Persons and the State
"Personality" in Nishida Kitarō's Zen no kenkyū

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Most scholarship dealing with Nishida Kitarō's (1870–1945) seminal 1911 monograph *An Inquiry into the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究) focuses on its first two sections, entitled "pure experience" (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験) and "reality" (*jitsuzai* 実在).[1] Despite evoking the title of the monograph, the third section, entitled "the good" (*zen* 善), has received comparatively less attention. This paper focuses on this third section, paying special attention to the influence of the British dealist philosopher T. H. Green (1836–1882) on Nishida Kitarō's conception of *jinkaku* 人格 as "personality." Here, Nishida reinterprets Green's individualist-personalist understanding of personality by granting personality to various levels of "social consciousness," including the state. After a brief discussion of the historical context behind Nishida's writings on personality, this paper compares Green's writings on "personality" in *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883) with Nishida's writings on *jinkaku* in *Zen no kenkyū* and offers a close reading of the latter in order to shed further light on Nishida's view of the relationship between the state and the individual.

T. H. Green and Japanese Philosophy

Thomas Hill Green was an idealist philosopher who served as White's Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford University from 1878 until his death. Although he is today often overlooked in survey courses on the history of philosophy,

1. Christopher Goto-Jones, *Political Philosophy in Japan* (Routledge, 2005), 51.

Green was an important historical figure for the discipline. Politically, he played an important part in the late nineteenth-century "New Liberalism" movement that rejected *laissez-faire* economics, and philosophically he took a leading role in the rise of Kantian and Hegelian idealism in Britain before the turn of the twentieth century.[2] Green had a significant impact not just on Japanese philosophy, but on Japanese society as a whole. His philosophy was introduced to Japan by Nakashima Rikizō (1858–1918),[3] who was appointed chair of ethics at Tokyo Imperial University in 1893 and whose students included luminaries like Takayama Chogyū, Ōnishi Hajime, and Nishida Kitarō.[4] Across Japan, scholars discussed the "Green school" of philosophy and ethics, and questions on Green's thought were asked at the annual government examinations for certificates to teach morality in elementary and middle schools.[5] Green has thus been described by one source as "unquestionably the most *popular* Western thinker at the turn of the century."[6]

Green's philosophy took its most mature form in his posthumously published magnum opus *Prolegomena to Ethics*. Here, Green argued that one's experiences necessarily require the existence of a self-conscious mind. He argued further that reality must be conceived as "a single and unalterable order of relations," which is conceived by an eternal consciousness—described in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* as a self-conscious corporate agent[7]—that includes all of the finite systems of relations that are within the minds of individual persons.[8] Green believed that this eternal consciousness was necessary for objectivity, it was present and operative in the consciousnesses of individual persons, and the growth of knowledge in individual persons was the result of the operation of this eternal consciousness in each individual person. Green's philosophical position, thus, is a version of absolute idealism.[9]

As Richard Reitan has demonstrated, Green's writings, translated into Japanese, became important within the context of the discourse of "personalism" (*jinkakushugi* 人格主義) in Japan.[10] This was largely because of the influence of

2. For a classic overview of Green's influence in Britain, see Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and His Age* (Harvard University Press, 1964). For an overview of the British Idealist movement that Green inspired, see W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

3. Atsuko Hirai, *Individualism and Socialism: The Life and Thought of Kawai Eijirō* (Harvard University Press, 1986), 90. Richard Reitan argues that "Nakashima" is the correct rendering of 中島 in *Making a Moral Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010).

4. Reitan, 84, 87.

5. Hirai, 90.

6. Hirai, 90–91.

7. David Brink, "Thomas Hill Green," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, eds., https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/green.

8. Thomas Hill Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Clarendon Press, 1906), xii.

9. For a more detailed analysis of Green's stance, see Brink, "Thomas Hill Green."

10. Reitan, 121.

personalist philosopher Nakashima. His essay "Concerning the British Neo-Kantian school," serialized in 1892 and 1893, focused on Green's thought. Nakashima largely followed Green, claiming that all phenomena exist because of their relation to some other phenomena, and that there must be an "eternal consciousness" that makes these relations its "eternal object." The good, for personalists like Nakashima, was understood as the realization of the self or the personality in unity with absolute spirit, a process that was often rendered in Japanese by personalists as *jinkaku jitsugen* 人格実現 (personality realization) or *jiga jitsugen* 自我実現 (self-realization).[11]

On a global level, "personalism" is a slippery term. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* mentions that personalism has "many different versions," which make it "somewhat difficult to define as a philosophical and theological movement." Additionally, the entry claims, "It is, in point of fact, more proper to speak of many *personalisms* than one personalism."[12] However, according to Reitan, "personalism" (*jinkakushugi*) in Japan could be described as "a form of philosophical idealism centering on the moral cultivation of the personality of an individual."[13]

Although it was centered on the moral cultivation of the individual, personalism connected the individual to society at large and to the state by conceiving of the "person" as both individual and social. Outlining the state of personalist discourse in Japan before the turn of the twentieth century, Reitan writes,

> For philosophers of personalism in 1890s Japan, the "person" was not merely individual, but social as well. Drawing upon an epistemology that brought together subject and object, self and other, personalism reconfigured utilitarian conceptions of the person as an isolated, socially atomistic individual, putting forward instead the view that the person was both individual and social. To the extent that a person could both actualize their own unique potentialities and cultivate a self-awareness of their sociality, he or she realizes "the good." The good of the self, in this view, is the good of the other. The state, in personalist thought, was the space within such "self-realization" took place. The primary function of the state was to facilitate the individual's social actualization by creating the conditions necessary for

11. Reitan, 87–88.

12. Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, "Personalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/personalism. This *Stanford Encyclopedia* article emphasizes that discourse about "personalism" in the West is often intertwined with Christian theology. This is particularly significant in Green's case, as his philosophy was often interpreted as an attempt to push forward an intellectually defensible version of Christianity in the wake of the spread of "higher criticism" from Germany and the rise of agnosticism. For more details, see Mander, *British Idealism*.

13. Reitan, 120–121. Green's "personality" was translated into Japanese as *jinkaku*.

> this to take place. That is, it functioned as the means to bring about the end of self-realization. If the state stifled this process, it was not fulfilling its purpose.[14]

Thus, late nineteenth-century Japanese personalist discourse represented the individual person as aiming for self-realization in society, aided (ideally) by the state, which lays the groundwork for this self-realization.

However, Reitan notes that the personalist language of Green's works would later be used to buttress the "national morality" (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道徳) ideology propounded by Inoue Tetsujirō that would come to be the "dominant form of moral inquiry among *rinrigaku* 倫理学 academics in early twentieth-century Japan."[15] According to Reitan, "national morality" began to "coopt the philosophy of personalism to legitimize the suppression of 'dangerous thought'" around the time of Inoue Tetsujirō's famous discourse on national morality in 1911, which would later be published as *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* 国民道徳概論 in 1912.[16] This work was followed by the publication of more than fifty scholarly works on "national morality" in the next decade.[17]

Reitan notes that personalism carried within it a crucial ambivalence that allowed for its exploitation by national morality discourse. On the one hand, personalism emphasized the self-actualization of the individual; but on the other hand, it asked the individual to preserve the state (which is understood as the space of self-actualization) by obeying the laws of the state. This is in line with the thought of Green, who believed that individuals should judge for themselves whether laws were truly serving the common good. If they concluded that they were not, then these individuals were entitled to resist through legal channels.[18] However, proponents of national morality forced the acceptance of the idea that the state was to be preferred over the individual. Reitan argues that they supported their position through an expansion of the meaning of "personality." As Reitan recounts,

> [I]n national morality thought, the ideal of "complete personality" referred not merely to the self-realization of the individual, but to the realization or perfection of the state as well. This was because the state also possessed personality, one that national morality scholars identified with individual personality by drawing upon the subject-as-object philosophy of personalism.[19]

14. Reitan, 121.
15. Reitan, 115.
16. Reitan, 120.
17. Reitan, 115.
18. Reitan, 122.
19. Reitan, 123.

In other words, Reitan argues that in national morality discourse, the state is not merely the entity that sets the conditions for the self-realization of individual persons, as it is in personalism. The state itself has personality and thus *is* a person. As a result, the good of the state-person can and should be privileged over the good of mere individual persons. In Reitan's words, "Whereas personalism posited the state as merely a means to the end of individual self-realization, national morality prioritized the completion of the state."[20]

Personality in T. H. Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883)

The move by national moralists to grant personality to the state lacks precedent in Green's work. In his magnum opus, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883), Green understands personality to be a quality of individuals and not of the state. This is clearly shown in sections 180–190, which form the beginning of chapter 2, "Characteristics of the Moral Ideal." Green helpfully devotes section 180 to a summary of his argument up to this point:

> Let us pause here to take stock of the conclusions so far arrived at. It will be convenient to state them in dogmatic form, begging the reader to understand that this form is adopted to save time, and does not betoken undue assurance on the part of the writer. Through certain media, and under certain consequent limitations, but with the constant characteristic of self-consciousness and self-objectification, the one divine mind gradually reproduces itself in the human soul.[21]

In this way, Green succinctly summarizes his argument. The divine mind, which for Green is equivalent to the aforementioned "eternal consciousness," reproduces itself in the souls of human beings. As a result, these souls are self-conscious (that is, they are aware of themselves) and are able to self-objectify (they are able to make themselves the objects of their consciousness).

In section 182, Green makes clear that self-consciousness and self-objectification are necessary for what he calls "personality":

> It is clearly of the very essence of the doctrine above advanced [the doctrine that the divine mind reproduces itself in the human soul] that the divine principle, which we suppose to be realising itself in man, should be supposed to realise itself in persons, as such. But for reflection on our personality, on our consciousness of ourselves as objects to ourselves, we could never dream of there being such a

20. Reitan, 124.
21. Green, 206–207.

> self-realising principle at all, whether as implied in the world or in ourselves. It is only because we are consciously objects to ourselves, that we can conceive a world as an object to a single mind, and thus as a connected whole. It is the irreducibility of this self-objectifying consciousness to anything else, the impossibility of accounting for it as an effect, that compels us to regard it as the presence in us of the mind for which the world exists. To admit therefore that the self-realisation of the divine principle can take place otherwise than in a consciousness which is an object to itself, would be in contradiction of the very ground upon which we believe that a divine principle does so realise itself in man. Personality, no doubt, is a term that has often been fought over without any very precise meaning being attached to it. If we mean anything else by it than the quality in a subject of being consciously an object to itself, we are not justified in saying that it necessarily belongs to God and to any being in whom God in any measure reproduces or realises himself. But whatever we mean by personality, and whatever difficulties may attach to the notion that a divine principle realises itself through a qualifying medium in the persons of men, it is certain that we shall only fall into contradictions by substituting for persons, as the subject in which the divine self-realisation takes place, any entity to which self-consciousness cannot intelligibly be ascribed. If it is impossible that the divine self-realisation should be complete in such persons as we are or can conceive ourselves coming to be, on the other hand in the absence of self-objectification, which is at least the essential thing in personality, it cannot even be inchoate.[22]

In this lengthy passage, Green implies that personality is the "quality in a subject of being consciously an object to itself," and that it thus includes self-consciousness and self-objectification. Consequently, "personality" for Green is a kind of self-reflexive awareness that only persons can have; hence, the term "personality." Even though nonhuman animals can feel and think to some degree, it is only persons who can consciously become objects to themselves.

For Green, the moral life is the fulfillment of a divine idea—the aforementioned "eternal consciousness"—in the human spirit. However, Green makes it clear that the human spirit cannot fulfil this divine idea apart from in individual persons. As Green aptly writes in section 184, "Our ultimate standard of worth is an ideal of personal worth. All other values are relative to value for, of, or in a person."[23]

22. Green, 208–209.
23. Green, 210–211.

Crucially, later in section 184, Green explicitly rejects the claim that a "national spirit" could exist as such, as an entity that could be metaphorically said to exist "in the ether," separate from individual persons. As Green writes,

> Nor, unless we allow ourselves to play fast and loose with the terms 'spirit' and 'will,' can we suppose a national spirit and will to exist except as the spirit and will of individuals, affected in a certain way by intercourse with each other and by the history of the nation…. It would seem that it [a national spirit] could only mean one of two things; either (a) some type of personal character, as at any time exhibited by individuals who are held together and personally modified by national ties and interests which they recognise as such; or (b) such a type of personal character as we may suppose should result, according to the divine idea of the world, from the intercourse of individuals with each other under the influence of the common institutions which make a particular nation, whether that type of character is actually attained or no. At any rate, if a 'national spirit' is held to be a form in which an eternal Spirit, in the only sense in which we have reason to think there is such a thing, realises itself, then it can only have its being in persons, though in persons, of course, specially modified by the special conditions of their intercourse with each other.[24]

Thus, for Green, a national spirit cannot exist as an independent entity. However, a "national spirit" could be said to exist as a "personal character" that appears in the various individuals who live in a given nation, as a result of national ties or common national institutions. Nevertheless, a national spirit can never be self-conscious or self-objectifying, and thus, a national spirit can never have personality.

In accordance with this line of thinking, Green claims that human spiritual progress is meaningless unless it refers to "a progress of personal character and to personal character." This is because, as Green notes in section 185, the human spirit "cannot develop itself according to its [divine] idea except in self-conscious subjects." Consequently, Green writes in the same section,

> The spiritual progress of mankind is thus an unmeaning phrase, unless it means a progress of personal character and to personal character—a progress of which feeling, thinking, and willing subjects are the agents and sustainers, and of which each step is a fuller realisation of the capacities of such subjects. It is simply unintelligible unless understood to be in the direction of more perfect forms of personal life.[25]

24. Green, 211–212.
25. Green, 212–213.

When Green says that the human spirit can only realize itself—thereby fulfilling the divine idea of man—in and through persons, he is also affirming that "realization and fulfilment can only take place in and through society."[26] As Green writes in section 190,

> Without society, no persons: this is as true as that without persons, without self-objectifying agents, there could be no such society as we know. Such society is founded on the recognition by persons of each other, and their interest in each other, as persons, i.e. as beings who are ends to themselves, who are consciously determined to action by the conception of themselves, as that for the sake of which they act.[27]

Thus, in Green's view, society and individual persons exist in a symbiotic relationship, sustaining each other. While it is obvious that society needs the self-objectifying agents that are individual persons, it is also true that, as Green pithily puts it, "[w]ithout society, no persons."[28] This is because Green believes that it is only through participation in society that people learn to regard themselves as persons.

Green believes that proper self-consciousness of one's personality required the recognition of one's own personality by another. As he writes later in section 190,

> Some practical recognition of personality by another, of an "I" by a "Thou" and a "Thou" by an "I," is necessary to any practical consciousness of it, to any such consciousness of it as can express itself in act…. But we know that we, who are born under an established system of family ties, and of reciprocal rights and obligations sanctioned by the state, learn to regard ourselves as persons among other persons because we are treated as such. From the dawn of intelligence we are treated, in one way or another, as entitled to have a will of our own, to make ourselves the objects of our actions, on condition of our practically recognising the same title in others. All education goes on the principle that we are, or are to become, persons in this sense.[29]

In other words, people learn to regard themselves as persons because other people treat them as persons. Through the existence of "others" in society, thus, individuals are able to conceive of themselves as persons.[30]

In sum, then, Green's stance is an individualist-personalist one, one that ascribes personality—defined as the special kind of self-consciousness and self-

26. Green, 217–218.
27. Green, 218.
28. Green, 218–219.
29. Green, 218–219.
30. Green, 218–219.

objectification that persons have—only to individuals. For Green, the divine idea—the eternal consciousness—can be fulfilled not in a "national spirit" or a state, but only in individual persons. These persons need society, because society allows individuals to recognize their own personality through their interactions with other persons. Yet at the same time, although Green argues that persons are in some sense dependent upon society in order to actualize personality, he never makes the case that society *is* a kind of personality. On the contrary, society exists primarily in order to set up the conditions for the mutual flourishing of individual persons.

Personality (*jinkaku*) in Nishida Kitarō's *Zen no kenkyū* (1911)

As Yukiyasu and others have shown, Nishida Kitarō's *Zen no kenkyū* was influenced by Green's philosophy.[31] In 1895, shortly after his 1894 graduation as a *senka* student from Tokyo Imperial University, Nishida published his first article, which was entitled "Guriin shi rinrigaku no taii" グリーン氏倫理学の大意. In this article, Nishida attempted to summarize Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* for a Japanese audience.[32] As Yukiyasu emphasizes, even before this point, Nishida had shown interest in Green's thought. One of Nishida's professors at Tokyo Imperial University was Nakashima, the personalist philosopher who introduced Green's thought to Japan, and it is thought that Nishida attended a lecture course taught by Nakashima in 1893.[33] Around this time, Nishida also mentioned Green in a passage in one of his letters, which Yukiyasu translates as follows: "I am reading Part I, *Prolegomena to Ethics*. This book is congenial to me, and it seems to me that I am very interested in it."[34] Consequently, when Nishida wrote the pieces that would be published in 1911 as *Zen no kenkyū*, he did so against the background of his previous exposure to Green's thought. In fact, according to Yukiyasu, there are points in books 2 and 3 of *Zen no kenkyū* that are patterned off "Guriin shi rinrigaku no taii."[35] For example, he points out that while Green understood the self as a unity constituted by desire, intellect, and will in *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Nishida understood *jinkaku* as a unity of desire (*ganbō* 願望), thought (*shisō* 思想), and will (*ishi* 意志) in *Zen no kenkyū*.[36]

31. See Yukiyasu Shigeru, "Nishida Kitarō to T. H. Guriin," *Nihon tetsugaku-shi kenkyū: Kyoto daigaku aigakuin bungaku kenkyū-ka nihon tetsugaku-shi kenkyūshitsu kiyō* 9 (2012): 1–22 and Yukiyasu Shigeru, *Kindai Nihon shisōka to igirisu risōshugi* (Hokuju shuppan, 2007). For earlier work on Nishida and Green, see Takeuchi Yoshitomo, *Nishida Kitarō* (Kindai Nihon no shisōka 7) (Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1966) and Mizuno Tomoharu, "Risōshugi-teki risei-teki shinkō," *Hikaku shisō kenkyū* 27 (2000): 66–72.

32. Reitan, 88.

33. Yukiyasu, *Kindai Nihon shisōka to Igirisu risōshugi*, 108.

34. Yukiyasu, *Kindai Nihon shisōka to Igirisu risōshugi*, 370.

35. Yukiyasu, *Kindai Nihon shisōka to Igirisu risōshugi*, 109.

36. Yukiyasu, *Kindai Nihon shisōka to Igirisu risōshugi*, 109.

In order to shed light on Nishida's stance toward the individual and the state, it is particularly important to focus both on the ways in which Nishida's stance on *jinkaku* is similar to Green's view of personality and on the ways in which it differs from Green's view. In fact, Nishida's stance on personality as expressed in *Zen no kenkyū* is one that Reitan attacks during his critique of national morality. Like the partisans of national morality, Nishida too goes beyond Green's individual conception of personality and claims that personality can be ascribed to the state. However, as I will argue later, this does not mean that Nishida was himself a partisan of the national morality movement.

Like Green, who holds an individualist-personalist conception of personality as the self-consciousness and self-objectification that individual persons have as a result of the presence of the eternal consciousness in them, Nishida understands *jinkaku* as a force that exists both within individual consciousness and within the deepest recesses of reality itself. However, Nishida develops a view of personality that leads to the ascription of personality to the state and beyond. At the beginning of chapter 25, Nishida identifies "the good" with the actualization of personality through the satisfying of the demands of personality.

> As I stated earlier, the good refers to that which satisfies the internal demands of the self. Because the greatest demands of the self—that is, the demands of personality [*jinkaku*]—are the fundamental unifying power of consciousness, to satisfy these demands and thereby actualize personality is for us the absolute good. The demands of the personality are the unifying power of consciousness and, at the same time, an expression of the infinite unifying power at the base of reality; and so to actualize and fulfill our personality means to become one with this underlying power.[37]

Nishida refers back to his statements at the end of chapter 24, where he argues, "If we regard this unifying power [the unifying power of consciousness] as the personality of each individual, then the good resides in the maintenance and development of personality as this unifying power."[38] Once again, Nishida's invocation of "personality," like Green's, ties individual persons to a deeper and more fundamental reality. As he writes at the end of chapter 24, "[I]f we assume that phenomena of consciousness are the only reality, then our personalities are the activity of the unifying power of the universe. In other words, our personalities are the particular

37. Nishida Kitarō, trans. Masao Abe and Christopher Ives, *An Inquiry into the Good* (Yale University Press, 1990), 132.

38. Nishida, 130.

forms in which the sole reality—which transcends the distinction between mind and matter—manifests itself according to circumstances."[39]

In chapter 25, Nishida then explains how people can become aware of the demands of personality:

> We can be aware of the demands of the whole personality only in the state of direct experience prior to deliberative discrimination. In this state, personality is the voice of a type of internal demand that emerges from the depths of the mind and that gradually envelops the mind as a whole. Conduct that takes personality itself as its goal is conduct that accords with this demand.[40]

Thus, Nishida holds that we should be able to access this "state of direct experience" in order to be aware of the "demands of the whole personality."

This Zen-like "state of direct experience" is to be understood as characteristic of the "true unity of consciousness." As Nishida writes in chapter 24,

> The true unity of consciousness is a pure and simple activity that comes forth of itself, unhindered by oneself; it is the original state of independent, self-sufficient consciousness, with no distinction among knowledge, feeling, and volition, and no separation of subject and object. At this time our true personality expresses itself in its entirety. Personality therefore is not found in mere reason or desire, much less in unconscious impulses; like the inspiration of a genius, it is an infinite unifying power that functions directly and spontaneously from within each individual.[41]

In Nishida's view, personality is a unifying power that springs up from within each individual, and it is to be identified with pure experience and the "pure and simple activity" of the primordial unity of consciousness. As Nishida writes later, personality is both "the unifying power of consciousness" and "the unifying power of reality."[42] It is both subjective and objective, tethering each individual to a fundamentally distinction-less level of reality.

This is an important difference from Green, who never endorses the possibility that one might access a "direct experience" of the "true unity of consciousness" prior to deliberation. For Green, even though the "eternal consciousness" realizes itself in individual persons, individual persons are limited in their comprehension of this "eternal consciousness." It is likely, that Nishida's innovation stems from his

39. Nishida, 131.
40. Nishida, 133.
41. Nishida, 130–131.
42. Nishida, 136.

experience with Zen practice. As Yukiyasu has observed, Nishida departs from Green's thought when he draws on his own experiences with Zen in order to make claims about the ways in which the individual can access a deeper reality.[43]

In chapter 26, Nishida, like Green, stresses the ontological importance of the individual person. For Nishida, personality—which he defines as both "the unifying power of consciousness" and "the unifying power of reality"—is first actualized in individuals. He argues that what gives an individual ultimate satisfaction is "the actualization of the individuality of the self," which he understands as "the displaying of one's distinctive characteristics in practice." These distinctive characteristics are "unique characteristics that cannot be imitated by others," and thus each person's realization of individuality allows each person to be "an indispensable part of the evolution of the universe." In addition, in a crucial passage, Nishida claims the following:

> I hold that the good of the individual is most important and that it serves as the basis of all other goods. Truly great people are so not because of the greatness of their achievements, but because they have displayed great individuality. If one climbs to a high place and yells, one's voice will probably carry a long way because the place is high, not because the voice is loud. I believe that people who thoroughly express their own unique characteristics are greater than those who forget their duty to themselves and heedlessly run around for the sake of others.[44]

Thus, Nishida claims unambiguously that "the good of the individual is most important" and that it "serves as the basis of all other goods."[45] In this way, he is in line with individualist philosophers like Green and Immanuel Kant, who famously held that rational human beings should always be treated as ends in themselves, and never as a means to an end.

Like Green, Nishida also conceives of the individual as being fundamentally linked to society. For Nishida, however, society's role is more than just to serve as the space that sets up the conditions for the self-realization of individual persons, as it is for Green. This can be seen in Nishida's conception of the "social consciousness" and its various stages, to which I now turn. Drawing on Aristotle, Nishida suggests that people are social animals. Using biological imagery, Nishida claims that "physical bodies are not entirely individual" because they "originate in the cells

43. Yukiyasu, *Kindai Nihon shisōka to Igirisu risōshugi*, 114, 116, 118.
44. Nishida, 137.
45. Nishida, 137.

of [their] ancestors." He then states, "When humans live in communities, a social consciousness necessarily functions to unify the consciousness of the members."[46]

For Nishida, this "social consciousness" is important because it generates cultural systems and standards for action and because it is the basis for the generation of the "distinctive characteristics" of individuals.

> Language, manners, customs, social systems, laws, religion, and literature are all phenomena of this social consciousness. Our individual consciousnesses emerge from and are nurtured by it, and they are single cells that constitute this great consciousness. Knowledge, morality, and aesthetic taste all have social significance, and even the most universal learning does not escape social convention. (It is for this reason that at present each nation [*shokoku* 諸国] has its own academic tradition.) The distinctive characteristics of an individual are simply variations that derive from the social consciousness at their base. Even the most original genius cannot step beyond the scope of this social consciousness; in fact, such a person is one who most displays the deepest significance of the social consciousness. (Christ's relationship to Judaism is one example of this.) In short, anyone who stands absolutely unrelated to the social consciousness has the consciousness of the insane [*kyōjin no ishiki* 狂人の意識].[47]

Thus far, everything that Nishida has suggested about the social consciousness is in line with what Green has said about "national spirit." For Green, the "national spirit" cannot exist as an independent entity, but it can exist as a "personal character" that can appear in the various individuals of a nation as a result of national institutions or national ties. Thus, the language, manners, customs, social systems, laws, religion, and literature of a given nation could generate a "national spirit" in the form of a "personal character" that would appear in the nation's individual citizens but would not exist as an independent entity.

However, Nishida then provides signs that he is moving beyond Green. Nishida's stance on the social consciousness is that it is a "living reality" because it has a unique character that arises from its unity. Thus, Nishida writes:

> [W]e encounter conflicting opinions about whether communal consciousness exists in the same sense as individual consciousness and can therefore be seen as a single personality. Høffding and others deny the existence of a unified consciousness. Høffding states that a forest is a collection of trees and that if the forest were divided there

46. Nishida, 138.
47. Nishida, 138–139.

> would no longer be a forest; likewise, a society is a collection of individuals, and there is no independent existence called a society that stands apart from individuals. We cannot say, however, that there is no unity simply because unity no longer exists after the dissection of the whole. If we analyze individual consciousness, we do not find a separate, unifying self. But because there is a unity upon which a unique character arises and various phenomena are established, we consider this unity a living reality. For the same reason, we can view social consciousness as a living reality.[48]

In this passage, Nishida advances nothing that is necessarily in conflict with Green's stance on the "national spirit." Nishida acknowledges that society has no independent existence beyond the individuals that make it up. However, he begins to suggest an expansion of the concept of personality that is unsupported in Green's writing by raising the question of whether communal consciousness can "be seen as a single personality."[49]

At this point, Nishida links the social consciousness with altruism and with a non-individualistic conception of the self and of personality.

> Because our individual consciousnesses are parts of such a social consciousness, most of our demands are social. If we were to remove all altruistic elements from our desires almost nothing would remain. This is clear when we see our desire for life as caused primarily by altruism. We find greater overall satisfaction in the satisfaction experienced by what the self loves and by the society to which one belongs than in personal satisfaction. Fundamentally, the center of the self is not limited to the interior of the individual: the self of a mother is found in her child, and the self of a loyal subject is found in the monarch. As one's personality becomes greater, the demands of the self become increasingly social.[50]

Nishida's view that a mother's self is found in her child and that a loyal subject's self is found in the monarch implies that the self is not limited merely to the individual; instead, the self can be found in the objects of one's altruism and love. As personality becomes greater, the demands of the self become greater and more social precisely because of the social bonds of altruism and love that are thus generated. This is an original point that Nishida is making, one that lacks a precedent in Green.

48. Nishida, 139.
49. Nishida, 138–139.
50. Nishida, 139.

Nishida then delineates three levels of social consciousness that go beyond individual consciousness. The smallest and most immediate level is that of the family, in which "the sexes complement each other and can thereby bring about the development of a complete personality." The next level is that of the state (*kokka*),[51] which Nishida claims "unifies the entirety of our conscious activity and expresses a single personality." The third level of social consciousness, "a social union that includes all humankind," one prefigured in Pauline Christianity and Stoic thought, is not yet in existence. Until this time has come, however, Nishida holds that the state is "the greatest expression of unified communal consciousness."[52]

Nishida makes explicit his rejection of Green's individualist-personalist understanding of the word "personality" in a lengthy passage in which he describes the goal of the state. The 1990 translation of this critical passage is reproduced here, with one caveat. The critical word *kokka* 国家 has been rendered as "state," not "nation":

> The development of social consciousness is not limited to the small group of the family. Our mental and physical life can develop in all of the various social groups. At the next level beyond the family, the state [*kokka*] unifies the entirety of our conscious activity and expresses a single personality [*jinkaku*]. Many theories have been set forth concerning the goal of the state. Some people consider the essence of the state to be the power of sovereignty and think that the purpose of the state is to ward off enemies on the outside and protect life and property of the people on the inside. (Schopenhauer, Taine, and Hobbes hold this opinion.) Others consider the essence of the state to be the individual, and see the harmonious development of individual personalities as constituting its purpose. (This is the type of theory advanced by such people as Rousseau.) But the true goal of the state is not something material and passive as outlined by the former group, and the personality of an individual is not the foundation of the state as maintained by the latter. We individuals are entities that have developed as cells of one society. The essence of the state is the expression of the communal consciousness that constitutes the foundation of our minds. In the context of the state, we can accomplish a great development of personality; the state is a unified personality, and the systems and laws of the state are expressions of the will of this communal consciousness. (This theory was set forth in antiquity by Plato and Aristotle and in modern times by Hegel.) To exert ourselves for

51. The Abe and Ives translation of *Zen no kenkyū* and Goto-Jones's *Political Philosophy in Japan* both translate *kokka* as "nation." In contrast, this paper translates *kokka* as "state."

52. Nishida, 139–141.

> the sake of a state is to exert ourselves for the sake of the development and perfection of a great personality. Moreover, when a state punishes an individual, it does so neither for revenge nor for the safety of society, but because personality possesses an inviolable dignity.[53]

This passage contains a rejection of Green's individualist-personalist understanding of personality. After considering the stance of thinkers like Rousseau who, like Green, "consider the essence of the state to be the individual and see the harmonious development of individual personalities as constituting its purpose," Nishida rejects this stance by writing that "the personality of an individual is not the foundation of the state." For him, the essence of the state is neither the power of sovereignty nor the individual, but is instead the expression of the aforementioned "communal consciousness." Hence, Nishida writes that "[t]he essence of the state is the expression of the communal consciousness that constitutes the foundation of our minds." Because the state expresses the communal consciousness, he argues that it is through the state that "we can accomplish a great development of personality," and he reiterates that the state is a "unified personality," whose laws are expressions of the will of the communal consciousness. As a result of its possession of this "unified personality," the state has a right to punish individuals who might endanger the state's personality. Thus, in sum, Nishida has taken "personality," which was for Green a means of delineating the special kind of self-consciousness and self-objectification that is characteristic of persons, and turned it into something that can adhere to various levels of social consciousness, including the state. In this specific case, Nishida's stance that the state can have "personality" is indeed a position that he shares with national moralists.

However, this raises several further questions about Nishida's position on individuals and their relationship to the state. On the one hand, Nishida writes, "I hold that the good of the individual is most important and that it serves as the basis of all other goods."[54] On the other hand, if individuals are "entities that have developed as cells of one society,"[55] then it becomes unclear how one ought to defend prioritizing the "personality" of individuals over the "personality" of the state, which is "the greatest expression of unified communal consciousness."[56] This is a complex issue, and it appears to be linked to what Yukiyasu suggests is a tension in *Zen no kenkyū* between the good of the individual and the good of society.[57]

53. Nishida, 140–141.
54. Nishida, 137.
55. Nishida, 140–141.
56. Nishida, 139–141.
57. Yukiyasu, "Nishida Kitarō to T. H. Guriin," 12.

That being said, I would disagree with the claim that Nishida ought to be numbered among the national moralists merely because he applies the concept of "personality" to the state. Even though Nishida goes beyond Green in applying "personality" to social groups like the family, state, and still-unrealized social union of humankind, it appears that Nishida's conception of the "personality" of the state is in line with Green's writings on the "national spirit." As mentioned before, Green held that the "national spirit" could refer to a personal character that individuals exhibit as a result of national ties or the influence of national institutions. While Nishida discusses the state as a "single personality" or a "unified personality," he does so within the context of a discussion of the various levels of social consciousness. As mentioned above, the phenomena of social consciousness that Nishida lists explicitly are language, manners, customs, social systems, laws, religion, and literature. These phenomena can be interpreted as being part of Green's "national spirit," manifesting themselves in individuals because of national ties and national institutions. For example, when Nishida asserts that "the systems and laws of the state are expressions of the will of this communal consciousness," one could interpret this statement as meaning that state laws and state systems make up part of the "national spirit" that applies to individual human beings within the state. Because of this, although Nishida goes beyond Green to say that the state is a "single personality" or a "unified personality," the substance of his thought on this point could in fact be interpreted as remaining squarely within the bounds of Green's philosophy.

Additionally, the apparent conflict in Nishida's thought between the good of the individual and the good of society hearkens back to what Reitan suggests is a tension within Japanese personalism. As mentioned before, Japanese personalism emphasized individual self-actualization while at the same time urging that individuals should obey the laws of the state, the space of self-actualization. From a Japanese personalist lens, it seems non-contradictory to say, as Nishida does, that "the good of the individual is most important" and that individuals are "cells of one society." After all, as Green emphasized, the individual person and society are mutually dependent upon each other. Thus, despite taking a national moralist position in advocating that the state has personality, Nishida's thought otherwise seems to fit firmly within the bounds of the Japanese personalism inspired by Green.

Conclusion

By means of the expansion of the concept of personality to make it adhere to the "social consciousness," which progresses from the individual to the family, the state, and an as-yet-unrealized post-state social union, Nishida rejects Green's individualist-personalist understanding of "personality." In doing so, Nishida

advances a conception of the state-as-personality, an intermediate stage on the way to a greater social union of humankind. Nishida made this move at the dawn of the twentieth century, when the discourse of national morality was also taking the vocabulary of personalism and using it to empower the state by granting "personality" to the state. However, at the same time, Nishida's understanding of the "personality" of the state seems to be coherent with Green's position on the "national spirit," and this suggests that Nishida's thought is more personalist than national-moralist.

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