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The 'I' and the 'Thou': A Dialogue between Nishida Kitarō and Mikhail Bakhtin

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This article attempts to crystallize Nishida's and Bakhtin's common ideas about the 'I' and the 'Thou' as paradoxical models of self-perception as well as of the perception of the Other. Stylistic unity, inter-subjectivity, and self-reflection are examined as phenomena of consciousness that are presented in similar manners by both philosophers. Both Bakhtin and Nishida insist on the paradoxical character of the perception of the Other. A fusion of the 'I' with the 'Thou' is not beneficial to the 'I' at the moment it wants to understand the 'Thou'. The aim must be to understand the 'Thou' as a 'Thou' by maintaining the status of the 'I'. In Bakhtin's view, to understand the 'Other' is an act of cultural creation. The "Otherness" of the 'Thou' is established as an important component of the 'I's understanding of the 'Thou' as the 'Thou'. In Nishida's later philosophy, the 'I'-'Thou' relation has been extended to a relation between the 'I' and the World. The immediate, "irrational" experience of the Other through action or an "answering act" leads to self-realization through action within a dialogically organized stylistic place. Only when this dialogical "place" is philosophically established, are we able to see the world as a world of mutually determining individuals. On the basis of their respective philosophies of the 'I' and the 'Thou' both Nishida and Bakhtin develop original ideas about the phenomenon of space.

Keywords: BAKHTIN, NISHIDA, SPACE, INTERCULTURALITY, DIALOGUE

1. INTRODUCTION

In the present article I attempt to crystallize Nishida's and Bakhtin's common ideas about the 'I' and the 'Thou' as paradoxical models of self-perception as well as of the perception of the Other. The ideas of the "organic," stylistic unity, inter-subjectivity and

self-reflection, will be examined as phenomena of consciousness presented in similar manners by both philosophers.¹

First, however, it will be necessary to introduce the comparison of such otherwise dissimilar authors very carefully. The Russian literary critic Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975) and the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870-1945) are two authors who come from different hemispheres and even different traditions, apparently linked only through having shared some decades of the same century. Going by the intellectual biographies of both authors, one can easily doubt that these two authors are really comparable. Bakhtin grew up in the milieu of Russian modernism, authored books on Rabelais and Dostoevsky, and a great number of works on literary aesthetics. His critical attitude towards his Russian Formalist contemporaries made him interesting, and his interest in language made him popular in Russia in the Sixties and Seventies, and later also in the West. Nishida developed a Western style *philosophy* out of early Zen experiences, and during his lifetime manifested a constant interest in Zen Buddhism as well as in philosophical questions concerning religious experience. This establishes a considerable distance. Added to this comes a “formal” problem within studies of comparative philosophy. Bakhtin was “officially” not a philosopher but a literary critic who built an aesthetic theory mainly around the novels of Dostoevsky. Nishida relied mainly on Eastern and Western *philosophical* sources and tried to design a Japanese *philosophy* compatible with Western standards.

On the other hand, as the title of this article suggests, both Nishida and Bakhtin have dealt with the subject of the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’: Nishida wrote a long piece bearing that title, and Bakhtin treats the same subject in principal parts of a well known article. It is also obvious that for both, reflections on the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’ represented a major theme with regard to the development of the entire body of their thought. Looking more closely, it even turns out that both authors have very similar things to say on the subject.

A further parallel occurs, providing a hint that both authors’ treatment of the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’ might not only work in parallel with regard to the topic itself, but also take place in a similar philosophical context. A decisive addition occurs when considering that both authors were, when treating the subject of the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou,’ concerned with the phenomenon of space. Both Bakhtin and Nishida were constantly working against abstract concepts of space, replacing them by more “cultural” and concrete ones.

Nishida’s work presents itself “officially” as a philosophy of space. His notion of *basho* 場所 is generally translated as *place* and has been considered, together with the notion of *ma* 間, as a Far Eastern contribution to theories of space in philosophy, architecture, and urbanism as well as a philosophical source of attempts to wrench the modern treatment of space from its Cartesian background.² I will refer to Nishida’s idea of space from here on as “place”; for convenience’s sake, I will do so also with regard to Bakhtin. Bakhtin’s contribution to the philosophy of place is less well known and more difficult to recognize. In spite of the overwhelming amount of Bakhtin criticism, the general tendency is

to treat Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism, *heteroglossia*, (or even of place-related topics like the "chronotope") in the context of society, literature, and language, and not of urbanism or architecture. Still, it remains a fact that what has later been called Bakhtin's "anti-idealism" rested on his conviction that any reality should not be transposed in an "extra-social" as well as in a "внепространственный" (extra-spatial) and "вневременный" (extra-temporal) realm.³ For reasons that will hopefully become obvious in this article, I believe that Bakhtin's theoretical suggestions concerning polyphony, carnival, and other cultural phenomena, should not be seen only as social, institutional, artistic, or language-related devices, but as concrete suggestions about cultural *space* and the life taking place within it.

Bakhtin insists throughout all of his philosophy that time and space are not physical but that time is historical and space is social. On this point he is indeed comparable with the later Nishida for whom the *basho* is a place in which things do not simply "exist" but in which they are "local," i.e. in which they "are" in a concrete way. Bakhtin's and Nishida's outspokenly "organicist" definitions of "place" or "locality" put both of them into the group of those people who attempt to think place as more than as a Newtonian extension of space. Yūjirō Nakamura has said in regard to Nishida that from Aristotle's *chora* to modern speculations about a Big Bang, the idea of "organicity" has represented a constant challenge. There is a link between Bakhtin's concern in spatio-temporal "chronotopes" (a term Bakhtin derived from Einstein but which he never defined rigidly) that should constantly be reflected against the "unity of the world," and Nishida's philosophy of "place" that deal with very similar questions. Seen like this, both philosophies occupy respective positions within the same twentieth-century current of organicist philosophy particularly interested in the definition of place.⁴

However, the parallel concerning "place" is twofold, which makes the entire subject even more stimulating. Within their analyses of the relationship between 'I' and 'Thou,' both Bakhtin and Nishida force us to see not only the 'I' and the 'Thou' within place but also to see *place itself as being constituted* by a relationship between the 'I' and the 'Thou'. This means that both thinkers needed, at a certain moment of their reflections on the non-abstract character of place, to refer to the relationship between humans and were interested, when it came to the topic of "human space," not just in "subjective humans" and their way of perceiving space. Neither was interested in the relationship between humans as long as it was a relationship between the 'I' and the 'He' or the 'He' and the 'He'. For both authors, the most interesting aspect of human, cultural place could be revealed through an examination of the relationship between the 'I' and the 'Thou'.

Nishida and Bakhtin aim to define "cultural place" as something non-scientific and "human," as opposed to abstract and objective definitions of space. At the same time, however, both are not giving in to, but rather combating subjectivist theories by putting forward the individualist side of culture as well as of place (or language and literature in the case of Bakhtin). Bakhtin would never give in to unidimensional definitions of a "milieu" (среда), soil (почва), or earth (земля).⁵ A priori, this affirmation of non-

objective values combined with the rejection of subjective concreteness, must be seen as a paradox. The choice of the 'I' and the 'Thou' as a common topic can, finally, only be explained by insisting on this paradox. The only way to get "out" of the paradox was not to talk further about abstract, "everybody's" space, nor about individualist, subjective space, but about that space which exists—in a "dialogical" way—*between* humans whose interconnection is neither abstract nor concrete. This is the place marked off by a "strange" relationship, the relationship between the 'I' and the 'Thou'.

The comparison of these authors can show what perhaps all comparative studies are supposed to show: that the one needed what the other had, and vice versa. Nishida needed the existence of the 'Thou' in order to remain close to "concrete" social reality—and he became aware of it very late (only after 1934 when he began transforming *basho* into a place of socio-historical determination). This represents a problem for interpretations of Nishida, and the particular religious, Buddhist connotations of *basho* do not make things easier. This is the more so true since it is especially because of these connotations that his philosophy of place tends, by some people, to be received exclusively as a *religious philosophy* trying to *negatively* overcome rationalist separations of the subjective self and the objective world, or of *noesis* and *noema*.

While for Nishida the 'Thou' was a relatively late discovery, Bakhtin was aware of it from his youth; but *he* needed something else. What it is that he needed is actually difficult to spell out, but let me make some suggestions why this could be called "non-Western."⁶ My point is that the contradictions between the theoretical positions announced in Bakhtin's texts can be resolved, at least to some extent, within a theory of cultural place that is not based on something "positive" but on "nothingness." In other words, instead of looking, for example, for the "positive" side of Dostoevsky's artistic forms, one can approach Bakhtin also by concentrating, from the beginning, on his "negative" side, analogous to the method that has been considered the only appropriate one for the treatment of a "metaphysical" theory of place developed by Nishida.⁷

"Contradictions" are not only present in Bakhtin's arguments themselves, but flow also, as is well known, out of comparisons of his works with each other, even those which chronologically belong close together. I believe that this fact becomes particularly interesting in the context I am trying to create in the present article. Already in textbooks one can read that "Dialogic Imagination" contradicts "Dostoevsky's Poetics."⁸ I want to emphasize this contradiction, because I believe that an approach to Bakhtin's dialogical place of 'I' and 'Thou' through Nishida's religio-cultural place of 'I' and 'Thou' can indeed produce a new and useful perspective on Bakhtin.

The contradiction becomes manifest through a comparison of three of Bakhtin's earlier texts, "Author and Hero," "Discourse in the Novel" (the latter now contained in *Dialogic Imagination*) and "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics," works which are, intellectually and historically, immediately related to Bakhtin's reflections on 'I' and 'Thou'.⁹ Here I concentrate mainly on these three works. The ultimate incompatibility of the

positions announced in these three texts from the 1920s or just after can be summarized thus: The “modernity” presented in the latest text, “Discourse in the Novel,” leaves uncentralized “chaos” as the last possibility of the development of human culture, spelling out nothing “positive” in regard to a perspective that can easily appear as pessimistic. Bakhtin speaks out against the “great centralizing tendencies of European verbal-ideological life [that] have sought first and foremost for unity in diversity,”¹⁰ and criticizes the exclusive “orientation toward unity” (установка на единство) relying on “monosemic” (односмысленные) and phonetic evidence. However, where finally a “real ideologically saturated ‘language consciousness’” (p. 87/274) should be found, he never says.

It is difficult to bring this attitude together with the “authorial discourse” argument of the earliest of the three texts, “Author and Hero” (1924-27). It is equally difficult to assume the compatibility of both ideas with the stylistic theory brought forward in the middle text, “Dostoevsky’s Poetics,” in which an organic, though “supra-personal” and “transcendental,”¹¹ *style* seems to be the final offering of a self-sufficient aesthetic theory of civilization.

This constellation of facts, especially within this comparative analysis of Nishida, raises serious doubts as to whether Bakhtin can really be apprehended as a “social philosopher.” When I say that Bakhtin needed a “non-Western logic” I mean, in fact, that his philosophy of dialogue needs a metaphysical foundation that cannot be reduced to a “socio-aesthetic theory,” shifting between the insistence on the structurally binding character of laws and institutions on the one hand, and the reduction of Bakhtin’s arguments to “aesthetics” on the other. Nor does his philosophy require a kind of neo-mysticism conjuring the otherworldly, unifying powers of “dialogue.” It must perhaps be said that, at the point where Bakhtin criticism presently stands, there seem to be relatively few alternatives between these two options, the first one presented, roughly speaking, by an American-liberal (“aesthetic”) and British “anti-capitalist” coalition, and the second one by a new Russian theological-philosophical movement apparently still searching for its intellectual identity.¹² In neither camp, however, has anyone ever thought that Bakhtin’s “dialogism” could be based on something like a “metaphysics of nothingness.”

When I say thus that my comparison is supposed to push Bakhtin towards a “philosophy of place,” I mean that Bakhtin’s ambition, particularly visible in the essay “Discourse in the Novel,” is to do research into dialogue itself, and not only into the positive or “relevant” components of dialogue. The “*absence* of the author” announced (and at the same time not announced) by Bakhtin in this essay, comes close to our supposition of a *negative* place replacing positive dialogical structures. The same can be said of Bakhtin’s avoidance of any positive definition of a chronotope as an “idyllic” place of time-place interaction, as well as about other typically Bakhtinian “un-finalized” concepts.

This perspective also permits one to see a coherence between texts that would other-

wise be difficult to link to each other. Attempts to establish a “*negative place*” occur not only in the later text but announce themselves, though modestly, earlier as well. In “Dostoevsky’s Poetics” Bakhtin without hesitation calls the discovered “multiplicity of styles” also the “absence of style.”¹³

From a comparative perspective, the interpretative struggle between the “disintegration” and the “progressiveness” of Bakhtin’s dialogical literary work (and the modern world it symbolizes) may well turn out to be irrelevant. While Nishida is known and appreciated for his use of philosophical paradoxes, any paradoxical input traced in Bakhtin’s philosophy—be it only a certain “open-endedness” of a structural framework—runs the risk of being perceived as a drawback. In his book on Bakhtin and democracy, Ken Hirschkop asks, “Does democracy need help from even a reconstructed stylistics, though? Isn’t it a matter of institutions and political structures first, and language, if ever, afterwards?”¹⁴ The “problem” with Bakhtin is that the obvious “lack” of “author-ity” in his purely stylistic world leaves nothing but a vague (aesthetic) intersubjectivity, and this lets him too easily appear to be living “beyond this world.” Hirschkop writes with rhetorical irony: “So enthralled is he with the vivid intercourse of socio-ideological languages and the stylistic acrobatics of the novel that he hardly pauses to consider what the point of the style is or how he will justify a world so dominated.”¹⁵ I want to show here that Bakhtin’s, as well as Nishida’s, cure for the modern world is neither naïve aestheticism nor a positive theory of communication. Their philosophies should rather be seen as opposing both positive science describing the self in terms of a purely socio-historical environment and also aestheticising descriptions of the world.¹⁶

2. EINFÜHLUNG AND ANSWERABILITY

The gist of Bakhtin’s and Nishida’s common point about the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’ is that both insist on the paradoxical nature of the perception of the Other. On the one hand, one could presuppose that a fusion of the ‘I’ with the ‘Thou’ could be nothing but beneficial to the ‘I’ at the moment it wants to understand the ‘Thou’. One could think that the ‘Thou’ is well *understood* at the very moment a real assimilation of the ‘I’ to the ‘Thou’ has taken place. However, in that case the ‘I’ will no longer be the ‘I’, and the ‘Thou’ will no longer be the ‘Thou’. The aim must rather be to understand the ‘Thou’ as a ‘Thou’ by maintaining the status of the ‘I’. Only if a clear-cut *distinction* between both is maintained is the perception of the ‘I’ by the ‘Thou’ possible. For Bakhtin, these thoughts, which he pursued with an almost fanatical perseverance, are linked to his life-long combat against an aesthetics and epistemology of empathy. Bakhtin develops these thoughts in his youthful text “АВТОР И ГЕРОЙ В ЭСТЕТИЧЕСКОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ” (“Author and Hero in Aesthetic Action”),¹⁷ an essay on aesthetics heavily indebted to phenomenology and Neo-Kantianism. The young Bakhtin’s approach towards the problem

of perception consists of pointing again and again to the impossibility of an understanding of the 'Other' as long as this understanding implies a theorization of any kind. Such a theorization or objectification already takes place at the very moment the 'I' attempts to understand the other in the same way in which it understands itself. Bakhtin discovers the essential paradox that the willful negation of differences between the 'I' and the 'Thou' through an act of abstraction (as it is represented for example by intuition or *Einfühlung*) does not lead at all to a "concrete" understanding of the other but rather to its antithesis. Intuition, empathy, or any approach substantially implying, as Bakhtin sees it, the idea of a "merging" with the other, will only understand the Other *as the I*. In a dramatic passage in *Art and Answerability* Bakhtin claims:

Пусть он останется вне меня, ибо в этом своем положении он может видеть и знать, что я со своего места не вижу и не знаю, и может существенно обогатить событие моей жизни. *Только* сливаясь с жизнью другого, я только углубляю ее безысходность и только нумерически ее удваиваю.

Let him rather remain outside of me, for in that position he can see and know what I myself do not see and do not know from my own place, and he can essentially enrich the event of my own life. If all I do is merge with the other's life, I only intensify the want of any issue from within itself that characterizes my own life, and I only duplicate his life numerically.¹⁸

In Bakhtin's view, to understand the 'Other' is rather an act of cultural creation and the idea of a simple "merging" with the other contradicts the concept of an "active" understanding. Bakhtin intends to establish the "Otherness" of the 'Thou' as an important component of the 'I's' understanding of the 'Thou' *as the Thou*. Expressing it in terms that were current in Russia at the time of formalism, one could say that the negation of an essential strangeness clinging to every 'Thou' as soon as it is perceived by an 'I' will simply turn the 'Thou' into an abstract idea. A concrete 'Thou' cannot be understood through its assimilation to an 'I' but only through an act of *reaction* guarantying the autonomous existence of the 'Thou' as something "strange." In this way Bakhtin writes:

Мы не должны ни воспроизводить—сопереживать, подражать,—ни художественно воспринимать, а реагировать ответным поступком. (I must neither reproduce it—imitate or co-experience it—nor apprehend it artistically, but react to it with an answering act.) (p. 207/148)

The conclusion is that, by *reacting* to the 'Thou', the 'I' understands the 'Thou' better than through an act of self-conscious abstraction from itself, even if this abstraction is

meant to provide a “neutral” perception of the other.

Nishida’s thoughts about the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’ occupy a special position within the development of his philosophy—a position so distinctive that, at first sight, they appear incompatible with some of his earlier thoughts. If we consider his early definitions of *pure experience* in *Zen no kenkyū*, we recognize *pure experience* as a kind of individual consciousness that is supposed to constitute a “sole reality.” Strictly speaking, nothing seems to contradict here the compatibility of Nishida’s philosophy with the “idealism” combated by Bakhtin. Nishida insists on a difference between immediate experience and conceptualizing approaches because conceptual universals fail to embrace “individuals,” and his alternative to conceptualism remains linked to attempts to grasp the individual “as such.”¹⁹

Later, in the text “Basho” from 1925, one sees Nishida designing a theory of “place” in which intuition is still guaranteed through a reflection of the self (*jiko* 自己) in the self. In spite of obvious attempts to grasp the process of intuition contained in *pure experience* with the help of a geographical metaphor, the “place” is not thought of in the sense of a socio-historical reality containing a ‘Thou’ or an Other. It seems rather that the individual, subjective consciousness has become “interiorized” to the utmost degree by thinking of the subject as being subsumed in the “predicative thing” called *basho*. This is still *pure experience*, though a certain reflective moment has been installed within the act of intuition. It is not a reflection of the ‘I’ against a ‘Thou’ but rather of an ‘I’ within an ‘I’. However, even if the Other does not play a role here in “Basho,” it is also true that “intuition” stands for more than simply the fusion of a subject with its objective world. Even if the alternative to the “general” is still the “individual,” this individual is not thought of as a subsumption of general aspects within one individuality:

我々が主客合一と考えられる直覚的立場に入る時でも、意識は一般概念的なるものを離れるのではない、かえって一般概念的なるものの極致に達するのである。…直覚というのが単に主もなく客もないということを意味するならば、それは単なる対象に過ぎない。既に直覚といえ、知るものと知られるものとが区別せられ、しかも両者が合一するというでなければならぬ。

Even if we adopt an intuitive point of view that will be thought as the unity of subject and object, consciousness will not be detached from the general-conceptual; on the contrary, we attain thus the utmost of the general-conceptual. . . . If intuition means nothing more than that there is neither subject nor object, it is no more than an object. As soon as one talks about intuition, one has already distinguished the knower and the known and again reunited both.²⁰

Let me explain this thought by comparing the *basho* to the notion of play. The individual of *pure experience*, like the individual of the *basho*, is an “individual in action” which

does not exist as a substance but which “comes into play.” For Nishida, the *basho* is a place where a certain game determines itself “all alone,” without referring to subjective or objective foundations, because for the game there is nothing but the place itself. In this place singularities like “selves” form themselves. A “self” formed in a place is not formed by following rules borrowed from a sphere outside the game but the self shapes itself by simply “playing” what is the game of the place.

This idea, which suggests a strongly paradoxical structure, becomes understandable when one considers that the game is no “substantial force” either. A game is not “something” that one can see or measure. A game is only an action creating its sense all alone while acting. The game’s sense exists—a game is not an arbitrary action—but it exists only inside a place that is created by the game itself.²¹

Within this framework, the existence of the ‘Thou’ and the dialogical character of human existence represented a new challenge for Nishida from the early 1930s. It permitted him to depict *basho*, including the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’, as dialogically determined. This did not topple his already existing ideas about *basho* as an activity linked to self-perception (the integration of the ‘Thou’ into *basho* must probably be seen as an unsolved problem). On the other hand it helped put things differently. In the texts immediately following *I and Thou* (*The World of Action*, 1933 and *The Dialectical World*, 1934, both contained in *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*),²² the self is no longer conceived of individualistically: On the contrary, the fact of seeing the ‘Thou’ as completely detached from the existence of the ‘I’ gives rise to criticism of contemporary Marxist world-views.²³ As a consequence, in Nishida’s later texts, we can read statements like: “a mere isolated individual is nothing.”²⁴ *Basho* appears now like a place in which all living and non-living things come into being: it reflects all individuals and their mutually determining way-of-being within itself.²⁵ This means that the place still subsumes individuals, but this time “all” individuals seem to be concerned.

What was it that brought about this change in *I and Thou*?²⁶ Here Nishida postulates for example, that the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’, because of their inter-determination, must “flow out of the same environment” (*onaji kankyō kara umare* おなじ環境から生れ) (p. 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’:

直観というのは通常、芸術的直観を典型として考えられる如く、我々が直ちに物と合一するというのではない、自己自身の底に絶対の他を蔵し、自己が自己の底から他に転じ行くということではなければならない、自己と他とが一となるのではなく、自己の中に絶対の他を見ると云うことでなければならない。それは考えることのできない矛盾であろうが。

Intuition—whose model is normally thought of 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 contradictio (p. 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’. I would argue that, for Nishida, from the time he wrote the text ‘I’ and ‘Thou’, “self-consciousness,” even in regard to its profoundest psychological layers, is not based on self-perception but on a *social consciousness*.²⁷

Would it now be wrong to say that what Nishida characterized in the passage quoted above from “Basho” as an empty generality whose claim to be “objective” might be justified, but which fails to provide any “knowledge” about the “objective” world that the subject intends to perceive, comes close to Bakhtin’s notion of an empty and “numerical” “duplication” of the other? Nishida criticizes the idea of a “merging” of subject and object as a type of intuition that will lead to abstraction and objectification. We have seen that Bakhtin criticizes the same idea because it will lead to the establishment of a “numerical reality.” Also for Bakhtin, this numerical reality can be avoided the moment we respect the paradoxical relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’. Nishida’s ideas not only fully correspond to Bakhtin’s concerning the “social character” of psychic life, language, art, and society, but they 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.”²⁸ This means that “social and historical components of the real world are illustrated in every instance of personal action” (p. 250). 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" (*watashi wa nanji ga watashi ni ōtō suru koto ni yotte nanji o shiri, nanji wa watashi ga nanji ni ōtō suru koto ni yotte watashi o shiru no de aru* 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).²⁹

The idea, as it stands here, is certainly more than merely reminiscent of Bakhtin. In Nishida's *I and Thou*, the act of "answering each other" or the "echo-like encounter of those who are opposed" (p. 392) 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" (*jinkaku to jinkaku to no ō* 人格と人格との応) (p. 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'.

For Bakhtin, in carnival, as he shows in his Dostoevsky book as well as in his revised thesis on Rabelais,³⁰ the individual person manages to exist, at least for a while, in an "in-between," i.e. in a place "between" persons, and negates in this way its biological body in order to become one with the "people," with mankind, and with the entire cosmos. Here, the body is no longer biological but *historical*. In this sense, also Bakhtin's idea of playacting as a unity of imagination and creation overlaps (as is best shown by his concept of carnival) with a kind of place that is half real and half playacted; and here one finds an obvious element indicating a certain "negativity" in his idea of consciousness.

It is true that Nishida would most probably not have been willing to push the playful fusion of the 'I' with the 'Thou' as far as that. His philosophy of the 'I' and the 'Thou' is developed within the limited framework of *metaphysics* concerned with the unification of opposites. Still, Nishida would agree that for example history could be seen not only as something "real" but also as a realization of the "unreal."³¹ Do such statements really need to be read as quasi-religious affirmations or can they not also be understood as being concerned with "real" human relationships? Any detection of parallel developments and differences with Bakhtin is here supportive of an understanding of Nishida's thought.

As for Bakhtin, he liked, in his juvenile fervor, to present the world as a stage in which all action is playacting. However, even while conjuring the most extreme forms of confusion about human identities (for example in carnival), Bakhtin always seems to be ready to concede that carnival needs to be seen as a "модус взаимоотношений человека с человеком" ("a modus of interrelationship of man with man")³² It would certainly require much more research than could be presented within the limits of this article, but perhaps specialists of consciousness studies will some day find similarities between Bakhtin's "dialogical consciousness" and Nishida's concept of consciousness as a manifestation of *basho*. Several points could support such a hypothesis: Bakhtin opposes not only laughter to seriousness, dialogue to monologue, coincidence to necessity, but also dream to *logos*. *Logos* is not only "logic" but also language. One needs now to be aware that, in Western philosophy, *logos* is seen as residing "above the contradictions of

spatial and temporal existence.”³³ This is exactly the point that Nishida also criticizes. Bakhtin prefers non-materialized psychic life that is not yet molded in language to linguistic expression.³⁴

3. STYLISTIC UNITY AND NOTHINGNESS

Bakhtin’s dynamic unity of style which appears, especially in “Discourse in the Novel,” as “self-negating,” i.e. simultaneously present and absent, suggests conclusions concerning a parallel development of Bakhtin’s and Nishida’s “place” defined through an ontology of play. Can the idea of the “organic” be seen, at least when it comes to art (but perhaps even elsewhere), as a *stylistic* unity? To this interesting question Bakhtin and Nishida give similar answers. Bakhtin somehow “borrowed” the concept of style to describe the interdependence of language and ethics. Because he wanted to avoid any Kantian formalism, his ideas on cultural dialogicity are based on the rejection of *any stylistic unity* (be it formal, empirical or even spiritual). Still, the idea of a cultural unity is introduced by recognizing the existence of a “place of play” in which the signs provided by social and historical reality interact. In this way, stylistic unity exists, but it must be “played” so it can be shaped after the ontological conditions provided by a concrete place. Nishida claims that art styles would represent a contradictory “self-identity of subject and environment” when he writes:

芸術の様式は主体と環境との矛盾的自己同一として、民族とその環境とによって異ならなければならない。 (...art styles, as contradictory self-identity of subject and environment, are, according to the respective people and environment, distinct from each other.)³⁵

There is a paradox clinging to style, which incited Bakhtin to develop a methodology (of dialogue) intending to show the insufficiencies of the quasi-structuralist approaches of Wölfflin when it comes to the novels of Dostoevsky. Nishida has a similar idea in mind when writing:

ヴェルフリンの様式範疇の如きものの中に、東洋芸術の様式を嵌め込めてよいであろうか。私は疑なきを得ない。(If Eastern Art could ever be forced into something like Wölfflin’s Categories of Style? I very much doubt so) (p. 241).

Nishida is aware that the price to pay for abstract definitions of “styles” is the transformation of spatial extension into something abstract. There is, in Nishida’s philosophy, an essential relationship between style and place. Style appears like a *basho*; it has no geographical extension but is a matter of mirroring self-reflection.

From here we are led to a consideration of Nishida's idea of "mirroring" (*utsusu* 映す), a difficult term essential for the 'I'-'Thou' relationship as well as for all issues related to it, and we are led to a comparison of this notion with corresponding thoughts of the Bakhtin Circle. At the root of the idea of Nishida's mirroring is the Buddhist insight that being can best appear "as it is" in the "Mirror of Emptiness." *Basho* does not simply contain an 'I' "in" itself as if it were a subject surrounded by an objective environment. Nishida uses the Buddhist metaphor of mirroring to *elude* such a directional relatedness between subject and object, as well as the separation of subject and object itself. Nishida's "mirroring" is not a simple "reflection"—rather it needs a certain "negative" surplus since it is supposed to produce an intersubjective *consciousness*. The above-quoted passage from "Artistic Creation as a Formative Act" continues with a sentence attempting to specify in which way Worringer's "limitation of space" could nevertheless lead to the creation of a *basho*. What would be needed is an "artistic" input that will be based on the effect of mirroring:

…それが芸術的立場であるかぎり、同時に物に於いて自己を映す、物に於いて自己を見ると云うことが含まれていなければならない.. (...as far as this [limitation of space] produces itself artistically, it immediately turns things into a mirror, and simultaneously implies that the Self is seen in things.)³⁶

As a matter of fact, the described complex relationship between 'I' and "things" represented such a "mirroring" because the 'I' sees itself in "things" and vice versa. The terms of the Russian formalists, "alienation" and "self-alienation," are suggestive here: would not a "simple," narcissist reflection of the 'I' in the 'I', produce an "alienation" or even a "self-alienation" of the subject? What is necessary is a more "open" mirroring which includes in itself an entire environment that is produced through this act of mirroring.

In principle, such a philosophical model of open, or "negative," "mirroring" in the context of reflections on the formation of consciousness is not limited to the Buddhist sphere but can be found also in the West. One can quote Richard Rorty, who has discussed the problem of consciousness within cognitive processes by using as a methodological guideline the metaphor of the mirror. His main argument, developed in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, suggests that

...it is as if man's Glassy Essence, the Mirror of Nature, only became visible to itself when slightly clouded. A neutral system can't have clouds but a mind can. So minds, we conclude, cannot be neutral systems.³⁷

As a matter of fact, what Rorty calls "clouds" could also be called "distortion" or "refraction," which is not just a mirroring but which contains a certain negative surplus. In any case, it is during a creative mirroring process that a "place" is produced that involves both the object and the self-conscious subject. The "cloudy" reflection that

Rorty speaks of can never be pure.

For Bakhtin, in “Discourse in the Novel,” the process of refraction (*prelomlenie*) as a producer of style represents a central topic. For the Bakhtin Circle in general, the opposition of refraction and reflection represents one of its main theoretical tools when it comes to statements about the formation of consciousness. Voloshinov insists, in an essay that also appeared in the early 1920s (thus at a time when his relationship with Bakhtin was close) that human existence “отраженное в знаке, не просто отражено, но преломлено” (“...reflected in sign is not merely reflected but refracted.”)³⁸ This is, of course, because “таким образом, конститутивным моментом для языковой формы, как для знака, является вовсе не ее сигнальная себетожественность, а ее специфическая изменчивость” (“...the constituent factor for the linguistic form, as for the sign, is not at all its self-identity as signal but its specific variability”) (p. 82/69). “Variability” means here that we have to do with a refraction of the individual through its social environment that is seen as a process of *stylization* through which the individual as well as the environment create a “stylistic existence.” For Bakhtin all essential devices of dialogism and polyphony are embedded within such a “refracting” act of stylization. This process of refraction is polyphonic, which is also the reason why no conventional stylistics has ever been able to grapple with this problem. The environment within which the refraction takes place must be *open* because the world itself is a dialogue involving many opposing elements constantly refracting each other. The result of this polyphonic refraction can never be “one style” or “one consciousness,” but it will be an open field of consciousness appearing like a polyphonic stylistic event.

For Bakhtin, this refraction is directly opposed to the idea of *Einfühlung* as it has been presented at the beginning of this article. Any “пассивное отображение удвоения переживания другого человека во мне” (“passive mirroring or duplication of another’s experience within myself,” p. 170/102) on the other hand, which does not include the active, stylizing act of answering necessary for real understanding, must be likened to positivism or the impressionist aesthetic of an empty play (p. 161/92). Bakhtin’s “theory of culture” is based on this concept of mirroring, as he writes in “Discourse in the Novel”:

Languages of heteroglossia (разноречия), like mirrors that face each other, each of which in its own way reflects (отражает) a little piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp behind their inter-reflecting aspects for a world that is broader, more multi-leveled and multi-horizoned than would be available to one language, one mirror (225-26/414-15).³⁹

Because a cultural environment can come about only through the dialectical refraction of the self with itself as well as with its environment, the mirroring effect of the *basho* must be active. Only in this way can “feelings and will produce themselves within the “self-reflecting mirror” (*jiko jishin o terasu kagami* 自己自身を照らす鏡) (“Basho,” p.

213).⁴⁰

4. FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

4.1. Bakhtin, Zen, and Laughter

In spite of obvious parallels between Bakhtin and Nishida, some people might still have doubts whether Bakhtin, with his adoration of laughter, carnival, and the grotesque, will not always remain a far cry from Nishida. His carnivalistic tendency lets him appear close to Nietzsche but certainly not to a Nishida who is as un-dionysian a philosopher as can be. However, Nishida's philosophy is directly determined by personal Zen experience; and the subject of laughter, especially when it is given, as in Bakhtin's philosophy, a religious quality, is not so far removed from Zen culture. Both Bakhtin and Zen use "laughter" as a means of opposing moral abstractions. Bakhtin wanted to challenge the rigid morality of Russian Orthodox religion (for which laughter is impermissible) but also, or even more, the Western rational spirit "controlling" laughter by submitting it to a hierarchy of civilizational values. Neither Bakhtin nor Zen set out to design an alternative abstract ethics. In both, laughter or carnival are supposed to establish a certain "affective feeling" that is supposed to make rational reflections more "earth-bound." Both Bakhtin and Zen pursue the idea of an "un-materialized" as well as "un-formalized" kind of laughter. Modernity, as Bakhtin explains in his Rabelais book, "formalizes the heritage of carnival themes and symbols."⁴¹ Finally, "the bourgeois nineteenth century respected only satirical laughter which was actually not laughter but rhetoric" (Bakhtin 1965, p. 59/51). This means also that Bakhtin's interest in the grotesque and in laughter as typical manifestations of Medieval and early Renaissance cultures is directed towards the *pre-linguistic* expression of these phenomena. In general, Bakhtin preaches the necessary "loss of a feeling for language as myth, that is, as an absolute form of thought."⁴² "Truth" is for him "non-linguistic." It does, as he says in "Discourse in the Novel," "not seek words; she is afraid to entangle herself (запутаться) in the word, to soil herself in verbal pathos" (Bakhtin 1975b, p. 123/309). The parallel with Zen Buddhism's and, in particular, Nishida's ideas of pre-linguistic or non-linguistic experience is obvious.

4.2. The "Body of People"

Even more interesting is the fact that, linked to these thoughts on the non-materialized perception of the world, Bakhtin manages to establish a certain concept of the *body* that appears particularly non-Western and non-modern. Bakhtin insists that the "exaggeration" of the grotesque is supposed to be understood "as such," that is as the original

experience it represented to the people who experienced and produced it and not as an act of *Verfremdung*. In no case should it be molded into abstract concepts depending on moral categories (designing it as a *caricature*) (Bakhtin 1965, p. 71/62), or psychology (designing it as the *id* or as an expression of *power*) (p. 56/49). It is out of these considerations for the importance of laughter in pre-modern Western culture, so closely linked to the bodily grotesque, that Bakhtin develops a concept of the *body* whose resemblance with Nishida's concept of the body cannot be escaped. In which other Western author could we read that in pre-Renaissance culture the body was no individual entity but prolonged in the form of a "body of the people" (народный тело)? Only since the Renaissance, Bakhtin writes, "the individual body was presented apart from its relation to the ancestral body of the people." (p. 35/29) Bakhtin is convinced that in premodern Europe...

the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in private, egoistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people. As such it is opposed to severance from the material and bodily roots of all the people. As such it is opposed to severance from the material bodily roots of the world. ... We repeat: the body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of the words, because it is not individualized. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable. (Bakhtin 1965, p. 24/19)

Rabelais is certainly Western, but Bakhtin is among the few critics who insist that in regard to this writer, modern Western concepts of culture and the body need to be annulled if his ideas are really to be understood. It is remarkable that one of the results of this approach is not only, as mentioned above, a rather Japanese-sounding concept of the human as an "in-between," but also a non-individualist conception of the "body of people" that remains strangely reminiscent of Nishida's "historical body" (*rekishiteki shintai* 歴史的身体),⁴³ a notion Nishida developed later in his life. The "body of people" is not the biological body but the body seen as a *function* (*kinō* 機能) existing within a certain place. "Bodily existence can be thought of by extending its function all the way to language," writes Nishida.⁴⁴ The body is not an object used by individual consciousness but always actively involved in the world.

CONCLUSION

Like Nishida, Bakhtin does not provide a comprehensive theory of communication, but notions like inter-subjectivity, self-reflection, or multi-linguality are supposed to be accepted as autonomous phenomena of consciousness. There is no elucidation of a technique or formalist device that would make obvious how this consciousness would come about. On the contrary, consciousness is a device itself—and the only one—producing itself autonomously. Like Nishida, Bakhtin does not believe that the potential world (of consciousness, of art, or of culture) would preexist and wait to be uncovered.

In Nishida's later philosophy the 'I'-'Thou' relation has been extended to a relation between the 'I' and the World: The immediate, "irrational" experience of the Other through action or an "answering act" leads, for Nishida, to self-realization through action within a dialogically organized stylistic place. Only when this dialogical "place" is philosophically established are we also able to see the world as a world of mutually determining individuals.

I hope to have shown that the particular Buddhist connotations of the *basho* which negates all distinctions between *noesis* and *noema*, do not make Nishida's philosophy "metaphysical" *in an exclusive way*.⁴⁵

Ernest Hocking has said that religion "speaks not primarily to the man-within-the-nation but to the man-within-the-world."⁴⁶ However, strictly speaking, there is no reason to say that history and sociology would not be part of a "World" but only of a "Nation." On the contrary, it is precisely within the historical and social world that reality is so much mixed with imagination that an analysis in terms of "institutions" will probably be unable to grasp the essence of any dialogical-ideological environment. What both Nishida and Bakhtin have in common is that their "dialogical consciousness" includes some of that kind of negativity that neither the "positive" social sciences or traditional Western aesthetics have been able to attain.

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NOTES

- ¹ It will not be possible to elucidate the deeper *historical reasons* for the parallels between Bakhtin and East Asian thought in general. Bakhtin's insistence that the "unity of being in idealism is turned into the principle of unity of *consciousness*," (Bakhtin 1979, p. 76) is certainly reminiscent not only of East Asian sources but also of Bakhtin's own, more "mystically-minded" predecessors, the pre-revolutionary, "organicist" thinkers Vladimir Soloviov (1853-1900, Lev Lopatin (1855-1922) and Semën L. Frank (1877-1950). These philosophers were trying to overcome Western metaphysics by their own—Eastern orthodox—means, making parallels between them and non-Western thought often more obvious than in Bakhtin. The Eastern Orthodox Church passed by those Neo-Platonic dichotomies like 'body' and 'mind' that are, not coincidentally, assumed by the Western Church as well as for Western metaphysics. See Lev Lopatin 1913. On proximities between classical Russian ontology and Far Eastern thought see Chari 1952. Chari draws on the medieval mystical heritage of the Eastern Church and encourages research into the Russian *Weltanschauung* that would give easier access to Eastern thought for Westerners. Chari shows much interest in "paranormal or supra-normal phenomena" including parapsychology which already seems to forecast post-perestroika Russian research into this part of Russian thought. However, more interesting, Chari also points to Soloviev's 'All-Unity' as a phenomenon reminiscent of Swami Vivekananda's *Hymn of Samādhi* in which "The 'I' is paralleled by the 'Thou' in me." (p. 231). Further, mention should be made of the general skepticism of traditional Russian thought towards words that it tries to replace by a more integral kind of pre-linguistic reason. This certainly creates a parallel with Nishida's Japanese ideas. Frank's and Soloviov's idea of *All-Unity* (*vesyedinstvo*) represents a "unity in multiplicity"; for Lopatin, this All-Unity is a kind of "immediate being" which establishes a "place" that is more than a geographical unity consciously held by ideologies.
- ² Cf. Berque and Nys 1997; Berque 2000; Sauzet and Berque 1999.
- ³ Quotation from Medvedev 1928, p. 25/14ff. Here as elsewhere the number before the virgule refers to the page number in the original text and the number following the virgule to the page number in the translation.
- ⁴ Nakamura 2000, pp. 369 and 375.
- ⁵ Bakhtin 1979, p. 35.
- ⁶ In general, allusions in critical literature to Bakhtin's possible links with East Asian theories remain suggestive, if not to say mystifying, typically like the brief footnote in an article by Hwa Yol Jung containing the information that "Bakhtin's dialogics is most close to the Chinese transformative logic of *yin* and *yang*." (Jung 1998, note 7). Another example is a statement by the eminent Bakhtin scholar Viacheslav V. Ivanov who points, when pondering possible parallel developments of a Bakhtinian 'I'-'Thou' line of thought in the history of philosophy, to a tract by a Buddhist logician entitled "Obosnovanie chuzhoi odushevlenosti" (roughly translatable as "The Substantiation of the Presence of Soul in the Other") which had been translated into Russian by Fedor Stcherbatsky, the famous author of *Buddhist Logic*. Ivanov indicates neither the author of the "tract" nor where it has been published but insists that it had been translated in the early 1920s, the time when Bakhtin developed his thoughts on the 'I' and the 'Thou' (Ivanov 1993, p. 5). It should be noted how amazingly close

the title of this Buddhist tract comes to topics treated by Russian philosophers at the end of the nineteenth century, for example the Neo-Kantian Alexander Vvedensky.

- ⁷ There is enough reason to believe that Bakhtin's obvious refusal of any "either/or" in his philosophy since at least "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-35), is indeed part of a search for a more outspoken "non-Western logic." This becomes clear even through very general considerations. First, Bakhtin is working against the oppositions of subjective-objective, individual-general, and all those binary oppositions that Western metaphysics usually takes for granted. He refuses *both* the linguistics of an "abstract objectivism" represented by Saussure, and "individualistic subjectivism" represented by the tradition of Humboldt *and* Vossler. Furthermore, in texts preceding "Discourse in the Novel," his appreciation of Dostoevsky's non-linear and non-historical way of presenting events within a novel is incompatible with Western metaphysical, scientific, linear, concepts of time. From Dostoevsky's works Bakhtin derived his ideas of ambivalence and polyphony which are essentially subversive in their ambition to make impossible the establishment of a "global" truth, by giving preference to different "local" truths existing next to each other within a single discourse. Also, his related idea of dialogue does not follow the progressive structure of Hegelian dialectics but becomes, as an eternal "dialogicity," an "end in itself" (как самоцель) (Bakhtin 1979, p. 252 and 338). Finally, this lets dialogue appear as something like a consciousness, but not a conceptualized, graspable *consciousness* designed by Western psychoanalysis, but rather the consciousness of an author whose intentionality is "deep-seated" though not absent (Bakhtin 1975a, p. 129-30). This is where one can find, once again, the refusal of an either/or. In spite of the "chaotic" character of the Dostoevskian consciousness that Bakhtin seems to adopt as something "positive," he never announces the dissolution of sense in literature whatsoever, thus never giving way to pure avant-garde devices or even "post-modernism" of any sort. Bakhtin continues to believe that "in spite of it all" the "consciousness of the author," determined by an "artistic thinking" (художественное мышление, p. 360) remains a reliable source of meaning. The poetical character of the work is, and remains, "organic" and "coherent" (p. 9).
- ⁸ This is all the more remarkable because "Dostoevsky's Poetics" is not represented here by the book of 1929 but by the entirely overhauled version from 1963.
- ⁹ Ken Hirschkop has crystallized the incompatibility of the three different positions announced in the three texts from the 1920s very well (Hirschkop 1999, p. 73ff).
- ¹⁰ Bakhtin 1975b, p. 87/274.
- ¹¹ Bakhtin 1994a, p. 20.
- ¹² For the opposition of these two tendencies see Hirschkop 1999, pp. 6-7 and V. Bazhanov 1999.
- ¹³ Bakhtin 1979, p. 20.
- ¹⁴ Hirschkop 1999, p. 26
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ¹⁶ The German heritage that both authors share needs to be mentioned. Both Nishida and Bakhtin can appear as typical representatives of *scholars* imbued with German hermeneutic and Neo-Kantian philosophy of their time, and being heavily influenced by Dilthey and Rickert. Their German-biased education often becomes obvious even in regard to the bibliographical angle they choose when it comes to art theory. Both philosophers can be expected to quote, for example, Semper, Riegl,

Wölfflin, and Worringer as art theorists whose works merit discussion. Another immediate parallel is that Bakhtin's research on the relationship between the 'I' and the 'Thou' was inspired by Martin Buber's book *Ich und Du* (Buber 1962-64). Cf. also the short essay "Zur Geschichte des dialogischen Prinzips," in the same volume). However, though it is known that Nishida also read this book, it is uncertain whether his own work with the same title was already influenced by it or not. As Ryosuke Ohashi has pointed out, Nishida mentions Buber's book for the first time in his diary on 20 August 1934, thus two years after the appearance of his own study (cf. Ohashi 2000, p. 342). See also James Heisig who claims in his article on Nishida and Buber that Nishida "had not read Buber's book but did know of it indirectly through the writings of the dialectical theologian, Friedrich Gogarten" (Heisig 2000). In *Ich und Du*, Buber attempts to redefine the value of a personal 'Thou' as an alternative to an alienated, modern environment in which the "Other" is mainly experienced as a numerical accumulation of information. Buber's theory of the 'I' and the 'Thou', which was so essential for Bakhtin, has had considerable influence on alternative formulations of the idea of *place* as opposed to modern concepts of *space* as a geometrical extension in the 20th century. The authentic experience of "place-like phenomena" dear to Western philosophers of space has been successfully related to Buber's 'I-Thou' experience. Cf. Relph 1976, p. 65: "An unselfconscious experience of space as an authentic sense of place is rather like the type of relationship characterized by Martin Buber as 'I-Thou', in which the subject and object, person and place, divisions are wholly replaced by the relationship itself." And: "An 'I-Thou' experience of place is a total and unselfconscious involvement in which person and place are indissociable" (p. 78). See also Hase 1998 on the matter.

¹⁷ Bakhtin 1994. Fragments or, as Clark and Holquist also say, different unfinished attempts to write the same book, from a period between 1918 and 1924. Another essay contained in the same volume is "Art and Answerability," a piece from 1919 and his first published work. English translations of these essays are contained in *Art and Answerability: Early Essays*, ed. M. Holquist and V. Liapunov (University of Texas Press, 1990).

¹⁸ Bakhtin 1994b, p. 157/87.

¹⁹ Nishida 1926, p. 218. Cf. also Abe 1988, p. 363.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

²¹ Ryosuke Ohashi (Ohashi 2000, p. 339ff) has shown in his study of the *basho* and the idea of "play" that Nishida's theory of the place has affinities with existing theories of play/game. When drawing links with Neumann and Morgenstern's game theory, Ohashi is eager to show that any theory of play/game should not reduce social and mental phenomena to *mathematical* phenomena by re-describing the world as a "numerical reality." In Ohashi's view, Nishida's theory could consciously avoid this because the *basho* is designed as a quantity bearing an essentially "negative" character.

²² Nishida 1933-34.

²³ Cf. Dilworth 1978, p. 250.

²⁴ Nishida 1944a, p. 115.

²⁵ Cf. Abe 1988, p. 371.

²⁶ Nishida 1932.

²⁷ Nishida's reflection of the 'I' against the 'Thou' even produces a certain conception of sociological time: The historical world as a single, eternal presence, is determined by a dialectics of time based on

an answering play of 'I' and 'Thou': 今日の私は昨日の私を汝と見ることによって、昨日の私は今日の私を汝と見る ことによつて、私の個人的自己の自覚というものが成立するのである、非連続の連続として我々の個人的自覚というものが成立するのである” (Today's 'I' sees yesterday's 'I' as a 'Thou', and yesterday's 'I' sees today's 'I' as a Thou'. In this way arises self-consciousness as a discontinuous continuity) (Nishida 1932, p. 415). The 'I' is neither general nor natural but *historical*, and the ideas put forth by the Bakhtin Circle about “time as events of social intercourse” (cf. Medvedev 1928, p. 160/102ff) seem also to apply to this conception of time.

²⁸ Dilworth, 1978, p. 250.

²⁹ Nishida 1932, p. 392.

³⁰ Bakhtin 1965, p. 98/88ff.

³¹ Schinzinger 1958, p. 60.

³² Bakhtin 1979, p. 141/123. Cf. also Medvedev 1928 introduction and p. 91/64ff.

³³ Dilworth 1978, p. 260.

³⁴ An early statement deploring the strategies of “material aesthetics” seems to contain the whole program of the Bakhtin Circle’s anti-Freudian campaign against “materialized,” isolated bits of psyche: “Any feeling, deprived of the object that gives it meaning, reduces to a bare factual (ГОЛО-ФАКТИЧЕСКОГО) state of the psyche, and extra-cultural state”(1975a, p. 14/264). In another early text, in his Dostoevsky study, Bakhtin says: “When we look at each other, two different worlds are reflected in the pupils of our eyes” (p. 168). This idea clearly establishes a self-determining world within which the subject is not opposed to a material world, but in which the true consideration of a socio-historical reality manages to overcome subjective rationalism. In the same book Bakhtin says about Dostoevsky: “It is not the multiplicity of fates and lives in a single objective world as seen by a single authorial consciousness that develops in his work, but precisely *the multiplicity of equal consciousnesses with their worlds* which is combined here, preserving their own integrity in the unity of a certain event” (1979, p. 140).

³⁵ Nishida 1941, p. 238)

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Rorty 1980, p. 86.

³⁸ Voloshinov 1929, p. 31/23. The notion of refraction becomes important for the establishment of the human, inter-individual, *sign* in opposition to the “animal” *signal*. Cf. also p. 81/68. In Voloshinov’s work, the word “reflection” almost never appears alone, but is usually accompanied by the term “refraction” in order to show that what is in question is not a simple reflection of signs but their refraction in society. The idea is developed by Bakhtin, especially in “Discourse in the Novel,” but it can be seen even in his latest texts.

³⁹ Interestingly, Bakhtin’s previously mentioned idea of “duplication” has also been translated by Emerson and Holquist as “mirroring.” Cf. Bakhtin, 1975b, p. 94/281: “But even a more concrete *passive* understanding of the meaning of the utterance, an understanding of the speaker’s intention insofar as that understanding remains purely passive, purely receptive, contributes nothing new to the word under consideration, only mirroring (дублировать) it, seeking, at its most ambitious, merely the full reproduction of that which is already given in the world.”

⁴⁰ The synthesis flowing out of this is that Nishida’s mirror effect is not linked to *naturalism* but rather

it is grounded on a *cultural stylistics* for which the moment of the refraction of the world is more important than its mere mirroring. We are reminded here of the fact that Nishida's self-reflecting mirror is not a clichéd pan-Asian quietism, which, on principle, makes no effort to actively refract nature, but accepts the world as it is in order to merely reproduce it. Nobuyuki Yuasa says about the production of *haiku* poems in the foreword to his translation of Issa's *Oraga Haru*, that *haiku* aesthetics of "objectivism" which claims to "learn about the bamboo only from the bamboo," would be no "incitement to simple naturalism but rather for true symbolic expression. The intention of the haiku poet is not simply to set the mirror up to nature ... but to find identity in nature" (Issa 1960, p. 18). Similarly, when Nishida insists on the *basbo's* function as a self-reflecting play, he does not have in mind an organic environment perfectly reproducing nature, but rather, to use an expression which repeatedly occurs in *Art and Morality*, a "style [that] is self-awareness in action" (Nishida 1921-23, p. 32). As Nishida says in "The Unity of Opposites," the result of the self-reflecting action-intuition is always a certain "style of production," a process in which "man, himself a forming factor of this self-forming historical world... gets in his grip the style of productivity of the world" (cf. Schinzinger 1958, p. 62). The term 生産様式の形 (*seisan yōshiki no katachi*, "style of production") appears on p. 161ff/178ff.

⁴¹ Bakhtin 1965, p. 55/47.

⁴² Bakhtin 1975b, p. 178-79/367.

⁴³ See Nishida 1937 and 1938, in particular p. 91ff.

⁴⁴ Nishida 1937, p. 277/45.

⁴⁵ Nakamura Yūjirō is convinced that Nishida's philosophy would, being purely religious and concerned with "transcendental problems," remain incompatible with concrete questions concerning a socio-historical environment. Nishida's "religious metaphysics" would, on principle, be inappropriate for an examination of history and society. These would need to be examined, as Nakamura says, in terms of institutions (Nakamura 2000, p. 375).

⁴⁶ Hocking 1956, p. 47.

要旨

「私」と「汝」：西田幾多郎とミハイル・バクティンの対話

トルステン・ボッツ

本論文においては、西田およびバクティンの自己知覚と他者の知覚のパラドキシカルモデルとしての「私」と「汝」についての共通の考えを明らかにすることを試みる。文体的統一、相互主観性、自己反省は、両哲学者によって類似した方法で提示されている意識の現象として検討される。

バクティンおよび西田の両者は、他者の知覚のパラドキシカルな性格を強調している。「私」の「汝」との融合は「私」にとっては、「汝」を理解する瞬間においては「私」に利益をもたらすものではない。目的は「私」の地位を維持すると同時に「汝」を「汝」として理解することである。

バクティンの立場においては、他者を理解することは文化的創造の行為である。「汝」の「他者性」は、「汝」を「汝として」理解する「私」の重要な要素として確立された。後期西田哲学においては、「私」と「汝」の関係は「私」と世界の関係へと発展した。他者の直観的で「非合理的」体験は、実践や「応答の行為」を通して、対話的に組織化された文体的な場所内の行為による自己実現を導く。この対話的な「場所」が哲学的に確立されるときにのみ、我々は個が個を相互に限定する世界としての世界を見ることができるのである。「私」と「汝」のそれぞれの哲学に基づいて、西田とバクティンの両者は空間の現象について独自の考えを発展させている。