



## Pure Experience

Nishida Kitaro, *An Inquiry into the Good*, translated by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 3-29, 158-166.

To experience means to know facts just as they are, to know in accordance with facts by completely relinquishing one's own fabrications. What we usually refer to as experience is adulterated with some sort of thought, so by *pure* I am referring to the state of experience just as it is without the least addition of deliberative discrimination. The moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound, for example, is prior not only to the thought that the color or sound is the activity of an external object or that one is sensing it, but also to the judgment of what the color or sound might be. In this regard, pure experience is identical with direct experience. When one directly experiences one's own state of consciousness, there is

## Pure Experience

not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified. This is the most refined type of experience.

Usually, of course, the meaning of the term *experience* is not clearly fixed. Wilhelm Wundt refers to knowledge that is reasoned out discursively on the basis of experience as *mediate experience*, and he calls disciplines like physics and chemistry sciences of mediate experience.<sup>1</sup> Such kinds of knowledge, however, cannot be called experience in the proper sense of the term. Further, given the nature of consciousness, we cannot experience someone else's consciousness. And even with one's own consciousness, whether consciousness of some present occurrence or a recollection of the past, when one makes judgments about it, it ceases to be a pure experience. A truly pure experience has no meaning whatsoever; it is simply a present consciousness of facts just as they are.

What kinds of mental phenomena are pure experience in this sense? Surely no one would object to including sensations and perceptions. I believe, though, that all mental phenomena appear in the form of pure experience. In the phenomenon of memory, past consciousness does not arise in us directly, so we do not intuit the past; to feel something as past is a feeling in the present. An abstract concept is never something that transcends experience, for it is always a form of present consciousness. Just as a geometer imagines a particular triangle and takes it to be representative of all triangles, the representation element of an abstract concept is no more than a type of feeling in the present.<sup>2</sup> And if we consider the so-called fringe of consciousness a fact of direct experience, then even consciousness of the various relations between experiential facts

1. Nishida's note is "Wundt, *Grundris der Psychologie*, Einl. §1." In this chapter of the work, translated by Charles Hubbard Judd, Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), a German philosopher and psychologist, writes that "the standpoint of natural science may . . . be designated as that of *mediate experience*, since it is possible only after abstracting from the subjective factor present in all actual experience; the standpoint of psychology, on the other hand, may be designated as that of *immediate experience*, since it purposely does away with the abstraction and all its consequences." Wilhelm Wundt, *Outlines of Psychology* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1897), 3. Wundt wrote prolifically on such topics as philosophy, psychology, physiology, ethics, and logic and established the first laboratory for experimental psychology. Advancing a type of voluntarism, he opposed the sensationalism of thinkers like Mach.

2. Nishida's note is "James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol.1, chap.vii." Nishida's personal library, now mainly in an archive at Kyoto University, includes the 1890 edition published in New York by Henry Holt.

## Pure Experience

is—like sensation and perception—a kind of pure experience.<sup>3</sup> Granting this, what is the state of the phenomena of feeling and will? Obviously, feelings of pleasure and displeasure are present consciousness; and the will, though oriented toward a goal in the future, is always felt as desire in the present.

Let us now consider briefly the characteristics of this direct, pure experience that is the cause of all mental phenomena. The first issue is whether pure experience is simple or complex. Given that direct, pure experience is constructed out of past experience and can be analyzed later into its single elements, we can consider it complex. Yet no matter how complex it might be, at the moment it occurs, pure experience is always a simple fact. When a reappearing past consciousness has been unified within present consciousness as a single element and has obtained a new meaning, it is of course no longer identical with the original past consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, when we analyze a present consciousness, what we are left with after analysis is no longer identical with that present consciousness. From the perspective of pure experience, then, all experiences are distinct and in each case they are simple and original.

Next, we need to determine the extent of the synthesis of pure experience. The present of pure experience is not the present in thought, for once one thinks about the present, it is no longer present. In the present as a fact of consciousness there must be some temporal duration.<sup>5</sup> The focus of consciousness is at all times the present, and the sphere of

3. Nishida's note is "James, *A World of Pure Experience*." James writes in this essay (originally published in 1904 in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*) that "the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in the system." John J. McDermott, ed., *The Writings of William James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 195.

4. Nishida's note reads "Stout, *Analytical Psychology*, vol.ii, p.45." In this section of *Analytical Psychology* (New York: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902), George Frederick Stout writes, "the only particular which is actually operative is the given particular. It is the special piece of sugar as seen by me at this special moment which recalls the sweet taste. The past particular experiences of other particular bits of sugar no longer exist, and therefore cannot operate." Stout (1860–1944) was an English philosopher and psychologist.

5. Nishida's note is "James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol.1, chap.xv." In this chapter, "The Perception of Time," James writes, "In short, the practically cognized present is no knife-edge but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time." William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol.1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 609.

pure experience coincides with the sphere of attention. But the sphere of pure experience is not necessarily limited to a single focus of attention. Without adding the least bit of thought, we can shift our attention within the state where subject and object have not yet separated. For example, a climber's determined ascent of a cliff and a musician's performance of a piece that has been mastered through practice are examples of what G. F. Stout calls a "perceptual train."<sup>6</sup> Such a mental state may accompany the instinctual behavior of animals as well.

In these mental phenomena, perception maintains a strict unity and connectedness; when consciousness moves from one thing to the next, attention is always directed toward the things perceived and each act gives rise to the next without the slightest crack between them for thinking to enter. Compared with an instantaneous perception, a perceptual train allows for shifts of attention and temporal duration, but in terms of directness and the union of subject and object, there is no difference. Because a so-called instantaneous perception is actually a consolidated construct of a complex experience, the two types of perception differ merely in degree, not in kind. Thus, pure experience is not necessarily limited to simple sensations. In the strict sense of the expression as used by psychologists, a simple sensation is actually a hypothetical entity resulting from scholarly analysis, not a direct, concrete experience.

The directness and purity of pure experience derive not from the experience's being simple, unanalyzable, or instantaneous, but from the strict unity of concrete consciousness. Consciousness does not arise from the consolidation of what psychologists call simple mental elements; it constitutes a single system from the start. The consciousness of a newborn infant is most likely a chaotic unity in which even the distinction between light and darkness is unclear. From this condition myriad states of consciousness develop through differentiation. Even so, no matter how finely differentiated these states may be, at no time do we lose the fundamentally systematic form of consciousness. Concrete consciousness

6. Nishida's note is "Stout, *Manual of Psychology*, p.252." Stout does not use the expression "perceptual train" on the page noted by Nishida, but he discusses the persistence demonstrated by squirrels in opening hickory nuts: "Just because the impulse is a tendency towards an end, it guides the course of the action. When the action enters into a phase which checks instead of furthering the return to equilibrium, the current of activity diverts itself into a relatively new channel. This process would not be a process towards an end, if it could persist without variation in an unsuccessful course." George Frederick Stout, *A Manual of Psychology* (New York: Hinds & Noble, 1899), 252-253.

that is direct to us always appears in this form. Not even an instantaneous perception diverges from this. For example, when we think we have perceived at a glance the entirety of a thing, careful investigation will reveal that attention shifted automatically through eye movement, enabling us to know the whole. Such systematic development is the original form of consciousness, and as long as the unity maintains itself and consciousness develops of its own accord, we do not lose our foothold in pure experience.

This holds true for representational and perceptual experiences as well. When a system of representations develops by itself, the event as a whole is a pure experience. An example of this is Goethe's intuitive composition of a poem while dreaming. In perceptual experiences, attention is directed by external objects, so such experience might seem to lack a unity of consciousness. But behind the perceptual activity an unconscious unifying power must be functioning, and it is this that guides attention. In contrast, a representational experience, however unified it might be, is necessarily a subjective action and seems to diverge from experience of the pure sort. When its unity occurs by itself and it coalesces on its own, though, we must recognize even a representational experience as a pure experience. For example, when its unity is not interrupted by external factors, a dream is readily confused with a perceptual experience. There is no fundamental distinction between internal and external in experience, and what makes an experience pure is its unity, not its kind. When strictly combined with a sensation, even a representation is a single experience. But when a representation is detached from the unity realized in the present and related to some other consciousness it is no longer a present experience, for it has become meaning. Moreover, when it stands alone, a representation is—like a dream—readily confused with a perception. And the reason a sensation is always considered an experience is that it invariably constitutes the focus of attention and the center of unity.

Let us now delineate in more detail the significance of the unity of consciousness and the character of pure experience. Like any organic entity, a system of consciousness manifests its wholeness through the orderly, differentiated development of a certain unifying reality.<sup>7</sup> When

7. "A certain unifying reality" is a rendering of the term *sitsusuki arumono*, literally, "a unifying certain thing." Throughout this translation, *arumono* is rendered "a certain reality" rather than "a certain thing" or "a certain entity" in order to avoid the limited, substantialist nuance of "thing" or "entity." In several sentences that include the term reality (as in ultimate reality) we render this expression "a certain unifying factor" in order to avoid confusion.

a consciousness starts to emerge, a unifying activity—in the form of a feeling of inclination—accompanies it. This activity directs our attention, and it is unconscious when the unity is strict or undisturbed from without; otherwise it appears in consciousness as representations and diverges immediately from the state of pure experience. That is, as long as the unifying activity is functioning, the whole is actuality—it is pure experience.

Assuming that we can argue that consciousness is entirely impulsive, and that as voluntarists maintain the will is the fundamental form of consciousness, then the mode of the development of consciousness is, in a broad sense, the mode of the development of the will, and the aforementioned unifying inclination is the goal of the will. Pure experience is an animated state with maximum freedom in which there is no gap between the demands of the will and their fulfillment. Of course, relative to a selective will, control by an impulsive will might be seen as a restriction of the will. In a selective will, freedom has already been lost; yet when we then train the will, it again becomes impulsive. The essence of the will lies not in desire concerning the future but in present activity. Physical actions accompanying the will are not necessary elements of it. From a purely psychological viewpoint, the will is an internal, apperceptive activity of consciousness, and apart from this unifying activity there is no distinctive phenomenon called the will. In fact, the zenith of this unifying activity is the will. Like the will, thinking is a kind of apperceptive activity, but its unity is simply subjective whereas the will involves a unity of the subject and object. For this reason the will always functions in the present.<sup>8</sup>

I have claimed that pure experience is the intuition of facts just as they are and that it is devoid of meaning. When expressed in this way, pure experience might be considered a nebulous, nondiscriminating condition. However, because various meanings and judgments derive from distinctions in the experience itself, these distinctions are not imparted by the meanings or judgments: experience always includes an aspect of discrimination. For example, one looks at a color and judges it to be blue, but this judgment does not make the original color sensation any clearer; the judgment has simply established a relationship between the

<sup>8</sup>. Nishida's note is "Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, §§4." In *The World as Will and Representation*, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) sets forth a notion of a universal will that expresses itself as the world and all that it contains.

present sensation and similar sensations in the past. Or if I take a single visual experience to be of a desk and make various judgments about it, no richness is added to the content of the experience itself. The meanings of, or judgments about, an experience are simply expressions of its relation to other experiences; they do not enrich the content of the experience. Meanings or judgments are an abstracted part of the original experience, and compared with the original experience they are meager in content. There are of course times when, in recollecting the original experience, we become conscious of something that was unconscious, but this is nothing more than our attending to a part of the original experience that was not previously an object of attention. Meaning or judgment thus does not add anything new to the experience.

Assuming that pure experience is endowed with discriminations, what are the meanings or judgments added to it and how do they relate to pure experience? People usually argue that when pure experience is connected to objective reality it generates meaning and takes the form of judgments, but from the perspective of my theory of pure experience, we cannot leave the sphere of pure experience. Meanings or judgments derive from the connection of a present consciousness to past consciousnesses; meanings and judgments are based on the unifying activity in the great network of consciousness. They indicate the relation between present consciousness and other consciousnesses, and therefore merely express the position of present consciousness within the network of consciousness. For example, when one interprets an auditory sensation to be the sound of a bell, one has merely established the sensation's position relative to past experiences.

Regardless of its nature, as long as consciousness maintains a strict unity it is a pure experience: it is simply a fact. But when the unity is broken and a present consciousness enters into a relation with other consciousnesses it generates meanings and judgments. In contrast to pure experiences that reveal themselves to us directly, the consciousness of the past has now become activated and connects with one part of present consciousness while conflicting with another. The state of pure experience thus breaks apart and crumbles away. Such things as meanings and judgments are states of this disunity. Upon careful reflection, however, we see that even these unities and disunities differ only in degree; there is neither completely unified consciousness nor completely disunified consciousness. All consciousness develops systematically. Just as an instantaneous knowing implies various oppositions and shifts, so behind

### Pure Experience

the relational consciousness that is seen in meanings and judgments must there be a unifying consciousness which makes the relations possible. As Wundt says, all judgments derive from the analysis of complex representations.<sup>9</sup>

When a judgment has been gradually refined and its unity has become strict, the judgment assumes the form of a pure experience. For example, as one matures in an art, that which at first was conscious becomes unconscious. Taking this a step farther, we are led to the conclusion that pure experience and the meanings or judgments it generates manifest the two sides of consciousness: they are different facets of one and the same thing. In a certain respect, consciousness possesses unity; but at the same time there must be an aspect of development through differentiation. And as William James explains in his essay "The Stream of Thought," consciousness is not stuck in its present, for it implicitly relates to other consciousnesses. The present can always be seen as part of a great system, and development through differentiation is the activity of a still greater unity.

If we thus regard even meaning as derived from the activity of a great unity, then does pure experience transcend its own sphere? When it relates to the past through memory and to the future through the will, does pure experience transcend the present? Psychologists hold that consciousness is an event, not a thing, and that it is therefore new at each moment and never repeated. I believe that their perspective diverges from the theory of pure experience. Do not psychologists reason from the character of time, in which the past does not recur and the future has not yet arrived? From the standpoint of pure experience, must we not consider consciousnesses with identical content as being identical? For example, in thinking or willing, when a representation of a goal is continuously functioning, we must consider it a single entity; likewise, even when a unifying activity is interrupted in its functioning through time, we must still consider it a single entity.

9. Nishida's note is "Wundt, *Logik*, Bd. I, Abs. III, Kap. I." Nishida's personal library at Kyoto University includes the work, which has the full title of *Logik: Eine Untersuchung der Prinzipien der Erkenntnis und der Methoden wissenschaftlicher Forschung*. The first volume is entitled *Allgemeine Logik und Erkenntnistheorie*.

### CHAPTER 2

## Thinking

In psychological terms, thinking is the activity that determines relations between representations and unifies them. Its simplest form is judgment, which connects two representations by determining a relation between them. But in making a judgment we are not connecting two independent representations—we are actually analyzing a single representation in its entirety. For example, the judgment "The horse runs" derives from analysis of a single representation: "the running horse." Facts of pure experience always underlie judgments, and for this reason we can connect the subject and object representations in a judgment.

It is not always the case that first an entire representation appears and then analysis begins. Sometimes a representation of a grammatical subject

## Pure Experience

emerges, which triggers a series of associations that continue until we choose one. Even in this case, however, the entire representation containing the individual subject and object representations must come forth in order for us to decide on a certain association. Although the representation was operating implicitly from the start, we can make a judgment only when it becomes manifest.

The idea that pure experience must exist at the base of judgments pertains not only to judgments of facts but also to purely rational judgments. Even the axioms of geometry are based on a kind of intuition. No matter how abstract two concepts might be, the experience of a unifying reality underlies the comparison and judgment of them. This accounts for what is called necessity in thinking. And as noted earlier, if not only perceptions but also the consciousness of relations is "experience," then we can argue that a fact of pure experience underlies a purely rational judgment as well. This holds even for judgments that result from inference; just as Locke argues that there must be an intuitional verification in each step of demonstrative knowledge,<sup>1</sup> so must there always be a fact of pure experience at the base of each judgment in the series. When we reach a conclusion by synthesizing judgments of various facets of something, even though we might lack a factual intuition that unifies the whole, a logical intuition that unifies and synthesizes all the relations is functioning. (Even the so-called three laws of thought<sup>2</sup> are a kind of inner intuition.) For example, in surmising from various observations that the earth is moving, one makes that judgment in accordance with the laws of logic grounded in a kind of intuition.

1. Nishida's note is "Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. xv, ch. ii, 7." In section 7 of chapter 2, Locke writes, "Now, in every step reason makes in demonstrative knowledge, there is an intuitive knowledge of that agreement or disagreement it seeks with the next intermediate idea, which it uses as a proof; since without the perception of such agreement or disagreement there is no knowledge produced. . . . By which it is plain, that every step in reasoning that produces knowledge has intuitive certainty." John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: George Routledge and Sons Limited, n.d.), 43.

2. The three laws of thought are the law of identity, the law of contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle. The law of identity is expressed in the formula, "A is A"; each thing is what it is and as such can be a predicate for itself. The law of contradiction states that "A is not not-A," and logically this indicates that contradictory judgments cannot both be true. The law of the excluded middle is that "Everything is either A or not-A (and cannot be something in the middle)," which in part means that contradictory judgments cannot both be false and hence do not point to the truth of a third or middle judgment.

## Thinking

Thinking and pure experience traditionally have been considered totally different mental activities. But when we cast off dogma and consider this straightforwardly, we see that, as James said in "The World of Pure Experience," even the consciousness of relations is a kind of experience—so we realize that the activity of thinking constitutes a kind of pure experience.

We can distinguish perceptions and the mental images that constitute thinking by regarding the former as arising from the stimulation of nerve endings by external objects and the latter from stimuli in the cortex of the brain. Internally we rarely confuse perceptions with mental images, but when viewed in a purely psychological manner we cannot easily make a strict distinction between the two. The distinction between them is not absolute because it derives from their differing intensities and relations to other things. (In dreams and hallucinations we often confuse mental images with perceptions.) This distinction does not exist in the primordial consciousness; perceptions and mental images are only later distinguished on the basis of their relations to other things. Perception seems to be a simple event and thinking a complex process, but perception is not necessarily simple, for it too is a constitutive activity. And in its aspect of unity, thinking is a single activity that develops a certain unifying reality.

Let us discuss this further, as there may be objections to putting thinking in the same category as perceptual experience. People usually think that perceptual experiences are passive because the activity is completely unconscious and that thinking is active because the activity is completely conscious. But can we make such a clear-cut distinction? When developing and operating freely, thinking also bases itself almost entirely on unconscious attention. Contrary to what one might expect, thinking becomes conscious when its advance is hindered. That which advances thinking is not voluntary activity, for thinking develops on its own; only when we rid ourselves of the self and merge with the object of thought or the problem—when we lose ourselves in its midst—does the thinking activity emerge.

Thinking has its own laws. It functions of its own accord and does not follow our will. To merge with the object of thought—that is, to direct one's attention to it—is voluntary, but I think perception is the same in this respect: we are able to see what we want to see by freely turning our attention toward it. When compared with perception the unity in thinking seems looser and its transitions more conscious. Even

### Pure Experience

this distinction, which we took earlier to be thinking's special feature, is relative. In the instant it shifts from one representation to the next, thinking, too, is unconscious, and as long as the unifying activity is actually functioning it must be unconscious. By the time we are conscious of this activity as an object, it already belongs to the past. The unifying activity of thinking is in this way completely outside the will.

When we think about a problem it seems that we can freely select from various lines of thought. This holds for perception as well. In a somewhat complex perception, we are free to direct our attention. Looking at a picture, for example, we can be attentive to its form or its colors. And although people contend that in perception we are moved from without and in thinking we move from within, the distinction between external and internal is relative. People make this distinction simply because the mental images that constitute the material of thinking change with relative ease and shift on their own.

Many people think that perception and thinking are completely different because perception is a consciousness of concrete facts whereas thinking is a consciousness of abstract relations. But we cannot be conscious of purely abstract relations. The movement of thinking occurs by virtue of certain concrete mental images, and without them it cannot take place. To prove, for example, that the sum of the angles of a triangle equals the sum of two right angles, we must depend on the mental image of a particular triangle. This thinking is not an independent consciousness divorced from such mental images, for it is a phenomenon that accompanies them. Gore explained that the relationship between a mental image and its meaning is identical to that between a stimulus and its response.<sup>3</sup> Thinking is the response of consciousness to a mental image, and the mental image is the first step in thinking: thinking and mental images are not separate things. A mental image, regardless of its type, never stands alone, for it inevitably appears in some relation to the whole of consciousness. This aspect of thinking is relational consciousness, and pure thinking is thinking in which this aspect is especially distinctive.

Given the relation between mental images and thinking, we must ask whether perception involves something similar to what we see in thinking. It always does, for like all phenomena of consciousness, perception is a systematic activity. The result of a perception is quite noticeable because it comes forth as will or movement, but in the case of a mental

### Thinking

image thinking does not go beyond internal relations. In actual consciousness, then, a distinction holds between perceptions and mental images, but not between the concrete and abstract. Thinking is consciousness of actual relations among mental images, and, as previously discussed, from the standpoint of pure experience in the strict sense no distinction can be made between perceptions and mental images.

In the foregoing paragraphs, I argued from the perspective of psychology that even thinking is a kind of pure experience; but thinking is not simply a fact that occurs in an individual's consciousness—it possesses objective meaning. The primary function of thinking is to manifest truth. Although there is no true or false in pure experience as the intuition of one's own phenomena of consciousness, thinking does include a distinction between true and false. To clarify this, we must consider in detail the meaning of such terms as objectivity, reality, and truth. When we think critically, we realize that reality does not exist apart from the facts of pure experience and we can explain the character of these notions psychologically.

As stated earlier, consciousness derives meaning from its relations to other consciousnesses—meaning is determined by the system to which consciousness belongs. Identical consciousnesses yield different meanings by virtue of the different systems in which they participate. For example, when a mental image that is a consciousness of a certain meaning is viewed simply as it is with no relation to anything else, it is merely a fact of pure experience with no meaning whatsoever. Conversely, consider a perception that constitutes consciousness of a certain fact: though it possesses meaning by virtue of its relations with other things in the system of consciousness, in many cases this meaning is unconscious.

Which ideas are true and which false? We always believe that what is most powerful, greatest, and deepest in a system of consciousness is objective reality. Whatever fits with it we consider true, and whatever conflicts with it we consider false. We judge the correctness or error of perceptions from this perspective as well. Thus, in a given system a perception is correct when it fits well with the system's purposes; when it runs contrary to them, it is in error.

These systems of course contain a variety of meanings, so we might make the distinction that systems of perception are mainly practical, whereas systems of thinking are a matter of pure knowledge. My view, however, is that since the ultimate purpose of knowledge is practical, reason functions at the base of the will. Though I shall discuss this later

3. Nishida's note is "Dewey, Studies in Logical Theory."

## Pure Experience

in regard to the will, let me state here that even this distinction between the two systems is not absolute. Although they are equally activities of knowing, an association of ideas or memory is simply a relationship—or, more strongly, a unity—within an individual's consciousness, whereas thinking is trans-individual and general. This distinction derives from our limiting the scope of experience to the individual and our failure to arrive at the recognition that there is no individual person prior to pure experience. (Will is the lesser, and reason the profound, demand of the unity of consciousness.)

Up to this point we have compared thinking with pure experience. Despite our ordinary view of these as two completely different things, deeper reflection reveals a point of correspondence between them. To clarify their relation further, let us consider the origin, course, and outcome of thinking.

Probably everyone agrees that the primordial state of our consciousness and the immediate state of developing consciousness are at all times states of pure experience. The activity of reflective thinking arises secondarily out of this. If this is indeed the case, why does this activity arise? Consciousness, as stated earlier, is fundamentally a single system; its nature is to develop and complete itself. In the course of its development various conflicts and contradictions crop up in the system, and out of this emerges reflective thinking. But when viewed from a different angle, that which is contradictory and conflicted is the beginning of a still greater systematic development; it is the incomplete state of a greater unity. In both conduct and knowledge, for example, when our experience becomes complex and various associations arise to disturb the natural course of our experience, we become reflective. Behind this contradiction and conflict is a possible unity. In the midst of decision or the resolution of conflicts, then, the groundwork of a great unity has already been laid.

We never rest in the internal states of unity that arise from decisions or conflict resolution: decision is always accompanied by action. Likewise, even thought necessarily has some sort of practical meaning and must come forth in action. Both conduct and knowledge must arrive at the unity of pure experience.<sup>4</sup> The fact of pure experience in this regard is the alpha and omega of our thought, and thinking is the process by which a great system of consciousness develops and actualizes itself.

4. Consciousness, for Nishida, is a self-developing system. It originates in pure experience and develops itself through various conflicts and contradictions in terms of conduct and knowledge. It finally arrives at a unity in which pure experience is fully realized.

## Thinking

Viewed from within the great unity of consciousness, thinking is a wave on the surface of a great intuition. When we are troubled about some goal, for example, the unified consciousness that is the goal operates at all times as an intuitive fact behind our thinking. Accordingly, thinking does not possess a content or form different from pure experience. Though it may be profoundly great, thinking is simply an incomplete state of pure experience. From another angle, a truly pure experience is not passive, for it has a constitutive, universal aspect; pure experience includes thinking.

The notions of pure experience and thinking derive from two different views of what is fundamentally one and the same fact. If in line with Hegel's emphasis on the power of thinking we assume that the essence of thinking is not abstract but concrete, then thinking is nearly identical to pure experience in my sense of the expression, and pure experience is none other than thinking. From the perspective of concrete thinking, the universality of a concept is not what we usually say it is—that is, an abstraction of similar natures from something concrete. Rather, it is the unifying force of concrete facts. Hegel likewise writes that the universal is the soul of the concrete.<sup>5</sup>

Because pure experience is a systematic development, the unifying force that functions at its foundation is the universality of concepts; the development of experience corresponds to the advance of thinking; and the facts of pure experience are the self-actualization of the universal. Even in the case of sensations and associations of ideas, a concealed unifying activity operates in the background. In contrast, as noted before, when the unity in thinking functions, it is unconscious; only when the unity is abstracted and objectified does it appear as a different consciousness—but then the unifying activity has already been lost. If pure experience were simple or passive it would be opposed to thinking. But if pure experience means to know things just as they are, then simplicity or passivity are not characteristics of it—the truly direct state is constitutive and active.

We ordinarily think we know the universal through thinking and the individual through experience. But apart from the individual there is no universal. That which is truly universal is the concealed power behind the actualization of the individual; the universal is located within the individual as the power that causes the individual to develop. It is like

5. Nishida's note is "Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 111, S.37."

### Pure Experience

the seed of a plant. If the universal were something abstracted from an individual entity and stood in opposition to other particulars, it would after all be a particular, not a genuine universal; the universal would not hold a position above that of a particular but would have equal status. Take, for example, a colored triangle. From the standpoint of triangularity, the color is a particular characteristic, but from the standpoint of color, the triangularity is a particular characteristic. If universals were likewise this abstract and powerless they would not constitute the basis for inference or synthesis. The true universal at the base of the unity that is found in the activity of thinking therefore must be the concealed power that takes as its content the individual actuality. The universal and the individual differ only in that one is implicit and the other explicit; the individual is that which is determined by the universal.

When we consider the relation between the universal and the individual in this way, the logical distinction between thinking and experience disappears. Our present individual experience is actually in the process of development; it possesses a concealed power, which can be still more finely determined. In the case of sensation, for example, there may be room for further development through differentiation, and from this angle we can regard it as universal. Conversely, if we examine something universal at only one point of its development, we can deem it as individual. Usually, the only things we label as individual are those that are determined in time and space, but this type of determination is merely external. The true individual must be individual in its content—it must be something with unique characteristics. In the true individual something universal has reached the extreme limit of its development. What we ordinarily refer to as sensation or perception is a universal that is meager in content. And contrary to what one might think, a painter's intuition full of profound meaning is truly individual.

In all likelihood, a materialistic bias underlies the view that an individual is a merely material entity determined in time and space. From the standpoint of pure experience, we should compare experiences by means of their content. Even things like time and space are nothing more than forms that unify experiences according to content. The strength and clarity of a sense impression and its close relation with feeling and volition are probably the primary reasons for our thinking of sense impressions as individual. Yet even such a phenomenon as thought is never unrelated to feeling and volition. That which moves our feeling and volition powerfully is usually regarded as especially individual, for in contrast to

### Thinking

knowledge, feeling and volition are our goal and are close to the culmination of the development of consciousness.

In summary, thinking and experience are identical. Although we can see a relative difference, there is no absolute distinction between them. I am not saying that thinking is merely individual and subjective. Pure experience can, as discussed earlier, transcend the individual person. Although it may sound strange, experience knows time, space, and the individual person and so it is beyond them. It is not that there is experience because there is an individual, but that there is an individual because there is experience. The individual's experience is simply a small, distinctive sphere of limited experience within true experience.



## Will

From the standpoint of pure experience I will now discuss the character of the will and clarify the relationship between knowing and willing. The will often takes action as its goal and accompanies it, but the will is a mental phenomenon that is distinct from external action, and action is not a necessary condition of the will. Even when circumstances in the external world are such that action does not occur, the will is still functioning. As psychologists say, we can will a movement simply by recollecting a past memory; if we direct our attention to the memory, the movement will follow naturally. From the standpoint of pure experience the movement itself is but a continuation of the sensation of movement in recollection. Further, when seen directly, it becomes clear that the

### *Will*

goals of the will are actually facts that exist within consciousness; we will our own state at all times, and in the will there is no distinction between internal and external.

We tend to think of the will as some special power, but in fact it is nothing more than the experience of shifting from one mental image to another. To will something is to direct attention to it. We see this most clearly in so-called involuntary conduct. In the aforementioned perceptual train, for example, the shift of attention and the advance of the will correspond exactly. This does not mean that attention is limited to the will—its scope may be wider—but that the will usually exists as a state of attention vis-à-vis the system of movement representations. To put it differently, the will emerges when the system of attention occupies consciousness and we become one with it.

We might think that simply paying attention to a representation is different from seeing it as a goal of the will, but the difference lies in the system to which the representation belongs. All consciousness is systematic and no representation arises alone—it necessarily belongs to some system. Depending on the systems to which they belong, two identical representations can become an object of knowledge and a goal of the will. In recollecting a cup of water, for example, when the cup is associated simply with conditions in the external world it becomes an object of knowledge, but when it is associated with one's own movements it becomes a goal of the will. Goethe's notion that the unattainable stars in the heavens are beautiful<sup>1</sup> is related to the idea that that which does not enter the system of one's own movement representations cannot be a goal of the will.

It is a fact that all our desires arise through the recollection of past experiences. Desires are characterized by both strong feelings and sensations of tension. Regarding the former, the system of movement representations is based on what are for us the strongest life instincts; the latter are the muscular sensations accompanying movement. We cannot argue that just to recollect a movement is to will it, for at the time of

<sup>1</sup> Mephistopheles says about Faust to God: "Forsooth, he serves you most peculiarly. / Unearthly are the fool's drink and his food; / The ferment drives him forth afar. / Though half aware of his insensate mood, / He asks of heaven every fairest star / And of the earth each highest zest; / And all things near and all things far / Can not appease his deeply troubled breast." *Goethe*, vol.47, 8. For Nishida, because we cannot reach the stars in the heavens we can not take them as goals of the will. Therefore, free from human volitional interest, they are simply beautiful.

### Pure Experience

recollection the movement representations have not yet occupied the whole of consciousness. It is only when they become purely one with it that the will immediately begins to act in a decisive manner.

What then is the difference between systems of movement representations and systems of representations in knowing? In the beginning of the development of consciousness there are no such distinctions. Originally, organisms perform various movements in order to preserve life. Because consciousness evolves in accordance with such instinctual movements, the primordial state is impulsive rather than perceptual. But because we can make various associations of ideas to the extent that experiences accumulate, two kinds of systems become possible: one is based on the center of perception and the other is based on the center of movement. No matter how much the two systems diverge, however, they do not completely differ in kind. Pure knowing in some respect possesses practical meaning, and pure will is based upon knowledge of some sort. Concrete mental phenomena are endowed with both aspects. Knowing and the will are simply two ways of referring to one phenomenon by separating the distinctive aspects. From this perspective on mental phenomena, perception is a kind of impulsive will and the will is a kind of recollection. Moreover, even the pure knowing involved in memory representations does not necessarily lack practical meaning. And the will, though often regarded as arising by chance, is actually based on some kind of stimulus. People may say that the will usually advances from within toward certain goals, but even perception can set its goal beforehand and then direct the sense organs toward it. Thinking is completely voluntary, whereas the impulsive will is thoroughly passive.

Accordingly, movement representations and knowledge representations are not completely different in kind, and the distinction between the will and knowing is merely relative. However weak, both the feelings of pleasure and pain and the sense of tension that are characteristic of the will inevitably accompany the activity of knowing. From a subjective perspective, knowledge can also be regarded as the development of an internal latent power. We can, as mentioned earlier, think of both the will and knowledge as systematic developments of a concealed reality.

When viewing the subject and object separately we make a distinction: in knowledge, we subordinate the subject to the object, whereas in the will, we subordinate the object to the subject. To discuss this in detail, we must clarify the nature of the subject and the object as well as their relationship, but knowledge and the will have a point in common. In the

### Will

activity of knowledge, we first hold an assumption and then look at it in light of facts. No matter how empirical our research might be, we must first have assumptions. When an assumption is congruent with the so-called objects, we believe it is true; we feel we were able to know the truth. In the case of volitional movements, having a desire does not lead directly to decisive action on the part of the will; only when we have considered the desire in light of objective facts and have grasped the appropriate possibilities do we shift to performance. Hence we cannot say that in an act of knowledge we completely subordinate the subject to the object whereas in a volitional act we subordinate the object to the subject. A desire can be fulfilled only through congruence with the object. The farther the will recedes from the object, the more ineffective it becomes; the closer it approaches, the more effective it becomes.

When attempting to put a lofty goal divorced from actuality into action, we must consider various means and proceed step by step accordingly. To consider means in this manner is to seek harmony and accord with the object. If in the long run we fail to discover appropriate means, we have no recourse other than to alter the goal. On the other hand, when the goal is close to the given actuality, as in the habitual conduct of everyday life, the desire immediately turns into performance. In this case we do not function out of the subject; rather, we function out of the object.

Just as we do not completely subordinate the object to the subject in volition, we do not completely subordinate the subject to the object in knowledge. When our ideas constitute an objective truth—when it is known that our ideas follow the laws of reality and that objective reality operates according to them—have we not then been able to realize our ideal? Thinking is also a kind of apperceptive activity; it is an internal will based on a demand to know. Is not our being able to reach a goal of thinking therefore a kind of fulfillment of the will? The difference between volition and knowledge is that in volition we modify objective facts to accord with our ideal, whereas in knowledge we modify our ideal to accord with objective facts; one produces and the other discovers. But truth is not something we can produce—it is something in accordance with which we should think.

We must now ask whether truth ever exists totally separate from the subject? From the standpoint of pure experience, there is no such thing as an object divorced from the subject. Truth is that which has unified our experiential facts, and objective truth is the system of representations

that is most effective and most integrating. To know the truth or to accord with it is to unify our experience; it is to proceed from a lesser to a greater unity. If we regard our authentic self as being this unifying activity, then to know the truth is to accord with this greater self, to actualize it. (As Hegel said, the goal of all learning is for spirit to know itself in all things of the universe.) As knowledge deepens, the activity of the self becomes greater, for that which was not the self now enters into the system of the self.

Because our thinking usually centers on individual demands, we feel ourselves to be passive in knowing, but if we relocate the center of consciousness in so-called rational demands, then we become active in knowing. As Spinoza said, knowledge is power.<sup>2</sup> We believe we can move our bodies freely by recalling past movement representations. But our bodies are made of matter, so they are no different from other material bodies. To know the change of an external thing through one's vision is the same as feeling the movement of one's own body through muscular sensation. Hence the "external world" refers both to our bodies and to other material things. Yet why do we think that we can freely control only our own bodies and not external objects? We usually consider movement representations to be both our mental images and the cause of movement in the external world. From the standpoint of pure experience, however, to say that we move the body by means of the movement representation is simply to recognize that a movement sensation accompanies a certain anticipatory movement representation. This is the same as the actualization of anticipated changes in the external world. In the state of primordial consciousness, the movement of one's own body and the movement of an external object are perhaps identical, and they come to be distinguished only as experience advances. That which occurs under specific conditions is regarded as a change in the external world and that which immediately complies with the anticipatory representation is regarded as one's own movement. Yet this distinction is not absolute, for slightly complicated movements do not comply directly with anticipatory representations. In this regard, the activity of the will distinctly approaches the activity of knowledge.

2. Following Francis Bacon earlier in the sixteenth century, Baruch Spinoza (1632–1697) maintained that "knowledge is power": the self-determining intellect is a type of efficient power (the efficient cause of its ideas) and human virtue is the activity of the intellect. David Bidney, *The Psychology and Ethics of Spinoza: A Study in the History and Logic of Ideas* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 285.

In summary, if we regard a change in the external world as actually a change in our world of consciousness—that is, as a change within pure experience, and if we regard the presence and absence of conditions as differences in degree, then the fulfillment of knowledge and the fulfillment of the will turn out to be of the same character. Someone may argue that an anticipatory representation does not simply come before a willed movement but directly functions as the cause of the movement, whereas an anticipatory representation in our knowing does not constitute the cause of a change in the external world. But fundamentally causality is an invariable continuity of phenomena of consciousness. If for the sake of argument we were to posit the existence of an external world completely independent from consciousness, then a conscious anticipatory representation in volition could not be considered the cause of movement in the external world, for all we could say is that the two phenomena parallel each other. From this perspective, the relationship of the anticipatory representation in volition to movement is identical with the relationship of the anticipatory representation in knowledge to the external world. In actuality, an anticipatory representation in volition and the movement of the body do not accompany each other except under certain conditions.

We usually contend that the will is free. But what is this so-called freedom? Our desire essentially is something imparted to us—we cannot produce it freely. Only when we function according to a certain profound, imparted motive do we feel we are active and free. Conversely, when we function in opposition to such a motive, we feel compulsion. This is the true meaning of freedom. Freedom in this sense is synonymous with the systematic development of consciousness. In knowledge, too, we are free in the same way. We think we can freely desire anything, but that simply means that it is possible for us to desire. Actual desires are imparted at specific times. When a motive is developing, we might be able to predict the next desire, but otherwise we cannot know beforehand what the self will desire in the next instant. It is not so much that I produce desires, but that actualized motives are none other than me. People usually say that a transcendent self outside desire freely decides motives, but of course there is no such mystical power; and if decisions made by such a transcendent self did exist, they would be fortuitous and anything but free.

As we have noted, there is no absolute distinction between volition and knowledge. Any assumed distinction is but an arbitrary judgment

## Pure Experience

imposed from without. As facts of pure experience, volition and knowledge are indistinguishable. Together they constitute a process through which a universal reality systematically actualizes itself. The culmination of their unity is truth, and at the same time this culmination is praxis. In the case of perceptual trains, knowledge and the will are still undivided—knowing is none other than acting. With the development of consciousness, because of conflict among various systems—which is an advance toward a still greater unity—one can distinguish between ideals and facts; the subjective and objective worlds diverge; and the idea arises that volition is a movement from the subject to the object whereas knowledge is a movement from the object to the subject. This distinction between willing and knowing arises when we separate the subject and the object and lose the unified state of pure experience.

Both desires in the will and ideas in knowing are states of disunity in which ideals separate from facts. Even an idea is a type of demand vis-à-vis objective facts, and so-called truth is an idea that fits the facts and ought to be actualized. Viewed in this way, truth is identical with a desire that matches facts and can be actualized. The distinction is simply that the former is universal whereas the latter is individual. The fulfillment of the will or the culmination of truth thus means that from a state of disunity one has arrived at the state of pure experience.

This approach to the fulfillment of the will is clear, but this approach to truth requires some explanation. There are various arguments about what truth is, but I think truth is that which comes closest to the most concrete facts of experience. Truth is sometimes said to be universal but if by this one means abstract commonality, then what one is designating is actually far removed from truth. The culmination of truth is the most concrete, direct facts that synthesize various facets of experience. These facts are the basis of truth, and truth is something abstracted and constructed out of them. Though truth lies in unity, the unity is not a unity of abstract concepts. True unity lies in direct facts. Perfect truth pertains to the individual person and is actual. Perfect truth therefore cannot be expressed in words, and such things as scientific truth cannot be considered perfect truth.

The standard of truth is not external, for it lies in our state of pure experience. To know the truth is to be congruent with this state. Even in abstract disciplines like mathematics, the foundational principles lie in our intuition, in direct experience. There are various classes of experience; when we include the consciousness of relations as experience, even such

## Will

things as mathematical intuition constitute a kind of experience. If various direct experiences exist in this way, then one may wonder how we can determine their truth or falsehood. When two experiences are enveloped by a third, we can judge the two according to the third.

It is in the state of direct experience—when subject and object merge with each other and we are unable, even if we try, to doubt the single actuality of the universe—that we have conviction about truth. The activity of the will is an expression of this kind of direct experience; it is the establishment of the unity of consciousness. The expression of desire, like the expression of a representation, is simply a fact of direct experience. Arriving at a decision after a struggle between various desires, like making a judgment after various deliberations, is the establishment of an internal unity. Just as one's scientific conjectures are proven through experimentation, what becomes manifest when the will has been fulfilled in the external world is the most unified, direct experience, which has broken through the subject-object distinction. One might say that the unity within consciousness is free, whereas to achieve a unity with the external world we must accord with nature—but a unity of the internal world is not free, for all unities are imparted to us. And viewed from the perspective of pure experience, even distinctions between internal and external are relative.

The activity of the will is not merely a state of hope. Hope is a state of disunity in consciousness, a situation in which the fulfillment of the will is obstructed. The unity of consciousness is the state of the activity of the will. Regardless of the extent to which actuality is opposed to the self's true hope, when the will is satisfied with and purely one with that actuality, actuality is the fulfillment of the will. Conversely, however complete circumstances may be, when there are various hopes apart from the will and when actuality is in a state of disunity, the will is obstructed. The activity of the will and the denial of that activity are related to simplicity and nonsimplicity, to unity and disunity.

For example, I have a pen here. In the instant of seeing it, there is neither knowledge nor volition—there is just a single actuality. When various associations concerning it arise, the center of consciousness shifts, and when the original consciousness is objectified, it comes to be merely intellectual. In contrast, let us imagine that the associated idea arises that this pen is for writing letters. While this associated idea is still attached to the original consciousness as a fringe element, it is knowledge, but when the associative consciousness begins to stand on its own—when

the center of consciousness has begun to shift toward it—it becomes a state of desire. Accordingly, when associative consciousness has become an increasingly independent actuality, it is the will and, in addition, one truly knows it.

I view any state in which the system of consciousness develops in actuality as the activity of the will. Even in thinking, the focusing of attention on a problem and the seeking of a solution is a form of the will. In contrast, consider the act of drinking tea or *sake*: if there is simply the actuality of drinking, then this is an instance of the will; but if a consciousness that tries to taste the flavor arises and becomes central, we have knowledge. In this example, the consciousness that tastes the flavor is the will. In comparison with ordinary knowing, the will is a more fundamental system of consciousness; it is the center of unity. The distinction between knowledge and volition does not lie in the content of consciousness—it is determined by their place within that system.

At first glance, reason and desire may seem mutually opposed, but I think that in actuality both have the same character and differ only in magnitude and depth. What we call the demands of reason are actually demands for a greater unity; they are demands of the universal system of consciousness that transcends the individual person, and they can even be seen as the manifestation of a great, trans-individual will. The sphere of consciousness is never limited to the individual person, for the individual is no more than a small system within consciousness. We usually regard as central the small system that takes bodily existence for its nucleus, but if we regard the great system of consciousness as central, then this great system is the self, and its development is the fulfillment of that self's will. This is what we find in people of religion, scholars, and artists.

The laws of reason, which say, "It must be like this," and the tendency of the will, which simply says, "I want it to be like this," appear to be completely different, but when we consider them carefully we see that they share the same foundation. The unifying activity of the will functions at the base of all reason and laws. As Schiller and others have argued, even axioms originally developed out of practical need; in their mode of origination, they do not differ from our hopes.<sup>3</sup> Although the

<sup>3</sup>. Nishida's note is "Sturt, *Personal Idealism*, p. 92." In his essay "Axioms as Postulates," Schiller writes that postulates "may rise from the crudest cravings of individual caprice to universal desires of human emotions." Henry Cecil Sturt, ed., *Personal Idealism: Philosophical Essays by Eight Members of the University of Oxford* (London: Macmillan, 1902), 92.

tendency of our will seems not to accord with laws, it is governed by necessary laws, and it is the unity of an individual's consciousness. Reason and the will are laws of the development of the system of consciousness, and only the scope of their efficacy differs.

Some people draw a distinction between the will and reason because the will is blind. But we cannot explain a direct fact; we cannot explain the intuitive principles at the base of reason. To explain is to be able to include other things in a single system. That which is the very nucleus of a unity cannot be explained; thus, it is blind.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>. Because the nucleus of a unity—the intuitive principles at the base of reason—is unexplainable, Nishida says it is blind, just as the will is said to be blind.



# God

God is the foundation of the universe. As said before, I do not regard God as a transcendent creator outside the universe, for God is the base of this reality. The relation between God and the universe is not like the relation between an artist and the artist's work; rather, it is the relation between a noumenon and a phenomenon. The universe is not a creation of God but a manifestation of God.<sup>1</sup> From the movement of the sun, moon, and stars without, to the intricate workings of the human mind within, there is nothing that is not a manifestation of God. We can worship the divine light of God in the foundation of each of these things.

1. In the original text Nishida inserted the English word "manifestation" for the accompanying Japanese term, *hyōgen*, which can also be rendered "expression."

Just as Newton and Kepler<sup>2</sup> were struck by a feeling of piety when they observed the order of the movement of heavenly bodies, so the more we study natural phenomena the surer we know that one unifying power in the background controls them. What people refer to as the advance of learning indicates the unity of this kind of knowledge. Hence, just as we recognize the control of one unifying power outside us in the foundation of nature, so too must we recognize the control of a unifying power within us at the base of the mind. Although the human mind assumes countless forms as if it follows no fixed law, upon contemplation it seems that a great unifying power controls it in all times and places. Taking this a step farther, we see that nature and spirit are not unconnected but, rather, closely interrelated. We cannot help thinking about the unity of the two—that is, there must be an even greater single unifying power at their base. All types of philosophy or science acknowledge this unity. And this unity is, namely, God. Of course, if materialists and scientists are correct in arguing that matter is the only reality and that all things simply follow the laws of material force, then we perhaps cannot conceive of such a thing as God. But is matter the true nature of reality?

As discussed before in regard to reality, we cannot know matter as an independent reality apart from our phenomena of consciousness. The given facts of direct experience are nothing other than our phenomena of consciousness, and what we call space, time, and material force are simply concepts established in order to organize these facts and to explain them. What physicists speak of as pure matter divorced from our individual nature is an abstract concept farthest removed from concrete facts. The closer we approach concrete facts, the more individual they become. The most concrete facts are most individual. Primitive explanations, as in myths, were therefore all anthropomorphic, but as pure knowledge advanced explanations became increasingly general and abstract and eventually generated such concepts as pure matter. Although such abstract explanations are exceedingly superficial and weak, we must not forget that our subjective unity lies behind them. The most fundamental explanation necessarily comes back to the self, for the self is the key to explaining the universe; therefore, to explain spirit according to matter is to invert the root and the branch.

2. Isaac Newton (1642–1727) and Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) established themselves as leading astronomers by setting forth, respectively, three laws of motion and three laws of planetary motion.



That which Newton and Kepler observed and took to be the order of natural phenomena is actually the order of our phenomena of consciousness. All consciousness is established according to a unity, which extends from the unity in the daily consciousness of each individual person to the universal unity of consciousness inclusive of all individual consciousnesses. (The idea that the unity of consciousness is limited to individual consciousness is a dogmatic assumption added on to pure experience.) The world of nature is a system of consciousness constituted by such a trans-individual unity. We unify the experience of the self by means of individual subjectivity and, further, unify the experience of all individuals by means of trans-individual subjectivity. The natural world arises as the object of this trans-individual subjectivity. Royce stated that our belief in the existence of nature is connected with our belief in the existence of our fellow humans.<sup>3</sup> The unity of the world of nature ultimately amounts to a kind of unity of consciousness.

Fundamentally, spirit and nature are not two separate kinds of reality; the distinction between them derives from different views of one and the same reality. In the facts of direct experience, there is no opposition between subject and object and no distinction between mind and matter; matter in itself is mind and mind in itself is matter, and there is only one actuality. The opposition of subject and object originates in conflicts of this system of reality, or—when seen from a certain angle—in the development of this system. In other words, in the continuation of perception there is no distinction between subject and object, for this opposition arises through reflection. When there is a conflict in the system of reality, the unifying activity is thought of as spirit and that which confronts it as its object is thought of as nature. In fact, however, objective nature cannot exist apart from a subjective unity, and we cannot expect to find a subjective unity without an object of unity, that is, content. Spirit and nature are the same kind of reality, differing only in terms of their forms of unity. Anything that leans toward one or the other is an abstract, incomplete reality. Reality first becomes a perfect, concrete reality in the union of the two. The unity of spirit and nature

<sup>3</sup>. Nishida's note is "Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Second Series, Lect. iv." Royce writes, "Our belief in the reality of Nature, when Nature is taken to mean the realm of physical phenomena known to common sense and to science, is inseparably bound up with our belief in the existence of our fellow-men." Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 165–66.

is not a unity of two types of systems—fundamentally they exist in one and the same unity.

If we assume that reality includes no distinction between spirit and nature; that there are not two types of unity; and that facts of direct experience lead to various discriminations depending on how we look at them, then God—the foundation of reality discussed before—must be the foundation of the facts of direct experience, the foundation of our phenomena of consciousness. Nevertheless, all of our phenomena of consciousness constitute a system. Even natural phenomena, which come to exist by virtue of a trans-individual unity, cannot separate from this mode. The self-development of a certain unifying entity is the mode of all realities, and God is their unifier. The relation between the universe and God is the relation between our phenomena of consciousness and their unity. Just as mental images in both thinking and willing are unified by a goal concept and as all things are expressions of this unifying concept, so is God the unifier of the universe and is the universe a manifestation of God. This comparison is not metaphorical—it is a fact. God is the greatest and final unifier of our consciousness; our consciousness is one part of God's consciousness and its unity comes from God's unity. In fact, all things—from such small-scale things as our joys and sorrows to such large-scale things as the movement of the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies—are based on this unity. It was this great unity of universal consciousness that impressed Newton and Kepler.

What is the nature of God, who in this sense is both the unifier of the universe and the foundation of reality? That which governs spirit must be the laws of spirit. And as I said before, matter is nothing more than the shallowest of abstract concepts, established for the sake of explaining things. Mental phenomena are the activity of knowledge, feeling, and volition, and that which governs them must be their laws. But spirit is not a mere collection of these activities; a single unifying power underlies these phenomena, which are its expression. If we call this unifying power personality, then God is the great personality at the base of the universe. From natural phenomena to the historical development of humankind, there is nothing that does not assume the form of great thought and great will. The universe is an expression of God's personality.

Though I argue in this way, I do not agree with the thinkers in a certain school of thought who contend that God transcends the universe and, like our subjective spirit, has distinctive thought and will separate

from the advance of the universe. In God, knowing is action and action is knowing. Reality is none other than the thought and will of God.<sup>4</sup> Such things as our subjective thinking and will are incomplete, abstract realities that arise from the conflict of various systems; we cannot attribute them to God. In *Personality, Human and Divine*, Illingworth sets forth self-consciousness, the freedom of the will, and love as elements of personality.<sup>5</sup> Before we take these three to be elements of personality, however, we must clarify what sort of actual facts these functions signify.

Self-consciousness is a phenomenon that accompanies the unification of a partial system of consciousness in the center of the entirety of consciousness. Self-consciousness arises through reflection, and the reflection of the self is the activity that in this way seeks the center of consciousness. The self is nothing other than the unifying activity of consciousness. If this unity changes, the self changes as well. To call anything else the essence of the self is to make an empty designation. Some people might think that if they reflect inwardly, they will then acquire a special kind of consciousness of the self, but such consciousness is, as psychologists point out, nothing more than a feeling that accompanies the unity. It is not that this unity arises because of such a consciousness, but that such consciousness arises because of the unity. The unity itself cannot become the object of knowledge; we can become it and function, but we cannot know it. True self-awareness exists upon the activity of the will, not upon intellectual reflection.

Construed in terms of the self-awareness in God's personality, each of the unities in the phenomena of the universe are none other than God's self-awareness. For example, the fact that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to the sum of two right angles is necessarily regarded in the same way by each person in each era. This, too, is one instance of the self-awareness of God. We perhaps can say that the notion of a universal unity that governs our spirit is a consciousness of God's self-

4. Nishida's note is "Spinoza, *Ethica*, I Pr. 17 Schol." In this proposition in his *Ethics* Spinoza states that "the intellect of God, in so far as it is conceived to constitute God's essence, is, in reality, the cause of things, both of their essence and their existence. This seems to have been recognized by those who have asserted that God's intellect, God's will, and God's power are one and the same." R. H. M. Elwes, trans., *The Chief Works of Benedict De Spinoza*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover, 1951), 61-62.

5. John Richardson Illingworth (1848-1915) wrote on Christian ethics, God's immanence (*Divine Immanence: An Essay on the Spiritual Significance of Matter*), and reason and revelation.

identity. The myriad things in the world are established through God's unity, and in God, everything is an actuality. Further, God is always active. And in God there is no past or future—time and space arise by means of a universal unity of consciousness. In God, everything is the present. As Augustine said, because God created time and transcends it, God is in the eternal now. In God there is accordingly no reflection, memory, or hope, and hence no special self-consciousness. Because everything is the self and there is nothing apart from the self, there is no consciousness of the self.

The "freedom of the will" has various connotations as well. True freedom is the necessary freedom of functioning from the internal character of the self. A totally causeless will is not only something irrational but also a completely fortuitous event in the self and is not felt as constituting free conduct. As I have said, God is the basis of the countless beings in the universe, and no things exist apart from God. Because all things emerge from God's internal nature, God is free. In this sense God is absolute freedom. God might appear to be restricted by God's own nature and to lose omnipotence, but acting contrary to one's own nature indicates the imperfection of or the contradictions in one's nature. I do not think that God's perfection and omniscience can be established together with a variable free will. Augustine wrote that the will of God is unchanging; God does not sometimes desire certain things and then other times not desire them, much less cancel a previous decision.<sup>6</sup> Selective will must accompany the state of consciousness in us imperfect humans, and such willing ought not be attributed to God. With things we have fully mastered, for example, there is no room for selective will to enter; selective will becomes necessary in instances of doubt, contradiction, and conflict.

As all people say, knowledge of course includes freedom and signifies possibility. Possibility, however, does not have to signify a variable possibility. And knowledge is not limited to reflection, for intuition is a kind of knowledge as well. In fact, intuition is true knowledge. Insofar as knowledge becomes perfect, the variable possibility disappears. Since in God there is no variable will or arbitrariness, God's love is not narrow-

6. Nishida's note is "Conf." Augustine (354-430) writes, "He does not will one thing then another thing; He does not will later something which He had not willed previously, nor does He cease to will something which previously he had willed. Such a will is mutable, and nothing mutable is eternal; but our God is eternal." Rex Warner, trans., *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1963), 294.

*parallel to the doin  
in in*

minded love in which God loves some and hates others, or by which some are caused to prosper and others to die away. The love of the God who is the foundation of reality as a whole must be equal and universal, and its self-development must be infinite love for us. There is no special divine love apart from the development of the myriad things in nature. Love is fundamentally the feeling that seeks unity. The demand for self-unity is self-love and the demand for the unity of self and others is altruism. God's unifying activity is none other than the unifying activity of all things, so as Eckhart says, God's altruism is God's self-love. Just as we love our own hands and feet, God loves all things. Eckhart also states that God's love for people is not an arbitrary action but something that must be done.

As discussed before, although God is personal we cannot view God as identical with our subjective spirit. God should rather be compared to the state of pure experience in which there is no separation of subject and object and no distinction between the self and other things. This state is the alpha and omega of our spirit and the true face of reality. Christ said that those pure in heart shall see God and that one who is like a little child shall enter heaven; indeed, in these cases our heart is closest to God.

As we have seen, pure experience does not indicate mere perceptual consciousness. There is a unity behind reflective consciousness as well. Reflective consciousness is established by that unity, and so it is a kind of pure experience, too. At the base of our consciousness there is always a unity of pure experience, and we cannot jump outside it (see part I). In this sense, God can be seen as one great intellectual intuition at the foundation of the universe, as the unifier of pure experience that envelops the universe. We can thus comprehend Augustine's statement that God intuits all things in the universe by means of unchanging intuition, and that God moves while still and is still while moving.<sup>7</sup> We can also glimpse the meaning of such expressions as Eckhart's "Godhead" (*Gottheit*)<sup>8</sup> and Boehme's "stillness without anything" (*Stille ohne Wesen*). A unity of consciousness transcends change and is unmoved; nevertheless, change arises from it. In other words, it is that which moves and does not move. The unity of consciousness cannot become the object of knowledge. It

7. Nishida's note is "Storz, *Die Philosophie des HL. Augustinus*, §20."

8. For Eckhart, the Godhead (*Gottheit*) is the impersonal ground of God's being and exists prior to any of God's personal characteristics.

WWD 1

transcends all categories and we cannot give it any fixed form—moreover, all things are established according to it. When seen from one angle, God's spirit is unknowable; when seen from another, it is closely connected with our spirit. At the base of this unity of consciousness we can make direct contact with the face of God. This is why Boehme said that heaven is everywhere: wherever one stands or goes is heaven, and it is through the deepest inner life that one arrives at God (*Morgenröte*).

Certain people might say that in my discussion God becomes identical with the essence of matter, or that even if God is regarded as spiritual, there is no distinction between God and reason or conscience, and that therefore God loses all living individual personality. Individuality can only arise from a variable free will. (In medieval philosophy, this is the gist of Scotus's disagreement with Thomas Aquinas.) We do not experience religious sentiment in response to such a God. Further, from my perspective, sin is not simply to break God's laws but to go against personality. Repentance is not mere moral repentance but sharp regret at having harmed one's parents and acted against a benefactor. Erskine of Linlathen<sup>9</sup> stated that religion and morality diverge according to whether personality is recognized behind conscience. But as Hegel and others have stated, true individuality does not exist apart from universality, and limited universality (*bestimmte Allgemeinheit*) becomes individuality. That which is universal is the spirit of that which is concrete. Individuality is not added to universality from without; rather, it has developed from universality. An accidental combination of various qualities without any internal unity cannot be called individuality. The freedom of the will, which is an element of individual personality, is a universal entity's self-determination. Just as the concept of a triangle can be differentiated into various triangles, to be aware of the possibility of the various determinations contained in a universal entity is to feel freedom. No individual awareness arises from a foundationless, absolutely free will. There is an expression, "In individuality there is no reason" (*ratio singularitatis frustra quaeritur*), but such individuality is identical to empty nothingness. My point is only that concrete individuality cannot be known through abstract concepts, although it can be clearly expressed by an artist's brush or a novelist's pen.

That God is the unity of the universe does not signify the unity of

9. Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788–1870) wrote on election (*The Doctrine of Election, and Its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity*) and faith (*An Essay on Faith*, 1826).

an abstract concept, for God is a concrete unity or a living spirit like our individual selves. Just as our spirit is individual, God is individual, too. Reason and conscience may be part of God's unifying activity, but they are not God's living spirit itself. The existence of this sort of divine spirit is not a mere philosophical argument, but an actual fact of spiritual experience.

This spirit functions at the base of all of our consciousnesses. (Reason and conscience are its voices.) But when we are hindered by our small selves, we are unable to know it. The poet Tennyson had the following experience: quietly chanting his own name, from the depths of his own individual consciousness the individuality of his self dissolved and became an infinite reality. During this time his consciousness was anything but vague—rather, it was most clear and certain. He stated that death was a laughable impossibility at this time, and he felt that the 'death of the individual was actually true life. He also said that since his childhood, at times of lonely solitude, he had occasionally had this kind of experience.<sup>10</sup> J. A. Symonds<sup>11</sup> observed that as our normal consciousness becomes dim, the fundamental consciousness at its base becomes stronger until all that finally remains is one pure, absolute, abstract self. There is no limit to such experiences among religious mystics.<sup>12</sup> One might consider these phenomena unhealthy, but whether they are or not depends on whether they are rational. As stated before, if we assume that reality is spirit and that our spirit is simply a small part of it, then there is no reason to feel wonder at breaking beyond one's own small consciousness and realizing one great spirit. Perhaps it is our attachment to the sphere of our small consciousness that is most in error. Great people have spiritual experiences far deeper than those of average people.

10. Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) was an English Victorian poet whose poetry, to a large extent, addressed moral and social problems of his time.

11. J. A. Symonds (1840–1893) wrote on the Italian Renaissance, English drama, Greek poetry, and Walt Whitman.

12. Nishida's note is "James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, lect. XVI, XVII." These two lectures are grouped together under the title of "Mysticism."