

NISHIDA
INTELLIGIBILITY
AND THE
PHILOSOPHY OF NOTHINGNESS

Translated and introduced by
Robert Schinzinger

in Collaboration with I. Kōyama and T. Kojima
The International Philosophical Research Association of Japan



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The English speaking philosophers will welcome the translation of the "Intelligible World", by Kitaro Nishida, who is unanimously considered as the most distinguished and representative thinker in modern Japan. I have personally been able to ascertain his powerful influence on the philosophical life in various Japanese Universities.

Whoever is interested in the general interplay of ideas throughout the world will be anxious to find out how an original philosopher in the Far East reacts to western dialectical thinking and contrives to adapt it to asiatic mentality.

Gabriel MARCEL

de l'Institut

*The character of the jacket, pronounce **Mu**, means Nothingness, and was written by Nishida himself.*

KITARŌ NISHIDA

Intelligibility and the Philosophy
of Nothingness

Three Philosophical Essays

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content of that which sees itself, becomes normative and becomes an act of realisation of value.

That which confronts and opposes our conscious Self as "objective world", transcends our conscious Self, and is nothing else but the content of Something, deep in our conscious Self; this "something" is the "intelligible Self". Of course, the content of the conscious Self, too, is nothing else but the content of a deeper Self, and this content is determined somehow; but in so far as this content is not determined by the conscious Self, it appears as "objective world" to the conscious Self. The title of "being" belongs only to the conscious Self, while that which confronts it is unreal and is a world of mere meaning, or — one step deeper — the world of truth. To this world of truth belongs everything that is determined in the Universal of judgement, besides belonging to the self-consciousness. When the Universal of judgement is thought of as being enveloped by the intelligible Universal, then all its content loses its significance as "being", and gets the significance of "meaning" or "value". When the Universal of self-consciousness is enveloped by the intelligible Universal, the conscious Self, too, enters into the objective world. Kant's "Bewusstsein überhaupt" (consciousness-in-general) is that intelligible Self, in this sense. Therefore, from this point of view, everything enters as object of knowledge into the world of values.

In so far as the Universal of judgement is enveloped by the Universal of self-consciousness, the theoretical self-consciousness is reached; when the Universal of self-consciousness is enveloped, again by the intelligible Uni-

really when we are forming. Man's body is "productive".

As biological beings, we "desire", since we are mirroring the world and denying ourselves. We form instinctively. In the world of unity of opposites, from the formed towards the forming, our "desire" is a kind of forming through expression. We have the desire to produce. Therefore, we, as individuals of the world of unity of the opposites of the many and the one, are true individuals. We form the world by acts of expression. This means, on the contrary, and at the same time that we form ourselves as viewpoints of the world. The world forms itself, as negating unity of innumerable individuals which form themselves. This can rightly be asserted already of the instinctive forming of living beings. The instinct, too, must be understood as relationship between the living being and the world. (Behaviourism). The instinct of man is essentially not mere bodily forming, but a forming with the "historical body", i.e. "producing".

Man's action originates from mirroring the world through acts of expression, by seeing things productive-bodily. Seeing things through action-intuition means seeing them productive-bodily. We see things productive-bodily, and from there we act. Seeing and acting form a unity of opposites in the productive-bodily Self. Seeing things productive-bodily means comprehending them according to the style of productivity, that is as "concrete concept". It means the comprehension of things by the self-expressing Self, and from the standpoint of the present of unity of opposites. This is the standpoint of concrete logic; here is the true and the real.

can be thought that we think and act freely. We separate ourselves from that which confronts us as unity of opposites. There is a world of abstract freedom.

This, however, is a direction in which we, in reality, lose the world, and lose ourselves. On the contrary, our consciousness appears as one moment of self-formation of the world of absolute unity of opposites. And vice versa: the contradictory joining of past and future in the present in our consciousness, means essentially that the world, contradicting itself, forms itself. To the degree in which we are consciously free, we are in a contradictory sense confronted with the absolute unity of opposites. By being individuals of the world which, as present of unity of opposites, forms itself, we are through and through confronted with that which asks us: "life or death?" That is the reason why our acts of consciousness have a normative character.

As I have already said, action-intuition, as I call it, is neither instinctive nor artistic. Of course, it can be said that instinct is its not yet developed form, and that art is an extreme border-case. But, [essentially], action-intuition is the fundamental and most concrete form of conscious comprehension of reality. The "concept" is not formed by "abstraction". To comprehend something by concept, means to comprehend it through action-intuition. Through action-intuition we conceive a thing conceptually ('gainen' is "Begriff"¹⁾).

1) Nishida uses the German word, "Begriff", concept; "gainen" is the Japanese word which also means "concept".

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