

1. Experience is always experience *of*—of reality as given to, and independent of, our experience.

2. Thought, or, as may also be said, understanding or reason, is always part of an experience and therefore is always thought *about*—about the reality given to, and independent of, our experience.

3. More exactly, thought is always about reality, not in its concrete content, quality, or value, but in its more or less abstract structure. Insofar as reality in its concrete content, quality, or value is given to us at all, it is not given through thought but through experience, although our experience itself is, in its way, so fragmentary and abstract as to mediate concrete reality only very inadequately.

4. Any concrete reality has a content, quality, or value in itself as well as for all other concrete realities experiencing it or otherwise internally related to it; and it may also have a meaning for us as beings who not only experience it but also understand and think about what we experience. This meaning it has, however, not in its intrinsic value as a concrete reality but in its different abstract aspects, and thus in its constitutive or instrumental value for us.

5. But if any concrete reality has a content, quality, or value in itself as well as for others, and may also have a meaning for us, it also has a structure in itself, which, relative to the concrete reality as such, is abstract, offering different abstract aspects in which it may be of constitutive or instrumental value for us.

6. Thought about reality, as distinct from experience of reality, is always either thought about *ultimate* reality (including *strictly* ultimate reality) as mediated by our experience in its vertical dimension or *existential* aspect, in which case it is properly distinguished as *metaphysics*; or thought about *immediate* reality as mediated by our experience in its other horizontal dimension or *empirical* aspect, in which case it is properly said to be *science*, i.e., one or the other of the so-called special sciences.

7. Thought takes place on two closely related but clearly distinguishable levels: on the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis; and on the secondary level of critical reflection/ appropriation and proper theory.

8. Thought on the primary level is already involved in normal adult "experience," which is as truly thought *about* reality as it is experience *of* reality. On this primary level, thought consists in asking and answering our various *vital* questions, existential and also intellectual, thereby making or implying certain claims to validity.

9. Thought on the secondary level, by contrast, consists in critically reflecting on/ appropriating our thought and experience on the primary level. Specifically, critical reflection/ appropriation includes both *critical interpretation* of the answers to our various vital questions, existential and also intellectual, and *critical validation* of the claims we make or imply in answering them as we do. In other words, the questions we ask and answer on the secondary level are not the various *vital* questions we ask and answer on the primary level, but rather the *theoretical* questions of meaning and validity—not simply as such, of course, but as oriented by, and corresponding to, our various vital questions.

10. Still another word closely related to "thought," along with "understanding" and "reason," is "belief." And what has been said so far about thought, understanding, and reason may also be said, *mutatis mutandis*, about belief. Thus, for example, if we may say that thought about reality on the primary level is already a part of normal adult "experience" of reality, we may say the same concerning belief, because our ordinary "experience" of reality is shot through with beliefs about it. Or, again, we may and must distinguish our various vital beliefs on the primary level from our corresponding theoretical beliefs on the secondary level.

11. In the same way, we may and must distinguish between our basic beliefs about ultimate reality as mediated by our experience in its vertical dimension or existential aspect and all of our other beliefs about immediate reality that necessarily

presuppose our basic beliefs, but that are themselves mediated by our experience in its other dimension or aspect previously distinguished as horizontal or empirical.

12. If, then, the claims to truth that we make or imply for our beliefs are valid, this can only be because our beliefs about reality, like our understandings of it, or our thoughts and reasonings about it, agree with, or correspond to, reality as it is. And the only conceivable test, finally, of whether this necessary condition is satisfied is that our beliefs, or the assertions that we believe to be true, may somehow claim the support of our experience of reality: of the vertical dimension or existential aspect of our experience, in the case of our basic beliefs; and of the horizontal dimension or empirical aspect of our experience, in the case of our other beliefs. This is the only conceivable test, finally, because the abstract aspects or structure of concrete realities with which our beliefs, thoughts, understandings, and reasonings about them must agree, or to which they must correspond, in order to be true are mediated only by our experience of concrete realities in one or the other of its two dimensions or aspects.

13. Experience is to the content, quality, or value of a concrete reality as thought, understanding, reason, or belief is to its abstract structure. This means that if the structure of a concrete reality can be thought, understood, reasoned, or believed about, the concrete reality itself and as such cannot be thought about but can only be experienced. Therefore, relative to thought, the content, quality, or value of a concrete reality is as mysterious as its structure is intelligible, although human thought, like human experience, is also, in its way, fragmentary and abstract, excluding most, if not quite all, of the abstract reality or structure thought about.

14. "Reasoning," as distinct from "reason," is a synonym for "argumentation," and thus refers to the entire process of giving reasons—from the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis to the secondary level of critical reflection/ appropriation and proper theory; and with respect both to our basic beliefs and our other beliefs as well as the purely hypothetical, nonexistential, necessary assertions of mathematics and logic. With the perhaps questionable exception of reasoning concerning the latter, it is rightly said to consist in discourse or argumentation

somehow grounded in, and involving appeal to, experience, in one or the other of its two dimensions or aspects.

15. In addition to the connections among the several distinctions previously clarified—experience and thought, concrete and abstract, mystery and intelligibility—there is also the connection between all of them and the distinction between the divine and the nondivine. This distinction, however, does not parallel the others but cuts across them, in that the divine and the nondivine can each be said to be, in infinitely, qualitatively different ways, objects of both experience and thought and to have aspects in themselves that are both concrete and abstract, both content and structure, and both mystery and intelligibility. "The infinite, qualitative difference" between the divine and the nondivine is the difference between "all" and "some" (in contrast to "none"), or "whole" and "part." Thus, while the divine, like the nondivine, is an object of both experience and thought, it is properly distinguished as *the* object, the universal and all-inclusive object thereof, even as the nondivine is simply *an* object, a particular and partially exclusive object among many others, both of experience and of thought. Or, again, the divine *qua* concrete and abstract, or in its content and also its structure, is not simply *a* concrete or content, or *an* abstract or structure, but is *the* concrete or content and *the* abstract or structure. This is because the divine as all or the whole includes within itself as concrete or content all other nondivine concretes or contents, even as in its aspect as abstract or structure it is included within all other abstracts or structures as well as all other concretes or contents. In the same way, or for the same reason, the divine *qua* concrete or content is not simply *a* mystery, but *the* mystery, all mystery compounded into one all-encompassing, impenetrable mystery, while *qua* abstract or structure, the divine is not simply *an* intelligible, but is *the* intelligible, all intelligibility united into one incomparably lucid abstract or structure.