

Jeudi 3 novembre 2016

Séminaire collectif du Centre de
recherches sur le Japon (EHESS)

Histoire du Japon moderne et contemporain : permanences et ruptures

«Much Ado About 'Nothing': The Kyōto-School as 'Media Philosophy'»

Fabian SCHÄFER (Friedrich-Alexander
Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Abstract

It is a commonplace in the existing secondary literature on the so-called Kyōto School (京都学派) that this modern strand of Japanese philosophy could be described as a 'philosophy of nothingness' (無の哲学). Depending on the respective ideological or disciplinary perspective, thinkers proposing the idea of 'nothingness' were either apotheosized by scholars of Japanese religions as the creators of an original Japanese mysticism, or criticized as proponents of a right-wing philosophy instrumentalizing the hypostasized term to serve the Japanese wartime regime in the 1930s and 40s by their exegetes. In fact, this schismatic view on the thought of the school has hindered more flexible and fruitful re-interpretations of the thought of the school to this day. Against this background, I will argue in my paper that the school – at least for a certain time in the 1930s, but possibly also beyond this period - should be considered not as a 'philosophy of nothingness' but as one of 'mediation' (媒介). Following this line of thought, I will argue that not only Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎), Tanabe Hajime (田辺元), Tosaka Jun (戸坂潤) and Nakai Masakazu (中井正一), who tried to circumscribe or even replace the abstract notion of nothingness with concepts such as 'mediation' or 'dialectics' (弁証法) from within the school, but also thinkers usually considered to be on its margins, such as Watsuji Tetsurō and Kimura Bin, who focused on the term 'in-betweenness' (間柄, 間), should be reconsidered as contributors of fragments to a particular kind of 'media philosophy' (Medienphilosophie) having evolved in Japan since the 1930s.