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# PHILOSOPHY CENTERED ON NOTHINGNESS: THE KYOTO SCHOOL, HEIDEGGER, AND OTHER NIHILISTIC PHILOSOPHIES

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, the existing link between Heidegger's philosophy and the main representatives of Kyoto's school will be demonstrated. For it, a brief synthesis of Nishida and Tanabe's philosophy will be presented; in their conceptions about Nothingness, whether as something absolute or dynamic that allows the movement of everything else, a first matrix can be observed of what for Heidegger represents nothingness: the source of all philosophical approaches; a something which, upon being, ceases to be or loses its being. The article ends with the reference to three consequences of this contemporary nihilistic approach: the one which sustains the need for a return to faith in order to avoid the abyss of nothingness, proposed in Unamuno; the one which implies a denial of all hope and the openness to the no-sense, implicit in Bataille, Cioran, Camus, and Caraco; just as the one which bases a hope of reconstruction on Nihilism, according to Vattimo.

## Introduction

The problem of Nothingness has been a persistent topic, generating interest from many distinct perspectives. Since Heraclitus, philosophers have attempted to understand it. Since Sophocles, intellectuals have attempted to describe it. Since the atomists, mathematicians have attempted to decipher it, as the Mayans did with the number zero and its personification. Theologians like Saint Augustine denied it in order to vindicate divinity, while others like Meister Eckhart, unified it with the Deity itself. Astronomers have attempted to locate Nothingness beyond the world, and since the Stoics it has been understood as beyond the universe. Scientists filled with ether that which could be Nothingness, until arriving at quantum physics which conceives it in dialectic with Being.

Hence, Nothingness has not only been in distinct disciplines of knowledge but is implied in, and related with, the most fundamental questions that man may ask himself. Issues such as life and death; existence and non-existence of values; knowledge and its limits; being and not-being; change and eternity, Nothingness is always present. How is it, then, that something which is always present can be excluded from our perception? How can Nothingness, that allows all that which is, not be?

In the last century, there have been two major approaches to the study of Nothingness. In Asia, the Kyoto School, centered on the writings of Kitaro Nishida and on Hajime Tanabe, fully maintain the importance of the study of nothingness for the comprehension of being; with similar intentions, the Western philosopher Martín Heidegger provides a clear meditation on the philosophical significance of nothingness. In this paper I will present the central postulates of both positions and develop the implicit links between them.

## 1. Nothingness in the Orient: the Kyoto School

There is no possibility of a phenomenology of Nothingness since it does not show itself directly. Raimon Panikkar, in the prologue to *Los filósofos de la nada* [*Philosophers of nothingness*] by James Heisig, mentions that “there is no transcultural phenomenological epoché. We cannot place our deepest convictions between parentheses. We cannot understand outside of our category”.<sup>1</sup> In that sense, Nothingness is that which in order to be conceptualized must enter the categorical spheres of what is. So, upon defining it we make it be, therefore, the Real Nothingness is incognoscible. In the same manner it can be affirmed that:

When human thought scrutinizes reality to the maximum of its strength, it trips over its own limits. But to discover the limit is to become aware that there is an insurmountable “beyond”; impassible to thought but not to conscience, since we become aware that it is a limit. A great part of the Western culture has put the name of God to this limit.<sup>2</sup>

Now, can we say that Nothingness is and, due to it, submit it to the category of what is and what isn't? Certainly we would have to search for another verb for that which is not an object noun, unless we attempted to create ontology of Nothingness. Hence, to speak of Nothingness supposes to make it something and, in that sense, it becomes impossible to speak really of it.

It would seem that Nothingness is a contradiction but, in the end, as Panikkar mentions, “reality does not have to be contradictory or not contradictory unless it is believed that our “diction” about it affects reality in such a way that it exhaustively tells us what it is”.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the problem of Nothingness is often not accepted in Western culture, the roots of which are bound to Aristotelian thought. Greek thought was unable to conceive the status of Nothingness since “the ancient Greeks, who developed logic and geometry which constitute the basis of all modern mathematics, never introduced the symbol of the zero; they profoundly

apprehended the idea”.<sup>4</sup> It is to be understood, from there, the impossibility that Aristotle could have conceived in terms of Nothingness that which he finally called the Unmoved Mover.

### ***Kitaro Nishida and Absolute Nothingness***

Returning to the issue of the East, in Kitaro Nishida we have a representative of the philosophy of Nothingness in its most radical form. Born in Ishikawa, Japan, this philosopher (1870-1945) is considered as one of the most important Oriental philosophers. To a large extent, the transcendence of the school of Kyoto in the panorama of world philosophy is due to his work and philosophical innovation.

Among his main lines of work was the conciliation between the intuitive and hardly reflexive conscience of the East with the West’s logical and rational conscience. His first book, *Indagación del Bien* [*An Inquiry into the Good*], shows a Nishida centered on his own ideas, creative, and brave in the depths of the ordinary in order to find answers about the Absolute.

For Nishida, there was no doubt in affirming that “the most important things are the spiritual ones and that the objective of the spirit consists in digging deeper and deeper into the nooks and crannies of the soul in order to reach the true and authentic self and become one with it”.<sup>5</sup> The self is the conscience and it is this which unifies reality for the individual. So much so, that “to say that our self is consciously active is to say that our self, as an expressive point of the world, forms the world. For the world to express itself in the self, it must be subjectively approved by the self”.<sup>6</sup> This subjectivity is situated in the perception of the counterparts and such an issue is a fact of the conscience from which our conscious world acquires order; in such a way that “we call our self the perspective or reflection of the self in its own self”.<sup>7</sup> But what we conceive as our self is precisely not our self, in such a way that we are not what we are; or, stated differently, we are somewhat different to our perception of ourselves.

The affirmation of the Absolute in self-denial is a key element in Nishida's philosophy; so much so that "our self should be understood as absolute denial and affirmation as a response to the One, as that which is bottomless..."<sup>8</sup> In the grasping of this being bottomless is where the liberty which one has already can be found; not the liberty which is to be found externally, but rather a liberty that is already possessed; which is why, according to Nishida:

Authentic liberty has a place in the point of inflection in which the self, through its self-denial, self-affirms itself as the self-denial of the One. In this point, the self touches the beginning and end of the world. Beginning and end are also the alpha and omega of the own self. This is the point, stated differently, in which our self acquires consciousness of the absolute present.<sup>9</sup>

In Nishida, there is no isolated self but always a wrapped self. That which wraps the self is the Absolute Nothingness; which is why the self doesn't ascend to transcendence like he who climbs a mountain, but rather like he who descends to the depths. This is a self which needs to deny itself in order to affirm itself, since "it is not about a self that affirms and thrusts itself outwards, but instead denies and submerges itself to discover a larger self in its depth; it transcends inwards more than upwards or outwards".<sup>10</sup>

In such a way that in denying oneself and leaving oneself, reality is presented such as it is, for one is then (and only then) situated in the place of Nothingness. This place is the eternal present that Nishida also usually binds to divinity; though this does not suppose a theocentrism, an egocentrism, or a cosmocentrism, but rather emptiness from all centers.

Heisig suggests, "Nishida recognized that the step towards ontology of Nothingness was defying a fundamental presupposition in philosophy until then".<sup>11</sup> He believed that the fundamental aspect of Western philosophy is to have taken the Being as the fundament of reality; however, the counterpart is to consider Nothingness as such fundament.

We can understand the Being as something absolute but situated in something more absolute which even precedes it: Absolute Nothingness. The desire of Nishida is bound to the need of the self of *denying the self* and be able to open up to a greater reality that possesses it, from which Nothingness could even be a hermeneutic possibility. It is about denying the self as a subject that perceives reality and continuing on to the self which, denying itself, perceives a greater reality. That is why “this self should be made Nothingness or annulled to open up to a truer dimension”.<sup>12</sup> It is about, even more, a denial of the self which is not only rational but “a denial constructed on the disciplined effort of dispensing the prejudice of seeing oneself as a subject placed in a world of objects”.<sup>13</sup> Naturally, this supposes a transition from the term *nothing*, going from the simple denial to the metaphysical affirmation of an Absolute distinct from the Being: *Nothingness*.

Now, in regard to the adjective *Absolute* as referred to Nothingness, Nishida tells us that it:

Does not come to be nor cease to be and, in this sense, is distinguished from the world of the Being. It is called an Absolute Nothingness – or nothing of the absolute – because it cannot be contained by any phenomenon, individual, event, or relation in the world. If it is absolute, it is precisely because it is not defined by anything in the world of the being which would oppose it. It is absolved from all opposition which would make it relative, so its only opposition to the world of the being is that of an absolute in regard to the relative.<sup>14</sup>

Nishida’s proposal has resulted so radical and contrary to the common metaphysical structures of the West, that even more than half a century after his death he has not received the necessary grasping nor, in many cases, even the required attention. That proves, in part, the impossibility of breaking with the blinding categorical structures where there is only that.

## ***Hajime Tanabe and Nothingness as Dynamo***

Tanabe (1885-1962) received the invitation from Kitaro Nishida to be included in the academic activities of the University of Kyoto, though later on they had discrepancies among them. I concur with Hajime when he affirms that:

The discipline which has to do with nothing is Philosophy. Religion encounters nothing and defeats it in faith, the art in sentiment; but only Philosophy is occupied in knowing nothing from an academic point of view. Since Aristotle, metaphysics has been defined as the study of existence as such, of the being *per se*. But if the being is something that can only be concretely known through the mediation of nothing, it would be more appropriate for us to define philosophy in terms of nothing, despite how paradoxical this may seem at first.<sup>15</sup>

The latter is sufficient to affirm the conception of Nothingness in Tanabe as a dynamo which allows the interrelation of all things, an “*élan vital*”<sup>16</sup> which supposes the dialectic necessary to comprehend things based on their own difference with the observer. This perception of Nothingness which Tanabe supposes does not subtract power from human will but rather does the contrary. Antagonical to Nishida, he does not assume in Nothingness the beginning of the order of reality, but rather only the prelude which allows the connection between things, in spite of their difference and due to their coincidence in Nothingness which permeates them.

## **2. Martin Heidegger: the Being of Nothingness**

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is possibly the most influential German philosopher of the twentieth century. His most important piece is *Ser y tiempo* [*Being and Time*]. Heidegger has been the most pointed

out representative of the contemporary existentialist trend, in spite of his reluctance to include himself in it and adopt the term.

The problem of the meaning of the Being is what worries Heidegger the most. For him, such a concept is the indispensable and essential presupposition of any other one. The essence or substrate of “existing” is precisely the existence in abstract; a way of being which, for Heidegger, is equivalent to “being in a world”. Now the Being, in other words the essence of existing, is timeliness.

In his study about the Being, Heidegger appeals to the phenomenological method considering that the phenomena are the aspects in which Being manifests itself. For Heidegger, the ontology that searches for the true Being is only possible as phenomenology. The aforesaid is clearly described in the following text: “The question which interrogates about the sense of the Being is the one which ought to be posed. With this we find ourselves before the need of elucidating the question which interrogates about the Being under the point of view of the structural elements indicated”.<sup>17</sup>

Further along, Heidegger notes that we, men, tend to the question Being but that we have a preconception that, in some way, is the necessary though insufficient starting point:

We already always move in a certain comprehension of the being. From it does the question arise which expressly interrogates about the sense of the being, and the tendency to forge the corresponding concept. We don't know that “being” means. But then when we ask, “What is being?” we remain in a certain comprehension of the “is”, without being able to fix onto concepts what “is” means. This comprehension of the being, on an intermediate term, is a factum<sup>18</sup>

It is convenient to be aware, however, that this “existing” cannot be separated from the concept or experience of one's own individual being. The essence of “existing” is something profoundly ours or, better expressed, something essential and irrepressibly individual and human.

In parallel, to exist is also to transcend from the ego to the world of the *noumenal*, of everything that is beyond our own selves, this would include Nothingness.

For man, “existing” is always a possibility, something unfinished, for it ends with death; in other words, with “ceasing to be”. So, this “existing” contains anguish, which is no other thing than the perspective of death; this is to say, the connection with the fact of being finite. Such a concept appears essentially bound to time. From it, the title of Heidegger’s main masterpiece is derived.

The starting point of various Heideggerian propositions is in the concept of the *Dasein*, which could be translated as the “being-there”. But Heidegger uses it to designate the manner of existence proper to man; a being which is a nothing but is in time in the manner of a partial nothing. This manner of existence implies that, for man, to exist is not to be, but rather, to be able to be; this is to say, an existential possibility. This necessarily supposes the not-being which has not yet been but which supposes its possibility.

The concept of Heidegger’s *Dasein* turns out to be a conscience of existence itself in terms of possibility. However, in the comprehension of existence it should not be seen as a cognitive act properly said, but rather something more fundamental and original than knowledge; in other words, the grasping of a possibility which lies in the execution of existence.<sup>19</sup>

What the *Dasein* vitally explains is the essential finiteness of man. The human being is found in the world, given to itself as a fact. Its possibilities, since it is born, are exhausted because death is not something exterior for him but – on the contrary – something that belongs to his essence. Hence, when man forgets or ignores this reality that – is unavoidable to him by the fact of existing – he does not live authentically. From this unauthentic environment, however, man can exit through anguish; the anguish before Nothingness, which reveals to us all of which our ordinary existence locks up as artificial, false, and apparent. Anguish, after all, is what “reveals his own essence to man”.<sup>20</sup> In such thesis about anguish is where the influence exerted by Kierkegaard over Heidegger can best

be grasped; though the latter, in difference to Nietzsche, does not end up positing Nihilism as the final consequence of *Awareness* but instead supposes that anguish is something that the Will cannot avoid due to its need of continuing to find answers.

Man finds himself trapped by the problem of his own being and by the experience of his irrepressible loneliness. His anguish flows from the conscience of his timeliness like an anemic state which makes man project and anticipate himself over the future. However, for every being, individually considered, the final future is Nothingness; in other words, what follows after his end. And it is in Nothingness as well, paradoxically, where man finds the possibility of getting to conquer his own identity, getting to be oneself with the death that liberates him from all future.

The previous premises explain the paradoxical conclusion to which Heidegger arrives. Human existence cannot relate itself with the being if it is not holding itself within Nothingness. This transcending is, precisely, metaphysics. This is why metaphysics belongs to man's nature. In his reflections about thinking, he admits:

That which should be object of thought, moves away from man; it is removed from him. But how can we know the most minimal aspect; how can we name that which has always been removed from us? What escapes from us, denies arriving. However it's removing itself is not merely nothing. The removal of itself is an event. What escapes from us can incite and affect us more than everything present, which comes out to meet us and concerns us.<sup>21</sup>

This is why the “sense” or the “future, upon removing itself before us, are a pair of concepts that attract us even more. For Heidegger, metaphysics is not only a special philosophical discipline, but rather a dark “intellective cosmos” into which man's individual and irrepressible existence plunges its roots. This is also Sartre's starting point.

Heidegger and Ernst Jünger together made “the most penetrating contemporary analysis of the problem of Nihilism [...] to the fit of the twentieth century”.<sup>22</sup> Both assume the centrality of the topic of Nothingness in the world, to the point that Jünger mentions that “whoever has not experienced over himself the enormous power of Nothingness and does not know its temptation, knows very little of our era”.<sup>23</sup> For him, the emptiness of values and sense pertaining to the era, does not give way to a defeatist and negative attitude. On the contrary, it considers a heroic Nihilism of the action of such an individual that elevates himself further from it. The experience of the interior is what, for Jünger, constitutes a type of final barricade before planetary Nihilism, no longer only European as Nietzsche considered it. It is advocated for the overcoming of Nihilism from Nihilism itself.

In turn, Heidegger is neither so optimist nor does he assume the possibility of overcoming Nihilism but, instead, warns that Jünger himself must have been absorbed by Nihilism when he considers a static definition of the Being; making him lose with it, its substantiality. Therefore, the Nihilism overcome by man’s will without the knowledge of Nothingness’ being is only the reiteration of Nihilism itself. Even rationalism is, for Heidegger, the expression of subjectivity and anthropocentrism which allows us to catapult ourselves beyond Nihilism. If one truly desires to escape Nihilism, it is necessary to overcome our resistances and to not erect weak blockades, but, instead, to allow the enormous power of Nothingness to be liberated and all the possibilities of Nihilism to be fulfilled. With this, I am completely in agreement and further along I will present it when I refer to post-rationalism.

In turn, José Ferrater Mora, in the introduction to a book by Priscilla Cohn, mentions that “the notorious Heideggerian being can very well result a trip through nothing”.<sup>24</sup> In the same way, Cohn does not have any doubt in assuring that the thought of the German philosopher is properly a philosophy centered on Nothingness, since:

In order to demonstrate the importance of Nothingness it is more fructifying to attempt to comprehend what Heidegger wants to say when he describes the *Dasein* as a being in whose Being its Being fades [...] it can almost be considered that the totality of *El ser y el tiempo* [The being and time] is an intent to explain – and demonstrate – the implications of this description. I affirm, like this, that the Heideggerian notion of the *Dasein* as a being in whose Being its Being fades cannot be deeply comprehended without understanding Nothingness.<sup>25</sup>

In such a case, as much with Heidegger as with Aristotle, we would have to recognize that even centering in on Nothingness they do not call it as such; they sketch it, they show it, they caress it without touching it, perhaps respecting it too much knowing that Nothingness, upon naming it, slightly loses its value for us. Certainly – as has already been said – Nothingness does not suppose that understanding it makes us nihilists in a pejorative sense. On the contrary: recognizing the magnificence of Nothingness is recognizing man's minimization and, in it, precisely its possible grandeur.

Being so, and following Givone, “For Heidegger it is Nothingness which reveals the absolute sense of the Being”,<sup>26</sup> for in it, it is possible to have an experience of the absolute since, “nothing is the nothing not of this or of that being but of the being in its totality”,<sup>27</sup> and due to it, “Nothingness makes possible the evidence of the being as such for the human being”.<sup>28</sup> One should let oneself, therefore, be possessed by Nothingness, not so that things may lose their sense but rather to reconstruct it.

In the end, with Heidegger it is about questioning Being, but from the perspective of Nothingness and not only being. It is clear that Heidegger considers Nothingness as equal in importance to Being. Nothingness in dialectic with the Being. Just as in Heidegger there is no being without Being and no Being without being, I would additionally assert that there is no Being without Nothingness, while Nothingness can be Nothingness even without Being. I do not connect Nothingness with the Being in the

same way as Heidegger, since what he considers on occasion as the Being, is what I consider Nothingness.

In any event, the *Dasein* is not the same as Nothingness but is in relation to it. Man's conscience over its own Nothingness, the understanding of being constituted as a being in whose being its being fades, is the idea that Nothingness allows man's being; it represents its *Dasein*. Man is always a possibility, never a reality. The possibility is always latent; a possibility always sustained by Nothingness, in whose imaginary arms human fragility is extended. Man may or may not become aware of this, but such conscience is independent to its being, or not, this way.

### **3. The Result of Assuming Nothingness in Philosophical Thought**

Three more perspectives considering the significance of Nothingness for philosophy must be discussed. Firstly, Unamuno's proposal, important in the history of philosophy, especially for recognizing, in spite of his Christian creed, the limitations of Christianity and the need of renewing it from a perspective that can manage to overcome nothingness through the absolute. From another perspective, the pessimistic vision derived from Nihilism which, without a sketch of hope, recognizes the no-sense and fallacy of knowledge and of the future world. Bataille's atheological summa, the perception of man as a "conscious nothing" in Cioran, Camus' anarchism, and the recognition of the alienating chaos promoted by Caraco, are clear examples of it. In another corner, though with a similar beginning, centered on the primal hopelessness, an apology of Nihilism can be found in Vattimo which recognizes in nothingness itself, that which is so feared; an alternative for survival in a world whose primordial problem is the denial of emptiness as an experience which, if allowed, could help to sensitize and to construct new bridges of sense.

## *Unamuno and the impossibility of fusion with Nothingness*

Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) was an important figure within the Spanish culture of the first-half of the twentieth century.

Unamuno – coinciding with Kierkegaard – affirms that reason does not provide humanity with the ability to know and inquire about life in its profound essence. Instead, one has to appeal to the imagination and live in such a manner of foreseeing death. Thus to know life, which is temporary, Unamuno makes use of the ‘existential’ or ‘personal’ novel as a method. In his piece *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* [*Of the tragic sense of life*], Unamuno briefly presents the sense of philosophizing:

At the starting point, at the true starting point, the practical not the theoretical one, of all philosophy, there is a: for what? The philosopher philosophizes for something more than philosophizing [...] and since the philosopher is man before philosopher, he needs to live in order to philosophize; and, in fact, he philosophizes to live. And he usually philosophizes either to resign himself to life or to find some purpose in it, or for enjoyment and forgetting sorrows, or for sport and game.<sup>29</sup>

Further along, Unamuno critiques Descartes (and Sartre) over the issue of thinking as a condition of existing<sup>30</sup> and establishes that before accepting the Cartesian ideas about the necessity of thinking to be able to exist, he would assume that *sum ergo cogito*; this is to say, that we exist and later think. Two of the fundamental questionings of his philosophy are: “Would a pure thought actually be possible, without self-consciousness, without personality? Does pure knowledge actually take place without feeling, without this type of materialness that the feeling lends to it?”<sup>31</sup> My position is that because of the fact that thought has self-consciousness or personality, it is not pure, precisely because of the implication of such sentiments.

Since Unamuno centers in on the material man of flesh and bone, he affirms that the greatest conscience possible is that of existence and, thus, one of the main desires will be to maintain it always; in other words, to become immortal. If the problem of personal immortality is man's basic problem since "we cannot conceive ourselves as not existing",<sup>32</sup> and if the uncertainty with regard to an ultra-earthly existence is derived from it, then this uncertainty – in contrast with the intimate need for survival that man experiences – explains its agony as a state of the spirit which, in spite of everything, he has to "use". In this "the tragic sentiment of existence" certainly consists.

Before the "ineffectiveness of Christianity"<sup>33</sup> which usually provides simple, magical, and accessible answers before the problem of "the beyond", man no longer has support between his desire of immortality and knowing that his time for existence is finite; and that, therefore, since in existence he is, he will cease to be. In the same way as "Christianity kills Western civilization, at the same time as this one to the other and that's how they live, killing each other"<sup>34</sup>; in man, the desire of immortality kills him at the same time as death is that which breaks that desire. Living is tragic since it implies dying. This is what we can specifically relate to Nothingness, for the human desire to live always is, precisely, the tragic aspect of man's life; a life which represents – furthermore – his impossibility of penetrating Nothingness and the paradoxical possibility of his plenitude as a function of Nothingness itself.

The Spanish philosopher strives to raise the debate over the physical man prior to the metaphysical one, the limited man prior to the super-man, the man that exists prior to thinking, and who thinks about his existence prior to the thought which engenders existence. Unamuno is the philosopher of the flesh and bone that takes existence, and its demands, to the starting point of all knowledge, or subsequent reflection.

## ***Bataille, Cioran, Camus, and Caraco***

The French Georges Bataille (1897-1962) constitutes one of the main representations of twentieth-century French Nihilism. In his work, the conscience that Nihilism inevitably accompanies us in each humanly constructed circumstance is observed. In his three main texts *L'expérience intérieure*, *Le coupable*, and *Sur Nietzsche*; which united are known as *Summa atheologica*; he clearly demonstrates the inevitable dailiness of Nothingness in human life.

Regarding Emile Cioran (1911-1995), we find ourselves with a thinker who fearlessly delves into the nausea of Nothingness. Someone who, such as Volpi says: “poisons all the ideals, hopes, and metaphysical rages of philosophy; this is to say, all attempts of anchoring existence into a single sense that calms it before the abyss of the absurdity, which threatens it at every moment”.<sup>35</sup>

Man for Cioran is “he who is not”; a conscious nothing in the world. The proximity of Cioran to the topic is centered on the inoperability of existence, which is tinged with literary images and effects. Today there is a flourishing of Cioran’s thought in Latin America, which is evidence of the translation of the majority of his works into Spanish.

Albert Camus (1913-1960) who has full conscience of his anarchist position underlying his own existentialist and nihilist reflection. More than the issue of Nothingness itself, Camus treats the issue of the absurdity of life, which has to do with the human incomprehension of the Nothingness that surrounds us as humans. In *El mito de Sísifo* [*The myth of Sisyphus*] he assumes that life is to be lived without explanations or reasons, once the gods have been silenced or died. Our rebellion would be, in any case, living in the face of this absurdity.

In turn, Albert Caraco (1919-1971) affirms that Being is nothing other thing than chaos and indifference, and that “the future will tell that the only clairvoyants were the anarchists and nihilists”.<sup>36</sup> In his work *Bréviaire du Chaos* [*Handbook of Chaos*] we find not only a defense of Nothingness but a resignation before its supremacy. Many texts of this

philosopher (who in the end, put a blade to his throat and terminated his life) remain as yet unpublished. In a way, this demonstrates that Nihilism is not necessarily always a beginning of constructions.

*Gianni Vattimo and the apology of Nihilism*

Some philosophers recognize in Nihilism something more than the manifestation of the contemporary era's evils. Such is the case of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo (1936), who considers present-day man's lack of conscience as the cause of the uneasiness in the face of Nothingness in daily life. The world is not sufficiently nihilist. Nihilism is not the problem, the problem is rather man's lack of adaptation to this situation. In his main writings like *La muerte del sujeto* [The death of the subject], *La Posmodernidad* [Post-Modernity], or *El pensamiento débil* [weak thought], he makes his nihilistic vocation noted and recognizes that metaphysics has ankylosed Western thought upon searching for categories that explain the Being, and forgotten that which can be beyond this scheme.

Gianni Vattimo invites, summing up, to recognize present times and to assume the inexistence of unity in the perception of the real, the fragmentation of linguistic explanations, and the impossibility of absolute knowledge in certainty. We should not have nostalgia for the lost absolutism, nor should we feel resignation – which characterizes the existentialist thinkers – but, rather, we should embrace this new perspective, recognizing it as part of the progress of human understanding; an understanding that supposes the recognition of its own limits. It is precisely in the recognition of the inexplicable coming forth of new perceptions of reality, that the absolute principles are demolished.

## Conclusion

Although the Dasein that Heidegger proposes is not the same as nothingness, its reason for existence and the platform which sustains it can be found in nothingness. Without nothingness there is no Dasein and without it there would not be any Heideggerian philosophy. Human existence, therefore, cannot sustain itself if it is not through Nothingness. In a similar approach, when Tanabe attributes the characteristic of dynamo to nothingness. Though Tanabe did not conclude, together with Nishida, the absoluteness of nothingness, he does recognize its generalized presence in order for all other things to be able to be. This also corresponds with Vattimo, who in a way performs a very interesting fusion of the Japanese vision with Heidegger's, and shows us there is an urgent need to return attention to what nothingness means and what contemporary philosopher has neglected.

It could be that through finding a new inspiration to live in nothingness, upon utilizing it as a platform to create new meanings for existence, the contemporary individual may choose to maintain his or her faith, in Unamuno's style, or definitely discard it as Camus or Cioran promoted; nevertheless, regardless of the final destiny of the philosophical reflections about nothingness, the feasibility of propitiating from it through a sensible and thinking election, which is the finality of all committed philosophy.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Heisig, *Los filósofos de la nada*, p.10.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.
- <sup>4</sup> Barrow, *El libro de la nada*, p.25.
- <sup>5</sup> Heisig, *op. cit.*, p.67.
- <sup>6</sup> Nishida, *Pensar desde la Nada*, p.28.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.
- <sup>11</sup> Heisig, *op. cit.*, p.93.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.94.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *El ser y el tiempo*, p.7.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.18-23.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* pp.428-434.
- <sup>21</sup> Heidegger, ? Qué significa pensar?, p.20.
- <sup>22</sup> Volpi, *El Nihilismo*, p.107.
- <sup>23</sup> Jünger & Heidegger, *Oltre la linea*, p.104.
- <sup>24</sup> Cohn, *Heidegger: su filosofía a través de la nada*, p.6.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.
- <sup>26</sup> Givone, *Historia de la nada*, p.255.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.258.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.262.
- <sup>29</sup> Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, p.18.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.
- <sup>33</sup> *Vid.* Unamuno, *La agonía del cristianismo*, 1983.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.237.
- <sup>35</sup> Volpi, *El Nihilismo*, p.124.
- <sup>36</sup> Caraco, *Brévaire du Chaos*, p.103.

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