

# Nishida's Philosophy and Christianity

## — Explication from the Concept of Love

Ishii Samoa

### For Preface—About Nishida's Philosophy and Religion

In raising a question on the theme of 〈Nishida's philosophy and Christianity〉, the first to be inquired about should be the position of religion in his philosophy. Miki Kiyoshi says, "Nishida's philosophy should be understood thoroughly as philosophy,"<sup>1</sup> warning that it should not be raised easily in connection with religion or the philosophy of religion. On the other hand, when we ask the question of what is Nishida's philosophy, we cannot but find significant religious issues underlying the question. In *"Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]"* (1911), which is composed of four parts, the final part is given to 〈Religion〉, and Nishida mentions in the preface that "Part Four describes my opinion of religion which I always consider as the conclusion of philosophy" (1-3<sup>2</sup>). His last essay *"Bashoteki ronri to shūkyoteki sekaikan [The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview]"* (1946), which was published posthumously, is not only the goal of the late Nishida's philosophy but also his view summarized in religion. However, his reference to religion is not made in the course of discussing the special form of his philosophy, but rather characterizes his philosophy in the sense that the inquiry into religion is equivalent to thinking over being.

Nishida says in his later days in the letter to Nishitani Keiji (as of February 19, 1943) as follows:

As you say, it is true that there is something like Zen underlying my meditation. Of course, I don't know Zen well, but people radically misunderstand Zen, so I think that the soul of Zen may be to grasp reality truly. I want to try my best to combine Zen with philosophy even though it may be impossible. It is my desire long cherished since my thirties (New 23-73<sup>3</sup>).

Nishida does not deny "something like Zen" underlying his meditation. However, what he describes as "Zen" in this letter is not what is called "Zen" positioned in the tradition of Buddhism but is rather "the thing whose soul is to grasp reality truly," and in this sense, Nishida tries to find the theme common to both philosophy and Zen. The reason for his saying that "it is true that there is something like Zen underlying my meditation" while he admits that he of course does not know Zen well is that his meditation aims for the thing "whose soul is to grasp reality." In the preface of the third-printed *"Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]"* in 1936, he looks back on the course of his own philosophy saying, "I had an idea earlier on that being should be reality in itself and the so-called material world is nothing but what was thought out from that" (1-7). Thus for Nishida, to grasp "reality" is the same as to grasp "being." Miki says that "we can say that the main question of Nishida's philosophy is being throughout all the stages of its explication"<sup>4</sup> when he thinks back on Nishida's philosophy, but without mentioning what he says, Nishida himself says in the preface of *"Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]"* that "I have long been thinking that I want to explain everything by pure experience as an only being" (1-4), and thus we can find that Nishida's

philosophy consistently stuck to the question of being that is “reality in itself” from start to finish throughout its steps. The question of being that is “reality in itself” underlies the core of his philosophy, and it is certain the awareness of the question was developed through sitting in Zen meditation during his youth. Furthermore, the fact that many Zenists were produced from his disciples proves his standpoint that his philosophy is “to grasp reality as its soul,” and thus it recognizes Zen as the thing whose “soul is to grasp reality truly.” In this sense, the relation between Nishida’s philosophy and Zen is very strong.

However, for Nishida who says “the thing whose soul is to grasp reality truly” as “Zen,” the emphasis on 〈the connection between Nishida and Zen〉 does not mean denying the relation with any religions other than Zen. In fact, each religion is the matter of concern as the most concrete form essential for truly grasping reality. As you can see in his late thesis *“Bashoteki ronri to shūkyoteki sekaikan [The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview],”* he describes religion as “a spiritual fact” (11-371) by referring to the Jodo-Shin [True Pure Land] sect, Christianity, and the literature of Dostoyevsky without limiting the ideas to Zen. The opening paragraph of *“Bashoteki ronri to shūkyoteki sekaikan [The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview]”* starts with the following:

Though not everyone is an artist, everyone can appreciate art to a certain degree. Though not everyone is a religionist, those who commit themselves to a religion being a rare few, everyone can understand religion to a certain extent. ... Situations of extreme misfortune are bound to awake religious awareness in every one of us. Religion is a spiritual fact. (11-371)

Nishida raises a question as to religion as “a spiritual fact.” The fact is the one in itself that cannot be collected by the subjective self, and Nishida calls religion into question as the most objective fact saying, “We truly recognize it for the first time when our own existence is called into question, when our very self becomes a question” (11-393). That is, he insists that our existence will not be topicalized until our own reality in which we must live our own life anew each time and our self who runs about desperately struggling with reality come into question by 〈us〉. “When we realize the self-contradiction of our existence, our very existence becomes the problem” (11-393). “A spiritual fact” is the fact for which the existence of our very self who lives our own one-time life anew in the middle of reality becomes a question, and Nishida emphasizes that philosophy and religion are brought from the places with the same root, saying that “when we seriously confront these contradictions, religious questions must inevitably arise (philosophical questions arise from the same source)” (11-393f). For Nishida, religion is the place where the existence of self is questioned, and therefore he clearly differentiates morality from religion. “From the standpoint of morality even the keenest moral conscience cannot take up the existence of the self as a question.” It is because however wickedly sinful one may feel oneself to be, morality presupposes the existence of the self (11-393, the underlined part is by the person who quoted it), and therefore the self is not called into question from the standpoint of morality. As long as the self has already been presupposed, the existence of the self cannot be called into question. Religion is the fact that questions the basis of a one-time life that is never repeated, and the problem with being, which Nishida pursued until the end of his life, is disclosed by focusing on that fact. Thus, he takes the position that the “philosophers’ task is to explain this existing spiritual reality” (11-371). Therefore, his approach to religion is to question not the doctrine of each religion but the fact that religion calls into question 〈our own existence itself〉 and thus is made for the fact that religion raises self-awareness of “the self-contradictions of our existence” (11-393). In this sense, as the source of raising the awareness of the self-contradictions of our existence, the basis of Christianity and that of Buddhism is taken up as a question. As far as the basis of Christianity is taken up as a question, picking up the theme of Nishida’s philosophy and Christianity makes sense.

## Chapter 1 The Background to the Problem with Nishida's Philosophy and Christianity

In recent years, based on Nishida's philosophical approach to religion as said above, the studies referring to his religious theory in relation to not only Buddhism but Christianity have increased. It may be possible to survey briefly the previous studies by categorizing them into several types. I will survey them by categorizing them into three types as follows:

- (1) Studies taking up Nishida's philosophy as one to overcome the closeness of Western Christianity from the criticism on that. <sup>5</sup>
- (2) Studies taking up and summarizing the influence relation of Christianity to Nishida's philosophy to call into question the historical dialogs between Nishida's philosophy and Christianity.
- (3) Studies exploring the possibility of dialogs between religions immanent in Nishida's philosophy from standpoint of dialogs between his philosophy and Christianity. <sup>6</sup>

Considering the theme set as Nishida's philosophy and Christianity, the previous studies in (2) may be the most direct. Ogawa Keiji has done pioneering work for those studies, examining the dialogs on thought between Nishida's philosophy and Christianity by categorizing them into four phases. The first phase is when "*Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]*" (1911) was written, the second phase is from "*Mu no jikakuteki gentei [The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness]*" (1932) to "*Tetsugaku ronbunshu I, II and III [Philosophical Essays I, II and III]*" (1939), the third phase is after "*Jissen tetsugaku joron [Introduction of practical philosophy]*" (1940), and the fourth phase is Nishida's posthumous essay "*Basho-teki ronri to shukyo-teki sekaikan [The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview]*" (1945/published in 1946). The Ogawa's categorization into the said four phases is the model of phase categorization in the studies on "Nishida's philosophy and Christianity." <sup>7</sup> Asami Hiroshi also focused on the historical dialogs between Nishida's philosophy and Christianity through in-depth studies on the materials. <sup>8</sup> Asami analyzed the history of influence from Christianity by researching the materials, however, his studies may be also categorized into (3) said above in terms of taking up as a theme how the dialogs between religions should be for the potential of Nishida's philosophy for the philosophy of Christianity, not limited to the analysis. <sup>9</sup>

Many of the traditional studies on Nishida's philosophy and Christianity, at most, take up as a question the argument over religion from the standpoint of dialogs between religions underlying Nishida's understanding of religion, that is, as his logic of place in which he takes the standpoint of dialogs between religions focusing on the differences between his philosophy and Christianity and the dialogs on thought between them. In fact, any of those studies did not inquire Nishida's philosophy itself and thus does not seem to have fully inquired in depth into the Christianity underlying Nishida's philosophy. This study will raise a question on the relation between Nishida's philosophy and Christianity not from Nishida's thoughts on religion or the history of influence surrounding Nishida's philosophy and Christianity but by starting the inquiry from the question of 〈being〉, which was the main theme of his philosophy after "*Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]*."

Nishida says to Nishitani through the letter to him that his philosophical motivation "lies in grasping reality," and as mentioned before, the reality means the one of self who must live its own life anew each time, and it is the starting point and the goal of Nishida's philosophy to grasp the single and concrete practice of the life of the self. In the speech for Shinano tetsugaku-kai (Shinano Association of Philosophy) in 1937, Nishida said, "Grasping the most deeply what our most ordinary life is will bring about the deepest philosophy" (14-267f.). In 1936 when Miki Kiyoshi said, "We can say that the main question in Nishida's philosophy, throughout all the stages of its explication, is being." Nishida admits that the direction of his philosophical thought was consistent with the clarification of being in the letter to the editor of "*Riso [An ideal]*" <sup>10</sup> saying, "Since the consideration of pure experience, my thought has started from the most direct concrete being" (13-138). As mentioned before, why Nishida considered religion as

“the conclusion of philosophy” (1-3) from the beginning of *“Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]”* and devoted one part to the consideration of it was that the considering religion was indispensable for grasping the world of reality the most deeply. For Nishida, religion is the most concrete form of being, and the existence of self comes into question as the most concrete form of being. Therefore, when Nishida explicates his philosophical thoughts from the theological terms by referring to Christianity, we can see in it his philosophical movement that is deepened toward the most concrete being.

To question Nishida’s thoughts on religion is to question the most concrete form of being that is the main theme of Nishida’s philosophy. In this study, focusing on the problem of “love” lying in the center of Nishida’s thoughts on religion, I will place his thoughts as the explication of the notion of love. However, at the same time, it illustrates the fact that Nishida’s thoughts on being were explicated together with his thoughts on love. Along with the explication of his thoughts on love, his understanding of being is greatly developed. In this study, I want to call into question the explication of Nishida’s thoughts on love and his thoughts on being as accompanied with that on love by taking up the first *“Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]”* phase and the second *“Mu no jikakuteki gentei [The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness]”* phase when Nishida aggressively worked on the problem of love, based on Ogawa’s four-phase categorization for the dialogs between Nishida’s philosophy and Christianity. Of course, it is his last thesis *“Bashoteki ronri to shūkyoteki sekaikan [The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview]”* that Nishida’s thoughts on love are presented in the ultimate form; however, I have no space in this study to write it in detail. Thus, I like to mention the ultimately explicated form of his thoughts on love in the conclusion section.

## Chapter 2 Problem of Love in *“Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]”*

It is in part four “Religion” of *“Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good],”* particularly in the last chapter of it, which was added later, that Nishida takes up love as a question. Part four of *“Zen no kenkyū”* summarizes “religion which I always consider as the conclusion of philosophy” (1-3) as mentioned by Nishida in the preface of the part, and it is composed of five chapters: chapter 1 is “Religious demand,” chapter 2 is “Essence of Religion,” chapter 3 is the definition of “God,” chapter 4 is the relation between “God and the World,” and chapter 5 is “Knowledge and Love” in which 〈love〉 is the main subject.

Nishida defines the religious demand as “a demand concerning the life of the self...the demand wherein our self perceives its relativity and finitude and, at the same time, joins with the absolute and infinite power, thereby desiring to acquire the true life of eternity” (1-169). As pointed out by Ogawa, Nishida explains the core of religion until his later days by citing section 20 of chapter 2 in “Epistle to the Galatians,” and he also cites it in *“Zen no kenkyū,”* enhancing as follows:

As Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me,” the religious demand is the feeling of trying to live alone by God by crucifying the whole physical life. True religion seeks the conversion of self or regeneration of life. (1-169)

The core of Nishida’s thoughts on religion is the motif of negative conversion of self or self-actualization as described in *“Bashoteki ronri to shūkyoteki sekaikan [The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview]”* as “at life’s very foundations we are every in confrontation with the Absolute one, i.e. God. We stand at the crucial point where we can choose eternal life or death” (11-427). Nishida’s basic attitude toward religion is negative conversion or actualization of self, and in this sense, we can say that his attitude toward religion does not change after *“Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good].”* However, as far as it is seen from the relation between God and man, it is true that his understanding is significantly different between *“Zen no kenkyū”* and *“Bashoteki ronri to shūkyoteki*

*sekaikan*.” The difference, in short, depends on whether the relation between God and man should be regarded as seamless 〈unity〉 or 〈confrontation / contradiction〉, but this study finds in it the result of deepened dialogs between Nishida’s philosophy and Christianity.

In “*Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]*,” being is thought of as “phenomena of consciousness,” and God is recognized as “the unifying one” (1-181) underlying our mental activities (consciousness) or “the unifier of the universe and the ground of being” (1-182). Personality and love are notions attributed to “the unifying one,” and Nishida presents the pantheistic view of God by outlining the unifying action and the unifying force as “live” and “personality” respectively. “God is the one great personality who is the ground of the universe...the universe is the personal expression of God” (1-182). Though the word “personality” is used, it is certain that what Nishida in the phase of “*Zen no kenkyū*” expressed by the word “personality” is not the notion of personality as an individual substance. It is rather recognized as the force of unifying the dualistic relation or the unifying action, and the essence of religion is to get a share of the unity. In fact, Nishida who tries to derive being from the motif of “unity” says that “the deepest religion can be formed on the God and man as the same substance, and the real intention of religion is to acquire the meaning of the unity between God and man” (1-177), and thus it is understood that the essence of religion is seen in “God-man unity” and love is that “two personalities are united into one” (1-176). What to be focused on here is that Nishida in the phase of “*Zen no kenkyū*” sees the grounds of the possibility of “God-man unity” in the sameness. For Nishida who thinks that “the reason that we worship and love God is because we possess the same foundation as God” (1-176), love is considered the unifying action of what has the same foundation. Such comments of his are pantheistic; therefore, his thoughts on religion that personality is not considered as an individual substance strongly tend to be recognized as being categorized into the question of the tradition of Buddhism. Ogawa also tries to see the discontinuity between Nishida and Christianity. It is true that the notion of personality as an individual substance is the mainstream in the metaphysical tradition of the West. However, the Holy Trinity of Christianity is predicated on the relation of God, which cannot be explained as an individual substance to God. Christianity is underlain by the tradition of the notion of personality that cannot be explained only by a substantial individual, and Tanaka Yutaka describes the tradition as “the tradition regarding personality not only as 〈being〉 but also as a 〈relation〉.”<sup>11</sup> As long as “the tradition of regarding personality as a 〈relation〉” also exists in Christianity, we should not understand Nishida’s thoughts on religion by connecting it easily with Buddhism even if Nishida’s thoughts on love are recognized as 〈what creates relation〉.

Nishida in the phase of “*Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]*” positions love in spontaneity and self-development of “the unifying one” working at the basis of being, which is “the phenomena of consciousness,” saying that “God is the foundation of all of beings, and as such, His love has to be fair and universal, and inversely the self-development of God in itself has to be infinite love for us” (1-185). Nishida, translating God’s love as God’s action of spontaneity and self-development, describes the understanding of 〈love〉 that man gets a share of God’s love in spontaneity and self-development. God is a unifying force (personality) that binds Himself to man, and the reason why it is possible is because God and man are the same in terms of the grounds. Therefore, that God loves Himself is equal to the fact that He loves man, and that man loves himself is equal to the fact that he loves God as his own grounds. Nishida concludes that “the unifying action of God is just that of the universe” and “God’s loving others is just equal to His loving Himself” (1-185).

At the last of the argument as above, Nishida’s thoughts on love are explicated in the form of chapter 5 “Knowledge and Love.” Here knowledge and love are described as “the same spiritual action,” which aims at the unity of self and other (1-197), and he points out that the idea of distinguishing knowledge from love is, in itself, only an abstraction of the world of being. Nishida takes the example of mathematicians devoting themselves to a mathematical principle, mentioning why mathematicians can devote themselves to a mathematical principle wherever and whenever they could is because they have a love of the mathematical principle itself beyond their

intellectual curiosity to get the answer and inversely they want to get the answer because of their love of it. It is emphasized that “in order to know something, we must love it, and in order to love something, we must know it” (1-197), and the spiritual action working by knowledge and love unified together is topicalized as “the action of unifying object and subject...that of my corresponding to the thing” (1-196). “The action of my corresponding to the thing” is <pure experience,” and Nishida tries to see in pure experience the spiritual action that works by knowledge and love unified together. “We are almost unconscious when we are caught up in what we like. We forget ourselves, and only the inexplicable power beyond ourselves is working majestically. At this time, there is no object nor subject, and thus object and subject are truly unified together. At this time, knowledge is just love, and love is just knowledge.” (1-198, the underlined part is by the person who quoted it.) Both knowledge and love that are described as “the same spiritual action” are formed when object and subject are unified in the stage of forgetting or losing the self and “only the inexplicable power beyond the self is working majestically.” Nishida calls into question the spiritual action of knowledge and love in the place of becoming the unifying action itself completely.

Nishida’s argument over knowledge and love represents his views on religion and morality in the phase of “*Zen no kenkyū* [*An Inquiry into the Good*]” well. In “*Zen no kenkyū*,” there is little differentiation between morality and religion; in fact, religion is recognized as the completion of morality. Nishida, who refers to “love as the culmination of knowledge” while he recognizes knowledge and love as seamlessly “the same spiritual action,” says that “learning and morality are the glory of Buddha God, and religion is the culmination of such actions” (1-199). In part 3 “Goodness” of “*Zen no kenkyū*,” morality is called into question as Nishida himself says that “it may be no problem to see it as an independent ethics” (1-3). Since love is discussed as the culmination of good behavior, love is understood based on the model of extremely <ascendant self-realization>. “To realize the self by satisfying the maximum demand of it is to realize the objective ideal of the self, or it means the coincidence with the object. From this viewpoint, good behavior is always love” (1-155). Nishida in the phase of “*Zen no kenkyū*” who considers religion as the completion of morality cites Plato’s love as Eros saying, “Love is always a feeling of corresponding self with other. It is a feeling of unifying subject and object...Plato says in the famous ‘*Symposion*’ that love is a feeling that those who are imperfect try to return to the original perfect state” (1-156f). Of course, as the truth of the love recognized in the ascendant model is <pure experience>, Nishida concludes after the said citation as follows:

However, considering further, truly good behavior is not to make object follow subject, nor to make subject follow object. It is not until both subject and object vanish, both the thing and I are forgotten, and only the activity of being that is the only one in the universe just exists that we can reach the culmination of good behavior. (1-156)

The grounds of morality emphasized as “the activity of being that is the only one in the universe just exists” fills Nishida’s theory on religion with the pantheistic color by being supported by his world view that “the universe is from the same root and everything is unified” (1-156). Therefore, knowledge and love, which are referred to as the spiritual action of the unity of self and other, are ultimately collected into “the activity of the only being in the universe,” too.

Nishida recognized knowledge and love as “the only spiritual action,” but he does not use them all without distinction. Knowledge and love are distinguished according to the difference in what they are targeted. For Nishida, knowledge aims at a non-personal object while love aims at a personal object. Only in this sense, the superiority of love that is “the wisdom aiming at a personal object” (1-198) is emphasized more than knowledge that is “the wisdom aiming at a non-personal object” because for Nishida “the substance of being in the universe is a



personal one” (1-199). In this sense, it is natural that love aiming at a personal object is placed higher than knowledge aiming at a non-personal object, and we can see Nishida’s unique view in it. For Nishida, the so-called philosophical analysis and inference are superficial pursuit of knowledge, and it is impossible to grasp being, which is a personal object by knowledge through inference (1-199). The reason why Nishida grasps knowledge and love inseparably is because knowledge ultimately aims at being itself that is “the unifying one” and he thinks that only love, which aims at personality” can grasp it. Love is “the power of grasping the substance of being” (1-199), and in this sense, it is “the deepest knowledge of things” or “the culmination of knowledge” (1-199). As learning and morality were regarded as religion, here the completion of knowledge is regarded as “love.”

In “*Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]*,” being is described from the context of the spontaneity / self-development of the phenomena of consciousness and the unification of them, and thus Nishida’s thoughts on religion follow the context. For Nishida who summarizes personality and love as “the unifying force” and “the unifying action” of the phenomena of consciousness, respectively, to love God means that the self is collected into God as long as love means “corresponding to other by excluding self” (1-197) in which nothing other than 〈pure experience〉, which is described as “only the activity of being exists in the universe” can be seen. Considering that he places the grounds for the possibility of unity on the homogeneity between personalities and he says that “the deeper the mutual understanding when the circumstances, thought and interest are the same, the deeper the mutual sympathy” (1-198), his standpoint in “*Zen no kenkyū*” is clearly different from that in “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei [The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness]*” (1932) which puts a definition that “There is no universal which encompasses me and thee” (6-381). However, love is recognized as 〈what creates relation〉 also in “*Zen no kenkyū*.” This point is the fact that should be considered when we understand Nishida’s thoughts on love.

### Chapter 3 Problem of Love in “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei [The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness]*” — Love as “Agape”

#### 1. Explication from “*Zen no kenkyū*” to “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei*”

There is an interval of more than 20 years between “*Zen no kenkyū*” and “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei*,” however, as far as we see from the viewpoint of dialog with Christianity, there is no significant change. Of course, it is possible to position “Eichiteki sekai [The Intelligible World]” (1928) carried in “*Ippansha no jikakuteki taikei [The System of the Self-conscious Universal]*” (1930) as the thoughts on religion in Nishida’s mid-term philosophy.<sup>12</sup> In the essay that indicates the course starting from the universals of judgment and reaching the universals of nothingness, which should be described as the universal of universals, the view of religion as the completion of morality is swept away and the self-contradictory moment going with the transition from morality to religion is rather emphasized. “Existence of the moral self means that the self is incomplete and thus the ideal is thoroughly pursued, and the keener the conscience becomes, the more the self is felt as evil. For perceiving the basis of the self truly beyond such a contradiction, religious emancipation from worldly attachments is required. By thorough self-negation, the basis of the self is understood. In this stage, neither good nor evil exists” (5-172). Nishida who mentions his religious standpoint beyond morality as “neither good nor evil exists,” however, still discusses with leaving the motif of 〈unity〉, saying that “in the religious consciousness, we drop our mind and body to be unified into the consciousness of absolute nothingness” (5-177). Though “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei [The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness]*” (1932), which was written during the period of transition toward his late philosophy, is unique in terms of frequently appearing theological terms, the word 〈unity〉 is avoided intentionally after this essay, and the relation between God and man or between individuals comes to be grasped based on 〈contradiction〉. It seems to make a change not only in Nishida’s thoughts on religion but on his thought itself. There is only an interval of four years between the essay “Eichiteki sekai [The Intelligible World]” (1928) in which the motif 〈unity〉 is left and “*Mu no*

*jikakuteki gentei* [*The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness*],” and given that Nishida’s late philosophy studies the historical world from the relation between individuals, it is possible to consider “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei*” as the turning point of Nishida’s philosophy itself.

In “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei* [*The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness*],” it is described that “what is considered as our personality must be absolutely free in its each step; personality exists as the unity of free things” (6-277), and Nishida takes up 〈personality〉 as a question from the 〈relation〉 between individuals that are “absolutely free in each of the steps” and finds the movement of 〈love〉 by which those free individuals cross each other. In “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei*,” being is thought as “the dramatic unity” (6-277) while it is never united, and the thought over love according to the motif 〈the unity of self and other〉 is denied. “Generally, love is simply thought as the unity of self and other, however, ... the simple unity of self and other is not love but a kind of impulse” (6-278). Nishida takes up as a question the structure where the personality that is “free in each of the steps” achieves “the dramatic unity” in the determinative form of being named “self-determination of eternal now,” discussing the question again in terms of the paradoxical relation between time and eternity. “When time is truly considered, it has to be considered as discontinuous continuity. Time has to vanish into the bottom of the present; time is considered as the unity of contradiction” (6-279). Nishida tries to think over being in terms of the paradoxical relation between eternity and time by describing the structure where the time “vanishing into the bottom of the present” is unified at the place where it “vanishes” as “self-determination of eternal now.” The interest of this study is to take up being as a question in terms of the paradoxical relation between eternity and time, particularly focusing on love grasped as “the dramatic unity” of time “vanishing into the bottom of the present.” Nishida admits that his own thoughts on time are sympathetic with Kierkegaard’s understanding of the instant. “It has to be like Kierkegaard’s paradox; we can say that we feel God in the instant when the present determines the present itself” (6-147). Kierkegaard’s paradox is the paradox in the instant when man can feel God, and it is called into question in terms of the way that man is essentially involved in the present in the form of repetition of 〈the Incarnation of Christ〉 in *Augenblick*, the instant of looking directly with eyes open. Therefore, the paradox in the instant is that between God and man in Jesus Christ, and the instant means the moment when God becomes man, that is, the moment of incarnation. 〈What is never united is united〉 is the paradox, and Nishida tries to see the relation between eternity and time or God and man in there. However, at the same time, Nishida sees the ultimate form of 〈love〉 in the paradox that what is never united is 〈united〉. As summarized before, love thought of in “*Zen no kenkyū* [*An Inquiry into the Good*]” is “the unifying action” that is ultimately collected into “the unifying one,” and the grounds of the possibility of unity were placed on the homogeneity God and man. In “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei* [*The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness*],” however, love is described as “the unity of what is free...absolutely free in each of the steps” (6-277), which is never united. Nishida sees “absolute love (agape),” which is the self-contradictory love for which eternal God sacrifices itself in “the unity of what is free” that is never united, or in that “the instant which cannot be captured determines the instant itself.” In “*Watashi to nanji* [I and Thou]” carried in “*Mu no jikakuteki gentei* [*The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness*]” as it is described that “agape is not a longing, but a sacrifice; not a love of humans, but a love of God, not a rise from human to God, but a descent from God to human” (6-421), love is recognized not as spontaneity and self-development of “the unifying one” but as the extremely Christian kenosis of God.

## 2. I and Thou — Responding to the Calling of “Absolute Other”

In the essay “*Watashi to nanji* [I and Thou],” an individual is discussed as the one that cannot be an extension of other or cannot extend other, that is, the one for which “other” is anticipated. Nishida takes up a concrete individual as a question from the viewpoint of relation with this “other,” presenting the personal relationship between “I and thou” as a subject. Nishida says, “Something intermediary mustn’t exist between one and other; the self must



include the absolute other in the self" (6-380), calling into question something different that is already immanent in the way the self exists. This saying of Nishida's responds to his mid-term argument about the self-awareness that "the self finds the self in the self," but the self-awareness in Nishida's late philosophy appears as what means the existential structure of the self (and the structure of the world where the self is located). Nishida topicalizes the self-awareness from the term "the absolute other" <sup>13</sup> mentioning it as follows:

When it is assumed that the self finds the self in the self, it must be assumed that the self finds the absolute other in the self and it must be meant that the absolute other is just the self. In this sense, what encompasses those who find and those who are found must be assumed to be the universal of nothingness as the determination with no determiner. It must be like immediate intermediate or discontinuous continuity. (6-386)

The self is described as having the immediate structure of self-awareness, which clarifies the structure of self-awareness that the self is itself according to what is not the self, or, in other words, the self is negated by what is not the self and the self is acquired by the negation. Calling into question the self-awareness with such a logical structure from the viewpoint of the personal relation between I and thou is the characteristic of Nishida's thought. "I and thou are absolutely others. There is no universal that encompasses me and thee. However, I am me by recognizing thee, and thou art thee by recognizing me; thou art at the bottom of me and I am at the bottom of thee. I am united with thee through my bottom, and thou art united with me through thy bottom; I and thou are united internally because we are absolutely others" (6-381). Here the concrete way that the self exists is guaranteed by the different one, and the self recovers itself by recognizing it as "thou." Of course, it is not an easy argument that "the absolute other" is equal to a so-called personal man. It means that Nishida does not find <the place of absolute negation where my own self is swept away> other than <the place of personal relation where "the absolute other" is recognized as thee>.

It is the characteristic of Nishida that he calls the place of negation into question in terms of the personal relation of response. <sup>14</sup>

For us what is thought as the absolute other must have the meaning of the representation of ourselves...the mutual relationship of what is absolutely contradictory must echo each other, that is, respond each other. Responding means that what determines the self independently in every point unites mutually at the peak of self-determination, in which the meaning contradictory to the so-called unity of self and other must exist. (6-392f)

Here Nishida analyzes that "other" which is considered as thee represents itself. In other words, to respond to what represents the self is to <recognize> the other as thee, and this responsive relation opens the relation between individuals that live the one-time present independently in every point. Everything responding to me in the present is "other" that cannot be the extension of me, in which Nishida finds the primary form of I-thou relation. Besides, the responsive relation is "not a simple substance of representation; it arises in the place where I and thou mutually speak of the fact as my self-determination and the fact as thy self-determination respectively" (6-405). It calls into question the responsive relation in terms of the time theory of the self who lives the present. Nishida's time theory is the one in which eternity and time cross each other paradoxically in the present, and he tries to discuss the life of the self who lives the present from the viewpoint of the personal responsive relation in which the past and the future are faced as "bygone thou" and <just coming thou> respectively.

The thought that we find the infinite past in the bottom of ourselves, and besides, the past is determined from

the future, or time is negated, in the bottom of ourselves must be according to the meaning that what responds to the self is thee. ... The determination of time begins when we find thee as the absolute other in the bottom of ourselves. (6-418f)

However, if everything the self meets is “thee,” we should always bear infinite responsibility “here now.” Nishida insists that “even if nature, or reason, is held in the bottom of the self, such a thought is not arisen. ... As thou are found in the bottom of myself and therefore I am myself, I bear infinite responsibility for the bottom of my existence itself” (6-420). The voice of calling the self in the midst of reality is the one from not the outside but the basis of the self, and we bear responsibility for how to respond to this different voice. Nevertheless, it is impossible for the finite self to respond to the infinite oughtness in reality, and the reality that it is impossible to respond to the infinite oughtness produces an infinite sense of sin about the existence of the self.<sup>15</sup>

Nishida opens the religious order by referring to the sense of sin (original sin) that it is impossible to respond to the infinite oughtness. For Nishida, religion is the most concrete phase of the world of being, and therefore he pursues the concrete world of being which thoroughly rejects abstraction or universalization by taking up the sense of sin as a question.

Thou must not be abstract thee that is simply universal; and even if it is historical, it must not be what is understood as a simply historical fact. It must be historical thee determined from the bottom of me; I am me by finding historical thee in the bottom of me. ... Though it is oughtness, abstract oughtness that is simply universal is not found; when I find what responds to me as historical thee in my determined historical position, true oughtness is assumed. Just in this sense, what is personal can be assumed in the bottom of being, and it is possible to think that the world of being is built on what is personal. (6-420f)

How should I respond to the calling of other that is met in each moment? As one to whom such a task is assigned, I am me, I am awakened by the calling from thee, and I open the historical world of being while responding to the calling. Therefore, the world of being is opened in the place where I and thou meet, in which the infinite past and the infinite future are united.

### 3. Calling of “Absolute Other” and “Absolute Love (Agape)”

Nishida thinks that the existence of the self can be called into question in the place where the sense of sin (original sin) that it is impossible to respond to the infinite oughtness becomes question.

In terms of morality, it is thought as personality that we hold the infinite oughtness in our finite self while personality cannot be assumed without the sense of sine in terms of religion. However, why does our personal self have to be thought of as such? Because it means that we hold the absolute other in the bottom of ourselves. As what is thought to be the absolute other that is held in the bottom of ourselves has the meaning of absolute thee, we must feel infinite responsibility for the bottom of ourselves and think our existence itself as sin. We always have deep anxiety and fear in the bottom of ourselves, and the more clarified the self-awareness is, the more strongly we feel our own sin. (6-419f)

Bringing forth the argument as above, Nishida argues that “the absolute other” he says “kills me” in the bottom of the self (6-401). The absolute negation working at the bottom of the existence of the self is 〈the calling of other〉 that refuses to be collected by me, but the “other” found “in the self” still has the possibility of going for the self-extension such as “objective spirit” and “universal spirit.” In this sense, the description of “finding the absolute

other in the self" is not enough yet,<sup>16</sup> and thus Nishida tries to take up the negativity of "the absolute other" by which we cannot but be tormented by a guilty conscience and consider the existence of ourselves in itself as sin according to the formula of "finding the self in the absolute other," using the words "we can find the absolute other as opposite to an extension of ourselves" (6-424).

Just in the sense that we find ourselves in the absolute other in opposition to finding the absolute other in the bottom of ourselves, we can think the personal self that truly has original sin in the bottom of the self and regards the existence of the self itself as sin. And the meaning of so-called agape in Christianity must exist in there. (6-424, the underlined part is by the person who quoted it.)

Nishida thinks that the self is inversely recovered in the absolute negativity in which the existence of the self is felt as sin and is considered as "guilt." That is, he insists that in the immediate directness by the absolute negation of the self, "I become truly what is me" (6-424).

To respond to the calling of "the absolute other" is to live from the absolute negation, which means that it is impossible to respond to the calling, and Nishida radically draws the negativity of "the absolute other" as the word "agape." Agape is the love of the absolute negation, which victimizes the self. It is the love that is thought of in the sense that is opposite to the self-extension like Eros. Moreover, as it is emphasized that "agape is not a love of humans, but a love of God, not a rise from human to God, but a descent from God to human" (6-421), agape means self-emptying of God which should be said as "kenosis," or, self-emptying of Christ by the death on the cross (Philippians 2:6-8). Nishida finds in the way we ourselves exist, which is consistent with God's "agape," the grounds that we are awakened by and respond to the calling of other and thus are able to love the other. "Agape" mentioned by Nishida is the principle of creation that was founded on the thorough self-sacrifice of God. The way for leading to man from God is the one as God's thorough self-negation, and from the absolute negation Nishida describes the world of being where I and thou are related with each other, that is, the historical world itself. Such self-negative God's love is more clearly presented in the text of "*Eros and Caritas*" by German philosopher of religion Heinrich Scholz.

Die Menschwerdung Gottes. In der Christuserscheinung. Und welch eine Menschwerdung! Bis zum Tode am Kreuz. So manifestiert sich die Gottesliebe. (God's incarnation. In the event of God. What incarnation! Till the death on the cross. Thus God's love is revealed.)<sup>17</sup> (6-421f)

Nishida describes the negativity of love which faces "the self-determination of eternal now" by citing the words of H. Scholz, who places the event of incarnation and the Christ's death on the cross in parallel and thinks that the historical world of being woven by me and thee is opened in that negation. But it does not mean that transcendental God exists somewhere away from the I – thou relation. Rather God's agape is the action for opening the relation, and God's agape is the absolute negation, that is, "the absolute nothingness" in the sense of opening the place where selfhood is completely swept away.<sup>18</sup>

## Epilogue

The historical world described by Nishida is a creative world. We can say that it is the world which will be created newly by the responsive relation between me and thee. In terms of this "newly," history is opened, and this "newly" is presented using the term "the self-awareness of absolute nothingness." "The self-awareness of absolute nothingness" is, however, the agape as the self-emptying of the absolute being. Agape is the movement toward the

absolute nothingness in which the absolute being negates itself, and also the movement toward nothingness in which the absolute includes nothingness in itself and reverses itself toward the relative. Therefore, in the movement with which everything is vanished and vanishes, everything is created through God's emptying in there. The self-awareness mentioned by Nishida is the one founded by 〈agape〉, and the argument in [*An Inquiry into the Good*] in which love is regarded as "the culmination of knowledge" (1-199) is presented in the more logically analyzed form.

However, at the same time, Nishida explicates the argument in "*Zen no kenkyū*" to develop his thoughts on love in his last years as the logic of crossing the fall with the expiation, creation and salvation, or negation and affirmation. God is described as "The God who is able to descend to the most wicked" (11-404), and the historical world is called into question by Nishida in the deeper argument about the basis of Christianity. In the last of his essay "*Bashoteki ronri to shūkyoteki sekaikan* [*The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview*]," he draws the picture of Christ stepping up to the old inquisitor to kiss him wordlessly in "The Grand Inquisitor" of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel "*The Brothers Karamazov*" to describe God's agape. In Seville, Spain of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which is the time when vast numbers of heretics were burned to death every day, among the people watching them curiously, Christ appears in private and performs a miracle secretly. The Grand Inquisitor who found it captures Christ and thoroughly criticizes and rebukes him.

"How can you deprive us of that authority now? Why art Thou come to hinder us? Tomorrow I shall burn Thee." In response, Christ remains silent, never uttering a word, as if a shadow. The next day when he is about to be released, Christ approaches the old man and kisses him without a word. The old man shudders. (11-462)

While Nishida of course admits that his interpretation becomes the target of criticism saying, "This Christ, silent from beginning to end like a shadow, is the Christ of what I call immanent transcendence.....It is my own interpretation," he clarifies his position by saying that "But a new Christian world may be opened up with the Christ viewed in terms of immanent transcendence. .... We see the real God where there is no God" (11-462). "Where there is no God" means the world where "there is no God" that is the ultimate of the self-negation of God. Vast numbers of people are killed, and among those who enjoy seeing it curiously Christ stands in front of the Grand Inquisitor who slaughtered the vast numbers of people and kisses him wordlessly. It is just the way of God Nishida begins to mention as agape, and the form of the world created as the ultimate of agape. The more diabolic the world, the more the agape of God who stands close to the diabolic world and kisses it with emptying itself is carried through. While Nishida thoroughly looks into agape logically, he develops focusing on "agape" the logics that can describe the real world (being) that dies and then arises even diabolically creatively each time.

- 
- 1 Miki Kiyoshi, "Nishida tetsugaku no seikaku ni tsuite [On the characteristics of Nishida's philosophy]" (1936), "*Miki Kiyoshi Zenshu* [*The complete works of Miki Kiyoshi*]" Vol. 10, p. 410, Iwanami Shoten, 1967.
  - 2 The citation of or reference to the writings of Nishida Kitaro is based on "*Nishida Kitaro Zenshu* [*The complete works of Nishida Kitaro*]" (19 vols) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by Shimomura Toratato et al., Iwanami Shoten, 1965-66, except for the dailies, letters, and new materials. With regard to the citation or the reference, it is indicated in the main text as the combination of volume and page number cited. For example, page 1 of volume 6 is cited as (6-1).
  - 3 The diaries, letters, and new materials of Nishida Kitaro are based on "*Shinban Nishida Kitaro Zenshu* [*New Edition of the complete works of Nishida Kitaro*]" (24 vols), edited by Takeda Atsushi, Kraus Riesenhuber, Kosaka Kunio & Fujita Masakatsu, Iwanami Shoten, 2002-09. With regard to the citation or the reference, it is indicated in the main text as 〈New〉 followed by volume and page number cited in order to distinguish it from the old edition. For example, page 1 of volume 24 is cited as (New 21-1).

- 4 Miki Kiyoshi, the essay cited before, p. 419.
- 5 Hanaoka (Kawamura) Eiko seeks the solution from Nishida's philosophy by showing the limit of Western Christianity by focusing on the difference between Christianity and Nishida's philosophy. (Kawamura Eiko, "*Kirisuto-kyo to Nishida Tetsugaku [Christianity and Nishida's philosophy]*," Shinkyo Shupansha, 1988) Shibata Syu, who also philosophizes by showing the limit of Western Christianity, seeks the new potential of religion in the form of criticizing modern religions by taking up Takizawa Katsumi (1909–1984) who came under the influence of Nishida and the dialectical theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968). Shibata criticizes modern religions and takes the standpoint of considering "the religion of Immanuel" as a new potential of religion from the viewpoint of Takizawa's pure anthropomorphism. ("*Gendai no kiki wo koete [Beyond the modern crisis]*," Nansosha, 1991: "*Kami gainen no kakumei [Revolution of the conception of God]*," Nansosha, 1995.)
- 6 Older ones include the studies on Nishida's philosophy by Takizawa Katsumi ("*Nishida tetsugaku no konpon mondai [The fundamental problems of Nishida's philosophy]*," "*Bukkyo to kirisutokyo no konpon mondai [The fundamental problems of Buddhism and Christianity]*") and the speculations by Yagi Sei-ichi who is the member of Non-church movement and met Takizawa in argument and Akizuki Ryomin who was baptized as Protestant but later became a Zenist ("*Bukyo to kirisutokyo – Takizawa Katsumi tononotaiwa wo motomete [Buddhism and Christianity – pursuing the dialogue with Takizawa Katsumi]*," authored and edited by Yagi Sei-ichi and Abe Masao, co-authored by Akizuki Ryomin and Honda Masa-aki, Sanichi Shobo, 1981, and "*Danma ga arawa ni narutoki <Bukkyo to kirisutokyono shukyo-tetugaku-teki taiwa> [When damma is exposed <Dialogues between Buddhism and Christianity in terms of philosophy of religion>]*," co-authored by Yagi Sei-ichi and Akizuki Ryomin, Seidosha, et al. 1990). Their speculations are formulas to be taken up when dialogues between religions are called into question. Jan Van Bragt, who is a Catholic priest, analyzed the influence and relation between Nishida's philosophy and Christianity critically, describing Nishida's philosophy as "the one opened to religion by addressing the mystery of the whole life or being deeply or the one trying to overcome the conflict between religion and philosophy" (Jan Van Bragt, Nishida's Philosophy and Christianity published as part of "*Nishida tetsugaku wo manabu hito no tameni [For those who study the philosophy of Nishida Kitaro]*," edited by Omine Akira, Sekai Shisoshu, 1996, p. 213). Onoda Isao also explored Nishida's philosophy as one to bring the theology of Christianity close to the philosophy of Buddhism from the standpoint of the theology of Christianity, calling into question the place of nothingness in Nishida's philosophy by focusing particularly on the relation with pneumatology based on the conception of "the place of the holy trinity" (Onodera Isao, "*Daichi no tetsugaku – Basho-teki ronri to kirisutokyo [Philosophy of the earth – Logic of place and Christianity]*," Sanichi Shobo, et al. 1983).
- 7 The characteristics of Ogawa's studies is that he took up the influence of Kierkegaard and dialectical theology underlying Nishida's philosophy to call into question Nishida's positive and negative reviews of Christianity. (Ogawa Keiji, Nishida tetsugaku to kirisutokyo [Nishida's philosophy and Christianity], "*Nishida tetsugaku heno toi [Inquiry into the philosophy of Nishida]*," Iwanami Shoten, 1990, pp. 242–279)
- 8 Asami, while he follows the four phases for the dialogues between Nishida's philosophy and Christianity set by Ogawa, considers the dialogues to have been started before "*Zen no kenkyū [An Inquiry into the Good]*" by taking up the letter to Yamamoto Ryokichi in 1987 (Nishida's profession of experience of the Bible) in contrast to Ogawa who considers the start of the dialogues to be by writing "*Zen no kenkyū*."
- 9 Asami Hiroshi "Nishida Kitaro to kirisutokyo no taiwa [The Dialogue between Nishida Kitaro and Christianity]," Chobunsha, 2000.
- 10 As the sentence appeared in "Riso [An ideal]" Vol. 64 (May 1936), I cited it from the old edition of "*Nishida Kitaro Zenshu [The complete works of Nishida Kitaro]*" as part of the short piece, not as a letter.
- 11 Tanaka Yutaka, "Mu no basho to jinkaku – Nishida tetsugaku to kirisutokyo no setten [The place of nothingness and personality – the contact point between Nishida's philosophy and Christianity]," "Riso [An ideal]," Vol. 681, 2008, p. 163.
- 12 The essay "Eichiteki sekai [The Intelligible World]" is not only the one representing Nishida's mid-term philosophy but also the one that tried to found the Western metaphysics from Plato according to Nishida's standpoint. Nishida, going beyond the metaphysics that intuites the idea of truth, goodness, and beauty intellectually, presents in the essay the view of religious world which goes beyond further the position of God as the transcendental subject. The essay has certainly an aspect of the thought on religion in Nishida's mid-term philosophy. Kosaka Kunitsugu also positions the essay as Nishida's mid-term thought on religion in "*Nishida tetsugaku to shukyo [Nishida's Philosophy and Religion]*," Daito Shuppansha, 1994, pp. 199–221.
- 13 The term "the absolute other" is the one that is intensively discussed in the limited essays ("Jiyu ishi [Freedom of Will]," "Watashi to nanji [I and Thou]" and "Sei no tetsugaku ni tsuite [On the Philosophy of Life]") carried in "*Mu no jikakuteki gentei [The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness]*." In "*Mu no jikakuteki gentei*," "the absolute other" is used in giving a

keenly highlighted description of the instant of an individual toward it, however, it is particularly formulated as “finding the absolute other in the self and finding the self in the absolute other” to describe the structure of self-awareness.

- 14 One of the essays topicalizing the relation of the response between I and thee in which we can find Nishida's change in his argument over other is Kumagaya Sei-ichiro, “Nishida tasharon ni okeru tenkai — Kyokanteki icchi kara outouteki musubitsuki e [Turning in Nishida's Argument over Other — from Sympathetic Correspondence to Responsive Unification],” *“Nishida tetsugakukai nenpo [Annual Report of Nishida Philosophical Society]”* Vol. 2, 2005, pp. 128–142.
- 15 Nishida thinks that “the absolute other” as “thy calling” negates the self at the bottom of the existence of the self from the two aspects; one is infinite oughtness and the other is a religious sin. “As what is thought to be the absolute other held in the bottom of ourselves bears the meaning of the absolute thee, we feel infinite responsibility in the bottom of ourselves, and the existence of ourselves in itself is thought to be sin” (6–420). What Nishida describes as “thou” is what puts infinite responsibility to the self and evokes sin in the self.
- 16 Shirai Masato, in spite of emphasizing that “It isn't meant that transcendental God exists somewhere while 〈I and thou〉 leave the place they respond, says that “the action of negation has to be said as the one transcending us” in the sense that the action of negation opens the place for the relation with other, and then emphasizes that “If the action of negation is simply a relative one, it is the negation for me, the selfhood of 〈for me〉 always follows around me, and after all it is impossible to go beyond myself.” (Shirai Masato, “Hiteisei to toui — Koki Nishida tetsugaku no tenkai ni mukete [Negativity and Oughtness — For the explication of late Nishida's Philosophy],” *“Nishida tetsugakukai nenpo [Annual Report of Nishida Philosophical Society]”* “ Vol. 4, 2007, p. 146.
- 17 Translation inside the parentheses is by this writer. Heinrich Scholz, *Eros und Caritas: Die platonische Liebe und Die Liebe im Sinne Des Christentums*. Halle: Mac Niemeyer Verlag, 1929, S.49. H. Scholz (1884–1956) is a German philosopher of religion who argued and collaborated with Karl Barth from 1920s to 1930s, who is also a German's first professor of mathematical philosophy. Considering the fact that Nishida cited this “*Eros and Caritas*” (1929) in “I and Thou” he wrote in 1932, we can find that Nishida was greatly interested in Christianity.
- 18 Nishida says that “what is thought to be the absolute other which determines us from the bottom of us must have the meaning of historical determination. God reveals the self in the bottom of history” (6–426), understanding that “agape” is God's revelation of itself through history.