Matsui Nobuyuki. 2022. Chapter 3: What is the Globality of the "Common Sense"? Somatesthesia in the Age of Chaotic Capitalism. In Matsui Nobuyuki (ed.), *Globally Shared Common Sense from the Philosophy of Imagination: Bridging Eastern and Western Perspectives*. Osaka: Asia-Japan Research Institute, Ritsumeikan University. ISBN 978-4-910550-00-8

Chapter 3
What is the Globality of the "Common Sense"? Somatesthesia in the Age of Chaotic Capitalism

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Introduction

We live in the age of "common sense" in the way that digital devices live our lives based on "common sense" instead of ourselves. This paper attempts to understand successive relationships between Nishida Kitarō's philosophy of the "place of nothingness" and Nakamura Yūjirō's philosophy of "common sense" in terms of digitalization through the concept of the predicate. In doing so, I would like to show what fundamental "common sense" is for human physical life and the significance of thinking of physical "common sense" to holistically capture our way of life in contemporary capitalism based on digitalization. In the first part of my paper, I examine how Nakamura's philosophy of "common sense" reformulated Nishida's philosophy of the "place of nothingness." In the second part, I introduce the philosophy of digitalization in terms of Nishida's philosophy and try to connect this argument with Nakamura's argument. Through these discussions, I will make a concluding remark about an implication of the philosophy of "common sense" for contemporary capitalism that has an invisible but destructive effect on human lives based on "common sense."

1. Nishida Kitarō and Nakamura Yūjirō

Figure 1. Nakamura Yūjirō
Source: https://www.asahi.com/articles/DA3S13171093.html

If I try to sum up what Nakamura's philosophy is, it is that the human being and its conscious acts, as only a partial effect of the "general system" of the cosmos, has the ability to embody operations of the "general system" inside his or her body. Extended from Nishida Kitarō's philosophy, he reformulated the "place of nothingness" as a consciousness in Nishida's argument into "common sense." It means that Nakamura embodies the core of Nishida's philosophy. In my study, I aim to reveal the exact meaning of this transformation, I mean, the significance of embodying the "place of nothingness" in terms of "common sense."

The "general system" here means what Nishida said in his philosophy of self-awareness based on Hegel. That is, "[j]udgments mean that the universal [*das Allgemeine*] differentiates and develops itself as Hegel said […]" (Nishida 1950: 48). Nishida reformulates Hegelian dialectics between the particular and the general into the scheme that *the universal* limits itself in the form of the particular,

which is conceptualized as the "self-limitation of *the universal*." Moreover, in Nishida's philosophy, this process of the "self-limitation of *the universal*" is the never-ending process against Hegel's idea.

As for the "place of nothingness," this view was developed from the above view. In other words, the "self-limitation of *the universal*" evolves in the way that the generality of predicates limits the substance (subject) that is the consciousness as the "place." As Nishida says, "[i]n general, the 'I' is thought as the subjective integration (…), and yet, 'I' ought to be the predicative integration. It's not a dot, but a circle. It's not a thing, but a place." (Nishida 1960: 496).

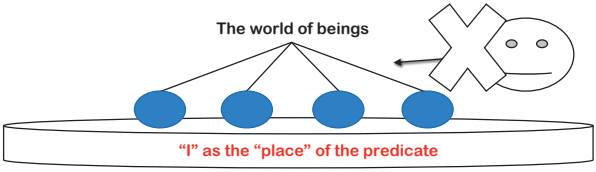

Figure 2. The Image of the Predicative Integration
(Made by the author based on Nishida's argument in "Basho")

In western metaphysics, it has been thought that logic can capture the order of being in propositions such as A is B. Here, this logic has its priority to ground what the subject (substance) actually is. On the contrary, Nishida's philosophy tried to overturn the Aristotelian formal logics that is based on "what becomes a subject, not a predicate." In his philosophy of the "place of nothingness," the subject is recaptured from the predicative logic which means that the subject cannot be grounded because the consciousness as the basis of logical acts is the "place" constituted by only predicates. He called this the "**predicative transcendence**" compared with "transcendental subject" in Kant's philosophy (Nishida 1960: 327).

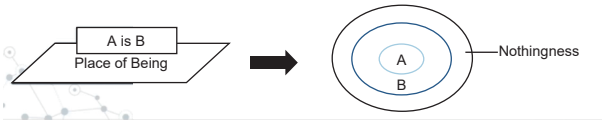

Figure 3. The Order of Being (left) and the Circular Structure of the "Place of Nothingness" (right) (Made by author)

The reason for the nothingness of the "place of nothingness" can be put in the following way: When we judge that "A is B," this A needs to be placed in an exact place. Thus, we can stipulate the qualities or meanings (predicates) in this "place of being." However, the placeness of this "place" is "nothing" in itself. Therefore, the "place of nothingness" is composed only of predicates and "mirrors" them on itself, and in this sense, the subject ("I" or this "conscious" being is typical here) is signified by predicates, if I use a Saussurian term, and is the "place of nothingness" in itself. If we see this logic of the "predicative transcendence" from the viewpoint of the "transcendental subject," the philosophical issue of the "proper name" and the "definite description" are spawned. Socrates is human, a philosopher in ancient Greece, thin (actually fat), an animal and so on. While we can increase general predicates to define Socrates, we cannot reach to the ultimate definition of Socrates himself.

Now, how did Nakamura critically reformulate Nishida's philosophy? Among works in English, we can find John Krummel's finely concise introduction to Nakamura's philosophy. He sums up Nakamura's philosophy over the view of Nishida's philosophy and "common sense" in the following way: Firstly, "common sense" is "the horizon of self-evidence that shapes a certain layer of thought and behavior within a given time, society, culture, etc.," but secondly, it is a sense that would be strongly affected by the destabilization of a social order and its self-evidence caused by social transformations,

hence "common sense" is potentially *exposed to the "extraordinary"* (Krummel 2015: 78–79; Nakamura 1979=2000: 280–282; italic added).

In this sense, focusing on "common sense" is suggested as the appropriate argument for the postmodern era in which social integration was dismantled. Consequently, human beings need to rethink their own framework of existence in order to understand and experience our collective social life in terms of a "common sense" (Nakamura 1979=2000: 280). What is more, this "common sense" is mediated by various communicational devices and the context constituted by them, because "common sense" is not only concerned with living in socially common contexts, but also living with each concrete body. In a word, Nakamura shows us the view that our bodily lives and social imaginations are surrounded by collective frameworks and technological conditions. In other words, his philosophy based on a "common sense" captures human communality under the dyadic view between physical and sensual levels, and the shared significances behind our social lives.

"Common sense" in Nakamura's philosophy means sensible actions that differentiate and integrate each perceptive action, traditionally among five senses. For example, when we look at sugar, while we can respectively discern the white color, sweet taste and sand-like touch, we can comprehensively perceive them as sugar as it is. This ability to discern and connect sensual actions is called "common sense." This definition has been philosophically employed since Aristoteles, and in the early modern period, Descartes gave a specific place in the brain, the pineal organ, to the action of the common sense and defined it as a "seat of imagination." However, through western history, the concept of common sense based on the physical terms became peripheral to the dominant understanding of common sense as contextually healthy and prudent judgments that were opposed to scientific and rational ways.

Among various sensual actions, Nakamura's unique contribution

to the issue of "common sense" is that he hypothesized that "common sense" can be found in the *coenesthesia*. As for the term *coenesthesia*, it is composed of "*coen* (*communis*)" and "*esthesia* (*sensus*). Therefore, coenesthesia literally means "common sense", and it includes the sense of touch, pressure sensation, warm sensation, cold sensation, pain sensation, and *kinesthesia* (Nakamura 1979=2000: 114–115). Moreover, *coenesthesia* includes the sense of skin in the superficial level of our body and the sense of muscles and organs in the deeper level. Thus, *coenesthesia* has both external accesses and internally deep accesses (Nakamura 1979=2000: 118–119).

Depending on the arguments of Husserl, Bergson, and Merleau-Ponty about the human body and its motion, Nakamura argues that *coenesthesia* mediates the touching and the touched and it makes senses of our world. Hence, *coenesthesia* works as a ground for making our "world horizon." In this sense, the "world horizon" is constituted by physically predicative integration (Nakamura 1979=2000: 122–123). According to Nakamura, it should be assumed that the *coenesthesia* always works even when humans recognize objects based on the "visual-centric" perception, because the essence of the *coenesthesia* is the sense that human beings direct to move and touch objects. The visual understanding has to premise these invisible, but constantly-working physical integrations of the world. If someone loses this *coenesthesia* and succumbs to a psychopathology such as depersonalization, he or she loses the sense of physical integration and senses that his or her body falls apart (Nakamura 1979=2000: 114).

From the above discussion, we can say that Nakamura's philosophy of "common sense" embodied the "place of nothingness." However, it does not mean that human body is literally the "place of nothingness." Rather, interactions between the world and the mediated roles of *coenesthesia* are captured as the "place of nothingness." In other words,

both the world and the body are implicated with each other. Through this insight, Nakamura tried to embody the "place of nothingness" as a "place where a fundamental event arises" and a "dynamic and complicated system" that "appears to be nothingness because of its transparency made by its abundancy of possibilities" (Nakamura 1998: 29). From this view, it can be said that "common sense" enables us to live limited lives with an incessant openness to the chaotic complexity and limitations of it, which are backed by the human body and its internal sensual order.

2. Materialization of "Common Sense" through Chaotic Capitalism and Digitalization and Beyond it

In this section, I would like to apply Nakamura's idea of "common sense" in the actual context of the contemporary society. I used the term "chaotic capitalism" in the subtitle of this paper. I chose this term, because I want to highlight the opposite features between "common sense" and contemporary capitalism. On the one hand, as I argued, "common sense" works as the mediating body and ecology and forms the "world horizon" for each of us. There, a huge variety of perceptions is interrelated and mediated, from which our semiotic activities become possible. This process is to give an order to the originally ecological chaos, as I argued in the last part.

On the other hand, we can find that a main feature of contemporary capitalism is that it does not need, or worse, it excludes actions of "common sense" and keeps reproducing chaotic decontextualization day by day, in which people are forced without any option to adapt to the chaos. As Mark Fisher argues in his *Capitalism Realism*, "capitalism realism requires us to subordinate the reality that is infinitely ever-changing in its forms in every moment" (Fisher 2009=2018:136). In this situation, "to forget becomes an adaptive strategy" for everyday

life (Fisher 2009=2018: 142). He also argues that this situation generates a kind of a memory disorder where "creating new memories is impossible" (Fisher 2009=2018: 150). Therefore, the main issue of contemporary capitalism here is concerned with creating memories, rather than retaining past memories.

About the issue of memory, Nakamura argues that "common sense" is deeply tied to the history of the argument over "*topos*" (place). Henri Bergson shows that human beings have two kinds of memories; one is the habitual memory that is attained through physical repetitions, and the other is the "pure memory" or "recalled memory" that is concerned with retaining the past memory in represented forms (Bergson 1896=2012: 227–228). Here, "*topos*" means the "place" where past memories are retained in certain orders so that one can appropriately recall each of them in an exact moment. According to Nakamura, recalling some memories becomes possible through the actions of the imagination that makes a sensual impression sustainable, and consequently, through the imagination, we can make a certain context based on pasts (Nakamura 1979=2000: 244–245). As already pointed out, "common sense" is the "seat of imagination", and hence, inscribing sensual impressions at a certain moment into "*topos*" transforms "common *sense*" into "*common* sense" in the sense of shared understanding among certain members. In other words, retaining and creating a common ground requires incessant inscribing and recollection of sensual impressions through expressions. In this sense, the "*topos*" is the "depository for various meanings (ideas)" (Nakamura 1979=2000: 296) and close to the "place of nothingness" from which the "predicative" activities evolve.

From the view of the "*topos*," we can regard what Fisher said about the demise of conditions to create new memories as the demise of "common sense" or "*topos*." Otherwise put, the problem of "chaotic capitalism" is not merely the demise of a shared culture based on traditions, trusts,

reasons or whatever, but, more importantly, the disorder of roles of physical "common *sense*." This is the problem of the chaotic capitalism that requires us to adapt to the chaos without recollective ability.

However, the above discussion is not enough to figure out the predicament of "common sense" today, because a more serious issue can be found in the fact that the "common sense" as the "place of nothingness" is being replaced by digital technologies. What is meant by this is that this replacement will totally change the way of living in the "predicative" world, as Nishida and Nakamura assumed. I would like to point out this issue subsequently in two processes. The first is that digitalization means that the "predicative" activities for each of us are computed through digital devices that replicate exactly the materialization of the "place of nothingness." The second is that the replacement of the "predicative" activities can mean that living energies can be lost from our lives.

Firstly, physical or affective issues caused by digitalization have been much debated. Roughly speaking, three forms of issues over the digitalized society can be categorized here; (1) its destructive effects on the human brain, which trigger distractions, and its impact on literacy cultures based on written things (Wolf 2000; Hansen 2020), (2) its political results of acute oppositions caused by affective ways of forming political opinions through social media (Ahmed 2004; Stiegler 2004; Gibbs 2008; Haidt 2012; Kahneman 2012; Feinberg et al. 2014; Anderson 2016; Richardson 2017; Till 2021), and (3) transformations of modes of "bio-power" through digitalization (Deleuze 1990=2008; Dean 2002; 2009; Stiegler 2004; Rouvroy et Burns 2013; Ito 2019). Let me skip detailed discussions about each issue here, because of the limited length of this article.

Despite these varieties of arguments over digitalization, what I would like to emphasize here is the connection between digitalization

and "common sense." It means that we can find the issue of the predicate in the sense of Nishida and Nakamura in digitalization. For this, it is quite meaningful to refer to Ishida Hidetaka, who is a Japanese philosopher centered on Michel Foucault, semiology, media theory and so on. He wrote, "Where is the 'Place of Sign': Reading Nishida Kitarō from the Neo-semiotic" in 2020, and he argues in it that Steve Jobs also invented Mac devices after his enlightened experience of the "place of nothingness" through Zen meditation.

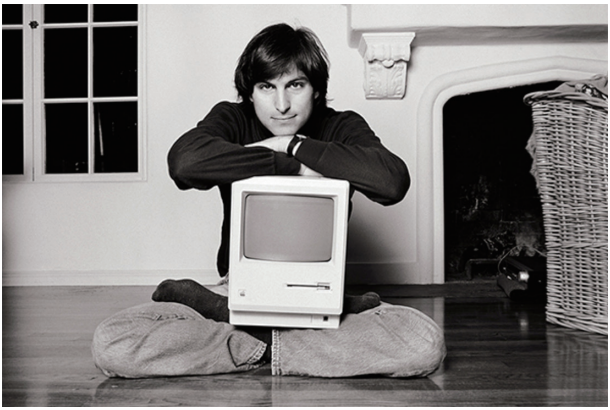

Figure 4. Steve Jobs, "Mac on Lap Classic," 1984
Source: https://www.artsy.net/artwork/norman-seeff-steve-jobs-mac-on-lap-classic (Access: 2020/11/08)

According to Ishida's insight, Figure 4. named "Mac on Lap Classic" symbolizes this connection in the Mac on his meditation posture. In fact, the connection between Macintosh or iPhone and his experience of Zen is pointed out in some studies (Isaacson 2011; Ishida 2020: 204–207; Yanagita 2020). Jobs had been influenced by Hippie culture and Hindu culture since the 1950s, and after that, he started to commit to the Zen practice taught by Otokawa Kōbun in San Francisco.

It is pointed out that his Zen meditation facilitated his creativity, which resulted in the simple design of Apple products (Kumagai 2015: 169). Ishida concluded in his article that:

> More than 60 chips were neatly set out on the motherboard of the Apple I, which were standing by to deploy the "system of the universal" through the universal network to come (…). Besides, (…) the young Jobs "bloomed his intuition", sitting in padmasana (meditation posture), or meditating on the "place of nothingness" in terms of Nishida Kitarō. (Ishida 2020: 208)

Subsequently, in what sense can we find a philosophical relationship between Jobs and Nishida? In his article, Ishida redefines Nishida's philosophy based on the predicates from the semiological perspective based on Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce stipulates human semiological processes as being constituted by processes of index, icon, and symbol (Peirce 1867=1960; Ishida 2020:185–186). Actually, while in Peircean semiology, the order of semiosis is in the order of (1) icon, (2) index, and (3) symbol, Daniel Bougnoux who is one of the media theorists in France recalibrated it into (1) index, (2) icon, and (3) symbol (Bougnoux 2001; Ishida and Azuma 2019: 257–261). Through modeling this semiological process that leads to logical judgments, he aimed to incorporate the logics into the embodied semiology (Ishida 2020:186–187).

Now, according to Ishida, this Peirce's semiological scheme can be correlated with Nishida's philosophy centered on the logic of predicates. As I argued before, the "logic of the predicates" depicts the relationships between the subject and the predicates in that the latter, "*the general*," envelops the former, the particular. From Peirce's semiology, these relationships are equivalent to the infinite semiosis (semiological processes) over a "dynamic object," although Peirce did not assume

the intuition of the "place of nothingness" as Nishida did, because this semiosis is entirely mediated by signs and one cannot intuitively grasp the "place" itself in this semiosis (Ishida 2020: 189). However, according to Ishida, if we focus on the fundamental moment in which an object is indexed, imagined, and symbolized, a work of the "place" on which the object appears in the way of the "*being-in-place*" is uncovered (Ishida 2020: 189–192). This fundamental feature of objects on the "*being-in-place*" is implicitly expressed in Japanese predication, *-de-aru* (~である). Terminologically speaking, *de* (で) has the original meaning of *-ni-oite* (~において),and *aru* (ある) literally means the status of being (*aru*, 有る) (Ishida 2020: 194). Therefore, in Japanese expression, the predicates cannot be regarded as being equivalent with *be* or *is* as the copula, rather it has a close structure to the French expression; il *y* a (*y* depicts the meaning of the place "there"). In this sense, Ishida calls this "*being-in-place*" feature of the predicate the "supplement of copula" (Ishida 2020: 192–194, 197).

In short, the semiosis in the Peircean sense can be reformulated into processes that are evolved *in* the "place" of the predicates, and given that his semiological idea of the human mind that always forms judgments and propositions of objects influenced the contemporary Artificial Intelligence (AI), the cyber space and its materialization into digital devices can be regarded as the materialization of the "place of nothingness." At least, we can interpret Jobs' "intuition" in this way. It means that not only the Macintosh but also contemporary digital devices like iPhone or iPad are material appearances of the "place of nothingness." This view enables us to think about the contemporary digitalization and globalization closely connected with the process in terms of the expansion of the predicative logic as the "place of nothingness."

Nonetheless, the problem here is that this materialization of the

"place of nothingness" did not accomplish the "place of nothingness" in our lives, and rather it is tantamount to the dis-embedding materialization of "common sense" through digitalization. This means that the logic of the "place of nothingness" that is embedded in Japanese language and cultural context, at least as Nishida envisaged it, drives quite the opposite process now. While digital devices form global communicative connections, they compute and provide each user with subtly customized information, service, and products as the predicative signs that constantly describe our personal features as data. In a word, digital devices live our predicative lives instead of us in the chaotic situation of capitalism in the way that they provide us with customized information, as if this information represents the "*being-in-place*." What you know through your digital device appears from the Big Data field and hence it defines the place of *de-aru* ahead of your expression. We can say that this situation is a *supplement of the predicative* by digitalization. Furthermore, under the chaotic capitalism, we are required to adjust to the "ever-changing" situation in every moment, which undermines our basis of memorization, as I argued with Nakamura and Fisher. In this sense, while the chaotic capitalism undermines the human ability of "common *sense*" based on the "*being-in-place*," digital devices substitute the predicative logic. We now live in this alienated dialogue between capitalism and digital devices, which is a novel situation in the history of philosophy, if the dialectic process means the process of self-realization.

3. Conclusion

I would like to wrap up my argument by pointing out a direction that we can explore in the future. In the global expansion of dependence on digital devices, human society has to think of ways to coexist with them.

However, given that digitalization is a material replacement of the "place of nothingness" or "common sense," we need to consider the possible ways of re-embodying them for ourselves. One thing I can point out here is that while "common sense" is based on the *coenesthesia*, the materialization of it dispenses with this and mainly provides us with sensual stimuli to the senses of vision and hearing. Even if these devices can provide users with images of bodily movements, it is meaningless if these images are limited to physical images provided by advertisements like the healthy body, "instagrammability" and disciplined behaviors driven by digitalized scores. According to Nakamura, "common sense" implies a fundamental potentiality of the human body that is porous to the natural world and cultural world. Nakamura says:

> The fact of the distinction between morning and afternoon and the units of days presupposes natural circulations. Moreover, it is not only that these kinds of natural time do not exist outside us humans, but also that we as a part of nature, especially as a living organism, also have intrinsic circulations and rhythms inside the self, that is, the natural time. However, the time lived by us is not limited to this kind of the natural time, but social and cultural time beyond it. *The natural time becomes the social and cultural time with mediations of conscious and unconscious institutions*. (Nakamura 1979=2000: 270; italic added)

Digitalization depicts the movement of this world based on "common sense." However, it occupies and replaces it. For re-living and reformulating "common sense," we also need to think of the nature of "common sense" that provides us with the possibility of newly forming the entire "rhythm" of our natural and cultural lives, which can be assumed more freely, slowly, and energetically driven by the vitalization

of "common sense." If we can elaborate on the study of the globally shared "common sense" today, it will be a philosophically critical investigation of the global capitalization of human predicative life accompanied by digitalization from the perspective of the universally physical level complicated by the natural and socio-cultural becoming of humans.

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Chapter 3: What is the Globality of the "Common Sense"? Somatesthesia in the Age of Chaotic Capitalism

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