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The Fact of Self-Awareness and Its Development: The Question of Self-Awareness in the Later Nishida

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Preamble

The word “self-awareness” (*jikaku* 自覚) is a word that is also used in everyday speech. For instance, we may hear people say as they reflect on themselves, “I lacked self-awareness as a teacher.” In our daily lives we act with a self-awareness of our role in accordance with the circumstances. In this sense it could be said that we live in a state of constant self-awareness. But the meaning of self-awareness in the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 is not limited to this everyday meaning of the word. “Self-awareness” was also an issue for him in connection with the methods of scholarship and philosophy.¹ It could thus be said that “self-awareness” is an important concept in Nishida’s philosophy, extending from our everyday experiences right through to the methods of philosophy. In this essay, dealing with this concept of self-awareness, I wish to clarify from various angles the workings of “self-awareness” in the philosophy of the later Nishida.

While questions concerning “self-awareness” were an important subject in Nishida’s philosophy, they have tended to be taken up chiefly in connection with his early book *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Awareness* (*Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei* 自覚に於ける直観と反省), and “self-awareness” has been treated, so to speak, as no more than a transitional issue prior to his engagement with the question of “place” (*basho* 場所).² Further, when dealing with “self-awareness” in his later writings, it has been taken up in terms of his theory of scholarship, and the fact that it also encompasses everyday experiences has been overlooked.

Based on the above concerns, I shall in the following examine details of the “fact of self-awareness” (section 1), elucidate self-awareness in terms of everyday experience (section 2), deal with the question of self-awareness in relation to Nishida’s theory of scholarship (section 3), and discuss the question of self-awareness in terms of the methodology of philosophy (section 4).³

1. What Is the Fact of Self-Awareness?

In his later years, Nishida Kitarō regarded self-awareness as an undeniable fact. In order to elucidate the concept of “self-awareness,” let us begin by examining details of this “fact of self-awareness.”

Nishida discusses the fact of self-awareness in relation to the starting point of philosophy. In his essay “On Self-Awareness” (“Jikaku ni tsuite” 自覚について [1943]), written in his final years, Nishida writes: “I think that, as a science clarifying the source of our knowledge and actions, philosophy must proceed from an indubitable standpoint. Philosophy must be a science of first principles.” (10: 557)⁴ In other words, for Nishida philosophy is a science of first principles from which various other things evolve. This means that the starting point from which

these various other sciences evolve must be “an indubitable standpoint” that is unwavering, for if it were a starting point open to doubt, then that which evolved from it would also be open to doubt.⁵

From this characterization of philosophy by Nishida there is drawn the conclusion that philosophy is that which encompasses a “thinking self.” If a thinking self is lacking, then philosophy cannot become a “science of first principles” from which various sciences evolve. But is it possible for a “thinking self” to think about the “thinking self”? Nishida answers this question in the following manner: “... It is impossible for us to deny the fact of self-awareness, and in the fact of self-awareness to think of that which thinks is already a self-contradiction in the logic of objects” (10: 557). What Nishida here calls the logic of objects is a form of logic that deals with objects. Because it is a form of logic that deals with objects as opposed to subjects, it cannot discuss the subject *per se*. Therefore, it is not possible to deal with the “thinking self” from the standpoint of the logic of objects.

What, then is the “fact of self-awareness” when it is said that “it is impossible for us to negate the fact of self-awareness”? Let us follow Nishida’s reasoning a little further. He describes a standpoint transcending the logic of objects in the following manner:

It must be the historical self’s standpoint of poiesistic self-awareness, its standpoint of self-awareness of the creative self. From such a standpoint we reflect on the self. Here there must be an indubitable starting point. Moreover, this does not mean to proceed from the self, but to proceed from the world, for the self, as something that acts, is reflected on from the standpoint of the world. The very act of doubting must be done in this world. (10: 557)

The first point one notices is that to be self-aware of the self is said to be possible in the form of “poiesistic self-awareness” or “self-awareness of the creative self.” “Poiesistic” means “productive,” and so poiesistic self-awareness is to be self-aware through the act of making things. This self-awareness is, moreover, said to be achieved from the “standpoint of the world” as “something that acts.” “Acting” in this case presumably means a productive mode of being such as that described as “poiesistic” or “creative.” Furthermore, this is not a self-awareness that views the self from the position of the self, but a self-awareness that views the self from the world.

Let us summarize the above discussion of details of Nishida’s “fact of self-awareness.” The first point is that the fact of self-awareness does not become possible by means of a “logic of objects” dealing with objects. In addition, as is indicated by the terms “poiesistic self-awareness” and “self-awareness of the creative self,” it is a self-awareness that operates in the midst of the act of creating things. Lastly, this kind of self-awareness is a self-awareness that proceeds not from the self, but from the world, and it is, so to speak, a self-awareness that discovers the self from the standpoint of the world. In the next section, I shall discuss acting and discovering the self from the position of the world.

2. The Act of Making Things and the Act of Being Self-Aware

In “The World of Physics” (“Butsuri no sekai” 物理の世界 [1944]), the next essay Nishida published after “On Self-Awareness,” he briefly summarizes the arguments put forward in this earlier essay.

We are aware of our self as something that creates and is created, and objective cognition is established as the self-determination of the creating and created world. The contradictory self-identity (*mujunteki jiko dōitsu* 矛盾的自己同一) of the inner and the outer is what is meant by creating and being created, and assuming that the world there determines its own self, there must be a reflecting and a being reflected, there must be a reflecting

of itself by the world, a self-awareness of the world. From the standpoint of our self, acting is seeing and seeing is acting in terms of the historical body and action-oriented intuition (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直観). That we see things by means of action-oriented intuition means that the world reflects the world itself. Our self-awareness is the self-awareness of the world itself. (11: 21)

This is a rather condensed passage, but the statement that self-awareness exists as “something that creates and is created” means that, as was seen in the previous section, self-awareness arises in the act of making something. This self-awareness thus has three characteristics. First, this act of making is also described as the “contradictory self-identity of the inner and the outer” and is alternatively referred to as “a reflecting and a being reflected.” Secondly, it is also said that this act of creating and being created is such that “acting is seeing and seeing is acting” in terms of “action-oriented intuition” (or “acting-intuition”). Thirdly, it is further said that it is a self-awareness of the world in which the world reflects the world itself.

In order to clarify the meaning of these three characteristics, let us first briefly consider the second, action-oriented intuition.⁶ Action-oriented intuition is defined as “acting is seeing and seeing is acting.” This can be considered in terms of our everyday experience. Our actions always become possible in conjunction with the act of seeing (intuition). Let us consider, for example, the building of a house. In order to build a house, one first needs to see the site where the house is going to be built. The plans for the house are drawn up with due attention being paid to objective conditions such as sunlight, drainage, topography, and climate. Then building materials suited to these objective conditions are selected and the house is built. It is through seeing that the act of building a house becomes possible. But at the same time this “seeing” is impossible without the act of building the house. It was precisely because we set about building a house that we saw the objective conditions of the site and saw suitable building materials. In this sense, “seeing” became possible in the act of making. Furthermore, through the act of building a house we came to see the built house. “Acting is seeing and seeing is acting” thus means that it becomes possible to make something through seeing and that thing is seen through the act of making it.

Why, then, is this action-oriented intuition said to be the “contradictory self-identity of the inner and the outer” that “creates and is created”? Let us consider the first point regarding the above quotation, again with reference to the example of building a house. To “create” something starts from something that has been “created.” When we set about building a house, we did not come up with the idea of a house out of a vacuum. There is a tradition that people build houses when they settle in a certain locality, and it was in the context of this tradition that we thought of building a house. For instance, nomads move together with their animals and put up tents instead of building houses. Our act of “making”—in this case building a house—had been defined by society and history. Consequently, when making something, we start out from a socially and historically “created” state. But at the same time we build a new house that has not previously existed. Referring to different kinds of houses that have been built in the past, we build a new house that incorporates our own new ideas and new technologies. In this sense, we shift from “that which has been created” to “that which creates” and add something new to society and history.

This act of “creating and being created” can also be described as an act that links the inner and the outer. The social and historical traditions that drive us to build a house and the various objective conditions that need to be met in order to build a house, all of which are external to us, and our inner desire to build a house become one and the house is built. The house that is actually built gives expression to society’s historical tradition of building houses and to external conditions that impose restrictions on the house’s possibilities. But at the same time the house is also an expression of our inner desire to build a house and a form of self-expression reflecting our own ideas. In this sense, the inner and the outer are linked through the act of making.

This type of link corresponds to the meaning of “identity” in the term “contradictory self-identity.” However, one needs to take note of the fact that it is said to be “contradictory.” The fact that the house is socially and historically

defined and is defined by external conditions means that our own arbitrary wishes are completely negated. It is impossible to build a house freely in any way we like. Insofar that we do not control everything and cannot do as we please, this could be described as a negation of our self.⁷ But at the same time, regardless of any tradition of building houses, and even if all the external conditions are satisfied, it is impossible for a house to be built spontaneously without our involvement. What is more, the newly built house is a new house that did not previously exist and reflects our own ideas, and it is a unique house unlike any other. In other words, our building of a house means that we negate the given reality of there being no house on that site and add anew a house as a form of our self-expression. The given reality negates our self. But at the same time we negate the given reality and reshape it by building a new house.

Now, what sort of self-awareness arises from this “creating and being created”? This can be understood from the fact that it is rephrased as “reflecting and being reflected.” Through the house that was created as an expression of our self we become aware of our self. Through the house that was actually built we may realize that “I wanted to live in a house like this.” Alternatively, through our dissatisfaction with the house that was actually built we may realize that “I didn’t really want to live in a house like this, but in a different house.” Through the house that was built our self is able to gain a true self-awareness of the type of house in which we wanted to live. When the house that we have created exists as an expression of our self, it functions as a mirror reflecting our self. With that which we have created acting as a mirror, we become aware of the self reflected therein. Therefore, Nishida writes as follows:

Our true self-awareness is not established by reflecting on our self within and, on the contrary, it is established by reflecting the self without. From the standpoint of the contradictory self-identity of what is created and what creates, we truly reach self-awareness expressively, formatively (by means of action-oriented intuition) as an individual self. (10: 421)

Through that which we have created as a form of self-expression we become aware of our own self. By reflecting our self on what we have created, we come to know our own self. But what needs to be noted here is that Nishida says, “assuming that the world there determines its own self, there must be a reflecting and a being reflected.” It is not just our own self-expression, but also the self-expression of the world reflecting the world. This point concerns the third characteristic mentioned above, namely, the “self-awareness of the world.” Let us consider this point in a little more detail.

Building a house is not just a form of our self-expression. As was the case with the above example of nomads, the act of building a house also reflects social and historical circumstances. In the case of the social circumstances of nomads, one would not build a house. Building a house reflects a social and historical background of building houses. In addition, were one to build a wooden house, this would give expression to the fact that one belonged to a tradition that differed from a tradition of building brick houses. Furthermore, a house built today also expresses today’s world, reflecting the technology of the present-day world. The roof that might in former times have been thatched is now a roof with solar panels. This expresses contemporary technology and also expresses the contemporary trend to place importance on renewable energy. In this sense, building a house is also an act of reflecting the world. Moreover, because the event of building a house is itself also a world event, building a house signifies a state of affairs in which one reflects the world in the world. In this sense, “The fact that we see things by means of action-oriented intuition means that the world there reflects the world itself. Our self-awareness is the self-awareness of the world itself.” Our various actions are actions that give expression to the world in the world, and the fact that we have self-awareness also means that the world has self-awareness in the world. In this sense, our self reflects the world, and, to use Nishida’s words, this means that our self becomes a “projective point” of the

world.

It might be argued, however, that building a house is a special experience and not an everyday experience. Although it is true that Nishida does not specifically say so, “walking” is probably also accompanied by a self-awareness characterized by action-oriented intuition. For example, when walking we look at the state of the road’s surface, the state of traffic congestion, the state of the weather, and so on. We are aware of the various circumstances in which we find ourselves as we walk. Moreover, the way in which we walk changes, depending on whether we are walking along an ancient unsealed highway or along a modern sealed road. In this sense, the way in which we walk reflects the contemporary world. In addition, by walking people discover their physical condition, for instance, that their feet are sore or that they are tired. In this sense, self-awareness is operating even in the most mundane action of walking.

In the above examination of self-awareness in everyday experience the following facts have been ascertained. Through the act of creating things we express ourselves and gain self-awareness. Moreover, insofar that this self-expression is an event that takes place in the world, it is also an expression of the world and the self-awareness of the world. But this kind of self-awareness is not confined to everyday experience. Self-awareness can also be conceived of as a method of science. In the next section, I wish to examine the question of science and self-awareness.

3. Science and Self-Awareness

In order to clarify self-awareness as a method of science, let us begin by taking up the question of the modal structure of self-awareness.⁸ On the mode of self-awareness Nishida writes as follows: “First, unless somewhere in some way or another there is not a mode of reality as self-awareness, such that that which expresses is that which is expressed, expression is not established. Our actions are all established from such a mode of self-awareness.” (10: 482) The statement “that which expresses is that which is expressed” means that our self which expresses something (i.e., that which expresses) and that which is created as our self-expression (i.e., that which is expressed) are identical. If, as we saw in the previous section, our self gains self-awareness through that which is expressed by our self, then this means that that which is expressed by our self is, as a self-expression of us, at one with us. This also means that our actions, as expressions of the world, are at one with the world.

This type of expressional relationship is succinctly described by Nishida in the following terms: “First, on the one hand one must think that the many invariably express the one, but on the other hand one must think that the one invariably expresses the many” (10: 481–482). In this case, “many” signifies the “singular many,” that is, our selves as singularities (*kōbutsu* 個物). Because we have dealings with all kinds of singularities as we live our lives, singularities are deemed to be many. “One,” on the other hand, indicates the “general one,” which brings together the totality as a unitary whole. If the sum total of self-expressions of the singular many is the general one, then the one can be considered to give expression to the many. But at the same time our actions also give expression to the context of the totality surrounding us, and in this case it can also be considered that the many give expression to the one.

With regard to the fact that the singular many give expression to the general one, Nishida writes: “When the many are invariably expressions of the one, they must become symbolic. This is the world of logic, the world of objects of cognition.” (10: 492) On the other hand, when the general one gives expression to the singular many, “the singular many can never be atomic” (10: 492), for if singularities were atoms constituting the totality, then the general one would “have to be a combination or unity” (10: 492) of atoms and would not give expression to the many. So long as it gives expression to the many, “it must be something that can be considered to be a one-off fact, an absolute fact. Because it is absolutely without foundation, it must be something that vanishes as something

one-off. It must be that which lives by vanishing, that is, that which, with absolute negation as a medium, possesses itself in the expression of itself, possesses itself in the absolute other." (10: 493) In this manner, the historical world is such that "from the standpoint of the one the world is invariably expressed symbolically, while from the standpoint of the many every single thing is considered to be an absolute fact" (10: 493).

Let us consider in a little more detail what the above kind of relationship signifies. When "the many give expression to the one," the individuality of each of the singular many is abstracted and each gives expression to the one. The world conceived of in this manner is also referred to as the world of logic or the world of objects of cognition. If, on the other hand, the general one is considered to give expression to the singular many, the general one that then emerges is a "one-off fact" formed by the singular many.

The singular many are each unique entities, and the expression of each is a unique expression. Therefore, they exist as "one-off facts" that can never be repeated. In other words, the self-expression of the singular many gives expression to the unique one-off life of each.⁹ That the many give expression to the one, on the other hand, means that that which vanishes in this manner possesses form as something "created," or is able to be objectified. That is to say, this once-only character or individuality is abstracted and becomes apprehensible as something possessing a particular form. That which is itself formless negates itself and assumes a form, that which cannot be grasped negates itself and becomes something that can be grasped. That which is itself not substratal negates itself and becomes apprehensible as a (grammatical) subject. In other words, that which is one-off and fleeting—the "illogical" (10: 493) historical world—negates itself and becomes the world of logic, the world of objects of cognition. It is here that the world of scientific cognition is established. Let us next consider this world of scientific cognition in a little more detail.¹⁰

Nishida writes as follows concerning the establishment of knowledge: "I wish to consider knowing, that is, the establishment of knowledge, ... from the historical world's reflecting of itself within itself.... That our self reflects the world means conversely that it becomes one perspective of the world. This is knowing." (10: 437) Symbolic or logical cognition means that our self becomes one perspective of the world, that we discard our subjective imaginings and reflect the world as it is. "Scientific negation must be the negation of the conventional preconceptions and arbitrary judgements of our self from the standpoint of action-oriented intuition.... Therefore, a prerequisite for the establishment of scientific knowledge is the standpoint of action-oriented intuition." (11: 154–155) Self-awareness has the effect of negating one's imaginings and prejudices and, by reflecting the world as it is, of knowing the world in which one is implaced.¹¹

In this fashion, by negating our self and reflecting the one, we also erase the quality of a unique self and become substitutable symbols. There now unfolds the world of the manipulation of symbols, and the scientific world of science is constructed. Since there is no space to discuss in detail the unfolding of various scientific worlds, I wish to touch briefly on what Nishida has to say about mathematics and physics. On the subject of mathematics Nishida states that, "contrary to the creative sphere, mathematics is a mode of pure symbolic expression in the world's self-negating standpoint" (10: 548) and that "mathematics is the action-oriented intuition of thought activity itself" (10: 550). Not only is our self negated to become a mere symbol, but the world is thoroughly formalized. As a science that develops the relationships between these modes, mathematics is thus said to be the action-oriented intuition of thought activity itself. Physics, on the other hand, is said to be "the symbol-plane self-expression of the most concrete reality" (10: 549). Physics is conceived of as a science that symbolically represents that which is clarified in a concrete manner by means of experiments and observations.

In this fashion, the sciences unfold within the self-awareness of the symbolically represented self.¹² But it is not with the symbolically represented self that philosophy is concerned. In the next section I wish to consider the relationship between philosophy and self-awareness.

4. Philosophy and Self-Awareness

As was seen in section 1, philosophy, as the science of first principles, is a science that deals with reality, including the thinking self. It is the symbolically represented self, on the other hand, that constitutes the scientific sciences. Consequently, the scientific sciences are unable to elucidate any reality such as that which includes the thinking self. Therefore, Nishida writes: "There is no way for such a reality to be clarified, or rather, for such a reality to clarify itself, other than relying on absolutely-negating self-awareness.... Philosophy grasps the basic principles of knowledge in such a standpoint." (11: 153) What is clearly stated here is that philosophy is carried out by "absolutely-negating self-awareness," which differs from self-awareness as a scientific method, and that through this self-awareness reality, including the thinking self, is elucidated.

What sort of self-awareness, then, is absolutely-negating self-awareness? The self-awareness that is symbolically represented in terms of a theory of scholarship represented the standpoint in which the many negate the self and reflect the one. It is not the case that the many are negated and the one is negated. It may therefore be regarded not as an "absolute" negation but as a relative negation. For it to be absolutely negating, it must be a self-awareness that, as well as negating the many, also encompasses the negation of the one. The "thinking self" is not only the all-precious self living a once-only life, but also the self that manipulates symbols and engages in thought. In other words, a negating self-awareness is the self-awareness of a self that is aware of both the self that negates the one and lives a unique life as the singular many and the self that negates the many and opens up the world of the manipulation of symbols. Absolutely-negating self-awareness could thus be said to represent a standpoint that is aware of both "the many that negate the one" and "the one that negates the many." And it is this dynamism of the mutual negation of the one and the many that constitutes the self-awareness of the world. Philosophy could be described as a science that is aware of the self-aware structure of the world.

It is, in other words, the task of philosophy to become aware of the structure of action-oriented intuition. In this kind of self-awareness, it is said that "when the world is self-aware our self is self-aware, and when our self is self-aware the world is self-aware" (10: 559). "The standpoint of philosophy as the self-awareness of the world must be an indubitable standpoint, a standpoint mediated by absolute self-negation. In this sense, philosophy is a science of absolute being that truly exists of itself, a science of fundamental reality." (10: 559) Philosophy takes neither the standpoint of the many negating the one nor the standpoint of the one negating the many. It is the task of philosophy to negate the adoption of such standpoints and, through this negation, clarify the positions of the one and the many. It then becomes possible to clarify all of reality, including the thinking self.

In order to highlight this character of philosophy, let us examine the difference between philosophy and fields of scientific knowledge. Fields of scientific knowledge are based on the self-awareness called "self-awareness of the poiesistic self." This is the self-awareness that arises in the relationship of "creating and being created" that obtains between myself and things. According to Nishida, "Something made always stands opposed to the self and is an absolute other, but conversely it is also something that moves the self. Our self is reflected upon from the standpoint of contradictory self-identity in this sense." (10: 558) A self-awareness such as is reflected upon in relationships with things is poiesistic self-awareness. Nishida writes of poiesistic self-awareness that "... the establishment of scientific knowledge must be accompanied by poiesistic self-awareness in which, in terms of historical fact, our self creates, our self makes something; it must be accompanied by the self-awareness of the historical self" (10: 552). Scientific knowledge is founded on the fact that the self is established as that which creates things, that the historical world forms itself and becomes historical as such formative elements, and that we exist historically as the self-awareness of the world.

But Nishida further writes: "At the root of the self-awareness of the poiesistic self there must be the

self-awareness of the creative self. As a singularity in the creative world, our self is poiesistic. Philosophical knowledge is established on the basis of a self-awareness of our creative self, an absolute fact that invariably determines the self.” (10: 561) Philosophy in its capacity as the self-awareness of the world is here characterized as the self-awareness of the creative self and is situated at the very basis of scientific knowledge. The endeavours of philosophy are not confined to poiesistic endeavours by means of action-oriented intuition, and are also endeavours aimed at becoming thoroughly aware of this creative self.¹³ “Philosophy..., as a process of self-expression of a fundamental reality that truly exists of itself and determines itself by itself, must invariably be a negating self-awareness, a self-aware analysis. And as a science of the root of all realities, of the reality of realities, it must be a standpoint that sees without a seer, a standpoint in which the world reflects itself.” (11: 155) A standpoint that sees without a seer is a standpoint that negates all “seeing standpoints.” It neither takes the standpoint of the one and negates the many, nor does it take the standpoint of the many and negate the one. “The object of philosophy must be that which bears self-witness to itself, an objectless object” (11: 155). Philosophy does not describe an object from a particular standpoint, and instead it is the accomplishment of a self-awareness that arises from both the seer and the object. Philosophy is not something the foundations of which are provided from without. It is not the task of philosophy to deal with one particular field. There is a self-awareness of the self-aware self, but it is also evident that by being self-aware of the structure of self-awareness the workings of self-aware philosophy themselves become possible on the basis of this structure of self-awareness. In this fashion, philosophy bears witness to itself.¹⁴

Philosophy is aware of the structure underpinning all knowledge, that is, the structure of self-awareness. Philosophy clarifies that which makes possible other sciences, and philosophy lies at the root of all other sciences. And through its discovery of the structure of the self-awareness of the world lying at the root of all other sciences, its own self-aware structure is revealed in philosophy itself. Philosophy cannot have any substratum. The basis of philosophy does not lie outside philosophy. By virtue of the fact that through the accomplishment of our self-awareness of the self it is simultaneously shown to be the structure of the self-awareness of the world, philosophy bears witness to itself. “The world of science is a world in which form determines form itself. At its root there must be a seeing without a seer, a reflecting of itself by the world. Herein lies the reason that philosophy must become the foundation of science. Therefore, the method of science is action-oriented intuition; the method of philosophy is self-awareness.” (11: 155–156) Philosophy lies at the foundation of the sciences. Philosophy has no foundation. Philosophy is not something that describes objects from a foundation that might serve as a base. Philosophy is that in which, as a negating self-awareness, the foundationless self bears witness to itself.

Concluding Remarks

In the above, I have discussed self-awareness. In section 1 it was ascertained that for Nishida self-awareness is linked to the starting point of philosophy. In section 2 we saw that self-awareness in everyday situations exists as the self-awareness of the world. In section 3 self-awareness was discussed in connection with science. And in section 4 self-awareness, as an engagement in philosophy, was deepened to the level of an act in which the world and the self both gain self-awareness. This self-awareness is not, however, a religious or mystical self-awareness. Philosophy is undertaken by persistently focusing on the fact of the establishment of the self, whereby our self is established as the self, that is, on the fact of self-awareness, and it requires nothing but facts. In this sense philosophy is, to borrow Nishida’s words, “thorough-going positivism” (11: 124).

I should perhaps add a comment on my comparing of philosophy with the knowledge of other sciences. It is true that this threw philosophy into relief on account of the differences between the two. But philosophy is not a field of scholarship that stands on a par with the sciences. Philosophy exists as the self-awareness of the world which

connects the sciences to reality and clarifies the basis of knowledge. The sciences have a foundation. This means that they possess a certain coherent unity as expressions of particular forms of the world. As sciences, investigations will advance *ad finitum* from one specific form to another, and knowledge exists as something possessing a certain coherent unity at each stage. At their root, underpinning the sciences, is the self-awareness of the world, or philosophy. But philosophy, as the self-awareness of the world, is a forever foundationless act as the self-awareness of the dynamism of the world, an act of seeing without a seer whereby the world continues unceasingly to gain in depth.

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Notes

- 1 For a treatment of the question of self-awareness in Nishida as a theory of scholarship and a theory of knowledge, see Nitta 1998. Nitta touches frequently on the question of self-awareness and philosophy and sheds light on the distinctive role of philosophical thinking that cannot be reduced to religion.
- 2 For a detailed retracing of the course taken by Nishida as he moved from “pure experience” to “self-awareness” and then to “place,” see Ueda 2002 & 2003.
- 3 In the following, quotations from Nishida’s works are based on the following edition: Shimomura Toratarō 下村寅太郎 et al., eds., *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1965–66). The location of a quotation is indicated by the volume number followed by the page number.
- 4 In *An Inquiry into the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究) Nishida likewise writes: “To understand true reality and to know the true nature of the universe and human life, we must discard all artificial assumptions, doubt whatever can be doubted, and proceed on the basis of direct and indubitable knowledge” (1: 47; English translation taken from Masao Abe and Christopher

Ives, trans., *An Inquiry into the Good* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990], p. 38). It could be said that this stance, considering the starting point of philosophy to be, in imitation of Descartes, an “indubitable standpoint,” remained unchanged throughout his life.

- 5 In this regard it should be possible to posit points in common with Descartes, but lack of space prevents me from discussing this here. For a discussion of Nishida’s understanding of Descartes, see Ishigami 2001 (esp. chap. 5), although Ishigami does not discuss the relationship between action-oriented intuition and self-awareness.
- 6 For details on action-oriented intuition, see Kosaka 1995: 69–116.
- 7 Nishida writes: “That something confronts me expressively means that it is closing in on me with a view to negating the present me, the given me” (9: 33).
- 8 The structure of self-awareness is taken up in detail in Ōhashi 1995 (esp. chap. 3, § 1) with reference to group theory. The aim of the present section is to examine this group-theory self-awareness in concrete detail in terms of the relationship between expression and the historical world.
- 9 On the self-awareness of the individual, which cannot be discussed in greater detail here for want of space, see Shirai 2004.
- 10 In this section I have dealt primarily with self-awareness as scholarly self-awareness. On the “logic” of self-awareness, see Shirai 2008.
- 11 For a treatment of the question of self-awareness from the perspective of “reflecting,” see Okada 2001. Okada sees a deepening of the question of self-awareness for Nishida in the way in which there was a shift in emphasis from the term *eizō* 影像 for “image” in connection with self-awareness to its homophone *eizō* 映像.
- 12 However, Nishida emphasizes that questions pertaining to self-awareness cannot be exhausted by dealing only with the sphere of knowledge, writing, “But that clarifies primarily the sphere of knowledge and does not truly clarify its structure as reality. Therefore, one cannot directly go on to discuss the sphere of practice” (10: 493); and: “The historical world must be the world of self-awareness of our self. In such a world, each and every fact is not only characterized by self-awareness, but invariably has the quality of *Sollen*” (10: 494). On *Sollen*, see Shirai 2007. The discussion of self-awareness as being accompanied by *Sollen* was probably a response to Miki Kiyoshi’s following criticism: “It should be noted that, though it may be said that only Oriental logic is founded on the standpoint of action-oriented intuition, in effect it remains at the level of a mental state, its techniques are techniques of the mind, and in the end it is liable to end in contemplation without embarking on practice that actually works upon things, changes their shapes, and creates new shapes” (Miki 1939: 11).
- 13 On the self-awareness of the creative self, see also Nitta 2006. Having distinguished between action-oriented intuition and creative intuition, Nitta characterizes creative intuition as the workings of a philosophical self-awareness that bears as profoundly as possible a “responsibility for knowledge.”
- 14 Ōhashi writes that an experience giving a bird’s-eye view of group-theory self-awareness is “an experience on a plane that rejects linguistic expression” (Ōhashi 1995: 100). But it is surely a self-awareness of the structure of self-awareness as the self-witnessing of philosophy that gains a bird’s-eye view of this group-theory self-awareness.