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Absolute Nothingness and The Divine Matrix

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- ¶1. As my contribution to this symposium on Field-Being and the Non-Substantialistic Turn, I would like to compare the thought of the Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida on the logic of the "place" of nothingness with a revision of the metaphysical scheme of Alfred North Whitehead which Jorge Nobo of Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, and I have been promoting for many years now, albeit in somewhat different ways. That is, for Nishida as well as for Nobo and myself, Ultimate Reality is envisioned, at least in part, as a context or place within which individual subjects of experience arise and are dynamically related to one another. While differences, naturally, exist between us, above all with respect to the notion of God within our respective schemes, all of us lay heavy emphasis on the non-substantial "Field-Being" of this all-encompassing ontological context for everything that exists.

A. The Logic of Place According to Nishida

- ¶2. Early in his philosophical career, above all, in *An Inquiry into the Good*, Kitaro Nishida focused on the notion of "pure experience" as that which transcends the duality of subject and object within empirical consciousness.^[1] In some ways, he here recapitulated the efforts of Fichte and the other German Idealists to find a transcendental starting-point for systematic reflection on the nature of reality. That is, he tried to grasp the dynamic self-constituting activity of "pure experience" before it solidified into the oppositional reality of subject and object in empirical consciousness.^[2] But he later became uneasy about the "subjectivism" which was unavoidably associated with this approach to the nature of reality. Accordingly, Nishida shifted his attention to Aristotle's notion of "hypokeimenon" or individual substance as the starting-point for an understanding of objective reality. In particular, he analyzed the relation between subjects and predicates within judgments about individual substances. In customary judgments, for example, the individual substance

is subsumed within the class of things represented by the predicate. The judgment "I am a human being" subsumes me as a particular human being within the class of human beings in general. The distinguishing features which constitute me as an individual human being, however, are ignored in asserting the objective truth of the judgment that I am a human being. Thus what is represented by the predicate "human being" is an "abstract universal" since it only represents a partial truth about me as the subject of the sentence.

- ¶3. Nishida's aim, on the other hand, was to search for a "concrete universal," in which the individual entity, which is represented by the subject of the judgment, does not lose its particularity in being subsumed under the predicate. But this would mean that the predicate is no longer a logical abstraction such as "human being" but refers to something which in its own way is even more "concrete" than the particular entity in question. The predicate, in other words, must represent a universal reality which assumes particularity or concreteness in becoming this individual entity. In such a truly subsumptive judgment, therefore, the particular entity which is represented by the subject of the sentence "does not lose its specific difference as it does when subsumed by an abstract universal-instead, a particular is grasped as the self-determination of a concrete universal (concrete in the sense that it concretizes rather than abstracts)."[\[3\]](#)
- ¶4. By way of interpretation of this paradoxical claim, I would say that Nishida is here implicitly returning to his earlier proposal that an all-embracing activity is the transcendental reality at the base of "pure experience." That is, Nishida's "concrete universal," in distinction from the abstract universals of Aristotelian formal logic, would seem to be not a concept or logical abstraction but a transcendent activity which lies at the base of objective reality just as it lies at the base of empirical consciousness or subjective reality. It is then this universal activity which particularizes itself within individual entities as the potential subjects of truly subsumptive judgments. As such, it is both the individual entity and itself at the same time. For it is not limited to being just this one particular entity. Rather, it is simultaneously all particular entities at the same time that it is none of them exclusively. Furthermore, the individual entity is fully understood in its particularity only when it is subsumed under this "concrete universal." The "concrete universal," in other words, does not strip it of its distinguishing characteristics vis-à-vis other entities in the same class (as in the case of abstract universals) but rather invests the entity with those individuating differences in thus becoming identified with it here and now.

- ¶5. Nishida, to be sure, does not refer to this "concrete universal" as an activity, but rather as a "place." As one of his Japanese commentators, Masao Abe, notes, Nishida "viewed a particular as 'that which lies within' a universal and a universal as the 'place' within which the particular lies." [4] On the other hand, it is also clear that "place" for Nishida is not a static reality, simply the de facto context or environment within which a particular entity exists. Rather, it is evidently a dynamic reality which realizes or determines itself in giving shape or form to this particular entity. Abe in his commentary at this point makes a comparison with the notion of the "concrete universal" in the philosophy of Hegel: "[a]ccording to Hegel, a concrete universal contains a principle of individualization, through which it develops distinctions within itself while maintaining self-identity. This self-differentiation is completely self-determined." [5] By comparison with Hegel's "concrete universal," Nishida's "concrete universal" is, therefore, likewise a dynamic, self-determining reality. Unlike Hegel's "concrete universal," however, Nishida's "concrete universal" does not in the end become a self-existing reality. For Hegel, the "concrete universal" is in the end the Absolute Idea or Absolute Spirit. As such, it absorbs the reality of particular entities into its own all-encompassing subjective-objective reality. For Nishida, on the other hand, the "concrete universal" has no reality apart from the particular entities in which it manifests itself. In itself, it is Absolute Nothingness, a total lack of reality in and for itself; for, as we shall see below in connection with the notion of "inverse correspondence," it is simply the ontological ground or all-encompassing context for entities to arise and be related to one another in dynamic co-origination.
- ¶6. To sum up, then, "place" for Nishida would seem to imply both a transcendent activity and a transcendent context or space for its operation. Bringing the two ideas together, one might imagine *Absolute Nothingness* as an ontogenetic matrix or all-encompassing energy-field for the various entities which take shape within it. As such, it would be both the collective field of consciousness at the base of the subject-object distinction within particular human consciousnesses, and the transcendent source of all the particular energy-fields operative within *the world* of nature. The classical subject-object duality would thus be overcome in that *the world* of human consciousness and *the world* of nature would have a unitary origin in Absolute Nothingness, understood as this all-embracing energy-field at the base of reality. In no sense is it a thing-like reality which would logically require still another "place" for its existence. Rather, as a strictly non-entitative reality it is simply the "place" within which everything else exists. Its only form of existence, paradoxically, is in terms of the entities which exist within it in that it takes on determinate form in them as particular entities. [6]

- ¶7. Abe illustrates this last point with reference to the celebrated "mu" koan in Zen Buddhism (When a monk asks Master Joshu, "Does a dog have Buddha nature?" Joshu replies, "Mu."-Chinese "wu" which means literally non-being, nothing or nothingness.) Abe comments: "The true Buddha Nature is in no sense Being; it is the totally unobjectifiable *Absolute Nothingness* diverging from any 'Buddha Nature' about which one asks 'have . . . or have not.' A dog is truly a dog precisely because it is a self-determination of this true Buddha Nature."[\[7\]](#) Yet the monk will come to this realization only when it dawns on him that he too is a self-determination of Absolute Nothingness. Abe thus concludes: "all individuals are self-determinations of *Absolute Nothingness* and are at the same time self-determinations of themselves (this also involves a mutual determination between individuals) and that precisely in this way *the world* is a self-determination of Absolute Nothingness. . . In short, the self-determination of Absolute Nothingness, the self-determination of individuals, the mutual determination between individuals, and the self-determination of *the world* are all the same thing."[\[8\]](#)
- ¶8. To understand this latter point more fully, however, we must have recourse to another key term in Nishida's philosophy, namely, "inverse correspondence." Inverse correspondence, says Abe, is a notion unique to Nishida's thought.[\[9\]](#) Although in itself a logical and philosophical concept, it "precisely captures the essence of religion common to the various religious traditions."[\[10\]](#) Nishida, for example, in his essay on the logic of a place of nothingness says: "The individual, by being opposed to another individual, is an individual."[\[11\]](#) Abe then elaborates:
- ¶9. "In Nishida's case, to claim that 'the individual opposes the individual' never simply means that the individual and the other statically face each other in one and the same dimension. It means, instead, that they dynamically oppose each other and that this dynamic opposition works mutually in the creation of something new. This mutual working of dynamic opposition means that the one tries to appropriate the other by means of a thorough negation of the other. It means that the other is negated and the self is affirmed and, at the same time, it means that the self negates itself and stands in the place of the universal beyond the self and the other. Finally, it means that the self is affirmed by means of an inverse determination arising out of this universal place."[\[12\]](#)

- ¶10. What Abe appears to be saying, at least in part, is that the self paradoxically affirms itself by admitting its essential dependence on its logical counterpart for its own self-identity. Its deeper self-identity, in other words, is to stand in dynamic relation to that which is opposed to it and thereby to create, in Abe's words, "something new." The greater the logical opposition between the self and the other, paradoxically the greater is their mutual identity as this new unitary reality. Hence, the self must radically negate itself as self-sufficient, that is, as independent of the other, in order to attain its own deeper identity.[\[13\]](#) As Nishida himself comments, the self thereby has an "absolute contradictory self-identity."
- ¶11. In some ways, this roughly corresponds to the logic of intersubjectivity as set forth by the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber in *I and Thou*. That is, the I becomes truly an I only when it acknowledges the other as Thou, a co-existing subject of experience like itself, rather than as an It or simply an object of thought for itself.[\[14\]](#) Yet what Nishida adds to this explanation of intersubjectivity, which Buber only hints at with his oblique reference to "the between" as the space between the I and the Thou is explicit reference to "the place of the universal beyond the self and the other." Only insofar as the self stands in the place of Absolute Nothingness, that is, sees its self-definition arising not only out of its relation to the other but even more fundamentally out of its relation to this ontological context of Absolute Nothingness, will it finally achieve its true self-identity as an "absolute contradictory self identity."[\[15\]](#)
- ¶12. Abe further explains this last point by borrowing an image from Nishida and then amplifying it to illustrate the difference between "religions of grace" such as Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism and "religions of awakening" such as Zen Buddhism in their respective understandings of the Absolute or Ultimate Reality.[\[16\]](#) In his essay "The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview," Nishida makes reference in several places to Nicholas of Cusa who depicted the all-encompassing reality of God as an infinite circle or as an infinite sphere with no circumference. Nishida himself uses the image of an infinite sphere to describe *Absolute Nothingness* or "the self-transforming matrix of the absolute present:" "Now because this infinite sphere has no circumference, every point, every act of consciousness, is a center radiating in infinity."[\[17\]](#)

- ¶13. Abe's comment is that this image of an infinite sphere, in which there is no absolute center but only overlapping centers of activity radiating in infinity, describes quite well Nishida's own understanding of *Absolute Nothingness* within Zen Buddhism as a "religion of awakening." *Absolute Nothingness* is everywhere within the sphere of the absolute present and yet nowhere since it only exists within the specific centers of activity which it empowers to exist. In "religions of grace," however, says Abe, the relation between the self and God or the self and Amida Buddha is better represented by the image of an infinite circle (rather than an infinite sphere), since in an infinite circle there is nevertheless an absolute center-point which corresponds to God or Amida Buddha with the self existing apart from the center ("on the circumference") and thus in dependent relation on God or Amida Buddha for grace, the means of salvation.[\[18\]](#)
- ¶14. Abe's point is that Nishida was insufficiently aware of the difference between the image of the infinite circle and the image of the infinite sphere as representing two quite different ways for human beings to understand their relation to the Absolute. As a result, Nishida misunderstood the position of his junior colleague in the philosophy department at the University of Kyoto, Hajime Tanabe, who as a Pure Land Buddhist endorsed the notion of "other-power," reliance on Amida Buddha, for personal salvation. For the same reason, he misunderstood the reality of God for Christians. But, claims Abe, properly understood, the two approaches to God or the Absolute are complimentary and should make room for one another through "self-negation."[\[19\]](#)
- ¶15. My own comment would be that Abe is exactly right on this point. That is, religions of awakening and religions of grace do address different understandings of the self's relation to God or the Absolute. Hence, individuals who ground their personal religious world view in one or other of these understandings should upon reflection realize that they are in dynamic relation with only one dimension of the Absolute or Ultimate Reality. Hence, they should through a process of "self-negation" find a way to incorporate the basic stance of the rival world-view into their own understanding and appreciation of God or the Absolute.[\[20\]](#) As I will make clear below in my reinterpretation of Whitehead's philosophy, I believe that there is a way at least for Christians to incorporate both approaches to Ultimate Reality, that is, both the interpersonal and the transpersonal approach, into a full understanding of God. To this rethinking of Whitehead's understanding of the God-world relationship, therefore, we now turn.

B. The Divine Ontogenetic Matrix

- ¶16. The affinity of Whitehead's metaphysical scheme with the tenets of classical Buddhism (e.g., the interconnectedness of all phenomena, the non-substantiality of the self, etc.) has long been noted. From my perspective, perhaps the most striking similarity in Nishida's and Whitehead's respective world-views is that both of them presuppose a world in which subjects of experience exist in dynamic interrelation and have a common relationship to a supraempirical reality which Whitehead calls creativity and Nishida terms Absolute Nothingness. Admittedly, I am here taking sides with a long-standing debate among Whiteheadian scholars about the status of creativity within Whitehead's metaphysical scheme.^[21] But if, as Jorge Nobo maintains, the notion of creativity in Whitehead's metaphysical scheme should be linked with still another category in that scheme, namely, the notion of the "extensive continuum,"^[22] so as to constitute what Nobo calls the "ontogenetic matrix" or ontological ground for the becoming and the being of actual entities, past, present and future,^[23] then the comparison with *Absolute Nothingness* as the "place" where individual subjects of experience are ultimately located, is quite striking. Neither the conjoint activity of creativity and the extensive continuum for Nobo nor *Absolute Nothingness* for Nishida are thing-like realities which need to be "placed" in some broader context in order to be understood properly. Both in that sense are the ultimate "place" where entities come into existence and are related to one another. Likewise, both Nobo's "ontogenetic matrix" and Nishida's *Absolute Nothingness* are dynamic realities which take on determinate existence in terms of the entities which they empower to exist. Every particular entity, therefore, is both itself and at the same time a self-determination of either the ontogenetic matrix or Absolute Nothingness.
- ¶17. For Buddhists, enlightenment or awakening takes place when the human being somehow becomes aware of his or her identification with the transcendent reality of Absolute Nothingness.^[24] This would be logically impossible if *Absolute Nothingness* were itself a self-existing substantive reality. For, in that case, at the moment of enlightenment, there would be only one entity, Absolute Nothingness. The finite entity would be totally absorbed into the superordinate substantive reality of *Absolute Nothingness* even if here and now it appeared to exist apart or different from Absolute Nothingness. On the other hand, if *Absolute Nothingness* is akin to a transcendent activity which takes on determinate reality and form in and through the finite entity which it empowers to exist, then both *Absolute Nothingness* and the particular entity can in a sense "co-exist," although only in dynamic interdependence. As Abe comments with respect to Ralph, an imaginary golden retriever, "Ralph, the concrete dog here and now, has his place in Absolute Nothingness, and at the same time, truly has his place in himself."^[25] Ralph both is and is not Absolute Nothingness. Likewise, *Absolute Nothingness* both is and is not Ralph.

- ¶18. Awakening to the reality of Nobo's ontogenetic matrix (the conjoint activity of creativity and the extensive continuum in one's life) could also conceivably be a religious experience like Buddhist enlightenment. Within a theistic context, of course, the connection of this ontogenetic matrix with the reality of God would have to be spelled out as well. Here Whiteheadians such as Nobo and myself differ on how that is to be done. I will end this paper with a brief description of our differences on this point.
- ¶19. In his article "Experience, Eternity, and Primordiality," Jorge Nobo distinguishes first between the eternal and non-eternal universes, and then between the necessary primordial actuality within the eternal universe and all contingent actualities which come into existence within the non-eternal universe as a result of a decision made by this primordial actuality.^[26] The primordial actuality, in other words, within Nobo's scheme becomes God the Creator as a result of its decision to create finite actualities; but this decision by the primordial actuality is merely enabled and not necessitated by the nature of the eternal universe or ontogenetic matrix. The primordial actuality could in principle choose simply to exist in and for itself. Ultimate reality for Nobo, therefore, is the eternal universe since it is, in the language of Nishida for Absolute Nothingness, the "place" where all entities, both God the Creator and all creatures, exist in dynamic interrelation. At the same time, the eternal universe enters into the self-constitution of all these entities. As Nobo comments, "the entire antecedent universe-in part eternal, in part non-eternal-functions in the becoming of every actuality, or what is the same, contributes to its determinacy. But each actuality also contributes its own determination; and this is possible because the begetting of each partially determinate actuality is the total universe incarnating and individualizing itself, and hence its eternal properties, in a new creation."^[27]
- ¶20. My own account of this ontogenetic matrix is quite similar to that of Nobo in all respects save one. Whereas Nobo distinguishes between the eternal universe and its primordial actuality, I regard the eternal universe or ontogenetic matrix for all entities as the "nature" or internal principle of existence and activity for God as a personal being in the traditional sense, namely, someone who knows and loves both self and others. God in my scheme is thus a non-dual reality: that is, both universal ground of being and a personal being at the same time. Furthermore, in my scheme, the ground of being for God's own existence and activity likewise serves as the ground of being or ultimate principle of existence and activity for all creatures. Thus, just as in Nobo's scheme, both God and all creatures exist in virtue of one and the same ontogenetic matrix or ground of being. But this matrix in my scheme is simply a dimension of the full reality of God rather than a reality distinct from God who is its primordial actualization.

- ¶21. The difference between Nobo and me thus basically reduces to differences in starting-points for our respective ontological schemes. Nobo's starting-point is purely philosophical. Ultimate Reality for him is an ontogenetic matrix which must have a primordial actuality as its necessary counterpart; otherwise, the ontogenetic matrix has no reason to exist. My starting-point is in Christian theology, in which the Biblical revelation of God as Creator of heaven and earth is assumed. The primordial actuality is then for me the God of Biblical revelation, and the ontogenetic matrix is the divine nature or divine principle of existence and activity which, as a result of a free decision by God, likewise is the principle of existence and activity for all creatures.
- ¶22. Thus, while my scheme allows me to affirm that Ultimate Reality is a personal God, whose inner principle of existence or ground of being likewise serves as the ultimate principle of existence and activity for all creatures, Nobo must logically say that Ultimate Reality is non-personal or transpersonal. Nobo's position is, to be sure, in accord with Whitehead's statement in *Process and Reality* that even God is a "creature" of creativity.^[28] On the other hand, in virtue of my scheme, Whitehead's celebrated Ontological Principle is preserved: namely, that the ultimate reasons for the actual order of the universe are to be found in (actual) entities, not in various logical principles for their existence and activity.^[29] That is, in my scheme, God as a personal being is the ultimate reason for the order of the universe. In Nobo's scheme, however, the eternal universe or ontogenetic matrix as a reality distinct from God but not itself an actuality is the ultimate reason for the way things are.
- ¶23. One further reason why I favor the understanding of the ontogenetic matrix as the nature of God rather than as a reality somehow distinct from God is that it thereby allows me to introduce the logic of intersubjectivity not only between God and creatures but even within the internal reality of God considered apart from creatures. That is, in line with classical Christian theology, I propose that God is not only personal but tripersonal. I interpret "tripersonal" in a strong sense to mean that there are three interrelated subjectivities within God who are governed by a logic of intersubjectivity in their relations with one another. Thus, in line with Nishida's explanation of "inverse correspondence" stated above, each of the divine persons has an "absolutely contradictory self identity" in that each is its individual self by reason of its dynamic relation of opposition to the other two subjectivities. As Thomas Aquinas described it in his classical treatise on the Trinity in the *Summa Theologiae*, each of the divine persons is a "subsistent relation" defined in its own individual identity in virtue of its dynamic relation of opposition to the other two persons.^[30] They have, in other words, nothing in common beyond their relations of opposition to one another, and yet, implicitly in line with Nishida's insight expressed above, they paradoxically possess a deeper identity; they are, in fact, one God, in virtue of those same relations of opposition.

- ¶24. Furthermore, in line with this scheme, one has at hand something of an explanation why Ultimate Reality, at least in part, should consist in an ontogenetic matrix. For, by their dynamic interrelation in virtue of the "logic of intersubjectivity," the divine persons sustain the ontogenetic matrix which is their common ground of being or conjoint field of activity. This is not to say, of course, that first the divine persons exist and then the ontogenetic matrix as their conjoint field of activity comes into existence. Rather, the divine persons co-exist with the ontogenetic matrix as their ground of being or internal source of existence and activity. The divine persons, in other words, cannot exist except in virtue of their conjoint enabling principle of existence and activity, namely, the ontogenetic matrix. But the ontogenetic matrix, on the other hand, has no reason to be except as, in the first place, the principle of existence and activity for the divine persons. Subsequently, in virtue of a conjoint free decision of those same divine persons, the ontogenetic matrix has still further reason to be, in that it now serves as likewise the ultimate principle of existence and activity for all creatures. But, as Nobo also maintains,[\[31\]](#) this ontogenetic matrix is not itself the cause of creation; it simply enables creatures to be once the decision is made by the primordial actuality (in Nobo's scheme) or the triune God (in my scheme) to create a temporal world.
- ¶25. To sum up, then, in this paper I have tried to link Nishida's "logic of place" together with its companion notion of "inverse correspondence" or "absolute contradictory self identity" with a revised understanding of the metaphysical scheme of Alfred North Whitehead which is currently being carried forward by Jorge Nobo and myself. That is, for both Nishida and Whitehead, entities or more precisely subjects of experience are dynamic self-constituting realities rather than fixed objects of thought as in the formal logic of Aristotle and Aquinas. Furthermore, for both Nishida and Whitehead, the manner of self-constitution of these subjects of experience is basically the same: namely, self-affirmation through self-negation, an absolute contradictory self identity in virtue of allowing oneself to be defined in one's own individual identity through relation to another independent subject of experience (or many such subjects of experience in combination). Finally, for both Whitehead and Nishida this "inverse correspondence" between opposing subjectivities is paradoxically enabled by a dynamic relationship to a common transcendent reality: for Nishida, Absolute Nothingness; for Whitehead, creativity.

- ¶26. As noted above, Jorge Nobo and I link Whitehead's category of creativity with the notion of the "extensive continuum" within Whitehead's metaphysical scheme so to constitute what Jorge Nobo labels the ontogenetic matrix of the universe and what I regard as the transcendent ground of being, or principle of existence, for the three divine persons and all their creatures. In both cases, however, the parallel with the notion of *Absolute Nothingness* in Nishida's philosophy is quite striking. That is, *Absolute Nothingness* for Nishida, the ontogenetic matrix for Nobo, and the nature of God or divine ground of being within my scheme, is not an actuality in the sense of some self-existing reality. Rather, it is an activity-oriented, non-substantialist "Field-Being" which achieves concrete actuality only in and through the particular entities which it empowers to exist. Hence, it is both itself and yet not itself in each of the entities which it enables to exist. Thus, as Masao Abe noted above in connection with the notion of *Absolute Nothingness* for Nishida, this transcendent reality likewise is or has an absolute contradictory self-identity in that it both is and is not everything that can be said about it.

END NOTES

1. Kitaro Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good*, translated by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives, New Haven: Yale University Press (1990).
2. Masao Abe, *Nishida's Philosophy of 'Place'*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 28 1988, 355-371. Reference is to Kitaro Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good*, translated by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives, New Haven: Yale University Press (1990), 48-49.
3. *ibid.*, 360.
4. *ibid.*, 363.
5. *ibid.*, 364.

6. Cf. Robert E. Carter, *The Nothingness Beyond God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nishida Kitaro, 2nd ed*, St. Paul, MN: Paragon House (1997). “Aristotle provided a logic which gave primacy to the grammatical subject, and thus to the unchanging substratum. Nishida wants to right this by placing full emphasis on the grammatical predicate, or to the underlying matrix of place out of which the subject arises, and which actually gives it its proper shape-as-contextualized. Still, it seems to this author that Nishida would have done better to have spoken not of his ‘logic of place,’ but to have stressed his logic of subject *and* predicate, or of object and place. It is not exactly a logic of place, but a logic of place as the matrix or context out of which all differentiations or determinations arise, and in which they and their mutual relationships are grounded” (p48-49).
7. Masao Abe, *Nishida's Philosophy of 'Place'*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 28 1988, 355-371, 369.
8. *ibid.*, 370.
9. Masao Abe, *'Inverse Correspondence' in the Philosophy of Nishida: The Emergence of the Notion*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 32(3) 1992, 325-344, 329.
10. *ibid.*, 329.
11. *ibid.*, 334. Reference is to Kitaro Nishida, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious World View*, translated by David Dillworth, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (1987), 93.
12. *ibid.*, 334.
13. Cf. Robert E. Carter, *The Nothingness Beyond God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nishida Kitaro, 2nd ed*, St. Paul, MN: Paragon House (1997): “two things cannot be self-contradictory unless they are related by an enveloping matrix which, at the same time, unites them. For things to be in opposition implies thereby a deeper, underlying and grounding unity/system/basho” (58).
14. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Scribner's (1970).

15. Robert E. Carter, *The Nothingness Beyond God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nishida Kitaro, 2nd ed*, St. Paul, MN: Paragon House (1997), 58-80.
16. Masao Abe, *The Problem of 'Inverse Correspondence' in the Philosophy of Nishida: Comparing Nishida with Tanabe*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 39(1) 1999, 59-76.
17. Masao Abe, *'Inverse Correspondence' in the Philosophy of Nishida: The Emergence of the Notion*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 32(3) 1992, 325-344, 53-54. cf. also 76, 89.
18. Masao Abe, *The Problem of 'Inverse Correspondence' in the Philosophy of Nishida: Comparing Nishida with Tanabe*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 39(1) 1999, 59-76, 69-71.
19. *ibid.*, 74-76.
20. The implications of this insight for interreligious dialogue are obviously quite significant even though they cannot be elaborated upon here. Briefly stated, what it seems to imply as a goal for interreligious dialogue is mutual enrichment for all the participants in an atmosphere of trusting acceptance of one another's cherished beliefs rather than seeking to establish a higher viewpoint from which to rank and order the various world religions.
21. Cf. my book Joseph . Bracken, *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link between East and West* , New York: Maryknoll (1995), 52-56, for a brief summary of this disucssion.
22. The extensive continuum is a metaphysical "given " for Whitehead in that it constitutes the necessary context or "place " for the interrelated existence of actual entities not only in our own "cosmic epoch " but also in any conceivable past or future cosmic epochs. Hence, the extensive continuum underlies the space-time continuum familiar to us from the natural sciences. Cf., e.g., Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* , New York: Free Press (1978), 61-82.
23. Jorge Nobo, *Experience, Eternity, and Primordiality: Steps toward a Metaphysics of Creative Solidarity*, *Process Studies* , 26 1997, 171-204, 190-194.

- [24.](#) Cf. here Seiichi Yagi , [Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Japan: Varieties of Immediate Experience](#), *Buddhist-Christian Studies* , 14 1994, 11-12. Yagi makes clear the different ways in which this total identification with Absolute Nothingness can take place.
- [25.](#) Masao Abe, [Nishida's Philosophy of 'Place'](#), *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 28 1988, 355-371, 368.
- [26.](#) Jorge Nobo, [Experience, Eternity, and Primordially: Steps toward a Metaphysics of Creative Solidarity](#), *Process Studies* , 26 1997, 171-204, 180-84; 195-203.
- [27.](#) Jorge Nobo, [From Creativity to Ontogenetic Matrix: Learning from Whitehead's Account of the Ultimate](#), *Process Thought*, 8 1998, 90-89.

N.B.: In *Process Thought*, a Japanese journal, pages are numbered backwards (from the last page to the first).
- [29.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* , New York: Free Press (1978), 19. Cf. also a recent article by Lewis S. Ford, [Nobo's Eternal Realities and the Primordial Decision](#), *Process Studies*, 26 1997, 205-217, critiquing Nobo for his failure to follow Whitehead's Ontological Principle in his reinterpretation of Whitehead's metaphysical scheme.
- [28.](#) *ibid.*, 88.
- [30.](#) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* , Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (1951), I, Q. 29, art. 4 resp.
- [31.](#) Jorge Nobo, [Experience, Eternity, and Primordially: Steps toward a Metaphysics of Creative Solidarity](#), *Process Studies* , 26 1997, 171-204, 195.

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