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THE CHRISTIAN GOD AND THE LOGIC OF MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM – NISHITANI KEIJI’S INTERPRETATION OF CHRISTIANITY

The Japanese philosopher Nishitani Keiji¹ (1900–1990) was one of the most eminent members of the second generation of the Kyoto School of Philosophy² founded by Nishida Kitarō³ (1870–1945). The aim of this article is to analyze Nishitani’s interpretation of Christianity, especially his reflection on the Christian notion of God. The author presents Nishitani’s Buddhist interpretation of God and the love of God, omnipotence and omnipresence, which was influenced by Nishida Kitarō’s ‘logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity’.

¹ The order of Japanese names and surnames that appear in this article complies with the traditional Japanese notation – surname first. Nishitani Keiji graduated in philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University. Nishida was both his teacher and mentor. The theme of his considerations deals not only with Buddhism, Zen and Eastern culture but also European philosophy and thought. He discusses German mysticism, and Kierkegaard’s, Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s considerations. His research focuses on religion-related concepts as well as the religious dimension of existentialism. Nishitani’s Zen practice plays an important role in his philosophy. He is considered to be one of the greatest representatives of the second generation of the Kyoto School of Philosophy. Among his most widely recognized works are: *History of Mystical Thought* (Jpn. (Japanese) *Shimpi shisō shi*), *The Philosophy of Fundamental Subjectivity* (Jpn. *Kongenteki shutaisei-no tetsugaku*), *God and Absolute Nothingness* (Jpn. *Kami to zettai mu*), *A Nihilism* (Jpn. *Nihirizumu*), *Religion and Nothingness* (Japanese title: *Shūkyō to wa nani ka [What is Religion]*), *On Buddhism* (Jpn. *Bukkyō ni tsuite*). See: Abe 1991: 150–2; Brown & Collinson & Wilkinson (eds.) 1999: 145; Craig (ed.) 1998, vol. 7, 16; Heisig 2001: 184; Horio 1992: 96–7; Abe (ed.) 1992: 155–7.

² The **Kyoto School of Philosophy – a group of 20th century Japanese philosophers** who outlined an original system of thought via considerations concerning both intellectual and spiritual traditions of East Asia and the philosophy and religion of the West. The three leading representatives of the Kyoto School of Philosophy are: Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) and Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990).

See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kyoto-school/>

³ Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) – his thoughts are referred to as ‘Nishida philosophy’ (Jpn. *Nishida tetsugaku*). Nishida’s efforts blossomed to shape the major philosophical discourse movement called the Kyoto School of Philosophy. Nishida emphasizes that he is mainly interested in the most direct and fundamental stand. As he points out, “‘Nothingness’ means ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’”.

For details see Yusa 2002.

The article is based on the analysis of one of Nishitani's books *Shūkyō to wa nani ka* (*What is religion?*, 1961)⁴. The book consists of six essays out of which the first four had been previously published, between 1954 and 1955, in a series entitled *Gendai shūkyō kōza* (*Lectures on Contemporary Religion*)⁵ by Sōbunsha in Tokyo (Nishitani 1983: XLVII). For the purpose of this article, the English translation of this book by Jan Van Bragt will be quoted. It was published for the first time in English in 1983 titled *Religion and Nothingness* – Nishitani was convinced to agree to such a translation of the title (Nishitani 1983: XLII).

In analyzing Nishitani's views, the author focuses on the philosopher's (Nishitani's) interpretation of Christianity while concurrently she relates to Buddhist terms and concepts. Nishitani's reflections on the religious experience and on the Absolute are essential in this respect. The thesis of the article is a statement: religious experience plays a significant role in the context of Nishitani's considerations concerning the Absolute. What is more, Nishitani's reflection on the Absolute is inseparably connected with the reflection on the human condition in the world. Thus it is crucial to present some theoretical assumptions regarding the nature of the Absolute in Nishitani's philosophy and it is worth pointing out that these assumptions are not separated from the individual human experience. Moreover, for Nishitani, a man can experience the Absolute regardless of religious beliefs – in this case, regardless of the fact that he is a Buddhist or a Christian. Thus, Nishitani's interpretation of Christianity, which agrees with Nishida's 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity', shows a new picture of the Absolute. This new picture goes beyond the limits of what traditionally is ascribed to the Christian God.

Main concepts of Nishitani's philosophy

The key to understanding Nishitani's view on Christianity is Nishida Kitarō's philosophy. Suzuki Daisetz Teitarō⁶ (1870–1966) also influenced Nishitani's theories

⁴ The first essay of *Shūkyō-to-wa nani ka* was translated into English by Janice D. Rowe under the title "What is religion?" and published in *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, vol. 2 in 1960. However, Jan Van Bragt (translator) and James Heisig (editor of *Religion and Nothingness*) were of the opinion that the phrase *Religion and Nothingness* was more suitable for the title of the English version of the entire book. See: Nishitani 1983: XLI–XLII (Translator's Introduction); Waldenfels 1966: 383.

⁵ The author uses quotations from Van Bragt's translation.

⁶ Suzuki Daisetz Teitarō – (1870–1966) was the promoter of Zen in the West. In his works he also refers to some other Buddhist schools (Amidistic). Out of all the Zen masters, it was Bankei Yōtaku (1622–1693) whom Suzuki valued the most. Suzuki and Nishida met in person in 1887. Suzuki practiced Zen under the guidance of Imagita Kōsen (1816–1892) and, following his death, under the guidance of Shaku Sōen (1859–1919). He, alongside his wife, established a journal entitled *Eastern Buddhist*. The same year he became the professor at Ōtani University. In 1933 he received his Ph.D. (Jpn. *bungaku hakushi*). What is more, he was the visiting professor at some

as did Nishitani's dealings with the Zen⁷ school. Thus, when explaining Nishitani's philosophy, the author refers to the views of both Nishida and Suzuki who, just like Nishitani, practiced Zen.

The author takes Nishida's theory of the 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity' (Jpn. *zettaimujunteki jikodōitsu-no ronri*)⁸, also called the 'logic of paradox' (Jpn. *hairi-no ri*), as the key to understanding Nishitani's thought. Nishida is of the opinion that the structure of reality is based on one principle, namely the logical principle of paradox, which is formally expressed as $A=A$ and simultaneously $A\neq A$. According to the 'logic of paradox', "[n]either sole 'yes' nor sole 'no' constitutes the truth, only such state of simultaneous negation and affirmation (which is unimaginable for us) is considered the truth, everything else is regarded as partial truths" (Kozyra 2007: 31). It is worth noticing that Nishida, who was in that case influenced by Suzuki, suggests that the 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity' ('logic of paradox') is not alien to the Eastern way of thinking, especially to *Mahāyāna* Buddhist⁹ philosophy (Kozyra 2004: 49). As its counterpart Nishida recognizes the 'logic of simultaneous negation and affirmation' (Jpn. *sokuhi*)¹⁰, which occurs in certain Buddhist sutras, as well as the 'logic of mutual interfusion

European and many American universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia and Cornell. He also translated into English books like, *Aśvaghoṣa's Discourse on Awakening of Faith in Mahayana* (Jpn. *Daijōkishinron*), *The Lankavatara Sutra* as well as Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

See: Kozyra 2004: 341, 358; Abe (ed.) 1986: 219–24, 235–46.

⁷ Zen (Skt. (Sanskrit) *dhyāna*, Chin. (Chinese) *chan*, Jpn. *zen*) – a faction of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism which refers to the 'enlightenment' of historic Buddha. Zen refers to twenty-eight Indian patriarchs of whom the last one was Bodhidharma (Chin. Putidamo, Jpn. Bodaidaruma, 5th and 6th century A.D.). The first Japanese masters were Kakua (12th century A.D.) and Myōan Eisai (1141–1215). In Japan one can distinguish between such Zen Schools as *rinzai*, *sōtō*, *ōbaku*. Zen is placed in opposition to Amidism which calls upon its followers to rely on 'other power' (Jpn. *tariki*) – the power of Amida Buddha. However, the negation of one's own ego is a basic question in Zen as well. The masters of Zen speak of the act of 'enlightenment' which means seeing of the true structure of reality. Zen masters utterances very often take the form of paradox judgments called *koans* (Jpn. *kōan*). See Maryniarczyk (ed.) 2004: 257–8.

⁸ Abbreviation Jpn.=Japanese.

⁹ The concept of perfect altruism is important in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism (Skt. *mahāyāna*, Chin. *dacheng*, Jpn. *daijō*). The ideal of Bodhisattva (Skt. *bodhisattva*, Chin. *pusa*, Jpn. *bosatsu*) who, being an embodiment of 'great compassion', devotes all his efforts to others and desires that all beings experience 'enlightenment', plays an important role here. *Mahāyāna* Buddhism was created as an alternative to *Hīnayāna* Buddhism (Skt. *hīnayāna*, Chin. *xiaosheng*, Jpn. *shōjō*) which is connected with the ideal of *arhat* (who only cares about one's own liberation) and the soteriological egoism. The following approach is an expression of the negative view of *Hīnayāna* Buddhism. See: Mejer 1980: 172–4; Kozyra 2004: 19.

¹⁰ *Sokuhi* – literally means 'is and is not' because *soku* means 'is' and *hi* means 'not'. Nishida says, "I want to make clear that religious reality cannot be grasped by conventional objective logic, but it reveals itself to the 'logic of contradictory self-identity', or what you call 'the logic of *sokuhi*'". See Yusa 2002: 330.

of all phenomena' (Jpn. *jijimuge*)¹¹ characteristic of the *Kegon*¹² school of Buddhism (Kozyra 2004: 49). It should be noted that there are many Buddhists who would not agree with such interpretation of their religion and Nishida was fully aware of this (Kozyra 2007: 98).

In this article, its author refers to the phrase 'absolutely contradictory self-identity' because Nishitani indirectly also refers to this concept when he analyzes the vision of reality in the experience of Buddhist 'enlightenment'. To describe the structure of reality as 'absolutely contradictory self-identity', Nishitani uses the Japanese word *egoteki* which in the translation presented by Van Bragt means 'circuminsessional relationship'.

'Enlightenment' (Skt. *bodhi*, Chin. *wu*, Jpn. *satori*)¹³ means awakening, an insight into one's 'true self', into one's true nature (Suzuki 2004: 134). Nishida states that 'enlightenment' is the discovery of the paradox structure of reality (Kozyra 2004: 48). It is worth pointing out that the concept of 'non-self' (Skt. *anātman*, Chin. *wuwo*, Jpn. *muga*) is acutely essential in Buddhism. It emphasizes that there is no such thing as a distinctive, independent 'self' (Kozyra 2004: 67). However, according to the 'logic of paradox', 'non-self' is contradictorily self-identical with the 'self'. Nishitani (1983: 124) underscores that it is the paradox that indicates the true being of a thing and a man¹⁴.

'Absolute nothingness' (unity of negation and affirmation) and 'relative nothingness' (negation) are terms which both originated in Nishida's philosophy where they are clearly distinguished. However, Nishitani does not do that in such a distinctive manner and therefore the article's author will try to systemize his somewhat unclear reflections to avoid misinterpretation.

'Absolute nothingness', introduced by Nishida, is understood as 'absolutely contradictory self-identity'. In his interpretation, "absolute nothingness is self-identical with the being" (Kozyra 2007: 39). Crucial is that it cannot be described by adopting the principles of formal logic. In this respect it cannot as well be objectified in any

¹¹ *Jijimuge hokai* – "[t]he mode of existence in which all phenomenal things are mutually unhindered and interfused". See Inagaki 2007: 131.

¹² Sutra of the Flower Garland, which is characteristic of the *Kegon* School, is connected with the 'logic of mutual interfusion of all phenomena' (Jpn. *jijimuge*). Nishida considers it an equivalent of the 'logic of paradox'. The *Kegon* school emphasizes that in spite of their self-identity, all phenomena retain their distinctiveness and uniqueness. The concept of oneness as well as the differentiation mentioned in the school are something original. There is not any aspect of unification or disappearance of all the differences. See: Kozyra 2004: 49, 384, 387; Kozyra 2007: 49.

¹³ Abbreviations: Skt.=Sanskrit; Chin.=Chinese; Jpn.=Japanese.

¹⁴ It must be added that the 'self' is also called 'individual mind' (Skt. *citta*, Chin. *xin*, Jpn. *shin*) in the works devoted to Zen. It is so as the 'self' expresses the relative aspect of reality concerning individual and unique features characteristic of a specific being. It must be remembered that the relative dimension is always self-identical with the absolute dimension. "All 'individual minds' are not 'individual minds' that is why they are 'individual minds'". See Kozyra 2004: 49–51.

way. As pointed out by Kozyra (2007: 41), “neither sole negation nor sole affirmation is enough to describe the essence of ‘absolute nothingness’, the essence which is ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’. It is only due to the ‘logic of paradox’ one can adequately describe ‘absolute nothingness’ which cannot be separated from the being as it is and it is not the being”¹⁵.

‘Relative nothingness’ in Nishitani’s philosophy, understood as the negation of existence, meaning, or value, is of crucial importance. He describes such ‘experience of nothingness’ in a very detailed and profound way. As Nishida’s disciple, Nishitani accepts most of the views of his mentor; however, Nishitani deals with certain aspects that Nishida only pays marginal attention to (among others, a deep analysis of ‘relative nothingness’ in the context of universal existential dilemmas). It is worth remembering that neither Nishida nor Suzuki completely reject formal logic. Nishida is of the opinion that formal logic complies with a certain aspect of reality. However for him, such logic is not able to present the overall structure of reality (Kozyra 2007: 31). On the other hand, Suzuki claims that human thought is one of the dimensions of what lies beyond the comprehension of discursive thinking (Suzuki 2004: 92). The uniqueness of Nishitani’s approach expresses itself in the emphasis on the fact that realization of ‘absolute nothingness’ occurs through the experience of ‘relative nothingness’. In this sense, ‘relative nothingness’ is present in Nishitani’s considerations also in the positive light despite the fact that most of the time various authors point out only the negative aspects. A man who does not break through ‘relative nothingness’ will not experience ‘absolute nothingness’. As a consequence, a man will be overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of the world, impermanence and death.

The realization of ‘absolute nothingness’ equals negation with simultaneous affirmation. It means freedom from the dualism of life and death, from existential suffering, impermanence and transience despite the fact that a man does not leave relative dimension even for an instant.

Nishitani presents the whole range of reactions to the experience of nothingness, from the instant feeling of meaninglessness through some deeper existential experiences as far as to the ‘great doubt’ (Jpn. *daigi*)¹⁶, which can become the

¹⁵ It is worth paying attention to a similar meaning of the Buddhist term ‘true emptiness’ (Chin. *zhenkong*, Jpn. *shinkū*) which cannot be in any way captured as the object of cognition. It is also known as the ‘emptiness of being and non-being’ (Chin. *wufayoufakong*, Jpn. *muhōuhōkū*) as it is not the being nor lack of the being. Moreover, it negates both affirmation and negation. See Kozyra 2004: 73–5.

¹⁶ ‘Great doubt’ (Chin. *dayi*, Jpn. *daigi*) is a term that refers to the words of master Luohan Guichen (Jpn. Rakan Keijin, 867–928) who stated that ‘enlightenment’ is the ‘shattering of the sphere of doubt’. The masters of Zen attempted to help their disciples to reach such a state of frustration where they are devoid of anything to lean on, any term or concept, anything their minds, working on the principle of dualism of the subject and the object of cognition, could rely on. Only such a state makes it possible for a breakthrough, namely ‘enlightenment’, or in the words

turning point where the perspective of perception changes. The change of the perspective means breaking through the dimension of 'relative nothingness' and realization of the 'absolute nothingness', which is *śūnyatā*¹⁷. Unless this happens, nothingness can appear as some kind of transcendence and therefore is merely 'relative nothingness'.

Nishitani uses a concept of *ek-stasis*¹⁸ when explaining the process of describing a being through its negation. As pointed out by Nishitani (1983: 108), "[w]hen the field of consciousness is broken through, allowing nihility to open forth at its ground, and when things are »nullified« and become unreal or deactualized, subjective existence takes this nihility as a field of *ek-stasis* and reverts nearer to an

of Nishida – for the perception of reality as being 'absolutely contradictory self-identical'. The methods of 'strange words and incomprehensible actions' (Jpn. *kigen kikō*) and of 'koan practice' (Jpn. *kanna*) can be applied to bring the effect of frustration considered above. The method of 'strange words and incomprehensible actions' was particularly common in the classical period of Zen (8th and 9th centuries). The aforementioned method is based on the direct relation between the master and the disciple and entails spontaneous and unexpected behaviors of the master that were to evoke some sort of 'shock therapy'. *Koans* are the paradox utterances, symbols and metaphors of the Zen masters that contain many layers of meaning. The classification of those utterances as far as their content and functions are concerned proves that the masters touch upon various aspects of reality which is 'absolutely contradictory self-identity'. Dahui Zonggao (Jpn. Daie Sōkō, 1089–1163) is considered to be the theoretician of the 'koan practice'. He emphasized the question of 'great doubt'. According to him, it was only due to the accumulation of frustration which resulted from the inability of a logical solution of the *koan*, epistemological dualism (the distinction between the subject and the object of cognition) could be exceeded. The disciple, when attempting to tackle the inability of the solution of the *koan* in a rational manner, was to get himself in the state of 'great doubt' constantly concentrating on the key verse of *koan*. This method became quite common in the 12th century. Much attention is paid in the *Rinzai* school to the creation of 'great doubt' even to the present day. The 'great doubt' is connected with the permanent wrestling of the mind with the paradox as it works according to the principles of formal logic. See Kozyra 2004: 103–7, 155, 329, 331, 343.

¹⁷ Nishitani formulates his own paradox interpretation of the term *śūnyatā*. In the works on Buddhism *śūnyatā* (Skt. *śūnyatā*, Chin. *kong*, Jpn. *kū*) is usually characterized as a term meaning 'void/emptiness', or literally 'being empty'. *Śūnyatā* is "neither a philosophical vacuum nor a philosophical non-being". This term means the inability to describe or grasp reality. See: Mejer 2001: 209; Kozyra 2004: 386.

¹⁸ *Ek-stasis* – Nishitani uses the term *ek-stasis* in reference to the situation in which being is defined through self-negation, in other words, in reference to nothingness. *Ek-stasis*, as understood by Nishitani, represents the direction 'from being to nothingness'. Nishitani states that the turn in Heidegger's considerations was not without a reason. Heidegger had thought through his previous stance and changed his view into the one leading 'from nothingness to being'. In Heidegger's interpretation, *ek-stasis* is "oriented on the being namely the emergence of *Dasein* from the nothingness of defined senses". In this respect nothingness manifests itself as being. In Schelling's interpretation *ek-stasis* means 'going beyond oneself' that is to ensure a man with freedom, which, in other words, is direct experience of the Absolute. Nishitani uses this term replacing the concept of the Absolute with nothingness. See: Nishitani 1983: 68; Schelling 1990: 15 (Introduction); Maryniarczyk (ed.) 2002: 98.

original subjectivity”. A man objectifies nothingness and his own existence through describing his being in relation to ‘relative nothingness’. In this context, however, there is no authentic liberation. Nishitani and Nishida are of the opinion that it is only possible if the perspective of the perception of reality is changed permanently and ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’ of true reality is experienced.

It should be noted that if we look at ‘absolute nothingness’ or, in other words, the ‘logic of paradox’ only in a theoretical way it will lose its existential and religious dimension, and for this reason, its real sense. Nishida (1993: 91) stated, “religion can be philosophically grasped only by a logic of absolute affirmation through absolute negation. As the ‘religious self’ returns to its own bottomless depths, it returns to the [A]bsolute and simultaneously discovers itself in its ordinary and everyday, and again in its rational, character”. As pointed out in this statement, the ‘logic of paradox’ must be seen in its existential and religious dimension, which is connected with the inquiry about one’s ‘self’ and the ultimate reality. A similar approach is seen in Nishitani’s philosophy. For him, the structure of reality – ‘original form of reality’ – cannot be conceived in a scientific way, but only in a religious one. He emphasizes that religion begins with the question “[f]or what purpose do I exist?” (Nishitani 1983: 3). What is more, for Nishitani (as well as Nishida¹⁹), authentic existence is not to be sought only in Buddhism since it is characteristic of every truly religious life (Nishitani 1983: 261). That is why he analyzes such religious traditions as Christian mysticism and looks for similarities and differences between them and the Buddhist philosophy.

The true God (the true Absolute) as ‘immanent transcendence’ in Nishitani’s philosophy

“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring”²⁰.

The quoted verse indicates that despite his transcendence, the Christian God is not completely separate from the world as a transcendent supreme being. In other words, the transcendence of God should not be understood as the negation of immanence. A man as well as all other beings cannot be perceived as exclusively distinct from the absolute dimension (God). This quotation, taken from the New Testament, constitutes an important foundation as well as an inspiration for interpretations of Christianity presented by the Kyoto School.

¹⁹ The religious experience means the experience of ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’ for Nishida. It is thus the universal act. Nishida emphasizes that the considerations upon it can be found in any religion, albeit to a different extent. See Kozyra 2007: 71–3, 94–5.

²⁰ [Acts 17: 28]. Cf. e.g. *The Holy Bible* 1945.

In Nishitani's philosophy a man and all other beings cannot be considered either as exclusively immanent or exclusively transcendent. He presents a reflection on the Christian experience from the Buddhist point of view, in accordance with Nishida's 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity'. According to Nishitani, Christianity stresses the transcendent aspect of the Absolute (God) which is not the true nature of the Absolute. In Nishitani's opinion, such an approach means focusing only on one of the dimensions of reality, transcendence, and ignoring the dimension of immanence. Nishitani looks for such verses in the Bible which could be interpreted in accordance with the 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity', in other words – in accordance with the way he understands Buddhism²¹. This does not mean, however, that he has limited knowledge of Christianity. The method undertaken by him is similar to the 'selective identification'²² used by Nishida. It is worth mentioning that in Nishida's philosophy one can also find some interpretations of Christianity based on the 'logic of paradox', since he believes that the experience of 'absolutely contradictory self-identity' is not completely alien to the Christian tradition (Kozyra 2007: 97). As he (Nishida 1993: 70) states, "a God merely transcendent and self-sufficient would not be a true God. God must always, in St. Paul's words, empty himself. That God is transcendent and at the same time immanent is the paradox of God. This is the true [A]bsolute". According to Christian doctrine God created the world out of love, and for Nishida this notion points to the self-negation of the Absolute, which is not merely 'transcendently transcendent' (Nishida 1993: 100), but 'immanently transcendent'²³.

One may doubt the sense of such interpretations. However, the members of the Kyoto School studied philosophical and religious concepts which were different from Buddhist tradition trying to incorporate them in some way into their own systems of thought since they treated them as the various expressions of the same religious experience. Suzuki (1962: 369) wrote: "[w]hen references are made to Christian symbolism such as 'God', 'Father', 'Son', 'Holy Spirit', 'begetting', and 'likeness', the reader may wonder in what sense a Buddhist interprets these terms. But the truth is that symbols are, after all, mere symbols and when their inner signification is grasped they can be utilized in any way one chooses". Suzuki, like Nishida and Nishitani, interprets the relation between God and the relative as a paradox. Thus, he (Suzuki 1962: 377) is of the opinion that, "[i]n truth they are one, the Self is God and God is the Self. But the traditional notion of God is full

²¹ The author would like to remind the reader that not all factions of Buddhism understand it in the same way which means that not all would agree with the paradox interpretation present in the writings of Nishida or Nishitani.

²² The method of 'selective identification', adopted by Nishida, means that he chooses certain elements from various philosophical systems. Then, he interprets them according to his own assumptions and uses them in his theory. See Kozyra 2007: 29.

²³ For more details considering 'immanent transcendence' see Kozyra 2007: 73–4.

of dualistic flavor and whenever the term is used we are reminded of its mythical background”.

In Nishitani’s philosophy the most essential issues with regard to Christianity are such concepts as nihilism, doubt and faith – all of them treated from the Buddhist point of view. However, what is more important is that the notion of God as presented in Nishitani’s thought, as well as in Nishida’s and Suzuki’s, differs from the notion of God in Christian doctrine. At first, Nishitani’s approach may seem strange, incomprehensible or even shocking for the reader with a Judeo-Christian background. Nishitani refers to the relation between God and man as well as to the Buddhist notion of ‘non-self’ which states that something like a permanent, unchangeable, substantial ‘self’ does not exist. The concept of ‘non-self’ is crucial for the Buddhist teachings and almost all Buddhist schools accept it as true and basic²⁴. However, the concept of ‘non-self’ should not be regarded as nihilistic, rather it just indicates that the ‘true self’ and the reality are unattainable, free from dualism between the object and the subject of cognition.

Nishitani holds the view that the aspect of self-negation (of self-emptying, in other words, of making oneself empty) is inseparable from God himself. For Nishitani the very fact that God is God must be inevitably related to the self-negation (self-emptying) of God. Whereas in the case of Christ, *ekkenōsis*²⁵ is realized by the fact that God became a man (Nishitani 1983: 58–9). Nishitani (1983: 59) states: “[w]ith Christ we speak of deed that has been accomplished; with God, of an original nature. What is *ekkenōsis* for the Son is *kenōsis*²⁶ for the Father [is self-negation of the Father – A.S.]. In the East, this would be called *anātman*, or non-ego [‘non-self’ – A.S.]”²⁷.

²⁴ For details see Fischer-Schreiber & Ehrhard & Diener 1991: 8.

²⁵ However, it should be noticed that Christianity does not make a distinction between the terms *kenōsis* and *ekkenōsis*. Christianity rather refers to the notion of *kenōsis* and omits the term *ekkenōsis* almost wholly. In this case the author considers the literal meaning of the quoted words. *Κένωσις* (*kénōsis*), the word of Greek origin, the noun, derived from the verb *κενόω*, which means: *to empty, to deprive, to make somebody devoid of something*. The word *εκκένωσις* (*ekkénōsis*) has a similar meaning. However, adding the prefix *εκ* puts emphasis on the meaning. The prefix *εκ* means *from the inside, from the interior, of something or somebody*. It can also indicate the source of origin. So the word *εκκένωσις* (*ekkénōsis*) can be interpreted as being deprived of something. See Perschbacher 2001: 123, 236.

²⁶ *Kenosis* (gr. *kénōsis*) – in its literal meaning – renunciation, a Christian concept referenced from the Bible [Phil. 2: 7]. Christ descended to take the form of a man to live among the people and die on the cross. The whole concept of his life and death is interpreted in the categories of descent. In Protestantism, *kenosis* is often interpreted as Christ’s self-suspension or even deprivation of all attributes of God. *Kenosis* bears a great importance in the theology of salvation. See Gadacz & Milerski (eds.) 2002, vol. 5, 439.

²⁷ In reference to the terms *kenōsis* and *ekkenōsis*, one might say that Nishitani uses these in the following context: Self-negation of God is included in his nature. ‘Non-self’ is the absolute dimension. The ‘self’ is contradictorily self-identical with ‘non-self’ but in order for the ‘self’ to

The notion of God presented in Nishitani's philosophy refers to the idea of God and the Absolute as well, both of which can be found in Nishida's works. That is, the idea of God which is understood in accordance with the aforementioned 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity'. For Nishida the true Absolute is not limited by anything, even by its own negation because it is contradictory in itself, which means that it contains its own self-negation (Kozyra 2007: 73–4). Nishida (1993: 69) says: “[b]ecause God, or the [A]bsolute, stands to itself in the form of a contradictory identity – namely as its own absolute self-negation, or as possessing absolute self-negation within itself – it exists and expresses itself through itself”. This means that the Absolute is truly absolute, because it is not absolute – it cannot be separated from the relative. However, what is the relation between a man and the Absolute (God), which is not separated from the relative? As stated by Nishida, “[a] man, as an element of the world of ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’, always touches the Absolute which cannot be contradictory to anything” (Kozyra 2007: 467), since it is ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’. According to Nishida, a man both is and is not self-identical with the Absolute. Religious transformation involves seeing the other dimension of reality – that is the aspect of self-identity, although this does not mean that the first dimension (diversity and contradiction) has been rejected. Only because of this self-negation can a man experience real oneness with God (the Absolute) without losing his individuality (Kozyra 2007: 75–6, 78). A man can find his ‘true self’ through religious experience of total and absolute self-negation.

In Nishitani's philosophy the paradox of God is particularly visible with reference to God's love and perfection, both of which transcend the personal dimension; they are ‘impersonal’ but do not exclude what is ‘personal’ (Nishitani 1983: 59, 60). In his words they are ‘personally impersonal’ (Nishitani 1983: 60). In that context it is worth quoting the following statement by Nishitani: “[i]t should be clear that this *perfectness* of God [the true Absolute – A.S.] is something qualitatively very different, for instance, from the *personal* absoluteness of God who singled out the people of Israel as his elect, who commands with absolute will and authority, who loves the righteous and punishes the sinful” (Nishitani 1983: 60). The same may be said about ‘personally impersonal’ love. The above quotation clearly indicates that Nishitani is well aware of the difference between his approach and both Christian and Judaic tradition.

Suzuki concludes that there is something divine in every human being since he inquires about God in the first place (Suzuki 2004: 112). However, he claims that true God (the true Absolute) is “neither Christian nor Jewish God” (Suzuki 2004: 69).

realize ‘non-self’, a deprived ‘self’ must occur. It is only then that faith appears – full realization of the ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’. In the interpretation of Nishitani, kenosis is God's deprivation of himself which means that God is internally contradictory, and thus contradictorily self-identical with the relative dimension – with man. *Ekkenosis* is a man's deprivation of himself, namely the negation of his ego, which leads to the discovery of contradictory self-identity with God.

Omniscience and omnipresence of the true God refers to ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’ of one and all, instant and eternity (Suzuki 2004: 75, 86–7). Suzuki distinguishes between Godhead²⁸ and God the Creator who is paradoxically self-identical with Godhead. Here God symbolizes the dualistic knowledge and Godhead is free from dualism (Suzuki 2004: 95). Suzuki is well aware that for Christians such considerations constitute blasphemy.

Nishitani does not analyze deeply the notion of God as such, since he rather focuses on all men, not necessarily Christian, who face the problems of evil and sin. He is trying to answer the question concerning the essence of religion. In Nishitani’s opinion (1983: xlvii–xlviii) this question is actually a question concerning one’s own existence. Moreover, he (Nishitani 1983: 15–6) states that it is uncertainty and doubt that contribute to the foundations of the existence of religion. According to him, the question concerning the essence of religion is related to the experience of ‘relative nothingness’. ‘Relative nothingness’ is not only the negation of existence but also of any meaning, and if experienced in an extreme manner, it leads to overwhelming despair and desperation. However, the experience of ‘relative nothingness’ is not to be avoided since the overpowering negation may lead to the ‘great doubt’ which is a spiritual breakthrough that reveals a new perspective of the perception of reality, namely the perspective of ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’.

The concept of an internally contradictory God constitutes the theoretical foundation of Nishitani’s interpretation of Christianity. An internally contradictory God means that God contains his own self-negation. He obviously refers to Nishida who stated that only the paradox is the Absolute as it stands in opposition to nothing else. According to Nishitani, only such definition of the Absolute can explain the contradictions included in the notion of the Christian God.

A New interpretation of God’s love and God’s perfectness

“You have heard that it was said, «You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.» But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be

²⁸ The distinction between God and Godhead is characteristic of Eckhart’s (approx. 1260–1327) thought, although it should be noted that Suzuki uses the terms God and Godhead in Buddhist context and, in result of this, he defines these notions in a different way.

perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect”²⁹. After having quoted the fragment of the New Testament, Nishitani refers to the Buddhist concept of non-differentiating love, in other words to ‘great compassion’ (Skt. *mahākarunā*, Chin. *taibei*, Jpn. *daihi*). In order for his considerations to be understood, it is necessary to expand upon the issue of ‘great compassion’. In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, ‘enlightenment’ is not the selfish goal towards which an individual is heading since the Buddhist practitioner should lead others to liberation. Therefore it is important to point out that not only the living beings, but the whole world should be liberated. A man is contradictorily self-identical with all that exists and when this paradoxical dimension is revealed, a man can experience oneness with everything that exists, although simultaneously everything retains its distinctiveness. It is the looking at reality from the paradox perspective that makes perfect mutual compassion possible (Kozyra 2004: 265–7).

Suzuki refers to the term of ‘great compassion’ as well. He stresses that ‘compassion’ (Skt. *karunā*) and ‘supreme wisdom’³⁰ (Skt. *prajñā*) are two inseparable aspects of reality with one not being able to exist without the other. The term *karunā* can be referred to God’s love and *prajñā* – to God’s wisdom. According to Suzuki, Zen excessively focuses upon the aspect of wisdom – ‘enlightenment’, and neglects the aspect of compassion (Suzuki 2004: 60).

Nishitani refers to the love of God as ‘great compassion’ concluding that the love of God, which is non-differentiating, belongs to the sphere of ‘non-self’³¹ which is by its nature contained in the perfection of God. By the realization of the perfection

²⁹ [Matt. 5: 43–48]. For details see Nishitani 1983: 58. Cf. e.g. *The Holy Bible* 1945.

³⁰ ‘Ultimate wisdom’ (Skt. *prajñā*, Chin. *banruo*, Jpn. *hannya*) – in *Hīnayāna* Buddhism the connection to the concept of *prajñā* exists as one of the three elements that constitute the essence of the ‘eightfold path’ that is supposed to be taken by a disciple if he wants to achieve the state of liberation. Those three elements are: morality, concentration and wisdom. However, in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism *prajñā* is one of the perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*). There are either six or eight perfections enlisted that are to be aimed at by a disciple of *Mahāyāna*. The six perfections are as follows: generosity (‘the gift’), morality, patience, energy, ecstasy (‘meditation’), cognition (‘wisdom’). There are ten perfections above human beings (who are one of the ways of transmigration – who are one of the modes of existence). Apart from the ones mentioned above, there are: ‘dexterous handling of the means of liberation’, ‘vow, noble resolution’, ‘wonderful power’ and ‘complete cognition’. Initially Zen masters used the terminology based on the tradition of Indian Buddhism in their utterances. Huineng (Jpn. Enō, 638–713) the sixth patriarch of Zen, made a breakthrough here. He distinctively underlined the paradox meaning of the term ‘ultimate wisdom’. He referred to it as transcendent and non-transcendent. What is more, Huineng coined a new notion – ‘non-thinking’ (Skt. *aksāna*, Chin. *wunian*, Jpn. *munen*) to express that the ‘enlightened’ ‘does not think when he thinks’. Dōgen Kigen (1200–1253), the founder of the Japanese School of Zen – *Sōtō*, also referred to the ‘paradox logic’ in his utterances concerning the ‘ultimate wisdom’. See: Mejer 2001: 186, 192, 194; Kozyra 2004: 60, 234, 385.

³¹ Nishitani (1983: 60) here speaks of this concept in the following way, “Non-ego (*anātman*) represents the fundamental standpoint of Buddhism, where it is called the Great Wisdom (*mahā prajñā*) and the Great Compassion (*mahā karunā*)”.

of God, a man becomes his son (Nishitani 1983: 59, 60). “Christ embodies this perfection of God through the love by which he »emptied himself« of his equality with God to take on the shape of a servant among man” (Nishitani 1983: 59). The Absolute is realized as absolute only when it is not separated from the relative and does not constitute a sphere merely transcendent to a man. The oneness with the true Absolute is the experience of being one with the world, since ‘one is all and all is one’³². At the same time it must be noted that according to the ‘logic of paradox’ the Absolute contains its own self-negation. As pointed out by Nishida, this is the meaning of God’s love (Kozyra 2007: 83). God’s love is determined by nothing and belongs to the nature of the Absolute.

Nishitani underlines the meaning of God’s love in a special way. He calls it a non-differentiating love. Such love is completely different from the human love. Nishitani considers it as a Christian equivalent for the Buddhist concept of ‘great compassion’ connected with the term ‘non-self’. According to Nishitani the true meaning of the Christian God can be expressed through the reference to the Buddhist concept of ‘non-self’.

Definition of faith in Buddhism and Christianity

“In Christianity, faith is considered to be a grace flowing from divine love (...) faith in Christ means both man’s witness to and appropriation of God’s redeeming love, and also God’s actualization of and witness to his own divine love in man” (Nishitani 1983: 26). The author would like to remind the reader that, according to Christian tradition, a man is not contradictorily self-identical with the Absolute. Nishitani however, understands God in a different way. In his (Nishitani 1983: 26) opinion, “[t]he acceptance of divine love is called faith”. Such acceptance of God’s love is possible by self-negation, although the love of God, as understood by Nishitani, is not a grace bestowed upon a man by the transcendent Absolute which is regarded as an antithesis of the relative (including a man). Faith, as the acceptance of God’s love, is not a result of the individual efforts of a man despite the fact that the ‘individual self’ must freely choose the self-negation. It should be noted

³² ‘One is all and all is one’ (Jpn. *ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi*) is a citation from the Sutra of the Flower Garland (Skt. *Avatamsaka sūtra*, Chin. *Huayanjing*, Jpn. *Kegongyō*). This Sutra is connected with the ‘logic of mutual interfusion of all phenomena’ (Jpn. *jijimuge*) which in Nishida’s understanding is an equivalent of the ‘logic of paradox’. The *Kegon* School emphasized that despite their identity, all phenomena retain their distinctiveness and uniqueness. The Sutra under consideration shows this in a picturesque fashion. When Sudhana, a Buddhist disciple, enters the tower, he spots a countless number of towers inside it, looks at them from the outside simultaneously looking down from every peak of each of them. Thus he is everywhere and at the same time nowhere. Both the towers and him permeate even though they do not lose their individuality and distinctiveness. See: Kozyra 2004: 49, 384, 387; Kozyra 2007: 49.

that Nishitani as well as Nishida is of the opinion that faith is not the result of the efforts of the 'individual self'. Nishida refers to the aspect of grace, although he understands it in a different way than in the Christian tradition. Moreover, he emphasizes the paradoxical dimension of faith which is not possible without the act of will of a man, although this act of will itself is not enough. Another power is necessary, the power of God, which responds to the human will of self-negation.

Nishitani expresses the same idea by referring to the words of St. Paul, "inspired by God"³³ and comments that "our very being becomes »God-breathed« through spiration of God himself" (Nishitani 1983: 28). Spiritual rebirth means absolute affirmation stemming from absolute negation. Nishitani thinks that faith is both negation and affirmation, which complies with the 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity' (the 'logic of paradox'). Faith brings 'spiritual death' when a man experiences the true meaning of a sin but it also signifies eternal life. Affirmation, however, does not depend on the arbitrary will of an individual (Nishitani 1983: 27–8), since the 'self' cannot free itself from itself (Kozyra 2007: 85). Salvation appears exactly at the point where a man realizes total lack of ability of self-negation.

Salvation is the love of God that is distinct from ordinary human love (Nishitani 1983: 27). Nishitani relates to the words of Jesus who said, "[d]o not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Nishitani 1983: 27)³⁴. The love Jesus speaks of is like a sword, "[f]or whoever will save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for myself will find it" (Nishitani 1983: 28)³⁵. The love of God is a sword that allows a man to see the paradoxical dimension of reality, thus finding his true nature. Referring to the experience of 'absolute nothingness' (the Absolute which is both negation and affirmation), one may say that God's love is the combined aspect of affirmation and 'great compassion' as total acceptance.

While discussing the notion of faith in Nishitani's philosophy it is important to elaborate upon the Buddhist distinctions between 'self-power' of a man (Jpn. *jiriki*)³⁶

³³ [2 Tim. 3: 16]. Cf. e.g. *The Holy Bible* 1945.

³⁴ [Matt. 10: 34]. Cf. e.g. *The Holy Bible* 1945.

³⁵ [Matt. 16: 25]. Cf. e.g. *The Holy Bible* 1945.

³⁶ 'Self-power' (Jpn. *jiriki*) – in order to receive the grace of Amida Buddha it is necessary to reject one's own powers which are connected with the conviction that the 'self' exists as individual and distinctive. Amidism is one of the factions of Japanese Buddhism wherein a key practice is to entrust yourself to Amida Buddha (Skt. *amitābha* – infinite light, *amitāyus* – infinite life, Jpn. *Amida*) and to be reborn in the Pure Land (Skt. *sukhāvātī*, Jpn. *jōdo*). The infinite light is a symbol of transcendent wisdom and infinite life is a symbol of unconditional love, that of 'great compassion'. Amida Buddha as the Bodhisattva Hōzō (Skt. *Dharmākara Bodhisattva*, Jpn. *Hōzō Bosatsu*) took forty-eight vows in which he obliged himself to save all beings, liberating them from suffering. In the 18th vow he assured that he who will faithfully say *nembutsu* (Jpn. *namu Amida butsu*) will be reborn in the Pure Land. *Namu Amida butsu* (Skt. *namo amitābhāya buddhāya*) literally means 'Praise Amida Buddha of Infinite Light'. The Pure Land was created with the power of Buddha who wants to liberate all creatures from suffering. All who will enter the Pure Land will experience

and ‘other-power’ of the Absolute (Jpn. *tariki*)³⁷. Both Nishida and Suzuki discuss the two concepts. According to Nishida, the core problem is that the internal contradiction of ‘self-power’ is often overlooked. He is of the opinion that true faith is not possible through efforts of the ‘self’ – it is the result of ‘absolutely contradictorily self-identical’ relations of a man and the Absolute (Kozyra 2007: 84–5). Suzuki expresses the same idea using different words. He emphasizes that the distinction between ‘self-power’ and ‘other-power’ is the result of looking at reality only from the relative perspective. However, when a man goes beyond this perspective, when he sees both the relative and the absolute dimensions of reality, there is no such distinction (Suzuki 2004: 100–1). Apparently, this does not mean that a man has lost all intellectual abilities, including the distinguishing skills. This dimension of distinctions (the dimension of contradiction) still exists, although another dimension (the dimension of self-identity) has been discovered (Kozyra 2004: 150).

For Nishitani, faith means the ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’ of negation and affirmation. The ‘individual self’ must be completely negated in order for the ‘true self’ to be found. Faith does not depend on the will of a man, although at the same time a man must be ready to accept it. Faith perceived in this way, with reference to Christianity, is not entrusting oneself to the Absolute (God) which is completely transcendent in relation to the world. It is, however, the realization of the ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’ of the Absolute (God) and the world.

The ideal of love in human relations

As mentioned before, non-differentiating love, which is a reference to the Buddhist definition of ‘great compassion’, accepts all people, good and evil. However, one more important aspect is underlined by Nishitani. He refers to the Christian vision of love and states that for a man reborn religiously, the love of neighbor must

there ‘enlightenment’ with no effort. Hōnen (1133–1212), Shinran (1173–1262) and Ippen (1238–1289) popularized Amidism in Japan. Amidism entails the following schools in Japan: *yūzū nembutsushū*, *ji-shū*, *jōdo shū*, *jōdo shinshū*. See: Maryniarczyk (ed.) 2004: 257; Shinran 1973: 203, 207, 229, 257, 280, 292 (Glossary); Kaczorowski (ed.) 2008: 175; Takakusu 1949: 168, 174.

³⁷ The relation to the Buddhist notion of ‘other power’. ‘Other power’ (Jpn. *tariki*) is the power of a vow taken by Amida Buddha. The conviction that the decadence of Buddhism (the time of ‘the last and decadent Dharma’ (Jpn. *mappō*)) was under way, was common in Japan in the period between the 12th and 14th centuries. According to this conviction a man is not able to experience ‘enlightenment’ using his own effort. It may happen only when he entrusts himself to ‘other power’. Then, by the power invested in the vow by Amida Buddha a man will be reborn in the Pure Land (Skt. *sukhāvātī*, Jpn. *jōdo*) to experience ‘enlightenment’. However, the concept of ‘other power’ goes far back to the past. It had appeared in India first. Nāgārjuna pointed to the question of ‘other power’ in his Sutra of *Dasabhūmi*. See: Maryniarczyk (ed.) 2004: 256–7; Takakusu 1949: 167.

be the love that accepts and the sword that punishes (Nishitani 1983: 28). In this respect Nishitani (1983: 28) quotes the Bible, “[t]hose whom I love, I reprove and chasten”³⁸. When Nishitani refers to the Christian concept of love, he interprets it in the Buddhist way which goes along the lines of the ‘logic of paradox’. It is clearly seen here that for him a man reborn in faith leads others to the discovery of the true nature of reality in a spontaneous way. In this sense the acts of a man reborn in faith are the punishing sword and the total acceptance. In other words, the acts of such a man (of a man reborn in faith) are a negation that is contradictorily self-identical with the affirmation directed to other beings. It is so because such actions are to lead others to the self-negation of one’s ‘self’. At the same time, however, it is only the self-negation that makes it possible to experience affirmation, to see the ‘true self’, the true structure of reality. Thus, according to Nishitani the concept of a man reborn in the Christian faith is understood in the same way as the Buddhist concept of the ‘enlightened’ who realizes ‘great compassion’.

It is worth adding that ‘great compassion’ can take many forms and is not connected with clearly defined ethical norms (Kozyra 2004: 267). Nishitani (1983: 58) is of the opinion that, “[i]t is a non-differentiating love that transcends the distinction between good and evil, justice and injustice”. The love of which Nishitani speaks is the love understood in the way characteristic of the ‘logic of paradox’. Consequently such an approach brings with itself a new interpretation of the Christian concept of love, an interpretation which refers to several key Buddhist terms. It is important to underscore that according to Nishitani this non-differentiating love embraces all as it is (Nishitani 1983: 58). Nishida is of a similar opinion as he states that the Absolute, being undetermined, cannot be an antithesis of evil, but has to contain it as its own negation. It is only in this way that absolute love, that which embraces both a good and evil man, is possible (Kozyra 2007: 86). A conclusion can be drawn that such love is not only characteristic of God but can also be experienced by human beings. A man can see oneness with the world by discovering his self-identity with the Absolute. It is an essential issue to remember that this love, as it is being considered here, concerns not only people. The love of neighbor is actually total acceptance of the whole world as it is here and now. Here Nishitani refers to St. Francis of Assisi³⁹, although he points out that St. Francis’s

³⁸ [Rev. 3: 19]. Cf. e.g. *The Holy Bible* 1945.

³⁹ St. Francis of Assisi, known as the poor fellow of Assisi, his proper name was Giovanni Bernardone, (1181 or 1182–1226), was a mystic, a priest, the founder of the Franciscan Order, Poor Clares Convent, and the Tertiary-Franciscan Order. He led a careless life when he was young. His breakthrough occurred upon meeting a leper. He then began severe ascetic practices and zealous praying. Additionally, he was helping those afflicted with leprosy. He then renounced his family fortune. From the year 1224 he had stigmata. He called upon the people to live in poverty and encouraged the love of neighbor. He valued all creation and the whole reality, not limiting himself to the human dimension. See Gadacz & Milerski (eds.) 2002, vol. 4, 87–8.

interpretation of Christian doctrine is rather unique and not shared with all Christians. St. Francis of Assisi treated not only people but also the sun, water, fire and wind as his comrades (Nishitani 1983: 281). In his *Canticle to the sun*, St. Francis says: “[b]e praised, my Lord, with all your creations, especially with the noble brother, the sun” (Jacovelli 1985: 125). He apparently felt oneness with the world, even in the moments of extreme physical pain when he had part of his face cauterized due to a disease (Nishitani 1983: 281).

For Nishitani, the ideal of love in human relations, in other words an interpretation of the Christian love of neighbor, constitutes a reference to the Buddhist concept of ‘great compassion’. Christian love of neighbor in Nishitani’s interpretation goes beyond the dualistic distinctions. It is both a complete negation and affirmation as only in this form can it lead others to religious rebirth. According to Nishitani, the love of neighbor is actually a complete acceptance of the whole world – here and now, Buddhist influence can be clearly seen – just as in Buddhism, the ‘enlightenment’ of one man means the ‘enlightenment’ of the whole world.

The problem of evil and sin

Thomas Merton⁴⁰ stresses that the aspect of evil (the Devil) is present throughout the Bible, from tempting man in Paradise until the last pages when the final defeat of evil takes place (Merton 1988: 122–3). Evil is something fundamental. It is not an individual act as it lies at the grounds of everything that exists. Nishitani agrees with the Christian tradition stating that all men sinned in Adam (Nishitani 1983: 23). He interprets it accordingly with the ‘logic of paradox’ that “the sinfulness of the self and the sinfulness of all mankind make themselves present in an elemental sense as *one* reality, and are actualized and appropriated as such in the self. It is, so to speak, an appropriation of the evil of all men within the evil of the self, and, at the same time, of the evil of the self within the evil of all men” (Nishitani 1983: 23). It is an exact description of the ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’ of the one and all in the categories of evil and sin. Nishida states that contradiction is present everywhere, in every aspect of life, and that the concept of original sin in Christianity should be understood in such context (Kozyra 2007: 166). However, Nishitani focuses upon a Christian who does not see the

⁴⁰ Thomas Merton (1915–1968) was a Trappist monk, a priest, a writer and theologian. His interests included monasticism, ascetics and mysticism in the West as well as the philosophy and religions of the Far East. According to Merton, a man is to intend to unite with Christ. It can only be done through true knowing of himself, the existential transformation as well as contemplation and ascetics. True contemplation is to lead to the opening of himself to God and the world, and not to turning inward. See Gadacz & Milerski (eds.) 2002, vol. 6, 496–7.

paradox structure of reality but faces the problem of the fundamentality of evil with all its due consequences. It should be pointed out that the Christian God is perceived as the ultimate goodness and the source of all goodness. St. Augustine⁴¹ said, “[d]eprive yourself of this and that, and look, if you can, at sole good, it is then you will see God who is the good not thanks to other good, but who is the good of all good” (Tatarkiewicz 1988: 197). Nishitani pays attention to a crucial question: Why does evil exist in the world created by God, who is goodness and sheer love (Nishitani 1983: 42)? In this context the problem of God’s wrath is considered as ‘absolute negativity’, and the contradiction between the love of God and the omnipotence of God reveals itself clearly (Nishitani 1983: 44). All the paradoxes that a Christian faces reflect separation – between transcendence and immanence, between *sacrum* and *profanum* – which can cause the source of great suffering for a man. It is the lack of any hope, of any possibility, which causes a man to be able to accept the love of God. “When the self becomes the actualization of sin seen as a Great Reality, when sin is appropriated, then the ensuing despair – that is, the loss of all hope of the possibility of escape, and the awareness of the self that it is nothingness and powerlessness – needs to be seen as a nothingness become a field somehow capable of receiving redeeming love from God” (Nishitani 1983: 25). Self-negation is not an internal act of the individual. According to Nishitani, it is correlative to the kenosis of God. What is more, self-negation cannot be determined by either evil or good (Nishitani 1983: 26) since faith also means self-negation in the ethical dimension (Kozyra 2007: 84). However, this does not result in moral indifference since a man who experiences contradictorily self-identity with the whole world, which is the true essence of reality, is moved by ‘great compassion’ (Kozyra 2004: 264–5).

Such principles of ‘great compassion’ do not mean that man becomes perfect in moral domain. As pointed out by Nishitani (1983: 44), “when the conversion of faith becomes reality, then salvation is realized even though man remains a sinner unable to rid himself of evil. Here divine omnipotence is realized as the absolute affirmation that permits evil even while persisting in its absolute negation”. Those words are a distinctive reference to Nishida’s views. According to him, the Absolute cannot be the ultimate good as antithesis to evil. However, this statement should

⁴¹ St. Augustine (354–430) – initially he was the follower of Manichaeism, then his views changed to academic skepticism, then he turned to Platonic philosophy and, eventually, converted to Christianity. His views constantly evolved and were subject to transformations which were later reflected in his writings. He was of the opinion that in order to achieve happiness a man needs to get to know God and his soul. Such knowledge is the grace sent by God, given in the form of ‘enlightenment’. Because of this the mind sees the truth, in other words, this is direct intuition. Only good humans are awarded with such grace. St. Augustine described God as the ultimate being, the reason for all being, the source of cognition, the ultimate good. He proclaimed the advantage of God above all creation, of the soul above the body, and of the will above the mind.

See Tatarkiewicz 1988: 193–9.

not lead to the assumption that the Absolute is evil. Nishida emphasized that the Absolute cannot be described either as good or evil in the relative meaning of these two terms (Kozyra 2004: 270). Neither of these two terms expresses the true nature of the Absolute, which is ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’.

When considering the issue of evil, Nishitani focuses on the contradiction of Christianity which deals with God’s goodness and the presence of evil in the world. To this question Nishitani gives a Buddhist answer when he states that the suffering caused by this contradiction is caused by the dualism of good and evil in which a man lives. What is more, this authentic, existential meeting with the issue of evil and sin in this world can become the reason for a true religious breakthrough.

Relation of God and a man – *creatio ex nihilo*

Nishitani states that all contradictions that torment a man are connected with the concept of the ‘creation *ex nihilo*’ – ‘act of creation out of nothing’. The act of creation in itself is not essential as much as the fact that all creation comes out of nothingness, of nothingness that is the negation of existence, so, as Nishida would put it, of ‘relative nothingness’. According to Nishitani, if the assumption is made that God created the world out of nothingness, which is completely distinct from him, one can say that there is a big gap between God and all creation. Consequently, Nishitani inseparably connects such an approach with the existence of evil in the world. Considering the issue of evil being present in a world created by God, Nishitani (1983: 44) claims that “man’s ability to commit evil arises out of the nihility that lies at the ground of his existence by virtue of his having been created *ex nihilo*”.

According to Nishitani, if *nihilum* constitutes the ground for all being, all beings are completely distinct from the Creator. “God is not his creatures; creatures cannot be God” (Nishitani 1983: 38). Such a statement expresses a dualism between the absolute dimension and relative dimension, in the case considered: between God and nothingness in which all creation took place, dualism between God and creation. For Nishitani it is dualism that is the cause of all human suffering and evil generated by humans. In other words, for Nishitani the concept of the ‘creation *ex nihilo*’ is a symbol of dualism in which a man lives.

What is more, it is worth pointing out that what Nishitani understands as the foundation of Christian theology: “God is not his creature; creature cannot be God” (Nishitani 1983: 38) is an example of the principle of non-contradiction characteristic of formal logic – a rule that proclaims that A is A and A is not non-A. However, Nishida points out that formal logic constitutes only one dimension of the ‘logic of paradox’ (Kozyra 2007: 31).

Ontological relation between God and his creations is a permanent problem of Christianity. Nishitani underlines that the relation between God and creation should become an existential enquiry in the life of a religious man (Nishitani 1983: 37). It is so that the ontological relation between God and a man presented in this way expresses a complete distinction of the relative dimension from the absolute dimension which a man experiences when he faces the problem of the meaning of his own existence, the existence perceived as being completely separated from the absolute dimension. Thus the perception of the Absolute as being completely separated from the relative causes a man to claim that even though searching for it he can find it nowhere in the world. In this respect he (Nishitani 1983: 37) quotes St. Augustine who said, "Lo, heaven and earth exist: they cry out that they have been created". It is worth pointing out that St. Augustine was of the opinion that all creations were to perish and were completely dependent on eternal God. However, God directly bestowed his grace onto human beings (Tatarkiewicz 1988: 196–7). Nishitani refers here to the important problem of the separateness of God and the world. "If things are telling us that they were created by God, then they also are telling us that they are not themselves God. To that extent, we do not encounter God anywhere in the world" (Nishitani 1983: 37). However, at the same time a Christian experiences the grace and might of God as he believes that it is God that gives and takes away life (Nishitani 1983: 38). Both Nishitani's and Suzuki's interpretations of the omnipresence of God are different from those offered by Christianity. Suzuki claims that the omnipresence of God cannot be understood in a way that God is present everywhere. Omnipresence should be perceived as zero, which is infinity, and infinity, which is zero (Suzuki 2004: 86–7). Such an approach can be related to the view that what is absolute (God) is nothing and at the same time everything. It is so because according to Suzuki the Absolute cannot be described in any objectified way. From such perspective, the Absolute is 'absolute nothingness' which on the paradox principle is self-identical with every element of the relative world. At the same time, however, the world and 'absolute nothingness' are distinct from each other. It is important to add that the Absolute, being both everything and nothing, is everywhere and at the same time nowhere.

Nishida's concept of 'ultimate *topos*' (Jpn. *kyūkyokuteki basho*), which is 'standpoint without standpoint', is worthy of consideration here. This concept expresses the spatial aspect of reality which is 'absolutely contradictory self-identity'. According to the 'logic of paradox', space can in no way be objectified. 'Ultimate *topos*' is nowhere and everywhere at the same time (Kozyra 2007: 47–9). Nishitani as well refers to 'absolutely contradictory self-identity' when he speaks of the omnipresence of God. Despite the fact that God (the Absolute) and the world (the relative) are completely distinct, at the same time they contain each other. Thus, the author draws attention to the fact that in Nishitani's opinion, God (the Absolute) is nowhere and everywhere at the same time. At this point in his considerations,

however, the aspect of space is not important for him but rather, the relation between the ‘individual self’ and God.

According to Nishitani, omnipresence means that God is absolutely transcendent and absolutely immanent (Nishitani 1983: 39). He agrees with Nishida who stated that “God that is only transcendent is not true God (...) However, God that is immanent is reduced to the subjectivity of human consciousness, and does not deserve to be named God” (Kozyra 2007: 95). Suzuki (2004: 34) as well refers to the issue as he says, “[i]f God puts himself beyond the world he created, if he separates himself from the world, or intends to do so, he is no longer God just like the world separated from God is no longer the world. God has to exist within the world, and the world must be within God”. As long as a man does not experience ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’ of immanence and transcendence, he lives within the assumption that these two aspects of reality are something completely distinct. However, the Absolute is always transcendent as far as the ‘individual self’ is concerned and, at the same time, the Absolute is self-identical with the ‘individual self’. The Absolute includes the ‘individual self’ just as it contains its own negation. When a man sees this aspect of the relation with the Absolute or, in other words, when he discovers the paradoxical dimension of reality, the transcendence of God turns out to be immanence that is closer to him than what he had perceived before as his own ‘self’. In a spiritual experience of the Absolute as ‘absolutely contradictory self-identity’, transcendence is no longer an antithesis of immanence. Here it is worth pointing out the relation between the ‘individual self’ (Jpn. *shin*) and Buddha⁴² in Nishida’s philosophy. Nishida claims that this relation should be understood according to the ‘logic of paradox’ which can be found in the teachings of Zen masters. Buddha is transcendent in relation to the ‘individual self’ and, at the same time, is self-identical with it. Thus, Buddha is absolute transcendence and absolute immanence. The ‘individual self’ is Buddha – (Jpn. *shin soku butsu*) – ‘enlightenment’ is nothing other than seeing reality from this perspective (Kozyra 2004: 48–51). According to Suzuki (1994: 120), *satori* (Skt. *bodhi*, Chin. *wu*, Jpn. *satori*) means that “God is myself and yet not quite myself. God and I are not one and the same being; they are two, yet one; they are one, yet two”. In this respect Nishitani agrees with Nishida and Suzuki. However, Nishitani is concerned with a man who does not see that the Absolute (in this case, God) is both transcendence and immanence. He points out that every human being, not only a Christian, encounters absolute negation which is represented by God. In this context God’s omnipresence (omnipresence of absolute negation) is experienced not

⁴² Buddha-nature (Jpn. *busshō*) – the absolute dimension which is characteristic of all kinds of beings, the living and the non-living. According to the principles of Zen, every man, together with all other beings, is the nature of Buddha, in spite of often not being aware of it. See Fischer-Schreiber & Ehrhard & Diener 1991: 38.

only by Christians (Nishitani 1983: 38). “God is omnipresent as one who graciously bestows being and one who absolutely takes it away” (Nishitani 1983: 38). In this way Nishitani refers to death as ‘relative nothingness’. Consequently, according to Nishitani the contradictions within the Christian doctrine⁴³, namely the issue of complete distinction of God from the world and at the same time his omnipresence – the presence of God’s goodness in the world, might turn out to be the contradictions of the general state of a man only expressed in the language of Christianity as one of many religions. Separation between life and death, good and evil, the relative and the Absolute is manifestation of dualism which is the foundation of the human perception of reality. Therefore the experience of the omnipresence of God is the experience of ‘relative nothingness’ understood as the negation of existence, meaning or universal values.

According to Nishitani (1983: 38), “encountering omnipresence of God existentially must begin with the sense of having been cast out into the middle of the desert of death. When the omnipresent God is accepted at the existential standpoint, it becomes a paradox for the existence of the self that finds God at every turn and every moment, like being in a desert from which one cannot escape, but within which one cannot survive either. The omnipresence of God, then must make itself present as something that deprives us of a locus to stand in self-existence, a locus where we can live and breathe”. It should be noticed that the above Nishitani’s statement could also be regarded as a definition of the Zen concept of ‘great doubt’ considered to be the indispensable condition of ‘enlightenment’.

Nishitani stresses that according to Christian doctrine God created the world out of nothingness and therefore nothingness is not transcendent to the being but absolute immanent in the being. “That a thing is created *ex nihilo* means that this *nihil* is more immanent in that thing than the very being of that thing is ‘immanent’ in itself. This is why we speak of ‘absolute immanence’” (Nishitani 1983: 39). He also points out the self-contradiction of such conceived ‘absolute immanence’ – “[i]t is an immanence of absolute negation, for the being of the created is grounded upon a *nothingness* and seen fundamentally to be nothingness. At the same time it is an immanence of absolute affirmation, for the nothingness of the created is the ground of its *being*. This is the omnipresence of God in all things that have their being as a *creatio ex nihilo*” (Nishitani 1983: 39–40). Nishitani presents here a new interpretation of ‘creation *ex nihilo*’. In this interpretation, ‘relative nothingness’ which is the negation of being is at the same time contradictorily self-identical with it (being). The discovery of this self-identity is the immanence of the absolute

⁴³ It is worth pointing out that in the Western thought connected with Christianity, philosophers attempted to tackle the problem of contradiction as well. Such efforts appeared in the works of, e.g., Pascal, who perceived paradox as the tragic character human life consists of, and Kierkegaard, who saw it as absurdity.

See Płuzański 1970: 8.

affirmation. In this respect, for Nishitani the 'creation *ex nihilo*' is an expression of 'absolutely contradictory self-identity'.

If Nishitani understands absolute immanence as nothingness, then what is absolute transcendence for him? As stated above, 'relative nothingness' is self-identical with being. When this paradox relation is considered from the relative dimension it seems like transcendence; however, it is important to point out that this paradox does not constitute a distinct sphere from the world – as it means 'immanent transcendence'.

It is life that stands in opposition to nothingness and death and at the same time is contradictorily self-identical with them. In other words, the omnipresence of God is death which is life, and life which is death. The omnipresence of God as 'absolute negativity' is capable of bringing a man to the experience of 'absolute nothingness' (it is important to point out that it may happen so only if a man has experienced 'relative nothingness'). Thus the omnipresence expresses absolute negation and absolute affirmation – 'absolutely contradictory self-identity' of negation and affirmation, of life and death. In this respect the Absolute – in the case being considered it is God – is both life and death. The existential dimension of the paradox that characterizes reality – the issue of mutual paradox relation of life and death – symbolizes, as understood by Nishitani, the omnipresence of God to which Nishitani lends a new meaning. For Nishitani, the possibility of meeting God anywhere in this world means the omnipresence of contradictory self-identity of life and death which cannot be either attributed to any exact place or captured within a notion. Despite the fact that a man usually does not notice the paradoxical dimension of reality, the paradox is present everywhere and nowhere at the same time as it can in no way be objectified. Thus, using Nishida's terminology, omnipresence as a paradox relation between life and death is 'ultimate *topos*'⁴⁴.

Nishitani is of the opinion that the relation between the omnipresent and transcendent God is 'impersonally personal'. According to him (Nishitani 1983: 40), "[i]t is what we should call an »impersonally personal relationship« or a »personally impersonal relationship«". Such conclusion differs completely from Christian interpretation of personal as antithesis of impersonal (Nishitani 1983: 40). This, however, does not mean an irrational approach but the 'logic of paradox', since the relation of the Absolute (God) and a man is relation of 'absolute contradictory self-identity'.

According to Nishitani (1983: 41), the problem of God's omnipotence is connected with God's omnipresence and 'relative nothingness'. In his opinion, in most trivial activity, a man confronts (not necessarily being conscious of it) the nothingness of his own 'self' and the omnipotence of God. Any, even most trivial, activity

⁴⁴ The 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity' was described by Nishida as the 'logic of *topos*' (Jpn. *basho-no ronri*). See Kozyra 2007: 47.

is connected with the omnipotence of God (Nishitani 1983: 42). In other words, at any point of his life a man is confronted with the issue of dualism between life and death. Life perceived as a negation of death can appear and then go by any moment. Thus, for Nishitani the omnipotence of God deals with the issue of life that is always on the edge of death, an existence that can be terminated at any time. In this respect, the omnipotence of God concerns not only a Christian, but every man, every existence. As pointed out by Nishitani (1983: 43), “[t]hus the omnipotence of God must be something that one can encounter at any time (...) Moreover, it must be something encountered as capable of destroying both body and soul, something that makes man fear and tremble and presses him to a decision”. Without this dimension, the aforementioned omnipotence is only an empty concept, as only when a man doubts and negates his own powers may there be an authentic religious breakthrough. Omnipotence understood in this way puts a man in the situation in which neither activity, nor the lack of it, can bring a result, and a man’s own power turns out insufficient to solve the problem⁴⁵. An act of will of the ‘individual self’ is essential for such self-negation. However, self-negation does not depend on the ‘individual self’ acting as a subject. It is thus possible to see the true structure of reality which, as stated by Nishida, is “a response to the calling of the Absolute” (Kozyra 2007: 77).

Nishitani claims that only when the omnipotence of God becomes the source of true fear and trembling⁴⁶ can one speak of it being authentic, and such an experience does not leave a man indifferent, but imposes a change in his life (Nishitani 1983: 43). Such perception of the Absolute is caused by the influence of existentialism⁴⁷

⁴⁵ The aforementioned considerations by Nishitani relate to the Buddhist concept of ‘self-power’ (Jpn. *jiriki*) which states that a man cannot experience ‘enlightenment’ using his own effort. However, Nishida claims that an act of will is necessary for ‘enlightenment’ to occur. In Zen the emphasis was put on the determination and the faith of a disciple. See: Kozyra 2004: 108–9; Kozyra 2007: 76–7.

⁴⁶ Fear and trembling, these words are associated with the book by Kierkegaard (*Fear and trembling*) to whose thought Nishitani refers as well.

⁴⁷ The influence of existentialism is clearly marked in the considerations of Nishitani. Existentialism is not only a philosophical concept but also a cultural phenomenon. It is presented in many fields like religion, psychology or art in its broadest meaning. It is, however, worth mentioning what distinguishes existentialism from other currents in philosophy. First of all, it is the critique of the schematic and abstract approach distinctively present in the Western philosophical tradition. Existentialism grew as an opposition to scientific systems, philosophical included, which perceived reality in categories of universal truths to which the whole world, together with man, is subjected. Existential philosophy focuses upon the human existence underlining its subjective dimension. The possibility of making a choice which constitutes the quintessence of the human existence, is crucial. In this respect, actions of a man are not determined. According to the existential philosophy, a man constantly makes some kind of a choice connected with responsibility. The issue of death, the tragic nature of human life, and the despair originating from it, are also touched upon in existentialism. The question of “going beyond one’s ‘self’” is bound with these concepts. It means confronting the tragic dimension of human existence. Such an approach stresses that human

on Nishitani, although in Zen, the realization of the Absolute, which is ‘non-self’, means peace. Kierkegaard⁴⁸ claims that only by referring to the absolute dimension – God, can a man find himself. However, it is connected with the discovery of the tragic nature that has always been present in human life. Then, made to fear and tremble, a man is faced with a dilemma: to believe, or to plunge into the tragic nature of existence (Prokopski 2007: 29). The omnipotence of God causes a man to discover the futility of his existence, and such experience may lead to self-negation. By the true acceptance of the omnipotence of God a man realizes that affirmation and negation are one, although contradictory (Nishitani 1983: 43). Such realization is the experience of faith, understood by Nishitani in the paradox manner, namely as simultaneous negation and affirmation. A man discovers this dimension of the world of which he was not aware before. The omnipotence of God does not seem threatening anymore as it takes up another meaning. For it is absolute negation that exposes a man to affirmation which means that he finds the ‘true self’, which is both his ‘true self’ and the ‘true self’ of the world. In other words, thanks to the authentic experience with divine omnipotence, reality appears to be what it really is. Suzuki (2004: 75) describes this situation saying that the omnipotence of God means being an angel in an angel, a stone in a stone. It is nothing else but a reference to the Buddhist notion of ‘suchness’⁴⁹ which means that every creature, living or non-living, is just what it is.

existence cannot be captured in concepts and terms which are clearly theoretical, and which are applied to relate to things. However, what is existential in Nishitani’s considerations goes far beyond what existentialism in the European understanding entails. The anxiety that accompanies human existence is the result of the inability to see the true structure of reality. True existence is not connected with the subjective choice but with the negation of one’s ‘individual self’. This negation is indispensable as ego veils both the ‘true self’ and the ‘true life’. See: Kostyszak (ed.) 1989: 5–8; Craig (ed.) 1998, vol. 3, 493; Nishitani 1983: 183.

⁴⁸ Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813–1855) was a Danish philosopher and a theologian as well as a writer devoted to the subject of religion. He criticized the institutionalized form of Christianity, although it was mainly man that was the focus of his attention. He was of the opinion that the existence of man could be neither captured in any systematic way nor brought to any general level. He presented three phases of the life of man: esthetic, ethical and religious. Then, he added three in-between phases. Among these three basic phases the first one is life during which a man aims to satisfy his egoistic needs. The second one concerns duty and responsibility. During the third phase a man reaches the true existence that is subjective and unique for each and every man. The essence of the existence cannot be conveyed. A man entails what is eternal and what is momentary. The aim is the synthesis of those two aspects, the lack of this synthesis is despair. This synthesis, however, does not mean coming back to the original oneness. Good means the uniting of what is eternal and what is momentary, the uniting sometimes called salvation or eternal happiness. See Maryniarczyk (ed.) 2004: 603–7.

⁴⁹ ‘Suchness’ (Skt. *tathāta*, Chin. *ru*, Jpn. *nyo*) – the final and true nature of all phenomena, the true experience, the final truth. As pointed out by Suzuki, “[s]uchness is not their [emptiness and non-emptiness – A.S.] synthesis but their self-identity as concretely realized in our everyday experience”.

See: Shinran 1973: 223 (Glossary); Suzuki 1962: 213; Kozyra 2004: 388.

Nishitani is of the opinion that the concept of the 'creation *ex nihilo*' in Christianity is an expression of complete distinction between God and the world. This distinction is the source of anxiety and suffering for a man. Thus, he proposes a paradox perspective from which to look at the question of the 'creation *ex nihilo*'. It is worth noting that the issue of omnipresence and omnipotence of God is connected with the concept of complete distinction between God and the world. According to Nishitani this problem can be resolved when a man, looking at omnipotence or omnipresence from relative ground, experiences 'relative nothingness' (negation of being, meaning, worth) in an extreme manner. Thus, a man can find the absolute dimension, namely, contradictory self-identity of negation and affirmation.

Conclusion

According to Nishitani, the starting point of all religions is the very moment a man asks himself the question, "[f]or what purpose do I exist?" (Nishitani 1983: 3). Such a question lays the grounds for the negation of all – for doubt that goes beyond the distinction of the object and the subject of cognition, and at the same time it touches upon the most basic issues such as the meaning and the worthiness of being. Thus Nishitani (1983: 261) claims that the revelation of existential authenticity is connected with every religious life, not only the Buddhist one. The experience captured in the form of symbols and myths lies at the base of every religion. Without this experience, religion would not have any meaning as it would only be reduced to dogmas.

To Nishitani, the views quoted above became the foundations for considerations over the authentic message of Christianity. Nishitani analyzes Christianity in the context of such experience, namely 'great doubt', as well as the discovery of one's own 'true self' (that is of the paradox structure of reality). Nishitani interprets Christianity according to the 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity' at the same time emphasizing that there is a similar message in the Christian Bible, although it is to a lesser extent than it is in Buddhism. It does not mean, however, that Nishitani fails to see the difference between his interpretation and the views characteristic of the Christian tradition. He shows that there are two approaches intertwining in Christianity – the first approach states that transcendence is completely distinct from immanence whereas the second one indicates that transcendence and immanence are not completely distinct. The author would like to point out that if one assumes that the structure of reality is in accordance with the 'logic of paradox', those contradictions are completely natural. Nishitani concludes that the interpretation of Christianity based on the 'logic of paradox' conveys its authentic message. Due to this reason, Nishitani keeps searching for the authentic message of Christianity which, in his opinion, is contained in the paradoxes of the religion.

These paradoxes become, for Nishitani, the foundations for further interpretations of Christianity in terms of the 'logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity'. At this point it is important to pay attention to the fact that there are many contradictions within Christianity, of which the majority, if not all, of the followers are aware of. It does not mean, however, that all of them pay much attention to those paradoxes. There are some, however, for whom, "the incomprehensible and contradictory Christian truths of faith become the source of irresolution and suffering rather than the feeling of comfort they desire" (Płużański 1970: 17). It happens so because those contradictions are nothing else but "the contradictions within a man" (Płużański 1970: 16).

In Nishitani's considerations, the issue of internal contradiction of the Absolute is of great significance. It is worth noticing that according to Nishida's theory, the Absolute contains its own self-negation and only because of this internal contradiction it is absolute. Nishitani underlines that Christ is the symbol of self-negation – *ekkenōsis*, being deprived of the 'self'. Self-identity with the absolute dimension can only be discovered due to the 'death of ego'.

The relations between a man and God, God's love, the love of neighbor (love in human relations) take up their true meaning only when presented in the context of reality being 'absolutely contradictory self-identity'. In his considerations Nishitani quotes those fragments of the Bible that indicate the perception of reality as it is done in the aforementioned way. For instance, Nishitani (1983: 277) states that there is an indirect message about the paradox structure of reality in the biblical perception of the love of neighbor. In this way Nishitani presents the issue of doubt, faith, sin and evil that do not concern a Christian only, but all men.

Nishitani unusually emphasizes the meaning of God's love – non-differentiating love. According to him, in Christianity it is the same as 'great compassion' in Buddhism (Nishitani 1983: 58–60). A man who sees the paradox structure of the world feels oneness with all the creatures, both the good and the evil, the living and the non-living. It is only due to such paradox structure that a man can experience the love of God while at the same time experiencing the omnipotence of God from which he feels fear and trembling. Consequently, it is then that a man experiences the love of God and can see the contradictory self-identity with the whole world, oneness, which does not mean losing individual features. According to Nishitani, a man experiencing God's love would not be possible without his existential experience of God's omnipotence, just as God's omnipotence, in the face of which self-negation of the 'self' occurs, would not be possible without God's love.

It is important to point out that religious transformation is possible only when a man fears and trembles – when a man doubts his own strength and experiences the tragic nature and the futility of his own existence. According to Nishitani, such a transformation is possible only when there is an authentic experience of

the omnipotence and omnipresence of God. Fear and trembling render it possible for the 'individual self' to be negated, the 'individual self' which discovers its contradictory self-identity with the Absolute.

In the end it is important to point out that for Nishitani an existential religious act is of the universal character, independent of any doctrine. According to him, behind all the symbols and words there is a hidden perception of the world in which 'one is all and all is one'.

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論文の日本語レジュメ

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キリスト教の神と大乘仏教の論理—西谷啓治によるキリスト教釈義

本論文の目的は、西田幾多郎(1870-1945)によって確立された哲学である京都学派の後継者の一人、西谷啓治(1900~1990)が提唱したキリスト教の仏教的解釈について分析することである。西谷の主張を理解するためには、キリスト教における神の概念と神と人間の関係性についての彼の考察が重要である。

西谷の解釈を前にすると疑問を呈することがあるかもしれない。しかし、実存的信頼性の啓示が仏教だけでなく、あらゆる宗教的な生活と繋がりをもっていると言っている。従って、西谷はキリスト教の真の教えを考究しつつ、それを何らかの形で自己の思想体系へ組み込むことを試みた。さらに、この宗教的経験の概念こそが西谷のキリスト教に対する思索の中で重要な役割を果たしたと考える。

西谷の哲学は絶対性と相対性の関係だけでなく、宗教的経験もが西田幾多郎の“自己同一性絶対矛盾の論理”に基づいて理解されている。つまり、西田の理論は実存的且つ宗教的側面から把握しなければならないことを注視する必要がある。

上記の枠組みにおいて、西谷のキリスト教の神と神の愛に対する解釈、すなわち全能と遍在と、そこに西谷が付与する新しい意義を分析する。

Keywords: Nishitani Keiji, Buddhism, Christianity, philosophy, nothingness, God, absolutely contradictory self-identity, paradox, logic.