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Wednesday, June 27th, 18:00h

Bret W. Davis

SPEAKER

Encounter in Emptiness The I-Thou Relation in Nishitani Keiji's Philosophy of Zen

Since Nishida Kitarō's pivotal essay of 1932, "I and Thou" (*Watashi to nanji*), the question of what it means for one individual to relate to another has been a central concern of philosophers associated with the Kyoto School. In part, this no doubt reflects contemporaneous attention given to this question in the West, especially in the wake of Martin Buber's *Ich und Du*. And yet, the relation between persons has always been a focus of East Asian thought. Nishitani Keiji demonstrates how this relation has been deeply—he argues most deeply—fathomed in the Zen tradition. According to Nishitani, the question of what it means for one person to encounter another "cannot be answered at a distance, from somewhere outside the encounter itself. Nor can it be answered with the tools of biology, anthropology, sociology, or ethics, which cannot fathom its depth dimension." Even Buber's philosophical and theological account is said to have "far from exhausted the hidden depths of the person-to-person, I-and-Thou, relationship." Indeed, "where it stops" is, according to Nishitani, "the very point at which Zen exploration begins." This talk aims to elucidate and interpret Nishitani's own Zen Buddhist account of the I-Thou relation as an encounter on the "field of emptiness" between persons who can, paradoxically, experience themselves as both absolutely independent and yet essentially relative to one another.

Bret W. Davis is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University Maryland in the United States, and is currently a visiting scholar at Kyoto University. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Vanderbilt University and has spent thirteen years studying and teaching in Japan, during which time he completed the coursework for a second Ph.D. in Japanese philosophy at Kyoto University. In addition to numerous articles in English and in Japanese on continental and comparative philosophy, on the Kyoto School, and on Zen, he has published five books, including *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School* and *Sekai no naka no Nihon no tetsugaku* (Japanese Philosophy in the World). He is currently editing *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Philosophy* and writing a book on the Kyoto School and dialogue.

This lecture will be held at the Institute for Research in Humanities (IRH), Kyoto University (seminar room 1, 1st floor).

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