

In this text Nishida postulates that the 'I' and the 'Thou', because of their inter-determination, must "flow out of the same environment" (同じ環境から生れ) (348), and that the 'I' must always be seen as being determined by a "common consciousness." But what is in question is not at all the fusion of different individual bits of consciousness. A mere "fusion" would not represent a real socio-historical world. Nishida insists that any idea of "merging" would neglect an essential component of human understanding. The act of intuition must incorporate the knowledge of the 'Thou' *as the 'Thou'* by the 'I':

Intuition – whose model is normally thought as artistic intuition – does not mean that we are immediately united with things. It is rather that at the bottom of ourselves resides the absolute other, so that at the bottom of its self, the self has to become the 'Other'. 'I' and the 'Other' do not become one here, but I am asked to see in myself the absolute other. This might be an unthinkable contradiction (Nishida 1932: 390).

The "ground" of intuition is not a subjective interiority contained in the 'I' but it is the relationship between the 'I' and the Other through which the Other becomes a 'Thou'. The idea of *place* becomes here a type of intuition that will never become "numerical" or abstract. It will never run out of concrete content as long as the 'I' sees itself in the 'Thou'. One can say that the "place" creates a kind of "play of reflection" in which the 'I' and the 'Thou' are not really opposed to each other, but are, even *before* any reflection takes place, determining each other.

In Nishida therefore, the 'I' does not represent a firm subjective basis into which, within the process of understanding, the 'Other' could or should be integrated through assimilation. If the 'I' and the 'Thou' approach each other, then they do so not in order to merge until the 'Thou' becomes the 'I', but rather in order to discover the 'Other-ness' not only of the 'Thou' but also of the 'I'.

Nishida criticizes the idea of a "merging" of subject and object as a type of intuition that will lead to abstraction and objectification. (...) Nishida's ideas imply a certain logic of "answerability", i.e. a logic of human understanding that attributes more importance to active *reaction*, than to passive *intellectualization*. David Dilworth has said that in Nishida's later thought "personal action", presupposes "the concrete fusion of the individual and environment, particular and universal, and subject and object in the dialectical field of the social historical world" (Dilworth 1978: 250). This means that "social and historical components of the real world are illustrated in every instance of personal action" (ibid.). This "fusion" is not an empirical fusion in the sense of empathy or of even more abstract scientific theories. The idea of action actually prevents it from becoming such a fusion. "I act therefore I am" is Nishida's way of avoiding the Cartesian *cogito*. In regard to the consciousness of the 'I', one could paraphrase Nishida's sentence as "I *re-act* therefore I am". It is most efficiently expressed in the phrase: "I know you because you answer me, and you know me because I answer you" (私は汝が私に応答することによって汝を知り、汝は私が汝に応答することによって私を知るのである) (Nishida 1932: 392).

In Nishida's *I and Thou*, the act of "answering each other" or the "echo-like encounter of those who are opposed" (ibid.) is presented as the basis of human existence and contrasts with all concepts of "unification". Even artistic activity is based on this kind of "answerability between persons" (人格と人格との応) (394), because art also exists in the realm of reality in the sense of "actuality"; and such an actuality takes place only within an encounter of 'I' and 'Thou'. (From T. Botz-Bornstein, *Place and Dream: Japan and the Virtual* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2004). Also contained in: T. Botz-Bornstein, *Aesthetics and Politics of Space in Russia and Japan: A Comparative Philosophical Study* (Lanham: Lexington-Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

**Literature:** Nishida Kitaro: ‘私と汝’ (Watashi to nanji; I and Thou, 1932). NKZ 6: 341-427. German trans. By Rolf Elberfeld in R. Elberfeld (ed.), *Logik des Ortes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999). David Dilworth: 1978. ‘The Concrete World of Action in Nishida’s Later Thought,’ in Nitta, U. and Tatematsu H. (eds) *Japanese Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer).