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## Review of: L'lo e Il Tu

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*L'io e Il Tu*. By Nishida Kitarō. Translated with an introduction by Renato Andolfato, with a postscript by Giangiorgio Pasqualotto. Padova: Unipress, 1996. L30,000.

Reviewed by  
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私と汝

*L'io e Il Tu* is an Italian translation of Nishida Kitarō's 1932 essay, "Watakushi to Nanji" (I and Thou), with an introduction by the translator, Renato Andolfato. The translation is followed by an essay by Giangiorgio Pasqualotto, the author of *Il Tao della Filosofia* (1989), who teaches at the University of Padova. The present book grew out of Andolfato's graduation thesis of 1994 for the University of Venice. Since Nishida's "I and Thou" has never been translated until now, this is a welcome addition to the field of Nishida Studies.

The book tells its readers something about the scholarly interest in Nishida in Italy today, and perhaps more specifically in Venice, as Pasqualotto intimates a certain affinity between Venice and the Oriental style of thinking:

For one to enter the works of an Occidental thinker would be something like going through the geometry of a Roman city or of a Renaissance garden, whereas to enter the writings of an Oriental thinker would be something like walking through Venice, or going to the sea or the desert, or into the mountains, where, based on few directions, one constructs an itinerary. (pp. 156–157)

Nishida's thought appears to be capturing the imagination of a select group of young Italian students of philosophy and scholars of Buddhism; their output is significant in terms of the global landscape of interest in Nishida's philosophy. It is fascinating to see how different cultures bring different colorations to an interpretation of Nishida. To Andolfato and Pasqualotto, Nishida's writings evoke the imagery of *sumie* (Zen ink painting) (p. 74) or the aesthetic taste of *shibumi* (p. 161).

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In the "Introduction to Nishida's Thought" (pp. 7–75), Andolfato attempts to describe Nishida's life and thought in a nutshell, focusing largely on the subject of Nishida and his Zen practice and its implications for his thought. Andolfato gives a cursory treatment of such terms as intuition, reflection, self-consciousness, *topos*, and Nishida's dialectical and religious worldview, as well as his style of philosophical discourse. All this gives the impression that both Andolfato and Pasqualotto came to Nishida out of their interest in Zen practice or in Buddhism in general.

A highly accurate and faithful translation of "I and Thou" follows (pp. 77–153). Andolfato has succeeded in conveying the meaning of Nishida's thought into Italian by means of a smooth, concise, and un-

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equivocal style, which remarkably helps even the “uninitiated” reader through the meanderings of Nishida’s philosophical journey.

Pasqualotto, in his postscript (pp. 153–207), draws from a vast ocean of Western intellectual history, Indian Buddhism, and Huayan and Chan/Zen Buddhism, and tries to situate Nishida as an original thinker who went beyond a hackneyed dichotomy or superficial synthesis of East and West and who achieved a system of thought that allows free interaction between the traditions of Buddhist insight and Western philosophy. Pasqualotto compares Nishida’s achievement to that of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who succeeded in incorporating the Greek philosophical tradition into European culture (pp. 160–161).

A rather extensive bibliography (pp. 209–223) completes the book.

Reviewers are expected to be critics, but what follows should be considered friendly augmentation. Any pioneering work faces challenges from all corners of its world, and this work is no exception. Misreadings of Japanese names and terms, as well as errors in dating articles and events, abound throughout the introduction, a perplexing contrast to the translation of the text itself, which is quite error-free. Before going into the specifics, however, let us first address a few general points.

A question that would naturally arise for any historian of ideas is, first of all, the connection between Nishida’s essay, “I and Thou,” and Martin Buber’s *Ich und Du*. Unfortunately, neither Andolfato nor Pasqualotto addresses this question (although Buber’s name is mentioned on p. 62 as being “similar”; and again on p. 103 n. 222). This lacuna may be related to their approach to Nishida via Buddhism. Certainly, there are as many avenues to understanding Nishida as the number of students of Nishida’s thought. This having been said, however, teachings of Zen, for instance, must only be an instrument, an indication, when trying to interpret Nishida’s thinking as “philosophy.” We certainly gain enormous insight into his thinking by resorting to the worldview espoused by Zen Buddhism, and it is probably true that this was at the heart of Nishida’s philosophical inquiry. But to interpret Nishida in terms of, or by way of, Zen teachings alone faces the danger of reductionism. Again, a critical placing of Nishida’s “I and Thou” within his overall philosophical development would have underscored the significance of this particular piece (though it should be noted that a mention of this sort is made briefly on pp. 165–166).

A second question concerns how much one should resort to the interpreters of Nishida’s thought as opposed to Nishida’s writings themselves, for Nishida’s interpreters *could*, left to themselves, overintellectualize him. For instance, when Nishida talks about *agape*, he does not yet talk about the *kenosis* of God (cf. p. 65), although he does develop this idea later. Again, when Nishida talks about the dialectical reality of the absolute irreducibility of each individual, he never talks about the

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“absolute replaceability” of the individual as an aspect of “absolute irreplaceability” (p. 61). Although it is helpful to listen to Nishida’s interpreters, turning to Nishida himself, whenever possible, would help one stay close to him.

即 A third area of concern is not so much a question as a suggestion, and it deals with the translation of the word *soku*. Andolfato has adopted “come” or “in quanto” to translate the word *soku*, which appears in such phrases as “life *soku* death,” or “unity *soku* multiplicity” (for the explanation of the term *soku* by the translator, see pp. 51–52). It is generally recognized how difficult it is to translate this connective into any language. Translators have variously attempted such words as *sive* (van Bragt) or *qua* (Yusa), without conclusive consensus. Here, may we suggest *ossia* (“that is”) for a possible Italian translation? “Vita ossia morte,” or “unità ossia molteplicità” seems to work fine.

Now to the details:

大乘寺 1. One needs to be cautious when making guesses. The statement on page 13 that Nishida and his wife “went to live in a monastery, Daijōji” and that “the relationship with Kotomi became progressively strained and [the two] finally decided to separate in 1897,” has no basis whatsoever. Daijōji is not a monastery but a local temple in Nanao, belonging to a Pure Land sect. The young Nishidas simply rented a room there. Various factors that led to their temporary marital separation seem to include Nishida’s difficult relationship with his own father and the economic hardship that Kotomi, the daughter of a well-to-do family, had never experienced before.

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2. One needs to recheck the original after translation. For instance, the journal entry of September 17, 1898, on page 14, is totally misconstrued.

3. One needs to remain critical of previous scholarship on Nishida. Andolfato has relied on Lothar Knauth’s “Life is Tragic, the Diary of Nishida Kitarō,” which appeared in *Monumenta Nipponica* 20 (3–4) (1965): 335–358. Unfortunately, Knauth’s article, although intermittently brilliant, is laden with misinformation. For instance, the statement that, in 1892, “with Suzuki, Nishida began to frequent the Zen monastery of Enkakuji in Kamakura, received koan, and dedicated himself to the study of Zen” (pp. 12 and 25) is based on Knauth’s erroneous speculation, which goes: “The following year [i.e., 1892] he attended Zen Meditations at Kamakura’s Enkakuji [Engakuji], where his friend Suzuki had just achieved his *satori* and was to receive the name Daisetsu from Shaku Sōen” (p. 339). First of all, it was 1891 when Nishida went to Kamakura. He did not attend “Zen meditations,” but visited Engakuji only to see his friend, Suzuki, who was staying there. It is an open question as to when Suzuki attained his *satori*, but he had a *kenshō* (initial breakthrough) experience in the training session of December 1896. The name Daisetz

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was given to him some time around 1895, judging from the date of its initial appearance in a journal, when Suzuki did use that name.

The description of Miki Kiyoshi as a “Marxist” and as someone who gave his life for his ideological conviction (pp. 18–19) is a myth believed by many, and found in Knauth, who wrote: “one of his philosophy disciples who had moved in the direction of Marxism, Miki Kiyoshi, died in jail as a political prisoner in 1945” (p. 347). Miki was not a political prisoner, but was arrested because he helped a convicted friend escape; the action that led to Miki’s arrest was sheer carelessness on his part, and was far from being based on a grand philosophical or ideological principle. In a similar vein, the reason why Nishida declined to attend the banquet on the occasion of his receiving the Cultural Medal (p. 23) was that he was suffering from a bad case of hemorrhoids, and had nothing to do with his supposed gallant political “resistance,” as Knauth wanted to make it seem (p. 347). Since this is not the place to go into a criticism of Knauth’s article, we must stop here.

4. One needs to check dates. “I and Thou,” for instance, came out in July 1932, and not in 1936, as stated on the outer cover.

5. One needs to check the pronunciation of Japanese proper nouns and terms. Although this is a headache widely encountered by everyone engaged in Japanese studies, it is still possible to achieve accuracy in this area. On page 9, “Yamamoto Ryokichi” should be Yamamoto Ryōkichi, “Matsumoto Fumisaburō” should be Matsumoto Bunzaburō (also p. 15), and “Kimura Sakae” should be Kimura Hisashi. “Miki Kyoshi” (p. 18, p. 85 n. 205, and passim) should be Miki Kiyoshi. “Unoge” (p. 12) should be Unoke, the birthplace of Nishida. “Uchinoke” (pp. 21, 23) also should be Unoke. The expression “to sit” (i.e., “to do zazen”) is pronounced *taza* and not *daza* (pp. 14, 26–27), a peculiar pronunciation practice common to Zen-related words. “Araki Junzō” (p. 17) should be Karaki Junzō. “Jihanijihō” (p. 20 n. 40) is *chian-ijihō*. “Shodoku Shinbunsha” on page 22 should be Yomiuri Shinbunsha. Given the very large number of mistakes of this kind, we cannot list all of them in this review due to limitations of space.

6. Regarding cultural and historical information, some of the problems may be pointed out here. On page 19, note 40, “mobo e moba” should be *mobo e moga* (the shortened form of *modern boys* and *modern girls*); and it is not “con i capelli lunghi” but *capelli corti*, since short hair for women became fashionable at that time, scandalizing the majority of tradition-minded Japanese.

The statement that Fukuzawa Yukichi was well known for being “a man of culture not concerned with others’ opinions and criticisms” (p. 14 n. 28) is ambiguous at least, and perhaps misleading. Fukuzawa, who was predominantly responsible for the introduction into Japan of a particular form of oratory, namely debate, firmly believed in the neces-

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sity of exchanging opinions and information, for the sake of both the intellectual growth of the individual and the solution of common economic, cultural, and social issues. Labeling him as indifferent to others' criticisms, as Andolfato has done, appears to be reductive and contradictory with Fukuzawa's enlightening contribution to the "secularization" of culture and knowledge in modern Japan.

Andolfato seems to attribute the difficulty of Nishida's philosophical discourse in part to "the intrinsic difficulty of pre-war Japanese" (p. 71, also n. 190), but this characterization of the Japanese language at that time is groundless. The distinction between pre-World War II and contemporary Japanese is erroneous. Nishida's "I and Thou," for instance, already largely employed a *genbun itchi* style (i.e., the unification of the spoken and the written language). This is obvious once one compares it with the earlier writings found in his manuscript from his "Gasonkai" days (1889–1890; see *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, 16:573–636). The language that was used by Nishida, especially in the bulk of his philosophical writings, had already gone through a deep and thorough process of simplification since the beginning of the Meiji period, and his written language is quite similar to the one presently used, especially if we transcribe older Chinese characters into new counterparts. On this point see Nishida's own statement, "Mondai wa kōgotai no seiren" (The question is the refinement of the colloquial style), published in September 1916 (*Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, 19:718–719), and his short essay, "Hajimete kōgotai no bunshō o kakidashita koro" (Around the time when I began to write in the colloquial style) (April 1938) (*Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 13:153–154).

By the way, it was not Kuwaki Gen'yoku (pp. 15–16) but Tomoeda Takahiko whom Nishida replaced at the Imperial University of Kyoto in 1910.

*The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*. By Steve Odin. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. Pp. xvi + 482.

Quite a number of studies of East Asian thought or comparative philosophy, including Steve Odin's earlier writings, have drawn attention to the usefulness of American pragmatism and its extension into process metaphysics for making sense of Confucian or Buddhist philosophy in terms already known within Western thought. In regard to Zen or Confucianism, a few studies have built on this apparent affinity to promote an intimate East-West dialogue wherein each tradition is used not only to illuminate the other but to propel it toward further development. *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*, however, is the first in-depth study to incorporate modern Japanese philosophy and social psy-

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問題は口語体の精練

始めて口語体の文章を書  
き出した頃

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