



## Research Paper

# Nishida Kitaro's Philosophy of Religion: A Challenge to the Philosophy of Western Religion

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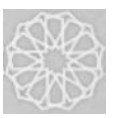
## Abstract

This study tries to show that Nishida Kitaro's philosophy is an eclectic philosophy in which Western rationalist thinking on the one hand, and Eastern intuitive thinking on the other hand are intertwined and has a religious nature. Therefore, in his philosophy, philosophy and religion are inseparable. In Nishida Kitaro's view, God is not a transcendent being of the world, but the absolute non-existence which forms the foundation of reality, and is found as an event within the human soul through inner intuition. The soul and God are of the same type, which is absolute non-existence. In the philosophy of the Nishida religion, God is not a being outside the world, but the foundation of this world. In his research book on goodness, Nishida emphasizes that religion is not a secondary issue in human existence and life, but the most important aspect of human existence. Our souls take their lives from religion. According to him, the religious need is the deepest and greatest need of the human mind. He believes that all our needs are derivatives that arise from religious needs and that the growth of these needs is the result of returning to them [religious needs]. Religion does not exist apart from the life of the soul or the self, and religious need is the need of life itself. Therefore, by studying Nishida's philosophy of religion, it can be concluded that his philosophy of religion, by providing a specific Buddhist definition of it, is a challenge to the philosophy of religion prevalent in the West.

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## Extended Abstract

In general, in the philosophy of the Kyoto school, religion and philosophy are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate them. Hence, the nature of religion and philosophy in the Kyoto school, unlike in the West, are quite different. The subject of philosophy is not existence, but absence or non-existence, and the subject of religion is not religion, belief, and faith, but the self-consciousness of the individual. In other words, God becomes intuitive in the soul of the individual, and this is our deepest representation of God. However, it should be noted that if religion in the West deals with the individuals' beliefs about faith in God, in Japan, religion is more concerned with the transformation of one's consciousness into absolute nothingness or Buddhhood.

In Nishida Kitaro's opinion, religion is not a secondary matter in human existence and life; rather it is the most important aspect of human existence. Our soul takes its life from religion. He claims that religious need is the deepest and greatest need of the human mind. All our needs are derivatives that arise from religious needs, and the growth of these needs is the result of returning to them {religious needs}. Religion does not exist apart from the life of the soul or the self, and the need for religion is the need for life itself. From this statement, it appears that religion is innate, that is, all human beings have an inner desire for religion.

In general, philosophy and religion in Kyoto's school are not two separate fields, but philosophy is the essence of religion and religion is the essence of philosophy. Both of them, in the thought of the founder of this school, Nishida, seek a change in attitude towards ourselves, others, and the world. Both seek to bring the individual to the level of enlightenment

and the stage of absolute nothingness. In general, it can be said that according to the religious approach of Kyoto school philosophers to God, the transcendence and independence of God from the world and history is impossible. Almost the Hegelian approach to religion and God in the form of the concept of the absolute soul or Christianity is more or less prevalent in the philosophies of these philosophers. Nishida sometimes speaks of Hegel as if Hegel's absolute soul is the Buddha who has a presence in nature. However, it can be said that Nishida Kitaro's philosophy of religion is in a challenge with the philosophies of Western religion in three ways:

A) The philosophy of the Nishida religion reduces God to the center of one's inner self-awareness and completely excludes the transcendence of God from man and the world and seeks God in one's heart like Islamic mysticism.

B) Religion for Nishida is not a matter related to teachings, rules, or prayers, and in general, it is not a matter related to the Shari'a that has specific religious rules, and followers of religion are saved when they follow those religious rules, such as what can be seen in Judaism. For this philosopher, religion is a kind of self-awareness of the essence of one's soul, in which he realizes the nothingness hidden in his soul; therefore, religion is an event inside man.

C) In Nishida's thinking, the fields of religion and philosophy are essentially the same, while in the West, religion and philosophy are mainly two opposing and rival fields. Therefore, if the confrontation of reason and faith can be seen in the West, in Nishida, this confrontation will not be observed. In the philosophy of this Japanese philosopher, religion and philosophy have one thing in common, which is God as an absolute non-existence.



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