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学位論文内容の要約

博士の専攻分野の名称：博士（文学） 氏名：Richard Hammond Stone IV

学位論文題名

How Original is Nishida Kitarō's Philosophy in *An Inquiry into the Good*? A Critical Investigation of Japan's 'First' Philosophy

(『善の研究』における西田幾多郎の哲学はどれほど独創的か？日本「最初の」哲学をめぐる批判的研究)

In this doctoral thesis, I have aimed to reevaluate the widely accepted notion that Nishida Kitarō's *An Inquiry into the Good* (1911) is the first original text in modern Japan. While there has been a long-standing and commonly accepted narrative which takes Nishida to be entirely original in comparison to his preceding philosophers in the Meiji era (1868-1912) – who are often claimed to have merely stopped at translations or interpretations of Western philosophy – there is significant evidence which suggests that matters are not so simple. Indeed, despite the comparative lack of attention that many Meiji philosophers like Inoue Enryō, Onishi Hajime, and Miyake Setsurei have received, it would seem that such thinkers offer many insights that not only stand prior to Nishida's earliest writings, but appear similar to what was written in *An Inquiry into the Good*. Given that this narrative has played a large role in shaping how students and philosophers in other fields understand the developmental process of philosophy in Japan, this inconsistency cannot be left alone.

Hence, in this thesis, I ask the question of what it means to say that Nishida's philosophy is more “original” than his predecessors in the Meiji era. Due to the intellectual dynamism that characterized the Meiji period, a complete survey of all the philosophy conducted during this time period and how it related to *An Inquiry into the Good* is not possible. Furthermore, because of Nishida's capacity to integrate a large amount of information into his own thought, it is similarly impossible to limit ourselves to comparing Nishida with only one of his predecessors. Hence, I have chosen to outline what it means to call Nishida original in relation to his predecessors by comparing Nishida with one thinker or important trend per chapter, with each particular chapter corresponding to the central arguments laid out in *An Inquiry into the Good*. Specifically, the first chapter correlates with Nishida's ontology (parts 1 and 2 of *An Inquiry into the Good*), the second

with his ethics (part 3), and the third with his religious philosophy (part 4). The content of these three chapters are as follows.

In Chapter 1, I start with an analysis of the cornerstone of Nishida's early philosophy: his theory of pure experience. Indeed, a look at the historicity of this theory will reveal the basic problems and core themes that run throughout this thesis. Here, I will explore the basic issue in which Nishida's philosophy of pure experience is treated as both an unprompted start to original philosophy in Japan as well as the final development in one trend in Meiji period philosophy: the theory of "phenomena-qua-reality." As the name implies, this theory looked to provide a view of reality in which conscious phenomena are immediately one with (*soku*) reality itself. In order to see how this theory – which has been associated with such authors as Inoue Tetsujirō, Kiyozawa Manshi, and Miyake Setsurei – relates to Nishida's philosophy of pure experience, I will focus on the relation between Nishida and the alleged first proponent of this theory, Inoue Enryō. By means of evaluating the similarities and differences between how these two thinkers interpreted reality, two things will become clear. First, we will clearly see that there are many overlapping claims in both of their theories. In this sense, I believe this exploration will allow us to state quite distinctively that Nishida's philosophical originality ought not only be pursued in the philosophical intuitions he espouses, given that they share a great deal with previous authors like Inoue. Second, we will also be able to see a critical difference between the ways that both of these authors approach philosophy, and what they expect of philosophical argumentation. This will open the way for us to see one basic claim of this thesis: Nishida's alleged philosophical originality should not be sought after only in the ideas he proposes, but also in his unique methodology as well as in his attitude toward philosophical argumentation.

In Chapter 2, I move on to an exploration of the historicity of Nishida's ethics. While many readers have looked at this aspect of Nishida's thought as the least interesting or valuable

aspect of his early work, the matter is likely not so simple. In order to evaluate whether or not this commonly accepted understanding is accurate, I will take another look at Nishida's ethical theory as it is situated within the critical discourse concerning individualism in the Meiji period. To do this, accomplishing the following two goals will be necessary. First, it will be necessary to establish the framework in which Nishida's ethics were formed. That is to say, we must make clear what problems he faced and what matters were of considerable import to thinkers in his generation. Only after this has been accomplished can we move on to our second goal: establishing what – if anything – Nishida contributed to ethical discussions in the Meiji period. In response to these tasks, I will make the following two claims. The first will be that Nishida's ethical thought ought to be understood within the progression leading up to what was referred to as the Theory of Self-Realization (自己実現説). The second will be that the consistency of Nishida's ethics with his ontological views manages to provide a theoretical background for many Meiji iterations of similar ideas that had – up to that point – been argued for with little to no substantiation.

In Chapter 3, I will finally approach the religious aspect of Nishida's thought as it relates to Meiji philosophy. In order to do so, I will focus on perhaps the most central concept of his earliest philosophy: The True Self (真の自己). In *An Inquiry into the Good*, Nishida often discusses our individual selves as though they were merely parts of a second, greater, "true" self. In spite of the intuitive appeal such a reading may carry, I question whether or not this view of selfhood can be justified within the framework of his philosophical project (or if it is even an accurate depiction of what he is trying to express). Keeping this in mind, I will attempt to understand how Nishida uses this term, and what possible influence the historical background of his work could have had on this often misunderstood concept. In order to accomplish this task, I

will move in the following order. First, I will contextualize the spread of notions relating to personality or selfhood in the context of what certain commentators have referred to as Organic Philosophy. Put better, we will see that frameworks employing a “small self” and “great self” were often treated as a bridge between the individual’s consciousness and a larger consciousness (i.e., the nation, humanity). As our representative of this organic tradition, I will focus on the work of Miyake Setsurei in *The Cosmos* (1909). For Miyake, the universe was not just *comparable* to an organism – it *was* an organism. Our individual selves, as part of this organism, needed to find harmony with this larger consciousness. Although in many respects this appears commensurate with how Nishida describes the relation between individual and universe or self and God, I believe that reading him along these lines raises unanswerable questions and fails to get at the heart of what Nishida was hoping to achieve. Hence, in this chapter, I argue that there is both lingering influence from previous authors in Nishida’s concept of selfhood as well as signs of a radically different understanding of what the self is.

In the conclusion, I briefly address what these three chapters can tell us about the narrative that Nishida is the first original philosopher in Japan. Instead of unilaterally deeming him original or unoriginal, however, I attempt to show that there is a “continuity of discontinuities” in play. That is, depending on the perspective one takes, one could say that Nishida’s early work is a continuous progression of ideas that had already been articulated by earlier Meiji period authors. At the same time, however, one could identify Nishida’s methodological advancements as a new starting point that would later give birth to his more mature philosophical insights, making *An Inquiry into the Good* a decisive and discontinuous cut between previous Meiji philosophy and Nishida’s original work. In light of this apparent contradiction, I end this thesis by highlighting some of the ways in which this conclusion can practically affect the way specialists study Japanese philosophy and introduce it to non-specialists in the future.