

# The Concept of “Subject” in the Philosophy of the Kyoto School

Focusing on the Thinking of Motomori Kimura and Masaaki Kosaka

Mayumi Yamada (Hokkaido University of Education)

## Abstract

This paper investigates the meaning of the word “subject” in the philosophy of the Kyoto School in order to reconsider ideas about developing human beings. After the acceptance of so-called postmodern thinking, we now face the difficulty of describing the universal aim of educating children. Recent studies in pedagogy have tried to overcome the concept of an autonomous or independent subject, by accepting Western thinking about “transcendence” and “otherness.” Against the backdrop of this intellectual situation, this paper focuses on the thinking of three philosophers from the Kyoto School: Kitaro Nishida, Motomori Kimura and Masaaki Kosaka, who discussed a lot of issues about subjects and subjectivity in the 1930-40s.

In today’s studies on pedagogy, while the thinking of Kimura has contributed various potential ideas for overcoming modern concepts, the thinking of Kosaka has been criticized for a long time because he acted as a chief editor of the report entitled “the Expected Image of the Japanese.” Although they both discussed how education could cultivate subjectivity, few studies have focused on this aspect. We examine the intellectual correlation between them, focusing on their thoughts about cultivating subjects, in their words, the “world’s historical subject.” By examining this concept, this article tries to suggest ways of considering the “subject” not as the absolute aim of forming independent humanity, but as a particular way of existing with history and the universe.

## Key Words

Kyoto School, Subject, World History, Cultivating Individuals, “the Expected Image of the Japanese”

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. The purpose of this paper**

The purpose of this paper is to reconsider the concept of a “subject” in the philosophy of education. Some might say this has already been done, because in recent years the modern concept of subject has come under radical criticism. Various studies in the field of education have tried to overcome this, as well as the conventional frameworks of “education” or “human development,” especially following postmodern trends of thinking, and we are now trying to create other ways of talking about education and human development (see Tanaka, 1999; Katayama 2009; Yano 2009). These studies have tried to re-examine the goals of education by discussing them without looking at modern concepts like development or autonomy, and instead focusing on new ideas, for example, “otherness” and “transcendence.” As Itani (2010) mentioned, we have lost a sense of the strict aim of educating human beings, and we now feel the impossibility of making universal images of what a “subject” is.

But on the other hand, as stated in the new “Basic Act on Education,” which was amended in 2006, education still has the aim of “cultivating people who make up a nation and society.” Furthermore, the national curriculum guidelines or textbooks for education always insist on the importance of subjectivity and the identity of children. In spite of the postmodern thinking regarding pedagogical philosophy, people still commonly use the word “subject.” It is likely that talking about education as cultivating subjective individuals is still binding us together.

Against the backdrop of this intellectual premise, this paper attempts to reconsider the idea of the subject through the philosophy of the Kyoto School. After accepting postmodern thinking, we need to face the difficulty of describing the universal ideal of human beings, and how to deliver the aim of educating children. As mentioned above, recent studies have tried to overcome the concept of autonomous subjects or the idea of human development, through Western thinking regarding otherness and transcendence. However, if you have paid attention to past discussions regarding the subject in Japanese philosophy, you might know that we already have various ideas regarding that concept which we use to overcome

traditional ideas of education. In particular, Japanese philosophers from the Kyoto School have discussed many issues about the subject since the 1930-1940s. Therefore, this article aims to figure out the meaning of the word “subject” in the philosophy of the Kyoto School, and also to describe thinking as regards education in terms of that concept.

## **1.2. The educational philosophy of the Kyoto School**

In the post-war educational setting, the thinking of the Kyoto School has been understood in connection with the famous report called “the Expected Image of the Japanese,” delivered by the Ministry of Education in 1966, because a central member of the school, Masaaki Kosaka, acted as chief editor of this report (Yamada, 2015). As the document proposed an ideal image of man, once the plans were released, a lot of teachers and educators strongly criticized it. People were concerned about the huge political pressures from the government of the time.

It should be considered more carefully whether this document intended to impose strict ideals on people or not. However, it is clear that the report tried to explore certain perspectives of human beings as independent subjects. The document mentioned that education entails activities that cultivate human beings to become “subjects,” and the Ministry of Education also said that “the Expected Image of the Japanese” tried to describe what an independent subject meant in Japan at that time (Monbusho, 1966). As mentioned above, we should focus on the fact that Kosaka, the chief editor of the document, had exactly the same concerns about forming subjective individuals. As referred to in recent studies, Kosaka cared about these issues of “subject” from the 1930s, then again after World War II, his philosophical interest expanded into ways of cultivating people who can develop themselves and wider society as well (Yamada, 2014).<sup>1</sup>

The observation that Kosaka made, arguing that education used the concept of subject, is now widely accepted. In his articles, the word “subject” does not refer to an independent individual, and moreover, although he certainly wrote a document, “the Expected Image of the Japanese,” he did

---

<sup>1</sup> In the first year of being in the faculty of education at Kyoto University, Kosaka had a lecture entitled “The ideal image of human beings for the Japanese of modern times.” (Kyoto University, 1957)

not believe that he could describe the absolute image of human beings. He always considered a subject to be a “historical subject” meaning people who can cultivate themselves continuously in relation to history, through dialectic discussion of the world and history (see Yamada, 2014; Aoyagi, 2016). On the basis of his theory about historical subjects, this paper additionally focuses on the intellectual relationship between Kosaka and two other philosophers belonging to the Kyoto School, Kitaro Nishida and Motomori Kimura.

Contrary to criticism regarding Kosaka’s thinking, recent studies have actively evaluated the philosophy of Nishida and Kimura, focusing on its potential to overcome traditional ideas about educating children. Yano (2013), for example, proposed a substantial connection between the anthropology of the Kyoto School around the 1920s and the early pedagogical situation in Japan. In addition, Tanaka (2012) suggested the term, the “pedagogy of the Kyoto School” in order to promote further research about their theory of education. According to Tanaka, “the pedagogy of the Kyoto School” has argued about education in relation to the original concern regarding ideas of entirety and pure experience. And moreover, Onishi (1999) regards Kimura’s thinking regarding education as worth re-discovering. He claims that the philosophy of Kimura is filled with potential and originality that we should take in, and it can offer a significant alternative to the post-war theory of education.

However, we should remember the fact that Kosaka has also been mentioned as an important member of the Kyoto School, and this fact is now widely accepted. Why is the thinking of Kimura now evaluated for its potential, while the thinking of Kosaka has been criticized for a long time? The serious problem is that few studies referring to the educational thinking of the Kyoto School examine any intellectual connections between the thinking of Kosaka and that of Nishida and Kimura, which are given opposite evaluations by today’s pedagogical standards. How can we evaluate the thinking of the Kyoto School, when we regard these three philosophers as having the same philosophical ideas of “the Kyoto School?” Therefore, in the following section, we examine the intellectual correlation between them, focusing on their thoughts regarding cultivating the “subject” and “subjectivity.”

In order to accomplish these issues, this paper investigates the meanings

of “subject” in the thinking of Nishida and Kimura in relation to Kosaka’s discussion which I have already treated in other articles (Yamada, 2014; Yamada, 2015). Second, we focus on the idea of “history” in Kimura and Kosaka’s writings, because it is necessary to grasp their thinking regarding “subject.” By these examinations, this study tries to suggest ways of considering “subject” in educational theory, not as an absolute aim of forming independent human beings, but as the particular ideals of each individual who maintains inter-determination with the historical situations in which they live.

## **2. What does the “subject” mean in the philosophy of the Kyoto School?**

### **2.1. The meaning of the individual in Nishida’s thinking**

In this section, we investigate Nishida’s thinking regarding individuals, with reference to his two articles “*Watashi no zettaimu no jikaku-teki gentei to iumono*” [*Theory about Self-consciousness and Nothingness*] (1931), and “*Watashi to sekai*” [*The Self and The World*] (1933). First, we should focus on the fact that Nishida denies a way of thinking about the self through an intellectual point of view.<sup>2</sup> According to his theory, the self is never formed by an intellectual process such as cognition through rationality or morality, rather it will just happen through an awareness and consciousness of a world of nothingness surrounding all individuals.

In the article “*Theory about Self-consciousness and Nothingness*,” Nishida says that when people truly have a consciousness, they are just seeing their own “self,” which means they are just grasping things that don’t exist (Nishida, 1931). Self-consciousness means that the universe which transcends the individual realizes the universe itself, in his words, it means that “the place of the universe directly gives determinations to the place itself.”

“Our consciousness is nothing but the consciousness of the fact that people stand in a particular place of their own. If people have

---

<sup>2</sup> To help understand Nishida’s philosophy, I mainly refer to Kosaka (1971), Koyama (2007) and Itabashi (2008).

consciousness through their ego, it cannot be the true meaning of consciousness. When you are released by your intellectual self, and you determine yourself by just feeling the place and the universe without any intention, you, for the first time, can genuinely reach self-consciousness” (Nishida, 1931, p.117).

It is crucially important that consciousness is not only the act of individuals, but also the act of the universe, or “the place” itself, in Nishida’s thinking. Therefore, we should now focus on his concept of place and understand when individuals become conscious of themselves. According to him, the bottom of the universe must be entire “nothingness,” and moreover, individual and universal consciousness exists in this nothingness simultaneously, during the process of self-consciousness.

In his philosophical essay, *“The Self and The World,”* Nishida also mentions about individuals not having an independent existence, but they are inter-acting continuously with other existences (Nishida, 1933a). He considers that individuals can reach self-consciousness, and determine themselves as “I,” only by realizing the nothingness of the universe and also recognizing that in themselves. He says:

“When we think about such interaction between individuals, it should not be enough to assume just the interaction of existence itself. We must reach the concept of the place which transcends our experiences and determines our whole existence and the world itself. I notice the way of such interactions, because I believe in the importance of determination carried out in the place itself.... We consider our world as a determination itself, conducted by beings with each other, and only through these innumerable determinations, the world continues to determine itself infinitely” (Nishida, 1933a, p.109).

Through this view of inter-determination between the individual and the universe, we can now understand his view on education. In his thinking, an individual cannot exist as an individual without having an actual connection to the universe. He calls it “basho, the place,” which covers the whole of existence in the world, and human beings can be recognized as individuals only in relation to the place and the self simultaneously.

Therefore, when he talks about education as cultivating human beings, he does not assume any absolute ideals to which every human being has to aspire to. Although one cannot deny the fact that education is one of the main activities for bringing up children to become self-determining individuals, in his thinking, there is no individual existence without a connection to the social and historical world in which they live. Because we all are standing in “the place” of the universe, education should form an essential way to not only develop human beings but also the world itself.

In his article “*Kyoiku-gaku ni tsuite*” [*About Education*] (1933), Nishida describes the idea of forming human beings as a process of circulation which the social and historical world determines dialectically. Therefore, according to him, the practice of forming people will only be accomplished when people see themselves in relation to the universe, and participate in the act of determining the world (Nishida, 1933b). As mentioned above, an individual can never be considered without this inter-determination of the world, in his thinking. Because each individual existing in this historical world is just a factor of that, education is the means to make people realize the fact that they are participating in the formation of the universe itself. From such a point of view, Nishida suggests the particular mission of the educator as not only helping in the formation of human individuals, but also supporting the formation of the universe itself (Nishida, 1933b, p.92).

Based on his educational thinking about the individual and the universe, in the following section, we examine the educational thinking of Kimura, focusing on his famous theory of “hyogen-ai” meaning “the love of expression.”

## **2.2. The idea of the “expressive subject” in Kimura’s thinking**

Various studies regarding his work “*Hyogen-ai*” [*The Love of Expression*], published in 1939, commonly insist that Kimura discusses an interactive relationship between the inner and the outer, or subjective individuals and the world around them (see Onishi, 2012). In Kimura’s thinking, the world is consistently structured by the interaction between the subject having an idea and what is produced by the representation of that idea. He says that the significance of a subject is to determine the outside

world expressively, by hearing the voice of the universe and also by giving responses to the universe (Kimura, 1939, p.24). As well as Kosaka's discussion of "gyaku-gentei," meaning inter-determination, Kimura also considers the interaction between the representation of individuals and the actual world they live in.

However, on the other hand, this representation of the subject is considered not just as an interaction with one's surroundings, but also as a determination of the greater universe which transcends both the subject and the world, in Kimura's discussion. He says:

"The idea of expression seen through personal experience, at the time one is looking inward, is not organized by the mere self-determination of that person, but springs from an abyss of the expressive universe itself, which transcends every existence in the world and also envelops all subjects and objects that dialectically conflict in this world" (Kimura, 1939, p.31).

In his thinking, the inter-determination between the subject and the object plays a substantial part in the formation of the world, in addition to the thinking of Kosaka. However, in addition, Kimura assumes a greater expression of the universe which relates to the real world we live in. That is to say, he describes the world in the following two phases: one is the historical world formed by the inter-action of both living existence and nature, and the other is the expressive universe springing from the more dialectical relation between the historical world and the great will of lives that embrace the whole of the historical world itself.

In his consideration described above, we can find a strong similarity with Nishida's thinking regarding the view of the dialectical expression of the universe itself. According to Kimura, the entire existence in this world is consistently expressing the great will of the universe; he calls it "the idea of the expressive world," and by this act of expression, we, the existence, can participate in the great movement of this natural and historical world's inter-determination (Kimura, 1939, p.31). He says "human individuals are, therefore, the beings that have the great mission of forming the expressive universe itself consciously, even though they exist inside the universe which continues its self-expression eternally" (Kimura, 1939, p.57).



From the above discussion, we can now suggest the intellectual peculiarity that Kimura shared with the Kyoto School, especially Nishida and Kosaka. The point is that Kimura considered human beings as inter-determining subjects who express their inward desire constantly against their surroundings, i.e. the natural and historical world. This is similar to Kosaka's thinking about the substratum of the history and the world (see Yamada, 2014). Furthermore, this inter-contradiction of subject and environment is composed by an expression of the greater universe; this is clearly analogous with the thinking of Nishida, discussed in the previous section. That is to say, in Kimura's thinking, whereas an individual always has to be the subject of expression which continues to present their innate will against the objective world, that expression of the subject is, in fact, a self-determination of the great universe, which transcends all existences. It transcends the whole of our historical world itself.

Therefore, in his thinking on education, even though Kimura defines the act of education as cultivating human beings as subjective individuals, it is clear that he never assumes any autonomous subjects which seem to be completely independent of their surroundings, just like the philosophy of Nishida (Kimura, 1941). Because he describes the subject as simply "the place for self-determination of the expressive universe," individuals should be merely elements of the social and historical world which is composed dialectically by the more dynamic universe.

Kimura says that education must be the act of the subject becoming a subjective individual in the concrete historical world, and he also strongly insists that developing subjectivity should make people realize that the voice of the universe transcends us, and understand the ideas coming from the contradictory world and its history (Kimura, 1941, p.45). That is why Kimura repeatedly says that education is the activity of contributing to the self-determination of the universe, by contributing to the cultivation of human beings as nothing but the subject of the universe's expression (Kimura, 1941, p.51).

### **2.3. The concept of "subject" in the educational thinking of the Kyoto School**

It has been shown how Nishida and Kimura argued about the point of

education, in comparing them with the thinking of Kosaka. We can suggest some remarkable points in their thinking as follows:

First is the fact that they consider the subject as a being, expressing itself all the time against the universe, not as a being who is closed away or fastened by any absolute means. In their thinking, a being can exist as a subject only by hearing the voice of the universe and responding to it, and this interaction between subject and universe determines both the subject and the universe simultaneously. The second point is that they talk about the subject in terms of individuals who are not totally independent from the context of the world and history. Beings always exist in the greater universe of expression, and the relationship with the universe is essential and fundamental for them to be a subject. And the last point we can suggest is that, in their thinking regarding education, they discussed the act of education as not merely bringing up each child or person to be an independent individual, but rather as cultivating a human being that is able to act as one of the elements of the formation of the great universe itself. For them, education is, in particular, a way of forming the universe and history through the effort to form people as subjects who can develop and organize world history.

Now we can give some answers to the first question we proposed at the beginning of this study. That is to say, the concept of “subject” suggested by the Kyoto School is nothing but the individual having a concrete relationship with the universe which envelops the whole of existence in the historical world transcendentally. Therefore, when they describe education as the act of forming a subject, the subject does not mean someone completely independent or autonomous, and they never assume anything like “absolute ideals” of human beings. The continuous inter-determination between subject and universe was the most substantial part of their philosophy. Thus, in order to understand their thinking in more detail, we should examine the idea of the universe which expresses itself as a historical world.

As mentioned repeatedly, in their thinking, the inter-determinative universe can appear as nothing but the historical world, so the concept of the “world’s history” has crucial meanings for their consideration of “subject.” Therefore, in the following section, we investigate the meaning of world history, which the Kyoto School, as Kimura and Kosaka argued about frequently in the 1930s and developed during the war as the theory of

so-called “*Sekai-shi no tetsu-gaku, [the philosophy of world history]*.” What does world history mean in their philosophical thinking, and why do they have to focus on it when developing their thinking regarding “subject?”

### **3. The concept of history in the thinking of the Kyoto School**

#### **3.1. What does “world history” mean in Kosaka’s thinking?**

Because of his consideration of world history during the war, Kosaka seemed to stand at the right side of the Kyoto School for a long time after the war, as mentioned at the beginning of this study. The most substantial work which gave such an evaluation was the article summarizing symposiums “*Sekaishi-teki tachiba to nihon*” [*The World’s Historical Position and Japan*], which appeared in a popular magazine “*Chuo Ko-ron*” from 1942 to 1943 (published as Kosaka, 1943). This series of symposiums was held among four philosophers, Iwao Koyama, Keiji Nishitani, Shigetaka Suzuki and Kosaka, who were all colleagues at Kyoto Imperial University. The aim of this meeting, Kosaka said, was to search for the direction that Japan should take in the context of the world war, and suggest how Japan could overcome the situation (Kosaka, 1943).

However, in order to understand his concept of subjectivity, we examine the topic, not using this symposium, but the article “*Sekaishi-kan no ruikei*” [*The Type of the World’s Historical Viewpoint*], written by Kosaka alone and published in 1944, because the discussion regarding the symposium was too affected by the reality of Japan’s situation in order to fully understand his philosophical thinking on that concept (see Sugimoto, 2008). Then, let us investigate his philosophical considerations regarding world history.

In the article, he conclusively defines it as “the history of human beings, struggling and trying to solve various problems of the world,” or “the continuous effort of doing it.” He begins his discussion by criticizing the traditional understanding of world history, which does not give enough significance to individuals (Kosaka, 1944, p.94). According to him, the traditional thinking of historical philosophy has regarded human individuals not as truly independent subjects of the world, but as beings bound tightly to land and tradition, or simply beings handled by the absolute will of something, as Hegel proposed. Against this tendency, he proposed a different

view of historical individuals by emphasizing the crucial meaning of human effort in resolving the world's historical problems. And moreover, we should focus on his emphasis of the significance of human irrationality in forming the rationality of world history.

According to Kosaka, a human being is not just an irrational existence, but an individual who can rationalize himself or herself consistently by placing themselves in particular relationships with the world and history. He says: "It is not rationality formed by subsuming the individual into the rationalized universe, but the historical symbol of rationality formed by subsuming the universe into individuality and specificity, that is to say, the rationality formed through the individual's recognition and acceptance for the particularity of the universe, on the contrary" (Kosaka, 1944, pp.94-95). Human beings should realize their subjectivity which makes them rational and practical by placing them in the objective world and history, and on the other hand, this realization of being a subject also can rationalize the universe itself and determine it as a particular historical universe. He also says "the universe can determine itself as a universe only through the act of being a subject, and the subject can realize itself as a subject only through deconstructing and constructing the universe historically" (Kosaka, 1944, pp.96-97).

"Without continuous construction, the historical world has to be completely frozen, and on the other hand, the subjective individual has no choice but to get lost in its meaning and disappear into the great universe. Only historical transcendence can truly develop the world, and in fact, there is some kind of dynamism and great energy in the historical universe for morality and rationality. Therefore, the history of the world can remain a particular symbol of the destiny of human existence, and it may hold a particular symbolism regarding the fate of human individuals." (Kosaka, 1944, p.97)

From the above discussion, we can now understand the meaning of world history in terms of Kosaka's philosophical thinking. As seen in the philosophy of Nishida, Kosaka maintained the continuous inter-determination between the individual and the universe as well, and he said that world history is continuously formulated through this

inter-determination. This means that the history Kosaka considered does not seem to imply any power of something resembling absolute oneness. The fundamental root of world history has to be the continuous movement of the world itself, and everlasting action and practice done by both subject and object simultaneously. In his thinking, it might be considered as absolute nothingness, which is the concept the Kyoto School commonly proposed and developed. Only particular acts of each individual can transform the world and its history, as Kosaka maintained.

### 3.2. What does “world history” mean in Kimura’s thinking?

In previous studies, little is known about the fact that Kimura has treated the issue of world history, especially during the war.<sup>3</sup> Compared to the case of Kosaka, it is certainly true that Kimura does not seem to approve of any direct action in terms of Japan pushing forward with the world war, but in fact, in one of his remarkable works, “*Kokka ni okeru bunka to kyoiku*” [*Culture and Education of the Nation*],” published in 1947, we can for sure find his serious effort to establish a theory named the “love of expression for world history,” as well as the other Kyoto School members. So, in this section, we try to investigate his theory about world history using his book “*Culture and Education of the Nation*,” in order to reveal why Kimura did focus on the problem of history in reaching his deeper philosophy called the “love of expression.”

Firstly, we should focus on his reflections regarding his previous work, as stated in the book. According to him, his previous writing about expression does not have enough perspective for species lying between individual and universal. He says: “If we fail to notice the importance of various species necessarily lying between individual and universal, or if we believe the direct connection of the two, we grasp only the abstract side of the relation between subject and universe” (Kimura, 1947, p.208). Human beings are all living with certain facts of historical reality, and they are not living in a place devoid of concreteness or specificity of the world and history. In particular, this specificity should encompass the fact of nationality, Kimura says. To consider a subject of expression concretely, it is necessary

---

<sup>3</sup> Many studies admit the fact, but they seem to avoid discussing it in detail (e. g. Murase, 2001).

to take into consideration the nationality of an individual, which is the most substantial one of any concept of species, and because of this observation, conceiving the issue of world history should become unavoidable for him.

Then, what does world history mean according to Kimura? In conclusion, the essential concept of mediation was to not allow particular nations to get absolute independence. He says “nationality gains its individuality only when it exists inside a relationship between other nationalities. If they fail to achieve the concept of intermediation, they cannot exist as particular nations” (Kimura, 1947, p.213). He calls it the “world’s historical universality,” which involves both the concepts of time and space. In his theory, world history does not mean any historical reality of the world we live in. It is rather the idea of universality which makes nationalities exist as subjective nations of the world and of history, and also develops them as particular “world historical nations.”

Kimura also says that the idea of world history is, in fact, coming from the concept about the place of nothingness which Nishida examined. People can form a particular nation only when they realize the absolute nothingness of history and the universe, and moreover, understanding their own nothingness is the only way for each nation to achieve individuality in world history. He says “the meaning of world history is a principle of negation functioning between nationalities and species, and because it is just a function without any concrete formation, we should call it just ‘the nothingness’ as an eternal and universal movement” (Kimura, 1947, p.226). As previously mentioned, in Kimura’s thinking, world history means not the concrete phenomenon of history, but the concepts of nothingness and universality which keep the world moving and negotiating infinitely.

### **3.3. Dynamism between history and subject**

In this section, we examine the concept of “world history” in the philosophy of Kosaka and Kimura, focusing on whether they assume absolute canon or not, which binds and restricts individuals transcendently. The facts we found are twofold: first, in Kosaka’s thinking, human individuals were given a significant role in the formation of world history, and indeed human irrationality played a substantial part in its construction. He considered world history not as the development of a great rationality,

like in Hegel's philosophy, but as the continuous effort and practice of human beings to live in the reality of history and the universe.

Second, we understand how Kimura discussed world history. From his point of view, world history means not concrete facts and the reality of the historical world, but a fundamental concept of individuality and the subjectivity of nations and species. Only when realizing the concept of world history can human beings gain a particularity and specificity, and all nationalities can exist as "individual nations." As the principle of history is nothing but the will of movements, it is never fastened by anything.

Therefore, it is clear that they do not assume any principle which operates the universe and the individual transcendentally. The fundamental point of history is, in fact, nothingness which envelops everything and enfolds every existence in the world. In their philosophical thinking, subject and history determine each other in a field of nothingness, and this infinite inter-determination is the only way to construct both subject and history. That is why they consider educating human beings as not only civilizing individuals, but cultivating history and the world as well.

However, we should also indicate unexpected problems that their theory of "nothingness" encounters. Firstly, looking at Kimura's thinking, the notion of "koku-tai," which means the imperial system of the Japanese, has serious incoherencies. As mentioned above, Kimura considered world history as a universal principle to mediate negotiations between all nations and species living in the world in real-life situations. Therefore, in his discussion, a distinction between both aspects of history, one where we practically live, and the other where we realize the universe as a medium, is completely unclear. Because of this obscurity, all beings existing in the world are directly accepted as the "world's historical subjects" and are fundamentally aware of their morality and principles (Kimura, 1947, p.293). That is to say, he failed to make clear the connection between the reality and the concept of "world history". It causes a more serious problem regarding the theory of "koku-tai," especially because of the particular situation of Japan during the war.

In his work, *"Culture and Education of the Nation"* published in 1947, Kimura admitted fundamental absoluteness in a praxis of construction to build nations, and he said that Japanese "koku-tai" is "the absolute root of whole national activity," "the creative springs of our development," and also

“the eternal absolute canon of our complete livingness” (Kimura, 1947, p.298). Although he considered “nothingness” as the root of the universe, he eventually saw it in the historical supremacy of Japanese “*koku-tai*.” Because it is difficult to find a border between reality and notions, we cannot clearly understand what “*koku-tai*” is. It must be assessed as the commendation of nationality. Hereafter, we should investigate why he had to refer to this uncertain and implicit concept in more detail.

Second, we point out the problem in Kosaka’s discussion. According to him, the most substantial issue for each individual was admitting the way in which they recognize the world historical situation and problems, and how they practically struggle with these issues. However, we should note that the idea of “individual” that he espoused was not meant to denote separate individuals, but a particular group of ethnicities. It is ethnicity connected by not only land or blood but also of the same nationality and forming the same nation. He says “an individual without awareness of ethnicity can never be a subjective individual of history, and without the awareness of forming a nationality, people can never reach the profound dynamism of the historical universe” (Kosaka, 1944, p.95).

The beginning of his discussion about history and subjectivity certainly made an effort to find the innate role of human individuals in world history, but at the same time, he required that individuals must be aware of themselves as members of a particular ethnic force which organizes and composes specific nations. In his thinking, people can conduct themselves as “subjects” only when they recognize their traditional spirit of place and blood ties, and also have a consciousness of their national and cultural situation. His thinking regarding ethnic subjectivity more or less resulted in the modern theory of the state and the usual assertions of nationalism, which he had tried to overcome.

As Furuta (1965) criticized Nishida’s philosophy, both Kimura and Kosaka discussed their historical philosophy insisting on the practical situation of their own lives as Japanese. Their thinking could not reach a position of anti-nationalism and it did not have any power to deny and overcome the idea of nation and ethnicity. Although the root of their thinking was the concept of nothingness, they seemed to accept the crucial meaning of “*koku-tai*” and the ethnicity of Japan forming a nation. In order to investigate the limits of their thinking more specifically, we must examine



the concept of “formation,” which they referred to as an act of inter-determination. We should investigate carefully how subject and object recognize each other, through the act of so-called “formation.”

In the previous paragraph, we indicated Kimura’s confusion between reality and the theory of history; the notion of “formation” holds a key to solving this problem. In order to make clear the whole thinking of the Kyoto School, especially the idea of nothingness, we must understand the relation between subject and universe, and the relation between the two aspects of human activity, recognizing nothingness and participating in the formation of world history. Based on the discussion this paper has proposed, from now on, we should continue to study their thinking by focusing on the notion of formation.

#### **4. Analysis and Conclusion**

This paper attempted to analyze the meaning of “subject” in the educational thinking of the Kyoto School. Although they treated education as cultivating subjectivity, few studies have focused on that fact until today. In conclusion, they considered a subject as an individual who continuously negotiates with the dynamic movement of history and the universe and never stops working even if he realizes the nothingness of the world and the self. Kosaka said that all human beings should take responsibility for awakening their own historical subjectivity and should also struggle against the subject as a subjective individual. Their philosophical idea of nothingness requires all people to keep considering, practicing and expressing permanently, because the world of their thinking expresses itself as nothing but the historical world.

That could be the reason why Kimura sought the ideal image of a world historical nation, and on the other hand, Kosaka attempted to analyze types of human beings historically through the document called “The Expected Image of the Japanese” (see Kosaka, 1966). For them, it was not a fallacy or surrender of their philosophy, rather a positive way of discovering their thinking more concretely. They took heavy responsibilities for their act of defining the world’s historical subject, in the turbulent situation of Japan at the time. Their philosophy of nothingness invites all human beings to continuously seek nothingness.

This study looked at today's unclear connection between the pedagogy which tries to overcome using the concept of subject, and the actual situation of educating children, which emphasizes the importance of cultivating subjectivity. Through the thinking of the Kyoto School, this paper suggests an alternative discussion of today's situation, and also suggests a framework to discuss this problem.

Until today, few studies have noticed the importance of the discussion regarding dialectical relations, in their words, inter-determinative relations between reality and theory. This does not concern the relation between the method of educating children and the actual activity of educating in schools, which has been of substantial concern for a long time. What we need to consider now is the fundamental understanding regarding our praxis of educating human beings, and on the other hand, the actual realization about the historical moment where we stand. As the Kyoto School proposed, we have to give a historical place to our theory of educating children, because the act of education should be the development of the universe's history through cultivating human beings.

Nishida insists that pedagogy must above all choose historical philosophy as its foundation. We have to understand the inconsistent connection between seeking the principle of education and responding to various requirements from historical reality. The most substantial work we have to try to accomplish is to analyze the historical situation we are living in, and in addition, to again question the role of "educating" based on its historical analysis. Our study contributes a small step to this continuous search, as a dedication to the Kyoto School.

## References

- Aoyagi, H. (2016). *Sengo kyoiku gaku no naka no marukusu-shugi (Marxism in "Post-war pedagogy": The concept of "subject" in Tokumitsu Yagawa and Masaaki Kosaka)*, *Forum on modern education no.25*. History of educational thought society.
- Furuta, H. (1956). *Nihon-teki kannen-ron tetsugaku no seiritsu (The Beginning of Idealism in Japan's philosophy)*, In Toyama, S (Eds.),

- Kindai nihon sisoushi (History of modern thinking in Japan)*. Tokyo: Aoki shoten.
- Itabashi, Y. (2008). *Rekishi-teki genjitsu to Nishida tetsugaku (The historical reality and Nishida's philosophy)*. Tokyo: Hosei university press.
- Itani, N. (2010). *Shutaisei no chokoku ha utsutsu ka yume ka (Can we go beyond the subjectivity through education?: Educational thoughts confronted with modern "Insomnia")*, *Forum on Modern Education no.19*. History of educational thought society.
- Japan Monbu-sho. (1966). *Monbu jiho (The journal of the ministry) no. 1072*. Tokyo: Monbu-sho.
- Katayama, K. (2009). *Kyoiku gainen ha kyoiku tetsugaku-kai de donoyo ni ronjirarete kitaka (How has the conception of education been discussed in academic conference of educational philosophy?)*, *Studies in the philosophy of education no. 100, special issue*. Philosophy of Education Society of Japan.
- Kimura, M. (1941). *Kyoiku no honshitsu to bunka no honshitsu (The principle of education and culture)*, In *Keisei-teki jikaku (Consciousness of formation)*. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- Kimura, M. (1947). *Kokka ni okeru bunka to kyoiku (The culture and education of the nation)*. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- Kimura, M. (1997). *Hyogen-ai (The love of expression)*. Tokyo: Kobushi shobo.
- Kosaka, M. & Koyama, I. & Nishitani, K. & Suzuki, S. (1943). *Sekaishi teki tachiba to nihon (The world's historical position and Japan)*. Tokyo: Chuo-koron sha.
- Kosaka, M. (1944). *Sekaishi-kan no ruikai (The type of the world's historical viewpoint)*, In Nishida, K (Ed.) (2000). *Sekaishi no riron (The theory of world history)*. Kyoto: Toei sha.
- Kosaka, M. (1966). *Shiken kitai-sareru ningen-zo (The expected image of Japanese)*. Tokyo: Riso sha.
- Kosaka, M. (1971). *Nishida Kitaro sensei no shogai to shiso (The life and philosophy of Kitaro Nishida)*. Tokyo: Sobun sha.
- Koyama, I. (2007). *Koyama Iwao chosaku-shu (The collected works of Iwao Koyama) vol. 1*. Tokyo: Tamagawa university press.
- Kyoto University. (1957). *Kyoto daigaku kyoiku gakubu kiyo III (The journal of Kyoto university, faculty of education III)*. Kyoto: Kyoto university.

- Murase, Y. (2001). *Kimura Motomori no tetsugaku (The philosophy of Motomori Kimura)*. Tokyo: Kobushi shobo.
- Nishida, K. (1931). *Watashi no zettaimu no jikaku-teki gentei to iumono (The theory about self-consciousness and nothingness), The collected works of Kitaro Nishida vol. 6*. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- Nishida, K. (1933a). *Watashi to sekai (The self and the world), The collected works of Kitaro Nishida vol. 7*. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- Nishida, K. (1933b). *Kyoiku-gaku ni tsuite (About education), The collected works of Kitaro Nishida vol. 12*. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- Onishi, M. (1999). *Kimura Motomori*. In Sumeragi, N. & Yano, S. (Eds.), *Nihon no kyoiku-ningen-gaku (The pedagogical anthropology in Japan)*. Tokyo: Tamagawa university press.
- Onishi, M. (2011). *Hyogen teki seimei no kyoiku tetsugaku (The pedagogical philosophy of expressive life)*. Kyoto: Showa do.
- Tanaka, S. (1999). *Kyoiku no kaidoku (Decoding the education)*. Kanagawa: Seori shobo.
- Tanaka, T. (2012). *Rinsho teki ningen keisei-ron no kochiku (The construction of clinical theory for forming human beings)*. Tokyo: Toshin do.
- Sugimoto, K. (2013). *Nishida tetsugaku to rekishi-teki sekai (The world's history and the philosophy of Nishida)*. Kyoto: Kyoto university press.
- Yamada, M. (2014). *Kosaka Masaaki no kyoiku-shiso ni okeru shutai gainen (The concept of subject in educational thought of Masaaki Kosaka), Studies in the philosophy of education no. 109*. Philosophy of Education Society of Japan.
- Yamada, M. (2015). *Sengo kyoikugaku ni okeru "Kyoto gakuha" (What does "Kyoto school" mean for the postwar pedagogical situation?), Studies in sociology, psychology and education: Inquiries into humans and societies no. 80*. Tokyo: Keio university.
- Yano, S. (2009). *Futto suru kyoiku-ningengaku he no sasoi (Invitation for the Pedagogical Anthropology), Studies in the philosophy of education no. 100, special issue*. Philosophy of Education Society of Japan.
- Yano, S. (2013). *Ningen gaku: Kyoto gakuha ningengaku to kyoikugaku no ushinawareta wa wo motomete (Anthropology: Seeking the missed connection between anthropology of Kyoto School and pedagogy)*, In Morita, H. & Morita, N (Eds.), *Kyoiku shiso-shi de yomu gendai*

*kyoiku (Reading modern education through the history of pedagogical thinking)*. Tokyo: Keiso shobo.