

# **Kant, Nishida, and Mou on Intellectual Intuition**

## **a transcultural comparison**

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### **Abstract**

As a pathway connecting Western philosophy to Eastern, Nishida Kitaro, and Mou Zongsan have similarly taken the challenge to reinterpret the meaning of intellectual intuition (*intellektuelle Anschauung*), through which the special characteristics of Asian philosophical thoughts can be revealed. Nishida believes that there is no clear distinction between intellectual intuition and perception. Intellectual intuition contains far richer content than ordinary intuition, which can be seen from the artistic and religious experience. Intellectual intuition transcends the dichotomy between subject and object and serves as a united basis for knowledge and morality in relation to religion; Mou, on the other hand, believes that the acknowledgment of intellectual intuition is the common characteristic of different schools of Chinese philosophy. Chinese philosophy in general admits that human beings can act as infinite beings in terms of morality and with which they can stand for and live out their subjectivity. The above appropriations show not only the different approaches to reinterpreting Kant's conception of intellectual intuition but also the unique way of modernization of Asian philosophy. The former introduces a different understanding of consciousness and unconscious acts for a better understanding of the living phenomenon, the latter rebuilds the foundation of Confucianism by Kantian argumentation of morality. In this paper, I will not only shed light on their thinking on intellectual intuition but also evaluate their interpretations according to their reception and appropriation of Kantian ideas to show why they are not "just another Kantian".

**Keywords:** Immanuel Kant, Nishida Kitaro, Mou Zongsan, Intellectual Intuition, comparative philosophy

## Introduction

As a pathway connecting Western philosophy to Eastern, Nishida Kitaro, and Mou Zongsan have similarly taken the challenge to reinterpret the meaning of intellectual intuition (intellektuelle Anschauung), through which the special characteristics of Asian philosophical thoughts can be revealed. Nishida believes that there is no clear distinction between intellectual intuition and perception. Intellectual intuition contains far richer content than ordinary intuition, which can be seen from the artistic and religious experience. Intellectual intuition transcends the dichotomy between subject and object and serves as a united basis for knowledge and morality in relation to religion; Mou, on the other hand, believes that the acknowledgment of intellectual intuition is the common characteristic of different schools of Chinese philosophy (including Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism). Chinese philosophy in general admits that human beings can act as infinite beings in terms of morality and with which they can stand for and live out their subjectivity. The above appropriations show not only the different approaches to reinterpreting Kant's conception of intellectual intuition but also the unique way of modernization of Asian philosophy. The former introduces a different understanding of consciousness and unconscious acts for a better understanding of living phenomena, the latter rebuilds the foundation of Confucianism by Kantian argumentation of morality.

Before we get into the discussion, I want to briefly elaborate on the reason why we parallel Nishida and Mou in this matter. I agree with Lam Wing-Keung's and Asakura Tomomi's observation that "not much attention has been devoted to the dialogue between Japanese philosophy and the contemporary Chinese philosophical tradition" (Lam 2006: 23) and "no two intellectual movements need the synthetic approach more urgently than the two philosophical schools in this region that have so far scarcely appreciated each other – the Kyoto School and Contemporary New Confucianism." (Asakura 2013:4) To improve this unsatisfying situation, first and foremost, we need to consider the orientation and method of conducting such comparison. As Asakura Tomomi put it, "it seems reasonable to group them together as *East Asian philosophy*" because they have certain "similarities" regarding certain similar philosophical backgrounds (e.g., Buddhism and Confucianism). However, Asakura maintains that these similarities cannot serve as the "firm bedrock for comparative philosophy" as "researchers have rarely found any distinctive philosophical arguments that are truly *common* to them." (Asakura 2013:4). Thus, he aims to establish the firm bedrock by arguing that they have a common philosophical model rooted in the same type of theory,

the “onto-topological turn” from the act of consciousness to its *basho* (Nishida’s term) or its vertical enfolding (Mou’s term). (Asakura 2013:2)

I agree that it is worthwhile to search for a “bedrock” for the comparative purposes between them. However, firstly, I am not convinced that his arguments for the same type of theory could meet the purpose of establishing a firm bedrock for the philosophical comparison between them. Secondly, I am worried that the direct comparison may lead us to a kind of philosophical essentialism in thinking.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, I purpose to compare these philosophers through a third figure other than a direct comparison between them. As a Chinese idiom says that “the other mountain’s stone can polish jade” (他山之石可以攻玉),<sup>2</sup> to build a “bedrock” for comparative philosophy, a triangular (or multangular) comparison by focusing on how Asian philosophers appropriate the keys alien philosophical concepts could avoid the difficulty of determining the “core” or “essence” of one’s philosophical systems. At the same time, we could gain a new perspective on the specific question from a perspective of transcultural or global philosophy, not limited to the perspective of East Asian philosophy. I am not conclusively saying that the method of triangular comparison is better than direct comparison for the sake of making progress in implementing the research between Nishida and Mou, or even between the Kyoto School and New Confucianism. This approach, instead, aims for the establishment of “multiple bedrocks” across philosophies depending on subjects of comparison.

With this idea in mind, I am going to compare their views on the concept of intellectual intuition for the sake of not only displaying their similarities and dissimilarities but also extending the question of whether they have original contributions to philosophy through assimilation and dissimilation of alien conceptions. I will not only shed light on their thinking on intellectual intuition but also evaluate their interpretations in contrast to Kant to show why they are not “just another Kantian”. (Asakura 2013: 7)<sup>3</sup>

## 1. Intellectual intuition for Kant, Nishida, and Mou

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<sup>1</sup> It is a pity that I am not able to offer sufficient reasons here to support my conclusion to Asakura’s argument because the main purpose of this paper lies neither in the methodological discussion nor the direct comparison between Nishida and Mou. However, I admit it is necessary and meaningful to do this on another occasion.

<sup>2</sup> Meaning “to improve oneself by accepting criticism from outside” or “to borrow talent from abroad to develop the nation effectively.”

<sup>3</sup> In the context of Asakura Tomomi’s essay, “just another Kantian” refers only to Mou Zongsan. However, I would like to extend the discussion to whether both of them are “just another Kantian”. Please refer to the last session of this paper.

The reception of Kant plays a key role in the modernization of contemporary Japanese and Chinese philosophy. This statement can be testified by the reception and contention about a cardinal concept of Kantian philosophy, intellectual intuition, in Nishida's and Mou's works. Notably, however, the development of the concept of intellectual intuition in the context of modern European philosophy is not less complex than the reception history in contemporary Asian philosophy. In the following, I will give a very brief retrospection of the conceptual development in the West, then we will review Nishida's and Mou's reception respectively.

### **1-1 Intuition and understanding: pure, sensible, and intellectual**

To understand the meaning and significance of intellectual intuition in Kantian philosophy, it is necessary to declare the fundamental role of "intuition" (*Anschauung*) in the critical system. Before Kant, intuition is to be distinguished radically from other forms of knowledge, especially for the rationalist philosophers like Descartes and Spinoza, which refer to immediate, intuitive, or intelligible knowledge contrasting the mediated knowledge of the senses. Kant, instead, situates intuition at the faculty of sensibility in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" of *CPR*, which is received and formed in terms of the forms of intuition, namely space and time. In this context, as Manfred Baum put it, the nature of intuitions is to be understood as sensible intuition that refers to singular representations (representations of individuals) affected by the object, contrasting concepts as general representations (representations of common characters of things). (Cf. Baum 2019: 133) Indeed, for Kant, although *human* intuition is by nature "sensible", intuition can still be divided into "sensible" or "pure". It is logically possible to assume a kind of pure intuition that is not only independent of sensible affection but also able to let sensible objects appear spontaneously. In this sense, "pure intuition" refers to those formal intuition concerning the form of something. Therefore, in the context of *CPR*, we can take "space" and "time" as pure intuitions as well as forms of intuition. Thus, Baum says, "[...] there is no contradiction in the notion of a pure or a priori and yet sensible intuition if pure intuition refers to the forms of possible appearances only, or if it should itself be only a formal intuition. This would mean that it is not the intuition of a given object but of the way of sensibly intuiting objects." (Baum 2019: 133)

Therefore, through Kant's formulation, "intuition" becomes a necessary but not sufficient condition in the formulation of human knowledge. The sensible character of "intuition" determined by Kant specifies the essential character of human understanding. Human intuition is thus necessarily sensible (or pure sensible), not intellectual. Therefore, to read this issue from another perspective, the nature of intuition tells the nature of understanding, and vice versa. Thus, as

Werner S. Pluhar put it, “[t]he ‘different understanding’ and the ‘different intuition’ turn out to be (almost) the same thing: an intuitive understanding (or ‘intuitive intellect’) is a power of intellectual intuition.” (Kant 1989: 289 n. 25) Since human intuition is by nature derivative (*intuitus derivativus*), not original (*intuitus originarius*), human understanding can only be discursive, not intuitive.

### 1-2 Nishida on intellectual intuition

At the beginning of *An Inquiry into the Good / A Study of Good* 《善の研究》, Nishida started his inquiry from the concept of “pure experience”. This concept became the foundational concept of the Kyoto school at a later time. However, as he explained in the preface in 1991, the first chapter of the book was written later than the second and the third, and he suggests new readers skip the first chapter concerning “pure experience”, although it should be understood as the foundation of his thought.<sup>4</sup> (NKZ 1:6) In the fourth and the last secession of this chapter, he focuses the whole discussion on the “intellectual intuition” because, in my view, it serves as a transitional role to connect the special character of pure experience and the later topics that concern “Reality” and “The Good”.

From the beginning of this session, Nishida states plainly how he understands and employs the concept of intellectual intuition. He says:

Intellectual intuition (intellektuelle Anschauung) is an intuition of ideal, usually trans-empirical one. It intuits that which can be known dialectically. Examples of this are found in the intuition of artists and people of religion. With respect to the process of intuiting, intellectual intuition is identical to ordinary perception, but with respect to content, intellectual intuition is far richer and more profound. (NKZ 1:33, Nishida, 1990:30)

From this passage, we know that Nishida’s understanding of intellectual intuition is in a sense closer to the traditional understanding in the West. Nishida does not *flatly* distinguish intellectual intuition from ordinary perception, namely empirical or sensible intuition in the Kantian term. The difference between intellectual intuition and sensible intuition is only a matter of degree. Nishida says: “I believe, [...], intellectual intuition and ordinary perception belong to the same category and that the two cannot be clearly demarcated.” (NKZ 1: 33)

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<sup>4</sup> Nishida works are to be cited according to NKZ. The English translation is made by me according to my understanding based on the Chinese and two English translations. If there are any misconceptions, it would be my fault. All Chinese and English translations are listed on the reference.

Although the difference between ordinary and intellectual intuition cannot be separated, it still can be differentiated by certain characteristics. First, the quality of intuition largely depends on one's talent. He takes Mozart as an example to illustrate the idea that the talented person has the ability or vision to grasp the wholeness of things at a glance. "The ideal elements are not simply built in increments quantitatively, but become qualitatively profound." (NKZ 1:34) For Nishida, the most profound intellectual intuition can be discovered from "a person of religion who, through human love, can intuit the oneness of self and other." (NKZ 1:34)

Second, Nishida rejects the view that "the intellectual intuition differs from ordinary perception in that it transcends space, time and the individual person and directly penetrates the true nature of reality." (NKZ 1:34) He maintains, from the standpoint of pure experience in the strict sense, experience is not limited to the above forms. On the contrary, "these discriminations derive from an intuition that transcends them [,]" namely the intellectual intuition. (NKZ 1:34) He takes a position similar to the early German idealists who emphasize that there exists a united and undivided status before subject-object-distinction. In other words, intellectual intuition represents the more original, more profound states of intuition or perception. Intellectual intuition is not a special power that owns by the supreme being. Nishida does not allocate this power to the higher or different beings; he reserves it for humans and through which humans could deepen and enlarge the state of pure experience. "Intellectual intuition is just that which deepens and enlarges our state of pure experience; it is the manifestation of a great unity in the systematic development of consciousness." (NKZ 1:34)

Third, Nishida rejects the view that qualifies the ordinary perception and intellectual intuition in view of passivity or activity. In Kant's *CPR*, empirical intuition or ordinary perception is formulated through the passive faculty, viz. sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*). Understanding (*Verstand*) is an activity power to modify sensible data and perception in order to formulate knowledge and experience. However, Nishida deems that intellectual intuition transcends the active-passive distinction because it transcends the subject-object distinction. "Intellectual intuition sounds like a subjective activity, but actually it is a state that has transcended subject and object." (NKZ 1:35) In *The Intelligible World* (1928), he restated the idea that "an intellectual intuition is reached, where subject and object are united." (NKZ 4: 135) Intellectual intuition represent a state that "the Self becomes conscious of the object with mediation; this union of subject and object is intellectual intuition." (NKZ 4: 140) Indeed, he revised the relation among the self, cognitive faculty and sensible intuition established by Kant. For Kant, human cognition must be expressed in forms of judgment. The table of judgments and the

table of pure categories indicate that all human conscious cognition has embedded the subject-object relation. Human cognition is a combination of *active* understanding and *passive* sensible intuition in consciousness, represented in different forms of judgment. This means no subject or self (as a representation of thought) can be comprehended without the help of linguistic expression. Thus, in his later essay, *The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview* (1945), Nishida names the Kantian subject to be “the grammatical subject” or “subject of expressions”. (Nishida 1987, 61-62) However, he rejects the idea that our cognitive faculty, namely “thinking”, actively modifies passive intuition in a logical structure. On the contrary, as a more profound intuition, intellectual intuition underlies thinking. (NKZ 1:35-36) He quotes William James’ ideas in “The Stream of Thought” to illustrate the idea that, at the base of consciousness, vast intuition functions behind or before the subject-object consciousness. This original, profound, all-encompassing intuition is intellectual.

### 1-3 Mou on intellectual intuition

As one of the founders of New Confucianism, Mou Zongsan made great efforts to interpret Kantian philosophy, intending to bridge Western and Chinese philosophies by examining Kant and the history of Chinese philosophy. In his late work *Appearance and Thing-in-itself* 《現象與物自身》, he criticizes Kant’s and Heidegger’s denial of intellectual intuition, which restricts the role and significance of thing-in-itself as well as noumenon in a negative sense. For taking a step forward in Kantian philosophy, he argues, we need insights from the tradition of Eastern philosophers that fundamentally asserts the possibility of intellectual intuition. Through those insights, we can not only establish a meaningful connection between Western and Eastern philosophy but also advance Kantian philosophy to a new level.

He argues for the reality of “intellectual intuition” (智的直覺) by extracting the common characteristic of Eastern philosophical traditions, including Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. For example, Mou illustrates the concept of non-attachment ontology by interpreting Buddhism. He uses the concept of *Yuanjiao* 圓教 (the complete and perfect doctrine) from the school of *Tiantai* 天臺宗 (also in comparison with the school of *Huayan* 華嚴宗) to illustrate his understanding of *Tiantai*’s noumenal ontology (本體界的存有論), namely the ontology of non-attachment, in contrast to Kant’s ontology of attachment. (Mou 2003b: 429) According to Mou’s reconstruction, although the doctrine of the school of *Huayan* on “store consciousness” (*ālaya-vijñāna*, 阿賴耶識) is able to explain “all dharmas” (*sarva-dharma*, 一切法), it can only explain the origin of all dharmas empirically. (Mou 2003d: 285) Therefore, we need a further explanation of the transcendental

ground of the origin of the Buddhahood (佛性). It cannot rely on *Huayan*'s system since it still depends on an ontology of attachment. We need *Tiantai*'s system of "the womb of the thus-come-one" (*tathagātagarbha*, 如來藏) which can directly assert the origin of the Buddhahood by intellectual intuition. (Mou 2003d: 285-286, also cf. 2003b: 420)

In the case of Daoism, to remove the sickness in life, namely "the manufacture" (造作), all we need to focus on is the training of the heart-mind. "The training" or "the way of training" (*Kungfu* 功夫) for one's heart-mind is "to reach the vacuity and to retain the silence and calm" (致虛守靜) of your heart-mind. (Mou 2003b: 445)<sup>5</sup> In this state, the heart-mind can genuinely return to its root, revive its nature and know the constant and thus, shedding light on all beings as themselves. (Mou 2003b: 446)<sup>6</sup> All these training aims at an understanding and experience of the origin of beings, which denotes a "negation of beings" (*Wu* 無). For Mou, the affirmation of the origin of beings as a negation of beings relies on the affirmation of intellectual intuition. Since intellectual intuition depends on nothing, it can lead to a detachment of fixation, which is in other words, a state of non-attachment. It is true freedom for Daoists.

In the case of Confucianism, Mou believes the starting point lies in its affirmation of "moral awareness" (道德意識). Moral awareness grounds the possibility of morality and by that, the metaphysical entity (the noumenon) is revealed. Mou explains that, as moral agents, humans can make a moral judgment because of the inner standard that originates from the moral entity. Our moral awareness reveals such an inner moral entity directly. In this revelation of morality, Mou believes, we will understand that the moral entity is plainly and immediately moral, as well as metaphysical. Since moral agents realize themselves *de facto* as a moral entity, they realize their subjectivity as well as others' subjectivity from the perspective of morality. Everything has its moral significance *in* and *for* itself. (Mou 2003b: 451)

Such realization is possible because Confucians, in particular regarding the tradition of the "school of heart-mind" (心學), generally believe in the reality of the heart-mind. In contrast with Buddhism and Daoism, which fundamentally deny the reality and value of subjectivity, Confucianism positively affirms the value of moral subjectivity and the constructive effect of moral actions. (Mou 2003b: 452) By his interpretation of Wang Yangming's 王陽明 doctrine and other Confucian texts, Mou argues that the "realization of self and realization of things" (成己成物)

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<sup>5</sup> Compare Roger Ames's translation about "致虛守靜" in *Dao De Jing* Chapter 16: "Extend your utmost emptiness as far as you can. And do your best to preserve your equilibrium (*jing*)." (Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall 2003: 99)

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 「在虛靜中，觀復以歸根、復命、知常，即是明照萬物之各在其自己也。」



are actually grounded in the same transcendental power, the a priori moral awareness. Such a priori moral awareness is an intellectual intuition that can positively and autonomously determine moral value and moral action. It is an inner event of the realization of self. With such intellectual intuition, the moral agent can also practice morality and affect things externally. It is the process of the realization of things. Both realizations originate from the same source and work parallelly through the process of self-realization. (Mou 2003b: 459) This dual process is grounded ultimately on the possibility of intellectual intuition.

## 2. Mou's and Nishida's application of intellectual intuition in comparison with Kantian philosophy

With the above reconstruction, we can discover that they hold a very different understanding of intellectual intuition in comparison not only to Kant but also to each other. For Nishida and Mou, intellectual intuition is a reality for human beings. Unlike Kant, both of them assert that human beings can apply intellectual intuition in different activities and experiences. Intellectual intuition is not a logical or limiting concept for defining or delimiting the possibility of human soul power. It is a sign of an enlarged or a deepening human understanding and experience.

Although both of them do not accept the delimitation of human experience set by Kant, they have very different stances towards the Kantian framework that is rooted profoundly in the transcendental method. Mou insists on the viewpoint that Kantian philosophy must be a dualism: not only a cognitive dualism but also a causal dualism including causality of nature and freedom. Moreover, following Kant's basic idea of the "fact of reason," Mou maintains the primacy of practical reason and treats it as the source of human infinitude. For Kant, the primacy of practical reason implies the primacy of morality over nature, denoting the superiority of the supersensible and independent determinant of morality. On this basis, Mou interprets the primacy of morality as the foundation of infinite progress. The progress states from self-realization to a perfect realization of morality in the human world. It is infinite progress towards the ideal. It can be recapped by the idea of "sageliness within, kingliness without" (內聖外王) promoted mainly by Confucianism, though it springs from *Zhuangzi*.<sup>7</sup> Such progress is infinite progress towards the ideal. In this progress, human beings implement the ideas of their ideal

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. 莊子：《莊子·天下篇·1》：「天下大亂，賢聖不明，道德不一，天下多得一察焉以自好。譬如耳目鼻口，皆有所明，不能相通。猶百家眾技也，皆有所長，時有所用。雖然，不該不遍，一曲之士也。判天地之美，析萬物之理，察古人之全，寡能備於天地之美，稱神明之容。是故內聖外王之道，闡而不明，鬱而不發，天下之人各為其所欲焉以自為方。悲夫！百家往而不反，必不合矣。後世之學者，不幸不見天地之純，古人之大體，道術將為天下裂。」

world through their moral and cultural endeavors, as represented in customs, religions, arts, politics, etc. In this matter, philosophy plays an essential role in the search for the fundamental unity behind these cultural endeavors. For Mou, this fundamental unity lies in the “transcendental interrelatedness between the way of heaven and human nature and destiny” (天道性命相貫通). Through the practice of moral deed, human beings not only carry out morality but also harmoniously actualize the way of heaven. Thus, the transcendental capacity of morals can be actualized and extended from the individual to all things under heaven.

On the contrary, in my view, Nishida emphasizes the primacy of existence. He maintains that existential experience is ontologically more primordial than moral and cognitive experience in constructing human experience as a whole. Moreover, he brings Nothingness—or in Nishida’s term, the “Absolute Nothingness” (*zettai mu* 絶対無)—into account when he considers the problem of Being and existence. The Nothingness belongs to the realm of unconsciousness that grounds the realm of consciousness and beings. Through religious consciousness one can reach the realm of no-self, of unconsciousness, denoting a nonverbal status that is not limited by conscious knowledge. In this status, one is liberated from the limitation of the conscious self and starts the process of transformation from the created to the creating. This process can be understood as a process that starts from the formed (the given facts and existential situatedness of one’s life) and goes into the formless and the unlimited (a sense of the infinite). Unlike Mou, Nishida transcends Kant by not accepting Kantian dualism. From his inquiry of Pure Experience to the Absolute Nothingness, Nishida asserts that there exists a realm beyond the consciousness of beings that is more original and profound. His interpretation stands closer to the monistic one which aims at penetrating the field of immediate subject-object unity.

Mou’s and Nishida’s application of intellectual intuition show not only the differences in understanding of the term but also in constructing of their philosophical agenda. For Mou, the reception and remolding of Kantian are necessary because he takes it as the key to bridging Chinese and Western philosophy. Kantian philosophy plays an essential role in this project due to the similarity between his practical philosophy and Confucian moral philosophy – both concerning the autonomy and transcendental power of morality. Moreover, Kant, or Western philosophy in general, offers a rigorous methodology and epistemological dimension that are missing in Chinese thoughts. These special characteristics, in Mou’s eyes, have an indispensable significance to his late philosophical agenda which aims for a general comprehension of Chinese

philosophy and an establishment of the status of Chinese philosophy in the world.<sup>8</sup> However, Kant does not play the same role in Nishida's philosophical system. Kant is for Nishida much more like an interlocutor for general philosophical issues. For example, in *The Intelligible World*, he critically reviewed Kant and Husserl's theory of self and consciousness in order to launch his investigation of the intelligible world. His review represents a stand that the philosophical investigation of consciousness is still confined to cognition through concepts. From Nishida's perspective, intellectual intuition is still subject to conceptual knowledge and cannot reach the true sense of the intelligible world.<sup>9</sup> He did not take the Kantian framework as a foundation of his system but as a passage to elaborate his ideas.

### 3. Just another Kantian? Doing philosophy by conceptual assimilation and dissimilation

After a brief comparison among these philosophers, we can get back to the discussion at the beginning of this paper concerning the orientation and meaning of transcultural triangular comparison. As we have mentioned before, scholars maintain that the comparison works between Nishida and Mou are insufficient. According to Asakura's observation, "Mou appears in Japanese eyes as just another Kantian" (Asakura 2013: 7) because they believe that Mou simply equalizes Confucianism with Kant. A reinterpretation of Chinese philosophy in Kantian terms and method does not contribute to philosophical discussion *per se*. Therefore, Japanese philosophers seem to rate Mou's philosophy negatively due to its lack of originality. Thus, Asakura explains: "Whereas Kyoto philosophers at least attempt to *contribute to philosophy* by their investigations, the keystone in the possible metaphysics that Mou envisions is no more than Kant's primacy of practical reason." (Asakura 2013: 6-7)

This reading can be understood for the reason that Mou, as we put in the last session, does have a strong belief in the role of Kantian philosophy in his late philosophical agenda. However, although, I believe, Kant is indispensable for Mou's philosophical agenda, it does not mean that his philosophy depends solely

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<sup>8</sup> Mou's ambition can be clearly seen in his three main works in his late time: *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy*, *Appearance and Thing-in-Itself*, and *Treatise on the Summum Bonum*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. "Of the intellectual intuition, too, it can be said that it is related to knowledge through concepts, because it has not yet given up [the element of] intentionality. But when it comes to transcending even that intellectual intuition, and when that which has its place in absolute Nothingness is conceived, no more statement can be made with regard to this; it has completely transcended the standpoint of knowledge and may perhaps be called "world of mystic intuition", unapproachable by word or thinking." (NKZ 4: 145)

on the assimilation of the Kantian method, framework, and terminology.<sup>10</sup> Through our illustration above we can exactly see that Mou has distinguished himself from Kant by his argumentation of the reality of intellectual intuition in the human world. With this view in mind, we should position him as an interpreter (Kantdeuter) of Kant, not a Kantian (Kantianer).

By the same token, we can also position Nishida as an interpreter of Kant who aims at a serious philosophical conversation with Kant. Otherwise, we can also assert that Nishida is just another Fichtean, Hegelian, or Neo-Kantian under a similar logic. With the help of the triangular comparison among Kant, Nishida, and Mou, we can not only see the similarities and dissimilarities, which is emphasized by Asakura in his article, but also the assimilations and dissimulations of Kantian concepts in their philosophical system. I agree with Lam's conclusion that Nishida's and Mou's assimilation of "Western" philosophical language and ideas only carries the function of "midwife" to illustrate traditional Japanese and Chinese thinking. What is important here is that "assimilation helps mutual understanding between different intellectual traditions and at the same time enhances the possibilities for philosophical advance". (Lam 2006: 36-37) Such advancement is not a one-way monologue from West to East but in its potential to be a two-way dialogue between East and West. In other words, mutual understanding becomes the necessary condition of mutual transformation.

As Derrida says, "[p]hilosophy has always insisted upon this: thinking its other. Its other: that which limits it, and from which it derives its essence, its definition, its production." (Derrida 1982: 1) The reception and appropriation of the Western conceptions should not be merely taken as a verbal translation but as a philosophical task that aims at a crossing (Übergang) from one's own understanding and perspective. John Maraldo rightly points out that "[t]he translation of 'Western' philosophy into Japan obviously helped bring out a transformation of Japanese culture often called 'westernization' or 'modernization.' This trans-lation, moreover, also entails the transformation of philosophy by the

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<sup>10</sup> Lam said, "[u]nlike Nishida, Mou does not seem to have felt the need to erect a new philosophical system to set up [against] Western philosophy. His principal agenda was simply to revive Chinese philosophy by consolidating the philosophical ground of Confucianism by assimilating Western philosophical ideas. This does not mean, however, that Mou stopped at the stage of mutual understanding without proceeding to mutual transformation." (2006: 37-38) In my view, this comment is partly correct because I believe in the fact that Mou has already erected a new philosophical system "against" (in a weak sense) other systems, including many Western philosophers, e.g., Heidegger. His principal agenda was not "simply" to revive Chinese philosophy by replacing or consolidating its foundation from the act of assimilating alien ideas. He tried to set up a universal principle for judging and evaluating different philosophical systems in his late life. Cf. Mou's *Treatise on the Summum Bonum*.

addition of Japan perspectives, and these perspectives apply to the reading of traditional texts and of texts yet to be traditionalized." (Maraldo 1995: 239)<sup>11</sup> The adoption and appropriation of alien philosophical concepts are never to be a single direction and single dimension process. It involves not only a transcultural succession across different cultural entities but also an intra-relational apperception within a cultural entity. In this process, people learn and also philosophize.

As a pathway connecting Western philosophy to Eastern, Nishida Kitaro, and Mou Zongsan have similarly taken the challenge to reinterpret the meaning of intellectual intuition, through which the special characteristics of Asian philosophical thoughts can be revealed from the perspective of world philosophy. Through the above discussion, I have not only shed light on their thinking on intellectual intuition but also evaluate their interpretations according to their reception and transformation of Kant. Thus, there is no reason to take them as "just another Kantian", instead, we should consider them as world philosophers or philosophers in the world, who have given great contributions to universal philosophical issues.

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<sup>11</sup> The quote is taken from Lam's paper "Assimilation and Dissimilation in Japanese and Chinese Philosophy". (Lam 2009: 252)

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