

# Chapter 25

## Nishida Kitarō as Buddhist Philosopher: Self-Cultivation, a Theory of the Body, and the Religious Worldview



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### 1 Introduction

Studies of NISHIDA Kitarō (西田幾多郎) (1870–1945) in the field of philosophy often treat the Buddhist dimension of his work. There are plenty of literary works as well as abundant scholarly papers on this theme in Japanese that make this Buddhist aspect of Nishida distinctly evident. Outside of Japan, American academic circles, with their 60 years' history of studies on Nishida's philosophy, tend to regard his philosophy as Buddhist philosophy. Some scholars' interpretations seem to place much emphasis on the identity of Nishida's philosophy as Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially Zen 禪, as if to claim that his philosophy is simply what expresses

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Buddhist thought in philosophical language.<sup>1</sup> But Nishida himself took precautions against this sort of viewpoint that regarded his philosophy solely as Zen.

In recent years, however, in North America and Europe, studies of modern Japanese philosophy, in which Nishida may play a central role, have made rapid progress in the direction of seeking novel philosophical possibilities.<sup>2</sup> This promises to advance the scholarly understanding of Nishida's thought without necessarily focusing on its Buddhist aspects. In 2011, corresponding to the 100th anniversary of the publication of his *Inquiry into the Good* (J. *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究), had Nishida been able to be aware of the actual scholarly situation in the West, he would realize the force of his own "philosophy" that is still alive today.

With that said, I will look at Nishida as a Buddhist philosopher. In other words, this paper will examine the relation between his philosophy and his experiences in Buddhist practice, that is, sitting meditation (J. *zazen* 座禅), to which he devoted himself in his youth for 10 years. We may freely associate these experiences, as revealed in his diary and correspondence, with his philosophical thinking, as supported by his use of Sino-Japanese terms and his development of a logic that is suggestively East Asian, in many cases Buddhist, in perspective. He never revealed, within his philosophical texts, the sources of his thinking. Scholars have thus not ceased to inquire after the "Buddhist philosophy" of Nishida, as if it were the invisible logic behind his philosophical thinking.

As INOUE Katsuhito 井上克人 made clear in his latest work, Nishida's monism, or, more appropriately speaking, his logic of "immanent transcendence" (J. *naizai-teki chōetsu* 内在的超越), was the product of his philosophical training founded on the logic of "being in itself and activity" (J. *taiyū* 体用),<sup>3</sup> namely, that of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (S. *Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda Śāstra*, J. *Daijōkishinron* 大乘起信論). According to Inoue, the generation prior to Nishida, INOUE Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944), INOUE Enryō 井上円 (1859–1919), KIYOZAWA Manshi 清澤満之 (1863–1903), and MIYAKE Setsurei 三宅雪嶺 (1860–1945) advanced the "theory that actuality is immediately reality" (J. *genjitsu soki jitsuzai ron* 現実即實在論), an eclectic standpoint based on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* and reformulated in Western philosophical terms. Nishida was neither the first nor the only philosopher in modern Japan who "consciously systematized the tradition of Japanese thought, assimilating Western philosophy." Inoue Katsuhito also points out our negligence of the history of Japanese philosophy during the Meiji

<sup>1</sup> For instance, see Robert E. Carter's affirmation: "What distinguished him, however, was his passion for rendering Buddhist paradoxical utterance, or the Zen experience of immediacy, understandable in the several 'languages' of Western philosophy" (Carter 1997: xxiii). This perspective would run the risk of averting the fundamental intention of Nishida's philosophical project. It is our understanding that his philosophy is not another version of Buddhism but aims at explaining reality.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Bret W. Davis, Brian Schroeder, and Jason M. Wirth's *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School* (2011). This is a representative publication, which reports the latest interests in Japanese philosophy in the Anglophone world.

<sup>3</sup> Frédéric Girard gives one explanation of this term when he suggests that "être en soi et activité; la chose en elle-même et le déploiement de ses fonctions" (Girard 2008: 1516).

period and the tendency to lump all Japanese thought together under the category of Zen (Inoue 2011: 152, 159). We need to take note of this remark and hope that it will encourage further development of the comparative studies of Japanese philosophy relative not only to Zen but also to East Asian thought in general.

Nevertheless, as a preliminary examination for the purpose of this paper, I will restrict myself to the task of taking up Zen in relation to Nishida. However, the principal course of our reflection will focus on the “theory of the body” that Nishida earnestly formulated after the 1930s for the purpose of relating his experiences of self-cultivation, in particular sitting meditation, to his philosophical thinking. Nishida’s theory of the body explains the human body through his original concepts and expressions such as “active intuition” (J. *kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直観), “historical body” (J. *rekishitekishintai* 歴史的身体), and “from the made to the making” (J. *tsukurarte mono kara tsukuru mono e* 作られたものから作るものへ). Here, the body is conceived of as a medium for the historical world as well as for the human being existing therein. The concepts of his later philosophy are characterized, on one hand, by this somatic vision, and, on the other hand, by the “absolutely contradictory self-identity” (J. *zettaimujunteki jikodōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一), “inverse correlation” (J. *gyakutaiō* 逆対応) and “depth in the ordinary” (J. *heijōtei* 平常底), of which the latter two are crucial concepts of his final stage, that is, his philosophy of religion. My purpose will be to clarify any link between his theory of the body and other key concepts relative to his philosophy of religion. This question generally seems to have been put aside: how did Nishida as a Buddhist philosopher assimilate self-cultivation from his own life into his theory of the body and, furthermore, his philosophy of religion?

## 2 Just Sitting as Self-Cultivation: Approaching the Life of Philosophizing

Is the philosopher’s own life reflected in his philosophy? Some aspects may be but others may not. As biographies of Nishida show, his younger years did not consist of the life of a blessed elite student. He was born heir to a village chief in Ishikawa, but ruin and bankruptcy of the Nishida family, as well as a feud with his father and the collapse of his parents’ relationship, brought him bad luck. As a high school student, Nishida reveled in intellectual exchanges and friendship with classmates like MATSUMOTO Bunzaburō 松本文三郎 (1869–1944), SUZUKI Teitarō 鈴木貞太郎 (later Daisetsu 大拙) (1870–1966), and FUJIOKA Sakutarō 藤岡作太郎 (1870–1910). Moreover, he met his lifelong mentor, HŌJŌ Tokiyuki 北条時敬 (1858–1929), mathematician and Zen Buddhist layman, at whose house Nishida boarded and with whom he studied for some time. However, Nishida and kindred spirits, feeling conflict with their high school establishment, withdrew from the school. As a consequence, he could enter the department of philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University (1891) only as a limited status student. Family tragedy continued even after graduation (1894) and marriage (1895), as he faced professional

instability in both his hometown Kanazawa and another provincial city Yamaguchi, while hoping for an opening to his new life as a philosopher.

It is against this background that Nishida began the practice of Zen Buddhism in 1896. From then until his appointment as professor at Gakushūin in 1909 and, in the following year 1910, to the post of associate professor at Kyoto Imperial University and his eventual retirement from that post, he devoted himself to sitting meditation. Although there may have not been any particular direct or concrete motivation that compelled him, it was philosophy that inevitably led him to Zen. This would explain his resolution to face the difficulties of life (Ueda 1996: 99).

In April 1896, Nishida studied Rinzai Zen under the guidance of a distinguished priest, the venerable master Setsumon, at Senshin-an in Kanazawa. As UEDA Shizuteru 上田閑照 emphasizes, Zen is nothing but living daily life (USS 4: 27–77). Nishida often “sat” both in the morning and in the evening or the night, according to his journal. Sitting and practicing “Zen meditation” (J. *sanzen* 參禪) are not by any means to be experienced through any ordinary effort. Nishida, assiduously engaged in the teaching profession, sometimes could not concentrate on Zen. He found it difficult to cope with both scholarship and Zen, especially due to the poor condition of his body. He was still an unknown scholar and only a “scholarly ascetic.” Reproaching himself for his distracting hopes about going abroad, or becoming a professor of a university, he made strenuous efforts to “sit” (NKZ 17: 101). In 1901, he obtained a “Buddhist layman’s name” (J. *kōjigō* 居士号), Sunshin 寸心, and, in 1903, he attained the experience of “seeing his own nature” (J. *kenshō* 見性); in other words, he was “enlightened” (J. *satoru* 悟る).

Nishida’s journal reminds us of the “bodily” aspect of sitting meditation in Zen. Bodily suffering may seem to impede it. The act of sitting itself suggests that it is somatic. At this point we ought to recall that in Eastern thought there is a tradition that regards mind and body as indivisible or, to put it differently, a tradition that takes account of the body. According to YUASA Yasuo 湯浅泰雄 (1925–2005), self-cultivation is “a practical undertaking that aims to train the mind by training the body and to advance one’s character” (Yuasa 1996: 101). Nishida, as a layman and, moreover, as a philosopher, was a “lay practitioner” of Buddhism. In Japanese Buddhism, the idea of *samādhi* (J. *jō* 定), in other words, meditation, developed as a focus of canonical comprehension. Meditation was originally a practice required only of priests and monks with no obligation for lay believers. Self-cultivation entailed “the imposition of restrictions upon one’s mind and body more severe than the life standards of secular daily experience” (Yuasa 1996: 117). The purpose was “to arrive at... a ‘life’ that exceeds the sort of life led by the average human being in society” (Yuasa 1996: 123). Moreover Zen is said to be the sect, from among Buddhist sects, that demands the most rigorous attitude towards practice.

The Zen of Dōgen 道元 has inherited from Kūkai 空海 the tradition of Buddhism that emphasizes the body. For Dōgen, Zen meant “the way of learning body-and-mind” (J. *shinjingakudō* 身心学道). In daily life we regard the state of mind, that is to say, consciousness, as normally controlling the body. But the method that reverses this pattern of everyday thinking is “nothing but precisely sitting” (J. *shikantaza* 只管打坐). Self-cultivation is to correct the state of the mind in accordance with the form of the body (Yuasa 1996: 205).

Ueda also appears to view sitting meditation as bodily. Sitting meditation is “entering *samadhi*” (J. *nyūjō* 入定) and “exiting *samadhi*” (J. *shutsujō* 出定). While this entails entering into sitting meditation and exiting out of sitting meditation, it means that sitting meditation arises in itself and begins to move on its own. In the “aspect of the body” (J. *shintaisō* 身体相), one goes from the state of rest in sitting meditation to the state of activity of day-to-day living. Sitting meditation entails the “act” (J. *gyō* 行) of “sitting” (J. *suwaru* 坐る). What does this mean? Perhaps we ought to read Dōgen’s *Fukanzazengi* 普勸坐禅儀, Dōgen’s primary meditation manual, to understand his meditation in depth. However, Ueda explains this “act of sitting” by means of ordinary and simple expressions without recourse to Buddhist terminology.

To sit in an erect position means that one’s self, without the use of hands or legs, becomes the concretization of concentration by folding hands and knees, fixing one’s position, and straightening the spine. “The self in concentration gives way and disappears to leisurely open up. Thinking or feeling nothingness...single-mindedly identifying with the inhalation and exhalation of breath. As the breath settles, it is no longer one’s own breath but the quiet pulsation of an infinite openness.” It is “thoroughly awake within a deep sleep.” Ueda stresses, however, that this is still a “state” and not sitting meditation. He states that “sitting meditation is when the way of being thoroughly awake becomes an unlimited question.” “Sitting meditation is the concretion of when the self, world, and everything has together become the single question of ‘what?’” And in its openness, “the body anticipates the solution, ‘as such.’” Furthermore, “when it is no longer question nor answer but has become completely identified with nothing, it is sitting meditation” (USS 4: 37–38). In other words, the basic point of sitting meditation is for the body to transcend the stage of consciousness to arrive at the dimension where it is one with the world.

There is also a Zen practice called “*zenmondō*” 禅問答 (“Zen question-and-answer”). This is a practice in contrast to sitting meditation. It refers to the point that while in sitting meditation one does nothing, one ought to be doing something in Zen practice. The *zenmondō* is “a Zen practice in the state of activity (J. *gyōtai* 行態)”: “It is the method whereby one grapples with a Zen puzzle (J. *kōan* 公案) given by the Zen master, brings its answer, or rather, becomes that viewpoint to enter the master’s room,... [and] volunteers one’s body to receive inspection” (USS 4: 39). We can consider this self-cultivation of *zenmondō* to be very much an active method and, as represented by the activity of “entering the room” (J. *nyūshitsu* 入室), a bodily method.

In a letter addressed to Nishida and dated February 20th, 1898, Suzuki writes the following:

One should resolve to administer all of one’s might, *the innermost power*, and to otherwise die so that one may achieve the *samadhi* of the *kōan*... Just as in everyday life all of one’s existence and instinctive latent abilities become suddenly mysteriously activated and summon up all of one’s life-force that ordinarily one is unaware of, hidden deep within the unconscious, so is the function of Zen. Unless one confronts the *kōan* as a matter of life and death, one is unable to activate the great life-force hidden deep within the human mind (neither an *individualistic* nor a *sexual instinctive impulse*, but a *coordinating [religious] impulse*). The goal of Zen is precisely in becoming self-aware of this life-force. The life-force that transcends intellectual discrimination emerges at the realm of authentic self-

awareness by breaking-through the darkness of the unconscious, only by letting go of the obsession for discrimination or the ignorance that reincarnates through life-and-death. This is a fact of psychology. (Nishimura 2004: 36–37)

From Suzuki's expression that "... all of one's existence and instinctive latent abilities becomes suddenly mysteriously activated..." or that it "summons up all of one's powers that... one is unaware of...", we can see that self-cultivation in Zen is something that is moved by the motility of life. Although self-cultivation is not accompanied by any rigorous movement of the body, there seems to be a certain severity that overflows the interior of both body and spirit.

In what way did Nishida's own experience of self-cultivation that is bodily, or that assimilated mind and body, as suggested by the testimonies above, begin to construct a foundation for his later thought? In an 1897 letter addressed to YAMAMOTO Ryōkichi 山本良吉 (1871–1942), soon after Nishida began Zen practice, there is a passage referring to the body. How does he understand the body here? "Although this flesh is precious, but is there reason for people in attempting to forcefully maintain it? I think that a person's life lies not in his flesh but in his ideal..." (NKZSP 19: 47).

It becomes interesting when we compare these reflections to Nishida's thoughts on the body after his Zen experience and after he began formulating his theory of the body. It would not be wrong to think that there was a change in Nishida's view of the body due to his practice of self-cultivation in the Zen Buddhist tradition and his experience of suffering and conflict.

### 3 Concern for the Body and the Development of a Philosophical Theory of the Body

The product of research that bore fruit from his period of self-cultivation in Zen was his *Inquiry into the Good* (*J. Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究). Of the two passages that discuss the issue of practice in the first and second parts of the chapter "Action" in Part III "The Good," we can find the following passages:

Seen from the outside, action is a movement of the body. It differs from such physical movements as the flow of water or the falling of a stone in that it is goal-oriented and possesses a kind of consciousness... How does the will arise? The human body is fundamentally constructed so as to make movements appropriate for preserving and developing its own life. Consciousness, arising together with these movements, is initially the simple feeling of pain or pleasure. (NKZ 1: 103; Nishida 1990: 87–88)

In my analysis of action I have taken the will and action to be two different things, but their relationship is not one of cause and effect, for they are two sides of one and the same thing. Action is the expression of the will, and that which is regarded from without as action can be regarded from within as the will. (NKZ 1: 111; Nishida 1990: 94)

Although the Nishida of the early period, according to Yuasa, shows no interest in the body, a decisive view of the mind-body relation already appears in the above passage. This conception is proposed more clearly in Nishida's expressions in

*Intuition and Reflection in Self-Awareness* (J. *Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei* 自覚に於ける直観と反省) (1917). In comparison to his view of the flesh as recorded in the early period of his Zen training, here he further grasps the connection of the internal world and the flesh that bears activity and motion as a unity of opposing sides. That is to say that the notion of “flesh” becomes even more of a focus.

Prior to the 1930s, Nishida’s philosophy did not entail the standpoint of a self practicing and acting in the world but that of a thinking and conscious self. Until this period, the “body” (J. *shintai* 身体) was, thus, not in his frequent philosophical vocabulary. Nevertheless, an acute perspective on the mind and body characteristic of Nishida and that sufficiently anticipates the formation of his theory of the body in his later period is evident in *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Awareness*. It bears the characteristic of Nishida’s unique philosophy of the will.

From the world of pure experience we think of the self’s body by concentrating on what follows the self’s will. From this perspective it is the will that creates the self’s body. But from another perspective there results a single center called the self only because the body exists. When I thus extend my hand, seen from within it is the will, but seen from without will is the body of the spiritual realm and the body is the will of the material realm. Our body, as the union of mind and matter, is a single work of art.... The body is the expression of the will. And what conjoins the mind and the body is an internal creative act. (NKZ 2: 238–239)

In this book, Nishida discusses “intuition” (J. *chokkan* 直観) and “reflection” (J. *hansei* 反省) within the activity of consciousness, from the standpoint of “the will of absolute freedom,”<sup>4</sup> as a systematic development of pure experience. He conceives of the will as the “root of knowledge” (J. *chishiki no kontei* 知識の根柢) that transcends active consciousness and stands in its extremity. In light of the cognitive act, as an object of cognition the will is something incomprehensible, but stated differently, it is a source of cognition not yet objectified in that cognitive act. We might compare it to “what is given in intuition” or “the experience of a truly concrete intuition” (NKZ 2: 284–287). It contains the motivational power of the act of consciousness itself, without possessing any object, as when the subject of consciousness that is the “I” acts. Therefore it is the starting point of the possibility for all free creations. Indeed “pure experience” (J. *junsui keiken* 純粹経験) is disclosed in the dimension of this will.

In this way, the will of the spiritual realm, according to Nishida, is interconnected with the body of the material realm as opposing sides of the same thing. His way of grasping the mind and body, that is, “thinking the self’s body from the world of pure experience... by concentrating on what follows the self’s will” (NKZ 2: 238–239) follows his understanding of composition in the plastic arts. But might

<sup>4</sup>A term Nishida employed under the influence of Fichte’s “*absolutes Ich*” (NKZ 2: 283). Nishida was also sympathetic to Bergson’s concept of “*mémoire*.” He states, “We are enabled to act from the root of our individuality by means of memory and to act from the root of the objective realm by means of thought. And by following the will we transcend the objective realm of various things to become creative evolution, that is, pure duration itself... The world of free imagination or fancy is in the standpoint of memory or representation, and the scientist’s world of so-called hypotheses is in the standpoint of thought. And in the standpoint of the will we can freely create reality, in other words, therein is the world of free will” (NKZ 2: 268–269).

this not have been a reality appropriate to one who had undergone a severe practice that extinguishes the body as it is absorbed in the spiritual realm? Perhaps the student of philosophy truly realized, through his Zen practice, that the body is located at the boundary connecting the so-called world and the self. And yet this link is not so easy to make. For Nishida, this link would be the mind-body relation. But setting this question aside, the fact that a view of the body is already present to this extent in the early Nishida philosophy demands our thorough attention.

Let us summarize at this stage the main points of his theory of the body that covers the standpoint of the later Nishida, including “active intuition” (*J. kōitekichokkan* 行為的直観).

After the 1930s, Nishida’s interest turns to human relations, society, or personhood as acting in the world. And he calls such a world wherein acting human beings dwell, “the historical world” (*J. rekishiteki sekai* 歴史の世界). As “there is no I without the body” (NKZ 6: 202) in Nishida, consciousness appears only on the basis of the body. It is not the reverse. And the body is not the flesh belonging as mere matter to the “material realm,” that is, the “realm of intelligible objects.” It is the body that is not of the universal, rationalized self but rather the self that thoroughly possesses “irrationality” and “free will” (NKZ 6: 408–409). He conceives of this sort of body that cannot be substantialized, that is, the “bodily self” (*J.shintai-teki jiko*, 身体的自己), as emerging in the dimension where the place in which consciousness acts and deepens itself—the place of self-awareness (*J. jikakuteki basho* 自覚の場所)—and the place in which the intellect is established when the activity of consciousness disappears—the “place of absolute nothing” (*J. zettaimu no basho* 絶対無の場所)—are mutually related to each other (NKZ 6: 202).

The body as explicated in the above manner would be the human being who “sees things while acting-intuitively.” What then is “active intuition”? How are “action” and “intuition” tied together in this conceptual composite? Nishida’s definition is that “we see things through action. At this time [of action], the thing determines the I and the I determines the object.” “Action” (*J. kōi* 行為) means that as I alter the thing, the thing alters me as well (NKZ 8: 128). Cognition is not a mere mental operation but a thoroughly bodily action. “Seeing” refers to “intuition” (*J. chokkan* 直観) and means “to grasp things with the body.” As we know from experience, at the moment we comprehend something, the feeling of knowing with the whole body, rather than with the head, appears. The analysis of the content comes after this bodily mastery. We can call this process “grasping with the body.”

When we shift our viewpoint to the world itself, in concerning the exercise of active intuition that possesses a dialectical structure, it amounts to “the self-determination” of the world itself. Let me verify this with the following passage:

We can say that the subject (*shutai* 主体) determines the environment (*kankyō* 環境) and the environment determines the subject at the place where the world, as a contradictory self-identity moving from the made (*tsukurareta mono* 作られたもの) to the making (*tsukuru mono* 作るもの), continually determines itself as individual. (NKZ 8: 546)

The various “environments,” that is, nation, race, society, and various other groups positioned within the world, are determined by the “subjects” (and each subject) dwelling within them and in turn determine those “subjects.” And if we



shift our viewpoint to the perspective of the world wherein various movements of reciprocity or inter-activity obtain amongst those many subjects, we can say that “the world determines itself” even “as a multiplicity of individuals.” There is the environment that reflects the innumerable individual self-determinations of each of these subjects. At the same time, the world reflects the individual self-determination of each environment.

“The made” is what has been acted upon and “the making” is what acts upon it. If this is the case, in what way is the continuity of time expressed in the phrase “from the made to the making” related to the body? Nishida explains this relationship as follows:

That the species forms the world means that the world constitutes itself as individual. The body is constituted therein and we can say that as historical individuals we see things acting-intuitively. But the dialectical movement of history does not only consist in this. While the present is something thoroughly determined, it has been determined in order to be negated. The made, while having passed, continually makes the making (maker). Therein lies the continuity of severance, the self-determination of nothingness. Posit something fundamental in either of the two opposing directions and there would be no historical movement.... To continually constitute itself individually does not mean the continuity from act to act, but rather must be a continuity from the made to the making, in other words, it must be an historical continuity. The made, while independent of its maker, continually makes that making (maker). (For instance, as in the act of artistic composition). (NKZ 8: 546–547)

The body is not merely something biological or animalistic but, as demonstrated here, something that is “constituted” by the workings of the historical world. This body is the human being who exists in the historical world as an individual, “seeing things acting-intuitively.” The definition of active intuition stated that “we see things through action. At this time [of action], the thing determines the I and the I determines the object.” Following Nishida’s thinking, I would like to suggest that when the subject sees the thing that becomes the object, that is, when it intuits something, the next activity is aroused from the thing that has thus been made to change by the subject. This means that the thing acts upon the subject. The object of the subject arouses this action within the subject. In different words, the notion “intuition” and the phrase “to see the thing through action” refer to precisely this sequence of actions. And on the basis of this intuition, the subject then acts upon the thing and is aroused by the thing acted upon to engage in a new action. This sort of activity always happens through the body. As we can discern from the above-quoted passage, the body is “constituted” where “the world constitutes itself as individual,” that is, where the world forms itself. We can, thus, interpret this activity of “constitution” by the body not as being singular but rather to mean that there is a plurality of bodily individuals that function as the world’s constitutive elements.

This connection between action and intuition originates in the process “from the made to the making.” Once a thing is “made” at a certain present moment, as something already “made,” it is thrust into the past. And in the next moment, it acts upon the subject as “the making (maker)” and is again acted upon by the subject to be “made.” This is the meaning of the passage, “...the present... has been determined in order to be negated.” While “the made” and “the making” are, in each case, absolutely independent and intermittent, they necessarily continue through history.

Nishida calls the body that is constituted in this sort of a “continuity of intermittence” “the historical body” (J. *rekishiteki shintai* 歴史の身体).

To explain the notion of the “historical world,” Nishida introduces the concept of “expression” (J. *hyōgen* 表現). He proposes that “the world of active intuition is a world of infinite expression” and that “our actions are all necessarily expressive acts” (NKZ 8: 146–147). By “expression” Nishida means not only specific forms like literature or art; rather “[e]ven what we regard as our physical movement must be established as the determination of the expressive world qua individual” (NKZ 8: 179). In other words, even a single movement of the body in day-to-day life can be function as “expression.”

#### 4 The Role of the Body in Nishida’s Theory of Religion

Nishida was initially hesitant to write about his Buddhist influence. In his later years, however, he tackles the issue of religion and philosophy head-on. The result is his posthumous manuscript, “The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview” (J. *Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan* 場所の論理と宗教の世界観) (1946). Therein, he explains his view of religion by means of a logic he formed after his theory of the body, that is, “the logic of place,” completed as a formulation belonging to the final stage of his life. Needless to say, it is not a Buddhist philosophy of religion. It transcends the distinctions between the various religions to deal with religion defined as “the facticity of the spiritual field.” Nishida states that “the philosopher ought not to fabricate religion on the basis of his own system. The philosopher must explain the facticity of spirituality. For this he must comprehend to some degree the religious mind within himself. True experience is facticity belonging to the religionist” (NKZ 11: 371). We can discern here his ideal of philosophy already present in his *Inquiry into the Good* that took facticity itself, experience itself, as reality. The task of the philosopher does not lie in the objectification of religion.

In this work Nishida sets forth as concepts “inverse correlation” (J. *gyakutaio* 逆対応) and “depth in the ordinary” (J. *heijōtei* 平常底). Ever since Nishida embarked upon his path as a philosopher, he did not practice sitting meditation. And yet he must have had various experiences of firm self-awareness through the body—for instance, the life experiences of any individual such as bodily disabilities or pain due to illness or old age.

In his later years, Nishida formulates his philosophy of religion with the support of these concepts like “inverse correlation” and “depth in the ordinary.” These concepts, however, indicate not the Zen Buddhism that Nishida experienced but rather a profound debt to the thinking of the “True Pure Land” school (J. *Jōdo shinshū* 浄土真宗). In his “Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview,” Nishida frequently refers to the True Pure Land sect and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263). For example, there is the following passage that suggests one of the major concepts of his later period, “absolutely contradictory self-identity” (J. *zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一):

I think that we find in Japanese Buddhism, in Saint Shinran's morality of amorality, "spontaneous dependence on the Buddha's vow" (*jinenhōni* 自然法爾), the negation qua affirmation of the absolute, the actual qua absolute, peculiar to the Japanese spirit. But this has not previously been positively grasped. (NKZ 11: 438)

I will shortly discuss the concepts of "inverse correlation" and "depth in the ordinary." The connections of the phrases "actual qua absolute" or "negation qua affirmation of the absolute" in the above passage with Shinran's thought should then become evident. If it is the case that the concepts of "active intuition" and "historical body" developed as products of his theory of the body on the basis of the ideas of "place" or "absolutely contradictory self-identity" that are the logic of Nishida philosophy, and if his view of religion was formulated on the basis of those conceptual accumulations, his view of the body ought to be recognizable in the concepts "inverse correlation" and "depth in the ordinary" as well. To show this, I would like to draw this out of "The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview." First, we need to understand his concept of "inverse correlation."

As the self-negation of the absolute one, our self borders the absolute one in inverse correlation through and through. The more it becomes individual, the more it confronts the absolute one, that is, God. It is as the extremity of individuality that our self confronts God. It encounters the extremity of the holistic one at the extremity of the historical world's self-determination as individual, in thorough contradictory self-identity. (NKZ 11: 430)

Plainly put, "inverse correlation" refers to the relation between the absolute or God and the finite self. While the self exists as the absolute's self-negation, because the absolute for the self is "contradictory," it confronts the absolute as other, as distinct from itself. Moreover, to confront or oppose as "the extremity of individuality" and "in thorough contradictory self-identity," from a certain perspective, means that the self becomes one with the absolute. It means that the self determines itself, or, to put it differently, expresses itself as a self that is one individual thing within the historical world and that by doing so it confronts or opposes the whole of individuals or a single determinate "extremity" of the world. The absolute is this extremity and, at the same time, a single self. The self does not confront the absolute in a simplistic manner but through an extremely intricate structure. Nishida also states that "our self touches the absolute in reverse determination step by step, as a thoroughly singular individual" (NKZ 11: 431). Even as the self is determining itself, from another perspective, it is being determined by the absolute. A determination that sustains this sort of duplicitous viewpoint is not something that can proceed so simply. We can discern here how precipitous is the path to reach the absolute. And as the passage, "[the more] it becomes individual, the more it confronts the absolute one," shows, the character of being a distinct "individual" deepens by means of self-determination as "inverse correlation." That is to say, that to the extent that the determination of inverse correlation proceeds, the path to becoming an individual and confronting the absolute also progresses.

"The more it becomes individual" would mean, borrowing Nishida's terminology from elsewhere, to be "independent." The self and the absolute are not in a relationship of mutual dependence. "The relationship of God and person must be comprehended on the basis of the relationship between that which expresses the self

itself by thoroughly negating itself and that which self-expressively counters it by being expressed.” “Expression” here means creation. Hence it is “the relationship of absolutely contradictory self-identity between the thoroughly creative and that which creates by being created, in other words, what makes by being made.” If to approach the absolute is to comprehend the absolute, its method must be “expressive” and “creative.” Nishida states that “to comprehend the other is one activity.” This means at the same time to “make the self in self-expression” and to “move the other in self-expression” (NKZ 11: 439).

What does it mean for the self to “move the other,” that is, the absolute? Can the absolute be moved by the self at all? On this point, Nishida explains:

The absolute that exists in itself and moves by means of itself is not beyond opposition. And what is not absolved of opposition is not the absolute. The historical world is established... as negation qua affirmation of the self of the true absolute that includes absolute negation within itself, in a thoroughly contradictory self-identity of the many and the one.... Our selves... are continually forming this world as self-expressive points of this world. (NKZ 11: 447)

The absolute that constitutes a negation qua affirmation of the self not only moves on its own but is moved and made as the self-expression of the self as a finite being.

Our following concern is “depth in the ordinary.” It is defined in the following manner as something that guarantees “the self of absolute freedom”:

In the depths of the self there is nothing to determine itself. There is nothing instinctive in terms of the subject, nor anything rational in terms of the predicate. It is thoroughly without foundation. It means “the mind that is secure in the ordinary (祇是平常無事),” that is, depth in the ordinary. (NKZ 11: 449)

The phrase to be “thoroughly without foundation” refers to the “absolute nothingness” (J. *zettai mu* 絶対無) in the logic of place. The self is not determined by someone or something. Rather, it emerges from the self-determination of this absolute nothing. We can say that “depth in the ordinary” is this absolute nothingness. Nishida continues his elaboration:

By depth in the ordinary I mean one of the essential standpoints of the self. It refers to the standpoint that, taking our self in its character, it necessarily makes the self as character even more of a self as character. In other words it refers to the true standpoint of the free will... It means the free standpoint of self-conversion, through the self’s negation qua affirmation, of our self established from the absolute one’s self-negation into the individual many. Upon this point our self while touching the beginning of the world is always in touch with its end... Therein lies the consciousness in the absolute presence of our self. Thus, if we take this to be deep, it is thoroughly deep, penetrating to the depths of the depths of the world. (NKZ 11: 451)

“Self-conversion” presumably means the mutual severance, and yet continuity, between self-negation and self-affirmation within the absolute one. To state that the self touches the beginning and the end of the historical world may be expressive of the formative act that continually and thoroughly renews the world, forming and reforming the historical world.

At what point do we decisively see the world of religion? The observation “[t]hat our self ends in the absolute by penetrating to the depths of its root does not mean a separation from this actuality. Instead it would mean plumbing to the depths of his-

torical actuality. It means to exist as the self-determination of the absolute present, by thoroughly becoming a historical individual” (NKZ 11: 421–424). HASE Shōtō 長谷正當 interprets Nishida’s explanation in the following manner. As the historical world is never stable, the “whereabouts” of the human being therein is constantly jolted:

Therein lies the necessity for the human being to search for the ultimate ground of the whereabouts of the self not in the historical world but rather in the world of religion. But to search for the ultimate whereabouts in the world of religion is not to depart from or exit the historical world. It rather means to plumb to the bottom of the historical world. (Hase 2007: 19)

In other words there is the infinite dimension of the world of religion within the historical world. And therein the self encounters the absolute in inverse correlation. And that is the significance of “depth in the ordinary.”

Now how does the body fit into Nishida’s theory of religion? Previously we saw Nishida’s point that both the absolute and the self approach one another through expression. The self here is “the historical body.” Nishida takes up the example of the name of the Buddha used in chanting, literally, “name” (J. *myōgō* 名号), in the True Pure Land sect.

The Buddha is expressed by *myōgō* [chanting of the name]. It is said that one is saved through faith in the mystery of *myōgō*. The discontinuity between the absolute, that is, Buddha, and human being, in other words, the continuity of discontinuity between Buddha and human being, or their mediation of contradictory self-identity, takes place through nothing other than expression, language. What expresses the earnest desire of the Buddha is nothing other than *myōgō*. (NKZ 11: 442)

As an expression, uttering the word of the “name” (J. *myōgō*) inevitably involves the body. Even the act of using language, as in reading or writing, is always accompanied by a movement of the body. The body acts without our being conscious of it. According to the theory of the body we looked at earlier, the place where the body or the bodily self emerges is in the self-determination of the “place” (J. *basho* 場所) wherein both subject and predicate are placed. However, the bodily self vanishes at the stage of absolute nothingness. While Nishida does not discuss this, the body, in the relationship of inverse correlation, must be expressive not only in language but in all sorts of acts. Nevertheless in his “Logic of Place” that became his posthumous work, he was unable to further develop his theory of the body on the basis of the world of religion. This is the issue that he has left us with, and we will have to search for a new perspective on Nishida’s theory of religion.

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 NKZSP *Nishida kitarō zenshū shinpan* 『西田幾多郎全集 新版』 [Complete Works of Nishida Kitarō – New Edition], 24 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006.

USS *Ueda shizuteru shū* 『上田閑照集』 [*Works of Ueda Shizuteru*], 11 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001–2003.

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