

Alternative View of Institution from the “Place of Nothingness”: Social Philosophy of Nakamura Yujiro as the Post-Excluded Middle Law

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Abstract:

In postwar Japan, the significance of Nakamura Yujiro (1925-2017) is underexplored domestically and internationally although he is a well-known philosopher in his unique arguments such as the “common sense”, “rhythm”, “oscillation” and so on. This paper attempts to clarify his significance in the context of philosophical and theoretical history over the relation between “institution” and “liberty”. What a series of his works reveals is that institution is not sharply opposed to liberty, and rather, institutionalized realities concretize our liberties *in parallel* in terms of a system of unconsciously creative acts. Based on this view, this paper tries to define the implication of this insight from Nakamura’s philosophy as the *social philosophy of the post-excluded middle*. That is to say, western philosophies of institution and liberty based on Hegel have their axis on the paradigm of *contradiction* and negativity, which makes institution and liberty opposed to each other. However, this opposition can be radically reconsidered from Nakamura’s view of the duality of institution and liberty.

Keywords: *institution, contradiction, excluded middle law, place of nothingness, oscillation*

Introduction

“A mountain was a mountain at the sight of it, and a river was a river at the sight of it, before I committed to Zen. After that, I got wisdom and enlightenment, and a mountain was not a mountain and a river was not a river. Recently, based on the former view, I have settled down to the view that a mountain is a mountain and a river is a river; so I ask you, are these three notions the same or different?” [Suzuki 1990: 234]

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This is a Zen riddle of Seigen Ishin¹, who was a Zen master in the Song era around the late eleventh century. Literally, the first and third statements are the same and the second is different from them. However, the implication of this riddle is that the third one includes preceding two statements. Through negations of the mountain's and river's existence, the mountain-is-a-mountain is not the mountain's factual being as in the former view. Rather, a mountain or a river is moving across these statements. What are the logical differences among these sentences? On this issue, I turn to a Japanese philosopher, Nakamura Yujiro² (1925-2017), who was one of idiosyncratic philosophers in postwar Japan who tried to overcome the restrictions of modern ways of thinking and living.

His representative inquiry, among others, is others is the critical interpretation and reappraisal of the philosophy of Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945), who established a distinctively Japanese philosophy and a philosophical stream known as the Kyoto School³. Nakamura, who is not a committed Kyoto School thinker, focused on Nishida's historical ontology of human subject based on actions and said:

“Actions take place because there are things. These things are what are ‘seen’ and what are historically formed. We see things through our actions. Things restrict the self and the self restricts things. This interaction is the ‘active intuition’. Furthermore, in this case it can be said that the active intuition is to “grasp things physically” because the self is the embodied” [*What is the Clinical Knowledge* [WCK]: 140⁴].

Here Nakamura grasps the historical dynamism of transformations of our living environments through interaction between physical and environmental transformations. With reference to this view, it would become clear that our social recognition formed through interactions between human and nature—the relational whole that forms this recognition is called “institution” in this paper—contains a dynamism and logic that cannot be grasped by a univocal logic, that is, a mountain and a river can appear in multiple forms correlating with deepening of the “active intuition” and it also enables us to be free from the logic that fixes recognition of objective existences, which results in judgements based on confirmation or denial of objects' natures.

Institution is no exception in that it has been treated as an object that can be confirmed or denied. Moreover, it has also been regarded as opposed to human creative activities in terms of the existing philosophical points of view. However, according to Nakamura's philosophy in this paper, creative moments of our activities exist inside our institutional reality correlating with each other at the same time. What this paper tries to grasp from his arguments is the logic of this ambivalence of the institutional reality that can overcome the opposition between institution and liberty.

First, in the first section, this paper would define the post-Hegelian philosophies as a paradigm that tries to overcome the law of contradiction in the logic through a critical consideration of these philosophical arguments over the relationships between the existing institution and liberty. However,

1 Seigen Ishin (青原惟信) is a Japanese pronunciation. In Chinese, it is Qīngyuán Wéixin.

2 Japanese names in this article appear in the Japanese order (surname, given name).

3 As the general introduction of Nakamura's philosophy, John W. M. Krummel's work is helpful and his thesis considers it mainly from the view of his evaluation on Nishida's philosophy [Krummel 2015]. In addition, on the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, you can find Nakamura's contribution to reevaluating the Kyoto School in 1980s (“The Kyoto School”; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kyoto-school/>) [2019/12/09]

4 In this paper, citations from Nakamura are noted by book titles and abbreviated.

at the same time, I will show the problem that these arguments necessarily face the situation that one must deny others’ liberty in the dialectical confrontations, as long as they oppose institution with liberty. Subsequently, I would offer Nakamura’s argument as the philosophy of institution in the post-*excluded middle* way and consider its concrete essence. Lastly, this paper concludes that his philosophy evolves the view of ambivalence that captures institution and liberty as two sides of the same coin in the way that institution contains logic of confirmation and denial of our creative activity in parallel. That is, his philosophy shows us the possibility that enables us to recognize the always-already achieved liberty in institutionalized reality.

1. Contradiction and Negativity in Modernity - Disputes over Institution and Liberty

Conditions of social transformations surrounding us spread widely to various levels such as political institutions, modes of thinking, economic situations, information environments, and disciplinary or teleological models. Concretely, these institutional transformations include the theoretical streams of the post nation-states, the philosophical turn of post-modernism, more “market-led” [Jessop 1996] models of our economic activities, more networked and decentralized relations in our economic activities and communicative spaces brought by information innovations, and transformations of the historical imagination from the Eurocentric view of modernization to a more pluralized one [Chakrabarty 2000; Eisenstadt 2000; Taylor 2004]. These dimensions of the institutional transformation signify the transformation from the modern institutional condition.

Meanwhile, these institutional transformations are historical in the sense that while institutional realities always define the framework of our thinking, reproductions of the realities are backed by our activities based on our thinking. Furthermore, the fact that the institution is historical means not only that paths of the institutional transformations are bound by continuities from pasts, but also that institution contains futures as possibilities which are not yet institutionally real. We can find this temporal structure of institution in modern social institution.

In “Modern, Anti, Post, and Neo”, Jeffrey Alexander provides us with a concrete list for modern conditions [Alexander 1994: 168-169]. According to him, the “modernity” has been conventionally described as composed of five elements:

1. Embedding subsystems into a rationally coherent principle of the whole system
2. The modernity as a historical phase is defined compared with the “traditional” modes of society.
3. The modernity depends on social and cultural principles descended from the West, such as “individualistic, democratic, capitalist, scientific, secular, and stable, and as dividing work from home in gender specific ways”.
4. Modernization refers to “non-revolutionary, incremental change”.
5. Modernization as processes of industrialization, democratization through legal governance, secularization through education, and scientific rationalization, as Talcott Parsons (1966) called these adaptive processes to these purposes “upgrading”.

As we can see from the above elements of modernity, the operation of the modern social institution is the movement directing to penetrate rationality from the macro level of the system to the micro level of individuals, and in the latter level, individuals are required to gain a rational way of

thinking through the modern educational system. In addition, through the penetration of rationality, we imagine modernity as a process in which the institution evolves into its possible forms relying on already achieved institutional bases in the sense of its aspiration to “incremental change”.

However, in this institutionalization, a problem would appear, namely, the problem of a rationalization of our way of thinking that causes the opposite results against the institutional evolution for the achievement of our liberty. In effect, this is the problem that many philosophers have attempted to overcome, by confronting the western tradition of thinking based on logic. Here, the meaning of the tradition points to three laws in formal logic: The law of identity, the law of contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle. First, this set of laws is concerned with causal associations of objects, and hence the being and non-being of them, and the last two laws are necessarily introduced from the first law of identity that means objective beings identified in accordance with human recognition.

Second, the law of contradiction is a logical principle based on the formula of “if X is A, then X is not B (non-A)”, thus, we cannot be permitted to accept the contradictory statements over the status of being X. A mountain must be either a mountain or not mountain in this law. Third, the law of the excluded middle is a logical principle that means the intolerance of middle statements over X that “X is in a state of the middle that contains A and non-A *at the same time*”.

However, as seen below, the modern history of western philosophy was, rather, attempts to overturn these laws of logic through activating illogical aberrations out of these laws, especially the laws of identity and contradiction [Yamauchi 1974]. We can say that the culmination of these attempts is G.W.F Hegel. To put it simply, according to Yamauchi Tokuryu, Hegel’s dialectic philosophy incorporated Immanuel Kant’s criticisms in his critical philosophies against the law of identity and set out his own philosophy that converts the negative implication of the law of contradiction into the principle of the historical evolution of a community [Yamauchi 1974: Chap.2].

The contradiction in Hegel’s sense denotes that contradict juxtaposition of statements over theme X (e.g., what we are) works out, then develops into opposition, and the *Aufheben* (*sublation*) is formed through this contradiction and opposition. From the view of Hegel’s philosophy, a community necessarily contains contradictory justifications over a theme and results in struggles in ways of mutual denials. In the logic, this juxtaposition of justifiable standpoints cannot be permitted. However, Hegel converted the meaning into the logic of history. He placed contradiction as the principle of his dialectic through introducing the concept of “negativity”.

What is the “negativity”? The concept of negativity explains this internal instability of the modern world. According to Hegel, the historical process imposes the human crisis and despairs of losing meaning for life [Hegel 1986: 72]. In the dialectic process of history, a subject relates with itself in the way that the consciousness of the “I” is always involved with the negation of the present self-understanding, in Hegel’s words in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the self consists of the “duplicated reflection (gedoppelte Reflexion)” in itself in the way that the consciousness independently contains “other beings or differences” which does not split conscious integration [Hegel 1986: 144-145]. At this point, we have to assume something unknown to existing statuses of beings, though it does not yet come to exist.

Nonetheless, in Hegel’s dialectic philosophy, an objective essence of the world is rejected. The world is an open-ended processes of transformation (becoming) along with evolutions of self-consciousness. The world itself is holistically *nothing*, hence when we define something by a certain meaning, *nothing* comes back and makes the meaning unstable. This return of *nothing* appears through *contradiction* that takes shape with dialectic confrontation between a thesis and an antithesis. In this

way, the world cannot be identified with something positive and does not stop transforming. According to Jean-Luc Nancy, Hegel’s world (world spirit) is captured as thoroughly “immanent” and “infinite” [Nancy 1997: 8-10]. Thus, negativity grants a subject an ability to overcome vacuities and limitations in present conditions and in each time.

Theodor Adorno pushed the Hegelian dialectic idea of negativity into his *negative dialectics* based on the clear distinction between the immediate reality which contains mediations of finite concepts and mediated reality which contains the immediate reality inside. [Adorno 1966: 170-172]. For him, as with Hegel, subjectivity is finite in the sense that it always confronts with the identical (and the finite) which is mediated by the non-identical. In Hegel’s case, the subject can identify the infinite with a finite *concept* in the process that the subject leads to the self-consciousness. However, for Adorno, Hegel neglected the distinction between the two dimensions of mediate-immediate relationships and relied on the understanding of the immediate reality which contains mediations of finite concepts in a historical process. Adorno’s negative dialectics tries to discern a possible thinking in the second mode, that is, mediated realities which contain the immediate reality inside, i.e., non-identity in multiple identities, although any mediations cannot fully identify with, hence institutionalize the immediate reality. In other words, what the finite conditions imply is that conceptual mediations and their dynamic relations can radicalize the Hegelian sense of dialectics as a movement of the *immediacy* (*Unmittelbarkeit*) or more immanent way in the concrete world. Thus, Adorno’s negative dialectics is to make the movement of contradiction more radical than Hegel to variegate a finite institution.

Meanwhile, against Adorno, we can also find a viewpoint in Alexandre Kojève’s *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1947, 1968) that diversification in reality is made possible through the end of historical processes involved with dialectic struggles. Kojève provides us with the view that negativity produced by the contradiction would be dismantled through the end of the “life and death struggle” for recognition that forms the historical subject who can existentially bear up under suffering from the problem of the identical and the non-identical. At the turn of the modernity, the disappearance of the authentic self who desperately struggles to achieve individual liberty becomes an imminent problem for human existence. Kojève has once diagnosed it in the famous note about the “end of history” as the disappearance of historically achieved subjectivity for liberty in Hegel’s sense and its replacement by “animalization” (“le retour de l’Homme à l’animalité”) [Kojève 1968: 436-347]. Thus, negativity also denies subjectivity that exercises it and pushes it into post-human modes of thinking and living⁵. While animalized beings do not substantively seek for their own subjectivity in a political and historical sense anymore, they can consume abundant economic lives and experience pseudo-variegated reality propelled by the mass consumer society.

Admittedly, Kojève’s prediction of the post-historical society is not logically valid and controversial. However, we can also say that his view of the “animalization” can grasp the issue that diverse commodities dominate the whole society and it makes people more and more uniform. Moreover, this uniformity through diversified commodities envelops the reality of animalization. If there is still a contradiction in this situation, we can *aufheben* (*sublate*) it only through choosing some

5 It has to be said that Kojève added the view of the “post-historical Japan” against the post-historical “American way of life” as a model of the end of humanity. He discovered the “totally formalized values” lacking “any humane contents” in the Japanese way of life [Kojève 1968: 437]. In other words, Japanese traditional logic of life achieves a historical mode of negativity, or negativity without subjectivity from Kojève’s point of view.

commodities among multiple choices.

Nonetheless, we can also discover philosophical inquiries to reactivate Hegel-Adorno's direction for variegating a finite reality. For example, as Jean-Luc Nancy (1997) argued, negativity opens routes to return to the fundamental selfness that is "a further liberation of what liberates itself infinitely, originating out of nothing" ("libération encore de ce qui infiniment se libère, à partir de rien") [Nancy 1997:107]. Simply put, when one feels that one must be free by nature (but one is not so in practice), it is never a liberty in Hegelian sense for Nancy. In a word, for Nancy, contradiction and negativity are enabled by fundamental liberty shared among us.

Here, we can find the alternative logic in Nancy's radicalization of Hegel, which tries to go beyond the logic of the contradiction, because Nancy attempted to do it through radicalizing fundamental liberty "out of nothing" beyond the contradiction and the dialectical opposition. "Liberty is pre-eminently the concept that the consciousness or the understanding (*l'entendement; Verstand*) expect as a given" [Nancy 1997: 103]. Liberty is prior to the contradiction in Nancy's reinterpretation of Hegel.

However, while he can establish the view that "we" based on liberty "out of nothing" and self-creation as negating the "self" are compatible with each other, we cannot exclude possibilities that dialectic oppositions, hence, denial of others' liberty, return to each social context. As seen from the above (neo-)Hegelian philosophy, Nancy (and Hegel) presupposes that the view of liberty "out of nothing" has only to do with the dynamics of the contradiction. In addition, they regard the relationships between liberty and institution as the opposite. However, these relationships among them can and have to be examined, and as seen below, Nakamura Yujiro's philosophy critically explored the logic of "nothingness" and alternatively connected with the logic of historical being in terms of the *post-excluded middle law*⁶. In doing so, he shows us the view that "institution" or "institutionalization" are not opposed to liberty "out of nothing" in the sense that "institution" is always evolving, depending on the post-excluded middle logic.

2. Institution and the "Place of Nothingness" in Nakamura Yujiro's Philosophy

We can rephrase the above issue in the following way: Can't institution incorporate the logic of nothingness and vice versa? This question can lead us to explore what lies beyond Hegel's dialectic philosophy through Nakamura's arguments. The major focus in this section is placed on the relationship between institution and nothingness. Nakamura attempts to clarify the view of the interaction between them, connecting Nishida Kitaro's philosophy of the "logic of place (*basho*)" in *Jutsugo teki Sekai to Seido* [*Predicative World and Institution, PWI*]. He adumbrates the nature of Nishida's philosophy that grasps the nature of consciousness in the "place" that "never becomes a subject, but predicates endlessly". This prescription was worked out through Nishida's confrontation

6 This idea originally stems from Yamauchi Tokuryu's argument in *Logos and Lemma*. According to him, "since the law of contradiction strictly prohibits simultaneous confirmation and denial, the logos must be not only any one of confirmation or denial, but also insist the impossibility of being something else such as the middle or the third" [Yamauchi 1974: 86]. Comparatively, the law of excluded middle is a logical rejection of the compatibility of non-confirmation and non-denial in parallel *and* of confirmation and denial. According to Yamauchi, Nāgārjuna established the thinking of the "middle" by converting negative meaning of the excluded middle into the positive basis of Buddhist philosophy. This work can be read in French translation by Augustin Berque: Yamauchi Tokuryu (2020) *Logos et Lemme: Pensée Occidentale, Pensée Orientale*, Paris: CNRS Éditions.

with the metaphysical tradition since Aristotle based on the *hypokeimenōn* (substratum) that “never become predicates, but are subjects”. According to Nakamura’s reading of Nishida, the self is a status of self-limitation in the “place” of the “absolute nothingness” (infinity).

At this point, we can pose a question whether this self-limitation is a restriction against liberty or not. Nakamura says as follows: Nishida’s philosophy found a “place” that is “general field of consciousness that reflects everything” and he suggested this view as a “model of reflecting the self thoroughly as it is”. This “place” is something holistic which cannot be named or defined in the way of the logic based on the substratum. In this sense, this “place” is the “place of the absolute nothingness”. Individuals are vital beings “self-limited” by “place”. In the field of consciousness, “place” is reflected in the breadth of consciousness through individual experiences. That is, as Nishida says in his first work *An Inquiry into the Good* (originally 1911), “it is not that experience exists because there is an individual, but that an individual exists because there is experience” [Nishida 1990: xxx]. Namely, the sense of the self is formed through experiences as factors of self-limitations that are predicative expressions of “place” [*PWI*: 12-17]. At least, what can be said here is that in Nishida’s theory of the self-based on the view of “place”, the formation of the self through experiential bindings is placed in quite close relationships with “nothingness”. The problem is how they are related to each other.

In the meantime, why is the “place”, in which beings are limited, called nothingness? In effect, this question is, according to Nakamura, the one that was not considered comprehensively in Nishida’s philosophy. “Why does the *place of nothingness* have infinite possibilities, rather than mere vacuum? And what kind of complexity does the place of nothingness have as a kind of a *dynamic system*? These were not clarified by Nishida’s ‘logic of the place’. [...] There must be some mechanism or structure that has an infinite productivity” [*Odyssey for Forms (OF)*: 208, *Italic*: original]. For Nakamura, nothingness is equivalent to an infinity of possibilities and produces everything. In this sense, “the place of nothing is [...] a dynamic network that can be modified infinitely. Hence it can’t help but be called the place of nothingness logically because it seems to be nothing by contrast due to its exceedingly high possibilities of modifications” [*OF*:209].

In other words, nothingness means the potential for excessive productivity for Nakamura. At first sight, this productivity seems to be opposite to the static institutional reality including the experientially limited self. However, we need to pay closer attention to the distinction that while nothingness is certainly an opposite concept to institutional limitation, it is not a contradictory concept to institution, which is to say, though institution is certainly restricted in contrast to the productivity of nothingness, nothingness penetrates into institutional realities through the logic of the “place” in some ways.

Now, the question is: How does nothingness penetrate into institutional realities? Posing this question enables us to grasp “nothingness” and the institutional binding in a nested relationship and to understand how “nothingness” constantly operates in individual experiences.

According to him, Jacques Derrida disclosed an insight into this issue in his work *Khôra* (1993). Derrida explores *Khôra* that came on the philosophical stage in Plato’s *Timaeus*, and the concept (rigidly, according to Derrida, *Khôra* is not even a conceptualizable [Derrida 1993: 31-35]) is astonishingly similar to “place” which has the productive power of human recognition based on meanings. “*Khôra* receives all the determinations to give them the place, but it possesses none of them for itself” [Derrida 1993: 36-37]. Derrida says that “in *Timaeus*, ‘*Khôra*’ cannot be expressed even in the way that ‘it is neither this nor that’, nor ‘it is either this or that at a time’”. Rather, *Khôra* is

something moving unremittingly among these semantic statements⁷. In a word, Khôra is the place of nothingness that forms the constellations of discourses and flees from these constellations.

Nakamura interprets Khôra as the one “as a cosmic oscillation” [*PWI*: 46]. Here, the “cosmic” is beyond both the “sensible” and the “intelligible”, and not even a return to the “mystique discourse” as Derrida says [Derrida 1993: 30, 66-67]. Rather, the cosmic fundamentally intrudes into our reality beyond sensible perceptions. In addition, the reason that Nakamura used the term “oscillation” is that Derrida also uses this same term for the movement of Khôra among our statements [Derrida 1993: 19]. Khôra is the source of the temptations of meaning although it never obeys the rules set by our statements or narratives, and it leaves only “imminence” to name the “place”. In Derrida’s words, “narratives are [...] the receptor of another [narratives]. There are only receptors of narrative receptors” [Derrida 1993: 75]. In other words, Khôra, as the oscillation runs through sequences for narratives, and never identifies itself with any particular one and makes concepts or narratives receptive to different ways of interpretation. Nakamura finds out the direction of overcoming “immobilization of the subjective identity” which originated from Aristoteles’ logic, and unfolds his analysis of how institution is formed from the place of nothingness through “oscillation”. This direction of his analysis seems to be the reverse of Derrida’s, because Derrida deconstructs the semantic structure toward indeterminate statuses of any concepts or narratives. On the contrary, Nakamura attempts to figure out how nothingness floods into our institutional realities. On the basis of this recognition, I examine his thinking of the “oscillation” along with his several works to reveal the nothingness inside the institutional realities in the following discussion.

In “My Standpoint of Hegel’s Dialectics” (1931=2003), Nishida argued that the “place of nothingness” makes itself real through its self-limitations in historical and cultural processes, while the “place” is the general beyond any finite meanings. Simply put, Nishida’s logic of the “place of nothingness” shows us the view that while the self has the ability to reflect itself immanently, this reflection reveals the bottomless nothingness inside it. And this nothingness within the self is connected to the eternal movement of the historical world. The self is, in this sense, always the *contradictory* identification and awareness of the self as the “place of nothingness”. However, for Nakamura, Nishida made the logic of the place absolute, and downplayed the issue of how the “place” and historical institutionalization are related to each other [*PWI*: 21-22; Nakamura 1987].

Why does Nakamura hold on to the problem of relationships between “nothingness” and historical institutionalization? According to him, institution, first and foremost, is “a ‘rationally regulated and objectified’ social relationship” in Hegel’s sense [*PWI*: 23]. Institution is “configured” as a collectively “objectified reality” and this reality reflectively constitutes collective imaginations of what social life is meant to be [*OCK*: 87]. Thus, the meaning of institution here is relatively broader than some sub-institutions such as the rule of law, human rights, democratic principles, education systems, social insurances, the significance of economic development under capitalism and so on, which multiply determine the form of “institution”. In this way, “institution” includes our recognitions

7 In addition, the “oscillation” of the Khôra is not just between A and non-A. Rather, it takes place among “A¹ and A²” and “non-A¹ and non-A²” [Derrida 1993: 19]. In other words, it oscillates among our saying that “it is either this or that” and “it is neither this nor that”. Hence, this logic “defies” the logic of noncontradiction [Derrida 1993: 15]. Furthermore, as we saw the Zen riddle at the outset of this paper, the concept of the “mountain” can ultimately contain even the possibility of the meaning of the “not-mountain”. In other words, the “mountain” can be and has to be multi-contextualized and reinterpreted due to the Khôra [Cf. Azuma 1998: 34-50].

and certain forms of morality formed through living in a certain social environment.

Importantly, Nakamura emphasizes the paradoxical nature of the institution as “boundary conditions” [OCK: 87]. As a “boundary condition”, firstly, the institution tends to frame and restrict our interpretations of the world. However, the “world” itself is the “place” of infinity in the sense of its openness to various possible interpretations. In this sense, the “world” is fused with the contradiction in Hegel’s sense. Secondly, the institution as “boundary conditions” has admittedly a nature of stifling human activities that contains possible routes to this openness of the world. In this sense, the institution seems to be opposed to human liberty. However, thirdly, “boundary conditions and institutions are not necessarily anti-life which stifles life forces as has often been regarded, rather, they serve to embody the possible and the latent” [PWI: 175]. Put differently, recognizing certain institutional realities is or can be a way to recognize the openness of the world. In other words, for Nakamura, to understand institution is not to comprehend the boundary conditions to us, but to seek for liberty through finding out “nothing” which *bound* (activates itself) inside institution. Hence, Nakamura sticks with the theme of “nothingness” and historical institutionalization.

From the above discussion, we can say that institution has the negative dimension of bounding and alienating our lives under the outer institution. However, it would become difficult to understand the meaning of historically distinctive meanings of the particular “without mediating objectively alienated recognition” [PWI: 23-24]. This alienation does not imply that liberty against institution is out there. Rather, liberty is inherent because institution is fundamentally created out of nothingness. In this sense, institution can be an art for knowing the deeper dynamism in factual realities. In other words, institution is unremittingly and unconsciously created by our collective experiences in nothingness. Liberty and boundary conditions are compatible in the above sense.

This ambivalent nature of institution is explained by Nakamura in the following way [PWI: 52]: Generally, there have been two forms of institutionalization. One is the customary form, and the other is the willfully constructed form. The former is the “institution formed from within institutions” which “has functions that can respond flexibly to the turn of events and stabilize the place”. Conversely, the latter is formed from “outside” and has “functions to make new places or modify them fundamentally by encouraging the latent in the place”.

However, we can think of the possibility of institutional bindings which vitalize the “place” from the above argument, departing from the view of institution as the boundary condition and the source of alienation. Nonetheless, what does it mean when we say that institutional bindings can vitalize the “place”? For example, it can be the statuses of institutionalized realities that are established for explorations on the “logic of place”, and it is not a total assimilation of institution into the “place”. Repeatedly, institutional boundaries overlap with the “place of nothingness”. From this perspective, we can think of the possibility that creative activities become equivalent to the logic of the boundary condition. Otherwise put, we can come to think that the boundaries we make result from our acts based on liberty, and they enable our further liberty.

It can be said here that this point of view shown in the above discussion is less a Hegelian contradiction than the theory of institution that positively converts the law of excluded middle, that is, we can say that institutional boundary conditions are *not* restrictions against our lives and *not non-restrictions* (hence liberty itself) *in parallel*, and are the very restrictions *and* liberty *in parallel*. Because these boundaries are created under the “place of nothingness”. In the following argument, the central problem is the nature of Nakamura’s philosophy as a theory of institution in terms of the *post-excluded middle law*.

For this purpose, I would pick up his distinctive argument on “oscillation” and “rhythm” to define the exact nature of his view. To provide an overview about it in advance, Nakamura suggests the concept of the “oscillation” to explain how “place” correlates with institution. What is more, the nature of the “place” as “oscillation” enables us to integrate the duality of institutional bindings and creativity. In *Notes on the Knowledge of Humanity (NKH)*, Nakamura emphasizes that “rhythm and its resonances are the very sources of [...] every human activity, and sciences, religions, and arts are connected with each other” [NKH: 153]. Also, in *Predicative World and Institution*, he points out that “a deeper reality often inverts to a superficial reality, and conversely, the latter does to the former. This is because the *place* is the *oscillating winnowing basket*” [PWI: 59, *Italic: author*]. The “oscillating winnowing basket” is an example shown by Plato to explain the Khôra, and “things in the place are sorted out, categorized and ordered by it” [PWI: 59].

Nakamura tries to open the bounding nature of institution in terms of the “place of nothingness”. However, his philosophy based on the view of the “place of nothingness”, “oscillation” and “rhythm” is difficult to comprehend directly because his philosophical arguments cover a broad range of topics. Also, the view of close relationships between institution and “place” through creativity is implied by his arguments, and it seems to make his philosophy only a magnificent insight. Nonetheless, his way of understanding institution and the “place” suggests the holistically alternative view of our institutional realities. Hence, in the next section, I will try to examine his view of the “place” and institution in terms of his argument of “oscillation” and “rhythm”.

3. Reconsidering a Society from within Nothingness as a System of Creativity

Institution has an ambiguous nature of stifling human lives and opening such lives to the “place” concurrently. Before directly heading off to considerations on his arguments on the “oscillation” and “rhythm”, it might be helpful to see the problem of how our lives and external realities are closely connected. In other words, this issue is concerning with concrete entanglements between individuals and communities.

Nakamura is also known as a researcher of Blaise Pascal, and simply speaking, from the *Pensées*, he draws out the idea of a nature that has a fundamental structure beyond the dichotomy between habits and nature and not in the way of Descartes’ mechanistic view [*Pascal and his Age*: 339-359⁸]. In Pascalian view of nature including the human nature, while nature is something that makes human lives *diverse*, *antagonistic* and *transient* as Pascal said that “[t]ruth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other side”, it also has the nature to make most people obedient to an authority or power without any rational reasons [Pascal 1964: 151ff]. And then, how do people accept their surrounding realities as natural and generate oppositions as a result of it?

Firstly, we need to pay attention to his argument of “common sense”. “Common sense”, however, means not only the normal understanding in a society but a habitualized second nature for Nakamura. It was argued by Aristoteles in *On the Soul* as “a common faculty which apprehends common sensibles [e.g., movement, size, and number] directly” [Aristoteles 1957: III, 425a] and was localized to the pineal apparatus in the brain by Descartes [Descartes 1996: 351ff]. In other words, “common sense” presides over the division of the working of senses and their connections, and integrates

8 As he points out, while the work *Pascal and his Age* was originally written in 1965, the part “Pascal and Present Era” that I cited was rewritten and added in 2000 in his *Writings* IX.

discrete functions. Put plainly, we discern each sensitive piece of information like sweet and white about sugar without confusing the visible information with the gustatory one. In this sense, common sense enables our senses of reality. It “serves to establish a conduit between a human and the world and reveal the ‘world’ for us humans” [*TCS (Theory of Common Sense)*: 47]. In other words, the world can be revealed alternatively through collaboration between “common sense” and the world mediated by language activities, and our language has multiple functions and plasticity in terms of this collaboration. In other words, our activities based on language are opened to the world and this enables us to say that our bodies are “expanded bodies” and our languages have such a nature of expansion to the world [Nakamura *Place*: 140].

Secondly, in the tradition of modern rationalism, things which constitute the world have been held to contain objective and describable mechanisms. However, such meanings rely on institutions mediated by language. Nakamura stresses that language is composed of metaphors that overlap distantly like “time is money” or “your brain is like a computer”, the metonymy as an “analogy that consists of substituting a term in adjacency relationships [of meanings]” as the statement “remember Pearl Harbor” depicts the Japanese attack on the U.S. and the American war against Japan, the synecdoche as generalization and particularization of word meanings such as expressing a car with the term vehicle in some cases, and the irony that can change or reverse the meanings by analogical expressions when we criticize someone’s coldness by saying “your brain is like a computer” [*PWI*: 53-62]. Language consists of these multiple functions of analogies.

Thirdly, word sentences have the syntactic structure (syntagm) and the selected axis of vocabs (paradigm), and “the paradigm is [...] a system of tacit and unconscious rules, that is, the place of common feeling” [*Awakening of Sensibility (AS)*: 291], because the paradigm enables us to understand unknown things or events through making metaphorical associations of meanings. In contrast to statements mainly based on the paradigm, ones based on the syntagm are more suitable for pointing to the “external relationships among things and objectifying things” [*AS*: 291] such as the statement “the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941” which is different from the case of expressing infamy with the term “Pearl Harbor”. Hence, the paradigm is “the place of common feeling”. Evidently, the “common feeling” here is equivalent with the “common sense” as paradigmatic or metaphorical expressions can reveal the world for us.

Thus, our sensibility and language activity interactively collaborate to reveal the meaning of the world we experience. Going back to Pascal’s question, people restrict these conditions of “common sense” and languages on their own under an authority or political power. In short, certain words that embody the “common feeling” act on the “common sense” that enables us to articulate sensible dimensions of a reality, and this also enables us to grasp each bundle of the world metaphorically and form the “rhythm”. According to Nakamura, through this collaboration, our reality comes to be formed through making “rhythm”, and this “rhythm” is (re)produced through “dividing” and differentiating a living space.

However, the above view leads to the fact not only that we accept monotonous and unilateral “rhythm”, but also that we can be opened to a different “rhythm”.

“‘Dividing’ is beneficial not just for being intelligent to objects and the world. (...) In dividing them, it serves to give rhythms to secular and trans-secular life and to deepen meanings of life through symbolic death and regeneration within the rhythms. (...) The fact that humans have been trying to ‘divide’ the surrounding things and the world composed of them in various ways

shows retrogradely that things and the world are indivisible and difficult to be divided. In this way, humans have ordered and activated their lives by dividing the indivisible and returning them to the original indivisible state.” [*Religion and Science*: 54].

For example, we have been dividing our living spaces in the way of religion and secular, work and leisure, routine and non-routine, subjectivity and objectivity and so on. All these divisions cannot only give us “rhythms” through our “common sense”. Moreover, as he says here, by “dividing the indivisible and returning them to the original indivisible state”, our language activity can enable us to access a different reality.

However, he assumes here the dichotomy between the institutionalized (divided) reality and uninstitutionalized (indivisible”) one. This work was originally published in 1975, and he assumed it at this time. Nonetheless, if we look at his latter works, it is revealed that he came to think that there was a deeply institutionalized or built-in structure beyond the dichotomy, that is, the view of the unified status of “nothingness” and “institution”.

Especially, his philosophical works in the 1990s show it clearly, for he tries to head to the “oscillation” beyond the “rhythm”. For example, Nakamura attempts to do it in distinctive scientific terms. He considers the “ability of resonance” with Rupert Sheldrake’s hypothesis of the “formative causation” and the “formal resonance” and David Bohm’s “implicate order”. From Nakamura’s interest, these hypotheses have resonances with the view of the rhythmic formation of meanings and things behind natural phenomena. How does Nakamura try to connect these scientific hypotheses with his view of duality of “nothingness” and “institution”?

Firstly, Sheldrake’s “formative causation” and “formal resonance” assume resonant relationships among material forms and the place of the resonance, which become sustainable through the resonances among the forms of beings. In other words, while the existing modes of biological explanations rely on the causal mechanism that the energy in materials cause sequent formations in other materials, Sheldrake hypothesizes a simultaneous formation of material forms beyond the causation. For example, “if a thousand rats in a laboratory in London learned a new pattern of a behavior, rats in any other laboratory (New York, for instance) easily learn the same pattern of a behavior” [*OF*: 20-21]. In this hypothetical experiment, there are some operations beyond energetic causation, as Sheldrake assumed the place of resonance that yields the simultaneous formation.

Secondly, Bohm’s theory of the “implicate order” shows the alternative view of the physical world that any part of the world encompasses wholistic information of the universe in itself, hence through observing certain parts, we can gain access to the wholistic information [Bohm 1980: esp. Chap.5]. In other words, a particular thing or a particular part of a thing as a microcosmos contains holistic information of the macrocosmos. Hence, from this “implicate order”, we can draw out a similar point with Sheldrake because things in distant places are connected with each other in the “resonance” beyond causal relationships [*OF*: 292]. For Nakamura, if this is true, we have to assume the “place” that enables each thing which contains some energies to be what it is⁹ [*OF*: 296-7]. Here

9 Admittedly, there is a difference between Sheldrake and Bohm on the issue of whether an energetic causality between the “place” and things is assumed or not. While Sheldrake assumes it, Bohm doesn’t because if some energies are conveyed to the formation of things, it means permitting the recognition of the causal in existing physics. However, Bohm does not permit any energetic causality, assuming an internal energy which translates quantum information into some patterns.

from the view of quantum theory, the “place” is something oscillating.

Here, the essence of the above scientific views is that each being never exists in a space without timeless and objective mechanisms, but in highly condensed time that contains micro moments which consist of highly contingent potentiality. It can be rephrased in the case of social fields that institutional forms are always reproduced moment by moment. In other words, institution is not formed based on causal relationships of meanings, but reproduced in every moment by every single individual, and we form an image of society in each moment. Making society is not a certain duration of processes, but a series of moments. Hence, different patterns of the ways of living or expression can be created sometimes and suddenly beyond certain patterns.

Thus, there is no distinction between an institutional reality and nothingness. Rather, Nakamura regards an institutional reality as accumulations and entwinements of creative moments in which we are unconsciously living. Furthermore, the way of living this creative reality has to be understood based on human physicality. He discerns “objectivist knowledge that divides relations with interlocutors” from knowledge based on “performance” closely intertwined with our bodies [WCK:3]. Bodily performances are the basis of our social communication for Nakamura.

“Practice is not [...] to change objects one-sidedly, nor the formal mutuality among the self, others, and the world, or theory and practice [...] as many ‘dialectic thinkers’ emphasized. Practice is to draw out multi-faceted and tacit dimensions of a reality through determinations and choices with each person’s body. [...] [P]ractice is actions of condensed encounters with a reality for us humans who live in historical societies and regions” [WCK:69-70].

As he finds out the relationships between body and “multi-faceted and tacit dimensions of a reality”, bodily actions always embody the nature of the “place of nothingness” that consists of the “exceedingly high possibilities of modifications”. In this respect, the body is a microcosmos of the “place of nothingness” as Bohm’s “implicate order” shows. In this view, creativity that generates institutional realities is regarded as containing and achieving infinite liberties.

Therefore, the validity of distinction between institution and nothingness cannot be held on the above perspective, as there are no borders such as the moment of creation or of non-creation, rather Nakamura’s view reveals a view of *pan-creationism*, so to speak. However, in practice, does a society that has a certain “form” impose us restricted lives? This question would always plague readers of Nakamura’s philosophy. In this sense, it would be helpful to think of what the “forms” of things are. For Nakamura, the “form” is not merely the material configuration. Rather, “forms” are realized in certain images. The internal image of a society has a certain form inside us. However, the form does not have any metaphysical essences. This way of understanding the form has been dominant since the Greek philosophies of Plato’s and Aristotle’s distinctions such as Idea and things or materials (Hyle) and essences (Eidos). Against this stream, there is the other stream of the view of forms which can be called the thinking of the *Morphée* that originated from Morpheus in Greek Mythology. Morpheus has the special ability to “reveal himself in various shapes and forms of persons in dreams” [OF: 65]. The forms are not actual, “superficial” and “static”, but “dynamic”. The form as *Morphée* appears from “dim and uncertain places” like in dreams [OF: 65]. In other words, the form as *Morphée* should be understood in the sense of the movements in which the forms appear and manifest. In a word, the *Morphée* is a plastic form as the term *Metamorphoses* implies and this way of form is found in the place where the borders of shapes become blurred.

When we pick up the *Morphée* as the main issue, we cannot presuppose existing forms that seem to have self-evident borders. According to Nakamura, every content of our senses has particular forms even if they are a sound, a color, or a smell because they invoke in us particular representations. Or we are affected to form such representations with dim sounds, colors, and smells. Forms are *not* recognized in the way that there is a thing over there and one sees it from here, and is rather appearing in a complementary contact among them. While the former sense of the form leads to the objective and external relationships, the latter sense enables us to see that we not only receive particular images of forms and make them habitual, but also we do so in the “place of nothingness” as a system of creation that is built in beyond our conscious awareness.

Therefore, the “place of nothingness” is not the opposite concept to institution. There are active movements of the “*Morphée*” in the “form” of institutions. The opposition between “nothingness” and institution is produced by fixing the institutional boundaries. Thus, in Nakamura’s philosophy, it becomes obvious that a deeply institutionalized reality of uninterrupted creation in every moment can be found beyond the dichotomy between a human society as an institution and the chaotic level beyond it. Thus, the problem is not how we overcome the static institution through finding out “nothingness” and self-creations, but *how we are living, lived, and what we created in the naturally built-in institution which is none other than duality of boundary conditions and creative moments at the same time*. In this respect, we can evaluate Nakamura’s argument as a philosophy of post-excluded middle creation of institution.

Conclusion

This article started with the critical review of the existing western philosophies over Hegel’s dialectics based on contradiction. However, as seen through critical consideration on Hegel and Nancy’s view on him, in the first section, in Hegel’s view of the institutional evolution in history, institution and liberty necessarily result in opposition. Against this problem, the reason for focusing on Nakamura Yujiro’s philosophy in this paper is to define the nature of his philosophy as overcoming the post-excluded middle law which can take us beyond the contradiction and negativity in Hegel’s philosophy. The post-excluded middle law in Nakamura’s philosophy is the very standpoint that tries to discover the duality of confirmation (our liberty) and denial (institutional bindings to our liberty) in parallel. Nakamura’s critical consideration on Nishida’s “place of nothingness”, “common sense”, philosophy of the “form”, “oscillation” and “rhythm” depict the institutional reality binding human lives as being formed by our unconscious relationships and shared. At least, this reality must have been astonishing for Nakamura’s eye. This view is to grasp the institutional reality as a product formed by unconscious creative acts.

At the outset, this paper proposed a question concerning logical differences among three statements in the Buddhist riddle. From the argument in this paper, it is conceivable that the riddle shows the possibility of the post-excluded middle law beyond the laws of identity and contradiction. Nakamura’s philosophy evolves based on the logic that contains both statements of institution as a boundary condition and a liberty itself simultaneously. This logic is similar to the statement of “a mountain is a mountain” in the third sense of the riddle including “a mountain is not mountain”. In this respect, our sense of a “mountain” appears to be formed out of our free acts of defining it. Otherwise put, the fact that there is a mountain there becomes an awesome event for us.

This philosophical implication seems to have an immense significance, because we can recognize

that we can realize the fact that seemingly self-evident objects and acts in our social lives such as money value, labor power, consummation, morality and so on can be formally regarded as created commonly by our unconscious activities, even if they seem to be boundaries against our lives in their contents in everyday lives. However, the specific consideration on this possibility remains to be seen in the near future. At least, we can elicit the exceeding significance for criticizing contemporary society from Nakamura’s philosophy as the post-excluded middle theory of institution.

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