

Buddhist Ethics and Counseling: Nishitani Keiji and Kawai Hayao

ANTON LUIS SEVILLA

The Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI)

CATHERINE JAO

Kyoto Saga University of Arts

Nishitani Keiji was a Japanese thinker of the Kyoto School known for his masterpiece Religion and Nothingness, where he discusses the problem of nihilism and the need to go beyond that into the area of Absolute Nothingness. Kawai Hayao, on the other hand, is the founder of Japanese Analytical and Clinical Psychology. His work to be discussed in this presentation, Buddhism and the Art of Psychotherapy, takes a look at the differing concepts of I in Buddhism and in the West, as well as how this affects his psychotherapy. In the first part of this presentation, we will delve into the ideas of these two thinkers regarding personal ethics. We shall look into the similarities between these thinkers in terms of their views on consciousness and the problem of nihility/loss of relatedness facing modern man, which often manifests itself in the form of psychological problems. We will also be exploring how they resolve and unite dualities involved in the formation of personal ethics such as the unification of the individual-whole, being-nothing, conscious-unconscious, and the already-not yet.

Using those above as a foundation, we will also be pointing out the social aspects of these ideas and their implications toward interpersonal relationships. Both thinkers agree on the problem of the separation of self in modern man with others and within himself. Nishitani gives clarity and depth to Kawai's ideas while Kawai's observations and experiences ground Nishitani's theoretical framework, giving it concrete applications in daily life. By combining these two thinkers, we hope to come up with a nuanced view of the self as it forms its personal ethics and the imperatives that such a view holds in the way we think of ourselves and relate with others.

Keywords: emptiness, counseling, philosophy, psychology

Since the introduction of Zen Buddhism to the west, much interest has been sparked by the ideas of nothingness, no-self, and the practices of self-emptying. Nishitani Keiji's *Religion and Nothingness*, translated to English in 1983, caught attention for precisely that—a possibility of rethinking religion, religious philosophy, and spiritual practice from the basis of emptiness. But a common complaint, spurred by both theoretical concerns and very practical concerns surrounding the (mis-) use of “selflessness” in Japan's imperialist ideology in the Pacific War, is that emptiness does not form a sufficiently rigorous foundation for practical philosophy. What does it concretely mean to empty oneself, and how does this affect one's relationship with others?¹

It is in light of this problem that we wish to discuss Nishitani alongside his younger colleague, the psychologist Kawai Hayao. Kawai provides us a view of emptiness and no-self from an eminently concrete standpoint—that of psychology, particularly the practical agency of a counselor/therapist—with a theory richly informed by both Jungian analytic psychology

and Japanese Buddhist traditions.

In this paper, we will be discussing the practical application of an ethics of no-self via Nishitani and Kawai. We will begin by introducing the two thinkers and their relationship with each other. We will then proceed to discuss the basic approach of each thinker to the following questions: What is the fundamental crisis we all face? What does it mean to be able to overcome this crisis? How does this breakthrough determine our interpersonal relationships? Finally, we shall explore the synergy between Nishitani's theoretical insight and Kawai's rich experience in professional counseling, and examine how these two might be combined for a deep but practical view of the ethics of emptiness.²

INTRODUCTION

Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 (1900-1990) needs little introduction in Japan. A member of the Kyoto School of Philosophy, he was the orthodox successor of Nishida Kitarô (1870-1945). His focus was primarily on religious philosophy, writing extensively on mysticism, religious existentialism, the idea of God in relation to absolute nothingness, nihilism, and Zen Buddhism. Most of his key works are available in English: *Religion and Nothingness* (1982), *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (1990), *On Buddhism* (2006), and a very recent translation *The Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji 1900-1990: Lectures on Religion and Modernity* (2012). He is one of the best-known Japanese philosophers in the English-speaking world, with much attention given to him in Christian-Buddhist studies. However, his reputation in Japan is heavily marred by his involvement in wartime propaganda, and this trend is beginning to show in the English literature as well.

Kawai Hayao 河合隼雄 (1928-2007) is less known in the English-speaking world. He is considered to be the founder of Japanese Analytical and Clinical Psychology, having introduced both sandplay therapy and Jungian psychology to Japan. After training in the Jung Institute in Zurich, he became Japan's first certified Jungian analyst in 1965. He was a professor of analytical/clinical psychology and Dean of the Educational Faculty at Kyoto University for 30 years, and after his retirement, became director of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies and chief of the Agency of Cultural Affairs. Dr. Kawai has authored and edited more than fifty books with religious and psychological themes, however, only a few have been translated into English, such as *The Buddhist Priest Myoe: a life of dreams* (1991), *Dreams, Myths and Fairy Tales in Japan* (1995), and *Buddhism and the Art of Psychotherapy* (2008). The bulk of his vast body of work has not yet been made available in English.

Nishitani and Kawai do not appear to have a particularly close relationship. Nishitani was largely critical of psychology (as seen in his remarks in *Religion and Nothingness* and *On Buddhism*). However, the younger Kawai seems to have been quite interested in the Kyoto School of Philosophy. There appears to have been quite a bit of collaboration between him and Prof. Ueda Shizuteru. Peripheral to the Kyoto School, he also drew much from Izutsu Toshihiko and D.T. Suzuki. But there is one recorded conversation between Nishitani, Kawai, and David Miller on "The Divine in the Contemporary World," which is available in English.

Despite the lack of intense collaboration between Nishitani and Kawai, we argue that a comparative study of the two is profitable. Nishitani is arguably one of the most theoretically

astute Buddhist philosophers of the Kyoto School, and Kawai one of the greatest depth psychologists of Japan. They wrote on similar themes, addressed similar problems, and drew from similar inspirations—Zen, Kego, and other forms of Japanese Buddhism, as they encounter western modes of thought in philosophy and psychology.

PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL ETHICS IN NISHITANI AND KAWAI

Hopefully, the importance of a comparative study of Nishitani and Kawai will become clear as we go over the basics of their thought in this section. We will be dealing with three main questions as posed to each thinker: First, what is the fundamental crisis that humanity faces? Second, what does it mean to be able to overcome this crisis? And third, how does this breakthrough determine our interpersonal relationships? By answering these questions, we hope to give a brief sketch of the personal and interpersonal ethical theories of both thinkers.

2.1 Nishitani

1. *The Crisis.* Nishitani's views on the crisis of humanity and the necessary response to it are found all throughout his works, from his wartime political writings to his work on nihilism to his later lectures on the problems of modernity. But for this essay, we will focus on his masterpiece on religious philosophy, *Religion and Nothingness*, supplementing his view of interpersonal ethics with selections from "The I-Thou Relation in Zen Buddhism" and *On Buddhism*.

The modernity that confronted Nishitani (is this not a *contemporary* problem?) was for him a fractured, fragmented world. On one hand, there are religious worldviews that center on god and that see the world as something fundamentally personal and concerned with the fate of man. But on the other hand, there is the rise of science and technology, whose progressive rationalization of all things has gradually encroached upon every facet of our lives. While on the surface, people may seem to live perfectly well in both of these worldviews, Nishitani stresses the fundamental contradiction between these two. The rise of science and technology means the rise of the impersonal order of things, and while rationalization and understanding everything as matter allows humankind to concertedly control a greater majority of reality than it ever has, it also leads to seeing reality as fundamentally dead and unconcerned with the plight of man. After all, if everything is just matter and its meaningless movement and reorganization, where is God's love for His creatures? What does the universe care about the perfection of human spirit? The gradual mechanization of things leads to the gradual mechanization of the inner life of man and his social relationships, in other words, it leads to the loss of the human (Nishitani, 1982, p. 89).

At the heart of the fragments of modernity and the crisis of technology is the problem of ego. Nishitani writes, "The self of contemporary man is an ego of the Cartesian type, constituted self-consciously as something standing over against the world and all the things that are in it" (p. 13). This ego is one that, standing in the center of its world, tries to secure its self-existence, over and against the world that confronts it. It is self-consciousness "mirroring self-consciousness at every turn," (p. 14) such that it sees nothing but its own objects, its own materials, its own ends. But the irony of it is that this self that sees only itself can no longer see itself, just as it can no longer see reality. The distance by which it keeps reality at arm's length

so that reality can be figured out and controlled is the very distance that prevents an essential encounter between the human being and reality (p. 123). Thus this ego that drives modernity and scientific technology is thrust into a double-estrangement—it is no longer able to encounter reality as it is, nor is it able to encounter itself as it is.

The fragmentation, double-estrangement, and dehumanization spoke of above lead to an overall situation of nihility. But in the shallowness of everyday life, this nihility that is constantly underfoot is covered over with the bustle of business and the amusements of consumerist living (pp. 87-88). Thus this nihility lurks in the shadows as anguish, a shade of meaninglessness behind the kaleidoscope of day-to-day experience.

2. *The Way*. For Nishitani, the way to overcome this situation of nihility is not to go *away* from it but to go *through* it—a *self-overcoming* of nihility. Which is why Nishitani advocates not merely a methodic doubt like Descartes' but a *Great Doubt* like that discussed in Zen, wherein one embraces the meaninglessness of things in a radical way:

To that extent the realization of nihility is nothing other than the realization of the self itself. It is not a question of observing nihility objectively or entertaining some representation of it. It is, rather, as if the self were itself to *become* that nihility, and in so doing, become aware of itself from the limits of self-existence. (p. 16)

In this great doubt, there is no gap between the doubter and the doubted. "Self-being and the being of all things combine to make one question; all being becomes a single great question mark" (p. 17). This great doubt is a key emancipatory experience because first, it breaks through the representation of things as merely objects to be comprehended and controlled, and second, it breaks through the subject-object duality through which the ego comprehends things in the field of consciousness. Thus great doubt is an essential overcoming of the very structure of ego.

However, while embracing nihility via the great doubt is necessary for "great enlightenment," it is not yet the standpoint which Nishitani is trying to advocate. "Nihility is still being viewed here from the bias of self-existence as the groundlessness of existence lying at the ground of self-existence" (p. 96). Nihility is still experienced as a denial of existence because it is still being seen from the point of view of the ego that *wants* to grasp reality but is impeded by the abyss of nihility. What is thus necessary is to stand in the emptiness itself, such that it is no longer seen as separate from being. This is what Nishitani refers to as the standpoint of *Śūnyatā* (emptiness, *kū*).

The idea of the standpoint of emptiness is the core of *Religion and Nothingness*—and its centrality makes it difficult to summarize. Arguably, emptiness is not merely an intellectual/philosophical standpoint—its realization can only be one of self-awareness (*jikaku*) that is the fruit of praxis, not mere speculation. But let us go over a few helpful metaphors that Nishitani uses.

If in the field of consciousness, things show in their being, that is their givenness and substantiality, and in nihility things are concealed in their nothingness, then the standpoint of emptiness is one of being-*soku*-nothingness—where *soku* indicates the immediate unity of contradictories. Nishitani writes, "The phrase 'being-*soku*-nothingness' requires that one take up the stance of the '*soku*' and from there view being as being and nothingness as nothingness"

(p. 97). Thus reality is no longer constrained to the concepts by which it is grasped but becomes permeable to its ontological other.

On the field of emptiness, however, the selfness of a thing cannot be expressed simply in terms of its “being one thing or another.” It is rather disclosed precisely as something that cannot be so expressed... Should we be forced to put it into words all the same, we can only express it in terms of a paradox, such as: “It is *not* this thing or that, therefore it *is* this thing or that.” (p. 124)

The ability to see the paradoxical unity of being and nothingness without being entrapped within the arrogance of ego’s search for being or despair in the face of nothingness indicates that one’s comportment toward reality has fundamentally changed. Nishitani puts it elegantly: “Not that the self is empty but that emptiness is self; not that things are empty, but that emptiness is things.” No longer is the I seeking for solidity amidst the mystery, but *being the mystery itself* that unfolds as the I and all things. As such, this standpoint indicates for the first time a real sense of peace and at-home-ness (as opposed to the wary *Unheimlichkeit* of ego) amidst reality and its complexities and impermanence, a true self-awareness (*jikaku*) of the true nature of self (pp. 152, 160). And it is also in this self-realization that the self realizes reality—in its true suchness that is at the same time emptiness, where being is a provisional mask through which emptiness expresses itself (see pp. 102, 129, and 157).

A key facet of reality in the standpoint of emptiness is that all reality is seen as one in this emptiness, but at the same time each reality is seen as absolutely singular—a true contradictory unity of the one and the many. Nishitani’s own conceptual expression of this is “circuminsessional interpenetration (*egoteki sōnyū* 圓互の相入)” wherein each thing is master of all things, standing at the center of existence like the primary object (*shu*) in an ikebana arrangement, supported and allowed to be the center by the auxiliary objects (*kyaku*). But at the same time, each thing is also servant of all things, standing at the periphery as an auxiliary, allowing others to be what they are (p. 148). It is this circuminsessional relationship that allows the world to cohere as *one world*, but at the same time allows each thing to be as a *singular thing* (p. 150).

3. Relationality. The movement from ego, through nihility, to the standpoint of emptiness can be seen as Nishitani’s *personal ethics*, that is, an ethic of self-cultivation toward total realization and true peace. But the idea of circuminsessional interpenetration opens up the question of *inter-personal ethics*: What does it mean to relate with the other as both servant and master, to be both one with the others but at the same time to be absolutely individual?

Nishitani’s idea of social ethics is couched in his discussion of the nature of time and history. He discusses history as a temporal field of infinite karma—the self-centeredness of the standpoint of consciousness is a mere cross-section of a collective ignorance (*mumyō*, *avidyā*) that is tied to all people in the present and in the past (pp. 223, 242). Perhaps one can see the *age* of modern technology as being *destined* (to use Heidegger’s words) by an entire history of control that is rooted in our shared egotism—our shared karma. Ironically, it is a collective egotism that leads to our essential isolation from each other (p. 249).

Thus the awakening to the standpoint of emptiness is a breaking past this field of karmic history and its compulsive reinstatement of its own collective egotism. Here, one awakens to

the connection with all other beings, not on the field of ego—of the fixation on control and on self-satisfaction—but on the field of emptiness where absolute freedom and infinite responsibility for the other become simultaneously possible. This is clear in Nishitani's interpretation of the four great bodhisattva vows:

However innumerable the sentient beings, I vow to save them all.
However inexhaustible the worldly passions, I vow to extinguish them all.
However immeasurable the dharma-gates, I vow to master them all.
However incomparable the Way of the Buddha, I vow to attain it. (p. 270)

Nishitani (p. 271) sees two key elements here: First, the other-directed aspect of the first vow and the self-directed aspect of the second, third, and fourth vows are seen as inseparable: one cannot free oneself from suffering and awaken to the realness of reality without at the same time bringing others to awaken to true peace. Second, the vows are unlimited, because the agent and the reality it confronts are unlimited. Perhaps this can be understood as meaning that the I that saves, extinguishes, masters, and attains is not the ego I, but the emptiness of all things as expressed in the I. There is thus no duality between the savior and the saved, the extinguisher and the extinguished, the one who masters and that which is mastered, and the one who attains and that which is attained.

This non-duality in the movement of liberation that expresses itself both within and beyond the field of karma can thus be seen in many ways, as the unity between Rinzaï's self-centered practice of freedom, "If you meet the Buddha, kill him . . . if you meet your relatives, kill them" (pp. 262-263) and Dôgen's other-centeredness and responsibility, "Before crossing over to the other shore oneself, one first takes all others across" (p. 262). It is also the non-duality of Kantian autonomy, that is never a merely a means to another, and St. Paul's being an instrument of God (p. 280), where one is a means for all others.

It is only in this ground where the competing interests of self and other as constantly reinstated by the field of karma are overcome, and the self finally awakens to true freedom. And in this true freedom, the self can respond to taking on the karma of the suffering of all sentient beings, not as an infinite burden, but as a responsibility freely chosen, with the lightheartedness of a child at play. Thus we see that the movement toward realizing reality in the standpoint of emptiness encompasses both the Great Wisdom (Skt. *mahā-prajñā*) of personal ethics and the Great Compassion (Skt. *mahā-karuna*) of interpersonal ethics.

Nishitani also attempted to develop the idea of relationality. For instance, in "The I-Thou Relation in Zen Buddhism," he examined the contradiction between the absoluteness of each individual subject and their relativity in relation to each other (Nishitani, 2004, p. 41). For Nishitani, if one focuses only on the absolute subjectivity of the individual, one ends up with an anarchistic individualism. Similarly if one focuses only on relativity, one ends up with a totalitarianism in which the relation dominates the individual altogether. If one tries merely to alternate between the two, then one merely wobbles between two extreme positions without any real solution.³ The only way beyond this quandary is an absolute negation of the individual that is the same time an absolute affirmation—something that is only possible in the standpoint of emptiness (p. 41). Nishitani illustrates this with a koan from the *Blue Cliff Record*, where Zen Masters Kyôzan Ejaku and Sanshō Enen clash in dharma battle:

Kyôzan Ejaku asked Sanshō Enen, "What is your name?"
Sanshō said, "Ejaku!"
"Ejaku!" replied Kyôzan, "that's *my* name."
"Well then," said Sanshō, "my name is Enen."
Kyôzan roared with laughter. (p. 40)

Bret Davis (2012) elaborates on this point, and I leave the full discussion to his paper. But let us briefly summarize Nishitani's interpretation of this koan. "What is your name?" here reflects the drive of an absolute subject to assimilate everything that is other to it (p. 46). Sanshō's replying with the name of his very questioner however shows Sanshō's emptying himself, opening his very subjectivity to the other: "It is now the Thou that is simultaneously I, so that I and Thou blend completely into one another" (p. 47). When Sanshō finally gives his real name, it is as if to say, "I can be I, and Thou can be Thou as absolute individuals because each of them is grounded on the absolute identity in which I am Thou and Thou are I . . ." (p. 48).

Thus, Nishitani expresses how the problem of individuality and communality can only be resolved on the ground where I am I only because I am one with not-I. This is none other than the standpoint of emptiness where absolute negation is absolute affirmation, and the circuminsessional relationship is established.⁴

However, despite this attempt to concretely express his idea of relationality, Nishitani still seems quite abstract. Perhaps at this point it is helpful if we examine Kawai for some more concrete possibilities for this relationship.

2.2 Kawai

1. *The Crisis*. While Kawai presents the reader a lot of thought-provoking concepts in his book *Buddhism and the Art of Psychotherapy*, it is his explication of the differing ways "I" is construed in Buddhism and Western thought, and the impact this has on his therapeutic practice that interests us here the most.

For Kawai, much of the psychological crises we are facing today are problems of "loss of relatedness", due to the development of a strong ego, which has been mistakenly equated with the whole I by modern man. Freud's conception of oneself contributed greatly to this misconception. Freud separated the elements of the self as *Ich* (the German word for I) and *es* (German for it), now translated as ego and id respectively. He conceived the *Ich* (ego) to be the organized, reasoning part of the mind which mediates between reality and the desires of the *es* (id). Freud effectively divided the whole self into two, and by equating I with ego, thereby valuing it above the id, he paved the way for seeing the ego as the whole self. However, in letting the ego stand in for the whole self, we have unwittingly taken the ego's *modus operandi* of differentiating things and holding it at arm's length in order to control and manipulate as our default. This sort of mindset has enabled rapid advances in science and technology and has helped man attain much of what we desire; however, Kawai writes:

We assume that now we can or should get anything we want, and we don't hesitate willfully to try to manipulate any object. We tend to think that we can understand anything through our scientific knowledge and to assume that nearly anything is possible. Since the split separating object and self underlies our scientific thinking and we overutilize the intellect for everything, we cannot help but fall victim to the

illness called 'loss of relatedness.' (Kawai, 2008, p. 10)

This problem of fragmentation between self and object manifests itself not only in how man deals with the world around him, but in how he views himself and others as well. We cut ourselves off from nature, believing it to be something outside ourselves, and only to be used and manipulated. Therapists try to "cure" their patients, hoping to fix what is broken. We separate our minds into different parts such as id, ego, and superego, leading us to believe that we can accept parts of ourselves and reject other parts without in some way damaging the whole. And as depicted in the Ten Oxherding pictures, we divide and search for our True Self, even though this division is not the reality.

2. *The Way.* What then does it mean to be able to overcome this loss of relatedness? To do so, Kawai points out that we need to investigate our unconscious and harmonize it with our conscious minds. This involves lowering the level of consciousness so that we are less likely to discriminate between things and more able to realize their fundamental interconnectedness with each other. Because of the value placed on the ego, all forms of lowering the level of consciousness are often seen as leading to a loss of judgment and observation and therefore abnormal or pathological. However, Buddhist tradition and Jung show us that this is not necessarily the case. Buddhism, in advocating various forms of meditation, goes against any concept of efficiency or manipulation and encourages this loss of differentiation between things as a means of letting go of craving and aversion, and in Mahayana Buddhism, as a means of realizing the emptiness of things. Jung also points out the constructive role the lowering of the level of consciousness can have. For example, active imagination, a therapeutic technique developed by Jung involving conversing with the unacknowledged thoughtforms in one's unconscious as manifested in one's dream characters, is thought to be a way of integrating our normal consciousness with the unconscious.

Gradually, in lowering our level of consciousness and questioning even our own individuality, we realize that our self-nature and the boundaries that we use to differentiate things from one another are illusory and non-existent. Kawai draws heavily upon the explanation of philosopher Izutsu Toshihiko on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (*The Flower Garland Sutra*, *Daihōkō butsu kegon kyō*) in order to clarify this. The world of our ordinary life, the "Dharmic World of Phenomena" is a world wherein we experience things as having their own characteristics differentiating each from the other. However, as we lower our level of consciousness, we gradually enter the "Dharmic World of Principle," wherein the differences between objects disappear so much so that self-nature is negated. This state is what the *Flower Garland Sutra* calls absolute emptiness, where everything is non-self-nature. This does not mean an empty world of no-things, but a world pregnant with the dual meaning of nothingness and being (pp. 99-100). Further, the absolutely emptied Principle manifests itself completely in the innumerable phenomenal forms (The Arising of True Nature) and because of this, "everything is related to everything; nothing can be considered apart from its relatedness to the whole," which Kawai refers to as "interdependent origination" (pp. 101-102). There is now a conscious non-differentiation, an awareness of no separation between things that applies to us as well.

The *I* is not a discrete indivisible individual, but is permeable, a composite of various

elements, and only temporarily formed into one being (p. 89). Here, the individual does not develop solely by what the ego judges to be the correct course, or solely by one's own intentions. Instead, the *I* embraces even what the ego deems to be irrational and incomprehensible, such as dreams and myths.

Jung says, "[Dreams] are invariably seeking to express something that the ego does not know and does not understand" (quoted in Stevens, 1994, p. 105). They draw heavily from the evolutionary history of our own species as a whole, the collective unconscious, and they "serve individuation by making valuable unconscious potential available to the whole personality" (pp. 103, 107). Thus, this permeable *I* can learn from and be influenced by the person's own dreams, and even the appearance of himself in another's dream. For example, Kawai tells of a housebound client who is helped by a dream of a Bodhisattva statue coming alive and accompanying him to the outside world. He cites another example of a client who dreamt of Kawai's death. Kawai took this to mean both his and the client's readiness to terminate the treatment. However, reflecting further upon the same dream wherein Kawai was represented half in shadow and half in light in what is distinctly a Buddhist scene, he realized that this also indicated his own half-conscious state of mind during that time with regards to Buddhism.

Myths and fairytales, if viewed from the Jungian perspective as the expression of archetypes wherein the collective unconscious tries to make itself conscious, are also meaningful for this permeable *I*. Kawai himself is one such example. Disillusioned by Japan's use of mythology to bolster their war effort and its eventual defeat during the second World War, he turned away from all he deemed Japanese and therefore irrational, and instead strove for things Western and rational. However, he gradually came to realize the value of myths the further along he studied Jung and more importantly, to see the value of his own Japanese myths as windows to his culture and himself. Medieval Japanese stories emphasizing dreams helped him realize how much the Japanese view the *I* and the other as interpenetrating one another, and Japanese fairy tales and myths helped him realize how completeness rather than perfection is valued in Japanese culture.

To be submerged in this way and to be aware of others before contemplating one's own independence is to realize that all things—ego, Self, Nature—are all part of the ever-changing spontaneous flow of naturalness that is called *jinen* in Japanese and thus realize one's "eachness." This is contrasted from the Western idea of the individual, which establishes the ego first, separating the person from everything else. However, he does not advocate one over the other, considering the Eastern eachness and the Western individual as both having advantages and disadvantages. A Western individual can actively and positively develop himself, but there is little possibility to develop in a direction that one does not expect from himself; in contrast, he questions whether eachness can really be called eachness if one's path is only being decided by environmental forces. To compensate for the disadvantages of both, he believes that

... a person following the Buddhist way, while living in the fullness of Interdependent Origination, needs to hold firmly to, or live in, the consciousness that "this is I"; while a person following the Western way sometimes needs to have the courage to let go of the ego's judgment (Kawai, 2008, p. 110)

But how does one do that concretely when both sides are completely contradictory? Kawai gives only a few hints to this question. In *Dreams, Myths and Fairy Tales in Japan*, he says

When one's individuality is established by means of making clear distinctions between oneself, others, things, and Nature, many general laws for observing the world can be discovered. By applying these laws, Nature can be efficiently controlled. However, one cannot establish one's uniqueness as long as one is under the rule of the collective consciousness... On the other hand, one may lead a unique life if one is open to others. Yet this path is open to danger... In Jungian terms, one's individuality may be lost in the collective unconscious... A truly individual life requires unique turning points and as well as general rules (Kawai, 1995, p. 39).

And in order to know when this turning point has come, one must learn to pay close attention to and follow *jinen*, that is, to be attuned to and respond accordingly to the world.

Talking about turning points leads us to another of his ideas which may further illuminate our path, that of the hollow center structure revealed by Japanese mythology as given in *Kojiki* (The Records of Ancient Things). In this record of Japanese mythology, gods and goddesses form triads which are made up of a pair of opposites and a mysterious god who does nothing, who is placed at the center. The most important thing here is not the acquisition of power by one side or the other; in fact, contradictory elements can co-exist with one another as long as they maintain their balance, with emptiness as their axis (p. 87). And it is from the standpoint of this empty center that we realize the fundamental unity of apparent opposites, the strength of whose unity strengthens the mystery of the *I* at its center.

3. Relationality. As a psychotherapist, Kawai cautions against accepting the client's deep inner psychic content with only a shallow level of consciousness, at the level of ego, as we often do in thinking that we can "fix" a client as if he were broken. Instead, one must be able to see and accept one's own fundamental contradictions, to see the same in the client, and thus, be more able to relate to the client on both a personal and a deep, "impersonal" level.

By learning from the Kego teachings, we gradually come to realize that the boundaries and restrictions we have placed upon ourselves and our world are illusory. There is a fundamental coexistence of opposites within us that does not take away from each other but strengthens and supports each other. Adolph Guggenbuhl-Craig (as discussed by Kawai) also points out that any archetype includes opposite elements, e.g., therapist/patient, healer/healed. Should these archetypes split, each part weakens and destroys itself. The patient loses the opportunity to heal himself, and the therapist loses the opportunity to connect with his patient, for example. In seeing this fundamental coexistence of opposites within ourselves, we are more able to be aware of the same in the other.

In realizing our absolute emptiness and how this same non-self nature is also manifest in the other, we realize that they are not merely objects to manipulate and impose our will upon. Kawai himself was shown the truth of this when one client whom he urged to do sandplay therapy met with a great deal of success with it yet refused to do sandplay therapy in the next session. When asked why, the client said "I don't want to be cured. I'm not coming here to be cured... I come here just to come here." It is then that he realized that he couldn't "cure" people—to fix them as if they were broken. He was trying to "cure by sandplay therapy",

operating by a modern way of thinking, which the client picked up on and refused. But by continuing to sit without focusing on curing her, her symptoms disappeared.

The most important thing in psychotherapy is that two people are there for each other. These two shouldn't be differentiated as "healer" and "healed one." ... while two people are "being" together, a phenomenon called "cure" frequently happens as a by-product (Kawai, 2008, p. 30)

In standing at the standpoint of this emptiness, we become more free and able to respond well according to what is needed. For example, in therapy, one is more able to look at patients both with and without the theory of stages. We have long found the idea of stages to be useful, indicating what might be normal or delayed and allowing us to chart our "progress"; however, Buddhism shows us another way of viewing the world - without stages. As the inscription in the first of the *Ten Oxherding Pictures* says, "From the beginning, never lost; why search?" From this attitude, we are able to view the other as he is, not merely thrusting interpretations at him and never losing hope though there does not seem to be a resolution to his problem. By continuing to stand here, we are able to see and relate to the deepest within the other which contains everything, including change and no change; we realize that here also in front of me is a locus of emptiness.

By being able to relate to the client at this level, our consciousness is able to experience the personal and impersonal levels simultaneously, experiencing a kind of free wandering according to what is needed by the other before me. From this standpoint, conflicts need not be "resolved", in fact, he says that the most effective way to deal with these conflicts is to maintain a posture of waiting, holding all the conflicting elements as long as possible. This is true for the conflicts that one experiences within oneself. For example, a client of Kawai's said that he wanted to die. Kawai's consciousness both rejects this as abhorrent and simultaneously understands it at the same time. There is no way to integrate or resolve these feelings, but for Kawai, it might be better to hold these feelings within oneself, allowing it to maintain its contradiction, as if it were a koan.

Further, one's own feelings are not the only koans that a therapist experiences. His clients' complaints and symptoms are koans to both parties as well. They are not there simply to be resolved, but are there to "create an opportunity to allow the whole person to relate to deeper consciousness" (p. 131). Therefore, when the client suffers a symptom, it's meaningful to resolve it—but also not to resolve it as well; it would be good if it were alleviated, and good as well if it were not alleviated. Which is more appropriate depends on the client's own process of individuation (pp. 131-132).

In the final analysis, Kawai believes that "the primary role of a therapist is to situate oneself at the center, while being inseparable from the client at the deepest level of suffering and sorrow (p. 138)." In this center, this standpoint of emptiness, we see that I and the other are both at the center and the auxiliary of the other, supporting each other yet making way for the other as well.

COUNSELING AS AN APPLIED ETHICS OF EMPTINESS

Examining the previous section, one sees a considerable amount of similarity between

Nishitani and Kawai, particularly in their view of the crisis that they face and the standpoint that overcomes it. There are also, however, considerable differences in *how* they see the transition from the standpoint of ego to the standpoint of emptiness, as well as how to concretely realize this inter-personal ethics. While their similarities reassure us of their kinship as thinkers, perhaps it is their differences that point out how Nishitani can contribute philosophically to Kawai's practical endeavor, and how Kawai can give flesh and bones to Nishitani's theory. Let us examine these contact points.

1. *The Crisis*. Even though they may use different words, Nishitani and Kawai are unanimous in viewing the issue of fragmentation or loss of relatedness as the prevailing crisis of modern man. This crisis is closely tied with the prevalence of science and technology, pointing to the need to continue scrutinizing scientific technology despite its indispensability in our contemporary lives. Furthermore, both thinkers see this problem as subjectively rooted in the dominance of the ego, and the consequent fixation on control and the creation of subject-object duality that this engenders. This then results in not just in "existential angst," but real, actual neuroses.

2. *The Way*. Nishitani and Kawai both situate their standpoints in the overcoming of this crisis of modernity, insisting on the need to go beyond the "field of consciousness," or ego. However, the methods of transitioning from the point of ego towards the point of emptiness tend to differ in emphasis.

Nishitani focuses almost exclusively on bringing the ego into crisis by having it confront nihility—the contradictoriness and meaninglessness that are givens of life, such as that of death and sin. In this, Nishitani's focus is similar to existential psychotherapy, such as that of Irvin Yalom (1980). And while he does not directly suggest a method, he seems to implicitly suggest Zen meditation, particularly the Rinzai Zen tradition of sitting with a koan as a means of confronting the Great Doubt.

In contrast, the "self-overcoming of nihility" is not stressed in Kawai. There are some similar ideas—the notion of seeing the client's symptoms as a koan for instance shares the same Rinzai Zen logic that informs Nishitani's approach. Also, Kawai refers to the discarded child in *Dreams, Myths, and Fairytales* and the idea of the Fourth added to the Japanese triad in *The Japanese Psyche*, both tropes referring to what is rejected by consciousness and needs to be accepted. However, these ideas are not thoroughly developed within these books. Perhaps the reason for this is not merely a difference in emphasis, but Kawai's focus on trusting the intrinsic "enlightenment" of the client rather than pushing hard to help the client overcome his/her ego (p. 47). He also worried that too deep a push into the domain of non-ego might result in an inability to use the faculties of ego effectively (p. 129). This shows a fundamentally different view from Nishitani, who believed that in going beyond both ego and nihility, one could recover the dimensions of both (being and nothingness).

Instead of focusing on bringing the ego to crisis, Kawai instead focuses on a notion of *balancing* the conscious ego with the unconscious; it is by investigating the unconscious that we are able to go beyond the confines of the ego. By doing so, Kawai does not restrict his focus to extreme situations such as death to help us transition, but allows for things that are relatively immediate and accessible, such as dreams, imagination, and myths, as paths leading beyond

our consciousness. While Kawai would probably be amenable to meditation as a method, he also seems to suggest other forms of praxis—analyzing dreams, active imagination, and forms of art therapy like sandplay therapy—as other ways to put the client in touch with the unconscious.

Nishitani seems to have neglected the value of the unconscious. While he briefly points out the value of myth as a non-logical approach to the existential realities of the human being (see 1982, 173), he did not develop the possibilities of using the unconscious as a gateway beyond the field of consciousness. Given that Kawai was able to develop the idea of *Ālayavijñāna* (storehouse consciousness) of Yogācāra Buddhism in connection to the unconscious (see 2008, p. 127), it would be interesting to see what connections can be drawn out from Nishitani's readings of Buddhism as well.

However, despite having different approaches, both seem to arrive at the standpoint of emptiness—a standpoint that goes beyond the dualities of ego and anti-ego, unity and multiplicity, and being and nothingness—as the ground from which one can overcome the crisis of modern man. Furthermore, there are considerable parallels between the hollow center structure as proposed by Kawai and standpoint of *soku* in *Śūnyatā* as put forth by Nishitani. It is possible that these similarities come from the fact that both Nishitani's and Kawai's ideas of emptiness are largely drawn from Kegon and Zen Buddhism.

3. Relationality. Both Nishitani and Kawai agree that relationships ought to be based on the ground of emptiness that transcends ego. This sort of relationship is able to unify both absolute individuality and absolute unity. We can see this clearly in Nishitani's idea of circuminsessional interpenetration and in Kawai's view of the therapist as situating himself as the center, while being inseparable from the client.

However, when it comes to the relationship between persons, Nishitani seems unable to provide any specifics. Perhaps expectedly, Kawai's discussion of the practice of counseling seems to offer a much more concrete view of relationality in emptiness. For Kawai, therapy is a refusal of the ego, both of the therapist in his attempt to “cure” his client, and of the client, wanting to be cured, but only in a particular way. There is the realization that the therapist cannot “give” anything to the other; at the same time, there is a realization that what the client truly needs may not be what he or she was initially asking for. In a sense, genuine therapy seems to refuse this “mutual using of egos” that occurs on the field of Karma. Thus while counseling is arguably a “profession” like any other on the field of economic ego relationships, Kawai seems to argue that the basic premise of therapy is perhaps closer to the Bodhisattva in the market—its fundamental aim is not the mutual satisfaction of therapist and client, but a mutual healing of their suffering, perhaps in ways that neither of them expect.

Kawai concretizes what this means in his practice through the posture of waiting that he adopts with the client, wherein he holds all the conflicting elements of the patient as long as possible. This is what clinical psychologist Tomatsu Ryosuke (2013) terms the “Paradox Containing Model.” This model emphasizes accepting the client and containing paradoxical ambiguous feelings and thoughts discreetly, rather than exposing these through conflict. Perhaps this vision of making a space for and suffering with one's client beautifully expresses Nishitani's notion of freely taking on one's infinite responsibility toward the other.

In these ideas, Kawai can be seen as contributing a sense of concreteness to Nishitani's

notion of the I-Thou relationship. However, there are also instances wherein Kawai's ideas encourage a theoretical reconsideration of Nishitani's views. For instance, for Kawai, this relationship in emptiness dislocates the fixity of roles. The lines between healer and healed are blurred, allowing for the unity of archetypes wherein both therapist and client can be seen as both healer and healed at the same time, strengthening and supporting their connection with each other. Importance is also placed upon the being together-ness of these two and just continuing to be there, not needing to interpret the other one way or another but making space for the psyche to realize its own natural movement. This idea is particularly thought-worthy, especially considering Nishitani's wartime propaganda of expressing selflessness by realizing one's role in the state—wouldn't self-emptying also empty the givenness of social roles?

Furthermore, while ego can be described as experiencing suffering (*dukkha*) in the face of certain antinomies—life and death, goodness and sinfulness, the personal and the impersonal—can one really comprehend the suffering of the other in this schematic way? Kawai's discussion of the therapist-client relationship seems to suggest a strong dimension of *alterity* to the suffering of the other. This is seen in Kawai's notion of seeing the client both within and beyond the theory of "stages." Within the theory of stages, a client is part of a determinate developmental process, thus guiding the therapist in how to help the client overcome particular developmental obstacles. But life is not reducible to a determinate developmental process, and thus the client's experience cannot be reduced to stages. This is a clear example of the consciousness of alterity—that the therapist is trying to respond to an *other* who at the same time cannot be reduced to one's understanding. While Nishitani stresses the absolute subjectivity of the Zen master, perhaps we need to examine if he sufficiently recognizes the alterity of the ego as it struggles with suffering.⁵

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we examined the basic ideas of Nishitani and Kawai concerning the crisis of loss of relatedness, the roots of this crisis in the controlling ego, the way beyond ego through confronting nihility and exploring the unconscious, and the possibility of compassionate relationships on the field of emptiness. The extensive similarities of the two reinforced each other's ethics of emptiness. But their differences were also thought-provoking, with nihility seeking a place in Kawai's psychotherapy, and the therapist-client relationship concretizing and suggesting a rethinking of Nishitani's philosophy of the I-Thou relationship.

With this attempt to concretize the ethics of emptiness, we hope we have challenged two major doubts that seem to prevent more collaboration between philosophy and psychology. On one hand, there seems to be a suspicion that the philosophical view of emptiness is "useless." While many philosophical articulations tend to challenge the very hegemony of usefulness by suggesting a non-controlling, non-dualistic framework, hopefully we have shown that this very non-usefulness can be put to work in a practical manner, just like it is in counseling (which is arguably "useful," but in a different mode of utility).

On the other hand, there seems to be a prejudice that psychology is not relevant within philosophical theory. Nishitani (1983, p. 165) himself treats the word "psychological" as if it were derogatory, pointing to something that is merely in the mind, rather than something

seriously ontological. Perhaps psychologists themselves are hesitant to cross that line and declare that their studies concern ontology and the structure of reality as a whole. But while this division may hold in many parts of philosophy and empirical science, is there not something woefully mistaken about holding this duality in the context of the Kyoto School's outright criticism of subject-object duality? If there is no reality separate from mind, then there is no ontology separate from psychology either. Put less mystically, there is no separating the way we consciously and unconsciously relate with reality with the very structure of our *lived experience of reality*. Furthermore, in the field of ethics, if we are to take responding to the other and mutual alleviation of suffering as serious ethical tasks, then can we ignore the empirical study of counseling, a profession that devotes itself precisely to the art and science of trying to help another with his or her suffering?

As the academe begins to realize the limits of excessive narrowness of disciplines and moves toward interdisciplinary research, we hope that our study has contributed somewhat to philosophy and psychology taking each other even more seriously.

NOTES

1. One of the most promising attempts to thresh out the practical expression of emptiness is Paul Standish and Saito Naoko, *Education and the Kyoto School of Philosophy: Pedagogy for Human Transformation*. While this paper has yet to integrate the insights from this book, the authors have received much inspiration from the discourses contained therein and hope to someday better integrate the insights of this paper with those of philosophy of education.
2. We refer to this in the title as a "Buddhist Ethics," for the sake of recognizability. But in many ways, this term is misleading. This ethics of emptiness is at best a *modern* Buddhist ethics—an amalgam of Buddhist inspirations taken in a largely rational, philosophical form (see McMahan). In the case of Nishitani, while the Buddhist emphasis is very clear in his standpoint of emptiness, he is very clear that he is not trying to write a Buddhist theory but a universal religious theory. However, to what extent he is able to cast off the particularity of Buddhism remains questionable.
3. This is possibly a critique of Watsuji Tetsurō's theory of the continuous "double-negation" between individuality and communality.
4. Nishitani also takes up the I-thou relationship in "Part Two: On the Modernization of Buddhism," *On Buddhism*. Furthermore, the very idea of the "I-thou" is heavily influenced by Nishida Kitarō's ideas on the same and Martin Buber's book *Ich und Du* (1923). It is also likely that Nishitani was responding to Watsuji's understanding of Nishida and Buber (as discussed in Prof. Tremblay's "Néantisation et relationalité chez NISHIDA Kitarō et Watsuji Tetsurō"). But for the sake of brevity, the authors will leave these other parallels to another paper.
5. An idea like this would have far-reaching implications. In ethics in general, this raises the Levinasian question: How do we respond to an other who we cannot comprehend? In education, more specifically, we might ask: If we cannot take "development" as a given, then how are we to educate people?

REFERENCES

- Davis, B. (2012) "Kū ni okeru deai: Nishitani Keiji no Zen tetsugaku ni okeru 'ware to nanji' no egoteki kankei (Meeting in Emptiness: Nishitani Keiji's Circuminsessional Relationship of 'I-Thou' in Zen Philosophy)," In *Risō tokushū Nishitani Keiji* (Chiba: Japan, Risōsha).
- Heisig, J., Kasulis, T., and Maraldo, J. (2011) *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press).
- Kawai H. (1995) *Dreams, Myths, and Fairytales in Japan*, J. G. Donat (ed.) (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon

- Verlag).
- Kawai H. (1998) *The Japanese Psyche: Major Motifs in the Fairytales of Japan* (Dallas: Spring Publications).
- Kawai H. (2008) *Buddhism and the Art of Psychotherapy* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press).
- Nishitani K. (1982) *Religion and Nothingness*, J. V. Bragt, trans. (California: University of California Press).
- Nishitani K. (2004) "The I-Thou Relation in Zen Buddhism," In *The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School and Its Contemporaries*, F. Franck, (ed.) (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc.).
- Nishitani K. (2006) *On Buddhism*, Yamamoto, S and Robert E. Carter, trans. (Albany: State University of New York Press).
- Sevilla, A. (2011) "Ethics of Emptiness East and West: Examining Nishitani, Watsuji and Berdyaev," in *Questioning Oriental Aesthetics and Thinking: Conflicting Visions of "Asia" under the Colonial Empires* (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies).
- Standish, P. and Saito, N. (eds.) (2012) *Education and the Kyoto School of Philosophy: Pedagogy for Human Transformation* (Dordrecht: Springer).
- Stevens, A. (1994) *Jung: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Tomatsu R. (2013, August). *Learning from Noh: From a Conflict-Integration Model toward a Paradox-Containing Model in Psychotherapy*, Unpublished paper presented at 3rd Asia Pacific Rim International Counseling and Psychotherapy Conference 2013, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
- Tremblay, J. (1996) "Néantisation et relationalité chez NISHIDA Kitarô et Watsuji Tetsurô" in *Théologiques* 4.2, pp. 63-82.
- Unno, M. (1988) "The Divine in the Contemporary World: A Conversation with Nishitani Keiji, Kawai Hayao and David Miller" in *Kyoto Journal* (Fall), pp. 16-22.
- Unno, T. (1989) *The Religious Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji: Encounter with Emptiness* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press).
- Higuchi, K. (2009) *Obituary-Dr. Hayao Kawai*, Retrieved August 5, 2013 from International Association for Analytical Psychology website, <http://iaap.org/obituaries/previous-years/obituary-dr-hayao-kawai.html>
- Williams, P., Tribe, A., and Wynne, A. (2012) *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge).
- Yalom, I. (1980) *Existential Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books).