

INTUITION AND REFLECTION IN SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

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Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness

NISHIDA Kitarō

translated by

Valdo H. Viglielmo with
Takeuchi Yoshinori
and Joseph S. O'Leary



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Foreword

It was apparently Swift's encounter with the Japanese syllabaries that inspired the following scene in *Gulliver's Travels*:

These Bits of Wood were covered on every Square with Paper pasted on them; and on these Papers were written all the Words of their language in their Order. The Professor then desired me to observe, for he was going to set his Engine at work. The Pupils at his Command took each of them hold of an Iron Handle, whereof there were Forty fixed round the Edges of the Frame; and giving them a sudden Turn, the whole Disposition of the Words was entirely changed. He then commanded Six and Thirty of the Lads to read the several Lines softly as they appeared upon the Frame; and where they found three or four Words together that might make Part of a Sentence, they dictated to the Four remaining Boys who were Scribes. . . . The Professor showed me several Volumes in large Folio already collected, of broken Sentences, which he intended to piece together; and out of those rich Materials to give the World a compleat Body of all Arts and Sciences. . . . He assured me, that this Invention had employed all his Thoughts from his Youth; that he had emptied the whole Vocabulary into his Frame . . . I made my humblest Acknowledgements to this illustrious Person

for his great Communicativeness; and promised if ever I had the good Fortune to return to my native Country, that I would do him Justice, as the sole Inventor of this wonderful Machine.¹

Nishida may have a similar impact on his Western readers, who will find themselves tossed on a sea of words, in which any scrap of Eastern or Western philosophical, religious, scientific and literary diction may at any moment surface upon the churning squall of endless sentences and paragraphs, flicker suggestively, and before its pertinence has been more than dimly glimpsed abruptly disappear into the flood. However, unlike the word-processor on the floating island of Laputa, the Nishidian kaleidoscope, in its multiple formations and scramblings, permutations and combinations, is the product of a mind struggling with an ineluctable problem, that posed by the encounter of Eastern and Western traditions, and the perspectives it throws up suggest the immensity of the promise, as well as the treacherous pitfalls, that this encounter conceals.

"I have always been a miner of ore; I have never managed to refine it."² The sadness in these words reflects not merely Nishida's sense of personal limits, but also perhaps a realization that the task he had set himself, of pursuing philosophical speculation in a language so remote from Greek or German and so little oriented to logical definition and systematic development, was one for which the ground was unprepared. To make Japanese a philosophical language, and to express Buddhist insights in and against the philosophical jargon of the West, he had to spend a lifetime rummaging among untried linguistic and conceptual possibilities, rather than advancing with the assured scientific tread of his Western colleagues. If he made more progress in this endeavor than anyone before him, it is due no doubt to his strategy, stubbornly pursued, of focusing on a single central theme, one intimately attuned to Japanese language and sensibility as well as to the wisdom of Zen Buddhism, namely, the notion of "immediate experience."

In his phenomenally influential first book, *A Study of Good* (1911), he pursues this idea in a style inspired by Bergson and James. David Dilworth has pointed out that already in this work a fondness for arguments of a speculative and idealist tinge prevents Nishida from embracing the "radical empiricism" of James: "While Nishida, with Zen overtones, 'emptied' experience of all content to find a richer experience which he found no trouble in articulating in the language of Western idealism, James had actually pursued his own analysis of 'A World of Pure Experience' as a critique of transcendental idealism."³ Bergson too becomes a fund of speculative rather than phenomenological insight in Nishida's reading, and the

same may be said of his reception of Husserl, as the work here translated will show. Similarly, in 1933, he writes: "Heidegger's philosophy is not dialectical; it is merely an interpretative phenomenology."⁴

One wonders, however, if the complex dialectical language of Nishida's later attempts to approximate to the reality of immediate experience, the language of "absolutely contradictory self-identity" and the "self-reflecting mirror of self-identity," really served his purpose as well as a more strictly phenomenological approach might have done. One might express the same unease about the ambitious speculative language of Japanese philosophy as Lucien Price does about American music in remarking "that our composers, instead of beginning back where the Europeans began, in simplicity, have begun in complexity and tried to make it more complex. It is perhaps too soon to know whether this is a success or a failure."⁵ Though Nishida's dialecticizing is inspired by the speculative legacy of Prajñāpāramitā and Hua-yen (Kegon) Buddhism⁶ as much as it is by Hegel, it seems an unduly cumbersome vehicle for his insight into the way all experiences find their "place" in absolute nothingness (an Oriental equivalent of the Platonic or Neo-Kantian *mundus intelligibilis*); this insight may be more simply and effectively conveyed in his remarks on impressionist paintings or on the poetry of Goethe.⁷

Nonetheless, those who expect that the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness can meet and heal the religious and philosophical anxiety of the modern West will attend carefully to whatever insights prompted his struggle with the limits of Western logic. His dialectical proclivities are not very much in evidence in his second full-scale work, here translated. Neither does this work propound the speculative constructions of the world from the standpoint of absolute nothingness found in his later, increasingly daring writings. Even so, two celebrated Japanese authors, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965), found in it a Dostoyevskian revelation of the abysses of the human heart.⁸ Indeed the work presents a small-scale enactment of the movement of Nishida's entire career, a movement from abyss to abyss. It originates from a Bergsonian-Fichtean abyss of immediate experience as self-consciousness and ends with a plunge into an Eriugenian-Schopenhauerian abyss of absolute will as absolute freedom. The argumentative infrastructure of this adventure may not always meet the highest requirements of logical cogency, but the reader is certainly taken on a wide-ranging journey, sharing the author's suspense as to the final destination.

Completed in 1917, *Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei* (Intuition and

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reflection in self-consciousness)⁹ is the public diary of a philosophical education. It chronicles Nishida's eager search for a more sophisticated grounding of immediate experience in an account of self-consciousness loosely inspired by Fichte, as well as his long-drawn-out confrontation with the Neo-Kantian philosophers, Cohen, Natorp, Rickert, and Windelband, then at the zenith of their fame, but now, despite the reviving interest of a few historians, forgotten. During these years he was also reading Lotze, Windelband's mentor, who is credited with keeping alive the idealist tradition in the bleakly materialistic period between the death of Hegel and the raising of the cry "back to Kant" in the later 1860s by Otto Liebmann, Friedrich Lange, and Aloys Riehl, soon followed by Hermann Cohen. The Neo-Kantians saw Kant as constructing the rational foundations of Newtonian science and they aimed to streamline and purify this construction, by equating the "thing in itself" with the ideal imperative of the mind's desire to know, and reducing the Kantian categories to aspects of a unified thrust of noetic consciousness (Cohen, Natorp), or else by focusing on the "ought" of logical validity as the true foundation of knowledge (Rickert). This aim took them away from the critical radicality of Kant himself. Nishida too seems to have imbibed serviceable Kantian doctrines, but not an effective critical method.

One might regret that Nishida devoted so much time to these increasingly scholastic epistemologists and so little to those of his authorities who had thrown off the yoke of Kantian jargon and embarked on the kinds of analysis which have prevailed in twentieth century philosophy: Husserl, Russell, Meinong, Brentano, Bolzano. It may be wondered why, given the obsolescence of the problems it deals with, this work should now be presented in an English translation. The misgiving cannot be allayed, I fear, by an appeal to the work's purely philosophical interest, for many an equally grandiose achievement in European philosophy of the same period now blushes unseen. But its historical interest, which is of more than one kind, may render its publication not unjustifiable. To students of European philosophy the present work offers a curious glimpse of the reverberations of Kant and Neo-Kantianism on a distant shore. For students of Japan this first document of a speculative struggle of a Japanese mind with Western philosophy may throw new light on the still unfolding story of Japan's absorption and transformation of Western culture since the Meiji period. Light is also thrown on the origins of the Kyoto School, which has recently become so well known in connection with the Christian-Buddhist encounter. Nishida's first work and several of the products of his later life are ac-

cessible in translations, summaries, and extracts in European languages; the present translation maps the transitional tunnel period connecting *A Study of Good* with the later works and at last makes a fully-rounded portrait of Nishida available to Western students. More than any other of his works, it reveals his anchorage in a certain constellation of Western ideas, and should serve both to temper claims about his uniqueness and originality and to locate his position in the history of philosophy more accurately.

The basis of the present publication is a complete, literal translation provided by Valdo H. Viglielmo, who in an unpublished essay gives this account of his work:

When I turned to translate Nishida's second major work, . . . I was disappointed to discover that it lacked much of the grandeur and excitement of his maiden work. I was not prepared for the detailed epistemological analysis of this second work nor was I familiar with the many Neo-Kantian scholars from whose works Nishida quoted so extensively. Yet another difficulty for me was the frequency with which Nishida used analogies from mathematics. . . . My translation of the work proceeded extremely slowly, but after setting the task aside for long periods to concentrate on literary topics, I finally completed my draft translation, as I recall, in Hawaii in February 1965. . . .

In the summer of 1963 I went to Japan for the entire academic year with my family. I had as my goal the completion of the translation of both *Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei* and Natsume Sōseki's unfinished last novel *Meian (Light and Darkness, London, 1971)*. Unfortunately I became seriously ill in the winter of 1963-64 and was unable to complete either translation at that time, but I did have occasion to meet with Professor Takeuchi in the late spring of 1964 at his home in Kyoto after I had recovered from my illness. At that time, and on numerous later occasions, he helped me considerably by reviewing my translation of *Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei*, making valuable suggestions and corrections, as well as explaining to me various philosophical problems.

Upon reviewing the work with an eye to its publication, the staff of the Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture enlisted my help in drafting a rather drastically edited version of the translation, allowing me to take bold liberties which at times amounted to a complete rethinking and paraphrasing of the text. This decision was not taken lightly. For one thing, it meant parting with the principles of translation under which Professor Viglielmo had labored. His reservations about the extent of the textual reconstruction were based on a fear that the reader would not be exposed to the true nat-

ure of Nishida's thought processes, with their characteristic redundancy and indetermination. For another, the Japanese academic world is not accustomed to the kinds of critical editing common in the West. In the judgment of the Nanzan Institute and its consultors, however, a literal and unabridged translation seemed impracticable at the present time if the work was to reach its intended audience. The editorial process of paring Nishida's composition in order to bring his essential arguments into clearer relief would of course have been impossible without the solid foundation provided by Professor Viglielmo's diligent and meticulous work in reproducing the substance and surface of the text.

Eliminating repetitions, ironing out the circuitous tentativeness of the style, which abounds in phrases like "it might be thought that . . ." and "one might also suppose that . . ." (though some praise this "meditative" style as reproducing the movement of the wondering mind), breaking up paragraphs, arranging sequences of ideas in more perspicuous order, and omitting fragmentary, opaque and inconclusive passages (while trying to avoid sacrificing anything of substance), I edited out a nimbus of vagueness, bringing the logical content of the arguments, insofar as I could grasp it, into clear view, so that they could stand or fall thereby. My aim was to "refine" Nishida's "ore" as much as was necessary to produce a more readable English text, one which might even be of help to those Japanese students who have found the work here translated a difficult hurdle to negotiate in their study of the philosopher. The results were carefully checked against the Japanese original (with much assistance from Jan Van Bragt and James Heisig). Our hope is that this abundance of cooks has for once enriched the broth.

The basic reason for the necessity of such editorial maneuvering is that Nishida wrote his philosophy *currente calamo*, adding section to section in the manner of a Japanese *renga*:

Every morning he regularly wrote two or three sheets at a go, much as a novelist would work. Actually, I do not think Nishida wrote his essays with quite the same purpose as the creator of a literary work, for these daily installments rather served to chronicle his cogitations, a process which could have no end, just as it had no beginning. His books have a quite different flavor from ordinary ones with their ordered sequence of chapters. Rather than construct a book in this way, he wrote a series of essays, which accumulated to form a volume. Yet the result was never simply a collection of essays. When he had finished one essay he always immediately registered the feeling that

something was missing, and to supplement the lack he proceeded to add another. Like an artist, his work was never done.¹⁰

The breadth of Nishida's reading is a phenomenon worthy of note, and it may safely be assumed that no Western contemporary of his would have been able to explore a comparable range of Eastern sources. Reading German and English fluently, French and Latin with some difficulty, he imbibed influences from every major European literature, from the sciences, from German, French, English, and American philosophy, and from classical, patristic, and medieval sources. Somewhat in the spirit of a crossword-solver, I have tracked down as many of his allusions as possible, in the belief that the historical interest of the text would be enhanced by the provision of its dialogical context, the net of influences in which it is entangled. Though many details of influence and reference were left untraced, and many corners of Nishida's argumentation remain insufficiently enlightened, enough has been done to enable the reader to form a just estimate of what Nishida achieved in his long struggle with his sources and to survey his claims and arguments in a demystified perspective. In several places direct quotations replace Nishida's paraphrases, which serves to lessen the "thieving magpie" allusiveness of the text and identify its bearings in a more graphic way. Sometimes this may have compounded obscurity, for Rickert, Cohen, Natorp, and even the famed stylist Bergson are not always as lucid as their assurance would lead one to expect.

Rather than repeat Nishida's summary of his argument in the Preface, I shall merely make some suggestions as to how readers may most expeditiously find their way to the nub of the matter. It should be rewarding to pay critical attention to a motif which recurs everywhere, namely, Nishida's strategy, pursued in countless ways, of reducing the common dualisms of philosophical and common sense discourse to some immediately experienced reality which resolves the dualism and integrates both sides of it. Among the many dualisms targeted are those between intuition and reflection, subject and object, existence and value, the form and the matter of thinking, the universal and the particular, judgment and concept, quality and relation, logic and mathematics, the psychological and the logical, knowledge and will, mechanism and vitalism, body and spirit, *egressus* and *regressus*, rest and motion, past and future, being and non-being, the individual self and the greater (divine) self. It is clear that Nishida is carrying on his philosophical battle on a great number of fronts, crusading for a reduction of the jungle of received philosophical ideas and rigid dichotomies to the simplicity of the absolute, experienced in the here and now. The

absolute is living, present Act; this Act, of self-consciousness, or will, or freedom, constitutes the full and ineffable reality which the scientific and philosophical language of self and world, past and future, matter and spirit, can grasp only in an abstract and objectifying way, leading to rigid dualisms and irresoluble antinomies.

This is quite Buddhistic, and was undoubtedly fueled by Nishida's Zen practice. But Buddhist philosophy is not explicitly drawn on, and even for his loftiest flights Nishida invokes such Western sources as Scotus Eriugena. Later, Nishida will satisfy his passion for unification and immediacy by integrating contradiction into his thought as the very texture of the here and now (in which both past and future are present only by not being present, or in which time exists only as the contradiction of space and space as the contradiction of time). But in the present work he indulges in syntheses more reminiscent of Western philosophy. In the early sections self-consciousness is the immediate instance which unifies subjectivity and objectivity, existence and value, intuition and reflection. In the middle sections the various sciences are unified as successive concretizations of the incomplete and abstract self-consciousness expressed in pure logic; the abstract form of self-consciousness calls for this fulfillment and through it returns to its own concrete truth. In the final sections absolute free will (which is both the immediate experience of the self and the ground of the cosmos) unifies knowledge and will, self and God, mechanism and vitalism, being and non-being, and provides a deeper ground for the results established in the entire preceding argument. Nishida himself recognizes that these sketches of a unifying ground could not satisfy his aspirations. For all the radicality with which they are successively sketched and occupied, each of these projections of the ultimate is derivative from some Western scheme. On finding his way back to the Oriental standpoint of absolute nothingness, Nishida must have sighed: "so near, and yet so far!" Whether he was later able to appropriate this standpoint lucidly, so that it overcame the accumulated jargon of the Western legacy, and showed through the series of abstractions of the prose meant to convey it, is a question on whose answer depends our final assessment of Nishida's historical status.

Perhaps the following sections may be recommended as most likely to repay attention: Section 1, which sketches Nishida's initial position, grounding knowledge, in its intuitive and reflective aspects, in unobjectifiable self-consciousness, an intellectual intuition in which the transcendental *Sollen* or "ought" actively recognizes itself; Section 10, which summarizes his views on the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, existence

and value, as worked out in a discussion of the judgment of identity "A is A"; Section 15, with its lucid account of the relation between sensation and cognition; Section 20, which attempts to capture the texture of the experiential world as a differential continuum underlying all other, relatively abstract, constructions of the world; Section 21, a characteristic piece of polemic against the objectifying psychology of Wundt; Section 29, which focuses the *élan vital* ("pure activity, reason-*qua*-non-reason, being-*qua*-relative-non-being, experience-*qua*-thought") whereby abstract thought hastens to its fulfillment in concrete intuition, logic calling for mathematics, arithmetic for analytic geometry, and so on; Section 37, in which from the foregoing meditations on the unity and interplay of subjective and objective in the Act of self-consciousness there begins to unfold a grand metaphysical vision of the relations between brain and consciousness, body and mind, mechanism and teleology, inorganic and organic, material and spiritual, relations founded in a vital unity whose core is the activity of the will; Section 39, which develops the notion of the living present as the center of gravity of reality, the apex of creative evolution, freeing us from the bondage of Newtonian time; Section 42, which surveys the world of knowledge from the final vantage point of a monism of absolute free will. If one begins by calling at these stations of Nishida's journey, noting the obscurities and unanswered questions encountered at each of them, and the possible implications of Nishida's claims at each point, one should enjoy a fairly adequate grasp of the scope and limitations of the work, which should make it easier to read in its entirety. The reader will, I think, find it advisable to pin Nishida down at the start in some such way as this, thus avoiding the risk of becoming lost in the flux of his wide-ranging discussion.

The reader should not pass over too lightly the pious remarks which strew Nishida's text, particularly in the later sections. Though at first these appear merely ornamentative, they may provide the essential key to the spirit of the work and the goal of its explorations. A tiny sprinkling of Buddhist allusions signals the realm of joyful detachment and freedom which Nishida aspired to capture in philosophical conceptuality. More portentous is the invocation of such figures as St. Paul, Basilides, Valentinus, Origen, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena, Saint-Cyran, Boehme. They orchestrate a monistic religiosity, wherein the self, as it touches its own depths, opens on to the paradoxical dimension of the absolute, grasped as a coincidence of opposites. Despite its derivation from a rather wayward selection of Christian sources, this line of speculation already reveals the

characteristic lineaments of Nishida's religious vision, which later acquired fixed form in the notion of "absolute contradictory self-identity," a formula which becomes an almost obsessive ritornello in his later works.

Professor Viglielmo calls the conclusion of *A Study of Good*, the chapter entitled "Intelligence and Love,"¹¹ "a magnificent piece of literature, a kind of prose-poem on a par with the greatest religious poems of both East and West." While such a claim can scarcely be made for the present work, it nonetheless reveals a further stage in the author's nagging at the religious problem. Nishida's Prefaces are particularly interesting for their confession of how unsatisfied the religiosity of the final part of the work left him, and the reader may even find that the text itself conveys this dissatisfaction both by protesting too much in its presentation of religious ideas and by neglecting to pursue them with determination. No doubt the prevalence of the characteristic identities of idealism (between thought and intuition, between consciousness and self-consciousness, or even, it occasionally appears, between idea and existence) prevented him from attaining the more subtle and freely moving panentheistic outlook which is the core of the later "Nishida philosophy."

The present translation may claim to present a Nishida previously unknown to the West. The degree to which he appears as a compulsively *mimetic* philosopher—ever echoing the grave rumble of Kant, the tortured acrobatics of Fichte, or Hegel's dialectical flightiness—will remind some readers of analogous phenomena in contemporary Japanese life; I think of the youths at Enoshima clutching their cumbersome California surfboards as they paddle in a perfectly placid sea. Mimetic rivalry is also in evidence. One can hear Nishida purr with satisfaction as he shows, for example, that Husserl's careful distinction between the content and the object of perception falls short of the higher viewpoint in which "the object which transcends consciousness" is no more than "the internal unity of consciousness itself" (Section 25). These displays of knowingness are conducted in the key of suggestion rather than assertion, and in modest dependence on the authorities which he plays off one against another.

It must be admitted, however, that in spite of, or rather by means of, this mimetic dialectic (which the present rather homeopathic translation has compounded), Nishida emerges as a thinker of stubborn originality. Particularly in the last chapters, when he leaves off from shuttling from one Neo-Kantian category to another and forgets his minute preoccupation with judgments of self-identity and perceptions of straight lines, one becomes aware of a broader sweep, a more pleasing coherence, and a more

determined thrust to this argument than its desultory progress had led one to expect. One finds oneself launched, unexpectedly, on the ocean of Absolute Free Will, which is identified with the very core of immediate experience before its conceptual moment has differentiated itself negatively from its matrix. The emergence of this theme, which combines the Hellenic quest for the absolute with the Biblical sense of God as creative will, and sublates both in a Buddhist wonder at the world which comes into being anew from nothingness at every moment, is refreshing like the explosion at the end of *Bolero*, assuaging the tedium of the professorial tone and the chagrin of interrupted arguments. These chapters mark a turning-point: behind them lies Nishida's long apprenticeship as an imitator of Western voices; before lie the grander themes of his later philosophy. No students of the Kyoto philosophy of absolute nothingness can afford to ignore these pages or their context (without which they cannot be understood). It is the interest of this genealogical revelation which most encourages us to present *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* to the appreciation of a wider public.

Joseph S. O'Leary

NOTES

1. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Paul Turner, Oxford University Press, 1971, 183-84. James Heisig brought my attention to the theory that the Plate on page 181 is derived from a Swiss author's reproduction of the Japanese syllabaries.
2. Kitarō Nishida, *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness: Three Philosophical Essays*, trans. Robert Schinzinger, Tokyo: Maruzen, 1958, preface.
3. David Dilworth, *Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945): The Development of his Thought* (1970), Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1977, 44.
4. Nishida Kitaro, *Fundamental Problems in Philosophy*, trans. David A. Dilworth, Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1970, 95.
5. *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead as Recorded by Lucien Price*, New York: Mentor, 1964, 66.
6. Especially as conveyed by the writings of D. T. Suzuki. The influence of Prajñāpāramitā logic is particularly evident in Nishida's last essay, "The Logic of Place and a Religious Worldview." Two translations of this work are forthcoming, by David Dilworth (University of Hawaii Press) and Yusa Michiko (*The Eastern Buddhist*).
7. "Goethe's Metaphysical Background" in *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, 143-59.
8. *Nishida Kitarō: dōjidai no kiroku*, Tokyo: Iwanami, 1971, 44-45.

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9. The book comprises vol. 2 of Nishida's collected works, *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, Tokyo: Iwanami, 1978.
10. Miki Kiyoshi, *Dokusho to jinsei*, Tokyo: Shinchōbunko, 1974, 137-38.
11. Nishida Kitaro, *A Study of Good*, trans. V. H. Viglielmo, Tokyo: Printing Bureau, Japanese Government, 1960, 185-89.

Preface

This work, consisting of studies contributed from September 1913 to May of this year (1917), to two journals, the earlier ones to *Geibun* and the later ones to *Tetsugaku kenkyū*, was originally meant to be a simple essay, but, as I pursued my thought to its finer reaches, doubt gave rise to doubt, one solution requiring another, and the pages piled up to form an entire volume. My aim was to rethink each dimension of the real in light of what I call the system of self-consciousness, and thereby to clarify a problem considered fundamental in contemporary philosophy, that of the connection between value and being, and between meaning and fact. Self-consciousness, in my usage, denotes the self-consciousness of the transcendental ego (close to Fichte's *Tathandlung*). This central conception, originally suggested to me, I think, by the Supplementary Essay in Volume I of Royce's *The World and the Individual*, was first expressed in my essay "Logical Understanding and Mathematical Understanding," included in *Shisaku to taiken (Thought and Experience)*, and the present work grew out of the attempt to investigate this idea thoroughly. If I have succeeded, I think I have shown that a new interpretation of Fichte can serve as the foundation of both Kantian and Bergsonian thought.

PREFACE

The first six Sections provide an outline of my views at the time I began this study. Here I clarified my understanding of self-consciousness, and aired the expectation of being able to explain the fundamental relationship between value and being in light of self-consciousness, in which meaning and existence are one, and which includes infinite development. (Later reflection showed me how problematic this project was, and forced me to state my doubts about it.) Reasoning that the real world is founded on the consciousness of an "ought," I saw the distinction between the worlds of meaning and reality as a relative one. I attempted a similar account of the distinction between universal and particular in Section 6, which now seems to me extremely inadequate in both thought and expression; the complete understanding of this idea must be sought at the end of the work.

In Sections 7 to 10, I tried to construct, as the foundation of my entire argument, a very formal system of self-consciousness on the basis of an extremely simple logical thought experience, the judgment of the law of identity. This judgment, I claimed, already encompassed in the most universal form the oppositions and relationships of value and being, object and cognitive act, form and content, and I thence attempted to clarify, in the most basic manner, the significance and relationship of each of these categories in concrete experience. In Section II, upon reconsidering the matter, I attempted to determine whether the empirical world can be explained as a system which is identical to that of the above formal thought experience, and I was forced to conclude that between these two stretch many chasms difficult to bridge. In Section 12, in order to clarify the transition of internal necessity from a merely formal system of logical thought to an experiential system having content, I ventured a fundamental theory, based on my previous discussion in "Logical Understanding and Mathematical Understanding," of how form acquires content, or how the abstract progresses to concreteness, as in the passage from logic to mathematics. Thus I clarified, with regard to the most abstract thought experience, the nature of the internal development of experience, or the *élan vital*. (This too is one of the basic ideas of this work.) Despite this elucidation, it proved difficult to move from the world of thought to the world of reality. In Section 13, I reduced the irrationality and objectivity of experience, as opposed to thought, to the fact that experience itself, like thought, is an autonomous system of self-consciousness, but the nature of this system, and the way in which it combined with thought, remained unclear. Sections 11 to 13, then, form a transition from the study of thought systems to that of experiential systems.

To show that systems of experience also are self-conscious systems, like systems of thought, and that all experiences, as systems of the same kind, are internal syntheses of meaning and reality, I needed first to prove that perceptual experiences are self-developing, self-conscious systems. I began with a general statement of the difficulties (14 to 16). I had become very interested in the original views of Hermann Cohen on "the anticipation of perception," which shed light on the *activity* of consciousness, but leave its *origin* unexplained. Cohen had thus, I felt, missed the key point at which the worlds of meaning and reality diverge; I was dissatisfied with an epistemology which did not open onto metaphysics.

From Section 17 the argument is chiefly concerned with consciousness, whose activity is grasped as the self-determining of an infinite idea. The relationship between unconsciousness and consciousness is characterized in the manner of Cohen as similar to that between dx and x ; thus I viewed consciousness of a certain straight line as an infinite progression determining itself. In order to develop this insight into the way in which Platonic ideas descend into the real, I felt it necessary to examine carefully the psychologist's view of mental phenomena and to assess the significance and status of psychological analysis (18). As later explained, I do not see mental and material phenomena as independent realities, but as the two interrelated aspects of concrete experience. Immediate concrete experience is not the psychologist's so-called consciousness, but rather a continuum based on various a priori positions, whose unifying function is thought of as subjectivity, while that which it unifies is thought of as the objective; true objective reality is the continuum itself. In Sections 19 and 20, following Fiedler, I show that perceptual experience, in its pure state, is a formal activity, and that the continuous is the truly real.

In Sections 21 and 22, using the example of the consciousness of a continuous straight line, I discussed the opposition and relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in a creative system. Since to *perceive* a straight line is to be conscious of it as one determination of an infinite, continuous straight line which is an object of *thought*, I contended that this perception is a self-conscious system wherein a universal determines itself. By tracing this activity of determination to its source I hoped to throw light on the nature of consciousness. But the particular determination of a universal thought object in perception seemed an accidental event, extrinsic to this universal, and I was unable to discover an internal necessity of determination within the straight line itself as thought object. I attempted to evade this difficult point by proposing that the consciousness of an object

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of pure thought must include the experience of an activity, and that true subjectivity is a structural function of objectivity. Viewed from a more comprehensive standpoint, the unifying activity of a lesser standpoint appears as subjective, though constitutive of objectivity within that standpoint itself. Thus we are dealing with a dynamic fusion of subject and object which we may call both true subjectivity and true objectivity. However, the following problem arose: is not the lesser standpoint which is reflected upon from the more comprehensive one already an object? For if it were true dynamic subjectivity it could not be reflected upon, and that which is reflected upon is no longer dynamic subjectivity (24). At that time I had not yet discovered the standpoint of absolute free will explored at the end of this work; I was searching for something, and did not find it, so that the confusion of the discussion was unavoidable.

Abandoning the problem of the possibility of reflection, I discussed the qualities of the activity of consciousness (25), and invoked the notion of limit to shed light on them. A limit is a position of a higher order which cannot be reached from a lower one, yet which is the foundation of this lower position, providing the concrete basis to what is relatively abstract. In Section 26, I clarified this in light of contemporary mathematics, and tried to consider the various meanings of limit as qualities of activities. After making some observations on the distinction between objects of thought and objects of immediate perception (27), I used the idea of limit to study the union of thought and perception (28). I claimed that the union of number and perception in analytical geometry is not merely accidental, as a mathematician might think, but is based on the requirement of objectivity intrinsic to knowledge. Knowledge is an infinite developmental process, and its quest for objectivity is a quest for a concrete whole given at the outset, in which the union of thought and immediate perception is already given. (Later I described this truly concrete given as the unity of absolute free will.) This is the reason the objectivity of knowledge is attained through uniting thought and immediate perception (29). In Sections 30 to 32, I applied this idea to the relationship between number and geometric space, showing that in the transition from number to space the *élan vital* is again operative, and that the object of analytical geometry is the concrete base of both number and space. This helped me to focus the point of contact between thought and experience. Further reflection on the meaning of a geometric straight line as a self-conscious system (33) shed light on the opposition and relationship of spirit and matter, though this topic still remained extremely obscure (34).

From Section 35 on, I viewed perceptual experience as a self-conscious system similar to all thought systems, and unified all experience in accord with one principle. This permitted a clarification of the nature and relationship of spiritual and material phenomena. Having refuted the notion that the body is the foundation of consciousness, or that sensation arises from matter (36), I presented a teleological account of the mind-body relationship (37), and showed that only things which are ends in themselves are true concrete realities, that life is thus more concrete than matter, and spirit more concrete than life, that material phenomena are projections of spiritual phenomena, and that the material world is a means to spiritual development (38). I claimed that we can repeat past experience only in accord with a position of trans-cognitive will, and that this will is the true point of fusion of ideal and actual (39). The remaining chapters reconsider the main issues of the work from this final position. After giving an account of the primacy of the will (40), and after explaining that "absolute free will" is not merely formal will without content, but the activity of concrete personality (41), I discussed the relationship between thought and experience (42), the condition of possibility of the unification of all experience in a single system by reflection, and the nature and relationships of various realms of reality such as spirit and matter (43). Having thus established the principles of a solution of the problems which had so long detained me, I could undertake a final treatment of the problems of the union of value and being, meaning and fact, which were the first objective of this work, venturing an explanation of how, at a certain time and in a certain place, a certain individual can consider a universally valid truth.

The Postface consists of the lecture entitled "Various Worlds," delivered before the Philosophical Association of Tokyo Imperial University in April of this year, but since it sums up briefly the final position of this work, I have appended it here. Also, to facilitate the reader's comprehension, I have included a Table of Contents, but since this book was not written according to a preconceived plan, if one adheres too strictly to it, it may be more of a hindrance to understanding than a help.

This work is a document of a hard-fought battle of thought. I must admit that after many tortuous turns I have finally been unable to arrive at any new ideas or solutions. Indeed I may not be able to escape the criticism that I have broken my lance, exhausted my quiver, and capitulated to the enemy camp of mysticism. Nevertheless I have sincerely tried to clear the desk of my thought. Of course this is a work which I hesitate to present for the perusal of scholars, but if there are some who have problems similar to

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mine and who are similarly laboring over their solution, they may feel some sympathy even if they do not receive any enlightenment.

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Tanaka-mura, North Kyōto

Nishida Kitarō

Preface to the Revised Edition

This work is a product of the period when, after having been a high school language teacher, I first ascended the lecture platform of a university. The trend of my thought had already been set in *Zen no kenkyū* (*A Study of Good*). Now I began to study Rickert and the other Neo-Kantians, attempting to maintain an individual position on every point vis-à-vis this school. I opposed to their sharp distinction between value and being, and meaning and fact, an overall unity of the two pairs from a position of self-consciousness, which is an internal union of intuition and reflection. This position was close to that of Fichte's "Act," but not strictly the same, for I focused on the self-generation and self-development of concrete experience. At that time I was stirred by the works of Bergson, but again, despite my whole-hearted agreement with him, my ideas do not entirely coincide with his. The notion of absolute will, which is the final position of this work, may remind some readers of my present position of "the self-identity of absolute contradiction," but it is still very remote from it. I used the limit concept of the Marburg school to discuss the internal unity of thought and experience, and object and act, but the true final position, from which the problems could have been solved, though hinted at from various angles,

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continued to elude me, so that the work remained inconclusive. This is why I was forced to confess at the end of the first Preface that I had broken my lance, exhausted my quiver, and capitulated to the enemy camp of mysticism. Today, probably the only significance of this work is that it represents one stage in my intellectual development. Though I reread this work in preparation for the revised edition, it is so distant from my present philosophical position as to make it impossible for me to add anything. As I look back over this document of thirty years ago representing my hard-fought battle over several years, I cannot but have the feeling of exertion expressed by the famous phrase, "I have had fierce struggles, Descending into the dragon's cave for you."¹

February 1941
Nishida Kitarō