

TRANSLATION

Neither Dogma nor Institution: Nishida on the Role of Religion

Translated and Introduced by GEREON KOPF

Introduction

THE present essay introduces two minor passages from the lectures on “Religious Studies”¹ Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) gave between August 1913 and August 1914 at Kyoto University. While Nishida’s lecture notes are largely ignored by Nishida scholarship in general, not the least because they were reconstructed from notes by his students,² these two passages especially provide a unique key to Nishida’s philosophy of religion in particular and his philosophical approach and system in general. In short, the lectures not only offer one of the few relatively systematic readings Nishida provides of the main philosophers, but they also reveal his general method of reading and doing philosophy. Such a method is especially important since his philoso-

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¹ The title of Nishida’s lectures on religion “*Shūkyōgaku*” (宗教學) comprises the Japanese translation of the German term “Religionswissenschaft” and its English rendition “Science of Religion.” While the former is still in use, the latter was replaced by the term “Religious Studies” in the middle of the last century. I decided to translate the Japanese original as this, since the term “science” today carries connotations that are difficult to reconcile with the academic project of *shūkyōgaku* and religious studies. The complete lecture notes can be found in *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū* (The collected Works of Nishida Kitarō, hereafter abbreviated as NKZ), vol. 15, pp. 221–381.

² Nishida credits Hisamatsu Shin’ichi (1889–1980) with taking notes and cross-checking them as well as preparing the manuscript for “Religious Studies.” (NKZ, vol. 15, pp. *i-ii*).

phy generally lives up to its reputation of not being easily accessible or reader-friendly even to the professional philosopher. In particular, as many readers of Nishida will agree, his thought is obscured rather than illuminated by his pervasive use of paradoxical language and mantra-like repetition of the non-dual paradigm. He commits himself to this practice to such a degree that his philosophy more often than not, seems to dissolve all concepts and ideas into a universal oneness or, more appropriately, the “self-identity of the absolute contradictories” (絶対矛盾的自己同一). However, this is not so. Not only does Nishida reject the standpoints of monism and pantheism throughout his work,³ the two sections translated here provide a key to his philosophical methodology and an application to the non-dual paradigm. The first excerpt, entitled “The Standpoint that Sets Up the Unique Norm of Religion,” (独自の宗教的規範を立てる立場)⁴ introduces a heuristic device that explains Nishida’s predilection for the non-dual paradigm and paradoxical language and offers a key to his philosophy, which is best identified as the dialectics of the middle way. The second one, “The Relationship of Religion to Scholarship and Morality,” (宗教と學問及び道德)⁵ provides a superb application of his non-dual principle to the discussion of the role religion plays in relation to other human endeavors, such as scholarship and morality, with a special focus on the often assumed incompatibility of science and religion. In short, Nishida suggests that scholarship and religion are not only compatible but necessitate each other; this essay thus facilitates a solution to the latter problem usually not considered.

Since the translation contains two excerpts, I would like to briefly introduce their context. In his lectures on “Religious Studies,” Nishida sets out to argue that the “religious demand” is the most central “demand” of human existence. This theme he had already developed in his *Inquiry Into the Good* (善の研究). There, he suggests that the “religious demand” (宗教的要求) comprises the “demand of life” (生命に就いての要求)⁶ that underlies all human activities. To explain this notion, Nishida strives to undermine the dualisms that dominate, in his mind, the four major philosophical discourses, namely the dichotomy of thought and will in epistemology, nature and spirit in ontol-

³ Nishida makes this point, for example, in NKZ, vol. 10, p. 491; vol. 11, p. 398; vol. 11, p. 450 and, more indirectly, in NKZ, vol. 1, pp. 173–196, where he suggests a middle way between pantheism and theism.

⁴ NKZ, vol. 15, pp. 289–296.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 331–335.

⁶ NKZ, vol. 1, p. 169.

ogy, heteronomy and autonomy in ethics, and theism and pantheism in philosophical theology or the philosophy of religion. In this context, it is important to realize that Nishida does not aim at presenting a satisfactory picture of mainstream philosophy, but rather points to what he considers the fundamental problem of the philosophical discourse. Nishida suggests that this problem lies in the reliance on a binary worldview and its assumptions that reality is divided into two completely distinct worlds. He questions this dualism inherent in mainstream philosophy and postulates a “unifying power” (統一力), which underlies the above-mentioned dichotomies. In this sense, thought and will, nature and spirit are not mutually exclusive but rather comprise two aspects of the same cognitive activity in the case of epistemology, and reality in that of ontology. This unifying activity Nishida identifies as the content of religion. He calls it, not unlike Paul Tillich’s (1886–1965) “ultimate concern” (*was uns unbedingt angeht*)⁷ and John Hutchinson’s “ultimate value,”⁸ the “demand of life” to drive home the point that religion addresses the most fundamental and all-pervasive dimension of human existence. It is in his lectures on “Religious Studies,” that he systematically develops this notion of the “most fundamental demand.”

In the section preceding the one translated here, Nishida applies the Platonic triad of “the truth, the good, and the beautiful” (真善美), which constitutes a recurring theme in his philosophy, and its epistemic equivalent, the triad of “knowledge, feeling, and will” (知情意),⁹ to the nineteenth century European search for the “essence of religion” in order to explore the ultimate concern and deepest demand of human existence. In short, Nishida contends that the “religious demand” transcends and, simultaneously, grounds the “intellectual demand” (知的要求), the “aesthetic demand” (美的要求), and the “moral demand” (道德的要求). The goal of his project is rather obvious. If he can argue that the religious demand really does underlie and transcend the other aspects of human existence, he will have accomplished two basic goals. First, he has made the case that religion does pervade all aspects of human existence. Second, he has successfully rejected all forms of reductionism that limit religion to intellect, aesthetics and morality and, subsequently, has proven the inadequacy of the respective philosophies. To accomplish just that, Nishida proceeds in two steps. First, he identifies the medieval scholastic theology exemplified by Anselm of Canterbury’s (1033–1109) ontological proof

⁷ Tillich 1958, pp. 19–21.

⁸ Hutchinson 1969, pp. 5–9.

⁹ NKZ, vol. 15, p. 291.

of the existence of god as “the normative intellectual consciousness” (知的規範意識), Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury’s (1671–1713) “religious enthusiasm” which unites and grounds “aesthetic matters” and “religious matters” and, at the same time, “harmonizes the intellectual and the moral demand”¹⁰ as “the normative aesthetic consciousness” (美的規範意識), and Immanuel Kant’s (1724–1804) *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft*) as the prototype of a “normative moral consciousness” (道德的規範意識). Second, Nishida rejects all three approaches as insufficient. Regarding the first position, he argues that, in addition to the arguments, especially the four antinomies Kant presented in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*) to thwart any attempt to “intellectually” grasp metaphysical matters,¹¹ the “intellectual demand” lacks the emotional and experiential dimension necessary to the religious enterprise. Second, Nishida believes that Kant’s three critiques have sufficiently demonstrated that the intellectual, the aesthetic, and moral standpoints cannot simply collapse into one but demand their own “reason.” Finally, the “moral demand” suffers from the dualism characteristic of Kant’s position; that is, a dualism between “pure” and “practical” thinking, between metaphysics and ethics. Analogically, Nishida concludes that the religious demand cannot be reduced to “faith” (信仰), “religious feelings” (宗教的感情) as in the case of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834), or “religious activity” (宗教的行為) such as rituals. Most importantly, however, Nishida argues that all three standpoints are incapable of solving the inherent “antinomy”¹² and, one could add, ambiguities of the religious discourse in particular and human existence in general.

In short, all three criteria, as well as all of the philosophies that represent the various approaches, fail to account for the religious phenomenon. Not only that, they also give an incomplete picture of the human predicament. To discuss the ground of human existence in “The Standpoint that Sets Up the Unique Norm of Religion,” Nishida suggests that these three demands actu-

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 283–84.

¹¹ Nishida fashions his term “intellectual demand” in the narrow sense of Kant’s “pure reason,” which is distinguished from “practical” and “aesthetic” reason, and Nishida’s moral and aesthetic demands.

¹² Nishida borrows the term “antinomy” obviously from Kant’s first *Critique*. However, Nishida tends to use this term to indicate any irreconcilable contradiction that points beyond the world of knowledge, his “universal of judgment.”

ally symbolize the two basic aspects of human existence: intellect and aesthetics, symbolizing the objectivist standpoint, which I usually refer to as the world of knowledge; morality, the standpoint of subjectivity to the world of engagement.¹³ Assuming the former standpoint, the scholar pretends to stand outside of the world and analyzes it from a neutral and, subsequently, seemingly objective place. This perspective allows for analysis, but assumes a distance between self and the world that in reality does not exist. The latter standpoint gives, due to the fact that even scholars are involved in the world, but concedes that subjectivity makes analysis impossible. In the present section, Nishida compares this situation to a play; the world of knowledge is thus symbolized by the audience that watches the play from a disengaged perspective, while the world of engagement is symbolized by the actors, who are actively involved in the performance of the play, but lack the angle, Nishida says “the space,” to reflectively process it. Elsewhere, he applies the same model to the role of the historian who lives within history yet, at the same time, pretends to analyze it from the outside.¹⁴ In short, the predicament of the reflective individual is highly ambiguous insofar as she/he occupies the standpoints of subjectivity and objectivity—that is, involvement in and disengagement from the world—at the same time. This existential ambiguity is expressed in the religious demand, which, according to Nishida, provides the unity of subjectivity and objectivity. In other words, the religious demand overcomes and mends the dichotomies and divisions within human existence and permits the individual to simultaneously be a participant and an observer in the great play called life. Using this analogy, Nishida has successfully reduced the variety of theories on religious phenomenon to two fundamental positions and applied them to the problem he is most interested in, that is, the problem of dualism. In addition, he has managed to introduce religion as the source of the non-dual paradigm and to identify his own position, as the title of his last finished volume confirms, as the standpoint of religion.¹⁵

¹³ In his article “The World of Intelligibility” (叡智の世界) (NKZ, vol. 5, pp. 123–185), Nishida identifies the realms of objective thought and subjective activity as the “universals of judgment” (判断の一般者) and “self-awareness” (自覚の一般者) respectively. I renamed them “worlds of knowledge” and “engagement” to take them out of the narrow context of the epistemological discourse, in which Nishida framed these terms, and make them applicable to a wider range of issues.

¹⁴ NKZ, vol. 12, p. 55.

¹⁵ The title of his last completed work reads “*The Logic of Basho and the Religious Worldview*.” (場所の論理と宗教の世界観). NKZ, vol. 11, pp. 371–464.

Subsequently, religion constitutes not one phenomenon among many (scholarship, aesthetics, and morality), but their ground and the relationship among them. What this means is that, to Nishida, religion thematizes the awareness of the framework that grounds scholarship and morality, but lies outside their respective domains; in addition, religion embraces the ambiguities these specific standpoints evoke. Due to its particularity, an individual standpoint, be it the standpoint of objectivity assumed by scholarship or that of the subjectivity of morality, loses sight of the totality and the ambiguity of human existence. The latter reduces it to either the aspect of objectivity or subjectivity and thereby denies the twofold dimension of the individual that is, at the same time, separate from yet belonging to the totality. At the same time, the individual self constitutes, simultaneously, the subject and the object of all human activity, but especially knowledge, be it scholarship or the simple awareness of oneself. In short, religion does not constitute a set of beliefs and practices, neither does it constitute social institutions, but rather an awareness of this inherent ambiguity of human existence. Nishida calls this awareness “the religious heart” (宗教心).¹⁶ He further describes this heart as the awe, caused by knowledge of the world and as the act, not the content, of faith, which scholarship and morality both require. In the case of scholarship, this act of faith is engendered by the recognition that there is no absolutely objective standpoint and that every standpoint is relative to its opposite as well as its historical context. The terminology of the religious heart does not refer to any of these particular standpoints but to the awareness that any particular position is bound to be relative and incomplete, especially when seen in the context of an all-encompassing totality. It is thus more appropriately called, to paraphrase the popular rhetoric frequently associated with the thought of the Kyoto School and Zen thinkers such as D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966) and Abe Masao, the “standpoint of no standpoint.” In the case of morality, the act of faith manifests itself in the abandonment of the self to the engagement, which in the ideal scenario is paramount to the loss of one’s self to the context of the totality. To Nishida, this context of totality is not completely transcendent but rather refers to the relationship of an individual to another, to the society, and to the environment. Nishida refers to this act of abandonment alternatively by citing the famous line from Dōgen’s 道元 (1200–1253) *Shōbōgenzō Genjōkōan* 正法眼藏現成公案, “to study the self is to forget the self—to forget

¹⁶ Ibid.

the self is to be actualized by myriad dharmas”¹⁷ or by using his own terminology of the “inverse correlation”¹⁸ (逆対応), that is, the human response to Amida Buddha’s “other-power” (他力). Both terminologies indicate that the self’s isolation from, and opposition to, the totality in the case of Dōgen, and the absolute other in that of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), are overcome. Nishida’s use of religious terminology indicates his belief that the act of faith, necessary for both scholarship and morality, can only be expressed in symbolic language and cannot be expressed otherwise.

This sentiment becomes especially obvious in the second section, “The Relationship of Religion to Scholarship and Morality.” Here, Nishida argues in extremely strong terms that religion can never be at odds with scholarship, especially science and morality; to the contrary, they support each other. They cannot be at odds, because knowledge about the world falls into the domain of scholarship, while engagement with the world falls into that of morality. One’s place within the play and the world, as well as the existential ambiguity experienced by the individual within these domains, is essentially a religious matter. While statements such as “if both, scholarship and morality, on one side, and religion, on the other, guard their domains, they are not in conflict” might be read to suggest a dualism between science and religion, they in fact do not. On the contrary, while Nishida acknowledges the existence and necessity of distinct domains, he always adds that they are insolubly intertwined. To him, scientific knowledge fosters religious faith and vice versa. Conflicts arise when religion is mistaken as a source of knowledge about the world and, respectively, scholarship as a tool to avert spiritual and existential crises. The key lines in this section are those that proclaim that Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) and Charles Darwin (1809–1882), criticized by the church of their time as heretics, were more religious than those who questioned their religiosity. While the controversy about evolution might be considered an issue of the past in most parts of the world (and even the U.S.A.), today’s issues on which religious fervor or fanaticism oversteps, as Nishida would say, its “domain” include abortion, stem cell research, the issue of sexual preference and equal rights for same sex partners. As Nishida notices rather bluntly, “moral law should not be determined by religious authority.”¹⁹ A religion that is threatened by knowledge about the world and by considerations about

¹⁷ Dōgen 1993–4, vol. 1, p. 95.

¹⁸ I borrow this translation from Heisig 2001, p. 99.

¹⁹ NKZ, vol. 15, p. 333.

morality cannot be authentic; by the same token, religion should not be identified with the adherence to dogmas but rather with the quest for knowledge and the desire to be moral.

Assertions such as these, make it unmistakably clear that Nishida breaks with most conventional definitions of religion. To him, religion has nothing to do with faith, religious institutions, morality, or even rituals. This way, he ignores polythetic definitions of religion based on family resemblance,²⁰ such as the notorious “four Cs” of creed, community, code, and cult that are frequently cited by textbooks as the basic features of “religion.” In addition, his pronouncements that “religion comprises the relationship between god and humans”²¹ and that “god constitutes the fundamental concept of religion”²² are misleading at best, since his conception of god does not show any affinity to the god of the theologies (such as the Pauline theology) he cites in support of his position.²³ As he suggests in his lectures, “the essence of religion comprises the union between humans and god. God constitutes the objectivity of the cosmos, the self its subjectivity.”²⁴ “God” and “the self” merely symbolize two extreme aspects of human experience. To Nishida, religion is not concerned with the relationship between transcendence and immanence or even between god—in the theistic sense—and humans; on the contrary, his concept of the “religious heart” indicates an existential attitude. Ultimately, “god” symbolizes nothing but the obliteration of the self.²⁵ Similarly “faith,” to Nishida, signifies an existential attitude that discards the self and embraces a more holistic rather than exclusive and subjective standpoint. The sense of the religious commences with the awareness of one’s own impotence, fragility, and impermanence. Since his words in this regard are especially strong, I would like to cite them here: the religious feeling arises “when we realize our own impotence and triviality in solitude or in the silence of broad daylight. ... Again, when we are in solitude or in the silence of broad daylight or when we face the vastness of the ocean, the awareness of our triviality and impotence weighs heavily upon us. In other words, we feel that we are bound and

²⁰ For a discussion of these kinds of definitions, see Wilson 1998, pp. 141–162.

²¹ NKZ, vol. 1, p. 173.

²² NKZ, vol. 11, p. 372.

²³ A minor fact he only acknowledges in *The Logic of Basho and the Religious Worldview*, where he delineates his thought from that of Karl Barth (NKZ, vol. 11, p. 398).

²⁴ NKZ, vol. 15, p. 332.

²⁵ Literally, Nishida suggests that “when we encounter god we die” (NKZ, vol. 11, p. 396).

confined indescribably in the mystical totality of life.”²⁶ Elsewhere, he suggests that “the religious heart is not born out of the procession from the finite to the Infinite or from the relative to the Absolute, as many people think; on the contrary we become conscious of it when our own existence is called into question and becomes problematic... The problem of religion is not a matter of values. It rather implies that the existence of the self becomes problematic at the moment when we become conscious of the deep self-contradiction at the bottom of our selves, or, alternatively, when we are aware that our existence is self-contradictory.”²⁷ These sentences clearly illustrate why for the later Nishida, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821–1881) and Shinran model the religious heart. To Nishida, religion is born out of an existential struggle to come to terms with one’s place in nature and society, the two faces of the historical world. It takes as its content, the awe scholarship and morality evoke in the individual and the recognition that we stand engulfed by a totality that is there even though it consistently escapes our grasp. The rest is accessory.

Drawing such a picture of religion, Nishida does bring to life some of the implications of religion of the non-dualist paradigm for philosophy. It is, of course, no surprise that a non-dualist philosophy questions a fossilized dichotomy of transcendence and immanence, the sacred and the profane, as he does explicitly so in his *The Logic of Basho and the Religious Worldview*. However, already in the section that precedes “The Relationship of Religion to Scholarship and Morality,” Nishida concludes his analysis of various models of religious categories with the dry observation that there is really no distinction between these two categories in general or between the religions of other-power and those of self-power in particular.²⁸ While Nishida borrows the latter terms from Shinran’s polemic against Tendai Buddhism, he uses them to contrast True Pure Land Buddhism with Zen Buddhism and, ultimately, to function as the prototypes of all religious categories. What is more interesting, however, is that Nishida’s philosophy of religion actually provides the thought structure to theories of religion that are very contemporary. Not only can his concepts such as the “transcendent immanence,” “imma-

²⁶ NKZ, vol. 15, p. 295.

²⁷ NKZ, vol. 11, p. 393.

²⁸ “When those two approaches are identical, true religion arises.... The religions of other-power (他力) and self-power (自力) become one when taken to their respective extremes” (NKZ, vol. 15, p. 330).

nence in the form of transcendence,” and “eschatology of the everyday,”²⁹ accommodate phenomena such as civil and cultural religions, they also resonate with the notion of “this-worldly transcendence,”³⁰ used by several post-modern theorists of religion. Finally, they offer a way out of the alleged incompatibility between religion and science, which was based on the dualistic philosophies of René Descartes (1596–1650) and Francis Bacon (1561–1626), and offer a way to reconcile them without having to sacrifice scientific discoveries to religious dogma or the religious heart to the alleged objectivity of rational thought.

Finally, I would like to add a quick note about the translation. Since the text is reconstructed from notes gathered by Nishida’s students, it frequently lacks flow and discloses leaps in thought larger than usual, even by Nishida’s standards. In addition, the editors frequently included explanations in parenthesis. To make the text accessible to the reader, I have tried to provide bridges without straying too far from the original text. Whenever necessary, I have indicated these additions with brackets. The fact that the text is based on lecture notes might have also contributed to what seems, at first sight, to be a glaring contradiction in “The Standpoint that Sets Up the Unique Norm of Religion.” While Nishida claims that “religious emotion is secondary”³¹ in the beginning of the essay, he later suggests that “the religious emotion is the most central among our emotions.” He follows the latter observation with the not necessarily helpful comment that, giving a literal translation, “even if we were to say that the religious feeling is secondary, it is secondary only insofar as the claim that the religious feeling is central, is secondary.”³² While there could be a host of possible reasons for this problem, ranging from a misunderstanding by the students to an inconsistency on the part of Nishida, it does disappear when one attributes two meanings to the term “secondary.” From a methodological perspective, we can say that “religious emotion” and

²⁹ While Nishida does not employ this term as such, he implies it twice. First, he asserts that Rinzai’s (臨濟) words “should not be misunderstood. They indicate that the eschatological appears in the form of the everyday.” He then equates his own expression with the title of the thirtieth case of the *Mumonkan* (無門関) “the mind is the Buddha” (心即是仏) (NKZ, vol. 11, p. 446). Six pages later, he combines the terms “eschatological” and “everyday” again in a somewhat cryptic statement that reads something like “I talk eschatologically about everydayness” (NKZ, vol. 11, p. 454).

³⁰ Bauman 1988, p. 69.

³¹ NKZ, vol. 15, p. 290.

³² NKZ, vol. 15, p. 291.

“the claim that it is central” are both secondary in the sense of being derived. This is to say that in this essay, he derives the concept of “religious emotion” methodologically from his observation that the present (in Nishida’s time) theories of religion, privileging the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral paradigms, are incapable of not only accommodating the religious phenomenon, but also of coherently dealing with what he considers the most fundamental existential dilemma. In short, Nishida contends that the human predicament discloses an inherent ambiguity that cannot be reduced to one particular standpoint or an easy formula. My translation reflects such considerations. Be that as it may, in the end, I hope, the reader will not be turned away by the terseness of Nishida’s language or by the imperfections in my translation, because I believe that his insights on the role of religion, based on the non-dual paradigm, still have value today.

TRANSLATION

1. The Standpoint that Sets Up the Unique Norm of Religion

Some consider that religion cannot be deduced from any of the three previously discussed norms of human existence [that is, from the intellectual, the aesthetic, or the moral demand], but has to be sought elsewhere. Therefore, I would like to discuss Høffding’s³³ *Philosophy of Religion*, a representative of the psychological approach to the search for the religious norm. According to him, pleasure and pain engender certain kinds of value. In short, everything that bestows pleasure or pain possesses some kind of value for us.³⁴

All feelings of pleasure and pain express some value. In other words, the objects of instant gratification, as well as anything that bestows meaning to these [objects], possess a value for us. This value presupposes and precedes the subject that feels pleasure or pain. In other words, it provides us with the conditions [that give rise to these emotions] as well as with their content. By the same token, it forms a specific relationship to the subject, that is, the subject that feels pleasure and pain. We

³³ Harald Høffding (1843-1931).

³⁴ In his *Religionsphilosophie*, Harald Høffding uses the notion of *Wert*, “value,” as a heuristic device to introduce an epistemological, a psychological, and an ethical approach to the philosophy of religion. Wilhelm Windelband, whom Nishida refers to frequently in the present excerpt, similarly assigns the notion of “value” a central role in the chapter of his *Religionsphilosophie* that deals with ethics and religion.

derive the quintessence of this value from the nature of the conditions and content particular to our emotions.³⁵

We have many emotions. Some of them are, for example, based on the feeling of self-preservation, others on the love for our neighbor. Religious values arise along with the question of whether these two kinds of forces can be maintained in the same realm of existence. In other words, the world can be understood as a struggle among various values; the various dimensions of human existence decide the outcome of this competition in the present moment. In this sense, we can compare our existence in the world with a play. In this play, we, human beings, not only constitute the audience, but also participate in the play as performers. If we observe the drama of this world from the standpoint of the audience, only the intellectual and aesthetic feelings arise. On the contrary, if we simply participate in the performance, we are completely absorbed in it and any place for reflection upon the performance itself is eliminated. This means that only the feeling of morality arises. However, because we simultaneously perform in and observe the play, the question of whether or not the object of our passions and desire, that is, our ideal, prevails in the contest to decide the dominant paradigm in this world, stirs our emotion; this we call religious emotion. Many values compete to exist in this world. Religious emotion arises from this competition. For this reason, we can say that religious emotion is secondary and derivative. However, religious emotion is not weak, but is felt as strongly as the dominant emotion. In some cases, the religious value constitutes the center of everything. (This means that when we consider the fate of these values in the world in which we work, religious emotion can be found).

The differences among the various values [that guide our decisions] are due to the differences among the various emotions they correspond to. Some values are connected to self-assertion, others to the devotion to another.³⁶ Moral, aesthetic, and intellectual emotions alike are not limited to self-preservation, [but must have a social dimension as well].

The religious value (that is, the third kind of value) depends on whether or not

³⁵ Hereafter, following the style of NKZ, the indented paragraphs in smaller type are Nishida's own lecture notes used by the editors in the reconstruction.

³⁶ Here, Nishida evokes once again the fundamental distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, which, as the next essay will demonstrate in religious language, is symbolized by the self and god and systematized as self-power religion or Other Power religion.

it is possible to maintain the co-existence of the previous two values [that is, the intellectual/aesthetic and the moral] in the present moment. We can discover this religious value in the place where the fates of the other (intellectual, aesthetic, and moral) values are determined. In the great play of life, we participate as both actors and spectators. If we were simply spectators facing the unfolding of the play, our standpoint would be purely intellectual and aesthetic. Again, if we were simply performers, we would sink into our roles and there would be no place from which the unfolding of the play could be observed. However, since we are both actors and spectators, we act and, at the same time, observe the unfolding of the play.

[When the standpoints of subjectivity and objectivity coincide], we are drawn into the innermost center of our selves and, because it is the highest value we know, we gain insight into the order and the transition of all events at such a moment. This experience has to be understood in analogy to the way the emotions of pain and pleasure arise in our midst when the fate of these values is decided. The feeling that arises from the fate of the values in their struggle to survive, we call religious emotion. Religious emotion is defined by [and dependent on] its relationship to these values in their realized form. (It constitutes the feeling that arises in response to the fate of the highest ideal).

Regardless of the fact that we encounter it in the form of various deviations, the religious sentiment is felt strongly and directly as if it did exist in its pure form. The religious emotion constitutes the central value in our lives. Consequently, the self tries to maintain it with all of its energy. Even if we were to say that the religious feeling is secondary, we would be only implying that the observation "the religious feeling is central," is derived [from other phenomena of human existence].

Real religious emotions arise bearing the mark of perfect totality. Yet, religious emotion develops the same way that instinct does.

In his *Religionsphilosophie*, Windelband takes this thought even one step further.³⁷ He locates the norm of religion outside of the true, the good, and the beautiful, that is, outside the norms of the intellect, emotion, and the will. In short, he assigns the sacred to a special domain. Nevertheless, religion possesses an intimate relationship to these three practical standards. Sometimes, religion is thought to refer to the truth; at other times, to designate moral organizations or artistic artifacts. However, religion does not simply constitute knowledge, life (that is, morality), and creativity. Rather, that which cannot

³⁷ The editors insert here (NKZ, vol.15, p. 291) the character for "sacred" (聖) in parenthesis, probably to identify Chapter 20, "Das Heilige," of Windelband 1920.

be exhausted by these three norms is included in religion. What is this? It constitutes the moment that includes and transcends the various cultural functions of intellect, morality, and art in the world. Religion possesses the content that transcends human beings and this world. What is the content of religion thus defined? Is there something within the bounds of our reason that corresponds to the content of religion? (The demand that reaches the extremes of the true, the good, and the beautiful constitutes the religious demand).

It is necessary that the content of religion transcends human beings and the world. Of course, such a content must be identical with the sacred. At the same time, that which transcends human beings and this world, must be deduced from an essence inherent in reason itself.

Knowledge, feeling, and the will constitute the activities of our psyche. However, if these phenomena did exhaust human experience, the true, the good, and the beautiful would be sufficient to function as norms for the spiritual capacity of humans. However, the sacred does not coincide with these norms. On the contrary, it constitutes the basic relationship among them and the basis on which the ideals of the true, the good, and the beautiful stand. In short, it comprises the antinomy of consciousness. There is an antinomy in the middle of our consciousness, that is, the antinomy between the ought and the necessary, between the norm and the natural law. This antinomy appears universally in the case of the true, the good, and the beautiful, and constitutes the content of the religious norm. (In other words, anyone who really understands the antinomy between the ought and the necessary, is inherently religious).

We can identify representation, desire, and emotion as our psychological activities and logic, morality, and aesthetics as their norms. The sacred does not belong to the same category of norms. Philosophy of religion evolves from these three norms and the fundamental relationship among them. It problematizes the ground of the intellectual, the aesthetic, and the moral norms and their status as facts [of human experience].

In each of these normative consciousnesses, we can always detect a contradiction. In other words, in the relationship between psychological reality and the norm, between reality and the ideal, between the arising of temporality and the validity of atemporality, we can identify a contradiction.

The consciousness of the antinomy arises for the first time in the form of guilt. When we reflect within our hearts, the thought that we are evil natural-

ly arises. This awareness marks the beginning of religious consciousness. Those, who have an extremely shallow conscience, assume that our mistakes are not necessary to our nature and that it is only by chance that they are identified as our mistakes. They believe that because our mistakes are not related to our essence, we can escape them sooner or later, even if in a case where we actually commit an error. A shallow conscience suggests that an error occurs by accident, that it is unrelated to our essence, and that we will not commit the error twice. While this may be so, the feeling of guilt is necessary to our essence. Kant says that committing a sin implies that "because you are presently a certain kind of person, you act in a certain kind of way." A violation of rules is necessary to our essence as is our obedience to them.

We can thus identify a normative consciousness at the basis unifying the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral consciousnesses. Even if we desired to cease its activity, we would not be able to do so. In fact, this consciousness constitutes our essence, and thus somehow functions perpetually.

We recognize that the antinomy is necessary to our essence not only through the feeling of guilt in the normative consciousness of morality but through all three normative consciousnesses. In fact, if any normative consciousness forms to even the slightest degree, it is accompanied by an antinomy. Therefore, it is possible to identify the awareness of the antinomy, on which any normative consciousness is based, as religious consciousness. Similarly, the expression "religious life" indicates that we are aware of the normative consciousness that grounds the true, the good, and the beautiful within the experience of the self. It is for this reason that we experience the transcendent. Religious life possesses a transcendent dimension. To be exact, the term "religious life" explicates that we proceed from concrete experience to an infinite ideal and that we belong to the realm constituted by the values of the transcendent spirit beyond experience. By the same token, what we call the "transcendent life of religion" indicates that we long to see the end of the empirical world and thus transcend it. In other words, one stretches out towards the world beyond [everyday] experience³⁸ to live therein.

³⁸ Nishida's "超経験世界," literally "the trans-empirical world," is not only a mouthful, it raises significant questions, since it suggests a new kind of experience beyond the empirical realm. To avoid this conceptual conundrum of suggesting an experience beyond experience, I decided to distinguish between two kinds of experience, the experience of the everyday and that of what transcends everyday consciousness.

The necessity of the antinomy between the ought and the necessary transcends the individual consciousness of guilt. We feel this antinomy not only within the individual consciousness but within all normative consciousnesses.

Yet, this antagonism cannot be explained by theories of psychological development. Such an explanation would assume the existence of a normative consciousness inside the self.

For this reason, the religious demand begins with the feeling of transcendence. That means it appears in the form of emotions. Windelband said that Schleiermacher's words often evoke the essence of religion. Schleiermacher identifies religion as the feeling of absolute dependence. Religion indicates the dependence on the cosmic totality our words cannot express. It appears as dependence on the totality, which is hard to grasp. Such a feeling arises when we realize our own impotence and triviality in solitude or in the silence of broad daylight. This is the beginning of religious emotion.

Again, when we are in solitude or in the silence of broad daylight or when we face the vastness of the ocean, the awareness of our triviality and impotence weighs heavily upon us. At the same time, we feel that we are bound and confined indescribably by the mystical totality of life. But the individual feeling that expresses this dependence on the transcendent arises in an even clearer form when we reflect upon the relationship between normative consciousness and individual life.

Norms make us aware of our impotence. At the same time, we sense an even deeper need for salvation. We feel remorse, regret, and repentance. Moreover, we experience the first emergence of the normative consciousness in the moment of conversion as well as in the frustration over our failure. This first recognition takes on the form of revelation. It comes in the form of a manifestation of the transcendent in ourselves. We experience it as a miracle or grace. For this reason, the power that judges us in the form of our own conscience constitutes, at the same time, the power that grants us salvation.

However, religion is not simply exhausted by our emotions. To the contrary, their content is not very clear. Therefore, wherever religious consciousness develops, it is always accompanied by an effort to clarify the object of this transcendental emotion. To express this object, religious thinkers choose adequate symbolic content. It is thus possible to say that the symbol of the transcendent has its roots in transcendental emotion. In other words, this emotion marks the beginning of the religious concept. The inscrutable object of emotion is expressed in eidetic form as the god of religion. For this reason, god cannot appear in a determined form such as everyday conscious-

ness. Already Jakobi³⁹ said that “the god that can be thought of is not the original God.” In short, it is possible to identify transcendental emotion as the origin of religion. It functions as the foundation of the transcendent symbol, and, at the same time, it is accompanied by transcendental will. Will, in turn, gives rise to the religious ought; in other words, it expresses itself in religious ritual.

Because the feeling of devotion indicates the moment where consciousness and the inexpressible enter into a real relationship with each other, the former attempts to express the non-normative object of transcendental emotion in the form of normative yet symbolic content. We can thus say that the symbol of the transcendent emerges from transcendental emotion. Yet, even the symbolic expression of transcendental emotion appears in the form of an antinomy.

In this sense, the symbol of god organizes what cannot be organized and expresses what cannot be expressed. Ironically, god must be symbolized as the demand of transcendental emotion, even though it is beyond symbolization.⁴⁰

Such symbols of the transcendent are accompanied by transcendental desire. The reason for this lies in the nature of our knowledge, concerning the concurrence of transpersonal energy and mystical life. This knowledge is directly linked to the various fluctuations and changes in the axiological life of us human beings. And yet, we can detect an opposition similar to the one that appears in theory and thought, [even in this form of knowledge].

2. The Relationship of Religion to Scholarship and Morality

As I mentioned above, there are many forms of religion. While all religions are based on the demand of life, they express it in various ways. However, because there are many forms of religion, we cannot reduce it simply to a subjective fabrication of the human mind. Rather, religious faith must be seen as the basis for scholarship and morality. In general, we assume that scholarship and morality are not limited to one particular time period but are eternal and unchanging principles to which most people can agree. At their very foundation, however, scholarship and morality include ideal faith. If we were to

³⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Jakobi (1743–1819).

⁴⁰ Nishida acknowledges here that even the notion of the transcendental demand is cast in the form of the symbolic and thus attempts to express the inexpressible.

assume that religion is purely subjective because of its plurality, then scholarship and morality also have different forms. But we should not lose sight of the ought⁴¹ that resides inside of the human heart. If it is the case that truth has its roots in this ought, even religion, not unlike scholarship and morality, must disclose objective truth. In other words, when we talk about "religion," we can identify a variety of forms and, at the same time, one universal essence. (The ideal is nothing akin to subjectivity or individuality but constitutes the ought, that is, the demand that lies behind this truth.)

The relationship of faith to scholarship and morality:

Both scholarship and morality are based on faith in an ideal and, therefore, on an ought.

Let us consider, for example, the case of scholarship. If we think about scholarship in pragmatic terms, then truth must be, as Windelband and others have noticed correctly, albeit not without flaws in their arguments, based on our desire for truth. The same reasoning applies to morality. We cannot even conceive of moral rules without postulating a transcendental ought. Our ideals develop systematically from this ought.

Religion has quarreled with morality and scholarship from ancient times. Scholarship has fought religion, and vice versa, but there is no reason that religion on one side and scholarship and morality on the other should oppose each other. On the contrary, scholarship and morality cannot be conceived of unless we assume religion. The essence of religion comprises the union between humans and god. God constitutes the objectivity of the cosmos, the self its subjectivity. We can thus say that all religious activity is based on, and expresses the unity of, subjectivity and objectivity. The union between god and humans includes and unites both the subjective and the objective. Again, religion marks the unity between subjectivity and objectivity. Now, scholarship, art, and morality require more than a mere unity between subjectivity and objectivity. For example, people who are not afraid of committing themselves to the true meaning of morality cannot practice righteousness considering good as subjective or as external. In other words, the good must possess the highest value. People, who are committed to the moral ideal, believe that they have to discard everything that is not good to attain this goal. This way

⁴¹ The term "ought" refers to the Kantian idea that every human individual is bestowed with an inherent sense of what is moral. To Nishida, as to Kant, this ought does not counter but forms the basis of rationality (in Kant's case "practical reason").

of thinking is based on the assumption that one has to conceive of the good as something that exists in the objective world; an illusion cannot have this status. The good thus combines the moments of actuality and potentiality. To follow Fichte's⁴² thought, the world must be thought of as the actualization of morality. Subsequently, it is in religion that I feel the unity of my ideal with the universe. Anyone who realizes this unity of subjectivity and objectivity⁴³ possesses a religious heart regardless of whether or not he/she adheres to an established religion. In the same sense, the very notion of scholarship is impossible if we assume that knowledge is subjective and disconnected from objectivity.⁴⁴ Scholarly knowledge must possess objective value as well. In fact, we produce it when we unite with objective reality; its creation presupposes the unity of subject and object. Without this unity, scholarship would not be possible. Just as the origin of moral obligation is to be sought in the unity of subject and object, the value of scholarship depends on religious faith.

The essence of religion is to be found in the unity of god and the self. In other words, religion unites objectivity and subjectivity. God constitutes the basis for objectivity; without god, neither scholarship nor morality is possible.

A moral person does not simply pretend to search for the good, but seriously pursues this quest. Such a person bestows the supreme authority in the world to that which possesses the highest value. Moral ideals have to be applicable to what is objectively real. The objective world depends on these ideals.⁴⁵ Without this kind of faith [and ideals that are rooted in the objective world], morality is mean-

⁴² Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814).

⁴³ The original translates literally as “anyone who possesses this kind of faith.” But when we consider the context of this statement as well as this, as Nishida spells out later in this essay, he in general defines “faith” as the unities of opposites, especially subjectivity and objectivity. This rendition seems to explicate what Nishida implies when he uses the term “faith.” Similarly in *The Logic of Basho and the Religious Worldview*, Nishida defines faith as “the reality that opposes the self objectively” (NKZ, vol. 11, p. 418) and as “grace” (NKZ, vol. 11, p. 419) to contrast it with “subjective belief” (NKZ, vol. 11, p. 418).

⁴⁴ It does seem strange that Nishida, who identified the intellect as the standpoint of objectivity, suggests now that scholarship is subjective. In some sense, he presents the Kantian and phenomenological angle here, according to which even scholarship comprises the subjective activity of the self. Nishida argues here that to be released from the solipsism of the self, the scholar has to abandon him/herself in faith to reason. This acknowledgment of something objective outside the self, Nishida sees symbolized with the theologumenon of the reliance on god.

⁴⁵ Here, Nishida strives to undermine the dichotomy between ideals and reality; once again, he claims that both necessitate each other.

ingless. This constitutes religious faith.

The same is the case for scholarship. Not only is knowledge not merely subjective in order to be applicable to the world outside of the self, it must be grounded in objective reality. In short, knowledge must bring objectivity to the fore. As is the case with moral obligation, scholarship is not simply grounded in subjectivity, but in the god who forms the unity of subjectivity and objectivity.

Knowledge and morality are not absolute but are determined by the content of the highest ideals; the same applies to religion.

Of course, moral law should not be determined by religious authority. If that were the case, religion would prevent moral development. Even scholarship does not derive its truths from religion. But the basis for the possibility of morality and scholarship can be found within faith, that is, within the unity of subjectivity and objectivity. If both, scholarship and morality, on one side, and religion, on the other, guard their domains, they are not in conflict. Only when either oversteps its boundaries do they collide. If scholarship and morality are [particularized and] appropriated by a specific time period, they collide with religion. Conversely, if religion is grasped [and fossilized] at a certain moment in time, it collides with scholarship and morality. On the contrary, true scholarship and morality purify and deepen religion. The development of scholarship does not harm religion. By the same token, the dimension of Christianity that was lost when Copernicus⁴⁶ hypothesized the movement of the earth does not constitute the essence of Christianity. Darwin's recent theory of evolution purified religion and removed what was impure about it. Religion does not lose its essence because of Darwin's theory. Even phenomena such as miracles are not necessary to religion. It is more appropriate to say that "miracles" emerge from the demand of religious emotion. In the famous words of Goethe,⁴⁷ "miracles are the beloved children of faith."⁴⁸ Since Kepler⁴⁹ and other scientists like him discovered principles that arouse the religious heart, they, rather than the religious fanatics [who rejected their discoveries], should be considered to be pure [and religious]. In the same sense in which religion is purified by advancements in scholarship, that of religion purifies scholarship. Even the likes of Descartes possessed a religious heart.

⁴⁶ Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543).

⁴⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832).

⁴⁸ This notorious citation is taken from Goethe's *Faust*, Part One, First Scene.

⁴⁹ Johannes Kepler (1571–1630).

Of course, morality does not comprise specific duties decreed by religious authority; neither does scholarship.⁵⁰ But the possibility of all knowledge and morality is grounded in the faith that unites subjectivity and objectivity. The psalmist says “we see the light when we are in the light of god.” Scholarship and morality protect the empirical world.⁵¹

Scholarship and morality purify religion. It is impossible for the advancement of scholarship to harm religion. On the contrary, scholarship deepens and purifies religion. Copernicus’ theory of the movement of the earth removes the impure elements of religion and, at the same time, promotes religion in its pure form. The theory of evolution does not take anything essential away from religion.

Anyone who is inspired to piety and awe by the lawful movement of the heavenly bodies, as were Kepler and Newton,⁵² must be more deeply religious than the religious fanatic. Again, in some sense, it is possible to say that we advance in scholarship if we have religious faith, just as Descartes did.

The relationship between religion and morality is characterized by mutuality: religion aids morality and vice versa. Morality first develops from its roots in religion. Nevertheless, the advancement of morality purifies religion. We can say that the pure moralist is more religious than the religious fanatic. Without religious faith there is no morality. A person with a penetrating conscience feels infinite awe towards the unlimited normative consciousness of morality. This feeling constitutes religion. To say that religion is trans-ethical does not imply immorality, but suggests that the goal of religion comprises infinite awe towards the normative consciousness.⁵³

⁵⁰ The name “Copernicus” is inserted in parenthesis at this location. NKZ, vol. 15, p. 334.

⁵¹ The original reads literally “this world of limitations.”

⁵² Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727).

⁵³ The title “*Tannishō*” is inserted in parenthesis at this location. NKZ, vol. 15, p. 335.

ABBREVIATION

- NKZ. *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集 (The Collected Works of Nishida Kitarō).
Nishida, Kitarō 西田幾多郎. 1947 (vol.1), 1950 (vol.10), 1949 (vol.11), 1966 (vol.15).
Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店.

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