Post-Anthropocentric Implications of "World-Expression" in Nishida's "Life"

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This paper examines Nishida Kitarō's (1870–1945) late essay, "Life," which develops the process of "world-expression" (世界表現) to situate human and nonhuman agency in ways drawing his thought closer to concerns of posthuman ideals of inter-species commensurability and biosemiotics today. Here he extends his philosophy of a site-specific matrix or basho (場所) so as to incorporate arguments from J. S. Haldane's The Philosophical Basis of Biology *(1931), which poses questions concerning the coordination of organisms and environments. Nishida finds in Haldane support for his own situating of selves, even engaging questions concerning how animals count as selves.*

Key words: Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎 1870–1945); Kyoto School; modern Japanese philosophy; posthumanism; world-expression; biosemiotics; ecological thought; philosophy of science; philosophy of biology; J. S. Haldane (1860–1936)

Nishida Kitarō's (西田幾多郎 1870–1945) long essay "Life [生命]" (1944)[1] draws into the context of biology many of his longstanding interests, ranging from aesthetic experience to history and modern physics. While "Life" foregrounds biology in ways that make the essay seem peripheral to his oeuvre and even suggests why it has remained overlooked, it may also be the case that since its appearance we have become more interested in such environmental issues. As Nishida draws J. S. Haldane's (1860–1936)[2] *The Philosophical Basis of Biology* (1931) into conversation with his own philosophical approach, he negotiates among the many writers he cites the historical interplay between fictions of both sparks of life animating Vitalism[3] and chains of causal relations turning Mechanism,[4] two legacies of nineteenth-century biological thought rendered problematic by developments in both biology and quantum mechanics, Nishida notes (NKz11: 310– 2). Indeed, Haldane is quite clear in concluding that "vitalism in any form has the same fundamental defect as the mechanistic theory of life. It assumes that a living organism and its environment can be separated in observation and thought, when they cannot be separated."[5] As Japanese philosophy professor Ikeda Yoshiaki, known for his work on Leibniz, Nishida, and technological issues, emphasizes, Nishida challenges this stark division of observer and environment by building an argument reflecting his understanding of inter-relationality.[6]

In brief, this paper argues that Nishida provides a world-philosophical model drawing on work in European languages to situate self-expression in life as world-expression, while always asserting his own Buddhism-inflected focus on contradictory self-identities (working contraries that do not form dualistic oppositions or dialectic movements per se) against the backdrop of absolute nothingness (not being or even the becoming-ness of being). His biologically oriented world-expression would seem at first to complement a biologically defined semiosphere of biosemiotics; however, by developing his philosophy as a non-cumulative and non-dialectical (in a Hegelian sense) system of engaging contingent living agencies at sites of interdependencies extending within and beyond the self (or potentially any species, in my reading), world-expression suggests a temporally synchronic (in contrast to diachronic) yet transient model, which would seem to be incompatible with existing dominant Peircean biosemiotics predicated on interpretants rather

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than merely pluralistic species expression.[7] Expression, one might add, may be interpreted as resembling a Badiouian approach to manifest objective *presentation* rather than of expression as inner projection outward, an unwarranted assumption in the case of Nishida's world-expression. While intention generally is linked to ethical and political questions, manifest actions exhibit the summation of somatic and autonomic functionality as well as consciousness (however defined) *in situ*, inclusive of ethical (for instance, environmentally beneficial, however defined) questions and aims. Applied to a multitude of species, Nishida's world-expression may move us *away* from the language of humans and into the world of interdependence, enmeshment,[8] and action. How it could be understood and developed is potentially unlimited.

Nishida's positioning speaks to Timo Moran's discussion (building on the work of Riin Magnus) of a current lack of dialogic relations between humans and nonhumans: "Despite technological progress and reaching the most remote corners of the world, humans have become solitary, as other species have ceased to address us, to ascribe meanings to us, whereas their dominant reactions towards us have become avoidance and fear."[9] Nishida can be seen as in effect offering a means of resetting human and nonhuman communication from a neutral starting point of always already emerging out of a situation in which each is contributing to the world through their world-expression, though not bound to any privileging of a species-centered domain of understanding, but rather always expressive of potentially relational interdependent engagements. In this respect, Nishida's world-expression allows nonhumans the possibility of being witnessed exhibiting their world-expressive contributions, while we may be trapped by our limitations as humans.

1 Scales of Interactive and Interdependent Life in Nishida

Nishida's definition of life derives from his special attention to self-awareness, which is attributed to not only humans but concepts or larger relational entities such as life itself in any form. He writes, "Life must depend on the self-awareness of life" (NKz11: 294), and argues that our understanding of life phenomena is only assisted by laboratory equipment, but, as Haldane says, "Our lives cannot be explained mechanistically" (NKz11: 295). Here one might argue that Nishida exhibits limitations with regard to how he understands applications to environmental or what we call the post-anthropocentric turn that would debunk human supremacy as a working model for understanding life. These new approaches resemble Haldane and Nishida's work in its emphasis on interdependencies in embodiments of self-defining open formations of life in contrast to closed and mechanistic formations. That is, Nishida appears to affirm the purposeful interpretation of the behavior of beavers making dams, as opposed to seeing beavers as using dams as tools in a complex cultural engagement that he reserves on the whole for humans (NKz11: 296). However, on the same page he goes on to question the special place of humans, writing, "There are animals which possess excellent tools in their bodies [身体的に]," literally "in a bodily way" (NKz11: 296).

Nishida later in the essay frames action in relationship to reaction so as to suggest a continuous inter-relationality between what today we might call actants (NKz11: 302). He situates "acting and being acted upon together in the entirety of causal relations," reserving self-expression of the whole to a process that "transcends it to express the whole, a whole rendered through self-expression" (NKz11: 303). Here is precisely how life as self-awareness extends into the world, not by means of self-expression as an intentional object externalized but by way of embodying it as an environmentally bound subject-presentation itself. In examining life in Haldane's biological sense in relation to his own interest in dynamic emergence, he realized through local selves his often invoked "contradictory self-identity of the many and the one," and describes this self as a "creative element [創造的要素]" (NKz11: 304). He even clarifies that, following Haldane, this approach does

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not assume a world created as a whole but rather the particular lives forming multi-(de)centered interactive fields out of the individual entireties and changing scopes, not an organic whole. It is the "entirety that forms the cells as elements made central" (NKz11: 304). The scales of these shifting realms may, as I will suggest following Nishida's approach, diffuse the distinction of instinctual needs and posited aims in the diminution of human language as privileging human scales of thought and reference. In other words, the marking of wholes shifts in terms of scale of framing and is ultimately arbitrary, dependent on the entity's needs or aims and the given entity's capability for accessing them.

Nishida writes, "We hold language as a self-expressive element of our world. In the extreme of such relations, what is made is that expressed, is ourselves becoming self-aware. In such extremes, our world through its contradictory self-identity joins subjective and objective into one. Animals have lives too [動物も生命を有つ]" (NKz11: 308). Haldane argued that "we cannot separate organic from environmental structure," and the "very existence [of organisms] expresses coordination with one another" (Haldane 1931: 15). Following this frame, Nishida debates how to situate animals within his own thinking, which emphasizes the potential for extending (heretofore human) awareness and expression of the world through a pluralistic situating of individuals (not necessarily human) as living organisms both self-aware and self-expressive while being existentially predicated on interdependent means of sustenance (physical, psychical, or however conceived). He comes to situate animals in the following important passage: "However, animals are not machines. To the extent that they form coherent patterns of patterning itself within and without, they must incorporate self-expressive elements of the whole within them" (NKz11: 309). On the same page, citing various earlier writers, Nishida argues in effect that it is not a problem of animals mindlessly following their instincts that distinguishes them from humans, but rather one of the need for a recognition that people too follow instincts. Even in language use we follow conventions and patterns so that "humans too are instinctual [人間も本能的である]" (NKz11: 309).[10] He reverses the usual distinction of animals as lacking metacognitive capabilities by exploring how both animals and humans function through cultures exhibiting rote behavior. One is reminded of the posthuman theorist N. Katherine Hayles, who situates information as decentered in biological or cybernetic modeling whereby "the narrator … exists less as a speaking voice endowed with a plausible psychology than as a series of fissures and dislocations that push toward a new kind of subjectivity."[11] Nishida's narrative is about how to articulate the animation of diverse life worlds. He continues his exploration of instinct: "However when it comes to people, what is expressed as that expressed is what returns life to life itself. The world becomes self-aware of the world itself. Actuality expresses the self itself" (NKz11: 309). Thus, Nishida's philosophical approach would account for diversity of species as well as inter-human discourses without assuming a givenness of an anthropocentric positioning. For Nishida, life becomes a context-enmeshed living *basho* (場所), a site and relational field in the world, emerging from within its interdependent functioning and out of the mediating needs of participants (living organisms, however defined).

A prominent recurring keyword in Nishida's oeuvre is *poiesis* (ポイエーシス, making, bringing into existence), which in *The Empirical Sciences* (経験科学 1939) is used to bridge his demand for situating creative will in engagements with the object-subject ambiguities that quantum physics and relativity theory have brought to the fore in the sciences. The scientific pursuit of simple objective knowledge was driven back by physicists (at least for now) from the illusion of material objectivity in the sense of a verifiable static particulate universe existing as an overarching spacetime. Matter or waves and coordinated elementary particles, themselves variously and still partially speculatively bound up in forces manifest as matter-waves or even massless, offer merely so-called ladders all the way down. The demythologizing process of modern physics and modernity already in Nishida's day had left scientific confidence in such givens—including the conservation of mass and energy and simple calculations of forces (Newtonian physics)—displaced, so that

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Nishida's conflation of artistic *poiesis* and material worlding offers an original development and contribution with continuing relevance. He situates object-oriented subjectivity as neither exclusively intersubjective nor self-objectifying.[12] For us today, his poiesis speaks to the need for merging biological frames of reference into posthuman physical and informational scales of referencing life, as simultaneously self-aware and world-expressive, closing the ontic-ontological gap.

In "Life," *poiesis* is used to describe operations constituting agential emplacements, namely the world-expressive loci of living organisms in relation to their interdependent environments. Presenting coordinated emergence on a canvas of nothingness, Nishida suggests that the *scales of life* themselves in effect hold the brushes and *interdependence with the environment* offers the palette of essential dependencies for this emergence. Each individual (human or nonhuman, variously) gives expression to the world and as the world, along with all the others engaged similarly within a given environmental scope, however defined, observed, measured, or speculated upon. The presence of life is no longer mimetic nor necessarily other-oriented, but neither does it mimic an *a priori*, in Homi Bhabha's sense, in adhering to conventions of categorizations that would blind us to complex and dynamic relationality among species. Nishida may offer, as I hope to show, a posthuman localization of species. Based on expressivity, but without communication within a common medium, as may be intrinsic to semiotics, and without necessarily engaging a common or commensurate code it requires, what he offers nevertheless suggests a localization of agential sharing in expression of world (material and living) as co-inhabitants.[13] How we interact, collaborate, co-constitute, signal prior to action, and even simply communicate in intra-species language circuits of conventional codes may all, strictly speaking, be situated as beyond the scope of their world-expressivity in Nishida's accounting for direct and indirect interactive relations *between species*, including needs and offerings, roles in food chains and farming across species, symbiosis and far-flung interdependencies. Biosemiotics has usually linked communication to some interspecies and systemic code-production for the sake of adapting such codes to human natural and artificial language systems; however, "world-expressivity" obviates this orientation and helps draw biosemiotics (if it still can be called this or should be considered a form of post-biosemiotics) into an even more post-anthropocentric and posthumanist accounting for world-co-productivity as life.

Beyond Nishida's last essay, "Life," one may argue that he points to how life is expressively collective as an interconnecting and disconnecting, intermittent and fickle partnering and shifting of attention. He offers an expressive syncopation, intercollectivity, absolute interdependence, with self-force or will as nodal, not absolute. Perception is inferred, not known. What is expressed or presented (in Alain Badiou's sense) is not representational of worlds but rather elemental to worlding as a discontinuous continuity, syncopated and interposed, interlinking and reconnecting, as multivectored interactive overlapping living systems constantly breaking off connections and viability, refabricating, and mutating. Such an approach also coheres with Nishida's predication of the worlding on movement bound up in living acts of interaction. As Adam Loughnane writes, "For Nishida, the world is not made up of discreet acting subjects here and non-acting objects over there, but is an 'infinite continuity of acts'" (Loughnane 2017: 718).[14]

2 Posthumanism as Decentered Human Epistemologies

We may as humans routinely tend to assume that even arguments for posthuman co-existence must begin with human bases in sociolinguistic systems of knowledge as natural languages and derivative symbol-driven sciences and discourses predicated on empirical human perception. As Sune Vork Steffensen, known for his work in ecological linguistics and human interactivity, argues, building on the ecolinguistic work of Andrew Goatly and others, "overemphasis on language

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downplays the biophysical reality of ecological issues" since "ordinary language is quite inadequate to represent the world" with its implications of a "grammar of transitivity [that] supports a 'billiard ball model' of reality, in which the world is occupied by separate entities that each has a definite territory in spacetime," "the ontology posited by [now superseded] Newtonian physics" (Steffensen and Fill 2014: 10).[15] Though in the interest of promoting social responsibility and justice, academic writing eschews the passive voice and nominalizations associated with it, Goatly "argues against the Newtonian ideology of the triumph of technology, and in favour of a new world-view which does not 'exploit an inert Nature,'" and would replace prevalent grammatical models with "more 'consonant' grammars which make use of nominalization, grammatical metaphors and ergativity" (Steffensen and Fill 2014: 10), thus complicating how we relate and situate language use in mediating across species and biomes. One is reminded of Félix Guattari's transversalist argument in *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, where he outlines not one "general syntax of the procedures of deterritorialisation," and argues that no coupling of "Being-being, Being-Nothingness, being-other" can form "ontological" binaries, since "expressive intensity" will diverge and expressions (which he here explores as "machinic propositions") will "elude the ordinary games of discursivity and the structural coordinates of energy, time and space."[16] In short, when approaching diverse biological fields of co-existence, there are no centers among life manifestations and not even a common cross-species basis for comprehending borders between living organisms. Nishida writes, "What we call the external senses are things that appear in the border regions of organic bodies in the external world, things that make and are made" (NKz11: 298).

Nishida provides a precursor to the posthuman decentering of the human being as a so-called universal measure of all things. He offers a more modest reduction to *expression as worlding* as a means of moving away from human discursive practices as sustaining a superior worlding in their own right, but rather as offering human expressive cultural engagement that other species also possess on *their* own terms. Since we are human and, even though not the center of the universe, still bound by our bodily and cultural limits, as are each manifestation of a species in specific situations, our interactions include some form of actions that engage the requisite conditions for self- and ecosystemic sustenance. Although we may be bound by the culmination of individual and group interactions, if we take Nishida's world-expression as derivative, as it is, of a modern physical (relativistic quantum physical) rethinking of biological systems, and as relinquishing the mind from the task of real-ization of the world and a more co-formative emplacement of *basho* evident through human acting, questions Schrödinger also engaged in his work on life,[17] Nishida can be seen as providing an opening for speculative ontologies or worlding based not only on talking about how humans are not the center (assertions promoting post-anthropocentric thought) but of suggesting a means of accommodating nonhuman worldings as observed expressivity, not self-serving (human-measured) hierarchized communication systems per se. Since it is difficult to enter into the communication networks of other species on their own terms, one major advantage to be noted in Nishida's world-expressive system is that it suggests a means of not depending entirely on situating perception or communication, but simply of focusing on world-expression as a biological entity in spacetime that is always already, as life, deterritorializing relations with other species, co-present or not, and bodily membranes.

Expression without communication implies an interaction based on multispecies (as well as multilingual human) misunderstandings, mistranslations as it were, and routine interactions that are not conscious or unconscious for that matter, but merely exist as vital flows of sustenance between species. Our bodies across species feed each other, and non-living systems such as the gravity-driven nuclear furnace of the sun provide the primary source of energy driving many of these systems (geothermal and tidal forces provide other sources). Thus, we may see how human communication is not the end-all, but rather complex dynamic flows of energy and matter. In fact, in situating ecosemiotics, Winfried Nöth defines expressive biological communication as broadly

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understood as likely having a "very low 'semiotic threshold' between signs and non-signs" (Nöth 2001: 72)[18] and even emphasizes in Peirce a focus on "teleology or final causation" as an expressive "common denominator" (Nöth 2001: 74) among various species that one may consider in relation to Nishida's world-expression. It is both integrated with other organisms and autonomous in some sense: "In the interaction of organisms with their environment, there is teleology in cybernetic processes which lead to homeostasis and equilibrium between the organism and its environment" (Nöth 2001: 75). Tommi Vehkavaara situates one facet of biosemiotics in relation to its complication of agency to the point that interpretation in a biosemiotics would "not relate to past causes but to its *actual* functionality" (Vehkavaara 2005: 295),[19] similarly moving toward a recognition of the difficulties of entertaining a semiotics of nature, arguing primarily for an "objective ethics" that "does not seek any true representation but *successful action*—and the successfulness or unsuccessfulness of this controlled action determines its validity" (Vehkavaara 2005: 299).

3 World-Expression as Limiting Framing of Presentations of Life

Expression implies a perspective and situation, but it is, strictly speaking, a material breaching of an area of species embodiment into an environment; it does not necessarily communicate to others, since others may not share a common medium of interaction, not to mention its means of processing as meaningful semiotic enunciation, even if physical biosemiotics (tracing, for instance, genomic information). One may briefly define ecosemiotics in general as bound up in human (anthropocentric) processes, given its focus on larger scales of reference that seem to assume an overarching human perspective. As Timo Moran speculates on ecosemiotics, echoing issues familiar within the field of postcolonial thought, "there needs to be an agency capable of destabilizing and interrupting the existing conventional codes and symbolic systems" (Maran 2020: 37), especially when one species dominates and garners symbolic force of generalization and attention. Moran discusses multiple semiotic solutions to comprehending ecosystems and species on their own terms, but in the end adheres to the Peircean orientation towards a division of conventional sign relationality via symbols, indexical functionality (orienting gestures), and iconographic mimesis or presentation.

Biosemiotics itself allows for a range of possibilities, growing out of the work of Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944), who segregated human and nonhuman *umwelten* (subjective outlooks) in ways that privilege human preconceptions in its ordering (Maran 2020: 6), along with Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914) and Thomas Sebeok (1920–2001), who form the basis for both code-oriented ecosemiotics and zoosemiotics (focused on nonhumans) and their limits.[20] Yet biosemiotics now offers a wide array of approaches ranging from physical (such as in tracking chemical exchanges) as mediums of semiotic codes at living system scales, to genetic code exchanges at evolutionary scales, and various attempts to find parallels or common ground among humans or among other species' interspecies semiotics and bases for codes, including "partially shared communicational conventions that can be called ecological codes" (Maran 2020: 55).

In extending Nishida's overt humanism to an implicit posthuman frame, world-expression presents an opportunity for extending his thought into more species-neutral approaches suggested in biosemiotics, ones drawing upon the backdrop of absolute nothingness in his situating of expression, drawing it into zoosemiotic (or even vegetal frames of reference). World-expression, if considered as a biosemiotic model, would suggest a more neutral coding specific to instances of emerging contingencies inclusive of human and nonhuman life within its scope. As such, it also forces the complication of multiple species in a de-anthropocentrizing biosemiotics, bringing it closer to posthuman ideals of inter-species commensurability without assuming a sort of mediumistic biological lingua franca, following Guattari's injunction (1995: 38). Nishida's world-

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expression situates interactive lives and environments within an immanent ontology starting from radical (absolute) nothingness, thereby providing a fresh approach by obviating the limits to communication modeling within semiotics following Peirce.

To clarify Nishida's use of "nothingness" (無) and avoid misunderstandings, I introduce Sartrean existentialism simply as a foil. Today, existentialism may seem a somewhat clumsy and naïve term, a relic of a modernist clinging to hope in a knock of authority from beyond the exit. However, many approaches to posthumanism today (as will be explored toward the end of this essay) retain a firm centrality in the starting points of a human subject and an objective outside. While Sartre uses this approach and Nishida problematizes it, both employ the same key word—nothingness. Though they are roughly contemporaries, Nishida and Sartre take entirely distinct, one might even say incompatible, approaches to nothingness. Sartre assumes a more integrated human subject qua subject apart from the world. For Sartre, a human interacts with the world as a self-determining force for-itself, based on what he called one's *project*, which is one's defining mission that is for-itself in the sense of negating the given and entrenched in-itself (the objective state of affairs) to one's project's end. For Sartre, nothingness is integral to the process of situating the self, so that he writes: "Cut off on every side by the in-itself, the for-itself can not escape it because the for-itself is *nothing* and it is separated from the in-itself by *nothing*. The for-itself is the foundation of all negativity and of all relation. *The for-itself is relation*" (Sartre 1992: 472, emphasis in original).[21] Sartre suggests a heroic force of engaging the world politically that inspired social movements of the 1960s, but which entails "an alienation" predicated on this exit from the givenness of the world and the "concrete relations with the Other" (1992: 473) whose gaze can attempt to confer its meaning on the self engaged in a project. Yet the center of the worlding is clearly human, based on inter-human relations and brought into focus by the hero of a project. Even though Sartre's formulation—"each relation in its own way presents the bilateral relation: for-itself-for-other, in-itself" (1992: 471)—*sounds* possibly proto-posthuman or pregnant with cybernetic implications, the subjects are human agents with political coalitions in mind, in trading influence rather than integral feedback loops that may be mapped onto nonhumans or informatics themselves. Existentialism offers narratives—however limited, partial, or inhibited—that use nothingness to enable a discussion of "life" or "lives" in tentative terms as a matter of interior-exterior or inter-subjective negotiation of self and environment in mostly socio-political terms.

Drawing Nishida into the realm of ecological and posthumanist discourse today, his essay "Life" can be seen as suggesting the possibility for situating the human as giving expression to the world in local but interdependent life organization that may take any expressive form and need not be organized formally or logically. Any order may be immanent, produced in the expressive act, out of a void rather than given world, which does not preclude drawing upon extant archives of information, inventories of acts, interactions, and habits, the making and the being made (as Nishida is fond of saying) in an expressive life situation. Nishida moved toward an understanding of self-based worlding, whereby the world is manifest in individual fields (*basho*) of world-manifestation as world-expression. Such an approach may best be described as complex *and* self-consciously "primitive" (Nishida's word) (NKz11: 318), in the sense of presenting a world defined by what is expressed at a given moment (for humans often in symbolic linguistic form), not what can be reduced to categorical orders or abstract systems (metaphysics). Nishida's refusal of the transcendental in this way dovetails with posthumanist and related (such as critical materialist or speculative realist) challenges to representationalism; however, as humans trying to understand other forms of life, human and nonhuman, we cannot just throw out the "bath water" of symbolic forms under the guidance of pursuing a post-anthropocentric understanding, since language is as integral to human understanding as signaling is to ants and bees. Echoing interpretations of Comte's positivism by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), who Nishida cites, Nishida embraces the continued de-abstraction of metaphysical frameworks for biological organization in life. Like Haldane, Comte's positivism reflects what Lévy-Bruhl noted as the tension between "the school

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of physiology which … sought a mechanical explanation of biological phenomena, and tended to reduce biology to physics and chemistry [and] the vitalist school of Montpellier in France, [which] appealed to metaphysical principles and to unverifiable hypotheses."[22]

Phenomena for bats,[23] though an oft-used example, would be engaged by virtue of their echolocating interfaces that manifest their worlds in bat-oriented (not human-oriented) ways, thus giving expression to their worlds in posthumanist (post-anthropocentric) ways compatible with Nishida's world-expressive modeling. Such modeling obviates having to map commonalities between species on the level of language, since the expressions are indirect and inferred by humans from observations of bats, to whose world-expressive ontology we otherwise have limited access. Bats and other species thus offer distinct examples of nonhuman worlding in Nishida's approach to "life" as defined by Haldane's concept of "active maintenance" (能働的維持), which Nishida qualifies further as enactive intuition. He writes: "the intuition of life becomes visible in patterns that determine [life] itself" (NKz11: 292). Nishida links such intuition in the process of discovering biological organisms to "enactive intuition" in his philosophical thought or approach, writing, "to the extent one proffers enactive-intuitive patterns, science becomes exact (精密)" (NKz11: 293) and "life must depend upon a self-consciousness of itself" (NKz11: 294), which is one of the sets of issues he explores in this very long essay.

For Nishida, we are not born as masters overseeing an anthropocentric metaphysically comprehended world, but rather life as it has evolved. In Ikeda's words, it must always be situated as seeing from an "inside" (内側) without separating subject and object, always beginning within the world (Ikeda 2018: 36). In life, no foundational distinction of objective and subjective defines each person or living organism, only contradictory emergences in absolute nothingness that form practices at sites or fields of spatial relations transitorily and variously known by the lifelines in passing moments in time defined by these spatial fields, so that across time actual extensive space itself becomes an unknowable abstraction.[24] Nishida also reiterates his previous observations concerning modern physics, and how his framing of "a world of contradictory self-identity of subjective and objective, with no objective world simply transcending the subjective" (Nkz11: 324), as it was once assumed in classical Newtonian physics. He even recognizes the electron itself as symbolic [記号的], not present in a "frame of spacetime" (Nkz11: 324). On the limits of spatiality, he suggests that space persists only locally in a Minkowskian reduction that reflects the limits imposed by spacetime relativity. The local time is a region of space [空間面的] and only temporary, evident at a moment simultaneous in time and limited to the scope of a self-determining self.[25]

Nishida situates this relation in a figure obviously modelled on Minkowski's *world-line* of lived time traversed as moments of extensive space (see Figure 1), a line he simply renames the *life-line*. He writes, "The simple 'space' separating from time is no more than an abstract concept of space" (NKz11: 349). This statement implies that space only exists in sensuous proximity and perceptive scope of an individual organism (which he limits to humans, but which today might be extended to other animals and even plants and other orders of life). On the adaption of Minkowski's world line and the limitations of trying to model life as the moving temporal center in local spacetime coordinate systems, Nishida suggests, by way of a correction or addition to Bergson's work on matter and memory, that *memory* is not fundamental to the subjective but rather the rendering of the order of the self as objective so that his "contradictory self-identity" can be placed in spacetime without entirely giving up space, so to speak, though time is the element of the present being in the world for people and other living things (NKz11: 351–2). This also creates a bridge between how we understand artificial forms of memory in

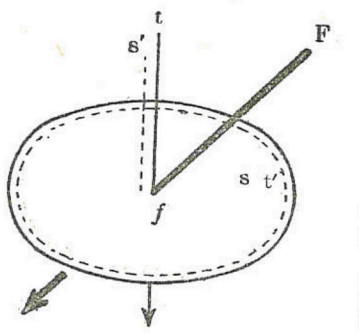

Figure 1. Life-line F in changing fields of space over time. Source: NKz11: 348.

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records inclusive perhaps of genetic, fossil, and written languages, not to mention other forms of inscription and plastic modeling, and all the arts.

Kriti Sharma, in a recent work on perception and phenomena in the philosophy of life sciences, argues for "contingent existence" as a means of avoiding the trappings of essentialism in "conventional existence," which defers to "the conventional referent of a term" (Jay Garfield cited in Sharma 2015: 11).[26] While Sharma uses contingency to dissolve essence in multiplicity, this approach may seem to parcel the consensus of multiple subjects, which form an overdetermined hegemony of essences subject to the socio-linguistic conventions of natural languages according to the enunciating participatory dominant subjects, to a pluralism of contingent subjects. The metaphysical transcendence is shifted from a common intersubjective space of recognition, of common named conventions and concepts, to a "contingentism" (Sharma 2015: 14). Sharma challenges Kantian presumptions of intuition and perception validating transcendental categories. Instead, all is both interdependently and contingently co-existing, so that observation of others becomes in itself not an end to validating an intrinsic existence of others, but more modestly the acknowledgement of the interdependence of the observing thing and observed thing. Nishida's world-expression, similarly, obviates Kantian metaphysics, but it does not turn to questions of empiricism per se in its framing. Rather, its ontology is dependent on and bound up with the life-expressive world of the individual. Nishida is interested in expression in the present, in ways perhaps distantly familiar to readers of recent work by Badiou, who emphasizes objective presentations *as* subject-manifestations.[27]

As discussed above, biosemiotics is as a whole intrinsically and problematically dependent on Peircean models of semiosis by way of the interpretant decoding information often presented as communication. World-expression, contrarily, offers an opportunity to focus on one aspect of what Yair Neuman has described as "meaning triggers," which include mRNA and hormones and other "carriers of meaning" (Neuman 2011: 195-6).[28] While world-expression need not remain naïvely situated outside of communication, it can serve the purpose of isolating actions within the scope of a given species in Badiou's sense of presentations of world-expression without necessarily immediately returning the expressive elements of a material back into a system or a culture so that it would be lost, as it were, in a chain of signifying relations. As Steffensen points out (in response to Andy Clark), "relational stability" cannot be conflated with "objective stability," not only in visual systems but in species-specific world-expression, which embodies (rather than merely registers) a stabilization of "a relation between organism and environment" (Steffensen 2011: 190).[29] Nishida's approach to world-expression, as posthuman transspecies modeling of interactive actors—human or nonhuman—in this distinction gains relevance.

Nishida's wording in the opening of his essay "Life" is itself instructive, not only tying his own approach to his interests in quantum physics as a complement foundational model (or at least pool of metaphors) for understanding his approach. He writes, partially summarizing J. S. Haldane's *The Philosophical Basis of Biology* while presenting his own philosophy:

> [Haldane] argues that we are first within what is called spacetime, and according to this [arrangement] itself we face *[men-shite iru]* the world of energy and things. It is the product of the study of the principles and axioms that form the foundations of such scholarship as is found in the literature of physics and chemistry. However, when it comes to the phenomena of life *[seimei genshō]*, principles and axioms are by no means so clear. The relations of organic bodies and the environment as well as relations among the parts of organic bodies seem on the surface not a bit different from what we call our physical and chemical relations. An organic body seems to conform to the interrelation *[sōgo-kan]* of itself to the environment and the environment to itself as well as itself to its parts. As long as alive *[ikite iru aida]*, this structure and activity *[kōzō to katsudō]* maintain the unique means for this living thing *[seibutsu]*, and is passed down over generations. (NKz11: 289)

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Although reproduction is essential for life, and mentioned in this study of life, Nishida focuses primarily on the present spatiotemporal situations in which life is simply maintained, preserved, or sustained (維持する). Such evident dynamic relations are in effect the contingencies by which life sustains not only itself but other life forms of similar or different forms and functions existing in relation to it environmentally. Nishida's philosophy of *basho* and the recurring central role he attributes to such formulations of his as a "contradictory self-identical world [矛盾的自己同一的世界]" (NKz11: 304) or "existence [存在]" (NKz11: 306) are key to understanding how Nishida realizes a sense of wholes themselves as not bound to ontological obligations of accounting for being itself *a priori* as a sense of a general whole. Moreover, his treatment of world-expressive living organisms reveals how his philosophical system is dynamic and dialectical in its very situating of emergent coming-into-being *not* as an existentialist passage through nothingness in the risky undertaking of one's life project, as Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*; rather, Nishida situates particulars and totalities themselves as formative by way of their own contribution of an aspect of contradictory self-identical elements specific to the sensory embodiment and emplacement of self-defined totalities that are diffused *through* life itself, which as Haldane already shows (long before posthumanism) displaces simple causal relations through complex interdependencies that may be related indirectly and over chains of contingencies that modulate living environments and how various species rise and fall within them. Thus, neither the whole of a body nor the whole of a world can be defined as absolutely limited nor making global claims; the very enactive intuition (行為的直観) of worlding and embodied acts frame worlds with respect to each life world's interactive, interdependent field of emergence (NKz11: 304–5).[30]

An ontological limitation defines what is in an expressive context within an ipso facto life-defined organism, rather than a given whole. Nishida writes, "What are called self-expressive elements of a whole are not atoms or [subatomic] particles or even cells. Always transcending a sense of material existence, they necessarily possess a sense of expressive existence," which he goes on to paraphrase as expression in a "sense of linguistic existence" (NKz11: 304). However, given the controversies surrounding the roles of language in understanding the macrological world in ecological inter-species aspects of posthumanism and biosemiotics, concerning how species relate in nonlinguistic forms—forms, ones not limited to models of human communication—Nishida offers a unique position. His work on self-expression as world-expression that conducts an expressive existence should not be read as simply taking this expressivity *as* a "linguistic existence" but rather as only expression in a "*sense of* linguistic existence" (NKz11: 304, emphasis added). It seems that Nishida is certainly aware of the uniqueness of world-expression in his thought and in philosophy in general. He situates human intention, agency, and conduct as not world-defining from a humanistic anthropocentric perspective but rather clearly as non-holistic, non-world-defining, non-intersubjective or interobjective. World-expression is a matter of the world expressing itself and defining itself through the participation of the world-expressing life, which must always include interdependence with other species, but foregrounds its limits by way of his focus on the world of an individual expressive organism, as it were.

4 From Limited Life Scopes to Self-Expressive World-Expressivity

Nishida's relation to posthumanism is perhaps best explored in his development of Haldane's thought, which is occasionally cited, as here, in the original English: "Life is Nature expressing herself as a characteristic whole which has no spatial bounds" (NKz11: 291). Though at first reading one might misunderstand this statement as whimsical bowing to the infinite, the spirit of Haldane's work—as well as Nishida's uses of it—emphasizes simply that life exists not in isolation but in interdependent networks or ecosystems (within a scope, taken to an extreme, that may even

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include solar systems and the known universe according to astrophysics). But Nishida was drawn to some of his favorite topics for understanding the "persistent and specific co-ordination of what is between [間] structure, action [作用], and environment" (NKz11: 290). Nishida notes that "From the perspective of physics, [life] is a miracle. The mutual relations of organic bodies and environments are not [reducible to] simple actions and reactions" (NKz11: 291). Thus, one may argue that Nishida reflects the pursuit of an account of actively self-sustaining life bodies and environments in ways that preserve the narrative of subjective activity by way of the word "express." Nishida's "Life" underscores how

> Our bodies are always self-expressive. If not so, it cannot be called a body. Our bodily understanding is said to derive from linguistic expression of our acts [作業]. What is called physical knowledge also must contribute to the foundation by way of the enactive intuition of the hands. Machines are extensions of the hands, always external projections of our bodies. (NKz11: 311–2)

Earlier in the same essay, Nishida even situates "enactive intuition of the hand" in a way harking back to his essay on the physical from the early 1920s (especially its discussion of the French philosopher Maime de Biran, 1766–1824, also mentioned in "Life")[31] and discussing an issue still haunting cognitive scientists: the question of whether the intention to move one's hand preceded the movement or what variances exist in the temporal scheme of events such as thought, movement of muscles, habitual behavior, spontaneity, and so on. Moreover, it did not escape Nishida's attention that this upsetting caused by such chicken-egg causality parallels modern physics, notably most vexingly in the famous double-slit experiment and its successors, which produce mutually exclusive results based on objective experimental designs *dependent on observer presence* and still debated in the philosophy of physics. One finds that Nishida builds on his usual interests in the contradictory self-identities of "subject and environment," "space and time," and "the overarching one and the many particular things [全体的一と個物的多]," but adds to these questions of how "forms [形] sustain forms themselves in mutually coordinated [相互整合的に] organic bodies and environments" (NKz11: 291). Building on Haldane's life-expression in nature as "without spatial bounds," Nishida justifies his own position, arguing that "because parts of organic bodies [有機体] live mutually coordinated and in possession of discrete existences [客自の存在を有つて居る], one cannot consider them in terms of so-called spatial relations" (NKz11: 291).

Nishida's world expression in a way simply reflects an extension of a Buddhistic ontology that begins with assumptions that modern physics would concur with, for instance the transience (quantum wave/particle indeterminacy beyond a given experimental setup) of immanent existence (limited by relativity's confinement to spacetime coordinates of reference), and a fundamental absolute absence of givens in a world, which only emerge through objectively situated self-contradictory or self-annihilating contradictions out of absolute nothingness. Writing that life does not simply appear "out of the world of matter," Nishida reasons that "life forms from the world of self-determination of the absolute present [絶対現在]," setting the parameters for situating the human self as expressive of the world, as seamlessly part of it too, rather than privileging a separate duality of self and world or even mind and body. He focuses, as is his way, on locating origination of self-contradictory identities to explain anything that could have been situated in classical physical space rather in a more Buddhistic nothingness-defined space of "absolute nothingness [絶対無]" (NKz11: 196).[32] He elaborates, "what is there as the self-determination of the absolute present, as what determines the self itself, are all living things and individual [個体的]. The world of the absolute present can be said to include countless shoots [芽 *sprouts, buds*]. I suppose we can approach this as [German historian Leopold von] Ranke,[33] who saw anything new at a given moment in the historical world as directly originating from a primitive source. When something called a shoot arises as the self-determination of the absolute present, out of it one world originates

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that forms the self itself in a way consistent across both the inner and outer" (NKz11: 318). Nishida thus asserts an analogy between historical periods and generations of life, the reproduction of organisms. "An organism [生物体] is what gives expression to a world, in other words, a little universe" (NKz11: 318). Thus Nishida sees not a rational, logical order as viable in the world, but rather, as he is adept at proposing, a many-worlds "compossibility" (NKz11: 319) predicated on contradictory absolute nothingness. Building on such Buddhist ontological assumptions, he uses the complexity of biological interdependencies to situate rational logic itself as untenable, while citing multiple scholars across various disciplines who share this inclination to go so far as to see the *primitive* not in terms of noble savagery but rather as actual knowledge production superior in its very skirting of the fallacy of being rational, logical, and well ordered, when life itself is, strictly speaking, not.

5 Logos-Complicating Implications of World-Expression

Nishida also explicitly resituates the "rational," writing, "Our bodily lives, as self-expressive formations of the world, are logos-like [ロゴス的]. The contents [内容] of the self-expressive formation of the world are considered rational [理性的]. Beyond this, what is called the rational does not exist. It is not simply a matter of what conforms to theories of formation being called rational, since the irrational [非合理的] also conforms to theories of formation" (NKz11: 311). Here, as in earlier works that focus on *basho*, he builds upon a redefinition of the Greek idea of logos as a universal nexus of word and principles guiding the overarching order of the universe; however, the particular—one's body, in this case—becomes a means of non-deterministic expression of the world as a conglomerate of interacting bodies. In fact, after this statement he unambiguously asserts that this self-expressive formation of the world through life forms both the historical world and a "historical bodiliness [歴史的身体的]" (NKz11: 311). Following Haldane, Nishida reasons that totalities are in effect aggregates of disparate elements that give expression to worlds "produced as creative elements [創造的要素]" and "such central elements are of course neither in a world of causal relations nor outside of it. Life is not within so-called space. However, neither can one say it is simply outside. To the extent one accounts for such elements within the self [自己自身の内に], it is a world that forms the self itself self-expressively, and it is a world of life" (NKz11: 304).

Like the cyberneticists who were soon to appear, Nishida is exploring through the frame of his philosophical system (of contradictory self-expression of existence becoming out of nothingness) how life presents a paradox of free will by way of expression that doubles as defining and reflecting (in a non-absolute non-mimetic and non-representational sense) a universal order *based on* absolute contradictory nothingness—an ontology that is neither mental and humanist in its determination nor non-expressive. However, though one can argue Nishida is de facto a humanist in that he based his system on the placement of the human as the natural mediator of the world, his system does not rule out other *expressive* modes by other forms of life. He even speculates, as touched upon already, on how "expression arises spontaneously and primitively out of the organizational relations of nerves and muscles" before developing into expressions of will and eventually the cause of thought (Nkz11: 310), which is still bound up in habits and conventional practices. This visceral focus helps Nishida distribute expressions of life beyond the closed realm of human minds, and across species and their specific "organizational relations," which brings him in conversation with contemporaries such as Haldane and Bergson and issues in cybernetics and posthumanism today. As such, one could fairly easily move toward localizing species-specific sites of communication based on the expressive "languages" (which could take the form of electrochemical exchanges) in plants and animals, which is to say integrating world-expressive ontologies into a refashioned biosemiotics and biocommunication.

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6 World-Expressive Plurality with No Common-Denominating Medium

Nishida suggests that the world is made according to this relationality "absolute willfully irreversible" (Nkz11: 324) This implies a democracy or anarchy of the present based on not interaction of forces but entanglements that define lives less according to their interdependencies per se than by their distinct scopes of sensation and understanding. Though difficult to translate, this literally "absolute willfully irreversible [絶対意志的に非可逆的]" implies in the context of Minkowskian world lines not only a link to his essay "Space [空間]" (NKz11: 193–236) of the same period and ongoing work on topics in modern physics (reiterated briefly at points in "Life"), but the situating of life itself as reflecting the complications of relativity that undermine rudimentary teleological and centralized systems, and even dialectical systems with which synthesis promotes an aggregation of absolute knowledge that exceeds the bonds of living individual organisms. He presents a modeling like that of the late Wittgenstein, one who resolves (brings peace to) issues in philosophy through localizing them in (ordinary) language games and scopes of engagement, in ways that may resonate with Nishida's extension of worlding expressiveness to other species and their respective means of interaction, whether involving humans or not. This suggests that Nishida has prepared a sophisticated frame unique to him for critical philosophical posthumanism, which he of course did not know, but may have felt at home in today.

On a practical level, while biosemiotics deals with biospheres of communication, bioinformatics is an emerging conglomerate of fields that map quantifications of biologically situated observables, including biofeedback within organisms, biochemical analysis, any physical data measurement and analysis, and various scanning technologies. Bioinformatics focuses less on systems than on data-collection; nevertheless, its presence as a field allows us to see the role of Nishida's world-expression as a form of situating in philosophical terms autopoietic yet interdependent life-formations that are each bioexpressive without necessarily being conducive to the prevalent models in biosemiotics, which still rely on the anthropocentric human interpretant model in its (Peircean) biosemiotic paradigm.[34]

The spirit of Nishida's approach to life incorporates dynamic interactions *in situ* and diachronically, that is, in the present with an understanding of the importance of the developments that culminate in present conduct—such as acts and choices, instincts and habits—that are physiological and environmentally interdependent while necessarily engaging ongoing debates. The range of philosophers Nishida draws upon reflects this trend that is with the very complications of biology and modern physics stuck between the objectivist fantasy of positivism and subject-dependent modeling. Nishida's systematic negative dialectics serves such a deconstructive critical assessment of life systems and the leveling of anthropocentric conceits. Though his impetus may have been simply to assert what is natural to him from a Buddhist perspective, his implicit departure from the hubris of western conceits of knowledge itself, namely as unproblematically built upon Greco-Abrahamic assumptions of a given Being on which the present rests, may offer a postcolonial complication reconfiguring the grounds for emergence in the present as one of many world philosophies that wrest the entitlements of the west for alternatives. Moreover, along these very postcolonial lines, Nishida offers a critique that quite readily may be applied to biological systems in posthuman reconsideration of human-nonhuman relations precisely in terms of the world-expression Nishida offers.

He writes in "Life," "We give expression to our capacities [働き], projecting capacities of the self, and objectifying the self in terms of our common world" (Nkz11: 307). Influenced by contemporary Marxist critical consciousness in his day (promoted by many of his students and ultimately influencing him), he is referring to human historical contexts and conceptualizing life as historical as well as biological in its communicative functionality. However, if we extend this to communication in biosemiotical terms, the human language bias can be recast into a general biocommunicative framework within which chemical exchanges among insects, plants, fungi, and

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so on also present their worlds. Nishida goes so far as to write, "Our lives exist in the mutual determination of subject and environment, the subject [determining] the environment, the environment the subject" (Nkz11: 314). In the end, Nishida's positioning of world-expression from multiple sources—potentially extendable to nonhumans of all types—forms a platform, a frame for nonhuman expression if not communication proper, though Nishida did not himself explicitly dwell long on this thread of his argument.

7 Conclusion

This work has merely touched upon one aspect of Nishida's "Life," which he develops in various directions. Many of its implications remain to be explored, including questions concerning how world expression relates to his writings on historiography, *basho*, and more on volition and habits and enactive intuition. John Maraldo already is exploring Nishida's use of "world" rather than "nature," arguing that Nishida did so "only to avoid the pretense of a natural realm outside of human conception and interaction," offering a compelling explanation of Nishida's approach based on one of his key terms, "enactive intuition," which Maraldo further situates, importantly, writing: "We humans [for Nishida] not only display or disclose a world already there; we enact it, that is, interact with it such that both world and self arise in mutual formation," so that humans are the "focal points of the world's awareness."[35] I have attempted to extract what I found interesting and relevant in Nishida's essay as it speaks to contemporary concerns in posthumanist approaches to nonhumans, yet there are many more possibilities for situating a spectrum of human and nonhuman worlding. For instance, in the long final section of Nishida's essay he explores nuances of how consciousness and habit form (NKz11: 337–70), writing, "The characteristic [特質] of life is to form an independent world in the center of the world" (NKz11: 357). He explains, "the so-called formation of individual life, in theoretical terms is none other than the world including self-expressive elements within the self in terms of spatiotemporal contradictory self-identity. Habit as a self-definition of such a world, is none other than the self-formative action of the form the form that forms form itself" (NKz11: 357). From the discussion of habits (習慣), he distinguishes plants and animals as being limited in their spatiotemporal engagements, implying that they are a lower form of life; nevertheless, he is thinking about them and situating them within his world-expressive subject formation based on habits, practices, and conventions across life, and applicable to plants and animals.

If one argues for a posthuman perspective of having multiple creature agencies engaging the world in a worlding commons, as is suggested here, the very presumption of any living creature's agential engagement needing to be seen as dependent on an illusion of what is commonly known as a knowing consciousness, or even non-conscious cognition in any limited sense, needs to be reconsidered. One way to rethink this would be to focus entirely on the elements that are chosen to appear in presenting each ontology, as Badiou argues, so that world-expression in Nishida's "Life" essay presents *configurations* of expression. Thus, building on Nishida, *world expression*, insofar as it is as a biological framing of actual, embodied co-emergence that follows from certain implications of quantum physics, asserts that there is no objective physical world in the way that has been assumed by classical Newtonian physics, and that therefore life forms give expression in interactive interdependent existences at the scale of emergent matter over discontinuous local spacetimes (from the so-called big bang, as it were, forward, in transitory stellar cycles, including the present so-called Anthropocene on Earth). However, these existences are not in any way coordinated with any human consciousness itself, but only can be known incidentally, so that human consciousness may strictly speaking be irrelevant, for instance, to the grass being eaten by the moose.

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Though perception is crucial to ascertaining what is, the epistemological opening to the ontological, to predicate a greater continuous world does not demand that we begin with perception. If we bracket perception we also may abandon the anthropocentric illusion that the world can only be known by way of human cognition, which suggests modeling apart from but inclusive of human models that may allow focus less on perception and more on how worlds of existence, necessarily limited in scope due to the vastness of the universe, become worlded by entities that we interpret speculatively, non-absolutely, with our worlding expressivity neither preeminent nor eclipsing other species of life. Perception, simply put, may be better understood as cognitive science perfects our knowledge of how we mirror worlds we create in our physical-virtual removes as our mindbodies; however, other species of life too have similar set-ups, so that our only advantage is our apparent advanced use of instrumentation to collect data and tell complicated stories about what they mean. My argument suggests that Nishida's world-expression may perhaps be translated as a worlding-expressivity, which reflects a co-existence with other species that is not granted out of the kindness of the superior human but rather the fact of our biological interdependencies.

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1 Kitarō Nishida 西田 幾多郎. *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* [Complete Works of Nishida Kitarō], 19 volumes (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1978–79), volume 11, 289–370. Japanese quotes have been converted to *tōyō kanji*. Abbreviated NKz.

2 J. S. Haldane (1860–1936) is known for his work in mining, biology, and particularly for his work on how oxygen and carbon dioxide are regulated in mammals. His son writes in an overview, "his research was based on his beliefs in the unity of organisms as self-sustaining systems." See J. B. S. Haldane, "The Scientific Work of J. S. Haldane (1860–1936)," *Nature* 187, 102–05 (1960): 103. https://doi.org/10.1038/187102a0.

3 Vitalism has many forms in recent centuries, but in general it tends to offer explanations of life as inwardly emergent by way of intrinsic metaphysical energies or élan vital, on which Bergson, a major influence on Nishida, also writes. Its explicit fiction of animated matter as something mysterious or irreducible to processes tested within the empirical sciences has been progressively overturned. Nishida takes Bergson's idea of creative evolution to support his own situating of life as emerging and reproduced within a self-limited absolute present, thus responding to Bergson by seeing change as based on contingencies specific to the demands of a given situation.

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4 Mechanistic narratives of life may be broadly understood as having merged with first-wave cybernetics, which focuses on closed systems with inputs and outputs, later entailing ongoing dialogue and more nuanced modeling, blurring organic living systems and computer processing, localized interfacing and networking. Nishida, building on Haldane's approach to living systems that anticipates cybernetics, suggests an ontological emplacement of life as worlding systems as well as living ones.

5 J. S. Haldane, *The Philosophical Basis of Biology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 31. Nishida himself affirms that "Haldane is not a Mechanist; however, neither is he a Vitalist who would accept life forces as separate from the environment. Quite the opposite is true" (NKz11: 292).

6 Yoshiaki Ikeda 池田喜昭, 『西田幾多郎の実在論』 [*Nishida Kitaro's Realism*] (Tōkyo: Akashi Shoten, 2018), 36.

7 Biosemiotics is a diverse field now, but it adheres mostly to a Peircean approach to understanding language in a sign, object, interpretant triangulation, which for the purposes of this essay seems overly human-biased in its situating of life forms' varied possibilities for producing meaning.

8 Development of such interspecies meshes in ecological criticism perhaps is best known in Timothy Morton, "Coexistence and Coexistents: Ecology with a World," in Axel Goodbody, and Kate Rigby, *Ecocritical Theory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), where he evocatively writes: "Life forms are connected in a mesh without a center or an edge" (169). For a more detailed and recent exploration of issues in biological systems in relation to attempts to map them in terms of cybernetics, see Simona Ginsburg, and Eva Jablonka, *The Evolution of the Sensitive Soul: Learning and the Origins of Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019), especially sections on animals and minimal consciousness.

9 Timo Maran, *Ecosemiotics: The Study of Signs in Changing Ecologies* (Elements in Environmental Humanities) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 37, doi: 10.1017/9781108942850.

10 He briefly mentions, for instance, German physiologist Johannes Müller (1801–1858), the French naturalist Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), and the German psychologist and anthropologist Theodor Waitz (1821–1864), who is known for a multivolume study *Die Anthropologie der Naturvölker* (The Anthropology of Indigenous Peoples).

11 N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), 45.

12 Dean A. Brink, *Philosophy of Science and the Kyoto School: An Introduction to Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime and Tosaka Jun* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), especially chapter 2.

13 See many examples of this incommensurability of species-orientations and actions in parasites such as ticks, which respond only to certain mammalian expressions (butyric acid) and require hair and follicles to sustain themselves, in Jakob von Uexkull, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 178.

14 See Adam Loughnane, "Merleau-Ponty and Nishida: 'Interexpression' as Motor-Perceptual Faith," *Philosophy East and West* 67, no. 3 (2017): 710–37.

15 Sune Vork Steffensen and Alwin Fill, "Ecolinguistics: The State of the Art and Future Horizons," *Language Sciences* 41 (2014): 6–25.

16 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 38. One cannot let go unmentioned an influence on Guattari recently rendered in English and of comparative interest: Gilbert Simondon, *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020). See especially Part II, "The Individuation of Living Beings."

17 See the first book in Erwin Schrödinger, *What Is Life?: The Physical Aspect of the Living Cell; with Mind and Matter; & Autobiographical Sketches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

18 Winfried Nöth, "Ecosemiotics and the Semiotics of Nature," *Sign Systems Studies* 29, no. 1 (2001): 71–81.

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19 Tommi Vehkavaara, "Limitations on Applying Peircean Semeiotic: Biosemiotics as Applied Objective Ethics and Esthetics Rather Than Semeiotic," *Journal of Biosemiotics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 269–308.

20 See Marcello Barbieri, "A Short History of Biosemiotics," *Biosemiotics* 2 (2009): 221–45.

21 Jean-Paul Sartre and Hazel E. Barnes, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology* (New York: Washington Square Press Pocket Books, 1992).

22 Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *The Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1903), part VI in the chapter "Biology."

23 See Eran Amichai and Yossi Yovel, "Echolocating Bats Rely on an Innate Speed-of-sound Reference," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (May 2021, 118 (19) e2024352118), DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2024352118.

24 Recent research on mice demonstrates the orthogonal structuring of consciousness in animals as in effect constantly swapping in and out memories and sense perception, so as to create a living matrix of live and recorded data utilized as the given species is equipped. See A. Libby and T. J. Buschman, "Rotational Dynamics Reduce Interference between Sensory and Memory Representations," *Nature Neuroscience* 24 (2021): 715–26. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41593-021-00821-9

25 Hermann Minkowski (1864–1909) developed a proto-special relativist spacetime model using world-lines in one rendering. One of its drawbacks, in light of Einstein's relativity theories, was that it fixed time as a moving focal point along a line, thus rendering the worlding along a line of events onto which Nishida maps worlding living organisms, in my reading not limited to humans. Whether it may be rendered as spacetime in relative or four-dimensional (3D+time) Minkowski space is not as important as that it depicts an abstract moving point that represents a living organism over time. We might recast this image from one world-line to a multi-vectored, spontaneous networking of organisms interacting over time and not necessarily even being aware of or directly contacting each other. The interdependencies are themselves diffuse by nature. The scales of attention themselves might be examined through species-defined criteria.

26 Kriti Sharma, *Interdependence: Biology and Beyond* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

27 See Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2* (London New York: Continuum, 2009).

28 Yair Neuman, "Why Do We Need Signs in Biology?" in Claus Emmeche, and Kalevi Kull, *Towards A Semiotic Biology: Life Is the Action of Signs* (London: Imperial College Press, Distributed by World Scientific Pub. Co, 2011), 195–209.

29 Sune Vork Steffensen, "Beyond Mind: An Extended Ecology of Languaging," in Stephen J. Cowley, *Distributed Language* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2011), 185–210.

30 As is often the case when dealing with totalities or wholes in Nishida, these may be understood as transfinite in Cantor's sense of limited samplings of many possible infinities replacing absolute infinity in set theory. See also NKz11: 251–5.

31 See Nishida's discussion of de Biran in "Acts of Consciousness as Self-determinations of *Basho* [場所の自己限定としての意識作用]," where he cites de Biran (contra Cartesian dualism) as writing, "I act, I want, or I think in myself the action" (NKz6:114, French in original). For a sample of Nishida's early writings on de Biram, see Brink (2021: 32–4).

32 See also references that refer readers to his "Space" chapter (reprinted in the same volume of the collected works and originally appearing in collected form in the immediately preceding volume of his *Collected Philosophical Treatises*, volume 6, NKz11: 193–236), which mentions Buddhistic space in relation to absolute nothingness (NKz11: 323).

33 German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1986) is known for enabling modern historiographical methods that eschew abstract and categorical reduction of eras to dominate concepts, and integrated a broad swath of cultural products into his pool of primary sources.

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[34] For instance, leading biosemiologist Timo Maran argues that animals' thinking processes are based on abstract functions such as generalization when choosing a habitat, writing, "Habitat preference is semiosic as it includes generalization, and generalizations cannot be made on the level of particulars but need semiotic mediation" (Maran 2020: 5). However, such modeling does not allow for alternative "logics" within species and their scopes for growth and decision-making, forming their own media of expression, which may elude human observation and inference. Generalization itself might blind one to the local species' cultures and interdependencies that may even shift decisions to forces beyond their kens of awareness. Thus extrapolating from species most similar to humans in scales and behaviors (such as mammals and birds) may lead biosemiotics itself away from a more rigorous interrogation of its history and assumptions. Nishida may contribute, by offering contrasting assumptions concerning the place of the human, a more Posthuman biosemiotic or bioinformational understanding.

[35] See John C. Maraldo, *Japanese Philosophy in the Making* (Nagoya, Japan: Chisokudō Publications, 2019), 451. Maraldo's position corresponds with Fujita Masakatsu, who argued that for Nishida "things are expressive" and "stimulate and provoke us to act." See Fujita Masakatsu, "The Development of Nishida Kitarō's Philosophy: Pure Experience, Place, Action-Intuition," in ed. Bret W. Davis, *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Philosophy*, trans. Bret W. Davis, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 409. Also look for Maraldo's recent exploration of world self-awareness in Nishida's work, in "Resonating through Nishida's Self-Aware World," presented at the 5th Annual Conference of the European Network of Japanese Philosophy, August 29–September 1, 2019, Nanzan University, Nagoya.

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