



Thinking through Images

The Lingering Presence of Bergson in Nishida Kitarō
and Jeanne Hersch

Early on in their philosophical careers, Nishida Kitarō and Jeanne Hersch engaged seriously with the ideas and style of Henri Bergson, leading them to new but markedly different ways of approaching the world. Seen in the light of Kant's third antinomy, despite their diverging interests and cultural backgrounds, they have a great deal in common in that both attempt to reconsider personal experience through a more scientific approach. An analysis of their respective appropriations of Bergson, particularly with regard to the use of imagery, provides a good example of how experience can influence philosophical expression and, at the same time, points to the relevance of Nishida's and Hersch's contributions to the debate on philosophical approaches to reality and expression.

KEYWORDS: Nishida Kitarō—Jeanne Hersch—Henry Bergson—Karl Jaspers—Immanuel Kant—image—intuition—freedom—necessity—pure experience—attention—antinomy

As is well known, Kant's principal contribution to modern philosophy was the stimulus he provided to rethinking how we approach the world and acquire knowledge of it. He demonstrated that purely logical and impersonal methods are insufficient, and that certain aspects of human reason can only be accessed from the personal experience of the subject. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* he approached the question through what he called the faculty or power of principles that synthesize the content of perception into general rules and that can be expressed as *a priori* concepts. In the course of that work he considers how the use of dialectics and the production of "transcendental ideas" respond to a basic human need, namely, the need to arrive at a consistent, unified, and objectively valid way of knowing. At the same time, he draws attention to the "transcendental illusion" of producing rationally valid ideas not grounded in concrete sense experience and hence doomed to failure.

The second main part of the "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements" in the *Critique* is devoted to exposing the kinds of illusory inference that come from trying to deduce objective knowledge by sidestepping experience, landing reason in fundamental contradictions of principle.¹ Among these are antinomies derived from "hypothetical syllogisms," the third of which poses a particularly difficult challenge:

Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only one from which all the appearances of the world can be derived. It is also necessary to assume another causality through freedom in order to explain them.... There is no

1. Given the density of these pages and the language Kant used, it is not possible here to provide further clarification. Nevertheless, I find it important to begin with these passages insofar as they lay the foundations for the subject I wish to address here. For a more detailed contextualization and analysis of these passages, see SEVERINI 2019.

freedom, but everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature.²

Kant recognized that no mere dialectic of the intellect can explain how everything in the world can be said to follow the laws of nature while at the same time allowing for *causality through freedom*. He lays out arguments supporting both kinds of causality without explicitly resolving the problem. It fell to Bergson in the twentieth century to take a fresh approach to the problem by restoring the importance of personal experience as a complement to objective scientific knowledge. It is precisely this recovery of the role personal experience plays in thinking that I wish to take up here. Kant's third antinomy gives us no more than a point of departure, a pretext for examining the idea that there are not two separate worlds—the world of natural causality and the world of freedom—but two distinct ways of approaching one and the same world. My aim is to deepen that perspective, to demonstrate its validity, and to underline its consequences for the role of “expression” in philosophy.

If the natural causality that governs our logical knowledge of the world and the freedom that shapes our personal experience of it are distinct paths to understanding, they are also mutually necessary. Rather than consider their correlation in the abstract or trace it through the history of ideas, I propose to show how two very different thinkers, Nishida Kitarō and Jeanne Hersch, arrive at similar conclusions without gainsaying the fundamental distance of their respective philosophies. As contemporaries the two stand at opposite poles. On one hand, we have a Japanese thinker animated by a keenly felt religious and spiritual need that only rigorous philosophical speculation could bring to some measure of satisfaction, a path he pursued by engaging Zen experience and Eastern philosophy with Western philosophy.³ On the other, we have a Swiss woman devoted to the practical consequences of philosophy and focused on ensuring as many opportunities as possible for as many people as possible to exercise their freedom, a path she pursued by following in the footsteps of Karl Jaspers' existentialist reflec-

2. KANT 1998, 484–5.

3. The relevance of Zen experience in Nishida's perspective is a matter of some debate. Here I would only draw attention to YUSA 2002, xvii–xx..

tions on the limits of our human condition and the impulse to authentic, alogical communication.

The style and ideas of Henri Bergson were instrumental in shaping the standpoints of both Nishida and Hersch. Despite their different intellectual and cultural backgrounds, and the fact that they never met each other or read each other's work, we may suppose that their arrival at comparable conclusions points to certain overlaps in the sensitivities that Bergson touched in each of them. The full range of possibilities for bringing Nishida and Hersch into dialogue is, of course, beyond the scope of these pages. I will restrict myself here to a fixed period, namely the earliest phases of the development of Nishida's and Hersch's thinking (which, I am convinced, can be shown to carry through to their later thought as well). In addition, I will not put too much attention on terminology, which is complicated by the linguistic distance of Japanese from European languages. Instead, I will focus on the intentions and sensitivities that emerge from a straightforward analysis of their writings. Finally, these first steps at a dialogue obliges me to avoid entanglement with the various lines of critique leveled at their respective philosophies from the outside.

NISHIDA ON BERGSON

Pure experience and thinking in An Inquiry into the Good

Nishida's first book was published in 1911, when he was 41 years old and had already come to a number of fundamental convictions, despite the fact that he was still just taking his first steps along the philosophical path. Yusa Michiko clarifies his position succinctly: On one hand, he was dissatisfied with his Zen experience, his initial breakthrough (見性) in 1903 having failed to lead him to any fruitful discoveries or inner happiness. On the other, he remained convinced that scientific truths alone were not sufficient and that efforts had to be made to go beyond them in the direction of philosophical and spiritual self-awareness.⁴ The same applied to rational attempts at ethics:

"Ethics" in the West is purely an intellectual pursuit. Its arguments are cogent, but no one pays attention to the "soul experience"—experience deep

4. YUSA 2002, 61.

in the human heart. People forget the ground on which they stand. There are those who analyze and explain the constituents of bread and water, but none considers the actual taste of either. The result is an artificial construct, which has no impact on the human heart.⁵

Yusa concludes that Nishida's primary concern was to "engage in studies while taking life as the basis.... His interest in scholarship, as he wrote to Suzuki, was not in the objective scientific analysis of religion and ethics but rather in depicting the 'taste' of religious and moral experiences." This is why Nishida defined himself in a letter from 1905 as an "inquirer into life."⁶ In this connection, I agree with Wilkinson's assessment that Nishida was a born philosopher whose goal was to conceptualize his view of human experience and philosophize his own personal experience.⁷

It was Nishida who introduced Bergson's thought to Japan, first in a 1908 essay on "Pure Experience, Cognition, Will, and Intellectual Intuition" (「純粹経験と思惟、意志、及び知的直観」) and then in 1910 essay entitled "Bergson's Philosophical Method" (「ベルグソンの哲学的方法論」). Thus, by the time he published his first book, *An Inquiry into the Good* (『善の研究』) in 1911, he was not only familiar with Bergson's thought but openly acknowledged that it played an indispensable role in forming the idea of "pure experience" developed in that work. That said, Nishida's knowledge of Bergson's thought was still fragmentary and, of course, unrefined by important later works yet to be published. Even after Bergson's death in 1941, Nishida continued to read his works.⁸ Although Bergson was not a primary focus of *An Inquiry into the Good*, where indeed he is not even mentioned,⁹

5. Ibid., 74.

6. Ibid., 70, 79.

7. WILKINSON 2009, 6.

8. I owe the details for this general introduction to Nishida's association with Bergson's thought to ABROL 2023, DALISSIER 2007, and SUGIMURA 2023.

9. Campo sums up effectively the points of contact between Nishida and Bergson in *An Inquiry into the Good*:

The minor Bergsonian themes we find in Nishida's Inquiry are the qualitative character of inner experience (42ff), the consequent impossibility of analyzing it with reflection and discursive thought (11–19), and the acknowledgement of a difference in degree, but not in kind, between intuition, i.e., the direct access to inner life, and the other acts of consciousness (30–4). Nishida describes it as "an extremely ordinary phenomenon" that can be found "in all of our disciplined behavior" (NISHIDA 1960, 34). Bergson, likewise,

there are any number of useful images that suggest his influence in the terms and contents that were driving Nishida's thought at the time.

Part II of Nishida's *Inquiry* opens with an analysis of reality based on the idea subject and object cannot exist independently of each other and, consequently, that mind and matter are not two different realities but rather "two different ways of looking at a single fact. He goes on:

As a concrete fact, a flower is not at all like the purely material flower of scientists; it is pleasing, with a beauty of color, shape, and scent. Heine gazed at the stars in a quiet night sky and called them golden tacks in the azure. Though astronomers would laugh at his words as the folly of a poet, the true nature of stars may very well be expressed in his phrase.¹⁰

What Nishida means here is that dispassionate knowledge is derivative in the sense that it only arises after a distance has been put between the subject and the object of its attention. At the outset, he claims, *knowledge*, *feeling* and *volition* are one and the true reality we experience at first is already imbued with *meaning*. There seems to me little point in challenging Nishida's assertions at face value. Rather than question the validity of his premises in the abstract, it is the consequences of his position that interest us and call for further clarification.

First, it must be noted that "The notions of pure experience and thinking derive from two different views of what is fundamentally one and the same fact."¹¹ Thus, no purely material object (Kant's thing-in-itself) ever appears; we have only the "pure experience" (the subject's sensation of the material object, as in Heine's gaze at the stars) or "thinking."

Secondly, Nishida affirms that for him truth is what "comes closest to the most concrete facts of experience," what "lies in unity,"¹² and "pertains

points out that "intuition exists in each of us, though it is covered by other functions more useful to life." (CAMPO 2023, 3).

In *An Inquiry into the Good* Nishida relies more directly on William James for his idea of "pure experience," and only in later works refers more frequently to Bergson. We may also note that at the time Nishida was writing his book, James and Bergson conducted an extensive correspondence which further confirms that continuity of ideas that we trace in Nishida's early works.

10. NISHIDA 1990, 49.

11. *Ibid.*, 17.

12. In this regard, Nishida notes immediately afterwards that "True unity lies in direct facts."

to the individual person and is actual.” This leads him to assert, for the first time, that “Perfect truth therefore cannot be expressed in words, and such things as scientific truth cannot be considered perfect truth.”¹³ The perfect truth of the star is more like the poetic “golden tacks in the azure” than it is to the scientific definition given by astronomers: stars as golden tacks in the azure have nothing universal, yet they tell the truth about the individual, actual unity that Heine experienced.

Before delving deeper into the implications of Nishida’s image, I would like to pause a moment at another of his images:

For example, I have a pen here. In the instant of seeing it, there is neither knowledge nor volition—there is just a single actuality. When various associations concerning it arise, the center of consciousness shifts, and when the original consciousness is objectified, it comes to be merely intellectual. In contrast, let us imagine that the associated idea arises that this pen is for writing letters. While this associated idea is still attached to the original consciousness as a fringe element, it is knowledge, but when the associative consciousness begins to stand on its own—when the center of consciousness has begun to shift toward it—it becomes a state of desire. Accordingly, when associative consciousness has become an increasingly independent actuality, it is the will and, in addition, one truly knows it.¹⁴

The world is always the same. What changes is the consciousness that approaches it. For Nishida, the very first moment of an individual’s encounter with reality is the moment of perceiving in which the actuality of that single event is unaffected by knowledge or volition. What follows is that this initial consciousness of reality—not of any particular object—is objectified and the intellectual associations lead to knowledge and desire: knowledge emerges as a result of interest in the nature of the object, while desire shifts attention to the utility of the object for the center of consciousness. Nishida clearly sees this as a “matter of degree,” a “quantitative, not qualitative difference,”¹⁵ because each of these distinct moments are grounded in the very first moment of pure experience in consciousness, from which we take a distance through intellectual associations. There is no direct allu-

13. NISHIDA 1960, 26.

14. *Ibid.*, 27–8.

15. *Ibid.*, 91, 90.

sion to Kant's third antinomy here, and certainly Nishida was not thinking of it when he wrote these pages, but it seems perfectly logical to conclude everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature *and* that another form of causality, namely freedom, is necessary to cover all the appearances of the world. It may be that the intellect does not conceive this immediately, but every conscious association is born of the same initial event, which is more than object, more than subject, and more than the simple sum of the two.¹⁶ Not only can the free causality that leads to pure experience coexist with the necessity of laws of nature, but it also complements those laws. A further image confirms this:

Let us take, for example, a bronze statue. The bronze, the statue's raw material, obeys physical and chemical laws yet we cannot view the statue as a mere lump of bronze, for it is a work of art that expresses our ideals. It appeared by means of the unifying power of our ideals. The unifying activity of the ideals and the physical and chemical laws that control the raw material belong to different spheres, and in no way do they clash with each other.¹⁷

The bronze statue remains raw material, but it is also a work of art that gives expression to something beyond the reach of rational categories. It represents a pure experience that takes place prior to the workings of conscious mind, in an ideal unity of mind and matter. It is this original encounter that inspires the artist throughout the creation of the statue. It is the very thing

16. I think it important to point out a couple of conclusions that are significant, if not central, in these passages. First, Nishida seems to come to the same conclusion as Kant when he states that mind and matter are two different ways of looking at the same, single fact. In line with what has been shown above, *matter* refers here to *pure experience*, which is the unity of the gaze, so that there is no point at which the knowledge of any *thing-in-itself* is possible. Granted Nishida is not claiming in these passages what Kant claims, but he does, nevertheless, seem to confirm Kant's transcendental *pure apperception* and the impossibility of ridding ourselves of spatial and temporal determination. Nishida himself reflects on his similarities to Kant's *pure apperception* in a section "On the Claims of Pure Logicians in Epistemology" (NISHIDA 2019, 13–38).

Second, Nishida affirms that "the apperceptions of thinking, imagination, and the will are fundamentally identical unifying activities" (Ibid., 90–1). This is precisely the position that Hersch tries to retrace from Kant in her essay "'Was kann ich wissen? Was soll ich tun? Was darf ich hoffen?'. Essai de paraphrase anachronique et inactuelle" (HERSCH 1976). Far from underestimating the differences among these three thinkers and the divergent backgrounds against which they framed their thought, it is worth noting the similarities.

17. NISHIDA 2019, 71.

that Nishida had found wanting in Western ethics. It also reminds us that to say that truth is actual in the sense that is “always an event.” In the end, Nishida’s *Inquiry* presents pure experience as the event that takes place in the encounter between what Western philosophy commonly calls “subject” and “object.” This encounter marks our most truthful experiences and is something the artist can express better than the scholar:

The world described by physicists, like a line without width and a plane without thickness, is not something that actually exists. In this respect, it is the artist, not the scholar, who arrives at the true nature of reality. Each and every thing we see or hear contains our individuality.¹⁸

Intuition in Thought and Experience

As we have seen, although the use of a physical line or plane may improve our knowledge of the world, Nishida insists that such abstractions are incapable of expressing the truth that the real world has width and thickness in unity, and that the world is made up not only of physical objects but also of our own individuality. This brings us to the role of Bergson in shaping Nishida’s early reflections on intuition,¹⁹ which in turn led him to new images and a new sensitivity that remained in the conceptual constructs of his later works. In the following passage, Michel Dalissier uses Bergson’s terminology to highlight the similarity to Nishida:

A true philosophy will renounce the “factitious unity that intellect imposes on nature from the outside” and rediscover the “true, inner, living unity”.... Everywhere, intellectual unification seeks to stop the living flow of reality in a “union” aimed at a hypostasized, divine, eternal unity. The “cold” combination of intelligence, which “starts” from a multiplicity of solid elements (ideas, words) to achieve a “composite unity” will once again be opposed to the “fire” of primitive coincidence.²⁰

18. Ibid., 54, 49.

19. “In *An Inquiry into the Good* (1911), Nishida states that philosophical systems are based on an intuitive force that is inexpressible and yet presupposes a deeper grasp of reality than what philosophical systems could ever hope to accomplish. This places the philosophy of Bergson and Nishida on an equal footing.... According to Nishida, intuition is the only way to understand the kind of creativity that manifests in the universe” (ABROL 2023, 10).

20. DALISSIER 2007, 35–6. In translating this passage, I rendered “entendement” as “intellect,” deferring to a practice common in Bergson’s and Nishida’s English translations.

The distinction between the “cold” and distant approach aimed at rational organization and the “fire” of primitive coincidence is precisely what I wish to present as the distinctive mark left on Nishida’s thought by his engagement with the writings of Bergson. Several images in *Thought and Experience* (『思索と体験』), a compilation of essays composed between 1908 and 1917, underscore the point. In addition to clarifying what he saw as certain ambiguities in *An Inquiry into the Good*, and reconfirming his debt to Bergson, the book is a record of other philosophers whose ideas he was wrestling with during those years.²¹ As we have said, the central concept occupying his attention after *An Inquiry* was that of *intuition*. The first image he introduces makes this clear:

Even the truth extracted from the depths of intuition both in the sciences and in philosophy, once it has been exposed to the light of the intellect, dries up and hardens, losing its vital spirit and ending up a kind of symbolic knowledge.... Even so, genuine philosophy is still as possible as it ever was.... There is nothing mysterious about the intuition I speak of in this essay, just as there is no one who has not experienced it to one degree or another. For example, anyone who has experience writing knows that once one has decided on a title, no matter how much research one has done and how much material one has accumulated, something is still missing, namely the effort to *become* the matter at hand. Only then is the spirit spontaneously activated; only then can the words flow freely from the pen. Philosophical intuition is something like this, except that its subject matter is different: the totality of observations and experiences accumulated by the sciences.²²

This dense passage adds something new about intuition and the role of philosophy and the sciences to the general context presented in *Inquiry*. Nishida accepts Bergson’s account of creative action as the foundation of the

21. This is still more evident in Nishida’s third book, *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (『自覚における直観と反省』). Since his concern there has more to do with Bergson’s notions of memory and pure duration while the present essay is centered on style and expression in philosophy, I have not included. For the same reason, I have passed over Nishida’s section on “Bergson’s Pure Duration” (『ベルグソンの純粹持続』) included in *Thought and Experience*, focusing rather on “Bergson’s Philosophical Method” (1910) and “Preface to Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*” (『物質と記憶』の序文) (1914). For a more comprehensive look at Bergson’s influence on Nishida, see especially DALISSIER 2015.

22. NISHIDA 2019, 127.

spiritual life, as prior to and superior to the laws of nature. He had already come to consider truth as coincidence with a concrete, primordial unity, a coincidence experienced as a broad and thick encounter of the individual with the world. He now gives a name to this encounter: intuition. And by that he understands a way of seeing that entails *becoming* that which is seen. The role of perspective and rational association, the assessment of what is gained and what is lost in intuition, will come later.²³ But the fundamental point he has in common with Bergson, namely, that there is a constant flux and development in reality that can only be glimpsed from the inside: “The deeper one is led into the depths of reality, the more in touch one is with living reality.”²⁴ Philosophy needs to be aware of this dynamic and restore intuition the importance it is due as philosophy’s guide for getting in touch with reality and expressing it.

Regarding the relationship between philosophy and the sciences, Nishida reasserts the general position of *An Inquiry into the Good*, namely, that each has its own distinct role. Quoting Bergson, he notes that insofar as intellect is practical and puts concepts to use for specific purposes, there is no dispensing with the “cold” and “hard” objects of rational thought. And yet, we “cannot get something alive from something dead.” To know the truth, one must trace the path of intention. In this sense, “philosophy is the science of intuition”—or at least it should be.²⁵

Regarding method and manner of expression, Nishida traces two differ-

23. Although I have chosen to abstain here from evaluating Nishida’s reading of Bergson, it is worth mentioning that Nakatomi has pointed to a number of inaccuracies (NAKATOMI 2016), while Abrol has argued that Nishida’s interpretation is not so much incorrect as incomplete (ABROL 2023). At the same time, we should note that Nishida and Hersch advanced similar criticism against Bergson for his failure to apply intuition fully to the concreteness of life. On one hand, as Wilkinson points out, to Nishida “Bergson’s account includes only half the picture. Nishida’s final view of Bergson is epitomized in these words: ‘life is the self-determination of the dialectical universal’... Bergson’s concept of pure duration cannot be said to be true concrete life” (WILKINSON 2009, 91–2). On the other, Hersch writes: “*Creative Evolution* is the epic of the impulse to life, but Bergson had to make a temporary about-face and abandon this impulse in order to observe it: to imagine himself in the act of following it, to be sure, but only to *imagine* himself. His work bears the imprint of this indispensable contemplative approach. It is predisposed more to this attitude than to action” (HERSCH 2001, 142).

24. NISHIDA 2019, 123. I have drawn on ABROL 2023, DALISSIER 2007, and SUGIMURA 2023 for details on this general introduction to Nishida’s association with Bergson’s thought.

25. NISHIDA 2019, 122, 121.

ent approaches in Bergson: the *analytical* method, which sees things from the outside and expresses them through *symbols* (120), and the *intuitive* method, which sees things from the inside without assuming a specific point of view. The analytical method serves to improve and perfect our knowledge of objects, which always remains relative to the subjective goal of knowledge. The intuitive method, in contrast, opens one to the actual state of things themselves. Nishida considered it a common philosophical error to think that one could reach reality by way of the concepts of an analytical method. Like Bergson, he insisted rather that philosophy proceeds from intuition to concepts—not the other way around. In this regard, rationalists and the empiricists alike are wrong to rely on analysis to the neglect of intuition:

Thanks to the power of Bergson's profound speculation, the insurmountable barrier that had hitherto separated matter and spirit like a wall of rigid dogmatism, has collapsed and swept up into the single stream of pure duration.... His philosophy is truly musical.²⁶

Nishida does not explicitly indicate how intuitive thinking is to be expressed in philosophical language, but his use of imagery and evocative language offer us clues. One needs to maintain a distance to think about an object and improve our understanding of it,²⁷ but this is already a second stage of thought, one taken after a barrier has been set up to separate what was originally unified. The intellect that cuts through the thickness of actual pure experience with borders and limits separates the individual from the world in such a way as to make it possible to study objects as cold, inert, and lifeless fragments cut off from their original unity with the analyzing mind. The poetic word or artistic gaze that erases those boundaries starts life flowing again, free of pragmatic intentions. The individual and the world begin to move again and warm to one another in the thickness of

26. NISHIDA 2019, 229–30.

27. Nishida's point is to reestablish the role of the scientific conceptual knowledge, not to reject it. Ghilardi correctly points to the relevance of this position to the achievement of self-awareness:

Thinking introduces a “gap” between one act and another, between one perception and another, and in this way is able to present these things to the conscious self.... In this way, the experience is no longer “pure,” since the subject splits itself off from the object in order to think about it, to watch it from a distance. In so doing, it acquires a new form of completeness; it arrives at self-awareness. (GHILARDI 144–5)

pure experience. The content and strict logic of concepts melt away. The pen of the philosopher is no longer chained to the demands of analytical thinking but is free to draw the truth as it is actually experienced in the personal encounter with the everyday world. In his attempts to conceptualize reality, Nishida does not hesitate to use imagery to express foundational intuitions that elude analysis:

No matter how firmly the certainties of natural science surround us with the iron chain of causality, when we turn inwards we arrive at the certainty of a deeper and more immediate world of freedom, from which even the “world of natural science” seems no more than a mediated and manufactured world, a superficial world. Hakuin wrote in praise of “time”:

*Yesterday at dawn we swept away the soot of the old year.
Tonight we knead rice cakes for the New Year.
Behold the pine tree with its roots and the wild tangerine with its leaves.
I put on a fresh dress and await the arrival of the guests.*

Exactly. The truly immediate world for us is the world of flowing time, the world of creative evolution.²⁸

HERSCH ON BERGSON: CONCEPTS AND IMAGES

Hersch first mentioned Bergson when she was an undergraduate studying literature. This was before she had met Karl Jaspers and turned to philosophy, after which she distanced herself more and more from Bergson’s thought. Nevertheless, his approach to philosophy left a permanent mark on her thought. *Les images dans l’œuvre de M. Bergson* (1931) is not only Hersch’s *mémoire de licence*, but also the best account of her initial interest in philosophy and the orientation with which she set out on her philosophical journey.²⁹ Bergson himself found it an outstanding starting point for a young student barely twenty years of age. Hersch wrote it in the late 1920s, when she was barely twenty. Her early reflections on “the duplicity of philosophy”

28. NISHIDA 2019, 229–30.

29. “The fact that the young Hersch began to study images in Bergson’s thought meant that she was opening herself up to new horizons for doing philosophy in the sense that is spared her having to harden her intuitions into concepts and opened her to the continuing tension between literature and philosophy which would come to play such a large role in her personal and political history” (MECCARIELLO 2009, 13).

culminated in the publication of *L'illusion philosophique* in 1936, by which time she had met Jaspers and been exposed more widely to philosophy in general. As De Vecchi points out, what impressed Hersch about Bergson was the opposition he set up “between ‘ground’ and simple, essential ‘original intuition,’” as well as the provisional articulation of a theory of original intuition that he laid out systematically in his famous 1911 lecture, “L’intuition philosophique.”³⁰ Hersch analyses the use of imagery in Bergson’s most famous books to demonstrate the original movement of his thought. In fact, this is a pretext for her to argue that such movement of thought

is the form given to ideas, the order of their relations, and therein lies the meaning of philosophy. Meaning thus lies in the subjective and personal part of philosophy—that of the philosopher’s act, which makes each philosophy unique and individual—and not in the ideas contained in it.³¹

Hersch would return to discuss Bergson in the early 1940s in *L’obstacle du langage* (1941) and *Défense de la technicité en philosophie* (1943).

The idea that the world can be approached in two different ways is already implied in *Les images dans l’œuvre de M. Bergson*, where Hersch demonstrates how the unfolding of thought adds something personal and individual to conceptual ideas. Nevertheless, it was only after her encounters with Jaspers that Hersch came to elaborate the idea of two different *modes* of residing in one and the same world. Rereading Jaspers’ *Philosophie*, she was struck by the fact that the scientific point of view formulates discontinuous paradigms that are not absolute but only hold within a pre-defined frame of reference, while a rational and personal search for meaning recognizes the limits of scientific paradigms and strives to overcome them through subjective decisions. All of this takes place in the same world, only read at different levels. When we try to orient ourselves to the world scientifically, we seek the uninterrupted paths of logic that ensure a smooth transition determined by necessity and subject to the laws of cause and effect. When we try to overstep the limits of that perspective (recalling Kant’s cognitive failure in the *Critique of Pure Reason*), we employ our freedom to give us a glimpse of “ciphers” of a transcendent value beyond the reach of our intellect and

30. DE VECCHI 2008, 1.

31. HERSCH 2001, 2.

only dimly reflected in the actual world. The subject begins to exist from the moment it glimpses these ciphers of transcendent value that the intellect, with its logical approach, fails to comprehend. I see these ciphers of value and devote myself to them (in Hersch's words, I "decide" for them), and as a result, I exist.³²

Hersch analyses these two *modes* in *L'illusion philosophique*, indirectly responding to Kant's third antinomy and demonstrating the sense in which, depending on our perspective and the goals we set ourselves, it is completely feasible to consider necessity and freedom as coexisting and collaborating in one and the same world.

Hersch opens her introduction to *Les images dans l'oeuvre de M. Bergson* by stating that we need more than objective comprehension to get inside of a philosophical system. We need to be able to think subjectively with the author, allowing the timbre of their ideas to resonate within us, to identify with them before passing judgment on them. Our aim should be a sensible intimacy that allows us to familiarize ourselves not only with *what* the author is saying but the *how* it is said: the expression, the nuance, the choice of language, the flow of the prose. This is what Hersch calls "image," namely, "any stylistic form that aims to give an idea a more sensible form." Referring to Bergson, she goes on to clarify how she views the relationship between concept and image:

Images are only points of reference, symptoms of an underlying attitude or fundamental intuition developed in a philosophical work. It is necessary to compare them, to search for their core and, if not to express it clearly, at least to intuit it and suggest it. By Bergson's own admission, the representation of a philosophy through imagery is neither superficial nor far removed from its living source: "We have only two instruments of expression: the concept and the image. The system develops in concepts, but it is condensed in images when we drive it back towards the intuition from which it derives."³³

For Hersch, Bergson's insistence on *intuition* serves to guide us back to "the deep self, the truly living part of being, where every moment is

32. I analyze these aspects of Hersch's interpretation of Jaspers in SEVERINI 2022, 44–51.

33. HERSCH 2001, 103, 102. Here and elsewhere throughout this essay, all translations from sources not originally in English are my own. Although Nishida himself does not define the term, I do not find anything in his writing to contradict her usage.

creative.”³⁴ The dominant attitude here is one of *pure receptivity*, of an abandonment and silence that in effect directs philosophy to a concrete and lived experience that reaches deeper than the respect that science shows towards objective data. Bergson’s subject opens itself to reality without any pretense of tracing its back to some prior representation. In a word, he allows reality to impose itself on the subject. There is no *form* at work here. The subject is so fully immersed in the rich indeterminateness of experience that, as Nishida would say, there is no longer any subject to impede its flow.³⁵ Hersch’s first image of intuition echoes the point precisely:

The whole of the outer world springs suddenly to life. Bergson feels the current touch him: “Matter thus dissolves into innumerable shreds... running in all directions like shivers.” There is no longer any question of an idea to be expressed as clearly as possible. It is rather an impression that is experienced, a way of having the surrounding universe appear in the concrete, almost as if one felt the universe were conveying itself directly.³⁶

The image, we might say, a kind of “translation device from the abstract to the concrete, from the foreign to the familiar.”³⁷ But insofar as intuitive experience drive language to its outer limits, it is caught in a dilemma: “Bergson strives to express with language the very thing that language destroys. On the field of action, his words kill. To give life to his expression, he must use the words of death.”³⁸ Hersch’s solution for a way around the problem out is to forget about trying to use language to express ideas like pure duration and intuition directly, and instead allow language to rely on its power of appeal. In this sense, imagery would be language’s way of acting on the soul of the reader, inclining them to trust in their own intuitive expe-

34. Ibid., 107.

35. “Form delimits an object and isolates it. Bergson instead transports us to the indefinite world of perfect fusion, of formless, indistinct, living unity. There are only nuances there.... The rest—that which is clearly seen, that which bears a name—is but shadow, black shades lacking in nuance, ghosts. Deep reality is iridescent, and Bergson lets his eyes fill with its reflections” (ibid., 108).

36. HERSCH 2001, 119.

37. MECCARIELLO 2009, 13.

38. HERSCH 2001, 131.

rience and educating them to be *attentive* in their approach to the matter at hand:³⁹

For Bergson, before ideas are transformed into expression, images work inwardly to replace abstract words, empty of experience, and ready-made concepts. To be sure, images are closer to the reality to be represented than algebraic signs are.⁴⁰

Images offer clues about something meaningful that cannot be explained analytically. When an image captures one's attention, it evokes an experience that one cannot fully express in words, thus awakening one to an original richness beyond logical understanding:

Images are also arguments in another sense.... The understanding that Bergson comes to by way of them is not a logical understanding. In logic, one is able to grasp a thinker's reasoning and, by understanding it perfectly, find fault with it and counter with correct reasoning. Bergson takes us down another path. His difficulty is how to make people *conceive* what he wants them to.... The whole soul is engaged and puts itself on the line. Reading the work becomes an experience. To understand what it is reading, it must relive it. It is impossible to judge from the outside or to understand and criticize at the same time. The experience can only be examined and judged later. For the time being, it is an experience. If there is one thing that cannot be doubted, it is precisely the fact that our experience is first-hand.⁴¹

At this point, Hersch's discourse abruptly changes tone and takes a somewhat unexpected turn that seems to break away from the direction Nishida took. The object is present and the subject is immersed in the reality of experiencing it, and yet the immersion leaves one dissatisfied:

Anyone who has fixed their gaze on an object in the outer world knows the feeling that things resist our gaze—like the prey that only pretends to be standing still and inattentive, apparently visible but in reality disguised—and will understand the veil Bergson talks about... The object is there, it is

39. Hersch remarks that Bergson "uses images precisely to overcome his paradoxical situation regarding language. When words are lacking to translate thought directly, one means remains: one can engage the reader's mind and drag it to a plane that eludes language.... Once caught up, the mind will make the transposition on its own" (ibid., 132).

40. Ibid., 136.

41. Ibid., 134–5.

real, it is more real than it seems. I cannot see it in its reality, in its life. What I see is only a symbol, not the thing itself. I pass it by without taking it; I do not penetrate it; I only read “the label stuck to it.”⁴²

It is safe to assume that at the time Hersch had not read Kant extensively, and, of course, she did not yet know Jaspers, but the above passage hints that the influence they were to have on her was grounded in ideas she had already been pondering on her own. We are reminded here of Kant’s antinomies and Jaspers’ pursuit of ciphers as a free and “violent effort of the will.”⁴³ This brings us to a third aspect of expression for Hersch: the transition from active receptivity to violent activity.

Emerging from out of the living, rich, shifting, and amorphous depths is a weapon of precision, sharpened and ready to make an engraving on the real. This inner movement this evokes runs contrary to the movement of melody: rather than assume the receptive attitude of the listener, one contracts, concentrated for the attack and aimed at a single goal that absorbs all of one’s attention. These are the two poles of Bergsonism: the attitude of one who listens and the attitude of one who acts, the attitude of one who rejoices in art and one who struggles. The activity that synthesizes the two is artistic creation. I believe that Bergson could never have created the philosophy he did had he not been an artist.⁴⁴

The “violent activity” referred to here does not have to do with the forceful oppression of someone or something, but rather points to a passion so intense that one is invested in it with all one’s strength. An intuitive experience of the real leaves the subject with a sense of having found something so precious they cannot repress their desire to keep hold of it, to be so completely absorbed in their own activity that they are able to leave their mark engraved on the particular object in reality that has so fascinated them. It is at this point, according to Hersch, that artistic activity becomes comprehensible. For in addition to being naturally predisposed to the active receptivity of intuition, the artist is also animated by the “violent” desire to give effective form to their experience and in this way overcome the initial disappointment at not being able to lift the veil.

42. *Ibid.*, 122–3.

43. *Ibid.*, 107.

44. *Ibid.*, 120.

The implications for imagery are not hard to see. Once having experienced intuition and the state of fusion in the deepest and most indistinct regions of the ego, Bergson could have remained immersed in the “mystique of pure duration, a voluptuous way of enjoying oneself.”⁴⁵ But his desire for rational insight and the need for precision that animated his artistic spirit, led him to exert every effort to express the experience as clearly as possible. Simple provoking the reader’s attention was not enough. Rather than discard the scientific perspective *tout court*, it was necessary to heed the call of science and retain its ties to the lived experience of intuition. So, too, Hersch’s analysis of thinking through imagery ended not only with a demand for “clear, definite and concrete images, but preserving the movement of the image, the continuity it can establish.”⁴⁶ To Bergson, the image is

true, concrete image, spontaneously arising, and not intellectually right, artificially associated with the fundamental idea.... In a style endowed with scientific clarity, he makes us feel the intuitive impulse: retaining the warmth of the soul, of a primordial conception born of the whole of one’s being, intelligence, vision, and sensitivity.⁴⁷

The final image of *Les images dans l’oeuvre de M. Bergson* captures the effort to achieve a comfortable balance of temperature between the living warmth of matter at hand and the sterile cold of the instruments with which we take it up:

There can be no overstating our admiration for the way in which he [Bergson] enters into the forest of the concrete and makes use of it, all the while maintaining his original orientation, confidently but without rigidity.... His life has been “a long effort to cover the fiery mass of boiling metals with a cold, solid film. But there are volcanic eruptions. If the earth were a living being, as mythology has it, perhaps when it is at rest it would dream of those sudden explosions that brought it into contact with what is deepest in itself.” In many ways, Bergson is close to the primitive imagination that lies at the origins of mythology, the imagination of those who experienced the world about them as something living.⁴⁸

45. Ibid., 132.

46. Ibid., 136–7.

47. Ibid., 109–10.

48. Ibid., 1024.

This concluding image opens out on to a new horizon for Hersch by leaving certain questions unanswered: The artist's gaze has been mentioned, but what of the philosopher's gaze? How does one arrive at a balance between the warmth of life and the chill of ideas? What are the consequences for philosophical expression? Her essay "Défense de la technicité en philosophie" makes explicit answers that can only be implied indirectly from her *mémoire de licence*. In it, Hersch confirms that philosophy must be *engaged with reality* but also committed to clarity of thought and expression. She speaks of the *technicité* of philosophy as something that even the most evocative and artistic philosophers need always to keep in mind: "So what might philosophy's technical keyboard be, one that would play the same role that sound does for music or color for painting? There is no doubt: abstraction."⁴⁹

As Meccariello has observed on reading Hersch's *mémoire de licence*, both the philosopher and the artist seek to express the vitality of intuition with the utmost clarity, but what distinguishes the philosopher is the expression of intuition in a "system of ideas." From the very first pages of her analysis of Bergson, Hersch refers to this as the "movement of thought."⁵⁰ According to Hersch, philosophical experience is artistic experience grounded in thinking, where the affective is also rational and intensity is in the service of truth. "Philosophy is neither a matter of sensation nor of affectivity. It is not an 'affective experience' but a thinking experience, a spiritual experience of thought."⁵¹ Nevertheless, to avoid becoming too cold, philosophical thought must be mindful of own limits and its intrinsic need for contact with the actual world. It is in this sense that philosophical thought must be, first and foremost, a matter of philosophical experience:

We must understand, therefore, that in philosophy thought is not a means.... Its purpose is neither to prepare for experience nor to provoke it. It is not an "exercise." Thought is the very reality of philosophy. This in no way prevents philosophical reflection (which is another matter again) from considering thought to be incomplete or in need of living extension, application,

49. HERSCH 1943, 63.

50. MECCARIELLO 2009, 11.

51. HERSCH 1943, 58.

and experience in order to reach ontological reality. Philosophical thought is philosophical experience itself.⁵²

Seen in this light, images are not a poor substitute for thoughts but rather its living essence; they are instruments with which to get a direct hold on reality.⁵³ Images are *cold, solid film* that mind casts over the world. They provide the optimal climate for the philosophical experience, a temperate middle ground, not too close to the heat of the original mass that would melt them and cause them to slip away from the grasp of reason, but also not so far away that they turn cold and lifeless. They occupy a space between inner life and outer reality where existence can flourish to the full. Bergson's imagery and style, the fervor of his language and its savor of original experience, bring just this feeling to his reflections. And here again, as we saw with Nishida, Hersch's own choice of words and images shows us how the same warmth that marks the artist's gaze can be carried over into more philosophical thinking.⁵⁴

SEEING THE REAL AND EXPRESSING THE REAL

Having traced a path through the main images that Nishida and Hersch used to accentuate the role of expression in Bergson and the influence it had on each of them, we may now step back to draw some provisional conclusions.

First of all, we have their approach to philosophical questions. In the case of Nishida, we can discern a Bergson-inspired *sympathy*⁵⁵ that is present already in his early works in anticipation of an interest in *love* that will recur throughout his later works. Such sympathy allows us to perceive the primordial flux of life and to enter into the object of our attention, a coin-

52. Ibid., 63.

53. MECCARIELLO 2009, 16.

54. "Jeanne Hersch attributes Bergson's intimate connection with the inner life as well as outer reality to the fact that he is at the same time artist and philosopher: Bergson's is not the gaze of the philosopher that abstracts and generalizes, 'that flattens reliefs and erases differences,' but the 'gaze of the artist that accentuates and isolates....' Bergson joins to the artistic mentality 'the philosophical need to reach the essence of things': his philosophy is a knowledge of things that gets to what is essential to them" (DE VECCHI 2008, 26).

55. ABROL 2023, 9; WILKINSON 2009, 88.

cidence that feature dominantly in *An Inquiry into the Good*. Though intuition, Nishida argues, we are able to grasp an object in its totality from the inside. For her part, Hersch exhibits a kind of *pietas* towards the real that is common among contemporary women philosophers.⁵⁶ In her case, it takes the form of a desire for “restitution.”⁵⁷ Wonder at the richness one finds the world is immediately followed by a sense of gratitude for the experiences lived and by a desire to communicate this richness in some way or other. From 1946 and *L’être et la forme*, Hersch pursued this desire by developing her thoughts on subjective forms of expression.

The emphasis on deep perception from within leads to the question of *attention* that Bergson had considered an expansion of ordinary perception,⁵⁸ bringing us back, in turn, to Kant’s problem of transcendental illusion and antinomy. In Nishida,

the public world is a construction we have found pragmatically effective. Our mistake is to impose this manner of conceptualizing things on our inner life, to which it is totally inappropriate.... The habit of applying external world categories inappropriately to the inner life causes us to develop a superficial self, which generally masks the deep, basic self.⁵⁹

Intuition emerges here as an additional focus on intelligence and its pragmatic functioning. As Ghilardi has shown, in Nishida’s idea of intuition, the body is a vehicle of a knowledge that not only precedes the workings of reason but also grasps something deeper, namely the actual encounter that takes place in the process of seeing: “Seeing is carefulness and attention to what is in the world.”⁶⁰ Hersch also assigns education a central role in the

56. I address this issue in more detail in the *Introduction* to SEVERINI, 2022.

57. I find this idea of De Monticelli’s difficult to paraphrase in English. His himself describe Hersch’s mindset as one “in which wonder is accompanied by gratitude. It is the movement of the soul common to those who, ‘buffeted by limitations,’ undertake the practice and the hard discipline of *form*, ‘giving back’ through their thinking and acting something of what it is in existence that has affected them, not merely naming it in vain” (DE MONTICELLI 2007, 165).

58. CAMPO 2023, 3,

59. WILKINSON 2009, 87.

60. GHILARDI 2008, 144. Certain passages in Ghilardi’s essay merit further discussion. First, he speaks of a process of seeing rather than a completed act of sight to emphasize that there is no hypostasis of a fixed subject but rather a dynamic relationship of *acting intuition* in the encounter between subject and object takes place (142). Secondly, seeing is a way of taking part in the world for which the senses are the indispensable means (144). Thirdly, while seeing

act of seeing, leading Guccinelli to link her with Simone Weil's ethics of attention. Thus seeing is for her an essential activity with an ethical value: to see is to renounce a neutral point of observation and allow ourselves to be guided by things without restraining them, to be stimulated to action reliant on feeling and reason.⁶¹

Moreover, "to the extent that intuition is also the way in which life lives and reality realizes itself, Bergson and Nishida agree that intuition is both our effort and the world's."⁶² To understand this, Dalissier analyzes the importance of the mirror image that Nishida uses in speaking of Bergson and the notion of matter in *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness*. If matter is said to be more than simply the end result of an action or a physical resistance to action, it is also more than a mere latent potentiality in the Aristotelian sense or a conscious abstraction of the actual world. Matter rather seems to be something that participates in its own production without the mediation of any outside form, as if it were a kind of "self-reflecting mirror." Nishida takes a different approach. As Dalissier points out, whenever he speaks of overcoming dualistic thinking—and that includes the dualism of mind and matter—he is speaking not of a higher level of abstraction at which the opposites are synthesized into a new and stable point of view but of a self-conscious process of thought that is more like what happens when two mirrors are made to face each other. The unifying of their opposition is "not a single, punctual, or final 'unity,' but a 'unification'; an infinite 'making' of the unity, or rather an infinite unity in the making."⁶³ The way in which matter plays an active role in the idea of matter is, in fact, a particular instance of the way in which Nishida sees the unification of world and individual in *An Inquiry into the Good*. I do not find this kind of thinking in Hersch, who is open about the influence of Aristotle, and in part, also Kant,

involves the senses it also goes beyond the sensual realm to link the visible and the invisible (146). For my part, I would argue that it is in this "augmented reality" that the gap between intuition and concept is generated and that freedom finds space in necessity. Ghilardi states that the sense of augmented reality becomes evident in Nishida's final essay, "The Logic of Topos and the Religious Worldview" (「場所の論理と宗教の世界観」), but is already present in *An Inquiry into the Good*.

61. GUCCINELLI 2012.

62. CAMPO 2023, 3.

63. DALISSIER 2006, 104.

on her description of matter as “the raw, anonymous datum that the spirit transforms into reality of consciousness, into forms.”⁶⁴

A second point of comparison is the way in which Nishida and Hersch regard the intellectual production of logical concepts. Nishida writes that “The sword of logic cannot penetrate the deep self because the deep self, like the God of the mystics and the *élan* of the universe, is not a *noema*. The deep self is an activity of unceasing creation that we become aware of through intuition.”⁶⁵ Granted the need for a scientific approach to produce objective knowledge and facilitate its use for practical purposes, the pragmatic methods of science have nothing to say when it comes to the deeper truth of the self. As with Bergson, from the fact that metaphysics relies on intuition Nishida argues that metaphysics is not a purely conceptual discipline.⁶⁶ In her “Défense de la technicité en philosophie,” Hersch, too, views abstraction and the scientific method as an unavoidable means to accumulate knowledge but not as a guide to the foundations of thought. Something more is called for, and this something is conceptually similar to what Nishida describes as the “experience of encounter.” Hints of this are present already in *Les images dans l’oeuvre de M. Bergson* and come to maturity in the notion of “metaphysical truth” developed in *L’illusion philosophique*.⁶⁷

In both Nishida and Hersch, the move from science to metaphysics has its implications for philosophical expression. The use of imagery discussed

64. HERSCH 2006, 4.

65. CAMPO 2023, 3. Campo links the creative activity of the world and individuality with Nishida’s view of freedom as the development of the deep or true self. As with Bergson, we come to the deep self through intuition and but rely on outward signs, like a painting or a piece of music, to give it expression. In this sense, to be free means to act out of our unseeing, innermost nature, to which we must needs remain passive and receptive. Hence we grasp the gap between intuition and intelligence: “Intelligence can only grasp, understand, and restrain the autonomic movement of the hand retrospectively, by way of its effects.... Intuition, in contrast, can feel the hand moving itself because it is not a knowing but an inward migration towards the true self” (CAMPO 2023, 4). Bergson and Nishida take this idea from Spinoza, for whom intuition is the meeting of two energies, the feeling of a passage or motion marked by joy. Without going into further detail here, I would only point out that Hersch also retraces the idea of “organic, necessary and free development at the same time” in Bergson (HERSCH 2001, 141), and credits its importance for the development of her notion of freedom. In addition to Kant, Bergson and Jaspers, Spinoza is one of Hersch’s main points of reference.

66. WILKINSON 2009, 89..

67. HERSCH 2005, 44.

above attests to the importance each of them places on the interplay between theoretical argument and practical demonstration. In markedly different styles, their texts emit a warmth of experience sharpened by imagery from everyday life that unexpectedly, but also unobtrusively, break the flow of the argument in order to give us a broader perspective on the question at hand. And just as quickly, concepts intervene to manage the fiery vitality of the images, giving them a context that provides clarity and organizing them in such a way as to stimulate novelty of thought. On the one hand, Hersch speaks of abstraction as a technical device that distinguishes the gaze of the philosopher from that of the artist. Nishida shares her passion for clarity, acknowledging that the data and theoretical models built up in the sciences provide material for intuition and allow arguments to flow freely. On the other hand, Nishida highlights the importance of the soulful—indeed, ethical—experience of savoring bread and water as a complement to analyzing their components objectively. This same affection for direct contact with the objects of knowledge emerges in Hersch. Both in their conceptual formulations and in their imagery, she and Nishida continually challenge language to speak to the richness and vitality of experience that logic greets only with silence.

For Nishida and Hersch alike, the relationship between individual knower and the content of the known must be reflected in its mode of expression if philosophy is to retain its contact with experience. From their standpoint, the immediacy and familiarity of the known need to be communicated in terms like Heine's liquid gold of the ocean and starless azure of the sky, or like Hakuin's expectant sense of awe before the pine tree and the wild tangerine. Let science define the stars and the flow of time as they will and garner what data they may in support. Let the spontaneous imagery of the poet and the mystics offend the rules of rational discourse. Let our concerns with insight and will be put off until later. The *ethical* road to knowledge preserves the truth of the experience even in the pursuit of the strictest scientific clarity, a truth that cannot be tamed by the intellect or acquired as its possession. The bronze statue is both raw material *and* a work of art. As with Bergson, Nishida's and Hersch's images strive for the incommunicable, loosening the reins on their readers' imagination and freeing them for intuitive, attentive experiences of their own. For them, it is this search for clear

and distinct ideas within the limits and vitality of experience that philosophy pursues, both in its reflections and in its modes of expression.

A third and final point of comparison has to do with the different conclusions to which Nishida and Hersch arrive regarding the objective material world. For Hersch, matter remains something *other* to the subject that gives it form. Just as Kant's thing-in-itself does not allow itself to be known in its essence, so, too, things resist the gaze of the subject. The "violent activity" this endangers is unthinkable from Nishida's standpoint, which is more interested in maintaining harmony between the world and the individual. She views the encounter in which the subject catches a glimpse of transcendent value in the object of its attention as something consequent to the scientific approach to the world; for Nishida, it is primary. As a result, the process of abstraction that Hersch identifies as the methodological *technicité* proper to philosophy, has no counterpart in Nishida.

At the same time, Nishida and Hersch are agreed that there is more than one way to approach the world and that while no one perspective can substitute for another, they can be mutually complementary. To think otherwise would be to ignore the deliverances of the senses and fall into a Kantian form of transcendental illusion. What matters most is what has meaning. The kind of dispassionate, pragmatic knowledge that serves the aims of science comes second. The world of the physicist with its lines and planes and rigid principles of causality is, of course, very real, not to say indispensable to the advance of human knowledge. But when it comes to contact with reality in its true nature, from the inside, we have to take into account the ways in which freedom of the individual mind adds depth and breadth to the world. The starting point of philosophy is inaccessible to language and yet must rely on language to sort out its concepts and images, to clarify its mode of argument and its appeal to reason. None of this is possible without a determined attentiveness to our encounters with the world and reflection on images that record those encounters. On this point, Nishida and Hersch, despite their differences of approach and orientation, concur with remarkable consistency.

* The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of a Grant-in-Aid for JSPS Fellows (23KF0281). Thanks are also due Zachary Smith and James Heisig for their editorial suggestions.

REFERENCES

ABROL, Mohit

- 2023 "Mapping the Notions of the Self and the World in the Works of Henri Bergson and Nishida Kitarō," *Bergsoniana* 3. {<https://journals.openedition.org/bergsoniana/1204>}

CAMPO, Alessandra

- 2023 "Henri Bergson's Complete Mysticism and Kitaro Nishida's Energetism: A Case of Common Intuition," *Bergsoniana*, 3. {<https://journals.openedition.org/bergsoniana/1316>}

DALISSIER, Michel

- 2006 "The Idea of the Mirror in Nishida and Dōgen," in J. W. Heisig, ed., *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy* (Nagoya: Chisokudō Publications, 2023): 99–142.
- 2007 "*Nishida Kitarō, interprète de Henri Bergson. (1) L'élan et la durée*," *Jinbun, Bulletin du Centre de recherche sur les sciences humaines* 6: 21–51.
- 2015 *L'Hexagone et l'Archipel. Henri Bergson lu par un philosophe japonais* (Paris: Éditions Kimé).

DE MONTICELLI, Roberta

- 2007 "Jeanne Hersch: una filosofia dei contorni," *Lectora* 13: 161–78.

DE VECCHI, Francesca

- 2008 *La libertà incarnata. Filosofia, etica e diritti umani secondo Jeanne Hersch* (Milano: Mondadori).

GHILARDI, Marcello

- 2008 "Between Aesthetics and Ethics: The Experience of Seeing in Nicholas Cusanus and Nishida Kitarō," in J. W. Heisig and U. Mayuko, eds., *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy 3: Origins and Possibilities* (Nagoya: Chisokudō Publications): 140–54.

GUCCINELLI, Roberta

- 2012 "Proteo o dell'esercizio di vedere. La gratuità del fare in Jeanne Hersch e Simone Weil," *Etica e letteratura* 9: 1–16.

HERSCH, Jean

- 1941 "L'obstacle du langage," in A. Béguin and P. Thévenaz, eds., *Henri Bergson. Essais et témoignages inédits* (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière), 214–21.
- 1943 "Défense de la technicité en philosophie," in H. Paissac and P. Thévenaz, eds., *L'homme. Métaphysique et transcendance* (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière): 53–71.
- 1976 "'Was kann ich wissen? Was soll ich tun? Was darf ich hoffen?'. Essai de paraphrase anachronique et inactuelle," in R.-M. Roberge, ed., *Savoir, faire, espérer. les limites de la raison* (Bruxelles: Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis): 345–67.

- 2001 “Le immagini nell’opera di Bergson,” trans. by L. Boella, in L. Boella and R. De Benedetti, eds., *Lucrezio* (Milano: Medusa): 95–142. “des
 - 2005 *L’illusione della filosofia*, trans. by F. Pivano (Milano: Mondadori).
 - 2006 *L’essere e la forma*, trans. by R. Guccinelli and S. Tarantino (Milano: Mondadori).
- KANT, Immanuel
- 1998 *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. By P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- MECCARIELLO, Aldo
- 2009 “*Immagini al lavoro* nel pensiero di Jeanne Hersch,” in V. Cuomo, ed., *L’immagine in questione* (Roma: Aracne): 9–24.
- NAKATOMI Kiyokazu
- 2016 “Nothingness and Love of the Early Philosophy of Nishida,” *Biocosmology – Neo-Aristotelism* 6/3–4: 465–84.
- NISHIDA Kitarō
- 1986 “The Logic of Topos and the Religious Worldview,” trans. by Y. Michiko, *The Eastern Buddhist*, 19/2: 1–29, 20/1: 81–119.
 - 1990 *An Inquiry into the Good*, trans. by M. Abe and C. Ives (New Haven: Yale University Press).
 - 2019 *Pensiero ed esperienza vissuta corporea*, trans. by E. Fongaro (Milano: Mimesis).
 - 2020 *Intuition and reflection in self-consciousness*, trans. by V. H. Viglielmo, T. Yoshinori and J. S. O’Leary (Nagoya: Chisokudō Publications).
- SEVERINI, Piergiacomo
- 2019 “Dalla ‘Critica della ragion pura’ all’alogica razionale. Karl Jaspers e’ l’interpretazione esistenziale della ‘Dialettica trascendentale,’” *Areté* 4: 285–301.
 - 2022 *Being is Doing With: Freedom and Existence in Jeanne Hersch* (Basel: Schwabe).
- SUGIMURA Yasuhiko
- 2023 “Transplanter le bergsonisme dans le ‘lieu du néant’: Bergson et ‘l’École de Kyoto,’” *Bergsoniana*, 3. {<https://journals.openedition.org/bergsoniana/1260>}
- WILKINSON, Robert
- 2009 *Nishida and Western Philosophy* (Surrey: Ashgate).
- YUSA Michiko
- 2002 *Zen & Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitaro* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press).