

Emptiness and Fundamental Imagination

Nishitani Keiji's "Emptiness and Immediacy"

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The philosophy of religion does not offer knowledge that can provide direct solutions for resolving the various problems facing contemporary society. Its main role is to reflect on the fundamental phenomena of religion where it interfaces with the world, thereby opening up a deeper level of philosophical understanding for the contemporary world. The spread of globalization in recent years has made it more and more difficult for individuals to live a religious life, but for an individual to try to be religious in modern secularized society courts the dangers of schizophrenia and self-deconstruction that bare their teeth in all areas of life. Hence, in order to live a religious life, one is constantly confronted with the question of what can give one's life a wholeness and depth to overcome the schizophrenia. Needless to say, any attempt to gain a fundamental perspective on the self and the world in such a way as to provide, on the one hand, insight into the innermost depths of the problems of death, evil, and nihilism, and, on the other, a meaningful context to the rapid changes taking place in contemporary society, is an endless challenge. This challenge is made all the more difficult in that both ontology and existentialism as formerly understood are no longer tenable.

One person who resolutely met the challenge head on was Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990), a leading Japanese philosopher of religion. "Emptiness

and Immediacy” (*Kū to soku* 空と即), which Nishitani published in the last years of his life, develops an original philosophy concerning the imaging of emptiness and fundamental imagination. His analysis is also a daring attempt to see to what degree the “facticity” of the self and the world can be brought to bear on the philosophy of religion. At the same time, it remained a preliminary analysis and has not been developed thoroughly. In this paper, rather than simply extract faithfully Nishitani’s philosophy, I would like to lay out the framework of his philosophy in such a way as to unearth new possibilities lying dormant in his thought. This may seem to be a circuitous way to proceed, but in no age can philosophy renege on its responsibility to inquire into the ultimate significance of what it means to be alive. This is because the refusal to forfeit this inquiry is a guiding principle for this age of confusion.¹

EMPTINESS, SKY, AND THE SIMILE OF THE TWO ROOMS

The first matter taken up for discussion in “Emptiness and Immediacy” is the close relationship between the visible “sky” and the Buddhist technical term “emptiness” (*śūnyā*). Nishitani points out that in Buddhist texts the phenomenon of the visible sky was originally used as an image (*Bild*) to express eternity and infinity. He argues that there is a close relationship, more than mere simile, between the sky and emptiness. In addition, there is another relationship that overlays the first, a relationship in which emptiness as a Dharma principle transcending sentiment is reflected, just as it is, in the world of sentiment. This relationship is the central motif of “Emptiness and Immediacy.”

Nishitani uses poetry as the occasion for investigating this relationship. He argues that the creation of poetry is an undertaking “for expressing an event at the root point where a fact is given and comes into existence” (NKC 12: 131). Poetry expresses the world of sentiment through words. For this reason, poets seek not only to polish their composition skills,

1. Therefore, although this essay may be written in a difficult style, I wish to present my efforts at inquiry candidly. There is not much point to making what I want to say easy to understand.

but also to arrive at the root point where facts are given. In this process, Nishitani argues, the standpoint of art reaches its limits and a new horizon called “religion” is opened up. The question then arises as to the boundary separating the realm of art from the realm of religion. To explain this boundary, Nishitani proposes the following simile.

The boundary line resembles a plank that partitions two rooms. Side x of the plank that faces room A represents room B, as the thing which indicates the limit of room A. We can say that side x , in its essence, is the expression of room B that is shown to room A. At the same time, however, the side x that expresses room B, being one part of room A, belongs to room A. So far as it appears to room A as a “phenomenon,” it is of room A, an element of room A’s structure. We can say all the same things about side y that faces room B. Side y belongs to room B as part of room B’s structure. “Phenomenologically,” it is one part of the phenomenon known as B. But at the same time, however, side y , as that which sets the limits of B from A, essentially represents room A in B. It is the expression of room A that appears in room B. (Nishitani 2000, 196–7).

This simile makes an absolutely important point concerning the relationship between the sky itself and emptiness as it relates to sentiment. But the simile is immediately released from the discussion of the relation between the realms of the arts and religion to extend into the problem of the interconnectedness of the world. Accordingly, in the pages that follow I will pursue the matter of the emptiness in sentiment by reading this simile from various angles.

Let us first consider Nishitani’s own explanation. His purpose, he tells us, is to express the mutually irreconcilable character of a boundary line: that it is simultaneously a disjunction and a conjunction. Nishitani uses the term “circuminsessional” to refer to the state of interconnectedness wherein, at the point of disjunction, “there is mutual permeation between things that are discriminated.”

The term “circuminsessional relationship” already appears in *Religion and Nothingness*, a work from Nishitani’s middle period, as a basic technical term to express the relatedness of all things on the field of emptiness. There it is defined as “a relationship in which all things in turn become

the lord and attendant” (NKC IO: 166). That is to say, the fact that a thing actually exists means that that thing has an absolute individuality and is positioned at the absolute center of all other things. From this perspective, all other things hold the position of guests. But that is not all. The thing that is positioned as lord over all other things, simultaneously takes the position of attendant towards them. All such things, says Nishitani, are brought together as one to form the world.

It is clear that this relationship has its source in the Huayan 華嚴 philosophy of the “dependent origination of the Dharma realm.” This is discussed in the section of Fazhang’s 法藏 *Huayan wujiaozhang* 華嚴五教章 dealing with the “mutual identity of all things” and “interpenetration of all things,” both fundamental concepts of Huayan Buddhism. There it is stated that all forms of dependent origination can be understood from the perspective of emptiness and existence, as well as from the perspective of having and not having power (FAZHANG 1989, 96ff).

The former is attributed to the substance of dependent origination, and it is on this basis that the “identity of all things” is possible. The latter, in contrast, concerns the function of dependent origination, and it is on this basis that the “interpenetration of all things” is possible.

When we focus on the aspect of function, in which the subject possesses complete power, it is possible for the subject to encompass all others. And since, in this case, the others have no power at all, they can be taken into the subject. In the case in which the power belongs to the others and the subject has no power, the others encompass the subject, taking the subject into themselves. When such activities are reciprocal and brought to completion, all things can mutually enter each other.

This, briefly put, is Fazhang’s view. Interpenetration refers to the relation wherein two or more things, from the perspective of their function, interfuse with one another without obstruction. Mutual identity refers to the relationship wherein two or more things, not only from the perspective of function but also from the perspective of substance, interfuse with one another without obstruction. Interpenetration and mutual identity are concepts that were made into technical terms by Huayan Buddhism to explain the absolute realm in which all things interfuse with one another without obstruction.

In “Emptiness and Identity,” Nishitani repeatedly employs the term

“mutual identity” but not “interpenetration.” This does not mean that these distinctive Huayan technical terms are used by Nishitani in the same way. Rather, they are altered in such a way as to situate them within Nishitani’s own horizon of thought. In particular, the concept of “circuminsessional relationship,” described in the simile of the two rooms above, was distinctive to Nishitani.

The relationship between the two rooms is understood as the fundamental form of the disjunctions, divisions, and limits of everything that can be found within the relationship known as the “world.” In the distinction between a pine tree and a cypress, between this pine and that, between this piece of dust and another piece of dust, between the atoms constituting a speck of dust, between the self and others—indeed, in all distinctions regarding things that may be spoken of in terms of self-identity—the relationship between the two rooms applies. Moreover, this relationship extends beyond the simile of rooms A and B to other things. If the room is triangular (as when we think of a room composed of the least possible number of walls), the triple relationship between room A and rooms B, C, and D, which are partitioned by the former’s three walls, is compounded, creating a single whole. This relationship is compounded ad infinitum. The simile of the two rooms is the basic form of the circuminsessional relationship, the simplest form of the relationship known as the “world.” The “concrete things” constituting the reality of the “world” manifest themselves in all aspects of the world (that is, as physical phenomena, organic phenomena, and the various phenomena of daily life), relating ad infinitum to one another in complex ways. “World relationship” refers to just such an infinitely complex whole.

What Nishitani considers important in this simile of the two rooms is that when “something that belongs essentially to A appears in B by being transferred or reflected into the latter, it does not appear in the latter as A but as part of B” (NKC 12: 133). A is A to the end, and the fact that it is not B, C, etc., serves to sustain its self-identity. But here the following problem immediately appears: how is it possible for A to appear as part of B? Nishitani responds by drawing on the concept of “image.” In a word, he says that this is a situation in which “A *hineinbildt* itself into B.” It is the “imaging of A.” It is this “imaging” that constitutes the fundamental mode of the circuminsessional relationship. The characteristic

feature of Nishitani's philosophy of emptiness during his late period, in contrast to that of his middle period, lies in this discovery of the realm of the image.

In *Religion and Nothingness* Nishitani also talks about how, in relation to the relationship between being and emptiness, "things" can transfer or reflect in other things. But in this case, the issue that concerned him was how things can move into and be reflected in "'a form' within 'consciousness'" (NKC 10: 147). This "form" within "consciousness" refers to "form" in the sense of the various modes limited by receptivity, that is, to the categories of the "appearance" of things on the field of rationality. It is the form of understanding. Since it is not the thing itself but the figure or shape of the "thing" as it appears to us, it is not something that can simply be overcome. In his later period, Nishitani speaks for the first time of things being transferred and reflected into another, not as the direct image of receptivity or intellectual shape or form, but as "image." In this way, he begins to see how the fact that "things" can transfer and reflect themselves into other things as something of fundamental importance.

Now if this transformation is understood only to mean that, instead of the "thing" itself being transferred and reflected into a "form" within "consciousness," the "thing" itself is transferred and reflected into an image as commonly understood, it does not show a complete grasp of the matter. We need to recognize here that Nishitani gives the concept of image a distinctive depth by overlaying it on Meister Eckhart's concept of *Bild* (image, archetype). In *God and Absolute Nothingness* (1948), Nishitani analyzed Eckhart's notion of "the birth of God within the soul," explaining that there is no difference between the existence of that which is known by God (the Son of God) and the activity of God's knowing, between the function of knowing God and God's function of knowing himself in knowing his son. The same thing, he goes on to claim, can be said of the soul:

By the intrusion of God's *Bild* (God's self-projection) into the soul, God's productive power to *bilden* (to create the image of one's own image) the *Bild* is given together with the *Bild*. It is the new life-giving power of the soul that has become the Son of God and is therefore the power through which the soul knows God. (NKC 7: 64ff)²

This idea is clearly reflected in the concept of “imaging” found in “Emptiness and Immediacy.”³ It is through the notion of imaging that the circuminsessionality of relationships becomes structurally possible. In *Religion and Nothingness* the circuminsessional relationship was described as transformation of the position of the mutual power relationship in which “everything in turn becomes lord and attendant.” We may say that “Emptiness and Immediacy” represents a sustained discussion of the structure that makes possible such a transformation of position.

What significance, then, is given to the philosophy of imaging? In order to clarify this, it is necessary to investigate the structure of the world relationship that is the basic unit of the circuminsessional relationship.

THE STRUCTURE OF WORLD RELATIONSHIP

For Nishitani the structure of world relationship is expressed as the *logos* of the “Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena.” The circuminsessional relationship, which becomes the basic unit of the world relationship, is a relationship that is, of necessity, simultaneously accompanied by self-confinement and liberation, distinction and non-discrimination, obstruction as well

2. Commenting on Eckhart’s words, “When all creatures speak of God, God arises,” Nishitani also states:

As long as *logos* means “word,” the effluence of the original self-images of all things in the universe indicates the fact that God has broken his silence and has spoken. His speech is also God’s self-recognition. This is because God knows himself by placing his own self-image (*Bild*) in front of him, that is to say, by reflecting back into himself. That *Bild* of God is none other than God the Son himself, and that *Bild* is none other than God’s “Word.” And the original self-images of all things appear as God’s *Bild* together with God the Son. God the Son is God’s omniscience that has taken form. And the original self-images of all things appear, as the concrete form of possibilities contained in God, together with the Son of God, God’s *Bild*.” (NKZ 7: 60ff.)

In other words, one of the meanings of Eckhart’s *Bild* is *logos*. At the same time, insofar as image does not have the meaning of *logos*, *Bild* and image cannot be said to overlap.

3. Nishitani makes the following statement: “If we borrow Eckhart’s words, the fact that A *hineinbildt* itself in B’s place is none other than what is called the ‘imaging’ of A” (NKZ 13: 134).

as non-obstruction. “Mutual identity” is how Nishitani refers to the relation in which these mutually contradictory trajectories are brought together as one. In Huayan philosophy, “the one is the many, the many is the one” became the fixed definition of “mutual identity.”⁴ Nishitani applies this formula to his own philosophy to understand the structure of world relationship as a relation of mutual identity consisting of two relations of mutual identities: that of “the one is the many” and that of “the many are the one.” “The one is the many” refers to the situation in which all things in the universe are seen from the standpoint of the world. It refers to the situation wherein the “one,” which is world as the clearing in which all things manifest themselves, is mutually identical to “all discrete things” found in the clearing. In contrast, “the many are the one” refers to the situation in which the world is seen from the standpoint of all things. It refers to the situation in which “existents,” each with its own particularities and individualities, all become discrete “localities” (“the many” that are “existent” become mutually identical as “the one” in a “locality” that is the opening of the world). Nishitani says that the relation of mutual identity consisting of these two relations of mutual identities is the world relationship itself. But when we think about it, this multiplication of mutual identities is seen to entail subsequent involutions. Here we get a glimpse into the “infinitely complex relationships” that will appear later.

In this analysis the *logos* of the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena is condensed into the relation of “identity.” According to Nishitani, this *logos* cannot be apprehended from the standpoint of science or philosophy. Scientific and philosophical thought are two modes of intellectual knowledge made possible through the grasping of the structure of, and expressing through the *logos* of language, concepts of logical forms such as “one” and “many.” When we reflect on concepts like “one” and “many” from the standpoint of these modes of intellectual knowledge, we only elucidate them as the world of abstract “principle.” In such reflection, the

4. It may be mentioned in passing here that “mutual interpenetration” is also explained in the following formula: “the many are in the one, and the one is in the many.”

world of concrete “phenomena” has slipped our grasp. The relationship between “one” and “many” belongs to the world of “phenomena” that must be actually experienced through sentiment.

That is to say, for Nishitani the *logos* of the world of “principle” and the *logos* of the world “in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena” are clearly demarcated, the latter being expressed as “identity.” Moreover, the *logos* of words extends to both worlds. In the world of “principle” it takes a logical form, whereas in the world “in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena” it appears in literary forms such as poetry. Still, he considers the original form of the *logos* of language to be found in the latter. Furthermore, he argues that the realm where all *logos*-ness disappears is the world “in which there is no obstruction between things.”

A word here about “phenomena” and “principle” may be helpful. These terms derive from Huayan philosophy, where, generally speaking, “principle” refers to “universal principle” and “phenomena” refers to “discrete phenomena” (KIMURA 1992, 223).⁵ Nishitani defined “phenomena” as “a mode of existence that is localized ‘right here, right now’” and “principle” as “everything that materializes in a place separated from a locality that is ‘right here, right now.’” This definition brings to mind the contrast between particular things and universality. Nishitani also recognizes within “phenomena” itself a “principle beyond principle” lying beyond the realm of “principle.” It is this “principle beyond principle” that is the focus of Nishitani’s interests. The reason, I believe, is that Nishitani had set his sights on the outermost extremes to which one can go in investigating “principle.”

Nishitani refers to this extreme point as *noesis noeseos*. “To know something that exists” starts with things around us, progresses to the realms of the natural sciences as well as social and historical sciences, then goes further to the realms of ethics and morals until it arrives at the realm of

5. Even in Huayan philosophy, the meaning of these terms is not uniform. It is sometimes said that “principle” refers to that which cannot be divided, while “phenomena” refers to something that can be divided. At other times, these concepts are linked to the notions of substance and phenomena, and it is stated that the “principle” refers to “suchness,” which is equal and without distinctions, while the “phenomena” are characterized by individuality that can be distinguished from other things.

art and religion. One can go a step further to reach a position at which the act of knowing itself knows the act of knowing itself. This ultimate position is what is called *noesis noeseos*.

The idea of *noesis noeseos* began with Aristotle, was adopted by the Neo-Platonist Plotinus, and is said to have reached its most lucid systematization in Hegel's philosophy of absolute knowledge (NKK 13: 81). The "principle," in which "everything that materializes in a place separated from a locality that is 'right here, right now,'" naturally includes a variety of things. A list of its most essential elements would include not only the rationality of the modern sciences and technology, but also the laws of ethics and religion in which they are sublated (*aufgehoben*), and even the ultimate form that is absolute being, identical to absolute knowledge itself. In this way, Nishitani's "principle" has become a concept relocated within a horizon from which to survey the various aspects of modern knowledge in all its forms. As for "phenomena," although it is limitless in content, in concrete terms it refers to fixed points in contrast to the plurality of the principle.

The structure of the world relationship, which is understood as the *logos* of the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena, is an endless dynamic. Within this dynamic entity, each and every thing, whether it be the "existence" of each "thing," the localized "place" in the world, or "mutual identity," contains within itself an element that points to its polar opposite.

Let us consider "mutual identity." The fact that things are "mutually identical" means that they are "unobstructed." That which can be considered "unobstructed" in a straightforward way is the world that has been opened up as absolute "oneness." Each "place" or locality in the world is also ultimately the world opened up as a "oneness" in which all things manifest themselves. When understood as a formation of structural relationships, this opening of the world can be described as an "identity." When we speak of each individual "existence" becoming a localized "place," space is an instance of a *topos* being opened up. Moreover, this opening is an opening of circuminsessional relativity. In other words, any place in the opening of the world can become a locality, but the opening of the world itself transcends all localization, being an absolute "oneness" that admits of no relativity. Since circuminsessionality and

mutual identity include a “dialectical” relativity accompanied by mutual negation, to be beyond all relativity means to be non-circuminsessional.

That said, the world relationship as a whole does not materialize only with the opening of the world as “one.” Only when there is an inner reality that can fulfill the opening of the world can the world relationship materialize. This inner reality, in contrast to non-obstruction, is obstruction itself. As stated above, “identity,” which constitutes the structural relationship of the world in which principle and phenomena are unobstructed, is possible because it includes both the poles of obstruction and non-obstruction. The pole of obstruction is found at the point where the “existences” of “things” have all reached the extremity of their particularities and individuality. At this extremity, all things and entities simply manifest themselves as “naked facts” given to us just as they are; they do not rely on any light from the outside, be it the light of the senses or the light of the intellect. Nishitani refers to this as “stubborn facticity.” From this standpoint, the “existence” of each individual thing is confined absolutely within itself and is completely non-circuminsessional.⁶

In this way, it is possible to understand the structure of the circuminsessional world relationship as a whole with two poles, the opening of the world as “oneness” and the stubborn facticity of each individual thing. There is always a certain tension between the poles, signaling the birth of something new. We may express this by saying that the opening of the world as absolute oneness indicates “emptiness,” while the stubborn facticity indicates “phenomena.” The fact that both poles are absolutely non-circuminsessional means that it is impossible to speak of them as “contradictory.” Hence it is also impossible to say that they are related in a relationship of “identity” that links the two contradictory poles to each other. Absolute non-circuminsessionality appears to negate all relationships. In spite of this, Nishitani recognizes the identity and contradiction between the two:

6. Nishitani uses the words *things* and *facts* almost synonymously. He refers to facts as things that manifest themselves to direct experience, in other words as things that manifest themselves in the experience that occurs in the absolutely limited locality known as “right now, right here” at each occasion. In his own words, a fact is “for example, the act of seeing an apple, the apple that is seen, sensual knowledge or experience that arises there, that place and that time—all of this” (NKZ 13: 104).

The concrete, actual “world” of the world relationship is made possible only when the two poles that are mutually contradictory due to their absolute non-circuminsessionality, are identical. This identity must surpass all “mutual identity” and the “principle” of mutual identity. This is none other than the world in which there is no obstruction between things mentioned previously. This is what makes possible the actual world, characterized by “non-obstruction between principle and things,” to be a world. That which makes possible the “world” of the myriad things, myriad existences, and myriad phenomena (the entirety of things, which can be infinite in possibility), is the “world,” which is the opening of the *topos* in which the myriad things can manifest themselves, but the absolute opening that makes this opening of the world itself possible, is the “world” in which there is no obstruction between things.... On the other hand, that which makes the opening of the world into an actual opening is the absolute “phenomena” that makes possible the myriad things and myriad phenomena to be such non-circuminsessional that they can be characterized as things is the “stubborn fact” that is the manifestation of the myriad things and myriad phenomena. This is none other than the “world” described as a place wherein there is no obstruction between things. (NKC 13: 144ff.)

The two poles can be said to become visible not when it is the circuminsessional relationship among individual existences but rather the circuminsessional world relationship as a whole that becomes problematic and, moreover, when that which makes possible the world relationship as a whole becomes problematic. Mediated by the indication of the non-circuminsessional poles, the world relationship is made possible in the world in which there is no obstruction between things. Since this does not allow for the contradiction to be treated as “contradiction,” we seem to be at a loss as to how to understand this.

“Identity,” which is the *logos* of the non-obstruction of principle and phenomena, is presented as something higher than the logic that defines relative relationships. This is shown by the fact that this identity is expressed as the mutual identity of absolute self-confinement and absolute liberation. What is required of the *logos* that has reached such heights is that it be a principle that wrestles with facts. But it is impos-

sible to understand the non-circuminsessional poles as being “mutually identical.” The problem here is what makes the relationship of “identity” possible. In order to speak of the two poles, it no longer suffices merely to raise the nature of the *logos* to a higher level.

Nishitani’s discourse thus inevitably falls into self-contradiction. The circuminsessional relationship may be conceived as an ongoing dynamic, but its dynamism only becomes possible because the circuminsessional relationship has a non-circuminsessional pole as its counterpart. The two non-circuminsessional poles are, so to speak, the structural vanishing points of the circuminsessional relationship, and insofar as they are vanishing points, they are, structurally speaking, the pivotal points of the circuminsessional relationship. The statement that the two poles are contradictory and identical at the same time is unavoidable in explaining this vanishing point from the standpoint of the circuminsessional relationship. The world relationship, grasped in its entirety at the non-circuminsessional pole, is what Nishitani calls the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things. The non-circuminsessional pole itself does not open up a concrete existential position; rather, the world in which there is no obstruction between things comes into existence as the position of concrete self-awareness. In other words, the non-circuminsessional character of the two poles truly appears in the world in which there is no obstruction between things.

We must be particularly careful when speaking of the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things. Since the four kinds of Dharma-realms posited in Huayan philosophy are generally presented as four distinct stages through which deluded beings progress in order to gradually awaken to true wisdom,⁷ it follows that Nishitani’s Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things is also understood as pointing to a separate, higher, existential level than the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena.

Are we correct in reading Nishitani this way? As a matter of fact, Nishitani does say that the “Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things” underlies the “Dharma-realm in which there is no

7. Even in Huayan Buddhism, of course, there are patriarchs who do not interpret them as successive stages in the deepening of awakening. See KIMURA 1992, 224.

obstruction between principle and phenomena,” and that the “Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things” is the “place at which one achieves the self-awareness of having attained liberation from the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena.” We can say that the “Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things” is the realm of ultimate enlightenment, but we must remember here that Nishitani’s simile of the two rooms was meant to clarify the boundary between the realms of art and religion. In coming to the limits of the realm of art and stepping into the realm of religion, language and its *logos* are surpassed and the original facts manifest themselves. Hence, it is possible to see the two rooms as representing the Dharma realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena and the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things.

However, we must also remember that the simile of the two rooms indicates a circuminsessional relationship that inheres in the world in which the principle and the phenomena are unobstructed. If we take the two rooms in the simile to represent the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena and the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things, this would mean that we must recognize the circuminsessional relationship between the two. But didn’t the world in which all things are free of obstruction refer to a realm beyond the circuminsessional relationships, where non-circuminsessionality truly appears?

Concerning the four kinds of Dharma-realms of Huayan philosophy, it is necessary to consider Nishitani’s standpoint when he spoke of the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things. For Nishitani, too, the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things is a religious dimension that is opened up in “faith.” It is a realm to which one awakens with true wisdom, and Nishitani describes it using the words of Huayan patriarchs and Zen masters. However, the standpoint from which Nishitani speaks is not such the realm of enlightenment. Although he has such a realm in mind, Nishitani’s standpoint is that of a philosopher of religion, meaning that he is clearly speaking from the standpoint of reason.

Herein lies the reason why Nishitani, even as he makes reference to

the “principle beyond principle,” has to speak in terms of the “principle” when it comes to describing the absolutely non-circuminsessional “phenomena.” In contrast, the Huayan patriarchs and Zen masters continually confront us with the question of what these “phenomena” are like. Nishitani considers the role of philosophy as that of criticism and mediation, but in my understanding, the philosophical endeavor that Nishitani is attempting in his essay “Emptiness and Immediacy” is to mediate critically between what the Zen masters are confronting us with and the world in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena, which is the world of our reality.

Here we will let stand the contradiction in Nishitani’s discussion of the world in which there is no obstruction between things and return to the analysis of his philosophy of imaging, in the hope that the latter will help clarify the notion of the non-obstruction of things.

MAKING EXISTENCE TRANSPARENT AND FUNDAMENTAL IMAGINATION

Stubborn facts—that is, distinct, individual existences—possess a non-circuminsessionality that defies all relationships. But when the limitation of existence comes to indicate a “locality” within the world, it steps out of its self-confinement, without ceasing to be itself, into the opening of the world and enters into relationship with other similar localities. This was what was meant when it was stated above that distinct, individual “existences” become localized “places,” and this is what Nishitani means by “making existence transparent.” The world is opened up by making transparent the wall of existence that keeps all of existence confined within itself. In concrete terms, existence is made transparent when the actual “fact” itself is transferred to its image. In other words, “the image, which is within and identical to the ‘fact,’ manifests its distinctive form as image” (NKC 13: 141). When the stubbornness of a stubborn fact is relaxed and released towards its image, it becomes possible for a fact to enter into relationship with other facts for the first time. It can be said that the relationship between facts is the relationship between the images of those facts, and that the *logos*-ness of the non-obstruction

of principle and phenomena is set in motion on the basis of these various modes of mutual imaging.

Using the examples employed by Huayan patriarchs, Nishitani likens the non-obstruction of things to the situation in which Mr. A drinks wine and Mr. B gets drunk, or the situation in which a man who has taken ill calls for a doctor, only for the doctor to come and give an injection to the man's dog. These examples use living images that are both creative and uncomplicated. Although the non-obstruction of things was to be found at the point where the original nature of facts was pressed to its limit, what we find there is "nothing but images." The fact that the images are preposterous and unrestrained indicates that they are free from the domination of the law of reason and *logos*. Between the fact that Mr. A drinks wine and the fact that Mr. B gets drunk, there is no rational, *logos*-like relationship such as that between cause and effect. It is simply absurd. This absurdity can be understood as the minute expression of the image being released from the stubbornness of facts and from the dominance of the laws of reason. What has occurred is simply that the original fact has been transferred to its image.

Put differently, it can be said that the multitude of images that make up the world of our everyday lives are not images proceeding from stubborn, original facts, but are a secondary cluster of images produced out of images stemming from stubborn original facts and transferring themselves to one another. Particularly in the social life of contemporary society, images are piled up one after another in complex ways, and it may be said that the network of images is like a towering kaleidoscope constructed by arranging and transforming the constituent images in a myriad of ways.

Now even if it is the case that the patriarchs' images are free from the domination of the law of reason, this does not mean that there is no systematic order in the event in which Mr. A drinks wine and Mr. B gets drunk. It is possible to posit a certain relationship between the two. The absurdity lies in the fact that the drinking and the drunkenness are attributed to two different people. But it is the relationship between drinking and drunkenness that makes us recognize absurdity for what it is. For example, if Mr. A drank wine and Mr. B read a book, the actions of these two people would be totally unrelated, and there would be no

problem. If there is a systematic order in the original example, it is one that functions by skillfully highlighting the absurdity of the relationship.

When this idea suggests itself to us, we begin to think that the images in the patriarchs' stories are just one manifestation of an image released from stubborn fact, and that there might be more. Perhaps the cluster of images to which the original fact transfers itself is, generally speaking, sinister, monstrous and gigantic, somewhat like the concept of "the numinous" that Rudolf Otto set out to describe (OTTO 1979). The numinous arouses a feeling of awe in us, evoking a chaotic fear which, if confronted head-on, would shatter us. The fact that the wall of existence is made transparent means that an entity can be invaded by all other existences as images through the wall. Moreover, the things that shatter them are not the other existences themselves but their various images. In the patriarchs' set of images, however, there is no such chaotic violence to overcome or be crushed by. Non-rationality that does not lead to ruin, or the systematic arrangement of phenomena that brings non-rationality to light, is what is meant by the claim that "phenomena" are free of obstruction from one another.⁸ This systematic arrangement of "phenomena" is what Nishitani called "the principle beyond principle," but it might be better to call this the "Dharma of phenomena," referring to the Dharma in which all reasoning has been surpassed.

What would happen if we take another look at the inexplicable situation concerning the world relationship where "the two poles contradicting each other by being absolutely non-circuminsessional, are identical with each other" from the perspective of the original fact transferring itself to an image? That both poles are said to be identical means that they are grasped anew as a situation wherein original existence has become one with image. Furthermore, the fact that the two poles are mutually

8. Nishitani of course took the notion of the "non-obstruction of things" from Huayan philosophy, but "non-obstruction" also seems to echo Eckhart's expression "free of obstructions (*ohne Hindernisse*).⁹ In *God and Absolute Nothingness*, Nishitani remarks: "Since Martha was completely *wesentlich* (or because she, with all her existence, was at one with the existence of God), her work did not obstruct her." He goes on to claim that "people who stand within their work without obstruction" stand at a higher stage than people who have forgotten themselves in their knowledge of God (NKZ 7: 90ff).

contradictory can be rephrased to say that the stubbornness of facts and the image that by nature is capable of transferring itself are completely contradictory. The problem of the two poles of the world relationship can be restated as the problem of the original fact and image. It is also possible to express the situation in which the original fact is at one with the image as follows: because the mode of being as image makes it possible for distinct “existences” to gain a localized “space,” the absolute possibility for opening up into the world is attached to the stubborn fact.

The experience of the non-obstruction of principle and phenomena encounters at the outer limits, where the world of the non-obstruction of principle and phenomena is investigated, a falling away of the “principle” and the manifestation of “phenomena” in its original form. The fact that this is a world where there is “nothing but images” brings to actuality a world in which there is no obstruction between things. In other words, without the world of the image springing forth directly from original fact, the original manifestation of things could not take concrete “form.” From this world of direct images there comes into existence a world of images created through the multilayered relationship of images mutually interpenetrating and encompassing each other. As long as it is impossible to take concrete “form,” the possibility of “phenomena” to reveal themselves as “phenomena” in a fundamental way must remain, in the final analysis, a limit concept.

Still, it would be wrong to conclude that from a standpoint where there is no obstruction between things, facts do not manifest themselves in the raw, so to speak, but as what has already been transferred to the image. The fact that “phenomena” as “phenomena” show themselves in a fundamental way means that they arise in such a way that the image springs forth and fills the world. There is no other way for the image to arise. At the same time, this makes it possible to transfer the non-obstruction of things to a realm of principle in which the structure of the world relationship—which has to do with the arising of images—can be investigated. When the world relationship is transferred to the realm of principle, we can speak of it as the “power of fundamental imagination.”

The non-obstruction of things, that is, the two poles of absolute opening and stubborn facticity, can be considered the source from which images arise. However, the two poles are not themselves images. They

are the sources from which images arise, but are not the images themselves. This is suggested by Zen aphorisms such as “Fire does not burn itself” or “The eye does not see itself.” Just as fire corresponds to burning and the eye to seeing, so does imagination correspond to the arising of images. By employing the concept of the “imagination,” Nishitani relates his notion of the imaging of emptiness to the theory of imagination, a traditional issue in philosophy that began with Aristotle and was developed in new directions by Kant and Heidegger.

Nishitani discusses imagination only briefly in “Emptiness and Immediacy.” But since he mentions that since ancient time imagination has been called *sensus communis*, it is clear that he intends to associate his view of imagination with Aristotle’s (something that he had pursued with keen interest during his thirties). Imagination has its own distinct field, which Nishitani describes as

the intermediate area where the senses and intellect intersect, or the mediating field where the two draw each other away one from the other, and in drawing each other away one from the other, bind themselves together. (NKC 13: 154)

The reason this is so is that, despite imagination being something that functions in the realm of sensation, it is believed to contain “an incipient seed-like perception and discriminating knowledge.”

To describe the intermediate character of the imagination, Nishitani uses another simile of two rooms. He argues that, in the realm of sensation, the image expresses an intellectual concept as the sensational image of a thing, while in the realm of the intellect, the image expresses the contents of the senses as an intellectual form. Following this line of thought, the imagination can be likened to a wall separating two rooms. Imagination truly “binds together by separating” the realms of the senses and the intellect. And yet imagination is a “power with its own distinctive source” that cannot be reduced to its function of separating the two realms. For Nishitani, this is so because imagination is always tied to “sentiment.” As mentioned above, the image brought forth by imagination is clearly distinguished from the form given in direct sensation and perception, but the former differs from the latter in that the former has a “sentimental element.” Concretely speaking, it is imagination, which

is the function to produce image from within the sentiment, that makes possible the circuminsessional character of the wall.

What, then, does the “sentimental element” refer to? In his *Studies on Aristotle*, Nishitani extracts the distinction of direct sensation (sensational impression) and image (image of imagination) from Aristotle’s theory of imagination as follows: The movement that occurs in the “sensing psyche” through sensation, leaves the form of what has been sensed within the psyche as a sensational impression. This sensational impression remains within the sense organ even after the active sensation has dissipated and continues to affect the sense organ. When this movement affects the sense organ to its roots and remains there, an image of imagination arises (NKC 5: 86). When the sense organ is affected to its roots, it means that the *sensus communis* is stimulated. The *sensus communis* is not only the root source of the sensation that diverges in various ways (as sight, touch, and so forth), but rather something that perceives all the specialized senses at their respective sources. Therefore, the *sensus communis* is the power to unify all the various senses. Moreover, imagination is considered the “pathos of the *sensus communis*” (NKC 5: 57, 68). The reference to imagination as the “pathos of *sensus communis*” in *Studies on Aristotle* probably refers to the same thing that Nishitani refers to when he says that image is an “sentimental element” in “Emptiness and Immediacy.” “Sentiment” refers to the situation where both the self and the world are opened up completely at that point.

It is also necessary to consider the reason why the “fundamental imagination” is called “fundamental.” The term “fundamental” is used only with reference to imagination that is set in motion from the “Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things.” But Nishitani does not explain how fundamental imagination differs from ordinary imagination.

In the essay “The Problem of Evil” (1952) from Nishitani’s middle period, we find expressions such as “fundamentally dark imagination” and “the dark workings of fundamental imagination” (NKC 6: 242-6). That is to say, the self, which is the natural self-nature of human beings, as well as natural instincts, such as impulses and desires natural to human beings, are, in and of themselves, neither good nor evil. But when the two interpenetrate and natural instincts are distorted within the self, a

self propelled by willfulness, that is to say, an egotistic self, comes into existence. Egotism is a form of excessively elevated self-understanding. At the bottom of such self-understanding self, there lurks imagination as dark fundamental power. The interpenetration of self and the natural instincts results in a self whose substance is found in the unity of the intellectual categories. Inasmuch as instincts belong to the realm of sensation, that which mediates the two and makes possible their interpenetration is the third power called imagination. This is how Nishitani understands the matter.

This understanding of the imagination is basically under the influence of Kant. It differs from Kant, however, in that the workings of the imagination are grasped not from the vantage point of epistemology but from a practical point of view. The imagination that functions in recognizing an object resides within the self as one of its faculties. In contrast, Nishitani says that the imagination he is speaking of is more basic: it is understood as “imagination in the sense that it is the driving force that pushes the self to become a certain type of self.” In other words, when one thinks and feels oneself to be, for example, a lovable and virtuous person or an incompetent and worthless person, it is the activity of the imagination that allows one to actualize oneself on the basis of such a self-image. Thus, there must be at bottom the possibility that the self will be represented as an existence with a substantial entity, and this is the more fundamental function of the imagination.

Imagination in this sense falls into the category of what Kant calls “theoretical” activity. But the egotistical self is the self that loves and is attached to the self as substantial “existence.” This self-representation is not a kind of self-representation that can be categorized as a self-understanding in which the self knows itself, but as one in which the self loves itself and is attached to itself. Here the subjectivity of the self-representing self enters into the self-representation. Instead of clarifying the self, it brings forth a thoroughly dark self-representation, that is to say, a self-representation that is distorted from within, not the result of a distortion produced from without. This is the kind of fundamental imagination that Nishitani takes up here. This imagination creates one’s own self-image in a dark way—that is to say, it is created by the subject’s will, all the while maintaining its dynamic nature, pouring itself into its

self-image, which in turn leads the self-image to lose itself in the will—and overlap this self-image with one's own self. For this reason, Nishitani discerns a “dark fundamental will” in the depths of the workings of this type of imagination.

In this essay from Nishitani's middle period, imagination is understood as something fundamental. However it is treated as a “‘dark’ power that shuts one up in oneself.” It is clearly different from the imagination that is set in motion from the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things. The latter type of imagination, so different from imagination that shuts one up in oneself, works in a totally different way. Inasmuch as the latter type of imagination allows one to be seen from the outside, it also goes without saying that it differs from “imagination that clarifies the self.” If we recall the cluster of images making up the world in which there is no obstruction between things, it is evident that the imagination producing them possesses a distinctive clarity and lucidity.

This is not a clarity of self-recognition arising from self-reflection, but is a clarity that purifies the “darkness” that confines the self within itself. The “dark fundamental imagination” creates a fictitious egotistical self-representation. The self represented in this way is nothing but a fiction. At the ground of the self that emerges with such a fictitious self-representation at its core, lie the activities of a dark, primal will. The dark imagination arises in response to such will. This type of imagination is characterized by fictitious self-representations, self-images, and responses to them. It is evident that the roots of its activities extend far into the deepest recesses of the self, but it is basically negative in character.

Unlike this dark imagination, which mainly generates the self's own images, the imagination that is set in motion from the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things generates a variety of images on a variety of matters. Considering the nature of its activities, it is difficult to conceive of this type of imagination as arising in reaction to the will. We cannot but feel that the imagination arising from the world in which there is no obstruction between things is its own source of creativity. In view of the radical difference between them, it is hard to believe that the imagination arising from the world in which there is no obstruction between things derives from some “dark fundamental imagination.”

The notion of “dark fundamental imagination” does, however, provide us with an important clue for understanding Nishitani’s discussion of fundamental imagination in “Emptiness and Immediacy.” That is to say, although imagination, like sensation and intellect (or reason and understanding), is usually seen as a kind of mental power within oneself, it can have a more elemental mode of being. If the “dark fundamental imagination” can be seen as the driving force that pushes the self to become a certain type of self, then the imagination that is set in motion from the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between things is the “driving force that makes the world in which there is no obstruction between things appear as the world in which there is no obstruction between things.”

To recapitulate schematically our discussion on the world in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena and the world in which there is no obstruction between things, we may say that imagination can be understood in terms of two stages: a primary stage and a secondary stage (encompassing all post-primary stages). In the primary stage, the imagination functions by generating images directly from the stubborn fact. Here the activities of the imagination are one-directional. Beginning from and based on the production of such primal images, the secondary stage witnesses the creation of a series of new, composite, multilayered images. Ordinarily, the production of images by the imagination presupposes and is based on primary images. In contrast, fundamental imagination functions by loosening up the stubbornness of an original fact and loosening the image that is coagulated within the fact.

We may now turn to the question of how this imagination, which is the working of a power more basic than a mental power within the self, actually functions.

EMPTINESS AND “TRANSFERRING AND REFLECTING”

The non-obstruction of things refers to the fact that the bare facts, while remaining bare facts, are not obstructed from one another, and that the image, to which the stubborn facts have been directly transferred, appears before oneself in a way that, so to speak, liberates one. In

a sense, it may be said that practice in Buddhism is a way of training oneself to allow the cluster of images to gush out of oneself in a liberating way without at the same time destroying one. Without training, one would inevitably recoil with fear from such a numinous outpouring.

Where, then, does the difference between the uncanny cluster of images pressing in on us and the cluster of free and generous images that liberate us, come from? The following passage, in which Nishitani discusses what the world in which there is no obstruction between things is like, provides us with a clue:

There, the mutually contradictory aspects are one. On the one hand, it is an absolute opening in which there is nothing, a total vacuity. On the other hand, it reveals the form of an anterior “chaos,” in which the myriad things are liberated from the logical framework that limits, and at the same time relates, the myriad things in the order called “cosmos.” However, at this point chaos is one with emptiness and is posterior to the world relationship that is “non-obstruction of principle and phenomena.” (NKC 13: 145)

The order of the cosmos is the initial aspect of *logos*. Since the nature of the *logos* of the world relationship marked by the non-obstruction of principle and phenomena extends to the realm in which there is no obstruction between things, the “chaos” described above may be said to characterize both the state before the initial *logos* nature and the state after it. Inasmuch as it is at one with emptiness, chaos shows the non-obstruction of things and the cluster of images possess phenomenal dharmas. In contrast, the numinous chaos is forever estranged from emptiness.

However, these two aspects of chaos are distinguished only for the sake of explanation. It would be completely wrong to say, for example, that one develops dialectically into the other. The chaos that is at one with emptiness must be, in substance, no different from the numinous chaos. To begin with, the numinous chaos is simply a limit concept vis-à-vis our perception in relation to the *logos*. The notion of “before the cosmos” is meaningful when the numinous chaos is at one with emptiness. This is because to be at one with emptiness requires the numinous chaos to come out into the clearing of self-awakening in a decisive way. Therefore, no matter how real the numinous cluster of images may appear to

the senses, it must be said that in the actual world they are nothing but illusions (though not fictitious self-images like egotistical self-images).

To say that the numinous cluster of images are illusions means that they are unable to open up the actual world. Although illusory, insofar as they arise from stubborn facts, they must be sharply delineated from romantic reveries and fantasies. Of course, reveries and fantasies are, in their own ways, world-creating activities made possible by the imagination. When their endeavors bear fruit in the form of stories and novels, the worlds created by such fantasies come to be shared by many people. But no matter how many people share in them, the worlds spun of fantasy are situated at a place lower than the actual world. Indeed, if the place of fantasy and the actual world were switched, one would be a candidate for psychiatric treatment. Insofar as the numinous cluster of images provide a stimulus for further activities of the imagination, they act as the source of fictional fantasy and imaginative thought and in that sense are something fundamental. Generally speaking, however, it is rare for the numinous cluster of images themselves to construct a world. Even where they seem to do so, theirs can only be a self-referential world dangling below the actual world.

In contrast, the cluster of images from the world of the Zen monks opens up the world itself. The Zen monks' world of images, as the very realm of spiritual insight, is an actual world possessing a reality more real than the world we ordinarily take to be the real world. This does not mean that this actual world exists apart from the Dharma-realm in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena. Rather, the world is opened up in such a way that the place from which the world is opened up is clear, resulting in a kind of fundamental clarity and stability. This is not to say, of course, that this world appears with a perfect pre-determined harmony as a result of being illuminated by this clarity.

The worldly nature (*sekaisei* 世界性) of the Zen monks' cluster of images reminds us of the notion of "sentiment." In my view, the idea that the "image brought forth by imagination has a sentimental element" can mean nothing other than the fact that forms and mental images emerge in such a way as to *make themselves present in the opening of the world*. In general, forms brought forth by direct sensation and perception simply remain as forms and go no further. It is entirely other with the worldly

nature of sentiment and the worldly nature indicated by Zen dialogues. Sentiments are the contents of the worldly nature, while the worldly nature of Zen dialogues reflect a prior worldly nature, before the contents—in this case, the sentiments—have reached fulfillment. It may be said that the thing that opens up the Zen monks' cluster of images is closer to vacuity. When filled with the contents called sentiments, the clarity that serves as the *point from which* the world is opened is lost, and in its place a variety of events unfold with a solid, uncontestable presence.

Inasmuch as sentiments are the contents of the worldly nature, the latter includes “principle.” A basic form of this “principle” is the *logos* of words. It may seem that the image of the Zen masters is also mediated by the language of Zen dialogues, but their words are just pointers for seeing images as real facts. For this reason, although the wording of poetry is polished to the point where not one word can be changed, the words of Zen masters have such fluidity that any word can be replaced.

While the images of the Zen dialogues are seen as real facts, they are totally vacuous and lacking in content. Their vacuity is positive, opening up infinite possibilities precisely because there is no content. In contrast, from the perspective of the “principle” itself, which is built into the world in which there is no obstruction between principle and phenomena, this vacuity is inevitably seen as absolute negation. When the positive vacuity of the realm of the Zen master's spiritual insight is transferred to and reflected in the world of sentiments, the words of poetry can serve as a locus for activating the image. This is what Nishitani calls “emptiness in sentiment.”

The poets, through their training conducted in the realm constituted by the “context” of words, were able to raise up the image and its locus to the level of “literature” by transferring and reflecting them into the Zen masters' realm of spiritual insight. (NKC I3: I60)

The phrase “transfer and reflect” will be taken up later, but first it should be noted that it is a very suggestive phrase. Nishitani constantly uses the Japanese word *utsusu* うつす in both the sense of “to transfer” (*utsusu* 移す) and the sense of “to reflect” (*utsusu* 映す). Sometimes he distinguishes between them, such as when he says that ““things” are transferred (*utsusareru* 移される) from the thing itself, and... are reflected in

(*utsusareru* 映される) our consciousnesses” (NKC 10: 147). But in most cases he writes “うつす (移す、映す),” thereby showing his intention to preserve the double meaning.

In the texts of the Huayan school, the terms “transfer” (*utsusu* 移す) and “reflect” (*utsusu* 映す) are used when there is a need to provide concrete images to the truth. For example, in Fazhang’s *Huayan wujiaozhang*, the perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna*) of “suchness” is described with the simile of a mirror: a bright mirror, even while reflecting all things (even defiled things), itself remains pure (FAZHANG 1989, 63ff). Likewise, a net of jewels in Indra’s palace is used as a simile for the manner in which dharmas are continually related to each other in infinitely complex ways (KIMURA 1989, 117ff).⁹ From each knot of this net, draped from the ceiling of Indra’s palace, there hangs a jewel. The jewels all reflect each other, and these reflections of reflected jewels in turn reflect one another, on and on ad infinitum. The core notion of the simile is “reflection.” Here, it may be objected that the notions of “reflecting” (*utsusu* 映す) and “being reflected” (*utsuru* 映る) are being conflated, but in both the mirror and the jewels, the notion of “reflecting” implies that they are “reflecting” themselves. In his case, the transitive and intransitive uses of the verb “to reflect” overlap. In the similes of the mirror and the jewels, the distinction between “reflecting” and “being reflected” may be considered meaningless.

What is interesting here is that the “reflection” attributed to the mirror and the jewel overlaps the “reflection” whereby the way in which “suchness” exists is reflected in the ways in which the mirror and the jewel exist. Buddhist texts are full of similes, and the *Huayan Sūtra* in particular is a text whose existence is inconceivable without similes.

Similes are generally understood to be a way of expressing indirectly what cannot be expressed directly in words. But there is something more to Nishitani’s simile of the two rooms, something that goes beyond the usual definition of a simile and may even be called a different way of

9. The parable of Indra’s jeweled net is emphasized in Huayan philosophy and is frequently employed by Zen masters as well. Xuebao 雪宝 uses this parable to describe the Dharma-realm of non-obstruction between things, while Xingxiu 行秀 uses it to describe the spiritual realm that he calls “Perfect and Sudden One Vehicle.”

thinking. The matter expressed in the simile of the two rooms is continually being displaced and shifted little by little, so that even though it is the same simile, its landscape is always changing. Which of these meanings is employed and whether or not the simile's mode of thought is activated all depends on the movement called "transferring and reflecting." For this to happen, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the notion of "reflecting" but also to that of "transferring."

"Reflection" also plays an important role in Nishida Kitarō's philosophy, where consciousness is understood to "reflect" its objects. But the notion of "transfer" is not found here, at least not overtly. Nor, does it seem, is this notion fully treated in Huayan texts. It was probably through his study of Eckhart that Nishitani realized the importance of the idea. Nishitani read Eckhart's philosophy of the "intrusion of the *Bild* of God into the human soul" to mean that when the *Bild* is transferred to the human soul, "the productive power to *bilden* the *Bild* is given together with the *Bild*." This is what the term "transfer" obviously refers to. This term is used to refer to the production of images as a self-transcending activity.

This is clearly what is indicated by the simile of the two rooms. The side of the wall facing room A, while expressing room B, belongs to room A. This means that B is reflected in something totally different called A in appearing as part of A. With this wall as a boundary, B, as an image, is transferred to A, and B itself disappears. Usually when B itself is said to disappear by being transferred to A, it is the negative aspect—the disappearance of B—that is emphasized. But if the power to produce its own image is transferred to A together with the image of B itself, A becomes infinitely richer by taking in the image of B. This is what the term "imaging" basically refers to. Moreover, it is the mutual transfer of the power to produce images that makes the circuminsessional relationship possible. The relationship that is depicted here is different from that between an original and a copy, as Plato's idea and its image. It is relatively easy to understand the notion of the lord and attendant switching places on the basis of this relationship.

When the stubborn fact is transferred, its image, I, is only the image that is given to us. It is not that something other than image is left behind as something prior to image. Of course, this does not mean that prior to

its being transferred to image, the original fact is given as the fact itself. The original fact is not simply a limit concept; it is something that *exists* undeniably as a fact, but its *existence* has to be apprehended through the dynamic workings of imaging. Supposing that Aristotle's theory of the *sensus communis* corresponds in some degree to the notion of imagination developed in "Emptiness and Immediacy," we may conclude that when the original fact is transferred to the image (as is the case when any imagined object in general is produced), the act of sensing something in a particular specialized sensation does not arise before the *sensus communis* is stimulated. It is rather that the facticity of the original fact stimulates the *sensus communis* directly. The characteristic feature of the imaging of the original fact consists in the fact that it does not arise from sense impressions. In other words, imaging, as commonly understood, can be said to arise either from direct sensation or from the image itself. In these cases, there is no problem in saying that imagination is understood as the function for producing the image, not by "transferring" but only by "reflecting" the direct sensation or the image.

The simile of the two rooms suggests another important point: the way in which the wall separating rooms A and B appears in the two rooms. For room A to be a room at all, it must be surrounded by walls. That is to say, the walls create the room. And while the wall creates room A, it simultaneously creates room B. Despite the fact that the wall is endowed with such an important function, insofar as the side of the wall facing room A belongs to room A while being an expression of room B, and the side of the wall facing room B belongs to room B while being an expression of room A, the wall itself does not belong anywhere. This shows the way in which the notion of "transferring and reflecting" fundamentally works.

The act of "transferring and reflecting" lies at the core of the way imagination works. Can it not be said that imagination arises when something is "transferred and reflected," as in the simile of the wall?¹⁰ The fact that the room is formed by the wall means that the world is formed as a world.

10. I have described the realm of imagination as the wall between the regions of sensibility and intellect, but the position of the wall points to something essential. The fact that it is impossible to distinguish between "transferring and reflecting" and being "transferred and reflected" shows that imagination is simultaneously passive and active.

As noted above, unlike the case of the numinous, the Zen monks' cluster of images opens up the world itself. This is so because the Zen monks' cluster of images is born from such "transferring and reflecting." Since it is something that opens up the world, fundamental imagination cannot usually be seen. Fundamental imagination is not fundamental because it produces an image that is an image transferred from the original fact. It is fundamental because it gives rise to "transferring and reflecting" in a straightforward way. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to speak of the foundation of imagination rather than fundamental imagination.

Making existence transparent means that the wall of room A comes to transfer and reflect other rooms as a part of the inner landscape of room A. But the wall not only transfers and reflects other rooms; it also encloses the room. The non-obstruction of things means that, at the same time the wall serves as a screen to reflect all things in the universe, it also serves to create the room. In this way the world is transferred to and reflected in the room. At such times, it must be said that the screen constituting the room is transferring and reflecting the very fact that it is transferring and reflecting all things in the universe.

This is what is meant by the claim that emptiness is being transferred and reflected. That is to say, when poets transfer and reflect into their sentiments the Zen master's stage of insight, this does not mean that the Zen master's world of the image, which is identical with the original facts, is transferred and reflected into the poets' sentiment. Rather the very "transfer and reflection" that occurs in the transference from the original fact to the fact's image is itself transferred and reflected into the sentiment. Only then can we speak of "emptiness in sentiment." And here it is possible for the world of sentiment to "be transferred and reflected" to the Zen master's world of the image.

CONCLUSION

The power latent in "transferring and reflecting" is closely tied to "phenomena" and "facts." If the starting point of "transferring and reflecting" is in the manifestation of facts simply as facts, "transferring and reflecting" is vacuous. The fact that the pursuit of poetic excellence

requires the deepening of the poet's own experience of reality reveals in vivid fashion the power of a fact to manifest itself "as a fact, just as it is." Nishitani understands that not only the arts but also the dynamic of the world relationship also possess a fundamental tendency to get in touch with the original nature of "phenomena." Clearly this way of apprehending facts is heir to the tradition of Zen and Huayan Buddhism.

"Transferring and reflecting" is not just a matter of production, creation, and transmission. It also effects transformations, deformations, and reversals. Because "transferring and reflecting" entails distortion—not of the things produced but of the productive power itself—the negative aspects of "transferring and reflecting" are serious indeed. It would thus seem possible to rethink from such a perspective Nishitani's notion of dark imagination hidden within the egotistical self alluded to above.

In reflecting on the demonic possibilities of the distortion of "transferring and reflecting," it may be necessary, as Nishitani noted, to reconsider the view that the dark fundamental imagination is nothing more than a reaction of the dark primal will. In other words, it would seem that the kind of interpretation that sets up the facticity supporting "transferring and reflecting" as a fundamental principle like original facts, and reads into it metaphysical concepts like "great will" or "great life," takes the edge off the radical import of the notion of fundamental imagination. The importance of this facticity is that it allows us to reflect on phenomena of religious philosophy in the wider sense of historical and social realities that have become problematic in today's world.

Although Nishitani does not himself develop his thinking along these lines, imaging and "transferring and reflecting" provide a solid hint for doing so. When we consider that contemporary society is dominated by the "duplicating" culture of manufactured goods and services, the fact that *utsusu* can also mean "to copy" (*utsusu* 写す) and the act of copying is suggestive in this regard. It is also interesting to note that the term "Indranet," taken from Indra's net of jewels mentioned above, has gained currency as a word to express a kind of computer-generated, multidirectional, multimedia network. The demonic possibilities of "transferring and reflecting" are deeply tied to the demonic possibilities of image. What Nishitani's philosophy has to show in this regard remains to be seen.

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