

## A Conversation with Nishida: The Destination

“People always rushing, forwards and backwards.” The master grimaced at the crowds scurrying beyond the *dojo* window in the blustery autumn weather. “If the ones running forwards exchanged destination with the ones running backwards, each would be precisely where they would want to be. Then, no rushing.”

“But even if they did so today,” I begin, “there would still be a need for them to end up somewhere else at some time—perhaps tomorrow.”

“Then perhaps it is not the destination in which they are so interested,” muses Nishida, cocking one eyebrow in my direction. By now, I know that look. I take a deep breath, preparing to be wrong, no matter what I say.

“Each destination has a purpose, a reason for someone to travel there.” I explain. “They could be heading to the shop to buy goods for the evening meal. Or to the library to obtain a volume for study. They might be meeting with a friend or a lover, or even a teacher.”

“Would that the purpose be so compelling that its reason could hold them,” responds Nishida. “But reason cannot, so purpose is not.” He turns slightly away, as if to stare out the window once again. His eyes, however, remain fixed on me, as I puzzle this latest conundrum.

“I agree. The purpose of the destination is temporary, serving only until the transient need is fulfilled. There is purpose in the travel itself, for were it not for the travel, the needs would remain unmet, despite the purpose being present at the destination.” There, I thought. That should be a sufficient koan-like response.

“So you say that the purpose of the travel is the purpose of the destination, that one fulfills the other.”

“Yes, *sensei*.”

“Yet a moment ago, we decided that the purpose is not compelling. So no reason to travel, but travel they still do.” The old man appears to be quite satisfied in tying me in mental knots.

“Then there is no purpose to any of it!” I blurt out.

“The first sensible thing you have said all afternoon,” replies Nishida, quite calmly. “These rushing people give far more

of themselves in travelling than they do being present at their destination because the purpose is indeed quite irrelevant. They will be as they become; purposes will always present themselves accordingly. But it is the voyage itself that compels, that produces the energy of transformation. Thus, to understand their voyage is to better understand their *reason* which, of course, is an entirely other matter.”