

Self-Mirroring and Self-Awareness

Dedekind, Royce, and Nishida

John C. MARALDO

One of the central notions in the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō is that of *jikaku* 自覚 (*self-awareness*), a notion as difficult as it is pervasive. This article attempts to throw light on the meaning of *self-awareness* by investigating its structure. One particular structural model of *self-awareness* seems to have played a decisive role in the formation of Nishida's thought, and to be significant for current debates about the nature of self-consciousness as well. This model describes self-consciousness as a structure in which a whole is mirrored or imaged in a part of itself. Our investigation proceeds by raising several questions for Nishida's philosophy: what is the source of this model? How far can a structural model go to clarify *self-awareness* and other central themes in Nishida's philosophy? And to what extent can Nishida's model resolve problems in the current philosophy of self-consciousness? This last question requires that we go beyond immanent criticism and attempt to question "Nishida philosophy" from the perspective of philosophers with radically different presuppositions. Nishida's thought may not perfectly "mirror" that of other

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philosophers, but unless it reflects concerns in common with them, it may end up a hall of mirrors mirroring only themselves with no one to see the show.

THE FORMATION OF THE MODEL OF SELF-AWARENESS IN EARLY NISHIDA

The notion of *self-awareness* is first developed in essays compiled in the volume called *Contemplation and Experience* [思索と体験]. Some of these essays, written soon after Nishida completed his pioneering *A Study of the Good* in 1911, launched Nishida's project to give a more logical and universal basis to "pure experience."

Nishida knew that pure experience could be misinterpreted as merely subjective and psychological experience, and so he began to connect it systematically to logical thought. A viable connection would have to preserve the immediate and foundational character of pure experience, but also account for the reflective and discursive (mediated) character of logical thought. Strictly speaking, then, it is not logical thought that should serve as the basis of pure experience but the other way around. In "The Claims of the Pure Logic School of Epistemology," Nishida reaffirms that thought is a logical development of experience, and implies that a certain kind of experience, namely *self-awareness*, is at the basis of all logical thinking.¹

These comments are expanded in the 1912 essay "Understanding in Logic and in Mathematics."² There Nishida uses the concept of *self-awareness* to clarify the nature of logical thinking, and the idea of a "self-representative system" to exemplify *self-awareness*. The notion of "self-mirroring" or "self-imaging" [*Selbst-abbilden*; *jiko shazō* 自己写像] in turn lies at the basis of self-representative systems. Josiah Royce had developed the idea of self-representative systems in the "Supplementary

1. 「認識論に於ける純論理派の主張に就いて」『西田幾多郎全集』[Complete works of Nishida Kitarō, hereafter NKZ followed by volume number]. (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2nd edition 1965–1966), I: 232–3.

2. 「論理の理解と教理の理解」, NKZ I: 250–67.

Essay” to the first series of his 1899 Gifford lectures on the world and the individual. The problems that Royce addresses there overlap only in part with those of Nishida, but both find an answer in a mathematician’s speculations on infinity.

ROYCE’S PROBLEM

In his supplementary essay, Royce responds to a challenge he reads in Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality*: how can we grasp unity in diversity without multiplying diverse particulars into an unthinkable infinite multitude?³ Every attempt to relate the One and the Many would seem to generate a relation which itself could become one more object of reflection, hence one more particular, ad infinitum, rendering reality as a whole ungraspable by thought. Royce wants to elaborate an intelligible system of the whole of reality and is challenged to find a single instance of self-evident unity in diversity or, as he later puts it, “some case of an unity which develops its own differences out of itself.”⁴ In his response Royce draws upon the definition of infinity developed in Richard Dedekind’s 1888 essay, “Was sind und was sollen die Zahlen?” Nishida, probably led to Dedekind through Royce, quotes from the same essay in addressing a slightly different problem.

NISHIDA’S PROBLEM

In Part II of his 1912 essay, Nishida challenges the conclusions of Heinrich Rickert’s “Das Eine, die Einheit und die Eins,” an article published the previous year. Logicians from Frege to Russell had attempted to derive all mathematics from purely logical principles, and were opposed by people like Poincaré who claimed that alogical, intuitive factors, conjunctions like “and” and “or,” had been introduced in

3. Josiah ROYCE, *The World and the Individual*, First Series (New York: Macmillan, 1901; reprinted by Dover Publications, 1959), 473–5. Hereafter ROYCE.

4. ROYCE, 496.

the derivation.⁵ Rickert as well argued that the concept of numbers could not be derived from purely logical thought and gave as an example of an alogical factor the relation “ $1 + 1$.” The idea of addition requires an intuitive factor that pure logic cannot provide; the numerical one is irreducible to the “One” of pure logic, for the sense of opposition between the One and the Other is replaced in mathematics by an intuited, free interchangeability of numerical ones.⁶ But what about non-intuitive factors in mathematics, such as the idea of infinity, Nishida asks. How do we get from the consciousness of the purely logical object, some unspecified thing, to the idea of an infinite series in mathematics?⁷

DEDEKIND AND THE DEFINITION OF INFINITY

Ever since Zeno’s paradoxes, philosophers and mathematicians were highly suspicious of infinite series and the notion of infinity. Aristotle argued that the notion of an actually infinite number was contradictory and meaningless,⁸ and his argument prevailed until the mid 19th-century when Bernard Bolzano defended the idea that there are actually infinite collections of objects and that in such collections the part can have a one-to-one correspondence with the whole.⁹ Georg Cantor furthered this defense by showing how some infinite sets can be counted, i.e., can have a one-to-one correspondence with the natural numbers, while others are uncountable and thus of a higher order of infinity. Richard Dedekind made the infinite series of irrational numbers less objectionable to “good sense” by showing how it could be defined

5. NKZ I: 256.

6. Heinrich RICKERT, “Das Eine, die Einheit und die Eins,” *Logos: International Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur*, Band II, Heft 1 (1911/1912), 61. Husserl had suggested that addition has a psychological foundation, in the intuition of “more” and “less”; see chapter 5 of his *Philosophie der Arithmetik*. Nishida had a copy of the 1891 edition of Husserl’s work, but he does not seem to have used it in his essay here.

7. NKZ I; 263. Nishida’s interest in mathematics (and in Zen as well) derives from his high school mathematics teacher, Hōjō Tokitaka 北条時敬.

8. In the third Book of the *Physics* and elsewhere.

9. In *Paradoxien des Unendlichen*, posthumously published in 1851.

in terms of rational numbers. Both Cantor and Dedekind defined an infinite set as a set that can be mapped onto a part of itself. Mathematicians still consider Cantor's and Dedekind's procedures as pioneering and make use of them; but the features of Dedekind's discussions that intrigued Royce and Nishida find no place in mathematics textbooks today.

For Dedekind, "a system is infinite when it is similar to a proper part of itself," that is, when the whole system can be made to correspond, element for element, to a portion of itself.¹⁰ Dedekind attempts to prove that there actually are such infinite systems by giving an instance of one, namely, "my own realm of thoughts [*meine Gedankenwelt*], that is, the totality T of all things that can be objects of my thought."

We can present Dedekind's proof by way of the following exercise. Think of something, anything at all (call it "t"); t is then an element of the totality T. Now form the thought: "t is an object of my thought." Call this second thought t*; it is an image [*Bild*] or representation of the first, t. Consider the totality of such representations; this totality T* is itself only a part of the totality T, for there are elements of T that are not contained in T* (Dedekind cites "one's own ego" as a example of an element of T that is not in T*). Further, T is "similar" to T* because any difference between elements in T is reflected by a difference between the corresponding elements in T*. The system T, therefore corresponds—element for element to a part of itself, and so by definition, is infinite.

Dedekind's attempted proof is replete with difficulties. First, one's "realm of thoughts" is not an acceptable concept in axiomatic set theory.¹¹ Secondly, if we translate this concept into a mathematically acceptable notion, the "set of all thoughts" becomes the set of all sets, and this entails various well-known antinomies in set theory. For example, the set of all sets would have to include the set of all sets that are not members of themselves, and thus would entail Russell's paradox. Mathematicians

10. "Ein System heißt unendlich, wenn es einem echten Teile seiner selbst ähnlich ist." Richard DEDEKIND, *Was sind und was sollen die Zahlen?* §5, Definition 64. Repeated in ROYCE, 510–11, and in NKZ I, 264.

11. Herbert MESCHKOWSKI, *Das Problem des Unendlichen: Mathematische und philosophische Texte von Bolzano, Gutberlet, Cantor, Dedekind*, (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974), 146.

today seem to regard the definition of infinity as axiomatic and to have abandoned attempts to prove the existence of actual infinite sets.

Thirdly, Dedekind's language of "my own ego" [*mein eigenes Ich*] involves many phenomenological difficulties regarding the priority of the ego and the nature of thought. Many phenomenologists, and Nishida as well, would regard the notion of the ego as an afterthought, subsequent to pre-reflective experience; "thinking that I am thinking t" is subsequent to "thinking t" so the ego would somehow first arise in the subset T^* , giving T^* an element not contained in T ! Furthermore, second-order, reflective thoughts of the form t^* or "t is an object of my thought" can be said to "contain" the thought t, which means that the set T^* does potentially "contain" all elements in T and hence is not a proper subset.

ANSWERS FOR ROYCE AND NISHIDA

Nevertheless, Royce and Nishida found the concept of one's realm of thoughts fascinating enough to consider reflective thought the prototype of an infinite system. Royce goes beyond Dedekind by taking the ordered structure of reflective thought as the origin, and not merely a typical instance, of the idea of numerical infinity.¹² Nishida uses Royce's explanation to counter Kant and the Neo-Kantians who proposed that the idea of numerical infinity derives from time as a form of intuition, i.e., from a schema of the imagination. For Nishida, as for Royce, the infinite series of the mathematicians derives from the infinity, i.e., the self-imaging quality, of thinking.¹³ The activity of reflective thought accounts for the passage from purely logical objects to mathematical infinity, and thus answers Nishida's initial problem. But this notion of the part "imaging" or representing [*abbilden*] the whole was to play a role far beyond this initial answer.

Note that the infinity here does not consist merely in an endless series of reflections, each one step further removed from the original thought,

12. ROYCE, 526-34,

13. NKZ I 263-6.

as if one were to think of something, then think of that thought, then think of that thought of that thought, and so forth. The point, rather, is that each successive reflection mirrors the prior reflection. In this whole series, the infinity consists in the fact that the whole is mirrored in the part; the part adequately represents the whole and reflects any differences within the whole.

Royce sees the series of reflections in question as a process of differentiation of the whole and not merely as an extension of the first part. He argues that it does not reduce to a vain repetition of the same thing over and over again, and makes the case that reflective or self-conscious knowledge is superior to unreflective consciousness or blind faith.¹⁴ But he does not convincingly show that this knowledge is advanced by further reflections beyond the first, beyond knowing that one knows. Note also that we are speaking of a particular kind of collection here. Not every collection or set will have parts that adequately mirror the whole or each other; Dedekind speaks of “proper parts” [*echte Teile*] that leave out some element of the whole. Royce extends the metaphor to “exact” or “perfect” imaging by modifying Dedekind’s stipulation that the whole contain elements that are not in any part of it; a part can contain all the elements of the whole and still be only a portion of the whole, as we shall see in the example of the perfect map below.¹⁵

For Royce the principle of diversity in unity needed to answer Bradley’s conundrum is provided by the iterative operation of thinking that systematically reflects on itself: it is united by *one* purpose but completed in infinitely *many* reflections. Royce calls this complex “a self-representative system,” that is, “a system that can be exactly represented or imaged, element for element, by one of its own constituent parts.”¹⁶ The infinite sets of natural numbers, rational numbers, and irrational or complex numbers, for example, all form self-representative systems.

Nishida’s interest in this definition, however, seems to lie more in the

14. ROYCE, 578.

15. Royce later makes mention of the recurrent processes of thought as a portion, imitation, or expression of the whole (p. 569), and defines the first of the series of parts as that which is not representative of anything else (p. 545).

16. ROYCE, 512.

perspective of infinite imaging than in the exact, one-to-one correspondence between whole and part. His next major work, *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness*, mentions for the second time Royce's illustration of the perfect map that includes a depiction of itself.¹⁷

THE "PERFECT MAP" EXAMPLE OF
A SELF-REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM

Let us suppose that you wish to draw a map of the very area in which you now find yourself (Royce himself chose England). This map can be as exact as you wish; it will depict all details point for point, so that every detail of the area will have a corresponding detail in the map. Now in order to be complete, this map will have to include a depiction of itself, for the map itself is one detail of the area being mapped. This smaller map within the map will again have to depict a yet smaller map, and so on, ad infinitum. It is, of course, physically impossible to construct such a map containing an infinite number of representations of itself. Mathematically regarded, however, there is nothing mysterious about this project; we can suppose that there somehow exists such a perfect map, no matter how or when it was made. "The endless series of maps within maps... would cluster about a limiting point whose position could be exactly determined." In Royce's words, the infinite multitude of representations is just an expression of the single plan to construct a perfect map upon the very surface to be mapped. The example of the perfect map illustrates the notion of a self-representative system.¹⁸

Royce's map example conceals a significant difference from Dedekind's definition of infinity. The map of the area contains every element of the area; and each smaller map contains every element of the larger, enveloping map; there is nothing represented in the latter that is not in the former as well. This is unlike Dedekind's definition, where the

17. 『自覚に於ける直観と反省』, NKZ II, 16.

18. ROYCE, 503–6. Not only are infinite number series in mathematics self-representative systems, so also is the "completed Self" that is fully self-conscious of all its thoughts as its own, and so also is the totality of being or reality. See ROYCE, 513, 520, 534.

subset T^* must leave out elements of T in order to be a proper part. And yet, depending upon one's point of view, the map of the area, and each map within a map, can be said to be only a portion of the area or of the enveloping map. From the point of view of someone standing in the enveloped map, that map is identical to the enveloping area or map; it leaves nothing out. But from the point of view of someone standing outside the enveloped map, that map covers only a portion of the space of the enveloping area or map. The map within an area or map is not a "proper part" as Dedekind has defined "part," but it can function as a genuine portion. This shift of viewpoints raises the question of whether there could be an all-comprehensive map that would necessarily include every possible viewer, so that no viewer could be outside the space that is viewed. Royce did not treat this problem, whereas Nishida did, as we shall see. But first we must turn our attention to Nishida's alteration of Dedekind's ideas.

THINKING AS INFINITE SELF-MIRRORING

Nishida's reading of Dedekind's original example of infinity is colored by the language of reflection [写像]. He translates Dedekind's original definition as: "a system is infinite when it can reflect itself within itself";¹⁹ and then turns the original instance of such a system, one's infinite world of thought, to thought about the self: "In reflective consciousness, making the self an object of thinking can again be made an object of thinking," ad infinitum, like an image reflected between two mirrors, or like Royce's perfect map.²⁰ Once again, however, the infinitude of thinking does not consist in an endless series of representations of itself; that would be a "bad infinity." Thinking in the proper sense of the word is not merely representational consciousness; it is "consciousness of validity and truth," a process of critical self-reflection that, in the successive examination of propositions, entails an infinity of the kind

19. 「ある体系が自己の中に自分を写し得る時に無限である」NKZ I: 264.

20. 「反省的意識に於いて、自己を思惟の対象とすることを又自己の思惟の対象とすることができる」NKZ I: 264.

previously defined. Nishida abbreviates Bolzano's formulation: if a proposition A is true, then the proposition A' that asserts the truth of A is also true, and the proposition "A' is true" is also true, ad infinitum.²¹ Nishida, like William James, speaks here of thinking as a form of consciousness, but opposes James to follow Bolzano and Royce in insisting upon the orientation of thought to truth. This orientation gives thinking its unity, a dynamic unity like that of other self-representative systems which "reflect the self within the self." This, says Nishida, is the unity of *self-awareness*.²²

A CONCEPTUAL LIMIT TO THE SELF-REFLECTING MODEL OF SELF-AWARENESS?

The notion of truth implied here would seem to be that of a coherence theory rather than a correspondence theory of truth. For in this model the unity of *self-awareness* and, accordingly, of thinking would preclude reference to an objective realm outside of the system of thought or *self-awareness*; there could be no correspondence between thought and objects exterior to the realm of thought. The realm of thought, as in Dedekind's original proof, must be all-inclusive, a set of all sets, which as we have seen is problematic. We shall leave the problem of truth in Nishida for another occasion; here we assume the coherence notion of truth and point out a parallel problem that occurs within the self-mirroring model of thought and *self-awareness*, a problem which threatens their unity. To define the problem we return to Royce's example of an endless series of maps united by a single purpose. If this map is to be perfect in the sense of complete, it must contain a representation of the place from which the map-maker projects the map. But that is impossible, for the place of projection necessarily lies outside the area

21. NKZ I, 265; ROYCE, 544.

22. NKZ I: 265. In his early essays in *Contemplation and Experience* [思索と体験], (NKZ I: 334-74), Nishida draws upon Bolzano's *Wissenschaftslehre* that replaces Kantian discourse about thinking and judging with discourse about propositions. See also Gottlob FREGE, "Der Gedanke," which distinguishes thoughts from mere psychological representations [*Vorstellungen*].

mapped. There is evidently something very imperfect about this supposedly perfect map.

If we switch to the example of the image infinitely reflected between two mirrors, the same problem occurs: the image (real or reflected) is seen from a vantage point that is itself never reflected in the mirrors. If we consider Dedekind's example of an infinite realm of thoughts, then the thinker, or the activity of thinking, is never included in the realm of thoughts; and so that realm may be infinite but it is not all-inclusive. An essential part that determines the system is excluded; and this problem of exclusion reappears whatever the metaphor, whether that of mapping or that of mirroring, and whatever the nature of the self that thinks, whether it is substance or activity or process.

In some unpublished lectures on Nishida, referring to Royce's example of the perfect map of England, Ueda Shizuteru has suggested a solution to this problem. Instead of thinking of a particular person that depicts England from a particular vantage point, we may speak metaphorically of England depicting England. This manner of speaking, strange as it may sound, is consistent with a purely structural model of *self-awareness* that is metaphysically neutral. This model makes no assumptions about whether something like England could be a conscious being. Describing England as "*self-aware*" in the structural interpretation implies not that it is self-conscious but only that it is self-reflecting or imaging in the way that a mirror or calm lake is reflective. There is, accordingly, no self or map-maker excluded from the self-representation, but the problem of exclusion still arises. Insofar as the concept of England implies areas outside of England, this self-representative system is not complete, its self-reflecting not "perfect." The "perfect" self-reflective system would have to be the world as the ultimate totality. In fact, as Ueda frequently points out,²³ Nishida later comes to speak of the world as *self-aware* [自覚的]; the world reflects itself in itself, with nothing left out. Indeed, "nothingness" [*mu* 無] is the name of the ultimate place that encompasses all possible vantage points and that itself cannot be viewed from any other place outside it.

23. See UEDA Shizuteru, 「経験と自覚」[Experience and Self-Awareness], in *Shisō* 思想 no. 738 (December 1985), 17-46 and no. 744 (June 1986), 60-90.

Still, a conceptual difficulty arises. Insofar as the concepts of reflecting, imaging, representing etc. presuppose someone *to whom* something is represented, consciousness or awareness seems to be required of the system. England may not itself need to be “self-aware” in order to be self-reflective as two mirrors are self-reflective, but some outside awareness would seem to be required in order for England to appear *as* England, *as* self-reflective, etc. A “seer” *to whom* things appear is needed; and if the world itself is in some sense the ultimate “to whom” or dative of manifestation, then the world is in some sense conscious or aware, and not merely self-reflective. Here the purely structural model finds its limit.

In some lecture notes of 1926, Nishida seems to intimate this difficulty. He calls nothingness or *mu* “what mirrors,” and says that beings are “what is therein mirrored.” Then he qualifies this metaphor with the statement that “in absolute nothingness there is nothing that mirrors.” Without something that mirrors, there is of course nothing that is mirrored, and nothing *to whom* something is mirrored. Yet mirroring is not thereby eliminated; rather, it is a “modification” [変様] or “determination” [限定] of “the place of absolute nothingness [無の場所].”²⁴ As all-inclusive, this ultimate “place” must include its own principle of determination; mirroring must lie *within* it. This suggests a sense in which self-mirroring is not descriptive of the ultimate (absolute nothingness) in Nishida’s philosophy.

A limit is also suggested in essays written in 1929. Nishida speaks of “seeing without a seer” and of the state of no-self [無我] in which there is no seeing or knowing self.²⁵ Here we are no longer dealing with *jikaku* as self-consciousness in which an I or ego knows itself. *Jikaku*, both as a self-mirroring structure and as egological self-awareness, finds its limits in absolute nothingness.

Nevertheless, we may fruitfully explore the extent to which the self-mirroring model clarifies the notions of self-awareness [*jikaku* 自覚], self-aware system [*jikakuteki taiki* 自覚の体系], place [*basho* 場所], and other notions in Nishida’s thought. The following treats only a few examples; it is not intended to be a thorough or conclusive analysis. Moreover, our

24. NKZ XIII, 294;295.

25. NKZ V, 427; 444.

discussion does not attempt to draw a line between *jikaku* as self-consciousness and as Buddhist self-awakening, nor to discern whether the one connotation prevails over the other in specific passages in Nishida's philosophy. Rather, we focus on *jikaku* as a self-reflective structure.

SELF-REFLECTIVE STRUCTURES IN NISHIDA'S PHILOSOPHY

The sense of *self-awareness* that governs Nishida's early writings is clearly Fichte's self-consciousness as the activity that endlessly constitutes the self, an activity in which self knows itself, in which knowing subject and known object are one. In the beginning of *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness*, Nishida proposes that this sense of *self-awareness* resolves a problem that arose in *A Study of the Good*: how can reflection, which is after the fact and removed from immediate experience, arise out of that experience? In developing this notion of *self-awareness* Nishida remarks:

The self's reflection on the self, its reflecting (in the sense of mirroring) itself, cannot be brought to a halt at this point, for self-reflection consists in an unending process of unification....²⁶

This remark leads to Royce's example of mapping England within England and to the example of two facing mirrors. What is noteworthy here is that Nishida has identified reflection as thought [*hansei* 反省] with reflection as mirroring [写すこと]; the self thinking about itself is structurally the same as the self reflecting itself within itself infinitely, just as the map infinitely projects itself or the object between the two mirrors projects its image infinitely. Nishida is not oblivious of the problem that the acting (reflecting) self can never adequately become an object of reflection.²⁷ He attempts to circumvent this problem by reminding the

26. *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness*, translated by Valdo H. Viglielmo with Takeuchi Yoshinori and Joseph S. O'Leary (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 4. The original is NKZ II: 16.

27. NKZ II: 17–18.

reader that the object is not pre-given; rather, reflection is constructive: “To reflect is to construct, that is to think.” This of course follows Fichte, for whom self-knowing is constructive of the self, as well as the Marburg Neo-Kantians, for whom thinking is *erzeugend*, productive. Later in this work, Nishida, again following Fichte, remarks that *self-awareness* is not simply an instance where knower and known are one. The self knows that knower and known are one, and this awareness of identity is *erzeugend* or constitutive of it.²⁸ Yet this description suggests a knowing self that somehow is prior to the identity of knower and known, a prior self that is already constructed, as it were, before self-knowing. Is there a self prior to its knowing of itself or does it first arise in and through this knowing; and is the known self really identical with the knowing self, or only a partial objectification of it?

The model of self-reflection that Nishida adapts from Dedekind and Royce would seem to suggest an answer to the problems of objectification and priority. We might think, for example, that the knowing self is reflected or mirrored in the known self just as the infinite whole is reflected in a proper part or a portion of itself. In Dedekind’s definition, that proper part obviously does not contain all elements of the whole; or, in Royce’s example, the portion does not cover the same area as the whole. Likewise the momentarily reflecting self is not included in the known or objectified self.

But can we really speak of the known self as a “part” or “portion” of the knowing self? And in what sense does the former reflect the latter? An adequate answer comes only with a shift in level. The known self is expressed as the “I” or subject of judgments of the form “I f” where f is any predicate. Here the known self is defined by the predicate, but the act of predication itself is not expressed in the judgment. That act appears only on a different, more concrete and comprehensive level. It is not that the known self reflects the knowing self, but rather that judgments reflect acts of judging. This relation provides an answer to the problems of priority and objectification mentioned above: the act is not prior to the judgment but co-arises with it; and the judgment is not the

28. NKZ II: 106; 108.

act objectified, for the present act of judging can never be captured on the level of judgment. These points will be significant for our later discussion of current objections to the notion of self-consciousness.

This relation between judgment and act also fits our model of self-reflective infinity. First, it involves an incompleteness on the part of the judgment; the judgment leaves out the act. Secondly, this relation involves “similarity,” i.e., a correspondence between differences: the difference (within the judgment) between subject and predicate corresponds to the difference between judgment and judging act. Note that the shift in level is also a shift from Dedekind’s original definition of infinity or from Royce’s map example. In Nishida we are no longer dealing with a correspondence between differences on one level and differences on another, or between details in one map and details in the smaller map. In Nishida, the more concrete level includes the difference between itself and the more abstract level, and that difference corresponds to the difference between elements of the more abstract level:

concrete level of act (judgment versus act
abstract level of judgment [subject versus predicate])

Nishida came to call the more concrete level of act the *predicative* side [述語的面].

The talk of sides or levels anticipates the notion of *place* [*basho* 場所] in Nishida. This notion too is elucidated by recalling its self-reflective structure. A very revealing passage in *The Self-aware System of Universals*, published in 1930, may serve to add precision to our previous discussion. Nishida says he needs to clarify the relation between two senses of *self-awareness*, but in effect he explains how the predicate of judgments is related to *place* and how *place* is *self-aware*.²⁹ We may summarize Nishida’s deliberations this way: In a judgment of the form S is P, S is a member of P, that is, the predicate or logical universal P contains the subject S; S is “placed” within P. Further, the connection between S and P is established within consciousness; in this sense, the predicate is “placed” within consciousness, a universal of a higher order. In other words, a place is within a (more inclusive) place.

29. 『一般者の自覚的体系』NKZ V: 64.

This judgmental consciousness (Nishida uses the phrase *jikakuteki ishiki* 自覚的意識 at this point), however, belongs within a even higher order universal that is the very activity of mediating truth in judgments (Nishida call this universal “will”). Hence (judgmental) consciousness itself is within the will (to truth), or, once again, a place is within a more inclusive place. Finally, that which mediates itself in the form of will is what is “truly self-aware,” i.e., is “what sees itself [in itself]; and this in turn is “*in* the ultimate place.” The talk of the “place that envelops *self-awareness*” implies, once again, that *self-awareness* itself is not the ultimate place.

The notion of “places within places” seems quite similar to Royce’s idea of maps within maps, although Nishida does not remark on this similarity. Can we say that the lower order, less inclusive place is a perfect image or representation of the higher order place, as the smaller map in Royce’s example “perfectly” images the larger map? What kind of correspondence can we find between the less and the more inclusive *basho*? “Will” for example, is not perfectly reflected in judgmental consciousness, in that the latter does not contain the pure dynamic activity of will that underlies intentional consciousness. (This is precisely why Nishida finds a need to go behind or beyond the form of consciousness expressed in judgments.) Schematically, we must add an intermediate level to our former diagram:

will or pure act {intentional consciousness versus pure act
intentional consciousness (intentional consciousness versus judgment
judgment [subject versus predicate])}

In later works Nishida shifts from the metaphor of “place within place,” i.e., of a lesser context within a more inclusive context, to the language of contradictory self-identities. After Nishida develops the notion of the world as a *dialectical* universal, he seems to reconcile differences not by picturing one “place” embedded in another, but by binding them together immediately into unities or “self-identities.” Nevertheless, the model of self-mirroring is still at work. In the 1943 essay “On Self-Awareness,” for example, he proposes that self-identity is not that of a substance, nor is it a process or even an activity; rather it is a self-identity related to *place*, a “contradictory self-identity of many and one.” But,

he asks, what makes this *place-related*? “Just what is being, as related to place, and what is place-related self-identity? We are compelled to say: it is a matter of reflecting (mirroring) self within itself; representing self within the self.”³⁰ Yet how does “contradictory self-identity” involve self-reflecting or mirroring? Nishida insists on the absolute differentiation and discontinuity of the many and the one; their *contradictory* self-identity means that their difference is maintained and held together immediately in a unity, not that difference is dissolved. Likewise, in Dedekind’s definition, an infinite set and a subset of it are different but equivalent sets; in Royce’s example, the master map and the smaller maps are different but equivalent projections. In Dedekind’s set theory, the difference consists in the fact that there are elements of the first set that are not contained in the proper subset, and yet a one-to-one correspondence or equivalence is maintained. In Royce’s map example, the difference arises when a point of view is taken outside the smaller map. These instances of self-mirroring, then, entail a kind of contradictory self-identity, one wherein difference and equivalence coexist. This is not to say that Nishida directly arrived at the notion of contradictory self-identity from that of self-reflecting, only that the two notions can be shown to display a parallel structure.

In the same essay, Nishida remarks:

The reality of the self consists in the imaging of the self itself represented within itself. To speak of imaging and representing may be considered mere speculation [*kagen* 仮現], but the world here is united with the absolute One...

Next he immediately connects the two notions: “in this self-representation or contradictory self-identity of the world...” (It is important to keep in mind here that the term *hyōgen* 表現 that Nishida uses is the translation of Royce’s “self-representation” in the sense of self-imaging; it does not simply mean “self-expression.”) Nishida writes that this structure constitutes the very actuality of the world: “there is no reality of the world separate from self-representation; the world is something which

30. NKZ X: 479.

represents self within self.”³¹ This language is repeated in Nishida’s last work, where for example he speaks of the self as the focal point where world reflects itself in itself.³²

These examples suggest that “self-reflection” or “self-mirroring” is a structure throughout Nishida that that can go a long way to clarify the notions of *jikaku* and *basho*. What about the notions of *jikakuteki taikai* (*self-aware systems*) and *jikakuteki gentei* (*self-aware determinations*)? What is a “self-conscious system”? For many philosophers, to describe anything that does not have a mind or brain as “self-conscious” is absurd. Other philosophers will give some credence to Hegelian notions of an emergent rationality that transcends individual minds and might be called “spirit,” even “self-conscious spirit.” Descriptions of the “self-understanding” of a collective body, a nation, tradition or institution, for example, imply this notion of self-conscious spirit, even if in an admittedly metaphorical sense.

In ordinary Japanese, *jikakuteki* can describe being fully aware of one’s role or duties in life, for example; or, by metaphorical extension, it can describe the awareness of a larger community, e.g. of Japanese people, regarding some issue. But Nishida goes beyond these usages to describe systems of color, space, or time, for example, or even “the determination of nothingness,” as “self-aware.” Does it make sense to call these systems and determinations “self-reflective”? It remains a task beyond the confines of the present essay to examine how much this model can clarify Nishida’s notions of *jikakuteki taikai* and *jikakuteki gentei*.

CHALLENGES TO NISHIDA’S PHILOSOPHY OF “SELF-AWARENESS” FROM CURRENT GERMAN THOUGHT

We consider finally whether this structure can clear up some difficulties in the current philosophy of self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*). In a recent dictionary article on *Selbstbewußtsein*, Hans Radermacher points out an amphiboly in the traditional notion of self-

31. NKZ X: 480-I.

32. NKZ XI: 378.

consciousness.³³ Self-consciousness is made to assume a double function: It is supposedly both certain self-knowledge, where knower and known are identical, and the condition for the (uncertain) knowledge of the world. This means that it is both consciousness of self and the condition for all intentional consciousness of objects existing in themselves (*an sich*). But if this self too exists in itself (*an sich*), then self-consciousness is a condition for itself! This amphiboly may be expressed in propositional form as follows: When we say, “I know that p,” “I know” expresses knowledge of a fact that should be independent of my knowing it, whether that fact is about myself or about other things. On the other hand, in theories that take self-consciousness as foundational, “I know that p” is said to be the adequate formulation of p, so that p is dependent upon self-knowing.

It would seem that Nishida falls into this difficulty. From his early to his middle periods, he frequently appeals to the paradigm of the identity of knowing self and known self in *self-awareness*.³⁴ He implies over and over again that *self-awareness* is a basic condition for intentional consciousness, even that our consciousness of the identity of things depends upon our awareness of our own self-identity.³⁵ How then can he maintain the objectivity of facts and yet preserve the priority of self-consciousness?

In “The Intelligible World,” Nishida resolves this problem by his “place within place scheme,” i.e., by placing the universal of judgments or propositions *in* the universal of *self-awareness*. He implies that p or, more precisely, the judgment “S is P” occurs on one level and that we must move to the higher (or deeper) level of *self-awareness* to realize the content of the judgment or, in our terms, to realize the independence of the fact. On this plane, the priority of self-consciousness over judgments and the independence of what is judged are not antithetical but correlative. The higher plane of consciousness “mirrors its own contents.”³⁶ We

33. *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. Krings, Baumgartner & Wild (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1974), 1318.

34. For example, in NKZ II: 106; III: 247; and V: 106.

35. The former, for example, in NKZ V: 73, 433; and the latter in VII: 322.

36. NKZ : 128.

can say that this mirroring makes the difference or the *Ansichsein* of the content visible.

Ernst Tugendhat has also attacked the traditional structural model of self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*). If we attempt to clarify self-consciousness on the model of *Reflexion*, a problem of circularity arises: Self-consciousness consists supposedly in the self's turning back to itself, in a *Sichzurückwenden*. This presupposes a given self. On the other hand, this self supposedly consists in the act of turning back, in the act of *Selbstreflexion* whereby the knower = the known. In other words, the self first arises in the act of turning back, but the act of turning back requires a self to turn back to! Tugendhat next mentions Dieter Henrich's early attempt to resolve this problem by appealing to Fichte's notion of the "I" or self positing itself (*Sich-Setzen des Ich*). The "I" posits itself immediately and is conscious of itself immediately. But to Tugendhat the notion of self-positing (*Sich-Setzen*) is incoherent; and Henrich also admits that we don't get rid of the circle by considering it immediate. The model of a self-reflexive or even self-relating (*selbstbeziehendes*) self-consciousness is not viable.³⁷

Of course Tugendhat uses the notion of self-consciousness in a much more restricted sense than Nishida's *jikaku*. Tugendhat's self-consciousness is restricted to a propositional form, "I know that I *f*," where *f* is a predicate referring to any state of consciousness (*Bewußtseinszustand*).³⁸ Nishida's *jikaku* underlies the level of judgments or propositions, as we have seen. Tugendhat also points out that the *Reflexionsmodell* is based upon a subject-object dichotomy; Nishida questions this dichotomy. But does not the objection that the self-reflexive model is circular hold for the self-mirroring (self-reflective) model of *self-awareness*? Is there a circularity in "the self mirrors itself in itself" or "the self sees itself in itself" or "the world reflects itself in itself"? Yes, if these expressions

37. ERNST TUGENDHAT, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstbestimmung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979), 62–4. Henrich in a later essay continues to grapple with these problems but substitutes for a self-reflexive definition of self a definition that comes closer to Nishida: the "I" is that which can have a particular standpoint. See "Selbstbewußtsein und speculatives Denken" in his book *Fluchtlinien* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 125–80, especially 136.

38. TUGENDHAT, 50.

are taken to assert a straightforward identity of reflecting and reflected self or world. No, if the difference between whole and part, inherent in Dedekind's definition and in Royce's map example, is maintained. And no, if the "in itself" refers to a *basho* within a *basho*, or if the identity is a unity of absolute contradictories, as in later Nishida.

The issue of identity leads to the second problem that Tugendhat points out and that Henrich faces with the traditional model. Self-consciousness means that I grasp or know myself. But how can I know that it is myself that I grasp? I can know this, Tugendhat argues, only mediately, through reference to what others know of me.³⁹ So-called self-consciousness, he concludes, is not really immediate knowledge. To a certain extent this problem is diffused by Nishida's shift first from an epistemological to a metaphysical interest in self-consciousness;⁴⁰ then later from the level or *basho* of propositions to that of pure, dynamic activity, and finally to *basho* as medium or dialectical universal. But Tugendhat's objection does point to an important question for "Nishida philosophy": Is not the immediacy implied in such descriptions as "the world reflects itself in itself" forfeited in the notion of a mediating universal?

We have attempted to test some strengths and weaknesses of an explanation of self-consciousness. The model of self-mirroring cannot explain all aspects of Nishida's *jikaku* that we have examined, nor have we by any means examined all that there are. Still, our model does prove to be invaluable to the understanding of this difficult and pervasive notion.

39. TUGENDHAT, 68, 88.

40. See KADOWAKI Takuji 門脇卓爾「自己意識と自覚」[Self-consciousness and *jikaku*], 『理想』(summer 1987), 99–101.