

ON A BOOK OF HOPE *A Process Model*

Tadayuki Murasato

Recently, I made three presentations on the philosophy of Eugene Gendlin (Murasato, 2006 and 2007), in which I discussed not only Gendlin's philosophy but also that of Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945). I believe they have something in common in terms of aim and theoretical viewpoint. A goal of this current essay is to introduce the nearness of Gendlin's philosophy to Nishida's. This nearness suggests their universality and thus might be encouraging for us, especially the Japanese community. Nishida showed us another model. I will discuss who Nishida was, and how he thought and wrote his philosophy from his felt sense or direct referent.

Gendlin (1997a) wrote in the "Conclusion and Beginning" of Chapter VIII in *A Process Model*:

From now on each new topic will be permitted to raise its own facets, not just those our model would lead to in "applying" to it, and will also be in IOFI space (Instance OF Itself), not in our model (p. 276).

Therefore, it is important to show that there is another philosophy that will give us the foundation upon which we can stand and go forward.

Finally, I want to try to show that *A Process Model* is a book of hope because it shows us how we are able to find our own ways into our good future.

I

I have kept in my mind a very serious issue centered on whether we are able to find a new way with which we can open a new vista of the future. I want to pursue this by following Gendlin's concepts with the question: Can our age in practice have a way to open the VIII of his *A Process Model*? ('VIII' is used as a term that refers to the content of chapter VIII, namely *direct-referent-formation* and its function in IOFI space. I want to state that we have possibilities for answering "yes" to this question.

We have faced a challenge as to how to live in this "after postmodern times" with hope for the future. Many thinkers in the world have denied that there is any hope with which we could live strongly in the post-World War II world, at such juncture that modern times ended and the contemporary age began.

Gendlin is not pessimistic about future because he has advocated for a new way of thinking and living after postmodern times. I think that *Focusing* (Gendlin, 1981) and Think-

ing at the Edge [TAE] (Gendlin, 2004) should be applied to many more fields and themes than ever before. The scope of our applications of *A Process Model* should be extended beyond individual problems. The pace of progress of our inner life might not have caught up with the needs of our contemporary age. I want to start from showing we have a few good philosophies, enough to tackle these difficult problems.

Gendlin (1997b) wrote of his *continuous philosophy*: “How can one be Plato, and Aristotle and more...? We stand on their shoulder, and Kant’s too, Wittgenstein’s and Heidegger’s and many more. If you really understand, you always move beyond” (p. 278). I asked Gendlin if he knew Nishida. He answered: “Only his name.” I want to add Nishida to the list of important philosophies and explain why it is relevant to the Focusing community.

II

In the introduction to the Japanese edition of *Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy* (1996), Gendlin explains that he thinks Focusing is more familiar in Japan than in the West, and that the philosophy that produced Focusing is also familiar to traditional Japanese culture. I want to clarify why this is true from the viewpoint of Japanese traditional culture, and especially the representative philosopher of modern Japan, Kitaro Nishida.

Gendlin said Focusing and TAE (a new way of creative thinking that often uses Focusing) are produced from his philosophy of the implicit from within the body. I have practiced and taught Focusing and TAE in Japan and read Gendlin’s and Nishida’s philosophy for more than ten years. There seems to be a kind of the coincidence of things between their philosophies. I find, underlying these philosophies, a similar need to overcome difficulties derived from modern Western culture, which dominates much of the world. Nishida and Gendlin recognized that their respective historical contexts urged them to find a breakthrough in the difficulties arising from Western modern thought and technology. They sought to establish a solid ground on which we can make a new world where we can live free of anxiety; namely, living with a new, sound understanding of ourselves as human beings rather than living as things.

Nishida started from his “pure experience”, which means an experience *before* thinking, which he believed to be the basis for understanding our world and ourselves. Since the Meiji Restoration (1867), modern Japan had encountered difficulties integrating her success in introducing Western technologies and her traditional self-understanding. In those days, Japan was in a crisis over her identity. It is said that only in Nishida’s Eastern cultural tradition, the West truly met her reflection for the very first time. His philosophical aim was to explain everything from the viewpoint that *pure experiences are the only one reality*.

I think Nishida’s is a highly practical philosophy in the sense that it endeavors to build a new and more profound basis or openness in which we can truly have both Western values and Japanese culture. He said, “In the Eastern culture there seems to be a profound difference. When Western modern philosophy and Eastern Zen Buddhism can find a more

profound basis on which both can truly live, we might be able to fully develop our humanity through them supplementing each other” (Nishida, p. 406).

Nishida developed his unique thinking uncompromisingly, along with his key terms such as “jikaku” (self consciousness) and “basyo” (place or space). These terms were carefully developed after a rather long period of contemplation in order to *open the openness*, and let his concepts lay the foundation for them. Let me explain these key terms by referring to Ueda Shizuteru (1994), a respected interpreter of Nishida’s philosophy.

Our self as “a predicative unity” (whose self is “monadological individual” a “historical body” and the selves are the elements as “an individual against another individual” who form our world) is in “basyo” (a place or a space), which is both a place of being (our world) and a place of an absolute nothing (infinite margin of our world). And the way of our being is “action intuition” and the logic of the basyo is “absolute-contradictory-self-identity” (p. 29).

These terms are quite difficult to understand, because they came from his challenge to cleave his way through our unforeseeable time — meaning it is not easy to see the direction of the future. His thinking was metaphysical, but at the same time it was very practical in order to keep connection with the real world. In this regard, his philosophy is related to Gendlin’s philosophy.

For example, both Gendlin and Nishida use similar words: “monad”, “body”, “space” — as their important terms. Nishida’s other terms are also very close to Gendlin’s in their contents. For example, “a predicative unity” relates to “the implicit”, and “action intuition” relates to “felt sense” or “direct referent”.

Merleau-Ponty (1964, *Signes* (translated in Japanese Vol.1, p. 194) once referred to “a wild sphere” that is not involved in its own culture and therefore can be crossed with each other. This wild sphere seems to correspond to the pure experience that Nishida called *basyo* (a place or a space in our body) and that Gendlin called the *implicit*. Furthermore, what functions as body for Gendlin is comparable to “action intuition” by Nishida, and to “direct referent” or “felt sense” by Gendlin. I want to emphasize that Nishida’s philosophy, which built a firm bridge over the deep gulf between Western rational reflection and Eastern body-wisdom, is one of the new ways of thinking that Gendlin envisages.

Of course, there are clear differences between them. They have had different contexts in their thinking: Gendlin comes from the Western tradition of philosophy, namely *philosophy of Being*, and Nishida from the Eastern tradition, the *philosophy of Nothingness*. Nevertheless, many of their terms that are seemingly opposite, such as Gendlin’s “evolution” and Nishida’s “historical work” or Gendlin’s Being and Nishida’s Negation or Nothingness are not contrary to each other’s ways of thinking.

Therefore, we can expect an important crossing will occur between the two philosophies. In Gendlin’s terms, we can say the two philosophies have their own *implying* or *possibility* and can make an important crossing in our history. However, why do these crossings happen? I want to explain this dynamic, using Nishida’s terms and Gendlin’s. Our selves

are “individuals against individuals” in Nishida’s terms, and have their “own implyings into which things occur”, in Gendlin’s terms. Our selves respond or cross over to their environments or the universe. Our environments, histories, and the universe, also cross over to us through our bodies. If we are close to our more profound wild sphere, our interactions will come to be more alive and demonstrate coincidences of things beyond the differences of our own contexts, thus many crossings will occur there.

Inspired by Gendlin, I intend to cross their philosophies, which will evolve to be one of a continuous philosophy. If we continue to do such crossings, a better world will be able to come true. Therefore we can say that we might be able to change our world into a better one to live in, through using their philosophies applied to our own practice.

III

Let me now make a closer examination into Nishida and Gendlin’s thoughts with the focus on action-intuition and direct referent.

A Japanese Philosopher, Yujiro Nakamura (1992) wrote:

Nishida’s “action-intuition” has deep connections with clinical knowing in a broader sense. In three respects Action-intuition will contribute to making a foundation of the clinical knowing. First: It understands action and intuition not as one way activity but as interaction between this and that. Second: Looking through action means actually looking through body, through which one can find most concrete knowing — such as radical experiences. Third: Looking through action and body is accomplished by “historical body” (the concept is one of Nishida’s philosophical terms (pp.138-140).

History refers to not only that of human beings but also that of organisms. This concept corresponds to Gendlin’s “evolution” in *A Process Model*. Action-intuition itself is carried out only in its historical world. Nishida’s action-intuition significantly influenced the broader view of biology and its theoretical foundations as structured by Kinji Imanishi (a famous biologist in Japan). He believed in many of Nishida’s concepts such as “pure experience” or “action-intuition,” to be very useful tools for his biological study. Nishida’s action-intuition also gives us clues to the finding and the making of hidden meanings of “clinical knowing” in the fields of clinical psychology and cultural anthropology, etc.

Nishida (1937) wrote in his essay titled *Action-Intuition*, “Action-intuition: not Plotinos’ intuition nor Bergson’s pure sequences but a basis for truly actual knowing and all empirical knowledge” (p.1). To establish objective knowledge, action-intuition should inevitably let the knowing occur in the historical world (in Nishida’s term). Our action must have developed historically from instinctive behavior through interactions between a subject and its environments in the way of the unity of opposites. This unity of opposites (literally translated as absolutely-opposite-self identity) forms and creates everything new in the historical view. Action occurs — since we live in the world of things which must be seen

in relation to dialectics. For this purpose, Nishida modified Hegel's Dialektik — that is to say, he thought of action-intuition as “dialectical general”. The world as a historical present is thoroughly determined by its past, but contains self-negation in itself and goes from the present to the present in which our action occurs. Our actions are inherently species-specific and occur, since we look to things with our action-intuition, namely with our body sense. In this historically proceeding world, subjective individuals define their environments and the environments define the individuals.

“Species make their environments,” says Nishida (1937), which means that we as individuals govern ourselves in our environments, and that species themselves are altered and denied by their environments, and vice versa. Also, the world — that which species and environments make up together — in turn, makes itself individually. There, our body is constructed, and we as historical individuals see things with our action-intuition. Inevitably we must continue to construct our environments and ourselves historically. In other words, we become human through our historical makings.

It was Bin Kimura (1989), a psychiatrist and psychopathologist, who first applied Nishida's philosophy to get a more precise understanding of psychopathology. He used Nishida's term “action-intuition” in order to better understand the many complaints of his patients. Kimura (1985) pointed out, in respect to the relation between philosophy and psychotherapy, that “the error of the separation between subject and object, which had dominated psychology (therefore psychopathology), was removed on the grounds that Heidegger thought of In-der-Welt-sein as transcendency and the unity of Da-sein and the world was produced,” (p.20). He quoted Heidegger, “The fact that Da-sein transcends means that it forms its world in its real nature and gives it a radical insight (a picture) with its world. The insight works just as its ‘pre-picture’ for all the explicit beings including the Da-sein” (1955, p. 97). From this viewpoint psychopathologists such as Binswanger could talk about transformations of In-der- Welt-sein, which his patients experienced.

This “pre-picture” is implicit and has felt meaning. Its function might be called “monad” according to Gendlin. We may have one or three monads according to our being and our problems. But Heidegger could not get to the importance of the body sense. Gendlin said to me once that Heidegger only mentioned the body of our being in his term “Wohnen” (to live) in his late writings (personal communications from TAE workshop in NY). Heidegger's terminology does not make clear sense of our body.

Unlike Heidegger, Nishida referred to the “historical body”, placing a special emphasis on the actuality and embodiment of our being. He even took the same approach to “history”, having been influenced by historicism, a theory prevalent in his day that posits: events are determined or influenced by conditions and inherent processes beyond the control of humans. Therefore he might have undervalued the creative function of *the body*.

On the other hand, Gendlin criticized Foucault's historicism in the respect that our body is not utterly pre-determined. The body, of course, has many contexts in our actual life, but these contexts are not completely pre-determined. In contrast, they are open and cross with each other. This crossing is the space of a new creation. Nishida showed us the actual existence of our world, illustrating an *us* in unseparated interaction — which

is a quite different viewpoint from the modern European way of thinking. His aim was to explain everything in a quite new way beyond any differences between the West and the East in culture and history. To that end, Nishida referred to the creative function of our body, but he could not show us how we use our body to find new ways of creation. It is Gendlin's truly new contribution to our world that has made it clear how our body functions in our creative working.

IV

I want to explain Gendlin's philosophy, especially his *A Process Model*, by giving a rough sketch of its philosophical and historical context. The context in which Gendlin found himself posed the same difficulty as that which confronted contemporary Western philosophies in general. Two main forms of Western philosophy, analytic and existential, seem to have both run into an aporia, (uncertainty or skeptical doubt), which might be called Postmodernism. It seems that the former got to nothingness, whereas the latter got to arbitrariness.

Gendlin and his colleagues from certain philosophical circles held a conference called After Postmodernism at University of Chicago in 1997. Below are some sentences reflecting Gendlin's way of thinking from *A Report* issued after the conference:

- We are developing a language across the texts.
- Theory and practice open each other.
- Human bodies "know" by inhabiting their interactive situations and the universe.
- New conceptual models are welcome as tools within a wider context.
- A new kind of truth and objectivity.

Guided by Gendlin's concepts, we can develop our own instances of re-thinking. For example, we have developed a reliable method of qualitative research, both in practice and in theoretical viewpoint (Murasato, 2008). Both in our interviews and interpretations of transcripts, we often use our felt sense and arrive at our interviewee's implicit context more exactly. Coding is an especially difficult point for every method of qualitative research. I use the 7th step of TAE and find out patterns in the important parts of the transcript of an interview session. Patterns don't drop out the details of the parts because it is not an abstraction of the protocol as other methods like Grounded Theory do. (Grounded Theory, according to Wikipedia, "is a qualitative research technique where instead of starting with a theory, the researcher begins with the data and uses the data to generate a theory. Starting with a theory before analyzing the data is not allowed. The theory is not created from analyzing research literature, but from systematically analyzing the data through both inductive and deductive reasoning.")

I have taught my graduate students this method. I've found that it is very useful not only in their research training, but also in their clinical training since it improves their

clinical sensitivity. In our project, we have already had encouraging outcomes. Theoretically too, we can apply Gendlin's "three universals" (1997a) to the issue of validity. Gendlin states: "A 'universal' is something that 'applies in many 'instances'" (p. 140). A first universal is a "new expression" in a behavior context. A second universal is "seen." Both 1st and 2nd universals are primitive and implicit. The third is a 'universal of the direct referent.' "A direct referent is a new kind of 'symbolization'" (p.247). We can make a universal from a direct referent. This is a very new explanation of 'universal'. Using this concept of universals, we have achieved marvelous consistency in a theory of qualitative research and made a presentation on this at the 8th World conference for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling in 2008.

Campbell Purton (2004) interprets Gendlin's philosophy as follows:

Gendlin believes that our current ways of thinking don't really allow for the existence of human beings in the world. Our current ways of thinking separate the world from what the world means to us.... So to make room for us in the world, the world has to be re-thought. Gendlin's concepts constitute a framework for this re- thinking (p. 137).

This means Gendlin's philosophy is both in the stream of phenomenology and more than that: that is to say, he is also a radical empiricist. Human beings experience themselves and their own environments bodily, not in their intellect alone. Bodily experiencing contains consciousness and unconsciousness and is much nearer to what we experience. Human beings are actually not separated from the bodily felt experience. However, they have been separated in modern Western thinking, even in Freud's thought. It is wrong in a sense. Separating subject from object is a good way of thinking as far as 'things' are concerned. But it does not work when we think of an organism, especially for human beings, just as they are.

But a truth hides itself when another truth comes out, as Heidegger suggested. We can say that Gendlin's philosophy knows and feels the whole of this situation and speaks from it. His theory of our body is also different from most theories and papers presented recently. Other theories might show surprising phenomena about the body, but do not know, feel, and have "the whole of the situation" of the body, as Gendlin posits it. Something new and interesting might happen, but in VII, namely only in an "in-action" way. The "VIII-sequence carries the whole forward, and is the having of the whole," (p.218). Therefore, if the example is of dancing, the VIII-sequence carries forward the whole situation of the dance, as seen in the case of Isadora Duncan. *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning* (Gendlin, 1997b), his early seminal book, *A Process Model*, and his many other works, are instances of this re-thinking — and there is marvelous consistency among them.

Now let me roughly follow Gendlin's Direct Referent in VIII of *The Process Model*. After his philosophical hard work on "symbolic process" (VII-A) and "proto-language" (VII-B), Gendlin opens VIII of *The Process Model* with a quotation from Isadora Duncan's *My Life*, and explains what she was doing.

Duncan was seeking something in her body. What was she seeking: something that would make her dance in quite a new way. Of course she could dance in the traditional way of dancing, which belongs to the world of VII that is related to our traditional culture. Duncan was seeking the sequence that could carry forward the whole situation of her dance. "An VIII sequence carries the whole forward and is the having of the whole." There is also the new "feel" of the whole and in a Direct Referent "everything is changed."

Gendlin asks to himself where this Direct Referent happens and answers:

In a new space generated by this new kind of sequence. Even in VII, people feel things in their chest and stomach, that is one "where" and also in their situations, that is another "where". But in VIII a new space opens (p. 220).

This is what distinguishes a VIII sequence. If it does not carry forward with the whole of the situation, it is not VIII sequence, whatever the sequence is. We have to notice that "the whole" is emphasized. When we want to go forward beyond our situation, we have to know the whole of the situation bodily and feel the whole of it. Duncan had to know and feel the whole of the dances that she experienced. Einstein and Stanislavski, whom Gendlin called pioneers of VIII, also knew and felt the whole of their own situations. They did so again and again. Although the results (expressions) of VIII may be simple, if we depict them in VII we may have to use vast expressions and cannot explain them completely. An expression of VIII contains "in itself the entire gamut of complex life phenomena" according to Stanislavsky (p.224).

Gendlin explains how the implicit of the body functions and how a direct referent forms. To open this new sequence, one must stop the sequences of VII and wait for something that is not VII. I suggest that for Nishida this stoppage represents Negation. Negation is not negative but a kind of affirmation.

As we can see in the Duncan's and Stanislavsky's case, not-doing is first of all inevitable in order to open VIII. Then one may be able to get "his whole body's implicit richness of situations and interactions, all changed at once in this particular focal implying now" (p.224).

Further, Gendlin continued to emphasize a very important point: "We need something like this in any life situation, and also in any new theoretical thinking" (1997a, p.224). In any life situation or in any new theoretical thinking, we don't have to give up a much better solution. It is important for us not to give up our solution and put the problem in a right way to be asked. For example, Einstein knew his problem and that his problem could not be solved with his knowledge of mathematics and physics. But he knew "his body, totaling and focalizing all that, formed for him a direct referent which he could feel as such," and "this feeling guided him" at last to "speak from it in terms of physics" 15 years later (p. 224).

Gendlin showed us that the implicit and Direct Referent had helped these three pioneers very strongly, and therefore Focusing and TAE had strong power if we applied it in appropriate ways in many fields. Thus, we can go beyond the VII-world and open a

VIII-place, which will change our ordinary contexts and therefore, we don't have to be pessimistic about our future.

Gendlin goes forward in his philosophical explication in VIII as follows:

"A direct referent does not always form." "Direct Referent comes." "It can come only if we let come" (p. 225).

Nishida wrote that a thing came and illuminated him. And where is he who is illuminated? Where does the occurring like this occurs? Nishida answered "in Basyo." Basyo means a place or a space in the ordinary meaning, but it is an important term of Nishida's philosophy. I think this parallels the use of the term 'space' in VIII of *The Process Model*. Nonetheless, in the both cases, what comes is important to the person, and we can say that here occurs the two phenomena close to each other, although these appear somehow different.

Gendlin has developed a model about the coming of a direct referent and the space into which a direct referent comes, in which the occurring is its result. I think what we have is not a hard way of thinking about the implicit. Gendlin seems to be helped by his experiences in the field of clinical psychology in the respect that his thinking is both phenomenal and metaphysical, and both sides make each other side stronger, although it might make the reading in both fields difficult to understand.

Gendlin explains other important functions of direct referent and its characteristics in the following quotes:

- *The direct referent is a perfect feedback object (p. 236).*
- *The direct referent, the feel of the whole problem, itself is closed and still in formation until suddenly it opens, and "what it is" falls out. "It" has jelled. Now one "knows," though it may then still take some time to find words or actions (p. 234).*
- *So there is a distinction between the direct referent still during formation (as when Duncan waits, the whole thing doesn't feel quite right), and once it formed (p. 234).*

And once it formed, the direct referent is a perfect feed back object. Gendlin explains "how a VIII sequence makes changes in the VII-context." "Each bit of the new sequence is a changed version of the whole VII-context." It "satisfies the requirement" of the problem (p. 245).

Gendlin uses the term "monad" and explains it this way: "Monad is the term I use for how a direct referent applies to everything" (1997a, p. 246). This echoes how Nishida used "monad" as a self: the self as a monad is mirroring the world. And Gendlin uses the term as a verb: "direct referent monad out into everything." Here is a clear difference between the two philosophies: Nishida's is more contemplative and less active than Gendlin's. I guess it is because the latter wants the readers to join in making their own continuous philosophy, and in knowing how to do so, understanding better how to use one's own body.

Gendlin closes *The Process Model* with an impressive heading, “Conclusion and Beginning.” He says that the process model will continue to develop many terms to solve the problems we now have. Gendlin evaluates Plato and Aristotle because they created what their age needed. Gendlin says, “I wish to be my own Plato and Aristotle” (p. 278). We need both method and concepts, and Gendlin thinks it is possible for us to establish our model and prevent beautiful concepts from containing ourselves within VII.

I’d like to conclude my article with the possibility that our opening to our own new possibilities — most likely by individual creation in individual space — opens a new period marked by enormous crossing. Fortunately, we have the philosophers and pioneers who showed us their possibilities in opening their own lives to us — and that we can share together. Our times might have implicitly asked some of us to open the heavy door to quite a new and deep life for human beings in which we can live our inherent possibility.

I have made a sketch of Nishida’s and Gendlin’s philosophy. Both are radical empiricists who found the profound basis from which we can live. I think there are such persons who feel happy when they can open a heavy door into a better human life.

Gendlin especially has explicated the function of the body to create a new way in our personal and public difficulties. The implicit function of the body is not arbitrary, but has its order from which we can find a new way to solve our problems. We have not had such a profound theory of the body until Gendlin explicated it. He foresees that we will be able to have new ways of life such as a new principle of economy, which replaces the principles of the market economy.

Gendlin invites us to go forward into what he calls a continuous philosophy. This message from Gendlin is a hope for us living in this difficult world. Therefore I want to call *A Process Model* “a book of hope”.

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Tadayuki Murasato is an Associate Professor at Teikyo Heisei University, and works in the fields of Philosophy and Clinical Psychology.

