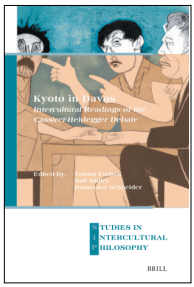
Book Symposium

T. Endres, R. Müller, D. Schneider, eds., *Kyoto in Davos*



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"Anthropological Perspectives on Davos and Kyoto with an Eye on Max Scheler," Jens Heise *360*

"Intercultural Philosophy and the Mirroring of Basic Phenomena: Some Remarks on the Second Chapter of *Kyoto in Davos*," Niels Weidtmann *370*

"Facing Nothingness with the Kyoto School," Gregory S. Moss *381*

"Bringing Historical Materialism to Davos (and Kyoto)," Raji C. Steineck *394*

"Understanding Dissent: Replies to the Commentaries on Kyoto in Davos" Tobias Endres, Ralf Müller, Domenico Schneider 407

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Jens Heise

Anthropological Perspectives on Davos and Kyoto with an Eye on Max Scheler

I have set myself the task of making a few comments to the reader—a challenging task given the number of topics involved. The central theme in Davos is Kant's question: What is man? However, the responses to this question prompt another inquiry: What is anthropology?

In his 1798 lecture on anthropology, Kant distinguishes between two anthropological approaches: "anthropology in physiological terms" (what nature makes of man) and "anthropology in pragmatic terms" (what man as a rational being makes and should make of himself). Kant insists on this division, asserting that only anthropology from a pragmatic point of view is philosophically relevant, as it is essentially practical philosophy. Consequently, Kant not only devalues the physiological perspective but also renders anthropology superfluous. Kant's fundamental dualism is evident in his approach to the human being.

Davos

Heidegger and Cassirer maintain a critical distance from Scheler's idea of a philosophical anthropology. Scheler does not play a significant role in Davos. For Scheler, it is evident that we must accept the naturalistic challenge and reintegrate Kant's exclusion of physiology. Therefore, anthropology must understand humans as part of nature while also explaining that humans emerge from a break with nature. Life and spirit are the two poles that define the human being, requiring constant adjustment: *Ausgleich*.

"*Ausgleich*" is also a term in Scheler's theory of modernity. Scheler posits that human beings generate several existentially relevant axes of differences through history, such as racial differences, cultural differences, differences between the mentalities of East and West and between capitalism and socialism. Scheler anticipated two possibilities for adjustment under modernity: the first through violent conflict of forces; the second through conciliation and growth. In the latter case, the new world-era of adjustment

would be characterized by the correlation of vital and spiritual principles, integrating the two contrasting forces in the novel type of an "All-Mensch." This is the normative image of the human being in the era of adjustment, potentially the anthropological version of the Eastern principle of the unity of contradictions. For diagnosing modernity, adjustment is a problematic term. But this is less true for philosophy, particularly intercultural philosophy, where adjustment has always been utilized. In his introduction, Ralf Müller cites examples of adjustment between positions in Cassirer, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Carnap on the one hand, and Nishida on the other: a direction towards greater proximity to experience, exposing the historical-cultural reality of the spirit, and considering the entirety of human existence and everyday life.[1] Additionally, criticism of all types of dualistic logic should also be mentioned.

In his contribution, John Maraldo made clear what was missing in Davos: animals and the voice of indigenous peoples. Maraldo's inquiry about the relationship between Dasein and humanity casts doubt on whether it is possible or meaningful to talk about humans without clarifying their status as living beings. This remains a key anthropological question in Davos as it does in Kyoto.

Michel Dalissier: Heidegger, Cassirer

Reconstructing the debate, Michel Dalissier shows how much Heidegger and Cassirer disagreed. First, however, he points to a common ground: the characterisation of man as the shaper of the world. For Cassirer, man is dependent on the creation of an artificial, cultural environment. It is in symbolic forms that the spontaneity of human subjectivity manifests itself. In symbolic worlds, human beings gain space for action and thought. Freedom and autonomy are only possible in a symbolically articulated world. From Heidegger's view, *Dasein* must relate to itself and create a mode of existence. But it is not cultural forms in which human beings experience themselves. Dalissier:

> to Heidegger's eyes, if man might be described as a shaper of beings, he cannot be thought of as a shaper of being itself (*Sein*). For him, the ontological

1. Cf. Ibid., 13.

> function of man (*Dasein*)'s relation toward being itself is neither creation nor configuration, but a typical behavior (*Verhalten*)..., emphasising the well-known phenomena of resolution (*Entschlossenheit*) and letting be (*Seinlassen*).[2]

Dalissier clarifies that Heidegger's interest lies not in the question of man, but in the question of being. It is important to note that "Being and Time" is not intended as an anthropology. Nevertheless, Dalissier identifies anthropological elements in Heidegger's philosophy. In his 1929/30 lecture, Heidegger discusses Uexküll's environmental biology, which brings animals into consideration. Yet, Heidegger regards animals as so poor in world (*welt-arm*) that they are irrelevant to man's self-understanding. Dalissier states: "The flaw is that Heidegger still describes Dasein in anthropological terms, manifestly those of power (*Macht*), force (*Kraft*), and body."[3] After the turn (*Kehre*), the anthropological remnants in Heidegger's philosophy disappear completely.

The double issue of human being and anthropology can be summarized: For Heidegger, Dalissier states, finitude as the determination of man is not anthropologically based. For Cassirer, the philosophy of symbolic forms does not exclude anthropology. But Dalissier notes a tendency to overlook the empirical human being and focus on self-liberation and autonomy.

Tobias Endres: Cassirer

For Heidegger, the natural side of the human being is of no consequence; this is not the case for Cassirer, as Tobias Endres makes clear with his key phrase: "the naturalistic challenge is not off the table."[4] Endres views Cassirer's philosophy as a form of naturalism that aims to enable a concept of culture as a plurality of human expressions and to open a perspective for philosophical anthropology. Endres: "Such anthropology must be able to make the transition from nature to culture plausible in the light of Darwinism and can therefore justifiably be called naturalistic in a sense that remains to be defined."[5]

2. Ibid., 42.
3. Ibid., 64.
4. Ibid, 137.
5. Ibid, 139.

Tobias Endres identifies a minimal naturalism in Cassirer, one that does not derive human existence from natural conditions, but rather aims to capture the transition from nature to culture. In accordance with Darwin's theory of expression, the distinction becomes evident: in humans. Expressions possess a symbolic quality, capable of referring to themselves and thus acquiring meaning. The distinction between passive and active expression signifies the shift from an organic to an artificial, cultural mode. Endres elucidates this transition by referencing Uexküll's functional model of an organism: Animals have a genetically determined closed connection between the receptor system and the effector system. Cassirer demonstrates that this wiring is successively loosened in the actions of humans. This rupture in the organic existence of human beings is the condition for the development of human culture.[6]

Cassirer is convinced that anthropology in the 20th century must be informed by the natural sciences, particularly taking note of the theory of evolution. The designation of man as an animal symbolicum expresses this. The philosophical question of man therefore requires an anthropology, which Cassirer outlines in his *An Essay on Man* (1944). However, Cassirer also leaves no doubt that the only way to find the essence of the human being is through his own *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1923–1929). According to Cassirer, cultural philosophy is the only viable path for a philosophical anthropology, as the human condition presents the difference from an animal life. When examining the difference between man and animal, Cassirer focuses primarily on the difference rather than the animal basis of human beings.

The tension between life and spirit, but also between nature and culture seem to have been resolved in cultural philosophy. But still: what does animal symbolicum mean?

Kyoto

Pivot to Kyoto: The same questions: What is man? What is anthropology?—and different emphases and motifs. Manifest is the convergence noted by Ralf Müller between Cassirer and Nishida: a direction

6. Cf. Ibid, 144–5.

towards greater proximity to experience, exposing the historical-cultural reality of the spirit, and considering the entirety of human existence and everyday life. In comparison to the proceedings in Davos, the emphasis here is more clearly placed on a critique of dualism. Heidegger and Cassirer presuppose this critique, but Nishida, Watsuji, and Miki make the overcoming of dualism an explicit program. The approach to contradictions is different from Davos, and the understanding of hybrid and ambivalent forms varies. In Kyoto, the body comes into play. A number of contributions address the concept of embodiment. The fundamental concept for comprehending the world is not the cogito or the transcendental subject separate from the world, but rather the body that interacts with the environment and creates itself, as a "historical body," as Nishida or Miki have described it.

Dennis Stromback: Nishida and de Biran

Stromback identifies the inception of a philosophical anthropology in Kyoto, as articulated in Nishida's 1930 article [人間学] ("Anthropology"). The reference to Maine de Biran is of particular interest. Nishida's concept of self-consciousness is informed by de Biran's anthropological approach, which posits that self-consciousness is inherently linked to the body. De Biran's concept aims to understand human beings as both objects (*homo exterior*) and subjects (*homo interior*). It is part of the human condition that we do not only perceive ourselves actively but also passively suffer the flow of life operating in us without us. As demonstrated in Nishida's work, the connection between inside and outside is also evident. Stromback:

> As Nishida argues, a science of self-awareness that breaks from the duality of subject and object would have to dialectically unite the exterior with the interior in the form of an embodied existence that is inherently active, creative, and intuitive.[7]

Stromback demonstrates that self-awareness does not represent a subject-object relation, but rather, it signifies our ability to relate to objects and perceive ourselves within this dynamic relationship. Self-awareness is the starting point for a philosophical anthropology in Kyoto. For Nishida anthropology should encompass the whole person, not just the rational per-

7. Ibid., 315.

son, and must therefore not exclude religion. Religious experience lies outside of objective logic and must be governed by a wholly different logic—an absolute contradictory logic.[8]

The self as described by Nishida is inextricably linked to the world around. It does not merely act, but is rather the result of actions. Stromback also refers to another relevant term in the field of embodiment: Action-intuition (行為的直観) denotes the interrelationship between self, perception, and action, emphasizing the body as an anchor point. It is evident that the body here is not merely a physical entity, but rather an embodiment of the world itself, functioning as an expressive and historical subject. Stromback: "... action-intuition refers to the world of historical production from the standpoint of the body (身体) as a standpoint of knowing that acts based on what it intuits."[9] Nishida asserts that anthropology's fundamental objective is to demonstrate that humans are a constituent part of the natural, historical, and cultural world. Hence humans can only be understood as a unity of contradictions. This results in a normative implication: anthropology should explain what freedom means, realised as absolutely self-contradictory.

Hans Peter Liederbach: Watsuji

Criticism of Cartesian dualism connects the philosophical cultures between Davos and Kyoto. The early Kyoto philosophers, including Watsuji, shared an interest in developing a notion of the subject that would not rely on problematic presuppositions, such as claims about the self as substance or representations of mental states, as Liederbach emphasises. There are compelling philosophical reasons for this, but it is also in keeping with East Asian tradition.

Watsuji addresses the question of man in his 1934 work *Ethics as the Science of Man* (「人間の額としての倫理学」). His "Science of Man" is explicitly positioned against Western anthropology which he sees as fixated on the isolated individual, focusing on a rational but worldless human being.

In his paper, Hans Peter Liederbach examines Watsuji's critique of *Being and Time* (1927). Initially, Watsuji is impressed by Heidegger's critique of

8. Cf. Ibid., 318.
9. Ibid., 325.

the subject philosophy. The thesis that Dasein understands itself as being-in-the-world opposes all philosophies that, like Descartes', start with the pure ego. Heidegger's philosophy posits that our interaction with the world is not inherently theoretical. In the context of everyday life, the world is becoming accessible for us. Liederbach's summary is as follows: "...the successful dealing with entities, be it signs, utterances, or tools, depends on what Heidegger calls the 'disclosure' of entities and the world wherein they are encountered."[10] Watsuji's position aligns with Heidegger's to this extent. His critique of *Being and Time* is based on two points:

1. Watsuji's critique of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein centres on the dominance of time, and he insists that existence is structured both temporally and spatially. Liederbach:

> Ultimately, his objections to the notion of Dasein amount to the claim that ningen's possible wholeness is grounded not in temporality alone, but also in the equiprimordiality of temporality and spatiality.[11]

Watsuji's emphasis on space is rooted in his fundamental understanding of subjectivity as being-with-others. The dual description of humans as individual and social is revealed in relation to others. Watsuji's focus is not on the subjectification of space, but rather on the spatialization of the subject, as illustrated by the concept of "subjective extension" (主体的空間性). This expression emphasizes the visibility of the subjects, their corporeality. Watsuji criticizes the philosophical tradition, especially Heidegger, for overlooking space, arguing that this omission excludes the body and confines subjects to their interiority. "Ethics" seeks to spatialize the subject, exploring how physical space becomes a space of subjective extension and how the body is inherently social. This reveals the significance of betweenness as mediated by the body—situated between two spaces and dimensions of extension.

2. Watsuji criticizes the fact that intersubjectivity is not addressed. Heidegger derives the "we" from the "I am" of *Dasein*. It then becomes clear that Heidegger does not understand the "I" and the "we" as equally primordial. Liederbach states: Watsuji's point is "that Heidegger's refuta-

10. Ibid., 63.
11. Ibid., 476.

tion of Cartesianism stopped short of acknowledging the positive function, the being-with-others has for developing and sustaining significant dealings with entities is well made."[12] And Watsuji himself (quoted from Liederbach): It is "only in dealing with others, we discover tools."[13] Or: "Although it is said [in *Being and Time*] that *Dasein* is essentially 'being-with-others,' this is, ultimately, a side-by-side of atomistic *Dasein*."[14] For Watsuji, Heidegger's insistence on an isolated subject shows that Cartesianism is still at work in *Being and Time*. Against Heidegger and the Western tradition as a whole, Watsuji posits the view of human beings as in-betweeness (aidagara). Watsuji holds that existence is determined both socially and individually, and that this relationship is the true topic of a "science of man." The ambivalence of this dual structure cannot be resolved into an overarching unity; it grounds the self-understanding of humans as inherently hybrid.

Finally, Liederbach points out that the normative implications in the concept of "Ethics" pose a problem:

> The notion of *ningen* does not provide the conceptual means for elaborating how the various contexts of common practices ought to be authorized beyond appealing to their factual effectiveness.[15]

Liederbach sees the explanation for this deficit in Watsuji's belief that the ontological structure of *ningen* is already normatively binding: that human beings can exist authentically when they do not try to resolve but live the contradiction of being both individual and social.

Concluding remarks

"What are, in fact, the alternatives that Nishida and other Japanese philosophers provide?"[16] Kyoto offers a contrasting yet complementary perspective, emphasizing the critique of dualism and the importance of embodiment in understanding human nature. Nishida, Watsuji and Miki advocate an integrative approach in which the body is at the centre of self-

12. Ibid., 463.
13. Ibid., 463.
14. Ibid., 466.
15. Ibid., 474–5.
16. Ibid., 31.

understanding and the creation of historical and cultural forms. The focus on action-intuition and the embodied self, challenges Cartesian dualism and offers a nuanced view of human beings as inherently active and creative, situated in a natural, historical and cultural environment. The engagement with Eastern philosophical traditions in Kyoto, particularly the critique of Cartesian dualism and the emphasis on intersubjectivity and spatiality, provides rich ground for rethinking Western anthropological assumptions.

Framing the issue of humanity in terms of space has significant consequences. The body comes into view and presents itself as an expressive surface. The body can be distanced from itself without leaving the physical dimension: it can be instrumentalized, trained and used in different ways. The realization that subjectivity is articulated in this distance is the condition for understanding subjectivity as embodiment. We can attribute this insight to Buddhism, for example. The spiritual dimension does not presuppose a separation of body and mind, but rather arises from the doubling of the body into a natural and a spiritual one. The model of the double body offers possible links to Watsuji's theory of the social body and to Nishida's theory of the historical body.

With its theory of embodiment, anthropology can overcome Cartesian dualism. The simple formula for this is: the *res cogitans* is a *res extensa*. Or to put it another way: the ego is extended; it has a surface. In the Cartesian paradigm, this can only be understood as a paradox. But that is precisely what it should be in the anthropological concepts from Kyoto. And it is the task to understand the human being as a unity of contradictions between a naturalistic and culturalistic point of view.

It is difficult to say whether we are living in an era of adjustment. But it seems to me that it makes more sense to focus on adjustment rather than progress.

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