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Nishida Kitarō and Ernst Cassirer

I and You, He, and the Dialectical Historical World

Beginning from Elberfeld's and Ōhashi's claims that Cassirer may have influenced Nishida, this paper examines Cassirer's and Nishida's views on the nature of the I-you relation and expression as well as the importance of the he (彼) in our understanding of Nishida's turn to the dialectical historical world. Section one establishes the historical and systematic connection between Nishida and Cassirer. Section two analyzes their respective accounts of the logic of mediation. Section three sets out their respective critiques of the metaphysical account of the I-you-world relation. Section four examines their relational accounts of the I-you, he (彼), and the dialectical historical world. The Conclusion delineates the difference between Nishida's and Cassirer's respective philosophies of culture and their historical expression.

KEYWORDS: Nishida Kitarō—Ernst Cassirer—Miki Kiyoshi—I-You—He (彼)—Expression—Logic of Mediation—Historical World

"What might Professor Cassirer think about my thinking?"
(NKZ 20: 427)

Rolf Elberfeld maintains that "Nishida developed his ideas of expression primarily based on... Leibniz and Cassirer"[1] and that Nishida "*probably* took up*" the post-Hegelian concern with the I-you relation from Cassirer and was "influenced" by his understanding of the "you." Elberfeld cites Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* on mythical expression as "*probably the source for Nishida's ideas about the I and you*."[2] Elberfeld's claims are, however, parenthetical and qualified: "probably" took up, "probably" the source. Ōhashi Ryōsuke has suggested that Nishida's use of the term "he" (彼) may have also been taken over from Cassirer's account of the *Er*. The term he (彼) involves, Ōhashi argues, a self-critique by Nishida of his account of the I-you relation and plays an important role in Nishida's "locational turn" that leads to his later theory of the self-determination of the dialectical historical world.[3] Ōhashi does not, however, elaborate further on this suggestion. Beginning from Elberfeld's and Ōhashi's claims, this paper examines Cassirer's and Nishida's views on the nature of the I-you relation and expression as well as the importance of the he (彼) in our understanding of Nishida's turn to the dialectical historical world. Section one establishes the historical and systematic connection between Nishida and Cassirer. Section two analyzes their respective accounts of the logic of mediation. Section three sets out their respective critiques of the metaphysical account of the I-you-world relation. Section four examines their relational accounts

1. Elberfeld 1999, 157.
2. Cf. ibid., 129, 159, and 130.
3. Cf. Ōhashi 1995, 12.

of the I-you, he (彼), and the dialectical historical world. The Conclusion delineates the difference between Nishida's and Cassirer's respective philosophies of culture and their historical expression.

THE HISTORICAL AND SYSTEMATIC CONNECTION BETWEEN NISHIDA AND CASSIRER

Nishida's Familiarity with Cassirer's Philosophy

While there are no references to Cassirer in Nishida's published works, we find several references to Cassirer in Nishida's diary and letters.[4] It is clear that Nishida read Cassirer's early works on mathematics as well as *Leibniz' System in seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen* (1903), *Das Erkenntnisproblem* (1907), and *Substance and Function* (1910), and he understood Cassirer's early work as "furthering Marburg neo-Kantianism in terms of contemporary mathematics and physics."[5]

Nishida's engagement with Marburg neo-Kantianism must be understood in the development of his philosophy. In *An Inquiry into the Good* (1911), Nishida sought to provide an account of the unity of "thinking" in terms of "pure experience (純粋経験)." Heeding the charge of psychologism, Nishida turned to transcendental philosophy to establish the logical ground for this unity that would be independent of the contingent mental processes of the psyche of individual subjects. In *Thinking and Experience* (思索と体験) (1915), Nishida took up the pure logic of Heinrich Rickert. Nishida quickly recognized, however, the limits of Rickert's pure logic for his project. The development and elaboration of the theory of *basho* between 1924 and 1932 can, therefore, rightly be seen as a response to the epistemological dualism of the Southwest School of neo-Kantianism between subject and object, form and matter, logic and life, validity and being.

Nishida valued, however, the Marburg school's efforts to develop a logic that would overcome this epistemological dualism:

> The Southwest School is generally formalistic, and the relationship between form and content is not sufficiently considered. The Southwest School is,

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4. Cf: NKZ-S 11: 133, 290; 12: 52, 132, 167; 14: 271; 18: 45; 18: 89, 109; 19: 285, 286;, 298; 315, 316; 20: 82, 427; 22: 145; 23: 353, 354.

5. NKZ-S 12: 167.

therefore, idealistic. By contrast, the Marburg school (Cohen, Natorp, and Cassirer) is more ontological and considers the problem of the correlation of form and content more deeply. In the Marburg School *das Gegebene* is considered as *das Aufgegebene*. What is given is not simply given from the outset but is the demand that thinking must solve.[6]

Noting the importance of Cohen's theory of "relationality," the "production point" (*erzeugender Punkt*), "the infinitesimal method," and "differential calculus," Nishida concludes that "in the Marburg school... the question of form and content is considered as dynamic and open-ended."[7] The significance of Cohen for the development of Nishida's and Cassirer's philosophies has been well documented.[8]

Nishida would have also been aware of Cassirer's mature philosophy of culture that goes beyond Cohen's official scientism through his discussions with those around him who were more engaged with Cassirer in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This would include Tanabe Hajime, Miki Kiyoshi, Nakai Masakazu, Tetsuji Yura, Iwao Koyama, and Robert Schinzinger.

The Question of Historical Influence

Did this familiarity with Cassirer "influence" the development of Nishida's thought? In many ways, Cassirer and Nishida are contemporaries who shared a common intellectual lineage with Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Goethe, and Cohen. As we will see below, both develop their philosophical language and perspective from a sustained engagement with the shift from substance-concepts to the function-concepts of group theory in mathematics and the paradigm shift from Newtonian physics to field theory. Both sought to move beyond the antithetical opposition between transcendental philosophy and Lebensphilosophie, logic and life.[9] In other words, both give expression to a

6. NKZ 15: 125–6.

7. Ibid.

8. Cf. ŌHASHI 1995, 63–6, and 76. For a detailed account of Nishida's reception of Cohen, see ITABASHI 2004, 58–73. For the relation between Cassirer and Cohen, see LUFT 2015, 119–24.

9. The term 経験 used by Nishida in 1911 to designate "pure experience (純粋経験)" is a neologism coined to translate the English term "experience" and the German term *Erfahrung* into Japanese. In 1915, Nishida adopted the term 体験, a neologism coined to translate the German term *Erlebnis* (lived-experience). With this shift in terms,

constellation of common sources and problems. Thus, even if there were no influence, it would not be entirely surprising that given the common sources of their thinking, we should encounter many similarities in the dynamics of their philosophical work. Our reading here, therefore, does not focus on the historical question of influence but on the commonality in their philosophical treatment of a systematic issue: namely, the relation between the I-you and the historical-world.

Cassirer's Presence in the Constellation of the Kyoto School and the Systematic Issues in Nishida's Turn to the I-You Relation and the Historical World

Here, I would like to suggest how Cassirer can be understood to have been an element in the constellation of the Kyoto School in a way that establishes the common systematic questions between Cassirer and Nishida that we will consider below in the development of Nishida's philosophy. As is well known, Nishida's later thought on the historical world was largely a response to Tanabe, Miki, and Tosaka.

For Tanabe, Nishida's concrete universals flowing out of the undifferentiated unknowable ground of absolute nothingness did not go beyond the Neoplatonic solution to the problem of dualism in Plato; and thus Nishida's theory of *basho*, as it is articulated in the 1920s, ends in a metaphysical theory of emanation in which absolute nothingness, which is beyond classification, thinks itself as itself and in so doing emanates out of itself becoming all the beings of the world.[10] Tosaka, for his part, argues that the logic of *basho* is still limited to the interiority of consciousness and is, therefore, not as such truly dialectal in nature. For Tosaka, as a Marxist, dialectics essentially

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Nishida makes clear that his philosophy seeks to reconcile transcendental philosophy and Lebensphilosophie, logic and life: "… my thinking was initially based on the theses of the so-called school of pure logic, e.g., by Rickert, and the theory of pure duration of Bergson. Because I sympathized with them and reflected on them, I was able to benefit greatly from both. However, I do not just believe Bergson, nor do I think Rickert's views are unproblematic; rather, I think that the requirement of contemporary philosophy lies in the synthesis of these two modes of thinking" (NKZ 1: 166). Cf. Ralf Müller argues that Cassirer and Nishida, "despite having seemingly opposing views on form, share a common philosophical aim: namely, to strike a balance between academic theory and the immanence of life" (MÜLLER 2018, 195–216). Cf. also LOFTS 2019, 124ff.

10. Cf. ŌHASHI 1995, 86.

means mediation. The issue concerns the dialectical and historical mediation between the universal and the singular individual.

For Tanabe, the "logic of the specific/species" (種の論理) is an originary relation of mediation between the antithetical opposition between the universal and the individual. There is neither formless life (radical individuality) nor lifeless form (abstract universality); there is only the existence of a historical life-form. Being-there (*Dasein*) in the world is always a specific way of being (*Sosein*) in the world. What concretely exists is not "culture" nor some non-cultural individual, but rather a specific historical-cultural-individual. What concretely exists is not culture *per se* but Japanese culture or European culture, which only exists in the present at a specific moment in history. And, when we speak *about* "culture," we do so *from the standpoint* of a specific historical culture. For example, when we speak about "religion" or "philosophy," we speak *from the standpoint* of the presuppositions about religion and philosophy of a specific historical culture. In this way, the concept *of* culture (objective genitive) is a concept *of* culture (subjective genitive), that is, a concept of culture that belongs to a specific historical culture. Thus, when we speak *from the standpoint* of a historical culture *about* culture, it is that culture's self-understanding that is expressing itself.

What is more, the nature of the self is such that its identity is defined not just by the culture in which it always already finds itself but in relation to other selves in which it co-exists. The logical structure of being in culture and being with others belongs, therefore, to the very self-identity of the self qua self. The I is always already defined by its being in culture in relation to a you.

We cannot enter into a detailed account of Tanabe's and Tosaka's critiques of Nishida here. What is important for our purposes is that the general constellation of thinkers around Nishida had turned their attention to more concrete embodied forms of praxis or engaged knowing that were expressive of a historically concrete cultural form of life that would seem very distant from Nishida's account of the various transcultural levels of *basho* undertaken during the 1920s. One can mention here Watsuji's work on *fūdo*, Kuki's work on *iki*, Nakai's work on sport and film, or Miki's work on the logic of the imagination, historical form, and technology.

Nishida's turn to the dialectical historical world is a turn to culture and history. It is, therefore, not surprising that it is only now that Nishida is brought to speak of the I-you, the historical world, and the specific nature of

"culture" – the three systematic points of our comparison between Nishida and Cassirer below.

For Nishida, the historical world is the product of a mutual determination or formation (形成: literally, becoming form) of the self and world. Nishida's *terminus technicus* for this mutual determination is "active-intuition" as that knowledge-as-action that marks a dialectical movement from "something made to something making" (作られたものから作るもの).[11] The historical world is itself creative, self-forming, moving from form to form; and the self is a "creative element of the creative world": "as the place of *poiēsis*, that is, as the place of active-intuition, the human being constitutes the historical present. The form (形) of living things is *functional* (機能的). To say that living things act *functionally* is to say that they have form."[12] Technology is the transformative mechanism of this creative mediation between the self and world, the human and nature. "Technology is the union of us (我々) and nature."[13] And our historical body, therefore, can be understood in light of a "machine."[14]

For Nishida, human beings are *homo faber*: "We are born in a historical society, and technically make things, and by making things, we make ourselves."[15] In fact, "historical reality itself is technical."[16] "In that sense, the form that forms oneself is called a historic specific/species (歴史的種), and it plays a subjective (主体的) role in the historical world. What I call form is not a static form that is separated from existence and is considered only abstractly. Even if we say from form to form, it does not mean that forms move without mediation. [Rather] we say that it is a form that, as *contradictory self-identity of one and many*, has reality."[17] A society is a historical species. There is no such thing as a society that does not have the characteristics of a species of the historical world.[18]

What is more, the activity of nature itself is technological: "Nature is an

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11. NKZ 9: 9.
12. NKZ 9: 157.
13. NKZ 9: 238.
14. NKZ 8: 298: NISHIDA 1990, 119.
15. NKZ 12: 297.
16. NKZ 9: 303.
17. NKZ 9: 157.
18. Cf. NKZ 9: 122.

ingenious technician. Accordingly, we cannot accomplish anything unless it is thoroughly through nature's technology."[19] John Krummel states about this technology of nature (自然の技術[20]): "This further illustrates Nishida's point that both logos and *technē*, which we commonly associate with our own humanity in distinction from nature, really cannot be separated from the *poiēsis* (making) of *phusis* (nature)."[21]

The parallels with Miki are evident and have long been recognized. As is known, Miki roots technology in the "imagination." "As formative action, our actions are historical, and historical actions are technological. Indeed, history is created technologically; history cannot be conceived apart from technology."[22] Technology is the productive activity of the imagination as the synthesis of logic (objective form) and pathos (subjective life) that *creates* and *is* historical form. "Life (生命) as form (形) produces form (形) externally and gives form (形) to itself by giving form (形) to things (物). Such formation (形成: the becoming form) is possible because nihility (虚無) is the pre-condition of the human being."[23] The similarities between Nishida and Miki have raised a debate about who influenced whom.[24] While we will not enter into this debate here, it is important to note that Cassirer has explicitly influenced Miki.[25]

Let us return to the question of how Cassirer might fit into a consideration of Nishida's turn to the dialectical historical world as a response to Tanabe's and Tosaka's critique and its similarities with Miki's logic of the imagination. In the quoted passage by Miki, he establishes a relational interconnection between his logic of the imagination, Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, and Nishida's conception of absolute nothingness.

Cassirer critiques Lebensphilosophie for wanting to negate form and return to the immediacy of life. He writes: "A self-awareness [*Selbsterfassung*] of life is possible only if it does not simply remain absolutely within itself. It must give itself form: precisely by this 'alterity' of form, it gains if

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19. nkz 8: 298: Nishida 1990, 119.
20. Ibid.
21. Krummel 2011, 227.
22. mkz 7: 211.
23. mkz 1: 256: Miki 2023, 197.
24. Cf. Krummel 2017, 265, and n. 101.
25. Cf. Lofts 2023a.

not its reality then its 'visibility' [*Sichtigkeit*]."[26] For Cassirer, there is no form without life, no life without form: life and form constitute a single individual unity. For it is by the symbolic mediation of form that the immediacy of life obtains the life-form of culture: all seeing (*Sehen*) is mediated by the sight (*Sicht*) of spirit such that the symbolic at once gives things their look (*Gesicht*) and to human beings their outlook (*Aussicht*).

Miki now articulates his concept of historical form as the product of the imagination in Cassirer's language of substance-concepts and function-concepts:

> In ancient times, people thought in terms of substance-concepts (實體 念), and in modern times, people thought in terms of relation-concepts (關係 念) or functional-concepts (機能念) ([mathematical] function-concepts (函 數念)). The new thinking must be a form-thinking (形の思考). Form (形) is not a simple substance (實體), nor is it a simple relation or function (機 能). Form (形) is a synthesis (総合) of substance and relation. Form (形) is to be thought where the relation-concept (關係念) and the substance-concept (實體念) are one, where the substance-concept (實體念) and the functional concept (機能念) are one.[27]

The logic of the imagination, therefore, is what Miki calls a "mixed dialectic," a combination of logic (function relation) and nihility ("the pathos dimension of nothingness (無)"[28]) that produces a historical form (歷史的な 形) as a mixture of logic (function relation) and life (pathos).[29] The formation (形成) undertaken by the mediation of function relations is always a formation from nihility (虛無), such that the history of formation is always a dialectical movement from form to form (形から形へ).[30] For Miki, pathos and logos are reconciled in the *envisioned* form, but this reconciliation is a historical dialectic of the world. The form itself is dialectical and historic. For Miki, too, "technology continues the work of nature."[31] History is a

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26. PSF 3: 44/45.

27. MKZ 1: 257: MIKI 2023, 198.

28. MKZ 18: 292.

29. Cf. MKZ 1: 259–60.

30. The expression 形から形へ is used by both Miki and Nishida to speak about the dialectical self-formation of the historical world: Cf. MKZ 1: 257; NKZ 8: 250, 508; NKZ 9: 77, 92; NKZ 10: 380; NKZ 11: 7.

31. MKZ 8: 237.

form-to-form metamorphosis mediated by technology, or as Cassirer would say, culture mediated by symbolic functions is always to be in becoming and never to be. The opposition between life and form, for Cassirer, is a dynamic, open-ended, and dialectical process of formation *and* its product; culture is a dialectical process from *forma formata* (form formed) to *forma formans* (form forming), "from the created to the creating,"[32] to speak with Nishida.

> The *forma formans,* which becomes *forma formata*, which must become it for the sake of its own self-affirmation, but which nevertheless never completely dissolves in it, but rather retains the strength to win itself back from it, to become *forma formans,* to be born again – this is what signifies the becoming of the *Geist* and the becoming of culture.[33]

Nishida and Miki began to speak about technology in the mid-1930s, and it is uncertain which of them first introduced the concept. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Nakai, whose work is developed by way of an explicit and sustained engagement with Cassirer's philosophy, spoke of the importance of the imagination to form and technology and of the historical nature of form as a unity of relational logic and life as the "form of facticity."

In his 1927 article, "On the Preface to Kant's Third Critique,"[34] Nakai compares the two versions of the Preface to Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. In the first version, Kant situates technology as the intermediary between theory (the first critique, knowledge) and practice (the second critique, action). Technology is a dialectical moment, a reflective relation in the production of historical forms by the productive imagination that mediates between theory and practice. Cassirer writes: "There is a technology of nature (*eine Technik der Natur*)" that is the "expression of a creative formative will."[35] Nakai develops his understanding of "technology" as a philosophy of the mechanism that dialectically mediates the rationality of nature and the rationality of the human. Nakai's philosophy of cultural mediation is a development of Cassirer's concept of function that was generalized into the concept of symbolic form. Nakai's philosophy of mediation and technology

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32. NKZ 11: 422.
33. CASSIRER 1995, 17f.
34. NMZ 1: 277–304.
35. CASSIRER 1981, 296.

develops from his reading of Cassirer's analysis of Kant in *Kants Leben und Lehre* (1921) and Cassirer's essay *Form and Technology* (1930).

Without making a claim as to the influence of Miki, Nakai, or Cassirer on Nishida, we have tried to map out, albeit tentatively, some of the rhizomic connections in the constellation surrounding Nishida in which his philosophy was taking form and the presence of Cassirer in this constellation. We have located the systematic questions that lie beyond the historical question of influence that are common to Cassirer and Nishida: namely, the problem of the dialectical-historical mediation between the universal and individual, the relational account of the I and you, I and world, the relation between logic (function, relation, form) and life (content), and the relation between the self-forming of life (the world of *poiēsis* of nature) and the emergence of the historical world of culture as an endless movement from formed to forming.

The logic of mediation: from mathematics to originary relationship and contradictory self-identity

Before considering Nishida's and Cassirer's relational accounts of the I and you, we need to account for the similarities in the logic of mediation that both assume operates in the self-formation of reality. For Nishida and Cassirer, the logic of mediation goes beyond the metaphysical dualism of immanence and transcendence: mediation is what at once differentiates and integrates; it is at once a "between" that separates and the "whole" (*Ganzes*) in which the oppositions are enveloped. For Nishida, the logic of the mediation of action-intuition is the logic of contradictory self-identity: thus, as "strife is the father of all things," "Where there is disharmony there is harmony," Nishida says, quoting Heraclitus.[36] For Cassirer, the logic of the mediation of symbolic action is the logic of "a dialectic unity, a coexistence of contraries" – thus, reality is "a harmony in contrariety," "a struggle between opposing forces," Cassirer says, quoting Heraclitus.[37] For both, "Culture is built around a contradiction."[38]

36. NKZ 14: 414. Cf. also, NKZ 9: 97.
37. CASSIRER 1944, 222–3.
38. NKZ 14: 414.

Nishida's and Cassirer's respective philosophical outlooks emerge from their study of the function-concepts found in Dedekind's "mathematical structuralism" and the move from set theory to group theory. Whereas a set is just a collection of self-identical things, a group is a set *and* a transformative relation (a function) that is *productive* of the relational existence that defines the members of a group. A function is the law of transformative relation that mediates between different elements belonging to a group. Mathematics is, therefore, the study of relationally and functionally determined structures or topological (場所的) fields that are productive. According to Cohen, a "differential" or the "infinitesimal method" produces something from nothing. Thus, although both dx and dy are zero, dx/dy is not zero: the "production (*Erzeugung*) is itself the product (*Erzeugnis*)."[39]

Cassirer generalizes Dedekind's function relation ϕ(x) into the relational logic of the symbolic functions as the different modes of world-making. The form of a function is nothing more than a mapping relation in which one thing reflects another thing.[40] The symbolic function is a "peculiar kind of 'identity' attributed to altogether heterogeneous figures in virtue of their being transformable into one another by means of certain operations defining a group."[41] Cassirer calls this an "originary relationship [*Urverhältnis*] which can be expressed in different formulations as the relationship of 'form' to 'content,' as the relationship of 'universal' to 'individual,' as the relationship of 'validity' to 'being.'"[42] It is a "strictly unitary relation" of "opposing elements." Metaphysics negates this fundamental orginary relation and treats the oppositional elements as isolated and self-existing.

Nishida, too, generalizes Dedekind's function relation ϕ(x) into the relational logic of topological (場所的) mediation: "M(e1, e2, e3, e4, e5…)/A: where *M* designates the medium of the place, *e* the singular individual, and

39. Cohen 1914, 29. Cf. nkz 15: 158.

40. Nakai articulates Cassirer's functional concept of the mapping relation that reflects and transfers by his concept of うつす (cf. Nakai 2023 and Lofts 2023b). As Ōhashi as shown, Nishida uses the term *tsutsumu* (包む) for "enveloping" and understands this in terms of a "mirroring" or "reflecting" (*utsusu* 写す) as well as a a "mapping" (写像; the first kanji 写す is also pronounced *utsusu*) (Ōhashi 1995, 26–7). And from here Nishida understands the historical world as a self-determination or self-mirroring.

41. Cassirer 1944, 25.

42. Cassirer, "Erkenntnistheorie nebst den Grenzfragen der Logik," ecw 9: 152ff.

A the universal law."[43] In a letter to the mathematician Joichi Suetsuna (末綱 恕一) in 1943, Nishida links active-intuition to his understanding of group theory in mathematics: "Our world is defined as action-intuition, as an invisible relationship, and from there, an infinite relationship is established and moves from form to form. I think that mathematics expresses the symbolic relationship of the contradictory self-identity of the world."[44] Ōhashi has illustrated that Nishida's topological language of contradictory self-identity is derived from his analysis of group theory in mathematics.[45] Ōhashi illustrates this with a quotation taken from "The Position of the Individual in the Historical World":

> A singular individual (個物) is an individual by reflecting the world of the reciprocal determination of individuals. Here, what is reflected must be, inversely, what is reflected back. Therefore, the form that determines itself, the living form, establishes itself as long as self-identical elements are implied, as in group theory.[46]

Cassirer's and nishida's critique of the metaphysical and substantial account of the i and you

Cassirer and Nishida developed their respective philosophical views through a critical engagement with the paradigm shift that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century in physics and mathematics, in which the concept of field replaced Aristotle's concept of substance as a concrete relational nexus of events.

In Aristotle's ontology, to speak with Cassirer, "the category of relation… is forced into a dependent and subordinate position to being.… Relation only adds supplementary and external modifications to the being, such as

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43. NKZ 7: 213; NISHIDA 1970, 162.

44. NKZ-S 23: 85.

45. ŌHASHI 1995, 95: "Nishida's 'contradictory self-identity' was not something that was merely a mystical intuition or an illogical formulation, as it is so often misunderstood, but something supported by a mathematical framework." (「西田の「矛盾的自己同一」は、がそう誤解するような、単なる神秘的直観であるとか非論理的定式であるとかといったものではなくて、数学的骨格に裏打ちされたものだったのである。」)

46. NKZ 9: 90. Cited in ŌHASHI 1995, 87.

do not affect its real 'nature.'"[47] Something is if it is self-identical to itself and requires nothing else to exist and thus can be conceived only through itself. The subordination of relation to being results in a series of antinomic, unrelated, self-identical, closed spheres of being: subject/object, interiority/exteriority, the one/the many, logic/life, universal/individual, I/you.

Metaphysics – working within the logic of ontological self-identity – attempts to establish the relation between these antinomies, to forge a bridge between unrelated regions possessing their own centers that would serve as the foundation of our knowledge of the world and our ethical relation to the other. For Cassirer and Nishida, however, every metaphysics ends by privileging one mode of being as the ground of the other. The antinomies between unrelated beings are overcome either through a quasi-mystical transcendence and fusion of the two elements (the many becoming one 多が一を成す) or by the negation or sublation of one of the elements whereby it becomes a mode of the expression of the one (the one giving rise to many 一が多を生じ).[48] Ultimately, there is no true alterity beyond the well-rounded sphere of being governed by the logic of self-identity.

When the being of the other is granted an unconditioned independent existence, it is nevertheless understood as located beyond the closed sphere of the being of the self and, thus, is ultimately inaccessible to the first-person perspective of the self. The inner citadel of the self leads to epistemological skepticism and ethical solipsism. The self of the other, as the hidden authentic interiority of the you, is said to be understood through a presumptuous "empathy" (*Einfühlung*) that violently inscribes the other into the ontological horizon of the self-understanding of the self, reducing the other to the same, to speak with Levinas.[49]

Cassirer and Nishida agree with Scheler's criticism of Theodor Lipps' theory of empathy and its critique of the theory of "conclusion by analogy."[50] The problem for Cassirer and Nishida is that the entire debate here assumes not so much an independent self as the substantial interpretation of the self as being self-identical and thus as an isolated self existing in and for itself

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47. CASSIRER 1953, 8.
48. NKZ 4: 137.
49. LÉVINAS 1969, 47.
50. PSF 3: 95–9/93–7. Cf. NKZ 6: 373, 392.

prior to and independent of any relation to others or the world. The theory of "conclusions by analogy" as well as the theory of empathy assume a certain theoretical interpretation of the self and other; both accept as given the divorce of the actual, its dualistic separation, into an "outside" and an "inside" without inquiring into the condition of possibility of this separation.

Cassirer's and nishida's account of the i-you-he-historical world

The Actual World is Individual and Universal

For Cassirer and Nishida, the existence of the actual world must be both subjective and objective, universal and individual. "The apparent dualism, the rupture in the fabric in 'existence' (*Dasein*)," Cassirer maintains, "is in truth nothing other than the result of a necessary duality of the 'sight' of objective spirit. This means that life, without breaking away from itself, without becoming absolutely 'beyond/beside itself' (*ausser sich*), has become transparent and objective to itself, i.e., self-aware of itself."[51] The logical unity of the actual, of the individual and universal, cannot be explained according to an ontology of self-identity that ends either in the sublation of the individual by the universal, such that the individual is but a particular expression of the universal, as in the case of Hegel, or in an infinite plurality of isolated individuals, such that although the individual is autonomous it has no connection to other individuals, as in the case of Leibniz. The logical unity of the actual must be a logic of contradictory self-identity, to speak with Nishida, that forms a dialectic unity, a coexistence of contraries, to speak with Cassirer.

The dialectal historical world of Nishida and the symbolic of Cassirer are both subjective and objective, such that the individual is an autonomous expression of the universal in opposition to another individual autonomous expression of the universal. The self must be at once a personal autonomous self that is simultaneously the expression of the relationality of the historical world in which the singular individual always already finds itself as a particular expression. However, the singular individual is *not* the universal; thus, the singular individual stands simultaneously in relation to the uni-

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51. Cassirer 1995, 17: translation amended.

versal, transcending it as something other. The singular individual is also always already differentiated in opposition to another individual that also always already exists as a particular expression of the universal and likewise transcends the universal by relating to it. The individual then is at once an absolute singular individual in that it never falls together with the universal *and* a relational individual defined by its relational opposition to another individual and to the universal of which they are both unique expressions. The universal is thus a mediation that at once differentiates and integrates the singular individuals that stand in opposition to each other, it is at once a "between" that differentiates them and the "whole" (*Ganzes*) that envelopes (*tsutsumu* 包む) them.

The logic of contradictory self-identity operates at the levels of the physical world,[52] the world of biological life in which "*form and function* (形と 機能) are indispensable,[53] and the historical world of the human.[54] Ultimately, what is actual for Cassirer and Nishida is what acts, or better, the act itself. In the mechanical, physical world, there are no truly acting things, and in the teleological world of life, the principle of self-expression remains immanent to it such that it exists and moves itself but only within itself. Thus, in the world of biological life, the individual is not truly expressive. The historical world of the human is the world in which the singular individual limits itself by transcending itself through self-expression, becoming an individual person. Here, the world forms itself as an absolutely contradictory and self-identical presence. The physical and biological worlds have form, but they are not creative: the world of expression is the world of creative action. The human being, then, must be understood as a physical thing, a living self, and a historical individual. The historical world mediates interactive creative focal points that must be both an individual entity (個物) as a particular of a historical universal and an individual human-person (個人).

In "Acting Intuition" (1938), Nishida maintains that the unity of the historical world is found neither in the multiplicity (many 多) of singular individuals nor in the oneness (one 一) of the universal, but in the absolutely contradictory self-identity of oneness and multiplicity (一と多の絶対矛盾的

52. Cf. NKZ 11: 374.
53. NKZ 9: 157.
54. Cf. NKZ 11: 376.

自己同一). In *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (1917), Nishida adopted Cohen's distinction between *Einheit* and *Vielheit*, translating them as one (一) and many *(多)*, respectively.[55] And "the structure of the contradictory self-identical world, the creative world, which includes self-negation in itself, can be thought of in terms of group theory."[56] It is through the function concept of group theory that Cassirer maintains that the differentiation of unity (*Einheit,* 一) into an infinite multiplicity (*Vielheit,* 多) can be thought of while unifying multiplicity into a whole.[57] Cassirer also traces the idea of a continuity of discontinuity, of a "multiplicity in unity" and a "unity in multiplicity" – of a 多即一一即多 to speak with Nishida – to Leibniz's concept of the monad and expression.

> Leibniz's mathematics and his entire metaphysics are based on this principle. Continuity means unity in multiplicity, being in becoming, constancy in change. It signifies a connection that becomes manifest only in change and amid the unceasing mutation of qualities – a connection, therefore, requires diversity just as fundamentally as unity. The relation between the universal and the individual is now also seen in a new light.[58]

It is through expressive action that the continuity of discontinuity between the universal and individual, the one and the many is established. Thus, for Cassirer and Nishida, there is neither pluralism nor monism.[59] "In the relation between the individual and the world, the individual expresses all other individuals; that is, it is a living mirror of that world, and at the same time, it is only a view of the world. [And] the world forms itself in an expressive way,... it must be the coming into being of the historical world. From this standpoint, our cognition itself is both a historical event and an expression of the world."[60] Expression mediates between the I and you, subject and object, self and world. Cassirer and Nishida depart, however, from Leibniz in two important respects. First, both reject Leibniz's concep-

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55. NKZ 2: 101.
56. NKZ 8: 316.
57. Cf. CASSIRER, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, vol 1, ECW 2: 353.
58. CASSIRER 1951, 30.
59. Ibid., NKZ 10: 488ff.
60. NKZ 10: 370.

tion of a pre-established harmony.[61] The world is radically self-creative, and only as self-creative can it truly be historical. Second, the individual monad cannot remain closed upon itself as an isolated substance. "The individual is individual only in opposition to an individual"[62] – what Nishida calls a "confrontation" (対立) *with* the other, what Cassirer calls a "confrontation" (*Auseinandersetzung*). Expression, as a mediating action, is a confrontation (対立/*Auseinandersetzung*) between the two that provides for their separation and unity.[63] It is not that two self-existing individuals enter into a confrontation, but that they exist only in and through this confrontation: as Heraclitus says, "polemos (*Auseinandersetzung*[64]) is the father of all things." As we will see, expression is both the medium and means of this "confrontation" (対立/*Auseinandersetzung*).

Cassirer: The Symbolic Auseinandersetzung *of the I and You*

Let us first consider the I-you relation in Cassirer. For Cassirer, the meaning and value of the individual symbolic topological fields (language, art, myth, religion, technology, science) "can never be obtained if we see in each of them only a bridge between a finished 'inner world' and a finished 'outer world,' between an 'I' and a 'non-I' as given and fixed starting points."[65] They are, rather, the "means for the creation of these polar opposites, as the *mediums* in which and only by virtue of which confrontation [*Aus-einander-setzung: the positing separation out of each other*] of the I and the world takes place."[66] There is no "pre-symbolic" reality that is represented or discovered by means of the symbolic forms: the logic of the symbolic is a creative logic of invention of forms and thus the symbolic is logically but not temporally prior to the separation of subject and object, I and you. The symbolic is the wherein and wherefrom that the I and you always already find themselves relating to each other. The symbolic forms do not "reproduce the outward world in the inward world" or "project a finished inner world outward":

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61. Cf. psf 3: 115; nkz 7: 236.

62. nkz 11: 115f.

63. nkz 6: 14, 23.

64. Heidegger renders Heraclitus' *polemos* as *Auseinandersetzung* and writes that "in *Aus-einandersetzung*, a world comes to be." Heidegger 2002, 66.

65. Cassirer 1995, 60.

66. Ibid.

rather, "the two elements of 'inside' and 'outside,' of 'I' and 'reality,' first receive their determination and their mutual demarcation in and through their symbolic mediation."[67] The standpoints of interiority and exteriority are reciprocal and even cooriginating standpoints of a single relational reality. Interiority and exteriority are conflicting-opposing elements (*Momente*) of an "originary-relationship (*Urverhältnis*)" that constitutes the logic of the *Aus-einander-setzung* (positing separation out of each other) of reality by which interiority and exteriority are understood as the things that they are: the corresponding opposite of the other. The opposing standpoints do not precede the topological field but are first constituted by their relationship to the relational field: they are a product of the field that they themselves open. Here, we find the "one in the other" and the "other in the one"[68] – the symbolic is thus a "many-qua-one, one-qua-many" (多即一一即多) to speak with Nishida. The "unity of mutual determination forms the absolutely first datum, behind which one can go back no further, and which can only be dissected into the duality of two 'viewpoints' in an artificially isolating process of abstraction."[69] When we speak of interiority or exteriority, we must, therefore, be cognizant of the dialectical relation of opposition that constitutes them and speak with Nishida of interiority-qua-exteriority and exteriority-qua-interiority. Thus, the logical unity of reality is, for Cassirer, "a dialectic unity, a coexistence of contraries."[70]

For Cassirer, the I and the you are thus not substantial things existing in isolation from one another but two standpoints of a unitary relation of expression:

> Here, the I is in itself only insofar as it is at the same time in its counterpart and only insofar as it is related to this counterpart, to a "you." Insofar as it knows itself, it knows itself only as a point of reference in this basic and originary relation [*Urrelation*]. Other than in this mode of being directed toward, of intention toward other centers of life, the I is nowhere in possession of itself. It is no thing-like substance, which can be thought of as existing in

67. PSF 2: 190/182.
68. PSF 3: 447/441.
69. CASSIRER, "Erkenntnistheorie nebst den Grenzfragen der Logik," in ECW, 9: 152ff.
70. CASSIRER 1957, 222f.

total isolation, separate from all other things in space, but acquires its content, its being-for-itself, only by knowing itself to be with others in one world and by distinguishing itself from others within this unity.[71]

.... the I and the you exist only insofar as they are "for one another," only insofar as they stand in a *functional* relation of being *reciprocally conditioned*. And the fact of culture is simply the clearest expression and the most incontestable proof of this *reciprocal conditioning*.[72]

Every reference to the I is made by way of a reference to a you: and every reference to an I and you is made by way of a reference to a shared "transpersonal objective world of expressive meaning." The I and the you are the binary opposing standpoints of the same reality brought about through their mutual activity. Each symbolic form constitutes a different mode of action, a specific kind of relation between the I and the you that at once differentiates them and yet binds them together. The world of symbolic expression is the world of action.[73]

In the beginning is the act: always, in the use of language, in artistic formation, in the process of thinking and research, a specific activity expresses itself, and it is only in this activity that the I and the you at once find each other, and separate themselves from each other. They are in and with each other as they preserve their unity through speaking, thinking, and all kinds of artistic expression.[74]

The expressive symbolic function saturates all perception: expressive perception makes manifest the lived experience of life, one's own life lived in the flesh of the lived body (*Leib*), the "foreign centers of life of the other," the life of the community (*Gemeinschaft*), and the ceaseless dynamic flow of life as such. And "If we were to think of this basic expressive function as sublated, the access to the world of 'inner experience' as well as 'outer experience' would be barred to us – the bridge which alone can lead us into the sphere of the 'you' would be cut."[75]

71. PSF 3: 102/100.
72. CASSIRER 2000, 49/50.
73. NKZ 14: 208.
74. CASSIRER 2000, 50–1/51–2.
75. PSF 3: 100/94.

As a linguistic subject, I come to know the other only in and through a dialogue with the other, and by recognizing in language the presence of that person who is expressing themself through language. Through this act of dialogue, we distinguish ourselves from each other; the one by an act of speaking, the other by an act of listening, dialectically alternating between these two roles. All being appears animated because all being somehow "is in speech," because all being linguistically opens itself up and responds. In this dialogical exchange conditioned by language, each relation is linked to the world. For everything "speaks to" [*spricht an*]. Things and events [*Ereignisse*], as the German language expresses it, "lay claim to" [*Anspruch*] the I and you; the world, I, and you form "a linguistic community" that, through their mutual co-respondence (*Sich-Entsprechen*), "signifies a real life-community."[76]

From this perspective, one can wager, paradoxically, that the I and you do not speak with each other and with things because they see them and each other as living; rather, inversely, they see them and each other as living because they speak with them.

> The fundamental difference between the mere relation of things and... the I-you relation exists in that only the latter is *purely reciprocal* and *purely reversible*. The thing and the I remain essentially foreign to one another in all relations they enter; they can constantly exchange effects, but these effects never move to a point where their substantive separation is sublated. "Subject" and "object," the self and the world, stand opposite one another as "I" and "not-I." Wherever this pure relationship to things has developed, and wherever it has become dominant in human consciousness, there the world has definitely fallen to the rank of mere material stuff. It can be ruled, it can be increasingly subjected to the human will, being governed by it, but, at the same time, by virtue of this form of subordination, it falls silent for the human being; it no longer speaks to him. For there is true speaking only where there is true *mutual "co-responding"* [*Sich-Entsprechen*], where the interlocutors are not only turned toward each other but in this correlation are also equal. It is characteristic that language, even when it forms the designation for purely objective relations, still retains an inkling of this basic relationship from which these relations are derived. The German expression "*sich*

76. CASSIRER 2013, 356/148.

entsprechen" and the French *"se répondre"* show how much the pure reference to things is originally interpreted and understood as a reference to speech.[77]

In both the reflexive verbs, *sich entsprechen* and *se répondre*, Cassirer is suggesting that all correspondence is a co-responding, such that the inter-relationship of the opposing standpoints of the I and you resonate with each other (互に反響し合う, Nishida will say). The French *se répondre* means something like "to correspond by responding to each other": oppositional (対) affirmative responding (応) that comes about in and through speaking with one another (話し合う) and responding to one another (互に応答: reciprocally responding), to speak with Nishida: "*lorsqu'on* écoute *les cœurs se répondre*," writes DeMusset.

The Dialogical Relation of I-you as Individual Person (個人)

Let us now turn and compare this to Nishida's account of the I-you. In his 1932 essay "I and You," Nishida develops his theory of the individual person (個人), the "I," as a dialogical reality constituted and determined in and through a mutually corresponding confrontation (対立: *Auseinandersetzung*) with the alterity of the "you"; and he further argues that this mutual correspondence as a mutual responding (応) involves a more primordial confrontation (対立: *Auseinandersetzung*) with the "absolute other" as the radical alterity of the "place of absolute nothingness" that lies at the ground of both the I and you as individual persons without reducing them to expressions of some substantial absolute being. "To say that I see the absolute other in my self… means that I see myself [and you] by seeing the absolute other; in that sense, our self-awakening as individual persons [我々の個人的自覚] is established."[78] As with Cassirer, the I is not a self-identical existence that comes into relation with the you, but is this relation with the you: "without a you there is no 'I.'"[79] The I and you are absolutely separated and opposed, transcending one another; and yet at the same time united internally in their very foundation, in and through their confrontation (対立: *Auseinandersetzung*) with the place of absolute nothingness: as such, they form a dialectic

77. Cassirer 2013, 357/150.
78. nkz 5: 317.
79. nkz 7: 86; Nishida 1970, 143.

unity of contradictory self-identity. This way, "a mutual exchange between I and you can be thought through expression."[80]

"That which determines an I as I also determines at the same time a you as you; you and I are born from the same environment, so they are in it as the *extensions* of the same universal."[81] Again, "I and you are determined by the same universal."[82] However, as Cassirer also noted, the I and you are not the universal, and because they transcend the universal, "there is no universal that subsumes I and you."[83] In the first statement, the universal spoken of refers to the socio-historical world in general and to language in specific. In this context, Nishida states that "the 'I' and the 'you' know each other... through the medium of language."[84] Here, as with Cassirer, the relation between the I and you is mediated by language, which is both the *medium* in which the confrontation between the I and you takes place and the *means* by which this confrontation takes place. As with Cassirer, the relation between the I and you takes place in and through expression as expression. It is not that the gap between preexisting beings is bridged, but that they become only in and through the expressive co-responding confrontation that forms a cor-responding (対応) or *Entsprechung* (to employ the German translation[85] of 対応).

> I know you when I, as personality (人格), respond to you, as personality, directly. And at the same time, with the fact that I know you and you know me through responding, I cannot know myself without your response, and you cannot know yourself without my response. If in self-awakening, we see the absolutely other in ourselves and the other has the meaning of the I, then the absolutely other towards us must be a self-expressing person; at the bottom of this relationship, a person-to-person relationship must be assumed. This relationship must be speaking with one another (話し合う) and responding to one another (互に応答: reciprocally responding).... This is not about a mere union of me with another person because the difference between my consciousness and the other person's consciousness must absolutely remain.

80. NKZ 7: 126; NISHIDA 1970, 64.
81. NKZ 6: 347–8.
82. NKZ 6: 372.
83. NKZ 6: 381.
84. NKZ 6: 372.
85. Cf. NISHIDA 1999, 308.

> Since my consciousness cannot become the consciousness of the other, I absolutely cannot know the consciousness of the other. The mutual relationship of those who are in absolute confrontation (対立) resonate with each other, this is response. [絶対に対立するものの相互関係は互いに反響し合ふ、即ち応答するといふことでなければならない。] The fact that those who determine themselves in complete independence unite with one another in the apex of self-determination, this is response. Here, there is a unity of I and you and at the same time a real opposition.[86]

From the Dialogical Correspondence of the I-You to the Dialectical Historical World

From the 1930s on, "expression" became one of the central concepts in Nishida's philosophy: whatever *is* is expression. Expression has the structure of a unity of antithetical opposition of two selves: the individual personal self (個人的自己) of today and the self of yesterday; the individual personal self of the I and the individual personal self of the you form a personal unity of individual personal selves.[87] However, in *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy II* (1934), an important shift in Nishida's understanding of expression already takes place:

> What connects I and you must be objective and subjective at the same time. It must be thought of as the world of expression. We connect through expression. The world of expression is not just an objective world or a world of things, nor is it just a subjective world or a world of consciousness. The world of expression is neither my world nor your world, but *the world of I and you* (私と汝との世界). The world of expression is, therefore, the world of understanding.[88]

To appreciate the development in Nishida's thought here, we must consider his treatment of the third person, the "he (彼)." Nishida recognizes a lacuna in his treatment that will bring him to develop his concept of the "self-determination of the dialectical world" that is subjective and objective and thus individual and universal. Thus far, Nishida writes, "the predominant theme still involved seeing the world from the point of view of the self.

86. nkz 6: 392ff.
87. nkz 7: 23.
88. nkz 7: 267; Nishida 1970, 64: italics added.

Accordingly, I did not fully clarify the idea of objective determination."[89]
The I-you relation is a personal relationship between one individual and
another in their radical singularity. The I-you relation, therefore, is limited
to the "standpoint of the determination of the individual" qua individual
person and "accordingly, still did not avoid seeing the world from the point
of view of the individual self."[90] However, "the actual world is both individ-
ual and universal"[91] – and the true continuity of discontinuity of the I, you,
and world, subjectivity and objectivity, cannot be conceived merely in terms
of the subjective dimension of the I-you. Thus, Nishida now states: "the
viewpoint of *he* (彼) is indispensable."[92] And in "Self-identity and Continu-
ity of the World," Nishida writes that "I and you are related by way of the
world of the he (彼の世界)."[93] Finally, whereas the I-you are radically unique
individual persons, there are innumerable hes.

For Nishida now, whatever *is* is expression; thus, as with Cassirer, all
being is somehow "in speech" because all being expressively opens itself up
and responds, and their mutual co-respondence signifies a real life-com-
munity: thus, "everything that stands opposed to the self, even the moun-
tains, rivers, trees, and stones is a you. In such a sense, the concrete world
becomes a metaphysical society."[94] While the medium of expression can be
understood from the subjective dimension of the I-you relation, the world
of expression which stands over against the individual must also be thought
of as "the objective world of understanding."

In the dialogical relation of co-responding, the I and you form a personal
and essentially binary relation. As with Cassirer, the relation is purely recip-
rocal and purely reversible, and thus purely symmetrical in their mutual
opposition. In 1938, Nishida introduced the concept of "inverse correspon-
dence" to distinguish this symmetrical relation with the 'other' in the world
from the asymmetrical relation with the absolute other as absolute nothing-
ness. Several interrelated issues arise here. First, the unity here concerns a

89. NKZ 7: 203; NISHIDA 1970, 107.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. NKZ 7: 210; NISHIDA 1970, 107. 彼 has been rendered as "some other" in the Eng-
lish translation.

93. NKZ 8: 37. See also 55ff and 68.

94. NKZ 7: 59; NISHIDA 1970, 29.

plurality and not a true multiplicity (多, *Vielheit*). Second, the I-you relation is an intimate, private one that is unable to account for anything beyond it, such as the objective place (historical world) wherein this confrontation takes place nor the objective means (transpersonal world of language) by which this confrontation takes place. Finally, this relation is dialogical and not dialectical; the private subjective sphere of the I-you must stand in opposition to a public objective world of transpersonal meaning, namely the medium of language. It is here that Nishida will introduce the third person (彼) standing beyond the closed duality of the I-you confrontation.

Let us return for a moment to Cassirer's account of the third person. The unity [*Einheit*: oneness] of the I is thus only possible with the "second" as a qualitatively "other" you. The opposition between I and you gives rise to the third person, the he. For Cassirer, this movement marks a passage from the immediate awareness of subjective reality to the awareness of the objective whole of being and mathematics. The reciprocal relations between number and the enumerated manifest originates in the "personal sphere."[95] The first designations of numbers created by language arose from entirely determinate concrete counting beginning from the lived body of the self. Thus, the "consciousness of number first unfolded... from the "separation of the 'I' and the 'you.'"[96] Number is entirely fused with the pure subjectivity of feeling. Here, "the activity of separation, as it unfolds the opposition between 'I' and 'you,' progresses from 'one' to 'two.'"[97] Cassirer traces the etymological origins of the first numerals to this differentiation of subjective feeling. We stand here "at a common linguistic source of psychology, grammar, and mathematics: the root of duality [*Zweiheit*] leads back to the originary dualism [*Urdualismus*] on which the possibility of speech and thinking is grounded" in that speech is contingent on the address and response between the I and you. This brings about a new sensitivity to the opposition between the "one" and the "many" that will lead beyond the duality of the I and you relationship. The presence of the "he" introduces the third person. In this triad of persons, Cassirer sees a universal structure:

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95. PSF I: 186/202.
96. PSF I: 202/203.
97. PSF I: 187/205.

> For one, two, and three, we find everywhere examples of such hypostases, not only in the thinking of primitive peoples but also in the great cultural religions. The problem of the unity (*Einheit*) [the number 1, first person] that emerges from itself, that becomes "another" ("*andere*"), and second [the number 2, second person], in order then to be ultimately reunited with itself in a third nature [the number 3, third person] – this problem must belong to the common spiritual heritage of humanity.[98]

The third, therefore, is this sublation of that difference, that joining together of the same. The return to unity, however, is a return to an infinitely higher unity, because it presupposes the difference out of which it arises, and it apprehends this difference as preserved within itself.[99] Cassirer traces the construction of the ideas of the I, you, and he in various languages, and even a summary of this is beyond the scope of this paper.[100] Language differentiates the contents of thought through the differentiation of "place" (*Ort*): "the place of the I, you, and he, on the one hand, and the place of the physical object [*Objekt*] sphere, on the other hand."[101] Thus, "the opposition of here [*Hier*], there [*Da*], and over-there [*Dort*] corresponds to that of I, you, and he."[102] Cassirer illustrates with an example taken from Japanese:

> Japanese has coined a word for "I" from a locative adverb that implies "focal point" [*Mittelpunkt*] and a word for "he" [*Er*] from another word that signifies "over-there." In phenomena of this kind, we immediately see how language draws, as it were, a sensible-spiritual circle around the speaker, and it assigns the "I" to the center and the "you" and "he" to the periphery.[103]

The Japanese term 私 (I) is derived from Chinese and originally meant "private" as opposed to public (公). This sense of "private (わたくし), not public," comes to mean one's own personal, private affairs or thoughts, and from there, one's own I (わたし). 彼 (*kare*) originally designated something removed from the interlocutors of the I-you and meant simply "that thing over there." 彼 (*kare*) becomes he, in the sense of the third person male,

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98. PSF 2: 169/169.
99. PSF 1: 99/109.
100. Cf. PSF 1: 186/203.
101. PSF 1: 147/153.
102. PSF 1: 157/167.
103. PSF 1: 158/168.

only in the late Edo period and early Meiji period. Finally, while this "that thing over there" (彼) is beyond or other than the relational encounter of the I-you, the reference to this "that over there" ruptures the immediacy of this relation of dialogue with a reference to something that always stands beyond dialogue and that originally is understood without being named.

We can return now to Nishida's account of the he (彼). Nishida writes:

> A true dialectical determination of independent individuals can be understood only where there are at least three. A [the first person] stands also in relation to C [a third person over there], just as it stands in relation to B [the second person]. And B [the second person] stands in relation to A [the first person] and C [a third person over there], and C [a third person over there] similarly stands in relation to A [the first person] and B [the second person]. The I [私: first person] stands in relation to the he [彼: third person over there] as well as to a you [汝: second person]. The you stands in relation to the I, and the he (彼) to both I and you. And thus, the mutual determination of three individuals gives rise to innumerable individuals. Only in this way can the mutual determination of truly independent individuals, i.e. the mutual determination of individuals, be conceived. The continuity of absolute discontinuity must have such a meaning. The medium M signifies a determination of individuals according to "place." This is the sense of my notion of one-qua-many, many-qua-one (多即一一即多).[104]

The individual person, as a radical singularity, has no meaning apart from the social-historical and transpersonal world of the symbolic that provides for the generality of meaning. "There is no such thing as a world between just two singular individuals (個物). [Only] when he and he dialectically face each other as in the historical world, can the I and you be considered. To say that we deny the conscious self and stand in the position of the actual self means that I stand in his position, that I become him (私が彼となる). When we say this, we objectify our subjectivity, this is its meaning. He and I are not only the principle of separation between I and you, but also the principle of objectification."[105] The subjectivity of the I and you attain objectivity in that the I and you "stand in his position," in that the private sphere is situated in the general public sphere of the universal. The he is "the

104. NKZ 7: 320; NISHIDA 1970, 168.
105. NKZ 8: 56.

world of the impersonal proposition (命題) in the direction of the universal determination"[106] (一般的限定の方向に非人稱的命題の世界); thus, "I become him" means I will become that thing over there, one of the multiplicity of individuals, a thing in the world of expression of transpersonal meaning, something common. In the I-you relation, one I confronts a you, and a you confronts the I: that "I become him" means I break away from the standpoint of this unique expressive relation and take up the standpoint of the universal. Thus, the he is the "principle of objectification" because it breaks from the inevitable subjectivity of the I-you and situates the I-you in the transpersonal historical world that is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity that is both individual and universal. "The 'bottom' of 'expression' is further stripped away, leading neither to 'seeing the world from the self' nor simply 'seeing the self from the world,' but ultimately encompassing both of them together, 'seeing the world from the world.' It leads to the position of 'seeing.'"[107] With this, Nishida has arrived at his concept of the "dialectical self-determination of the historical world."

The I-you-he in Miki's Philosophical Anthropology

It is interesting to note that Miki speaks in his *Philosophical Anthropology* about the importance of the "he" for the constitution of society at about the same time that Nishida introduces the notion of the "he." In this text, Miki is engaging both Cassirer and Heidegger. For Miki, society cannot be thought of simply from the conception of "I and you." In order for society to be thought of, a philosophical conception of "he" is required. Society is only established through the presence of the "he."

> The reason why the idea of "he" is important in this case is that it shows that society is not just about the relationship between the I and the you, or between I, you, and the he [over there], but it is something that goes beyond the I, the you, and even the he. The relationship between the I and the he is not something that can be thought of as a relationship between the I and the you. If the he can also be included in the category of "I and you," then something beyond the "I and you" relationship is the he, and in that sense, the he is the society. Of course, society is not the he as an individual. Rather, the

106. NKZ 7: 210.
107. Ibid.

society is something that makes the I, the you, and the he "us." Unless the he is one of us, we cannot think of a true society. But what makes the he a part of us cannot be something like the relationship between the I and the you. Society is conceived as the basis of the I, the you, and the he. In this way, society cannot be conceived solely from the idea of "I and you." A philosophical "he" is required in order for society to be conceived.[108]

For Miki, society is not a relationship between people but *the place* where such a relationship is established. This place forms the "worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*) of human existence." Miki goes on to critique Heidegger's concept of worldliness; arguing that Heidegger (in contrast to Cassirer) has failed to distinguish between "human social worldliness" (世間的) and "worldliness" *tout court* (世界的) – a distinction that is important in Nishida's own turn to the historical world (世界).[109]

Conclusion: the philosophy *of* culture

Cassirer and Nishida drew the philosophical consequences of the shift from set theory in which relation is subordinated to being to group theory as the study of relationally and functionally determined structures or topological (場所的) fields that are productive. From their study of group theory, they develop the logic of functional mediation that forms the *medium* of oppositional reality and the *means* for its differentiation. This logic of the actual is the logic of a contradictory self-identity, a dialectic unity, a coexistence of contraries. The functional form is the expressive mediation of the becoming of actual as self-forming, at once differentiating and integrating, at once the "between" that separates oppositions and the "whole" that envelopes them. We have followed their respective rethinking of the I-you relation and the nature of expression according to this logic. One could, of course, find all sorts of differences between their respective accounts. However, the primary difference is made evident in the move Nishida makes from "seeing the world from the self" or the "seeing the self from the world" to the "seeing the world from the world," to the position of "seeing"– a seeing without a seer. In "seeing the world from the self," the

108. MKZ 18: 373.
109. MKZ 18: 376–80.

world is an object of the understanding and judgement of a subject that transcends it. In "seeing the self from the world," the subject is immanent in the world and in fact *subjugated* by the world. The "seeing the world from the world" will involve a contradictory self-identity of the historical world and the self. As we have seen, for Cassirer all seeing (*Sehen*) is mediated by the symbolic functions of culture, by language and art, by the sight (*Sicht*) of objective spirit, such that the symbolic expression gives things their look [*Gesicht*] and a people their outlook [*Aussicht*]. Cassirer's philosophy of culture is a transcendental account of the logic of the symbolic function of objective spirit by which life forms itself and attains its reality, visibility, and self-awareness. However, if the *terminus ad quem* of Cassirer's philosophy of culture is clear, its *terminus a quo* remains undefined. While Cassirer's philosophy *of* culture (objective genitive) speaks *about* culture, it is unable to speak about the *standpoint from* which it speaks *about* culture. Cassirer's philosophy *of culture* remains abstract in that it cannot account for its own actuality within actuality. Here, the knowing of the real is not a real knowing-known; or at least, to the degree that it is a real knowing it remains, Hegel would say, alienated from its truth: that is, its relation to the whole. The third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* undertakes a Hegelian "phenomenology" of the symbolic function as it moves from its most concrete expression in mythical consciousness to its highest self-aware expression in mathematics. In the end, however, Cassirer cannot account for the *wherein* and *wherefrom* of the symbolic itself, for the "seeing" that sees through the sight of spirit, for what is self-forming in and through the symbolic function and so cannot account for a philosophy *of* culture. Cassirer explicitly refrains from descending down the Hegelian ladder to its ground into the logic of origins or *poiēsis* that is situated beyond theory and practice, subject and object, a point where culture would become conscious of itself in its own ultimate ground of itself: that is, to speak about the standpoint from which it speaks about itself, in the ground of life: that is, to be a philosophy *of* culture (subjective genitive). Such a venture, for Cassirer, cannot but end in a reversion to the substantial metaphysics he sought to overcome, to make claims about the primal ground of *poiēsis* itself: be it the Absolute of Hegel, the God of Leibniz, or the *noesis noeseos* of Aristotle, or the simple "it is" of Meister Eckhart. Cassirer, therefore, limits himself to the symbolic function by which the world-forming power of *poiēsis* operates. Nishida, by

contrast, can descend the Hegelian ladder into the ground of culture without returning to a substantial ground. For Nishida, culture (文化) emerges on the basis of the self-formation of such a reality; "culture is the self-determination of the expressive world." "The content of this self-formation of the historical world in the absolute present is culture, at whose ground there is always something religious at work."[110] "Religion" is the standpoint of absolute-contradictory self-identity, a confrontation with absolute nothingness, such that culture as the self-determination of the expressive world emerges from it. "The world of historical reality expressively determines itself and goes on seeing itself through action-intuition. This is the formation of historical nature."[111] The world of historical reality is a creative world; as such, the historical world is the world of *poiēsis*. The historical world is self-forming, working itself out through historically embodied individuals who form each other through their corresponding confrontation. In active-intuition, we form the world and in forming the world form ourselves: and yet this is but the self-formation of the historical world itself.[112] Our seeing is seeing the world from the world. Thus, the self-awareness of the individual self is the world's self-awareness.[113] The individual takes part in the world's self formation through action-intuition: each of us is the means by which the world as historical life expresses and determines itself.[114] "When the world becomes aware, our self becomes aware. When our self becomes aware, the world becomes aware. Each of our conscious selves is the viewing center of the world. Our knowledge begins with the world reflecting (*utsusu* 映す) itself within itself."[115] The awareness of the world, as it is experienced in ourselves, allows us to experience the world directly. This intuition is an action intuition, which is actualized by our action as a historical body. That the self reflects does not mean that the world appears as an object to the self. Rather, the world gives itself form, manifesting itself to the self in the very interior of the self, such that each of the innumerable selves of the historical world

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110. nkz 11: 456.
111. nkz 8: 354; Nishida 1990, 151.
112. Cf. nkz 8: 39.
113. nkz 10: 528.
114. nkz 8: 61.
115. nkz 10: 528.

is thereby the recipient and creator of the forms that make up the world. When the self reflects (写す) the world, the world is self-forming; it manifests itself as a world of the self. Nishida's philosophy of culture thus not only speaks *about* culture, but it can also speak *about* the *standpoint* from which it speaks about culture.

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Abbreviations

ECW   *Ernst Cassirer Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2009).

MKZ   『三木清全集』[*Complete Works of Miki Kiyoshi*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966–1968), 20 vols.

NKZ   旧版『西田幾多郎全集』[*Complete Works of Nishida Kitaro*, Old Edition] (Tokyo: Iwanami). Pagination in this work refers to the old edition unless otherwise noted.

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NMZ   『中井正一全集』[*Complete Works of Nakai Masakazu*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981): 4 vols.

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