



The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel: Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe Remake the Philosophy of Spirit

By Peter Suares

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The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel: Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe Remake the Philosophy of Spirit is Peter Suares' in-depth analysis of the Kyoto School's integration of Western philosophical idealism with Japanese religious traditions. Suares traces the School's attempts to develop a doctrine of absolute nothingness using Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness. Hegel's dialectic plays a formative role in the work of the three principal figures of the School—Nishida Kitaro, Nishitani Keiji, and Tanabe Hajime—yet many of its aspects are difficult to integrate with their neo-Buddhist outlook. Suares shows how this difficulty manifests itself in the ambivalence of the three philosophers toward Hegel: they are not only his adherents, but also his outspoken critics. Their criticism itself is no less problematic. The ostensibly Hegelian ideas denounced by Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe are often difficult to identify in his philosophy. On the other hand, many of their own theses, which they advance in express opposition to Hegel, are in fact quite compatible with his teachings. Given the pivotal importance of Hegel to the Kyoto School, Suares demonstrates how these misreadings signal a problem with the coherence of the School's broader worldview. *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel* suggests how this problem could have been mitigated, making the School's philosophy of nothingness more effective than it is today.

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Editorial Review

Review

The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel is precisely what scholarship should be: clearly written, critical, well documented, and erudite. Peter Suares possesses the rare attribute of being firmly grounded in both Japanese and European traditions. This book is a *tour de force* study for both Hegel and Kyoto School scholarship. (Brian Schroeder, Rochester Institute of Technology)

Peter Suares' *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel* is a detailed study that highlights the confusing relationship between Hegel and the Kyoto School philosophers. It challenges one to rethink the spell and presence Hegel exerted over his critics. Scholars and students of Kyoto School philosophy interested in its connections with Western philosophy would want to read this important work of scholarship, and so would those interested in Hegel's impact beyond European thought. (John W. M. Krummel, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Hobart and William Smith Colleges)

Suares's first book-length publication on philosophy fills a conspicuous lacuna of scholarship on the complex relationship between Hegel and the philosophers of the Kyoto School.... Overall, Suares's study is well-documented with an extensive bibliography divided into sections according to subjects for convenient reference. Textual references to Hegel and the Kyoto scholars make use of both translations and the sources in their original languages, providing guidance for readers at various levels of expertise.... *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel* is a model work of comparative scholarship and makes a highly valuable contribution to the field. All in all, this work boldly charts exciting frontiers in world philosophy, demonstrating the potential fruit that may come from thorough and intelligent cross-cultural comparative studies. (*Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*)

About the Author

Peter Suares pursued doctoral studies at the University of California at Berkeley, specializing in cultural anthropology of Japan, Japanese literature, psychology, and sociology, and at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, where he studied Japanese religious philosophy. He is active as a freelance writer in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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