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Introduction to the “Nishida Problem”: Nishida Kitarō’s Political Philosophy and Governmentality

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Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University
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Introduction to the “Nishida Problem”: Nishida Kitarō’s Political Philosophy and Governmentality

Satofumi Kawamura*

Introduction

Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) has been one of the most controversial intellectuals in modern Japan. On the one hand, in pre-war Japan, he earned a reputation as a leading philosopher who philosophised traditional Japanese thought as the crystallisation of the kernel of the oriental principle, mainly Zen-Buddhism: Nishida’s philosophy (*Nishida tetsugaku*) came to be seen as the prime example of Oriental philosophy as against Western philosophy. On the other hand, during the Asia Pacific War he also wrote papers and gave lectures relating to current affairs of the War; those activities have created the impression that Nishida engaged war-time politics and played a role in justifying the war.

The most notorious paper written by him relating to the war is “The Principle of the World New Order” (*Sekai shinchitsujo no genri*), which was written in response to a request to write the draft of the Greater East Charter (*Dai-tōa sengen*). In 1943, as a part of the policy to establish the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (*Dai-tōa kyōeiken*), the Greater East Asia Conference (*Dai-tōa kaigi*) was planned by Tōjō Hideki, prime minister and army general at that time, and a future Class A war criminal. Person sympathetic to Nishida’s philosophy who were working around Tōjō and the army came up with the idea of asking Nishida, a leading intellectual of Japan at that time, to write the draft of the declaration for the Conference.

Besides “The Principle of the World New Order,” the book titled *The Problem of Japanese Culture* (*Nihon-bunka no mondai*), published in 1940, has also been subject to disputes, because it discusses one of the most politically and ideologically controversial concepts: the Imperial House (*Kōshitsu*). In other words, in this book, Nishida seems to posit the Japanese Emperor as the cultural authority of the Japanese imperial-nation state, and this has aroused the suspicion that Nishida may have contributed to the total mobilisation of individuals as Imperial subjects who must be unquestionably loyal to the Emperor and the National Polity.

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To make matters worse, some of Nishida's prominent former students, members of the so-called Kyoto School (*Kyoto-gakuha*), participated in notorious symposia named "the World Historical Standpoint and Japan" (*Sekaiishiteki tachiba to nippon*) and "Overcoming Modernity" (*Kindai no chōkoku*). At these symposia, they discussed the justice and legitimacy of the Japanese decision to wage the war as an anti-Western imperialist attempt, from the angle of the moral superiority of Japanese culture not only vis-à-vis modern western culture, but also vis-à-vis other Asian cultures. These symposia were held at around the same time as the Greater East Asia Conference: just before and after the outbreak of the Asia Pacific War in December 1941, which was ideologically called the Greater East Asia War (*Dai-tōa sensō*).

Needless to say, these facts make the image of Nishida worse, and strengthen the impression that he was a pro-war and militarist/nationalist philosopher: like a Japanese Heidegger. Interestingly, however, while the seriousness of the "Nishida problem" has attracted attention from many persons, one does not often see such research or analysis squarely addressing the relationship between Nishida's political philosophy and Nishida's problem. For example, Sakai Naoki (1997, 2010) and particularly Karatani Kōjin (1993, 1996, 1999 and 2001) could be cited as representative scholars who address the politics of Nishida's philosophy, but although their discussions are very critical and insightful, they seem to be partial and not adequately developed. It should be noted here that their concern is more likely to be about the politics of his philosophy *per se*, than about his political philosophy. On the other hand, discussions by vindicators also seem inadequate, because most of them pay so much attention to the apolitical elements of Nishida's philosophy, such as Zen-Buddhism, that they forget to examine –or even avoid examining– the political implications of his philosophy in any sense. Compared to the problem of their teacher, the problems of the Kyoto School have come under tougher scrutiny. It is possible to cite numerous scholars who address and criticise the Kyoto School, such as Maruyama Masao (1961), Hiromatsu Wataru (1989), Harry Harootunian (2000), Koyasu Nobukuni (2003, 2008), Takahashi Tetsuya (1995), or even Umehara Takeshi (1959).

Paradoxically, there seems to be an assumption that the political problem associated with the name of Nishida has been discussed many times so far, but there is only a small number of researches addressing the relationship between Nishida's political philosophy and the ideological critique of Nishida. The works which could be cited as research on this relationship are the following four: Kobayashi Toshiaki's *Nishida Kitarō: Tasei no buntai* (Nishida Kitaro: the Writing of Otherness), Christopher Goto-Jones's *Political Philosophy in Japan: Nishida, the Kyoto School and Co-prosperity*, Kado Kazumasa's *Nishida Kitaro to kokka e no toi* (Nishida Kitaro and the Question to the Nation), and Uemura Kazuhide's *'Nihon' e no toi wo meguru tōsō: Kyoto-gakuha to Genri-nihonsha* (The Struggle around the Question to Japan: Kyoto School and the Society of the Japanese Principle). While Kobayashi mainly looks at The Problem of Japanese Culture, Goto-Jones focuses on "The

Principle of the World New Order,” and Kado and Uemura primarily discuss “The Problem of Reason of State” (*Kokka riyū no mondai*). Those three are works Nishida published during the early 1940s, and should be understood as his major works about political principles: the first one is about the Japanese Emperor and Japanese Culture, the second about the Co-prosperity Sphere, and the last about reason of state (or *Staatsräson*, or *raison d'état*). Therefore, the main concerns of those researches vary according to the topic of the titles: Kobayashi discusses the relationship between the idea of species (or race) and Japanese Emperor; Goto-Jones the relationship between Buddhist idea and the Co-prosperity Sphere; Kado the relationship between sovereignty and reason of state; and Uemura the relationship between Nishida’s political philosophy and the extreme right wing.

However, it could be argued that there is still the need to develop research on the relationship between Nishida’s political philosophy and “the Nishida problem.” This is because even the studies mentioned above do not discuss the relationship among the three works. Hence, the primary aim of my research project is to examine the relationship between those political works, and thereby to elucidate what sort of problem is lurking in Nishida’s political philosophy. Pursuing this task, I shall consider the implications of his political philosophy particularly as regards the political discourse of Miki Kiyoshi (1897-1945), who was one of the major members of *Shōwa Kenkyūkai*, the research institute founded in late 1930s to facilitate Japanese policy toward Asia, and the Theory of Emperor as National Organ (*Tennō-kikansetsu*), which has been understood as the theoretical backdrops against which emerged the democratic movement during the Taishō era (*Taishō demokurasi*). By considering these implications, it will become possible to understand the underlying logic of Nishida’s political philosophy, and what was his influence on war-time policy.

How to Problematised Nishida’s Political Philosophy

Here, I should make clear what the argument, or hypothesis, is that will be examined in my project. This paper is the introduction to my project, in which Nishida’s political philosophy will be examined. The argument of my project is that, at one level, Nishida’s political philosophy can be understood as a counter discourse against the ideological discourse being promulgated by the government, militarists, and fanatic nationalists. However, his critique endorsed the exercise of power in the name of the Emperor, so in that sense, it could not be the fundamental criticism against the ideology of the Co-prosperity Sphere. According to Nishida’s logic, the Co-prosperity Sphere would establish a regime within which the exercise of power operated over each nation in the name of the Emperor.

Hitherto, the vindication of Nishida against criticism has often been that Nishida is a sort of liberal, or a person who respects the importance of individual freedom. The implication is that, if he was such a person, he could not have supported the Japanese militarist and authoritarian regime or their policy during the war. Rather, he intensely opposed them, a fact

that can be proven by various records, letters and other correspondences. My thesis also agrees with the argument that Nishida respected individual freedom and that his political philosophy reflects this tendency. Indeed, such elements seem to fall at the centre of his political philosophy. However, this does not necessarily mean that his political philosophy is wholly incompatible with Japanese fanatic nationalist or militarist ideology, since Nishida's positionality does not seem to have been different from that of the militarist or fanatic nationalist. For example, both Nishida and the Tōjō regime were concerned with the crisis confronting the "Japanese nation"—a crisis that the series of wars from the Manchurian Incident to the Asia Pacific War was waged to overcome, but was actually amplified by them—; they shared the perception that it was necessary to deliver the nation-state-empire from the crisis on the basis of the incomparable National Polity (*Kokutai*). Of course, their diagnosis and formulation of the crisis differed, but in the sense that both focused on the importance of the "Nation Polity" as the substantial object, they were the same.

Needless to say, even though Nishida respected the "National Polity" and the Emperor (*Tennō*), in which sense he is a nationalist, this does not directly lead to the conclusion that his political philosophy is necessarily oppressive, exclusive, ethnocentric, or irrational. As Craig Calhoun (2007) argues, "there are no "natural" nations"; the idea of nation is always already subject to interpretations and appropriations. Depending on the interpretations, we can use the idea for both oppression and emancipation. Nishida also seems to have tried to resist the policies orchestrated by government, militarists, and fanatic nationalists, interpreting their political and ideological terms—such as the National Polity and the Co-prosperity Sphere—, in terms of his philosophy. Actually, vindications of Nishida are always asserted from the standpoint that Nishida intended to dissent from the current political trends, giving different interpretations of the ideological terms (*Imi-no sōdatsusen*, or "the semantic tug of war"¹).

Nishida discusses a world-oriented nationalist political philosophy respecting freedom and rationality, and hence his political philosophy respects the freedom and independence of each individual and nation. My thesis agrees with these arguments, which have been raised by the vindicators of Nishida.² That is, my thesis will agree with the evaluation that Nishida's discussion has the meaning of dissent from the political trends of the late 1930 to the 1940s. However, at the same time, my thesis will suggest a question regarding the limits of his dissent: his political philosophy can be seen as dissent in so far as it countered the arguments by militarists and fanatic nationalists, but there may still be a moment when his political philosophy comes conversely to legitimatise the exercise of power in the name of the Emperor. For Nishida, the National Polity is compatible with freedom and rationality, and conversely, freedom and rationality is ground of the legitimacy of the National Polity. On one

¹ This word is originally suggested by Ueda Shizuteru. See, Ueda (1995).

² For example, I can raise Ueyama Shunpei as a major vindicator. See Ueyama (1998).

hand, this argument can oppose oppressive policy legitimatised in the name of the Emperor; on the other hand, however, it can contribute to liberal government –or domination– in the name of the Emperor. The problem of Nishida’s political philosophy should be understood as this duality, and the main concern of my project is regarding this duality.

Some objections to this can be expected. If Nishida’s political philosophy respects freedom, could it ever be compatible with the exercise of power? Should not liberal government be government without power? Generally, it is assumed that the authoritarian or militarist regime is more likely to force individuals to obey orders from above, and this enforcement is understood as the oppression or domination of subjectivity. As Nikolas Rose (1999, 94-95) puts it, this is “the conventional ways of ascribing ethical value to the opposition between subject and object, in which subjectivity is privileged as the authentic and natural locus of moral autonomy.”

However, even if some regime guarantees freedom of subject, it does not necessarily mean that the regime does not exercise power. Here, attention should be given to the study of governmentality by Michel Foucault. As Foucault argues, there are regimes that would reinforce themselves by enhancing the freedom of subjectivity: within such regimes, although individuals are opened to several possibilities and can act freely, they are directed by the regime to act according to rationality; the regimes themselves are legitimatised by their ability to suggest and maintain rationality which can be compatible with freedom. Thus, Foucault thinks that the direction to rationality through the enhancement of freedom is the exercise of power: the power to form subject who follows the rationality. Power is exercised to manage the “field of possibilities” (Foucault 2000, 341), and thereby direct –or “conduct” in Foucauldian word– free subject to take a particular action. Even “though consent and violence are instruments or results, they do not constitute the principle or basic nature of power” (*Ibid.*), Hence, he argues that the exercise of power is the “conduct of conducts” (*conduire des conduites*). Faced with such regimes, “one must abandon the political calculus of domination and liberation” (Rose 1999, 95). In his political philosophy Nishida also argues the necessity of enhancing freedom of subjectivity, but from the angle of Foucauldian governmentality analysis, his respect for freedom of subject would lead or conduct individuals to internalise rationality suggested by the Emperor-centred regime and follow it of their own accord. In other words, Nishida’s political philosophy becomes an argument that facilitates the exercise of power: the argument that, because the Emperor-centred regime respects the freedom of the individual and suggest rational order compatible with freedom, individuals should internalise the principle of it.

As the “conduct of conducts” is the “exercise of power,” it could be understood that government, militarists, and fanatic nationalists also intend to conduct people to internalise the dogmatic or irrational principle spread in the name of the Emperor. Against such conduct,

Nishida's discussion can be understood as "counter-conduct"³ (*contre-conduite*). Nishida also discusses the same notions or terms used by militarists and nationalists, but tries to articulate them with rationality and freedom, and intends to conduct people to follow a principle which will conflict with what the government, militarist, and fanatic nationalist argue. In this sense, his conduct is the dissent. However, in so far as it is conduct in the name of the Emperor, it will form a subject who is loyal to the Emperor-centred regime, and thereby the regime will be reinforced. Consequently, the "National Polity" and the Co-prosperity Sphere will also continue to be at the centre of the formation of subject.

In other words, the "National Polity" and the Co-prosperity Sphere continue to be privileged in Nishida's discussion. For Nishida, the "Japanese nation" is not a parochial and mystified cultural notion, such as is envisaged by militarists and fanatic nationalists. Nishida neither argues for nor believes in the unquestionable distinction or divinity of the Japanese nation. Rather, he thinks that nation emerges according to rationality which can be found in the interplay between individuals, and that the aim of the state is to maintain the rationality. For him, each nation is the same in this respect; hence the universal principle of maintaining rationality of each nation. The Emperor-centred regime, i.e. the National Polity, should also be based on this principle; conversely, to the extent that this is the regime which is most likely to be based on this principle, it can be more distinct than other regimes. Furthermore, the Co-prosperity Sphere is also the idealised international community wherein the rationality of each nation is maintained according to the universal principle. However, how is this principle possible? Nishida tries to envisage the possibility of the principle by referring to the problem of "reason of state."

The Problem of Reason of State

Nishida published the article titled "The Problem of Reason of State" (*Kokka-riyū no mondai*) in 1941. In this article, he discusses the *Kokka-riyū*, which is a translation of *Staatsräson*, or *raison d'état*, or reason of state. "The Problem of Reason of State" is the most significant article in which Nishida looks particularly at the problem of the state and the political principle. Prior to the publication of this article, in 1938 Nishida published *The Problem of Japanese Culture*. This book is based on a public lecture delivered at Kyoto Imperial University in 1938, and his intention in this lecture seems to be to counter the propagation of cultural ideologies by the government. This dissent had already emerged in 1937. In correspondence to his friend Yamamoto Ryōkichi, he put it:

I entirely agree with your opinion that, although the Ministry of Education is trying to dominate the whole of thoughts and ideologies following the idea of the

³ Foucault raises the question: "How can we designate the type of revolts, or rather the sorts of specific web of resistance to forms of power?" His answer by himself to this question is "counter-conduct." See Foucault (2007, 200-201).

Institute for the Research of Japanese Spirit and Culture (Seihshin-bunka kenkyūjo) as the absolute imperative, such a policy seems to make young men sceptical. However, the topic of what I talked in Hibiya Public Hall (Kōkaido) the other day was not about how to interpret the National Polity, but I just argued that the interpretation of Japanese culture should be theoretical. (Nishida 2007, 93)

In 1937, Nishida gave another lecture at the urging of the Department of Education and Knowledge in the Ministry of Education (*Mōnbusho kyōgaku-kyoku*), and his correspondence mentions this lecture. Nishida was concerned with the irrational and a-theoretical glorification of Japanese culture and spirit by the government, fanatic nationalists and militarists, to boost national prestige and facilitate current affairs in the middle of the Second Sino-Japanese War. At this time, Nishida was particularly concerned with Kihira Tadayoshi, who was a member of the Council of the Renovation of Education and Knowledge (*Kyōgaku sasshin hyōgikai*), and a research fellow of the Institution for the Research of Japanese Spirit and Culture. Nishida also reluctantly joined the Council, and was stressed by Kihira's fanatic and nationalistic argument and the Institution's influence on the Ministry of Education through him. Other than Kihira, Nishida was distressed by Minoda Muneki's attack and argument. Minoda, a notoriously fanatic ultra-nationalist, was a professor at Keio University and Kokushikan, and founded the *Genri Nihonsha*, an extreme right-wing organisation that denounced liberal or progressive intellectuals.

Hence, Nishida's articles are written to intervene in such situation somehow, the problems of nation, state, and culture being his main concerns. "The Problem of Reason of State" was published against this backdrop. In it, Nishida sought legitimacy for the existence of the state. That is why Nishida translates "reason of state" as "*Kokka-riyū*." By pursuing the legitimacy of the state, Nishida intended to counter the dominant discourse which grounds the legitimacy of the Japanese National Polity on the dogmatic and oppressive divine authority of the Emperor.

Usually *Staatsräson* or *raison d'état*, or reason of state, is likely to be translated as *Kokka-risei* or *Kokuze* in Japanese. As Maruyama Masao (1998) argues, *raison d'état* or *Staatsräson* has been understood in terms of the question: what is the principle according to which the state should act? This question is discussed in the context of the independence of the state itself, and the interest of the state itself. Hence, reason of state becomes the principle indicating both the end and art (or technology) of the state as a historical entity: the state must perceive the end of its action correctly, and needs to invent the art (*Staatskunst*) to achieve the end. In other words, reason of state emerges as the principle for the state to survive in the world of power politics. For Maruyama, as he argues (*Ibid.* 241) "the moment that the problem of reason of state becomes most heated and the subject of the loudest discussion is, needless to say [the moment when] the state's international action [matters]." Reason of state is thus mainly a principle for international policy. According to Maruyama, the modern

international community is constituted by modern Western states, which pursue their own interests; thus the rule of the international community, such as notions of equality of sovereign states and balance of power, is underpinned by the modern Western state system. So Maruyama thinks that reason of state develops against the backdrop of the Western modern state system. He argues that when reason of state works best, the state can adequately calculate the balance between its own interests and the rule of the international community.

On the premise of his understanding of reason of state, Maruyama criticises Imperial Japan (*Kōkoku nihon*) from the 1930s to 1940s as a state that entirely loses its *Staatsräson*.⁴ He thinks that the Imperial Japan came to a miserable end because Japanese militarism during this period narcissistically pursued its power and interest, and failed to recognize and calculate reality. Maruyama argues that the flood of ideological buzzwords, such as “the spread of the Imperial Road” (*Kōdō no senpu*), “the project to make the East Asian people blessed with the Imperial Authority” (*Kōon ni tōa no tami wo abiseshimeru jigyō*), or “the spirit of the Eight Corners of the World under One Roof” (*Hakkō-ichiu no seishin*), is a reflection of this loss of *Staatsräson*: the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere also emerges in this context. On the contrary, however, as we shall see, in Nishida’s logic reason of state and the Co-prosperity Sphere are connected.

According to Maruyama, *Kokka-risei* is not necessarily an appropriate translation of *raison d'état*, or *Staatsräson*, or reason of state, because it cannot adequately express the polysemy of reason of state: he thought the word was not appropriate to connote such meanings as, “end” and “art” or “technology,” because “*risei*” usually means rationality (and “*kokka*” means the state). However, he says, because there seems no better word, he also adopts the conventional translation of the word. At least, *Kokka-risei* can mean “rationality,” according to which the state should invent the art to effectively pursue its own interests and achieve its own ends. In this sense, *Kokka-risei* can imply the relationship among the end, art, and rationality of the state.

In contrast, in adopting *Kokka-riyū* as a translation of reason of state or *Staatsräson*, Nishida seemed to focus on another connotation of the word. That is to say, “the reason why.” In a letter dated June 1, 1941 to Watsuji Tetsurō, a former colleague in the Department of Literature of Kyoto Imperial University, Nishida (2007, 414) said he was currently writing an article whose “title is “*Kokka-sonzai-riyū no mondai*,” which means, the problem of *Staatsräson*.” Then, in a letter to Watsuji dated June 24, Nishida (*Ibid.* 416) said: “I use the title *Kokka-riyū no mondai* some have translated [*Staatsräson*] as *Kokuze* but it may be incorrect, because it sounds like the policy of the state.” Thus, by the term *Staatsräson* or

⁴ Maruyama says that he initially pays attention to the idea of reason of state during late 1930s to 1940s through Meinecke’s *The Idea of Reason of State* (*Die Idee Der Staatsräson*). The period when Maruyama pores over the Meinecke’s book overlaps to the time when Nishida publishes “The Problem of Reason of State”. In this sense, both Nishida and Maruyama try to understand the current affairs looking at reason of state.

reason of state, Nishida tries to convey the “*sonzai-riyū*” or “*riyū*” of the state: the reason why the state exists, or the reason why the state is needed. Considering this interpretation by Nishida, it seems that it was most important for him to examine the necessity for the state, or the legitimacy of its existence. In other words, these works give the impression that Nishida tried to examine a problem that is not raised in Maruyama’s discussion on “reason of state.” Maruyama examines “reason of state” assuming the state as a given in the Western traditional discussion of “reason of state.”

Hence, there seems to be a sharp contrast between Maruyama and Nishida in their understanding of “reason of state.” While Maruyama tries to understand “reason of state” in terms of “how,” assuming the state as given, Nishida seems to examine “reason of state” in terms of “why,” examining the legitimacy of the state. Nishida thinks that the state can be legitimatised in so far as it is a rational state, and, tries to interpret the National Polity as a rational regime. Furthermore, Nishida argues that rationality can be found through the interplay between free individuals. In this interpretation, there seems to be a possibility of making Nishida’s political philosophy both the “counter-conduct” and the “conduct of conducts.”

Nishida’s interpretation of the National Polity could counter the interpretation of the Polity based on the mystic divinity of the Emperor. In other words, it was a dissent from the irrational and anti-liberal interpretation of the National Polity. However, from the angle of Foucauldian governmentality analysis, it could be argued that Nishida’s logic worked to constitute and legitimatise the regime that exercises power according to liberal rationality. Interestingly, Foucault also discusses the development of the idea of reason of state; according to him, the emergence of reason of state initiates the development of governmental art (or technique/technology) to utilise freedom and rationality for the exercise of power.

As discussed previously, Foucault thinks that power is exercised in order to conduct a free subject to a particular conduct, and that this conduct is in accordance with rationality. Hence, because reason of state provides rationality according to which the state should govern for the reinforcement of the state, it also becomes a principle of the art/technology for conducting subjects to the reinforcement. Although the study of reason of state initially refers only to the state, the pursuit of rationality of government comes to find and refer to society. In other words, as the basis of the state, society is found as the entity which is constructed through the interplay between people and has its own rational mechanism. As a result, there emerges the necessity to ground the government of the state on the rationality of society. Thus, governmental rationality initially discussed in reason of state becomes the ground for legitimatising government of society by the state. In this moment, rationality and freedom are connected: whereas society is formed spontaneously, the rationality of society should be found in the mechanism formed by the interplay between free individuals. Government by the state can be legitimatised as rational in so far as it respects and enhances the freedom of the

subject. Foucault thinks that in this sort of government by the state, to enhance freedom is to exercise power.

Taking this Foucauldian analysis into consideration, I would like to argue that Nishida also grounded the legitimacy of the National Polity on the rationality of the regime, and that his political philosophy suggested the logic for conducting people to follow the government of the regime spontaneously: the logic according to which power is exercised. For Nishida, the rationality pursued in the study of reason of state should be found in each nation; he thinks that each nation is based on “ethnic society” formed spontaneously. In other words, Nishida thinks that rationality should be grounded on ethnic society and the mechanism according to which each society is formed. Nishida argues:

Hitherto, we are likely to abstract what is called society ignoring historical backdrops. However, society must be formed based on the historical backdrop. It must be formed as the self-formation of the historical world including the natural world. This is the reality of society. We are likely to think that when an ethnicity (minzoku) inhabits a certain region, the mutual determination between people and nature initiates the development of society. However, what is thought of today as ethnicity did not exist from the start. It must emerge through the development caused by the mutual relationship between the natural environment and the animal called Homo sapiens (Nishida 2004, 322).

Here, Nishida discussed the dynamic of ethnic society. He was convinced that ethnic society was subject to relentless changes or transformations caused internally and externally, and, in this sense, should not be assumed as any sort of a-historical substance. In particular, for him, the most important rationale of the transformation of society was the interplay between individuals. Nishida called this rationale the “contradictory self-identity” (*mujun-teki jiko-dōitsu*) arguing (*Ibid.* 321) that “society is formed as the contradictory self-identity of the totality as one and the individuals as many.” For him, only a society that is constructed according to this rationale can be rational.

In other words, Nishida emphasised rationality of society based on the interplay between free individuals. To put it conversely, rational society became possible only when such liberal mechanism of society was respected. Therefore, he was convinced that the governmental institution of nation –that is, the state– should respect the freedom of individuals in order to ensure this rationality, and that reason of state was the principle for envisaging such a rational government. Arguing that “to elucidate the relationship between individuals and the world thoroughly, first of all, you should refer to Leibniz’s *Monadology*” (*Ibid.* 313), Nishida suggested that each individual perspective can be justified as one of the perspectives of the world. For Nishida, the world is a polysemic oneness that can be perceived in various ways. Thus, each individual perspective should vary, in principle, and the reason of state should be

the principle of respecting and facilitating such variation of individual perspectives. Finally, Nishida concluded that the ideal of the National Polity, that is, the Emperor-centred regime, should be to realise a rational and liberal government that could mediate the diverse perspectives of individuals as free subjects.

This interpretation of the National Polity by Nishida could be a dissent from the mystic ideology of the National Polity, which was argued by fanatic nationalists like Kihira or Minoda. This is Nishida's "counter-conduct." At the same time, however, Nishida's theory could form rational and liberal subjects who reinforced the National Polity of their own accord. From the Foucauldian angle, Nishida's theory can be understood as an attempt to justify the government in the name of the National Polity as a rational government for facilitating individual freedom. This is Nishida's "conduct of conduct." That is to say, Nishida's discussion of reason of state can be understood as a theory justifying the exercise of power.

Conclusion

In *The Problem of Japanese Culture* and "The Problem of the World New Order," Nishida developed his argument in terms of his political philosophy underpinned by his understanding of "reason of state." In *The Problem of Japanese Culture*, he discussed how Japanese culture developed as the central principle of the Japanese nation, which put the Emperor at the centre, and how "reason of state" was regarded as a principle for building the Japanese state as the governmental institution of Japanese nation. In "The Problem of the World New Order," Nishida developed his idea of "reason of state" as the principle for constructing the new world order, which was argued as the aim of the war waged by Japan. As Nishida's "reason of state" was the liberal and rational principle of exercising power, his interpretation of Japanese culture and the new world order was also based on liberal and rational ideas, but justified the exercise of power in the name of the Emperor and Co-prosperity (*Kyōei*). Nishida's works thus contributed to mobilisation of the subject who was loyal to the National Polity and pursued the aim of the war voluntarily. I will look at these problems more closely in my project. It could therefore be argued that "The Problem of Reason of State" evinced the fundamental principle of Nishida's political philosophy that underlies his controversial political works; I have examined this point as the introduction to my project.

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