Kunitake Ito

Kitaro Nishida is the founding father of the so-called “Kyoto School of Philosophy”. His metaphysics of “pure experience” developed in his first book *The Inquiry of Goodness* is often compared to the philosophy of radical empiricism of William James. This comparison is rather natural because there are so many overlapping themes between their theories. There were some indirect personal ties between two philosophers. Nishida’s close Zen friend Daisetsu Suzuki was an assistant of Paul Carus in Chicago, who was the editor of *Open Court* and very close to the Peirce-James circle. Carus was a representative figure who took Buddhist philosophy most seriously in Victorian era of the West. Peirce and James were influenced by Carus-Daisetsu to consider Buddhism as a valuable alternative of traditional philosophy and theology. James took the teaching Buddhism as the “Gospel of Relaxation” and a valuable antidote to the Calvinist activism. On the other hand, Nishida considered James’s metaphysics of radical empiricism very similar to Zen Buddhism. But he also complained that this empiricism lacked the Buddhist element of voluntarism and activism. Thus, there was a sort of mutual misunderstanding between them. I will consider some details of this rare case of near miss of Eastern and Western philosophies.