

Time and Eternal Now in the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō

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〈要約〉

時間と空間は、近代の思想において次第に実在の最も根本的な形式とみなされるようになった。自然科学ではすべての物理現象を空間的・幾何学的に説明する傾向が強まってきた一方、哲学では逆に時間が経験の中心的な次元として強調されるようになった。『無の自覚的眼底』の諸論文の中で発表された西田幾多郎の時間論は、こうした歴史的な背景において生まれた。拙論では、西田の処女作から晩年の論文まで登場する「永遠の今」の概念の発展を辿った上で、それに基づいた後期西田の時間論のさまざまな様態を明らかにしたい。永遠の今の自己限定の説によって、西田は自分の前期の抽象的な時間観において生じていた様々な問題を解決できた。この点を踏まえた上で、西田がいかに自然科学や哲学の抽象的な時間観の起源を説明し、その限定的な妥当性を根拠付けることができたのかを示したい。結びに、西田の時間論において解決し難いいくつかの問題点を指摘したい。

Introduction

In his early philosophical works, Nishida Kitarō gave little attention to space and time as basic categories of reality, cursorily dealing with them only in the context of other themes, such as the problem of the inter- and intrapersonal unity of experience. In later years, however, he delved into the idea of space and time as basic dimensions of the process of actualization of experience. Finally, in the last phases of his thought, he formulated his own original philosophy of time, as a development of the new ideas he had been formulating since the introduction of the concept of *locus* (場所). Such original philosophy of time must be understood in the historical context of the development of the complementary ideas of time and space in modern western thought – of which Nishida was keenly aware – with its dichotomy between the naturalistic, space-based idea of time predominant in modern science, and the subjectivistic idea of time predominant in philosophy.

Time and space are two of the most basic features of experience, and their role as primary categories for any fundamental understanding of reality has been growing steadily in the modern age. In the field of the natural sciences, since Descartes interpreted matter as pure extension, whose properties can be described in merely geometrical terms, space has become one of the most important concepts. Physicists now regard space and time as the very fabric of the cosmos¹⁾, and a strong tendency has emerged to reduce time to just another dimension of space. Physicists have obviously always been acutely aware of the empirical fact of the irreversibility of time – the fact that

we experience time as an “arrow” moving in a one-way direction, and physical systems accordingly change states in a non-reversible way, expressed in the laws of thermodynamics. However, classical physics has made it theoretically possible to treat time mathematically as a coordinate in a spatial continuum, formulating its basic laws as time-reversible, and since the advent of relativity theory and quantum mechanics, the reductionist tendency has become stronger, to the point that some physicists have explicitly proposed to eliminate time from the basic equations of physics²⁾.

In contrast, in the field of theoretical philosophy time has gradually come to occupy the privileged position of most fundamental ontological category. Kant interpreted space and time as forms of sensibility upon which the perceptual world is synthesized, and considered time as the form of the inner sense (*Form der inneren Sinnes*). This implies that, for Kant, time is not only the immediate condition of inner intuition, but also the a priori formal condition of all appearances (*formale Bedingung a priori aller Erscheinungen überhaupt*), as outer appearances as well are perceived as situated in time through the mediation of the inner experience of the knowing subject³⁾. The first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* contains a detailed reconstruction of the genesis of experience, based on the interpretation of the concepts of understanding as temporal *schemata*, through which our experience of the world is unified⁴⁾. Kant rewrote the whole section in the second edition, dropping the genetic reconstruction, and it has been argued that, in his quest to find a foundation for geometry-based scientific knowledge, he ultimately privileged space over time⁵⁾. However, there is little doubt that, in idealistic or non-objectivistic readings of Kant’s philosophy, his characterization of time as the form of inner intuition upon which concrete experience is shaped can easily lead to the interpretation of time as a more fundamental form of experience than space.

In reaction to the strong reductionist attitude of modern science – which, albeit still fledgling, was rapidly gaining momentum in the 19th century – Kierkegaard and Dilthey tried to formulate a description of reality as directly experienced by human beings in their concrete existence. Their attempts revisited the notion of time mostly on the basis of a theological or historical understanding of human experience, rather than from a Kantian standpoint, and both thinkers stressed the fact that actually experienced time cannot be interpreted as a mere succession of instants separate from each other, but must be understood as a dynamic interplay of future and past within the present⁶⁾. Kant’s epistemological approach, Kierkegaard’s theological position, and Dilthey’s historical standpoint came together in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, which constitutes the most radical attempt in the history of western thought to reconsider time as the single most fundamental ontological category for the understanding of reality. Early Heidegger grounded the happening of experience in *ursprüngliche Zeitigung*, the primordial unfolding of time that makes it possible to be in the world and encounter things, trying – albeit, by his own admission, unsuccessfully –⁷⁾ to derive space from time⁸⁾.

It is in this historical context that we must understand the evolution and the final results of Nishida's philosophy of time. In his early ideas of time, sketched in *An Inquiry into the Good* (『善の研究』, from now on referred to as *IG*) and developed in *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (『自覚に於ける直観と反省』, from now on referred to as *IRSC*)⁹, Nishida accepted without much questioning the then-dominant Neo-Kantian philosophy of time. The turning point in his conception of time was the original concept of *eternal now* (永遠の今), developed in the writings collected in *The Self-Aware Determination of Nothingness* (『無の自覚的眼底』, from now on referred to as *SADN*), which are often recognized as the starting point of the later phase of Nishida's philosophy. In this essay, I will first delineate the development that led to the formulation of Nishida's mature concept of time, then I will analyze some of its meanings and implications. In particular, I will analyze the concept of eternal now formulated in *SADN*, focusing on the intrinsic dialectical dynamic of the present that Nishida sees as the origin of time and of different time-based interpretations of reality. I will thus make clear how the notion of eternal now allows Nishida not only to solve the conceptual problems that had emerged in his earlier position, but also to encompass and mediate the differences between the naturalistic and the subjectivistic views of time, by providing an original synthesis of the two positions in a third, wholly original view. In the end, I will point at some problems and limitations in the concept of eternal now, hinting at its insufficiency as an ultimate explanation of the phenomenon of time.

Nishida's early ideas of time

Nishida's *first* major work, *IG*, begins with a description of Nishida's concept of pure experience (純粋経験), followed by an attempt to build a metaphysics based on that concept. As I mentioned above, the concepts of time and space do not play any significant role in either of the two endeavors. In the description of pure experience, nevertheless, time makes its debut very early, since for Nishida the temporal quality of experience constitutes an essential trait of pure experience. Nishida stresses that the focus of pure experience is the present, and argues that, although the present can appear as a complex construction interwoven with mnemonic elements, such elements from the past are always synthesized in one unitary reality in the experience of the present moment. When there is no interference by reflective thinking, the synthesis results in the flow of a seamless present, which constitutes pure experience in the strictest sense of the term, described in Nishida's famous examples of people performing engrossing activities. Reflective thinking, by producing the opposition of subject and object, breaks the primal continuity of the flow of time, objectifying and separating single present contents of consciousness as perceptions, memories, and anticipations.

直下の純粋経験であっても、之が過去の経験の構成せられた者であるとか、又後にて之を単

一なる要素に分析できるとかいふ点より見れば、複雑といってもよからう。併し純粹経験はいかに複雑であっても、その瞬間に於ては、いつも単純なる一事実である。たとひ過去の意識の再現であっても、現在の意識中に統一せられ、之が一要素となつて、新なる意味を得た時には已に過去の意識と同じとはいわれぬ。(中略) 純粹経験の現在は、現在に就いて考ふる時、已に現在にあらずといふやうな思想上の現在ではない。意識上の事実としての現在には、いくらかの時間的継続がなければならぬ(中略) 即ち意識の焦点がいつでも現在となるのである。それで、純粹経験の範囲は自ら注意の範囲と一致してくる。しかし余は此の範囲を必ずしも一注意の下にかぎられぬと思ふ。我々は少し思想も交わず、主客未分の状態に注意を転じて行くことができるのである。例へば一生懸命に断岸を攀ずる場合の如き、音楽家が熟練した曲を奏する時の如き、全く知覚の連続 perceptual train といつてもよい。(I, 11)¹⁰⁾

Pure experience flows as a continuous stream of present consciousness, and this implies time as one of its dimensions. What is, then, the interpretation of the nature of time within the conceptual framework that Nishida develops on the foundation of pure experience? Such interpretation should be able to account for the fact that reflection is able to tell past, present, and future apart, in spite of their all being experienced as present contents of consciousness. Nishida accepts, without further investigation, the answer provided by post-Kantian idealistic thought: Time and space are just forms according to which the content of experience is synthesized. 「時間空間といふ如き者もかかる内容に基づいて之を統一する一つの形式に過ぎないのである。」(I, 27) Experience itself, consequently, is not thought to be in time, as the unifying act that synthesizes its content in time and space must in itself be prior to time and space. As Nishida famously wrote, the fact that experience knows time and space (and the individual humans that we always are) means that experience is beyond time and space. 「経験は時間、空間、個人を知るが故に時間、空間、個人以上である。」(I, 28) Our experience appears to be divided into multiple individual acts of consciousness, separated by space and time, but the ultimate reality of experience is for early Nishida that of a unitary absolute activity that synthesizes all contents of experience in one single act. Nishida calls it “one great intellectual intuition” (一大知的直観)¹¹⁾, and ascribes it to God as the ultimate foundation of reality that transcends both its content and the forms a priori according to which it synthesizes its content. 「神はかかる意味に於て宇宙の根抵に於ける一大知的直観と見ることができ、又宇宙を包括する純粹経験の統一者と見ることが出来る。」(I, 186) Nishida metaphorically interprets such act, quoting Jacob Böhme, as God reflecting on itself by making itself a mirror, and thus creating the world by giving birth to the separation of subject (the reflecting God as activity of consciousness), and object (the reflected God as content of consciousness). (I, 191) As I have argued elsewhere, according to this metaphor, time and space can be considered as the basic dimensions of the mirror, which determine the structure of the projected world, but not the structure of the projecting conscious-

ness itself¹²⁾.

For God as cosmic consciousness everything is present in an “eternal “now” (永久の今), and there is no past or future. This begs the questions: What is the relationship between present as eternal now, present as the temporal reality of our concrete experience, and present as a moment in time separate from past and future? What is the difference between past and future that characterizes time as irreversible, in contrast with the symmetry of spatial directions? Nishida states that time originates from the eternally present act of consciousness, which he qualifies as simultaneously static and dynamic, but his argument does not go much further than the intuitions of the western mystics and theologians he quotes in this respect. (I, 184)¹³⁾

In *IRSC*, Nishida elaborates on the nature of time and space, answering to some of the questions left open in the system of pure experience. The starting point of the analysis is the same as in *IG*: time and space are the transcendental forms of the synthesis of the world of experience. 「所謂個人とか、事実的原因とかいうことは、時間、空間といふ如き形式によって、我々の経験界を統一した後に考へ得るものではなからうか。」 (II, 25) Nishida states, as he had already done in *IG*, that the synthesis is rooted in the primordial act of self-awareness. Following Fichte, he regards self-awareness as the act of self-creation by absolute consciousness, and ascribes to it the form of the logical self-identity “A is A” (「甲は甲である」)¹⁴⁾, in which the predicate A (A as apprehended by itself) is dialectically opposed to the subject A (A as apprehending itself) as non-A (非甲). (II, 69) The distinction between A and non-A, from a formal point of view, is the distinction between mere quantitative units, and the recursive nature of self-awareness – whereby A as subject becomes object of a new act of self-reflection – generates a series of discrete units that constitutes the series of numbers, which is interpreted, in Kantian terms, as the temporal succession. The succession is unified and apprehended as simultaneous (as a geometric line) within the arena of the spatial continuum, which is identified as the condition of possibility of the whole process¹⁵⁾.

This analysis not only clarifies the transcendental structure of time that was left unexamined in the system of pure experience, but it also interprets time and space as deeper realities than simple forms of the objectified world. They constitute the transcendental form of the act of consciousness itself, the basic relationship – to elaborate again on Böhme’s metaphor – between the God that reflects itself and its image reflected in the mirror, rather than just the internal relationships of the image reflected in the mirror. However, the relationship between the eternal nature of the absolute and the temporality of its manifestation remains problematic. Though Nishida does not explicitly state the eternally present nature of the absolute at this stage, nothing suggests that his position has changed since *IG*. Dealing with space, which he now sees as more primordial than time, Nishida makes clear the simultaneous existence of the elements of the act of self-reflection that originates the temporal series: 「余は空間的直覚の基たる同時存在といふことは、自覚的体系の欠

くべからざる一面であると思ふ。「甲は甲である」といふ自同律の判断は主語の「甲」と客語の「甲」とその位置を交換し得るといふことも、即ち主語の「甲」と客語の「甲」との同時存在を意味するのである。」(II, 191) Nishida cautions that such simultaneity is not the same as temporal simultaneity, as it simply refers to the symmetrical relationship between A as subject and A as object in self-awareness. However, this only begs the question of the nature of the relationship between this relational simultaneity and temporal simultaneity – between the reversibility of spatial relationships and the irreversibility of temporal relationships – made more urgent by the fact that the Japanese word here translated as “simultaneous” (同時) includes the Chinese character for “time” (時).

The final chapters of *IRSC* mark a significant step forward in Nishida’s conception of time and its relationship to eternity. Unable to explain the metaphysical contingency of experience within the logical framework of his idea of self-awareness, Nishida famously resorted to a notion of absolute free will inspired by Christian mysticism. He interpreted the act of self-projection by which God creates the world as an act of absolute free will, not bound by any logical or transcendental formal structure. The act is not a single event in which the beginning of time is created, so that the world then develops deterministically from its initial temporal state to successive temporal states (from the instant of creation *to* to successive instants $tn \dots t_{n+m} \dots t_{n+m+p} \dots$). As the free activity that opens up time, the absolute is an eternal now that transcends time (永久の今), whose center is always the concrete present expressed by the demonstrative “this”: 「此意志の中心が何時でも現在であって, 「此」 といふ語を以て表はされる」(II, 331) This means that every instant of experience (every tn) is an expression of God’s freedom, and every single act of will of a finite individual is free, as concrete expression of God’s free will¹⁶. In *IG*, the fact that God sees the world as eternally present seems to imply that time is ultimately an illusion, and the universe as seen by God seems to be a block-universe, similar to the universe imagined by cosmological theories of eternalism. God as absolute free will, however, sees the world not as a unitary, ever unchanging block, but rather as the result of countless instants of free creation, interrelated but independent of each other. Each instant in time is an independent focus of the creating activity of God, and the temporal relations that make the future appear to be asymmetrically (irreversibly) determined by the past are a secondary feature of reality, as time is, from the standpoint of the absolute that opens it, reversible.

一瞬の過去にも還ることができないと考へられたが、意志に於て時間を超越し、却って時間を創造する絶対的自由の我に返ることができると考へることができる。(中略)「我が意志する」といふ時、我は時間的關係を超越するのである、目的論的因果關係に於ての様に意志は時間的關係を離れた原因である、時間的關係は却って意志によって成立つのである。(II,

265 f.)

Reversibility in this context does not imply determinism, as it tends to do in physical eternalism – and in the eternalism of *IG*, in which determinism is explicitly affirmed, (I, 184 f.) and free will explicitly denied. (I, 111 ff.) It rather seems to imply that, from the standpoint of the absolute, the network of temporal (and spatial and causal) relations is freely interwoven starting from each individual knot, i.e., from every individuated act of will, rather than from one single starting knot or all at once from outside the network. The image on the mirror in which God sees itself is not a monolith projected in an unmoving instant, but is rather shaped by infinite acts of reflections that freely relate to each other as originating in the same absolute will.

The eternal now in Nishida's later philosophy

Nishida – a non-theistic thinker with a strong need to provide a comprehensive rational explanation of reality –¹⁷⁾ could not be satisfied with resorting to a mysterious will of God to justify the apparent irrationality of concrete experience. Moreover, with regard to the concept of time, the questions left open in the metaphysics of pure experience had remained largely unanswered. The fact that absolute will freely creates all present moments as mutually related but independent events can, to some degree, explain the relationship between eternal now and concrete, transitory present: Our perception of the uniqueness of each moment depends on the fact that each moment is an original expression of the freedom of absolute will. However, it does not explain why we actually perceive concrete present moments not only as individualized, but also as transient in a temporal sense. It does not explain why, in other words, we experience the unicity of the present moment as its passing away and never coming back. The reversibility of time from the standpoint of the absolute, which seems to imply the absolute symmetry and simultaneity of all moments of reality, relegates the asymmetry between past and future that we experience as one of the most dramatic, if not tragic, features of our lives to the subaltern role of just one among the many secondary relationships that absolute will establishes among the contents of its activity.

With the introduction of the concept of locus (場所), Nishida gained a firm foundation on which to build the further developments of his thought. By interpreting the ultimate foundation of reality as locus of absolute nothingness, he became able to provide some rational explanation to those features of reality, such as the contingency of experience and its fragmentation in individual selves, that he had previously only been able to justify as the result of a principle beyond rational understanding. In the first stages of development of the logic of locus, the notions of time and space were not explicitly thematized, and were still relegated to a largely secondary ontological role, as mere formal categories for the synthesis of experience¹⁸⁾. However, Nishida soon focused his atten-

tion on the nature of time, formulating his original theory of time as fundamental form of reality¹⁹⁾ in the essays included in the volume *SADN*.

In the framework of the logic of locus, concrete reality is not considered the result of an act of self-projection by some absolute lying behind the world of appearance, such as the God of *IG* or *IRSC*. Concrete experiential reality originates itself in an act of self-aware self-determination, which is a self-referential movement whose only elements are the manifested elements of experience itself, with no room for any transcendent metaphysical or mystical principle. The essence of the movement is the self-contradictory relation (自己矛盾) between subject and object – between *noesis* and *noema*, interiority and exteriority – which co-determine each other in a dialectical interplay of mutual negation *qua* mutual affirmation. The self-aware self-determination of nothingness is the act by which reality simultaneously creates and sees itself, as consciousness relating to itself in the form of a content that is apprehended at the same time as external, as the seen must logically and phenomenologically differ from the seer, and as internal, as the seen is nothing but the seer itself. Not only is such dialectical self-aware actualization not a process taking place in time, as was already the case with the self-projection of God in early Nishida's thought, but its logical structure is also not describable in any temporal terms, even if metaphorical. The seer is not something logically and ontologically prior to the seen, as some Godhead prior to creation, which in a successive phase projects itself within itself. The seer and the seen, the act of consciousness and its content, God and the world are the two mutually determining elements in a relationship of absolute logico-ontological simultaneity. This is the ontological meaning of nothingness as the “subject” of self-determination: There is nothing prior to determination that determines itself in the act of determination, nothing to which self-determination can be attributed as predicate of a substratum.

As in his previous works, Nishida stresses the concrete immediacy of present as the fundamental dimension of the self-determination of reality. In the context of the logic of locus, however, he gives a new ontological meaning to present. As there is nothing behind self-determining factual reality, and factual reality is always actualizing itself as self-determining present, the present moment (瞬間) is the ultimate substratum of reality, the true *hypokeimenon*. This new conception of present constitutes thus the culmination of Nishida's effort to ground his description of reality in the actuality of concrete experience. Such effort had taken a detour in the metaphysical systems of *IG* and *IRSC*, in which there was a tendency to hypostatize an absolute subject as the wellspring of reality, and it is only within the framework of the logic of locus as self-determination of absolute nothingness that Nishida can find a way to reconcile his need to adhere to concrete experience with his need to provide a theoretical explanation of reality. However, even in his most “mystical” moment – the metaphysics of absolute free will – Nishida had never given up on his drive to put the immediacy of present experience at the center of his system. Indeed, the way in which Nishida

qualifies the present moment in the essay *My Notion of Self-Aware Determination of Nothingness* (「私の絶対無の自覚的限定といふもの」) is reminiscent of the final chapters of *IRSC*: in both texts the concreteness of the present is expressed by the term “this” (although signified by different Chinese characters, 「是」 and 「此」, respectively). The difference between the two positions is explicit in the fact that in his earlier work, Nishida opposes the concrete “this” to a logically prior absolute, of which the concrete present is the actualization, whereas in his more mature work, he opposes it to a complementary “I”, which he conceives as the noetic side of the self-actualization of reality, of which the “this” constitute the dialectically complementary noematic side.

事実が事実自身を限定するといふ意味があり（中略）事実の背後には何物もない、物とは事実
に即して考へられたものである、限定するものなくして自己自身を限定する所に事実とい
ふものがあるのである、事実とは現在が現在自身を限定する真の現在の内容でなければなら
ない、事実には瞬間がヒポケーメノンとなるのである。之を掴まれた今の立場から云へ
ば、即ちノエマ的に云へば、「是」といふものであり、之を掴む今の立場から云へば、即ち
ノエシ的に云へば、「私」といふものである。「是」といふものの裏にはいつも「私」とい
ふものがなければならない、この花が赤いといふことは私が見るといふことである。(VI,
142 f.)

This self-determining, self-conscious present takes center stage at this stage in the develop-
ment of Nishida’s philosophy, and is qualified, once again, as eternal now (永遠の今). As the
meaning of “now” has changed, though, so the meaning of “eternal” is not the same as in earlier
works. Since behind concrete phenomena there is no atemporal absolute seeing the temporal world
as a simultaneously present totality – be it as the unchanging *nunc stans* of eternalism, or as the
dynamic network of acts of free will of the standpoint of God’s absolute free will – the meaning of
eternal cannot be simultaneity *sub specie aeternitatis*. The eternity of the now lies in the fact that it
contains within itself the interplay of past and future, thus transcending mere temporality under-
stood as being a single instant of time only extrinsically related to other instants of time. 「事実が事
実自身を限定するといふことは限定するものなくして自己自身を限定するといふことでなければ
ならぬ、それは過現未を包む現在の内容でなければならぬ、一々瞬間が無限の過去未来を包む瞬
間でなければならぬ。」(VI, 52)

The eternal character of the present thus expresses the fact that our actual experience of time
extends to past and future. Albeit phenomenologically obvious, this temporal feature of experience
has not been adequately thematized until the XX century. The *prima facie* interpretation of
memories and expectations as present representations, reproducing past perceptions or simulating
future ones, cannot adequately account for the awareness of past and future as such. My present

recollection of yesterday's dinner undoubtedly takes the form of a present image I am experiencing right now, and not in the past; however, the mere presence of the image cannot explain its mnemonic nature. When I am aware now of yesterday's dinner, I am aware of it as something that happened in the past, whereas when I am aware now of tomorrow's breakfast, I am aware of it as something that may happen in the future, in spite of their both being present contents of consciousness. Through present recollections or anticipations, we relate to the past as past and to the future as future, and our ability to be aware of moments in time that do not exist anymore, or do not yet exist, attests to the fact that our consciousness, although always in the present, is not confined to the single instant of time in which its material content – in the sense of Husserl's *hyle* – happens to exist, but extends to the time span of its intentional content.

The eternal now and time

The coexistence of past and future in the present moment is not only recognized in Nishida's concept of eternal present, but is also dialectically explained. Nishida's drive to provide explanations prompts him to look for the origin of past and future in the dialectical structure of the self-determination of the present. Self-determination has the dialectical nature of self-negation qua self-affirmation, which Nishida would in later essays define as absolute contradictory self-identity (絶対矛盾的自己同一). The self-actualization of reality as self-aware takes the form of the identity qua contradiction of simultaneous moments that constitute each other, actualized as the opposing elements of concrete experience. Self-determination thus implies the two co-essential moments of the determiner and the determined, which Nishida had already made explicit in his earlier works as the complementarity of subject and object, act of consciousness and content of consciousness, or A and non-A – although in his earlier works he was still espousing a processual form of dialectic (過程的弁証法), in which the determiner tended to be seen as prior, more fundamental than the determined.

As the determined, noematic element, the self-aware self-determination of nothingness is the world we experience as given, the object of apprehension whose reality cannot be changed insofar as it has *already* been determined. In this respect, our relationship as subjects of experience to the noematic element of self-awareness has the character that Heidegger describes as facticity (*Faktizität*) and thrownness (*Geworfenheit*): We cannot change the situation in which we already are, insofar as we cannot not be where we are and what we are right now. However, as the determining, noetic element, the self-aware self-determination of nothingness is the very activity that shapes the world and acts upon it, constantly changing it insofar as the determined nature of the object can never exhaust the determining nature of the subject. From the point of view of Nishida's dialectical logic, the projected self, as the world, cannot be given all at once, like the block-universe of eternal-

ism, because such projected object would not only dialectically negate the projecting self, but rather completely eliminate it from the equation of reality, by denying its active nature: A as subject would disappear from the identity “A is A”, as it would be completely transformed into A as predicate, leaving only a single, lifeless, non-contradictory A. In other words, the symmetric nature of the relationship of absolute contradictory self-identity implies that, as the determined is produced by the determiner, so the determiner is produced by the determined, in a dialectical relationship that Nishida would later express as dialectic between the individual and the environment. In this respect, our relationship to the noematic element has the character that Heidegger qualifies as project (*Entwurf*): Although we cannot not be where and what we are right now, we can act upon our situation in order to change it, inasmuch it is *not yet* completely determined²⁰⁾. The self-aware self-determination of reality thus unfolds dialectically as past, in the form of the noematic moment of reality, and as future, in the form of its noetic moment, opening up the temporalization of time²¹⁾.

Nishida’s explanation of the nature of time makes it possible to give an answer to the problems left open in his previous attempts. The difference between noesis and noema, created and creating – their asymmetry with regard to their dialectical function, which does not imply a hierarchical asymmetry in their logico-ontological relationship – accounts for the difference between past and future, and hence for the irreversibility of time, which Nishida now stresses as one of its essential features. The relationship of dialectical negation between noesis and noema, moreover, allows Nishida to stress the dramatic character of the flow of time as experienced in our daily lives. The created is denied by the creating, and this means that the already-determined present moment, substituted by a new present moment, vanishes into the past never to be directly experienced again²²⁾. As for the problem of the difference between eternal now and the transitory present moment, Nishida’s foregoing of any absolute point of view in his later thought changes the nature of the question itself. The problem now collapses into that of the relationship between the eternal now, as enfolding (包摂) past and future, and the now perceived as a transient instant in time that is distinguished from the moments that precede or follow it, and its solution too is contained in the dialectical structure of the self-actualization of reality. The present as transient instant in time, the *nunc fluens*, is the present projected as noema, the content of consciousness that we experience as a single snapshot of reality. In this respect, the meaning of presence can be understood as somewhat similar to Heidegger’s interpretation of presence as *Vorhandensein* and *Zuhandensein*: What is present is what lies in front of us, either as mere object of apprehension, or as environment to act upon. As such, the moment becomes the determined that is negated by the noetic side of reality, being obliterated by a newly created instant in time.

The self-determining present as eternal now, on the other hand, is not one element of time diachronically opposed to other elements within the temporal flow of reality. It is the act itself of

self-aware self-determination of nothingness, the fundamental act of projection of itself within itself that creates reality as flowing in time. 「永遠の今が自己自身の中に映す永遠の今の姿といふことができる。永遠の今と考へられるものかゝる意味に於て時を包み時を基礎附けるもの」である。(VI, 368) It is therefore the dialectical act of temporalization itself in which time is opened up, and it possess the paradoxical, self-contradictory character of being present moment that does not belong to time, movement that becomes stillness, stillness that becomes movement.

それは過去からの限定に対しても、未来からの限定に対しても非通約的なものでなければならぬ、時の限定を越えたものでなければならぬ。そこにプラトンがパルメニデスに於て、運動と静止との間に位し、そこから運動が静止に変じ、静止が運動に変ずると考へた、時に属せざる瞬間の意味がなければならぬ。それは時を包む永遠の今の自己限定として、自己自身を限定することによって時を限定すると考へられるものでなければならぬ。(VI, 376)

The eternal now, having the nature of enfolding locus²³⁾, can be conceived as the arena in which time unfolds and moves. 「真に絶対の無と考へられるものは、かゝる時の流を包んだものでなければならぬ、時は永遠の今の中に回転するのである。」(VI, 377) In this respect, although Nishida still writes about space as a derived dimension on a par with time²⁴⁾, he nevertheless often uses the term “spatial” (空間的) in a seemingly more fundamental sense, to denote the character of openness of the self-determining present, explicitly qualifying the eternal now as “something spatial.” 「時を包み時を内に限定する永遠の今の自己限定 (中略) 時そのものを限定する空間的なるもの。」(VI, 400)²⁵⁾ Such spatial character is related to the social dimension of the self-determination of the eternal now: The self-determining present is not a private reality confined to a single individual, being rather the mutually determining interaction of countless humans (無数の人), and the interaction between humans – between I and you (私と汝) – has a spatial nature. Inspired by Pascal’s metaphoric description of God, Nishida describes it as an infinite circle with no circumference, whose center is everywhere; that is to say, an infinite openness that determines itself in countless temporally simultaneous, but spatially separated (as constituting different individual humans) individual acts of consciousness it enfolds. 「絶対無の自覚的限定といふのは周辺なくして至る所が中心となる無限大の円と考へることができる。」(VI, 188) Heidegger’s terminology might help us once again in understanding the meaning of Nishida’s concepts, in spite of the many differences between the two philosophers’ positions. The self-determination of the eternal now appears to be the same fundamental act that Heidegger was trying to describe as the event (*Ereignis*) that creates reality as the mirror-play (*Spiegel-Spiel*) of elements that are what they are only in relation to each other. As enfolding locus – openness that enfolds what it creates, allowing it to be – it has the nature of space open for the play of time (*Zeit-Spiel-Raum*)²⁶⁾, the spatial arena described by Heidegger in

Contributions to Philosophy as the opening whose movement consists of the temporalization of time²⁷⁾.

Eternal now and abstract interpretations of time

Nishida's eternal now is thus not a *nunc stans* that constitutes a timeless eternity. The well-known statement about the relationship between the transitory now and the permanent now – *nunc fluens facit tempus, nunc stans facit aeternitatem*, the now that passes produces time, the now that remains produces eternity – could be rephrased by Nishida as *nunc aeternum facit tempus et nunc fluens*, the eternal now produces time and the now that passes²⁸⁾. As time is generated in the dynamic of self-determination of the present, all modes of time should be describable in terms of the elements of self-determination. Having explained the concrete modes of past and future as the noematic and noetic side of self-determination, Nishida proceeds to explain the abstract modes of time – that is to say, the conceptual interpretations of reality based on abstractions from the concrete reality of the self-determining present.

The transient now, as noematic element of reality, disappears into past as it is substituted by a new now that, as noetic element, was future before becoming present. However, since the opposition of past and future is a dialectical relationship of contradictory self-identity – since they are, in a fundamental sense, one and the same thing, the dialectically self-determining eternal now – past and future coexist in the eternal now. Therefore, by removing the noetic element from concrete, experienced reality, it is possible to consider abstractly the totality of the transient nows as simultaneous totality of juxtaposed instants in time. By virtue of its changing into future now the present, already-determined now, the noetic element is what constitutes the flowing character of time, and its subtraction from the image of time produces the abstract image of a timeless (非時間的), spatialized continuum. Its spatial character derives from the fact that time as diachronic succession is projected onto the spatial dimension of simultaneity of the eternal now. This is the origin, in Nishida's view, of the physical eternalism espoused, more or less explicitly, by many modern scientific theories. Noematic eternalism is a legitimate way to see the world and to deal with it mathematically, insofar as it is based in an abstract, but real aspect of time. However, it is a theoretical mistake to elevate an abstract view of time to the status of privileged expression of the fundamental nature of concrete time, as is the case with many reductionist forms of physicalism. As abstractly considered noema is pure being free of becoming and non-being, abstraction from the noetic element is also the origin of ideas of absolute being, including mystical ideas of the world such as the idea of fullness of time (*Vollendung der Zeit*) expressed by Meister Eckhart²⁹⁾. 「永遠の一面には時を超越し時を否定した意味がなければならない。それが所謂「時の充実」と考へられるものであり、そこに絶対の有があると考へることができる、絶対無のノエマ的自覚に於て絶対の有が見られるの

である。」(VI, 141) Although Nishida does not explicitly refer to his own earlier works, it is clear the abstraction from the noetic element is at the origin of the eternalism espoused in *IG*, where, as mentioned above, the world is conceived as the eternal, unchanging object of God's cosmic intellectual intuition³⁰.

On the opposite end of abstraction, lies the view of time that abstracts from the noematic element of reality. When reality is seen as pure noema, the world appears as a block-universe, and temporal relations vanish, or are reduced to the deterministic causal relations of the physical world, in which the future (noesis) is completely absorbed by the past (noema), insofar as it is fully determined by it. On the contrary, when the noematic element is absorbed in the noetic element, the world appears as ever changing environment determined by the future: It is the world of consciousness, individual self, freedom and teleology interpreted by the human sciences as sciences of spirit (*Geisteswissenschaften*). When the absorption of the noema into the noesis is carried to the extreme, the individual consciousness rises above itself and becomes God (神となる ; X, 228), as Nishida explicitly states in the later essay *Artistic Creation as Historical Formative Activity* (「歴史的形形成作用としての芸術的創作」)³¹. This is the origin of notions of reality as grounded in a transcendent subject that unilaterally creates and enfolds the world as object, including mystical ideas of Godhead as consciousness beyond consciousness, intellection beyond intellection (*hypernoesis*). The concept of absolute free will in *IRSC* as well may be said to derive from the abstraction toward the noetic pole of subjectivity and freedom, whereas the concept of God abstract from the world in *IG* may be said to derive from a similar abstraction that disregards freedom.

As is the case with the abstraction toward the noematic pole, the abstraction towards the noetic pole is a legitimate way of describing reality only insofar as it does not claim to be complete and exclusive. Reality is always constituted by the dialectical interaction of the two identical but contradictory poles, and any worldview that relies only on one of them is inevitably incomplete and unilateral³². In the earlier essays of *SADN*, Nishida still tends to see the noetic, subjective pole of determination as somewhat more relevant than the noematic, objective pole – in keeping with his idealistic tendency to interpret reality as phenomena of consciousness – and, consequently, to see future as the dominant temporal mode³³, in line with the existentialist tradition from Kierkegaard to Heidegger. However, he is already aware of the fundamental symmetry between the two dialectical elements of awareness and temporality, which he would later on stress with increasing emphasis³⁴.

Between the opposite worldviews of physicalistic objectivism and idealistic subjectivism, lies the historical worldview, which Nishida sees as closer to the concrete, social reality of the self-aware self-determining present. (VI, 146) Nishida states that the historical worldview is still an abstraction on the noetic side of reality, as historical time is determined by the future, having the form of a circular movement (円環的運動) in which the future acts back onto the past changing it, as

opposed to the linear movement of time determined only by the past of the natural sciences. (VI, 240 ff.) However, it is less abstract than mere subjectivistic views based solely on the noetic pole, being rather the result of the consideration of the noema as enfolded in the noesis, i.e., of the objective world as acted upon by subjects. In layman terms, the world of history is the world of the interaction between humans and their environment, in which the future is the main mode of time, insofar as human actions teleologically determine the present, but in which the past as factually given environment is nevertheless still seen as influencing the present. The historical world is thus qualified by Nishida as the world of the mutual determination and interaction between subject and object, born out of the concrete social world of the eternal now, and opposed to the abstract worlds born out of the separation of the two dialectical poles.

永遠の今の自己限定として客観界と考へられるものが、絶対愛のノエマ的限定の内容として社会的意義を有つと考へられる時、それは永遠なる生命の流と考へられる。そこに歴史の世界といふ如きものが考へられ、かゝる世界に於ていつも主客相対立し、之に於てあるものは何処までも主客両面を有つて居るのである。広義に於ける行為的一般者に於て主客の対立が考へられ、之に於てあるものは主観的・客観的に自己自身を限定するのである。併し何処までも結び附かない両極端と考へられる所に、相対立する主客の両界といふ如きものが考へられるのである。(VI, 254 f.)

Conclusion

The notion of eternal now that Nishida developed in *SADN* is a powerful conceptual tool that allows for an elaborate philosophy of time, and provides an answer to the problems raised by his previous, less elaborated views of time, while justifying the validity of such problematic views within given limits. Nishida is thus able to build an adequate theoretical foundation for our concrete experience of time, while at the same time safeguarding the validity of more abstract approaches to the phenomenon. Albeit influenced by the developments of the concept of time in western philosophy, Nishida's achievement is made possible by the internal development of his own philosophical views, and it is a testimony to the refinement and depth of his philosophical endeavor.

An evaluation of Nishida's theory of time, however, would not be complete without pointing out some of its limitations and unsolved problems. I will mention three problems that I believe are particularly significant for an evaluation of Nishida's ideas. First, Nishida's theory is predicated on the postulation of free will. Freedom is one of the key features of the idea of self-determination of the eternal now – as causal determinism would reduce the determination of the present to passive determination by the past – and as such it is an essential element in the distinction between past and future, natural sciences and humanities. In spite of having expunged the idea of free will in *IG*

(I, 111 ff.), Nishida reintroduced it at the end of *IRSC* as a sort of *deus ex machina*, an otherwise unjustified solution to the problem of the contingency of concrete experience. Since then, Nishida simply assumed freedom as an experiential datum, without arguing about its validity. However, although the acceptance of the data of immediate experience is a defensible philosophical position, it is not unassailable³⁵⁾, and given that the denial of free will is a widely held position in many fields of human knowledge, (like, for instance, neurophysiology), the simple postulation of the validity of the direct experience of free will seems to be a rather shaky foundation for a solid philosophical system.

Furthermore, there is one important feature of time that Nishida's theory seems to be unable to explain. Time as a linear flow is not perceived as a single unitary process, in which any event at a given instant can be equally related to any event at a successive or previous instant. As physicists use the concept of "world lines" – specific sequences of events causally interrelated in a linear temporal progression, and as such referred to the same object – in our concrete experience we perceive *our* past as radically different from other people's past. The train of events that made us what we are now (our world-line) is different from the train of events that made other people what they are now, as the train of events that made the Earth what it is now is different from the train of events that made some extra-solar planet what it is now. Such difference is not accounted for in Nishida's analysis of time. On the contrary, he stresses that the relationship between the I of today and the I of yesterday is the same relationship of "I and you" that defines interpersonal relations, and possesses the same character of discontinuous continuity (非連続の連続). 「今日の私は昨日の私を汝と見ることによって、昨日の私は今日の私を汝と見ることによって、私の個人的自己の自覚といふものが成立するのである、非連続の連続として我々の個人的自覚といふものが成立するのである。」 (VI, 413) Accordingly, there seems to be nothing in his theory of time that makes it possible to distinguish between individuals in the ordinary sense of the word, as temporal entities whose continuity is stronger than the continuity between different humans³⁶⁾.

Finally, the usage of the term "eternal" by Nishida can be questioned. The eternity of the self-determining present lies in the fact that it does not belong to time, since it opens and enfolds within itself potentially infinite past and future, as attested by their present accessibility to memory and anticipation³⁷⁾. In this respect, "eternity" only expresses the difference between the temporal locality of the projected moment (the fact that it is perceived as one single instant in time, separated from other instants) and the temporal non-locality of the self-determining now (the fact that it enfolds time, rather than being contained in it). Indeed, Nishida makes clear that such eternity is not the eternity of God conceived by mystical thinkers, which he now sees as a mere abstraction. 「永遠の今 *nunc aeternum* など云へば、すぐ神秘的と考へられるかも知らぬが、神秘学者はそれによって「永遠なるもの」即ち神を考へた。併し私の永遠の今の限定といふのは唯、現在が現在自

身を限定することを意味するのである。」(VI, 138; see 148) However, mystical thinkers may have conceived an eternal God by abstracting from the concreteness of the present, but mysticism is first and foremost a concrete experience, and only derivatively an abstract viewpoint. Nishida does seem to attribute to the self-determination of the present some deeper spiritual, even mystical (VI, 40) meaning. God as “true time, absolute time” is not just an abstracted thought, but something we can touch in the present moment, a transcendence we can see in the depth of ourselves. 「我々は（中略）瞬間の先端に於て真の時に触れると考へることができる，即ち絶対時に接すると考へることができる，個人の先端に於て神に接するといふことができる」。(VI, 190) 「神は何処までも我々の底から働くものでなければならぬ。（中略）我々は我々の底に超越を見るのである。」(VI, 425) However, it is difficult to see how the experiential content of such contact with the absolute can be conceived in the context of Nishida’s thought. In particular, it is difficult to see how it can be conceived the temporal (or atemporal) quality of such a contact with the eternal. Since Nishida describes God as the self-determination of nothingness in the eternal present itself³⁸, there seems to be no place in his system for any transcendence we can touch, and it is hard to see what it could experientially mean to touch the self-determination of nothingness. If to touch God and eternity just means to be aware of the self-determination of nothingness as coexistence of past and future in the present, one may then wonder what is actually eternal in Nishida’s eternal now³⁹.

Notes

- 1) See Greene, Brian The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality, New York, Vintage Books, 2003.
- 2) To my knowledge, the most radical attempt has been made in recent years by physicist C. Rovelli, who argues that, “We must forget the notion of time altogether, and build a quantum theory of gravity where this notion does not appear at all. The notion of time familiar to us may then be reconstructed in special physical situations, or within an approximation, as in the case for a number of familiar physical quantities that disappear when moving to a deeper level of description.” Rovelli, Carlo “Forget Time: Essay written for the FQXi contest on the Nature of Time,” 2008, available online at Cornell University Library, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/0903.3832v3.pdf>, p 1.
- 3) Kant, Immanuel Kritik der reinen Vernunft, A 32 ff., B 49 ff.
- 4) See the first edition’s section on “The Deduction of Pure Concepts of Understanding” (Der Deduktion der reinen Verstandesbegriffe), in id., A 95 ff.
- 5) Gendlin, Eugene T. “Time’s Dependence on Space: Kant’s Statements and Their Misconstrual by Heidegger,” in Seebom, Thomas M. and Kockelmans, Joseph J., eds. Kant and Phenomenology, Washington, University Press of America, 1985, pp. 147 ff.
- 6) See Bedell, George C. “Kierkegaard’s Conception of Time,” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XXXVII (3), 1969, and the essays in Dilthey, Wilhelm, Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften (The Formation of the Historical World in the Human

- Sciences), *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 7, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914–2006.
- 7) See Heidegger, Martin “Zeit und Sein,” in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969, p. 24: “Der Versuch in ‘Sein und Zeit’ §70, die Räumlichkeit des Daseins auf die Zeitlichkeit zurückzuführen, läßt sich nicht halten.”
 - 8) Heidegger, Martin *Sein und Zeit*. 15. Aufl., Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1979. See Zweiter Abschnitt, “Dasein und Zeitlichkeit” (Division two, “Being-there and Temporality”), pp. 180 ff.
 - 9) For the title of the book, I follow the established translation by Valdo H. Viglielmo, Takeuchi Toshinori, and Joseph S. O’Leary: Nishida, Kitarō *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1987. However, in the text I will use “self-awareness” to translate *jikaku* (自覚). The latter, widely used translation is more adequate, and “self-consciousness” is more properly used to translate Nishida’s different term *jikoishiki* (自己意識).
 - 10) In the references to Nishida’s work, the Latin numerals refer to the volume, the Arabic numerals to the pages of the first edition of the Complete Works (『西田幾多郎全集』, 東京, 岩波書店, 1947~1953年).
 - 11) I follow the translation by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives: Kitarō Nishida *An Inquiry into the Good*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1990, p. 164.
 - 12) Leonardi, Andrea “Locus and Space: The Concepts of Time and Space in the Evolution of Nishida’s Philosophy,” in 『西田哲学会年報』, 西田哲学会, 第7号, 2010年, p. 180.
 - 13) See also Nishida’s “Fragments on Pure Experience” (『純粹経験に関する断章』), XVI, 388: 「此の一の状態に於て意識は普遍である。之を「永久の今」といふ。始終活動である。時間空間の範疇は之から始まってくる。」
 - 14) See I, 183: 「神の自己同一の意識」.
 - 15) See chapter 33 (II, 207 ff.).
 - 16) 「意識現象の根柢となる全体は、その部分を否定する全体ではなくして、各部分の独立、各部分の自由を許す全体である（中略）我々の意志の自由と絶対意志の自由とは相撞するものではない、我々は絶対自由の意志の中に於て自由である、否絶対的意志は他の独立を許すことに依って真に自ら自由となることのできるのである。」 (II, 296)
 - 17) The need for a comprehensive explanation of reality, famously expressed in the preface to *IG* (I, 4), is reaffirmed in the preface to *IRSC*. 「余の所謂自覚的体系の形式に依ってすべての实在を考へ〔て見よう。〕」 (II, 3)
 - 18) 「非合理的なるものの合理化によって、存在判断が成立するのである、時間空間といふもかゝる合理化の手段に過ぎない。」 (IV, 230)
 - 19) 「すべて実在的なるものは時に於てあると考へられ、時は実在の根本形式と考へられる」 (VI, 341)
 - 20) Nishida himself, although critical of what he perceived as a lack of depth in Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology, acknowledged the affinity of his own position with Heidegger’s existential analysis in relation to facticity and project: 「かゝる世界に於ては我々はハイデッゲーの云う如く何処までも投げられたものと考へられると共に、投企的と考へられるであらう。」 (VII, 118) For Nishida’s criticism of Heidegger, see V, 349 f.
 - 21) Nishida would later describe such movement as the dialectic of the created (作られたもの) and the creating (作るもの). See, for instance, IX, 159 f.
 - 22) S. Odin’s unsubstantiated remark that the fact that for Nishida the future is already contained in the present implies symmetry, reversibility, and determinism appears to be mistaken. Odin, *Steve Process Metaphysics and Hua-Yen Buddhism: A Critical Study of Cumulative Penetration Vs.*

Interpenetration, Albany, SUNY Press, 1982, p. 80.

- 23) As Nishida wrote to Mutai Risaku in 1940, the inquiry into the theory of time elucidates the logic of locus: 「時間の論理を究明することによって場所の論理が明になって来るとおもひます」(XIX, 141)
- 24) 「私のこの所謂今の自己限定かも所謂時間空間が限定せられるのである。」(VI, 168)
- 25) 「永遠の今の自己限定として、今の限定の底には空間的なものがあるのである。」(VI, 331) 「現在が自己自身の中に自己自身を流動的に限定すると考へることができる。時を包む時の空間的限定、時の外延的限定といふ如きものが考へられる。」(VI, 403) See VI, 360 f.; XI, 225: 「時の背後に空間がなければならぬ」; XI, 45: 「時間はその成立の根底に於て空間的でなければならぬ」; XI, 14 f., et al.
- 26) As H. Ruin remarks, “for the important German term *Spielraum*, literally “playspace,” there is no good English translation,” Ruin, Hans “Contributions to Philosophy,” in Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Wrathall, Mark A., eds. *A Companion to Heidegger* Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 368.
- 27) Heidegger, Martin *Beiträge zur Philosophie*. Frankfurt a. M., V. Klostermann, 1989, see pp. 380 ff. Needless to say, there are many differences between the two philosophers’ positions. Leaving aside more general differences, it can be remarked that Heidegger does not elaborate on the social, interpersonal dimension of the opening event emphasized by Nishida, neither does he express his thought in explicit dialectical terms (although I believe that it would not be difficult to reformulate the dynamic of his *Zeit-Spiel-Raum* and the mirror-play of the Fourfold, *Geviert*, as an explicitly dialectical relationship).
- 28) The saying is a paraphrase from Boethius’ *De trinitate* by Thomas Aquinas, in *Summa theologiae*, 1a, 10, 2.
- 29) Nishida quotes Meister Eckhart’s *Von der Vollendung der Zeit* at the beginning of *The Self-Determination of the Eternal Now* (「遠の今の自覚的限定」). (VI, 181)
- 30) It seems plausible that Nishida had originally borrowed the term “eternal now” from Meister Eckhart, whom he quotes in the section on religion, albeit in different contexts. (I, 185 f.) In *The Self-Determination of the Eternal Now* Nishida explicitly refers to Eckhart’s notion of eternal now. (VI, 182)
- 31) See VI, 238.
- 32) These abstract temporal modes are discussed in *The Temporal and the Atemporal* (「時間的なもの及び非時間的なもの」); for the abstraction from the noetic element see particularly VI, 237 ff.
- 33) 「現在が現在自身を限定するといふところに、時が未来から限定せられるといふ意味が含まれて居るのである。」(VI, 243)
- 34) On Nishida’s evolving position on the primacy of the future, and his stance towards Kierkegaard on this topic, see 太田裕信「瞬間と歴史」、『日本の哲学』, 第12号, 京都, 昭和堂, 2011/12年, pp. 112 f., 119.
- 35) In the paper quoted in note 2, physicist C. Rovelli argues that, “The notion of time is extremely natural to us, but only in the same manner in which other intuitive ideas are rooted in our intuition because they are features of the small garden in which we are accustomed to living (for instance: absolute simultaneity, absolute velocity, or the idea of a flat Earth and an absolute up and down). Intuition is not a good guide for understanding natural regimes so distant from our daily experience.” (p. 9)
- 36) Nishida does mention the bond (結合) between past and present experience as an essential

feature of the individual self, (VI, 358), but he does not provide any theoretical justification of such bond (see also VI, 399). The problem of personal identity in Nishida's philosophy has been a topic of interest for western interpreters, but the problem of the difference between separate trains of present moments constituting different personalities seems to have gone unnoticed, as the difference is generally taken for granted. G. Kopf remarks that "Nishida's self is a momentary awareness event which arises in *mutual determination*... and *mutual correlation*... with other individual awareness events." (Kopf, Gereon Beyond Personal Identity: Dogen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-Self, Richmond, Curzon Press, 2001, p. 248.) J. Tremblay, as well, deals extensively with the problem of the unity and continuity of consciousness in Nishida (Tremblay, Jacynthe Auto-éveil et temporalité: Les défis posés par la philosophie de Nishida, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007, pp. 49 ff. and 141 ff.), and underlines the link between self and present. However, neither of them explains how a particular sequence of present individual awareness events can be connected diachronically as a single human personality, and how the same relationship of discontinuous continuity can account for both intrapersonal and interpersonal dialectical unity. S. Odin believes that the difference lies in the fact that, for Nishida, "I and Thou interact directly but only through communication using the intersubjective medium of language." (Odin, Steve The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism, Albany, SUNY Press, 1996, p. 89) However, Nishida stresses the fact that the direct interaction between the I of today and the I of yesterday too is mediated by linguistic expressions (言表), and is a form of dialogue (話し合う) based on a semantic bond (意味的結合). (VI, 399, 343) Linguistic mediation cannot therefore account for the difference between intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships.

- 37) This position remained unchanged in later years. See XI, 379: 「時の瞬間は永遠に消え行くものなると共に、永遠に生れるもの、即ち瞬間は永遠である。」
- 38) See VI, 350 ff., and 238: 「神といふのは（中略）我々が之によって之に於て成立する場所といふ如きものでなければならぬ。」 The latter passage shows some ambiguity in the use of the term "God," as it is qualified both as the locus itself, and as noesis enfolding the noematic side of reality.
- 39) I have criticized Nishida's later position on God and mysticism in Leonardi, Andrea "Mysticism and the Notion of God in Nishida's Philosophy of Religion," in *Philosophy East and West*, 64: 2, 2014.