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Universal aspects of paradoxical logic in Nishida Kitarō's philosophy*

All attempts to create a universal philosophical system are not successful since any new philosophical world-view is confronted with its opposition, and therefore we must deal with plentitude of philosophical “isms” (materialism versus idealism, or theism versus atheism etc.). The adherents of each “ism” are surprised that what they regard as logical and coherent argumentation is somehow not convincing for their opponents.

Is there any universal philosophical system which could reconcile all these opposite world-views?

In my opinion such attempt can be found in the Nishida Kitarō's system of “philosophy of Nothingness” (jap. *mu no tetsugaku*). Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) is the only Japanese philosopher of modern times around whom a philosophical school, the so called Kyoto school (jap. *Kyōto ha*), has been formed. Furthermore he is credited with having developed “logic of Nothingness” (jap. *mu no ronri*), also known as “logic of absolutely contradictory identity” (jap. *zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu no ronri*) or “paradoxical logic” (jap. *hairi no ri*)¹.

Paradox as “absolutely contradictory identity”

In my opinion, the meaning of the word “paradox”, which in Greek means “the judgement opposed to the prevailing opinion”, should be defined more accurately. According

* All qotation from Nishida are the authoress's translation from Japanese.

¹ Nishida Kitarō, *Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan* (Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview), in: *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* (Collected Works of Nishida Kitarō) vol. 11, Iwanami shoten, Tokio 1979, p. 443. (This philosophical essay was translated from Japanese into Polish by the authoress as: *Logika miejsca w perspektywie religijnej* part I “Japonica” No. 11, Warszawa 1999; part II “Japonica” No. 13, Warszawa 2000. There is also an English translation of this text: David A. Dillworth, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1987).

to Simon Blackburn also “contradictory conclusion” should be regarded as paradox². Any contradictory conclusion forms a paradoxical judgement (“A=non-A”) that does not comply with the principle of non-contradiction. Since the principle of non-contradiction is the demarcation line of formal logic a paradox is thought to be absurd caused by the erroneous process of reasoning.

We should distinguish from paradox a judgement in which contradiction is only seeming, due to the inaccurate description of conditions. In my opinion, such a judgement should be called a “two-dimensional contradictory judgement” because each of two opposite attributes imputed to a grammatical subject belongs to a different “dimension” (different sphere or different moment). For example the judgement: *A man is great and miserable* can be regarded as “two dimensional” contradictory judgement if:

1. The two opposite attributes of grammatical subject are not identical in the same respect because each of them belongs to a different sphere (A man is great because of its epistemological abilities /sphere 1/ and a man is miserable because he can be so easily annihilated /sphere 2/).
2. Two opposite attributes of grammatical subject are not identical in the same respect because the grammatical subject does not have them at the same time. (A man is great and miserable in the same sphere of epistemological abilities because sometimes he formulates true judgments and sometimes he formulates false judgements).

In both cases we have not to do with the Aristotle’s definition of contradiction, according to which “the same (attribute – A.K.) cannot be ascribed and not be ascribed to the same (subject – A.K.) in the same respect”³. The condition “in the same respect” is very important since it leads to conclusion that if we analyse a contradictory judgement in two different respects “the same can be ascribed and not to be ascribed to the same”. That is why a “two-dimensional” contradictory judgement is not a paradox, because it complies with the principle of non-contradiction of formal logic.

In my opinion only “one-dimensional” contradictory judgement can be called “paradox”, since the contradiction applies to the same sphere and at the same time. In order to regard “one-dimensional” contradictory judgement as a true judgement one must abolish the principle of non-contradiction (A is not non-A). From the point of view of the “common sense” thinking which became the starting point of formal logic, the falsity of “one-dimensional” contradictory judgement is so obvious that no proof for it is required. We cannot even imagine the state in which the contradictory identity of the opposites takes place – for instance that something is changing and not changing in the same respect and at the same time. As Nietzsche concludes: “We can not affirm and negate the

² Simon Blackburn, *Oksfordzki słownik filozoficzny* (The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy), Warszawa 1997, Książka i Wiedza, p. 276.

³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* – quotation from: Maria Kostyszak, *Martin Heidegger – rękodzieło myślenia* (Martin Heidegger – the Handicraft of Thinking), Wrocław 1997, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, p. 78.

same thing: it is a subjective epistemological principle that does not express necessity but only impossibility"⁴.

The above definition of paradox as a "one-dimensional" contradictory judgement is crucial for Nishida's philosophy, because in the teaching of Mahayana Buddhism he referred to in his writings there are many "one dimensional" contradictory judgements, i.e. paradoxical judgements.

Paradoxical judgements in Zen tradition

Nishida referred to the Buddhist theory of identity of Mind (jap. *shin*) and Buddha, which is one of the most important Mahayana teachings. In this context "Mind" means the conceptual, discriminating mind which distinguishes between subject and object. It should be noted that one of the *koans* (enigmatic sayings of Zen masters) from the collection titled "The Gateless Gate" (jap. *Mumonkan*) directly expresses this truth: "Mind is Buddha" (*sokushin sokubutsu*)⁵.

"Individual self is the same as Buddha" – such statement is contradictory since individual self is relative and Buddha is absolute. Nishida stressed that the identity of the individual self and Buddha should not be understood in terms of formal logic since it makes sense only from the point of view of paradoxical logic (logic of absolutely contradictory identity). He stated: "Mind is Buddha, Buddha is Mind – this true statement does not mean that the world is emanation of the Mind. An Individual self (jap. *shin*) is not individual self (jap. *hishin*) and that is why it is an individual self. The relation of Buddha and human being must be understood as "contradictory identity" in compliance with «'is' and 'is not'» logic (the so called *sokuhi* logic, jap. *soku no ronri*) characteristic of the Transcental Wisdom Sutras (sk. *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, jap. *Hannya haramita kyō*)"⁶. An individual self is identical with Buddha though the relative individual self is not transformed into the absolute Buddha – an individual self is and is not Buddha at the same time and at the same respect. Nishida thought that the following words of Daitō Kokushi (Shūhō Myōchō, 1282–1338), famous Japanese Zen master, are the best expression of the paradoxical relation between the relative Mind and the absolute Buddha. "Separated by billion eons, and yet not separated even for a moment. Always face to face, yet we never meet"⁷. According to Nishida, intellect cannot understand the truth of Enlightenment since it rejects paradox as absurd. However only paradoxical judgements are adequate to the truth of Enlightenment. This is not the problem of finding sufficient expressions – this is the problem of shifting from formal logic to paradoxical logic.

⁴ Vittorio Passenti, *Il nihilismo teoretico e la "morte della metafisica"* translated into Polish by Jarosław Merecki as: *Nihilizm teoretyczny i "śmierć metafizyki"*, Lublin 1998, PL-SITA Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, p. 50.

⁵ *Zen no goroku* (Zen Sayings), Hirata Takashi ed., Tōkyō 1986, Chikuma Shobō, p. 114.

⁶ Nishida Kitarō, *Bashoteki ronri...*, op. cit., p. 446.

⁷ Ibid., p. 399.

Nishida has practised Zen for 12 years, but as a philosopher and a mathematician he has always kept some distance to Zen religious institutions in Japan. He did not receive a formal confirmation of Enlightenment from any Zen master, but apparently he did not care to get it. He elaborated consistently philosophical reflection on the reality disclosed in his own experience and in Zen tradition. He came to the conclusion that Enlightenment is connected with the shift from the epistemological perspective of formal logic to the perspective of paradoxical logic, i.e. the logic of absolutely contradictory identity. Nishida wrote: "The Enlightenment means reaching into the source of individual self. An individual self is the negation of the Absolute, i.e. the self-negation of the Absolute Oneness which results in individual multiplicity. That is why the existence of self is contradictory. The self affirms itself in self-negation and finds its existence in such contradictory self-identity"⁸.

In the case of Zen, the veracity of *sokuhi* logic ("is and is not" logic) is verified in the experience of the Enlightenment which is open (at least potentially) to everyone. The change from formal logic perspective to paradoxical logic perspective means disclosure of harmony and complementarity underlying apparent disparity and contradiction. Nishida distinguishes three types of discrimination: irrational discrimination, discrimination in compliance with formal logic, and discrimination in compliance with paradoxical logic, which he called "discrimination without discrimination" (jap. *mufunbetsu no funbetsu*). In the case of irrational discrimination we cannot judge irrational statements to be true or false, since such statements are chaotic and have no logical rules to govern them, so we simply reject them without analysing them. In the case of formal logic we regard as true judgement affirmation or negation, so we can call it "two-value" logic. However, in the case of paradoxical discrimination there is only one true judgement, namely the "one-dimensional" contradictory judgement (the contradictory identity of negation and affirmation: $A = \text{non-}A$). That is why paradoxical logic is "one-value" logic.

According to Strowson, contradiction is self-destructive since we can compare it to a situation when a written statement is "negated" by being erased with a rubber⁹. This is not true in the case of paradoxical statement in which negation does not replace affirmation – negation and affirmation or two opposite attributes stand together and do not exclude each other.

Absolute nothingness and relative nothingness

According to Nishida only paradoxical judgements are adequate to the reality, because reality is absolutely contradictory self-identity. The reality as absolutely contradictory self-identity can be called Nothingness, because such reality cannot be objectified (treated as epistemological object). Paradoxical reality cannot be determined by negation since it is

⁸ Ibid., p. 446.

⁹ Maria Kostyszak, op. cit., p. 76.

the contradictory identity of negation and affirmation. In this sense paradoxical reality means absolute negation, i.e. not only the negation of affirmation but also "double" negation – the negation of negation. Any paradoxical judgement negates both affirmation and negation since it can be regarded as neither negation nor affirmation. The Absolute Nothingness should not be taken as nothingness (no-being) which is distinguished from "somethingness" (being). If so, we would be involved in duality of non-being and being, and therefore the overcoming of duality regarded as a necessary condition of Buddhist Enlightenment would not be realized.

For Nishida reality is Absolute Nothingness (jap. *zettateki mu*), which is not "non-being" (the antithesis of being as negative vacuity)¹⁰. Such "no-being" is called Relative Nothingness (jap. *sōtateki mu*) by Nishida, because it is conditioned by the existence of "being". We cannot think about "non-being" without its relation to "being", therefore we may say that notions of "being and "non-being" are mutually conditioned. The Absolute Nothingness is the Absolute and therefore it can not be conditioned by anything. It should be noted that "Relative Nothingness, called "Mere Nothingness" by Masao Abe, a disciple of Nishida¹¹ is the equivalent term to "One-sided Emptiness" (jap. *henkū*) in Mahayana Buddhism. "One-sided Emptiness" means a state of Mind during meditation when all functions of consciousness are eliminated. It should be noted that many Zen masters criticized the so-called 'Silent Illumination Zen' (jap. *mokushō zen*) stressing that attainment of "One-sided Emptiness" is not true Enlightenment. According to Huineng (638–713), the Sixth Patriarch, one should not try to "extinguish" his consciousness but must reach the True Emptiness, which he defined as a paradoxical state of non-thinking (jap. *munen*), i.e. "thinking without thinking"¹². The Emptiness conceived as identity of the opposites is a new interpretation of traditional Buddhist term of Emptiness (skt. *śūnyatā*, jap. *kū*)¹³ Masao Abe emphasises that Nothingness as negation of both "being" and "non-being" that can be found in Nāgārjuna's teaching (1/2 century) is unique idea in the history of the world philosophy. Nāgārjuna's idea of Middle Path does not indicate a midpoint between the two extremes, but it refers to transcendence of every possible duality including that of being and non-being. Nāgārjuna criticized the Abhidharma Buddhists for taking the negative state of "turning the body to ashes and annihilating the consciousness" (jap. *keshin metchi*) as the ideal state of deliverance, i.e. nirvana¹⁴.

Absolute Nothingness as absolute contradictory identity cannot be objectified, since any objectified notion has its negation. However the Absolute Nothingness is the absolute

¹⁰ The term "Nothingness" (jap. *Mu*) is of Taoist origin but Nishida identifies it with the Buddhist term of "True Emptiness" (jap. *shinkū*) from *Prajnaparamita Sutras*. See: B.R. p. 423; L.M. part. II p. 124.

¹¹ Abe, op. cit., p. 169.

¹² *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, ed. Philip B. Yampolsky, York and London 1967, Columbia University Press, New sec. 17.

¹³ Afonso Verdu, *Dialectical Aspects in Buddhist Thought*, Center for East Asian Studies, The University of Kansas 1974, p. 3.

¹⁴ Abe Masao, *Zen and Western Thought*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1985, p. 101.

negation that cannot be negated – no antithesis results in such negation. If we negate a notion of contradictory identity (not contradictory, not identity), the meaning remains the same – identical contradiction, which is the same as contradictory identity. It should be noted that the Absolute Nothingness as absolute contradictory identity is not a synthesis in the Hegelian sense, since Hegelian synthesis can be objectified and negated.

We must also face another paradox – if we formulate judgement: All is Nothingness, we must admit that “there is still a subject that formulates judgements”¹⁵. In Absolute Nothingness all the opposites are paradoxically (contradictorily) identical. Therefore, subject and object are the same, although each of them retains its integrity – they are the same and they are not the same, which can be regarded as true only from the point of view of paradoxical logic. We cannot formulate judgements about Absolute Nothingness in terms of formal logic, since in Absolute Nothingness there is no subject separated from object. Only paradoxical logic is adequate to the Absolute Nothingness.

Abe points out that the theory of primacy of “being” over “non-being” typical for Western philosophy is groundless¹⁶. “Being” does not precede “non-being” in ontological validity, nor is non-being dependent on “being” it negates. In the case of the Absolute Nothingness “being” and “non-being” are completely antagonistic principles and therefore inseparable from each other, and thus constitute an antinomy, a self-contradiction. They are entirely relative, complementary and reciprocal, one being impossible without the other. Being and non-being determine each other by self-negation.

Abe stated that the Absolute Nothingness as “negation of negation” is not a “third position” outside the two (i.e. affirmation and negation). The Absolute Nothingness is absolutely contradictory identity of all opposites, therefore it includes both affirmation and negation. There is nothing outside the Absolute Nothingness.

In Mahayana Buddhism absolute contradictory identity is expressed by the notion of “the mode of existence in which all phenomenal things are mutually unhindered and interfused” (jap. *jijimuge*)¹⁷. In such vision of reality as dependent co-origination “there is nothing whatsoever «more real», (for instance, in terms of transcendence, immanence, or «in-between»), which lies beyond or behind the interdependence of everything in universe”¹⁸. Therefore, the interdependence of all elements in the universe is determined and limited by itself without any outside principle of determination and limitation. Nishida expressed the same vision of reality stating that “the world manifests itself and forms itself in the process of self-expression”¹⁹.

¹⁵ Nishida Kitarō, *Bashoteki ronri...*, op. cit., p. 395.

¹⁶ Abe, op. cit., p. 121 (Abe quotes mainly P. Tillich in this respect).

¹⁷ Abe translates this Huayan Buddhist term as “the realm of unhindered mutual interpenetration of phenomena and phenomena”, *ibid.*, p. 106. It should be noted that not only Huayan patriarchs studied Ch’an (Zen) but also Ch’an masters themselves made extensive use of Huayan teaching (see. Thomas Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable – An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism*, Honolulu 1983, University of Hawaii Press, p. 11).

¹⁸ Abe, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁹ Nishida, *Bashoteki ronri...*, op. cit., p. 426.

The Absolute Nothingness is the contradictory identity of all different elements (including opposite elements), in which all phenomena are unhindered (they retain their individual attributes) and interfused (they are the same). Such statement is paradoxical – all phenomena are the same, and are not the same. Contradictory identity means that all elements in universe interfuse one another constituting the Oneness, which is inconceivable for our “common sense” perception. In Buddhist tradition (mainly Huayan sect) such inconceivable state is compared to the “Indra net” (jap. *Indara mo*). The net of Indra is a net of jewels: not only does each jewel reflect all other jewels but the reflection of all the jewels also contains the reflections of all the other jewels, ad infinitum. This “infinity of infinities” represents the interidentification and interpenetration of all things²⁰.

The relation of Absolute Nothingness to individual self

According to Nishida Nothingness is the Absolute (jap. *zettaisha*) since Nothingness is not conditioned by anything and it is not determined by negation – “it cannot be treated as a notion which is the negation of the opposite notion”²¹. The Absolute Nothingness does not transcend an individual self, neither is it immanent in it. Nishida uses his own term “panentheism” designating the paradox of the Absolute Nothingness as contradictory identity of transcendence and immanence.

It should be noted that absolutely contradictory identity of transcendence and immanence is the negation of both transcendence and immanence, and therefore such a state is beyond the anthropological dimension of human being. Strictly speaking we have to do with the paradox that the Absolute Nothingness is beyond and is not beyond an individual self. That is why it is a mistake to interpret the Absolute Nothingness as a form of pantheism.

From the point of view of formal logic the statement: “Mind is Buddha” means that two elements are identical, so they are only different names for the same thing ($A=A$). Identical notions are synonyms – Mind (synonym of Buddha) is Buddha (synonym of Mind). If we say: “Mind is not Buddha” we mean that the Buddha Nature, or the state of Buddha (the Enlightened One) has nothing to do with an individual self, since Buddha is transcendent to a human being.

However, from the point of view of paradoxical logic “identity” is always contradictory – individual self is Buddha and is not Buddha at the same time and in the same respect. The contradictory identity of immanence and transcendence is neither transcendence nor immanence. That is why individual self is not annihilated; it always retains its unique characteristics although it is never separated from the Absolute Nothingness (i.e. the contradictory identity of all opposites, including dualism of subject and object). The Enlightened One experiences the contradictory identity of the self and the universe, so he cannot treat the universe as an object. In the act of Enlightenment the subject separated

²⁰ Cleary, op. cit., p. 37.

²¹ Nishida, *Bashoteki ronri...*, op. cit., p. 435.

from object (i.e. “dual” self) is transcended, and the new perspective of the contradictory identity of subject and object is open. Nishida stated: “In the bottom of our self there is something that transcends conscious self. This ‘something’ is not outside the self, but it is the source of a conscious self. By this I do not mean unconsciousness or primitive instinct – if someone thinks so, he makes mistake due to his complying with formal logic”²².

According to Nishida, so far Western philosophers have not taken into consideration the problem of an “an active self” (jap. *kōiteki jiko*), that is a concrete, individual self, that is active here and now. In his opinion, Western philosophers were not able to grasp the meaning of reality, since they analysed static and abstract self, treating it as any other “object” of cognition. They did not realize that they keep objectifying a subject, since they did not pay any attention to the paradox of epistemological act in which the self (a subject that cannot become an object) looks at itself “from the outside” and objectifies itself – so the self is a subject and an object at the same time and at the same respect. Treating itself only as an object the individual self can never fully know itself.

Nishida stated that the Absolute Nothingness as contradictory identity of transcendence and immanence is open to both the Buddhists and the Christians as a “spiritual fact” (jap. *shinreiteki jijitsu*). Sometimes he used such expressions as “God-Father or Buddha-Mother” to designate the Absolute Nothingness²³. Many representatives of Buddhism and Christianity would protest against such notion, but by using it Nishida wanted to express his solemn conviction that everyone can hear the voice of the Absolute in his heart. According to him religiosity is not related to the separated sphere of sacrum. Nishida wrote: “The relation of God to man must be understood as the relation of reciprocal polarization (jap. *gyaku taio* – identity through self negation of the opposites). Our religious consciousness is not our own expression but the voice of God, the voice of Buddha. Such voice is the act of God, act of Buddha and it comes from within our individual self”²⁴.

Nishida insists that it is a mistake to interpret his words in pantheistic sense. Individual self is not emanation of the Absolute. “The true direction is to discover God in the self-negation. It does not mean immanence since in this direction the world loses itself and a man negates its humanity”²⁵.

Masao Abe notes that there is an important difference between the description of the oneness with God we can find in the Western mysticism and in the theory of contradictory identity of Mind and Buddha – the Christians never dare to treat man as equal to God. However Buddhists do not regard the statement: “a Man is Buddha”²⁶ as blasphemy. In paradoxical logic contradictory identity is reciprocal – “Mind is Buddha” and “Buddha is Mind”, but it does not lead to conclusion unavoidable from the point of view of formal logic that such identity means that we have to do only with Buddha or only with Mind.

²² Ibid., p. 414.

²³ Ibid., p. 407.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 409.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 461.

²⁶ Abe, op. cit., p. 161.

The difference between a man and Buddha is retained as one aspect of absolutely contradictory self-identity. The Absolute Nothingness is not transcendent in the sense that it is absolutely "alien" to a man. A man can never be separated from the Absolute Nothingness and discovers it within himself in the contradictory identity (in paradox) of immanence and transcendence. That is why in Zen tradition the experience of Enlightenment is called "returning home and sitting in peace" (jap. *kika seiza*), because when an individual self finally grasps the truth of its own nature, all existential anxieties are gone. In the act of self-negation a man is thrown into the Absolute Nothingness, but since the Absolute Nothingness is absolutely contradictory self-identity, a man's self-negation does not mean annihilation. Nishida wrote: "By the statement that the self transcend itself at its very foundation I do not mean that the self becomes Nothingness, on the contrary, the self truly becomes individual as the point of expression of the world"²⁷. It should be noted that in the reflections of the Western Christian mystics we can find a conviction that the self-denial leads to mysterious union with God in which the difference between the Creator and the created is retained. The representatives of Kyoto philosophical school, which traces its origin back to Nishida, interpret this assertion as the expression of the truth of the absolutely contradictory identity of the relative and the absolute.

An individual self is contradictory existence, it is a living paradox because if it tries to know itself "it becomes both subject and object at the same time; it is both spatial and temporal"²⁸. According to Nishida, such contradictory existence "must have as its foundation absolutely contradictory identity which is creative as absolutely contradictory identity of affirmation and negation"²⁹.

Absolute Nothingness as topos (*basho*)

For Nishida redefinition of individual self was the most important philosophical problem. When he was analysing the source of conscious self he realized that no philosopher so far tried to answer the question: where is there the so called field of consciousness demarkated by the epistemological dualism of subject-object relation. He came to the conclusion that an individual self has its place in Absolute Nothingness which is the final place of everything. Only "the final place" has no place and therefore is everywhere and nowhere. The Absolute Nothingness as the final place is not an object – it cannot be objectified, since it is absolutely contradictory identity.

Nishida called his logic of absolutely contradictory identity the logic of place/topos (jap. *basho no ronri*). The direct inspiration of the term "place" was *khora* in Plato's philosophy, which is usually translated as "space". Nishida did not quote Plato, but in *Timaios* I found some fragments that can be useful in the analysis of this term. Plato

²⁷ Ibid., p. 143.

²⁸ Nishida, *Bashoteki ronri...*, op. cit., p. 414.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 415.

compares *khora* to a womb that embraces everything, i.e. eternal ideas and things that are their imitations. *Khora* has no form – “We should give a name of Mother and the Ground of everything not to the earth, nor the air, nor the water, nor the fire (...) but some invisible and shapeless form that can embrace everything and has inconceivable contact with the objects of thoughts. We are not wrong if we say that it is something extremely elusive”³⁰. Everything is generated in *khora* because “unavoidably, everything must exist in a place”³¹.

In the Western philosophical tradition the term *khora* is understood as some kind of “shapeless matter”³². However Nishida stresses that only Absolute Nothingness is absolutely elusive and formless place/topos of everything. Even “field of consciousness” must have its place. We can think of a place of something and then notice that this place has its own place, but the result of such regressional process is the Final Place – a place which has no place, i.e. the Absolute Nothingness. Such “place without place” is creative and dynamical, since it embraces everything in it and is absolutely contradictory identity of one and many.

The Western culture of being and the Eastern culture of nothingness

Nishida abolished the epistemological paradigm of subject-object dualism that is the foundation of formal logic. According to him the epistemology is the result of human self-reflection which was influenced by historical and social conditions. He emphasised that subject-object dualism in epistemology is not an axiom. He wrote: “I think that historical and social conditions of the development of logic and ontology should be examined carefully. In this context the outset of Greek philosophy, especially of subject-object dualism must be reconsidered”³³. The reflections on acts of cognition are “events” in the historical and social world. According to Nishida “It is the sign of ignorance to regard objectified individual self as the true self, treating it as the object from the point of view of formal logic”³⁴.

In the case of paradoxical logic subject-object dualism is caused by one-sided perception of reality, in which only the aspect of difference is grasped but the aspect of identity is overlooked. According to Nishida, the conception of “non-self” (skt. *anātman*, jap. *muga*; ‘no permanent self’) in the Buddhist tradition is the result of the reflection on the aspect of contradictory identity of subject and object. Nishida wrote: “I am aware that it is generally thought that in the philosophy of India the problem of individual self was taken

³⁰ Platon, *Timaios i Kritias* (Timaios, Kritias), translated into Polish by Władysław Witwicki, Warszawa 1999, Alfa, p. 57–58.

³¹ Ibid., p. 59.

³² Ibid., (translator’s afterword), p. 209.

³³ Nishida, *Zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu* (Absolutely Contradictory Identity), *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* vol. 9, p. 154 (pp. 147–187). There is no English translation of this essay. Polish translation by Agnieszka Kozyra as: *Absolutnie sprzeczna samotożsamość* (part I), “Japonica” No. 14, 2001, pp. 167–199.

³⁴ Nishida, *Bashoteki ronri...*, op. cit., p. 411.

into consideration less than in the Greek philosophy. In my opinion however, the negation of separate, individual self in India must have been preceded by the profound analysis of individual self"³⁵.

Nishida stated that the forms of culture in the West and in the East differ from the metaphysical point of view, since each vision of reality has different metaphysical premise.

He distinguished the Western "culture of Being" (jap. *u no bunka*) from the Eastern "culture of Nothingness" (jap. *mu no bunka*) arguing that the Greek culture which became the source of the Western culture has as its foundation the concept of Being³⁶. "In the Greek philosophy one cannot find a theory in which reality is regarded as something absolutely infinite, something that absolutely transcends the objects of sensual and rational cognition. The Parmenides's notion of Oneness is not Nothingness but the culmination of Being, and Heraclit's conception of perpetual flow has the meaning of logos"³⁷. True Nothingness can be found only in the Eastern philosophy, especially in philosophy of India. The highest God in *Upanisada* is "motionless and yet in constant motion, it is far away and yet so close. In itself it perceives everything that exists and perceives itself in everything; it condemns nothing"³⁸. It should be noted that in the Buddhism we can find the reflection on the experience of absolutely contradictory identity of reality in the notion of "the first principle Emptiness (skt. *paramārtha śūnyatā*; jap. *daiichigikū*) as the ultimate principle beyond all relative concepts.

Nishida gets also some inspirations from Taoism, in which Nothingness (jap. *mu*) can not be objectified and, therefore, can not be named. He quotes the following words of Laozi: "The Way that can be named is not the Eternal Way. The names that can be spoken are not eternal names. The Unnamed is the beginning of heaven and earth. If we want to define Nothingness we call it the Mother of everything that exists"³⁹. When Nishida stated that in his philosophy he wanted to express the "form of the formless", he referred to the words of Laozi: "The return of everything to Nothingness is called the form of the formless (jap. *mujō no jō*)"⁴⁰.

In relation to Nishida's distinction between "the culture of Being" in the West and "the culture of Nothingness" in the East the following problem arises: Is this true that we cannot find a reflection on the Absolute Nothingness (i.e. absolutely contradictory identity) in the Western Philosophy? In my opinion the problem of veracity or falsity of the paradox

³⁵ Ibid., p. 428–429.

³⁶ Nishida, *Tetsugaku no kompon mondai* (Fundamental Problems of Philosophy, 1932), *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, vol. 7, Iwanami shoten, Tōkyō 1979, p. 429. (Last chapter of this book was translated from Japanese by Agnieszka Kozyra as: *Starożytne formy kulturowe Wschodu i Zachodu w perspektywie metafizycznej* (The Ancient Cultural Forms of East and West in a Metaphysical Perspective) in: "Japonica" nr 10, Warszawa 1999, pp. 143–160. See also English translation by David A. Dilworth, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy – The World of Action and the Dialectical World*, Tokyo 1970, Sophia University.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 430.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 433.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 435.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 436.

is important not only for the Eastern philosophers but also constitutes a crucial dilemma in philosophy of Martin Heidegger.

Martin Heidegger and Paradoxical Logic

Masao Abe stated that Heidegger had paid more attention to the notion of Nothingness than any other Western philosopher. However Abe concludes that since Heidegger did not use logic of absolutely contradictory identity, his philosophy has nothing to do with Zen⁴¹. It is true that in comparison to Nishida Heidegger formulated his opinions on the problem of contradiction seldom and inconsistently. However, in my opinion, Heidegger is the first Western philosopher who dared to question the authority of the principle of non-contradiction, generally accepted as a regulative principle of logical thinking. In Nietzsche's philosophy we can find only a vague idea that the state of harmony of the opposites can be real. Being aware that from the point of view of formal logic the opposites exclude each other Nietzsche wrote about Zarathustra: "All contradictions united themselves in him in the new Oneness. The highest and deepest forces of human nature; all that is the noblest and all that is the meanest outflows from the same source with immortal necessity"⁴². "In such fullness of space, and in this acceptance of all the contradictions Zarathustra feels himself to be the highest kind of all existence"⁴³.

Heidegger was the first Western philosopher who formulated the thesis that the principle of non-contradiction should not be treated as a formal principle having no premise to metaphysical vision of reality. According to him, the historical beginning of logic has its foundation in an immature ontology of the present (*Vorhanden*)⁴⁴. The immaturity of such ontology consists in treating the abstract thinking (abstract language) and its general principles as absolutely adequate to the reality. Heidegger stressed that from the times of Aristotle logic has not made any progress, and therefore the only possible step is to remove such logic (as the main perspective of understanding of Being) from its foundation⁴⁵. For him Descartes's ratio "is not a righteous judge – without hesitation it thrusts down everything that does not suit it to what it regards as 'the swamp of irrationality', and it delimits the area of such irrationality by itself"⁴⁶.

The scope of this article does not allow for broader analysis of the Eastern inspirations of Martin Heidegger who was interested in books of Daisetsu Suzuki, the Zen master and a close friend of Kitaro Nishida. It should be noted that Vittorio Passenti

⁴¹ Abe, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴² Fryderyk Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, Warszawa 1989, BIS, p. 94.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 95.

⁴⁴ Kostyszak, op. cit., p. 92.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Zur Seinsfrage*, in: *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main 1967, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 216. Polish translation: *Znaki drogi* (Z.D.), Warszawa 1999, Spacja, p. 332.

admitted the generally known fact stating that "one should not forget about the sympathy, the late Heidegger shown to Zen Buddhism"⁴⁷.

According to Heidegger, a paradoxical judgement is not to be regarded as true only because of certain ontological premises which constitute the foundation of formal logic. The most crucial is the premise of subject-object dualism. The intellectual horizon of modern Western philosophy is a heritage of the Greek philosophy with its notion of being as permanent presence. Being permanently present means being objectified by the subject⁴⁸. D.A. White emphasises that the principle of non-contradiction depends on the existence of the self which is able to reflect upon the reality. Such a self is treated as a separate subject that objectifies everything. For Heidegger, ontological structure of the principle of non-contradiction takes it for granted that every "being" is determined by its negation which conditions it⁴⁹. In this sense the general conception of being is defined only in relation with its negation, i.e. in relation to "non-being". Necessity of negation in determination of being is the preliminary condition of the principle of non-contradiction. Therefore, it is impossible to determine being by identity of affirmation and negation.

Heidegger stated that it is necessary to abolish the principle of non-contradiction if we want to know the concrete, individual self, which he called "Being-there" (*Dasein*)⁵⁰. Individual self as Being-there formulates judgements about the reality by determining things and giving names to them, so it objectifies being and gives meaning to it. Being-there as a subject is not an object, so it cannot be objectified if one wants to avoid contradiction. The question arises: What is the Being-there which is not objectified? From the point of view of formal logic, something that cannot be objectified is Nothing⁵¹. If individual self tries to know itself, it should be aware that it is the subject and object at the same time, that it can not be objectified. It leads to the conclusion that Being-there transcends the subject-object dualism.

Heidegger also gives us other examples of situations to which the principle of contradiction of formal logic cannot be applied. For instance, he pays attention to the mutual relation between that which defines (work) and that which is defined (a worker).

In order to think about such circular totality we need the logical thinking which is not limited by the principle of non-contradiction⁵². Heidegger also states that Heisenberg's rule of the indeterminate cannot be considered unless we move back to the transcendental ground of the subject-object relation. Only if we succeed in doing so, we can ask question about the origin of the objectified being⁵³. Transcendental area of subject-object relation means the overcoming of subject-object dualism, which is absurd from the point of view of formal logic. Heidegger notes that the veracity of the

⁴⁷ Passenti, op. cit., p. 86.

⁴⁸ Krzysztof Michalski's preface to Martin Heidegger's Selected Essays: *Budować mieszkać, myśleć – eseje wybrane* (*Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*), Krzysztof Michalski ed., Warszawa 1977, Czytelnik, p. 15.

⁴⁹ D.A. White, *Logic and Ontology in Heidegger*, Columbus-Ohio 1985, p. 27.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Michalski's preface, op. cit., p. 19.

⁵² Heidegger, *Zur Seinfrage*, op. cit., p. 228; Z.D., p. 341.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 230; Z.D., p. 343.

principle of non-contradiction is based on common sense judgement which is "understandable by itself" (*"Selbstverständlichen"*). However, due to such way of thinking we do not ask why something is "understandable by itself". Therefore, we allow that such "understandable by itself" notions or judgements to prevent any further inquiry⁵⁴.

In my opinion, there are the following similarities in Heidegger and Nishida's worldview:

1. Reality can not be objectified, it cannot be presented to the subject as an object.

According to Heidegger the history of the Western philosophy is forgetting about the true meaning of Being, which cannot be objectified⁵⁵. It should be noted that sometimes Heidegger treats the notions of Being and Nothingness as synonyms: "We should be ready to experience in Nothingness spaciousness of what is guaranteed to all essents by Being"⁵⁶.

2. The difference between "the Imagined (Relative) Nothingness" and "the Actual (Absolute) Nothingness".

In Heidegger philosophy we can find the term which is equivalent to the notion of Nishida's "Relative Nothingness" as the antithesis of Being. Heidegger wrote: "Something that is different from Being is non-being (*das Nicht-Seiende*)"⁵⁷. He stressed that 'non-being' is "Imagined Nothingness" (*das eingebildete Nichts*), which is regarded as negation of being⁵⁸. Definition of Nothingness as 'non-being' has its origin in the Greek philosophical tradition. "In the ancient metaphysics Nothingness was understood as 'non-being', namely as formless matter, which cannot form itself"⁵⁹.

Concerning "the Actual Nothingness" (*das eigentliche Nichts*) Heidegger stated: "As regards Actual Nothingness, should we not say that it is latent and therefore self-contradicted notion of existing (being) Nothingness (*das seinende Nichts*)?"⁶⁰. Being is the Actual Nothingness since it is unknown and bottomless ground of metaphysics (*ungrundete Grund*)⁶¹. Heidegger refers to Hegel statement that "pure being (*das reine Sein*) and pure nothing (*das reine Nichts*) are the same"⁶². The Actual Nothingness is potentiality for Being⁶³ but is not the antithesis of being⁶⁴. According to Heidegger, "the Actual Nothingness" is something more primordial than negation⁶⁵.

For Heidegger, Being as the Actual Nothingness cannot be treated as affirmation or negation, and that is why he writes the word Being crossing it out. "The purpose of crossing

⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, in: *Wegmarken*, op. cit., p. 74; Z.D., p. 158.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Nachwort zu: Was ist Metaphysik*, in: *Wegmarken*, op. cit., p. 101; Z.D., p. 265.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 102, Z.D., p. 265.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik*, in: *Wegmarken*, op. cit., p. 7; Z.D., p. 100.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 16; Z.D., p. 108.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 7, Z.D., p. 100.

⁶¹ Heidegger, *Nachwort zu: Was ist Metaphysik*, op. cit., p. 100; Z.D., p. 264.

⁶² Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik*, op. cit., p. 17 (G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* I. Buch, WW III, S. 74); Z.D., p. 109 (G.W.F. Hegel, *Nauka logiki*, Warszawa 1967, PWN, p. 93).

⁶³ Ibid., p. 12; Z.D., p. 105.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 7; Z.D., p. 99.

out the word Being is to uproot the habit of presenting Being as something existing of itself, as something facing a man and approaching him sometimes only incidentally"⁶⁶. Heidegger stresses that Being is not something separated from us – we are always immersed in Being.

The notion of the Actual Nothingness in Heidegger's philosophy can be interpreted as having the same meaning as the concept of the Absolute Nothingness in Nishida's philosophy, i.e. as absolutely contradictory identity of being and non-being. Heidegger stressed that Nothingness which is revealed in the contradictory statement is something different from Nothingness as silence (i.e. a lack of speech, a lack of language)⁶⁷. He draws our attention to the fact that contradiction appears already in the question about Nothingness, since we ask: What is something that is Nothing? "In this question we grasp Nothingness as something, which exists in the one way or another as being. And yet, it is different from being.(...) Thinking by virtue of its very nature, is the thinking about something, therefore thinking about Nothingness goes beyond its limits (is against its own nature)⁶⁸.

Sometimes Heidegger's statements remind the teaching of Zen masters: "Metaphysics, due to the way it thinks about Being is automatically fated to become a barrier, which prevents a man from experiencing primordial union of Being and human self"⁶⁹. Such erroneous way of metaphysical thinking about Being is to treat an individual self as substance or subject⁷⁰.

It should be noted, however, that Heidegger's attacks on the logical principle of non-contradiction do not lead to establishing a new logical paradigm, as in the case of Nishida's logic of absolutely contradictory identity. One of the reason for this is Heidegger's unique method of philosophical analysis he conducts in order to abolish established vision of reality that is "understood by itself". His purpose is to "dismantle all habitual conceptions which became empty so that primordial, metaphysical experience of Being could be disclosed"⁷¹. According to Heidegger only "the dismantling of conceptions" can disclose the primordial experience of Being and that is why he follows his own process of 'dismantling'. He does not accept any ready answer for his questions, any different metaphysical theory which is not the immediate result of his own analysis. That is why Heidegger was not pleased at all when a Japanese professor, Tomio Tezuka told him that the Japanese readers of the essay *What is Metaphysics* had no problems with the notion of 'Nothingness' and was surprised that the Western readers do not understand this concept. Such reaction of Heidegger should not be treated only as a expression of the wounded pride of the philosopher who thought that he had brought about a Copernican-like revolution in philosophy but who learned that in the other part of the world such 'revolution' had taken place long time ago. In his conversation with the Japanese professor Heidegger keeps repeating that "it is difficult to say about mutual understanding in conversation in German, if the Japanese professor categorizes in the

⁶⁶ Heidegger, *Zur Seinsfrage*, op. cit., p. 239; Z.D., 350.

⁶⁷ Kostyszak, op. cit., p. 76.

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik*, op. cit., p. 4; Z.D., p. 98.

⁶⁹ Heidegger, *Einleitung zu: Was ist Metaphysik*, in: *Wegmarken*, op. cit, p. 200; Z.D., p. 317.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 204; Z.D., p. 321.

⁷¹ Heidegger, *Zur Seinsfrage*, op. cit., p. 245; Z.D., p. 355.

European way and the German professor (Heidegger – A.K.) tries to avoid any categorization”⁷². One cannot avoid categorization, if one wants to build a systematic theory based on the result of ‘the dismantling’ process. However Heidegger is apparently concentrated on the dismantling process itself, and is very cautious in formulating any conclusions. Or at least, he does not want ready answers for his questions from the Eastern thinkers.

Unlike Heidegger, Nishida openly stated that his approach may be called dogmatic, since he is influenced by the Eastern philosophical vision of reality as the Absolute Nothingness. Nishida did not use traditional Buddhist terminology; he seldom refers to Buddhist sutra or commentaries, and he continually conducts dialogue with the Western philosophy. He introduced some new terms as “absolutely contradictory identity” or “reciprocal polarisation”, but generally in his theory of “philosophy of Nothingness” (*mu no tetsugaku*) he used Western philosophical categories and concepts.

Nevertheless Nishida’s philosophy is the part of the same Eastern tradition, to which paradoxical logic of Zen masters belongs.

Nishida called his logic of absolutely contradictory identity the logic of the East, since it originated in Asia. He did not mean that the Easterners have nothing to do with the “Western” formal logic. There is no Eastern mathematics, so in this sense there is no Eastern logic. The formal logic is a set of rules that govern thinking based on subject-object dualism. Such principles of thinking are the same in the East and in the West – such is ‘the common sense’ thinking of human beings. The paradoxical logic does not negate formal logic, it is not alternative to it. Paradoxical logic transcends and, at the same time, includes formal logic. In other words, formal logic refers to one aspect of paradoxical logic, namely the aspect of disparity. Nishida stressed that logic of absolutely contradictory identity does not exclude formal logic. “Classical logic (formal logic – A.K.) as the self-determination of concrete logic (paradoxical logic – A.K.) is included in it”⁷³.

Paradoxical logic may be rejected by some philosophers as absurd, but they should not ignore the fact that Zen masters have used paradoxical logic for more than 1480 years (The first Chinese Patriarch of Zen was Bodhidharma, who, according to tradition, went to China in 520). One may not agree that paradoxical logic is adequate to reality which is absolutely contradictory self-identity, but one must find better arguments against it than statement: “it is understood by itself”.

Paradoxical logic is the logic of truly universal philosophy, since in philosophy of contradictory self-identity which all various opposite statements are united in one integral system as partial truths. In my opinion philosophy that complies with paradoxical logic should be distinguished from other types of nihilism as “paradoxical nihilism” which is not multi-valued since the only ultimate truth of such system is the truth “one-dimensional” contradictory judgement.

⁷² Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Stuttgart 1993, p. 9 (quotation from Kostyszak, op. cit., p. 45).

⁷³ Nishida, *Bashoteiki ronri...*, op. cit., p. 416.