

Confronting Capital and Empire

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Confronting Capital and Empire

Rethinking Kyoto School Philosophy

Edited by

Viren Murthy
Fabian Schäfer
Max Ward



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Studying the Kyoto School

Philosophy, Intellectual History, and Marx's Critique of Modernity

Viren Murthy, Fabian Schäfer, and Max Ward

The Kyoto School occupies a special place in philosophy in East Asia. While many of the thinkers understood under the rubric of Asian philosophy, such as Confucius, Lao Zi, and Dōgen, would have never heard of the term “philosophy,” thinkers of the Kyoto School were trained as philosophers, engaged with their contemporaries in Europe, and thus would have characterized their intellectual activity as “philosophy.” Of course, the category of philosophy is not neutral and universities in various parts of Asia have made different uses of it. For example, in China, the activity of thinkers from Confucius, Zhu Xi, and Ogyū Sōrai to Nishida Kitarō and Karatani Kōjin is characterized as philosophy (*zhexue*). However, in Japan, universities make an important distinction: there, they categorize most intellectual activity in Asia until the twentieth century as intellectual history (*shisōshi*) and then only twentieth-century thought as philosophy. From this perspective, the Tokugawa Confucian Ogyū Sōrai would be studied as intellectual history, while philosophers of the Kyoto School such as Nishida would be studied as philosophy.¹ These kinds of disciplinary and methodological distinctions point to more fundamental questions concerning the relation of thought to history, the temporality of philosophical reflection and ultimately the responsibility, or what Harry Harootunian calls the “answerability,” of philosophy to history. *Confronting Capital* engages these

1 On Nishi Amane's translation of “philosophy” as *tetsugaku*, see Nishi Amane, “Hyakuichi shinron” (1872), in Ōkubo Toshiaki, ed., *Meiji keimō shisō shū: Meiji bungaku zenshū 3* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō 1967), 3–24. For a particularly useful definition of what can be studied under the rubric of “thought” (*shisō*), see Tetsuo Najita, “Method and Analysis in the Conceptual Portrayal of Tokugawa Intellectual History,” in *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period 1600–1868: Methods and Metaphors*, edited by Tetsuo Najita and Irwin Scheiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 3–38, here 6. A recent survey has attempted to bring together a diverse range of thinkers—from Zen Buddhists, Shintōists, and Neo-Confucianists to more recent Kyoto School thinkers as well as Hegelian Marxists and poststructuralist thinkers—under the expanded rubric of “Japanese philosophy.” See James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo, eds., *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

kinds of questions through a critical examination of the Kyoto School in relation to Marx's analysis of capitalist modernity.

The question of philosophy's relation to history is expressed in the two primary ways that scholars have approached the Kyoto School: intellectual history and pure philosophy. This volume considers the respective limits and possibilities of intellectual history and pure philosophical reflection by reconsidering the Kyoto School in relation to Marx. In this Introduction we begin by pointing to the historical temporalities that underlie each approach as well as some of their analytical consequences. Then, we consider how Marx's emphasis on the historical mediations of social being requires moving beyond the conventional approaches to the Kyoto School and opens new possibilities to reflect on the its historical, political, and philosophical significance. Lastly, we introduce the essays that make up this volume and speak to how they, in very different ways and reaching different conclusions, address the organizing problematic of *Confronting Capital*: namely, philosophy's answerability to history.

The advantage of approaching the Kyoto School as intellectual history is that this foregrounds its influence, the historical context, and defining debates. Many of the philosophers grouped under the name of the Kyoto School (*Kyōto gaku-ha*) were trained in European philosophy departments, immersed in the various schools of "Western" philosophy, but also had a profound knowledge of the Japanese and Chinese classics.² Consequently, from within the discourse that the Kyoto School inhabited, they were practicing philosophy proper. Many conventional intellectual histories of the Kyoto School thus seek to outline the particular influences and categorical structure of their respective philosophical interventions, and then situate these interventions in the historical contexts of interwar and postwar Japan.

However, there are clear limitations to such an approach. The intellectual history approach often reduces 'history' solely to discursive influences or the contextual circumstances surrounding a certain thinker, overlooking that the social or historical mediations that condition a philosopher's thought gesture beyond their presents. Moreover, we often cannot grasp the significance of works in question if we limit ourselves to the concepts that the subjects of our study used. Strictly speaking, such an empirical approach would not allow us to use analytical concepts such as social structure, power relations, and so on, unless we could find such concepts used during the period in question. With

2 Tosaka Jun was the first to use the term *Kyōto gaku-ha* in his critique of the thinkers around Nishida Kitarō. See the English translation of Tosaka's 1932 essay, "Kyōto gaku-ha no tetsugaku," in Kenn Nakata Steffensen, "Translation of Tosaka Jun's 'The Philosophy of the Kyoto School,'" *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 8 (2016): 1–19.

respect to temporality, treating thought as merely historical tends to make any thought a reflection of its historical period, overlooking how philosophy is driven by the imperative to transcend its present. At worst, thought is reduced to historical context, thus making it a kind of museum piece representing its contextual “history.” In short, when this historical move is taken to its extreme, thought becomes trapped in its discursive or historical context. Against such mummification, the philosophical approach highlights the potential for thought to critically transcend its conditions of possibility. But how should we understand such transcendence?

We suggest an approach in which philosophy and history permeate one another; the complete exclusion of one of these intellectual practices leads to a paralyzing one-sidedness. Philosophical approaches to the Kyoto School have at times pushed the emphasis on transcendence to an extreme and made philosophy indifferent to history. Consequently, scholars are often as comfortable comparing contemporaries Nishida and Heidegger as they are with comparing the Kamakura period (1185–1333) thinker Dōgen and Heidegger. There are of course arguments one could make at this level of abstraction and even if there is something transcendent about the concept of, say, “nothingness” (*mu*, *sunyata*) in Buddhism, an intellectual historian would counter that we cannot understand the significance of such a concept unless we grasp it in its historical context. Although the historical approach tends to become trapped in a discursive prison, the pure philosophical method is blind to its own historical conditions of possibility. Building on the example above, the role that “nothingness” plays among samurai in the Kamakura period was radically different from the role it played in Heidegger’s philosophy and the politics of Weimar Germany. The philosophical approach methodologically excludes this difference and proceeds as if time and space almost did not exist.

Drawing from Marx, we might see this as a problem where philosophy represents a homogenizing modernity that mimics the universalization of capital and the nation-state. However, given that the universalization of capital is articulated with the nation-form, which implies particularity, philosophy today cannot rest in a simple universality. Consequently, philosophy departments (as well as intellectual histories) often group philosophers around regions such as East and West or around nation-states, such as Japan, China, and India. Here philosophy becomes mediated by national difference and also by the categories that dominate area studies. Thus much of the literature on the Kyoto School is an attempt to constitute these philosophers as particularly “Eastern” in contrast to “Western.” The issue posed above concerning reading Heidegger and Dōgen is now recast in the geographical binary between East and West, where time is obliterated in favor of space, allowing us to read Dōgen

and Nishida alongside each other as expressions of something called “Japanese philosophy” (or in intellectual history, “Japanese thought”) without taking into consideration the radical global transformations that took place since the advent of capitalism, imperialism, and a host of other processes. Marxism is important in this context precisely because it represents an interdisciplinary body of thought that enables one to situate thought in terms of historical structures without losing the critical potential of philosophy.

Inspired by Marxism and critical theories, the essays in *Confronting Capital* attempt to retain the rigor associated with philosophical analysis while bringing to the discussion of Kyoto School thought a sensitivity to historical and political questions. Marxism plays a dual role in this volume, since it provides an analytical framework for many of the essays, but it is also the explicit subject of some of the essays in the third section of this volume, which examine Japanese thinkers who themselves sought to synthesize the Kyoto School with Marxism. Contributors who take a more historical approach show that at times the philosophers of the Kyoto School were confronting capital, even when they seemed to be discussing something else. In short, we cannot be empiricist with respect to the words and ideas of a particular philosopher and must listen to the historical structures and processes that condition the production of ideas. On this level, we refer specifically to the sentence in the *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) where Marx argues, “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being (*gesellschaftliches Sein*) that determines (*bestimmt*) their consciousness.”³ This passage is often taken to be an overly deterministic account of the production of ideas, which leaves no room for philosophy or intellectual autonomy. However, Marx’s use of the term “determine” (*bestimmen*) need not imply determinism.⁴ Rather, when we say that a given type of thought is determined by capital, we refer to how the parameters of what is thinkable are conditioned by people’s social being, which is in turn mediated by a given mode of production, in our case capitalism. Consequently, when Kyoto School philosophers discuss nothingness (*mu*) or species (*shu*), the task of the historian is to uncover how their thought is mediated by social being, which in turn must be understood in

3 Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy” (1859), in *The Portable Karl Marx*, Eugene Kamenka ed. (New York: Penguin, 1983), 160.

4 For instance, Tosaka Jun interpreted the co-determinations of being and consciousness this way: “The way in which consciousness determines matter (existence) is partial, fragmentary, and noncosmological (*sekai hōsoku-teki de nai*). On the contrary, matter (existence) can formatively determine the content of consciousness. Only matter determines things in a universal, categorical, and cosmological way.” Tosaka Jun, *Gendai yuibutsuron kōwa*, in *Tosaka Jun zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1966), 219–413, here 313.

terms of larger global processes of empire and capital. It is precisely this mediation by social being, which will at times be contradictory, that separates the concept of nothingness in a capitalist society from its use in other societies.

As mentioned above, there is a more direct way this volume engages with Marxism, namely, in the essays that analyze how Japanese Marxists drew on Kyoto School philosophy to confront capital. In the last section of the volume, we examine how Japanese Marxists at times drew on concepts from the philosophers associated with the Kyoto School to supplement Marxist theory. In this case, the essays analyze how Marxists attempted to formulate a theory to grasp their historical world and, in the process, found philosophical concepts of the Kyoto School useful. *Confronting Capital* consequently looks at the Kyoto School's confrontation with capital at two levels, which could be understood as historical and philosophical, but each to different degrees responding to one another.

Confronting Capital: Scholarship on the Kyoto School and the Problem of Politics

Confronting Capital presents a new perspective on the Kyoto School by bringing the school into dialogue with Marx and the underlying questions of Marxist theory. However, the essays also intervene in conversations that have their own history. In Western Europe, the United States, to some extent Japan, and more recently China, studies of the Kyoto School can generally be split into two approaches: those that look at the Kyoto School philosophically and those that look at it from a historical or political perspective informed by critical theory. With respect to the former, we could mention a number of relevant books, but here we refer to a recent edited volume, which attempts to take the study of the Kyoto School in a new direction, *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School* (2010).⁵ As the title suggests, this book attempts to bring out the significance of the Kyoto School by showing how it anticipated or overlapped with contemporary Continental philosophers, including Luce Irigaray, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Luc Marion. The book claims that as a whole, it aims to combat Eurocentrism and promote dialogue between East and West.

While *Confronting Capital* clearly shares the critique of Eurocentrism, it also examines the historical and political consequences of such critiques. After all,

⁵ Brett W. Davis, Brian Schroeder, and Jason M. Wirth, eds., *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

while most of us are eager to support the critique of Eurocentrism, we often forget that the critique of Eurocentrism and the promotion of Asian identity was a key slogan of Japanese imperial propaganda. Consequently, any scholar of the Kyoto School cannot avoid the questions of capital, war, and empire. The question of the Kyoto School's involvement in the war is unavoidable, given the open participation of many of its philosophers, such as Nishitani Keiji, Kōyama Iwao, and others in the roundtables of 1942 on "Overcoming Modernity" and "World History," which were connected to pro-war ideology.⁶ The initial disputes in Japan concerning the Kyoto School concerned precisely the issue of war and empire, a question that was taken up much later in the English language literature.⁷

In the United States, much of the controversy began over a fairly simple essay written by Tetsuo Najita and Harry Harootunian, entitled "Japan's Revolt against the West," which was published in volume six of the *Cambridge History of Japan* (1989) and then reprinted in the anthology *Modern Japanese Thought* (1998). Because we are opening our volume with an essay by Harootunian, we will briefly outline the significance of this essay, and the subsequent debates it initiated. In "Japan's Revolt against the West," Najita and Harootunian present a survey of anti-Western thought and in this context have a passing phrase associating the Kyoto School philosopher Nishida Kitarō with fascism. After the publication of this essay, those who defended the Kyoto School have tried vehemently to protect Kyoto School philosophy from the history of Japanese fascism. One of the passages that some authors objected to reads as follows:

[The Kyoto School's] central purpose was to construct what they called a "philosophy of world history" that could both account for Japan's current position and disclose the course of future action. But a closer examination of this "philosophy of world history" reveals a thinly disguised justification, written in the language of Hegelian metaphysics, for Japanese aggression and continuing imperialism. In prewar Japan, no group helped defend the state more consistently and enthusiastically than did

6 A particularly insightful essay from *Japanese and Continental Philosophy* takes up these kinds of questions: Bernard Stevens, "Overcoming Modernity: A Critical Response to the Kyoto School," in Davis, Schroeder and Wirth, eds., *Japanese and Continental Philosophy*, 229–46.

7 For example, see Katō Shūichi, "Sensō to chishikijin," in *Kindai Nihon shisōshi kōza 4: Chishikijin no seisei to yakuwari* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1959). In English, James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo eds., *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

the philosophers of the Kyoto faction, and none came closer than they did to defining the philosophic contours of Japanese fascism.⁸

A few years after the publication of “Japan’s Revolt against the West,” Graham Parkes wrote a review essay defending the Kyoto School from its critics.⁹ Parkes’ defense of the Kyoto School was not particularly philosophical; rather his main criticism was that Harootunian and Najita, as well as other critics, needed to show the “differences among the voices” in the Kyoto School, distinguishing between more “vehement” and more “moderate” positions.¹⁰ More interesting, however, is that immediately after calling for attention to the diversity of positions, Parkes points to the historical context of Western imperialism in East Asia in order to understand the increasingly nationalistic positions—vehement or otherwise—advocated by members of the Kyoto School. Here Parkes argues that “while nationalism often has disastrous effects, in the form of resistance against imperialism it can be quite understandable.”¹¹ Obviously, Parkes is correct to say that concerns about “British, Dutch, and American imperialist expansion in East Asia were not simply groundless,” but he stops before asking the more difficult question: Why does imperialist expansion often present itself as liberation, either from historical “backwardness” (i.e., the ideology of Western imperialism in the nineteenth century) or from imperialism itself (i.e., the paradoxical ideology of Japanese imperialism in the twentieth century)?¹²

In other words, Parkes does not address the larger problem about the relationship between Kyoto School thought and history, politics, and philosophy. Harootunian is pursuing much larger stakes than Parkes recognizes, which could be posed as follows: How does one explain the complex possibilities in Kyoto School philosophy in relation to the fact that Japan produced a version of both fascism and imperialist expansion, all in the name of anti-Western imperialism? An answer to this question must be capable of placing Japanese fascism in a larger context and should then consider how thought is historically mediated in such conditions, even when articulated as opposition.

8 Tetsuo Najita and H.D. Harootunian, “Japan’s Revolt against the West: Political and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century,” in Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 711–74. Readers can see how Harootunian has furthered his analysis of the idea of the “philosophy of world-history” in the first chapter in this volume.

9 Graham Parkes, “The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School,” *Philosophy East West*, 47:3 (1997): 305–36.

10 *Ibid.*, 309.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

The issue of course is not merely with Parkes or any particular advocate of the Kyoto School, but is much more profound. In short, despite incessant critiques of Eurocentrism, behind such criticism is a strange empiricism of an academic philosophical perspective that is incapable of understanding the world that makes possible Japanese, American, and British imperialisms. While it might be odd to call a philosophical perspective empirical, the division of disciplines such as philosophy and history makes it such that both of them have difficulty theorizing global or transnational structures. As we see in Parkes' critique, he ultimately turned to historical context in order to justify the increasing nationalist rhetoric of the Kyoto School. However, the concept of structure, a nonempirical concept, eludes both history and philosophy.

Philosophy becomes confined to the analysis of texts often read separately of any historical context in order to solve problems of contemporary philosophy. The objects of philosophy might be nonempirical, such as "being," "nothingness," and so on. However, philosophy may be considered empirical in that it goes from the empirical text to the abstract world of ideas without any mediation through historical structures and dynamics. Because of this lack of mediation, philosophy cannot think its historical conditions of possibility and remains confined in its own version of empiricism.

This empiricism is especially detrimental because unperceived dynamics and structures condition the production of ideas in contemporary academia. In the discipline called comparative philosophy, Asian philosophy depends for its legitimacy on being able to measure up to (or even surpass) a leading Western philosopher. That is why we have seen texts such as *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (1990), *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (1991), *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* (1990), and so on.¹³ Regardless of the insights contained in such texts, the framework they operate with makes it impossible to grasp the conditions of the selected Western or Asian thinkers, let alone the possibility to compare across particular historical or regional conditions. As a result, it is not surprising that some scholars can do no more than reproduce prevalent liberal ideas such as multiculturalism or national pluralism as they attempt to demonstrate the importance of their favorite non-Western thinker who is equal to a canonical Western thinker. Again the problem is not with the explicit content of such ideologies. A world in which all nations looked at each other as equals would be an improvement and this is even presupposed by the formal equality

13 Graham Parkes, ed., *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990); Graham Parkes, ed., *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Harold Coward, *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

of various nation-states. But if one does not go further and reflect on the antinomies between universality and national particularities mentioned above by grounding these antinomies socially, one will not understand why a world premised on ideals of equality eventually leads to its opposite; in other words, how ideals such as the liberation of the East could lead to imperialism and so on. Dealing with such problems implies that one spend as much time dealing with history as with philosophy.

The discipline of history, on the other hand, usually endows people with a different set of skills, namely archival research, which serves as the basis for the construction of a compelling narrative. However, the question of structure usually escapes the historian, just as much as the philosopher. Although historians are sensitive to influence and context, they tend to shy away from grounding their analysis in larger structures that one cannot find in the archives. Indeed, this could be one of the reasons that a contemporary historian has written an essay with the title “Why Is History Anti-Theoretical?”¹⁴

Given the nature of this volume, we should especially highlight the problem of theory in intellectual history. In view of the importance of context for historians generally, intellectual historians usually describe a discourse and situate a given intellectual within a debate. They are able to think of conditions of possibility in terms of discursive contexts, but have difficulty crossing the threshold of language. However, placing Nishida and other Kyoto School philosophers into the context of interwar and wartime Japan and analyzing the discourses that were salient at the time, will not allow one to grasp the larger conditions that gave rise to this type of thinking or explain why many of Nishida’s ideas continue to appeal to us today. For this, contextualization must go beyond mere discourse.

The significance of Harootunian’s recent work on the Kyoto School speaks directly to reading philosophy in order to ask larger questions about history and politics. His essay in this volume offers a particular perspective on this antinomy, but we would like to explore the larger contours of this issue in order to lay the groundwork for the essays that follow. With respect to the Kyoto School, the empirical-historical question concerning the extent to which thinkers associated with it supported fascism is interesting, but the significance of Harootunian’s work goes beyond this. Rather than merely labeling Kyoto School thinkers as fascist (as his detractors argue), Harootunian’s works such as *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*

14 Prasenjit Duara, “Why Is History Anti-Theoretical?” *Modern China* 24.2 (1995): 105–20. For another expression of this problem, see the introduction to Eelco Runia, *Moved by the Past: Discontinuity and Historical Mutation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

(2000) and *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (2002),¹⁵ place Japanese intellectual history in a global context in order to rethink both Japanese intellectual history and the global crisis that produced fascism. In so doing, Harootunian introduced into the study of Japanese philosophy a host of concepts related to structure such as the commodity form, uneven development, and the multiple temporalities of capitalism, which enable readers not only to grasp the empirical fact that Japanese fascism was synchronous with fascisms around the world, but to formulate an explanation for the emergence of fascism as a response to the commodity form, global unevenness, and the homogenization of things around the world. Harootunian draws on the Frankfurt School, Althusser, and other theorists to explain how, with the increasing production and circulation of commodities in interwar Japan, people began to experience an increasing homogenization and sensed a loss of culture. Kyoto School philosophy should be seen as one response to this larger crisis. Critics of Harootunian fail to recognize that he and others have turned to the Kyoto School specifically for how it engaged with this crisis and what it revealed about the possibilities and limits of thought in such a confrontation. Rather than a rejection of the Kyoto School as critics have characterized it, this is an affirmation of the importance of the school for its engagement with the crisis of modernity.¹⁶ However, where the debate continues is in Harootunian's final analysis that Kyoto School thinkers ultimately ended up supporting—inadvertently or otherwise—the state's project of imperialist modernity. This is what Harootunian means when he inverts the title of the 1942 "Overcoming Modernity" symposium by arguing that these philosophers were "overcome by modernity."

This attempt to grasp critically the philosophy of the Kyoto School represents one type of essay in *Confronting Capital*. A second type in this volume involves bringing out the significance of the Kyoto School for Marxism. Such an attempt often involves wielding philosophical concepts that might indicate

15 Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), and *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

16 Similarly, we should also place contemporary proponents of non-Western philosophy in a later configuration of capital, unevenness, and homogenization. Contemporary philosophers dealing with non-Western thought often refer to culture in order to inject difference into a world that appears dominated by the same. Of course, unlike contemporary proponents of the Kyoto School, who are fighting primarily an academic battle against mainstream philosophy, the Kyoto School philosophers wanted to enter history and actually change the world—to create a world beyond the domination of capitalist modernity.

transcendence, including the concept of nothingness, to supplement what is perceived as an overly deterministic paradigm (i.e., vulgar Marxism). This includes essays by contemporary scholars (see, for instance, William Haver's essay), but more primarily essays about Japanese Marxist intellectuals during the postwar period, when radical philosophers had to rethink the legacy of the Kyoto School in a new context. Indeed, as Haver's essay demonstrates, this is a project that continues today, and is not limited to Japan.

The essays in this volume taken together make an additional contribution by highlighting a perspective that might go unnoticed: Marxism and its importance for Kyoto School thinkers. In addition to examining the Kyoto School through the lens of Marxism, some of the essays in *Confronting Capital* show the extent to which members of the Kyoto School and intellectuals around them were themselves interested in Marxism or had in some way confronted Marxism. For example, Takeshi Kimoto shows that Tanabe Hajime developed his dialectic through an engagement with Marx both in the pre- and post-war periods. In other words, unlike our world today, where Marxism is often seen as outmoded, interwar and postwar Japanese intellectuals from various perspectives seriously engaged with Marx's critique of capitalist modernity and saw it as one of the most important ways to grasp their historical present.

Outline of the Chapters

Confronting Capital is organized around the central figures of the Kyoto School and their legacy on subsequent thinkers. Harry Harootunian opens the volume by posing a central question important not only for the study of the Kyoto School, but for philosophy more generally: How should philosophy pose itself in relation to history, how does the historical present require philosophical reflection proper to its eventfulness, and what do Kyoto School philosophers tell us about these twin demands? Harootunian explores this question by underscoring how Marx and Marxists have dealt with the problem of unevenness. He then shows how Kyoto School philosophers Kōyama Iwao and Kōsaka Masaaki confronted their shared historical present by attempting to grasp "world history" in a world of capitalist imperialism. In their own way, they each tackled the problem of unevenness, imperialism, and global domination. However, each of them, for different reasons, could not develop a theory adequate to its object, namely global capitalism and how it produced the crisis that Kōyama and Kōsaka were attempting to overcome. He concludes by turning to Miki Kiyoshi, who proposed a very different understanding of the contradictions

determining their shared present, but one that, in the last instance, subsumed the contingencies of the everyday into a conception of world history that could be yoked to Japan's imperial project in East Asia.

William Haver opens the section on Nishida Kitarō with an extremely original reading of Nishida through Marx. Part Two begins with this essay because it anticipates the final section in which authors examine how Marxist thinkers rehabilitated or turned to the Kyoto School in an attempt to critique their postwar present. Haver's essay exemplifies that this trend to rethink the Kyoto School in relation to Marx is both contemporary and not limited to Japan. He supplements contemporary readings of Marx by incorporating aspects of Nishida's philosophy. The essay makes Nishida contemporary in a unique manner, by asking what Nishida's philosophy could add to Marx's concept of production. In Haver's view, despite Nishida's own somewhat hostile attitude toward Marxism, his philosophy actually pushes Marx in different directions. Since the 1960s, when Marxists began to become frustrated with prevalent interpretations of Hegelian teleology, they often experimented with bringing various thinkers in relation to Marxism. For example, Kostas Axelos attempted to wed Heidegger and Marx and more recently Antonio Negri famously brought Spinoza and Marx together.¹⁷ Both of these forerunners are important, since readers might find parallels with both Axelos's Heidegger, and especially Negri's reading of Spinoza, in Haver's unconventional reading of Nishida with Marx.

Although Haver's chapter opens Part Two, it by no means defines the terms of this section. In the following essay, Elena Lange presents a trenchant critique of Nishida's logic by arguing there are structural similarities between Nishida's treatment of "logic of place" (*basho no ronri*) and the inversions of commodity fetishism that Marx finds structuring capitalist society. Lange argues that both Nishida and Marx aim to overcome the phenomenon of reification, but that Nishida, because he fails to locate the causes of reification in capitalism, ends up producing a logic that mirrors the inversions of commodity fetishism. As Lange explains, Marx was precisely interested in grounding the phenomena of reification and fetishism in relation to the capitalist mode of production.

Christian Uhl continues Lange's analysis by further grounding Nishida's concept of space and indeed the whole of Nishida's philosophy in capitalist society. The contribution of Uhl's essay, however, is not limited to a critique

17 Kostas Axelos, *Introduction to a Future Way of Thought: On Marx and Heidegger*, Kenneth Mills trans. (Lüneburg: Meson Press by Hybrid, 2015); Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*, Michael Hardt trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

of Nishida. Rather, before launching into this critique, Uhl shows that Nishida was actually extremely interested in Marx.¹⁸ Uhl concludes by grounding Nishida's work in a social logic of capital. In short, Uhl contends that Nishida expresses the antinomies of capital without confronting their social conditions of possibility.

Part Two of *Confronting Capital* shows that bringing Marx and Nishida together is not simple and there are no forgone conclusions. Haver's reading is positive, while Lange and Uhl each read Nishida's philosophy as an ideology that conceals the contradictions of capitalism. These kinds of tensions continue into Part Three, which is organized around the next giant of the Kyoto School, Nishida's student and successor, Tanabe Hajime.

Tanabe is famous for expounding two concepts: the logic of species (*shu no ronri*) and metanoetics (*zangedō*). In Part Three, the authors critically analyze both of these concepts. Continuing the critical perspective that Lange and Uhl began in their respective essays on Nishida, Naoki Sakai outlines a critique of Tanabe Hajime by showing how his theory of the species reproduced the logic of the Japanese Empire. Sakai touches on a key issue in modern Japanese history, namely that Japanese fascism and imperialism might have had different but interdependent logics. Somewhat similar to what Harootyan finds in Kōyama's theory of "world history," Sakai contends that Tanabe's logic of the species represents a universal, but an extremely specific universal, that legitimated Japan's relation to the regions it colonized. Next, Takeshi Kimoto argues that the unique dialectics of Tanabe's logic of species and his later metanoetics emerged from his close engagement with Marx. Not only does Kimoto establish that Tanabe engaged with Marx, but also that Tanabe's emphasis on contingency in his dialectics—what Kimoto deems an "aleatory dialectic"—anticipated the thinking of later Marxists such as Louis Althusser and Slavoj Žižek who sought to theorize contingency within a Marxian framework. This opens the question that Haver posed, namely the extent to which Kyoto School philosophy can be used to supplement a Marxist project. Indeed, Kimoto

18 Uhl's work is reminiscent of Lucien Goldman's famous work on Lukács and Heidegger, where he argues that Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) should be understood as a response to Georg Lukács' Marxist analysis of reification. In short, in Goldman's view, Heidegger attempted to do from the right what Lukács did from a left-wing perspective; in short he provided a non-Marxist right-wing critique of reification. Similarly, in the 1930s and 1940s there were numerous debates among Marxists in Japan and Nishida could have well attempted to counter Marxist analysis from his own ontological perspective. See Lucien Goldman, *Lukács and Heidegger: Towards a New Philosophy*, W.Q. Boelhower trans. (London: Routledge, 2009).

argues that Tanabe's aleatory dialectic may in fact revitalize contemporary critical theory.

Max Ward echoes Uhl's essay and grounds Tanabe's postwar writings on metanoetics in relation to capitalism. In this process, he returns to the issue initially posed by Harootunian, namely the mutual answerability of history and philosophy. The question of history is especially pertinent when dealing with Tanabe because in the 1930s Tanabe himself proposed his "logic of species"—which Tanabe claimed addressed historical and social questions—as a critique of his teacher Nishida for being insufficiently concrete and historical. By focusing on Tanabe's 1946 text, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, Ward engages with the problem of history on two levels. On the first, he shows how most interpreters of Tanabe are unable to understand Tanabe's historicity. On the second, through a careful reading of Tanabe, Ward shows there is a structure of philosophical engagement with history and the ultimate failure of this engagement at the formal level of Tanabe's text, especially in relation to the crisis of interwar global capitalism and world war.

Ward's essay closes the section on Tanabe and brings us to Part Four, which moves to a different register. Rather than tackling the major Kyoto School philosophers themselves, authors in this section delve into the uncanny afterlives that Kyoto School philosophers have had in the work of Marxists and other leftists in prewar and postwar Japan. Gavin Walker opens Part Four with an essay on Kakehashi Akihide, a well-known Marxist during the interwar and postwar years. Walker shows how Kakehashi drew on Nishida's conceptions of nothingness and subjectivity to reformulate Marx's analysis of capital. To some extent, we can see Kakehashi as anticipating the perspective that Haver presents in this volume, although Kakehashi obviously operated within a different historical context.

Viren Murthy then continues this line of inquiry by grappling with the work of another Japanese Marxist who was inspired by the Kyoto School, Umemoto Katsumi. Umemoto's work has been famously dealt with by J. Victor Koschmann in his *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (1996).¹⁹ Koschmann focused on Umemoto's theory of subjectivity and argued that Umemoto subsumed subjectivity to a closed, totalizing structure. Murthy uncovers the larger stakes in Koschmann's critique: issues connected to civil society and capitalism. Indeed, Koschmann relied on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's famous

19 J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

critique of Marxism as not allowing a space for political practice.²⁰ Murthy argues against this position and shows that Umemoto mobilized Marx's critique of civil society and the state in his early works in order to locate the conditions for political praxis. This highlights another type of politics and history, namely the politics of capitalism's domination in civil society, which often does not figure in most concepts of politics. In this way, Murthy's work echoes Ward's in that both highlight the politics of structural exclusion.

Aaron Moore's chapter deals with Nakai Masakazu, a thinker who is not usually considered to be part of the Kyoto School, but was clearly associated with it. Moore carefully analyzes Nakai's concept of political practice and shows the connections between Nishida's philosophy and Nakai's confrontation with capitalist commodification and the rise of Japanese fascism. Satofumi Kawamura similarly examines Yanagida Kenjūrō, again someone not directly connected to the Kyoto School, but a contemporary of the Kyoto School philosophers. Moreover, like Kakehashi and Umemoto, Yanagida attempted to combine religious thought with Marxism. Together Moore's and Kawamura's respective essays expand the boundaries of our understanding of the Kyoto School by dealing with thinkers neglected in Western discussions of Japanese philosophy.

Finally, Endo Katsuhiko completes the volume by using the Japanese Marxist Tosaka Jun as a springboard to reflect critically on both the Kyoto School and contemporary scholarship in Japanese intellectual history. Tosaka was one of the first scholars to critique Nishida and Tanabe from a Marxist perspective and so it is appropriate to end this volume with some reflections on this major intellectual in Japanese history.

The chapters together present two different but complementary perspectives on the Kyoto School and Marxism. The first perspective, exemplified in essays such as Harootunian's and Uhl's, uses Marxism to make sense of Kyoto School philosophers' responses to capitalist modernity. This approach does not by any means imply uniformity, since authors bring their own understandings of Marxism and capitalism to their analysis. However, they are united in attempting to return thought to its historical conditions of possibility while at the same time showing how philosophers constantly critiqued and changed these conditions. The second approach, which explores how Marxists drew on Kyoto School philosophy, could be described as at once philosophical and philological. For example, Walker demonstrates that Kakehashi draws on Marx,

20 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2014).

but at the same time focuses on the tension within Nishida and Marx in Kakehashi's work to productively reflect on larger issues such as the incompleteness of capitalism. This issue of the incompleteness of capitalism and the question of whether capitalism can subsume all of life without remainder also separates Harootunian's and Uhl's respective interpretations of Marx. In short, Uhl posits capitalism as a contradictory unity that determines thought, while Walker and Harootunian, each in their own way, suggest that capitalism only ideally subsumes everything, while leaving or even creating spaces that cannot be completely subsumed.²¹ These two positions make for fundamentally different standpoints with respect to how one thinks of political practice and conceives of the relationship between philosophy and its historical-social conditions.²² Thus, the essays come together in unexpected ways. We hope that when taken together the essays of *Confronting Capital* will enable readers to think about the Kyoto School in relation to the question of the answerability of philosophy to history and how the Kyoto School can continue to inspire critical reflection on our own historical moment.

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21 For elaborations on their respective theories, see Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University press, 2015); Gavin Walker, *The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

22 The forthcoming volume *East Asian Marxisms and Their Trajectories*, edited by Joyce Liu and Viren Murthy (Routledge, 2017), tackles this same issue in relation to East Asian more generally.

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PART 1

*The Kyoto School and the Problem of Philosophy,
History, and Politics*

∴

Philosophy and Answerability

The Kyoto School and the Epiphanic Moment of World History

Harry Harootunian

Kōsaka Masaaki: Philosophy has come to be a discipline such that, within history's movement, it clarifies one's own standpoint and has thus become a learning (*gakumon*) that provides suggestions on which direction we might proceed. It is because of this (reason) that we must analyze the contemporary (moment). Yet analysis of this present is in fact nothing more than the analysis of a particular moment of the present within the context of world history.¹

I think philosophy must also be mediated by historical fact. Historical reality and...²

Suzuki Shigetaka: Solutions which once were impossible within the study of history until now will become the necessary philosophical motifs for the study of world history....For overcoming the unsatisfactory side of historicism...³

Nishitani Keiji: This is what contemporary philosophy must be.⁴

I

Ever since Georg Lukács exposed the affirming method of philosophers like Heinrich Rickert as simply a “prolongation of the state of pure immediacy” that reflected the failure to take into account the process of mediations, there could only be the inescapable conclusion that any analysis of reality “ends by returning to the same immediacy that faces the ordinary man of bourgeois society in his everyday life.”⁵ What apparently troubled Lukács was the perception that the “facticity of bourgeois existence...now acquires the patina of an

1 *Sekaiishiteki tachiba to Nippon* [Japan and the world historical standpoint] (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1943), 5. Hereafter *SstN*.

2 *Ibid.*, 94.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), 155.

eternal law of nature or a cultural value enduring for all time.”⁶ Under such circumstances, “history must abolish itself,” owing to the “unhistorical character of bourgeois thought [which] appears instantly when the present is seen as an historical problem.” Lukács insisted that the problem of the present has become the problem of history, one that refuses to go away despite bourgeois denial, whose elucidation must constitute the task of a proper historiographical vocation. The reasons for this “blindness” stemmed from the preoccupation of philosophy to ground its theoretical approach in unmediated “contemplation,” which itself has produced an “irrational chasm” dividing the subject and object of knowledge. Since World War I bourgeois thinkers and historians have been prevented from seeing the “world historical events” of the present as an expression of an incipient universal history. As a result, their work has never risen above the “pitiable” level of the worst kind of “provincial journalism.” In other words, philosophy’s dedication to sustaining the separation has originated in the decision to bracket the historical present of its world and thus exonerate some of the century’s outstanding thinkers from accounting for their thought and its moment of temporality. Years later and in a different part of the world this was the same estimate made by the philosopher Tosaka Jun, who pointed to how philosophy had abdicated its principal vocation to interrogate actuality for a flight to transcendence.

Paradoxically, the present is the philosopher’s primary precinct of occupancy, not the historical past. It is the place where thought and reflection are carried out. Yet, as Paul Ricoeur reminded us, despite the differences between thought, literature, and history, they ultimately share a common referent, which is the human experience of time or the “structure of temporality.” In the decade of the 1960s of the post–World War II era, the philosopher Louis Althusser revisited the question of philosophy and history and their putative relationship and the space they might mutually share. With his lapidary declaration that “philosophy has no history,” echoing another familiar announcement asserting that “ideology has no history,” Althusser called into question the necessity of rethinking the relationship. But the proposal should not be understood as recommending a thoroughgoing formalism immunizing philosophy from its world, even though some have seized upon this interpretation as a divergence from conventional Marxism. But as Marxists, Althusser and his followers granted to philosophy neither an independence from “an objective, historical existence,” its claim to timelessness and universality, nor its unknowing complicity in dimly reflecting social reality.⁷ Rather, philosophy,

6 Ibid., 157.

7 Pierre Macherey, *In a Materialist Way, Selected Essays*, ed. Warren Montag, trans. Ted Stolze (London: Verso, 1998), 5.

as a practice, was linked to other practices, and produced effects (from absent causes) that needed to be accounted for and revised according to a changing historical situation it could never fully grasp.⁸ This departure from an immanent critique manifest in Lukács, which the Althusserian inflection partially shared, required philosophy to thus confront its present and reflect upon its historicity, that is the “theoretical conjuncture,” in order to “stake out a position” on and in the temporality of the present. For Althusser, since philosophy has already occupied every space, what thus appears necessary is the act of taking a position against the prior occupants. According to Pierre Macherey, Althusser was apparently objecting to any attempt to reduce philosophy to an historicity external to itself that would “denature the fundamental operation.”⁹ Because the philosopher thinks in the present, meaning that the present provides no priority as a given circumstantial “actuality,” what is being expressed is the “pure presence of thinking to oneself.” Thought thus affirms itself to the present in the act of thinking, which is proper to a “pure practice” since it is not related to anything but itself. Unlike other forms of knowledge shaped by relations to exterior objects defining their domains, philosophy has no history because its “object” is itself, dedicated to speculative reflection in a temporal moment proper to it that cannot be measured by any other time. But lingering in the shadows of the present is the conjuncture, a historical moment demanding an accounting in any explanation of philosophy’s presentness and the present of philosophy.

If philosophy has no proper history as such, history has a philosophy that works on it and transforms it. In this regard, history marks philosophy by exposing it to the risks and promises of temporality, rather than thinking solely in and for its own time in a necessarily singular manner.

Hence, philosophy is induced to think with and for time, ideally for all times, by moving beyond the circumstances that have made it contemporary to itself;¹⁰ it thus confronts other forms and figures of thought and is conserved or altered. In this way, history is not external to it, but rather internal to its operation since it can in no way be bonded to a fixed object and its appearance. Philosophy is in fact history, a history of its relationship to itself, that is, its present. But the present is not so much merely a moment but rather a vast conjuncture marked by traces of coexisting pasts, uneven temporalities between different domains of activity, heterogeneity, irreducible divergences that foreclose the possibility of linking social reality to the appearance of an unmediated immediacy. In fact, the philosophic text is no longer separated

8 Ibid., 6.

9 Pierre Macherey, *Histoires de dinosaure* (Paris: PUP, 1999), 283.

10 Ibid., 283, 284.

from an external history, nor is history external to it, no longer reflecting a world outside of it or merely representing it since it is both “fully historical and real.”¹¹ The sign of this kinship is recorded in the temporal discordance and disorder that traverses and criss-crosses the philosophic (and indeed any) text fashioned out of a social reality, which itself is indicated by conflicts and uncertainties unevenly developed that can only be described as a “historical present” rather than “the simplicity of the present.”

Whatever distance some philosophers sought to impose between their philosophy and moment in the 1930s, it was not nearly as great as the effort of the postwar reflex in Japan to rehabilitate Kyoto philosophy under the steady drum beat of periodically and repetitively reminding us that its philosophic reflections never refracted the force of the historical present in which it was produced. The reproach calls attention to yet another context, more implicit than explicit, which is rarely articulated but clearly refers to the text(s) under consideration, as if it (or they) possess an invertebrate knowledge of itself. Such attempts to spare philosophy from the world that produced it, or in which it was produced, can only lead to denunciations that discount the scholarship informing accounts that seek to explain the historicity of texts. What appears to be at stake in this defense of an indefensible formalism is the presumption of a transhistorical truth claimed for philosophy (as if history has no truths of its own) and the impossibility of securing assent or agreement on what constitutes the proper “context” for the elucidation of philosophic reflections. Those critics who have made careers in defending the claim of exemption of Nishida philosophy from its world, ultimately remind us of Marx’s penetrating critique of Stirner and the effort of Young Hegelians to separate thought from history: “Philosophy and the study of the actual world have the same relation to one another as onanism and sexual love.”¹² The resulting consequence is a rejection of both the singularity of situations and the importance of its specificity.

While it is not my purpose to assign political guilt and rehash the imbecilities of philosophic formalism, and contemporary appropriators seeking to “correct” misinterpretations that serve the present rather than either past presents or its thinkers, I will be concerned with what we might identify as the practice of separating philosophy from history and reflection from its world, the reasons informing this impulse, and the corollary question of philosophy’s answerability to history. I should say, in this connection, I am not referring to the history of philosophy, as such, a mere history of illusory ideas, spirits and

11 Ibid., 10.

12 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in Marx and Engels *Collected Works*, vol. 5 *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978), 236.

ghosts, as Marx observed,¹³ since it sustains the very formalism that is at the heart of the question. Rather I want to focus on how both philosophy and history must be answerable to each other in the present they commonly occupy, how each must be used against the other in the effort to seek a way to offset the impression that they are not mutually implicated with each other, even though such a relationship is often disavowed on both sides. Instead, I want to suggest that many of the very people who have been exonerated from their historical present by the appeal to a timeless formalism were deeply involved in and responsive to the imperatives demanded by their present. Specifically, I will be concerned with the relationship of a historical present and the formation of what Kyoto philosophers called a “world historical standpoint” at the outset of World War II.

The Russian philologue, comparatist, and literary critic M.M. Bakhtin is our best guide to the problem of answerability, as exemplified in one of his early texts dedicated to explaining art’s answerability to life. Bakhtin perceived in discursive thought a split between the “content or sense of a given act” and the “historical actuality of its being.” For this reason, he feared the loss incurred in every instance of knowing the value and “unity” of a given art’s actual “becoming and self-determination.” Hence, he declared, “two worlds confront each other,” two worlds that fail to have any communication with each other and are thus “mutually impervious.” “The world of culture and the world of life, the only world in which to create and the world in which these acts and cognition proceed and are accomplished once and only once.” What Bakhtin was apparently calling to attention was the recognition of acts that moved in two different directions and the necessity to reflect on both simultaneously, to achieve the “unity of two sided answerability.” Moreover, the accomplishment of this reciprocal answerability must become a constituent moment of the act or what is given, since it is the only way the “pernicious non-fusion” and “non-interpretation of culture and life could be surmounted.”¹⁴ A human, he wrote, has no right to an alibi, to an evasion of that unique instantiation of answerability, which is constituted by his/her actualization of a unique, never-repeatable “place.” In fact, a human has no right to avoid that once occurring “answerable act or deed” which a whole life must constitute.

It seems to me that it is this reluctance to satisfy the imperative of answerability that has resulted in the narrowing of our understanding of philosophy’s moment of historical production. Driven by a fear that philosophy, like all

13 Ibid., 130.

14 M.M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 3.

other forms of expression, will be merely reduced to a material historical determination, the act of denial risks undermining the necessity of mutual communication between philosophy and history. Yet from philosophy we must expect an accounting of the historical location of its reflective act, while history will be asked to acknowledge its reliance on forms of philosophic enablement in its pursuit of meaning. It is instructive to note that Tanabe Hajime, in his lectures on historical reality of 1940 (*Rekishiteki genjitsu*) expressed this sentiment, whereby he saw philosophy's task to be sorting out what we know or do not know about historical reality and especially the contemporary history Japanese were living in the late 1930s.¹⁵ Tanabe was merely reiterating a shared response among Kyoto philosophers, who had increasingly turned to history and the present to grasp the nature of their relationship to it as a condition of understanding the meaning of their moment. Like many of his contemporaries, Tanabe saw the challenge of the contemporary present as the singular vocation of philosophy to grasp the reality of history and its meaning for the future.

We must thus recognize the importance of the irony of a philosophic discourse that sought to surmount the conventionally received separation of philosophy and history for the more difficult task of inducing a mutual answerability to each other by focusing on the present in order to ascertain the demand of contemporary history. In this encounter, both philosophy and history would be transformed into a proper form of address leading to action. Yet, this response represented a far cry from later custodians (the epigoni) of Kyoto philosophy, who have consistently persisted in their resolve to reinstate the cleft between history and philosophy. However much this engagement of the present might today summon critical denunciation, it cannot be discounted for having shirked the gesture of responsibility for attending to the more difficult decision to find an "answerable unity" of thinking and "performed action," in the interest of trying to align life (history) and politics.¹⁶ We can detect in this sensitivity the leitmotiv of the now infamous symposium on world history of 1942 (*Sekaishi tachiba to Nippon*), which, in Kōsaka Masaaki's admonitory proclamation, proposed that the central question at hand is the present, and constituted a preoccupation found in the writings of virtually all of the people who, in one way or another, were associated with Kyoto philosophy, like Tanabe, Tosaka Jun, Nishitani Keiji, Kōyama Iwao, Miki Kiyoshi and indeed even Nishida Kitarō himself. But none was more engaged in this question than Miki Kiyoshi, who answered the compelling question of the conjunctural present

15 Tanabe Hajime, *Rekishiteki genjitsu* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1945). Hereafter *Rg*.

16 Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, xxiii.

in a philosophic idiom that fused into pragmatic and political analyses for the formulation of policy in the current situation. When he departed from his philosophic vocation to work in policy-oriented research units associated with the state, his intent was to supply an example of how philosophic analysis could be used to grasp and address the current situation to make policy. Yet we can see in all of these thinkers the effect of Marx's early identification of a world history yet to be written but that would fuse the "local being" to the "universal being," region to world, as he already had perceived occurring in the formation of the world market demanded by capitalism and its aptitude for expansion. However, this is not to say that Kyoto philosophers were Marxist, excepting Tosaka; far from it in fact but only captive to this singular insight that saw capital as making possible world history.

What Miki shared with his philosophic cohort was the conviction that the resolution of the present's status required finding ways to overcome it, and thus exceeded its entailing historical associations to reach the goal of a temporalization no longer burdened by the claims of the modern. It should be remembered that this rejection of the reviled category of a degraded modernity had become the subject of both philosophic discourse and common sense in the late 1930s and echoed Martin Heidegger's earlier dismissal of the modern and the "them" (*das Man*) who inhabited this specious temporal and historical register. With Miki, and Kyoto philosophy in the late 1930s, the present offered an urgent occasion for continuing the "reckoning of time," as Heidegger had named it earlier, and the opportunity for rethinking the figure of a true temporality. In Miki's reflections this trajectory led to envisaging a new conceptualization of time and its relationship to space capable of accommodating Japan's world historical position and an emergent Asia yet preserving capitalism in a new configuration. Part of this preoccupation with the present in the form of a persisting presentism derived from a modernist impulse already established in interwar Japan that had pronounced a verdict on the past as a necessary condition for securing a separation from the burden of the present's antecedents. Kyoto philosophers also shared a modernist distrust of received forms of historical representation. But an equally important source prompting it was the interwar conjuncture that literally sought to fuse the future with the present or condense the one into the other for its promise of immediacy, presence—progressively made more demanding by the deteriorating world situation.¹⁷ In this environment, philosophy moved to emphasizing the importance of what might be called the phenomenological "now" and proceeded to provide it with

17 For an articulation of this condensation of the present's eternality and the future, see *Rg*, 31–42.

a diagnosis that would open the way for it to become the temporal tense of the future perfect. Here, it seems, was the meaning of an “overcoming” that would surpass the contemporary present. Yet inscribed in the heart of the conjunctural imperative privileging the immediacy of the present and urgency to meet its demand for resolution was a set of historical presuppositions pointing to the nature of Japan’s modernizing experience that eventually would prefigure the philosophic intervention and configure its discourse. I am referring to the appearance of the great Marxian historiographical controversy of the late 1920s and early 1930s over the historical nature of capitalist development in Japan and its subsequent effect on sensitizing the conjunctural generation to the consequences of capitalist modernization in Japan. More than anything else, it was this debate that called attention to the various aporia of capitalist modernization, and which would ultimately prompt the recommendation to “overcome modernity.” Even though its own agenda was narrowed to emphasize the economic nature of capitalist development in Japan since the late eighteenth century and the political fallout of the transformative events leading to the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and its aftermath, the debate, owing to its Marxian orientation, would also identify the social contradictions put into play by the new state and its commitment to establishing a capitalist political and economic order, which, it was believed, would have to be overcome if Japan was to enter the new world history Marx had envisioned but was yet to be conceived and written. Hence, the effort to supply the view of a new world history, no longer yoked to either Hegel’s systematic presentation of a universal history and the unfolding of reason or Marx’s incomplete reflections, with a philosophic analysis that assigned the task of overcoming all antinomies to a state rooted in folk and community as the response to the contemporary Marxian debate on the origins and development of Japan’s capitalism. Both Marxian historical discourse and Kyoto philosophy sought to resituate Japan in a new global and temporal register: the Marxists in capitalism and the formation of a new international division of labor that would announce the triumph of the proletariat as a fulfillment of Marx’s own unfinished conception of world history; and Kyoto philosophy in discerning in the present the temporal moment as the occasion for Japan to embark upon a world historical mission to construct a “true” and universal world order that would surpass the particularistic manifestations of the past.

Hence, philosophic discourse turned toward the assignment of addressing the status of contemporaneity—*genzai*—by paradoxically taking up the task of rethinking the status of history and historical consciousness. The purpose of this seeming detour was, according to Kōsaka Masaaki, to reconfigure the matrix of the present in such a way as to make history anew in a temporal register

no longer weighted with associations burdened by the category of “modernity.” To be sure, this new history was the world history valorized by the famous symposium named after it, a new temporal and spatial formation, which, Kōsaka proposed, was the problem posed by the present itself that would lead to its (the present) surpassing. In Kōsaka’s thinking the present and its overcoming was “above all” reducible to “the problem of Japan.”¹⁸ In his opening statement of the symposium on world history, Kōsaka highlighted the importance of history and especially the philosophy of history. In his reckoning, he divided Japan’s interest in the philosophy of history into three stages, which reflected stages in the country’s modern history, the last being the present now dominated by a consciousness and philosophy of world history, which has succeeded the previous moments of Rickertian epistemology and Diltheyian hermeneutics (*SstN*, 3–4). In other words, the identity of an achieved world historical status in the present underscored its contemporary significance and its importance for the future. Moreover, it is precisely this identification between a consciousness of world history and the actual demands of the present (*genzai Nippon*) that accentuated philosophy’s responsibility toward history: “Philosophy has come to be a discipline such that, within history’s movement, it clarifies one’s own standpoint and has thus become a learning (*gakumon*) that provides suggestions on which direction we might proceed. It is because of this [reason] that we must analyze the contemporary [moment]” (*SstN*, 3–4). As a result, the “philosophy of world history possesses the obligation to direct the course in world history,” as it now serves as a foundational discipline for “orienting” and “advancing” “anew, step by step” (*Snr*, 61).

At about the same time, Tanabe Hajime was advising that “historical reality” must be seen as the mediation of possibility, which determines the self freely for “our future” (*Rg*, 20). What is important is the overdetermined activity of philosophical discourse in the 1930s conjuncture to privilege the present moment at the virtual expense of diminishing the role of the past. (Kyoto philosophy’s response to the Marxian historiographical debate on the development of capitalism in Japan and its contradictions.) While this intellectual impulse brings to mind one of the principal planks of the modernist platform, it also draws attention to the philosophic desire to refigure the present and world historicity into an epiphanic moment positioned to shatter the narrative reminders of the past for the attainment of a new level of consciousness, which would induce a defining interruption leading to intense change. In this regard, I think it is possible to suggest that Kōsaka’s decision to discount both

18 Kōsaka Masaaki, “Sekaishikan no ruikai,” in Mori Tetsurō, ed., *Sekaishi no riron*, Kyōto tetsugaku sensho, vol. 11 (Kyoto: Tōeisha, 2000), 59. Hereafter *Snr*.

epistemology and hermeneutics for world history represents a shared rejection of the claims of narrative itself—especially all those narratives that had, like the Marxian historical debate, highlighted the development of a specific capitalist modernity made in the West. Since the events announcing the arrival of world history were beginning to disclose the vague silhouette of a world still in process of “coming” into being and in its “making” in the present, as Tanabe anticipated, it would be necessary to continue the effort to actualize a course of action committed to overcoming and moving beyond the older narrative of modernity. (Here, it should be noted, Tosaka Jun also shared a distrust for narratives, especially those dominated by the unity of nation-state but substituted the hegemony of the world market and the international division of labor for world history [*Rg*, 25–26].) The determined purpose of the philosophy of world history was the achievement of a new present, a time different from the “modern,” once associated with an anticipated future and directed at realizing the what will have been of the future anterior. Moreover, this project of the present leaned increasingly toward defining Japan’s destiny as the subject and substance of the category of world history, which aimed to replace the older stage dominated by the reign of the world market as the arena of the nation-state and its political alignments, marking Japan’s entry into capitalist modernity.

II

The central problem that aroused the interest of Kyoto philosophers in the present was the question of historicism and the urgency of resolving the crisis of value resulting from an excess of history. Beyond the immediate task of resolving a surplus of historical knowledge and the uncertainty of values in the face of relativism, the attempt to address the crisis of historicism ultimately paved the way to “overcome the modern,” which meant surpassing the present itself for a new contemporaneity. Japanese thinkers in the 1930s, especially those associated with the Kyoto School, responding to what Ernst Troeltsch named earlier as both “the problem” and the “crisis” of historicism, reinforced the conviction that in their present they were living through a crisis in historical thought manifest in the production of an excess of historical knowledge and the runaway relativism of values it unleashed.¹⁹ Moreover, it was observed that

19 Christian Uhl, “What Was the Japanese ‘Philosophy of History’? An Inquiry into the Dynamics of the ‘World-Historical Standpoint’ of the Kyoto School,” in Christopher Goto-Jones, ed., *Re-Politicising The Kyoto Schools as Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2008), 125–26.

this excessive production of history was principally derived from accelerated specialization and fragmentation among the disciplines resulting in a collapse not only in the stability of values making the permanence of evaluative judgments impossible but also the crumbling of whatever coherence history may have once commanded. Ever since World War I it had been progressively noted that historical specialization was undermining both the claims to standardized, enduring values by seeking to understand the past in and on its own terms (as if such a utopian mastery was ever attainable) and the acknowledgment that the discipline had consistently failed to explain convincingly how the present has been produced by its pasts, prompting Paul Valéry to declare that “history will justify anything” and “it teaches precisely nothing.” Valéry, along with numerous contemporaries, saw the ultimate inutility of historical knowledge in its failure to foresee and anticipate the coming of World War I.²⁰ But this failure signified an exclusive preoccupation with the past to the detriment of ignoring an analysis of the current situation as history’s true vocation, as Marx and successors like Lukács had advised. This discounting of history was especially true of the immediate present of the late 1930s and the defiance of a world conjuncture to submit to the protocols of historical understanding, as it was already forecasting the contours of yet another global conflagration.

Kyoto philosophers were quick to turn away from the faded promise of historical knowledge to teach about life to understand the historical present, which they designated as the locus of history. In this new assessment, the present thus required a rethinking of the structure of historical practice conforming to a philosophy positioned to provide a coherent image of world history, rather than merely a history of the national past. The purpose of this rethinking was to make history once more meaningful—universal—and its value freed from the oblivion of relativism. The task was assigned to the construction of a philosophy of world history, one that would exceed Hegel’s idealist trajectory of the unfolding of “freedom” and overcome the crisis-ridden historicism of a European consciousness dominated by a regime of abstraction for a return to the concreteness of “real life.” Kyoto philosophers thus seized their moment as the occasion for redefining Japan’s special world historical mission to rid Asia of an implacably exploitative white man’s imperialism and release its various societies from colonial bondage for the realization of independent nationhood under a new putatively cooperative regional arrangement of authority called the East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.

Under Japanese supervision, the new regional authority would create a spatial site for capitalism (making some suppliers, others producers) and a

20 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978), 36.

different temporality for its operations, which, it was believed, would transport an hitherto absent Asia, languishing invisibly in the shadowed eclipse of Western colonialism, into the light of a new age of world historicity and put on an equal footing with the West. In the meditations of Kyoto philosophy, it became evident that the past, which was rejected for the present, was the temporality that had been assigned to Japan, whereas Asia would now occupy the new time of the present. As Kōyama proposed, time and again, Europe and its world historical moment now belonged to a different temporality and the past. While this proposal implied an inversion of the Hegelian historico-temporal paradigm, I think Kōyama was trying to move beyond Hegel by pointing to both the installation of a new temporal present, one that would accommodate the new with the received past and which was consistent with the thinking on “overcoming,” and a new kind of social and political configuration that was ultimately concretized in the East Asia Co-Prosperty sphere that aimed to “federate” new Asian nation-states. It is important to recognize that Kyoto philosophy pursued the promise of a new, universalized world history, first systematized by Hegel as the march of reason and later revised by Marx as a moment yet to come once the “world market” appeared. But Marx envisioned (as did non-Marxian thinkers of the Kyoto School) not the “universal history” propelled by Hegel’s reason, which posited the trajectory of a one way street endowed with meaning all societies would eventually realize but a world history that would show the uneven interplay of contingent forces that made of history moments marked by the appearance of world historicity and its “closing down,” as Kōsaka put it, its disappearance, and the overcomings that would lead to its reappearance only in a new present. Or as Marx might have envisaged, “It breaks up into branches, large and small, that always begin afresh. Each critical point of bifurcation poses its own questions and demands its own answers.”²¹ Hegel’s “universalism” pointed to the achievement of homogeneous sameness, precisely the modernity Japanese were committed to overcoming, whereas Marx’s worldly history conserved the past in the new present, that is the mutually interactive relationship between the “local being” and “universal being” Marx and Engels first envisaged in *The Germany Ideology*.

Kōsaka Masaaki announced that the present was “spatially” an “unprecedented turning point,” inasmuch as new worlds were emerging that the West heretofore had ignored, especially the historical world of Asia. “Temporally,” he added, the modern will be immediately changed to a “new present” (*Snr*, 60). His colleague Kōyama Iwao constantly returned to the centrality of a “turning point” as the occasion for “constructing” and establishing a new world

21 Daniel Bensaïd, *Marx For Our Times*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 34.

historical presence in the present. Above all, the prevailing intellectual impulse informing this quest for a new world historical imaginary at the outset of World War II was the resolution of the historicist crisis, which had gripped the attention of leading thinkers throughout the 1930s conjuncture in Japan and Western Europe, not, as some today suppose, Japan's putative cultural identity. But it was also clear that the question confronting all participants in the 1930s was the meaning of the present, as a growing complex conjunctural configuration began to show signs everywhere of overdetermination and question the status of historical consciousness and knowledge to actually determine what was happening.

In Kōsaka's reckoning, there were three world historical views that represented a typology of subjectivity. Convinced that world history symbolized particular human destinies, the trinity represented a history of symbolic humans. World history was not merely spirit wending its way through time, manifesting itself along a certain trajectory, since it inevitably realized its potential in the land (*tsuchi*), the soil, ground. Its appearance was modulated by the oscillation of diversity and historical repetition (*Snr*, 77). Land, in fact, was connected to the absolute and embodied in forms that changed appearance with expansion (*Snr*, 92). Even though the absolute was dispersed in diversity, its symbolic remained firmly rooted in the soil, a distinctive principle that meant that naturalistic phenomena like earthquakes could never be disregarded in the making of a world historical formation. (Here, Kōsaka was evidently echoing the earlier mediations of Watsuji Tetsurō's *Fūdo*). The history of the Orient, he remarked, whether in Japan, China, or India, has always been achieved through the mediation of a profound naturalism. Hence, world history, illuminating the dispersed manifestation of the absolute through the principle of land, constitutes the movement of the "great earth" seeking its symbolic center. Despite the practical positioning of world history down to the present, Kōsaka was confident that it constituted an organic unity that grew out of the soil. Why this organic principle of growth loomed so importantly in the present is that the current situation now appears crowded with several past worlds being reshuffled to become contending candidates as grounding for a tendency to build a new civilization. World history is thus not like a "necessary tidal current" that flows incessantly and on schedule from the past but rather is a reorganization that derives from the symbolic center of the world history in the present. It is a "symbolic event that occurs anew" and marks the ceaseless repetition of the present. "The present" is therefore the period that announces the arrival of an awareness that recognizes its message of unique meaning (*Snr*, 92). Kōsaka warned that when the present grows out of the past, as imagined by German idealism and rejected by Marx, the peculiar meaning

of the present is extinguished; there can be no true creation or history under this circumstance (*Snr*, 86). When past, present, and future are universally divided, the finite nature of human existence becomes insurmountable and, as with Hegel, there is a correspondence between history and a self that eliminates the “true thou.”

Here, it seems, Kōsaka’s referral to the universal, the transcendental, pointed to the folk (*minzoku*), timeless yet ever changing, and the imperishable world it has made. As for the accomplishment of world history, whether it expresses its particularity in the individual or the folk, it is complicated since such a subject must be said to have a “world historical existence.” What Kōsaka pointed to was the perception that regardless of the forms of either spatially or temporally driven world histories, the question of a “true subjectivity,” one embracing both the particular and universal, had hitherto always been disregarded “burying” the true subject, which meant forfeiting the transcendental and absolute in history. Where the current move toward a new world history constituted a superior improvement over earlier types was precisely in recognizing the present’s awakening and bringing to surface the importance of a true subject.

Historically, past world histories failed because of their denial of the universal. They instead relied more on worlds of particularity, which can never change into the world historical. In this regard, the universal should never be exclusively identified with Christianity, which, in his opinion, had already “exited” from the scene, played out its particularistic role in the mask of the universal, and was no longer in a position to foster a continuing process or development of the universal in the historical world. The way out of this troubling prospect lay in an analysis of time. Kōsaka, in this connection, recapitulated Tanabe Hajime’s argument that historical time could take diverse forms and directions. Specifically, temporality’s course is not narrowed to a linear, horizontal register (*suiheimen*) but is capable of simultaneously moving vertically or perpendicularly, not to forget circularly in repetition. If time is limited to the horizontal, the world historical will no doubt be considered only from the perspective of progressive development. But when time simultaneously moves vertically, it will possess dimensions of both continuity and discontinuity in world history. By the same measure, if time ordinarily begins from the present (its sole state of existence in its presence), so too the world historical. What makes the past a mediation of the self, rather than having the mediation take place in the past, is the true present (*Snr*, 93). This view implied a concurrence of the temporal tenses of past and present, an identity that Kōsaka called the “eternal now,” and proposed that the circumstances of world history must be the same. While world history has begun in the past, presumably the present of a past, its identity derives from the present, not the past. Its possibility resides

in the present, “a labor of resolution,” and all of the proper instances of the world historical, whether in China or Greece or even modern Europe are products of the present and its confrontation with things that are made new and fresh again. For him, the world historical was identified with the mission of relieving people, and thus aligned with the world’s religions in antiquity. In this sense, the kinship with world history was in its discovery of the absolute no-thing, inasmuch as it—world history—was the symbolic (and material) embodiment of something that had no objective existence. In fact, Kōsaka’s argument implied that world history was an effect of an absent and unseen cause. Beyond this relationship to the absolute, world history represented humanity’s symbolic history that marked the selected paths of destiny in different pasts and places, which referred to those moments when subjectivity was formed.

But Kōsaka was convinced that world histories did not always establish conceptions of “true subjectivity.” True subjectivity hinged on a notion of universal rationality. “It is not,” he explained, “a rationality produced according to having been connoted under the universal whereby the particular case mediates the unique; to the contrary, the universal connoted within the particular mediates the unique.” This distinction called attention to a relationship to the domain of the symbolic or representation and signified what he described as the “characteristic of historical rationality” (*Snr*, 94–95). At the same time, such historical rationality is not inscribed in the individual but rather in the world historical individual, which maintains the “ethical substance” of a self linked to the folkic subject that accompanied the formation of the modern state. In other words, world historical subjectivity is the world historical folk sustained by the state. To this extent, world history is the history of the symbolic folk and clearly constituted a substitute for Marx’s world proletariat proposed in a conception of world history that had yet to be written. Not only did an ethnic folk take over the role assigned to an international laboring class but one now equipped with the capacity to overcome the interiority of the solitary and individual self, which had once been the classic emblem of class consciousness. Moreover, it is the state that supplies the “nucleus” of this possibility for realizing folkic subjectivity, that gives it form, through which it must create a world historical culture. The expression of the world historical mission Japan had begun to undertake was marked by the folk, state, and culture as its principal constituents. Japan, Kōsaka remarked, had not hitherto followed “the failed path of established world historical models that have disregarded the opportunity offered by the objective spirit.” A true overcoming, which implied seizing the opportunity at hand, is impossible without the mediation of the historical formation that will lead to the absolute. In this sense, an overcoming is always an overcoming of history (*Snr*, 96). The true future utopia remains within the

act of overcoming in the present, the now of eternity, as he put it (in contrast to Tosaka Jun, who looked to the present as the now of the present, that is, the everyday as the source of history's temporality.) The difference was the following: Kōsaka's now eternity was a utopian imaginary linked to the accomplishment of overcoming the contemporary present, whereas Tosaka saw in the present the nowness of making history rooted in the daily performance of labor, with no hint of a utopian moment. World history symbolized this eternal now.

A subjectivity that fails to "blast open" and construct the world anew, Kōsaka asserted, is no subjectivity at all; and a "world historical world" without a constructive overcoming will simply close up again. Under this circumstance the subject will remain buried in the world and disappear into world history (*Snr*, 97). Hence, world history symbolizes the overcoming of immanence and the mission of humanity that makes the eternal its destiny; it is thus a symbolic stage of humanity's eternal mission. If history is the world symbolizing the absolute no-thing, inasmuch as it flows eternally, it will be carried out in the "eternal now." "We must see," he concluded, "the eternal history of Japan there."

Kōsaka, like a member of a relay team handing over the thematic baton to a successor, turned these themes over to Kōyama Iwao, who would bring them to completion. In fact, Kōyama's lengthy *Philosophy of World History* (*Sekaishi no tetsugaku*), a compilation of a number of essays written from the late 1930s, reflected, perhaps as no other contemporary work, the fullest assessment of the nature of historical production as the vocation of the present and force of answerability demanded of philosophy by the global conjuncture of the contemporary moment. It was necessary that the response be equally worldly to satisfy the immense task of overcoming the liabilities of the past and ridding the present of its unwanted and inhibiting problems of untimeliness. Much of this project was enshrined in the various symposia conducted by the Kyoto School in 1942 devoted to its enunciative presentation, whose discussions disclosed the prescient range of their philosophical analysis "before the letter" that would reappear in altered form to meet the circumstances of a different world after the war in texts like the Monbushō's *Kitai sareru ningenzō* and in European poststructural philosophy, which could not have known the earlier Japanese articulation.²² While this analysis prefigured later discourses that put into question the status of the subject, especially the instability of representation and conceptions of history no longer bound to the limited unit of the nation form, chronology identifying past with present and the authority of empirico-positivism as the ground of historical knowledge, it often

22 My thanks to Steven Platzer for making this connection between Kyoto philosophy and the postwar Ministry of Education.

subordinated this philosophic analysis to the demands of the Japanese state and its agenda calling for “total war” and leadership in Asia.

Even more than Kōsaka, Kōyama’s analytic perspective was driven by the “crisis of historicism.” The present constituted a temporal “turning point” or even a transition that required “deep reflection on the question of historical consciousness.”²³ Such moments inevitably arouse the impulse to resolve vitally important problems that have been transmitted from a prior time, which the past has denied or declined to address that necessitates its rejection by the present. Kōyama argued that historical practice had proceeded to simultaneously convey what effectively was relative to its moment while presuming it also constituted an instantiation of the absolute. The awareness of a critical turning point in the present demands an immediate recognition of the relativity of the moment as a condition for subsequently assessing how it might be linked to the absolute. “We often forget about the death of many in everyday life,” he wrote, echoing Heidegger’s earlier condemnation of an everyday life that seeks to forget about death, “and live and act as though there was immortality” (*St*, 401). While this sentiment clearly resonates with Heidegger’s meditations on the death of *Dasein*, it is evident that Kōsaka was actually seeking to absorb the death of many in everyday life to the figure of *Dasein*—“Being There,” even though commentators on Heidegger have presumed that *Dasein* did not refer to others but only *Dasein*’s singular death. Yet, it did not necessarily exclude the possibility of referring to the death of people in everyday life. But a singular death has the capacity to call attention to the possibility of the death of many. People ordinarily have little consciousness of the periods in which they are living but acknowledge this fact once they confront a turning point in the present, as they do when they face the conditions of dying and death. Moreover, this attitude is conducive to believing that because life is lived in modern culture its idea of itself is eternal and passes unchanged for all times to come. Echoing Marx’s critique of political economy in *Grundrisse*, which he could not have known, the same attitude, marking the absence of a critical reflection, prevails toward politics and economics. Under such circumstances, Kōyama suggested that it was difficult to be shaken from a condition of non-critical lethargy, which has completely lost any sense of awareness, into a state of consciousness that is fully capable of recognizing the powerful temporal

23 Kōyama Iwao, *Sekaishi no tetsugaku* [Philosophy of world history] (Tokyo: Kobushi shobō, 2001), 400. Hereafter in text as *St*. I have also consulted Kōyama’s wartime (1944) book *Nippon no kadai to sekaishi* [The task of Japan and world history] (Tokyo: Kōbundō shoten, 1944), which he saw as a companion volume to *Sekaishi no tetsugaku* and dedicated to the spirits of the war dead who “fell in defense of the fatherland in the Great East Asia War.”

unevenness constituting the historical world. What is so important about this observation is the role Kōyama accorded to the “turning point in the present,” which throws the present into dramatic contrast to what has come before and manifests both a temporal unevenness that undermines the supposed identity between past and present, the claims of succession in a continuous causal relation and, most importantly, an attitude that has assumed the givenness of life as unchanging and eternal. It is here, he reasoned, that the relativity of the moment is made apparent, the limits of its temporal boundedness established. By the same measure, he insisted, there is also now the possibility of discerning the absolute in such moments, since the fleeting nature of human life intimates the absolute because the encounter with death is with an absolute and thus a confrontation with the immortal and eternal. The quest for the absolute comes to be embodied in the action of constructing (*kensetsu*) a new historical structure in the present (*genzai*) (*St*, 401). In other words, the necessity of compelling a resolution of a problem inherited from the past transposes the period (*jidai*) and accomplishes resolving the task (*kadai*). Such a resolution is a “new creation.” “When the act of construction is directed to penetrating the historical consciousness of relativity, it realizes the eternal in the present, makes the present the beginning of the universe (*tenchi*) and carries out a creation of the universe in the creation of the present” (*St*, 402). For Kōyama, this singular act pointed to pursuing the historical simultaneously with the transhistorical, the instant with the eternal, the relative with the absolute.

In this oscillating movement, historicism is the name of the spiritual attitude that pierces the center of historical consciousness. While historicism venerates history it is also a spiritual attitude that comes to the heart of historical reality and because of this it shows its typical structure on those occasions when periods are transposed. But Kōyama warned that this spiritual attitude is not solely all there is to historicism. The spiritual in historicism exists everywhere there is “deep reflection” on all history and organizes the immanence of one philosophic world view with historical studies (*St*, 402). On the one hand, historicism is bonded to a consciousness of historical relativism and on the other to the search for the absolute of construction. It is this recurring impulse for construction in the present that converts the relativity of the time-bound moment into the sign of the absolute and eternal that thus drives the ceaseless repetition of a dialectic between *kadai* and *kensetsu*, whereby the same always produces something different, that is to say, different presents. Nothing, he proclaimed, is outside of the pursuit of creation in history, which is always the creation of the present itself (*St*, 346). What Kōyama was implying is that historicism, in its inordinate valorization of the past heritage and cultural value, invariably forgets the present as the site of construction. The sense of

construction that informs creation denies the utility of the past, and the resulting discontinuity that severs present from past makes sure that history is no longer founded on continual chronological or genealogical development (*St*, 351). In the temporal succession of historical worlds there is always a discontinuous rupturing since history is an intricate web of unlimited necessity and contingency interacting with each other to produce change from possibility. When the creative will of humans is braided with history's internal demands, there appears the creative moment, a history men make but not always according to their wishes, so to speak. But Kōyama was convinced that what is produced is the new without the weight of the past (*St*, 354).

Kōyama was particularly sensitive to the European (Hegelian) conceit that history and a critical tradition of philosophical history had failed to develop outside of Europe. Even though it had been Ernst Troeltsch's important *Historismus und seine Probleme* (1922) that later had sparked Japanese responsiveness to the relationship of the problem of historicism and the crisis of the world conjuncture in the 1930s, it was also this work that foreclosed the possibility of societies like Japan and China from envisioning a world history. In this work, Troeltsch was dedicated to demonstrating how the attainment of a future was consciously derived from a past preserved by Europeans. Kōyama's task was to show the cultural bankruptcy of Europe's claim to singularity (*St*, 357–60). The real reason for claiming this monopoly, he reasoned, stemmed from an impulse to expand to other regions of the world that was not always propelled by economic considerations but frequently accompanied by the political reason of the sovereign state to implant Anglo-Saxon supremacy (*St*, 380). While Troeltsch failed to see the world beyond Europe's borders, he was still able to propose a promising solution to the question of historicism—its relativization of values—that Kōyama was able to employ in accounting for the relationship of the particular and universal. Troeltsch had argued that the solution lay in a cultural synthesis of the absolute and relative that might bring particular and universal together. Yet, as Kōyama observed, this solution relied on a conception of the absolute rooted in Christianity, with its transhistorical fixation on the eternal, universal, whereas he advised that it was better to start from the particular like the ideal of folk spirit or ethics of nationality. The problem was to envisage a conception of world history that was able to include a nation's history yet remain distinct from it. In this endeavor, Kōyama recommended abandoning Troeltsch's reliance on Christianity (but not necessarily the idiom of spirituality) and the particularity of Europe masquerading as a universal endowment for all to all to follow and advised the construction of a true and secular world history in the present that was genuinely worldly. In fact, he designated the vocation of the present to imagine a new world history,

commensurately reflecting the facts of the day, which would mark its capacity to fulfill the task of producing the contemporary.

The issue at hand was how to determine the relationship of history and value. Kōyama agreed with Troeltsch and other writers of the epoch like Oswald Spengler and Christopher Dawson, the Irish Catholic medievalist, that historical philosophy embodied two significant themes: the realization of cultural synthesis in the present as subjective premise of world history and the selection of ideals that would constitute the content of world history (*St*, 436). In this arrangement, whereby world history performed as the concrete materiality of cultural synthesis, the principles assigned to determining value that grasp the meaning of historical structure derive not from theory, as such, but from conditions of subjective life that correspond to the living association of people themselves. But cultural synthesis, the capacious power to integrate diverse practices, risked an internal strain—contradictions—that inevitably inhibited the achievement of a realizing a genuine “theoretical unity.” Kōyama explained that connection to the absolute made for an “idiosyncratic unity,” symbols representing the trace of an unknown principle, which undoubtedly constituted a true unity that could only be imperfectly reflected in effects as partial revelations. Here, it seems to me, Kōyama was reaching back and rescuing an earlier form of cosmopolitanism that momentarily reigned in the post–World War I decade of the 1920s, following Nishida Kitarō’s earlier pathway charted in *Zen no kenkyū*, which called for the gathering of national cultures into a world cultural unity greater than its parts, whereby the distinct or singular parts contributed to a blending or even a unity that remained unseen and unknown. However, the difference between the earlier cosmopolitanism, implying a metonymic strategy by which the part stood in for the whole and thus privileged the unique contribution of each national culture, lay in Kōyama’s appeal to a new world historical configuration that clearly prioritized the whole at the expense of incorporating elements of diverse cultures under Japan’s guidance. This difference disclosed the immense seismic shift in world conjunctures and a virtual inversion from what had taken place in the postwar of the early 1920s down to the beginning of World War II. The cultural synthesis Kōyama thus recommended required abandoning first, as much as possible, received cultural dispositions, in order to plunge into the world’s several cultures. It is, he believed, necessary to change received circumstances as a whole, and this demanded objectively recognizing cultural ideals from different societies and pasts that might be enlisted in the project of constructing a new present (*St*, 438). It is important to point out that in Kōyama’s reading of Troeltsch it was evident that the German thinker’s analysis had managed to exceed the practice of mere positivist historical research and a hermeneutic approach to the

past. What he—Kōyama—thus perceived in Troeltsch was rather the promise of an intellectual range of options that opened up a historiographical perspective empowered to induce “creative action.”

Here, we must turn to Kōyama’s representation of the current situation that authorized his promotion of a new conception of world history. Kōyama was particularly concerned with considering the “necessary conditions” that “will imperil” Japan’s program to overcome the European-based worldly history that had excluded non-Europeans (*St*, 360). “Our Japan,” he exclaimed, “is now [positioned] to enact the leading role in changing world history today. Japan’s world historical activity had begun by entering the contemporary century and separating the movement of emancipation from the European world by those who had been outside it” (*St*, 445). In other words, the significance of Japan’s arrival on the world scene was foremost *the* act that put the world outside Europe on an equal footing. But what had appeared immanent now became a different temporal order. At the heart of this observation was a view that classified the European conception of world history as belonging to the past (the epoch of modernity)—the history of overseas expansion, imperialism, and the establishment of the world market in the late nineteenth century. In a sense, Kōyama seemed to shift from what earlier had looked like relativism to a universal temporality embodied in Japan’s realization of a present (and thus conception of the modern) it had now surpassed. What apparently had occurred is simply a transformation of the historical configuration, whereby Japan now represented a new temporality when before it remained locked in the indeterminate atemporal zone of “catch up.” Now societies like Great Britain were consigned to a timeless past that had passed. Specifically, Kōyama was referring to Great Britain’s compulsion to install its hegemony in the “Orient” and legitimate its status militarily, which, in the interwar years, was progressively enhanced through a series of international conferences seeking to regulate the relations among states in the postwar years by controlling relative military size that clearly were directed at curbing Japan’s role in Asia, what he described as “energetic opposition.” It is interesting to note that Kōyama’s account of the reasons raising the necessity for a new world history guided by Japan clearly saw Japan replacing Great Britain’s hold on the world, which had been centered on European hegemony (*St*, 381). In this recent history, he compared Japan’s seizure of Manchuria in 1931 to “the great wave” that inaugurated a new world history (following up on Japan’s earlier and momentous victory over Russia in 1905, an event that turned all of Asia toward Japan), succeeded next by further involvements in China envisioned to keep in check British and American ambitions in the region, and finally Japan’s decision to join the Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The purpose of this recounting of events was

to show how one conception of world history was already in process of being replaced by another, whereby a “particularistic” form was being overtaken by a universalistic one. But the leading structuring agency was intimately linked to the experience of Japan’s national history. Kōyama’s discourse aimed at explaining how the newly emergent formation was pointing to the installation of a new universal world history—nourished by the nation’s history that would qualify as a “worldly world history” (*St*, 390), one capable of containing the subjectivities of both Europe and Asia rather than Europe alone. This immense transformation was principally historical, since the “turning point” that animated the present to such an act resulted from a “thematic” (*kadai*), which had been formulated by the failures of the past the present had inherited to now resolve. Hence, recognition of the contemporary meant the end of an older history and the beginning of the new—actualized in an “instant” (*St*, 400, 429, especially 452). “The instant of contemporaneity (*genzai*) is time [that] overcomes time. During such a turning point instant there is a consciousness of relativity in one direction and a connection to the pursuit of the absolute character of construction in another” (*St*, 402). Even though the different historical worlds signify the relative and embody a diversity of histories, possessing their own temporalities, a universalistic world history of the present would be able to transcend these discordant times by incorporating the particularistic histories they represent and unify them. Unification for Kōyama meant sharing a singular temporality. The transformation already announced a new temporal immanence that marked the change from a declining world order to an emergent successor led by Japan. It should be noted in this connection that Kōyama’s recommendation to transcend the temporal diversity of historical worlds and integrate them into a new immanence was consistent with colonial policy everywhere, which demanded the recalibration of a standard social time and the subordination of all local times to it. In his program the different temporalities would be incorporated into a single worldly time that would unify the historical world.

In the new global configuration, Europe would be consigned to a particularized past, to play the role of a vanishing remnant but discredited claim to world historical status, while Japan would command the present through its actualization of a true world history. Kōyama named this universalist history as the “absolute no-thing” (*mu*), because of its ability to transcend the local character of historical worlds, unify times with the world and the relative with the absolute (*St*, 448). Ultimately, this absolute “no-thing” exceeded time itself for the “unlimited” and “eternal.” This appeal to (and reminder of) Nishida Kitarō’s conception of an all incorporating and eternal absolute—recalling the “absolute contradictory self-identity” (*zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu*) and its

powerful but complex “logic of integration”—a virtual absent cause—unified all antinomies and was the place (*basho*) that manifested the world historical, indeed the eternal (*St*, 450). What Kōyama wished to emphasize was that concurrence of the relative in world conditions with the simultaneous perception of the absolute, the historical (time) with the eternal, that is a correspondence between temporality and sociality into what, in effect, became an absolute present no longer causally bound to a past and indistinguishable from a future it already embodied (*St*, 455). In other words, history, deriving from relative conditions determined by the moment, produced values that at the same time could claim the status of the absolute and eternal. It was this “absolute present” that reconciled all oppositions to “overcome the modern.” Yet it is difficult to separate this absolute present from the eternity claimed by capitalism’s conception of contemporaneity.

In Kōyama’s reckoning, it seems that the process of realizing the absolute present signaled the final becoming of the folk, which meant permanently reconciling all oppositions since the present was no longer shackled by its past. Once identified with an enduring and unchanging past the present was positioned to represent an achieved future. This philosophical formulation was not far from more familiar political programs in Germany declaring the establishment of a Thousand Year Reich and Italian fascism’s commitment to continue imperial Rome’s eternal glory and actually opened the way for the return of a fictional archaism Tosaka Jun saw as the core of the “Japan Ideology.” In other words, this “natural” history was realized by homologizing the categorical structure of capitalism with a logic preoccupied with forms that would result in bracketing empirical history presenting a natural, timeless and synchronic history, much in the manner Marx had observed of political economy. As a result, the absolute present claimed by capital provided the ground to eternalize the archaic and to subsume the past to the present into a timeless and unchanging unity. It is important to recognize that Kyoto philosophy, like others, was never far from the conjunctural crisis of capitalism, even though it was a topic rarely and directly addressed. In the end, it was Miki Kiyoshi who tried to envisage a temporally and spatially different kind of capitalism embodied in the regional East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as the solution to both a crisis that required saving capitalism from itself (and liberal failure) and satisfying the need to emphasize distance and difference from the “modern” that is, overcoming the West.

It is important to suggest here that all of the attributes Kōyama invested in explaining the creation of a new world historical order he inscribed first in the act of creating culture and the role of the folk (*minzoku*). Yet this new world historical order assumed the form of the imperium, which Japan had already

begun to construct and expand but which merely expressed the centrality of the state itself. In this regard, we must propose that whatever link Kōyama had to Hegel, his conceptualization of the state as the source of absolute and eternal morality and value derived from Nishida's philosophy, which offered both to supplement what he believed was missing in Hegel and at the same time exceed him by appealing to a philosophical configuration grounded not in being, as such, but in no-thing (*mu*) that presumably grew out of the Japanese folk experience of the world. In fact, it is the state that mediates all social oppositions like "class struggle and national conflict," and constitutes the "truest expression of the 'world-historical mission' of the Volk as creator of the 'new world order.'"²⁴ But if the state produces and reproduces value, it is because the folk have come into being through the act of "self-formation" or self-consciousness by creating culture from the experience of its daily working existence and thus distinguishes itself from the "human species" first by representing itself in the form of a social imaginary characterized by communitarian relations (*kyōdō*). This prior construction, undoubtedly the model for the later figure of world history in the present, signifies the presence of subjectivity, that is, the state. Kōyama identified history (temporality) and culture because they shared the same dynamic of production: "The foundation of culture exists in the self-formation of a folk life" (*St*, 67). Moreover, "Culture possesses historical temporality together with a territorialized folk character" (*St*, 398). As a result, the presence of the folk, especially the history of the folk, becomes the basis of world history. By the same token, the folk is formed and re-formed by culture.

Despite the later evolution of the nation-state from earlier forms of social imaginaries, Kōyama was convinced that it continues to express a folkic component. The trace of this folk endowment in the modern state appears in the desire to maintain continuity and survival through reproduction and through the will to sustain unity based upon the communal character of culture. But the state also continues the work of the earlier folk community by becoming the subject, which constructs culture in the widest sense and preserves the ethical and moral systems that set limits and regulate. The most enduring folkic residue is the sense of collective solidarity and thus the differentiation between inside and outside other and the subordination of the self to the group whereby the individual is integrated into a totality that is the state. Yet, there is something circular about this achievement of integration since it was secured by appealing to a prior identity achieved as a member of the folk and its culture, which might be described as an "always already" identification with the

24 William Haver, *The Body of This Death: Historicity and Sociality in the Time of AIDS* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 34.

primal folkic cultural community even before its ultimate manifestation in the state. We can only point to the dire and obvious political consequences of this idea once yoked to the imperium and its world historical countenance upholding the principle of exceptionalism and exclusion that designated the Japanese state to act “instant[ly]” (*setsuna*) to begin its historic “mission” of constructing an absolute present for East Asia.

III

If thinkers like Kōsaka and Kōyama sought to address the question of answerability between philosophy and history, expressed in the relationship between the present and the past, Miki Kiyoshi took the next logical step that had remained unattended in these discussions, which was to consider the relationship between historical time and action. In a certain sense, Miki’s discourse followed the path charted by Kōsaka, Kōyama, and Tanabe. But where he significantly departed from them was in a willingness to think through the consequences of contemporary eventfulness for the proper formulation of policy and action. Throughout his writings in the crucial decade of the 1930s, the common theme of crisis appeared regularly, accompanied by articulations of the condition of angst and the circulation of expressions of permanent anxiety over the contemporary state of the human condition, driving it ceaselessly into ever more desperate attempts to find a practical solution. This concern was verbalized in his essays on Marxism, where he first sought to construct a humanist philosophical anthropology positing an I/Thou relationship grounded in a putative materiality. In subsequent texts on angst, the philosophy of crisis, Pascal, Lev Shestov, Nietzsche he deepened this sense of the existential dislocation of humans as he backed off from his earlier encounter with Marxism. Yet he retained his interest in the role played by history in both its Marxian theorization of alienation and its existential conceptualization of a hermeneutic necessity that demanded addressing the question of self-understanding the current human condition, which, he believed, might offer or reveal a way to overcome the anxiety-ridden present. Specifically, it seems that Miki’s effort to overcome the present was driven by a desire to realize the creation of a new human being, indeed a new philosophical anthropology, whose profile was already disclosed in literary figures like Don Quixote, Hamlet, and Othello. Yet, it is important to recognize that the urgency fueling Miki’s quest to find an adequate anthropology was reinforced by the conjunctural force of his present and thus the concurrence of local, regional events and global occurrences leading to full-scale economic failure and the unwanted promise of an evolving political totalism committed

to resolution by war. Under these dire circumstances, Miki proposed a conception of double overcoming that clearly pointed to Japan's inadequate adoption of borrowed elements from foreign cultures since the Meiji period—its superficial adapting and imitation—and the misrecognition that the country's pace of development lagged behind the advanced, modern states of the West. (I should point out that this misperception of developmental lag persisted well into the postwar years and was dramatized by the party of modernization led by Maruyama Masao.) Here, Miki was particularly animated by the defects of the narrow understanding associated with action and conduct (*kōi*).²⁵ Actions, he believed, were linked to a chain of causes but there was something more to their structure. While the course of acting and performing a deed reflect the movement of an internal disposition, this interiorized impulse is still not merely reducible to consciousness. Interiority must always overcome what is internal—externalized—since action can never be considered solely from the standpoint of the interiority prompting it. In this sense, the performance of an act must always involve the gesture of a “double overcoming” that entails a surpassing of both the external along with the internal (MKe, 225). Action's meaning, resembling the figure of an angle, seeks to accomplish the unity of inside and outside. Moreover, Miki envisioned the expression of enactment as the manifestation of an “occurrence” (*dekigoto*), whose meaning unveiled a destiny yet to be realized, deriving its authorization from a theory of historical action grounded in the vocation of poiesis and “making” (*techne*) rather than simply practice.

The very historical present that supplied empirical authority to Miki's categorization of a pivotal contemporaneity, which now required surpassing, convinced him, like Tosaka Jun, that philosophy should pursue a more practical calling. To this end, Miki turned increasingly to assessing the significance of events implicated in the crucial relationship between local and global historical happenings that occasioned the production of a number of policy-oriented papers seeking to design the shape of a world historical Japan and its mission to reconfigure the East Asia region into a new kind of “cooperative” union. At one level, he was treading the path Marx had earlier (in *The German Ideology*) recommended when he proposed that true world historicity could be achieved only when the “local being” was connected to a “universal being” in the world market; at another his commitment to a solution personified in the East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere ran counter to Marx's conception of the world historical because it privileged the domination of the local (Japan) over the

25 Miki Kiyoshi, *Miki Kiyoshi essensu* [The essence of Miki Kiyoshi], ed. Uchida Hiroshi (Tokyo: Kobushi shobō, 2000), 224–25. Hereafter in text as MKe.

universal (Asia). It is important, in this regard, to be aware of how he sought to reconnect his understanding of contemporary historical reality—a “practical present”—as Michael Oakeshott has proposed in another venue, to a philosophic ground far removed from the “lecture pulpit” (Uchida, in *MKe*, 320). By referring to what he classified as world historical events like the Sino-Japanese War, the Soviet purges, and the Nazi burning of the books, not to forget the assault on academic freedom in Japan symbolized by the Takigawa incident, Miki was able to gradually resituate his own position within the larger precinct of world history, which, as a category, acquired empirical and existential substance by the end of the decade to become a major preoccupation of Kyoto philosophy. For, as Kōsaka proclaimed, the figure of world historicity “touched upon” the subjectivity of Japan (*Snr*, 61). According to Kōyama Iwao during the symposium of 1942, world history is felt differently by Japanese and more intensely and “bodily” than by Europeans (*SstN*, 7). What seemed at stake in these considerations of the current situation was the conviction that humanity was in a process of fusing with a worldly historical experience already foretold by both Hegel and Heidegger. In Miki’s thinking, Japan had no other hope for existing but to open itself to the world. We must thus see in Miki’s engagement of the present and its demand both the formulation of philosophy’s responsibility to contemporary history’s insistent challenge by specifically responding to the task of overcoming the double aporia of a philosophic discipline turned in on itself and its willingness to now confront an external world crowded with facticity claiming the status of an eternal law of nature in its immediacy. It was the reality of contemporary human existence embedded in history and the necessity to change this relationship that constituted the fund of experience informing anthropology, which Miki would rename as historical anthropology. And it was action itself that provided the key to overcoming, the act of making, recalling the still audible echo of Marx’s designation of the first, inaugural historical act of social cooperation that revealed the contours of an anthropology steeped in the authority of the paradigmatic experience of collaboration. For Miki, it was especially the experience of lived everydayness that marked this sphere of practice humans initiate in encountering their immediate environment (*MKe*, 209). But it must also be added that Miki shifted his tactic to not only merge the everyday with the contemporary present but reconstitute it as a the sedimented reservoir of historical deposits.

For Miki, custom played an ambivalent role in his equation on how the everyday related to history. It was custom that made history part of nature and supplied the everyday with its link to it (*MKe*, 225). While this identity of custom, standing astride nature and history through the mediation of the

everyday, secured for everydayness a relationship to nature and the natural world, Miki would try to demonstrate how daily life was still subject to the broader movements of historical change. It might be noted that this formulation departed from Tosaka Jun's reflections on custom (*fuzoku*) which, despite the appearance of eternity that effaced its conditions of production, was still produced by specific historical circumstances. Miki departed from many of his Kyoto philosophic contemporaries (excepting Tosaka) who ultimately saw in the present of world historicity a category that was already skilled in subsuming the everyday and its materiality. While he avoided clarifying what this material subsumption of the everyday actually involved, it conceivably referred to how world history, the ongoing arena of the production of events, acted similarly to the human intervention and conquest that subsumed and subordinated nature. With Miki, it should be recalled, the everyday was spare of events and belonged as much to the order of nature as to the human sphere, whereas world history, like Hegel's unfolding of Spirit, was the product of human action. In this regard, his position was sandwiched between the Conference on Overcoming Modernity, with its inordinate emphasis on the materiality of modern everyday life in Japan and the symposium on Japan's world historical position, which remained somewhat distant from everydayness for the more abstract configuration of a world history that had not yet been achieved and the role of the moral energy. During the first conference on world history, Kōsaka recognized, like Tosaka before him, that philosophy appears to have been "separated" from the everyday, insofar as the ordinary person has forgotten that they embody a philosophy conforming to a "new world image" and live according to its requirements (*SstN*, 94).

But it was Miki's interest in the current situation as it was daily unfolding in events that captured his interest and disclosed both the historicity inscribed in everyday life and its imprint in the changing status of custom. Convinced that the task of anthropology should focus on the "actuality" of human action in the present, the meaning of "actuality" must invariably refer to the everyday and thus relate to the situation of the lived everydayness of humans (*MKe*, 210). "What we call real life," he exclaimed, "is the active, everyday life." Here, Miki wished to differentiate his conceptualization of anthropology rooted in the humus of everyday activity from Kant's earlier meditation on cosmopolitanism and its association with a complete (and completed) philosophy, whose basic meaning appeared to be "unhistorical." In this view, there was no real incompatibility (*mujun*) between actuality and history since his logic presupposed an anthropology claiming equivalence with the standpoint of historicity, that is, actualization. Similarly, he discerned in this formulation the hint of a possible aporia. If, for example, the original viewpoint of an actual

anthropology emphasizes everyday things, then it might be seen as contrary to the advocacy of historical anthropology. When speaking of history ordinarily understood as a narrative of “great men,” the “extraordinary,” as such, then it usually appears to be concerned with “non-everyday things” (MKe, 211). By the same measure, the actions of everyday life are rarely visible in historical practice, no more so than the fact that everyday humanity mirrors the actions of historical personalities. Even though these two spheres of activity must remain distinct and differentiated from each other, Miki proposed that everydayness should be the “basic presupposition” of the historical. At this juncture he tried to yoke the everyday, through the mediation of its historicity, to the wider categorical unit of the “world historical.” “Even though everyday personalities are not world historical personalities,” he wrote, “they are still [part of] a historical humanity.”

In this equation, Miki distinguished between what he named as an “original historicity,” the “character of everydayness,” and “world historicity” as basic categories in a “chain” or “series” securing the figure of a coherent, sequential relationship, if not necessarily a shared temporal kinship. Returning to the question of philosophy’s “answerability to history,” he proposed that the problem of history, if envisioned from a philosophic perspective, must not be grasped at the level of a preference that privileges “historical consciousness” and thus a specific narrative dedicated to an unfolding (Japan’s modern history) but rather from an inquiry embedded in its sources as a question of a wider human historicity. With this move, world historicity and everydayness become mutually bound to a generative originary historicity, which makes available a perspective that permits viewing the coupling as an interactive unity (MKe, 216). At bottom, he added, everydayness provides the grounding of history since the actions that gain entry into history are bolstered by it, insuring its constant development and the shifting of its grounding. Quick to acknowledge that the everyday is a subject on which there is rarely any serious reflection, Miki saw in it an eternal countenance—its “pure, constant conditions,” which recalled its affinity with nature (MKe, 218). Even so, history and the everyday were still separated by their respective contents and their distinct temporalities. Whereas the everyday is spare in its capacity to produce eventfulness, more preoccupied with circumstances encountered daily, the repetitions of custom and habit rather than the more exciting world teeming with dramatic events, the amateurs who pursue the study of history favor events and constantly express a desire for them that invariably captures their attention. Needless to say, the two domains do not stand in a direct causal relationship to each other since history and everydayness remain unconnected in substantive ways. Accordingly, Miki reasoned that because the two realms are

circularly bound to each other, they are sure to clash with the implicit temporal linearity attributed to the unfolding of history's reason.

Yet it is important to see in this decision to elevate the figure of circularity one of the possible forms of time Tanabe Hajime enumerated later in his *Rekishiteki genjitsu*. Just as the scarcely perceptible movement of a continent constituted of custom and habit, with its rhythms seemingly obeying a circular motion, could clearly collide with the temporal claims of a forward moving narrativity, so the conception of the everyday Miki envisaged shared with the world historical an eternity—in fact an “eternity of the now”—that would manage to occupy a different register of time that was timeless. In trying to resolve this knotted problem, he thereby sought to demonstrate how custom corresponded to everyday things and vice versa, and how inevitably the customary of life changes with history, however glacial the movement, because it possesses the aptitude (*nōryoku*) to produce a trajectory that continually moves (MKe, 226). Indeed, “it premises change” as an internal endowment. What Miki apparently meant was the “in-dwelling” of possible change in the customary of everyday life. Additionally, the division between possibility and reality, inner and external conformed to the basic structure of things and created custom. And that which makes or creates custom must possess an inner spontaneity. But not to excess since custom always represents the “mean ratio between [human] will and nature.”

In these reflections, the presence of custom pointed to a structure comprising interiority and exteriority and sanctioned a relationship marked by the binary of possibility and reality. We might recall in this connection Tosaka Jun's dim estimate of custom as a figure of pure, calcified exteriority, whose informing will and history remained concealed and obscured in imitation of the conduct of the commodity form. He saw custom as the “skin” on the surface that brackets its historical production by misrecognizing it as a natural phenomenon, that is as the phenomenon itself that induces unquestioning consensual assent. Because it was modeled on the figure of the commodity, it signified the presence of reification and necessity of imitation since its objective appearance claimed there was nothing behind it, concealed or hidden. The importance of Tosaka's account of custom's capacity for reified existence derived from the observation that its demand of consensual assent encouraged only conformist imitation, not action. In this respect, Miki, by contrast, saw in the changeable tendency of the customary the creation of new customs that ultimately would have the force to destroy the old and thus realize the renewing promise of the relationship between inner and outer, possibility and reality.

Still, by situating custom on the side of nature and delegating it as the mediator between human will and natural existence, Miki was obliged to

differentiate it from history. History's basic principle is time, he wrote, whereas space determines the shape of nature.²⁶ If nature is considered to be an interior moment (*keiki*) of history, then it is possible to detect in history the shadow of spatiality and its force on the making of events and custom. In this sense, history is not only temporality but participates in both time and space. Similarly, if the everyday participates in the historical, it too shares its temporal dimension and the combination will produce a special characteristic of real historical temporality toward physical nature, which he called "spatialized time."²⁷ Although Miki had already distinguished between the two directions of linear and circular limitations of time (MKe, 228), he nevertheless acknowledged that historical time is circularly limited at the same time that its pulsation is also marked by a linear limit to constitute the *zeitraum*—the time/space that resembled a chronotopic relationship determined by differing directions assigned to history's time and space. This binary was further reduced to what he named as *Generation* (*sedai*) and *Zeitalter* (*jidai*), which enabled seeing the relationship as a coextension of two different temporalizations represented by the idea of generational change based on circular time and the category of period (*zeit*), with its emphasis on linearity (MKe, 229).²⁸ For Miki, this conception of time/space structurally encompassed the reality of the historical present, inasmuch as "real historical time...finds [its] completion in the [movement] of the two directions" of circularity and linearity. A constant oscillation of one to the other, the movement of the specific direction authorizes either the installation of a period or an epoch, the former expressing linearity, the latter circularity, employing the category of period to denote the linearity of "transition" and epoch to signify the passage to maturation. I would clarify this distinction further by suggesting that the concept of a rectilinear transition implied production, while epochal circularity and its world of settled maturation represented the operation of reproduction. The point to configuring time/space into an historical unity and breaking it down further into differing temporal directions and durational subdivisions was to reinforce the relationship between history and everydayness (clinging to the domain of the natural). Beyond this purpose, Miki's apparent objective was to locate the placement of the larger and more advanced category of world historicity. Both everydayness and world historicity matched up to the structure of opposites constituting his conception of history's structure: with the everyday constrained by

26 Miki Kiyoshi, *Rekishi tetsugaku* [Philosophic history], in *Miki Kiyoshi zenshū* [Complete works of Miki Kiyoshi] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967), vol. 6: 151–200.

27 *Ibid.*, 180.

28 *Ibid.*, 153–54.

space and its destination veering circularly, world history driven by a linear trajectory aimed at reaching a permanent present. In this sense the establishment of world history signified the end of chronology, an abstract, quantitative marker, and its replacement by real, lived time.

Clearly, a world historicity identified with history as endless historical movement was the principal problem that remained unresolved. How Miki sought to solve it must be seen in his decision to appeal to the “maturation of time” and in the meaning of a completed time which supposedly brought the two temporalities of history and the everyday together. Events and occurrences would reveal the meaning of “completed time,” what he named as *kairos*, which itself possesses the signification of the instantaneous (distantly echoing Walter Benjamin’s “flash of lightning”). Action finds its conclusion in the fullness of time, its ripeness, as time’s completion in the event and occurrence. In this way *kairos* contains the meaning of destiny yet to be fulfilled, which only the completed event and thus the ripeness of historical time will finally disclose.²⁹ “The differentiation of world historicity from everydayness is considered from the [standpoint] of *kairitic* time....In order to concretely grasp our problem it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the world. From beginning to end both the idea of world historicity, as well as the idea of the everyday, are connected to the world” and “both are indivisible from the idea of the world (*Welt*)” (MKe, 230). In other words, Miki managed to substitute the identity of world historicity for everydayness (incorporating the latter into the former) by replacing the structure of time shared by history and narrative with the structure of the world as it was encountered in its immediacy. As a result, he risked forfeiting the force of temporal form for the static countenance supplied by space, ultimately embodied in the epochal figure of the imperium. The closest he came to making a persuasive linking of the domain of world history and everydayness was to propose that the everyday was the circumference surrounding the world historical since it is everywhere the “center of history” (MKe, 222). More to the point, the form of world historicity was mediated by the nation-state, which seizes the occasion offered by the present to give it a new direction and leadership, which eventually took the political form of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In this respect, everydayness, the “lived,” was subordinated to and assimilated by the broader narrative of nation, that is, the conceived. Where Tosaka Jun departed from the fixed historical form was to see the everyday as the source of historical time and prior to the construction of any national narrative, which ultimately must be derived from its experience instead of personifying “history’s reason.”

29 In his earlier *Rekishi tetsugaku*, Miki assigns a more modest role to the ripening of time. See *ibid.*, 165.

In Miki's accounting of the current situation, the so-called China Incident announced the advent of the world historical (MKe, 281). Even though the "Incident" had occurred recently, the event had ripened in time, by bringing to a close a process that been long in the making. The meaning of the moment had already been foretold by history's reason, which had proclaimed its designated arrival in the present. "We must endeavor to pursue history's reason," he wrote of the occasion, "within the occurrences that have taken place in the present," because such events provide the promise of realizing self-independence from the subjective intentions of certain classes, groups, individuals, and concerned persons (MKe, 269). Plainly pointing to the corrosive divisiveness caused by capitalism in the more settled industrial regions of Euro-America, Miki viewed the Japanese invasion of China (an "incident") as a moment in the creation of a new regional cooperative union in East Asia that would lead to the successful realization of a world historical mission directed at recognizing the distinctiveness of each of its constituent members and implementing a new kind of capitalism without capitalist class conflict. The model for this world historical epiphany was ancient Greece. Recalling for his contemporaries the lessons of the ancient conquests of Alexander the Great and the resulting worlding of the Greek culture he revered, Miki was convinced that this transformation to Hellenism exemplified the momentous turn from a local Greek culture to a worldly one. It also represented the unfolding from classical Greece to contemporary culture that fulfilled the meaning of world history because it decisively demarcated the maturation of time. More importantly, this moment disclosed the necessity for Japanese to re-apprehend the meaning of historical reason within the events taking place in the present, as they will inescapably lead to other events, corresponding to and enlarging them. This vision sharply contrasts with Kōyama's program, which would not have appealed to the example of Greece and all prior instances of world historical epiphanies as a model for Japan's entry into world history but rather as necessary failures that provided little or no instruction for the conduct of the "absolute present."

But, for Miki, it was the search for "new meaning" from the position of "history's reason" that drove his pursuit, even though he acknowledged the possibility that he might see no meaning at all in the crowded eventfulness of his present and thus fail in the effort to extract history's elusive message. Anticipating the opening remarks of Kawakami Tetsutarō at the time of the meeting of the conference on overcoming the modern in 1942, Miki insisted upon the expression of duty (*gimu*) toward the expenditure of "flowing blood" to give world historical meaning to the "China Incident," as it is "the way of living our own bodies today." Discounting reliance on abstract theory to explain world historicity, Miki advocated a view founded on the "concrete historical situation of reality," which required an expressed reverence for the

special and distinct characteristics of Chinese and Japanese cultures. As such, it made no sense to merely base Japanese action in China only on the valorization of Japan's distinct culture. What appeared necessary was the identification of a genuine mediation competent to connect the two. This mediation was supplied by the category of the "Orient" (*tōyō*). Henceforth, the Orient, in his thinking, would not become simply a world that possessed a single internalized unity in the manner of the West since the time of Greek culture and the spread of Christianity but would be committed to observing the different cultures that formed it. For Miki, the problem of the "Japanese Spirit" could not be separated from the Orient, which meant that it was also possible to discern a broader meaning of world history that included the "China Incident" in the formation of the Orient. Anxious to avoid misunderstanding, Miki warned that it was important not to confuse imperialist ideals with Japanese despotism in the Orient. Yet it was equally necessary to recognize in Japan's emergence on the stage of world history an immense transformational event that was still related to the modern culture of the West. Unity in the Orient in the present has become possible through the powerful mediation of a scientific culture born in the West but which now has entered the East, and recalls the prior unification of the West mediated by a Christianity born in the East, which had subsequently migrated to the West. "The day on which the 'Orient' is formed is the day on which the 'World' is formed in its true meaning" (MKe, 272). By the same measure, Miki could not but acknowledge that Japan's contemporary mission to unify the Orient would have consequential effects for the contradictions of capitalism and how they might be overcome. Just as he was certain that the realization of "true world historical meaning" and Oriental unity was not possible without a "plan" (*kōsō*) directed toward resolving this problem, so he granted that this project could no longer remain a speculative one.

Ultimately, Miki's conceptualization of a world historical present trumped his considerations of everydayness by subordinating its politics of time to the demands of a present dedicated to actualizing Japan's world historical position. This was, it seems, a final reworking of his earlier Marxian formulation that envisioned the historical present as actuality. Where Miki differed from Tosaka Jun's powerful intervention that opened the way to rehistoricizing the everyday, as suggested earlier, was in his decision to yoke it to the mission of world history and required emplotting the everyday within the framework of world history that already signified the status of an achieved nation-state. But he could only accomplish this act of conjuration by taking on the additional risk of making the everyday complicit in Japan's vocation of fascism at home and imperialism abroad in Asia. If his formulations emptied the everyday of precisely the fund of never completed experience, memoration and coexisting

temporalizations which had made it the scene of constant rehistoricization, the aporetic nature of the problem of aligning everydayness with world history (the calling and domain of the nation-state and the purpose of actualization in the present) was manifest in the desire to nudge differing temporalities inscribed in the now of everyday experience into agreement with the more abstract principle of Japan's world historical destiny. In many ways, this desperate bonding of the everyday to the larger space of the world historical (actually mixing a temporal unit with a spatial one) worked first to incorporate its unassimilated remainder and residue into the framework of the nation-state; at another level it resulted in the attempt to efface the frictions of the non-contemporaneous contemporaneity by subordinating the everyday to a larger spatio/temporal chronotope provided by Japan's world historical aspiration. While Miki fully recognized that the everyday was the principal site of action, it was downgraded to the level of a lesser principle since he had reserved the space of actualizing for the larger stage of world history. Hence, the everyday remained outside the historical as such, and gained its meaning from world history to form a unity with it rather than from the act of producing history. The implication of this move resulted in thoroughly spatializing everydayness—making it appear as a given readymade instead of seeing in it a temporal unit of formation—ultimately extending to and equating its atemporal husk with empire. In this regard, world history subsumed the everyday, despite Miki's attempt to show they constituted equivalent space/times. Tosaka widely diverged from Miki's formulations by initially rejecting the unity of world historicity as it was being discussed by Kyoto philosophers. His reason for this stemmed from his rejection of national narratives or national history, which the category of world history simply enlarged and expanded into the broader space of an imperium. By the same measure, the privileging of world history and subsequent eclipsing of the everyday meant a diminishing of the importance of historical time for historical space, despite Miki's effort to salvage the significance of time's maturation. The problem Miki confronted with his appeal to *kairetic* time was to position the centrality of eventfulness and thus chronology, not the measure and action of historical time. In Tosaka's reckoning, everydayness was always a combination of space, specific place and time,nowness, that might be mediated by a nation-state but was still apart from it since it constituted the source of historical production. Under this circumstance, the category of world history was little more than a enlarged reified version of the nation form.

In the end, Miki grasped history as national narrative, whose content differed significantly from the mundane experience of time in the everyday present. Moreover, historical narratives centered on the nation-state pointed to the singular and unique, while everydayness was the context of averaging and the

commonplace, routine and repetition found everywhere and always leavened by the force of unanticipated contingency. For this reason, the everyday could never have been considered as identical with history, which presumably occurs elsewhere and in a different zone of temporality. How Miki sought to resolve this tangled contradiction was to link the everyday and world history to a commonly shared ground called “originary historicity,” which authorized the procession of a steady evolution progressing from one level or stage to another. The different and mixed temporalities signaled by the everyday and world history were restructured, smoothed and flattened into a narrative succession supposedly illustrating the inevitable maturation of time, its “ripening” (*jjuku, zeitigen, kairos*). In other words, Miki’s “answerability” to history sacrificed the temporality associated with the sentient claims of everyday life—experience, memory, and its vast tableau of uneven temporalizations—to what appeared to him as the higher necessity of totalization and the very abstraction of narrative movement he eschewed and the final (Hegelian) revelation of history’s meaning in reason. Yet, we must also perceive in the project how closely Miki’s program inadvertently managed to recuperate Lukács’ verdict on bourgeois thought’s penchant for “prolonging the state of pure immediacy” that masquerades as an enduring natural law. With Miki, it is thus possible to see the steady slide into the unhistorical miasma of provincial journalism once he recognized that the present constituted a compelling historical problem. But it is also possible to imagine in this reconsideration of the overheated attempt of Miki and the Kyoto School in the late 1930s and early 1940s to rethink the philosophy of world historicity in order to resolve the problems of their present the prospect for revisiting the terrain of the original conceptualization to begin the difficult labor of foreseeing its meaning for our global present. Such a revisiting must avoid the baneful effects of missionizing the world historicity the prewar philosophers enthusiastically embraced. At the same time postwar Japan must reject its entry into the American imperium, and the domestic politics that supports it, as if it promised a return to a world free from its prewar adventure in imperial missionizing when, in fact, it was the reverse that substituted what it had lost.

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PART 2

Rethinking Nishida Kitarō with Marx



The Labor Process and the Genesis of Historical Time

With Marx, With Nishida

William Haver

For all that capitalism imagines itself to be the culmination of an inevitable history of modernization, and for all that capitalist apologetics never ceases to celebrate innovation, and for all that the capitalist mode of production perpetually revolutionizes itself, the logic of the capitalist mode of production is nonetheless that of non-linear periodic cycles, the modern myth of eternal returns. Conceiving itself thus to be eternal, capitalism has no need of any concept of historical time, that is, time *as* irreversibility: according to the logic of the capitalist mode of production, the past is only the childhood of a present that extends into an infinite future in an essential continuity. All of this rhymes perfectly well, of course, with the idealist presupposition of time and space as transcendental a priori, a presupposition that more or less successfully avoids any consideration of the possibility that the concepts of space and time might have empirical, material conditions of possibility—or even determinations. In other words, the idealist formulation avoids any necessary speculation on the (empirical, material) *genesis* of irreversible historical time. It is also the case, I think, that many of us who lay claim to thinking in a materialist way perhaps too easily conceive time and space to be “given,” always already there, even if we do not express that conception in terms of an idealist transcendental a priori: the eternal givenness of time and space thus too easily becomes a default conception that, as such, impedes any reflection or speculation on what an empirical, materialist concept of historical time in its essential irreversibility might be, a concept that would enable us to conceive past, present, and future in their essential difference.

To undertake such reflections on a materialist concept of historical time—which would also be to explore the possibility that time and space are in fact generated in the experience (broadly speaking) of empirical materiality—perhaps has a certain urgency at a time when the logic of the capitalist mode of production (that is, the entire congeries of presuppositions that make specifically capitalist sense) saturates so much of all production, social and institutional organization, political forms, and so much of what counts as thinking in the present conjuncture, a malignancy that Marx called “real subsumption.”

Reflection and speculation on materialist time would be a specifically philosophical intervention (specific in the sense that a philosophical intervention does not find its test or its truth in sociology). This would be reflection and speculation that would aim to disrupt those concepts of time, space, and materiality that sustain the logic of the capitalist mode of production. What follows should therefore be read in the spirit of “notes toward an investigation,” rather than as an accomplished formulation.¹

With Marx

Recall, if you will, Marx’s discussion of “The Labour Process” in Chapter 7 of the first volume of *Capital*.² It is, he claims, a consideration of the labor process in its universality, “independently of any specific social formation” (C1, 283). There is therefore no apparent necessity to invoke historical difference at all; indeed, there is apparently nothing in this presentation of the universal that requires any conception of “time” whatsoever: the very universality of the labor process demands that it be thought in its timelessness. It might seem curious, then, that having just differentiated man from the other animals by virtue of the purposefulness of his poiesis and by virtue of the fact that he is a “tool-making animal,” Marx invokes the concept of a “mode of production” as radical historical difference:

Relics of bygone instruments of labour possess the same importance for the investigation of extinct economic formations of society as do fossil bones for the determination of extinct species of animals. It is not what is made but how, and by what instruments of labour, that distinguishes different economic epochs. Instruments of labour not only supply a standard of the degree of development which human labour has attained, but they also indicate the social relations within which men work (C1, 286).

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- 1 The attentive reader will understand that I have no interest whatever in the competition for hermeneutic hegemony in the interpretation of the texts of either Marx or Nishida. I have even less interest in assessing the thought for the “political implications” that are assumed to be embedded in and essential to the thought, but which in fact inevitably leads to judgment. I leave such readings to “historians who refuse to grow up,” in Foucault’s memorable phrase. The only excuse for reading philosophical texts is that they offer concepts that can provoke us to think beyond the presumptively common sense of the dystopia that is the present conjuncture; indeed, that they might provoke another practice of philosophy.
 - 2 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 283–92. Hereafter cited parenthetically as C1.

It can certainly be said that Marx here is gesturing toward modes of production as particular instantiations of the principle of the universality of the labor process; but to leave our reading at that begs the question of the relation between universal and particular that is at stake here, a question that has bedeviled more than one philosophical invocation, for the question is one of why there should be “particular instantiations”—*historical* instances of universal principle at all. Where does this sense of particular historical difference come from? What in Marx’s exposition of the labor process demands a concept of radical historical difference? And how is it that it is precisely the labor process that generates historical time as not merely one kind of time among others, but the very possibility of time as irreversibility? How is it that the presumptively timeless universal labor process is the empirical, material genesis of “time”?

“Labour,” Marx writes, “is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature” (*C1*, 283). Through an appropriation of nature for his own needs, man’s labor is an exercise of “his own sovereign power” over nature. Apparently, then, we are in a securely Aristotelian world of human mastery over a quiescent, essentially passive “nature” that presumptively exists only to serve man’s needs. But of course labor is not quite as straightforward as all that, for in acting upon nature and changing it, man “simultaneously changes his own nature.” If labor, *in* acting on nature, is at the same time a reflexive change in one’s own “nature,” that is, man’s essence—a constitutive ontological change—then it might be useful to inquire into the nature of the “metabolism” (*Stoffwechsel*) between man and nature, as well as the “appropriation” of nature by man that Marx finds essential in that metabolic relation.

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, the metabolic relation between man and nature is developed at somewhat greater length than in *Capital*:

The universality of man manifests itself in practice in that universality which makes the whole of nature his *inorganic* body, (1) as a direct means of life and (2) as the matter, the object and the tool of his life activity. Nature is man’s *inorganic body*, that is to say nature in so far as it is not the human body. Man *lives* from nature, i.e. nature is his *body*, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man’s physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.³

3 Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844),” in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin, 1975), 328.

The practice (“*sensuous human activity*,” as the first of the “Theses on Feuerbach” has it) that manifests the universality of man in making the whole of nature his inorganic body is, of course, labor. The metabolic relation between man and nature is simply a relation of “nature” to itself: man’s nature is nature’s relation to itself as it is articulated in and as human species being. Man’s sovereignty is therefore the sovereignty of man in and as his (natural) species being. Man is constituted qua sovereign subject in the relation to his “inorganic body” as the condition of our species being: the relation is prior to the emergence of the relata. “Man” is an effect of that relation.

The appropriation that is articulated in the sensuous human activity that is labor is therefore reflexive from the very beginning. In appropriating nature, man appropriates himself *as such*, comes to possess himself in his *Eigentum*. But this is also to be appropriated by the nature that one always already is, the nature that is the condition for life. To appropriate is always to be appropriated, and it is this double appropriation, this *chiasmus* between man and nature, that makes of the labor process, a process driven by need and desire, one of ontological constitution, which necessarily implies, I think, that Marx’s “man” is always a subject-in-process, a subject that is constituted in—and as—becoming.

This double appropriation, this *chiasmus*, that is the constitution of man in his species being as a subject-in-process, is a relation that is—always already—mediated by instruments of labor, tools:

An instrument of labour is a thing, or a complex of things, which the worker interposes between himself and the object of his labour....The object the worker directly takes possession of is not the object of labour but its instrument. Thus nature becomes one of the organs of his activity, which he annexes to his own bodily organs (*C1*, 285).

There are implications here that I think are worth making explicit; I will mention three. First, for man in his species being (that is, insofar as this relation exceeds any possible phenomenology), the tool as such is not merely a fortuitous convenience, but is necessarily *prosthetic*. That is, tools belong to that congeries of circumstances without which our species could not survive; tools are as necessary to the human species as is the carapace to the turtle, claws to the big cats, or wings to the birds. Tools of course differ from shells, claws, and wings in that they are themselves objects conceived and fashioned by “purposeful” intelligence, but that fact does not mean that they are (collectively) any the less necessary.

Second, this is to say that man constituted as species being in a reflexive appropriation with nature is unavoidably a technological subject-in-process. The

tool is a *constitutive* mediation. The prosthetic tool belongs to our “natural” species being as much as does the opposable thumb or our (more or less) upright posture. It is not simply a matter of the fact that Marx had little sympathy for any nostalgia for any putatively pre-technological natural man, or that he had any patience with the naïveté of any opposition to technology per se. More, it is a matter of understanding that the “purposeful activity” of labor and the use of tools, according to whatever version of instrumental rationality we might conceive, belong to our subjectivity qua species being. Rationality is therefore not “outside” of nature, nor is it alienated in and as nature; it is *how* our species is natural (which is not to say that all that is real is rational, of course).

Third, what is immediately given to labor is not a pristine Nature “in the raw,” as it were, but the always already worked-on, the already there, a world that has been made. Indeed, you will remember that for Marx, “raw materials” are precisely materials in which labor has already been objectified. Labor (and in exchange economies, value) is objectified in the products of labor. Further, what has been made, a “world,” as the objectification of labor, is the material articulation or expression of the instrumental rational intelligence of *homo faber*. It is the built environment, most especially the tools that present themselves to labor, that not only constitute the sense that “the world” putatively makes, but are thereby the very possibility of making sense of the world qua “world.” The possibility of making sense is the purposeful rationality of the tool-maker objectified in the tool that has been made, a rationality we learn in learning the uses of the tools that are immediately “given” to us. Thus, the material, worked-on, or built environment bears sense as well as the very possibility of sense within itself. This is why a mode of production determines economic formations; this is how an economy in fact makes sense. We can dismiss “economic determinism” as naïve only if we settle for a very reductive sense of Marx’s concepts of a mode of production, of economic formations, and of “economy” itself.

So what is it in all this that constitutes the genesis of historical time? As a preliminary move, and in an experimental, speculative, perhaps perverse manner, I want to suggest that there are at least three moments at which Marx invokes a sense of empirical singularity: in the concept of use-value, in his consideration of the worker’s *Eigentum*, and in his exposition of the practical sensuous activity of living labor in the singularity of the present. (The concept of singularity figures in various ways across a number of sciences, of course; here, I use the term in its most general sense to designate that which exceeds the logic and sense according to which its existence has been posited. The existence of singularities cannot be deduced from any axiom, nor does the concept emerge from any ground. It makes no sense [literally] to ask what came

before or caused the Big Bang, or to ask what is inside a black hole; physicists explaining themselves to non-physicists will simply say “nothing,” or “we don’t know”—perhaps diplomatic ways of saying that such questions make no sense with respect to the concept of singularity.)

With Marx, let us begin with the distinction between use-value and exchange-value in the commodity: “The commodity is, first of all, an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind. The nature of these needs, whether they arise, for example, from the stomach, or the imagination, makes no difference” (*C1*, 125). Every commodity must be possessed of use-value in order that it can possess exchange-value (which it possesses only by virtue of actually being exchanged), and thus become a commodity, but the specific qualities that give a thing its use-value are irrelevant from the point of view of exchange-value. Use-values as such, however, are not exchangeable; they are in fact not quantifiable. To become quantifiable, after all, they must be abstracted from their empirical material qualities into the possibility of being counted, an abstraction into numbering number: “The usefulness of a thing makes it a use-value. But this usefulness does not dangle in mid-air. It is conditioned by the physical properties of the commodity, and has no existence apart from the latter. It is therefore the physical body of the commodity itself...which is the use-value or usefulness of a thing” (*C1*, 126). Furthermore, “use-values are only realized in use or in consumption. They constitute the material content of wealth, whatever its social form may be” (*C1*, 126). Only the qualities, or “physical properties,” make it useful, and only the usefulness of a thing gives it use-value, use-value that can only be realized in use or consumption. “Use-value,” then, is first of all a qualitative determination, but is also determined by the singular event of its use or consumption. In short, use-value is nothing apart from the “here, now, this”—the haecceity—of the thing that is, as such, the product of labor (as Marx says, “the use of labour-power is labour itself” [*C1*, 283]). When I consume a use-value, whether as means of production or as final product, I do not consume the thing in the abstraction of its generality. Hungry, I do not consume “potatoes” or “rice,” for example, in the universality of their categories; I consume *this* plate of potatoes or *this* bowl of rice, here and now. Thirsty, I do not drink “wine” in general, I drink *this* bottle of Romanée-Conti’08 (fat chance, that), here and now. In other words, use-values are always singular, as quality and as event. That is, there is no general principle, no principle of commensurability, and therefore no concept of number (Platonic or otherwise), from which I could ever deduce the singularity of use-value in its haecceity.

Of all of Marx’s considerations of various forms of “(private) property,” it is the consideration of the non-alienated farmer or worker in the section of

the *Grundrisse* concerning “pre-capitalist economic formations” that is of interest.⁴ In formulations that prefigure the consideration of the labor process in *Capital*, Marx writes: “*Property* thus originally means no more than a human being’s relation to his natural conditions of production as belong to him, as his, as *presupposed* along with *his own being*; relations to them as *natural presuppositions* of his self, which only form, so to speak, his extended body.”⁵ He continues, reiterating that as a member of a clan, a man’s relation to land and soil is the relation to a “presupposition belonging to his individuality, as modes of his presence.”⁶ This conception of “property” indicates that the singularity of free men (that is, men whose labor is not merely not alienated, but essentially inalienable) emerges from a prior relation to “land and soil,” what Marx calls “nature” in *Capital*. The articulation of singularity, considered as the possession of oneself as “the proper” in the propriety of one’s autonomy—the fact that nothing in the world can predict the appearance of a singular human being—is itself a process. Here, singularity is neither a starting point (least of all a ground) nor a telos: “singularity” always indicates a becoming-singular, the very movement of exception. And in the *Grundrisse*, this movement of the coming-to-presence of the singular self is an effect of production: “Property...is only realized by production itself. The real appropriation takes place not in the mental but in the real, active relation to these conditions—in their real positing as the conditions of his subjective activity.”⁷ It is in (non-alienated) labor that the worker comes to possess him or herself in inalienable singularity.

The labor process, then, produces singularities: use-values and the becoming-singular that is the mode of the worker’s presence. But the labor process also, and thereby, produces the singularity that is what we generally call the present—which, qua singularity, is the genesis of historical time. Here, as I mentioned earlier, “historical time” means time *as* irreversibility: what we call “time” is an effect of irreversibility; irreversible historical time is not a particular type or kind of a putatively universal time. This is linear time (bearing in mind that not all lines are straight lines, and not all lines have a destination). “Genesis,” here does not indicate some sort of absolute beginning, as in popular conceptions of the Big Bang. Or rather, “genesis” *is* an absolute beginning, but one that can be situated nowhere other than in the radical singularity of

4 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973).

5 *Ibid.*, 491.

6 *Ibid.*, 492.

7 *Ibid.*, 493.

the present (and it is precisely this that assures us that “time” is not merely the object of any subjectivism; “time,” in fact, is radically objective).

Marx’s accounts of the abstraction by which labor becomes labor-power and thereby quantifiable, and the *same* abstraction by which the experience of temporality becomes nothing but abstraction, measurable by clock and calendar, are well known, of course. In Marx, and in many subsequent writers, there are many powerful accounts of labor-power and “time” considered as pure abstraction, mere measure. Yet apart from apparently obligatory references to natural cycles, the periodicity of day, month, and year, there is not really much attention paid to questions of labor and temporality, outside of the assumption that it is something other than the labor-time the worker sells to the capitalist. Typically, it seems to be assumed that the relation between labor and temporality is simply the negation of the abstractions of labor-power and labor-time—negation before the fact, as it were. The difficulty is to think the relation of labor and temporality, on the one hand without falling back on concepts of time as abstraction, and on the other without giving into the seductions of a relatively naïve phenomenological subjectivism.

Perhaps we might take a clue from the logic of productivity in the capitalist mode of production, as Marx presents it in Part IV of volume 1 of *Capital* on “The Production of Relative Surplus-Value,” and in Chapter 21 on “Piece-Wages” (*C1*, 429–639, and 692–700, respectively). It is in the interest of the bourgeoisie, considered as a class, to reduce that part of the working day Marx calls necessary labor-time (the labor time required for the proletariat—considered as a class—to sustain and reproduce itself). In order to reduce that necessary labor-time, commodities must be produced as inexpensively as possible, which means increased productivity—maximum production of commodities in a minimum of time. Here, then, “time” and “space” are functions of each other, and as such they are simply nicknames for the resistance that materiality *is* in the production cycle. The logic of productivity in the capitalist mode of production is to overcome that resistance as much as possible, to reduce the material resistance of production—that is, time and space—as close to zero as possible: in the logic of productivity, capitalism realizes itself as the apotheosis of idealism. Let us retain from all this the insight that in the labor process, “time” is the duration of the process of overcoming resistances, a duration that is determined not by the clock, but by the labor process insofar as it pays no attention to time and space as transcendental a priori intuitions. The baker will tell you the dough is ready for the oven when it has risen the requisite number of times to the requisite volume; the floor refinisher will tell you the newly varnished floor will be dry when it’s dry. Duration is the tautological rule that “it

takes as long as it takes." Task and materials determine duration, with respect to which time and space as abstractions are simply quite irrelevant. Time and space as transcendental a priori objects of intuition are, by definition, objects of knowledge; time and space qua duration are objects of what of experience is irreducible to any subjectivism.

Duration, then, is produced by and internal to the labor process. In the labor process, duration is the infinitely expansive present, a *spatial* present, such as every worker experiences when entirely absorbed in the task. It is not that "time" is suspended in duration, but that time and space, qua abstractions, are obviously quite beside the point. Further, this duration of the present in the labor process is infinitely restless, restlessness (*Unruhe*) itself. Duration is the labor process as becoming:

A machine which is not active in the labour process is useless. In addition, it falls prey to the destructive power of natural processes. Iron rusts; wood rots. Yarn with which we neither weave nor knit is cotton wasted. Living labour must seize on these things, awaken them from the dead, change them from merely possible into real and effective use-values. Bathed in the fire of labour, appropriated as part of its organism, and infused with vital energy for the performance of the functions appropriate to their concept and to their vocation in the process, they are indeed consumed, but to some purpose, as elements in the formation of new use-values, new products, which are capable of entering into individual consumption as means of subsistence or into a new labour process as means of production (*C1*, 289–90).

In the labor process, living labor works upon objectified labor, upon what has been made, dead Being (*Sein*). Living labor (as itself use-value) gathers the made, with the possibility of sense, the instrumental rationality it brings with it, into the essential restlessness of the present, that singularity which is the "fire of labour." It does so, however, as an orientation toward difference—new use-values, new products: living labor, the labor process, is thus becoming itself, and as such is the very possibility of the articulation of past, present, and future as different material conditions, different ways of making sense, different modes of production. Qua duration, the present is at once the limit of time conceived as abstract continuity; it is the interruption of that continuity, but as such also the possibility of historical time. The singularity of the present, the labor process as *process*, as the restlessness of becoming that is to say, is itself an orientation toward that which is incomprehensible according to the logic that subtends the existing mode of production.

With Nishida

In 1939 Nishida Kitarō published an essay entitled “Absolute Contradictory Self-Identity” (*Zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu*), which he later said clarified the most fundamental aspects of his thinking.⁸ A few pages into the essay, he writes “To say that we are *homo faber* is to say that the world is historical; to say that the world is historical is to say that we are *homo faber*” (NKz 9: 152). Here, I will simply attempt to follow the argument that leads Nishida to this insight, and to indicate in general what the implications are for Nishida’s conceptions of *homo faber* as subject (*shutai*), and of a mode of production (*seisan yōshiki*), as they are developed later in the essay. My exposition will take the rather archaic form of translation with interspersed commentary. So, from the beginning:

/147/ The world of actuality is perforce a world of the interaction of things. The form (*katachi*) of actuality is conceived as the mutual relation of things, the effect of their interaction. But to say that a thing acts is necessarily that the thing itself negates itself, necessarily that what is called the thing is disappearing. To say that a single world is formed in the interaction of things, is necessarily to say that, conversely, the thing can be conceived as part of a single world. To say, for example, that things interact in space is necessarily to say that things are spatial. Ultimately, when we consider something like physical space, physical force can even be conceived as the change of the spatial [as such]. However, to say that the thing is conceived to be absolutely [nothing but] part of the One-All (*zentaiteki ichi*), is to say that the acting thing disappears, that the world becomes static, and that what is called actuality disappears. The world of actuality must be through and through the unity of the many (*ta no ichi*), a world of the mutual determination of things. I therefore speak of the world of actuality as absolute contradictory self-identity.

Here, Nishida sets out the terms with which he will articulate the logic that will support the investigations, terms that his first readers would recognize from much of his previous work. It is a question, first of the relation between the one (construed both as totality and singularity, and—significantly as totality qua singularity) and the many. The relation between the one and the many is

8 Nishida Kitarō, “Zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu,” in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* [Complete works of Nishida Kitarō], ed. Abe Yoshishige et al., 19 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966–1967), 9: 147–222. The *zenshū* will hereafter be cited parenthetically as *NKz*. A French translation may be found in Nishida Kitarō, *L'Éveil à soi*, trans. Jacynthe Tremblay (Paris: CNRS, 2003), 145–92.

of course one of the oldest and most constant themes in the Western philosophical canon, a theme to which Nishida was attentive throughout his career, devoting especial attention to the *Parmenides* and to the *Enneads* of Plotinus. While questions of the relation (if relation there be) between zero and one, construed as the relation between Non-Being and Being, have always been essentially theological questions, the relation between one and more-than-one was of far greater interest and importance than the “onto-theological” question. There is nothing in the concept of one (whether construed as totality, singularity, or totality-qua-singularity) that either implies or necessitates a concept of more-than-one; the concept of more-than-one cannot be deduced from the concept of one. The stakes of the relation, therefore, concern the concept of “number” as such. Of itself, “one” simply designates the incommensurable, the singular, and therefore the incalculable. The concept of more-than-one, is itself the possibility of the concept of number, and therefore of rationality altogether, because to conceive of “more-than-one” requires abstraction from the singularity of the empirical “one.” In other words, “one” can only figure as numbering number, if and only if there is a prior concept of the “more-than-one.” If one posits the priority of the “one,” as every theology has been obliged to do, then the many can only be considered emanations (as the Scholastics were wont to say) of the one; conversely, if one posits the priority of the many, then the one can only be the *telos* that gathers the many into unity. Nishida, as will be readily apparent in these few paragraphs, refuses to grant logical priority either to the one or the many, positing a relation of co-immanence of the one *as* (not *in*) the many, and the many *as* the one, a relation designated by the Buddhist term *soku* (which I have decided not to translate, relying upon the reader to remember that it designates this co-immanence of the one with the many).

To posit the co-immanence of the many and the one, of number as the possibility and guarantee of rationality and the incommensurable singularity of the empirical as such (which Aristotelian logic can only denounce as irrationality), constitutes a contradiction. Nishida’s position, quite clearly expressed here as in many other texts of the period, is that this contradiction is not merely a logical contradiction, but a contradiction that constitutes the actually existing historical world. When Nishida invokes “absolute contradictory self-identity,” the discussion is always of the absolute contradictory self-identity of the present as the possibility of historical time. It might also be useful to bear in mind that in the mainstream of the “Western” philosophical tradition contradiction has traditionally marked the limit of the thinkable. In this context, it is no doubt also useful to recall that in both Marx (and, yes, in Hegel), contradiction marks the limit of what is thinkable within historically specific possibilities of

making sense, and *as such* orients the thinker of contradiction to the radical difference of historical time.

/148/ Such a world must be a world continually moving from the made to the making (*tsukurareta mono kara tsukuru mono e*). It cannot be conceived, as in classical physics, as a world constituted in the mutual activity of unchanging atoms, that is, the world as the unity of the many. Were we to so conceive the world, the world would be nothing more than the repetition of the same world. But neither can it be conceived as a teleological world, simply the development of the One-All. Were we to think so, we could not speak of the interaction of things. The world must be conceived neither as the unity of the many, nor as the multiplicity of the one. It must be conceived as a world where what is given is what is made, that is, given dialectically, as a world which is ever moving from the made to the making in self-negation. It can be thought that in its depths, as substrate,⁹ there is neither the One-All nor the multiplicity of singularities (*kobutsuteki ta*). The creative world that is itself ever moving truly of itself as phenomenon *soku* actual existence (*genshō soku jitsuzai*) must be a world such as above. Although what exists in actuality, as what is fixed, is Being, as what is made, it is what is changing, what is perishing: Being *soku* Nothing (*yū soku mu*). One therefore speaks of this as the world of absolute Nothing (*zettai mu*), or, as the world of infinite movement, a determined world without that which determines.

Allow me to point out what may be obvious—that this characterization of the world in terms of the movement “from the made to the making,” a phrase to which Nishida returns almost obsessively in the work of this period, as well as his further characterization of this movement as dialectical, is precisely the dialectical becoming that Marx termed the labor process, most particularly in the discussion of “living labor.” For Nishida, then, the dialectical labor process is ontologically constitutive, and its concept constitutes Nishida’s historical materialism. If neither the One-All nor the multiplicity of singularities constitutes the ground or the *hypokumeinon* of the dialectical labor process, and if the creative world itself moves “of itself,” and if the phenomenal world is actual existence (rather than the expression of some absent essence), then there is nothing before, behind, above, below, after, beside, or outside of the dialectical becoming of the labor process: what there is, is all there is, and all

⁹ Substrate translates *kitai*, which is a translation of Aristotle’s *hypokumeinon*.

that is, is destined to perish in the “bath of fire” that living labor is. The world is “determined” (*gentei*), without there being that which determines; the only ground there is, is the fixity of Being, Being perishing in the restlessness of living labor.

Such a world of contradictory self-identity must be conceived as a world in which the present always determines the present itself.

That which itself determines itself is necessarily singular, for there can be no principle, no universal from which one could deduce the existence of singularity: it is not “what” it is but *that* it is. There is nothing in traditional concepts of time that in fact requires a concept of the present. The present in its concrete and inescapable presence is, after all, that which resists abstraction absolutely. Nishida is in the process of trying to tell us why.

It is neither a world fixed by the past as in causalism—the unity of the many—nor as a world fixed by the future as in teleology—the multiplicity of the one. From the outset, time can be conceived neither simply from the past, nor from the future. /149/ If the present is conceived to be simply a point of instantaneity in a continuous straight line, then there is no present, and consequently neither is there time. The past is that which within the present that, although it has passed, has not yet passed; the future is that which within the present that, although it has not yet come, has already appeared: past and future are opposed as the contradictory self-identity of the present, and this is what constitutes what we call time. Thus, because it is contradictory self-identity, time is infinitely moving from the past to the future, from the made to the making. The instant (*shunkan*) must be conceived as one point in linear time. But, just as Plato already conceived the instant to be outside of time, time is constituted as the continuity of discontinuity. We can say that time is constituted as the contradictory self-identity of the many and the one. What we call the concrete material present (*gutaiteki genzai*) is the simultaneity of infinite instants, the unity of multiplicity. That is necessarily the space of time. Therein the instant of time can be thought to be negated. But the one that negates the many must itself be a contradiction. To say that the instant is negated is to say that what is called time disappears, it is to say that what is called the present disappears. Were we to posit that each instant of time is constituted in discontinuity, then there would be nothing that would constitute what is called time, and the instant would disappear. Time is necessarily constituted in the simultaneity of instants

in the present. Thus, as the unity of the many, the multiplicity of the one, time is constituted from the contradictory self-identity of the present. Time is constituted because the present determines the present itself. /150/ To say that it is in the instant of time that we touch upon eternity is nothing other than to say that the more the instant, as such, is truly the instant, the more is it the instant of the eternal present that, as the multiplicity of singularities of contradictory self-identity, is absolute contradictory self-identity. To say also that time is constituted as the self determination of the eternal now, is no more than to say the same thing backwards. To say that, in the present, while the past is already passed, it has not yet passed, and that while the future has not yet come, it has already appeared, is not to think, in the manner of abstract logic that past and future are linked, or that they become one. It is to say that they become one in mutual negation. Where past and future become one in mutual negation, there is the present; it is as the contradictory self-identity of the present that past and future are opposed. Thus it is because the present is contradictory self-identity that past and future are absolutely uncoupled, that there is utterly only the movement from past to future. Moreover, in the present, as the contradictory self-identity of many *soku* one, one *soku* many, as temporal space, one form is fixed, and time must be thought to be brought to a standstill. And it is therein we can conceive that the present of time, as the self determination of the eternal present, touches upon the eternal that exceeds time. However, as contradictory self-identity, it is that which is fixed only to be negated; time is continually moving from present to present. To speak of the one as the unity of the many is to speak of the spatial; to speak of [the movement] from the many to the one is to speak of the [world as] mechanism; it is to speak of the movement from the past to the future. Contrariwise, to speak of the multiplicity of the one is to conceive the world to be dynamic, to think temporally; to speak of [the movement] from the one to the many is to conceive the world developmentally, it is to think teleologically, from the future to the past. /151/ The world that, as the contradictory self-identity of the many and the one [moves] from the made to the making, is necessarily a world conceived as moving from present to present. Although actuality possesses form, and what is within actuality is absolutely fixed, that is, actually existing, as what is fixed absolutely self-contradictorily, [actuality] is necessarily what is always moving from the self-contradiction of actuality itself. One can think neither that behind that there is the one, nor that there are the many. What is fixed, must itself include self-contradiction.

All of Nishida's important discussions of the logical conundrum of the one and the many find their strongest and most pertinent expression in discussions of time. What you have just read is, as far as I know, one of the clearest and most succinct expositions in all of his work. Perhaps it is useful to think of time, all times, the infinite instants that are gathered in the simultaneity of the eternal present, time "itself," as the totality of times, as the One-All. "All" instants (the scare quotes marking the catachresis of an "all" that could gather infinite instants) are singularities that are, contradictorily, simultaneous in the present. The One-All is immanent *as* rather than "in" the totality of singularities that constitute it. Conversely, the infinite instants are immanent *as* the One-All itself (rather than being elements or particulars). Yet each of the infinite singular instants is, precisely, an exception to the One-All, and therefore exceeds the "allness" of the One-All. Singular instants constitute the One-All precisely in excepting themselves from the One-All. This would seem to be a contradictory, even absurd formulation—as indeed it would be, were it not that it is contradictory or absurd only if it is assumed that the One-All is static, exempt from all becoming. Nishida's point seems to me to be that it is precisely this contradiction that is the possibility of becoming, the very possibility of historical time.

The instant (*shunkan*, *Augenblick*) is at once of immeasurably short duration, but also infinitely expansive; it is "eternal" in the sense that there is no escape from the present, there is no outside of the present, there is nothing but the present. It is for this reason that Nishida tells us that the instant of time is "spatial," at once the limit and possibility of the differentiation that allows us to posit that there is time at all. The instant is thus a kind of "spacing," or hyphenation between those "presents" constituted in the movement from the made to the making. This is not a "pure" movement or "pure duration" because the forms of the actually existing historical world have been "fixed"; were it a world of pure becoming, it would be utterly formless, the labor process would produce only nothing. This fixity of form as such bears the nickname of Being (*yū*, *Sein*). But this fixity will perish in the labor process which is at the same time, and by virtue of that perishing, the production of new forms.

The world that in this way, as absolute contradictory self-identity moves from the made to the making, must be the world of poesis (*poieshisu*). When we speak of production (*seisaku*), people think it is simply to make things subjectively (*shukanteki ni*). But however much we speak of human intentional action, to the extent that the thing is in the least bit constituted objectively, it must be objective. It is because we possess hands that we can make things. The fact that we use our hands in the movement from the made to the making must be the effect made possible by many

thousands of years of biological evolution. Albeit a metaphor, Aristotle says of this that “nature makes” (*shizen tsukuru*). Of course, this is not to say our production is the activity of nature.

Nishida speaks of human subjects in two principal senses. It is the first sense that we encounter here, the subject as *shukan*. In general, the *shukan* is the subject who (re)cognizes the world, who understands and knows the world. This subject is further characterized by reflection, Cartesian or otherwise, who can take himself and/or herself as an object of knowledge; thus, the *shukan* is the subject who is capable of reason (and who is largely defined by that capacity), and is thus the subject who passively intuits the transcendental a priori of time and space. It is this subject who is taken to undertake production intentionally, and thus to be master of the labor process. Nishida certainly doesn't deny that production is purposeful and intentional, but he does deny that it is merely a projection of the rational *shukan's* interiority. We do not have hands because we make things, we make things because we have hands. This speaks to the argument made at greater length elsewhere that we both *are* and *possess* our bodies as tools; we are not authors and masters of what we take to be our being. Rather, we are constituted in exteriority, in the objectivity of the “outside” of what we conceive to be our subjectivity.¹⁰ The second conception of the subject (as *shutai*) is a subject that emerges from the labor process, in which sense the *shutai* has much in common with Whitehead's “superject.”

What is it to make things? To make things is necessarily to change the connections of things. The builder who builds a house changes the connection among things in accordance with the characteristics of those things; that is, the builder must change the form (possible in the world of Leibniz's compossibles). /152/ The world of actuality must be a world that, as the unity of the many, possesses a fixed form. If we conceive this to be the movement from the many to the one, there would be no room for production. Even if we conceive it as a world that moves from the one to the many, that would be a thoroughly teleological world. There would be only the activity of nature, no more than a biological world. We can conceive neither the many nor the one to be the ground of the world; being a world of absolute contradictory self-identity in the manner of

10 See, for example, “Ronri to seimei” [Logic and life], *NKz* 8: 273–394. For an English translation, see *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays by Nishida Kitarō*, trans. John W.M. Krummel and Shigenori Nagatomo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 103–74.

the mutual negation of the many and the one, singularities, being utterly singular, make things in the sense of constituting their form, and also, as the movement from the made to the making, can be said to be, absolutely, the formative activity of historical nature. Just as we can think both that time concerns what happens once only (*ichidoteki*) and that the present is the space of time, and that time is constituted in the movement from present to present, from the self-determination of the present, so too to say that the world, as contradictory self-identity, moves from the made to the making, is to say that singularities are productive, and conversely, to say that singularities are productive is to say that the world moves from the made to the making. To say that we are *homo faber* is to say that the world is historical; to say that the world is historical is to say that we are *homo faber*. Thus, just as we can conceive that in the world of absolute contradictory self-identity that, in the present of time, we touch upon that which goes beyond time, we can say that the world of *homo faber*, as the movement from the made to the making, is a world of seeing form in actuality. The world possesses a conscious section (*ishikiteki setsudanmen*) between past and future, as it were. In that the world which moves from the made to the making possesses such a conscious section lies the significance of reflection. /153/ We produce by way of active intuition; production is necessarily conscious. In the aspect of the world of absolute contradictory self-identity that is consciousness, the productive self can be conceived to be thinking (*shi-i teki*), to be free. Our personal self-awareness arises from production.

In the labor process, we make our own world, but we do not make it just as we please. The world we confront is the made, a world whose Being is the fixity of its forms. Previous labor has created material forms which not only bear but express a circumscribed range for the possibilities of making sense. For Nishida, materiality is not merely insensate and inert stuff; rather, it both expresses sense and delimits the possibility for making sense in any present: in the essay on "Logic and Life," Nishida spoke therefore of the world of material forms—Being—as the logos. Not everything is at all times possible; not everything at all times makes sense. But all Being is subject to the restlessness of the labor process, all Being perishes in the making of other material forms in what Nishida was wont to call "historical formative activity" (*rekishiteki keisei sayō*). Finally, to make a world is to make a subject that itself emerges only from production; the subject, as *shutai*, emerges from the making and unmaking of worlds, from the making and unmaking of sense, and is therefore, as such, itself the affirmation of historical time.

With Marx, with Nishida

To read with Marx, and with Nishida, is not in my view to subordinate either thinker to the other. Marx was no more an avatar of Nishida-philosophy than Nishida was a Marxist. I think it is, however, important to recognize that Nishida undertook a serious and radical philosophical engagement with Marx's work at precisely one of the critical points in that work upon which the whole analysis of the capitalist mode of production depends; here, Nishida was in agreement with a Marx that not all readers of Marx have cared to explore. On other aspects of Marx's work—the analysis of the expropriation of labor power, just for example—Nishida is conspicuously silent.

Of greater importance, I think, is to read with Marx, with Nishida, on the question of historical time, in a conjuncture where the hegemonic logic of the capitalist mode of production is as such a denial of the very possibility of history and time in the constant invocation of innovative technologies (all those robots that are supposed to make the very concept of labor obsolete), can perhaps help us conceptualize, and even resist, the reproduction of that logic in the name of philosophy.

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Commodity Fetishism and the Fetishism of Nothingness

On the Problem of Inversion in Marx and Nishida

Elena Louisa Lange

In the capitalist process, every element, even the simplest, the commodity for example, is already an inversion.¹

KARL MARX, *Theories of Surplus Value*



“Eastern” Nishida and “Western” Philosophy

To present a complicated matter in an easy-to-understand, approachable, and not too highly sophisticated way—in the sense that someone does not need to have a thorough knowledge of the Arabic documents of Areopagita as well as the writings of Peter Strawson to understand one’s point—could be regarded as one of the big challenges that philosophers face. Though by no means can this essay be expected to fulfill ideal requirements, it will at least try to come close to them. Since in the following pages, one author’s work will be scrutinized with the help of the methodological foundations found in another, it may be useful to begin by summarizing the main and overall line of thought of the author under investigation, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945). It might then be appropriate to simply unravel the thread that this summary may contain and follow its various winding paths.

Nishida Kitarō’s thought concerns the overcoming of the subject-object dualism that has come to dominate the intellectual history of classical European philosophy. His objection not only to Aristotelian logic, but also to the Kantian and post-Kantian tradition, is based on the assumption of the alleged “objectification” (*taishōka* 対象化, *Versachlichung*) of the subject in these traditions.

1 Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, in *Marx Engels Collected Works, Volume 32: Economic Manuscripts, 1861–63* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989), 507.

In his “logic of place,” the anti-Aristotelian and quasi-religious masterpiece of Nishida’s forty-year philosophical career (roughly 1911–1945) that began with his essay “Place” (Basho 場所) in 1926, he seems to have found a holistic principle that opposes the “reifying substantialization” of the subject (and of the object simultaneously) by which substantialization would become obsolete: the place of “absolute nothingness” (*zettai mu no basho* 絶対無の場所), in which the subject-object dichotomy will be overcome.² In this essay I will show, however, that Nishida neither overcomes nor sublates the substantialization or objectification of the subject and the object, but rather *generates it in the first place*. This interpretation relies on a particular reading of the concept of objectification as the result of an inversion process that Karl Marx famously describes in the first volume of *Capital* in Chapter 1 on the “Fetish Character of the Commodity and Its Secret.” This diagnosis of objectification or reification forms the cornerstone of Marx’s critique of the fetish-characteristic forms that value takes in the capitalist mode of production. Methodologically, it frames Marx’s analysis of capitalist production and, with it, the critique of its bourgeois theorists. Following Marx’s concept of fetishism, I make use of its analytic and heuristic potential to describe a structural inversion of intention and explication taking place in Nishida’s development of his concept of nothingness, and to present its “phantom-like objectivity.”³

Nishida is arguably the most significant and influential philosopher in the intellectual history of modern Japan. His maiden work, *An Inquiry into the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究) from 1911,⁴ has the reputation of being the first original contribution to philosophy from a Japanese author. The innovation of this work may also be explained by Nishida’s heuristic usage of the term “pure experience” (*junsui keiken* 純粹経験)—borrowed from William

2 On “reifying substantialization,” see Kobayashi Toshiaki, *Denken des Fremden. Am Beispiel Kitarō Nishida* [Thinking the alien: Nishida Kitarō as an example] (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Nexus, 2002), 91.

3 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, introduced by Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 128. Marx’s concept of fetishism will be analyzed in more detail in the course of the essay. For now, we can say that in Marx’s analysis of the value-form, we find an inversion of the social nexus that constitutes value and its thing-like, objectified expression in which the latter *appears* as its *essential* feature: “the commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material [*dinglich*] relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (ibid., 163).

4 Nishida Kitarō, *An Inquiry into the Good*, trans. Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

James—to signify the “purest” state of reality, unmarred by the subject-object dualism in a self-relational consciousness. To Nishida, the holistic system of what we can call “reality” must be founded on the basis of pure experience. “No Japanese thinker before Nishida,” Peter Pörtner writes, “has—in this form—tried to grasp [this idea] in philosophical terms.”⁵ Nishida’s labeling as being the “founder” of modern Japanese philosophy may be explained by the effects of his speculative efforts to imitate, and yet overcome the terminology, style, and standards of “Western” thought. His intellectual heritage is also shown in the emergence of the Kyōto School, which despite all the differences in the details, in the same philosophically idealistic vein generally understood reality as the product of the expression of “absolute nothingness.” Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 (1885–1962), though from the 1930s a harsh critic of his former mentor Nishida, also belongs to this Japanese philosophical school that today encompasses more diverse academic disciplines, such as history and the social sciences. In the self-image of the original Kyōto School, the dichotomy between Eastern and Western “thought,” however, was always retained in order to mark itself as being distinctively “Eastern”—while at the same time arguing that “Eastern” thought had its own contribution to make to “Western” philosophy, even if their philosophical interests had different objects.⁶ This account of Kyōto School thought finds supporters even today.⁷ The consequences of this position can be seen in the political writings of members of the Kyōto School from the 1930s and 1940s in which the ultranationalist ideology of the military regime was uncritically adopted in the school’s increasing rightwing and nipponist direction. In these writings, concepts such as “(Japanese) people” as in *Volk* (*minzoku* 民族), “imperial family” (*kōshitsu* 皇室), and “biological species” (*shu* 種), and even the propagandistic concept of the so-called Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai tōa kyōeiken* 大東亜共栄圏) were embedded in philosophical jargon.⁸ Often typical of the coinage of neologisms

5 Peter Pörtner, *Nishida Kitarōs Zen no kenkyū* (Hamburg: Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens e.V. [MOAG], 1990), 17.

6 “Roughly said, the object of Western logic is the thing (*mono* 物), and the object of Eastern logic is the heart/mind/spirit (*kokoro* 心).” Nishida Kitarō, “Nihon bunka no mondai” 日本文化の問題 [The problem of Japanese culture], in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集 第九卷 [Collected works of Nishida Kitarō, volume 9] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002) 12.

7 James Heisig and John Maraldo, eds., *Rough Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995); Bernard Faure, “The Kyoto School and Reverse Orientalism,” pp. 245–82 in Charles Fu and Steven Heine, eds., *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995).

8 See Nishida’s “The Principle of a New World Order” (*Sekai shin chitsujō no genri* 世界新秩序の原理), 1943, in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* [The Collected Works of Nishida Kitarō], vol. 9

in an idealist manner, these terms were juxtaposed with concepts suggestive of analytical potential such as “absolute contradictory self-identity” (*zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一), while their explanatory power remained obscure. Moreover, concepts such as these, central to Nishida’s later writings, were designed to give Japanese military aggression in Pacific Asia a transhistorical “meaning.”⁹ After the postwar discussions of the Kyōto School’s political nationalism in Japan had waned since the 1960s, this problematic was again picked up in the 1990s, especially in Anglo-American and European humanities and Asian studies departments.¹⁰ Especially Nishida’s later thought—such as *The Problem of Japanese Culture* (*Nihon bunka no mondai* 日本文化の問題, 1938) was criticized as a poorly concealed philosophy of Japanese expansionism.¹¹

Within the last twenty years, however, the image of Nishida et al. has substantially changed. Most new publications on Nishida in Japan and abroad, it seems, have rediscovered the value of the *philosophical* Nishida, a Nishida undisturbed by his own thought’s historical conditions of possibility.¹² This

(Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 444–50. Translated by Yoko Arisaka. See also Yoko Arisaka, “The Nishida Enigma: The Principle of the New World Order,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 51.1 (1996): 81–99.

9 I discuss this in great detail in Chapter 5 of my dissertation. See Elena Louisa Lange, “Die Überwindung des Subjekts—Nishida Kitarō’s Weg zur Ideologie” [The overcoming of the subject: Nishida Kitarō’s way to ideology], Ph.D. diss. (University of Zurich, 2011), 216–87, www.zora.uzh.ch/56978/1/Dissertation_Lange.pdf.

10 Pierre Lavelle, “The Political Thought of Nishida Kitarō,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 49.2 (1994): 139–65; Heisig and Maraldo, eds., *Rough Awakenings*; Faure, “The Kyoto School and Reverse Orientalism”; Toshiaki Kobayashi, “Die Stützung des Tennōismus durch die Philosophie. Zum politischen Standpunkt des japanischen Philosophen Kitarō Nishida” [The support of Tennōism by philosophy: The political standpoint of the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō], *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 44. 6 (1996): 975–85.

11 See Lavelle, “The Political Thought of Nishida Kitarō.”

12 In Western languages, see Maximiliane Demmel, *Der Begriff der Reinen Erfahrung bei Nishida Kitarō und William James und sein Einfluß auf Nishidas Verständnis von religiöser Erfahrung* [The concept of pure experience in Nishida Kitarō and William James and its influence on Nishida’s understanding of religious experience] (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2004); Robert J.J. Wargo, *The Logic of Nothingness: A Study of Nishida Kitarō* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005); Jacynthe Tremblay, *Introduction à la philosophie de Nishida* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007); Myriam-Sonja Hantke, *Die Poesie der All-Einheit bei Friedrich Hölderlin und Nishida Kitarō* [The poetry of all-unity in Friedrich Hölderlin and Nishida Kitarō] (Nordhausen: Beutz, 2009). In Japanese, see Kobayashi Toshiaki, *Nishida tetsugaku o hiraku: “Eien no ima” o megutte* 西田哲学を開く. 永遠の今を巡って [Opening Nishida philosophy: About the “eternal now”] (Tokyo: Iwanami gendai bunko, 2013); Higaki Tatsuya, *Nishida Kitarō no seimei tetsugaku* 西田幾多郎の生命哲学 [Nishida Kitarō’s philosophy of life] (Tokyo: Kodansha gakujutsu bunko, 2011); Fujita

essay focuses on one aspect of the philosophical Nishida, too, rather than on the political implications of his thought. At the same time, however, I aim to uncover a structural problem in his philosophical logic, which not only renders his political commitment questionable, but highlights an as yet unthematized aspect in his “unpolitical” thought.

Nishida’s logic of “place” began its influential career with his essay “Basho” in 1926, which appeared in a collection of smaller essays under the title *From the Acting to the Seeing* (*Hataraku mono kara miru mono e* 働くものから見るものへ) and hence became to be known as “Nishida philosophy” (*Nishida tetsugaku* 西田哲学).¹³ Many commentators here not only saw a clear incision in Nishida’s intellectual development, but also, more radically, the first mentioning and categorization of an “Eastern,” i.e., genuinely Asian, type of logic vis-à-vis a so-called Western Aristotelian logic. Nakamura Yūjirō in his standard monograph on Nishida even feels compelled to claim that the logic of “place” or the logic of “nothingness”—which, as we will see later, is synonymously used by Nishida—has led to a “Copernican turn” in the conventional Aristotelian logic of being.¹⁴ This automatically leads to the question of what the special features of such a logic of “nothingness” might be.

To answer this question, I will first briefly elucidate Nishida’s *intention* in establishing a distinctively “Eastern” logic of place/nothingness. Then I will elaborate on Nishida’s *explication* of his own logic, in other words, the “formulation” of the logic of place/nothingness in the making. By doing this, a structural contradiction of intention and explication will be discernable. Finally, following Marx’s critique of the “fetish character of the commodity,” I will develop a heuristic criterion to formally diagnose this contradiction as a *relation of inversion*.

The Logic of Place as “Intuitional” Logic

Nishida’s logic of absolute nothingness is firmly grounded in his philosophy of *jikaku* 自覚, self-consciousness or self-awareness. To him, *real* self-consciousness—self-consciousness that deserves of the name—has always

Masakatsu, *Nishida Kitarō shisaku sekai: Junsui keiken kara sekai ninshiki e* 西田幾多郎思索世界. 純粹経験から世界認識へ [The world of Nishida Kitarō’s thought: From pure experience to world perception] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2011).

13 In Nishida Kitarō, “Basho” 場所, in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集. 第三卷 [Collected works of Nishida Kitarō, volume 3] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 253–388.

14 Nakamura Yūjirō, *Nishida Kitarō (1)* 西田幾多郎 (1) (Tokyo: Iwanami gendai bunko, 2001), 77.

already overcome the opposition of subject and object, that of the I and the world, and that of consciousness and the object of cognition. The classical epistemological problematic of the constitution of subject and object, i.e., the question of whether the subject's cognitive acts constitute an object "for itself," or whether the object is a necessary "constitutum" for the subject's own acts, was the main topic in Nishida's intellectual development until the late 1920s. While in his 1911 work *An Inquiry into the Good* and *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (*Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei* 自覚に置ける直観と反省) he still struggles to find a principle to overcome the antinomy (or rather, to solve it), it was not until his essay "Basho" in 1926 that he was confident he had found an adequate conceptualization to express the immediate, pre-disjunctive identity of subject and object with his idea of "absolute nothingness."¹⁵ For Nishida, absolute nothingness is an absolute-transcendental principle that allegedly overcomes everyday experience and signifies a place that not only contains, but also generates the opposition of being and nothingness, subject and object in the first place. Nishida here intends to determine the "highest" or, depending on one's viewpoint, "deepest" dimension of self-consciousness, which in contrast to the Western (Kantian) tradition, not only denotes a "consciousness made conscious" (*ishiki sareta ishiki* 意識された意識), but also, in the process, a "consciousness conscious of itself" (*ishiki suru ishiki* 意識する意識), i.e., original or immediate self-consciousness. This principle of immediacy in Nishida's view consequently contains the capacity to transcend the scope and area of the subject-object relation. Yet, what concept of subject/subjectivity and object/objectivity does Nishida draw on to make his point? His starting point is the judgment of subsumption in Aristotelian logic, which he often confounds with Husserlian phenomenology from whose terminology Nishida borrows central concepts such as *noesis* and *noema*. Even in later texts, Nishida refrains from a clear distinction or distinctive methodology to differentiate the logical-grammatical subject from the subject as the bearer of (self-)consciousness. Furthermore, in "Basho" he gives a rather idiosyncratic interpretation of the Aristotelian definition of "substance," which is supposed to initiate the "transcendence" of the logical. In order to achieve this, Nishida is eager to draw a clear line of distinction between Aristotle's definition of substance and his own ideas of the subject where the logical-grammatical and the

15 As we also learn from his foreword: "In the essay Basho, the beginning of a logical foundation was opened to me by thinking the transcendental predicate (*jutsugo* 述語) as the level of consciousness. I think I have hereby grasped what has long been at the bottom of my thought." Nishida, "Basho," 255.

bearer of consciousness data collapse into one. As is well known, in Aristotle's definition, "substance" or "ousia" is the last individual, the *hypokeimenon* or *substratum* which is subject and hence cannot become predicate:

The term "substance" is used, if not in more, at least in four principal cases; for both the essence and the universal and the genus are held to be the substance of the particular, and fourthly the substrate. The substrate is that of which the rest are predicated, while it is not itself predicated of anything else. Hence we must first determine its nature for the primary substrate is considered to be in the truest sense substance.¹⁶

Nishida uses this Aristotelian definition of substance—"that of which the rest are predicated, while it is not itself predicated of anything else"—almost like an incantation, but only in order to turn the tables: for Nishida, even the "last" individual which cannot become predicate must be transcendable so that there will remain a "level" or *hypokeimenon* which also encompasses the substance itself. For Nishida, it is to be found in self-consciousness, understood not as the last *substance*, but the last *predicate* that enfolds the place of the subject as "nothingness." It can do so "because the level of the predicate (*jutsugomen* 述語面) is 'nothing' (*mu* 無) in opposition to the subject."¹⁷ To Nishida, this place of nothingness signifies the "concrete universal" (the Hegelian *konkretes Allgemeines*) which contains the principle of individuation and encompasses "relative" being and "relative" nothingness, encloses them within itself and comes to the fore as "absolute" nothingness. In Nishida's understanding, "absolute nothingness" has overcome the dualistic relation of the subject and the object, because not only the object, the material and informational content of knowledge, is dissolved in it, but also the subject, understood and criticized as Kantian "transcendental apperception." In other words, both the subject of cognition as well as its material object are subdued under "absolute nothingness," the *Urgrund* of all that is. This "logic" of absolute nothingness therefore cannot be explained or presented with a conceptual analysis of the classics and has to be understood as "intuitional" (*chokkanteki* 直観的). Consequently, for Nishida, in "absolute nothingness" the substantialization allegedly implied by the subject-object relation in classical logic and epistemology is abolished:

16 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 1028b–1029a, available at: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D1028b>.

17 Nishida, "Basho," 472.

“If the thought of the universal concept as place is radicalized to the extreme and this place becomes absolute nothingness (*basho ga zettai mu to naru toki* 場所が絶対無となる時), then all things become pure quality in it.”¹⁸ Here, the dimension of the “last substance” or subject “sinks into” the dimension of the “last predicate.” Nishida here calls the place of true or absolute nothingness the “transcendental predicate level” (*chōetsuteki jutsugomen* 超越的述語面).

The essential feature of the place of absolute nothingness or the “transcendental predicate level” is its *alogical* character. To Nishida, no judgment of subsumption could generate this place. Rather, any logical judgment is based on it. Only through and with it is a “standpoint” (*tachiba* 立場) beyond the subject-object dualism possible:

A judgment is formed by the relation of subject (*shugo* 主語) and predicate. However, beyond the fact that it comes into existence as judgmental knowledge (*handanteki chishiki* 判断的知識), there must be a widening predicate level in its background, so that the subject is ultimately within the predicate (*shugo ha jutsugo ni oite nakerebanaranu* 主語は述語に於いてなければならぬ) and the act of judgment must be thought of as secondary.¹⁹

In Nishida’s view, with this new foundation of a predicate logic of nothingness, Aristotelian logic as well as Kantian epistemology have been finally subverted.

Diagnosing Inversion

The disavowal of the logical character of consciousness in favor of its irrational and alogical dimension forms the cornerstone of Nishida’s theory. Concepts and propositional contents in Nishida’s view are merely weak derivatives of the more “original” (“immediate,” “true,” or “real”) absorption of the subject into the predicate, of being into nothingness. The following two quotes serve as examples:

At the bottom of perception, there is something infinitely deep (*mugen ni fukai mono ga aru* 無限に深いものがある) that cannot be subjected to conceptual analysis.²⁰

18 Ibid., 444.

19 Ibid., 469.

20 Ibid., 455.

And:

Only volition (*ishi* 意志) cannot become the object of a judgment.²¹

The latter sentence can easily be seen as a performative contradiction which, however, does not in the least disturb Nishida's insistence on the insufficiency of the logical to explain "true" reality.

Yet in my view, this is exactly where the problem lies. It is Nishida's *intention* to locate an area somehow "beyond" the subject-object dualism, i.e., the logical-epistemological determinability of consciousness, of which his incantation of a so-called transcendental predicate level is paradigmatic. Moreover, his search for a "super-ordinate" universal which cannot become part of everyday experience presupposes the exclusion of judgmental logic. However, in order to achieve this aim by making an *explication*, he must make use of arguments and reasoning. Arguments and logical reasoning, however, *presuppose* the logical—at least the rules of identity, non-contradiction, and the *tertium non datur*—if the speaker wants to convey meaning *at all*: and Nishida certainly wants to convey meaning, as we learn from his very intent to discover true reality in absolute nothingness.

Yet, there seems to be an inversion at work in what Nishida *thinks* he is doing and what he is *actually* doing. At this point, readers of Marx will see the relation between Nishida's theoretical puzzle and the fetish paradigm as to the specific *Problemstellung* of thought and practice, formulated in Marx's famous verdict, "They do this without being aware of it."²² Below we will see how this inversion of acting and thinking applies to the agents in (and the theorists of) capitalist commodity production, especially in the process of commodity exchange.

Regarding Nishida, we should also be reminded that logic presupposes the ability to handle concepts as abstractions from the concrete material contents they may or may not have. However, by trying to escape the pitfalls of "dualistic" logic, Nishida uses a language that betrays the very overcoming of substantialization he wants to achieve. His language relies on reifying and dualistic images of *things*. Nishida's usage of words such as "deep," "immersion," "infinite," "plane," etc., far from being metaphoric, suggests that concepts are not *abstractions from things*, but are to the contrary thing-like entities themselves. However, if in the performative act of making an argument, concepts are being used as concrete or material objects, the claim to truth as a universal becomes

²¹ Ibid., 471.

²² Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 166–67.

questionable: because, if not a universal concept, then *what else* can the notion of truth possibly mean, if one wants to circumvent a radically relativistic or “private” truth, hence *a truth that is not a truth*? More than that, in Nishida’s intention to *argue for* a level of consciousness that is based on the “infinitely deep” plane of absolute nothingness devoid of any logical confirmability, we find a performative contradiction at work that is also shown in the reifying rhetoric he was originally trying to overcome:

Nothingness lies always and everywhere in the back of being, and the predicate envelops the subject, and if it gets to the furthestmost limit, the subject level will sink into the predicate level (*botsu’nyū suru* 没入する), and being will sink into nothingness.²³

This rhetoric, contrary to the way it was intended, invites substantialism. Here we find the predicate “enveloping” the subject, “getting” to the “furthestmost limit” (*kiwamaru tokoro ni itatte* 窮まる所に到って), and a being that “sinks” into nothingness as if it were a liquid into which other things can be put. If logical abstraction were acknowledged, this relation would be expressed in (relational, judgmental) concepts, but Nishida expresses it in concepts denoting *things*. Furthermore, the imagery language Nishida evokes cannot simply be reduced to metaphors, because they do not *stand for something else*. Consequently, what “lies” in the “back” of being must be something substantial, or rather, substance-ridden. Only as a “thing” or substance can the predicate “overcome, deepen and widen” the subject.²⁴

Notwithstanding the problem of Nishida’s reifying rhetoric, a substantialization of his philosophical object, (self-)consciousness, unwittingly takes place. This becomes all the more problematic since by his own definition the view of “substance” or “subject” in Aristotelian or Kantian terms does not overcome the subject-object distinction which in turn is Nishida’s own objective.²⁵ Nishida’s *intention* of establishing a (concept of?) self-consciousness *outside of* reflexive thought is counterfactual to his *explication* of it. By emphatically putting the conceptual-logical out of sight, and likewise the fact of concepts as functions of thought, he initiates a mechanism of reification that delivers the very horizon on which his philosophy of self-consciousness alone makes sense. Nishida’s main concepts—place of absolute nothingness, predicate

23 Nishida, “Basho,” 455.

24 Ibid., 471.

25 “Traditional epistemology acts on the assumption of the opposition of subject and object....Instead, I want to begin with thinking self-consciousness as a self that is reflected in the self itself.” Ibid., 420.

level, volition, intuition, the concrete universal, all of which are more or less synonyms²⁶—become *fetishes* which, disposed of their logical function, only act as place-holders for entities beyond reflection. They are neither falsifiable nor verifiable, since the means of logic are precluded in Nishida's approach. In this fashion, Nishida's philosophy also runs the risk of becoming dogmatic and authoritarian, since its self-understanding serves to undermine discourse proper.

In short, Nishida does not reflect upon the “phantom-like objectivity” of his own concept of nothingness which becomes thing-like by the disavowal of its logical-analytical dimension. Absolute nothingness, which in Nishida's understanding has overcome dualistic thinking per se, is only possible as a material residue if it is not to be thought of as a concept—and therefore always already instantiates dualism between the material and the logical. In this case, an inversion of intention and explication takes place that Nishida with his own means is unable to reflect on. In the following, I want to throw another light on the predicament which may help to structurally diagnose the phenomenon of inversion in a more general, and likewise subtle, way.

The Inverted Structure of Value

In the opening chapter on *The Commodity*, including the “Fetish Character of the Commodity and Its Secret” in the first volume of *Capital*,²⁷ Marx examines a particular form of inversion as the “fetishism” of bourgeois relations of production. He goes on to apply this diagnosis of fetishism, or “objectification” (*Versachlichung*) as a tool critical for his analysis of capitalist social relations in toto, in all three of *Capital's* volumes. In other words, the critique of fetishism forms the core of Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*. In it, Marx systematically explores the process of mystification in the economic categories in which their relation to human labor as the source of value and valorization is increasingly obfuscated. His inquiry starts with the fetish of the commodity, the money and

26 I have devoted a chapter of my dissertation to analyzing the usage of these concepts in different passages in Nishida's work, and have come to the conclusion that no substantial difference in their meaning can be detected. See Lange, “Die Überwindung des Subjekts,” esp. Chap. 3.

27 The following assumptions are by no means intended to address all possible interpretations of the phenomenon of commodity fetishism, nor do I intend to give an overview of the problematic or of the scope and themes of *Capital*. My interpretation is limited only to the extent to which it is applicable to the theory of Nishida; space, too, precludes a fuller look at different interpretations.

capital fetish, moves to the wage-form of labor, profit, the “transformation” of values into prices of production, and arrives at a preliminary halt in the notion of interest-bearing capital in which “the fetish character of capital and the representation of this capital fetish is...completed.”²⁸ In this process, he critically examines theories of surplus value, or, in its fetishized equivalent, “profit,” especially theories of “vulgar” economists about profit through exchange, and theories of the “three sources of revenue” (capital, labor, and land) in the more sophisticated classical political economists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo.²⁹ The fetishism of the bourgeois relation of production precisely consists in its obfuscation of the exploitation and appropriation of unpaid human labor as the source of abstract wealth that is the only aim of the capitalist system of production and reproduction. This wealth can only be measured by money, a very specific kind of commodity. Hence, his inquiry begins with the commodity.

At the start of Marx’s analysis stands the assumption that in societies “in which the capitalist mode of production prevails,” the commodity, like the

28 Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 3, introduced by Ernest Mandel, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin, 1981), 516.

29 In the theory of the “three sources of revenue” that Marx polemically calls the “Trinity Formula,” the whole problem of fetishism in classical economics reaches its climax. It is therefore formulated close to the end of volume 3 to bracket his analysis of the “fetishism of the bourgeois relations of production”: “Capital-profit (or better still capital-interest), land-ground-rent, labour-wages, this economic trinity as the connection between the components of value and wealth in general and its sources, completes the mystification of the capitalist mode of production, the reification of social relations, and the immediate coalescence of the material relations of production with their historical and social specificity: the bewitched, distorted and upside-down world haunted by Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre, who are at the same time social characters and mere things. It is the great merit of classical economics to have dissolved this false appearance and deception, this autonomization and ossification of the different social elements of wealth vis-a-vis one another, this personification of things and reification of the relations of production, this religion of everyday life, by reducing interest to a part of profit and rent to the surplus above the average profit, so that they both coincide in surplus-value; by presenting the circulation process as simply a metamorphosis of forms, and finally in the immediate process of production reducing the value and surplus-value of commodities to labour. Yet even its best representatives remained more or less trapped in the world of illusion their criticism had dissolved, and nothing else is possible from the bourgeois standpoint; they all fell therefore more or less into inconsistencies, half-truths and unresolved contradictions. It is also quite natural, on the other hand, that the actual agents of production themselves feel completely at home in these estranged and irrational forms of capital-interest, land-rent, labour-wages, for these are precisely the configurations of appearance in which they move, and with which they are daily involved.” Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3: 968–69.

concept of nothingness in the thought of Nishida, contains a very “phantom-like objectivity,” which Marx characterizes in the following way:

The mystical character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this substitution, the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible or social....The commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material (*dinglich*) relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things.³⁰

With regard to its method, the analysis of the commodity, with which *Capital* begins, relies on a wholly different pattern of explication than the Enlightenment idea of de-mystification. In contrast to the Enlightenment endeavor to lift the veil of blind reverence to aristocratic authority behind which there are “only humans,” Marx's characterization of the commodity follows the opposite direction: the commodity, while it seems to be “an extremely obvious, trivial thing,” is in fact a “very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”³¹ What, then, does its mystical character consist of? According to Marx, the mystical element of the commodity consists in its form itself, i.e., its *value*. In contrast to the many different use-values in which one commodity differs from another, the *form of its value* (*Wertform*)—the central analytical concept in the opening chapter of *Capital*—is the same in each in every commodity. While the definition of the magnitude of value—the average socially necessary labor time consumed to produce a commodity—as a matter of fact could and must be different for various commodities, the very *form* under which value creation itself takes place is one and the same for all.³²

30 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 165.

31 Ibid., 63.

32 “What exclusively determines the magnitude of the value of any article is therefore the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-time socially necessary for its production.” Ibid., 129.

It is given in the conditions of production in capitalist societies. These, among others, include the division of labor (specialization), the wage system, cooperation, and a constant innovation of production techniques with the aim to lower the value of labor power in order to produce relative surplus value. All of these forms of labor organization under capitalist conditions serve to facilitate the extraction of surplus value from the unpaid labor of workers. The conditions for capitalist production and its relations to the organization of our work life, however, are completely obscured by the time production reaches its necessary realization in commodity *exchange* (namely, in the realization of commodity prices). Moreover, it is even legitimate to claim that the character of commodities as social “bearers” of value in the everyday act of exchange is fundamentally inverted. What takes place in the inevitable act of exchange has an almost metaphysical quality that fascinated Marx: how a *purely social* relation—capitalist commodity production—inevitably turns into a determinate, material (*dinglich*) form (money) that goes on to live a life of its own. To look at the same problematic from a different angle, Marx’s interest was to analyze how and why in capitalist societies *value* is the dominant *and only* form in which labor manifests itself, so that (surplus) value and it alone—disguised as the exchange of equivalents—becomes the ultimate aim of capitalist production. The production of use value in order to satisfy human needs is anathema to capitalist production, and Marx made very clear that “the aim of producing capital is *never use value*, but rather the general form of wealth as wealth.”³³

In analyzing this, the act of commodity exchange plays a decisive role. Without intending to renarrate the value-form analysis at the beginning of *Capital*, let me only draw attention to a few important observations Marx makes here regarding the systematic basis of inversion and fetishism. What takes place in the relation of the commodity in the relative form of value to the commodity in the equivalent value form is a threefold inversion: in the equivalent form, (1) the use-value of a commodity assumes the form of its opposite, value; (2) concrete labor assumes the form of and becomes the expression of its opposite, abstract human labor; and (3) private labor assumes the form of its opposite, labor in immediate social form.³⁴ This reduction or inversion to value, abstract labor, and labor in immediate social form is *always already performed* in the minds of the agents of commodity exchange as a prerequisite to meaningful exchange—otherwise it would be impossible to change

33 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. and intro. by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 600.

34 See Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 147–52.

two commodities of different use-values.³⁵ While concrete labor in the act of exchange is reduced to abstract labor, a strange thing is happening: it is only this latter kind of labor that produces value in the strict sense. How? Abstract labor that exists nowhere but in the act of exchange generates value as value-abstraction, as a concept in the *mind* that is produced by an act in *practice*. But have we not just claimed that labor in capitalist production is structured in such a way as to embody value? How can we then claim that it is the act of exchange that generates a specific kind of labor (abstract labor) which produces values? I claim that we do not need to revise either assumption. We rather have to try to think both assumptions as one if we want to understand the core of the inversion of the social and the material dimensions of the commodity:

Men do not therefore bring the products of their labour into relation with each other as values because they see these objects merely as the material integuments of homogeneous human labour. The reverse is true: by equating their different products to each other in exchange as values, they equate their different kinds of labour as human labour. They do this without being aware of it.³⁶

The reason that value *as an abstraction* from concrete labor becomes a “self-processing” entity, however, must be traced back to the inversion of purely social relations and their thing-like manifestation Marx analyzed in the value form of the commodity: money. It is in *money*, derived from the equivalent form of value, that the inversion of the purely social and material takes place. In the money form, abstract labor finds its exact material expression. Marx was the first in the history of social thought to unravel the money fetish as the “direct incarnation of all human labor,”³⁷ thereby making it possible to decipher the origins of the “automatic fetish” taking place in the capitalist social edifice. The “automatic” fetish character of value is paradigmatically shown in the constant production and reproduction of its own conditions of possibility whereby the irrational autonomization of value production against a meaningful purpose of society takes place. Commodity exchange is only its “superficial”

35 In Japan, the questioning of the role of the commodity owner's want for determining the value of a commodity was famously led between Uno Kōzō 宇野弘造 and Kuruma Samezō 久留間鮫造 (1897–1977) between 1947 and 1957. For a critical look at Uno's position, see Elena Louisa Lange, “Failed Abstraction: The Problem of Uno Kōzō's Reading of Marx's Theory of the Value Form,” *Historical Materialism*, 22.1 (2014): 3–34.

36 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 166–67.

37 *Ibid.*, 187.

expression, the agents of production its unaware aides, reproducing the “automatic” fetish of money in their everyday behavior.³⁸ While to Marx, however,

38 This “unawareness” first and foremost does not pertain to the agents of exchange in Marx’s study, but to classical political economy, even its “best representatives,” Adam Smith and Ricardo, who “treat the form of value as something of indifference, something external to the nature of the commodity itself. The explanation for this is not simply that their attention is entirely absorbed by the analysis of the magnitude of value. It lies deeper. The value-form of the product of labour is the most abstract, but also the most universal form of the bourgeois mode of production; by that fact it stamps the bourgeois mode of production as a particular kind of social production of a historical and transitory character. If then we make the mistake of treating it as the eternal natural form of social production, we necessarily overlook the specificity of the value-form, and consequently of the commodity form, together with its further developments, the money form, the capital form, etc.” Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 174fn. Like the classical bourgeois economists, William Haver’s essay in the present volume also seems to “make the mistake” of treating the “metabolism” between man and nature as an ahistorical, ontological process, by hypostatizing an essentialism both with regard to the “species being” (a term exclusively used by the young Marx and absent from in his economy-critical writings after 1857), as well as to the labor process and the role of use-value and nature within it. While it is true that at the first few pages of Chapter 7, Marx’s observations concern “The Labour Process and the Valorization Process” in a general way, Haver conflates it with Marx’s analysis and criticism of *capitalist* production that Marx, to the contrary, *differentiates* from these short, general introductory notes. Tellingly, Haver also never uses the term “capitalist” in his own account of Marx, so that Marx’s intervention goes indeed missing. Accordingly, Haver’s interpretation is mired in platitudes about the appropriation of a transhistorical nature by equally transhistorical humans that says nothing about the specificity of the capitalist production mode and the form that labor takes: “If labor, *in* acting on nature, is at the same time a reflexive change in one’s own ‘nature,’ that is, man’s essence—a constitutive ontological change—then it might be useful to inquire into the nature of the ‘metabolism’ (*Stoffwechsel*) between man and nature, as well as the ‘appropriation’ of nature by man that Marx finds essential in that metabolic relation.” However, there is nothing essential in Haver’s view. It abstracts from the social specificity of labor organization under capital where labor is not labor *as such*, but *wage labor*, and the conditions of wage labor *confront it as capital*. (Marx discusses this difference time and again in his writings, perhaps most aptly in the *Theories of Surplus Value*; see Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, 498ff.) From Haver’s social “ontology” follow equally misguided views of use-value and nature as “singularity” that makes one wonder whether Haver has chosen to ignore the gist of Marx’s writings. Haver says: “When I consume a use-value, whether as means of production or as final product, I do not consume the thing in the abstraction of its generality. Hungry, I do not consume ‘potatoes’ or ‘rice,’ for example, in the universality of their categories; I consume *this* plate of potatoes or *this* bowl of rice, here and now. Thirsty, I do not drink ‘wine’ in general, I drink *this* bottle of Romanée-Conti’08 ... here and now.”

“value...does not have its description branded on its forehead,”³⁹ it becomes the material end in itself. Here, people’s “own movement within society has for them the form of a movement made by things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them.”⁴⁰

It should also be mentioned that Marx did not think that the inversion of social relations into thing-like manifestations, their *objectifications* (commodities, money), can simply be undone by uncovering the “veil of materiality” under which they are supposedly hidden.⁴¹ In this sense, Marx does not belong to the Enlightenment discourse of critique. Rather, to him, in capitalist societies, these relations are simply material and cannot be expressed in other forms. There is no “human,” warm and friendly world beyond the “cold” world of wage labor and commodity exchange. The fetishism of commodities, therefore, has a double characteristic: while value “naturally” (*naturwüchsig*) appears to belong to a commodity, and “most naturally” to money, it is *socially* constructed. This social contraction is simply material and has no other means of expression:

To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours *appear as what they are*, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material [*dinglich*] relations between persons, and social relations between things.⁴²

Although Haver seems to think that personal consumption has a bearing on understanding the inner structure of social form, Marx observes that “the use-values of commodities provide the material for a special branch of knowledge, namely the commercial knowledge of commodities (*Warenkunde*)” and as such are anathema to the analysis of the social form in which capitalist relations express themselves, namely value. (Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 126). On the concept of nature, Haver suggests that Marx had identified it with “land and soil.” These ahistorical, if not outright wrong accounts, treat the capitalist social relation as eternal and natural, or rather as “one of ontological constitution,” thereby not only missing Marx’s point, but betraying Haver’s own intention of reflecting “on a materialist concept of historical time.”

39 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 167.

40 Ibid., 167–68.

41 Marx uses the term “objectification” (*Versachlichung*) more often than he uses “reification.” In a famous passage toward the end of volume 3 of *Capital*, he, however, observes that it “is the reification of the social determinations of production and the subjectification of the material bases of production” that characterizes “the entire capitalist mode of production.” Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3: 1020.

42 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 165–66, emphasis added.

How can this double predicament be made useful for the analysis of Nishida's text?

“They Do This without Being Aware of It”: Real Abstraction and the “Logically Unconscious”

While recognizing the unbridgeable gap between Marx's object of critique, capitalist society, and Nishida's focus on the philosophy of consciousness, my only aim is to highlight a particular formal dynamic that includes the moment of the *structurally unconscious* within the theorem of inversion. In this sense, I make use of the double structure of Marx's diagnosis of the commodity fetish that points at two seemingly paradoxical features: first, the reification of the nonmaterial. Second, the *nonexistence* of an *immaterial* expression of “value.” I contend that Nishida's usage of concepts and the certain limitations he imposes on them do in fact correspond to both of these phenomena. Like the agents of capitalist commodity production and exchange who “are not aware” of the materializing effects of their own performative acts, Nishida is “not aware” of the inversion put into effect by his alogical determination of “absolute nothingness.” Let me make this clearer in the following:

- 1) We have seen that the social character of labor is reflected as material or “thing-like” in the money form. In Nishida's case, the logical character of a concept such as “absolute nothingness” becomes material when it is located outside of the “realm” of cognition and reflection. Contrary to Nishida's own intention, it cannot “be” anything but a substantial residue. In the same way that in Marx's view the social character of labor is an *inessential external relation* to the producers of commodities, to Nishida, precisely logical thinking becomes an *inessential external relation*. Value and its fetishized expression in money, capital, profit, etc., become the form of domination that overwhelms people instead of the opposite. In Nishida, the alogical, irrational becomes the dominant form and thus undermines the means to even be able to think it. In fact, Nishida is convinced that only by disavowing the logical can a “deeper logic” be established.
- 2) Yet there is another analogy between the fetishism theorem and Nishida's line of thought: commodity exchange does not *represent* the edifice of the social in everyday life as though there were a different reality hidden beneath its reified surface, but commodity exchange is precisely *the very form* in which the social in capitalist societies is expressed. Paradoxically,

value-abstraction can *only* be expressed in the materiality of the commodity. As for Nishida, there is no “higher” or “deeper” reality beyond the “reciprocal interpenetration” (Adorno’s term) of the epistemological subject and object, no “third level,” which by way of being simply hypostatized could escape its own substantialization.⁴³ As much as we cannot escape the prosaic logic of commodity exchange when we take part in capitalist social life, we cannot escape the logic of subject and object in all its foundational rationality. Needless to say that capitalist reality is something that can—and must—be changed, while the means in which we can express *what* and *how* it is to be changed, will have to follow the means of our cognitional apparatus.⁴⁴ The conceivableness (*Denkbarkeit*) of the concept of absolute nothingness, the concept of “volition” and the “irrational,” cannot exist otherwise than as a derivation from the relation of subject and object, not only if “thinking,” but also thinking

43 “Because, in truth, subject and object do not...stand in firm opposition to each other, but interpenetrate each other reciprocally, the degradation of the object (*Sache*) to something chaotically abstract in Kant’s theory also degrades the faculty which shall form it.” Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 142.

44 Readers familiar with the colossal theoretical superstructure in the novels of German writer Dietmar Dath as well as readers familiar with Alfred Sohn-Rethel’s theory of the conditionality of the validity of conceptual thought that problematizes its historical-material genesis will probably dispute this view. Dath’s novel *Für immer in Honig* (Forever in Honey) diagnoses the defects of capitalism and the seemingly impossible obstacles in building a new one as a problem of *categorical thought*—on hindsight, from the standpoint of a new, non-capitalist society depicted at the end of his book. Here, his heroine Lena Dieringshofen, a theoretician and the “smartest woman in the world,” theorizes what was wrong with the world as we knew it: “we needed a new category: ACT....The difficulties were not in the objects, but in what we were able to do with them, sentences which were not proven, not calculated yet, had no place, truth was always only historically fabricated, not found.” Dietmar Dath, *Für immer in Honig* (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag, 2008), 964. In a less Leninist science-fictional approach, Sohn-Rethel’s effort to trace back the genesis of conceptual thought to its historical determinants in premodern commodity exchange must be mentioned and admired: his studies of Babylonian societies that historically first had coins, approximately in the sixth century BC, where the division of intellectual and manual labor first took place. However, in doing this, Sohn-Rethel must retain the means of logic as we know it. Neither he nor Nishida can maintain that, for example, the law of non-contradiction does not apply to them. While Sohn-Rethel’s predicament consists of the gap between the logic he applies to former, allegedly “non-logical” thought to determine the historical point when, finally, logic “fell upon history”—a predicament he fails to address—Nishida is not aware of the systemacity of his problem to apply logical standards to explain an allogical phenomenon. See also Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

“feeling,” thinking “intuiting,” thinking “nothing” should have any meaning at all.

In this context, the materiality of thought itself must be stressed—in other words, how the inversion in both cases is made possible not only by not reflecting on the conditions of its own possibility, but also by keeping the material process, the material contents, of the structure of thought as well as of action outside of reflection. A precise account of what Alfred Sohn-Rethel has called *real abstraction* (*Realabstraktion*) designates the role of the material in the inversion of value constitution and commodity exchange: here not the *thought abstraction* (*Denkabstraktion*) of commodity owners is value-constituting, but the abstraction from their *action*, namely that of *exchange* (*Tauschhandlung*):

While the concepts of natural science are thought abstractions, the economic concept of value is a real one. *It exists nowhere other than in the human mind, but it does not spring from it.* Rather, it is purely social in character, arising in the spatio-temporal sphere of human interrelations. It is not people who originate these abstractions, but their actions. “They do this without being aware of it.”⁴⁵

In this sense, real abstraction is the modus operandi of value creation, not thought. Accordingly, the value of a commodity is a “very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties”—its *genesis* is purely material and social, but its *validity* is purely cognitional. This is what Marx calls a sensual-suprasensual phenomenon: the term of *Wertgegenständlichkeit* (in English poorly rendered as “objectivity as a value”), in fact a contradiction in terms, designates its very workings. The exchange of commodities, the necessary form of human relations in capitalism, therefore becomes *constitutive* for our own representation (*Vorstellung*) of the society we live in.

Returning to Nishida, we can see that the disavowal of its own determinants in Nishida’s logic of place leads to the emergence of yet another “world” which

45 Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 20. The term “real abstraction” was coined by Georg Simmel in his *Philosophy of Money* (*Philosophie des Geldes*): “It is not as strange as it may seem at first glance that not only the study of the economy, but the economy itself is constituted by a real abstraction from the comprehensive reality of values.” Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore, David Frisby, and Käthe Mengelberg (London: Routledge, 1978), 80. See Helmut Reichelt, “Marx’s Critique of Economic Categories: Reflections on the Problem of Validity in the Dialectical Method of Presentation in Capital,” *Historical Materialism*, 15 (2007): 4n3.

by its own standards cannot account for itself. It is as though the concept of nothingness had no relation to a subject thinking, and therefore, making a judgment about it *as an object of thought*. Instead, what it “naturally” had was pure meaning. In Marx’s critique of the existence of “natural” value, the same predicament is expressed in a satirical and ironic way:

If commodities could speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values.⁴⁶

Consequently, if Nishida’s concept of absolute nothingness could speak, it would say that only its meaning belonged to it, while no judgment *about it* could provide it with its meaning.⁴⁷ This account forgets how meaning is constituted through a process that presupposes thinking subjects and its thought-of objects. One cannot think “nothing.”⁴⁸ Meaning is not a thing naturally belonging to a word. At the same time, Nishida’s intuitionism, so afraid of entanglement with the object or material dimension of thought, becomes perfectly entangled. In Marx’s analysis likewise, value is not a thing, but a social-material relation that is produced and reproduced by thinking subjects in a “logically

46 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 176–77.

47 One may object that Kant’s *Ding an sich selbst betrachtet* is equally transcendental to judgment. But the comparison would be, strictly speaking, lopsided: unlike Nishida, Kant does not hypothesize a positively “truer” level of reality allegedly inherent in the so-called *Ding-an-sich*. Quite the contrary: rather than making futile attempts at deciding the dialectical illusion (*dialektischer Schein*) of the antinomies of pure reason that strive to have cognition of the “thing as regarded in itself,” we should restrain ourselves to having cognition of the phenomenal appearance (*Erscheinung*) of the objects: because only here we can speak of cognition in the strict sense. The pun here is that *precisely because* the *Ding-an-sich* can never become the object of the synthesis of conceptual thought (given in the categories of the intellect) with sensuous intuition (*Anschauung*), it is not only something we must *not* strive to “know,” but to arrogate to know it would be an absurd and futile undertaking. Nishida, however, sees the explication of this “last predicate level” as his foremost task. In my dissertation, I have argued the difference between Kant and Nishida with regard to the “Paralogisms” in the “Dialectical Inferences of Pure Reason” and its rationalizations of “pure consciousness” in more detail. See Lange, “Die Überwindung des Subjekts,” 80–91. I also argue that Nishida’s concept of absolute nothingness is closer to Fichte’s concept of intuition (*Anschauung*).

48 Consequently, Nishida was a harsh critic of (Husserlian) intentionality, however dubious his objections were. See *ibid.*, 149–52.

unconscious” way.⁴⁹ With regard to real abstraction, Helmut Reichelt adopts a slightly different position from Sohn-Rethel’s concept of abstraction taking place in human action to stress the moment of the structurally unconscious as the prerequisite for value-abstraction:

What we will consider...is whether this account of valid value-abstraction is identical to Marx’s conception of value when the latter states that equivalent only means equal magnitude “after both objects have first been reduced tacitly in our head to the abstraction ‘value.’”...A more precise formulation would have been desirable, but note that Marx does not refer to an abstraction in our consciousness, although also stressing that it takes place “tacitly.” Abstraction can, therefore, be seen as an action that takes place in the mind, although we are not conscious of this; it is therefore a logically unconscious process, a lack of awareness within awareness itself.⁵⁰

In the same vein, I claim that the Nishidean concept of absolute nothingness in which the deductive principle of the world known and unknown is to be detected relies on presuppositions that Nishida is “logically unconscious” of. Yet, this is exactly Nishida’s contention: in absolute nothingness, though not reflective in itself, everything else is reflected. However, by the logical constraints Nishida implies, this notion must remain a scheme just like a “natural” concept of value abstraction. The latter is the result of a particular historical and social formation, the former is the result of logical thought.

To summarize, the structure of the inversion—the objectification of the *immaterial* and the simultaneous *necessity* of a *material* expression of value—on the one hand consists in the paradoxical fact that objectification takes place exactly through the non-acceptance of materiality, if materiality is understood as the historical, social, and factual experience of capitalist commodity production and exchange. On the other hand, however—and Marx’s coinage of the concept of the *sensous-supersensuous*, i.e., *the social*, must be admired here

49 The heuristic value of this term from Helmut Reichelt can be detected in the following formulation, though this chapter is not the place to elaborate on its intricacies: “This law of autonomisation reconstructs a movement executed by means of the conscious actions of individuals, but which, at the same time, eludes conscious understanding—they do not know it, but they do it,’ in Marx’s concise formulation. Therefore, the constitutive moment of unconsciousness, which determines the social reproduction process, is the actual object of dialectical criticism.” Reichelt, “Marx’s Critique of Economic Categories,” 5–6.

50 Ibid., 8–9.

for its brilliance—the inversion consists in disregarding the material (social) genesis of value and its completely immaterial *objective validity* in the cognitive reduction and abstraction process of exchange. The relation of the social genesis of value and its immaterial objective validity never comes to the fore on the surface of exchange. In this way, the paradox per se generates itself as “forms of thought which are socially valid,”⁵¹ *objektive Gedankenformen*.

That the value-abstraction is not *given*, but has evolved through the material praxis of commodity production and exchange, which in turn consolidates our representation of value as thing (and the whole fetishism of it), is evidence of this dialectic as is the fact that the more the object-dimension of thought is denied, the harder it comes back. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the material dimension, for those who deny it, always comes back with a vengeance.

Notwithstanding all the structural similarities that are shown in the “logical unconscious” of both models of inversion, a difference in their formal-logical constituency must be conceded: while in the phenomenon of the commodity/value fetish, a *temporal* inversion of value-creating labor and the retroactive act of value realization through the act of exchange takes place, Nishida’s inversion of thinking and doing or intention (in the mind) and explication (in the act) is strictly *atemporal*. Nishida’s concept of nothingness is indicated by a logical contradiction, whereas the concept of value is indicated by a process taking place in time (and space). The logical structure of the commodity/value fetish is therefore more complex. Every act (of commodity exchange) becomes its own presupposition with regard to value as already being thought of as something *given*. Precisely this assumption—value already exists in commodities, paradigmatically in money—leads to their necessary exchange, while value is constituted *only by the real abstraction taking place in the modus operandi of exchange*. In other words, value is constituted by the capitalist organization of production in abstract labor that, however, only comes into existence as abstract labor when commodities are exchanged through money. Capitalist production is production for exchange, so that the production process already *anticipates* the circulation process. However, the realization of value depends on the latter. For the agents of production and exchange, however, commodities already (“naturally”) have a value, independent of their being exchanged. Hence, the reduction to abstract labor taking place when two commodities are exchanged provides value with its social character *outside of the scope of thought or knowledge* of the agents in the process. The process of thinking (“commodities have values”) and doing (exchanging) are here retroactively

51 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: 169.

interlocked, generating the abstraction of value as something *real*, one being the presupposition for the other. Accordingly, while the fetish character of the commodity could be expressed in the formalization

(S is) thinking “p” ↔ doing p,

Nishida’s logic of nothingness could be expressed in the formalization

(S is) thinking “p” → doing p.

Both forms of inversion, however, depend on the divergence or perhaps even *contradiction* between a form of thought unconscious of its own conditionality and its corresponding performative act. Marx’s often quoted “They do this without being aware of it” must be understood as a striking expression, but also a *criticism*, of this predicament.

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Nishida Kitarō and the Antinomies of Bourgeois Philosophy

Christian Uhl

Premises

In the following pages I will review some of the core issues of the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō, such as the question of the place of philosophy vis-à-vis science, art, and religion, the question of self and truth, of logic, time, and history. I will also address Nishida's perception of Marx. The premise of my review, however, is itself a Marxian one. Adorno has formulated this premise as follows: "Our metaphysical categories," he says, "are not only the veiling ideology of the social system, but are at the same time the particular expressions of its essence; they express its truth, and in their transformations the most central experiences manifest themselves."¹ Adorno is paraphrasing here Marx's twin notion of foundation and superstructure: "In the social production of their life," says Marx, "men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will....The total sum of these relations...constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."² The architectural metaphor of foundation and superstructure suggests an understanding of a given social formation as a single structure, in contrast to nineteenth-century liberalism's view of modern society as being the result of the interplay of the distinct, and essentially autonomous spheres of the market, the state, and the people. The metaphor also resists the liberal illusion of the independence of the consciousness, as it has manifested itself most explicitly in the *Bewußtseinskritik* of German idealism. Thus, the twin notion of base and superstructure does *not* establish yet another division, but rather—as Adorno's words, "expression" and "truth" underscore—a *methodical hierarchy*, which, indeed, is itself not presuppositionless: it presupposes a "metaphysics"

1 Theodor W. Adorno, "Nr. 148: Abdeckerei," in *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), 311.

2 Karl Marx, "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 503.

of cause and effect, of essence and appearance. Words such as “expression,” “truth,” “metaphysics,” or “hierarchy,” have all become non-words in neoliberal, postmodern academia. Yet, as Marx himself rightly emphasizes, “all science [*Wissenschaft*] would be redundant if the manifestation and the essence [*Wesen*] of the things were immediately coinciding.”³

In *Capital*, Marx’s analysis, therefore, departs from what we see in the first place wherever the “capitalist mode of production” has taken hold. This phenomenologically first thing is not capital, but rather an “enormous pile of commodities”:⁴ the most obvious feature of the capitalist social formation is that here almost all products of human labor are produced for the marketplace, and that each and everything, even the human labor force itself, has become “commodified” (labor market). A commodity, as Marx’s analysis reveals, is a double-faced thing: seen from the viewpoint of the consumer, a commodity is a concrete, specific thing with particular qualities by virtue of which it can meet the consumer’s individual needs; it has a “use-value.” Yet, seen from the viewpoint of the producer, the same commodity is an abstract means of exchange, which has an “exchange-value.” The same applies to labor: as “concrete labor” it is and has always been a concrete and specific productive activity; in capitalism, however, labor also has a socially mediating function insofar as it is the universal, un-specific means to acquire commodities from others, and with regard to this historically specific function of labor, Marx speaks of “abstract labor.” In accordance with the concrete and abstract dimensions of capitalist labor and its products, we further have to distinguish two different forms of wealth. With regard to the form of wealth measured on the basis of the specific quantities and qualities of the use-values that constitute it, Marx speaks of “material wealth” (*stofflicher Reichtum*). The dominating form of wealth in capitalism, however, is not material wealth, but what Marx calls “value” (*Wert*). Value is a function of the relation products of human labor establish with each other in the marketplace as commodities, i.e., as means of exchange. Its magnitude—in contrast to the magnitude of material wealth—is measured on the basis of that thing which all products of human labor, regardless of their distinct qualities, have in common. This common thing is the socially necessary expenditure of labor time, that is to say, the amount of time that under the existing, regular conditions of production, with average skills, and the regular intensity of labor, is necessary in order to produce any kind of use-value. Thus, the measure for the expenditure of labor time is standardized units of time,

3 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, vol. 3 (MEW 25) (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1962), 825.

4 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, vol. 1 (MEW 23), (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1962), 49.

such as the day and the hour. These are the conditions, as Marx says, under which

the human beings disappear, and the pendulum of the clock has become the exact yardstick for the ratio of the output of two workers, as well as the measure for the speed of two locomotives....Time is everything, and the human being is nothing anymore—or, if anything, then it is an incarnation of time. Quality no longer matters. Only quantity alone decides: hour by hour, day by day.⁵

Thus, in capitalism, not only a historically specific form of wealth constructs itself, but also a universal, quasi-objective notion of empty, abstract time.⁶ In capitalism, as Lukács writes, “time loses its qualitative, changing, floating character: it congeals into a precisely defined, quantitatively measurable continuum.”⁷ This “vulgar and mundane notion,” as Derrida calls it, “of a homogenous temporality, governed by the...ideal of a continuous, rectilinear, or circular movement,”⁸ is the time which we measure by means of our ubiquitous chronometers. “All over our landscape,” observes Oswald Spengler, “all day, and all night long, from thousands of towers the strokes of the clocks are echoing, permanently linking the future with the past.” He continues: “The Baroque period heightened the symbol of the church clock even further so that it became the grotesque symbol of the fob watch, which permanently accompanies everyone.”⁹ For Heidegger, this “grotesque symbol” is a manifestation of a notorious and “inauthentic” modern urge to save time: “The measurement of time itself shall consume as little time as possible.”¹⁰ At this point, of course, we have already ascended far into the most lofty sphere of the superstructure: the department of philosophy. “Time is money,” knows the capitalist—and he has two ways to make money out of precious time: by the absolute extension of the labor time beyond the span of time consumed by the production of an amount of product, the value of which equals that of the workers’ salary; or, by the shortening of this span of time in relation to the time of surplus labor by

5 Karl Marx, *De la misère de la philosophie* (MEW 4) (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956), 86.

6 This has been explained in detail by Moishe Postone, *Zeit, Arbeit und gesellschaftliche Herrschaft. Eine neue Interpretation der kritischen Theorie von Marx* (Freiburg: ca-ira Verlag, 2003), 269–307.

7 Georg Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* (Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1968), 258.

8 Jacques Derrida, *Grammatologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 153.

9 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1998), 175.

10 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), 418.

means of increasing productivity. Marx speaks of the production of “absolute surplus value” in the first case, and of that of “relative surplus value” in the second.

At the stage of unfolded capitalism the production of relative surplus value becomes decisive. The increase of productivity, however, which takes into its service science and technology and at the same time fuels and accelerates their development, redefines the measure of value, i.e., the definition of the “socially necessary expenditure of labor time.” In this context, Marx also speaks of the “compression” (*Zusammenpressung*), “condensation” (*Kondensation*), or “densification” (*Verdichtung*) of the labor hour.¹¹ Constantly generalized by the transmission belt of capitalist competition, and constantly restarted once it has been generalized, this “compression” gives rise to a directional dynamic, by which capitalist society is taken away and carried up to ever newer, ever higher levels of productivity, while at the same time it constantly reproduces in a “treadmill pattern” (in Postone’s words) its own preconditions.¹² The consequences of this specific dynamics, however, far transcend the horizon of the productive process and the sphere of the workplace.¹³ “Hence the great civilizing influence of capital,” writes Marx,

which produces a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere *local developments* of humanity and as *nature idolatry*. For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility...and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production. In accord with this tendency, capital drives beyond national barriers and prejudices..., as well as all traditional, confined, complacent, encrusted... ways of life. It is destructive towards all of this, and constantly revolutionizes it, tearing down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs...and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces.¹⁴

11 Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1: 60–61, 431.

12 See Postone, *Zeit, Arbeit und gesellschaftliche Herrschaft*, 441.

13 See Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1981), 131.

14 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 336.

Due to this peculiar dynamic, capitalist humanity as a whole is subject to a permanent change in all aspects of its life, including, as Marx emphasizes, its “furthest forms” such as “the language of politics, laws, religion, metaphysics, and so on.”¹⁵ In this context we must understand the emergence of the modern subject and its according modern notion of truth as knowing objects, both constituting not only the interior of a historically specific, modern order of knowledge, but also, as this order’s specific exterior, the realm of “art and religion” (as opposed to “science”). Moreover, behind capital’s dynamics, and in the shadow of its ever growing, gigantic “pile of commodities,” an equally titanic, ever growing heap of “past,” “tradition,” “heritage” is piling up. This Calvary of “dead labor” is the nursery of modern historical consciousness, the “real foundation” of “our enormous desire to excavate, preserve and collect, *what has happened*,” as Spengler puts it, and of the notion of the past as *history*, that is to say, as an immanently driven, directional, *progressive* process, which, as Spengler points out, is “in complete accordance” with the modern obsession with abstract, linear, chronometric time.¹⁶ Eventually, the dynamic of capital and the contradictions emerging from it—the local and the global, old and new, abstract and concrete, particular and universal, continuity and discontinuity—set the stage also for the clash of two basic attitudes toward the self and the world, namely the opposition of modern rationalism on the one hand and the romantic revolt against it on the other. These superstructural ramifications of the commodity form in the realm of thought and ideology are what we shall call with Lukács the “antinomies of bourgeois philosophy.”¹⁷

Philosophy and Science

Capital always must expand in order to remain what it is, and, as Marx points out, “what distinguishes industrial capital’s process of circulation is the *Dasein* of the market as a world market.”¹⁸ Japan eventually was dragged into the circulation of industrial capital when, in 1853, a fleet of U.S. warships appeared in the bay of Uraga and demanded the opening of ports for trade. The rulers of Japan saw themselves compelled to give in. The following year, they signed

15 Karl Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie* (MEW 3) (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), 26.

16 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1998), 175.

17 Georg Lukács, *History and Class-Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingston (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 110.

18 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, vol. 2 (MEW 24) (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1962), 113–14.

a “treaty of amity” with the United States, and subsequently also with Great Britain and Russia. In 1858, trade agreements were made, first with the United States, then also with Great Britain, the Netherlands, Russia, and France, granting the opening of four ports, the permission to build concessions, extraterritoriality, and so on. The consequences of this “opening of the country,” however, and the political fermentation caused by it, brought about the downfall of the last feudal regime in Japanese history: in January 1868 a coalition of domains, which had allied itself with the imperial court, seized the imperial palace at Kyoto, announced the end of the rule of the feudal regime, and the return of de facto political power to the emperor. In June 1869 the remaining forces of the old regime and its allies were defeated. Edo was renamed Tokyo, and was made the new national capital, where in the following years the new government launched a drastic reform program to transform Japan into a modern nation-state. Right at the onset of this Gramscian “passive revolution,” on May 19, 1870, Nishida Kitarō was born in a village near the city of Kanazawa.

The transition of Japan into a capitalist market economy was basically completed around 1890. Piggybacked on that transition, however, and propelled by a titanic translation effort, rode what I have called above the modern order of knowledge. Japanese intellectuals “consumed and translated [*übersetzten*] since the so-called ‘opening of the country’ everything that was anything in the West, and this way they crossed over [*setzten über*] into the modern, Western world,” as a Heideggerianesk amphibology of Elmar Weinmayr has it.¹⁹ Indeed, as if a gigantic invisible hand suddenly turned the kaleidoscope of consciousness, in this period everything fell into place anew, and disappeared, or reappeared in new constellations, and thus became charged with new meanings. The “splitting up of the existing systems of knowledge in line with the categories of Western learning”²⁰ is illustrated exquisitely by the ways in which Japanese translators plundered, for example, the terminological arsenal of Zhu Xi-style Confucianism, which was once the official ideology of the perished feudal regime. Not even *rigaku*, the old common name for Zhu Xi’s teachings, was spared from this huge metamorphosis: for a while, a certain group of intellectuals used *rigaku* to translate the word “philosophy,” whereas another group of intellectuals translated “philosophy” as *tetsugaku*, and used *rigaku* to

19 Elmar Weinmayr, “Aspekte des Übersetzens zwischen Heidegger und Japan,” in *Destruktion und Übersetzung. Zu den Aufgaben von Philosophiegeschichte nach Martin Heidegger*, ed. Thomas Buchheim (Weinheim: Acta humaniora, 1989), 194–95.

20 John Makeham, ed., “Preface” to *Learning to Emulate the Wise: The Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012), 1.

translate “science.”²¹ Neither of the two groups thought of the “teaching” (*gaku*) of Zhu Xi’s cosmic “principle” (*ri*) anymore. Rather, in their terminological disagreement they reenacted the modern rivalry between “science” and “philosophy” in the form of the question of which of the two was entitled to inherit from old-style *rigaku* the status of the “highest form of human knowledge.” However, this terminological struggle was eventually won by the second group of intellectuals, some of whom were directly involved in the government’s educational reforms, and in the institutionalization of science and philosophy in the course of the foundation of Tokyo Imperial University, Japan’s first modern university, in 1877. Ever since, students of physics or chemistry enrolled in the Faculty of Sciences (*rigakubu*), whereas the students of philosophy had to make do with a mere department (*ka*) for philosophy (*tetsugaku*) in the Faculty of Arts (*bungakubu*). Nishida graduated from this *tetsugakka* in 1894.

The experience of modernization, of course, triggered also in Japan a rising awareness of the ailments of modernity, and in Japan as well an increasing discomfort with the modern state and society was accompanied by the discovery of what, after having fallen into capitalism’s event horizon, had turned into “tradition,” “cultural heritage,” etc. The Confucian part of this “heritage,” however, was largely discredited not only as the outdated ideology of feudalism, but also as an ideological tool of the modern state’s increasingly reactionary educational politics. Shintoism too did not seem to provide much useful intellectual inspiration and, moreover, it had been reinvented already as modern Japan’s new state religion. Buddhism, on the other hand, had become subject to severe repression. Precisely due to this repression, however, the rich Buddhist cauldron of ideas and concepts, as Sueki Fumihiko argues, had been set free for a critical reassessment of “Western modernity.”²² The legacy of Nishida Kitarō, who became attracted to Buddhism as a student and practiced Zen meditation enthusiastically until his appointment as professor at the Imperial University of Kyoto in 1910, is commonly interpreted in light of this context: “Nishida’s active life spans some 40 years, during which he strove to assimilate Western philosophy and methodology and to create his own distinctive philosophy based largely upon the Eastern religious, especially Buddhist, traditions,” as the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* explains.²³ A major Japanese

21 See Hirayama Yō, “Joron,” in *Nishida tetsugaku no saikōchiku: sono seiritsu katei to hikaku shisō* (Tokyo: Mineruwa shobō, 1997), 4–5.

22 Sueki Fumihiko, *Kindai Nihon to Bukkyō—kindai Nihon no shisō saikō II* (Tokyo: Transview, 2004), 12–13.

23 “Nishida Kitarō,” in *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993), 1098.

compendium of philosophy and intellectual history confirms that “Nishida enthusiastically embraced old and new Western philosophy...but strove to breathe new life into it by means of the Eastern, and, above all, the Buddhist tradition of thinking.”²⁴ Occasionally, Nishida himself seems to have approved of this common view. One of these occasions is the following passage from the Chinese preface to the 1936 Chinese edition of his first book, *Studies on the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū*, 1911):

Philosophy [*zhexue*; Jpn: *tetsugaku*] is science [*xuewen*; Jpn: *gakumon*]. Science has to be regarded as something based on reason, and as a truth which nobody can deny. In that sense, on the basis of philosophical truth, there shouldn't be any difference between old and new, East and West. However, although philosophy is science, it simultaneously, like art and religion, has to be grounded in our feeling, and our life. In this sense, one can say that the West has its Western philosophy, and the East has its Eastern one. The philosophy of us Easterners has to be the expression of our life. It has to be a shining exhibition of the culture of the East, unfolding for thousands of years, and being handed down to us from our ancestors. Insofar as the scientific form is concerned, I think we have to learn from the West, but the content has to be our own.²⁵

And yet, in Nishida's writings explicit references to that cultural heritage of “the East” are very rare. He refers almost exclusively to the “philosophy of the West,” and therefore Nishida's Chinese preface is interesting, not so much as evidence for the common assessment of his legacy, but rather as an expression of a modern thinker's struggle with the *aporiae* of modernity. Behold the fractures and bifurcations which intersect all over the place in Nishida's preface: first, we stumble over the rift between “old and new,” which is immediately crossed by the dichotomy of “East and West.” This spatial-temporal intersection is already troublesome enough. Yet, it is further complexed by the divorce of form and content, which, in addition, overlaps with the opposition of “science” on the one hand and “art and religion” on the other. All these bifurcations cluster together and constitute one big conundrum: “philosophy is science” says Nishida, and science, again, is the universal, abstract form of “a truth which nobody can deny.” One may argue that precisely because philosophy as science

24 Nakaoka Narifumi, “Nishida Kitarō,” in Hiromatsu Wataru et. al, eds., *Iwanami tetsugaku shisō jiten* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1998), 1207.

25 Nishida Kitarō, “Xu,” in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1978–1980; hereafter *NKz*), vol. 1: 467.

is merely an abstract, universal form, it can serve as an indifferent, empty vessel for a particular Eastern or Western content. However, as appropriate as the metaphor of the vessel might be to depict Nishida's reasoning, it is inappropriate for addressing the problems inherent in it. A vessel can be indifferent to its content, and even to holding a content, or being empty, but philosophy *as science* cannot: the very moment it is "filled" with a particular material content, it loses its merely formal, and thus, its universal character. Apparently, what we are dealing with here are two conflicting notions of philosophy. On the one hand "philosophy is science" and, in contrast to "art and religion," sheer form; but "simultaneously" it is not sheer form but, "like art and religion," a material expression of the feeling, life, and culture of "us Easterners." In addition to all this Nishida concludes: "insofar as the scientific form is concerned, I think we have to learn from the West," thus implying that the "scientific form" as a universal container is itself a particular "Western" innovation, so that we can expect the content of any "Eastern philosophy"—which, in contrast to its "scientific form," is "our own"—to be fundamentally at odds with "science."

Art and Religion

In another, earlier preface to his *Studies on the Good*, written on the occasion of the 1926 reprint, Nishida writes:

One morning, [Gustav Theodor] Fechner was sitting on a bench..., oblivious of himself and completely immersed in looking at a spring meadow, with fragrant flowers, birds singing, and butterflies dancing in the sunlight, and he said to himself that this is the day view of the real reality, just as it is, in contrast to the night view of the exact sciences. I don't know due to which influence, but already very early I was convinced that real reality has to be reality as it is, and that the so-called material world is not more than an abstraction from this [real reality]....I still remember that once when I was still a high school student, while I was strolling on the streets of Kanazawa, this idea occurred to me as if in a dream. This idea then became the foundation of my book.²⁶

Apparently, in 1926 Nishida wasn't yet all that eager to identify the "influence," which he marvels about, and his basic insight, as "Eastern," as he was ten years later, when he in a time of increased political tension between Japan and China

26 Nishida Kitarō, "Han o arata ni suru ni atatte," in *NKz* 1: 7.

tried to build a bridge to his Chinese readers. On the contrary, here he refers to Fechner instead, thus rather emphasizing that one doesn't have to be a Buddhist to get involved in a post-Kantian, romantic struggle with "science." With Fechner, the German father of "psycho-physics," Nishida distinguishes two realities, or better, two approaches to reality, which are as different as night and day. On the one hand, there is the objective, "material world" of science. This "material world" is constituted by the force of the Cartesian notion of proper knowledge, i.e., of truth as knowing objects. Such knowledge, however, is "not more than an abstraction," a derivative knowledge, a knowledge of a secondary order, which, even worse, eclipses what Nishida calls "real reality." This "real reality" must remain in the dark, as long as we do not become "completely immersed" in it. We have to be "oblivious of ourselves," or in other words, we have to stop acting as subjects facing a world of objects. "Real reality," thus, is the prior unity of reality "as it is" before the divorce of subject and object. Nishida's technical term for this prior unity is "pure experience," a state, as he explains in his first book, "in which there is not yet a subject, nor an object," and in which the knowing and the known "are completely one." This "complete truth is individual and real"; it "cannot be put in words," and thus "such a thing as so-called scientific truth cannot be called complete truth,"²⁷ and so on.

The reasoning is cogent enough: where there is unity but no difference, there cannot be any distinction, and thus no predication, and thus no objective knowledge, and accordingly no words to put that unity in. Such a unity is "unspeakable," as Wittgenstein—coming from the opposite direction—calls it. This unspeakable, as Wittgenstein continues, "6.522 ... shows itself, it is the mystical." Wittgenstein therefore concludes: "6.53 The correct method of philosophy would be: to say nothing, but what can be said, namely the propositions of the exact sciences—thus, something, which has nothing to do with philosophy."²⁸ If one, however, is reluctant to draw from Kant this most radical conclusion, if one does *not* want "to say nothing, but what can be said," then one has to claim, indeed, another kind of knowledge, one that is non-reflexive, concrete, intuitive, and immediate, and is not acquired methodically in a laboratory, but occurs "as if in a dream," while we sit on a bench or stroll on the streets of our hometown. Of course, in claiming such other kind of knowledge Nishida is no more or less "Buddhist" than, for example, Martin Heidegger, who in turn scales back the dichotomy of subject and object to the prior unity of the *In-der-Welt-sein*. In the context of this "being-in-the-world," as the interaction

27 Nishida Kitarō, *Zen no kenkyū*, in *NKz* 1: 37.

28 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, in *Werke in 8 Bänden*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), 85.

(*Umgang*) in the world with the intraworldly being things (*mit dem innerweltlich Seienden*), Heidegger also introduces the term *hantierendes Besorgen*, a form of *Umgang*, which, as he points out, has its own form of *Erkenntnis* (here: insight/knowledge).²⁹ Instead of the made-up term *hantierendes Besorgen*, Heidegger could have simply spoken of *Praxis* (practice). Yet, apparently, he wants to evoke in his German reader the notion of literally “handling” something, that is to say, of using one’s own hands (*hantieren*) to carefully manipulate or make something (*besorgen*). We are probably not misguided if we think of an old-school craftsman here, a *Handwerker*. Indeed, a stonemason knows what a hammer and chisel are, and what they are good for, not by theorizing about them, but by using them, i.e., in immediate, concrete, “pure experience.” Together, hammer and man complete each other, they constitute a *Ganzheit*, a whole, a unity, the truth of which must remain beyond the myopic sight of the bespectacled, objectifying eye of science.³⁰

Elsewhere, Heidegger explains, “The stone weighs and manifests its heaviness....If we try to grasp this in another way, by putting the stone on the scales, then we merely turn its heaviness into the calculation of a weight.”³¹ This line is to be found in Heidegger’s essay “The Origin of the Work of Art,” and this is not just a coincidence, since art—and not, as in ancient Greece, theory—is considered here to be the highest form of practice. The scientific experience of the world, as Pöggeler comments, “is an abstraction which disregards the unspoiled immediacy (*Ursprünglichkeit*) in which the truth betides [*sic*] (*geschieht*) in art.”³² Nishida would agree. Art and science, as he insists in one of his later essays, “stand at opposite poles of the...world”:³³ scientists adopt a methodical attitude that involves isolating the things they observe from their concrete relations in order to place them before themselves as objects. In the “artistic act of creation,” by contrast, “thing and self, subject and object, become one,” as Nishida argues elsewhere. “This is why the artistic act of creation should be understood as intuition in the true sense of the word.”³⁴ Likewise, it is in this artistic act of creation that the transition “from the created to the creating,” as Nishida calls it, and the “self-formation of the historical world” manifest

29 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), 66, 69.

30 Ibid.

31 Martin Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 33.

32 Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Stuttgart: Verlag Günter Neske, 1994), 213.

33 Nishida, “Rekishiteki keisei sayō toshite no geijutsuteki sōsaku,” in *NKz* 10: 232. See also Nishida, *Nihon bunka no mondai*, in *NKz* 12: 350.

34 Nishida Kitarō, “Benshōhōteki ippansha toshite no sekai,” in *NKz* 4: 339–40.

themselves especially clearly. The work of art emerges “where our poiesis... is at the same time the poiesis of the world.” When the self “is artistically intuitive, it becomes one with the creative activity of the historical world. The movement of artistic intuition,” as Nishida writes, “does not go from God to the human being, but from the human being to God. The human being takes part in God’s creation, the human being himself becomes God.”³⁵ By this *homoīōsis tō theō* qua art, however, Nishida eventually pushes “philosophy” right into the abyss of what we mean today when we think or speak of “religion.”

Self and Truth

Already at the beginning of his first book, Nishida states that “the new ideals of an artist” as well as “the new insights of a religious person...are all rooted” in the same “mystical intuition,”³⁶ and in his last chapter he finally presents the “religious experience” as the ultimate overcoming of our ordinary, Cartesian self, and as the recovery of, or return to, the prior unity of “pure experience,” a feeling, as he explains, “like that of Paul, when he said that not he, but Jesus lives within him.... True religion requires that the Self changes; true religion requires the renewal of life. Even if one preserves within oneself just a tiny residue of the belief in one’s own self, one is not yet filled with the spirit of true religion.”³⁷ Thirty years later, in “The Logic of Place and the Religious World-view,” Nishida refers to the Christian notion of original sin and continues:

Illusion and Delusion are the origin of all such primordial sin. Illusion, however, originates...from the objectifying view of the self. For this reason, Mahāyāna Buddhism teaches that the human being is liberated qua awakening (*satori*). This does not mean to see in any way or form objective things....Awakening means to grasp...the origin of all sin. [The Zen monk] Dōgen [1200–1253] says, “to learn the way of Buddha means to learn oneself; to learn oneself, however, means to forget oneself.”...It is obvious now that the question of religion does not amount only to the intellectual problem of objective cognition....Rather, it concerns the following problems: What are we? Where are we? What is the essence of our self?... What makes the self being the true self, what allows the self to be?³⁸

35 Nishida, “Rekishiteki keisei sayō toshite no geijutsuteki sōsaku,” in *NKz* 10: 230.

36 Nishida, *Zen no kenkyū*, 43.

37 *Ibid.*, 169.

38 Nishida Kitarō, “Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan,” in *NKz* 11: 410–13.

A self, or subject, however, which has to change, awake, be forgotten, or reborn in order to be true must be a stranger to the modern order of knowledge, or, to be more precise, it is in fact this order's preeminent *outsider* and most intimate adversary.

In his last lectures, which have been published under the title *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault distinguishes this modern order of knowledge from premodern, "spiritual" ones, which are manifest "in all of ancient philosophy and all Christian thought." The latter are based on the presumption that the subject, in order to have access to the truth, has to carry out "necessary transformations on himself," and the term "spirituality" signifies the set of practices and experiences "which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to truth."³⁹ Here, having access to the truth means "to have access to being itself, access which is such that the being to which one has access will, at the same time, and as an aftereffect, be the agent of the transformation of the one who has access to it."⁴⁰ This precisely, as Foucault points out, "is the Platonic, or anyway the Neo-Platonist circle: by knowing myself I accede to a being that is the truth, and the truth of which transforms the being that I am and places me on the same level as God. The *homoiōsis tō theō* is here."⁴¹ This spiritual notion of truth, however, has been liquidated in the course of what Max Weber called the "disenchantment of the world," what has been referred to as the turn from transcendence to immanence, as the process of secularization, etc.; in other words, in course of the advent of modernity:

If we define spirituality as the form of practices which postulates that, such as he is, the subject is not capable of knowing the truth, but that, such as it is, the truth can transfigure and save the subject, then we can say that the modern age of the relation between subject and truth begins when it is postulated that, such as he is, the subject is capable of truth, but that, such as it is, the truth cannot save the subject.⁴²

The "enormous transformation," as Foucault explains, which distinguishes the modern from the premodern world is the replacement of this spiritual notion of truth by the "Cartesian type of knowledge," which "cannot be defined as

39 Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 15.

40 Ibid., 191.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 19.

access to the truth, but is knowledge (*connaissance*) of a domain of objects." This replacement, by which we arrive at what Heidegger calls "the age of the wordview," completed itself in Kant's claim that "what we cannot know is precisely the structure itself of the knowing subject, which means that we cannot know the subject."⁴³ With this "supplementary twist," as Foucault says, the idea of a transformation of the subject, which gives her access to the truth by giving her access to her true self, becomes obsolete. Thus, Descartes and Kant mark an epoch, the point "at which the tradition breaks off."⁴⁴

Truth, understood as "knowing the object," has its own rules and criteria, such as the distinction between knowing and believing, and by the force of these rules and criteria a whole new order of knowledge constituted itself, requiring from "philosophy" to find and claim a place within this new order. Kant's call for setting metaphysics on "the secure course of a science (*Wissenschaft*)," is an attempt at responding to this challenge:

I should think that the examples of mathematics and the natural sciences, which by a suddenly achieved revolution became what they are now, are remarkable enough to reflect on the essential element of the change of the way of thinking, which has become so beneficial for them, and to at least try to imitate them in this respect, as far as their analogy, as rational cognition (*Vernunftkenntnis*), with metaphysics allows.⁴⁵

Kant's program to emulate the sciences is ambiguous, insofar as it simultaneously is also an attempt to defend the independence and prerogative of what "philosophy" still can be, after "science" has become "what it is now." In contrast to the exact sciences, as Kant argues, the object of philosophy is not knowledge of determinate objects, but cognition of the condition of the possibility of such objective knowledge. Thus, philosophy would be the ultimate foundation of the sciences. The prize for this reclamation of philosophy's status as the *prima scientia*, however, is its reduction to a mere instrument of the formal critique of scientific theories and propositions. Not everyone was willing to pay this price, and so Kant marks also the beginning of what has been called the equivocation of the notion of philosophy, the effects of which we have already observed above in Nishida's Chinese preface. The term "equivocation" signifies the ultimate breakdown of philosophical intercommunication,

43 Ibid., 190–91.

44 Ibid., 19.

45 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft 1, Werkausgabe Band III* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 25.

a situation, as Wolfgang Stegmüller comments, in which in the worst case a certain thinker not only does not know what the other one is saying, but cannot even say anymore what the other's activity is, which he or she strangely calls "philosophy."⁴⁶ On one side of this big divide are thinkers such as Pierce, Boole, Frege, and Wittgenstein, who are subsumed today under the label "analytical philosophy." Thinkers, by contrast, who cling to the idea of a material philosophy are subsumed under the label "Continental philosophy," and in this other yet equally modern camp we also find all of those who, as Foucault puts it, tried to smuggle "spirituality" back into the philosophical discourse, and to relink "the activity of knowing, and the conditions and effects of this activity to a transformation in the subject's being."⁴⁷ Foucault explicitly limits the validity of his insights to the European world. Yet, it should be clear at this point that Nishida too is a member of this spiritual camp: Kant, as he makes clear, has failed to understand religion, "because religion does not find its way into mere reason (*blosse Vernunft*). Whoever wants to discuss religion, has to depart from the religious consciousness as an inner, spiritual [*shinreijō no*] matter...I am convinced, that religious phenomena cannot be treated from the viewpoint of objective logic, because from this point of view, religious questions remain invisible."⁴⁸

Logic

Philosophy has to be "like art and religion," as Nishida said above. Yet, at the same time it has to be "science," and of "a truth which nobody can deny," and this means for Nishida that it has to be grounded in logic. In 1926, in a retrospective sketch of the development of his own philosophy, Nishida writes: "The standpoint of pure experience...made a turn by the medium of Greek philosophy to the notion of the place [or, topos: *basho*]. At this point, I succeeded for the first time in formulating my thoughts logically. The notion of the place then concretized itself as the notion of the dialectical universal (*benshōhōteki ippansha*)."⁴⁹ Elsewhere, Nishida points out that there cannot be a logic of the East in contrast to a logic of the West. "Logic must be one." However, he continues, in the East and in the West logic evolved in different

46 Wolfgang Stegmüller, *Hauptströmungen der Gegenwartsphilosophie. Eine kritische Einführung*, four vols., vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1989), xlii–xliii.

47 Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 28.

48 Nishida, "Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan," 373–74.

49 Nishida, "Han o arata ni suru ni atatte," 6–7.

ways. In the West, it became a logic of things, whereas in the East it became a logic of the mind. “In Buddhist logic are the seeds of something like a logic of the self, a logic of the mind (*kokoro no ronri*), yet it didn’t unfold beyond concrete personal experience (*taiken*).”⁵⁰ Thus, Nishida’s approach to the problem of logic can be understood as an attempt to transcend the limitations of what he called “objective logic” by unfolding a “logic of the self”—or of “the mind,” for that matter—which allows for making “religious questions” visible again, and thus for a reversal of the historical process Foucault analyzed above as the “liquidation of spirituality.”

In his later writings, Nishida occasionally presents the essence of his logic in the form of the calculus “ $A \equiv E$,”⁵¹ which I would like to use as a starting point. The letter *A* represents the German word *Allgemeinbestimmung*, which can best be translated as “self-determination of the universal” (the predicate); the letter *E*, the German word *Einzelbestimmung*, or the “self-determination of the individual” (the subject). The core of the calculus is the symbol “ \equiv .” In propositional logics it signifies so-called material equivalence. It is spelled out as “if, and only if,” and serves Nishida to redefine the relation between individual and universal, subject and predicate. Now let us buckle up and start with the apparently most palpable element here: the individual thing (*kobutsu*, Ger.: *Einzelding*).

When Nishida discusses the individual, his reasoning generally oscillates between two thinkers: Aristotle and Leibniz. “I always think,” Nishida writes, “that the one who defined the individual logically for the first time was, indeed, Aristotle. Leibniz’s definition of the individual too is, undoubtedly, based on the Aristotelian one.”⁵² Aristotle’s name for the individual thing is *hypokaimenon*, which means, “the underlying,” i.e., the “base” that is “at the root.” The *hypokaimenon*, as Aristotle explains in his *Metaphysics*, “is that thing, of which all the rest is said, but which itself is not predicating anything else.” In contrast to the accidents (the universal properties; the predicates attributed in a proposition), the *hypokaimenon* is “independent” and “separate,” as the cause of these accidents and as an individual thing. In other words, the individual thing is the “first essence”: logically speaking, it is the last subject of everything that can be attributed in predication; and, ontologically speaking, it is the substance, i.e., an independent being, which “carries” the secondary, accidental attributes and, in this sense, is “underlying” them.⁵³ However, already at this point we run

50 Nishida, *Nihon bunka no mondai*, 289.

51 See, for example, Nishida, “Zushikiteki setsumeï 1,” in *NKz* 8: 221.

52 Nishida, “Rekishiteki sekai ni oite no kobutsu no tachiba,” in *NKz* 9: 69–70.

53 Aristotle, *Metaphysik*, zweiter Halbband (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1991), 376–77.

into a problem: the complete notion of an individual thing would result from the sum of all predicates that can possibly be attributed to it (Aristotle was a human being, male, a Greek thinker, a teacher of Alexander the Great,...)—and yet, no matter how many predicates we attribute, the *hypokaimenon*, by definition, will always be “independent” and “separate.” In other words, the vehicle of language and thinking can never catch up with it; as a sort irrational leftover it always remains beyond the limits of predication. Precisely at this point, Nishida steps in: “Aristotle’s individual is just something that has been defined right up to the utmost limit of the abstract universal.”⁵⁴ And since the “individual, which is always the subject and never becomes a predicate, must be that which transcends the abstract universal,” Nishida defines the individual occasionally as the “transcendental subject.”⁵⁵

Yet, Aristotle’s *hypokaimenon* poses a problem not only with regard to the limits of predication, but also with regard to the status of the individual vis-à-vis the universals (the predicates). If the individual is to be really independent and identical with itself, then it must have the capacity to determine itself, or, in other words it has to possess or “contain” within itself all the predicates that can possibly be attributed to it—and here Nishida brings Leibniz into play: “Leibniz argues that it is not sufficient to define the individual by saying that it is the subject and never becomes a predicate. All predicates must be contained within the subject. That, what can be thought of as causing everything that ever happens to it, and to which nothing ever happens because of anything else: *that* is an individual.”⁵⁶ Arguably, Nishida is referring here to the following passage in Leibniz’s *Discourse de la métaphysique*:

If several predicates can be attributed to one and the same subject, and if this subject itself is not a predicate of anything else, then it is probably correct to call this subject an individual substance; but this is not sufficient since such an explanation is just an explanation of the word. Accordingly, one has to consider what it means for something to be truly attributable to a certain subject. As a matter of fact, every true judgment is grounded in the nature of things, and if a sentence is not identical, that is, if the predicate is not explicitly included in the subject, then it has to be at the least virtually included in it. The philosophers call this *in esse*.⁵⁷

54 Nishida, “Kōiteki chokkan no tachiba,” in *NKz* 8: 212.

55 Nishida, “Ronri to seimei,” in *NKz* 8: 356.

56 Nishida, “Rekishiteki sekai ni oite no kobutsu no tachiba,” 70.

57 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Metaphysische Abhandlung* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1991), 17.

The basic disagreement between Leibniz and Aristotle lies with the fact that concepts can be interpreted in two different ways, namely, either with regard to their *extent* or with regard to their *intent*. Let us take, for example, the sentence “All philosophers are human beings.”⁵⁸ In extensional interpretation, this means that all individuals who come under the concept “philosopher” are contained in the group of individuals that come under the more encompassing concept “human being.” From the intentional point of view, however, it is impossible for an individual who is not a human being in the first place to be a philosopher. Thus, in intentional interpretation, the concept “philosopher” already always encompasses or “includes” the more general concept “human being.” Traditional as well as modern logics are biased in favor of the extensional point of view. The logic of Leibniz is one of the exceptions—and Nishida’s strategy to problematize “Western logic” is to not opt for either of the two sides, but to play them against each other.⁵⁹

Leibniz’s term for the individual substance is “monad.” As an individual substance, the monad is indivisible and thus cannot have an extension. Since a monad has no extension, it must be disembodied and “intellectual” (*geistig*). Moreover, as an independent substance, it is “windowless,” that is to say, no determination can emerge from, or enter into, a monad. Yet, monads are in a permanent process of change, driven by an inner urge to achieve completeness.⁶⁰ In this process, each monad experiences the restrictions imposed on it by all the others, and thus perceives its relation to them like a geometrical point at which countless angles converge. “Every monad,” says Leibniz, “is a living mirror, which is capable of an inner activity, reflects the universe from its own point of view, and is organized in the same way as the universe.”⁶¹

This Leibnizian universe, i.e., the puzzle of the monads as a whole, resembles to a certain degree Nishida’s above conception of the world as “the many which are the one,” and, indeed, Nishida occasionally calls his own philosophy a “dialectical monadology.”⁶² Yet, this designation not only expresses Nishida’s intellectual indebtedness to Leibniz, but also underscores his disagreement with him. As a matter of fact, Nishida’s world, in which everything real is a coincidence of the two contradictory principles of the “self-determination of

58 See Franz Schupp, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Ueberblick* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 2003), 244–45.

59 On Leibniz’s logic, see *ibid.*, 245.

60 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “Monadologie,” in *Vernunftprinzipien der Natur und der Gnade. Monadologie* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag), 27–31.

61 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “Vernunftprinzipien der Natur und der Gnade,” in *ibid.*, 5

62 Nishida, “Kōiteki chokkan no tachiba,” 96.

the individual” and the “self-determination of the universal,” seems to be fundamentally at odds with Leibniz’s notion of truth, according to which “we assess everything as false which contains a contradiction, and as true everything which is opposed to falsehood, that is, to that which is contradictory,”⁶³ and thus Leibniz’s interpretation of Aristotle’s law of non-contradiction. According to Leibniz, identity is the identity of the indistinguishable, or respectively, the indistinguishableness of the identical, and hence two otherwise completely identical things are still two distinct things and therefore not identical. Identity, thus, is always self-identity, in the strict tautological sense of the expression $A = A$. The following remark from Hegel’s *Logic* may give us a sense of what a seasoned dialectician thinks about this:

In this remark I will have a closer look at identity as the *law of identity*, which is commonly referred to as the most fundamental law of thinking. This law in its positive expression, $A = A$, is, first of all, not more than the expression of the void *tautology*. Therefore, it has been rightly stated that this law of thinking is *without content* and does not get us any further. Thus, it is the void identity, to which those adhere, who take it, as such, as something true and who always claim that the identity is not the difference, but that identity and difference are different. They do not realize that they, already by claiming this, say that identity is something different.⁶⁴

Leibniz, as Nishida seems to believe, is one of those. Of course, Nishida did not regard himself as anti-Leibnizian. Otherwise, he would not have called his own philosophy a “dialectical *monadology*.” However, not only does he not hesitate to call his monadology *dialectical*, he also does so with an explicit reference to Hegel: “Leibniz’s world of preestablished harmony must be Hegel’s world of the dynamic idea.”⁶⁵

The problem Leibniz’s model poses for Nishida is that it allows for the monadic independence of individuals, but not for any real interaction or “cooperation” between them. As windowless as they are, they are capable of “inner activity,” but not of really “affecting each other,” as Nishida requires: “Leibniz’s monads are merely intellectual and therefore have no effects. But something

63 Leibniz, “Monadologie,” 41.

64 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II, Theorie-Werkausgabe G.W.F. Hegel, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 6* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), 41.

65 Nishida, “Rekishiteki sekai ni oite no kobutsu no tachiba,” 94.

that has no effect is not a real individual.”⁶⁶ Kant criticizes Leibniz’s rationalist lack of empirical sense in a similar way: “Leibniz’s monadology has no other reason than that this philosopher thought of the difference between inside and outside only in relation to the intellect. Substances as such must have something *internal* (*etwas Inneres*) which is free from all external circumstances,” and therefore “his principium of the possible community of substances could have only been a preestablished harmony, and not any physical influence,” writes Kant.⁶⁷ The term “preestablished harmony” is Leibniz’s answer to the question of how and why the “windowless” monads can serve as the building blocks of the world as a whole, and in his *Theodizee*, Leibniz defends this world as chosen by God as the best of all possible worlds.⁶⁸ Nishida’s “dialectical universal,” on the other hand, is supposed to exist without such an intervention. In contrast to Leibniz’s world, Nishida’s is meant to be “not a world of preestablished harmony, but a world that creates itself,” and in this respect he distinguishes his “dialectical monadology” from that of Leibniz’s also by calling his own a “creative” (*sōzōteki*) one.⁶⁹

At this point, however, Hegel too becomes problematic. Nishida, who on the one hand refers to Hegel in order to criticize Leibniz’s monadological incapability to grasp the world dialectically, criticizes on the other hand Hegel’s dialectics by arguing monadologically that in light of Hegel’s logic “the true individual is inconceivable” as well.⁷⁰ Hegel’s notion of the “identity of the identical and the nonidentical” overcomes the dualism of A and non-A. Yet, Hegel presumes *knowledge* as the absolute (the “absolute idea” of Hegel’s *Logic*), the unfolding of which is governed by a strict teleology that does not allow for grasping the relation of the many and the one in any other way than that of a logical subsumption of the former to the latter. Hegel, as Adorno complains, “presupposes from the start positivity as all-comprehensibility,” and in the end “he rakes in the prey of the primacy of logics over the meta-logical.”⁷¹ Such a standpoint of positivity, of Being, as Nishida points out, “does not represent the logic of the real historical world.”⁷² In contrast to Hegel’s system, Nishida’s

66 Ibid., 101.

67 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft 1, Theorie-Werkausgabe Immanuel Kant, Werke in 12 Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968), 295.

68 See also Leibniz, “Monadologie,” 51–53.

69 Nishida, “Rekishiteki sekai ni oite no kobutsu no tachiba,” 96–97.

70 Nishida, “Chishiki no kyakkansei ni tsuite (aratanaru chishikiron no jiban),” in *NKz* 10: 447.

71 Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 162.

72 Nishida, “Chishiki no kyakkansei ni tsuite aratanaru chishikiron no jiban,” 447.

“world” is designed as an open, infinite, a-genetic, and a-teleological “place,” which allows individual beings, just as they are, to relate to each other by contradicting each other: “A and B exist independently *from each other*,” as Nishida points out (emphasis added); “neither does A exist due to A itself, nor B due to B itself. A and B do not exist without being related to each other. A exists due to the fact that it is in opposition to B, and B exists due to the fact that it is in opposition to A.”⁷³

A is A, *if and only if* (\equiv) non-A is non-A (and vice versa): this formula, as Nishida believed, no longer needs to lean on the God of the rationalists. It is questionable, however, if Nishida is doing justice to them. Where Leibniz, for example, speaks of God as a “divine mathematics, or a metaphysical mechanism...which gives rise to the most ample production of what is possible,” he rather makes us think of Darwin’s theory of evolution or of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand,” than of the everlasting arm of the Lord of the Holy Writ.⁷⁴ In any case, we face a God here who in the process of the “liquidation of spirituality” has already dissolved into mere abstraction and, if at all, is needed only as a sufficient reason as to why there is something in the first place and not just nothing. Nishida, on the other hand, copes with the *pricipium rationis sufficientis* by means of his notion of the “place” or “topos.” It represents the “universal of all universals” (the extensional “pole” of Nishida’s world), which is always predicate and never becomes a subject. Since it never becomes subject to any predication, it remains as transcendent to predication as the already mentioned “transcendental subject” (the intentional “pole” of Nishida’s world), and accordingly Nishida also calls it the “transcendental predicate.” As the “universal of all universals,” which contains all other universals and thus can never be contained itself, it must be vast and empty in an absolute sense.⁷⁵ Therefore, Nishida, in a certain period of the unfolding of his philosophy, also speaks of it as “absolute nothingness.”

Occasionally, Nishida promoted this notion as a unique contribution of the “East” to the “Western” tradition of philosophy, which, as he declares, conceives of the world from the standpoint of Being instead,⁷⁶ and insinuated a connection between this concept of nothingness and Buddhist notions, such

73 Nishida, “Sekai no jiko dōitsu to renzoku,” in *NKz* 8: 88.

74 On God as “divine mathematics,” see Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Fünf Schriften zur Logik und Metaphysik*, trans. Herbert Herring (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1966), 42–43; on Darwin’s theory of evolution, see Schupp, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 3: 259.

75 See, for example, Nishida, “Basho,” in *NKz* 4: 272–89.

76 See Nishida, “Keijijōgakuteki tachiba kara mita Tōsei kodai no bunka keitai,” in *NKz* 7: 429–30.

as that of “emptiness” (*ku*): “what is called emptiness,” he explains, “is ‘empty’ because it is seen from the standpoint of knowledge; in fact, it is a powerful creative reality, the force of life, which forms the ground of all knowledge.”⁷⁷ Surely we have reached the point here where “objective logic” has to surrender and “religious questions” become visible again.

Time

Nishida’s logic is transformative as it aims at teaching language and objective consciousness their limitations. He is a *Bewußtseinskritiker*, as Marx arguably would have called him. But Nishida was more concerned with the criticism that came from his own neighborhood. In an unpublished fragment with the title “About My Logic,” he explains that he “tried to reconsider the fundamental questions of the exact sciences as well as of morality and religion,” and he adds, “Somebody asserts that what I call logic is not logic. That it is religious experience, and so on.”⁷⁸ This “somebody” was Nishida’s colleague and rival Tanabe Hajime, who attacked Nishida repeatedly. Here is one of these attacks:

The main reason why the above mentioned logic of nothingness...is not consequently philosophical is that it is religious philosophy. It should be beyond all question that mysticism is nothing else but the identification of philosophy and religion. This identification jars with dialectical logic. Such a philosophy gravitates either toward the individual or toward the whole, but puts no value on the mediation by the species....For this reason such a philosophy, albeit grudgingly taking the problem of history seriously, lacks a stable foundation. It takes the view of an artistic [alias: esthetic] subjectivism, and does not get beyond a hermeneutics of expression, which has detached itself from all logic.⁷⁹

At the end of the day, as Tanabe argues, Nishida’s nothingness is just Being again,⁸⁰ and Nishida’s philosophy, as he complains elsewhere, just some sort of Plotinist teaching of emanation. Accordingly, he continues, Nishida may be

77 Nishida, “Shūkyō no tachiba,” in *NKZ* 14: 307.

78 Nishida, “Watakushi no ronri ni tsuite,” in *NKZ* 12: 266.

79 Tanabe Hajime, “Shu no ronri to sekai zushiki,” *Tanabe Hajime zenshū* (hereafter *THz*), vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 224.

80 Tanabe Hajime, “Shu no ronri no imi o akiraka ni su,” in *THz* 6: 467.

capable of grasping the subject of religious intuition.⁸¹ However, the real subject, who acts in a concrete historical and cultural world, is given no place in his dialectics of individual and universal.⁸²

Tanabe's constant criticism did not leave Nishida unimpressed, also because its cutting edge was further sharpened by the drastic economic, political, and social changes Japan and the rest of the world experienced in the years of the Great Depression and the expanding and escalating war following Japan's annexation of Manchuria in 1932. The impact of Tanabe's critique, arguably, manifested itself in Nishida's turn toward the problem of history. In the above-mentioned review of his own philosophical development, Nishida continues: "The notion of the place then concretized itself as the notion of the dialectical universal (*benshōhōteki ippansha*), which subsequently could be grasped even more immediately from the standpoint of active intuition (*kōiteki chokkan*). What I initially called the world of immediate experience, or pure experience, I understand today as the historical world (*rekishiteki sekai*)."⁸³ This understanding of the historical world—or of the world as an explicitly historical one—is supported by a reconsideration of the problem of time, which I would like to start with. Nishida explains:

This world is neither determined causally by the past, nor teleologically by the future; in other words, it is neither the one in the many nor the many in the one....By the past being bygone and yet not bygone in the present, and by the future not yet having arrived, but nevertheless already showing itself in the present, thus by the past and the future facing each other as the self-identity of the absolute contradiction, time comes about....This...does not merely mean—as seen from the abstract-logical point of view—that past and future become one by connecting with each other; this means that they become one by mutually negating each other. And the point at which past and future become one by negating each other, is the present.⁸⁴

Thus, the notion of a "self-identity of absolutely contradictory things," or of "absolutely contradictory self-identity," respectively, signifies not only a spatial, but also a temporal relation: "that the one is the one of the many means spatiality....Conversely, that the many are the many of the one, is the dynamic,

81 Tanabe Hajime, "Nishida sensei no oshie o aogu," in *THz* 4: 309, 310.

82 Tanabe Hajime, "Bunka no genkai," in *THz* 7: 296, 298.

83 Nishida, "Han o arata ni suru ni atatte," 6–7.

84 Nishida, "Zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu," in *NKz* 9: 148–50.

temporal aspect of the world.”⁸⁵ Time and space determine each other in the strictly concrete present, the “here and now” (*koko to ima*), where everything real begins and ends. Nishida defines the “self-determination of the present” as the “continuity of discontinuity” (*hirenzoku no renzoku*). Time as a whole—the “eternal now” (*eien no ima*)—is conceptualized as a time-space, which contains qua negation an infinite number of individual moments. Time, says Nishida, “essentially consists of the present coexistence of moments” and has the structure of a dialectical unity of the one and the many: “that in a single moment one gets into touch with eternity means nothing else but that the moment..., being the individual many, becomes a moment of the eternal now, which is the absolute unity of opposites.”⁸⁶

Obviously, Nishida is revolting here against the modern, linear notion of time, which we have discussed above. Here too he occasionally mobilizes Buddhist terminology, for example, when in his last essay he employs the hybrid term “eschatological everydayness” (*shumatsuronteki ni byōjōtei*), yet another of the oxymoronic notions that serve him to perplex objective reason. However, Nishida’s struggle with the problem of time too is neither Buddhist nor Eastern, but is essentially—and above all—modern: whenever modern thinkers became involved in “the critique of Western metaphysics,” as Agamben remarks, they encountered the problem of time.⁸⁷ “Metaphysics transcends time; it is strictly speaking meta-chronics,” as Michael Theunissen points out.⁸⁸ As a matter of fact, the problem of time was of marginal import until it suddenly, since Kant, became a major obsession of philosophers. Some of them—Marx, Lukács, Derrida, Heidegger, and Spengler and his clock towers and fob watches—have already been cited above, but we may think as well of Nietzsche’s “eternal instant,” or of the “messianic instant” of Walter Benjamin, whose French revolutionaries make perfectly clear what it at stake here by taking Spengler’s tower clocks under gun fire.⁸⁹ Like many of his romantic contemporaries, Nishida tries to subtend the “vulgar, mundane,” modern notion

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid., 150.

87 Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* (London: Verso), 89.

88 Michael Theunissen, *Negative Theologie der Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 38.

89 “The consciousness to blast open the continuum of history is a characteristic feature of the revolutionary classes at the moment of action....But it was only as late as the July Revolution that this consciousness asserted its rights. As the evening of the first day of fighting had come, people at several locations in Paris, and independently from each other, shot at the church clocks.” Walter Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” in *Abhandlungen: Gesammelte Schriften I.2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 701–2.

of abstract, chronological time by means of the notion of a non-identical time imbued with the abundance of the concrete, monadic moments. At the end of the day, however, the time-space of his “eternal now” seems to be a romantic derivative of just that spatial temporality, which Lukács has already identified above as a characteristic feature of capitalist modernity. Here too, Nishida remained haunted by what he was seeking to overcome, as much as he remained haunted by Tanabe’s criticism.

History

I have suggested above that the shift of Nishida’s philosophical focus toward the “historical world” was triggered by Tanabe’s critique of Nishida’s incapacity to deal with the “real subject” in an increasingly climacteric “concrete historical and cultural” environment. The most compelling textual evidence to support this is Nishida’s adoption of the term “species” (*shu*). In Tanabe’s writings, “species” signifies the People—in the sense of the German word *Volk*—and figures as the “historical substratum” that mediates the real individual subject, and the state as the unifying whole, into the dialectical structure of the “historical world.”⁹⁰ Already in the text, in which Nishida speaks for the first time of the “historical world,” we also stumble over words such as *minzoku* (*Volk*), *dantai* (group), and *gemainshafuto* (*Gemeinschaft*).⁹¹ In Nishida’s essay “The Problem of the Development of the Species” (1937), Tanabe’s term has eventually replaced the German word *Gemeinschaft*,⁹² and has, in fact, opened a gateway through which the historical and political reality of the late 1930s breaks in upon Nishida’s thinking—with rather disquieting results, as the following, longer passage illustrates:

Reality is in every respect determined, and yet historical reality exists where the self contains within itself self-negation and transcends itself and goes from [one] reality to [another] reality, and this can only mean that in every respect a species asserts itself from its own standpoint as a species, and that within the same environment multiple species oppose

90 See Ōhashi Ryōsuke, “Einführung,” in *Die Philosophie der Kyōto-Schule*, ed. Ōhashi Ryōsuke (Freiburg im Breisgau, Munich: Alber, 1990), 29.

91 Nishida, “Sekai no jiko dōitsu to renzoku,” in *NKz* 8: 48, *minzoku*; 63, *dantai*; 82, *gemainshafuto*. See also Kobayashi Toshiaki, *Denken des Fremden. Am Beispiel Kitaro Nishida* (Frankfurt am Main, Basel: Stroemfeld Nexus, 2002), 123.

92 Nishida, “Shu no seisei hatten no mondai,” in *NKz* 8: 500–540.

each other and struggle with each other....For this reason, I understand the present day, which is commonly regarded as the most nationalistic period of history, as the most international one. Never before has there been a period as real as our own. Because the world is real, every country has to be nationalistic. Today, the world is not outside of the country, but inside it....This, however, does not mean losing one's particularity, but making one's particularity truly particular, that is, becoming a living species. One can think of the particular as of the concrete, but something truly concrete and particular must embrace self-negation, that is to say, it has to be individual. Individuality requires that one determines oneself dialectically, this is the force of the living beings....As long as one merely faces other, unrelated persons as intellectual objects, then individuality too is not more than just an object of understanding. Yet, individuality is a force at work within the self. One may regard the self as being merely speculative, but in any case it is the formative function at work within the historical, corporeal self.⁹³

I have quoted at length because this passage demonstrates especially clearly that Nishida responds to Tanabe's critique not by questioning his own premises, but rather by fitting the "real world" into the Procrustean bed of his "dialectical monadology." Nishida's distinction between a merely abstract, "intellectual" individuality on the one hand and the true individuality of a "living species" on the other, clearly resonates with his critique of Leibniz's monads as being "merely intellectual" and therefore having "no effects." Moreover, we also learn here what "self-negation" and "affirmation of the other" really mean. In friendlier interpretations, these words sometimes serve to read into Nishida's political philosophy some sort of Buddhist self-restraint. Yet, *au contraire*, these words, in fact, just call for putting an end to one's "windowless" existence, to crack one's shell, to go out, and to become a truly "historical, corporeal self" by engaging and grappling with the real world, which is a dialectical battlefield: "the historical world as contradictory self-identity is a world of struggle, in which species and species wrestle with each other forever."⁹⁴ The fuel that drives this eternal struggle is "individuality," says Nishida, "a force which is at work within...the historical, corporeal self." Already Johann Gottfried Herder—yet another romantic monadologist—recognized this same force in "nature's great work of the formation of the nations, circumscribing itself in accordance with

93 Ibid., 519–20.

94 Nishida, *Nihon bunka no mondai*, 320.

internal forces and external relations of time and space.”⁹⁵ Leopold von Ranke called these internal forces “moral energies” and interpreted the drama of history as the result of their interaction.⁹⁶ And where Nishida, in turn, speaks of nations as the “demonic forces of historical formation,” he does so with explicit reference to Ranke.⁹⁷ Elsewhere, Nishida substantiates this choice of words “dialectically”:

Heraclitus says that opposite things unite, that from difference the most beautiful harmony arises, and that war is the father of all things....In the self-identity of completely diverging, oppositional things, in disharmonious harmony, *there* is life; and the appearance of this disharmonious harmony, of this contradictory self-identity, is the species. In the mutual opposition and conflict of individual versus individual, the formation of the species takes place.⁹⁸

Nishida’s vocabulary—“struggle,” “life,” “species,” and so on—is telling. Already Kobayashi Toshiaki has underscored the Darwinist features of Nishida’s Heraclitean world, and he has also pointed out that this world’s “most beautiful harmony” can readily coexist with the “pre-stabilized harmony” of Leibniz.⁹⁹ As I have mentioned above, the structure of Leibniz’s conception of the world can be, and has been designated as quasi-“Darwinist” rather than religious, and is reminiscent of Smith’s “invisible hand”—which was, by the way, Darwin’s original source of inspiration—rather than of the biblical Lord’s everlasting arm. For this reason one may feel encouraged to argue that Nishida’s “most beautiful order” is perhaps more liberal and less fascistic and “demonic” than it looks at first glance, and that the word “war” does not necessarily mean physical war, but is used here in a merely Heraclitean, figurative sense and can also be interpreted as peaceful competition in a free market. Yet, in the same way in which in times of peace the liberal mind reveals its own Darwinist lineage by notoriously conflating economy and sports, the word “war” as a metaphor still collapses competition and physical war, and, moreover, implies that physical

95 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit, Werke in zehn Bänden*, vol. 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), 579.

96 See, for example, Leopold von Ranke, “Die großen Mächte,” English in Theodor H. von Laue, *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 181.

97 Nishida, “Eien naru kachi sōzōsha toshite no kokka,” in *NKz* 12: 423.

98 Nishida, “Rekishiteki sekai ni oite no kobutsu no tachiba,” 100–01.

99 Kobayashi, *Denken des Fremden*, 115, 137–38.

war is not just a special case of competition, let alone its perversion, but is indeed the mother of all “competition”—or its “father,” respectively.

In fact, with the last quote from Nishida we have arrived again at the Hegelian side of Nishida’s “dialectical monadology.” The state “as the immediate reality of a *single* and *natural* People [*Volk*]”—as Hegel explains—is “a single individual” and is, as such, “exclusive against other, similar individuals.” Their relationship, he continues, can only be “a relationship of violence, a *state of war*,” since “for the sake of the autonomous totality of these persons the universality of the law *should*, but doesn’t *really* exist between them.”¹⁰⁰ This is one of Hegel’s attacks on the “formalism” of Kant, and, in particular, of Kant’s suggestion to establish a “confederation of princes” for achieving “eternal peace.” Nishida agrees: “Kant’s ethics were bourgeois ethics,” he says, and “not the ethics of historical creation,”¹⁰¹ and Kant’s confederation as well as its derivative, the League of Nations, manifestations of the rationalist, “eighteenth-century notion of the world,” a notion, which did not pass muster in the belligerent reality of the 1940s.¹⁰² In this reality of war, however—i.e., in the free, unhampered interplay of the “forces” and inner potentials of the “living species”—he saw the possibility for a “new world order” and the “world historical mission” of Japan to establish it. “Once, Rome’s conquest turned Europe into a singular world. Today, one can say that British capitalism has turned the world into a singular world. To become individual (*koseiteki*) does not mean to become particular (*tokushuteki*). It means to become, in historical reality, a bearer of the times.”¹⁰³ The Hegelian spin of this figure of thought is as obvious, indeed, as its affinity with the official propaganda of wartime Japan.

Nishida and Marx

“Hence the great civilizing influence of capital,” said Marx above, “which produces a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere *local developments* of humanity.” In the German text, the phrase “Hence the great civilizing influence of capital,” is written in English, ironically singling it

100 Georg Wilhelm Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse. Dritter Teil. Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 345–46.

101 Nishida, “Kokka riyū no mondai,” in *NKz* 11: 445.

102 Nishida, “Sekai shin chitsujo no genri,” in *NKz* 12: 430.

103 Nishida, “Shu no seisei hatten no mondai,” 520.

out as the voice of British imperialism,¹⁰⁴ or “capitalism,” as Nishida just called it. He was familiar with Marx’s approach, and it stands to reason to not conclude this essay without having a look at how he thought about it.

Nishida first encountered Marx rather enforcedly, that is to say, because many of his students were interested in Marxism, which in the 1920s and early 1930s was a dominant intellectual current in Japan until the movement broke down under the repression by the state. Sometime in 1929, after an informal colloquium with graduate students, Nishida penned a poem: “Yofuke made mata Marukusu o ronjitari Marukusu yue ni inegate ni suru.”

We have discussed Marx again
Till deep in the night
And it’s because of Marx that then
Sweet sleep has taken flight

In the course of the 1930s Nishida’s initially rather passive attitude toward Marx turned into an active engagement with his writings. Kobayashi Toshiaki, to whom I am indebted here for crucial hints, even comes to the conclusion that the genesis of the central concepts of Nishida’s philosophy of history, such as “dialectics,” “poiesis,” and “active intuition,” would not be thinkable without considering Nishida’s profound receptivity to the writings of the late Marx.¹⁰⁵ The philosopher Takeuchi Yoshitomo too argues that at least one of Nishida’s central concepts, “poiesis,” is flirting with Marx’s concept of “labor,” and that one can say that “with regard to the project to understand the logic of the active world (*koiteki sekai*) by understanding the world in light of labor-based practice, the late philosophy of Nishida and Marx share the same horizon.”¹⁰⁶ More recently, William Haver, in his introduction to his translation of three of Nishida’s later essays, makes a whole train of important and refreshingly heretical observations and suggestions concerning the affinity between Nishida and Marx, which also bring us back to the standpoint of historical materialism and the question of ideality (superstructure, philosophy) and materiality (foundation). The “most profound congruence between Nishida and Marx” Haver sees in “their insistence on the identity of ontology and production,” whereby in both thinkers production is conceptualized “as the radical historicity of autotelic becoming....Production takes the place of ontology, and thus

104 See Viren Murthy, *The Political Philosophy of Zhang Taiyan: The Resistance of Consciousness* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 27.

105 Kobayashi Toshiaki, *Nishida Kitarō no yūutsu* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten 2003), 207.

106 Takeuchi Yoshitomo, *Nishida Kitarō to gendai* (Tokyo: Daisan bunmei sha, 1978), 114.

catachrestically becomes ‘ontological.’¹⁰⁷ In light of this observation, Haver also emphasizes Nishida’s interest in seventeenth-century philosophy, “most particularly, Leibniz,”¹⁰⁸ whose “this-worldliness” we have already discussed above. It is the notion of the radical historicity of becoming, as Haver explains, that allows Marx to speak of capitalism as merely one historical “mode of production.” Nishida in turn, as Haver suggests, has “read Marx beyond those forms of Marxism that would domesticate the most radical possibilities in Marx.”¹⁰⁹ Exactly that, however, is arguably the problem of Nishida’s later philosophy. Let us have a look at some of Nishida’s clearest references to Marx:

In the life of economy as well, in which production is consumption and consumption is production, the self-identity of the contradiction signifies a dialectical process....And also, that the capitalist economy constitutes itself due to the transformation of commodity-money—commodity into money—commodity-money can only mean that society is self-creative, that it moves actively intuitively, that is to say, historically corporeal.¹¹⁰

The commodity as the building block of capitalist economic society can be thought of as a dialectical individual, which is split up into use-value and exchange-value and which conflicts with itself. This is the foundation of capitalist economic society.¹¹¹

The true individual has to mediate itself entirely from out of itself, and at the same time it has to be mediated from the outside. It must have dialectical existence, in the same way in which we can conceive of the commodity form as being use-value and exchange-value at the same time.¹¹²

Economic society, for example, emerges from the contradictory self-identity of production and consumption.¹¹³

What caught Kobayashi’s attention is Nishida’s use of words such as “commodity form,” “dialectical process,” and “use-” and “exchange-value.” What catches my attention, however, is instead Nishida’s use of words such as “also,” “as well as,” and “for example”: Nishida uses the central concepts of Marx’s analysis in

107 William Haver, “Introduction,” in *Ontology of Production: 3 Essays, Nishida Kitarō* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 27, 12.

108 *Ibid.*, 13; also, 19–20.

109 *Ibid.*, 12.

110 Nishida, “Jissen no taishō ninshiki,” in *NKz* 8: 411, 414.

111 Nishida, “Kōiteki chokkan,” in *NKz* 10: 551.

112 Nishida, “Shu no seisei hatten no mondai,” 525.

113 Nishida, “Kokka riyū no mondai,” 161.

order to *exemplify* and illustrate his own “dialectical monadology.” In so doing, however, he is not at all “within the same horizon as Marx” (Takeuchi). Marx is concerned not only with “the relation between man in his species being and nature” (Haver); he is particularly concerned with the relation between man and nature *in capitalism*. Marx does not merely criticize capitalism from the standpoint of labor (production), understood transhistorically, as *Stoffwechsel* in general; he also—and above all—criticizes the *historically specific* form of labor *in capitalism*, and exactly there, I insist, lies the most radical potential of Marx. Certainly, Nishida and Marx alike “situate sense in the historical world *and nowhere else*,” and neither Marx nor Nishida favor “the narrative of Reason alienated from itself in Nature and destined to a reunion with itself at the end of history.”¹¹⁴ Yet, if we understand the later theory of Marx as an attempt to rescue the rational core of Hegel’s philosophy by de-ontologizing “history” and “dialectics” as *historically specific* features of the capitalist social formation,¹¹⁵ then Nishida’s attitude toward Marx can be seen, indeed, as an attempt to re-ontologize Marx, to turn him back into philosophy, and to return to a rather Hegelian point of view: like Hegel, Nishida takes the contradictions of capitalist modernity transhistorically and ontologically. As a consequence, Nishida’s whole world turns into a “Heraclitean” “dialectical universal,” which as such can only be affirmed, but no longer be criticized, not even—as we have just seen—in its manifestation as “capitalist economic society.” This is probably the price to pay for the de-domestication of Marx’s most radical potentials: they decamp and disappear, as Nishida’s political philosophy strikingly demonstrates. Yet, if we say that Hegel discovered essential characteristics of the capitalist social formation, although not as such, and not in their historical specificity, then this should be true of Nishida as well. The significance of his philosophy then would lie in its being not more and not less but an expression of the alienated *condition humaine* in capitalism. This, I would conclude, is the splendor of Nishida’s essentially romantic critique of the “civilizing influence of capital,” and *la misère* of his philosophy, which merely reproduces capital’s antinomies and contradictions.

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114 Haver, “Introduction,” 15 (emphasis in the original).

115 Postone, *Zeit, Arbeit und gesellschaftliche Herrschaft*, 129.

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PART 3

Tanabe Hajime, Imperialism, and Capitalism



Ethnicity and Species

On the Philosophy of the Multiethnic State and Japanese Imperialism

Naoki Sakai

One of the major problematics that dominated philosophical discussions during the interwar period—between the end of the First World War and the end of the Second World War or the Asia-Pacific War—in the Japanese Empire was the status of the classificatory scheme of *species* and *genus*, a distributional formula of particularity and generality in logic. Major intellectual endeavors were undertaken to challenge the conventional authority granted this logical algorithm that is often attributed to classical or Aristotelian logic. Even today some commentators on modern Japanese thought are either inattentive to or simply ignorant of philosophical debates concerning the conceptual distinctions between generality and universality, individuality and singularity. Many are incapable of apprehending why some Japanese philosophers were engaged in the examination of the very workings of this algorithm in our standard classification of not only animals but also humans.

Why did the classificatory scheme of species and genus become such an important issue in the early twentieth century? First of all, we cannot overlook the historical backdrop against which this logical algorithm regained its relevance from the period of the Reformation. I cannot engage in an extensive historical contextualization here, so I will refer to only two significant trends, the combination of which I hope will summarily illustrate the historical backdrop at issue.

* This chapter has been published twice in different forms, the first time as “Ethnicity and Species: On the Philosophy of the Multi-ethnic State in Japanese Imperialism,” *Radical Philosophy*, 95 (May/June 1999): 33–45. I thank the editors of *Radical Philosophy* for permission to republish the article here, in a slightly different form. The second time, the essay appeared as “Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism,” *Cultural Studies*, 14.3–4 (2000): 462–530. Although “Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism” appeared later, the first article was written as an abridged version of the second. At the request of the editors of this current volume, I have added a brief introduction to the article published in *Radical Philosophy* and modified some parts. But, except for the first several pages, the article is essentially the same as the 1999 version.

First, the vision of the international world promoted by the system of international law has become hegemonic globally since the seventeenth century. More and more monarchical states in Western Europe justified their diplomatic conduct and religious policies by this vision of the international world—customarily sanctioned by the order of the Westphalian Peace—according to which the surface of the land on earth was to be segmented into homogeneous unities, each constituting a “territory,” unambiguously circumscribed by a national border, and uniformly governed by a single sovereign state.¹ The areas and their inhabitants who either contradicted or ignored the dictates of international law were excluded from the international world and deprived of the protection of that law. Step by step these areas and their native inhabitants were “colonized” and subjected to the sovereignty of the European states that justified their reign over these extraterritories by appealing to international law.² It goes without saying that this exclusionary strategy exercised by the international world would be known as “modern colonialism,” while the very distinction of the international world and the areas outside judicially recognized territories and the native populace would be an integral part of what

1 We must keep in mind that the region called Europe came into being in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its lineage going back to ancient Greece is an eighteenth-century invention. One must never overlook the mythical nature of the conventional notion that European history supposedly goes back to Greek antiquity.

The vision of the international world is often explicated in reference to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), according to which it has been claimed that the following four principles were asserted: (1) the principle of territorial integrity, (2) the principle of territorial state sovereignty, (3) the principle of legal equality between states, (4) the principle of nonintervention of one state in the domestic affairs of another. This does not mean, however, that this vision was actually put into practice in the seventeenth century; instead it has been gradually accepted by an increasing number of states, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

2 Extraterritoriality means being exempt from the jurisdiction of local law, and applies to certain individuals. But, in modern history it also applies to physical spaces such as embassies and military bases of foreign countries. Historically the most famous cases of the latter can be found in places such as the Shanghai and Hong Kong of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where foreign nationals of treaty powers were exempt from local jurisdiction. Another case is the military bases of the United States after the Second World War, where American military personnel have been exempt from the laws of local governments, even in criminal cases. Extraterritoriality, however, is a transitory treatment from the viewpoint of the colonial powers of the classical type (preceding the new type of colonialism represented in *Pax Americana*). When a new geographic area is conquered and “territorialized” by a colonial state, any need to appeal to extraterritoriality becomes redundant because the colonial state establishes its sovereignty over newly acquired territory.

Stuart Hall called “the discourse of the West-and-the-Rest.”³ It was only in the twentieth century that many colonies of Britain, France, the United States, Japan, the Netherlands and so on gained independence and achieved the status of territorial national state sovereignty, thereby becoming members of the international world, as symbolically represented by the United Nations. Only in the 1950s and '60s, when a great many colonies became independent, did the international world become more or less synonymous with the entirety of the planetary surface. This is the first trend in the domain of international diplomacy to which we must pay attention.

The second is in the domain of knowledge production. In the eighteenth century Carl Linnaeus introduced a rank hierarchy in the classification of animals, plants, and minerals by which the scientific descriptions of creatures were selected, classified, synthesized, and systematized. The Linnaean taxonomy, which has underpinned scientific knowledge for the last two and a half centuries, classified the universe of creatures by strictly following the algorithm of species and genus. By a repeated application of this logical algorithm, Linnaeus systematized selected groups of creatures into ranks, and—in the case of the animal kingdom—he further hierarchically ordered these ranks into classes, orders, families, genera, and species. The relationship between the successive ranks, for example, of classes and orders, or of families and genera in this classificatory hierarchy, is a repetition of the relationship between genus and species in classical logic. Through a repetitive application of this formula of generality (genus) and particularity (species), creatures were classified and identified so that class is a *general* set of *particular* orders, and an order is a *general* set of *particular* families, and so on.

It is no exaggeration to say that these two trends define the basic and routinized procedures of how human beings are identified, classified, and distinguished from one another in the modern world. A century after the introduction of the Westphalian Peace in which the Eurocentric system of international law (*Jus Publicum Europaeum*) established the international order of state diplomacy after the Thirty-Year War, a new and significant element of “nation” was added to the idea of the territorial state sovereignty in the eighteenth century. Eventually, particularly since the nineteenth century, the standard form of sovereignty in the international world has no longer been territorial state sovereignty; the American Revolution of Independence and the

3 Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” pp. 184–229 in Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson, eds., *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

French Revolution created a precedent for the subsequent model of “popular sovereignty”; the majority of states in the international world would find their legitimacy in territorial national state sovereignty.

It has been taken for granted that the fundamental unit of the modern international world thus formed is the territorial national state. Essentially the international world consists of units—territorial nation-states—that are juxtaposed horizontally. And each of the fundamental units of the international world is characterized by two principles: the modern state governs its own territory, clearly marked and unambiguously distinguished from the territories of all the other states by national borders. Accordingly, in the modern international world, one territory is always defined by its externality to all other territories. This state is the sole governing body whose sovereignty is supposed to apply homogeneously to every square centimeter of its territory. Moreover, this territorial national state governs its population, namely, all the individual residents of the territory, homogeneously. Perhaps for the first time in human history, the totality of a residential populace of a clearly circumscribed region (territory) has been taken as one unified object of governmentality known as “population,” and a set of new technologies has been established whereby the “population” has been nurtured, coordinated, registered, punished, guarded, educated, policed, and governed. Every resident of the territory is expected to be endowed with the *nationality* of this state as well as membership of the community called the “people”; this ultimately—of course, there have been many exceptions such as the prewar Japanese Empire, where state sovereignty was ascribed to the emperor—constitutes the core of state sovereignty (popular sovereignty). Yet, this sovereignty is totally ineffectual as soon as it moves beyond its territory and the national border. In a strict parallel to the international juxtaposition of national territories and populations, human individuals are classified into particular nationalities, each of which is supposed to be external to all others, so that multiple nationality is, at least in principle, an abnormality.

In the modern international world, therefore, the entirety of humanity is classified according to the logic of internationality. The inter + national of internationality presupposes that each nationality is distinguishable from and external to all others, but that it constitutes a subset of humanity in general. In other words, the logic of internationality repeats the logical algorithm of species and genus, whereas each nationality occupies the particular position of species and the totality of the international world occupies the general position of genus. Analogous to zoological classification, the scheme of internationality divides entire humanity into its subsets = nations. Once again,

what dictates zoological classification is the logical algorithm of species and genus. Unless the essential validity of this classical logical operation is called into question, all humanity should be able to be divided into the subset of humanity, nation, and ethnos or race.⁴ According to the scientific racism that dominated academia, journalism, and political discussions in Europe, North America, and East Asia before the end of the Second World War, and that never questioned the validity of the logical algorithm of species and genus, an individual belonged to humanity at the dimension of generality but he or she could not but be identified as belonging to a nation, ethnos, or race. Interestingly enough, the identity politics of internationality and the biological or physiological identification of the human individual thus converge in the topos of the logical algorithm of species and genus.⁵

It has been long forgotten—for about a half century since Japan's defeat and the loss of its empire—that, during the Asia-Pacific war (1931–1945), many scholars, journalists, and bureaucrats were eagerly engaged in academic and public discussions of racism and colonialism. In contrast to the overall poverty of the critique of racism and ethnic nationalism in postwar Japan, its copiousness during the imperial period is striking. While occupying a wide range of political stances from the total erasure of ethnic differences within the Japanese nation (Governor-General's Office in Korea)⁶ to national socialist's

4 Let us note that, as far as the logical structure of classification is concerned, three major categories of individual identification—nationality, ethnicity, and race—are homologous to one another. In fact, these three registers are constantly confused with one another.

5 The individual is a logical concept, but in modern European languages, it often means a human being marked with a gender identity. But, as a logical concept, it only connotes an individual thing; it refers to a plant, an animal, a social organization or a human being as long as it is an indivisible unit (*individuum*), that can be treated as the most particular among particular things. Due to a peculiar use of the word “individual” in modern European languages, any attempt to translate *ko*, *kotai*, or *kobutsu* into English and other European languages gives rise to some difficulties. As a philosophical term, it is devoid of gender. Dependent upon the context, I render the term into “the individual,” “he,” “she,” or “it.” But, please note that the original texts are indifferent to the dimension of classification marked by gender. Of course, gender itself is traceable to its Latin origin, *genus*.

6 For instance, “Naisen ittai no rinenn oyobi sonogugen housaku yōkō” [Summary: The idea of Japanese–Korean synthesis and its policies] (*Bōei Shidō-bu, kokumin Sōryoku Chōsen Renmei* [Defense Headquarters, Korean League for the Total Mobilization of the Nation], 1941). On the Japanese–Korean synthesis, see Miyata Setsuko, Kim Yōng-dal, and Yang T'ae-ho, *Sōshi kaimei* [The creation of surnames and the change of first names] (Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 1992).

insistence upon racial purity (Watsuji Tetsurō and Nishitani Keiji)⁷ Japanese intellectuals invariably admitted that issues concerning racism and ethnicity must be publicly addressed. It was as if the Japanese expeditiously lost interest in the critique of racism as they adjusted themselves to the domestic reality of American occupation and to the emerging international order of the Cold War in East Asia. Today, few either in Japan or in North America or Western Europe acknowledge the existence of widely circulated public doctrines in the 1930s and particularly in the early '40s which claimed that neither scientific racism nor ethnic nationalism was licit in the polity of the Japanese Empire and that the nation-state of Japan was explicitly created against the principle of ethnic nationalism (*minzoku-shugi*).⁸ Thus, the myth of the monoethnic society, or *tan'itsu minozoku shakai no shinwa*, a myth that, ever since the premodern era, Japanese society has been ethnically homogeneous because it is made up mostly of a single ethnic group, is an integral part of this postwar amnesia.⁹

This essay presents an outline of a philosophical argument about ethnicity and subjectivity in what is often referred to as the Logic of Species (*Shu no ron-ri*), expressed in a set of essays published in the 1930s and the 1940s by Tanabe Hajime, a philosopher at Kyoto Imperial University who officially headed the Kyoto School of Philosophy after the retirement of his mentor and colleague,

7 For instance, Watsuji's *Fūdo* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1934). English translation, *Climate and Culture*, Geoffrey Bownas trans. (Tokyo: Japanese Ministry of Education, 1961), or his *Ringaku* [Ethics] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1942), reprinted in *Watsuji Tetsurō zenshū*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1962). Also see Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 72–152; Kōsaka Masaaki, Nishitani Keiji, Kōyama Takao, and Suzuki Shigetaka, *Sekaishi-teki tachiba to Nihon* [The standpoint of world history and Japan] (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-sha, 1943).

8 For instance, Odaka Tomoo, *Kokutai no hongī to naisen-ittai* [The essence of nationality and the Japanese–Korean synthesis] (*Bōei Shidō-bu, kokumin Sōryoku Chōsen Renmei* [Defense Headquarters, Korean League for the Total Mobilization of the Nation], 1942); Kōsaka et al., *Sekaishi-teki tachiba to Nihon*, op. cit.

9 See Oguma Eiji, *Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen* [The origins of monoethnic myth] (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995); also see Tomiyama Ichirō's critique of Oguma. For a critical review of Oguma's theoretical sloppiness, see my "Introduction" in Naoki Sakai, Brett de Bary, and Toshio Iyotani, eds., *Deconstructing Nationality* (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2005). What is more important to note is that Japanese amnesia about the prewar discussions of racism was actually promoted by American area experts on Japan. The United States government was most afraid of a Japanese campaign against American racism and made concerted efforts to suppress journalistic and academic discussions, not only of race but also of racism in general. Regrettably, a more detailed account of American fear of Japanese anti-racism must be taken up elsewhere.

Nishida Kitarō.¹⁰ This is a summary of my longer essay since, due to the lack of space, I cannot present in the full the original in which a more detailed reading of the *Logic of Species* is attempted.¹¹ Neither can I explain why we must switch off a certain habit of reading that is widely practiced not only in area studies and anthropology but also in the humanities and social sciences in general. In place of a point-by-point explanation, let me introduce a warning disclaimer: I deliberately avoid framing Tanabe's texts in terms of a number of binary oppositions such the West versus the East, and Christian versus Buddhist/Confucian values, because I believe that, by appealing to these binary oppositions in order to foreground one's involvement in the discussion of ethnicity, colonialism, racism, and nationality as presented in texts of the "non-West," one has been solicited to abide by the postwar collective amnesia about wartime Japan, a sort of amnesia typical of American area studies on Japan. Prejudices and projection mechanisms associated with these binary oppositions seem to inhibit us from calling into question the comfort and security induced by what we wittingly or unwittingly agreed to forget for the sake of both postwar Japanese national solidarity and the Cold War international configuration.

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- 10 The philosophy department at Kyoto Imperial University was recognized as one of the intellectual centers in Japan from the 1920s until the early 1940s. The department developed under the leadership of Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), and in the 1910s when Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962), who taught philosophy of science and mathematics—A.N. Whitehead, B. Russell, G. Frege, modern mathematics, quantum mechanics, theory of relativity, in addition to Neo-Kantianism—at Tōhoku University, joined the faculty of philosophy at Kyoto, the philosophy department began to attract many talented students who would later constitute the leading intelligentsia in the Japanese public sphere in the 1920s and 1930s. They included Miki Kiyoshi, Tosaka Jun, Tsuchida Kyōson, Nakai Masakazu, Hanada Kiyoteru (Hanada was in the English department at Kyoto), Kuno Osamu, and others. Included in the faculty were Tomonaga Sanjūrō, Hatano Seiichi, Watsuji Tetsurō (who taught at Kyoto for a short time, and moved to Tokyo Imperial University in 1934), Kuki Shūzō, Kōsaka Masaaki, and Kōyama Iwao. In the 1920s Nishida published a series of articles in which he began to conceptualize the notion of *mu no basho* (the place of nothingness). It should be noted that the concept of *mu* grew partly out of Nishida's struggle with the classical logic of species and genus. Around the same time, Tanabe became interested in the ontology of the social being and began to write about Kant's Third Critique, Bergson's social philosophy, Hegelian dialectics in reference to modern mathematics, particularly Riemann's geometry and Minkovsky's theory of space and time.
- 11 Naoki Sakai, "Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism," *Cultural Studies*, 14.3–4 (2000): 462–530.

Race, Ethnicity, and Subjectivity

The variable according to which the universalistic nation of multiethnic diversity is distinct from the particularistic nation of monoethnic exclusivity is, indeed, the concept of *minzoku*, translated sometime as nation, sometime as ethnos, folk, or even race. The myth of the monoethnic society cannot be sustained unless this distinction between *multiethnic* and *monoethnic* nations is to be established. In other words, of logical necessity the myth must embrace an assumption that the unity of the ethnos/nation or *minzoku* must be not only countable but also *accountable*; the distinction is hardly sustainable unless the logical algorithm of species and genus is unquestionably embraced.

In Japanese philosophical discourse of the 1920s and '30s, which certainly did not take the myth of the monoethnic society for granted, the concept of the ethnos/nation or *minzoku* was far from self-evident. What was thematically discussed in Tanabe's *Shu no ronri* was nothing but the problematic nature of this concept of the ethnos/nation or *minzoku*. And the term "species" was called for because of inherent ambiguity in such unities as state, nation, ethnos, folk, and even race, unities without which we cannot comprehend desires for identity in modern social formations.

Tanabe's social ontology is significant because not only the aforementioned Kyoto School philosophers of world history, Kōsaka Masaaki, Kōyama Iwao, and Suzuki Shigetaka, but also because some governmental policy makers, such as Murayama Michio, who were concerned with the management of the empire's minority population appropriated some theoretical insights from Tanabe's Logic of Species.¹² Tanabe's Logic of Species must have been attractive to Japanese intellectuals of the day because it offered a philosophically

12 Murayama Michio, *Dai Tōa kensetsu-ron* (Tokyo: Shōkō Gyōsei-sha, 1943). Murayama was the secretary to the Governmental Planning Agency headed by Kishi Nobusuke. Kishi was the Minister of Commerce and Industry in the Tojō Hideki cabinet (from October 18, 1941, until October 18, 1943) and the minister of the newly formed Ministry of the Great East Asia (from October 18, 1943, until July 22, 1944). From 1936 on Kishi was de facto the chief administrator for the construction of Manchūkuo. After the defeat of Japan, Kishi was arrested as a class A war criminal by the Allied powers, but in 1948 he was released from prison; through the enthusiastic endorsement of the United States, he became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Ishibashi Tanzan cabinet (December 23, 1956, to February 25, 1957), and then formed his own cabinets for two successive terms (February 25, 1957, to July 19, 1960). He was of course known for his work as a political collaborator of the United States policies in East Asia. Kishi's case as well as the case of the Kyoto School philosophers of world history—Kōsaka Masaaki, Kōyama Iwao, Nishitani Keiji, and Suzuki Shigetaka—who wrote vehemently in support of the United States' collective security

rigorous sociopolitical account of what might have appeared to be the multi-ethnic social reality of the Japanese Empire. Furthermore, it declared itself to be an ethic for the construction of a state embracing political, economic, and cultural diversity, an ethic *against* ethnic nationalisms (*minzoku-shugi*) and separatism. Tanabe's Logic of Species is the most consistent among the philosophical articulations, in the 1920s and '30s, of an ethico-political thesis on which something like the idea of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere could be built.

However, two disclaimers are in order here. First, Tanabe started publishing articles on the Logic of Species much earlier than the inauguration in 1940 by the Japanese government of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Thus one cannot argue that Tanabe conceived of the Logic of Species particularly for the large-scale regional transnational polity nor that policies for the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere were formulated according to the theoretical design outlined in the Logic of Species. In this case too, the relationship between philosophy and politics is overdetermined and far from being direct. Second, the vision of the multiethnic state that one can discern in the Logic of Species was neither the vision officially sanctioned by the government nor a consensus shared by political and military leaders and bureaucrats. Reading Tanabe's essays, we gain some understanding as to how some scholar bureaucrats at imperial universities wanted to design Japanese imperialist policies, but argumentations which led Japanese imperial nationalism did not form a monolith: competing political stances and different debates seem to refuse to be summarized in a single continuous narrative.

Probably the most direct link between the policies of the government and Tanabe's philosophy can be found in an incident at the Second Imperial University, that is, Kyoto Imperial University, on May 19, 1943. As chair of the philosophy department at Kyoto Imperial University, Tanabe delivered a lecture entitled "Shi sei" (Death and Life, or Death in Life) to an audience including a large number of volunteer student soldiers who were about to depart for the front.¹³ In this infamous lecture, Tanabe unabashedly spoke as a passionate patriot, as an individual committed to the state's mission, and offered a philosophical justification, in an exceptionally lucid—for Tanabe, indeed—language, for why "the people (*kokumin*) have to devote themselves to the

policies in Asia during the 1950s and early '60s strongly suggests the continuity of prewar/wartime Japanese imperial nationalism and postwar American imperial nationalism.

13 Its outline was published in *Kyōto teikoku daigaku shinbun*, or the *Kyoto Imperial University News*, on June 5, 1943. See Tanabe Hajime, "Shi sei" [Death and life], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1964).

country.” Yet, we should note that, even in this exemplarily jingoistic lecture, the individual’s devotion to the country is not limited to his participation in the concerted efforts to destroy the enemy and its facilities, and to the execution of his duty even if it could result in the loss of his own life. “One’s devotion to the country” is not merely the passive subjugation of the individual to the commands issued by the state.

During an emergency, of course, there should be no separation between the country and the individual. But we should at the same time acknowledge that the tendency for such a separation exists even more strongly than. This is why I claim that the relationship between the individual and the state (= the country) is dynamic. By blindly following the state, some could make a profit for themselves in such a situation rather than sacrifice themselves to the country. In the extreme case, some may abhor the war and sympathize with the enemy countries. Knowing there are such facts, we cannot automatically presume that people always adhere to the state. As a matter of course, we must prevent separation from taking place, but, more importantly, we must aspire to create a situation where there is no need for separation, a situation where the state allows the individual to be fully himself and encourages him to act truly and righteously. As I mentioned above, the individual’s devotion to the state is premised on the absolute stance in which we can be with God. Returning from the absolute stance, we must act to make the state accord with the Way of God, and thereby prevent the state from deviating from truth and justice. We are called upon to destroy deception, untruthfulness, and injustice within the state because these alienate the nation from the state and give rise to a separation between the nation and the state. But, this cannot be accomplished unless one is determined to sacrifice oneself in this task just as one is in physical warfare. This is one’s duty that requires the anticipatory resolution toward one’s own death (*kesshi*).¹⁴

Operative here is Tanabe’s basic formula, to which I will later return, according to which a man (the individual, *ko*) is with God (the genus, *ru*) by opposing the species or *shu* (the state). Through devotion to the state and by risking his own life, a man acquires a right to rebel against the state; what the individual aspires to realize even by staking his own life is not the factual content of the state’s order or rule but an idea whose validity goes beyond the existing state and which, at least in principle, is true and just for all of humanity. This is why

14 Tanabe, “Shi sei,” 261.

the individual's act of devoting himself to the state must be understood to imply not only the movement of the individual's identification with the state but also the movement of the individual's act to pull the state toward some universal principle beyond the existing state. Thus, the idea that is true and just for entire humanity, or the dimension of the genus or *ruì*, is indispensable in Tanabe's justification of the self-sacrifice of the individual for the country. This is to say that, for Tanabe, the individual's devotion to the country could possibly take the form of rebellion against the government at any time. It is in this sense that the individual's devotion to the state can be called a duty whose execution requires anticipatory resolution toward one's own death (*kesshi no gimu*).

Tanabe's lecture "Death and Life" was offered as the first in the series of lectures organized to deal with the anxiety over death felt by drafted or volunteer students who were about to go to the front. Many lectures, including Suzuki Shigetaka's and Kōsaka Takaaki's, after Tanabe's, attempted to give meaning to the probable death of those students by linking their devotion to the world historical mission of the Japanese state. Yet, Tanabe also suggested the possibility that, once having anticipatorily put oneself in the path of death and thereby secured one's loyalty to the country, one could in fact act to transform or even rebel against the existing state under the guidance of the universal idea whose validity is not confined to the existing state. I find it hard to imagine what could have been done in order to "act to make the state accord with the Way of God" in 1943 when many Japanese intellectuals began to recognize the imminent defeat of the Japanese Empire. As though wittingly overlooking that his philosophical argument could easily be distorted or appropriated to serve unintended political interests, however, Tanabe presented rather naïvely a fundamental principle that should regulate the relationship of the individual to the state.

Insofar as it looks at the relationship between the state and the individual from the viewpoint of the individual's death, the lecture "Death and Life" discloses a philosophical insight into the individual's subjectivity and his participation in the state, an insight repeated, perhaps unwittingly, in 1960, eighteen years after Japan's defeat, by Maruyama Masao in his thesis on loyalty and rebellion.¹⁵ Here, it is important to stress that, in both Tanabe's and Maruyama's observations, either the individual's identification with the state or his rebellion against it would be inconceivable unless the nation-state for the individual is primarily and essentially something to which he *chooses* to belong: let us

15 Maruyama Masao, "Chūsei to hangyaku" [Loyalty and rebellion], pp. 3–109 in *Chūsei to hangyaku* [Loyalty and rebellion] (originally published in 1960) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1992).

keep in mind that the problem of loyalty and rebellion itself would dissipate when the individual is thought to naturally—or *in itself*—belong to the country, or to the “species” in Tanabe’s terminology. A human being cannot be in a species in the same way that an individual cat is in the species of *Felis catus*; human identification works against the Linnaean taxonomy of natural creatures, and it cancels out logical selection in terms of particularity and generality. Yet, from this does it not follow that species can be divided into natural and non-natural? What is at stake in Tanabe’s observations is that the individual is always able to posit an existing social grouping he belongs to as something not naturally inherent but of his choice. His belonging to it is never his *natural* property, to which the Linnaean taxonomy applies.

Therefore, it is clearly stated that the individual belongs to a social grouping as a result of his or her wishing to belong to it and that the individual’s belonging to the nation, for instance, must be “mediated” by *his or her freedom*. One can identify oneself with the country because freedom is available for one not to do so. Only by giving up the possibility of not identifying with or of separating oneself from the nation can one gain one’s belonging to it. Thus, in order to belong to it, one must choose to *give up* the possibility of not belonging to it. It is a closing that must be intentional. It is an investment in a negative form, and as a reward for this investment the individual gains the ground on which to justify his or her act which would otherwise appear treasonous, an act “to make the state accord with the Way of God, and thereby prevent the state from deviating from truth and justice.” The closing is a scheme to translate the fact of the individual’s belonging to a social grouping into a matter of one’s choice, and the freedom of separating oneself from it must be granted in order for this scheme to operate. Needless to say, separation from the nation need not be physical. Consequently, one cannot belong to the nation naturally or without “mediation.” This is to say that no one among the Japanese nation is, naturally and immediately, Japanese.

Underlying Tanabe’s stress on the individual’s freedom and negativity is a philosophical thesis that neither nation nor ethnos could possibly be conceptualized as a particularity within the generality of humanity, that the arborescent taxonomy of the Linnaean type, of the species and the genus, is not only utterly inadequate but also politically and morally misleading in understanding how humans form their collectivities and thereby divide humanity into many assemblages. Yet, strangely enough, Tanabe continued to base his argument on the concepts of the species (*shu*) and the genus (*rui*), which has given rise to much misunderstanding among those who are inattentive to his philosophical rigor.

Outside Aristotelian formal logic, the term “species” is most often used in biological taxonomies as a median term in the series: individual (*ko*)–species (*shu*)–genus (*ru*). Individuals are always members of some class just as individual humans are also members of the subset, species, of that genus, and each subset distinguishes itself by its *specific difference* from other subsets. Because of the association of the term “species” with biological taxonomy which in essence preserves the dictates of the classical logic, Tanabe Hajime has to establish, in the domain of knowledge of the social and historical, a new use of the term that clearly differs from its uses in the botanical and zoological sciences and natural history. In a sense, Tanabe introduced his concept of the species in his social ontology in order to disqualify the validity of the old Linnaean classification in the domain of the social. And insofar as the category of race is associated with the discourse of Linnaean taxonomy and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biology, it can be said that he introduced his concept of the species in place of the racialized one. By no means, however, do I mean to imply that Tanabe’s logic of species is therefore outside racism. Rather, it is with the acknowledgment of the fundamental inadequacy of the logical taxonomy of the species and the genus that Tanabe’s social ontology begins. In addition, let me note, the notion of the individual, or *kotai*, can no longer be conceived of within the Linnaean classification either.¹⁶ This is to say that the term *kotai* or *ko*, which I translate as “the individual” for the lack of a more appropriate word, cannot be directly equated with the individual as an indivisible unit of life.

In applying the term that is widely accepted in the classical taxonomies of creatures to inquiries into the social, however, there are two main dangers to be warded off by deliberately demarcating Tanabe’s concept of the species from the classical comprehension of the term. The first danger is an obvious one, in that the social sense of belonging to a group must never be confused

16 The notion of the individual had undergone a theoretical revision with Tanabe’s mentor, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945). Normally, in Japanese philosophical discourse of the 1920s and ’30s, the term *kobutsu*, or *kotai*, is a translation of “the individual” but the original’s sense of indivisibility or *individuum* is not necessarily emphasized. Nishida conceptualized *kobutsu* or the singular-individual thing as that which is in a discontinuous relationship with any generality. For this reason, I translate his *kobutsu* as the individual—singular—thing. Tanabe adopts the term *kotai* instead of Nishida’s *kobutsu*. *Kotai* is still closer to “the individual,” yet Tanabe is aware that *kotai*, or individual, is not a generality or the most particular of generalities: it is discontinuous with any generality, and so cannot evade being something like a singular point in mathematics.

with the biological and physiological facts of some creature belonging to a specific class.

Going back to the issue of the *minzoku* (or what is often referred to as ethnic nation), let me redefine it with regard to the question of taxonomy in general. First of all the *minzoku* is not an immediate given unless it gains its reality through the classification of the individual: only when an individual *belongs* to it does the *minzoku* acquire its own reality. But, how can we define an individual's belonging to a specific *minzoku*? Does belonging to a specific *minzoku* mean that the individual shares the same habits and mores as other members of the same group? Or shares the same language, the same tradition, the same culture? Or does it imply that the individual is blood related to other members, lives in the same region, or shares the same physiognomic features? All these attempts to define the individual's belonging to a specific *minzoku* externally and objectively seem inadequate precisely because none of them meets the following criterion.¹⁷

17 For correlations between the concept of race and natural history, see Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966), 137–76 in particular; George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 1–34; Mary Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992). From the outset, the Logic of Species is aware that the taxonomy of natural history is utterly irrelevant in the discussion of the social. In this sense, Tanabe was most interested in the destructive effects of Darwin's *Origins of Species* with regard to the classical Linnaean taxonomy and Aristotelian logic of creatures. And Tanabe attempted to conceptualize species in the aftermath of the Darwinian critique. See Kōyama Iwao's testimony, in the monthly supplement to *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, July 1963: 3–4. In this respect, the Logic of Species is most critical of the classical and static notion of race, which Darwin's evolutionism effectively undermined. As goes without saying, it is hardly possible to dissociate the disintegration of the static taxonomy of creatures from the constant rearrangement of social relations by capitalism. There is no doubt that the Logic of Species was a philosophical response to the development of Marxist scholarship on Japanese capitalism in the 1920s and '30s. It is important to keep in mind that Japanese imperial nationalism too transformed itself in producing an argument to destroy the static concept of race. Yet we must also keep in mind that there is a racism with universalistic orientation that differentially reproduces a racial hierarchy by constantly rearranging static racial categories. It is from this perspective that racism in the Logic of Species must be investigated, and as long as we continue to regard the Kyoto School philosophy as an ideology of particularistic ethnic nationalism, we will never be able to expose the racism inherent in the Kyoto School philosophy. For an attempt to analyze the relationships between "race" and colonialism from a dynamic viewpoint, see Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

In social formation, the individual's belonging to a group is an essential part of his own self-awareness, or *jikaku*, so that an individual can never be classified into a species unless it is *aware of belonging to it*. In other words, unless the individual identifies him or herself with a *minzoku*, s/he cannot be said to belong to it. Furthermore, this belonging is not a matter of epistemic consciousness but is itself a mode of praxis in the social. "Self-awareness is not a lived experience (*taiken*); it is a mediation."¹⁸ Here, Tanabe uses the term "mediation" in the Hegelian sense of *Vermittlung* of the subject's *self-othering with him or herself*. Self-awareness is primarily not an epistemic or hermeneutic issue but a mode of praxis. *In social ontology, what one is is simultaneously what one ought to be*. Therefore, for Tanabe, the logical must ultimately be the ethical. Accordingly his social ontology is called the "logic" of the species, which is at the same time the "ethics" of the species.

As Tanabe reiterates, self-awareness should, in the first place, not be problematized with regard to *understanding* (*Verstehen*) but in the context of *inference*, which involves the shift from one utterance to another, from one speaking voice to another, so that self-awareness must necessarily be conceptualized dialogically and dialectically.¹⁹ In contrast, biological taxonomy classifies an individual into a species without any regard for the individual's self-awareness. This is to say that a subject (or, *shukan*) who classifies the individual in a biological taxonomy does not return to the very individual that is classified, and that the fact of the individual's belonging to a species is established irrespective

18 Tanabe Hajime, "Shu no ronri to sekai zushiki" [The logic of species and the schema "world"], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 185.

19 Tanabe insists that the essentially dialogical structure of inference haunts all logical argumentation: just as every enunciation is inevitably open to other enunciations, a proposition is intelligible only insofar as it is in relation to another proposition. What he pursues in the Logic of Species, therefore, must be located in the chain of inference and cannot be contained within a proposition or the synthetic unity of predicative apperception. In contrast, hermeneutics confines its investigation to *understanding* within a proposition, within a synthesis of predication, totally ignoring the inferential dimension of philosophical demonstration. From this observation, Tanabe concludes that hermeneutics (the zenith of which Tanabe found in his contemporary, Martin Heidegger) lacks the fundamental aspect of social praxis. Just as every proposition is open to another proposition in inference, the Logic of Species must be the logic of mediation in which an enunciation constitutes itself in relation and opposition to another. But this process of mediation cannot be complete since every enunciation is always open to an additional enunciation. Hence, Tanabe argues that the logic of social praxis must be absolutely endless, and this absolutely endless nature he called "absolute mediation." In the sense that there cannot be a terminal point or an end to mediation, the Logic of Species must be the logic of absolute mediation. See Tanabe, "Shu no ronri to sekai zushiki."

of its freedom, of the freedom for the individual to refuse to belong to it. In this conception of belonging, which the supposition of a totemic community assumes, there is no inner relation between the individual and the species so that the individual does not exert any influence over the formation of the species. In other words, the individual in this case is not a subject or is without self-awareness because of a lack of an inner split or negation, which is an essential moment in mediation; this mode of belonging does not constitute a social praxis. Not being autonomous, the individual unwittingly would do what he or she is accustomed to doing. To the extent that an individual is identified and classified by the logical algorithm of species and genus, he or she neither reflects upon him/herself nor is distanced from him/herself, so that he or she does not constitute a subject. The individual simply obeys given dictates and is not conscious of any gap between what ought to be and what is.²⁰ For the individual, therefore, the species is not a reality but a transparent irrelevancy.

The second danger is also related to the individual's freedom. Tanabe clearly distances himself from such a Corporatist conception of species as follows:

The notion of moral or collective personality—in which “personality” has *proper analogical* value—applies to the *people* as a whole in a genuine manner: because the people as a whole (a *natural whole*) are an ensemble of real individual persons and because their unity as a social whole derives from a common will to live together which originates in these real individual persons.

Accordingly, the notion of moral or collective personality applies in a genuine manner to the *body politic*, which is the organic whole, composed of the *people*.²¹

20 “We are born into a society where already many maxims regulate the will and action of the individual, thus we regulate our own will and action according to the generally accepted maxims before we experience our action and its consequence.” Tanabe Hajime, “Hegeru tetsugaku to beshōhō” [Hegelian philosophy and dialectics], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 3 (originally published in 1931) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 214. However, Tanabe argues following Kant that those maxims cannot be moral maxims for the individual. Moral maxims are moral laws only for the autonomous subject who institutes these laws by itself (*ibid.*, 195–210).

21 Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 16 (emphasis in the original). As Étienne Balibar argues, this corporatist notion of the body politic is inherently incompatible with the modern notion of equality. Balibar continues, “Whatever may be said about it, Rousseau’s reference to a ‘moral and collective body composed of as many members as there are votes in the assembly, produced by the act of association that makes a people a people,’ is not the *revival* but the *antithesis* of the

In this typically corporatist comprehension of national community and the state, heterogeneity or discontinuity hardly exists between the “real individual person” and “the body politic.” An assembly of “the people” is supposed to be in some form of communion and constitutes itself as an organic whole. Tanabe emphatically distances himself from the corporatist conception of the social whole or of the species, and insists on *an essentially discordant relation* between the individual and the species.

In this respect, Tanabe’s social ontology from the outset assumes the undecidability inherent in modern subjectivity caused by the disappearance of the *body politic* in modern social formations.²² This undecidability is preserved—partially if not fully—in the term “negativity” and, as we will see, the concept of negativity plays the central role in Tanabe’s social ontology.

The individual does not belong to the species in the same way that a part is embraced by and absorbed into the whole: in the corporatist conception of the social that is still under the spell of pre-dialectic and therefore premodern logic, the part and the whole are understood from the relationship between two terms that are continuous with one another, that is, between the particular and the general.²³ Here, I hasten to add that the individual is not the general that is most particularized; he or she remains essentially heterogeneous to the opposition of the general and the particular. What Tanabe calls *kotai* or *ko*

corporatist idea of the *corpus mysticum* (theologians have never been fooled on this point). The ‘double relationship’ under which the individuals contract also has the effect of forbidding the fusion of individuals in a whole, whether immediately or by the mediation of some ‘corporation.’ Étienne Balibar, “Citizen Subject,” James B. Swenson, Jr. trans., in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, Eduard Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy eds. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 52 (italics in the original).

22 See Claude Lefort, “The Logic of Totalitarianism” and “The Image of the Body and Totalitarianism,” pp. 273–306 in John Thompson, ed., *The Political Form of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

23 As to continuity and discontinuity, see Nishida Kitarō, “Sekai no jiko-dōitsu to renzoku” [The self-identity of the world and continuity], in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, vol. 8 (originally published in 1935) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965), 7–105. Although Nishida differentiates generality (*ippan-sei*) from universality (*huhēn-sei*), Tanabe adopts Hegelian terminology that does not distinguish generality from universality. This is rather odd, given the fact that, being a philosopher of mathematics himself, Tanabe’s argument owes much to modern mathematics, particularly Riemann geometry—consequently much to Neo-Kantians and Bergson who philosophically responded to the emergence of the notion of discontinuity and infinity in nineteenth-century mathematics—and that the issues of singularity and universality with regard to discontinuity occupy central positions in his philosophy. Thus, I introduce the terms “generality” and “universality” here as they are distinguished from one another and conceptualized by Gilles Deleuze.

(individual) is more akin to “the singular” in our terminology. A human individual does not belong to a nation, for example, as a cat belongs to the genus of cats or as a potato does to the class of tubers. By no means can the “species” be conceived of as an analogy to an organism or in terms of an analytical relation of the logical algorithm between the particular and the general.²⁴ Thus, how should we understand the state of affairs depicted about human agents and social formations in the statement “an individual *belongs* to a nation, an ethnus, a *minzoku*, and so forth, that is, a species”?

In this respect, it is important to keep in mind that, in one phase leading to a further elaboration on the concept of the species, Tanabe refers to the discussion of totemic organization by Emile Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl and praises their insight that the reign of a society over an individual must be understood according to the logical relationship of species and genus. Yet, the point most forcefully put forth by Tanabe is—contrary to Durkheim’s sociologization of Kantian ethics—that the individual’s belonging to the species cannot be characterized by the individual’s conformity to the totemic belief of a given group, whether that group be clannish, ethnic, or national;²⁵ it must be premised upon the *negation* of it. Tanabe’s critique of French anthropological approaches to totemism shows that the supposition of the totemic community in which an individual *immediately* accepts its maxims without being aware of his belonging in fact makes it impossible for an individual to act morally. Only where there is freedom on the part of the individual to negate and disobey the imperatives imposed by totemic beliefs can the individual be said to belong to it. In other words, *only as a subject* can the individual be said to *belong* to the species. Therefore, for the individual to be in the species is to be *mediated* by its negativity, and what is misleading about the corporatist conception of the species lies in the fact that it overlooks and suppresses negativity, without which the species would be a matter of no significance for the individual. What entails the transfer of the term from the domains of knowledge of natural beings to those of the social is that the social would be inconceivable without taking human negativity into account. Therefore, if modernity is defined in

24 Tanabe Hajime, “Shakai sonzai no ronri” [The logic of the social being], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 6 (originally published in 1934–1935) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 55–56, 74–128.

25 The most important aspect of the totemic belief is that it consists of a set of generalities according to which members of a tribe are classified and determined as particular. What is most clearly demonstrated by the example of totemic belief is that the basic mode in which the social group such as the state rules its members is reducible to the logical relation of the general and the particular, a relation in which the general subsumes the particular under it. *Ibid.*, 55–56.

terms of the negativity inherent in the constitution of a subject, the domain of the social itself is of modernity; the very possibility of thinking about the social is already marked by modernity.²⁶

Moreover, negativity could imply the discursive mediation of antagonism from the viewpoint of social practice, and hence the social would be incomprehensible once deprived of negativity and antagonism.

The Individual, the Species, the Genus (*Ko, Shu, Rui*)

Tanabe Hajime discerns two moments without which no relationship between the individual and the species can be thought, and outside of this relationship the recognition of one's belonging to the species cannot ensue: the first moment is the individual's factual participation in the given species, and the second is the individual's negation of it. The first moment can be said to be that of facticity whereas the second is that of negativity. And, indeed, this very splitting of the moments is facilitated by negativity and a process of the subject's *self-othering with itself or mediation*.²⁷ And, at the same time, negativity opens up space not for a factual but an active participation in the species. But, at this stage, that which the individual actively and wittingly decides to belong to does not remain the species as it once was. For negativity and the first stage of mediation alter the nature of a social grouping in which one once was blindly and immediately placed.

Whereas, in immediacy, the individual would never constitute her/himself as a subject, he/she becomes one by returning to him/herself after reflecting upon and distancing him/herself from his/her immediate inheritance, through self-negation. It goes without saying that Tanabe's exposition of the self-negational contradictory and heterogeneous relation between the individual and the species is at the same time an attempt to construct a logic of social praxis by re-articulating the logical (not analytic but dialectic) relations among individuals, the species, and the genus in terms of the Hegelian triplicity of individuality, particularity and universality. Yet, one instantly notes that,

26 Tanabe, "Shakai sonzai no ronri"; Tanabe, "Rinri to ronri" [Logic and ethics], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 7 (originally published in 1940) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 173–209.

27 Alexander Kojève's reading of Hegel with its emphasis on negativity is well known. Almost simultaneously in two places, Paris and Kyoto, Hegel was read in a characteristic way. For negativity and mediation in Hegel, see Alexander Kojève, "L'idée de la mort dans la philosophie de Hegel," in *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1947), 529–75.

up to this stage of development, the individual has not returned to itself and that, therefore, mediation has not completed its circle.

The species is not an entity, like a human body, a tree, or a book, and one cannot designate it unless one mistakes its representative, or symbol or schema for it (I will return to this point). In order to deal with the reality of the species, therefore, we must start with the process of thematization in which its reality is brought into awareness. One comes to an awareness of one's existence by negating and calling into question what has been taken for granted in one's own behavior and customs. The thematization of the species is accompanied by self-awareness on the part of the individual that he has been nurtured and cultivated in that substratum while he now wants to abandon it. For the individual, the species is *one's own* past and an other at the same time. Insofar as it is a past from which the present is distinguished, that past is an other to and of the present. In this respect, the individual sheds his past and objectifies and distances himself from it.²⁸ But, as the individual recognizes the past as his own, he must subsume the species in himself. Accordingly, for the individual the species is constitutive of one's facticity or thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) in Heideggerian terminology in Dasein's "projective existence" (*Entwurf*) into the future. The thematization of the species is intertwined with the self-transcending or ekstastic *jikaku*, or self-awareness, as *geworfener Entwurft* which is a mode of social practice of projecting oneself into the future and bringing about something that does not yet exist, rather than a mere epistemic recognition.²⁹

Thus, the reality of the species is an institutional reality par excellence. It manifests itself as an assemblage of the universals that regulate individuals' behaviors, and can by no means be ascribed to the whimsy of an individual. It is a reservoir not of the individual but rather of collective habits. It is always of trans-personal and publicly habituated rules just like a language. Yet, it is not

28 Tanabe Hajime, "Zushiki 'jikan' kara zushiki 'sekai' e" [From the schema "time" to the schema "world"], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 6: 25–28.

29 Ibid., 11–18. Tanabe believes that Heidegger's reading of Kant successfully captured the aspect of the individual's indebtedness to the species as part of Dasein's thrownness. However, he claims, the Heideggerian *Entwurf* lacks a practical aspect and essentially remains speculative since Heidegger failed to recognize the spatiality of social practice. To supplement this shortcoming, Tanabe proposes to introduce the schema of the world. A similar critique of Heidegger was offered by Watsuji Tetsurō about Heidegger's neglect of spatiality, but Watsuji's reading where the temporality of Dasein is completely eliminated is no match for Tanabe's in terms of rigor, and these two critiques of Heidegger's Kant Book must not be confused. This explains why Watsuji's static conception of the national community could legitimate the postwar Japanese cultural nationalism successfully whereas Tanabe's social ontology was fast forgotten after the loss of the Japanese Empire in 1945.

ubiquitous or general in the sense of the genus that every member of humanity should be subsumed under in the rubric of *Homo sapiens*.

And it is at this stage that Tanabe introduces the concept of *rui*, or the genus, and thereby indicates how one's belonging to the species inevitably leads to participation in the genus of humanity. It is important to note that the concept of *rui* Tanabe introduces is radically different from the genus in the logical formula of Aristotelian logic. What is at stake here is the conception of universality that can by no means be confused with that of generality.

Unlike the individual and the species, which possess reality in their respective senses, however, the genus is not a positive institutional reality. It follows that it is pointless to talk about the individual's refusal of or disobedience to the genus. If the genus is discussed in this manner, as if it constitutes a positive institutional reality, it should invariably suggest an absolutization of a particular species of which ethnocentrism is the best example, and it would lead to denying the individual her negativity. In other words, the genus is not a positive reality one could revolt against or disobey. Rather it exists as something like a problematic. Nonetheless, it signifies an infinitely open society for the totality of humanity, the only society, which encompasses all humanity. Yet, Tanabe insists, "To dissolve [into one genus] particular societies which oppose one another is to neglect the concreteness of the social being. It amounts to erasing the problems for social beings rather than solving them. History has proven both how disrupting for the progress of humanity and how numbing to one's conscience it is to entrust all to religion's absolute affirmativeness."³⁰ (Here, I would like to add that history would prove the same point again, particularly about Tanabe's own career in the late 1930s and '40s. Can one think of a better example of "religion's absolute affirmativeness" than his lecture "Death and Life"?)

The genus is an essential moment in mediation between the individual and the species. The genus is not the general that underlies a *specific difference* between one particular species and another as in Aristotelian logic. The genus is called for in the individual's refusal and disobedience of the edicts of given social institutions, which have often been internalized by individuals. Hence, the individual negates and deviates from the species by appealing to something higher than the rules whose validity is specific and limited.

If I lived in a community in which, for instance, the locality of my residence is predetermined by my racial status, I could either take such a state of affairs for granted or call it into question, thereby risking fragmenting and dividing the putative unity of that community. According to Tanabe, my belonging to

30 Tanabe, "Shakai sonzai no ronri," 69.

that community becomes an issue for my self-awareness only when I act to disagree with or disobey such a custom, thereby risking fragmenting and dividing that community. In other words, I do not belong to that community naturally because of my birth or other accidental native property, but only when I try to negate and change it will I begin to belong. Yet, my belonging to it is potentially a divisive moment, which might result in a schism in the putative coherence of the community. Thus, I would have to appeal to an authority beyond the dictates immediately sanctioned by that community in order to call that custom into question; I can act to change it only by introducing and adhering to an imperative, whose execution is impossible within the given dictates of that community, and the implementation of which will bring about something that does not yet exist. Nevertheless, the imperative thus introduced cannot be my own; even if I am absolutely alone in my commitment to it, the imperative I voluntarily abide by must be collectively valid. I would have to postulate the principle of equality, which I believe to be not only higher than the dictates of the community but also acceptable to *everyone in the world* in principle.³¹ In the name of this principle I would engage in an antagonistic relation with the members of the community who refuse to agree with the transformation of the community in this direction. This is a struggle in which one can be destroyed by the majority of the community or can destroy it. It can be a struggle of life or death. Yet, one has to postulate beyond this given community a collectivity for whom this principle of equality is a rule to live by. But, as we can realize instantly, this collectivity is not a positive reality because we cannot find any factually existent community of people that actually lives according to that principle anywhere in the world. Perhaps this is why Tanabe felt justified to use such terms as God, for instance, in “Death and Life” when he said “we must act to make the state accord with the Way of God, and thereby prevent the state from deviating from truth and justice.”³²

A collectivity defined by the dictate in which one engages to change the species does not exist positively: this collectivity to which one devotes oneself is the genus or *rui*. Allow me to state, once again, that the *rui* put forth here is clearly distinct from the genus in classical logic. In Tanabe’s social ontology, the genus is not a positively existing institutional reality, but exists in the individual’s struggle with the species. Furthermore, if each dictate positively demands a different collectivity, different dictates beyond any community

31 Here we might note that Nishida Kitarō, for example, tried to introduce two different conceptions of universality, *fuhen*, in the sense of the universality of the Kantian idea, and *ippansha*, generality in the sense of the universality of the Kantian concept.

32 Tanabe, “Shi sei,” 261.

could postulate different genera which could be the totality of humanity at the same time. In other words, the genus must be mediated by the individual's negativity, but it cannot be a positive reality such as the species. The totality of humanity is thus inexpressible in any institutional form, and, consequently, is often called God by Tanabe.

Therefore, it is in relation to the genus that the individual is independent of the species. "Unlike the species it [= the genus] does not directly oppose the individual; instead, it liberates the individual from the constraints of the species and lets him assume a free stance as an individual. Thereby the genus comes into being, mediated by the negativity of the individual's relation to the species."³³ In this way, the genus is neither a generalization of many species nor an ideal representative of them. It is simply in the element not of generality but of universality. Again, the term "genus" betrays the conceptual economy of the particularity–generality framework which many of us take for granted. It is the absolute totality which is expressed in human *historical* action but which cannot be represented conceptually. For *it is an idea*. Tanabe agrees with Max Scheler that the individual's moral action expresses the eternal absolute and, therefore, that historical practice based upon the individual's autonomous will can be understood as an action contributing itself teleologically toward absolute totality.³⁴ In this respect too, we cannot think of the genus as commensurate with differences and commonnesses among species. The genus cannot be posited in the register of conceptual opposition or what Gilles Deleuze calls "differentiation."³⁵ By virtue of the fact that the genus is radically heterogeneous with and negative to the species, every individual can be recognized as equal under the genus (equality only in the negative sense, that is, of the absence of a hierarchical ordering), irrespective of the individual's factual belonging to a particular species. For this reason, the ultimate totality of humanity must be *mu* in the sense of being an absolute negativity.³⁶

33 Tanabe, "Shu no ronri to sekai zushiki," 198.

34 Tanabe, "Hegeru tetsugaku to benshōhō" (originally published in 1931), 124.

35 For the distinction between differentiation and differentiation, see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Paul Patton trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

36 The term *mu* was introduced by Nishida Kitarō particularly in the context of the ontology of self-awareness, or *jikaku*. It has often been translated as "nothingness." But primarily it signifies the undecidability of the transcendental subject in opposition to the decidability of the empirical ego in the Kantian formula. See Nishida Kitarō, "Basho," in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, vol. 4 (originally published in 1926) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965), 208–89; and *Mu no jikaku-teki gentei* (Self-determination of mu), in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, vol. 6 (originally published in 1930–1932) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965).

Thus, the individual returns to himself only when he also participates in the genus and distances himself from the species. But it does not follow that the individual would then cease to belong to the species. Negative mediation also transforms the species, so that the individual's negativity indicates the basic mode of social practice whereby one can work on social reality and transform it. "Praxis (*jissen*) whereby the species is renewed puts the individual and the species in correlation."³⁷ (The liberal notion of voting in a general election which allows the individual to participate in the process of transforming the social formation might fit this idea of praxis, but Tanabe does not specify it.) Accordingly, the sense of one's belonging must be altered. Through social praxis, which is negative in regard to the given formation, the individual belongs to the species by actively transforming it. To belong to a species does not mean to be in it objectively or to be merely born in it; to belong to it is to transform it according to the dictates of universal humanity. Thus, only as a practical subject, or *jissen shutai*, can the individual belong to it. At the same time, though, the species on which the practical subject works to transform cannot remain immediate.

Here too, Tanabe recognizes two moments inherent in the mediation of self-negational contradiction, this time from the viewpoint of the species: one concerning the ethnic and factual constraints no individual can escape from, and the other which mediates both antagonisms among the individuals within the same species and contradictions between the individual and the species. These two moments are explained in a variety of ways, for example, in reference to Tönnies' distinction of *Gemeinschaft* (*shuteki kyōdō shakai*) and *Gesellschaft* (*koteki keiyaku shakai*) and the Bergsonian opposition of the closed society and the open society.

According to Tanabe, a clear distinction is made possible in this process between the substratum as that on which the individual *is* and the subject which acts socially toward other individuals. But this distinction applies only within mediation. This point must not be forgotten in the following exposition.

37 The most obvious case is Watsuji Tetsurō, who followed Tanabe's argument in his *Ethics* to a certain extent, but deliberately eliminated negativity between the individual and the state, so that the state is positively immanent in the individual. In other words, the nation is in continuous relation with the state without the mediation of the individual's negativity. In this respect, in Watsuji's *Ethics*, the state does not guarantee the individual's right of refusal to accept the dictates of a given community. See Naoki Sakai, "Return to the West/Return to the East: Watsuji Tetsurō's Anthropology and Discussions of Authenticity," in *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 75–115.

In this regard, it is important to note the complexity of the term *subject*, or *shutai* as Tanabe adopts it. Here, Tanabe's indebtedness to Hegel becomes very obvious. In history, an individual acts to transform a given community by believing in the universality of a certain idea. Therefore, insofar as an individual's action can be regarded as a historical practice (*rekishiteki jissen*) embodying the conviction that his action will be justified, not because it is an action based upon its particular whim, but because it *ought* to be sanctioned by the genus, that is, the totality of humanity (which does not exist positively), it is also an action by that idea. Thus, an individual acts in history to constitute himself as a subject, but the same historical practice is the process in which the idea realizes itself as a Subject or Spirit. Therefore, in historical practice, the subject's will to act is already and always the Subject's will just as "the *labor* of the individual for his own needs is just as much a satisfaction of the needs of others as of his own, and the satisfaction of his own needs he obtains only through the labour of others."³⁸ "As the individual in his *individual* work already *unconsciously* performs a *universal* work, so again he also performs the universal work as his *conscious* object; the whole becomes, as *a* whole, his own work, for which he sacrifices himself and precisely in so doing receives back from it his own self."³⁹ Even if one is not sanctioned by anyone in the positive sense and has to act alone and in absolute isolation as was the case with Jesus, historical practice is the action of the Subject whereby the individual returns to himself.⁴⁰

38 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.V. Miller trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 213 (originally published in 1807) (italics in the original). Tanabe explains the relationship between the subject and the Subject in reference to Pure Land Shin Buddhism established by Shinran (1173–1262). Perhaps the most explicit reference to Shin Buddhism can be found in his *Zangedō no tetsugaku*, in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 9 (originally published in 1946) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963).

39 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 213. For a detailed account of the work and individuality in Hegel, see Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Samuel Chernick and John Heckman trans. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 296–318.

40 "The state in and by itself is the ethical whole, the actualization of freedom; and it is an absolute end of reason that freedom should be actual. The state is the mind on earth and consciously realizing itself there. In nature, on the other hand, the mind actualizes itself only as its own other, as the mind asleep. Only when it is present in consciousness, when it knows itself as a really existent object, it is the state. In considering freedom, the starting-point must not be individuality, the single self-consciousness, but only the essence of self-consciousness; for whether man knows it or not, this essence is externally realized as a self-subsistent power in which single individuals are only moments. The march of God in the world, that is what the state is." G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, T.M. Knox trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 279.

Thus the individual comes across the genus only when he cannot abide by the imperatives of a given species. In relation to the genus, the individual is singular and most independent of the species as substratum in which he is supposed to be embraced. In other words, the individual is then alienated from the immediate community and stands alone. It is in this solitude that the individual is able to encounter the genus, and this insight is consistently emphasized throughout Tanabe's philosophical publications. Thus, Tanabe argues that his concepts of the individual, the species, and the genus correspond to the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the Father, respectively, in the Holy Trinity.⁴¹ As an isolated singular abandoned by the Father, the individual is the Son. The individual as the Son encounters the genus as the Father precisely in the absence of the Father. And through the anticipatory resolution toward its own death—as we have already seen in Tanabe's lecture "Death and Life"—the individual can work to change the species.

Thus, the reality that the individual obtains through negativity and historical practice is at the same time a species and a work like the Subject. And Tanabe calls this reality the *kitai soku shutai* or "substratum *that is* Subject." Through the participation of the genus, a society—or an ethical substance in Hegelian terminology—which is called the *minzoku kokka*, or nation-state, emerges, and this society is not directly the species because it embodies the dictates of universal humanity. It is the synthesis of the individual's factual belonging both to a given community of customs and mores and to universal humanity. Therefore, the state in the nation-state in this formulation implies the moment of the agent as a Subject while the nation in the nation-state means the unity of *the work as a community* which individuals create collectively by transforming the given social reality.⁴²

41 Tanabe repeatedly referred to the Holy Trinity in order to schematically explain the relationships between the individual, the species, and the genus. See, for instance, his "Kokka sonzai no ronri" [The logic of the state being], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 7 (originally published in 1939) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 42–44. For a critique of Tanabe's obsession with Christianity, see Tosaka Jun, "Gendai yuibutsu-ron kōwa" [Lectures on today's materialism], in *Tosaka Jun zenshū*, vol. 3 (originally published in 1936) (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1961), 309.

42 Hegel called this work "spiritual essence as ethical substance." "Spirit, being the *substance* and the universal, self-identical, and abiding essence, is the unmoved solid *ground* and *starting-point* for the action of all, and it is their purpose and goal, the in-itself of every self-consciousness expressed in thought. This substance is equally the universal *work* produced by the action of all and each as their unity and identity, for it is the *being-for-self*, the self, action. As *substance*, Spirit is unshaken righteous self-identity; but as *being-for-self* it is a fragmented being, self-sacrificing and benevolent, in which each accomplishes

Thus it was possible for Tanabe to argue:

“To be a member of the state is the highest right [and obligation] for the individual.” If the subject of this [Hegel’s] proposition simply means that any individual is born and dies within the state or that the life of the individual becomes possible only when it is incorporated into the variety of state organizations, the proposition would not be able to take the predicate “the highest right.” That it is thus predicated should mean that the proposition does not state a mere [observable] fact but that it refers to the state of affairs which has to be realized by the individual’s will and action. In other words, it implies that, while the individual could will to refuse it, the individual is obliged to will and, following such a will, to promote the realization of such a state of affairs.... Therefore, membership in the state should not demand that the individual sacrifice all his freedom and autonomy for the sake of the unity of the species. On the contrary, the proposition would not make sense unless the state appropriates into itself individual freedom as its essential moment.⁴³

The view equating the nation-state with one ethnic community cannot be accepted at all. Hence, Tanabe criticizes Hegel for his ethnocentricity: “Hegel never completely rid himself of the tendency to regard the state as the ethnic spirit of an ethnic community.”⁴⁴ The claim that to be a member of the state is the highest right and obligation *for the individual* would not be accepted unless the individual negates the ethicality (*Sittlichkeit*) of a specific community and actively endorses the morality (*Moralität*) for the individual to transcend the particularity of a specific community toward the universality of generic humanity. As far as Tanabe’s social ontology is concerned, universality can by no means be confused with generality. Absolute loyalty to the state can be legitimated only when the state is an actualization of the universalistic logic of mediation that goes beyond ethnically specific and toward the state that grounds the individuality of the individual returning to himself through universality.

Here, let me note that one might suspect complicity between universalistic nationalism and cosmopolitan individualism in Tanabe’s Logic of Species.

his own work, rends asunder the universal being, and takes from it his own share.” Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 264 (emphasis in the original).

43 Tanabe, “Shakai sonzai no ronri,” 157. The proposition quoted here is from Hegel.

44 Ibid., 155.

In Place of a Conclusion

As we have seen above, Tanabe's Logic of Species was intended to refute and discredit *minzoku-shugi*, or ethnic nationalism, which was of course perceived to be the most immediate menace to Japanese imperial nationalism in the 1930s, by taking into account the historical conditions that drove people to ethnic nationalism and social antagonism that made ethnic nationalism so attractive to the people under colonial rule.⁴⁵ If seen from the viewpoint of ethnic nationalism, the Logic of Species would appear to consist of a series of meditations that would attempt to undermine any political and philosophical discourse that would legitimate a particularistic rebellion against universalism in the name of which imperialism seeks domination. Tanabe's argument is conspicuous for its almost obsessive emphasis on negativity and for its rather religious notion of universal humanity, which, one can sense, must have had a certain appeal to Marxist activists and other leftists;⁴⁶ many of them in fact supported ethnic nationalism and separatism in Japan's annexed territories and later underwent the traumatic experience of conversion, or what is known as *tenkō*. On the other hand, as the term *shu* clearly indicates, his was also concerned with the particular historical and cultural conditions of the time. Given these cursory observations and the outline of his philosophical project, how should we understand the connections between his philosophy and nationalism?

45 Therefore, one has to be extremely sensitive to the political function of an ethnic identity. Ethnic identity must not be essentialized or spatialized but it is very important to note that, in certain contexts, it might be the only means to resist an imperialist maneuver. In this respect, we find the most rigorous critic of Tanabe's logic of the species in Takeuchi Yoshimi, who valued the significance of *minzoku-shugi*, or ethnic nationalism, as an indispensable means by which to resist imperialisms but who endorsed it only as an inevitable moment in imperialist domination, a moment that would be utterly meaningless outside an imperialist hegemony although he could not totally avoid the essentialization of ethnic identity in ethnic nationalism. See Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Kindai to wa nanika" [What is modernity?], in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū*, vol. 4 (originally published in 1948) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1980).

46 Cf. Tosaka Jun, for example, who criticizes Nishida Kitarō's philosophy as a typical form of bourgeois idealism. Yet, his critique of Nishida seems to coincide with Tanabe's critique of him in many respects. Tosaka was very sympathetic with Tanabe's Logic of Species except for Tanabe's emphasis on religions and, particularly, Christianity. See his *Nihon ideologii ron* [On Japanese ideology] (originally published in 1936) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1977). On Tanabe's political activities in the 1930s and early '40s, see Ienaga Saburō, *Tanabe Hajime no shisō-teki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Hōsei University Press, 1974).

In the 1920s and '30s the Japanese Empire covered many overseas territories including Hokkaidō, Taiwan, Korea, the southern part of Sakhalin, Manchuria, the Pacific Islands, and so forth. The population under the jurisdiction of the Japanese state could not be viewed as linguistically and culturally homogeneous by any account. Although, as I have remarked above, I have serious doubts about the validity of the distinction between monoethnic and multiethnic societies, we may use the term "multiethnic society" to draw attention to the composition of the Japanese Empire at that time. It was simply impossible to assume a simple overlapping between the state and the ethnos or any "natural" community, although the minorities in the empire were somewhat rendered invisible. The state had to represent and incorporate a multitude of the populace that did not share any single national language or ethnic culture insofar as language or culture is understood to be a closed unity.

Tanabe never neglected this historical situation. His conception of the state in the nation-state reflected his awareness of it: "The opposition of a species against another species necessarily contains a duality: it is the exclusionary relationship between plural species on the one hand, and the opposition of the individual to his or her species on the other hand. The state is the synthesis of the individual and the species. Therefore, it must necessarily mediate the opposition between the conquering species and the conquered species and thereby sublimate that opposition into a generic synthesis by recognizing the freedom of the members of the conquered species *to a certain extent* and by appropriating the former enemy."⁴⁷ Thus, Tanabe seeks the historical origin of the state in the conquest of one species by another. "Though not related to the conquered through blood ties, the conquering species allows the conquered to survive, and unifies it into itself through the mediation of shared land."⁴⁸ Ethnic conflicts are mediated by the state's recognition of a minority's freedom just as it recognizes the individual's freedom, thus facilitating collaborative economic activities among those opposing groups. (Or, since the species could signify the social class, interspecific conflict could be class conflict.) But this recognition must be limited; it is permitted only *nanrakano teidono*, or *to a certain extent*, because the ethical substance is also a political sphere that cannot be free of struggle.

First of all, it is evident that the species is not an ahistorical entity. It is a moment in mediation which goes on in world history. But the individual belonging to the conquered species can continue to negate a given social reality and work for its transformation. In this respect, it is not the immediate species

47 Tanabe, "Shakai sonzai no ronri," 160 (emphasis added).

48 Ibid.

but the state that provides the individual with opportunities for justice that is valid beyond the confines of a specific community. For the species, insofar as it is the ethical substance that is mediated by the genus, i.e., *kokkateki minzoku*, or state-nation, is always in a dialectic process in which it continues to split and appropriate other specific communities. But, by the same token, the existence of the state already implies that society that is reigned over by the state consists of a plurality of specific communities.⁴⁹ Unless there is ethnic or class conflict, the state would not be called for, thus the state would never be. Internal antagonism dialectically gives rise to the state just as the individual's negativity invites the moment of universal humanity into the species. In the ambivalent hyphenation between the nation and the state, one thing is certain: *there is no necessity for the state unless the nation is multi-specific (or multi-ethnic)*. Where there is no multiplicity of species in the state, that state cannot exist in the modern world. For the nation-state of Japan to exist, therefore, the Japanese nation must be multiethnic—though what is signified by multiethnicity in this instance is far from clear. And a corollary of this insight into the formation of the state and of the nation-state, which Tanabe Hajime would never have pronounced publicly, was that no modern nation-state could possibly exist unless as *a trace of colonial violence*, which of necessity gave rise to social antagonisms among the species.

Since I must forego a detailed examination of how the Logic of Species could have served and justified Japanese colonial rule and total mobilization policies during the Asia-Pacific War, let me state the following in place of a conclusion to this essay. When seen from the viewpoint of the minority population in the empire who were mobilized for Japan's war efforts, the Logic of Species was nothing but an endorsement of colonial violence. Precisely due to its universalistic aspiration and sense of national mission, it was all the more aggressive and violent. Just as it was one source for the philosophy of world history, it also prompted the philosophy of World War.

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Aleatory Dialectic

Takeshi Kimoto

Tanabe Hajime was one of the most dialectical philosophers of modern Japan. He ceaselessly sought to mediate different, and often opposing, ideas and standpoints. He was not a dialectician from the outset, however. It was the rise of Marxism in Japan in the late 1920s that pushed him into a critical dialogue with dialectics. Many of his students, most notably Miki Kiyoshi and Tosaka Jun, started to advocate Marxist thought and launched fundamental philosophical debates with Tanabe, as well as Nishida Kitarō. Tanabe took this challenge most seriously. In his *Hegelian Philosophy and Dialectics* (1931), Tanabe responded to Marxists with his “absolute dialectic,” which he claimed mediates and supersedes the oppositions between materialism and idealism, mechanism and teleology, and so forth.¹ This standpoint would form the basis for his “logic of species” in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Proposed as an alternative to Marxist class theory, this social ontology conceptualized the “nation” as a dialectical mediation of the universal and the individual.

There are a number of testimonies to Tanabe’s sympathy with the progressive students who engaged themselves with Marxist theory and practice. Tosaka Jun, who organized the *Yuibutsuron kenkyūkai*, or the Materialism Study Group, 1932, comments on Tanabe’s 1933 major work, *Paths to Philosophy*: “Professor Tanabe as a philosopher is formalistic and hermeneutic because he is moralistic; and therefore he is metaphysician and idealist. Professor Tanabe as an enlightenment thinker, on the contrary, still remains a friend of materialism. Under today’s social circumstances in our country where obscurantism is rampant, even this idealist philosopher must realize the unparalleled effectiveness of materialism.”² Even though he does not agree with Tanabe’s absolute dialectic, Tosaka welcomes his attempt at critically engaging with both Hegelian and Marxian dialectics. Tosaka makes a crucial observation that the

1 Tanabe Hajime, *Hēgeru tetsugaku to benshōhō* [Hegelian philosophy and dialectics], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū* [Collected works of Tanabe Hajime] (hereafter *THz*), vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 73–369.

2 Tosaka Jun, “Tanabe tetsugaku no seiritsu” [The establishment of Tanabe philosophy], in *Gendai tetsugaku kōwa* [Discourse on contemporary philosophy], in *Tosaka Jun zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1966), 184.

idealist Tanabe was nevertheless a “friend of materialism.”³ For his part, too, Tanabe thought highly of his student. Tanabe expressed his mourning for Tosaka Jun, who had died in prison just a week before Japan’s defeat in August 1945: “As you may know, Tosaka and I were intellectually opposed to each other.... He often sharply and fiercely criticized me in their magazines.... However, his attacks, despite their intellectual fierceness, were more frank and open-minded than any others.... Here I must recognize his rare, respectable personality.... He was the type of magnanimous person that one rarely sees.”⁴ In this way, Tanabe and Tosaka were tied with the spirit of polemical friendship.

Interestingly, Kōyama Iwao, who represents the right wing of the Kyoto philosophers, corroborates Tosaka’s remark. Kōyama remembers that he had serious tensions with Tanabe over Marxism.

At that time, at Saturday afternoon open meetings, sensei’s house was packed with visiting current and former students. Our discussions always moved to Marxism and materialist dialectic, and sensei showed considerable sympathy toward them. I was always scolded, because I was not very sympathetic with materialism. I remember that a couple of times, after a fierce debate, I felt as if sensei might hit me in the face.⁵

These comments require us to rethink the simplistic view of Tanabe Hajime as a religious philosopher of Buddhist repentance, which puts him within the lineage of the mainstream Kyoto philosophers, like Kōyama himself and Nishitani Keiji. This view often accompanies the definition of the Kyoto School as heirs to Nishida Kitarō and his notion of “absolute nothingness.” What is absent from this orthodox representation is their fierce debates, both internal and external, with leftist thought which stimulated and shaped their philosophizing.

In fact, Tanabe immediately resumed his critical dialogue with Marxism after the Asia-Pacific War. Just before Japan’s defeat, Tanabe had retired from Kyoto Imperial University and moved to Karuizawa, where he secluded himself until his death in 1962. Nevertheless, he attempted to intervene in the changing

3 In fact, Tanabe often shared the materialist critique of the widespread reactionary and obscurantist ideology in contemporary Japan. In 1936, he himself publicly criticized the “contradictions” of the government’s policies that sought to promote the “Japanese spirit” in science and technology. See Tanabe Hajime, “Kagaku seisaku no mujun” [The contradictions of science policies], in *THz* 5: 248–65.

4 Tanabe Hajime, “Tosaka kun o omou” [Commemorating Tosaka], in *THz* 14: 420.

5 Kōyama Iwao, “Kaisetsu” [Editor’s postscript], in *THz* 3, 531. On Kōyama’s ideological involvement in the Asia-Pacific War, see my “Antinomies of Total War,” in *positions: east asia cultures critique* (Spring 2009): 98–125.

political situation under the occupation, vigorously debating with Marxists, who had been liberated from long suppression and imprisonment under the Peace Preservation Law. It was precisely at this moment that he published his magnum opus, *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (1946), which derived from his final 1944 lecture course and was completed after Japan's defeat. In the final chapter of the book, he advocated "social democracy" as an alternative to the emerging Cold War rivalry between liberalism (the United States) and communism (the Soviet Union).⁶ Furthermore, in a series of lectures in 1948, published as *Introduction to Philosophy: Basic Problems of Philosophy*, Tanabe presented his reinterpretation of Marxian materialism and dialectics.⁷ Specifically, he discussed Marx's own texts, including his dissertation on Greek natural philosophy and most notably *Das Kapital*. Significantly, he sought not to raise an external criticism, but to read Marx fairly and immanently, trying to extract the positive from his dialectic. While he admitted Marx's criticism of Hegelian idealism has a point, Tanabe insisted this Marxian dialectic derives from human praxis and should not be regarded simply as "materialist," but also as "immaterial and nonmaterialist."⁸ Marx's "materialist" philosophy, Tanabe claimed, actually "betrays" (*uragiru*) his own dialectic. Obviously, his point is not to reject Marxian dialectic, but to propose its reinterpretation against Marx's own self-understanding.

Thus, unlike the established view of Tanabe as a conservative religious thinker, he was deeply concerned with Marx and Marxism. Tanabe developed his own dialectic in critical dialogues with Marxism in the first place. He believed that the notion of dialectics itself developed dialectically through the opposition between Hegelian and Marxian dialectics. Real dialectics, he argued, cannot be reduced to either a materialist or an idealist principle; the essence of dialectics lies in the very negation and transformation of opposites, which he called absolute dialectic. Yet, albeit in a critical manner, Tanabe remained convinced that Marx's theory constituted an essential moment for dialectics.

Significantly, his discussion of Marxian dialectic, which concentrates on the temporal structure of action, anticipates in many ways later readings of Marx,

6 Tanabe Hajime, *Zangedō toshite no tetsugaku* [Philosophy as metanoetics], in *THz*, 9. Hereafter, I will quote from the English translation *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, trans. Takeuchi Yoshinori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

7 Tanabe Hajime, *Tetsugaku nyūmon: Tetsugaku no konpon mondai* [Introduction to philosophy: Basic problems of philosophy] in *THz*, 11: 1–132. Tanabe gave this series of introductory lectures to a group of schoolteachers of the Shinano Philosophical Society in the neighborhood of Karuizawa. Once the record of the lectures was published, it sold more than three hundred thousand copies, making it a national bestseller.

8 *Ibid.*, 123.

including those by Louis Althusser, Karatani Kojin, and Slavoj Žižek, who emphasize contingency, agency, and temporality in Marxian thought. In other words, Tanabe's nonmaterialist dialectic, as well as his interpretation of Marx, shows remarkable convergence with at least some of the major developments of diverse Marxian perspectives since the late twentieth century. If this is the case, it might be necessary to call into question the very demarcations of the Kyoto School and Marxism respectively.

In this essay, I will focus on Tanabe's interpretation of the dialectic that Marx developed in his doctoral dissertation and *Capital*. Tanabe pays special attention to Marx's reading of Epicurus's declination, as well as commodity exchange, the emergence of money in particular. As I will show, Tanabe extracts from Marx a specific kind of temporal dynamic that I call *aleatory dialectic*. I will demonstrate a number of striking parallels between Tanabe's reading and recent discussions by Althusser, Karatani, and Žižek. Although I cannot enter into Tanabe's important dialogues with Hegelian and Marxian dialectics in the prewar context, this essay will contribute to rethinking the received conception of the Kyoto School, and Tanabe Hajime in particular, in relation to Marxism.

Epicurean Declination, Contingency, and the Future

Tanabe on Marx's Dissertation

Tanabe first discusses Marx's 1841 dissertation, *The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*. Marx's interpretation of Epicurus, Tanabe argues, shows a remarkable understanding of the nature of dialectics, an insight Tanabe claims will be preserved and developed in Marx's mature thought in *Capital*. As I will show, Tanabe's reading here reminds us of recent commentaries on Marx, most notably by the later Althusser.

In his dissertation, Karl Marx challenges the standard view about the ancient Greek natural philosophy of Democritus (460–370 BC) and Epicurus (341–270 BC). Epicurus succeeded and modified the teachings of Democritus, a pre-Socratic philosopher who founded atomism to explain every phenomenon based on two principles, atoms and the void. In Democritus, atoms move randomly in all directions with mechanical necessity. Democritean atomism represents one of the major origins for the modern concept of matter, with his notion of the “straight line” as a precursor to the linear motion in mechanics since Galileo Galilei. However, Epicurus made subtle but crucial modifications of this theory. Later commentators criticized him for having made unnecessary, arbitrary revisions to the founder's natural philosophy. By contrast, Marx argues that this seemingly problematic revision actually matters. “Epicurus,”

Marx says, “assumes a *threefold* motion of the atoms in the void. One motion is the fall in a *straight* line, the second originates in the *deviation* of the atom *from the straight line*, and the third is established through the *repulsion of the many atoms*.”⁹ Marx argues that while both Democritus and Epicurus share the first and the third points, the “declination of the atom” constitutes their crucial difference.

In addition, Tanabe points out that Epicurean deviation also must be understood in the context of his dialogue with Aristotle (384–322 BC), who came after Democritus and criticized his notion of random motion. As is well known, Aristotle formulated a teleology of nature in his *Physics*. “Aristotle’s view of nature,” Tanabe says, “is that each and every entity performs its activity according to its own essence and tries to realize its essence, making the movement from its possibility to actuality. This standpoint considers every substance as having its own proper place and a disposition to move toward this place.”¹⁰ In this view, every entity has a certain goal in motion, moving from a high to a lower place, ultimately toward the center of the earth.

Thus, Epicurus’ argument should be interpreted, Tanabe argues, as an intervention into the debate between Democritus and Aristotle in terms of mechanism and teleology, which represents one of the first polemics in the history of philosophy between idealism and materialism. Epicurus, partly influenced by and partly trying to answer Aristotle, insisted that the straight line does not move in random directions, but falls downward. Tanabe points out that “atoms make a parallel motion, just as raindrops fall in the same direction in a parallel way when there is no wind.... In this view, however, it would be difficult to understand how the collision of atoms would produce such multiple, complex phenomena as a group of atoms.”¹¹ This is precisely why Epicurus introduced the second principle, i.e., the motion of “deviation” or “declination” from the straight line, which Lucretius would call *clinamen*. “Atoms, which should originally fall in a straight line,” Tanabe explains, “have the possibility of falling obliquely, swerving, and deviating from it. As a result, atoms collide with each other, which explains diverse, complex phenomena.”¹² In this way, the Epicurean notion of deviation can be said to represent an alternative to both mechanism and teleology.

9 Karl Marx, *The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 46.

10 Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 102.

11 *Ibid.*, 103.

12 *Ibid.*, 104.

The young Marx argues that declination as a principle of negativity provides the very possibility for freedom from mechanistic necessity represented by the “straight line.” “As a matter of fact” Marx says, “abstract individuality can make its concept, its form determination, the pure being-for-itself, the independence from immediate being, the negation of all relativity, effective only by *abstracting from the being that confronts it.*” Marx continues, “for in order truly to overcome it, abstract individuality had to idealise it, a thing only generality can accomplish.”¹³ Marx thus claims that declination, or swerve from the straight line, enables negation of immediate and relative “mode of being,” thereby allowing for “pure-being-for-itself” and “abstract individuality.” In this reading, Epicurus presents a notion of self-conscious “subjectivity” in the form of matter, which was absent from both Democritus and Aristotle. As the terminology suggests, this line of argument explicitly follows Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, especially its Doctrine of Being, interpreting declination as a form of Hegelian negativity.¹⁴ At this point, obviously, Marx was not so much a “materialist” as an idealist. It is not Tanabe’s intention, however, to depict the young Marx merely as a Hegelian. Instead, Tanabe is trying to show that Marx already employs a notion of dialectic that cannot neatly be categorized as “materialist” or “idealist.” And in fact, Tanabe believes this specific dialectic characterizes Marx’s later thought in *Capital*. Tanabe is suggesting that Marx’s interpretation of Epicurean deviation addresses strictly *ontological* questions before a decision is made in terms of either materialism or idealism. It is also important to add that for Tanabe, the term “dialectic” is a name for a specific ontology of *nothingness*, not being.

Epicurean deviation, Tanabe maintains, shows remarkable ontological insight into motion and its fundamental “contingency.” First of all, contingency stands in a dialectical relationship with necessity. Chance or contingency means a “possibility of not being,” whereas necessity is the “impossibility of not being.” Tanabe insists that contingency is defined by the nothingness of “not,” while necessity is also a negation of this nothingness. Contingency is often regarded as something that is beyond explanation, which is usually attributed to our limited and imperfect knowledge. However, our historical reality is characterized by the fact that what is possible not to be, this potential non-being, exits. Contingency exists regardless of our capacity to know the reason. Tanabe argues that historical reality is essentially characterized by *gen gūzen*,

13 Marx, *Difference*, 50.

14 Commenting on atomism, Hegel says that the notion of the “one and the void” constitutes a moment of “being-for-self.” See *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Amherst, MA: Humanity Books, 1969), 165–66.

or primal contingency. This notion derives from Schelling's *Urzufall* in his "positive philosophy" emphasizing the irrational nature of existence beyond reason and its necessity, including Hegel's "negative philosophy."¹⁵ Referring to the Kegon Buddhist notions of *ri* and *ji*, he also argues that *ji* as the world of facts and reality is not reducible to *ri*, or the principle of reason. However, his point is not to emphasize such existential or Buddhist abyss and groundlessness of nothingness, which another Kyoto philosopher, Kuki Shūzō, thematized in his *Gūzensei no mondai* (The Problem of Contingency) (1935). Tanabe is more concerned with the *dialectic* or mutually contradictory unity of both than the *analytic* of the historical facticity beyond reason.

Necessity and contingency, he argues, stand in an opposite or contradictory relation with each other and are mediated by nothingness. An ordinary mode of thinking, however, which Hegel termed *Verstand*, or understanding, is based on an analytical, non-contradictory identity as well as binary oppositions, and therefore tends to stop at separating necessity and contingency, favoring the former over the latter as a lack of necessity. Tanabe questions the very dichotomy between these two. If it were not for chance, there would be no use talking about necessity. Without necessity, however, chance would not exist as such. Contingency only takes place or becomes recognizable where there is a necessity. What Tanabe is getting at has far-reaching implications for modernity in general. He is virtually suggesting that as the system becomes more rational, regulated, and predictable, irregularity becomes all the more irrational, disruptive, and unpredictable. This is because the world is exposed to and vulnerable to basic contingency, which is impossible to eliminate. Although Tanabe himself does not elaborate on this dialectic per se, this would represent a profound paradox of modern rationalization as a historical process. Thus, in their very opposition, necessity and contingency do not exclude, but rather presuppose and mediate, each other. In reality, they are inseparable and form a contradictory unity. The Epicurean notion of "declination," according to Tanabe, implies such a dialectical unity of necessity and contingency.

Second, moreover, the essential contingency of the Epicurean declination also means a radical break with Aristotelian categories of being, which define *dynamis* and *energeia*, or potentiality (possibility) and actuality (reality), as the modes of being qua form or substance. Aristotle employed these notions to theorize *kinēsis*, or motion. However, Tanabe claims that these Aristotelian categories cannot really explain "becoming" (*seisei henka*):

15 Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 105.

Potentiality (*sensei*) becomes actual (*gensei*); possibility turns into reality. In other words, reality is already prepared as a possibility; actuality is already hidden in potentiality. Therefore, it is based on the notion that what is already there gradually expands and grows. Put differently, it takes the form of quantitative development, or progress in quantity. In fact, however, it alone does not amount to a genuine, vital becoming.... Such a notion is based on the duration of something; what comes after was already there beforehand, and what is prior develops into what is posterior. If we faithfully observe such a standpoint of identity in which something identical simply maintains itself, we cannot really make sense of what it means that the old becomes new.¹⁶

Aristotle regarded potentiality as continuously developing into reality. Here potentiality and reality are basically identical, while potentiality is a mere abstraction from, or the lack of, reality. In the received interpretation, this ontology also characterizes Aristotle's teleology that describes the process of potentiality becoming reality. While the goal or purpose of the process is reality, it is already implied at the beginning in the form of potentiality. However, this "logic of identity," he insists, misses the true nature of "becoming," which must be a sudden event. In contradistinction to the notion of identity, the potentiality of the future as designated by Epicurean declination is a break from, and negation of, reality. Even though it does not exist yet, the future has the power to determine reality. Tanabe, echoing Heidegger, clearly maintains that "potentiality is higher than reality."¹⁷

In this way, the dialectic between necessity and contingency, reality and potentiality, comes down to the nature of temporality. Motion not only follows the law of necessity, but essentially remains unpredictable and discontinuous.

¹⁶ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷ Ibid., 88. See also Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 38. Unlike Tanabe, however, Heidegger himself sought to radicalize Aristotelian *dynamis* and *energeia* into his existential analytic of being-toward-death. Following Heidegger, Giorgio Agamben provides a deconstructive reading of Aristotle based on his statement in *Metaphysics* that "all potentiality is impotentiality": "*if potentiality to not-be originally belongs to all potentiality*," Agamben says, "*then there is truly potentiality only where the potentiality to not-be does not lag behind actuality but passes fully into it as such*. This does not mean that it disappears in actuality; on the contrary, it *preserves itself* as such in actuality." See Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 183 (emphasis in the original). This insight into the self-preservation of potentiality, which derives from the facticity and finitude of human existence, is also shared by Tanabe's metanoetics.

Whereas motion takes place in time and space, the nature of time and that of space are fundamentally different.¹⁸ According to Tanabe, the straightforward motion of the Epicurean atom that follows the law of necessity takes place in a spatial continuum. In contrast, the motion of declination corresponds to the discontinuous leap that is the temporal moment of the movement. Movement is impossible without the leap. He describes this break in terms of nothingness as the time of the future:

Motion does not take place without the internal duality of infinite divisibility of space and temporal indivisibility, that is, beingness of space and nothingness of time. Now, necessity of motion can be compared to the necessary straight line from here to there. Thus, nothingness of time is indispensable for a moment of motion, that is to say, nothingness in which the not-yet-existent future breaks into, and promotes, the present, as self-breakthrough of the motion, corresponds to the very deviation, the possibility of swerve, of the Epicurean atom.¹⁹

This future-oriented, or even future-promoted, view of temporality is different from and negates the traditional view of time as the persistence of the past. Tanabe insists that philosophers, such as Aristotle, Hegel, and even Bergson, tended to argue that the past maintains itself. However, the time of the future is ontologically heterogeneous from the past as a mode of “being.” In other words, the future is radically different from what we imagine based on our memory and past experience. The future represents a “quantum leap” that is truly nonexistent and negates being. The time of the future, he claims, comes from “absolute nothingness.” Such a future comes as a sudden event, and is therefore fundamentally contingent.

18 Tanabe refers to Zeno's famous paradox of Achilles and the tortoise, as well as the debate about it between Bertrand Russell and Henri Bergson. Zeno claimed that Achilles cannot overtake the tortoise, essentially because the distance between them is infinitely divisible; Russell believed he had solved the paradox by showing that the distance Achilles traversed and the one the tortoise did can be taken as two sets of infinite points and therefore be mapped onto each other by Cantor's one-to-one correspondence. Bergson, on the contrary, criticized Russell, saying that he, as well as Zeno, overlooked the basic fact that unlike divisible space, time in motion is indivisible and of heterogeneous duration. Tanabe agrees with Bergson except for his characterization of the instant as continuity. See Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 77–81. Tanabe already discussed the debate in his 1925 major work, *Sūri tetsugaku kenkyū* [Studies in philosophy of mathematics], in *THz* 2: 557–68.

19 Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 104.

Interestingly enough, Plato had already described this moment of rupture, Tanabe claims, in his later dialogue *Parmenides*. Plato discusses the instant as the “queer thing” that lies between motion and rest, time and eternity, and is realized in *to exaiφhnēs*, which translates as the “instant” or “all of a sudden.”²⁰ Therefore, Tanabe is virtually claiming that Plato and Epicurus, who was anti-Platonist, actually shared a similar insight into the nature of time. Paradoxically, this would also mean that the very founder of so-called Western metaphysics of presence was crucial for the philosophy of absolute nothingness as well. Indeed, Plato’s dialectic remained one of the most essential inspirations for Tanabe throughout his career.²¹

The future as nothingness breaking into the instant, however, is not a merely “contingent” phenomenon in the sense that it may or may not occur in an objective timeline. History would be impossible without our action in the present, which represents a subjective conception of time. In other words, the future not only mediates, but also is mediated by, our present action. Tanabe explicates the dialectic involved in the future and action. On the one hand, the future is something that is to come, to reach us. But, on the other, it is our action that seizes the future, anticipating and preempting it ahead of itself. This apparent tension or contradiction between the future and the present not only characterizes the time of the future, but constitutes the possibility for the movement of deviation, declination, and swerve. Tanabe calls this *yosen mirai* (予先未来), which might be translated as “preemptive future,” or *futur antérieur*, a subject I will discuss later.²²

In this way, Tanabe conceives of dialectic in terms of time: dialectic as temporality, or temporality as dialectic. Here Tanabe does not follow the traditional dichotomy between logic and sensibility, concepts and intuition,

20 Ibid., 82. See also Plato, *Parmenides*, 156d-e, trans. Francis Macdonald Cornford, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 947.

21 In his essay in *Hegelian Philosophy and Dialectics* (1931), Tanabe claims that the instant represents the temporality of absolute nothingness. He reiterates the same point in his final critical commentary on Heidegger in 1959. See Tanabe, *Hēgeru tetsugaku to benshōhō*, 166; “Sei no sonzai gaku ka shi no benshōhō ka” [Ontology of life or dialectic of death], in *THz* 13: 529–32.

22 Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 84. *Yosen mirai* also reminds us of Heidegger’s *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit* (anticipatory resoluteness) as the primordial “potentiality of being” in *Being and Time*. Tanabe insists, however, that his potentiality remains “suspiciously close to that of potentiality or possibility in the Aristotelian sense,” which is based on the continuous identity of *dynamis* and *energeia*. In other words, Tanabe claims that Heidegger’s temporality is far from realizing the future in the present through what Tanabe calls “death-and-resurrection.” See Tanabe, *Metanoetics*, 77 and 85.

as well as the association of dialectics with the former. Heidegger rejected Hegel based on the conventional notion of dialectics, even as he deconstructed these epistemological binaries into “transcendental imagination” as temporality in his *Kantbuch*.²³ In contrast, Tanabe’s dialectic is temporalized through and through.

He also presents this dialectic of the future and the present action as an alternative that supersedes the dichotomies between mechanism and teleology. Even as he emphasizes contingency deriving from “other-power” beyond the control of the subject, Tanabe never argues for sheer randomness of chance occurrences, which would rather correspond to Democritus’ mechanism. Contingency both mediates and is mediated by the agency of action.²⁴

Tanabe struggled with this problematic until the very final stage of his philosophy. He engaged with the French symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, discussing his poems “Igitur” and “Un Coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard” (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance). Tanabe even translated the latter and interpreted it in terms of the dialectic between “fate and freedom.” In his annotation on the poem, Tanabe says, “it is clear that the core of Mallarmé’s thinking about chance lay in the question of the unity of fate and freedom since Plato. It is utterly praiseworthy that he made a strenuous effort to dialectically provide a solution exceeding the myth of Er in Plato’s *Republic*, by positively affirming the mediation of contingency in his self-aware resoluteness for death.”²⁵ Necessity of fate only takes place as such through one’s own free act, i.e., throwing the dice. In this way, fate is mediated with freedom by chance.

Significantly, Tanabe comments on Maurice Blanchot’s reading of Mallarmé in *L’Espace littéraire*, which had just been published in France. Although Tanabe agrees that “he [Blanchot] rightly insists on unpredictability and contingency of action,” Tanabe rejects his criticism of Mallarmé that insists on “absolute contingency” beyond control. Tanabe also disagrees with the impossibility of subjectively experiencing death in which “*on meurt*.” The “anonymous death” that cannot become an event, Tanabe maintains, may be an interesting thought, but Blanchot, because of his reliance on the “logic of identity,” misses Mallarmé’s profound dialectic between contingency and freedom,

23 See Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), 138–71.

24 See also Tanabe, *Metanoetics*, 65–67.

25 See Tanabe Hajime, *Mararume oboegaki* [Notes on Mallarmé], in *THz* 13: 301. The work was originally published in 1961, one year before his death.

life and death. In other words, aleatority would be pointless in such absolute contingency.²⁶

Such interplay between fate and freedom, chance and throwing the dice, Tanabe argues, is also at work in Marx's reading of Epicurus. It goes without saying that Marx consistently highlighted the primacy of praxis over interpretations of the world. Already in his dissertation, Marx talked about "abstracting from the being," which suggests that he viewed Epicurean *clinamen* as an act of cutting or rupture.²⁷ For this reason, Tanabe argues that Marx represents a specific kind of dialectic, *kōi benshōhō*, or "action dialectic," which he insists is neither idealist nor materialist. This notion might also be described as "aleatory dialectic," given his reading of Mallarmé's "Un Coup de dés."

Althusser's Aleatory Materialism

Tanabe's discussion of contingency, as well as his reading of Marx's Epicurus, can be said to anticipate the notion of aleatority that has been one of the major inspirations for contemporary thought since the 1960s. This trend has also affected Marxist discourse. It was the later Louis Althusser who, just like Tanabe, goes back to Marx's dissertation on Democritus and Epicurus in rethinking the notion of materialism, which represents a major shift from his earlier theorization of structuralist Marxism.²⁸

In his 1982 essay "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," Althusser seeks to uncover an almost hidden tradition of a materialism, which he describes as the "materialism of the encounter, and therefore of the aleatory, and of contingency."²⁹ His discussion shows a number of remarkable parallels with Tanabe's reading. About the *clinamen* Althusser says: "The clinamen is an infinitesimal *swerve*, 'as small as possible'; 'no one knows where, or when, or how' it occurs, or what causes an atom to 'swerve' from its vertical fall in the void, and, breaking the parallelism in an almost negligible

26 Ibid., 282–85. See also Sugimura Yasuhiko, "Shisha to shōchō," *Shisō* 1053 (January 2012): 36–56.

27 Marx, *Difference*, 50.

28 Louis Althusser, "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," in *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978–1987*, eds. François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), 163–207. Also, in *Marukusu sono kanōsei no chūshin* [Marx: the center of possibilities] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1985 [1978]), Karatani Kojin identifies the text-theoretical significance of the Marxian reading of the "micro difference" between Democritus and Epicurus (15–20). Moreover, in *Transcritique* (2003), he depicts Marx's Epicurus as "proto-transcritique," a dual commentary on Democritean mechanism and Aristotelian teleology (161–63).

29 Althusser, "Underground Current," 167.

way at one point, induce *an encounter* with the atom next to it, and from encounter to encounter, a pile-up and the birth of a world.”³⁰ Just like Tanabe, Althusser highlights Epicurean declination, saying its “swerve” brings about encounters, giving birth to the world. The world is nothing but a result of these contingent encounters, which is to say that it has no origin whatsoever. This materialist thinking, he argues, has persisted as an undercurrent within the rule of idealism in philosophy. He traces its genealogy from Epicurus and Lucretius, through Machiavelli and Spinoza, to Rousseau, and even to Heidegger and Derrida.

From Epicurus to Marx, there had always subsisted—even if it was covered over ...—the “discovery” of a profound tradition that sought its materialist anchorage *in a philosophy of the encounter*.... Whence this tradition’s radical rejection of all philosophies of essence (*Ousia, Essentia, Wesen*), that is, of Reason (*Logos, Ratio, Vernunft*), and therefore of Origin and End—the origin being nothing more, here, than the anticipation of the End in Reason or primordial order.³¹

By disclosing the fundamentally contingent character of occurrences, the materialism of the encounter, or aleatory materialism, rejects any teleology of reason and foundationalism, favoring a certain sense of anarchy, or the absence of the origin, *telos*, and the ground. While one can hear in this passage echoes of contemporary French thought, including Jacques Derrida’s critique of “metaphysics of presence,” this notion of contingency also reminds us of Althusser’s earlier conception of history as a “process without a subject.”³²

Tanabe would agree with Althusser’s attack on reason, because he himself conceived of his *metanoetics* as an “absolute critique” of *noesis*, or reason.³³ Tanabe admits that reason cannot avoid its radical crisis. “Contrary to what Kant thought in his critical philosophy, it is impossible for the autonomy of reason to provide its own foundations.... The critique of reason needs to be pressed to the point of an absolute critique through ‘absolute disruption’ and absolute crisis, which constitute the self-abandonment of reason.”³⁴ The only way out of the “impassable barriers of antinomies,” Tanabe argues, is to break with the

30 Ibid., 169 (emphasis in the original).

31 Ibid., 188 (emphasis in the original).

32 Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 82.

33 See Tanabe, *Metanoetics*, 36–57.

34 Ibid., 19–20.

standpoint of *jiriki*, or self-power, and submit oneself to *tariki*, or other-power, as absolute nothingness. Although framed in the religious language of *tariki*, this metanoetic critique of reason clearly implies negation of the sovereign subject, as well as absence of the first principle.³⁵

At the same time, however, their basic difference appears to be obvious. Whereas Althusser describes the above-mentioned thinkers in terms of “materialism,” Tanabe regards this notion as an ontologically questionable standpoint. Yet, it is important to recognize that Althusser rejects received conceptions of materialism, whether it is the mechanical atomism of Democritus or the “dialectical materialism” as in Stalinist doctrine, because these are nothing but versions of determinism. Ironically, Althusser’s aleatory materialism virtually worked to deconstruct the very notion of materialism, a consequence of his self-critical theorizing that characterized his entire career. In fact, he says, “We continue to talk about a materialism of the encounter only for the sake of convenience: it should be borne in mind that this materialism of the encounter includes Heidegger and eludes the classical criteria of every materialism, and that we need, after all, some word to designate the thing.”³⁶ Althusser clearly admits that he uses the term “materialism” for lack of a better word. In fact, he is trying to get at something that is a name for absence: “nothing.” This is the point where Althusser comes closest to Tanabe. “To the old question ‘What is the origin of the world?’ this materialist philosophy answers: ‘Nothingness!,’ ‘Nothing,’ ‘I start out from nothing.’”³⁷ This same nothing enables Epicurean declination. “In the ‘nothing’ of swerve,” he says, “there occurs an encounter between one atom and another.”³⁸ “Hence,” he insists, “the primacy of ‘nothing’ over all form, and of *aleatory materialism over all formalism*.”³⁹ The nothingness here not only designates the mere spatial or physical void, but also means the absence or negation of the first principle. It refers to the “critical labour” that destroys or “deconstructs” any metaphysical ground. “In short, *the void that is philosophy itself*.”⁴⁰

This notion of “nothingness” is another important convergence between the later Althusser and Tanabe. In Tanabe, absolute nothingness is a name for the

35 Indeed, Tanabe insists that sovereign states must also repent. See *ibid.*, 255–96. However, it is important to add that a careful, contextual reading is required to fully understand the political implications of Tanabe’s *Metanoetics* and his polemical interventions in wartime and immediate postwar Japan.

36 Althusser, “Underground Current,” 171.

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, 191.

39 *Ibid.*, 192 (emphasis in the original).

40 *Ibid.*, 178 (emphasis in the original).

principle of non-identity and self-negation. Nothingness is not any identifiable entity or substance. It simply does not exist as such, in an immediate way, but only exists in negating and transforming being. Yet, this negation is negation without an agent. Moreover, it is also negation of negation, which means transforming the negated being into an “empty being.” Thus, negation is no longer opposed or relative to being, but becomes “absolute” in that it now vanishes. Instead, it now mediates, and is mediated by, relative being, including our action. In this way, what he calls absolute nothingness refers to this dialectic of transformation.

That is to say, what is called absolute nothingness does not represent any first principle or the origin of being; instead, it is mediated by being. Tanabe describes this dialectic as the movement of “absolute mediation.” Based on this recognition, Tanabe first rejects both idealism and materialism as ontologies deriving from a certain self-identical principle, i.e., being, such as spirit or matter. Second, Tanabe also negates any fixed binary oppositions as based on the abstract “logic of identity” called *Verstand*, or understanding.⁴¹ Therefore, so-called absolute nothingness is far from a mystical principle or metaphysical entity. Quite the contrary, it allows us to criticize the metaphysics of presence.

Both Tanabe and Althusser understand “nothingness” as allowing for a transformative “swerve” and “encounter,” as well as a critique of metaphysics. Both would also agree that the dichotomy between idealism and materialism is part and parcel of the metaphysical assumption that both these philosophers seek to undermine. If this is the case, Althusser would not have hesitated to include Tanabe’s dialectic in the tradition of “aleatory materialism.”

Of course, one cannot ignore certain differences between these two thinkers. Tanabe, unlike Althusser, tends to emphasize the dimension of agency as enabled by contingency. The aleatory becomes impossible, Tanabe would argue, if one does not cast the dice. Even if throwing the dice does not abolish the dimension of contingency, as Mallarmé would have it, the act of casting the

41 This reminds us of Theodor Adorno’s negative dialectic, which criticized both objective positivism and *Ursprungsphilosophie*, or philosophy of origin, as two opposite forms of immediacy. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*, trans. Willis Domingo (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984). Adorno drafted this book while he was in exile in England during 1934–1937. It is important to remember that Tanabe developed his logic of species at about the same time. In this connection, Fredric Jameson makes a powerful point that the Hegelian critique of *Verstand* can and should be reinterpreted as a critique of “reification.” Jameson also suggests that it is meaningful to speak not only of “Marx’s Hegelianism,” but also of “Hegel’s Marxism.” If this is the case, it might be interesting to think of “Tanabe’s Marxism” or possibly “Marx’s Tanabeism.” See Fredric Jameson, “Hegel and Reification,” in *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 75–101.

dice is a prerequisite for the emergence of chance. “Freedom,” Tanabe claims, “has to be seen as preceding contingency.”⁴² One might even go so far as to say that this very act retroactively produces and constructs the contingent, a point I will return to later.

In contrast, Althusser seems to be more concerned with the *effects* of an aleatority leading to an encounter. Toward the end of his essay, he reflects on the question of the “aleatory encounter” in *Capital* as well as in the history of capitalism. He emphasizes the violent character of this “‘encounter’ between the ‘owners of money’ and the proletariat stripped of everything but his labour-power.”⁴³ Specifically, he discusses the issue of primitive accumulation, suggesting, first, that the establishment of the capitalist system was never a necessity and, second, that its “mode of production” is composed of a combination of various elements and is not a unified totality. In this way, his focus here is on the “encounter” in the form of “exchange.” It is in this context that he seems to emphasize mercantile capital and money, instead of production and industrial capitalism.

Significantly, however, Tanabe, too, discusses the very question of exchange and money in his lecture. He identifies the same aleatory dialectic in Marx’s *Capital*. And here we can find a significant intersection with another Marxian theorist, Katarani Kojin. Now let us return to Tanabe.

Antinomy, Action, and the Emergence of Money

Tanabe’s Reading of Capital

In Tanabe’s reading, aleatory dialectic that involves both contingency and agency also characterizes the later Marx. Tanabe especially focuses on how this dialectic works in the act of exchange in *Capital*, volume one. The logic of *Capital*, he claims, cannot be reduced to “materialist dialectic,” a mere inversion of idealist dialectic. Here, again, Tanabe identifies a specific, nonmaterialist dialectic of action in the discussions of the commodity and money. Rather than focusing on the “value-form” and the “fetishism of the commodity,” he discusses the “process of exchange.” In particular he is most concerned with the emergence of money as Marx describes it. His interpretation reveals surprising parallels with the reading of *Capital* by the Japanese literary critic and Marxian theorist Karatani Kojin.

42 Tanabe, *Metanoetics*, 66.

43 Althusser, “Underground Current,” 197.

Like Epicurean atoms, the commodity makes a dialectical movement, because it implies a dual character of use-value and value. Any product needs to have a certain use-value that anticipates consumption. However, since a commodity is produced “for the sake of trade and exchange,” its exchange-value becomes independent of its use-value.⁴⁴ While these are two moments of the commodity that must be unified, Tanabe finds in this duality “a fierce contradiction that we cannot immediately unify.”⁴⁵ In order to solve this antinomy, one has to assume an “exchange-oriented standpoint.”⁴⁶ “As long as two immediately contradictories are put together, they will split up. Therefore, you need to unify them by introducing a third-party principle that would separate them.”⁴⁷ It is here that “money” appears as the “mediation for exchange.” “Money is itself a kind of commodity.” However, it serves as a “third-party principle.”⁴⁸

This logic may seem to be a rather schematic application of the standard Hegelian notion of mediation and supersession. In addition, Tanabe is apparently talking about the contradiction within a commodity, rather than a social process between two commodity owners. However, it is possible and more productive to take Tanabe’s formulation of contradiction not as a speculative construction, but as referring to *incommensurability* between use-value as a qualitative matter and exchange-value as a quantitative category. It is also important to note that at this point there is no common measure or medium of value available yet. What is at stake is the very genesis of money that would mediate and facilitate exchange. Tanabe clearly understands Marx’s insight into the emergence of money out of “social action.” Here Tanabe mentions an important passage in *Capital* in which Marx cites Goethe’s famous phrase in *Faust*: “In their difficulties our commodity-owners think like Faust: ‘In the beginning was the deed [*Im Anfang war die Tat*].’ They have acted before thinking.”⁴⁹ In the paragraph following the quote, Marx develops an action theory of money, as it were.

They [commodity owners] can only bring their commodities into relation as values, and therefore as commodities, by bringing them into an opposing relation with some one other commodity, which serves as the

44 Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 113.

45 Ibid., 115.

46 Ibid., 114.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 180.

universal equivalent.... But only the action of society [*gesellschaftliche Tat*] can turn a particular commodity into the universal equivalent. The social action of all other commodities, therefore, sets apart the particular commodity in which they all represent their values.⁵⁰

Marx goes on to say that this leads to a “socially recognized” equivalent form, that is, money. “Through the agency of the social process it becomes the specific social function of the commodity which has been set apart to be the universal equivalent. It thus becomes—money.”⁵¹

It is possible to distinguish several moments in this dialectic, which involves, first and foremost, the “action of society” in the beginning, the subsequent exclusion of one particular commodity as a universal equivalent, and finally the social recognition of this equivalent as money. Tanabe’s reading focuses on the moment of action in this whole process. Curiously, he does not thematically analyze the moment of social recognition per se. “In one word, money was not invented as a method or solution to intellectually (*kannen-teki ni*) cope with the contradiction of the commodity. But money was brought about through the act of transformation before thinking, when in an impasse, one gives up oneself in a state of powerless self-abandonment, as it were.”⁵² First of all, it is important to see that the action Tanabe is describing is one of creating the very medium of exchange. In this sense, it is a performative act par excellence. However, this action is fundamentally different from the active operation of a subject. This is in stark contrast to the voluntaristic theory of action modeled on means-end rationality, because the action he is talking about cannot presuppose any frame of reference as given. Tanabe emphasizes that the action does not derive from prior planning or thinking. He points out the essential limit of our thinking: “Since the nature of our thinking is to fix and conceive of things in terms of their identity, it is fundamentally impossible to intellectually reproduce (*utsusu*) reality in its self-contradictory and dynamic development.”⁵³ Thinking must negate itself, breaking with its standpoint of self-identity. The act of self-negation is urged and mediated by the impasse of antinomy when *tenkan*, or transformation, begins in a state of “self-abandonment”: “In a self-negating impasse, as well as transformation, both reality and thinking are mediated by our own action. In this action, reality and thinking mutually and transformatively interpenetrate each other; it is impossible to draw a definite

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 180–81.

52 Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 115.

53 Ibid., 120.

border between them.”⁵⁴ In action, neither thinking nor reality has primacy over the other. Just as thinking cannot be a self-identical operation anymore, reality ceases to be a self-identical matter. Like the Epicurean atom, matter reveals itself essentially as self-contradictory. Thinking and reality are both negated and become self-contradictory.

In *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, Tanabe frames this experience of deadlock or antinomy in terms of religious *zange*, or repentance: “This impassable barrier of antinomies, even as it remains closed, will become passable if the contradictions are recognized as penetrable though still unresolved, if one throws oneself into this difficult situation and surrenders oneself in absolute submission to its requirements without any resistance on the part of discursive (discriminatory) thinking.”⁵⁵ If thinking gives up its *jiriki* (self-power), which implies the logic of identity, there will be no border that distinguishes it from reality, which is itself no longer self-identical. What propels this self-abandoning transformation, Tanabe claims, is *tariki*, or other-power, of “absolute nothingness.” Thinking and reality are now transformed into mutually mediated “self-qua-other” or “other-qua-self,” while the practice of *zange* by other-power takes place as the action of self-power. Although Tanabe describes this process in terms of religious notions, such as Pure Land Buddhist *tariki* and *jiriki* and Kierkegaard’s concept of “death-and-resurrection,” what is relevant to our context is the dialectic at work in this situation: the paradoxical transformation of rebirth through self-abandonment. One can clearly see that in this dialectic, Tanabe is getting at exteriority and alterity in the form of nothingness. At the same time, absolute nothingness is a vanishing mediator that urges the powerless subject into action toward the future. Other-power needs self-power. Tanabe maintains there is no other way in which absolute nothingness can manifest itself. In this way, action in Tanabe’s sense is a resurrected mode of agency that is urged and mediated by nothingness.

We need to remember, however, that he was commenting on the emergence of money in *Capital*, which is based not on the action of individuals, but the “action of society.” Significantly, however, he does not mention the passage in which Marx talks about social recognition of money as a universal equivalent. That is to say, Tanabe seems to leave the matter open as to whether or not this social action succeeds in creating money. If we may assume this is the case, another important point Tanabe is making here is that such a universal is neither preestablished nor inevitable in the strict sense. Rather, the possibility of a universal is based on a risky, contingent act of exchange. In other words, there

54 Ibid., 121.

55 Tanabe, *Metanoetics*, 9.

is no guarantee of social recognition of a particular commodity as a universal standard. In this way, such a commitment to absent universality in creating the medium is an aleatory act. However, it is not a mere random act of throwing the dice. Nor is it a mutual recognition based on rational communication. The action mediates and is mediated by a leap of faith, that is to say, a faith in the absent universal.

Based on this reading of the emergence of money, Tanabe critically comments on Marx's famous statement about Hegelian dialectic in the afterword to the second edition of *Capital*.⁵⁶ "Marx says, 'the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.' This statement may serve as a refutation of Hegel. As a literal expression, however, it must be said to betray (*uragiru*) Marx's own standpoint."⁵⁷ The so-called materialist inversion of idealist dialectic, Tanabe argues, does not truly represent Marx's own dialectic. Tanabe explicates what Marx meant by "matter": "What Marx calls matter is no longer mechanical, natural matter. It is historical matter, that is to say, the objective moment of reality that is being made (*sakui sare tsutsu aru*) through human action."⁵⁸ The Epicurean atom was "no longer matter as self-identical being, but being that is nothingness, that is to say, matter that is not matter."⁵⁹ Just like it, Marx's matter also allows self-contradiction within itself. Marx's dialectic in this sense, Tanabe thus claims, should be called "action dialectic" (*kōi beshōhō*) or "reality dialectic" (*genjitsu beshōhō*), which is characterized as "immaterial and nonmaterialist."⁶⁰

56 Beyond the issues of commodity exchange and money, Tanabe basically accepts the Marxist critique of capitalism. Once money assumes "independence," Tanabe argues, it brings about two "strange inversions." First, merchant capital now seeks to accumulate money itself. Money then transforms itself into *capital*. The second inversion occurs when labor power is commodified: workers' actual labor produces more value than that of labor power they sell. Tanabe here is getting at the Marxian distinction between labor and labor power. (Unfortunately, however, he reveals some inaccuracy in his understanding: he speaks as if "surplus value" were achieved through "extra labor" beyond the working day written in the contract. In fact, he describes surplus value as "unjust acquisition" or "unjust exploitation.") Moreover, he recounts the classic narrative of the crisis of capitalism through overproduction, concentration of capital, impoverishment of the working class, and so forth. Although opposed to Communists' political strategy of "violent revolution," he largely agrees with their diagnosis of the contradictions of capitalism. This is partly why, in the immediate postwar period, Tanabe called for "social democracy." See Tanabe, *Tetsugaku nyūmon*, 118–20.

57 *Ibid.*, 122.

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Ibid.*

60 *Ibid.*, 123.

In this way, Tanabe identifies the same kind of dialectic in the young and mature Marx. The movements of the Epicurean atom and commodity exchange, Tanabe demonstrated, are based on the dynamic that I call aleatory dialectic.

Karatani's Parallax

Tanabe's reading of Marx not only comes close to Althusser's aleatory materialism, but also demonstrates a striking resemblance to the reading of *Capital* by Karatani Kojin, which has evoked a number of important responses. Significantly, a commentary by Slavoj Žižek also helps illuminate Tanabe's philosophical project as well as his reading of Marx.

In his *Transcritique* (2003), Karatani formulates a definitive version of his influential interpretation of Marx since his *Marx: The Center of Possibilities* (1978). Just like Tanabe, he rereads *Capital* from the standpoint of "exchange" instead of production. He makes a crucial distinction between two stances, i.e., "ex ante facto" and "ex post facto." Karatani explains: "Commodity may be seen as a synthesis of use-value and exchange-value only inasmuch as it is seen from an ex post facto stance, while such a synthesis does not exist ex ante facto. The value of a commodity can come into existence only after it is exchanged with another commodity, an equivalent."⁶¹ The difference between "before" and "after" in the exchange of commodity and money represents a temporal leap, which Marx famously describes as *salto mortale*: "*C–M. First metamorphosis of the commodity, or sale. The leap ... is the commodity's salto mortale.*"⁶² Karatani also overlaps this Marxian difference with what Kierkegaard calls "qualitative dialectic" in the paradoxical synthesis of "Jesus-as-Christ." Karatani makes this comparison because he identifies these two thinkers as "the most radical critics of Hegelian ex post facto synthesis."⁶³ Karatani harshly criticizes Hegel for conceiving of history as a teleological process of self-realization of the absolute spirit. In other words, Hegel looks at everything from the point of view of "ex post facto," as if the process is already completed. Hence, the "end of history." (However, this is a rather standard critique of Hegel, which Tanabe, along with Žižek, would challenge.)

In contrast, Karatani reads Marx's critique of political economy through Immanuel Kant's project of transcendental critique. In order to describe the value of a commodity, Karatani specifically refers to Kant's important distinction in his *Third Critique*, i.e., "reflective judgment" and "determinant judgment."

61 Kojin Karatani, *Transcritique*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 190.

62 Marx, *Capital*, 200 (italics in the original).

63 Karatani, *Transcritique*, 189.

“Here it is possible,” Karatani thus maintains, “to see the distinction between reflective and determinative as analogous to that between *ex ante facto* and *ex post facto*.”⁶⁴ In this way, Kant’s philosophy as a whole, Karatani points out, is informed by this kind of move between different perspectives, including analysis and synthesis, thesis versus antithesis (i.e., antinomy), as well as determinative and reflective judgment. Karatani calls this a “parallax” that allows us “to see things neither from his own viewpoint nor from the viewpoint of others, but to face the reality that is exposed through difference.”⁶⁵ This parallax, Karatani argues, also characterizes Marx: the dual perspective gained through his “transposition” between Germany and England made his “critique of political economy” possible.

Although Tanabe would object to such a simplistic dichotomy between Kant and Hegel, I would argue that the stance of *ex ante facto*, or *salto mortale*, is shared by Tanabe’s reading of *Capital* as well. These phrases are all the more suitable to describe his standpoint since he discusses the very act of inventing money as a medium of exchange. Tanabe clearly understands the structure of action according to Kant’s reflective judgment. Indeed, he was one of the first Japanese scholars who thematically discussed Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In *Kant’s Teleology* (1924), Tanabe discussed the central notions in *The Third Critique*, including “reflective judgment” and “purposiveness without purpose.”⁶⁶ He continued to use these notions as part of his key concepts even after he adopted Hegelian dialectic in the early 1930s. “If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given,” Kant says, “then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it ... is determining. If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely reflecting.”⁶⁷ In Tanabe’s exposition of *Capital*, commodities correspond to particulars, while money represents a universal; money as a medium of exchange belongs to the domain of *reflektierende Urteilskraft*, or reflective judgment, because it is not already given. The absent universality corresponds to “purposiveness without purpose.” What is at stake in the genesis of money is precisely to find or even invent a third party as a universal equivalent to make it possible to exchange particular commodities. Therefore, reflective judgment can also be described in terms of translating incommensurables

64 Ibid., 188.

65 Karatani, *Transcritique*, 3.

66 Tanabe Hajime, *Kanto no mokutekiron* [Kant’s teleology], in *THz* 3: 1–72.

67 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66–67.

into commensurabilities.⁶⁸ Tanabe's argument rigorously shows how money as a universal medium is invented through action structured by reflective judgment. In this way, Karatani's interpretation of Marxian *salto mortale*, it turns out, is almost identical to Tanabe's logic of reflective judgment.

Žižek's Parallax and Futur Antérieur

In his commentary on Karatani's *Transcritique*, Slavoj Žižek makes a point similar to Tanabe's discussions of Marx as well as German Idealism. Inspired by Karatani, Žižek borrows his "parallax" notion in his own central argument that emphasizes the irreducible gap between two separate points of view that cannot be synthesized or superseded. Included in this parallax gap are phenomena such as antinomies, ontological difference, sexual difference, political economy, class struggle, and so forth. What is relevant to our discussion is that Žižek describes the commodity's *salto mortale* in terms of the temporality of *futur antérieur*, which he argues characterizes not only Marx but Kant and Hegel as well. In other words, the action as reflective judgment in both exchange of commodities and invention of money has the temporal structure of *futur antérieur*. Here Žižek comes very close to Tanabe's temporal dialectic of *yosen mirai*.

The temporal gap between the production of value and its actualization is crucial: even if value is produced in production, without the successful completion of the process of circulation, there *stricto sensu* is no value—the temporality here is that of the *futur antérieur*: value "is" not immediately; it only "will have been," it is retroactively actualized, performatively enacted.⁶⁹

68 In this respect, the issue of commodity exchange is analogous to the question of "translation" insofar as it also implies creating commensurability out of incommensurability. Naoki Sakai argues that translation is made possible by a "heterolingual address" in which the translator cannot assume the addressee will understand what she is saying. In this sense, translation takes place as reflective judgment with *futur antérieur* its temporality. Sakai also shows how the act of "translation" precedes the unity of a "language." See Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1997). Significantly, Sakai points out elsewhere that the Kyoto philosophers, such as Tanabe and Miki Kiyoshi, were deeply indebted to the problematic of Kantian reflective judgment discovering the unknown universal. See "Interview with Naoki Sakai," in *Politics of Culture: Around the Work of Naoki Sakai*, edited by Richard F. Calichman and John Namjun Kim (New York: Routledge, 2010), 231.

69 Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 52.

Žižek makes clear that the parallax gap between production and circulation constitutes an antinomy, and that it will be solved through the temporality of *futur antérieur*. But this is another way of stating Karatani's point: commodity exchange always already faces a crisis; "it will have been" may not be realized—eventually; there is no preestablished harmony whatsoever. At the same time, however, Žižek makes a vital point that the commodity's "leap of faith" should not be mistaken as certain normativity, or even Kantian "ought" and "regulative ideal." The "leap of faith," Žižek insists, is fundamentally "*anti-normative*": "the 'leap of faith' by means of which the subjects take it for granted that they mean the same thing not only has no normative content, but can even block further elaboration."⁷⁰ That is to say, it is nothing but a "counterfactual fiction."⁷¹ This amounts to saying, "they know not what they do." Karatani's Marx would also begin with this fundamental fact. It is certainly necessary to recognize that the practice of everyday life consists of countless verbal and economic transactions made possible by a groundless trust in this social fiction. That is to say, everydayness always touches, but forgets this abyssal, and indeed aleatory, dimension. This is also why Tanabe chose to comment on the specific passage on exchange and creation of money in *Capital*.

Despite all this subtle critique, however, Žižek actually never denies the "fact" that the counterfactual "leap of faith" pragmatically produces the "social facts" of, and shared or to-be-shared faith in, the validity of meaning and value. He repeatedly emphasizes the very performative and retroactive character of this temporality. What Tanabe describes as *gyō-shin-shō*, or "action-faith-witness," in his *zange dō*, or metanoetics, points to this temporal structure: an aleatory act, made possible by faith, will have been witnessed and demonstrated.⁷² To be sure, Tanabe insists that the "subject" of this action is not "my" self, but absolute nothingness. When he retains the term *jikaku*, or self-consciousness, for lack of a better word, however, he is saying that a minimum level of reflection is necessary for action.⁷³

Žižek shows how this temporality of the performative-retroactive is not only Kantian, but also—*pace* Karatani—Hegelian. Žižek identifies the same dual character in the Kantian-Hegelian notion of "freedom":

"Freedom" is thus inherently retroactive: at its most elementary, it is not simply a free act which, out of nowhere, starts a new causal link, but a

⁷⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Tanabe, *Metanoetics*, li.

⁷³ Ibid., 134.

retroactive endorsing which link/sequence of necessities will determine me. Here, we should add a Hegelian twist to Spinoza: freedom is not simply “recognized/known necessity,” but recognized/assumed necessity, the necessity constituted/actualized through this recognition. This excess of the effect over its causes thus also means that the effect is retroactively the cause of its cause—this temporal loop is the minimal structure of life.⁷⁴

Žižek also characterizes this temporal loop in terms of what Hegel calls “*Setzung der Voraussetzungen*” (positing the presuppositions). Significantly, Tanabe already had developed a similar conception of “meaning” in his critical dialogues with Kant, Hegel, and Marxism in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Tanabe contrasts the mechanical notion of causality, predominant in orthodox Marxism at the time, and the notion of “meaning” that is at work in human action. “Meaning” refers not so much to something that can be linguistically defined per se but to a “purpose” of human action that is made possible by reflective judgment. While a causal relationship is linear, with the cause preceding the effect, cause and effect in human action are mutually mediated through the temporality of meaning. “The relationship of meaning,” Tanabe maintains, not only “contains the causal relationship in itself,” but also “conditions the so-called abstract causal relationship.”⁷⁵ Tanabe attributes to the notion of meaning a certain, higher sense of effectivity that conditions linear causality. “What is taken as cause,” he claims, “is conditioned by the meaning of the whole, or what the whole should realize.”

Cause is determined in such a way as to work to realize a purpose that does not yet exist within itself. Cause is again determined by another cause, as it were. Cause is determined by what is considered to be opposed to itself, i.e., effect. Effect is transformed into another cause, and

74 Žižek, *Parallax View*, 204.

75 Tanabe Hajime, “Benshōhō no imi” [The meaning of dialectic], in *THz* 15: 196. He gave this public lecture at the Tokyo Imperial University, hosted by the Ministry of Education. The date of the lecture is unknown. In it, Tanabe argues that it is important to critically study Marxism, rather than banning it from curricula, in order to prevent its influence spreading among college students. The editor of *Tanabe zenshū*, Ōshima Yasumasa, conjectures that, judging from its view of dialectic, as well as its commentary on the left-leaning students, the lecture was delivered at about the same time as the publication of *Hegelian Philosophy and Dialectics* or perhaps later, but not later than the outbreak of the China Incident. See Ōshima Yasumasa, “Kaisetsu” [Editor’s commentary], in *THz* 15: 506–08.

here the [first] cause works as an effect, taking the [first] effect as its own cause.⁷⁶

Tanabe describes the temporal dialectic of retroactive transformation of effect into cause, or “cause of the cause.” The performative moment of action toward the future retroactively constructs the past cause. This temporality of reflection characterizes his “absolute dialectic,” which he claims supersedes the oppositions between mechanism and teleology, idealism and materialism. Tanabe’s effect-turned-cause presents the very same insight into what Žižek calls the “temporal loop.” As Žižek points out, this temporal structure of self-reflection makes the self-identity of living organisms possible, which emerge “at the minimally ‘ideal’ level, as an immaterial event.”⁷⁷ When Tanabe repeatedly claims that Marx’s dialectic of action is not merely materialist, but “immaterial and nonmaterialist,” he is saying exactly the same thing as Žižek. Tanabe would agree with Žižek in saying that to reduce this immateriality to either material or ideal elements means to miss the parallax gap between these two dimensions.

Tanabe’s *yosen mirai* can be taken as a development of this temporal logic of transformation. To be sure, one cannot ignore the major shift from his “absolute dialectic” in the 1930s to his metanoetic philosophy in the immediate postwar period. This turn is usually described as a change from a standpoint of self-power to that of other-power. In the metanoetic period, Tanabe presents a weak notion of the subject, emphasizing contingency beyond control, as well as impasse, powerlessness, and self-abandonment of the subject. Nevertheless, the tensions or antinomies between causality and finality, contingency and agency, finitude and freedom constitute the pivotal moments in his dialectic and the very logic of temporal transformation as expressed in his *yosen mirai*.

Conclusion

Tanabe’s dialogue with Marx concentrates on identifying in him a temporal dialectic of human action that mediates contingency and agency, particularity and universality, causality and finality. Tanabe understands it as an act of transformation, expressed in the temporal dynamic of *futur antérieur*, as well as the logical structure of reflective judgment. This temporal dialectic I call aleatory dialectic. With Louis Althusser, Tanabe emphasizes Epicurean declination and

76 Tanabe, “Benshōhō no imi,” 197.

77 Žižek, *Parallax View*, 204.

aleatority; however, he remains committed to the idea of action as a future-oriented, or even future-promoted, temporality, which he calls *yosen mirai*. In his reading of *Capital*, too, Tanabe describes the invention of money as an act of transformation that breaks through the antinomy between particular commodities toward the absent universal medium, which reminds us of what Karatani Kojin calls commodity's *salto mortale* and its "ex ante facto" stance. They both explain this structure in terms of Kant's reflective judgment. Yet Tanabe differs from Karatani in his reliance on Hegelian dialectic. Here Tanabe's aleatory dialectic finds its contemporary counterpart in Slavoj Žižek. Tanabe's *yosen mirai* corresponds to what Žižek describes as the performative-retroactive temporality of *futur antérieur*. In this way, Tanabe's dialectic contains a still inexhaustible potential for dialogue with Marxian perspectives.

Tanabe's engagement with Marx can be said to represent one of the most productive dialogues between Marxists and non-Marxists not only in Japanese intellectual history, but also in a global theoretical context since the late twentieth century. In other words, Tanabe's aleatory dialectic goes beyond the boundaries between Marxism and the Kyoto School, "Western" and "non-Western" philosophies. If this is the case, reading Tanabe in this way will help revitalize critical theory.

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Tanabe Hajime as Storyteller

Or, Reading Philosophy as Metanoetics as Narrative

*Max Ward**

To imagine that, sheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there already exists a realm of freedom—whether it be that of the microscopic experience of words in a text or the ecstasies and intensities of the various private religions—is only to strengthen the grip of Necessity over all such blind zones in which the individual subject seeks refuge, in pursuit of a purely individual, a merely psychological, project of salvation. The only effective liberation from such constraint begins with the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, everything is “in the last analysis” political.

FREDRIC JAMESON, *The Political Unconscious*¹



The Politics of Repentance and the Problem of History

In 1946, Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962), the recently retired chair of the Department of Philosophy at Kyōto Imperial University, published *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (*Zangedō to shite no tetsugaku*), a work that is often read as marking

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1 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 20. The title of my essay borrows from another of Jameson's essays: “The Vanishing Mediator; or, Max Weber as Storyteller,” in *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971–1986. Volume Two: Syntax of History* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1988), 3–34. My reading of Tanabe is inspired by Jameson's attempt to read Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as a work of history and narrative against the conventional reading as a static typological or classificatory schema of sociological values.

a significant transformation in Tanabe's thought.² In his uncharacteristically personal preface to *Metanoetics*, Tanabe explains that this transformation was spurred by his experiences in the last years of the Pacific War, when, confronted by the suffering he witnessed around him and his inability as a philosopher to bring his expertise to bare on the situation, he was thrown into a painful process of self-reflection and self-critique. From this personal experience, Tanabe began to question the limits of philosophy and turned to the theories of self-negation and repentance found in the True Pure Land school of Buddhism (*Jōdo shinshū*). Influenced by the teachings of the Japanese Buddhist monk Shinran (1173–1263), Tanabe conceived his personal experience and the ostensible crisis of philosophy more generally through *metanoia* (μετάνοια; *zange*), understood as a circular process of self-negation, repentance, conversion, and resurrection. For Tanabe, metanoia would serve not only as a new model for philosophy—where philosophy became metanoetics (μετανόησις; *zangedō*), a continual process of philosophy's self-negation and resurrection—but more immediately, would illuminate a path for Japan's national repentance and reconstruction in the wake of war and defeat. The resulting 1946 text, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, was not a discourse on religious conversion, or a new philosophy of religion, but a call for the complete rethinking of philosophy from a religiously inflected perspective. Ultimately, Tanabe hoped to push reason to the limits of its own antinomies and, through a process of negation-and-resurrection, reformulate the philosophical enterprise as a critical practice of what he called “absolute critique” (*zettai hihan*).

Metanoetics is thus a bold and complicated text. It has been read as a philosophical treatise, as religious philosophy, and as an expression of the general discourse of national repentance (i.e., *ichioku sōzange*) circulating in Japan after its surrender in 1945.³ When *Metanoetics* is compared to Tanabe's earlier writings—in particular, to his “logic of species” (*shu no ronri*) developed

2 Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, trans. Takeuchi Yoshinori, Valdo Viglielmo, and James W. Heisig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Hereafter, cited as *PM*. Where necessary, I will also refer to the Japanese version, *Zangedō to shite no tetsugaku*, in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963), 1–269. Hereafter *THz*.

3 On *Metanoetics* as a philosophical treatise, see Nishitani Keiji et al., *Tanabe tetsugaku to ha* (Tōei sensho 17) (Kyoto: Ichitōentōeisha, 1991); James W. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); as religious philosophy, see Himi Kiyoshi, *Tanabe tetsugaku kenkyū: Shūkyō tetsugaku no kanten kara* (Tokyo: Hokuju shuppan, 1990); and the essays collected in Taitetsu Unno and James W. Heisig, eds., *The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime: The Metanoetic Imperative* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1990). On *Metanoetics* in relation to *ichioku sōzange*, see Andrew Barshay, “Postwar Social and Political Thought, 1945–1990,” in Bob Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese*

in the 1930s—*Metanoetics* appears to mark a major shift in his thought.⁴ For example, in the conventional literature, Tanabe's earlier logic of species is recognized as a thoroughly political project, emerging from his concern with the historical reproduction of ethnonational units and their constitutive irrationality.⁵ In contrast, *Metanoetics* appears to be, as James Heisig has claimed, a "supremely nonpolitical book" since it is a "call...for a religious change of heart, not for a reform of social institutions."⁶

If *Metanoetics* is understood as expressing any political significance at all, it is in representing Tanabe's shift from engaging with "historical actuality" through his earlier logic of species, to a highly abstract reassessment of philosophical reason from the standpoint of Buddhist conversion, what one critic saw as Tanabe's fall into "ultra-metaphysics."⁷ Here the debate centers on whether *Metanoetics* signified Tanabe's "philosophical *tenkō*" (*tetsugakuteki tenkō*)—i.e., a philosophical recantation—in the wake of Japan's defeat.⁸

Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

- 4 For Tanabe's works on the "logic of species," see *THz* 6 and 7. Partial English translations of essays developing the "logic of species" are: Tanabe Hajime, "The Logic of the Species as Dialectics" (1946) translated by David Dilworth and Taira Satō, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 24.3 (Winter, 1969): 273–88; and excerpts from "The Logic of the Specific" (1935) translated by James W. Heisig, in James Heisig, Thomas Kasulis, and John Maraldo, eds., *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Honolulu; University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 671–83.
- 5 Katō Shūichi rejects Tanabe's claim that his logic of species was engaged with "historical reality" as "utter nonsense" (*kōtōmukei deshika nakatta*). Katō Shūichi, "Sensō to chishikijin," in *Kindai Nihon shisōshi kōza 4: Chishikijin no seisei to yakuwari* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1959), 346. Positing a more nuanced critique, Naoki Sakai argues that Tanabe's logic of species answered the need of Japanese imperialism to link colonial subjects to the imperial state. See Naoki Sakai's contribution to this volume, and his "Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism," *Cultural Studies*, 14.3–4 (2000): 462–530. In contrast to these critiques, James Heisig attempts to exonerate Tanabe's logic from Tanabe's own ambiguous politics during the war. See James W. Heisig, "Tanabe's Logic of the Specific and the Spirit of Nationalism," in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), in particular Heisig's critique of Katō, "Tanabe's Logic," 264.
- 6 Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 155.
- 7 Yamada Munemutsu, *Shōwa no seishinshi: Kyōtōgakuha no tetsugaku* (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 1975), 99.
- 8 The term "philosophical *tenkō*" is Tsujimura Kōichi's, who argues against those who claimed Tanabe performed one in response to Japan's defeat. See Tsujimura Kōichi, "Kaisetsu: Tanabe tetsugaku ni tsuite: Aru hitotsu no rikai no kokoromi," in *Gendai Nihon shisō taikai 23: Tanabe Hajime*, edited by Tsujimura Kōichi (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1965), 45–46. It should be noted that Tanabe Hajime is included in Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai's foundational study of *tenkō* representing the "philosophy of total-war theory." However, this study locates Tanabe's

Another approach to assessing the political nature of *Metanoetics* is by gauging Tanabe's personal conversion against the more general discourse of "national repentance" circulating in Japan's soon after its defeat. In all these approaches, the political significance of *Philosophy as Metanoetics* is measured by what it does not say, in relation to either Tanabe's earlier writings or to the context of its publication.

As we can see here, the question of history is at the center of all of these evaluations of *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, whether in relation to Tanabe's intellectual trajectory or the political context in which it was published. Indeed, Tanabe himself invokes history in the preface to *Metanoetics*, where he tells us how the national crisis in 1944–1945 induced his personal metanoetic conversion and inspired him to develop this experience into a new philosophical system. Most analyses of *Metanoetics* accept Tanabe's personal narrative outlined in the preface at face value, and thus when they pose the question of history in *Metanoetics*, these studies merely repeat the personal experiences that Tanabe himself narrates in the preface.

As I will elaborate in this essay, the sense of history we get from Tanabe's preface and which is replicated in the secondary literature is that history was an external reality to Tanabe's thought, which, depending on one's evaluation, Tanabe was either bravely standing up against, or unable to resist its determinations. In contrast, I will explore how history is mediated in the text and will show how there is a formal gap between the history that inspired Tanabe's personal metanoetic conversion narrated in the preface, and the subsequent metanoetic philosophy of history that Tanabe develops through an exegesis of the philosophical canon. This attention to the formal structure of *Metanoetics* is, I contend, necessary before a fuller engagement with the content of Tanabe's metanoetic philosophy of history can take place.

What is at stake in such an approach is to measure to what degree *Metanoetics* can account for its own history; in other words, to what extent *Metanoetics* can, in Harootunian's formulation, "answer" to the history that Tanabe himself invokes in the preface.⁹ Specifically, I will analyze how the historical crises that Tanabe says threw him into penitent self-reflection are sublated within and re-textualized as a narrative of personal conversion, and ultimately displaced

supposed *tenkō* during the Pacific War. See Gotō Hiroyuki, "Sōryokusen riron no tetsugaku: Tanabe Hajime • Yanagita Kenjūrō," in Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai, ed., *Kyōdō kenkyū: Tenkō*, vol. 2. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1960), 273–338.

9 See Harootunian's idea of "philosophy's answerability to history" in Harry Harootunian, "Philosophy and Answerability: The Kyoto School and The Epiphanic Moment of World History" in this volume.

from philosophical reflection once Tanabe elaborates his metanoetic philosophy of history. Here I draw upon Fredric Jameson's idea of the "political unconscious," a critical hermeneutics that emphasizes narrative form as the location to interpret a text's ideological significance.¹⁰ Jameson is careful not to reduce the political semantics of a text solely to its sociohistorical context, which, as I will demonstrate below, has been the primary way *Metanoetics* has been evaluated. Not only does a reduction to context imply that the source of "real" determinations are solely those of external political, economic, or social processes, but at worst, it renders the text as an ideational "reflection" of an a priori social reality. Rather, Jameson argues that a text, or more correctly the interpretative codes that we bring to a text, generate their own historical contexts by dialectically subsuming irresolvable social contradictions within their symbolic structure. This subsumption establishes a text's relation to history, not as an "external reality," but paradoxically as a "subtext" internal to a text's own narrative form. Jameson explains: "The paradox of what we have here called the subtext may be summed up in this, that the literary work or cultural object, as though for the first time, brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction. It articulates its own situation and textualizes it."¹¹ Tanabe's preface to *Metanoetics* performs this symbolic operation, articulating the sociopolitical crisis in Japan into a narrative of personal torment and formally displacing this problem of history outside of the logic of his resulting metanoetics.

This displacement produces, I argue, the central paradox of Tanabe's *Metanoetics*: namely, that Tanabe both invokes the authority of the historical crisis of 1944–1945 to ground his metanoetics, only to elide the question of this history once he sets out to formulate metanoetics as a religiously inflected philosophical critique. When history is addressed again later in the text, it is reformulated as an exegetical problem to be pursued through the philosophical canon, as Tanabe conducts close readings of Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, among many others. In this way, the acute contradictions that marked *Metanoetics* own moment—e.g., the collapse of Japanese militarism and imperialism after two decades of increasing social, economic, and political crises, not to mention the nascent ideological and political divisions that would soon constitute the Cold War, all of which Tanabe alludes to in the preface—are dialectically subsumed in, and displaced by, a narrative of personal conversion, which then allows for a pure philosophical exegesis to take place in the rest of the text.

10 Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*.

11 Ibid., 82.

From his extensive reading of the canon, Tanabe develops the unique temporal logic and historicity of what he calls “absolute critique” (*zettai hihan*)—the core of metanoetics—as a “circular movement of creativity, a ‘revolution-qua-restoration’” (*kakushin-soku-fukkō no junkanteki sōzō*) which he contends “forms the basic structure of history.”¹² Here, however, Tanabe’s inquiry remains purely in the realm of philosophical discourse.¹³ Ultimately, as an exegetical problem in the philosophical canon, the paradoxical result is that Tanabe’s *Metanoetics* cannot account for its own historical genesis within its own logic. In other words, once Tanabe posits the temporal and historical logic unique to metanoesis, he does not bring this to reflect upon what initially threw him into penitent self-reflection in the first place. And it is this paradox—one between his personal narrative of history-as-experience, which subsequently authorizes his metanoetic philosophy-of-history—where we must first locate the political significance of *Metanoetics*.

Metanoetics in History: History as External Reality

To initiate this inquiry, it is first necessary to review how *Philosophy as Metanoetics* has been understood historically and the varying political evaluations that derive from such historical analyses. It should be noted at the outset that although secondary studies of *Metanoetics* bring with them their own interpretative methodologies and analytical assumptions, they by and large replicate the narrative Tanabe outlines in the preface. As I will demonstrate in the next section, this is an effect of how history is displaced at the level of the formal structure of the text. For this reason, an analysis of the secondary literature serves as an introduction to how the problem of history is framed by Tanabe in *Metanoetics*.

In the literature, the analysis of *Metanoetics* generally proceeds along two historical axes, each organized around its own specific set of questions, although each axis draws upon the other for explanatory support. The first axis

12 *PM*, 62; *THz* 9: 131.

13 For studies that focus on Tanabe’s metanoetic philosophy of history, see Kōyama Iwao “Tanabe tetsugaku no shiteki igi to tokushoku,” and Tsujimura Kōichi, “Rekishi / ronri—Hitotsu no danbenteki kakusho,” in Nishitani Keiji et al., *Tanabe tetsugaku to ha* (Tōei sensho 17) (Kyōto: Ichitōentōeisha, 1991). See also Jason M. Wirth, “Death and Resurrection as the Eternal Return of the Pure Land: Tanabe Hajime’s Metanoetic Reading of Nietzsche,” *The Past’s Presence: Essays on the Historicity of Philosophical Thought* (Södertörn Philosophical Studies 3), edited by Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback and Hans Ruin (Stockholm: Södertörns Högskola, 2006).

traces Tanabe's intellectual trajectory and inquires into whether *Metanoetics* marks a radical break in his thought (i.e., a leap of faith from the realm of philosophy into religion), as Tanabe himself portrayed it, or rather if *Metanoetics* retains the basic categorical structure of his earlier philosophy, now recast in religious terms.¹⁴ And yet, this axis almost always evaluates Tanabe's intellectual development in light of its historical context, both in the 1930s and in the postwar period. For instance, the leftist critic Yamada Munemutsu argues that *Metanoetics* was the culmination of a philosophical conundrum that Tanabe himself had created in the 1930s and 1940s, in which an insurmountable gap grew between his logical abstractions and the actual events of external reality; that is, Japanese fascism and imperialist aggression. Yamada argues that Tanabe was "caught between his ideal of the 'Logic of Species'—the ideal that he based his conceptual interpretation of the nation on—and the actual Japanese state." As a result of Japan's imminent defeat, Tanabe's own failures and "powerlessness" (*muryoku*) became explicit, and he "fell into the ultra-metaphysics" (*chōkeijijōgaku*) of metanoetics.¹⁵

The more positive evaluations of *Metanoetics* are forced to recognize that the work, at least on the surface, marks a repentant "about-face" from Tanabe's earlier philosophical project,¹⁶ since this is how Tanabe himself had narrated the project—i.e., as a pivotal "awakening" to the limits of both the self and of philosophical praxis during a time of national crisis. In these studies the question then becomes a search for the origins of Tanabe's metanoetics, and the location of its genesis determines the political evaluation, as well as the extent, of Tanabe's philosophical transformation. For instance, Tanabe's former students Tsujimura Kōichi, Ōshima Yasumasu, and Takeuchi Yoshinari, all argue against the assumption that *Metanoetics* signifies Tanabe's "philosophical *tenkō*" (*testsugakuteki tenkō*) as a result of Japan's defeat.¹⁷ To cite just one

14 Many studies of Tanabe have attempted to organize his intellectual trajectory into discrete stages, wherein *Metanoetics* marks an important transition between two periods. See, for instance, Kōsaka Masaaki, *Nishida tetsugaku to Tanabe tetsugaku* (Tokyo: Reimei shobō, 1949); Himi, *Tanabe tetsugaku kenkyū*; Takeuchi Yoshinori, "Translator's Introduction," in Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, trans. Takeuchi Yoshinori with Valdo Vighlielmo and James W. Heisig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

15 Yamada, *Shōwa no seishinshi*, 99.

16 Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo, eds., *Japanese Philosophy*, 670. Takeuchi Yoshinori notes that the period *Metanoetics* was being formulated constituted a "dramatic turning point" in Tanabe's thought. Takeuchi, "Translator's Introduction," xxxv.

17 See Tsujimura, "Kaisetsu," 45–46; Ōshima Yasumasu, "Kaisetsu," in *THz* 7: 382; Takeuchi Yoshinari, "Kaisetsu," in *THz* 9: 493–95. As noted before, the term "philosophical *tenkō*" comes from Tsujimura.

example, Takeuchi Yoshinori argues that “Tanabe’s metanoetics had developed in advance of the postwar situation,” and should not be understood as a response to defeat:

The greater part of the thought set forth in *Philosophy as Metanoetics* is therefore directly connected with the tense wartime situation in which we studied and reflected on philosophical problems. For this reason, I find it unfortunate that its publication in the immediate postwar period, which was also a time of uncommon intellectual turbulence, should have overshadowed its true origins and caused it to be absorbed into the general atmosphere of mass appeals for national repentance being generated by opportunistic politicians.¹⁸

These assessments then attempt to portray Tanabe’s singular bravery in calling for repentance as the imperial state intensified its efforts to mobilize the empire. Takeuchi goes so far as to see this as “a philosopher willing to risk his life for his convictions.”¹⁹ Not only do assessments like these ignore Tanabe’s many ambiguous statements about Japanese imperialism and the war,²⁰ but this location of the “origin” of metanoetics in 1944 allows Tanabe to appear as a lone

18 Takeuchi, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxxviii and xxxvi. Many celebratory assessments of *Metanoetics* point to the fact that Tanabe first outlined his understanding of metanoesis in his valedictory lectures in November and December 1944 upon retiring from his position at Kyoto Imperial University. See James W. Heisig, “Foreword,” in Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, trans. Takeuchi Yoshinori with Valdo Viglielmo and James W. Heisig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), xvii.

19 Takeuchi, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxxv.

20 The question of philosophical collaboration has recently resurfaced with the publication of the notorious “Ōshima memos” taken during secret meetings between Kyoto School philosophers and members of the Japanese Imperial Navy. See Ōhashi Ryōsuke, *Kyōtōgakuha to Nihon kaigun: Rekishika “Ōshima memo” o megutte* (Tokyo: PHP kenkyūjo, 2001); David Williams, *Defending Japan’s Pacific War: The Kyoto School Philosophers and Post-White Power* (London: Routledge, 2005). Both Ōhashi and Williams go to great lengths to defend the Kyoto School, and in particular Tanabe Hajime, from criticism in regards to Japanese imperialism and the war. For an important corrective to such efforts, see Sakai, “Subject and Substratum”; Harry Harootunian, “Returning to Japan: Part Two,” *Japan Forum*, 18.2 (2006): 275–82. Takeshi Kimoto has also provided an important corrective to Williams’ and Ōhashi’s readings of the “Ōshima memos” and shows how the term “metanoesis” was first used by Tanabe as an ethical principle for recasting Japan’s East Asian empire at the height of the Pacific War. Takeshi Kimoto “The Genesis of ‘Metanoetics’ from Imperial Sovereignty,” paper delivered at the “Digital Archive and the Future of Trans-Pacific Studies” Conference, Cornell University, September 12–14, 2008.

figure, standing bravely against the external forces of history and the imperial state's disastrous efforts to continue the war.

With the origins of metanoetics safely located during the war, the question then becomes whether *Philosophy as Metanoetics* constitutes a break in Tanabe's thought or is merely a translation of earlier concepts from his "logic of species" into a new philosophical system. Interestingly, those concerned with establishing "Tanabe philosophy" (*Tanabe tetsugaku*) as a single system have to overlook that Tanabe himself understood *Metanoetics* as marking a radical break.²¹ Engaging with this issue, James Heisig argues that while Tanabe's "idea of metanoetics gave his logic 'a new and deeper basis'" and thus did not signify "a radical restructuring,"²² Tanabe's turn to metanoetics was because of his failure to remain true to the critical potential of his earlier logic of species. Here Heisig argues that Tanabe's logic of species "remained too abstract," leaving it "benignly ineffective" and thus "susceptible to spreading the disease it had been concocted to contain."²³ In other words, Heisig reads Tanabe against himself in order to rescue Tanabe's *logic* from Tanabe's *personal* failure to utilize the critical potential of this logic.²⁴ In this regard, Heisig sees *Metanoetics* as emerging from this failure:

Tanabe's metanoetic did not answer the question of the relationship between the logic of the specific and the spirit of nationalism because it did not ask it.... Tanabe's turn away from the critique of social existence [i.e., logic of species] to work at the limits where reason breaks down and religious consciousness comes to birth [i.e., metanoetics] inverts the very goal that he had set for the logic of the specific. There is no doubt the metanoia was radical. The problem is that he also saw it as a redemption of his ideas from the fate that had befallen them.²⁵

While Heisig is careful to leave the final determination for Tanabe's failures and nationalist leanings to *external* determinations (i.e., history), he does

21 For instance, see Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 112; Tsujimura "Kaisetsu," 47; Takeuchi, "Translator's Introduction," xliii.

22 Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 157.

23 Heisig, "Tanabe's Logic," 286.

24 In another forum, Heisig outlines his reading of Tanabe in the following manner: "I will try to show that his thought does present a total structure from beginning to end, and that his political deviation resulted from a failure to examine his own premises and to heed his own warnings." Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 112–13.

25 Heisig, "Tanabe's Logic," 286.

ultimately understand Tanabe's turn to metanoetics to be a result of Tanabe's failure to confront the external reality of Japanese nationalism and aggression.²⁶

Other scholars have evaluated *Metanoetics* by situating the text within the historical context of its publication. This approach leads to evaluating Tanabe's metanoesis within the more general discourse of "national repentance" (*ichioku sōzange*) circulating immediately following Japan's surrender.²⁷ For instance, Andrew Barshay finds a certain naivety in Tanabe's postwar assessment of the intelligentsia's responsibility during the war. Barshay argues that there is a contradiction between Tanabe's critique of intellectuals (including himself) who claimed to be mere "innocent bystanders" during the war—thus implying that a more direct critique was possible—and Tanabe's own ethical system, which emphasized "service above that of recusal." While Barshay recognizes that "Tanabe's self-criticism was sincerely meant," he notes that Tanabe failed to recognize how his morality of service could be susceptible to nationalism and/or state mobilization during both wartime and the immediate postwar period. Barshay concludes that in the end "Tanabe remained locked in a world in which 'the compassion of Other-power' might be underwritten by state coercion," thus approximating the more general postwar *zange* discourse and its political ambiguities.²⁸

Similarly, John W. Dower weighs *Metanoetics as Philosophy* against the postwar discourse of *zange*. In Dower's reading, Tanabe's metanoesis takes on an aura of authenticity due to the personal torment that initiated it as well as the intensity to which Tanabe called for universal repentance.²⁹ However, Dower argues that by invoking Shinran in order to reassess philosophical reason,

26 It should be noted that although Heisig defends Tanabe and the Kyoto School from the criticism of leftists like Yamada Munemutsu, Heisig's view that Tanabe's logic remained at the level of the abstract and thus ineffective against the actuality of nationalism may owe more to Yamada than Heisig admits. For Heisig's defense of Tanabe against Yamada and other leftist critics, see Heisig, "Tanabe's Logic," 257–68.

27 For instance, on the eve of the arrival of Occupation Forces, Prime Minister Higashikuni Naruhiko called for a "nationwide, collective repentance" (*ichioku sōzange*) as a first step on Japan's road "toward reconstruction and...national unity." Higashikuni, August 30, 1945, quoted in Barshay, "Postwar Social and Political Thought" 273–74. Also cited with a slightly different translation in John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 496.

28 Barshay, "Postwar Social and Political Thought," 276.

29 John Dower, *Embracing Defeat*. Dower points to Tanabe's vision of social democracy as well as his call for the emperor to distribute imperial wealth to the nation as an example of repentance to sharpen the distinction between Tanabe and the more strategic call for "repentance" from the government. See *ibid.*, 500–01.

Tanabe inadvertently smuggled nationalism into his religious language of salvation. For Dower, Tanabe's metanoetics was located within an opposition between a "unique, even superior, traditional wisdom of Japan" and the "inferiority of the Western philosophical tradition."³⁰ For Dower, metanoesis was a "singular Japanese path to redemption, a transcendent wisdom greater than anything Western thought has produced."³¹ Japanese singularity was then invested with world historical importance, as Dower points to sections in which Tanabe argues that metanoetics would allow Japan to "overcome the dichotomy" between capitalism and socialism, and fulfill what Tanabe saw as "the historical mission that fate has accorded our country of Japan."³²

Whether *Metanoetics* is assessed through Tanabe's intellectual trajectory, or in relation to the immediate postwar context, in both approaches history is understood as an external reality that Tanabe and his thought were determined by and/or reacting against. In the next section I will show how these are not necessarily misreadings of *Metanoetics*, but rather are based upon how Tanabe himself narrated his personal experiences of the historical crises of 1944–1945 in the preface. In order to move beyond such readings, I will focus on the function of the preface in relation to the overall structure of *Metanoetics*, and what happens to history in its narrative.

History in *Metanoetics*: Interiorization and the Displacement of History

What is most curious about Tanabe's preface and the reading of *Philosophy as Metanoetics* that it authorizes, is that although Japan's immanent defeat in 1944–1945 was the catalyst for Tanabe to be thrown into self-reflection, the historicity of this crisis is narrated as an interior experience of repentance, effectively displacing it beyond any further investigation.³³ The result is that this history is momentarily emphasized in the preface only to be forgotten after it has performed this narrative function. Thus before we can take Tanabe to task for eliding his own ambiguous support for Japanese imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s, we must first recognize how the historical staging of metanoia in the

30 Ibid., 497 and 499.

31 Ibid., 497.

32 Tanabe, quoted in *ibid.*, 500.

33 Tanabe's overemphasis of the "catastrophic" last years of the war completely ignores the decades of both Japanese aggression throughout East Asia and increasing political repression domestically—including the deaths of his own imprisoned students, Tosaka Jun and Miki Kiyoshi, in 1945.

preface forecloses the possibility of asking these kinds of questions. The effect is that Tanabe fails to recognize that *Metanoetics* cannot take account of its historical genesis within its own formal logic.

Tanabe begins his preface by describing the critical years of 1944–1945 in Japan, when the convergence of “economic distress,” the “increasing threat of direct raids and attacks,” and the government’s inability to enact reforms that could “stem the raging tide of history” caused consternation throughout the nation. Worse, the government kept “the actual course of events secret from the people” while suppressing all forms of public opinion except those of the extreme right. Giving this extra critical charge, Tanabe remembers that in “the midst of economic distress and tensions, and an ever deepening anxiety, our people were greatly concerned about their nation’s future but did not know where to turn or to whom to appeal” (*PM*, xlvi). This immediately presents the reader with a sense of sociohistorical crisis, a crisis that Tanabe utilizes to present his metanoetics as a path to national salvation and reconstruction.

Here, Tanabe notes that he too “shared in all these sufferings of my fellow Japanese, but as a philosopher I experienced another kind of distress” (*PM*, xlvi). The unique dilemma Tanabe faced was that “as a student of philosophy, I ought to be bringing the best of my thought to the service of my nation,” but that to do so in a time of war would be considered “traitorous” (*PM*, xlvi–l). This dilemma, between the destruction that Tanabe saw around him and his inability to do something to stave off this destruction, drove Tanabe “to the point of exhaustion,” in which he ultimately concluded that he was “not fit to engage in the sublime task of philosophy” (*PM*, xlvi). In his surrender to his own powerlessness, and the “penitent confession” that this delivered him to, Tanabe was thrown back into his “own interiority and away from things external” (*PM*, l). This is the first pivot of Tanabe’s narrative: the *external* socio-historical crisis in 1944–1945 is *interiorized* into his individual and experiential crisis, re-narrating the original catalyst into a process of personal reflection and transformation.

This interiorization initiates the process through which Tanabe simultaneously “died to philosophy” and was “resurrected by *zange*” (*PM*, li)—expressive of the metanoetic logic of “death-and-resurrection” (*shifukkatsu*) that Tanabe will elaborate later in the text. Tanabe’s personal distress led him to the teachings of Shinran and the True Pure Land school of Buddhism, which he read as essentially a doctrine of metanoia (*zange*).³⁴ At the level of individual

34 Tanabe renders the Greek *μετάνοια* and *μετανόησις* (*metanoia* and *metanoetic*) as *zange* (懺悔) and *zangedō* (懺悔道) respectively. He then connects this to his reading of Shinran’s *Kyōgyōshinshō* as a doctrine of metanoetic praxis of death-and-resurrection.

experience, then, Tanabe understood *zange* as the “conversion and transformation” (*tenkan fukkatsu*) of the self through Other-power (*tariki*). In metanoetics, Other-power is not a transcendental “being,” but rather is the locus of a radical alterity to the self, which is only manifested in the *negation* of all relative beings. Ultimately, the operation of Other-power is one of religious grace. Tanabe had earlier formulated this transcendent alterity as, following Nishida Kitarō, “absolute nothingness” (*zettai mu*). Here Tanabe locates absolute nothingness in the operations of the Buddhist concept of Other-power, whereby *zange* becomes the effect of the “transcendent negation of absolute nothingness at work in the self” (*PM*, xlv). At a later point in the text, Tanabe calls this the “paradox of nothingness” wherein “the absolute [as nothingness] is the principle of this absolute mediation, yet paradoxically transcends us even as it remains forever immanent in us” (*PM*, 96). Tanabe suspends Other-power in the liminal space between transcendence and immanence through the operations of grace. Speaking of his own metanoesis, Tanabe recounted that “this Other-power brings about a conversion in me that heads me in a new direction along a path hitherto unknown to me.” Already, the external historical crisis that Tanabe began his preface with has been textualized as his personal negation through the grace of Other-power.

Tanabe is careful not to portray his metanoetic transformation as an epiphanic moment of conversion analogous to a religious “rebirth,” since this would leave open the potential for the self to fall into the error of assuming that one’s faith was a result of self-power (*jiriki*).³⁵ In order to safeguard against falling into this error required a perpetual process of “death-and-resurrection”—the negation of the self and the salvific grace of Other-power—which anticipates the historical principle of “revolution-qua-restoration” (*kakushin-soku-fukkō*) that he will formulate later in the text:

However, as Tanabe himself notes, the term *zange* is not used by Shinran in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. However, he argues that *zange* is the “whole basis and background” of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* (*PM*, 21). Ueda Yoshifumi does not let Tanabe escape from this philological issue, noting that Shinran consciously used the term *zangi* (慚愧), not *zange*, in order to distinguish his thought from other versions of Buddhism. See Ueda Yoshifumi, “Tanabe’s Metanoetics and Shinran’s Thought,” in Unno and Heisig, eds., *The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime*, 135. See also Taitetsu Unno, “Shin Buddhism and Metanoetics,” in Unno and Heisig, eds. *The Religious Philosophy*.

35 In other words, the error that Buddhists call *honganbokori*. For an explication of *honganbokori*, see *PM*, 15; and Wirth, “Death and Resurrection as the Eternal Return of the Pure Land,” 188–89.

Only through continual *zange* can we achieve the faith and witness (*shin-shō*) of continuous resurrection. By acting in and witnessing to the circular process of death-and-resurrection that characterizes *zange* and indeed accords with the unfolding of reality itself, the infinity and eternity of *zange* are revealed to us and the dialectical unity of absolute and relative affirmed. *This is in fact the basic principle that shapes history. In terms of its concrete content, metanoetics is a radical historicism in that the continuous repetition of zange provides basic principles for the circular development of history.* (*PM*, lii; emphasis mine)

In an important move, Tanabe casts his personal crisis as simultaneously a philosophical crisis, recounting that “metanoesis was aroused because I had been driven to the limits of my philosophical position as I confronted the desperate straits into which my country had fallen” (*PM*, liv). This then is the second pivot in the narrative of the preface. Like the powerlessness of sentient beings that he was awakening to, Tanabe understood philosophy to be finite and predicated on a contradiction related to the subject practicing critical reason—a subject that was necessarily posed outside of critique in order for critique to take place. This observation reiterates the most important philosophical intervention of the Kyoto School thinkers beginning with Nishida Kitarō—i.e., the attempt to locate a new ground for philosophical reflection without relying on a presupposed identity, whether through a priori categories (Kant) or teleology (Hegel). However, it remains a point of debate whether their answer to this question—i.e., absolute nothingness (*zettai mu*)—allowed them to escape this conundrum.³⁶

Tanabe explains that philosophy heretofore had been a “philosophy of self-power,” one that was “bound to fall into antinomies in the encounter with actual reality.” In this encounter, “self-affirming reason can only be torn to shreds in absolute disruption” (*zettai bunretsu ni mizukara mataku hikisaku*)—a disruption, moreover, resulting from the constitutive contradiction of philosophy, whereby the “subject...undertaking the critique of pure reason” had to be negated as well—i.e., incorporated within what Tanabe called “absolute mediation” (*zettai baikai*) and thus constituting a total process of “absolute critique,” or *zettai hihan* (*PM*, lvi). However, similar to how the self would be negated and resurrected through the grace of Other-power, philosophy would necessarily be negated and reborn as metanoetics. Tanabe claimed that metanoetics would be “a philosophy that has to be erected at the very point that all prior philosophical standpoints and methods have been negated in their entirety.

³⁶ For instance, see Elena Lange’s contribution to this volume.

It is a philosophical method of ‘destruction’ more radical than even the methodical skepticism of Descartes” (*PM*, lv). However, this should not be read as Tanabe discarding philosophy for a theory of individual religious conversion, for philosophy, as with the negated self, is resurrected and transformed—yet remains a *philosophical* enterprise at its core. At this point, Tanabe famously called metanoetics “a *philosophy that is not a philosophy* (*tetsugaku naranu tetsugaku*): philosophy seen as the self-realization of *metanoetic consciousness*. It is no longer I who pursues philosophy, it is metanoesis itself that is seeking its own realization. Such is the nonphilosophical philosophy that is reborn out of the denial of philosophy as I had previously understood it” (*PM*, l). In other words, the “non-philosophical” quality of metanoetics derives from the overcoming of the inherent contradictions of (self-)identity and critical reason, an overcoming that was still ultimately oriented to what Tanabe saw as the fundamental project of philosophy, namely, self-awareness (*jikaku*).³⁷ It should be remembered that in the early 1930s Tanabe countered Nishida Kitarō’s “logic of place” (*basho no ronri*) and its emphasis on individual self-awareness with his own philosophy of the “logic of species” (*shu no ronri*) and its purported emphasis on the sociohistorical.³⁸ Tanabe’s defense of metanoetics as still within the realm of philosophy due to its concern with self-awareness (*jikaku*) could thus be read as Tanabe’s capitulation to Nishida’s original emphasis, and, as many later studies have argued, marking Tanabe’s abandonment of the socio-historical. As will be explored further below, when metanoetics is linked to a social praxis, it is largely to affirm the negation-and-resurrection of the self, rather than a logic *of* the sociohistorical.³⁹ In other words, the logical priority rests with the individual who continually *affirms* their transformation through social-praxis, guided of course, by the grace of Other-power.

The final pivot of Tanabe’s preface is when he links his existential crisis, individual transformation, and reconsideration of philosophy, to the imperative for national redemption and reconstruction. It can be argued that this completes the telos of Tanabe’s narrative of metanoesis. He recounts that “once I had turned my attention away from my private life to focus on the destiny of our nation, my regret and sadness were without bounds.” History has become destiny. Armed with his new faith in Other-power, Tanabe reports that he was

37 For instance, Tanabe argued that metanoetics “maintains the purpose of functioning as a reflection on what is ultimate and as a radical self-awareness, which are the goals proper to philosophy” (*PM*, l).

38 This break can be dated to Tanabe’s review of Nishida’s *Ippansha no jikakuteki taikai* (1930). See Tanabe’s “Nishida-sensei no kyō o aogu” (1930), in *THz* 4.

39 On this point, see Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 169.

able to confront the Allied bombing of Japan and unconditional surrender without falling back into anguish:

Notwithstanding these calamities and even though the situation was considerably worse than before, I was no longer sunk in despair but endeavored to concentrate on the problems that lay before me. In this I could feel the power of metanoetics. Far from relinquishing myself to despair, I was transformed, converted, by the absolute and elevated to a spirit of detachment. This confirmed my conviction that metanoetics is as strong as we are weak. (*PM*, lix)⁴⁰

Individual conversion was never to be limited to individual salvation but *necessarily* entailed performing salvific acts for others. This is where Tanabe makes the connection between metanoesis and national solidarity, finding in Shinran's principles of *ōsō-ekō* and *gensō-ekō*—"going forth" toward salvation (i.e., self-negation) and "returning to the world" in order to perform salvific acts for others (i.e., affirmation), respectively—a social praxis for communal (or more correctly, national) redemption. This infuses metanoesis with an ethical imperative, namely that one's negation and surrender to Other-power through *zange* are only affirmed through the "return to this world" (*gensō*) in order to carry out ethical acts for others. This constitutes the logic of perpetual affirmation-in-negation (*kōtei-soku-hitei*) and negation-in-affirmation (*hitei-soku-kōtei*), one that Tanabe himself performed when he turned his attention away from his "private life" and back toward "the destiny" of the Japanese nation with his first public lectures on metanoetics in 1944. Compared to Tanabe's earlier "logic of species," in which the specific (*shu*) was the site of the mediation (or, for "closed societies," the limit) between the individual (*ko*) and the genus (*rui*),

40 Tanabe continues: "Looking back, I have come to realize that my own metanoesis of a year earlier [1944] was destined to prepare the future for my country. The thought of this coincidence brought me great sorrow and pain. Of course, I despise the shamelessness of the leaders primarily responsible for the defeat who are now urging the entire nation to repentance only in order to conceal their own complicity. Metanoesis is not something to be urged on others before one has performed it for oneself. Still, it is clear that we the nation of Japan, having fallen into these tragic and appalling circumstances, should practice metanoesis (*zange*) together as a people. Since I am one of those who believe in the collective responsibility of a nation, I am convinced that all of us should engage in collective metanoesis (*sō-zange*) in the literal sense of the term. I feel compelled to conclude that metanoetics is not only my own private philosophy but a philosophical path the entire nation should follow" (*PM*, lix–lx).

in metanoetics the salvific acts that take place in national society (here: *gensō*) serve largely to affirm the death-and-resurrection of the individual.

Tanabe concludes his preface by reiterating the critical importance for a nationwide *zange* performed in the wake of surrender, citing that even one “step in the wrong direction, even one day’s delay, may be enough to spell the total ruin of our land” (*PM*, lxi). Framing this in world-historical terms, Tanabe argues that Japan, if successfully renovated through metanoetic repentance, could fulfill its destiny and serve as a model for world repentance:

If there is any vocation of significance for world history in the reconstruction of our nation, it lies in the search for a middle path between these two ideologies, a middle path that is neither democracy nor socialism but moves freely between the two systems to make use of the strength of both. And if this is so, then metanoetics must become the philosophy not only of Japan but of all humanity. (*PM*, lxi–lxii)

Tanabe remarked in a letter that if this was carried out, then metanoetics “may come to have a strange kind of historical objectivity about it.”⁴¹ While Tanabe’s acolytes read such remarks as evidence of his ethical commitment to world humanity, it is hard to disagree with those like John Dower who find that Tanabe’s metanoetic imperative expressed a kind of nationalism.

Before taking Tanabe to task for nationalism, however, it is important to recognize how the preface paradoxically invokes history to infuse Tanabe’s metanoetics with urgency, only to displace it outside of the circular logic of metanoetics that he proceeds to develop in the rest of the text. As we move through the stages of Tanabe’s interiorization of the historical crisis of 1944–1945, his penitent confession, his salvific transformation, and the resulting imperative to outline metanoetics as a path for national as well as world redemption, the historical genesis of Tanabe’s metanoia is safely displaced, leaving only the imperative to formulate the logic of metanoetics through an isolated exegesis of the philosophical canon. Tanabe’s interiorization—his being thrown “back... [into his] own interiority and away things external” (*PM*, l)—begins a narrative operation similar to what Jameson defines as the initial “symbolic act” of a text: the generation of “narrative form” that is an “ideological act in its own right,

41 A personal letter from Tanabe to Takeuchi Yoshinari, cited in Takeuchi “Translator’s Introduction,” xxxvii. Tanabe’s full statement is as follows: “It seems to me that there can be no other path toward national rehabilitation than for our people as a whole to engage in repentance. My philosophy of metanoetics may come to have a strange kind of historical objectivity about it” (*ibid.*).

with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions.”⁴² Here the “formal solution” is the interiorization of the collapse of two decades of Japanese imperialism and sociopolitical crisis as initiating a deeply personal and sincere process of repentance.

Conclusion: Metanoetics and the Displacement of History

After the preface, Tanabe does not mention the historical crises that initiated his personal repentance in the years 1944–1945. This is why recognizing the narrative function of the preface is so important, for it demarcates a turning point in Tanabe’s thought, one so thorough that his elaborated metanoetics does not have to account for its genesis or what came before. Once Tanabe begins to outline the philosophical system of metanoetics, his individual experience fades from view, serving only as the precondition for his more substantial reassessment of philosophy as metanoetics. There, Tanabe outlines metanoetics against Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and other figures of the philosophical canon, arguing that although their respective systems revealed some aspect of the fundamental antinomies that drive the philosophical enterprise as such, each attempted to escape the fundamental impasse of philosophy by recuperating identity and being, whether Kant’s transcendental reason, Hegel’s *Geist*, or Nietzsche’s will to power. In the end, Tanabe explains this failure by reverting to culture:

For Heidegger, for Nietzsche, and even for Kant, the so-called independence and antinomy of the northern European spirit did not go deeply enough into the human to achieve the denial and breakthrough of the self. In the end, they all cling to a kind of self-centered elitism that makes it impossible for them to pass beyond into the freedom of absolute nothingness by renouncing and letting go of even the noble self. (*PM*, 114)⁴³

For Tanabe, metanoetics would push through such philosophical impasses and, in a continual process of negation and resurrection, become the culmination (or possibly, highest expression) of all prior philosophy.

42 Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 79. Here, “imaginary” solutions does not mean, of course, false or fictive solutions, but that which takes place in the domain of ideology.

43 At another point, Tanabe explains Nietzsche’s will to power by reverting to historical context, arguing that Nietzsche overlooked negation since the “goal of his philosophy was to save Europe from the degeneration into which it had fallen” (*PM*, 103–04).

The ground for metanoetics is this philosophical impasse—where “self-affirming reason can only be torn to shreds in absolute disruption” (*PM*, lvi)—which expresses a historical dynamic that Tanabe called “revolution-qua-restoration” (*kakushin-soku-fukkō*).⁴⁴ Tanabe understands the temporal pivot (*jiku*) of “revolution-qua-restoration” as an “eternal present” (*eikyū no genzai*), an axis where the determinations and contingency of the past are mediated by the free action to turn these determinations into the freedom of the future. This pivot of the “eternal present” ultimately demarcates the *individual* metanoetic subject—a subject of self-negation.⁴⁵ In other words, the historical time of metanoetics is largely a theory of metanoetic subjectivity as a continual process of negation and resurrection through the grace of Other-power, a negation, moreover, that needs to be continually affirmed through an ethics of social praxis oriented toward the future.

While a full analysis of Tanabe’s metanoetic philosophy of history is beyond the parameters of this essay, I contend that before such an analysis takes place it is necessary to recognize the paradoxical figuration of history in the formal structure of *Philosophy as Metanoetics*. As I have outlined in this essay, history is initially invoked in the preface to describe how Tanabe was thrown into a painful process of self-reflection and critique in the years 1944–1945. Once this experience of history has been sublated into Tanabe’s narrative of his personal conversion, history is then refigured as revolution-qua-restoration through an exegesis of the philosophical canon. This bifurcation conditions not only how Tanabe’s *Metanoetics* has been subsequently read, but more importantly, it frees Tanabe from having to account for the historical crises he notes in the preface through his new metanoetic philosophy of history. Rather, Tanabe saw metanoetics as the “regeneration of a new life” (*fukkatsu ha shinsei*),⁴⁶ both personally and philosophically. *Metanoetics* thus marks a “new beginning,” one announcing a radical break with that which was paradoxically invoked to explain its very genesis—history. Recalling Jameson’s notion of the “political unconscious,” this formal gap allows for Tanabe to posit metanoetics without having to confront *either* the irresolvable sociopolitical contradictions that were the historical ground for his purported turn to metanoetics, as well as how he himself was implicated in this history. And it is here, at the formal structure of

44 Tanabe develops “revolution-qua-restoration” from a critique of Heidegger’s ontology of time through Kierkegaard’s religious dialectic. See *PM*, 91–92.

45 When Tanabe explains that “self-consciousness arises in a circular development-qua-return (*hatten-soku-kanki*)” he admits that what “is here called the ‘self’ is no more than the center of circularity” (*PM*, 74).

46 *PM*, li; *THZ* 9: 5.

the text and its textualization of historical crisis, that we must first locate the political significance of *Philosophy as Metanoetics*.

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PART 4

The Legacies of Kyoto School Philosophy



The Subjective Drive of Capital

Kakehashi Akihide's Phenomenology of Matter

Gavin Walker

The unity of the world does not consist in its being, although its being is a precondition of its unity, as it must certainly first *be* before it can be *one*. Being, indeed, is always an open question beyond the point where our sphere of observation ends. The real unity of the world consists in its materiality, and this is proved not by a few juggled phrases, but by a long and wearisome development of philosophy and natural science.¹

FRIEDRICH ENGELS, *Anti-Dühring*

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In my conception of the “phenomenology of matter,” the total content of the total natural-historical development of matter unifies human mental and physical labor on the lithosphere, the earth’s crust or “site” (*basho*), manifesting itself rhythmically in succession. Within the universal consciousness of mankind that directly comes in contact with the complete expanse of the earth’s surface, this cosmological total content is phenomenalized, spurring us toward the phenomenology of matter. This universal consciousness of mankind is reflected as a latent potentiality in the subjective consciousness of every actual worker.²

KAKEHASHI AKIHIDE, “Rēnin no ‘busshitsu no tetsugakuteki gainen’ kara watashi no ‘zenshizenshiteki katei’ no shisō e”

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* All translations from languages other than English are mine unless otherwise indicated.

- 1 Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 25 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), 41.
- 2 Kakehashi Akihide, “Rēnin no ‘busshitsu no tetsugakuteki gainen’ kara watashi no ‘zenshizenshiteki katei’ no shisō e” [From Lenin’s “philosophical concept of matter” to my conception of the “total natural-historical process”], originally published in the inaugural issue of *Yū* in September 1964, reprinted in *Zenshizenshiteki katei no shisō* (Tokyo: Sōjusha, 1980), 341.

Following the dominant Kyoto School philosophers such as Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime, who attempted in the early 1920s to grasp the structural logic of the subject, the subsequent generation of thinkers of this moment in modern Japanese thought, trained in the late 1920s to early 1930s, and among them Kakehashi Akihide, principally concerned themselves with the questions of philosophy's social role and political economy's relation to political strategy. Both intellectual polarities, one located within the discourse of theoretical philosophy proper and the other in historical and social analysis, in essence recognized that in order to fundamentally grasp the question of the subject, analytical recourse to the systematicity of capital, the modern social relation par excellence, was necessary. What Nishida, for instance, referred to as the unity of *egressus* and *regressus*, indicating the fundamental contingency of the historical world that nevertheless operates *as if* it were a necessity, points not only to the question of development on a world scale, but also to a concern with the social order's origin, maintenance, and limits, and its links to the specific problem of how something like a subject should appear within this field. In broad terms, this concept of *egressus* qua *regressus* expresses something crucial about the structure of the capital-relation and its implications for an understanding of modern subjectivity: what is advancing (the drive toward capital's systematicity) is simultaneously retreating (burrowing inward toward an increasingly narrow social basis and its ideological zenith).

Nishida referred, in his famous "Acting Intuition" ("Kōiteki chokkan") to Marx's 1859 Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, in emphasizing, from his standpoint, that just as "economic phenomena are not conceived as the synthesis of analyzed things, but seen as the process of a lived totality," so "concrete existence mediates the self itself and forms a contradictory self-identity," requiring us to view the historical world from the standpoint not only of "our everyday historical embodiment" but also the "standpoint of absolute mediation."³ This overlapping of the concerns of the nature of the "historical world" with the concept of "absolute mediation" links together the theory of the subject with the inner logic of capitalist society. In the following pages, we will seek to discover a series of analytical moments in the work of Kakehashi Akihide that will disclose another reading of Nishida, one that develops this relation in which the theory of the subject is located within the analysis of the logical dynamics of capital. In turn, in investigating the history and development of Kakehashi's thought, we will subsequently turn to its influence on the

3 Nishida Kitarō, "Kōiteki chokkan" [Acting intuition] (1937), in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965), 570–71.

nascent New Left of the 1960s, and the other major Marxian theoretical system of the time, that of Uno Kōzō.

The Subjective Drive of the Commodity

Few recent attempts have been made to reinvestigate the Kyoto philosopher and Marxist theorist Kakehashi Akihide, specifically his attempt to rework Marxist philosophy from the logical system of Nishida Kitarō. In this vein, I examine here in particular Kakehashi's essay "In Praise of Nishida Philosophy" ("Nishida tetsugaku o tataeru"), published in the Kyoto journal *Gakusei hyōron* in May 1937, an essay that essentially formed the initial basis for Kakehashi's later influential reading of Nishida, inflected with a Hegelian-Marxist grasp of the subject.⁴ With this basis, I take up a number of his postwar texts, treating the major thematics of his work—the concept of matter implied within materialist thought, the status of the subject in the Marxian dynamics of capital, the concept of the "total natural-historical process," all themes that furnished the basis for Kakehashi's thought, which would go on in the postwar period to constitute a major trend of Marxist analysis, associated with Umemoto Katsumi, Kuroda Kan'ichi, and others around the theory of alienation.⁵ While Kakehashi appealed to Nishida philosophy as a means of grounding his Marxism in the general philosophical matrix of the time, his attempt to find an immediate link between the theory of the subject and the structural logic of Marx's *Capital*

4 "Nishida tetsugaku o tataeru" [In praise of Nishida philosophy], originally published in *Gakusei hyōron* (Kyoto), May 1937. Reprinted in *Sengo seishin no tankyū: kokuhaku no sho* (Keisō Shobō, 1975), 299–315, and subsequently reprinted in vol. 5 of *Kakehashi Akihide keizai tetsugaku chosakushū*, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1982–1987), 338–53.

5 Kakehashi's work also had a significant impact on postwar literature, particularly on writers like Noma Hiroshi and on Haniya Yutaka's serialized *Shirei* (1945–) and other writings, such as *Fugōri yue ni ware shinzu* (1950); the key to this relation lies in the analysis of *style* (*buntai*) above all else. Kakehashi's peculiar writing is full of darkness, intensity, relapses, cosmological scope, and an austere, severe mode of expression that borders on a kind of mystical or hermetic discourse. On Kakehashi's influence on literature, see Suga Hidemi, "Shisha no keijijōgaku: Kakehashi Akihide to sengo bungaku no rinen" [Metaphysics of the dead: Kakehashi Akihide and the ideal of postwar literature], *Bungei* (July 1985): 136–68; republished as Chapter 9 of Suga's *Fukusei no haikyo* (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1986). On Kakehashi's relationship to Noma Hiroshi, see for example, "Kurai e no haikai," in *Noma Hiroshi zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987). The communist student movement in Kyoto in the 1930s constituted the backdrop to Noma's famous novel *Kurai e* (Dark Pictures). I owe thanks to Brett de Bary for her help and suggestions surrounding the relationship of Kakehashi's thought to the literary scene.

presented numerous theoretical problems, while also providing a unique and influential point of departure in the intellectual history of postwar Marxism.

Kakehashi was born in 1902, and graduated from the famed First Higher School, three years behind the great Marxist cultural theorist Tosaka Jun, and six years behind Miki Kiyoshi, one of the most influential and original philosophical voices in modern Japan. He matriculated to Kyoto University and in 1928 graduated from the philosophy department, although he concentrated on sociology, writing his graduation thesis on Gabriel Tarde's microsociology of natural and social assemblages.⁶ Kakehashi became well known in the postwar period for his highly abstract theoretical investigations of Hegel and Marx, and particularly the young Marx of the 1844 *Manuscripts*. But probably the most lasting as well as formative influence on Kakehashi's unique theoretical apparatus was the philosophy of the Kyoto School, specifically that of Nishida and Tanabe. A student of theirs at Kyoto Imperial University, Kakehashi remained in Kyoto, at Ritsumeikan University, for his entire life, passing away on April 14, 1996, at the age of 93.

Like many of the younger Kyoto students, he was heavily influenced by Miki Kiyoshi's work at the time, especially the book *The Study of the Human Being in Pascal* (*Pasukaru ni okeru ningen no kenkyū*, 1926) and the essay "The Marxian Form of Anthropology" ("Ningengaku no Marukusuteki keitai," 1927).⁷ Miki's work in the 1920s provided a point of departure for an entire generation of Marxist-leaning young philosophers, partly because he produced an opening for Marxian thought specifically within the discipline of philosophy, whereas Marx had primarily been read at this point, in the mid-1920s, within the social

6 See Kakehashi's graduation thesis, "Shakai no kyogisei: Tarudo (ni tai suru) kaishakugakuteki kenkyū danpen" [The fiction of society: Hermeneutical research fragments on/against Tarde] (1928), republished in *Zenshizenshiteki katei no shisō* (Tokyo: Sojūsha, 1980), 116–57. I cannot extensively expand on this discussion of Tarde in the present essay for reasons of topicality, but I take this whole problematic up more comprehensively in Gavin Walker, "Gabriel Tarde in Modern Japan" (forthcoming) and in my forthcoming book *Topologies of the Dialectic*. It is at least important to note the widespread reading of Tarde in the 1920s in the theoretical humanities and social sciences in Japan, in contrast to Europe, where Durkheim had become the preferred theoretical source of sociological thought while Tarde had been largely ignored by this point in European and North American works, until his "rediscovery" in the 1960s by Deleuze, which would inspire a new "Tardean" moment.

7 See Miki Kiyoshi, *Pasukaru ni okeru ningen no kenkyū* [The study of the human being in Pascal] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1926); Miki Kiyoshi, "Ningengaku no Marukusuteki keitai" [The Marxian form of anthropology], originally published in *Shisō*, June 1927, and included along with other collected essays of Miki in *Yuibutsu shikan to gendai no ishiki* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1928). Republished in *Miki Kiyoshi zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966).

sciences and historical disciplines as a textual corpus that would provide a cutting-edge theoretical apparatus for the understanding of modern economic systems and specifically the social features of a capitalist society, or within theories of political organization (specifically that of Fukumoto Kazuo), which had the effect of making Marxism a seemingly elitist system of highly abstract theorizations. Miki, passing initially through a reflection on the status of the human in Pascal, turned rapidly to a different view of Marx: in emphasizing the constitution of the human being from out of the social-historical forms of labor, the means of nature, the means of production, and so forth, Miki found in Marx a method by which to treat the human not as a simple substance or given presence, but as a *relational* production, what he came to call the human as a “relational existence” (*kōshōteki sonzai*). We might rather translate this phrase as a “negotiation existence,” in the sense that Miki intended to alert us to the human being as an amalgam of negotiations with the world of objects, tools, and above all else, social-historical forms.⁸

Kakehashi (along with Tosaka Jun) was unquestionably influenced by this view that placed the emphasis directly onto the constitution of the subject from out of the complexities of everyday life in its dimensions of exchange, or *intercourse*, in the early Marxian sense of *Verkehr*. Later on, as he developed his own theoretical system, deeply indebted to Hegel more so than to Miki’s inheritance of the tradition of philosophical anthropology, Kakehashi came to repudiate what he saw as Miki’s idealist Marxism, and participated in the Materialism Research Group (*Yuibutsuron kenkyūkai*, often abbreviated *Yuiken*), centered around figures like Tosaka, Oka Kunio, Saigusa Hiroto, and Funayama Shin’ichi, which had been organized in 1932. Kakehashi came to excoriate Miki during the same year: his essay in the review *Hihan* was a brutal parody of Miki’s influential essay “Ningengaku no Marukusuteki keitai” (The Marxian Form of Anthropology) called “Miki tetsugaku no fasshoteki keitai” (The Fascist Form of Miki Philosophy). As the text stated, Kakehashi was trying to examine the perhaps unconscious “moments of possibility” in Miki’s philosophy through a reading of Miki’s just-published *Philosophy of History* (*Rekishitetsugaku*). Nevertheless, Kakehashi’s position was somewhat removed from the theoretical standpoint of the *Yuiken*, especially that of Tosaka. Partly this is due to disciplinary boundaries: Kakehashi was heavily involved in economics, sociology, and the natural sciences, more so than “pure” philosophy or cultural

8 Rereading Miki within the intellectual-historical genealogy of philosophical anthropology from Kant to contemporary figures who have attempted to develop this tradition, such as Etienne Balibar, could yield many productive insights, in particular its early 1920s iterations.

criticism.⁹ But he also later came to strongly criticize what he called “Yuiken-style materialism” (“*Yuiken*” *teki yuibutsuron*) and its “intellectualist deviation,” in particular because this tendency led to its inability to critically apprehend the philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe.¹⁰ In essence, for Kakehashi’s early work on Nishida and Tanabe, the Yuiken group made too quick a conjunction between the level of the political, the “style” of Marxist cultural critique, and the task of philosophy, suturing philosophy’s work to immediate political conclusions: from such a perspective Kyoto-School thought was inseparable at all levels from its use in times of crisis and fascist politics. But for Kakehashi, this led the Yuiken thinkers (probably with the exception of Tosaka) to hold to an impoverished view of the subject, that most peculiar of philosophical problems, and one to which Nishida in particular had devoted such extensive and abstract theorization.¹¹ But why did Kakehashi, within the Marxist theoretical framework, regard Nishida’s logical grasp of the subject as crucial? After all, the Marxian system (and particularly its Hegelian links, as well as the ubiquity of Lukács’ work, then already widely known among Japanese Marxists) already contains a theory of the subject, albeit a theory with multiple potential directions of development.

In brief, Kakehashi’s project, undertaken over a wide range of texts and over more than fifty years, was to “emphasize the subjective (*shutaiteki*) moment of materialism,” but not to produce a *subjectivist* Marxism as such. His attempt was to read *Capital* as a logic, and precisely to begin from the “subjective grasp” (*shutaiteki ha’aku*) of the so-called initial commodity (*tanshoteki shōhin*) in Marx’s *Capital*, reading it, in a sense, as a Nishida-inflected “logic of place” (*basho no ronri*), focused on the site or place of subjective self-awareness of the wage laborer who must sell his or her living labor power as a commodity. How is the systematic nature of the dialectic of capital expressed within the individualized consciousness of this worker who, compelled to sell his or her labor power for a wage, must be there at the outset for the cycle of capitalist reproduction to initiate its motion? This is precisely what Kakehashi referred to later as the task of reading “*Capital* as an actual science” (*genjitsu na gaku toshite no Shihonron*). Hattori Kenji, for example, argues that Kakehashi can be understood as combining Ernst Bloch’s emphasis on the natural subject

9 See Kakehashi’s remarks in the dialogue “Zadankai: Kyotō gakuha saha no keisei katei” [Roundtable discussion: The formation process of the left-wing of the Kyoto School], appended to Kakehashi, *Zenshizenshiteki katei no shisō*.

10 See Hattori Kenji’s *Nishida tetsugaku to saha no hitotachi* (Kobushi Shobō, 2000), 185–88.

11 For Kakehashi’s views on and remembrances of Tosaka, see *Kaisō no Tosaka Jun*, eds. Tanabe Hajime, Oka Kunio, and Kakehashi Akihide (Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 1948).

with the Lukácsian notion of class-consciousness.¹² This is a complex pairing, however, because for Bloch, the concept of a “natural subject” is by no means an attempt to ground the figure of the subject in some sort of eternally present inherent substance, but rather an argument that such a natural subject is a sort of “retrojection” back from the *future*, what he calls frequently the “not-yet”; he describes instead “that possible subject of nature which gives birth to and dynamizes itself in utopian terms not merely subjectively, but also objectively.”¹³ On the other hand, for Lukács, what is important is to emphasize “the distance that separates class consciousness from the empirically given, and from the psychologically describable and explicable ideas which men form about their situation in life.”¹⁴ This in turn leads him to produce the statement that “abstractly and formally” speaking, “class consciousness implies a class-conditioned *unconsciousness* of one’s own socio-historical and economic condition.”¹⁵ What Hattori then points to in Kakehashi’s work is its drive to utilize the projected consciousness of the proletariat-to-come as the ground from which to derive an understanding of the sociohistorical and economic conditions that could produce such a figure of history in the first place. This circular or cyclical structure of thought, where the beginning or point of departure is always recursively folding back onto itself as it develops toward its zenith is another characteristic that Kakehashi shares at the level of the *style* of thought with Nishida.

Kakehashi pursued the question of natural philosophical speculation primarily in order to look for a “subjective grasp” (and this is by far the most repeated phrase within his work) of the categories of Marxian economics.¹⁶ While Hattori is without doubt correct to emphasize this intriguing overlapping of Bloch and Lukács in the conceptual architecture of Kakehashi’s thought, it would also be possible to see in this analysis of the “subjective grasp” of objective social-historical forms a continued influence left over from his early focus on French sociology, a sort of Tardean reschematization of Marxian economics as a microsociology of the psychic life of the wage laborer. We ought to recall here Deleuze’s famous revival of Tarde’s work in 1968 in *Difference & Repetition* when he argues that, in opposition to Durkheim’s emphasis on small

12 Hattori, *Nishida tetsugaku to saha no hitotachi*, 180.

13 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 2, trans. N. Plaice et al. (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 686.

14 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. R. Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), 51.

15 *Ibid.*, 52.

16 Hattori, *Nishida tetsugaku to saha no hitotachi*, 181–82.

inventions, minor exchanges, and invisible relations, “what Tarde instaurates is a microsociology, which does not necessarily establish itself between individuals but is already founded in a single individual. [It is] a dialectic of difference and repetition which founds upon a whole cosmology the possibility of a microsociology.”¹⁷ The centrality of Deleuze’s characterization of Tarde’s sociology to the economic-philosophy of Kakehashi is essential. What Kakehashi attempted to do was to try to discover within the standpoint of the projected proletarian subject’s understanding of the categories of Marx’s *Capital* the possibility of an immediately apprehendable logic of capitalist society, prompted by Lenin’s famous declaration that “Marx did not leave behind a *Logic*, but rather the logic of *Capital*.” His project was to discover within *Capital* a structure founded on the subjective grasp, from *within* the figure of the wage laborer, of the logical development of capitalism as a total system. Thus, Kakehashi’s economic philosophy is not only an investigation into political economy, but rather could be approached from a variety of vantage points, including that of a Tardean philosophy of economic psychology.¹⁸

The Moment of Nishida Philosophy in Marxism

In the postwar theoretical environment of the mid 1940s, immediately following the defeat in World War II to the early 1960s with its nascent New Left born between the two major demonstrations against the US-Japan Joint Security Treaty (the 1960 and 1970 *Anpō* revolts), the three theorists most closely associated with a Nishida-influenced Marxism were without question Kakehashi, Umemoto Katsumi, and Kuroda Kan’ichi.¹⁹ But of all of these figures,

17 Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 105n1.

18 Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato both emphasize this dimension of Tarde. See in particular Lazzarato’s *Puissances de l’invention* (Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002).

19 See, for instance, the genealogy of Marxist theories of subjectivity in Aoki Kōhei’s recent *Komyunitarianizumu e* (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 2004), 474n12. See also on this point Suga Hidemi’s important *Kakumeiteki na, amari ni kakumeiteki na: 1968nen no kakumeishiron* (Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2003). In the period following this one (the conjuncture of the late 1940s–early 1960s), significant new theoretical voices would emerge in the late 1960s–mid 1970s, such as Hiromatsu Wataru and Karatani Kōjin. In fields other than philosophy as such, Marxist theory remained widely influential in both historical scholarship (Hani Gorō and Inoue Kiyoshi, among others, were important figures to link prewar Marxist historiography to the developing trends of *minshūshi*, or “history from below,” at the time)

Takehashi was certainly the closest to Nishida himself at a personal level, and directly engaged in debate with Nishida philosophy for much of the 1930s, returning to it throughout his life's work. Clearly, Nishida's philosophical system operated for Takehashi (and generally for a certain subjectivist Marxism oriented toward the early Marx and theory of alienation) in a twofold manner: by offering a *general* logical framework for the theorization of the anxiety and groundlessness produced by the crisis of modern subjectivity; and by allowing the standpoint of Marxism to be located specifically within the discursive and disciplinary register of *philosophy* as opposed to other fields of social-scientific inquiry.

Nishida's essay "Acting Intuition" ("Kōiteki chokkan") was published approximately three months after Takehashi's "In Praise of Nishida Philosophy" ("Nishida tetsugaku o tataeru") and in a sense can be read as a response to the development, by Takehashi and others, of his own standpoint in relation to Marxist philosophy. Nishida, however, had earlier developed this concept of acting intuition, albeit in less specific detail, particularly in his *Logic and Life* (*Ronri to seimei*) in 1936, and the long three-part essay "Practice and the Understanding of the Object" ("Jissen to taishō ninshiki") serialized in *Tetsugaku kenkyū* from March to May 1937. In these essays, Nishida coins the term "acting intuition" (*kōiteki chokkan*) to indicate that any knowledge is already an action, a creative-formative action. Thus, there is nothing simply given in relation to the epistemological subject (*shukan*)—rather, what is given is historically constructed in a self-contradictory movement, by which the subject is constantly both created and creating through actuality's self-negation. Actuality, within which a particular and highly specific historical arrangement of factors acts as if it were eternal, is always subject to the slippage that the practical, or acting dimension, of the subject's intuition introduces into the situation. These works and this field of questions central to Nishida are the starting point for Takehashi's concerns in "In Praise of Nishida Philosophy," and the basis for the development of his Nishida-inflected Marxist trajectory. But this concept was not only influential for Takehashi: even the non-Marxist (and in some cases, anti-Marxist) students of Nishida also emphasized the primacy of acting intuition in Nishida's philosophy. For example, Kōyama Iwao argued that materialism, emphasizing the emergence of actuality from a material basis, conflated the concept of matter in a physical, natural-scientific sense, and the concept of "thing" in the sense of *something posited in thought*. A thing posited in thought cannot produce material things or actions in actuality, and

and in political economy (where the work of Uno Kōzō and his major students such as Suzuki Kōichirō, Ōuchi Tsutomu, Iwata Hiroshi and others remained dominant).

thus “acting intuition does not emerge from the subject (*shukan*), nor from the epistemic object (*kyakkan*). Rather, it emerges from the boundary of the unification of subject and object, that is to say, from the place wherein fact determines fact itself.”²⁰ This linkage of practice to the conceptual self-development of consciousness is part of what led Kakehashi to extend Nishida’s thought in the following manner: although matter is strictly separated from what is posited in thought, it nevertheless *operates* in thought—the specific *material* dynamics of capitalist society reach even into the level of cognition insofar as the structural *forms* that make up its function are both material and at the same time categories of consciousness. As Etienne Balibar writes, for Marx

the economic is in this sense the object itself of Marx’s “critique”: it is a representation (at once necessary and illusory) of real social relations.... The representation is implicated in the very form of the *manifestation* of social relations. This is precisely what enables producers-exchangers to *recognize themselves* in the image that the economists present of them. The “representation” of the economic is thus for Marx essential to the economic itself, to its real functioning and therefore to its conceptual definition.²¹

It is this problem at the core of Marx’s work—the real material functioning of representations and concepts, the cognitive-ideological conditioning of material social relations—that leads Kakehashi to seek in Nishida’s thought another point of entry to the explication of the Marxian system.

Kakehashi begins “In Praise of Nishida Philosophy” by arguing that Japanese materialists (and it is likely here that he is primarily alluding to those associated with the Yuiken) have done themselves a great disservice by ignoring or deriding Nishida philosophy, in particular the standpoint of acting intuition, because it has prevented them from putting their own “philosophical apperception of their own acting selves” into question. Kakehashi attacks both this dismissive materialism, as well as the “direct imitators” of Nishida philosophy,²² for being unable to “critically absorb” and thus mediate Nishida

20 Kōyama Iwao, *Nishida tetsugaku*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1936), 55.

21 Etienne Balibar, “Sur la dialectique historique: Quelques remarques critiques à propos de *Lire le Capital*,” in *Cinq études du matérialisme historique* (Paris: Maspero, 1974), 213.

22 It is basically unclear whom Kakehashi is referring to here, although he clearly means to indicate Nishida’s non-Marxist direct adherents. Certainly at the time there existed a sort of second generation of the Kyoto School, composed of the four major young figures Kōsaka Masa’aki, Nishitani Keiji, Suzuki Shigetaka, and Kōyama Iwao. These figures,

philosophy. This “mediational sublation” (*baikaiteki shiyō*) of Nishida philosophy is crucial for Kakehashi, precisely because Nishida’s system has had such a total influence on the development of the Japanese philosophical world that it constitutes a “limitation of the contemporary stage” (*gendankai no seiyaku*) for the progress of philosophy. Kakehashi writes:

What is sad is that historically, most materialist philosophers have seriously neglected the philosophical self-awareness of their own acting selves (*mizukara no kōiteki jiko*), and it is still the same at the current moment: they speak of material things from the standpoint of a simply knowing self. Nishida has emphasized: “The understanding of the object (*taishō*) is not a silhouette of actuality, but must be the expression of life. Here is where we can see the objectivity (*kyakkansei*) of knowledge.” Isn’t it precisely that materialists can assert the objectivity of the self only through the conceit that their statements are *expressions of historical life*?²³

For Kakehashi, the existing materialist philosophy of the time participated in a paradoxical position: emphasizing the historically grounded genesis of all social phenomena, subjecting the cultural realm to a rigorous process of historicization, but tending to dislocate the position of the speaking analytical subject from this same historicity. Such a position, noting the historically formed and forming character of the social field, would undermine its own claim to discover the dialectical process of capitalist society’s historicity if it did not subject the process of the formation of this knowledge itself to the same demands.

Such a perspective necessitates a theory of the embeddedness of the physical body within the conceptual architecture of social-historical forms. Nishida emphasized the dimension of self-alienation of bodily existence because in

famous for their participation in the “Sekaishiteki tachiba to Nihon” (Japan and the Standpoint of World History) symposium, largely gravitated to the right, and in some cases, particularly that of Nishitani, were open fascists and racial ideologues. The symposium was published accompanied by two subsequent dialogues, “Tōa kyōeiken no rinrisei” [The ethicality of the East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere] and “Sōryokusen no tetsugaku” [The philosophy of total war], in *Chūō kōron*, and the following year collected in a book, *Sekaishiteki tachiba to Nihon* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1943). Nevertheless, Kōyama produced a genuinely exemplary two-volume study of Nishida’s work that cannot be summed up solely as “imitation.” See Kōyama, *Nishida tetsugaku*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1935–1940), among other writings.

23 Kakehashi, “Nishida tetsugaku o tataeru,” 340 (emphasis added).

modern life the body is grasped as a tool or instrument of self-expression—Kakehashi thus argues that the body in Nishida is alienated as a technical body, not because of some innate feature or religious notion of embodiment. But Kakehashi points out an important lack in Nishida's notion of the historical body's technical self-alienation: if life-practices of beings in the world are formed through a correlation to technology or technique, what mediates the life-practices of individuals and the stage of technical development is the question of the system or institution (*seido*), in other words, "the rational systematic organization of technique," that is to say, the capitalist mode of production and its immediate regime of social relations.

For Nishida, the fact of bodily existence is an indicator of the always-already existent character of self-alienation, because the body is instrumentalized as a tool for self-expression in the world. At the same time, the body is the site of creation in the historical world, to the extent that it both exceeds and creates the self, and is thus the basis for Nishida's claim that the actuality of the world is already absolutely self-negating. For Kakehashi, though, this represents a primary problem with Nishida's system in general: if the body is alienated because it is made into a tool in expression, and thus because of its *technical* (*gijutsuteki*) nature, then it follows that every such social fact derived from the problem of technique is necessarily a fact about the system or institution which governs it. Because Nishida does not treat the problem of the systemic nature of alienation, his notion of the historical body cannot be grasped as historically *acting* (*rekishiteki ni kōi suru mono*). Thus, Kakehashi argues, in order to seriously extend the analytic possibility of Nishida's system in the Marxian direction, we need to "sublate the bodily self (*nikutaiteki jiko*) and emphasize the systemic self (*seidoteki jiko*)." He later formulates this institutional dimension of Nishida's historical body as follows: "The class contradictions of capitalist society are experienced through one's own body, and are thus intuited by the individual as *self-contradictory*."²⁴

Kakehashi pursues this problem in Nishida by reading its relation to the dialectical method. Although Nishida always emphasized the centrality of the notion of action to his system, Kakehashi identifies a problem in Nishida's "one-sided emphasis on the local (*bashoteki*) moment of the dialectic." Husserl, for instance, and the tradition of phenomenological sociology following him, organizes the world on an epistemological-subjective (*shukanteki*) basis. In this way, the interiority of the self is bracketed through the idea of the body as "external continuity." Consequently, as Kakehashi points out, in both Husserl and Nishida, the instrumentalized body becomes something "irregularly

24 Kakehashi, *Zenshizenshiteki katei no shisō*, 74.

scattered across the field of consciousness.” At the same time, the working class is systematized within the capitalist production process in a mechanized ordering and in/through an irreversible temporality. In this sense, the world of expression (“in which past, present, and future are subsumed through the self-negative standpoint of actuality”) is not irregular, but regular—uniformly mechanized, and thus enabling movement of the dialectic. Hence in this way, Kakehashi states that emphasizing only the local (*bashoteki*) moment of the dialectic, and ignoring its processual (*kateiteki*) moment, “statically flattens it out” (*seiteki ni heimenka suru*). Thus, in this contradictory movement between the “processual determination of being and the local determination of nothingness,” a dialectic of “absolute being,” there is a constant self-movement of matter, incessantly being formed into new ordering mechanisms.

Here Kakehashi brings in the central problem of much of his philosophy: the clarification of the nature of matter (*busshitsu*) itself within the scope of materialism. Matter is not something to be grasped simply noematically, as Nishida does, but rather grasped simultaneously as noematic *and* noetic.²⁵ In this sense, we must examine how Nishida developed his logic of locus in relation to his understanding of historical actuality.

In opposition to the hitherto-existing argument that apperception is the identity of knowing and known, I suggest that the self sees itself within the self. In this sense, so-called phenomena of consciousness are thought of as being, and what is thought as noetic must have the sense of apperception. In opposition to this, what is thought as noematic must have the sense of that which is seen, the sense of an apperceptive content.²⁶

In this vein, for Kakehashi our daily alienation experienced within the matrix of the relations and forces of production is a *material* constraint experienced through the body, and thus our selves are constantly touching absolutized matter. Thus, we grasp this alienation through our *practical intuition* (*jissenteiki chokkan*), Kakehashi’s revision of Nishida’s term “acting intuition”—this

25 For Husserl, *noema* and *noesis* refer to different correlations at the level of intuition—*noema* being the object of perception while *noesis* refers to the act of thought in which the object is conceived. This split, and the evaluation of Husserl’s terminology (and its contested meaning within Husserlian phenomenology) is, in my view, tangential to Kakehashi’s point here, that Nishida does not conceive of matter’s social-systematic function within the specifically class-character of consciousness in capitalist society. See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

26 Nishida Kitarō, “Watashi no tachiba kara mita Hēgeru no benshōhō,” in *Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975), 66–67.

practical intuition, “which corresponds self-negatively to the system, is our bodily nature as a tool of the self-determination of the content of this absolute matter.” Our practical intuition, in which we grasp the material basis of alienation, suggests that although there is an objective content to matter, this objective content itself is grasped *subjectively* and experienced within a single individual. Here, the natural dialectic is not a simplistic scientific displacement of the dialectic into natural phenomena as in Third International “proletarian science” or Mao’s mechanistic attempt to “conveniently tidy up the oppositions present in all natural and social phenomena into dialectical relationships.”²⁷ For instance, Kakehashi later, in the 1960s sums up his extension of “practical intuition” as a phenomenology of matter:

In my idea of “phenomenology of matter,” the total content of the total natural-historical development of matter acts by unifying human spiritual labor and bodily labor on the earth’s crust or “place” (*basho*), self-manifesting itself gradually in succession. Within the universal consciousness of mankind that directly comes in contact with the complete expanse of the earth’s surface, this cosmological total content is phenomenalized, and is thus what I call the “phenomenology of matter.” This universal consciousness of mankind must be reflected as something latent in the epistemological-subjective consciousness of each actual worker.²⁸

This leads Kakehashi to develop this subjective grasp of matter in relation to Hegel. For Hegel, consciousness always returns to Spirit in its self-movement. In parallel then, for Kakehashi, because the determination of consciousness always returns to matter, to the material basis of its conditions, it can be said that matter as self-moving is something that is established subjectively, not merely something that has “the property of *being an objective reality*, of existing outside our mind.”²⁹ The object *does* exist absolutely independent from consciousness, but in turn that consciousness is not something separate from the object, but rather the *subjective self-expression of matter itself*. In practical intuition, the practical object (*kyakutai*) and the epistemic subject (*shukan*) are contradictorily grasped as an identity of the practical subject (*shutai*) and

27 Uno Kōzō, “Marukusu keizaigaku to Marukusushugi tetsugaku,” in *Shihonron to shakai-shugi*, in *Uno Kōzō chosakushū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 10; reprinted in Uno Kōzō, *Shihonron to shakaishugi*, ed. Furihata Setsuo (Tokyo: Kobushi Shobō, 1996), 15.

28 Kakehashi, “Rēnin no ‘busshitsu no tetsugakuteki gainen’ kara watashi no ‘zenshizenshi-teki katei’ no shisō e.”

29 V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, in *Collected Works of V.I. Lenin*, vol. 14 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1962), 267.

epistemic object (*kyakkan*)—this epistemic object itself is absolute matter as experienced subjectively within the self. Essentially, this is Kakehashi's theorization of Marx's claim in the 1844 *Manuscripts* that "free conscious activity is the essential moment of productive labor." In this moment of productive labor, that is, in the moment of practical intuition, absolute matter is the site in which the self determines itself. Thus, for Kakehashi, the basis of the materialist dialectic is the resolution of the question of the simultaneous differentiability and identifiability of consciousness and matter through the pivotal standpoint of practical or material intuition.

Kakehashi's essay ends with a long meditation on the relation of materialism to Nishida's work and strongly militates against the tendency within Marxism to ignore Nishida—he derides the simplistic theoreticians of the objective, solely noematic grasp of matter as "outdated eighteenth-century materialists," and points out their inability to produce coherent methodology for social science due to their lack of subjectivity and reflexive consideration of their own standpoints. What is essential, in the final analysis, for Kakehashi in his initial major foray into the doublet Marxism-Nishida is that rather than mechanistically and intellectually understanding the dialectic in *Capital*, we ourselves, each as individuals, have to subjectively develop *Capital's* logic through our acting, practical intuition. Thirty years later, in the 1960s, reflecting on Nishida's formative influence on his thought, Kakehashi writes:

Before the war, Nishida himself was positively in agreement with Marxist philosophy, and there was one period in which he thoroughly read a number of the works of Marx and Lenin. This was around the time that I presented Nishida with a complimentary copy of my essay "The Capitalist Self-Alienation of Human Labor" ("Ningen rōdō no shihonsugiteki jiko sogai"), which was published in 1935. I know directly that Nishida took this as an opportunity to get a hold of and read Marx's 1844 *Manuscripts*. The connections of thought between Marx and Nishida in the logical form of the dialectic exerted a decisive influence on my philosophical thinking from that point onward. That is to say, sublated into Nishida's philosophical thought of this period, I inversely mediated Nishida's concretization of Marx's thinking, and thus came to utilize Nishida's philosophy as a repository for my own creative development of the Marxian form of thought. The core of my interest in Nishida stems from this, and nothing else.³⁰

30 Kakehashi Akihide, "Nishida tetsugaku no shutaiteki na mu no tachiba to rōdō ningen no ronri kōzō" [The standpoint of subjective nothingness in Nishida philosophy and the

Nishida philosophy in this sense becomes an archive of philosophy itself, one that can provide a ground and orientation for developments in many directions, but specifically within philosophy as a disciplinary space.

In this same highly influential essay of the 1960s, Kakehashi does offer a critical evaluation of Nishida's system, but in turn, the disciplinary displacement functions to show Kakehashi's own mediational role between Marx and Nishida:

Marx's dialectic, as a logic of the development of historical actuality, must be a conceptual thinking that is self-moving in the objective structure as process-qua-locus (*katei soku basho*), as I explained previously. Incidentally, when I emphasize that Marx's dialectics of the negation of the negation can be understood in this way, I cannot help but recall my critiques of Nishida's philosophy: from his standpoint of acting intuition, Nishida, in agreement with Marx, sees the dialectical self-movement of conceptual speculation in Hegel's philosophy as a logical process unconnected to us actual human beings, but objectively (*kyakkanteki ni*) passing only through the brain; yet in opposition to Hegel's simply process-al (*kateiteki*) dialectic, I pointed out that Nishida philosophy lacks the moment in which we actual human beings subjectively participate, creating historical actuality through action. Still, what I take as my philosophical standpoint, the logical structure of the practical-intuitional, is nothing more than a critical reworking of Nishida's "acting intuition" from the standpoint of materialism. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily the case that the speculative analysis of the local moment (*bashoteki keiki*) of the objective logical structure as process-qua-locus (*katei soku basho*) is clearly developed in Marx himself; in fact, the argument that the logical structure of Marx's dialectic can be clarified through my standpoint of practical-intuition is a result of my own speculative analysis. But I emphasize that what I call the standpoint of practical-intuition must be something identical to Marx's standpoint, or more generally, to the standpoint of Marxism.³¹

logical structure of the laboring human being], Part 3 of *Keizaigaku kenkyū no shuppatsuten ni aru tetsugakuteki kadai: Yonjūyon-nen "Shukō" ni okeru Marukusu jūshin no shiben tetsugaku ni tsuite no bunsekiteki ginmi toshite* [The philosophical tasks at the starting point of economic research: An analytical investigation of the speculative philosophy of Marx himself in the 1844 Manuscripts], *Ritsumeikan keizaigaku* (June 1962); reprinted in *Kakehashi Akihide keizai tetsugaku chosakushū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1987), 63.

31 Ibid., 10.

This identifiability of Marxism and the “standpoint of practical intuition” would become a major point of criticism of Kakehashi by postwar Marxists. For example, the historian of philosophy Iwasaki Chikatsugu argued that “ultimately, Kakehashi takes the concept of practical intuition as the standpoint from which Marx established his scientific system. But no matter how much he tries to distinguish between his standpoint of practical intuition and Nishida’s acting intuition, it clearly remains thoroughly within the contextual sensibility of Nishida philosophy.... No matter how much he criticizes Nishida, he operates within the frame of Nishida philosophy and thus Kakehashi’s dialectic is not a materialist dialectic.”³² Iwasaki’s view in this sense is prototypical of the postwar fantasy that “true” prewar Marxism operated in separation from or opposition to the discursive registers of the time. This can be seen in one sense operating as a psychic foreclosure of the prewar-to-postwar continuity in the economic register: the seeds of high economic growth (*kōdo seichō*) and a Fordist model of social reproduction that were points of crisis in the postwar era had already been sown in prewar economic policy. Secondly, it can be seen operating as a repression of the experience of *tenkō*. Thus, a figure like Kakehashi, who attempted to philosophically reground the study of Marx in the theory of the subject, with explicit reference to, and intellectual heritage from, the Kyoto School, problematized the notion of Marxism as an untainted field of inquiry.

In 1962 Kakehashi Akihide published perhaps his most important work, the one work in which he undertakes a complete systematization of his reading of Marx and Hegel. But the paradox is that this work, *Keizai tetsugaku genri* (Principles of Economic Philosophy), has been completely forgotten, has never been republished, and was not included in the compilation of his collected works in the 1980s from Miraisha. This essential work followed another critical moment—1959, when Kakehashi serialized his three-part essay “Shihonron no zushikiteki kaimēi” (Schematic Explication of Capital) in *Ritsumeikan keizaigaku*. This long essay would also remain obscure, but it contains the most concrete development of Kakehashi’s lifelong project: to explicate and develop the “subjective grasp” (*shutaitēki ha’aku*) of the inner logic of capital. He writes here: “The unpublished manuscript ‘Shihonron no zushikiteki kaimēi’ constitutes an effort to clarify my intentions to read *Capital* for its ‘scientific systematicity’ (*gakuteki taikēsei*).”³³ What Kakehashi added to this project was

32 See Iwasaki Chikatsugu, *Nihon Marukusushugi tetsugakushi josetsu* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1971), 367–78, quoted in Kakehashi, *Sengo seishin no tankyū: kokuhaku no sho*, 444–46.

33 Kakehashi, *Keizai tetsugaku genri* [Principles of economic philosophy] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), 34–35. He also emphasizes here that the unpublished manuscript of

to read the question of *Capital's* systematicity in its inner determinations as an extension or development of what Tanabe Hajime had long referred to in his analysis of the concept of “schema” (*zushiki*) in Kant, Hegel, and the modern philosophy of science, as a subjective moment. The concept of “schema” was widespread, particular in Tanabe’s work, with which Kakehashi was intimately familiar.³⁴ Although the chapter on “schematism” in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* has long been considered by most commentators to be excessively abstract and difficult to follow (and Kant himself agreed in his notebooks with this judgment), the Kantian concept of “schema” was deeply influential among the Kyoto School thinkers, particularly Tanabe (and by extension the younger generation in this orbit, such as Kakehashi and Tosaka). Broadly speaking, the concept of schema indicates a determining set of specific rules “under which given empirical intuitions are to be subsumed” so as to ensure that sense impressions are linked to proper categories (a priori concepts).³⁵ For Kakehashi, the use of this concept was a way to express how the schematic totality of capital as a social relation could be implied in the intuitions of the wage laborer, whose cognitive architecture, in a sense, becomes implicated *within* the reproduction of capitalist society, such that the overall schema comes to operate even within the singular worker.

But what does Kakehashi mean by this repeated emphasis on the analysis of the schematic features of capitalist society through a “subjective grasp”? Two basic points emerge at this moment and intersect, both in the intellectual history of modern Japan and in the larger and global conceptual history of the Marxist theoretical project. Why did the question of “subjectivity” and the status of this highly particular concept of the subject become such a dominant and overwhelming concern in the theoretical landscape of twentieth-century Japanese intellectual life? And what is, in fact, the status of the subject in Marxist theory? The former expresses a broad problem traced in inquiries in literature, film, philosophy, politics, the arts, and so forth with a specific focus on the dense and compressed historical development of modern Japan from

“Shihonron no zushikiteki kaimei” (later published in the journal *Ritsumeikan keizaigaku*, where many of Kakehashi’s texts first came out) does not develop the “subjective moment (*shutaiteki keiki*), or the problem of the actual beginning (*genjitsuteki tansho no mon-dai*)” adequately, and on this point references his own *Shihonron e no watashi no ayumi*, Chapter 3, Part 4.

34 On Tanabe’s thought of the concept “schema,” see for instance, “Zushiki jikan kara zushiki sekai e” [From the schema “time” to the schema “world”], in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1962).

35 See, for instance, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 272–76.

the Tokugawa period onward,³⁶ while the latter expresses one of the most difficult and irresolvable questions posed in the Marxist theoretical register. In Kakehashi's work we find a peculiar but suggestive site through which to imbricate and articulate these two problematics with each other, to trace not only the rhetorical history of the concept of the subject, but above all else to inquire into what is at stake *for us* in even asking this question at all.

To say that history comes into existence in the economic process is not to simply find in economic life the origin of and abstraction of our social lives. Concrete social life is economic life *an sich* [in itself]. Its *für-sich-sein* [being-for-itself] is juridical and political life.³⁷ Thus, conceptual life (*shisōteki seikatsu*), which transforms into an object of analysis (*taishōka*) the synthetic totality of the juridical, political, and economic life of various societies and critically sublates it, and as something both in-and-for-itself, must be posited as truly concrete social life. To theorize conceptual life as concrete life from the standpoint of practical intuition is to emphasize absolute freedom as an expression toward the objective content of consciousness.³⁸

Kakehashi explicates Hegel's logical structure of the circular movement of Absolute Spirit (the Christian conception of God), and poses as its antithesis "self-moving absolute matter." Earlier in his career (in the prewar texts such as *The Philosophical Concept of Matter* [*Busshitsu no tetsugakuteki gainen*] and *On the Origins of Society* [*Shakai no kigen*]), Kakehashi argued that human consciousness is nothing but a means for the self-development in stages of the total content of this objective, absolute matter, but later during the 1960s came to argue that this "universal human consciousness must be thought as the subject [of practice] (*shutai*)."³⁹ But Kakehashi always approaches this problem

36 This took shape in Japan in the famous "debate on Japanese capitalism" (*Nihon shihonshugi ronsō*). On this question, see Gavin Walker, *The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). On the postwar "debate on subjectivity" (*shutaisei ronsō*), see J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Despite their divergent histories, these two debates are deeply linked. In a sense, the postwar debate on subjectivity can be read precisely as a sort of "recoding" of the unfinished and unresolved debate on capitalism from the prewar period.

37 Both phrases in German in the original.

38 Kakehashi, *Keizai tetsugaku genri*, 51.

39 Kakehashi, "Rēnin no 'busshitsu no tetsugakuteki gainen' kara watashi no 'zenshizenshiteki katei' no shisō e," 342.

from within the logic of the subject, that is, from within the understanding that what Marx described with the term “labor process” constitutes the thick material connection between natural history and social history. In other words, for Kakehashi, the subject names precisely this process itself—it is not that the subject appears within this process but rather that this aporetic gap of the historical process is itself the subject. His critique of humanism is also located here fundamentally—for Kakehashi, the “human being” is merely one local moment in the historical process qua subject. (In this sense, his critique of Miki in famous prewar texts like “Miki tetsugaku no fasshoteki keitai” is precisely organized around the critique of Miki’s deviation toward humanism in his anthropology. That is, by emphasizing the role of the body from the basic perspective of “man,” Miki comes to theorize the subject as the nation/ethnos and thus expresses the contemporary tendency toward social fascism. This text is decisive as it fully expresses a critical break in Kakehashi’s work, which to this point had been written with an implicit background in Miki.)

Kakehashi, in constantly attempting to provide Marx’s *Capital* with a reading appropriate to philosophy proper, broadly emphasizes three essential moments in this text: (1) the specific formal movement of theory itself as a circle, or its systematicity (*taikeisei*); (2) the subjective moment that is paradoxically exceeding but grounding this “circle” (it is in this excess that Kakehashi distinguishes Marx’s “systematicity” [open and can account for the excess of the labor process] from Hegel’s “systematicity” [closed, or must ignore/erase this subjective excess found in the labor process]) essential to the objective dialectic of the labor process; (3) the aspect of totality derived from this philosophically isolated labor process, which allows all mental and physical processes to be located or sited, insofar as they are all merely moments in the total natural-historical process, on the cosmic “place” (*basho*) of the earth’s crust or “lithosphere” (*chikaku*).

Part of Kakehashi’s project was to emphasize the link between this subjective grasp of capital and what he called the “total natural-historical process” (*zenshizenshiteki katei*), an articulation stitched together by the historicity of social forms in general: “My standpoint is the following: the concrete grasp of human society must be historical, and this sense of history emerges in the material relation of nature and society, that is in the human labor process.”⁴⁰ In Kakehashi’s work, an entire tropic sequence—the “surface” (*hyōmen* 表面),

40 Kakehashi, “Shakai no benshōhōteki ha’aku no tame no futatsu no zushiki” [Two schemas for the dialectical grasp of society], originally published in *Nihon shakai gakkai hōkoku yōshi* (May 1936); reprinted in *Kakehashi Akihide keizai tetsugaku chosakushū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1987), 217.

“plane” (*men* 面), the “earth’s crust” or “lithosphere” (*chikaku* 地殼)—operates as the essential conceptual genealogy. This concept in particular of the “earth’s crust” or “lithosphere” must be elucidated, because it provides an essential link between certain Marxist philosophical concerns and the conceptual order of Nishida’s work. The earth’s crust is not merely the geological substratum of the earth’s surface. In essence, it is a material remnant composed of the sedimented remains of every previous epoch of biological life and inanimate matter. In this sense, the concentrated aftermath of every previous era of social production remains as an underpinning hard kernel of the very basis of the contemporary order. Oil, for instance, is the sedimented remains of biological life located within the earth’s crust. This remnant structure then enters into the processes of social production, once again a residual structure of the subjective practice that subtends the objective social order. It is precisely in this sense that Kakehashi here links his work to Nishida’s understanding of “place” or *basho*:

Nishida’s “place of nothingness” (*mu no basho*) seems to be frequently misunderstood in a one-sided sense as something onto which anything can be placed, something vaguely Buddhist, or something that saves everything, or whatever. But the decisive point in my understanding of Nishida is nothing like this at all, but rather that, if we regard being—*Sein*—as an accomplished fact (*hataraita seika*), this “accomplishing” itself, in other words, this operation itself, is precisely an effect of nothingness (*mu*)—*Nichts*. This operation or work of nothingness is itself the site or place (*basho*).⁴¹

Kakehashi’s argument is precisely that *mu no basho* names the general economy of operability, function, work (*sayo*). Therefore, what is “working” or “operating” and so forth, is in fact something negative, something empty of positive valences, something void and contentless (the initial commodity or beginning of capital is always *einfach und inhaltlos*, therefore the *Anfang* expresses the recurrent motion of nothingness). This nothingness that nevertheless somehow operates positively is exactly what Kakehashi, echoing a certain Freudian register, will refer to as the drive (*Trieb*; *shōdō*). On the concept of the drive, a point that could be used to expand Kakehashi’s work in the direction of topics in psychoanalysis, he writes:

41 Kakehashi, “Rēnin no ‘busshitsu no tetsugakuteki gainen’ kara watashi no ‘zenshizenshiteki katei’ no shisō e,” 349.

In actuality, before it becomes the object of epistemic judgment for the wage laborer, labor power qua money is already the external object of desire, and is thus physically owned, while the self-relation to the living self as internal object of this desire is not the self-awareness of its universal species-being, but is merely a self-consciousness directed toward simple and direct individual life, and therefore this self-relational movement remains nothing more than the drive, the pulsional element (*shōdōteki na mono*) that attempts to merely satisfy desire.⁴²

Thus, capital itself operates in this structure, whereby the foundational nothingness at its core is also the mechanism for its plenitude, which drives it toward its own transcendence through itself.

In the postwar, I concentrated on the analysis of *Capital* as a logical system. The first result of this work was my article “*Capital* as an Actual Science” (“Genjitsuteki na gaku toshite no Shihonron”), published in 1949. In this text what must be remembered most is that the argument in my essays immediately following the postwar preceded the critique of the “form of value”—the commodity exchange of commodity owners—that emerged in the debate between Uno Kōzō and Kuruma Samezō. When Marx states that the laborer “tumbles from his fulfilled nothingness into absolute nothingness” or when Engels critiques Barth for “coming from nothing through nothing to nothing,” I tried to conceptualize the meaning of this “nothingness” (*Nichts*; *mu*) and analyze it in terms of its relation to the meaning of “nothingness” in Nishida’s philosophical work: my task from here on is to turn this moment into something thoroughly materialist.⁴³

For Kakehashi, this problem in Nishida allowed him to mediate or articulate the gap from Hegel to Marx, in which the acting function of something absent allows for the closed system of capital to be undermined by the historical element of subjective practice: “The systematic conceptual speculation of Hegelian philosophy appears cyclically, as progress-qua-retreat (*zenshin soku kōtai*), but within Marxism, in which is conceived a form of conceptual speculation that takes as its essential moment a revolutionary practice for the sake of historical development, the principle of subjective practice must be something

42 Kakehashi, *Keizai tetsugaku genri*, 159.

43 Ibid.

intuited as an ideal that exists within the content of the objective process.”⁴⁴ The subject in essence therefore names exactly the gap of the historical process where this dialectical torsion loops back onto itself. Capital’s proletarian “torsion,” whereby what must logically be the beginning or *Anfang* must also be already established or captured (*An-fang* = “in-capture”) in order to thereafter function *as if* it were an effect of the accomplished process, is thus permanently attempting to show itself as a positive development when its origin lies in negation. To put it another way, Kakehashi poses the essential question of Marxist theoretico-historical inquiry: how is it that this system smoothly operates when logically speaking, it should be incoherent?

Capital or Alienation? Kakehashi and Uno Kōzō

Despite the widespread attempt to imbricate Marx and Nishida especially in the postwar debate on subjectivity, Marx only ever appears in Nishida’s philosophy as a type of metonymic trace.⁴⁵ The preeminent metonym in Nishida is the concept of “acting intuition,” which is precisely an attempt to clarify the subject’s self-formation through the act. But Nishida rarely directly dealt with Marx or Marxian thought. Rather, as I mentioned earlier, one thing that seems important in Nishida for the theoretical work of figures like Kakehashi was a certain question of the task of philosophy itself. Marxism as a field of inquiry in the prewar period was largely oriented toward theory of political economic principles, clarification of the class composition of the Japanese working class, and the debate on the origins of Japanese capitalism. Marxist *philosophy* as such, and certainly Marxist theory of the subject, was not widely influential—consequently, Marxian economics and Marxist philosophy come to be somewhat separate fields of inquiry with highly divergent tasks. Kakehashi’s work is an interesting index of this problem, because its aim was specifically the philosophical clarification of the grasp of economic categories, and thus a certain type of attempt to relink philosophy and economics. In the postwar period, the

44 Kakehashi, *Keizaigaku kenkyū no shuppatsuten ni aru tetsugakuteki kadai*, 97–98.

45 There are some references explicitly to Marx in Nishida’s work, especially of the 1930s, such as “Kōiteki chokkan,” but these are somewhat cursory, and sometimes in fact, incoherent. These references, rather than indications of the importance of Marx to Nishida, were probably instead directed at his Marxist students, as a gesture of solidarity. Needless to say, the dominant articulation of Marx and Nishida in postwar Japanese intellectual history is hardly the only possible reading. For another imbrication of the two, from a quite divergent standpoint, see William Haver’s translation of Nishida, *Ontology of Production: Three Essays* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

massive publication boom of Marxist theory beginning in 1947 served to force through the reemergence of this problem. In addition to a plurality of theories of subjectivity that emerged from Marxist theory in the postwar period, Uno Kōzō's distinctive epistemology and political-economic methodology also came to the forefront of theoretical debate.⁴⁶ In many ways, Uno and Kakehashi were seen as two of the “master thinkers” for the formation of the New Left—the famous phrase “Uno's theory in the east, Kakehashi's theory in the west” (*Higashi no Uno riron, nishi no Kakehashi riron*) is well known—Uno at the time was still affiliated with the University of Tokyo in Kantō, or eastern Japan, while Kakehashi remained in Kyoto all his life at Ritsumeikan University, in Kansai or western Japan.⁴⁷ While leaving aside a direct engagement with Uno's theoretical work itself for reasons of topicality, I want to simply point out that Uno's problematization of the unity of theory and practice (also science and ideology) in Marxism through his emphasis on the methodology of three levels of analysis (*sandankairon no hōhō*)—principles or pure theory (*genriron*), theory of historical conjunctures or stages (*dankairon*), and analysis of the contemporary situation (*genjō bunseki*)—also points us to the problem I think is central to Kakehashi's work: the split of the subject in the Marxist theoretical register and the undecidability of such a subject's grounding.

Uno, certainly the most widely influential Marxian theorist of twentieth-century Japan, reschematized and reformulated Marx's economic thought, exemplified by *Capital*, into a highly formalized, purified system designed to create a “scientific” political economy on par with the other social sciences coming to the fore in the immediate postwar period. The most basic distinguishing methodological feature of Uno's system is the theory of three levels of analysis or *sandankairon* (in addition to his general theoretical maxim related to the “impossibility,” or *muri*, of the commodification of labor power). This tripartite division of the practice of theory represents an effort to construct a general economic meta-epistemology capable of dealing with the primary contradictions of not only the conjuncture of Japanese capitalism (and the constant debate within Japanese Marxism on its origins and development), but also the theoretical concerns internal to Marxian economics. Structurally, Uno proposes three levels of analysis: (1) the level of pure theory or “principles” (*genriron*), essentially the logical functioning of a relatively pure capitalism; (2) the level of the theory of stages (*dankairon*), wherein the logic of a pure

46 On Uno's work in general, and particularly the genesis of his theoretical system, see Walker, *The Sublime Perversion of Capital*.

47 See for instance Hattori Kenji, *Nishida tetsugaku to saha no hitotachi* (Tokyo: Kobushi Shobō, 2000), 180–82.

capitalism encounters a historical situation and is changed, impeded, or bolstered; and (3) the level of analysis of the contemporary situation or conjuncture (*genjo bunseki*).

What this division accomplishes in its separation of a level of “pure theory” or “principles” is an attempt to draw closer to the possibility of a Marxist logic—Uno often emphasized the importance of understanding Lenin’s famous argument in the *Philosophical Notebooks* that “Marx never left us a Logic, but he did leave us the Logic of *Capital*.” Further, it allowed for the constitution of a Marxian economics unaffected by the official line of the USSR-aligned communist parties, one which did not rely on a mechanistic fantasy of historical necessity and inevitable transition to socialism, a theoretical standpoint radically out of line with the massive economic growth of Japan, and the rise in wages and living standards in the postwar decades. Consequently, because of the somewhat unique position enjoyed by the Uno school of not being aligned to a particular tendency (or in fact any political program at all), the status of Unoist theory constituted itself as graspable from a variety of vantage points. Chief among these was that of the New Left from the end of the 1950s to the mid-70s, wherein Unoist theory became strikingly present in the political and theoretical formulations of the Bund, the Revolutionary Marxists (*Kakumaruha*), the Middle Core Faction (*Chūkaku-ha*), the Revolutionary Left (*Kakumei saha*), and so forth.

For the economist and critic Ōuchi Hideaki, for instance, the genesis of the theory of Uno’s three levels of analysis can be described as follows: “Beginning from the problem of how to articulate the relation between Marx’s *Capital* and Lenin’s *Imperialism*, the question of how to situate the analysis of economy policy within the system of political economy had a decisive meaning for the formation of the theory of three levels of analysis.”⁴⁸ From the outset, the primary debate over the Unoist methodology took up the question of whether or not it constituted a break with or a completion of Marx’s own project. The theorist Satō Kinzaburō argued for the latter, suggesting for instance, that the concept of three levels of analysis was nothing more than a formalization of Marx’s “plan” for the outline of his general project in the 1857–1859 preparatory manuscripts for the *Critique of Political Economy*:

Uno’s “theory of three levels of analysis” has been criticized for separating the unity of logic and history, theory and practice, which constitutes the general essence of Marxism. This criticism is basically accurate. But this criticism has the deficiency of frequently ignoring or neglecting the

48 Ōuchi Hideaki, *Uno keizaigaku no kihon mondai* (Gendai Hyōronsha, 1971), 101.

mediational significance of the theory of stages within the three levels of analysis and thus commits the error of leaping to conclusions over Uno's real intentions. His theory of three levels of analysis might be better described as first rigorously distinguishing between logic and history, theory and practice, and beyond that aiming at clarifying the stadial movement *from logic toward history and from theory toward practice*.⁴⁹

Satō's attempt to directly integrate the Unoist theoretical apparatus into Marxism in general met with strong approval from sectors of the New Left whose theoretical programs were underwritten by a reading of Uno, in particular on the level of methodology—for instance, Satō's *Capital and Unoist Economics* became a feature of the suggested reading list of the theoretical journal of the student organization of the Bund, *Riron sensen*, or "Theoretical Front."⁵⁰

Among the many secondary reexaminations of the Unoist framework in and around the pivotal moment of 1968, ironically one of the most insightful was that of a relatively orthodox Marxist-like Mita (Amakasu) Sekisuke, for whom Uno's theory of the three levels of analysis "completely negates the dialectical relation of identity within Marxism between the theory of stages of capital and the principles of capital."⁵¹ Despite his hostility to Uno, Mita manages to incisively sum up the possible political outcomes of Uno's project:

Unoist theory constitutes a view of society and the laws of capitalist development which emphasizes that the necessity of revolution is not something that can be theoretically clarified on any of the levels of "principles" or "stages" or in "analysis of the contemporary situation," but rather can only be proved within the subject's (*shutai*) determined practice.⁵²

For Mita this is proof positive that Uno's work is a fundamental betrayal of the Marxian framework of theoretical and practical revolutionary action, but ironically his entirely correct summation of the Unoist project identifies precisely why Unoist theory could become such an essential element of the New Left—by dissociating the logic of revolution from the necessary movement of the falling rate of profit or the inevitability of imperialist war, Uno left open the possibility that only spontaneous subjective action in the immediate moment, creative action not necessitated by any laws of development or inevitable

49 Satō Kinzaburō, "Shihonron" to *Uno keizaigaku* (Shin Hyōron, 1968), 151.

50 See in this regard Suga, *Kakumeiteki na, amari ni kakumeiteki na*, 110.

51 Mita Sekisuke, *Uno riron to Marukusushugi keizaigaku* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1968), 18.

52 *Ibid.*, 248.

transitions, could the spark the revolutionary. Uno's silence on this topic of directly political programmatic action allowed for a theoretical compatibility between this scientific, hyper-rationalized refoundation and reschematization of Marxian economics and simultaneously a vanguardist politics across the political spectrum.⁵³

In order to look at this question, I want to briefly take up an important text from the 1950s–1960s which explicated the Kakehashi-Uno opposition. Shimizu Masanori's 1962 work *From Self-Alienation to "Capital"* (*Jiko sogairon kara "Shihonron" e*) was a crucial text in the environment of the New Left. Because of the historical moment and theoretical conjuncture into which it emerged, *From Self-Alienation to "Capital"* is an index of the ubiquity of these discourses of Kakehashi and Uno: the critic Suga Hidemi, in a recent work, unearthed the "reading list" ("Texts That Should Be Critically Absorbed" [*Hihanteki ni sesshu suru beki mono*]) circulated in the journal *Riron sensen* (Theoretical Front), the theoretical organ of the Bund. Among the texts listed are Kakehashi's *My Path to "Capital"* (*Shihonron e no watashi no ayumi*), Uno's *Economic Methodology* (*Keizaigaku hōhōron*), Satō Kinzaburō's *"Capital" and Unoist Economics* (*Shihonron to Uno keizaigaku*), and Shimizu's *From Self-Alienation to "Capital."*⁵⁴

The title of Shimizu's text in many ways exemplifies the theoretical project it followed—a shift from the early Marx of the 1844 *Manuscripts* and the concomitant emphasis on the theory of alienation, to the scientific study of the later Marx and the parallel focus on value theory. In summing up the contributions of Kakehashi to Marxist philosophy, Shimizu writes, "One important result of his work is that Kakehashi, in investigating 'alienated labor,' logically and conceptually pursues the relation from what he calls 'the laboring human being' to 'the simple laboring human being,' that is, the relation from labor as 'self-active biological self-objectification' to 'alienated labor.'"⁵⁵ But it isn't the case that Kakehashi deductively develops the movement from former to latter. Consequently, for Shimizu, what is problematic in such a standpoint is its lack of separation of levels of analysis in grasping Marx's *Capital* as an analytic of capitalism:

Positively using the apperceptive or self-aware standpoint (*jikakuteki tachiba*) of the wage laborer as this being-in-itself (*kōji yū, An-sich-Sein*) in order to ground *Capital*, not merely as a fundamental philosophical

53 In general on this moment, see Suga Hidemi, 1968 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2006).

54 Suga, *Kakumeiteki na, amari ni kakumeiteki na*, 110.

55 Shimizu Masanori, *Jiko sogairon kara "Shihonron" e*, ed. Furihata Setsuo (Tokyo: Kobushi Shobō, 2005), 129.

standpoint, but also in presupposing the subjectivity and self-awareness of the wage laborer within the unfolding of *Capital* as science, by obscuring the historical subjectivity of capital as self-expanding value, and making the standpoint of “practical intuition” into a positive principle of understanding, Kakehashi’s economic-philosophy rather has the danger of preventing us from gaining a clear understanding of the pure principles of the historical social form of capitalism.⁵⁶

Insofar as we take, from the outset, the figure of the wage laborer as a *subject*, we will lack a way to articulate to each other two divergent conceptions of the subject in Marx. On the one hand, the subject of history in Marx is represented by the militant proletariat, aware of its historical mission to herald the death knell of the capitalist mode of production and the beginning of a new historical departure. On the other hand, *capital itself* is precisely the subject of historical transformation in the Marxian narrative, precisely because, as an aggregated social relation itself, capital is paradoxically the only perceptible *agent* of change within the social field (insofar as the proletariat is included within capital in general as variable capital), occasioned by the necessities of its ceaseless dialectical motion. But we might also say on this point, what we can name the subject in capitalist society is rather an effect that inserts itself between these two above positions. The first is an affirmative endorsement of the proletariat’s substantiality; the second is a negative identification of the proletariat’s absence or its subordination-inclusion to capital. But is it not exactly the wager that Marx makes to emphasize that the proletariat’s self-aware *political* mission can only ever be grasped precisely by passing through its relative subjective *destitution* at the level of the social structure? In this sense, Marx’s work always shows us this particular theoretical passage from (or through) structure to politics, that is, the process through which the ostensibly formal enclosure of structure, rather than excluding politics proper, is in fact the enabling condition for a politics that truly introduces and exploits some gap or rupture in the structure’s sense of full inclusion into its own logical contours.

In Shimizu’s terms, Kakehashi’s standpoint is opposed by the Unoist levels of analysis approach—the question of the intuition and practice of the wage laborer as to his/her conditions of existence does not explicitly follow from the structure of *Capital*, which for Shimizu (and for the Uno school) was a semi-systematized explication of a purely capitalist society. *Capital* for Uno still needed to be reconstructed as a theory of principles, but nevertheless

56 Ibid., 134.

could never simply be “applied” as such. The revolutionary practice of the worker who has become self-aware of his or her real conditions of existence occurs at particular historical moments. This revolutionary practice does not occur in a purified circuit of capitalism, an economic circuit in which absolute exploitation and expropriation would rapidly lead to a falling profit rate and subsequently a breakdown of the circuit as a whole, even if only thought from common sense Smithian “diminishing returns.” Thus, the standpoint of revolutionary practice does not *necessarily* follow from the economic circuit described in *Capital*—as Uno emphasized over and over again, the only thing necessary in capitalism is crisis, not a breakdown of the system and inevitable transition to socialism.

Thus, Shimizu states simply of Kakehashi: “I can’t go along with the results of grasping the conceptual self-development of *Capital* from the subjective standpoint, from what he calls the standpoint of ‘practical intuition.’”⁵⁷ However, “because we have learned much from this truly subjective philosophy developed from a thorough clarification of the principles of the class self-awareness of the wage laborer in capitalism from the standpoint of the subject of practice, we eagerly wait in hope for Kakehashi to take up the work of clarifying the *total* structure present in the structure of the synthetic development of the subject of labor, the development of the form of value, and the self-expansion process of value.”⁵⁸ But later, Shimizu seems to have rethought his relation to Kakehashi’s economic-philosophical work, in a revealing piece that displays how the split between the methodological standpoints of Uno and Kakehashi was grasped by many Marxist scholars in the disciplinary situation of philosophy:

My thinking on the issue of grasping *Capital* was fundamentally rescued by Uno’s theory of principles, or level of pure theory (*genriron*). But eventually, in trying to give a meaning to philosophy, there was a point at which I could not help but go beyond Unoist theory, and had to take a different point of view from Uno’s idea of the meaning and role of “philosophy” as *ideology*.⁵⁹

Delving deeply into this critique of Uno (which I think is problematic) would require a thorough examination of Uno’s distinctive conception of “science”

57 Ibid., 136.

58 Ibid., 134.

59 Shimizu Masanori, “Kakehashi sensei no koto,” in the monthly supplement (*geppō*) to *Kakehashi Akihide keizai tetsugaku chosakushū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1985), 4.

(a category he reserved for Marx's *Capital*, to be contrasted with "ideology"). Among other things this would necessitate a close look at the role of phenomenologists like Takahashi Satomi, who influenced Uno's early thinking. But simply put, in Shimizu's statement we can see that Kakehashi's work comes to play a parallel discursive role to that of Nishida earlier, functioning as an operating framework for Marxists to deal with the troubling doublet "Marxism/philosophy." This problem within Marxism of the role of philosophy is strongly related to the question of modern subjectivity, as I mentioned at the beginning. It is also a question of the problem of the boundaries of knowledge and the formalization of discrete disciplines, and thus demands an examination of the discursive crises that erupt when theoretical dislocations take place between, for example, philosophy and economics in the Marxist framework.

But aside from Shimizu, many critiques of Kakehashi from the Uno School were powerfully dismissive, for instance Furihata Setsuo, who argued, "Fundamentally, Kakehashi's economic philosophy was nothing more than an amalgamation of a Japanized Neo-Kantian epistemology mediated by Nishida philosophy, and an idealist revision of Marxism inherited from Miki philosophy that was founded on early Shōwa-era Fukumotoism."⁶⁰ In the most basic sense, this critique is accurate on all levels, but does not give us tools to think *why* Kakehashi's peculiar philosophical system—with all its stylistic and discursive idiosyncrasies—should have become such a source of literary and theoretical inspiration within the New Left. Certainly, the type of highly subjectivist Marxian theorization that linked, in a grand systematic style, the individual's immediate disposition and conceptual framework to the total reproduction of the social system, appealed widely in the 1960s on a global scale.⁶¹

The immediacy of our concrete practice to the levels of cosmology, natural history, and the dialectic of capital is a seductive perspective. But as Shimizu also argued, Kakehashi's tendency to presuppose the practical self-aware subjectivity of the wage laborer as a means to grasp the entire historical dialectic of capital has the possibility of instead obscuring *how* capital demands and creates forms of subjectivity to give a semblance of substantiality to the "bearers" or "guardians" of labor power. In a sense, Kakehashi runs up against the limits of humanism for an understanding of capitalist society. If we simply presuppose our lived subjectivity as a given element of the social field, we will be

60 Furihata Setsuo, *Furihata Setsuo chosakushū* [Collected works of Furihata Setsuo], vol. 4 (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 2004), 90.

61 Much more discussion would be required to properly ground Kakehashi's work and its influence on the New Left in Japan in relation to similar theoretical developments in Europe, North America, and elsewhere.

unable to seriously conceive of the *forms* through which the cultural field and its accompanying ideology cover over or obscure capital's own subjective destitution of its social basis, but most importantly, we will lose our grasp on the essential *historicity* and class-character of capitalism. To privilege social forms over the supposedly evident and obvious empirically existing entity is not to disregard real historical life, but rather to emphasize that our real historical life is itself a living social outcome of these formal effects in constant dialectical process.

Takehashi attempted to find the structure of capital itself as concretely deducible from its subjective grasp (*shutaiteki ha'aku*) by the wage laborer. But his system confronts us with precisely the problem that he tried to overcome in the imbrication of Marx and Nishida: Marxism, when understood as a humanist discourse culminating in the figure of the non-alienated "human" and a total systemic narrative of the social structure without an outside or excess, was just as incapable of coming to terms with the anxiety and fractured sensibility of modern subjectivity as the thought of the Kyoto School philosophers such as Nishida. Rather, Takehashi's thought in some sense expressed the tragic double bind of postwar humanism: aware of the radically uncanny sense of living through and continuing to exist after "the end," but also tending toward an internalization of this sense of aftermath whose final result would likely be a philosophically grounded solipsism in the face of the modern world more than a point of departure for a renewed critical analysis of the social-historical forms whose force dominated the conjuncture.

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Umemoto Katsumi, Subjective Nothingness, and the Critique of Civil Society

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When one thinks of philosophy in Japan, the name Umemoto Katsumi (1912–1974) is not the first to come to mind. Next to the famous Kyoto School philosophers, such as Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime, Umemoto appears like a minor figure. This is partially because much of the discourse around Japanese philosophy, and perhaps philosophy more generally, tends to overlook Marxism. However, Umemoto's version of Marxism is particularly meaningful in the context of modern Japanese intellectual history because he engaged the conservative Kyoto School philosophers from a perspective that was at once sympathetic and critical. In particular, Umemoto began his academic career by writing an undergraduate thesis on the medieval Buddhist thinker Shinran, under his mentor, Watsuji Tetsurō, who was also associated with the Kyoto School and later turned to Marxism. Hence he had a foot in both the so-called conservative and progressive Marxist camps. This put him in a unique position to develop a theory of subjectivity based on a critical reflection on both the Kyoto School philosophers and his contemporary Marxists. The significance of Umemoto's thought lies in the fact that he contextualizes and develops Japanese philosophy from the point of view of Marxism in order to take Marxism beyond the sphere of technological determinism and also beyond liberal conceptions of politics and civil society.

Most scholars have underestimated Umemoto's significance in this context because they have insufficiently thought of his work in relation Marxist theory. J. Victor Koschmann and Rikki Kersten have each devoted sections of their respective books to Umemoto Katsumi and have made important contributions by analyzing Umemoto's Marxism. However, neither of these works performs an immanent critique of Umemoto's works and both in some way or another chide Umemoto for not being liberal or post-Marxist enough. Koschmann attacks postwar Japanese Marxism with European post-Marxism as he draws on the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to criticize Umemoto and postwar Marxists for fixing the meaning of subjectivity from the outside

and consequently undermining the possibility of real subjectivity.¹ In other words, rather than allowing subjectivity to be undetermined, Marxists such as Umemoto bestow meaning on history through a teleological narrative of necessity. That is to say, according to Umemoto, present practices potentially have meaning because history is moving toward socialism and this goal can serve as a standard for action.

Koschmann claims that both the conservative narrative of morality and the Marxist idea of materialism sacrifice subjectivity to totality. Although many postwar Japanese thinkers rejected concepts of totality associated with Nishida and other prewar thinkers, they reproduced a vision of a telos in history in a Marxist frame. Koschmann's description is, of course correct, but perhaps it is Koschmann who is looking from the outside in. Specifically, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse is explicitly hostile to most Marxists from Lenin to Althusser and so one could use their theory to criticize most Marxists, be they from Japan or from elsewhere.

The key issue here concerns civil society, which in the years immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall seemed to be a panacea for the ills of actually existing socialism. Interestingly, both Umemoto and his teacher Watsuji invoked Marx's critique of civil society, each from a different perspective. In both cases, there was some sense of how such a critique would point to a world beyond imperialism and capitalist alienation. Umemoto more explicitly follows Marx's analysis in "On the Jewish Question," a text that has of course come under criticism from proponents of civil society such as John Keane and more recently by post-Marxist-inspired political theorists such as Patchen Markell. But to analyze Umemoto's critique of civil society and his plan to sublimate it, we need to ask whether telos and totality are merely discursive impositions. If so, then of course Umemoto and others can be criticized from the standpoint of a totally contingent and open subjectivity. However, Umemoto's own discourse

1 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985). In Koschmann's words, "to a greater or lesser degree, each attempt to make a place for *shutaisei* [subjectivity] seemed to require a renewed appeal to the plentitude of metahistory as an external, determinate process that alone could provide *shutaisei* with its necessity and meaning. But each time *shutaisei* was reconnected to the supplement of an external history, its claim to free subjectivity was subverted by its own supplementarity function as the completion of a closed metahistorical system." J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 148. Kersten draws a comparison between Umemoto and Eduard Bernstein, but laments that "eventually, Umemoto modified his rhetoric, altered his terminology, and professed adherence to that orthodoxy" Rikki Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy* (London: Routledge, 1995), 90.

goes toward showing that capitalism and subjectivity in capitalism suggest a notion of teleology embedded in the concept of alienation. When a subjectivity experiences alienation, there is an immediate impulse to overcome it, and because this alienation is connected with political powerlessness, the goal of de-alienation would be the first step toward realizing the play of contingency that post-Marxists extol. From this perspective, the limitations of Umemoto's theory do not stem from his insistence on the concept of totality or telos, but rather from the way he understands such concepts in relation to capitalism and how he theorizes a path beyond.

In what follows, I interpret the conservative project of Kyoto School philosophy, Watsuji and Umemoto's Marxist theory, as different attempts to respond to the problem of civil society by opposing a redefined notion of human agency against an alienated totality, which expresses itself in modern forms of bureaucracy and capitalism. Umemoto understood alienation as being inseparable from the history of capitalism, and his discourse on morality aimed at overcoming both alienation and capitalism. If this ethical obligation has its origins not outside of history but emerges from history and capitalism, then historicizing Umemoto's work is especially significant for our capitalist present.

I will begin with a discussion of Umemoto's early life in the 1930s and in the context of a global crisis of humanism, since this forms the foundations for much of Kyoto School philosophy as well Umemoto's conception of human agency, which becomes the fulcrum of his critique of civil society and capitalism. In the final section, I will contextualize Umemoto's theory of alienation and civil society in light of recent critiques. This is particularly relevant in Umemoto's case because he himself theorizes capitalism in order to overcome it. Thus the final section of the essay presents an immanent critique of Umemoto, within the parameters of Marxist theory itself.

Umemoto's Early Life and the Global Crisis of Humanism

Umemoto Katsumi was born in 1912, a few months before the beginning of the Taishō period, and was educated entirely in Japan. When Umemoto was a student, the Japanese philosophers Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime, pioneers of the Kyoto School, were extremely influential. Umemoto had already begun to read Nishida's philosophy in Mito Higher School and eventually studied ethics with the famous thinker, tangentially associated with the Kyoto School, Watsuji Tetsurō at Tokyo Imperial University. In 1937 he wrote a graduation thesis on the medieval Buddhist thinker Shinran. This was a time when a number of philosophers from the Kyoto School were becoming interested

in Shinran. Umemoto's thesis and its context provides the background for his theory of subjectivity and his critique of civil society. In particular, since the crisis in Japanese civil society was connected to people's doubts about an evolutionary discourse of modern subjectivity and the market, Umemoto's thesis on Shinran, which intimates different concepts of time and subjective agency, was in this sense an attempt to grapple with fundamental issues facing Japan.

Umemoto wrote in his diary that his interest in Buddhism emerged in the process of coping with several personal crises. His mother passed away when he was a year old and he was raised by his stepmother. However, he only found out about his mother's death during high school around 1931 and, he says, as a result turned to nihilism. About three years later, he entered Tokyo Imperial University after being impressed by a lecture by the famous literary critic and ultranationalist Kurata Hyakuzō. Kurata was influenced by the works of the Kyoto School and had written a play about Shinran, which became a best seller. Umemoto claims that his own turn toward Shinran came after he fell in love with a 17-year-old female ticket vendor and realized that his love would be unrequited.² He claimed that he recovered from his desperation through reading Shinran. It is tempting to contextualize his graduation thesis in this manner given that its subject is largely existential and about freedom. However, a brief look at this early text will show that he broached themes related to temporality—something he would continue in his Marxist period—which suggests he was responding to something more fundamental.

Speaking of the Bodhisattva in his thesis, he wrote:

He is free and because his personality is united, he bears past and future in the present with one thought. He must bear responsibility for the past and the responsibility of the past self. To the extent his is a free unification of personality, he must of course have the fate of bearing the past and the future. Because he bears the past and the future in one present thought, although yesterday and today are separated by a rupture, the self of yesterday is inside that of today and here the various moments in which the existence of the self are punctuated are also unified.³

While the initial impetus to read Shinran might have been to overcome the fragmentation of the self caused by personal distress, involved here is a type of

2 Tanabe Tsunenobu, "Kaisetsu [Interpretation]," in Umemoto Katsumi, *Chosaku shū*, vol. 10 (Tokyo: Tokyo san'ichi shobō, 1977), 608.

3 Umemoto Katsumi, *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku* [Historical materialism and morality] (Tokyo: Kobushi shobō, 1995), 28–29.

religious conversion associated with a new unification of time and self. Eventually, Umemoto relates this unification of the self through time to the meaning of history:

Because one cannot break free from it, it is karma (*shukumei*). At this point, with a strong consciousness of the present, one mediates oneself with a destiny that seems to encroach on one's freedom. Then one faces nothingness, that which is at the bottom of one's action, that which cannot be grasped by the self and can even rule karma. Destiny still leaves space for human freedom. Karma encroaches on freedom from the outside.⁴

We see here a theme that is common not only in Kyoto School philosophy but also among existential philosophers, such as Sartre: namely, the subject as rooted in a recalcitrant nothingness. The above passage lays the foundation for Umemoto's analysis of capitalism and civil society, which includes not only his concept of nothingness, but also his concepts of destiny and karma. Destiny and karma are ontological categories and are hostile to subjectivity. We see aspects of this in Hegel's concept of the "necessity of empty destiny" (*leeren Schicksal*), of which, as a student of philosophy, Umemoto was perhaps familiar. Describing the transition from the Greek to the Roman world, Hegel writes that "we saw the powers and shapes of the ethical world sink in the simple necessity of empty destiny."⁵ This destiny is empty to the extent that subjectivity is completely unaware of its workings and hence self-knowledge and knowledge of spirit is connected to freedom. Umemoto's reading of Buddhism follows Hegel's concept of self-knowledge as freedom. In other words, understanding karma is the first step toward liberation. However, because liberation implies the negation of karma and not its realization, in the above passage Umemoto already hints at a theory of incomplete subsumption—neither destiny nor karma completely subsumes subjectivity.

Umemoto's conception of nothingness, destiny, and karma was mediated by a larger historical trajectory, to which his mentors Nishida, Watsuji, and Kurata, were all responding. At this point, Umemoto merely conceptualized the antinomy between freedom and the structures that constrain it ontologically, but as he understood Marxism, he began to grasp it historically in relation to political possibilities. This trajectory was of course related to capitalism, but more specifically Japan's rise in a global capitalist world. This trajectory runs deeper

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1986), 355.

than any simple separation between pre- and post-war Japan and should thus cause us to rethink how we periodize Japanese intellectual history. Japanese historians often contrast the democratic 1920s to the autocratic 1930s, which would suggest that Umemoto's personal crises accompanied a national crisis, the transition from the more liberal 1920s to the autocratic 1930s. However, the recent trend is to affirm continuities between these two periods, from both political and social perspectives. Among other things, this continuity is evidenced in the continuous development of bureaucratic control over the whole of society, which was connected to nation building and industrialization.

Bruce Cumings points out that in the 1930s, Japan seemed to withdraw from the world and develop its own form of industrialization:

In the 1930s Japan largely withdrew from the world system and pursued, with its colonies, a self-reliant, go-it-alone path to development that not only generated remarkably high industrial growth rates but changed the face of Northeast Asia. In this decade what we might call the "natural economy" of the region was created; although it was not natural, its rational division of labor and set of possibilities have skewed East Asian development ever since.⁶

This "withdrawal" from the system of global capitalism was accompanied by an ideology that stressed an alternative path to modernity, one that was associated with the Co-Prosperity Sphere. In this sense, Japanese conservative thinkers anticipated the famous nationalistic tract of the late 1980s by Ishihara Shintarō and Morita Akiō, *The Japan That Can Say No*.⁷ However, conservative intellectuals of this period often tried to "anchor the Japanese present" in pre-modern Japanese history and further connected this to larger universal project.⁸ Kurata's and the Kyoto School philosophers' references to Shinran express precisely this tendency.

Cumings' point helps clarify the continuities between prewar and postwar Japanese intellectual history and also helps provide a historical context for relating Umemoto's prewar and postwar phases. We should note that Japanese

6 Bruce Cumings, "The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences," *International Organization*, 38.1 (Winter 1984): 1–40, 12.

7 Ishihara Shintarō and Morita Akiō, *No to ieru Nihon* (Tokyo: Kōbunsha 1989).

8 Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 31. Harootunian gives the examples of Kuki Shūzō, Yanagita Kunio, and Watsuji Tetsurō.

industrialization took place in a world where the uniqueness of the Japanese modern was premised on deeper structural similarities. To some extent, the opposition between sameness and difference was expressed in the duality of the nation-form, which on the one hand presupposes the formal sameness of all nations, while on the other hand stresses the uniqueness or difference of a particular nation. The nation-state form also mediates capitalism both in Japan and elsewhere and thus one can find a similar dialectic of sameness-in-difference with respect to national and global capital. However, in addition to this dialectic, one needs to supplement the picture with the notion of unevenness, which would account for the imperialist relations not only between the emerging American empire and Japan, but also the legacy of Japanese imperialism, which has been intimately connected to what Cumings describes as the Japanese trajectory of development.

I would suggest that capital and the nation-state not only formed the social conditions for Umemoto's prewar and postwar thought, but also that these social conditions imply certain conceptual oppositions, including difference, sameness, unevenness and subjectivity, which Umemoto mobilized in his work. Upon graduation, Umemoto took a job teaching ethics at Mito Higher School and avidly read Marx and began to rethink his philosophical framework to encompass a capitalist world characterized by class divisions and bureaucratic rationalization.

Given that intellectuals around the world were all confronted with such capitalist and bureaucratic rationalization, it is not surprising that they conjured similar responses, one being the attempt to return to subjectivity as resistance. We can read the work of the Kyoto School and the early Umemoto in terms of a larger intellectual current critical of humanism and progressive time, a current that tried to come to grips with the eclipse of human agency and narratives of development in the face of capitalist crisis. With the human reduced to nothing in the face of capital and bureaucratic rationalization, these philosophers took recourse to "nothing," a lack and so on, to refer to a subjective potential that could not be reduced to a rationalized object. As Japanese intellectuals were exposed to this trend in the 1930s and 1940s, we can understand why they would be drawn to Buddhism, a philosophy premised on the self being constituted by nothing.

The crisis of humanism, however, was not confined to Japan. In Europe, to put it simply, the crisis emerged as people doubted the reconstructions of ethics after Nietzsche's famous utterance that God is dead. In other words, with the death of God, the foundation of morality became obscure. In response, Neo-Kantian philosophers hoped to ground ethics in human subjectivity. Stefanos Geroulanos points out that until the late 1920s, French academics attempted to

develop a humanism based on Neo-Kantianism, which was inextricably connected to a view of progress as it existed in the West.⁹

Among the elements of this trend was a belief in progress and science, which entailed certain epistemological and metaphysical assumptions. Clearly, as Japan entered the world system, defeated Russia, and began to stake out its own colonies, a neo-Kantian narrative of progress, based on putative Western superiority, would be found wanting. Indeed, from the beginning of the 1890s, Japanese historians developed the notion of “East Asia” (*tōyō*) to counter Eurocentric discourses.¹⁰

However, it was not always easy to grasp how thought was changing in Europe. For example, when the Japanese aesthetician Kuki Shūzō visited France in 1929, he claimed that French philosophy was characterized by an emphasis on objectivity and on metaphysical Cartesian dualism, inner observation, and a striving to be social.¹¹ French and German intellectuals linked these characteristics to Western civilization and progress in science, especially since scientific concepts of objectivity often entailed Cartesian dualism and positivism.

However, this would all change the following year. In 1929, in Davos, Martin Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer had a famous debate concerning “What is man?” According to many of the attendees, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, and other soon to be well-known figures, Heidegger clearly won this debate which entailed the death of a particular type of humanism. The attack on humanism would find further expression in Heidegger’s magnum opus, *Sein und Zeit*, published the same year. In short, Heidegger’s work questioned a number of the assumptions that Kuki believed were predominant during the period, such as Cartesian dualism.

Umemoto was exposed to Neo-Kantianism at Mito Higher School at approximately the time when intellectuals around the world were experiencing Heidegger’s undermining of the ground on which Neo-Kantianism stood. The publication of *Sein und Zeit* was the first of successive attacks on the autonomy of the subject and the foundations of ethics. This had a profound impact in France, influencing George Bataille, Alexandre Kojève, and Jean-Paul Sartre, among many others. Specifically, Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* undermined

9 Stefanos Gueroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

10 See Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), Chapter 1.

11 Kuki Shūzō, “General Characteristics of French Philosophy,” in Steven Light, *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Early History of Existential Phenomenology* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 92–95. Cf. Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 49.

the autonomy of the human being by stressing that human beings are constituted by their relations and practices and by their relation to Being. During the 1940s and into the postwar period, Sartre and Heidegger both hoped to avoid the nihilistic consequences of denying the existence of both God and human autonomy.

Although Stefanos Geroulanos dates this attack on humanism as starting with the 1930s, in both Europe and Japan there is a larger trajectory of this thought. For example, when Nietzsche famously proclaimed that “God is dead,” he was by no means happy with the Cartesian subject or any humanistic enterprise. Indeed, Heidegger’s *Dasein* is anticipated by a cluster of concepts found in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹² In fact, in both prewar and postwar France, leading thinkers in this anti-humanist trend, such as Georges Bataille and Jean Hyppolite, were influenced by Nietzsche and Hegel. Japanese scholars drew on versions of Buddhism mediated through readings of Hegel and Nietzsche to reconstitute thought in modern Japan and this reconfiguration made it easy for intellectuals to affirm a breakdown of the subject at almost the same time as the idea of the modern subject emerged in Japan.

One can safely say that the idea of the modern subject emerged with a number of other epistemological shifts encircling the Meiji period beginning in 1868. Initially, intellectuals of this period, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, related subjectivity to an enlightenment narrative of progress, which extolled European development. However, toward the end of the Meiji period around the turn of the twentieth century, as problems with Western-influenced capitalist development became apparent, scholars drew on combinations of German idealism and religions such as Buddhism in order to construct a new vision of Japanese and Asian philosophy.

Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) was perhaps the most famous of these thinkers, and one who exerted a significant influence on the Japanese left, and on Umemoto in particular, during the postwar period. The Japanese word for subjectivity, *shutaisei*, was coined by Nishida, and a couple of decades before the crisis of humanism spread in France, Nishida was already developing a theory of subjectivity that decentered the role of the human or the conscious subject. In his famous *An Inquiry into the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū*), published in 1911, he stressed the importance of “pure experience,” which emerged before the separation between subject and object. Such concepts, and Kyoto School

12 This suggests that although one might periodize the crisis of humanism in relation to the 1929 economic depression, the roots of both this mode of thinking and this economic crisis lie deeper in the logic of capital.

philosophy more generally, surround Umemoto's prewar writing. During the early postwar period, he would try to fuse these concepts with Marxism.

The Kyoto School in Postwar Japan

The position of the Kyoto School in postwar Japan was complex partly because the period witnessed a number of conflicting tendencies. People experienced the emperor's declaration of defeat in 1945 as the beginning of a new age of possibilities. However, at the same time, the freedom that Japan now enjoyed was granted from the outside by another nation and the quasi-colonial presence of the American Occupation, which caused intellectuals to ponder how freedom could become their own, emerging from the inside. In this context, the reception of the Kyoto School was complex. On the one hand, the early postwar period in Japan was an "age of philosophy," as there was both a space and a necessity to rethink fundamental notions related to politics. In this context it is not surprising that people were enthusiastic about the works of the Kyoto School. Koschmann points out that people would line up to purchase copies of Nishida Kitarō's work and Tanabe's *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (*Zangedō no tetsugaku*) was a best seller.¹³ On the other hand, Japanese Marxists were critical of Kyoto School philosophers since Kyoto School philosophers, and Nishida and Tanabe in particular, often explicitly placed the nation over class conflict and therefore directly attacked Marxist theory. Moreover, Kyoto School philosophers were associated with the prewar discourse of fascism. Thus immediately after the war, the Association of Democratic Scientists (*Minka*), an organization that tried to continue prewar Marxist organizations such as the Proletarian Research Institute and the Materialists Study Group, set out to criticize the Kyoto School.¹⁴

However, postwar Japanese Marxists were by no means unified with respect to their view of Kyoto School. Their split was connected to an antinomy within Marxist theory. On the one hand, Marxism is ostensibly about human emancipation and consequently entails some type of humanism, but on the other hand, Marxists have stressed the laws of history, which are primarily governed by a dialectic between the forces of production and the relations of production. Most postwar Marxists stressed the latter aspect, leading to an intellectual scene that pitted the science of history against subjectivity. But Umemoto, one of the most outspoken advocates of subjectivity during the early postwar

13 Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity*, 88.

14 Ibid.

period, combined ruminations about the early Marx with a reappropriation of ideas from the Kyoto School. Moreover, he attempted to place these concepts back into the context of a Marxist theory of history, a step that seem to go deeper than his reading of the early Marx. This combination would encounter limits, as we shall see, in the midst of his discussion in “On the Limits of Human Freedom,” which draws on Kyoto School philosophy to critique civil society. Before analyzing this text, it will be helpful to look briefly at Watsuji Tetsurō’s critique of civil society—since there are some clear similarities between the thinking of Umemoto and Watsuji, Umemoto’s teacher—and Umemoto’s response to Marx’s “On the Jewish Question.”

Watsuji Tetsurō and Society of Individual Interests

Among Japanese non-Marxist critics of civil society, Watsuji Tetsurō stands out because he connected his attack on civil society to a larger critique of the modern capitalist world. Although Watsuji was not a Marxist, his work is significant in this context because his critique of civil society mimics the critique in Marx’s “On the Jewish Question”—namely, that civil society atomizes and fragments society. Watsuji was associated with the Kyoto School philosophers who, during the 1930s and 1940s, famously developed a philosophical theory to overcome modernity and in particular the West. While they did not grasp modernity historically, the major thinkers of the Kyoto School pointed to a number of antinomies associated with modern philosophy and attempted to overcome them by rethinking the concept of totality in relation to radically reinterpreted ideals from Buddhism. Given their political orientation and their support for both the Pacific War and the invasion of China, one could not call Kyoto School philosophers left Hegelians, but one could perhaps call them antimodern Hegelians or Eastern Hegelians since they constructed notions of Buddhist nothingness heavily mediated by German idealism and then symbolically connected such concepts to an idea of Asian resistance.

More than the philosophers closely associated with the Kyoto School, Watsuji was interested in social philosophy and launched a critique of civil society from the right, stressing the idea of community, which he associated with resistance to the West. He refused to translate the German term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as *shiminshakai* (市民社会), a term that remains the most popular translation for “civil society” in both China and Japan today. In a well-known essay that criticizes Japanese life in the cities, Watsuji used the term “society of individual interests” (*riekishakai* 利益社会) to translate *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* to highlight that it was a bourgeois or capitalist society in which people

primarily pursued their individual interests. Recall that for Hegel as well civil society would disintegrate into atomistic individuals if the state did not cancel and lift the contradictions in civil society to a higher level. In what was probably a response to contemporary Marxists, Watsuji connected the problem of the emergence of civil society to issues that plagued Japan since the Meiji Restoration.

In a certain sense, the Russo-Japanese War was not only a watershed event in relation to Japanese capitalism, but also a watershed event in terms of the history of the Japanese spirit. Since the Meiji Restoration, there were the contrary positions of driving out the barbarian and developing and opening the country, enlightening Korea, and Enlightenment and Development, but after the Russo-Japanese War these contradictory attitudes were unified in the idea of capitalist civilization. In other words, the mutual constraints of the awareness of communal society and the development of interest-based society (*riekishakai*) were broken; there remained only a tendency toward the development of interest society. It is not that communal society has died, but only that *awareness* (*jikaku*) of it has grown feeble.¹⁵

Watsuji splits the Meiji Restoration into two contradictory aspects: the discourse of civilization, which is connected to capitalist atomization; and the nationalist, anti-imperialist discourse of repelling the barbarian,¹⁶ which is connected to the idea of community. The emergence of interest-based society in the Meiji represents the crisis of humanity because of a lack of community and atomization, which is related to capitalism, which in his view is intimately connected to encroachment by the West. In a Hegelian manner, Watsuji contends that community remains concealed and that people must become self-conscious of their own nature. Again in this case, as with Umemoto's reading of Shinran, we have an instance of incomplete subsumption and the problem of knowing who one is. Watsuji here is also invoking his conception of multiple layers of history or temporality (*jūsōsei* 重層性), which implies remnants that could change the course of history. In this sense, one must look beyond the

15 Watsuji Tetsurō, *Keizoku Nihon seishinshi kenkyū* [Continuation of the study of the Japanese spirit], in *Watsuji Tetsurō zenshū* [The complete works of Watsuji Tetsurō], vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), 447 (emphasis in the original).

16 This specifically refers to the term *sonnō jōi*, which implies attacking the foreign imperialists. The idea of the barbarian is partially taken from the Chinese discourse, but here Japan becomes the center of civilization.

appearance of civil society or a society of individual interests, which emerged after the Meiji Restoration. Watsuji invoked remnants of community in the hope of curtailing the fragmentation caused by basing society on individual interests. While Watsuji was no Marxist, Umemoto, his student, would also attempt to analyze and overcome the fragmentation associated with capitalist society by taking his cue from Hegel and Marx. Indeed, it is their respective responses to Marx that separate Umemoto and Watsuji. Umemoto rarely commented on the similarities and differences between his own thought and that of his teacher but, in an essay written in 1966—"Kokka, minzoku, kaikyū, kojū"—he noted that when Watsuji criticized the interest society, this included the proletariat and the Marxist movement, which consequently changed the political terrain of his analysis.¹⁷ In this sense, Watsuji was using the idea of layered history, remnants, and his critique of civil society against Marxism. The question for Umemoto would be how to reread Marx in order to develop a theory of civil society that goes beyond Watsuji.

Umemoto's Reading of Civil Society

In a series of essays connected to the issue of subjectivity written in the immediate postwar and after, Umemoto responded to Watsuji's arguments, without mentioning his name directly until the 1966 essay mentioned above. About two decades earlier, Umemoto had published "On the Limits of Human Freedom," an essay that is often discussed because it sparked the famous "subjectivity debate" of 1947, which both Kersten and Koschmann have analyzed. In particular, the Marxist philosopher Matsumura Kazuto attacked this essay for veering off the course of Marxism into a voluntaristic affirmation of subjectivity. Rather than going into this debate, I will outline some of the possibilities of the essay in the context of Marxist philosophy.

Umemoto begins the essay by underscoring the contradiction between state and civil society while simultaneously attacking Tanabe Hajime's essay "The Immediate Necessity of Political Philosophy" ("Seiji tetsugaku no kyūmu"), published in 1946. Tanabe had attempted to conceive of democracy as a dialectic between freedom and equality, which would eventually be synthesized in a totality symbolized by the emperor.¹⁸ Thus Umemoto begins his 1947 essay "On the Limits of Human Freedom" with the following lines:

17 Umemoto Katsumi, "Kokka, minzoku, kaikyū, kojū," in Umemoto Katsumi, *Chosaku shū* [Selected works], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Tokyo san'ichi shobō, 1977), 339–92, 350.

18 Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity*, 90–92.

It appears that social democracy is being provided with a philosophical foundation and is being praised by intellectuals. They say that as a result of the development of liberalism, equality became alienated and through this, freedom was placed in danger. In response to this, the equality of communism is greatly praised, but this implies alienating freedom again and then uniting the two once more.¹⁹

Here Umemoto considers freedom and equality dialectically opposed, where the former is represented by civil society and the latter by the state. In other words, as one places the emphasis on civil society and the market, one alienates equality. But as inequalities increase, freedom is itself placed in jeopardy. Tanabe already saw this problem, but did not agree with the communists' attempt to counter it with the state. Umemoto responds to this same issue by focusing on freedom in capitalist society and the limits of political emancipation within the structure of modern capitalist society. In this context, Umemoto draws on Marx's critique of political emancipation in his essay "On the Jewish Question."

Umemoto's invocation of "On the Jewish Question" is fitting because it is a text with resources to construct a Marxist theory of the state. The other obvious choice would be Marx's "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," and Umemoto would return to both of these texts in 1962, in an essay entitled "Marxism and the Problem of the State: On the Relation to Alienation."²⁰ The significance of these texts emerges because in works such as *Capital*, Marx focuses on the logic of the commodity and capital and does not explicitly theorize the state, even though capital always presupposes a state apparatus. Therefore, since the 1990s, scholars as diverse as Wendy Brown and Paul Thomas have turned to the above texts to expound a Marxist theory of the state.²¹

We will return to the problem of Marxism and recent critiques of Marx's "On the Jewish Question" in the conclusion, but we should note here that in both of the above-mentioned essays, Umemoto underscores the following passage from "On the Jewish Question."

Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual

19 "Ningenteki jiyū no genkai," in Umemoto, *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku*, 9. Cf. Koschmann *Revolution and Subjectivity*.

20 "Marukusushugi to kokka no mondai: sogai ni kanrenshite," in Umemoto, *Chosaku shū*, vol. 10, 207–23.

21 Paul Thomas, *Alien Politics: Marxist State Theory Retrieved* (London: Verso, 1994); Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2001.

man in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species-being*; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (*forces propres*) as *social* powers and so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political* power.²²

Marx makes a number of distinctions that play a key role in Umemoto's conception of freedom. The distinction between the political or the state and society actually represents a split in the individual concomitant with the emergence of capitalism. In capitalist society, individuals simultaneously pursue their own interests in civil society and at the same time are represented politically by the state. Marx calls the former *bourgeois* and the latter *citoyen*. As bourgeois, human beings are concrete individuals going on the market to sell their labor power in order to procure use-values. The state establishes the conditions for the sale of labor power and represents the individuals in civil society. This representation finds its expression in the concept of citizenship and national community, but people's identity as citizens remains abstract and alienated from their everyday lives. In other words, people's social and political power remains congealed in the state, a separation that the nation to some extent legitimates. Another side effect of the institutional separation between civil society and the state is that the laws that form the conditions of civil society, that is, the conditions of the capitalist market, do not appear as political.

Following Marx, Umemoto explains the emergence of the institutional separation with reference to the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the displacement of moral personality.

Liberalism politically liberated the modern citizen from feudal fetters. However, because this was originally the liberation of the egoistic spirit of city dwellers from that which constrained them, feudal society disintegrated into atomized self-interested individuals and moral personality floated in the air. Modern capitalist society is formed out of such self-interested individuals and through this formation all of the members of this society are reified. Humanity is completely fragmented. In such a society, no matter how much one longs for the moral personality floating in the air, this can only end in being a demand (*yōsei*).²³

In feudal society, people were directly subject to hierarchical and political relations such as those between serf and lord. As feudal society transformed into

22 Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," pp. 126–51 in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 46 (italics in the original).

23 Umemoto, *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku*, 10.

one based on the market, human relations were no longer mediated by overt political power, but rather human life was mediated by the market and by labor. Umemoto adds that this leads to a moral fragmentation and moral alienation. He uses the term *bukkenka* (物件化), which implies both reification and atomization. As a result, one's moral personality or communal or species being floats in the air and as long as relations remain capitalist, there will be no way of grasping this. One might ask, what exactly Umemoto means when he claims that "moral personality floats in the air." If we follow the analysis in "On the Jewish Question," Marx claims that human community is displaced to the state, which is separate from people's everyday lives. The only way to overcome this is to transform both civil society and the state.

Umemoto's project is to reunite people with their moral personality, which involves ethics and politics. In other words, Umemoto constructs an ethics to restore agency, but this will involve locating a subject who can effect this change—a subject that reflects on its reification and can potentially undo it. In light of this project, he will draw on the thought of Nishida Kitarō. As a reader of Lukács, Umemoto could easily locate the working class as the revolutionary subject. However, given that moral personality is floating in the air, it is not something that can be monopolized by one class. In other words, there are certain general features of capitalism, including the separation of civil society and the state, that affect everyone within capitalist society, even while differentially influencing members of specific classes.

Umemoto's Critical Inflection of Nishida's Nothingness and Historical Agency

Nishida is important for Umemoto because he needs to find within civil society a type of subjectivity that points beyond itself and transcends what Watsuji called "interest society." If one were to remain within the confines of interest society, one would only reproduce capitalism. Indeed, this is perhaps why rational-choice Marxists are constantly frustrated when it comes to thinking about revolutionary action.²⁴ The problem for Marxists is to some extent similar to the issue that Marx describes with respect to the capitalist: s/he needs to find one commodity that is different from others in that it produces more value than it costs. The capitalist finds this in labor, and to some extent the

24 There is a huge literature on analytical Marxist ideas of subjectivity. See for example, Jon Elster, "Weakness of the Will and the Free-rider Problem," *Economics and Philosophy*, 1.2 (1985): 231–65.

subjectivity that can effect social transformation is also connected to this same subject/object, namely labor.

A number of scholars, including Chris Arthur, have pointed out that capital cannot completely subsume labor and therefore it can potentially point beyond.²⁵ However, we need to be clear about what labor is. Pheng Cheah has pointed out that Marx's conception of labor is at times similar to what the German idealists understand by human activity or culture.²⁶ What is key here is the distinction between labor in capitalism and labor in general, or labor mobilized for the creation of exchange values and profit in distinction to labor as human activity in general. Arthur's point is that even in capitalist society labor does not cease to be a creative activity and thus there is a part of labor that will never be completely subsumed by capital. Umemoto attempts to draw on this type of activity to overcome the various alienations of civil society and capitalism.

In his contribution to this volume, William Haver shows how Nishida echoes Marxian conceptions of production and labor as human activity. We have already mentioned Nishida's early work in which he attempted to ground subjectivity in what he called pure experience—experience which should be understood as activity. However, in the 1920s one of Nishida's most famous students, Tanabe Hajime, constantly criticized him for not accounting for history, political action, and society. In short, Tanabe contended that Nishida's philosophy was mystical, focusing only on the individual subject. In response, in a series of essays Nishida repeatedly attempted to relate his philosophy to issues of history and action. There are many examples, but from the following passage from his famous essay, "Absolutely Contradictory Self-Identity" (*Zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu*), we see his emphasis on historical subjectivity.

As I already mentioned, the individual is absolutely creative as individual. The individual is individual simultaneously as forming the world and as an element creating the world and creating him or herself. The world that moves from the created to that which creates in a contradictory self-identity is a world that transforms from one form to another. It is the world in which form is self-determining; as I mentioned in the beginning, the present is self-determining. The world of absolutely self-contradictory self-identity between multiplicity and unity must form itself from the above-mentioned standpoint. It must reveal its formative act. The form

25 Chris Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx's Capital* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

26 Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 9.

that forms itself in such a manner is a historical species. The latter plays a subjective role (*shutaiteki yakumoku*) in the historical world.²⁷

Although he begins with the individual, we find the individual immediately involved in creative activity that creates the world. He does not use the term “nothingness” in this passage, but the contradictory self-identity of the subjectivity he describes is similar to concepts such as nothingness, since they transcend existing boundaries between creator and created or subject and object. Nishida here connects his ontology of fundamental subjectivity to history, action, and temporality. The present itself is self-determining, which suggests that time is active and action itself mimics the structure of time. Nishida then follows Tanabe and connects creative activity to species and history. However, the consequences of this action remain vague and underdetermined. There has been a huge debate about the extent to which Nishida’s or Tanabe’s philosophies could be linked to fascism, but it is clear that Nishida and Tanabe claim that creative subjectivity should be mediated by the state, by the species, and by the emperor.²⁸

Umemoto inherited Nishida and Tanabe’s legacy and mobilized their ideas to different ends. This required a paradigm shift that placed an analysis of capitalism at the center and then tried to conceive of nothingness in this context. As he notes in another essay on Shinran, echoing his early work on the subject, “Nothingness is a fact of consciousness that emerges when one subjectively understands the negative transformation of historical reality. But it is not the origin of reality.”²⁹ Although in his early essay on Shinran, nothingness seemed almost ontological, here Umemoto highlights that it should not be understood metaphysically. It is something like Sartre’s *pour-soi*, the lack that constitutes consciousness. Although Sartre attempted to combine his understanding of subjectivity with Marxism, Sartre’s *pour-soi* was still undetermined and thus constituted the root of human freedom. Umemoto contextualizes subjective-nothingness and the transformation of historical reality in relation to the logic of capitalism and first and second nature.

Real history takes place in the realm of this second nature, and through a dialectical relationship between the individual and the totality, and here

27 Nishida Kitarō, “Zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu” [Absolutely contradictory self-identity], in *Nishida Kitarō tetsugaku ronbun shū* [Collected articles of Nishida Kitarō], Ueda Shizuteru, ed. (Tokyo, Iwanami shoten 2009), 17–18.

28 For an analysis of Tanabe Hajime and the concept of species, see Naoki Sakai’s essay in this volume.

29 Umemoto, *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku*, 93.

the determination of the individual makes real contingency a necessity.... There is probably no uneasiness about the fact that the self cannot grasp itself as a totality or that there is something within the self that cannot be seen. Moreover, such uneasiness really presents itself in the world of human action where subjects encounter other subjects, the historical world in the original sense of the word. If one tries to grasp the conditions that make such freedom possible, humanity must break completely from these conditions. However, one cannot break free by reflecting on one's consciousness. People call this [that which makes freedom possible] nothingness. Mysticism grasps this nothingness without mediation in the form of direct intuition, a mistake that has often been pointed out. It is a fact that the shadow of this unmediated nothingness is the symbol of class oppression.... Dialectics tries to grasp this nothingness as it is auto-determined by the object—namely, nature and society—but to the extent that this stops at the level of thought, in the end one can only end at interpreting its shadow.³⁰

In this passage, Umemoto invokes a concept of creative activity, namely nothingness, which goes beyond the distinction between state and civil society and yet presents the uncertainty and unease connected with the uncontrollability of social action. He insists on understanding nothingness, unease, and human finitude in relation to capital to avoid the pitfalls of what he calls mysticism. Umemoto grasps nothingness in the context of an opposition between first nature and second nature, both of which go beyond the antinomies of capital. First nature is the realm of the natural sciences, something other Marxists of the time stressed. By emphasizing science, Marxists highlighted the objective laws of history rather than subjective nothingness. These objective laws supposedly transcend capitalism, even if many have been discovered recently. Moreover, they include natural limits on human beings, such as death and vulnerability.³¹

However, Umemoto points out that history takes place in the realm of second nature or society, which asserts itself as an alien totality, while at the same time it is made by human beings. In his words, as we have seen in the above quote, social totality is always mediated by individual action. From this perspective, the structures of alienation that pervade capitalist society are also made by humans but they confront people as objective. This is part of the uneasiness of fundamentally not being able to control what we have created. To some extent, this is part of our existential condition and, to this extent, it

30 Ibid., 22–23.

31 Ibid., 23.

should not be a major concern. But to the extent that we are allowing what we create, our second nature, to control us, this is a political problem that requires us to act. The goal of history is emancipation from these structures and, in Umemoto's view, this requires overcoming this second nature.

Through the leaping development of natural science, human freedom greatly expanded. In this case, one can recall Bacon's words about how science is a way in which human beings control nature. However, there appears for humans a second nature, namely "society." To the extent that one does not understand the mechanisms that pervade "society," it becomes an unstoppable destiny that transcends the members of society.... Through human beings grasping and bringing this second nature under "planned and conscious control," the external force that controlled human beings up to this point comes under the control of human beings.... "Only after this point do human beings begin to consciously make their own history."³²

Note that in this passage the unstoppable destiny that was associated with karma is now socialized in terms of the logic of capital, civil society, and the state. In the passage, unstoppable destiny refers to second nature or social forces. Insofar as we do not understand "unstoppable destiny" we are subject to it. Thus, understanding the world becomes the first step to changing it. Returning to the analysis in the preceding section, the institutional separation between civil society and the state encourages the reproduction of capitalism, since it makes the functioning of the market appear as a private and apolitical realm; it also makes second nature appear as first nature. This obscures how capital, politics, and history are intertwined. Umemoto's use of the term "second nature" suggests that another history is possible and this is precisely the attempt to realize Marx's call in "On the Jewish Question"—namely to realize a world where the real human being absorbs the powers of the abstract citizen. Now that we have outlined Umemoto's position, we can briefly turn to the criticisms of his position along with the post-Marxist criticism of Marx.

Conclusion: Umemoto and the Problem of Civil Society in Marxist Theory

As I mentioned at the outset, Umemoto's work has been criticized from many different perspectives. In the postwar period, people such as Matsumura

32 Ibid., 15–16. The words "only after this point..." are from Engels.

Kazuto attacked him for straying from the Marxist line and more recently he has been criticized for not straying far enough. The latter complaint opens up some theoretical issues that have long plagued Marxism, which I will begin to address in this conclusion. Koschmann anchors his critique of Umemoto in Laclau and Mouffe, whose hostile analysis of Marxism meshes with that of many who stress political practice in civil society. While such critics usually refer to the whole of Marx's oeuvre, they also often single out "On the Jewish Question" because, as I mentioned earlier, it is one of the places where Marx appears to develop a theory of the state. Patchen Markell's critique of this position is worth considering here since it overlaps with earlier positions critical of Marx and at the same time targets more recent appropriations of "On the Jewish Question" by Paul Thomas and Wendy Brown. The latter two readings have influenced my own interpretations of the text and consequently of Umemoto, and thus Markell's critique is directly relevant to the discussion.

Markell's critique echoes Laclau and Mouffe's reading of Marxism, and consequently Koschmann's critique of Umemoto, to the extent that they all argue that Marx fails to grasp the complexities of subjectivity. However, Markell goes further in underscoring the institutional structures that make subjectivity in capitalist society. In particular, he contends that when in "On the Jewish Question" Marx argues that the political state lets social structures act according to their own logic, he overlooks the active role the state plays in capitalist society. In other words, what Umemoto glosses above as "political liberation from feudal fetters" does not grasp the active role of the state in shaping the identity of citizens. Markell contends that scholars since Marx, including Wendy Brown, fall into the trap of viewing the state as merely passive.

One could say that Umemoto also falls into this trap. Marxists have attempted to remedy this problem by bringing the state back into the picture. Drawing on the long tradition from Althusser to Foucault, one could show how state apparatuses and modern governmentality create new subjectivities that are enmeshed in new forms of domination. Jacques Bidet's recent work attempts to do this by viewing modern capitalist society as having two sides—market and organization, where the latter includes state apparatuses.³³ The problem in modern capitalism does not lie in the fact that the state withdraws from civil society, but that it is transformed and participates in a new manner.

However, none of this alters the fundamental thrust of the Marxist critique of capitalist civil society as naturalized social domination. Indeed, it just makes the problem more complex since we need to theorize the state as another form

33 Jacques Bidet, *L'État-Monde : Libéralisme, socialisme et communisme à l'échelle globale* (Paris: PUF, 2010).

of naturalized domination. Moreover, both civil society and the state are aspects of capitalism, and are not reducible to one another. This is one of the reasons Bidet underscores that the ruling class has two poles: the market and organization. Umemoto and other Marxists stress the structural constraints on human subjectivity and the potential for resistance embodied in the nothingness of subjectivity, which cannot be completely subsumed by either the state or the market. But the attempt to affirm a pure subjectivity is perhaps the drawback of both the Kyoto School and Umemoto.

Markell's point is that we need to think about how a political future should be theorized and eventually institutionalized. He is critical of both Rousseau's idea of a day when "each sees himself in others so that all will be better united" as well as Marx's anticipation of a day when man recognizes and organizes his "own powers as social powers so that he no longer separates this social power, in the form of political power, from himself."³⁴ Markell's objection is about mediation. In Markell's view, these theorists imagine a situation where there is full transparency and identification. The issue that Markell and others see here involves a vision that rids politics of contingency and deals with political identity as if it were unproblematic. Because of this, Markell, Laclau, and previous critics of Umemoto give up on the political project of Marxism.

However, one can agree with Markell's description of an ideal politics while drawing different conclusions. Markell writes that one could reconceive

democracy as a pattern of mutual and interlocking relations of dependence among multiple loci of authority or concentrations of power. And it could mean defining democratic citizenship not as the self-control of the people, but as a matter of taking part in the activity of politics, where taking part can refer not only to the participation in authoritative deliberative and decision-making bodies, but also to a range of unofficial activities, both quotidian and extraordinary, through which authoritative acts are subjected to the unpredictable responses of those whose lives they touch.³⁵

These words, inspired by a number of political theorists, including Laclau and Mouffe, offers much food for thought. In particular, Markell has replaced the goal of self-control, which echoes Engel's and Umemoto's "planned conscious control," with "taking part in the activities of politics." This helpfully affirms

34 Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 188, citing Marx, "On the Jewish Question."

35 Ibid.

that the contingencies that remain from the structure of first nature will continue to exist even when second nature, namely society, is no longer capitalist. Note that part of those contingencies emerged from human interaction and finitude.

However, the problem from a Marxist perspective concerns precisely how one deals politically with the unintended consequences and contingencies of human actions. Markell's model implies that "authoritative acts [will be] subjected to the unpredictable responses of those whose lives they touch." Umemoto's point is precisely that capitalism and its structures preclude this democratic possibility. In short, a world of multiple loci of authority and concentrations of power that respond to people below cannot be realized in a meaningful way until capitalism is transformed. After all, in addition to the concentrations of class power at both the levels of market and organization, capitalism implies an impersonal dynamic that makes the decentralization of power impossible at best and at worst a façade for the regime of flexible accumulation and neoliberal capital that we face today. Consequently, the condition for realizing a utopian world as sketched by Markell must be a strategy to overcome capitalism, and this is precisely where the problems of subjectivity, political practice, and telos reemerge.

This is where Umemoto brings the concept of nothingness into play, to denote an aspect of subjectivity that has not been subsumed by capital. The analysis above suggests that both civil society and the state shape subjectivities by causing people to identify with roles that reproduce capitalism. In Althusser's words, one is interpellated as worker, bureaucrat, and so on. Nothingness implies the possibility of de-identification. Sartre's politics is often connected with a de-identification or a detachment from the roles one plays because we can separate ourselves from the roles that objectify us. In other words, although one is always already in a role, the role does not exhaust our subjectivity. In this context, my point overlaps with Max Ward's discussion of Tanabe Hajime in relation to Dipesh Chakrabarty's distinction between a history connected to capital and one that cannot be subsumed by capital and the state. This opens a number of possibilities related to de-identification.³⁶

Given the totalizing power of capital, Nishida and other philosophers claimed that the beginning of both subjectivity and history was a negative

36 Devin Shaw, "The Nothingness of Equality: The 'Sartrean Existentialism' of Jacques Rancière," *Sartre Studies International*, 18.1 (Spring 2012): 29–48. We could add that such a phenomenology becomes important in capitalism, where roles become more fluid and the self finds itself a commodity in a world of commodities, state power, and alienation, in which subjectivity is constantly being interpolated and objectified. For Chakrabarty's distinction between two histories, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

moment, but they did not understand how this nothingness was complexly articulated in relation to capital.³⁷ For de-identification to really be revolutionary, it must be part of a larger project to transform existing structures of identification. Through looking at Umemoto, I suggest that we need to return to where he left us and think further about how political practice can overcome capitalism and about what new institutions would enable the type of decentralized post-capitalist democracy that Markell adumbrates. In short, de-identification and re-identification must in some way be combined with re-mediation. This last point is perhaps the most difficult and Umemoto, like most Marxists, says little about it. However, he has left us an important legacy concerning how to think of subjectivity and capitalism to imagine a different future.

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37 How such a subjectivity should be mobilized in relation to capitalism is a complex issue and much hinges on how one understands the contradictions of capitalism and the possibility of overcoming them. A full discussion of this issue will have to wait for another occasion.

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The “Logic of Committee” and the Newspaper *Doyōbi* (Saturday)

Nakai Masakazu's Theory of Political Praxis

Aaron S. Moore

As Harry Harootunian has argued in *Overcome by Modernity* and elsewhere, for many Japanese intellectuals during the 1930s such as Tosaka Jun, Kon Wajirō, and Gonda Yasunosuke, the “everyday” was the site of transformative praxis since it was where social contradiction and unevenness were sharpest, and where unrealized meanings and identifications incessantly operated.¹ The philosopher and theorist of aesthetics Nakai Masakazu also viewed the everyday within modern capitalist life as the site of innumerable “technologies” or practices, sensations, and subjectivities of invention and critique.² But did this insistence on the critical, irreducible nature of the everyday significantly challenge or alter predominant systems of capitalist control and mobilization of all areas of life? Despite the presence of innumerable sites of potential critique and invention, were not these forces ultimately integrated into or diffused within the various social technologies of capitalist reproduction? How could these diverse forces be mobilized into a politics of changing the capitalist order into a more democratic, equitable, and liberating one? This essay addresses such questions through an analysis of Nakai’s famous 1936 work, the “Logic of Committee” (“Iinkai no ronri”), and its idea of political praxis as manifested in the mass newspaper he helped organize—*Doyōbi*—which led to his arrest in 1937.

Nakai entered Kyoto Imperial University’s philosophy department as a student of aesthetics in 1922. His supervisor was the aesthetics philosopher

1 Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Harry Harootunian, “Time, Everydayness, and the Specter of Fascism: Tosaka Jun and Philosophy’s New Vocation,” in Christopher Goto-Jones, ed., *Re-Politicising the Kyoto School as Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2008), 96–112.

2 Aaron S. Moore, “Para-Existential Forces of Invention: Nakai Masakazu’s Theory of Technology and Critique of Capitalism,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 17.1 (2009): 127–57.

Fukuda Yasukazu, but he also studied with Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime, and became close to other renowned philosophy students such as Miki Kiyoshi, Tosaka Jun, and Kakehashi Akihide, who later engaged intellectually with what became known as the Kyoto School of philosophy. He went on to graduate school in the same department in 1925 where upon Fukuda's request he worked as associate editor of *Tetsugaku kenkyū* (Research in Philosophy), one of Japan's leading journals for philosophy, from 1926 until 1937. He became a lecturer in aesthetics at Kyoto Imperial University's philosophy department in 1934, but was stripped of his position in 1937 after his arrest for violating the Peace Preservation Law due to his activities with *Doyōbi*.

As associate editor of *Tetsugaku kenkyū*, Nakai engaged with the full range of thought generally associated with the Kyoto School. For example, he fondly remembered the weekly gatherings at the homes of Tanabe and Fukuda, his fierce debates with Tosaka, and what he described as Miki's intellectual brilliance.³ He singled out Tosaka's "Theory of Space" and Miki's "The Structure of In-Betweenness" as cutting-edge examples of phenomenological analysis, and Tanabe's critiques of the "idealist" and "ahistorical" philosophy of Nishida as key milestones in the development of Kyoto School philosophy.⁴ Nakai considered himself to be a part of the Kyoto School not in the sense of adhering to a fixed body of thought, but as engaging with a dynamic "body of brilliantly scattered diversity" or "one enormous comet, a shooting star with a shining tail."⁵ Nakai's deep interest in contemporary mass culture and aesthetics, however, broadened his intellectual circles beyond the confines of philosophy. For example, as an editor of *Bi hihyō* (Aesthetics Critique), he engaged with contemporary European modernist trends such as surrealism, Bauhaus, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, montage film theory, reportage literature, and Russian avant-garde film, among others.⁶ Ultimately, this exposure to European modernism led to a deep interest in popular front cultural movements in Europe, which inspired Nakai and others to launch *Sekai bunka* (World Culture)—a journal

3 Nakai Masakazu, "Kaiko jūnen—Omoiizuru mama" [Looking back over ten years—as I recall], in *Nakai Masakazu zenshū* [Complete works of Nakai Masakazu], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Bijutsu shuppansha, 1981), 350. Hereafter I cite Nakai's reprinted essays as *NMz*, followed by volume and page numbers. On Miki, see Nakai Masakazu, "Miki-kun to kosei" [Miki and singularity], in *NMz* 1: 339–43. On Tosaka, see Nakai Masakazu, "Tosaka-kun no tsuioku" [Recollections of Tosaka], in *NMz* 1: 344–48.

4 Nakai, "Kaiko jūnen—Omoiizuru mama," 351–55.

5 *Ibid.*, 355–56.

6 On Nakai and contemporary European modernist trends in Japan, see Takashima Naoyuki, *Nakai Masakazu to sono jidai* [Nakai Masakazu and his age] (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2000).

introducing the various popular front movements to Japan—and the mass newspaper, *Doyōbi*, which will be analyzed later in this essay.⁷

If one had to identify two philosophical trends of Kyoto philosophy that Nakai most deeply engaged with, they would have to be Nishida's deep reflections on the nature of praxis, poiesis, and production (or in Nishida's words, "expressive activity" and "active intuition"), and Tosaka's philosophy of everydayness. Nakai, like many others associated with the Kyoto School, agreed with Nishida's basic premise that ontology is production and production is ontology—that subjectivity was always already involved in the world as a "bodily subject" (*shutai*) rather than merely as a "reflective subject." As William Haver notes, this basic premise placed Nishida in conversation with Karl Marx, who also insisted that human beings existed only in the making of things (themselves included) and not simply as "beings" or "essences" first and foremost. "Modes of production," therefore, were dynamic products of the radical historicity of human beings as originarily transformative (rather than fixed external structures or totalities) and the "proletariat" signified "production toward a futurity radically other than the present" (rather than a fixed entity working for a pre-defined socialist future).⁸ As we shall see, Nakai's "Logic of Committee" also posited various historical "logics" corresponding to modes of production that dynamically structured subjectivity and praxis, as well as located the source of radically transformative praxis in what he called "negation" in everyday life. In this sense, Nakai joined Tosaka in criticizing what they perceived as Nishida's abstractness and idealism (as well as that of other culturalist philosophers such as Watsuji Tetsurō, Nishitani Keiji, and Kuki Shūzō) by insisting that the "everyday" was the site of transformation and critique.⁹ Somewhat different from Tosaka, however, Nakai focused mostly on analyzing the effects of mass media technologies on subjectivity and aesthetics, and their potential for radical social transformation.

Nakai's engagement with Marx was very similar to that of his contemporary in Europe, Georg Luckás. Like Luckás, Nakai argued that the logic of "reification" restricted the critical energies of the people.¹⁰ Price and value appeared

7 For more background on Nakai, see Kinoshita Nagahiro, "Nakai Masakazu no ikikata" [Nakai Masakazu's way of life], in Kinoshita Nagahiro, *Nakai Masakazu: Atarashii "bigaku" no kokoromi* [Nakai Masakazu: Toward a new "aesthetics"] (Tokyo: Riburopōto, 1995), 119–93.

8 William Haver, "Introduction," in Nishida Kitarō, *Ontology of Production: Three Essays*, trans. William Haver (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 10.

9 For more on the concept of "everydayness" among intellectuals in 1930s Japan, see Harootyan, *Overcome by Modernity*.

10 Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 83–222.

to people as external, natural laws divorced from human activity and control. The fulfillment of human needs and desires in contemporary society was subject to price and the possession of money obtained through selling one's labor. Moreover, desire and any activity to fulfill desire were based on capitalist rules of money and price. The result was that human desire without money became "unreal" and "mere representation" or contemplation among the people.¹¹ Instead of actively producing all aspects of their lives and fulfilling their needs accordingly, capitalism forced people's desires into the "structures of buying and selling," which limited human activity to an endless "repetition" of reflection about commodities and the forced sale of labor to purchase them.¹² In short, capitalism's constant transformation of everything from things actively produced in everyday human life into external commodities with price tags subject to market laws had engendered an "uncritical nature" among the people, who then conformed their energies accordingly rather than actively created their own social reality.¹³ However, unlike Luckás, Nakai did not believe that people had "false consciousness" and must therefore be led to the "correct" path of overthrowing capitalist society. Rather, he sought to find potential within the concrete structures and practices of modern capitalist life that could stimulate a transformative "critical nature" within people.

Taking off from this basic premise of capitalist reification, Nakai's writings offered a sophisticated analysis of modern Japanese capitalism as an integrative social system that combined spiritual mobilization through an antimodern, irrational nationalism; technocratic regimes geared toward the rational reorganization of society for maximum productivity; and the permeation of a capitalist logic of "commodification" and "specialization" throughout all areas of life.¹⁴ All of these worked to subvert the possibility for radical critique and social transformation. Nakai's 1936 essay "Logic of Committee," addressed the question of organizing some political vehicle for transforming Japan's high capitalist society and increasingly fascist order in the 1930s. The "committee" would be the autonomous political form that transformed capitalist society's various ideological regimes, which restrained people's creative energies. The committee would also contribute to the realization of a mass subjectivity infused with a "cooperative nature" and "critical nature," yet firmly grounded in the people's everyday practices, techniques, and customs, rather than in some privileged vanguard group (e.g., the "working class" or "nation").

11 Nakai, "Iinkai no ronri" ("The logic of committee"), in *NMz* 1: 97–98.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 99.

14 Moore, "Para-existential Forces of Invention," 129.

Written around the same time as *Doyōbi*'s publication, "Logic of Committee" may be interpreted as providing the newspaper's theoretical foundation. In the opening editorial for the October 20, 1936, issue, Nakai explained *Doyōbi*'s objective:

Today, people are deaf and dumb within their groups.

By the readers becoming the writers, *Doyōbi* is seeking a new language whereby the readers first become the ears of several thousands and then the mouth of several thousands.

We are discovering a new voice whereby several thousands can speak with several thousands of others. What human beings should discover [here] is not a machine or apparatus but rather, actions toward a new order.

We can say that the voices of *Doyōbi*'s several thousands have not yet become the voices of several hundred thousands, several millions, or several tens of millions. This is because we are like the deaf and dumb who are acquiring a collective language.¹⁵

Doyōbi's primary goal was to combat the alienation caused by the "specialization" and "commodification" of modern capitalist life. "Specialization," according to Nakai, prevented cooperation by creating specialized technical hierarchies and organizations while "commodification" stifled creativity and critique by incorporating human desire into the repetitive "structures of buying and selling," the profit designs of large corporations, and the rational techniques of production and organization.¹⁶ Being a newspaper based primarily on anonymous contributions and covering a wide range of topics from contemporary film to women's issues, *Doyōbi* sought to reverse the overwhelming barrage of "one-way sermons" and "bargain sale shouting" churned out by the capitalist media, which made people "deaf and dumb" toward each other, and instead provide a vehicle for the expression and articulation of people's everyday social, political, and economic needs.¹⁷ By "becoming the ears and voice

15 Nakai Masakazu, "Doyōbi kantōgen" [*Saturday* prefaces], in *NMz* 4: 35–36.

16 Moore, "Para-existential Forces of Invention," 133–36.

17 Nakai, "Doyōbi kantōgen," 35. According to Kuno Osamu, *Doyōbi* was modeled after the popular weekly journal *Vendredi* (Friday), the main organ for the French Popular Front; however, *Doyōbi* was different from *Vendredi* since it had less of a character of intellectuals "enlightening the uneducated masses." *Vendredi* listed the names of over forty prominent anti-fascist intellectuals such as Romain Rolland and André Gide on its front page, and consisted primarily of their articles. *Doyōbi*, on the other hand, was based on anonymous reader contributions, and sought maximum reader participation in formulating its content. Kuno Osamu, "Bunka shimbun *Doyōbi* no fukkoku ni yosete" [On the

of thousands,” *Doyōbi* would be more than just an informational tabloid (“machine or apparatus”) and perhaps a kind of loose “committee” for mass empowerment and social change. Thus, before examining some of *Doyōbi*’s cultural politics, we need to first analyze the theory of political praxis that informed it as outlined in Nakai’s “Logic of Committee.”¹⁸

What is the Committee?

A “committee” usually conjures up undemocratic images of corporate or governmental committees of technical experts or the Leninist “central party committee” that would guide the “unenlightened” masses toward revolution. In fact, “committees” seem to be somewhat alienated from everyday life. The committee Nakai envisioned, however, was something akin to a popular movement on environmental or consumer issues, an independent newspaper, or an artist collective—in short, any group that articulated and mobilized around hitherto unvoiced or repressed popular concerns that demanded some form of egalitarian change in social, political, economic, or cultural relations.

First, let us examine Nakai’s overall diagram for the “logic of committee” (see Figure 10.1). The “Logic of Committee” consisted of four consecutive moments—“Thought,” “Debate,” “Technology,” and “Production”—each representing a development in the history of rationality (more on this later). “Thought” and “Debate” formed the committee’s moments of “Deliberation” (*shingi*), while “Technology” and “Production” formed the committee’s moments of “Representation” (*daihyō*). “Deliberation” was when the committee articulated the “potential energies of the masses,” while “representation” was the moment these “potential energies” or popular interests were translated by the committee into some form of action (“actual energy in language”).¹⁹ “Deliberation” and “Representation” appeared more specifically within the committee’s activities as “Proposal,” “Decision,” “Delegation,” and “Implementation.” “Proposal” and “Decision” fell under “Deliberation,” while “Delegation” and “Implementation” were under “Representation.”

occasion of reprinting the cultural newspaper *Saturday*, in *Doyōbi fukkōkuban* [*Saturday*, reprint version], ed. Doyōbisha (Tokyo: San’ichi shobō, 1974), 2.

18 There are many interpretations of this famous essay, which attests to its continued relevance. I have been aided by Takeuchi Shigeaki, *Kattatsu na gūsha: sōgōsei no naka no shutai* [Magnanimous fools: The subject within reciprocity] (Tokyo: Renga shobō, 1980), 132–242.

19 Nakai, “Iinkai no ronri,” 103.

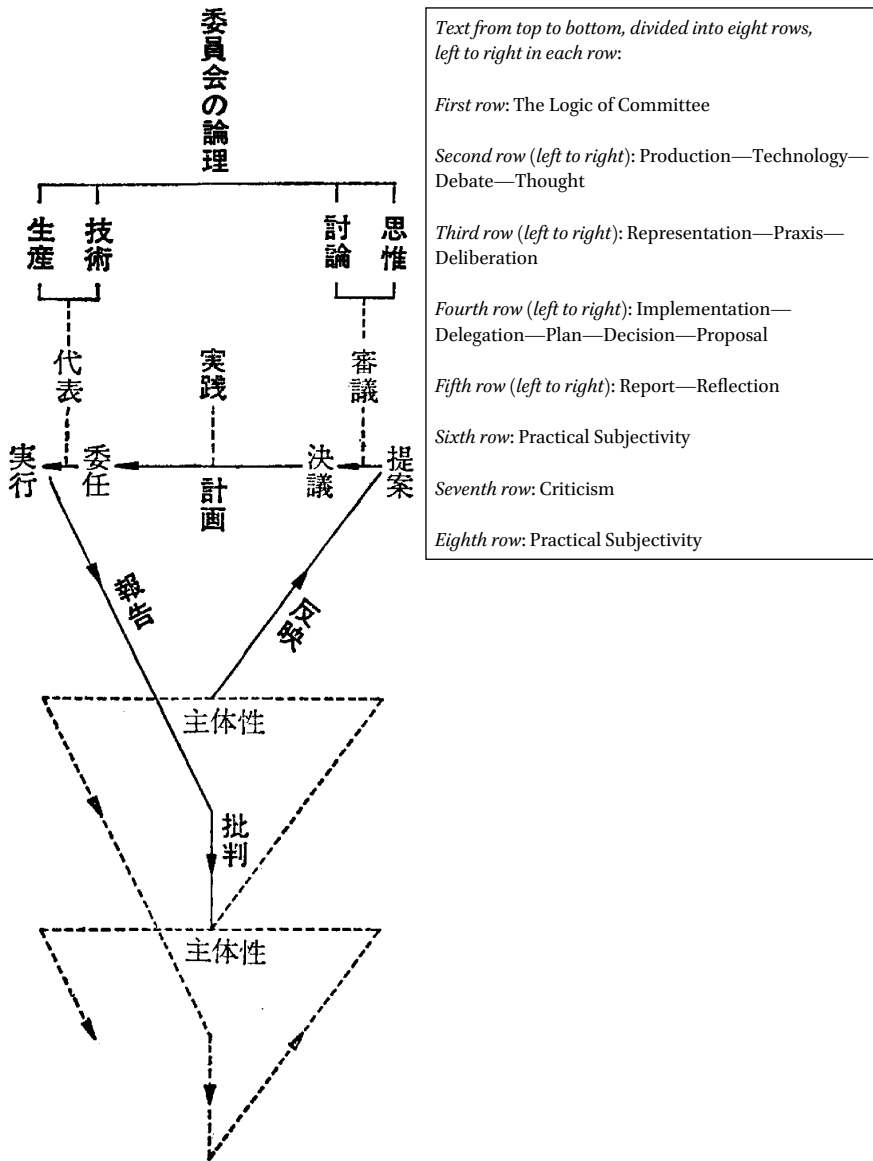


FIGURE 10.1 *The logic of committee.*
 SOURCE: NAKAI, "IINKAI NO RONRI," IN *NMZ* 1: 103.

The committee's activity began with the "proposal," which Nakai called a "primary reflection" of an "immediate lack" (*chokusetsu-teki ketsubōsei*) or "mediating alienation" (*baikai-teki sogaisei*).²⁰ Here, the unvoiced or repressed

²⁰ Ibid.

desires of the people were articulated in the form of a concrete proposal. Nakai called this “reflection as proposal,” the “primary objectification of subjective conditions.”²¹ The various unarticulated needs and desires that arose in everyday social existence (“potential energies” or “subjective conditions”) were formulated (“objectified”) into a proposal to be debated by the committee. For example, when people encountered higher commodity prices, lower salaries, and higher taxes amid growing militarization and capitalist monopolization, their need for cheaper food was articulated by the consumer cooperative movement, which reflected this social need and put forth proposals accordingly (e.g., demanded the equitable distribution of government-stored rice at cheap prices). “Distorted” reflection of the people’s needs was also a possibility, according to Nakai—for example, by ideologies of hard work and self-sacrifice or new religious movements that diverted attention away from the fundamental issue of food security.²²

“After undergoing numerous questions, clarifications, and debates, the proposal reaches a decision,” Nakai wrote, and in this process “it is corrected from distortions in the understanding of the actual situation and filtered of lies and falsehoods.”²³ When the decision was made, the moment of “deliberation” ended and “representation” toward concrete action began. The moment of conversion to action was the formulation of the “plan” of action. To use the example of the consumer cooperative demanding the release of cheap government rice again, “planning” could be preparing a negotiation strategy with the government, organizing mass demonstrations and education campaigns, and arranging mechanisms to distribute government rice equitably. Nakai called the plan’s formulation “the secondary objective conditionalization

21 Ibid., 104.

22 Ibid., 103. *Doyōbi* in fact covered the issues of high prices, ideologies of hard work and cooperation, and the spread of new religions. In his essay “The Question of Rationalism,” Nakai noted that unarticulated popular needs could even express themselves as “terrorism” and violence. See Nakai Masakazu, “Gōrishugi no mondai,” in *NMz* 1: 140. For more on Nakai’s activities in the consumer cooperative movement, see Yoshida Masazumi, “Seikatsu ni taisuru yūki (zenpen)—Jūgo-nen sensō shoki Kyōto no shōhi seikatsu undō to zasshi ‘Bi hihyō’ shūdan ni okeru ‘gakushū’ no ichi: ‘Nakai Masakazu-tachi to ‘Teikō no gakushū’ o meguru shomondai’ (I)” [Courage toward life (Part 1)—The position of “learning” in the Kyoto Consumer Cooperative movement and the *Aesthetics Critique Magazine* Group at the beginning of the fifteen-years war: Various issues surrounding Nakai Masakazu’s group and the “learning of resistance” (1)], *Kyoto daigaku shōgai kyōikugaku toshokan jōhōgaku kenkyū* [Kyoto University Learning Disability Studies Research in Library Information Science] 2 (2003): 7–38. Hypothetical examples below regarding the consumer cooperative movement are inspired by descriptions in this article.

23 Nakai, “Iinkai no ronri,” 104.

of the subject.”²⁴ Through “delegating” and “implementing” the plan’s tasks, the participating subjects attempted to objectively realize their needs. After the plan’s “delegation” and “implementation” came the “report” to the people whose needs and interests the committee previously tried to articulate. The “report” inevitably would then run into some discord with the people because of a disconnect, thereby engendering a moment of “critique” by those very same people whose needs were being reflected by the committee. For example, Koreans or *burakumin* might complain about discrimination in rice distribution or others might demand wider social reform such as job stability, lower taxes, or the expansion of cooperatives. Such critique would then lead to the formulation of another proposal by the committee toward a “planning” and “implementation” that addressed these concerns. Thus, Nakai called the committee’s “report” the “tertiary subjectification of objective conditions,” meaning that the committee’s objective actions were democratically exposed to the subjective critique of the masses.²⁵ “Critique” was then the “quaternary subjective conditionalization of the object,” according to Nakai, meaning that the objective “report” was once again prepared to be rearticulated as subjective public opinion into yet another “quinary” concrete proposal by the committee (i.e., another “objectification of subjective conditions”).²⁶ Thus, the whole process occurred as follows:

1. Primary objectification of subjective conditions (“Proposal”)
2. Secondary objective conditionalization of the subject (“Plan/Praxis”)
3. Tertiary subjectification of objective conditions (“Report”)
4. Quaternary subjective conditionalization of the object (“Critique”)
5. Quinary objectification of subjective conditions (“New Proposal”)

As we can see, Nakai grounded this unending process of translating the unarticulated “potential energies of the masses” into concrete proposals and plans of action (“actual energy in language”) in a dialectical process of mass subjectivity. The “potential energies” were given concrete form as a proposal, debated, put into practice, critiqued, and given form again. This process not only transformed society but the people themselves, whose energies were given form and implemented by the committee, which then reported the often unexpected results back to the people. This in turn engendered a more involved critique and increasing demands on their part. The “potential energies of the

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 105.

26 Ibid.

masses" were the innumerable creative energies at work in the people's everyday practices, sensations, and techniques, which Nakai strove to articulate throughout his career. He wrote:

The actual circumstances [of life] are the foundation of the potential energies of the masses, and even though the circumstances demand a swell in these potential energies, if they are expressed in the expressive form of indifference, they will certainly be distorted into other directions, becoming dispersed actual energy, since a proper projection of that very foundation is lacking.²⁷

Here he acknowledged that while there was immense "potential energy" for change among the people stemming from actual social conditions, this energy was often weak and easily distorted or dispersed by the social technologies of commodification, specialization, and rationalization.²⁸ The driving exigency behind the "Logic of Committee" then was to articulate a way to forge this dispersed, often distorted potential energy into a transformative subjectivity or social force with its own critical momentum.

Deepening Subjectivity through the Committee

Yet how was Nakai's committee, which employed the same technocratic terms of modern capitalist society, any different from a self-contained bureaucratic committee of specialists, a corporate information management system, or an authoritarian Leninist party?²⁹ Such expert committees also went through the same process of proposal, debate, planning, implementation, and critique, yet they could hardly be called democratic and accountable. In fact, specialized expert committees are part of the system by which the "potential energies of the masses" were dispersed or distorted. However, there was an important difference between Nakai's committee and the committees that characterized authoritarian or rationalist control systems. While corporate or bureaucratic committees aimed toward some form of linear progress and development

²⁷ Ibid., 103–04.

²⁸ Earlier in the essay, Nakai analyzed the commodification and specialization of concepts from everyday life in *ibid.*, 95–103. For more on Nakai's view of the effects of commodification and specialization under high capitalism, see Moore, "Para-existential Forces of Invention," 133–36.

²⁹ Takeuchi, *Kattatsu na gūsha*, 147–48.

(e.g., increasing efficiency and productivity), interestingly enough, Nakai's committee chart moved downward *toward* the "potential energies of the masses," or what he called "practical subjectivity" (*shutaisei*, see Figure 10.1). In fact, Nakai wrote that this "diagram itself turning into something else bears an important meaning for the logic of praxis."³⁰ Thus, rather than being a committee that stood above the masses, which channeled their energies into some determinate idea of progress without changing its very own power relations, Nakai's committee aimed at democratically changing its very own structure or Practical subjectivity. According to Nakai, the moment of "mediation" or "self-negation" was a fundamental part of the logic of committee.³¹ It was the key to deepening and spreading egalitarian and democratic values.

Thus, to take up the example of the consumer cooperative again, let us say that that the committee failed to distribute rice equitably to Koreans or did not take into account the structural aspects of their chronic poverty such as lack of legal rights, systematic job discrimination, and frequent racial violence. In order to address this, the committee would have to fundamentally change itself by incorporating more Koreans and campaigning for social protections and better working conditions. The committee would need to transform itself from an organization that addressed the pocketbook needs of the Japanese middle classes to one that was sensitive to the different needs of a more marginalized population as well as the structural factors that led to such marginalization.³² Or perhaps it had to dissolve itself and form an organization that addressed such wider structural issues of labor conditions or discrimination. Even if this antagonism led to the committee's dissolution or into a decisive split, however, it still succeeded in spreading egalitarian values to other sections of society, thereby potentially deepening the democratic revolution or "practical subjectivity."

The committee's articulation of the masses' "potential energies" or "subjectivity" of the masses in the form of a concrete proposal and plan of action became the "mediation" or "self-negating" moment for renewed creative energy toward the forging of another collective subject or more "potential energy" dispersed to other social subjects. The committee's work was merely to serve as a mediation or focal point for generating a more critical, more involved

30 Nakai, "Iinkai no ronri," 107.

31 Ibid.

32 For firsthand accounts of how Nose Katsuo, one of *Doyōbi's* co-editors and Nakai's close confidant, negotiated the differences among members of Kyoto's consumer cooperative movement, see *Deruta kara no shuppatsu—Seikyō undō to senkakusha Nose Katsuo* [Departure from the delta: The consumer cooperative movement and Nose Katsuo, the pioneer], ed. Kyoto seikatsu kyōdō kumiai (Kyoto: Kamogawa shuppan, 1989).

collective subjectivity, rather than as an authoritarian guide for these popular energies. Nakai called the committee’s mediating work a “deepening” of subjectivity. “This deepening by a return from subjective condition to subjective condition—here lies the sense of true subjectivity, as well as the dialectical nature of transforming itself toward another mediation,” Nakai wrote.³³ Unlike the systemized subject of modern rationalist committees, which only critiqued and changed themselves within certain ideological parameters or structural limits, the “subject as mediation” of Nakai’s committee was an endless process of subjective and social transformation (or “self-negation”). “Through such criticism,” Nakai wrote, “subjectivity truly passes through its own foundation—sub-ject—and sinks further toward a new, quinary proposal, or in other words, as the foundation for another objectification of subjective conditions.”³⁴

Yet despite this fundamental difference in direction between Nakai’s logic of committee and specialized technocratic committees, there was always the danger of bureaucratism or authoritarianism in his thought. The problem lay in the moment of the committee’s articulation of the “potential energies of the masses” into a concrete proposal and plan of action. Nakai called this “reflection,” which suggested that the committee members had some expert ability to gauge and articulate the people’s diverse needs. There is an important difference between the “expression” of people’s demands and creative energies as they are and the “reflection” of these demands and energies.³⁵ “Reflection” by a committee in the name of the people could simultaneously become a way for technocrats to silence or repress their demands. At this point, however, let us just keep this danger of the committee developing into a bureaucratic system of control in mind and continue to analyze the “Logic of Committee.”

Logic as Living “Ratio” (Rationality)

The five moments that constituted the “Logic of Committee” (Thought, Debate, Technology, Production, and the moment that unified these four, Praxis—see Figure 10.1) were moments that Nakai abstracted from historical “logics” that arose during periods of rapid cultural and social change. For Nakai, “logic” was not some transcendent ideal but rather referred to the way people approached and understood the world, which in turn shaped culture and society. Thus, in the end the “Logic of Committee” represented the emergence of a new “logic”

33 Nakai, “Iinkai no ronri,” 107.

34 Ibid., 105. Nakai wrote “sub-ject” in English.

35 Takeuchi, *Kattatsu na gūsha*, 152.

of a critically engaged and cooperative mass subjectivity that would transform the increasingly specialized and commodified reality of monopoly capitalism. Nakai illustrated his historical idea of logic in another diagram (see Figure 10.2). To quickly summarize this diagram, historically, there have been three distinct cultures, “Classical Culture,” “Middle Age Culture,” and “Modern Culture.” Each culture was characterized by a particular logic—“Spoken Logic,” “Written Logic,” and “Printed Logic,” respectively. Also, in connection with each culture’s social system, even more specific logics arose. In the transformation from the “Clan System” to the “Slave System” within Classical Culture, the “Logic of Dialectics” came about; in the shift from the “Slave System” to the “Feudal System” during Middle Age Culture, the “Logic of Meditation” appeared; in the transition from the “Feudal System” to the “Commercial System” in early Modern Culture, the “Logic of Experience” arose; and corresponding to the particular developments of the “Capitalist System” (Commercial System, Industrial System, and Financial System), the logics of “Action,” “Function,” and “Production” appeared respectively within Modern Culture. “Debate,” “Thought,” “Technology,” and “Production” were the essential characteristics of each of these historically produced logics, and “Praxis” engendered the “Logic of Committee” by dialectically unifying these four historical moments, according to Nakai (see Figure 10.2).

In the same way that Figure 10.1, which illustrated Nakai’s “Logic of Committee,” was similar to yet fundamentally different from technocratic, authoritarian committees, Figure 10.2, which illustrates the history of logic, mimics yet essentially differs from a mechanistic base-superstructure theory. A glance at the diagram suggests that new logics merely reflected changes in the economic system and relations of production. However, Nakai reversed this and instead gave “logic” a principal role in instigating social change. He wrote, “As one can see by this diagram, logic always plays some particular role in the crisis of the collapse of one system and its reorganization into another. That is to say, we see logic itself becoming a living *ratio* within a rift, or in other words, logic itself becoming a mediation.”³⁶

For example, according to Figure 10.2, the “Logic of Experience” played an important role in the transition from the “Feudal System” to the “Commercial System.” With the development of new forms of transportation and the rise of commerce, tightly knit communal relations were dissolved and individualistic, utilitarian human relations were formed—“humans are wolves toward humans.”³⁷ The rise of print technology and “Print Logic” enabled people

36 Nakai, “Iinkai no ronri,” 68.

37 Ibid., 54.

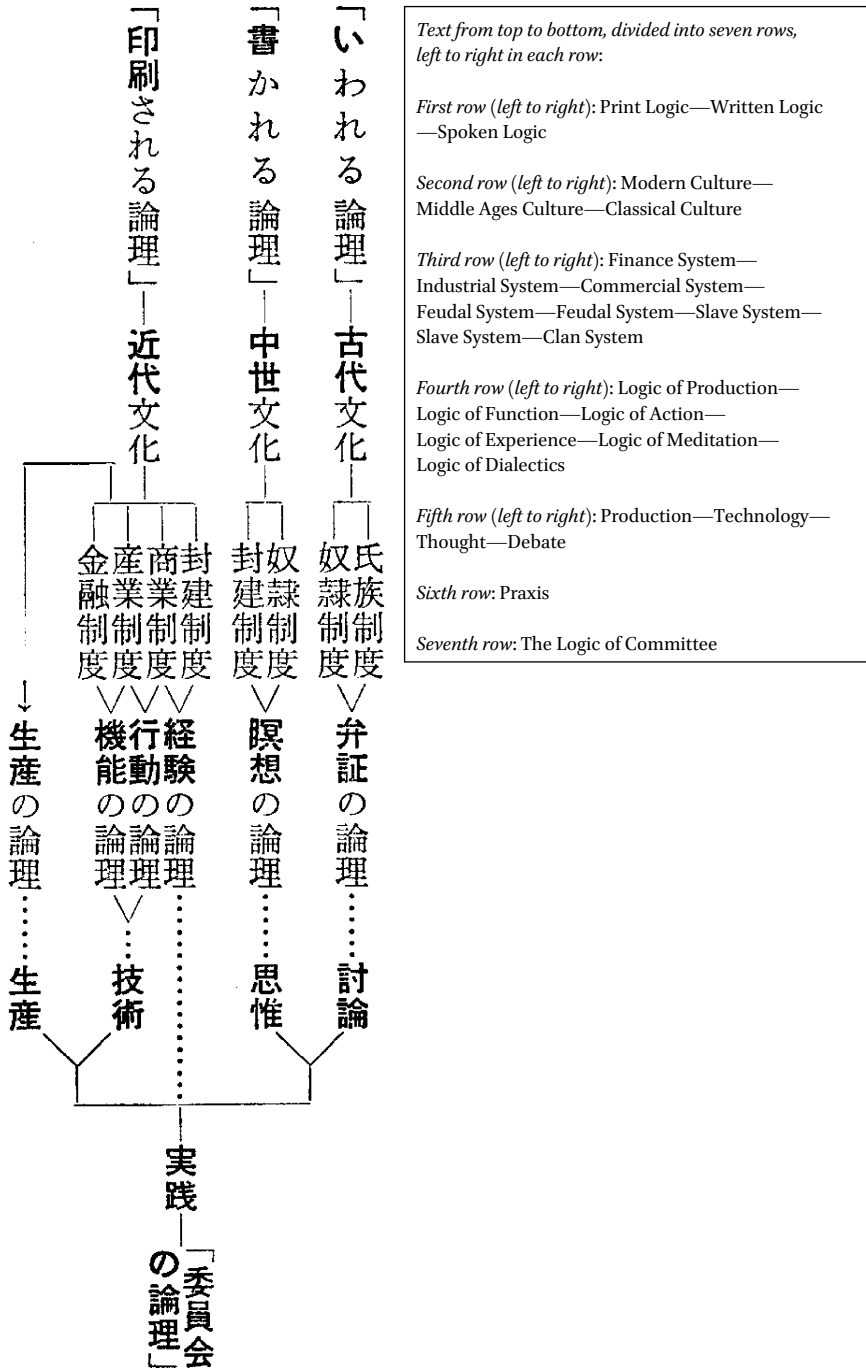


FIGURE 10.2 The dialectic between history and logic.
 SOURCE: NAKAI, "IINKAI NO RONRI," IN NMZ 1: 91.

“to interpret [words] according to their particular life experiences or circumstances,” whereas under feudalism, words had the character of univocal divine sanction or meaning as illustrated by the practice of biblical hermeneutics (or the “Logic of Meditation”).³⁸ As commerce dissolved feudal economic relations and print technology enabled varying interpretations, people began to understand themselves as “lonely individuals” in the universe.³⁹ From out of the “Logic of Meditation” under feudalism whereby subjects understood themselves as *subject to* some higher order, a tendency emerged whereby subjects began to understand themselves as disinterested observers or interpreters of and actors on an external world (i.e., as *subjects*). Thus, with the crisis of feudalism’s collapse and capitalism’s rapid rise, people developed a new “living *ratio*” of “individual experience” within that social rift to deal with that crisis. This “living *ratio*” formed the basis or “mediation” for a new social system, new social relations, and a new form of subjectivity. Mercantile capitalism developed out of guild/feudal capitalism, market relations developed out of patriarchal relations, and the epistemological subject developed out of the subservient subject.

The “living *ratio*,” however, which provided a sense of liberation from feudalism, soon spread throughout society and developed into a logic of control or hegemony (the “logic of experience”), according to Nakai.⁴⁰ The historical logics on Nakai’s diagram such as “Meditation,” “Experience,” and “Action” were these hegemonic logics that originally began as tendencies, or “potential energy,” filled with transformative possibility during periods of crisis. Thus, the formation of the individual subject, new commercial relations, and new forms of communication soon became the basis for the commodification and abstraction of individual labor, the formation of impersonal market relations and capitalist industry, and the alienation of words from everyday life through uncontrolled market circulation. In short, the individualistic, interpreting subject of the “Logic of Experience” became the ideal subjective comportment or “logic” to sustain the capitalist system since it justified labor’s commodification and the competitive free market, for example. Capitalism came to be subjectively anchored in the logic of experience.

The “Logic of Committee” then was to be the new “living *ratio*” that would form a collective subjectivity imbued with a “critical and cooperative nature” to overcome the current “Logic of Production.” The logic of production was characterized by the disciplining of people’s creative energies through

38 Ibid., 53.

39 Ibid., 54–55.

40 Ibid., 53–56.

the “intellectual mechanization” and functionalization of life under large capitalist organizations, the profit-driven plans of monopolistic combines, the overwhelming “structures of buying and selling,” and the employment of rational techniques of production and irrational ideologies, for example.⁴¹ The committee’s role was to articulate or “mediate” the diffuse, often vaguely formulated interests of the people into a proposal, implement that proposal, and report the results back to the people with the express goal of fully subjecting itself to the potential energies of the masses, thereby encouraging a more critically involved and focused subjectivity. In a technocratic capitalist world where not only consumption and production were alienated from concrete, sensuous activity but the very structure and meaning of collectivities such as “nation,” “corporation,” “family,” and “culture” also seemed abstract and beyond human control, the committee would instead be a specific collective subject grounded in clearly articulated projects and most importantly, always be subject to the needs of the people (i.e., be “self-negating”). The committee would establish a “living *ratio*” that brought out the creative energies of the “Logic of Technology,” which were being disciplined by capitalism’s social technologies and fascism’s repressive policies. Yet what was to prevent the living “logic of committee” from becoming yet another hegemonic logic that again stifled the masses’ potential energy? What was the source of the masses’ critical power that might prevent such hegemony and how could it be sustained?

The Structure of Communication

Throughout his writing, Nakai always affirmed what he saw as an irreducible critical potential inherent in the customs, practices, and techniques of everyday life. “The fact that they could discover something rational within the movement of existence itself; that they could rationalize their own lives within such movement—this is the pride of human beings, who have made their way through these thousands of years,” Nakai wrote in the same *Doyōbi* editorial announcing the newspaper’s goal of forming a new collective language amid the “deafening” structures of capitalist modernity.⁴² By “rational,” Nakai meant

41 In this essay, Nakai reiterated his theory of technology—developed elsewhere—as the unexpected, dynamic forces of creativity in everyday life. *Ibid.*, 80–90. He also discussed how these forces have been co-opted and diverted by increasing “specialization” and “commodification,” which have restricted “cooperation” and “critique” on the part of the masses. *Ibid.*, 99–102.

42 Nakai, “*Doyōbi* kantōgen,” 34–35.

the various “living *ratios*” that humans have collectively formed throughout history to overcome periods of social crisis. While historically these have always turned into hegemonic logics of control, newer “*ratios*” in turn have always sprung up from the “potential energies of the masses.” Nakai explored these critical energies further by outlining a general structure of communication in everyday life that always generated some form of “questioning” or “negation” of social reality.

Nakai described this structure of communication in another diagram (Figure 10.3).⁴³ Instead of minutely analyzing this complex figure, I will just outline some of its basic features. Nakai first differentiated between “Thought” and “Debate.” “Thought” was the act of constituting meaning “qualitatively,” while “Debate” was the act of extending meaning “quantitatively.”⁴⁴ In thought, statements or phenomena were subject to questioning and examination, thereby becoming objects of critique. A critical “conviction” often emerged from this qualitative constitution of meaning in thought. Criticism was precipitated or “mediated” by a “negative judgment” within oneself. A negative judgment had two moments: a question (is the rose red?) toward some positive judgment (the rose is red) and an evaluative answer (the rose is not red).⁴⁵ All convictions had to undergo the test of negative judgment, and if they failed that test, they then became critical convictions. However, for Nakai, critical convictions were not formed merely within the abstract individual but in relation to some social space or context—the factory, the office, the theater, or the cooperative, for example (the institutions of high capitalism or technological modernity). Only questions and answers expressed within some social, interactive space constituted critical convictions. Thus, “qualitative” constructions of meaning within the individual only occurred within “quantitative” exchanges of meaning between people in definite social spaces.⁴⁶

43 Nakai, “Iinkai no ronri,” 80. Nakai borrowed from the phenomenologist Adolf Reinach’s inquiries into the foundations of social consensus in developing his theory of communication. See Adolf Reinach, “On the Theory of Negative Judgment,” in *Parts and Moments: Studies in Logic and Formal Ontology*, ed. Barry Smith (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1982), 315–77. See also Nakai’s engagements with Reinach in Nakai Masakazu, “Hatsugen keitai to chōshū keitai narabini sono geijutsuteki tenbō” [The form of enunciating and the form of listening, and their aesthetic prospects], in *NMz* 1: 250–63, and Nakai Masakazu, “Imi no kakuen hōkō narabini sono higekisei” [The expansive direction of meaning and its tragic nature], in *NMz* 1: 264–74.

44 Nakai, “Iinkai no ronri,” 71.

45 *Ibid.*, 75.

46 Thus, for Nakai cinema was a politicized arena with revolutionary potential because the mass spectator was immediately transformed into someone who made “negative

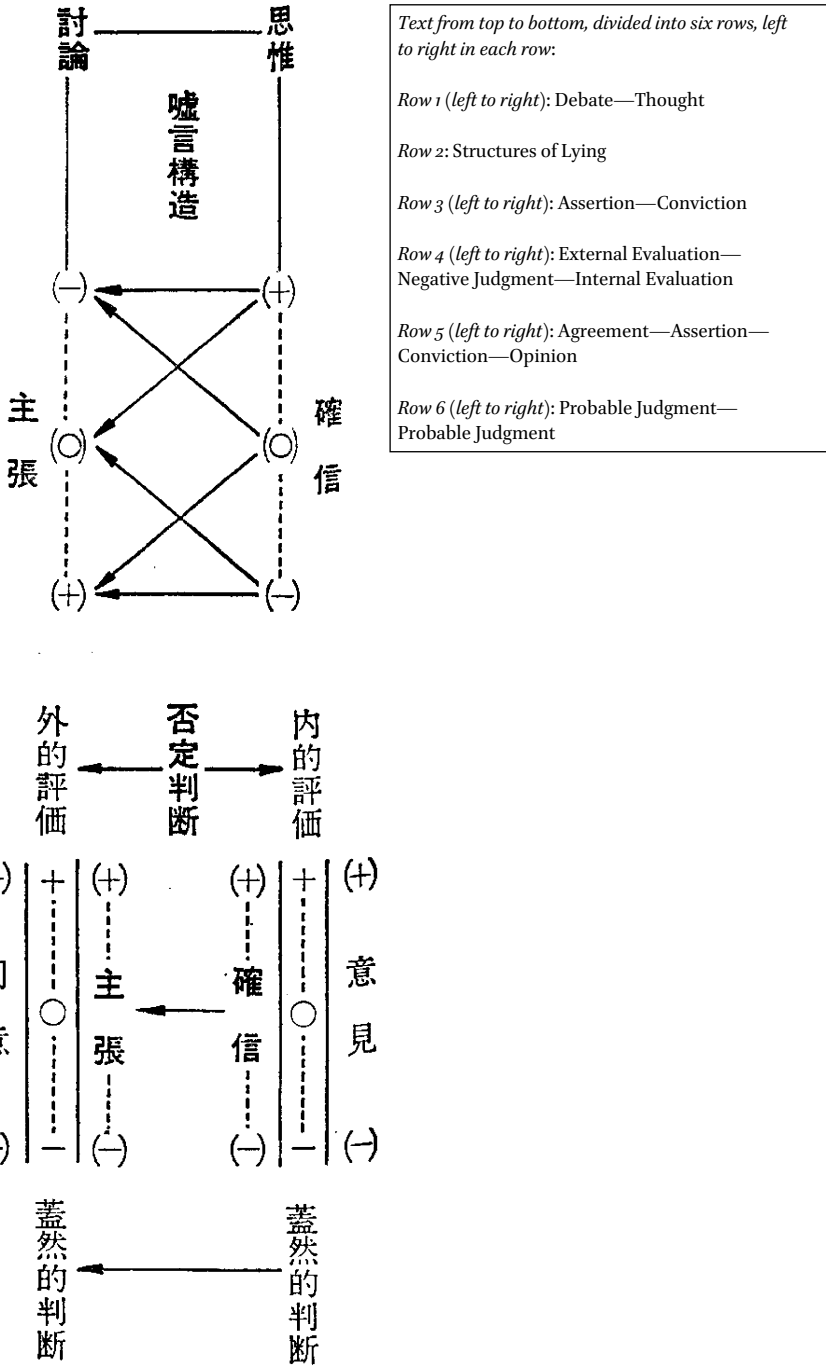


FIGURE 10.3 *The structure of communication and judgment.*
 SOURCE: NAKAI, "IINKAI NO RONRI," IN *NMZ* 1: 80.

The conviction entered language as an “assertion”; however, it never entered language continuously or in some pure, unmediated form. The assertion was altered by power relations, large institutions, the prevailing ideology, other people’s opinions—in short, all of the techniques whereby the creative energy of the masses were disciplined. Nakai called this alteration in communication “the structure of lying.”⁴⁷ Thus, despite the presence of innumerable questions and critical energy generated in everyday life, the dominant systems of capitalist control and mobilization worked hard to prevent the emergence of new, transformative meanings.

As illustrated by *Doyōbi*’s publication, Nakai and others placed their hopes in providing an expanding venue for public debate, a space where people could express and articulate their needs and interests. While there was no guarantee that people would generate a strong enough critique to break through the “structures of lying,” the newspaper still provided a rare space where people could learn and debate, thereby creating unexpected social critique and energy. In the “Logic of Committee,” Nakai continued with his outline of a general structure of communication in everyday life by exploring the nature of debate. It was only through proliferating debate that dominant ideologies or the social consensus could be thrown into question.

When the critical conviction or assertion was presented as a question awaiting the listener’s “evaluative response” rather than as an internal “absolute conviction,” space for “debate” was created.⁴⁸ Even though the assertion was a critical conviction that had undergone the process of negative judgment within the speaker, the listener had not yet evaluated it for truth-value or agreeability. The assertion thus awaited evaluation by the other. The listener also was not just a passive responder. For the listener, the speaker’s assertion was a “positive judgment” that should be subjected to questioning and answering, and perhaps, a reply in the form of another assertion that questioned the whole basis of the speaker’s assertion. This was the moment whereby dominant ideologies or the social consensus (“the structures of lying”) could be thrown into question. The speaker of the first assertion could also question the responder’s assertion or convictions, and so on. In this way, new meanings were formed. By creating a space of debate for a multiplicity of assertions and counter-assertions, *Doyōbi* would hopefully question and generate critical momentum

judgments” on social reality—or into an “expert,” as his contemporary Walter Benjamin wrote. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 234.

47 See Figure 10.3 and discussion in Nakai, “Iinkai no ronri,” 72.

48 *Ibid.*, 77.

toward alternate visions to the restrictive ones of high capitalist modernity. The constant exposure to public questioning ensured that the "committee" would never become a bureaucratic form of control since it always had to justify itself. The constant questioning also generated new ideas for the committee, thereby giving it momentum.

Yet the provision of ready-made answers to common questions was exactly what made the institutions of capitalist modernity (factory, family, nation) so powerful. For example, Japanese fascism provided people with a concrete sense that they were taking part in a world-historical project of building a modern, prosperous empire. Thus, it provided a powerful response to a growing anxiety and frustration over capitalism's devastating effects without fundamentally changing those capitalist relations. The institutions of Japanese fascism were increasingly able to appropriate or exclude questions that challenged it. Thus, Nakai's "committee" was designed not only to question, but more importantly to question in a manner that would precipitate an unprepared or new response by the institutions of power. In short, a questioning that would catch the dominant ideologies off guard.

The Question's Critical Power

Nakai devoted much attention to these types of unexpected, unforeseen, and overlooked "questions," or everyday forces of invention, in his other work on the new sensations and structures of modern life. The objective of the "Logic of Committee," however, was to intensify these forces toward stimulating social change or the formation of a new "living *ratio*" different from the one sustaining high capitalist modernity. In the essay, Nakai identified the source of this constant ability to question and therefore "negate" dominant assertions and convictions as the "indifferent point" within oneself and the other.⁴⁹ The "indifferent point" was the distance one could always take from one's own convictions or other people's statements, which was always made explicit in the act of questioning. The "indifferent point" also represented the potential of the other to throw one's own convictions into question. In other words, there was always an "indifference" toward absolute validity within any statement or conviction. No matter how dominant a conviction or assertion was, it could

49 Nakai borrowed this term from the philosopher Wilhelm Windelband. *Ibid.*, 77–78. See especially Wilhelm Windelband, *Beiträge zur lehre vom negativen urteilen* [Contributions to the doctrine of negative judgment] (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1921), 167–95.

always be questioned. In another essay where he developed this concept of “indifferentness,” Nakai wrote:

There is something that stimulates a doubt; something like the chill of the split self; that is to say, something like “me” being silenced by a bottomless indifferentness (*mukanshinsei*), which exists in the form of an *inner language* to be feared within the depths of conviction. At the same time, there is also a negator who always listens, an “other” in the form of an *outer language* within the assertion. Does not language stand amid these “two solitudes,” within a “questioning” in this sense?⁵⁰

Thus, language was not the bearer of univocal injunctions or universal truths but always existed in a tense field of questioning within “inner language” (the indifference within oneself) and “outer language” (the indifference of the other). Language was a field of political struggle whereby new questions and meanings emerged. Politics and language could never be fully folded into an overarching logic of production as the state and capital sought to achieve. Unexpected, contingent critiques or antagonisms would always arise. Nakai’s objective was to somehow proliferate and intensify these nodes of conflict within the capitalist structures of daily life.

This “indifferentness” or potential for negation and critique did not just exist in a void but always within concrete social relations—in Nakai’s case, various capitalist and technocratic relations of control pervading the media, workplace, government, and marketplace that restrained the people’s creative energies. Therefore, unexpected, unforeseen critical questions and assertions, no matter how weak or dispersed, always attempted to change or dissimulate those relations in some form. In his thought-provoking interpretation of Nakai’s essay, Takeuchi Shigeaki gives the example of the environmental movements that arose out of the Minamata mercury poisoning case in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵¹ From the early 1930s, the Japan Nitrogenous Fertilizer Corporation (Nippon Chisso Hiryō Kabushiki Kaisha) produced acetaldehyde for use in plastics production, which caused mercury waste to be spilled into the bay from which Minamata residents fished and relied on for food. With the appearance of many cases of uncontrollable shaking, brain atrophy, and mad behavior in the 1950s, medical investigators established that mercury from Chisso in the fish was the cause. However, after a decades-long, difficult struggle by the victims against an obstructive Chisso, resistant and uncooperative local and national authorities, an often uninterested and unsympathetic public, and a

50 Nakai, “Imi no kakuen hōkō,” 265–66 (emphasis in the original).

51 Takeuchi, *Kattatsu na gūsha*, 201.

dragging legal process, the courts finally ordered the national and local government to pay compensation.⁵²

Minamata is an example of how a small group of victims and affected fishermen took on huge institutions and corporate interests intent on silencing them. The images of their trembling bodies themselves served as powerful "questions" not only toward Chisso, but also toward industrial society and the Japanese state itself.⁵³ Their small movement inspired many other groups criticizing Japan's rapid industrialization and its polluting effects, which eventually forced the Japanese state and companies to adopt stricter environmental measures. More importantly, it generated a widespread debate on Japan's high-speed economic growth. People began to question whether economic growth at the expense of quality of life was really worth it, creating further agitation for better working conditions, more leisure time, greener cities, and cheaper consumer goods, for example. In short, despite the intense efforts of the state, media, and capital to suppress and co-opt the Minamata victims, their fundamental indictment of industrial capitalism and statism, which demanded a change in the relations with capital and the state, could not be fully contained.

From "The Logic of Committee" to the Politics of *Doyōbi*

Thus, the engine of the committee's political practice was the unexpected questions generated amid the social contradictions of everyday life. Although the questioning of fascism and capitalism continued to be unheard and even violently repressed by the state and capital during the 1930s and 1940s, the mere presence of critical questions or traces of past questions among the people itself was important for Nakai. If they did not necessarily lead to immediate change in the present, they could serve as "potential energy" for future social change.⁵⁴ One might argue that the attempt to merely stimulate critical energy among the people without any firm objective or clear trajectory from the start

52 On Minamata, see Timothy George, *Minamata: Pollution and Struggle for Democracy in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001). Some longtime activists have criticized the Minamata struggle's turn toward issues of compensation as a deadening of the movement's original widespread indictment of high-speed economic growth and Japanese capitalism. Ōiwa Keibō, *Rowing the Eternal Sea: The Story of a Minamata Fisherman*, Narr. Ogata Masato (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

53 Takeuchi, *Kattatsu na gūsha*, 201.

54 We can see Nakai's active role in the postwar Hiroshima Culture movement for peace and democracy as a continuation of his cultural politics of the prewar period. See Leslie Pincus, "A Salon for the Soul: Nakai Masakazu and the Hiroshima Culture Movement," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10.1: 173–94.

(i.e., the overthrow of capitalism and creation of socialism) was a passive, dissipating notion of praxis. Nakai, however, was always very suspicious of purist notions of praxis such as the orthodox Marxist privileging of the proletariat since they easily became dogmatic and alienating. Rather, Nakai emphasized a “leaping into” the messy sphere of political debate and struggle without any guaranteed revolutionary outcome. There were no neat formulas for political change and there was definitely no time for resignation or pessimism over lack of success. If Japan’s increasingly fascist society was to be transformed, a politics that mobilized the critical energies of the widest number of people would have to be established. If all areas of life were being threatened by commodification, specialization, and rationalization, multiple issues would have to be taken up for political struggle, and different techniques would have to be used to mobilize critical interest. This was the goal of the “Logic of Committee.”

The specific threat posed by *Doyōbi*, however, was slightly different. It not only sought to proliferate critical nodes of democratic transformation but also give them some direction within a broad “egalitarian imaginary” or the ongoing democratic revolution whereby more and more people were challenging relations of subordination throughout the world (e.g., the popular fronts in Europe).⁵⁵ *Doyōbi* was not a mere celebration of creativity, multiplicity, and critique (as Nakai’s thought often seemed to suggest), but rather it sought to mobilize various nodes of critique within a wider democratic imaginary of the expansion of liberty, democracy, equality, and justice to more and more people. The newspaper did not do so abstractly by proclaiming empty slogans of freedom and equality as the political parties or the state often did; nor did it do so by insisting on a privileged revolutionary subject or some teleological course of history as the socialist parties did. Rather, it sought to encourage these values *within* the specificity of people’s daily struggles and pleasures, which it recognized as increasingly incorporated into immense capitalist structures and technocratic systems of control. The state recognized the threat, which led to its shut down in October 1937.⁵⁶

55 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe use the terms “egalitarian imaginary” and “democratic revolution” to describe the discursive conditions behind the proliferation of struggles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for equality and freedom involving a wider range of subject positions—the origins of these date back to the French Revolution. The task of radical democracy is to expand and deepen liberal-democratic ideology to a whole range of struggles in civil society and the state. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1986), 149–53.

56 In a detailed June 1940 report by Shimokawa Ikuo of the Justice Ministry’s Investigative Division on the various Kyoto cultural movements, “cultural” politics in Kyoto were cited

It would be simplistic to interpret *Doyōbi* merely as a practical manifestation of Nakai's theory of political praxis and organization as outlined in the "Logic of Committee," namely because the mass newspaper was a cooperative endeavor. However, Nakai wrote the essay as he was engaged in organizing the newspaper and participating in various citizens' movements in Kyoto—therefore, its main concern with organizing a transformative "mass subjectivity" rooted in people's everyday practices, techniques, and customs resonated deeply with the *Doyōbi* collective's goals. In fact, *Doyōbi* enables us to begin to think more concretely about political organization and practice in the age of commodification and fascism.

Nakai's *Doyōbi* Editorials

In the lead editorial of *Doyōbi*'s first issue, entitled "Flowers Even Bloom on Top of the Railway," Nakai wrote: "Long, long ago, people lived like adventurers filled with a sense of their own strength beneath the towering sun and billowing waves. Today, people's lives have become one of quietly living from morning to evening in a cold, concrete room underground at one's designated post while listening to the sounds of a monotonous engine."⁵⁷ People's lives were "incorporated into enormous organizational mechanisms," which destroyed their hopes, dulled their minds, and made them forget their dreams.⁵⁸ Continuing the line of thought from his earlier philosophical essays, Nakai immediately described the world in terms of specialized technocratic structures of production. Yet despite the passage's romantic language, Nakai never yearned for the return of some idyllic, premodern. Invoking the image of flowers growing on top of cold steel rails, he asked readers to never "let go of the fact that we are living here and now" and to hold on to any criticism of that "here and now."⁵⁹ Change did not come through the "power of thousands of pounds of steel," according to Nakai, but began in the form of asking small questions of one's everyday surroundings and activities.⁶⁰ These questions were the

along with the activities of the Social Masses Party as attempting to create the beginnings of a "popular front" movement in Japan. *Doyōbi* was ultimately shut down and Nakai was arrested on suspicion of organizing for socialist revolution. Shimokawa Ikuo, *Jinmin sensen to bunka undō* [The popular front and the cultural movement] (Kyoto: Tōyō Bunkasha, 1973).

57 Nakai, "Doyōbi kantōgen," 24.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., 25.

60 Ibid.

“flowers” that bloomed on the “cold steel rails” of the established capitalist structures that shaped daily life.

By making the readers the writers, *Doyōbi* was to serve as a space for popular reflection, questioning, debate, and planning for a different future. Nakai wrote at the end of his opening editorial: “*Doyōbi* is the afternoon where we remember what we are losing within ourselves; the evening where we sketch out serious dreams in our heads, discuss actual knowledge with each other, and plan our schedule for tomorrow. It is the evening where tears flow without hesitation, and smiles bloom with abandon.”⁶¹ As he outlined in the “Logic of Committee,” *Doyōbi* was to be an arena for proliferating debate on a whole range of concrete everyday issues facing people who were living within the grid of the high capitalist structures of 1930s Japan. The “tears” and the “laughter” described the difficult process of changing one’s views and attitudes in order to arrive at something new—what Nakai referred to as a “negation” that “deepens subjectivity” in the “Logic of Committee.” The slogan printed at the top of each issue read, “Courage Toward Life. Clarity of Spirit. Friendship without Separation. *Doyōbi*: An Afternoon of Rest and Reflection.”⁶² *Doyōbi* would serve as a reflective space for people to temporarily step back from a life that was increasingly mobilized by specialized technologies of sociocultural production within the factory, the family, civil society, and the market. Nakai envisioned *Doyōbi* as a kind of creative interruption of life.

Expanding on his earlier notion of the “indifferent point” whereby people’s convictions were thrown into question, Nakai affirmed a “feeling of emptiness” as the source of critical power and creativity in his editorial of August 15, 1936, entitled “We Should Not Merely Remain in a Feeling of Emptiness.” This “empty, lonely feeling” often appeared amid the “deafening roar” of modern life, according to Nakai, and it generated existential questions such as, “Why is there so much suffering?” “Why is everyone so busy?” “Why are people laughing?” and “Why are people crying?”⁶³ Yet it was this very moment of emptiness that often served as the foundation for new “trajectories” or unforeseen opportunities.⁶⁴ “This very feeling is the basis of an affect that is the springboard for all action; it is a source of knowledge; an originary, inexhaustible storehouse for the critical spirit,” Nakai wrote.⁶⁵ Emptiness or “indifferentness” could be the origin of unexpected questions, insights, or inspirations—“the raw ore that

61 Ibid.

62 *Doyōbi fukkokuban*, 11 (July 4, 1936).

63 Nakai, “*Doyōbi kantōgen*,” 29.

64 Ibid., 30.

65 Ibid.

immediately transforms into people's wishes for tomorrow, the first breeze before the storm of real knowledge."⁶⁶ Thus, "negation" was often necessarily a difficult and painful experience; however, it could lead to unexpected "flowers" of critique and insight. He therefore urged people to "grasp" this emptiness, instead of just lingering in it. "*Doyōbi* is a storehouse full of such treasures," Nakai wrote, referring to the numerous contributions from people discussing their everyday struggles and pleasures.⁶⁷ Each contribution represented a "small breeze" or "raw ore" of critique and insight that would perhaps generate responses from others, or some unexpected critical momentum for social change.

As mentioned above, Nakai's notion of negation was not a Hegelian one whereby negation is merely one moment in the dialectical march of historical progress. In his lead editorial of December 5, 1936, entitled "Truth Is Seeking Support More Than Vision," Nakai wrote, "Does history traverse a path schematically from one point to another like a line drawn on a map? Is it a trajectory that we should be able to view horizontally? No, it is not."⁶⁸ He instead saw history as potentially going in different directions through people's minute, everyday actions:

Any small, correct criticism or any little action amidst our minute lives can become the basis for enormous actions that can shift history from one pole to another.

Rather than being seen horizontally, history should be entered into; it is seeking support. Today truth is sincerely asking for each of your little hands, both men and women, to not let go of your criticisms and actions toward your lives at hand.⁶⁹

History has no inevitable destiny or mission to which people are subject. In a context where people were increasingly incorporated into larger state discourses of war mobilization and "building a New Order for East Asia," Nakai instead implored people to remain at the level of everyday concerns and problems. History and truth arose out of people's mundane lives and concerns—they were not eternal, transcendent forces. Instead of resigning oneself to the course of national events or eternal truths, people should actively look at and question what was happening in the "here and now" of their everyday lives—

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 40.

69 Ibid., 41.

this was the only truth. “Just pick up any small clump of dirt—let’s take it up in our hands and crush it,” Nakai wrote in his lead editorial of September 5, 1936.⁷⁰ People should simply grapple with an issue that they immediately face, rather than concern themselves with “historical forces,” “national missions,” or “eternal truths.” In the face of increasing mobilization of all aspects of life, Nakai urged a kind of politics of the everyday that would create new truths and multiple points of critique, rather than direct mass resistance, which was becoming less and less possible.

Doyōbi’s Multiplicity

Doyōbi’s anonymous contributions reflected the problems and opinions of a range of people: working women, housewives, small businessmen, artists, intellectuals, farmers, and laborers. In the afterword to the September 19, 1936, issue, the editors expressed delight over the number of contributions. “We think that you should all consider *Doyōbi* to be your graffiti wall,” the editors wrote.⁷¹ They then apologized to the contributors they could not include. “We would like you to consider your submissions as disappeared graffiti,” they added.⁷² Saitō Raitarō, one of *Doyōbi’s* founders and owner of its publishing license, insisted that contributors write for an audience with a sixth-grade education in order to ensure a wide readership. The advertisements from coffee shops, tea houses, record stores, department stores, cosmetics shops, restaurants, liquor shops, movie theaters, and clothing stores suggested a diverse readership ranging from working class to upper middle class—in short, urban Japan’s growing consumer classes.

The editors also made a conscious decision to keep their price at three sen, despite pressures to raise the price due to paper shortages at the time. One letter from a rural reader expressed gratitude for the price in comparison to the big “cultural magazines,” which were charging one yen or eighty sen per issue.⁷³ The editors also made a conscious decision of not solely relying on the “capitalist commercial” networks of bookstore cooperatives, wholesalers, and small shops.⁷⁴ They encouraged people to mail their used copies to their

⁷⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁷¹ *Doyōbi fukkokuban*, 46 (Sept. 19, 1936).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 111 (April 5, 1937).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

friends and relatives in other cities and especially to the countryside.⁷⁵ They also distributed free copies to coffee shops in the Kyoto-Osaka area.⁷⁶ Thus they tried to gain new audiences and create unexpected encounters with unknown readers through other circulation methods. In doing so, perhaps new questions, debates, or “flowers of criticism” would arise among a public saturated with big capitalist media. Each issue was divided into six one-page sections: Opening Editorial (by Nakai or Nose Katsuo), Culture, Film, Women, Society, and Entertainment/Club. For reasons of space, I will analyze only the Society and Women sections in order to bring out some of *Doyōbi*'s multiple dynamics.

Domestic Politics and Everyday Life in *Doyōbi*

Domestic issues took up much of the Society section's space and received the most reader contributions. The leftist Social Masses Party was the target of several articles for its failure to criticize the military's restriction of the franchise and obstruction of party leaders from becoming ministers, its abandonment of the “masses” in favor of the “nation” (*kokumin*), and its attempt to prevent any type of left popular front.⁷⁷ Technocratic tendencies such as the nationalization of electricity, the reintroduction of a neighborhood patrol system, and the rise of the “reform forces” also received some attention. A writer criticized the state's nationalization of electricity, which was implemented under the guise of being “for the good of the nation,” as merely an attempt to reduce wages and fire workers—nationalization was totally consistent with capitalist interests.⁷⁸ A 1937 article urged people to support the proletarian parties in the face of the growing power of the “reform forces,” who were pushing for the establishment of total planning ministries, the prevention of political appointments in the cabinet, and the dissolution of parliament.⁷⁹

Many articles expressed firm support for parliamentary politics, fundamental democratic and human rights, and the legal-judicial system. A regular “Our Everyday Legal Rights” column appeared where readers wrote about

75 Many obliged, according to some letters. *Ibid.*

76 Saitō Raitarō, “Doyōbi' ni tsuite” [Regarding *Saturday*], pp. 8–10 in *Doyōbi fukkukuban*.

77 *Doyōbi fukkukuban*, 24, 63 (Aug. 1, 1936, and Nov. 20, 1936).

78 *Ibid.*, 45 (Sept. 19, 1936).

79 *Ibid.*, 117 (April 20, 1937). Konoe Fumimarō, one of the leaders of the reform forces, became prime minister in June 1937. He announced the formation of the “New East Asian Order” and the State Total Mobilization Law, among other things.

their legal problems, and a lawyer gave practical advice. One woman asked if she had any legal recourse against an older man who promised her a tobacco shop in exchange for becoming his mistress but never fulfilled his promise. Her only recourse, the lawyer wrote, was to sue for fraud since the state did not recognize mistresses.⁸⁰ Another letter from a woman asked about legal ways of addressing her husband's chronic debt problems. The lawyer urged her to rationally make a chart of his debts, try to pay off the high-interest ones first, make long-term payment plans, and have the courts approve the plans to prevent any arbitrary change.⁸¹ Articles on the threat to local self-government from state centralization, the persistence of police torture and a weak sense of human rights among the people, the growing fear of exercising basic rights of free speech and assembly, and the rise of the left parties in local Tokyo elections also appeared.⁸² Thus, most of the articles on domestic politics stayed within the framework of parliamentary politics and the assertion of basic legal and democratic rights. This is understandable given that state repression had shut down most alternative forms of dissent and was attacking the parliamentary system itself. Part of the politics of the everyday for *Doyōbi's* organizers lay simply in asserting these established democratic rights.

Yet many of *Doyōbi's* articles were also about the readership's everyday lives and problems. Workers and small shopkeepers discussed their lives in the regular series, "Essays on the Workplace." One watch repairman who rented some space in a shop corner wrote about barely making enough to eat, recently being able to send some money to his family in the countryside, having to rely on the larger watch shops for subcontracting work, and how *Doyōbi* was one of his life's few joys.⁸³ Another report, from a factory worker, discussed the frequency of rural youth quitting their jobs and management attempts to replace them with cheaper female labor in order to drive down wages and encourage worker competition.⁸⁴ Other reports included those from a film studio worker, a used bookseller, and a gas station attendant.⁸⁵ A series of articles on rural Shinshū and Tōhoku also appeared. The organization of ineffective debt reorganization cooperatives, the prevalence of tuberculosis among returning women factory workers, the persistent poverty in northern Japan despite good harvests, and the exploitative actions of a rural Shinshū silk magnate were some of the issues

80 Ibid., 75 (Dec. 19, 1936).

81 Ibid., 87 (Jan. 20, 1937).

82 See Ibid., 57, 87, 105, 117 (Nov. 5, 1936; Mar. 20, 1937; Jan. 20, 1937; and April 20, 1937).

83 Ibid., 57 (Nov. 5, 1936).

84 Ibid., 69 (Dec. 5, 1936).

85 Ibid., 27, 45, 63 (Aug. 1, 1936; Sept. 19, 1936; and Nov. 20, 1936).

discussed in the series.⁸⁶ One article called for the formation of a "farmer book-keeping movement" whereby debt cooperatives would train farmers in basic accounting practices, which would hopefully help them avoid the paradoxical situation of being in debt during good harvests.⁸⁷ Thus, *Doyōbi* made an effort to include the voices of a variety of people, who discussed their lives and even proposed solutions to specific problems. Moreover, it made an extra effort to include women's voices by devoting a section to their concerns.

Doyōbi's Women's Section

Reflecting women's increasing prominence in the workforce and civil society, many articles in the Women's section discussed their experiences both in the workplace and at home. One article described a young department store lady's experience in her choral group where a rich woman refused to sing with her on the grounds that she was a "working woman." The department store lady asserted pride over the fact that she worked for a living whereas the rich woman lived in her own little "fictional" world.⁸⁸ Another article described how women workers at a clothing inspection center were made to prepare lunch boxes for everyone as a part of the company's attempt to cut costs. The author decried "male feudalism" and the work environment that treated women as existing for the service of men.⁸⁹ One female doctor recounts her visit to the Tenri countryside where farmers did not visit the doctor because of poverty and relied on "superstitions" and religion instead. As a result, many died from easily treatable diseases.⁹⁰ A teacher wrote about a meeting in preparation for the school's sports day where three or four men talked nonstop for several hours into the evening. Meanwhile, she was thinking about her one-month-old baby at home. For her, this was an example of men's lack of consideration for women's positions as both mothers and workers.⁹¹ Thus, in *Doyōbi* we glimpse snapshots of the different subject positions of working women in urban Japan.

There were also many opinion pieces on women's status in the workplace and at home. One piece discussed how many women endured low-paying jobs with bad working conditions in the city and hoped instead that marriage

86 Ibid., 57, 69 (Nov. 5, 1936, and Dec. 5, 1936).

87 Ibid., 75 (Dec. 19, 1936).

88 Ibid., 14 (July 4, 1936).

89 Ibid., 74 (Dec. 19, 1936).

90 Ibid., 68 (Dec. 5, 1936).

91 Ibid., 50 (Oct. 20, 1936).

would save them from their work. Yet what often happened was that men did not want “tired wives,” and even if they did get married, a hard life of raising two or three children on a low income awaited them. The author ended by asserting the right of women to have both a good working life and an equal, cooperative marriage, instead of having to choose one or the other.⁹² Another talked about a male department store worker bragging to his female colleagues about his rural wife, who was “sophisticated, yet not argumentative” like them. He went on to say that his female colleagues were “not Japanese women.” The author poked fun at him, writing that instead of returning to his sophisticated wife, he went to billiard halls and bars enjoying “coquettish” women while his wife managed his low salary. “Why don’t you throw away your old-fashioned ways and become more like a man,” she wrote.⁹³ In response to these articles on men’s “feudal” attitudes, one person asked women to see the root of sexism in the exploitative capitalist system rather than simply in male “attitudes” or behavior.⁹⁴

Another article celebrated the increasing number of jobs available for women such as hairdressers, dressmakers, sales women, review dancers, typists, bus conductors, waitresses, and teachers. The author wrote that such jobs gave women a certain degree of independence and in some cases practical skills in the event of marriage.⁹⁵ In the same issue, another woman praised the passing of the Mother-Child Protection Law, which provided welfare for poor mothers without husbands as well as for illegitimate children. She wrote, however, that the law should be expanded to include women with criminal records, itinerant women, and women with mental disorders.⁹⁶ Articles celebrating research into artificial insemination as a step toward women’s empowerment, decrying the registration of pregnant women in Chiba Prefecture as a means to prevent abortion, and supporting the organization of red light district workers in Osaka also appeared.⁹⁷ Thus, *Doyōbi* was also a dynamic forum for women to assert their various political viewpoints and agendas.

Housewife concerns also took up a lot of space in the Women’s section. Rising food prices was a constant theme. One article linked the rising prices of some key food items such as beef, rice, tofu, flour, miso, soy sauce, milk, sugar,

92 Ibid., 26 (Aug. 1, 1936).

93 Ibid., 44 (Sept. 19, 1936).

94 Ibid., 80 (Jan. 5, 1937).

95 Ibid., 86 (Jan. 20, 1937).

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., 74, 98 (Dec. 19, 1936, and Mar. 5, 1937).

and cold drinks to international events, state price controls, and monopolies.⁹⁸ An article on the national meeting of women's consumer cooperatives highlighted the dispute between the leadership of middle-class women, who sought state assistance, and the majority of women, who wanted to be more autonomous.⁹⁹ One piece urged women to "turn your faces away from your account books" and toward the politics of the state. Instead of focusing on the trivial minutia of prices, bargains, and budgeting, women should look at the larger socioeconomic problems stemming from state policies that put more burdens on the people.¹⁰⁰ The entrance examination system was also the topic of much debate among mothers. One woman criticized the petty competition among women in a local Mothers Association where the women of those who were admitted to a certain middle school socially excluded those who were not. She reminded women that the Mothers Association's purpose was for the good of not only all mothers but all of society as well—not just themselves and their children.¹⁰¹ Another woman asked whether there was a point to the exam system given that corruption was more determinative than actual student ability.¹⁰² In a special edition devoted to the junior high school exam system, articles criticized the different systems in the Kansai area. The system at a famous Osaka school was particularly worrisome since it only tested national history and did not really test children's intellectual ability.¹⁰³ Kyoto schools adopted a three-part system of elementary school grade reports, physical exam, and character exam. Leaving intellectual evaluation to the elementary schools made them vulnerable to parental pressure and corruption, physical exams problematically glorified physicality over intelligence, and character exams were often vague and of questionable value, the article noted.¹⁰⁴ The stress on memorization and the advantages some children gained from going to private cram schools were also criticized.¹⁰⁵ Thus, a number of contentious everyday issues facing housewives such as rising food prices and children's education mobilized debate among women in *Doyōbi*.

Fashion and style also received attention in a regular "Vogue" column. One column discussed how increasingly popular polka dot patterned dresses looked good on everyone without being too gaudy. Larger women could wear dark

98 Ibid., 26 (Aug. 1, 1936).

99 Ibid., 62 (Nov. 20, 1936).

100 Ibid., 80 (Jan. 5, 1937).

101 Ibid., 38 (Sept. 5, 1936).

102 Ibid., 50 (Oct. 20, 1936).

103 Ibid., 116 (April 20, 1937).

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

dresses with fine polka dots to “hide their body lines,” while gray, round polka dots on a dark background “softens the bony frames” of smaller women. The article continued to describe other color combinations as well as popular polka dot dresses in France and the United States.¹⁰⁶ Another column was devoted to the Spanish bolero jacket, which would look good on a “short, black-haired Japanese” woman, and the Chinese *qipao* dresses, which “unfortunately” do not fit well on most Japanese women.¹⁰⁷ A series of advice columns on “working women’s clothing” also appeared. One piece on the navy blue and white bus girl uniforms suggested that the number of pleats be reduced in order to make movement in crowded buses easier, and using hair bands instead of hats in order to display their neat hair styles.¹⁰⁸ Waitresses should wear dresses that were not too long with open sleeves to allow for free and easy movement. Their uniforms should match the table colors and yet not be louder than the customer’s clothing (black or gray were safest).¹⁰⁹ The author added that while the white apron should be the waitress’s identifying marker, recently the apron had gained public significance by becoming the National Defense Women’s Association’s public uniform, whose members wore them over their kimono. Thus, *Doyōbi*’s politics of the everyday even extended to the politics of clothing and style, both in the workplace and in public. Fashion was not considered merely ephemeral or diversionary.

Conclusion: Politics of the Everyday

Nakai’s defining problematic was the incorporation of people into large capitalist organizations and productive mechanisms—the law of production and commodification increasingly governed all aspects of daily life and created a kind of productivist technocracy in 1930s Japan.¹¹⁰ In this context where people’s cultural, social, economic, and political lives were being mobilized by the state for the war and for building the New East Asian Order, Nakai insisted on focusing on the here and now as the basis for constructing a democratic politics. Whereas the state saw revolutionary socialism in *Doyōbi*’s articles, Nakai saw a myriad of “blooming flowers” representing the everyday pleasures and

106 Ibid., 26 (Aug. 1, 1936).

107 Ibid., 14 (July 4, 1936).

108 Ibid., 62 (Nov. 20, 1936).

109 Ibid., 68 (Dec. 5, 1936).

110 For more on Japan as “technocracy,” see Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire: Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

struggles, questions, and critiques of intellectuals, salarymen, working women, housewives, and shopkeepers. Whereas the state and more orthodox leftist contributors to *Doyōbi* viewed the tabloid within larger ideological frameworks and historical goals (i.e., the inevitability of socialist revolution), Nakai viewed people's daily questions about the workplace, the home, the school, the media, and the legal system as “small breezes” or the “raw ore” of unexpected historical change. All of the issues raised in *Doyōbi*—from reforming the entrance examination system to discrimination against Koreans to rising commodity prices—represented potential nodes of democratic mobilization. Thus, rather than laying out a set political program for certain predetermined political subjects, *Doyōbi* sought to create an arena for the people to articulate a democratic politics relevant to the multiplicity of their lives at hand.

Nakai wrote his theory of political praxis, “Logic of Committee,” as he was engaged in publishing *Doyōbi* and actively participating in the consumer Kyoto cooperative movement. While the tabloid never realized his conception of establishing “the committee” or a radical democratic vehicle for social transformation, it nevertheless embodied some of its central concepts. The committee perhaps was the thirty or so intellectuals who launched *Doyōbi* under the editorship of Nakai, Nose, and Saitō, who wrote many of the articles in the beginning and selected contributions from the readership. As a result, the published articles and contributions usually asserted social democratic values of class, gender, and ethnic equality, which the state recognized as closet socialism. At the same time, however, the editors repeatedly expressed surprise at the number, variety, and quality of contributions they received—often by postcard—that deepened or specified these progressive principles.¹¹¹ In several issues, the editors wrote that they received so many contributions that they had to shorten and even omit some articles.¹¹² In the October 5, 1937, issue—*Doyōbi*'s last issue before the authorities shut it down—the editors boasted that seventy percent of the issue consisted of contributions.¹¹³ Thus, the newspaper was not entirely run with an iron fist from above. The inclusion of debate and criticism, the constant struggle to maintain readability and to avoid jargon, and the conscious effort to use alternate circulatory methods to gain a mass audience also resonated with the explicit goal of the “Logic of Committee” to establish a political medium firmly rooted in the people's energies and desires. Ultimately, *Doyōbi* sought to become “the ears and voice of thousands of people” amid the

111 *Doyōbi fukkōkuban*, 70, 76 (Dec. 5, 1936, and Dec. 19, 1936).

112 *Ibid.*, 136, 184 (June 5, 1937, and Oct. 5, 1937).

113 *Ibid.*, 184 (Oct. 5, 1937).

productivist, technocratic structures mobilizing daily life, as Nakai wrote in one of his lead editorials.¹¹⁴

While *Doyōbi* never successfully created the radically democratic “committee” rooted in the people’s desires, it did achieve something else that was also potentially threatening to the state. Rather than openly asserting an identifiable political agenda or mobilizing people based on explicit ideologies or historical objectives, *Doyōbi* insisted on remaining at the level of people’s everyday struggles and questions. Or in Nakai’s words, it insisted on remaining *within* history’s messy reality rather than reducing that reality to some overarching framework or ideology. In a context where work, leisure, family, consumption, and political life were incorporated into capitalist structures of production, people had little space of their own. However, instead of asserting some romantic, untouched space of resistance, Nakai and his co-organizers insisted on “rest and reflection” or taking a step back from one’s “commodified and specialized” reality to see what one could find or discover at hand. The housewife burdened with debts and rising food prices; the bicycle shop owner faced with fierce competition, low sales, and high taxes; the salarymen criticizing the inefficient and unpredictable local bureaucracy; the film viewer engaging with social issues presented in popular films; the department store lady asserting pride in her work and anger at men’s “feudal attitudes”; the fashion reviewer giving practical advice on work clothing—these and more represent the “flowers” among the “steel rails” of high capitalist society. These variety of issues were the here and now that needed to be grasped and expanded into multiple nodes of critique and democratic transformation. *Doyōbi* never privileged a certain axis of political struggle but sought to expand an egalitarian imaginary throughout society.

While these critiques of the “here and now” did not represent any immediate threat to the state, the authorities nevertheless still recognized some danger. The Ministry of Justice official Shimokawa noted that “reflection” was a danger to wartime spiritual mobilization.¹¹⁵ By displaying and encouraging people’s everyday pleasures and struggles, and receiving a genuinely popular response, *Doyōbi* was mobilizing at the level of what mattered to people most, which was precisely what the state found most difficult to appropriate or completely repress. While a tangible “third political force” did not emerge, smaller cultural groups did (i.e., what Shimokawa called the “Kyoto cultural movement”) and the consumer cooperative movement reached its peak in 1936–1937. Those working with purist notions of party building and mass organizing might ask

114 Nakai, “*Doyōbi* kantōgen,” 35–36.

115 Shimokawa, *Jinmin sensen to bunka undō*, 147.

how *Doyōbi* or popular front politics in general could escape the logic of commodification under wartime fascism. However, Nakai was never interested in some predetermined utopia or historical objective but rather in what he broadly referred to in his work as the “technologies” of everyday life. That is to say, creating “chance,” “opportunity,” “points of departure,” and “small breezes” of critique and change.¹¹⁶ The “Logic of Committee” and *Doyōbi* were attempts to give these creative energies some egalitarian horizon. They sought the constant growth or “deepening” of democratic subjectivity and sociality amid the high capitalist structures of everyday life.

From the standpoint of Marxism, such a politics may appear dissipative and at times ungrounded in any hard analysis of how capitalist reproduction worked in wartime Japan. Nevertheless, it foreshadowed a politics of expanding the struggle against commodification outside the sphere of production to the multiple spaces of daily life. As David Harvey notes, while surplus value is produced in the factory or workplace, it is realized in the market and in daily life. Thus, by simultaneously expanding struggles against commodification to areas such as housing, food, quality of life, local government, the media, and human rights—issues that *Doyōbi* in fact began to raise—capitalist mechanisms of commodification may then be challenged on multiple fronts.¹¹⁷ The “Logic of Committee” and *Doyōbi* may therefore also be viewed as early attempts to promote and articulate a potent language of dissent that allowed people from different walks of life to express their various frustrations against the rising tide of commodification and fascism in 1930s Japan.¹¹⁸

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116 Moore, “Para-existential Forces of Invention.”

117 Hiba Bou Akar and Nada Moumtaz, “On Why Struggles over Urban Space Matter: An Interview with David Harvey,” *Jadaliyya*, Nov. 15, 2013, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15156/on-why-struggles-over-urban-space-matter_an-interv (accessed May 2, 2016).

118 I borrow the term “language of dissent” from Jeremi Suri’s work on the rise of global protest during the 1960s and the conservative reaction to this “global disruption.” Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 88.

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Yanagida Kenjūrō

A Religious Seeker of Marxism

Satofumi Kawamura

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Asia-Pacific War, it was not unusual for intellectuals who had followed Nishida Kitarō and the Kyoto School to convert to Marxism. As the postwar opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified, an increasing number came to reveal their conversion. Yanagida Kenjūrō (1893–1983), the protagonist of our exploration, has been swept into oblivion, but he may be seen as one of the representative figures of this group of Marxists. Originally, Yanagida sympathized with Nishida's philosophy and the Buddhist ideas that inspired it, but after Japan's defeat in the war, he turned to criticize Nishida's philosophy for its inability to resist both the war and the militarist state. We shall explore the nature and likely motivations for this conversion in the following pages, but its magnitude should be emphasized straightaway. During the 1930s, the influence of Nishida's philosophy was such that Yanagida published a book in 1939 discussing the absoluteness of state sovereignty, and the necessity and morality of the war. In the early 1940s, though, Yanagida struggled with the inner contradiction between his sympathy for Nishida's thought and a growing antipathy for the war. Through sustained introspection and the experience of personal loss in his family, Yanagida gradually considered Marxism as the principle that could sublimate this contradiction. Nevertheless, as I shall argue, Yanagida's Marxism remained permeated by the principle of "self-negation," which he had adapted from Nishida's thought. Himself inspired by Buddhist tradition, it was Nishida who established "self-negation" as a part of philosophical discourse. Thus, it can be said that Yanagida never succeeded in detaching himself from Nishida's pro-Buddhist influence. In this sense, Yanagida may be understood as a religious seeker of Marxism.

After 1950, Yanagida began to publish books and essays in which he conducted a Marxist philosophical inquiry, but through these works it is also clear that he was not deeply committed to Marxism. As he came to realize his own

* The author would like to thank Mark Roberts for his comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this essay.

skepticism, he tried to negate the self that maintained this skepticism, thereby devoting himself more completely to Marxism. During his life, Yanagida published several autobiographies, such as *Waga shisō no henreki* (My Ideological Trajectory), *Yuibutsu-ron jū-nen: zoku waga shisō no henreki* (Ten Years of Materialism: The Sequel to My Ideological Trajectory), and *Watashi no ningen kakumei* (My Human Revolution). If we recall Michel Foucault's argument that confession functions to produce the subject,¹ these autobiographies may be understood as Yanagida's confession—i.e., “self-negation”—as the principle of forming his own subjectivity. In order to form the subject that could finally reach the truth he identified with Marxism, Yanagida needed to repent for his past, in which he had pursued heresy.

However, this was never accomplished, for even after his conversion to Marxism, Yanagida still held onto the concept of “self-negation.” This also means that he remained trapped within the relationship between subjectivity and truth that was suggested by Nishida, because Nishida maintained that “self-negation” is the principle that guides an individual to reach the truth. In this essay, I shall examine how Nishida's pro-Buddhist or pro-religious speculation on the relationship between subjectivity and truth defined Yanagida's understanding of Marxism. Through this examination, we can better grasp how Yanagida finally came to require the subject to be self-negating or submissive to a truth guaranteed by communism. In order to consider why Yanagida remained yoked with Nishida's pro-Buddhist thought, I would like to invoke Foucault's discussion again. This is because Foucault not only problematizes the relationship between subjectivity and truth, but also suggests a perspective by which we can understand the emergence of an intersection between Marxist thought and religion in the nineteenth century.

Marxism and Religion: The Care of the Self as the Method of Forming the Subject

In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault discusses the relationship between truth and subject. In this text, Foucault problematizes the concept of

1 Discussing how power produces the subject, Foucault states: “Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom: traditional themes in philosophy, which a ‘political history of truth’ would have to overturn by showing that truth is not by nature free—nor error servile—but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power. The confession is an example of this.” Michel Foucault, *An Introduction: The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 60.

the “care of oneself” (*souci de soi-même*) as the key principle of the formation of the subject, because he thinks that, in the process of the subject formation, every individual is urged to become the master of him/herself. As Martin Heidegger argues,² the word “subject” comes originally from *subjectum* in Latin or *hypokeimenon* in Greek, which mean the substance or basis of the self. Subject is the basis according to which an individual can act by him/herself and, as long as he/she can act according to his/her own basis, s/he can be a subject. In this sense, to be a subject means to be the master of the self. According to Foucault, the concept of the “care of the (one-)self” appeared as the rule to become the master of the self, and “remained a fundamental principle for describing the philosophical attitude throughout Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman culture,”³ because philosophy focused on the relationship between the subject and the truth.

Foucault argues: “we will call ‘philosophy’ the form of thought that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth.... If we call this ‘philosophy’ then I think we could call ‘spirituality’ the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth.”⁴ In the philosophical tradition of “Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman culture,” “philosophy” and “spirituality” were never separated, and the rule of the “care of the self” was the formula of the pursuit of “spirituality.” In order to achieve the “transformation on himself,” an individual must follow the rule of the “care of the self” through which he, as the master of himself, can control himself so completely that he can remove himself as “the subject from his current status and condition.”⁵

As Foucault puts it, whereas seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy tried to separate “philosophy” from “spirituality,” nineteenth-century philosophy tried to reconsider the problem of “spirituality.” In other words, the philosophy of the nineteenth century rediscovered the “care of the self.” Foucault contends that, in the discourses of “nineteenth century philosophy—well, almost all: Hegel anyway, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, the Husserl of the *Krisis*, and Heidegger as well—...a certain structure of spirituality tries to link knowledge, the activity of knowing, and the conditions and effects of

2 See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Albany: State University New York Press, 2010), 112 and 305.

3 Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 8.

4 *Ibid.*, 15.

5 *Ibid.*

this activity, to a transformation in the subject's being."⁶ Here, we might ask: what led nineteenth-century philosophy to rediscover the "care of the self," and what were the effects of this rediscovery?

In Foucault's account, the discourse of nineteenth-century philosophy began to be aware of the limits or end of transcendental subjectivity, and began to understand the subject as an "Empirico-Transcendental Doublet."⁷ In other words, nineteenth-century philosophy tried to problematize the point that while the empirical world is composed of the objects perceived and judged by the transcendental subject, the subject is also formed, configured, and transformed through its interplay with the world. As Foucault argued, philosophy after the nineteenth century has focused on "how can the world be the object of knowledge (*connaissance*) and at the same time the place of the subject's test?"⁸ While the subject was dragged down from the privileged Cartesian and Kantian position as the ground of truth, the empirical or ontological condition that constitutes the subject became more problematic.

From this perspective, in order to pursue truth, it was necessary to establish a ground that would never be subject to empirical, objective conditions in a fashion different from that of Descartes or Kant. Therefore, in order to become a subject, an individual must become the subject who can remove him/herself from current conditions in order to pursue truth that transcends any conditions. Here, to become a subject who can grasp the truth was reunited with becoming master of the self, as one who can remove "himself from his current status and condition." With this, the "care of the self" as a method, or *tekhne*, of forming or becoming the subject mattered once again. Another way to express this would be to say that "philosophy" and "spirituality" were reunited.

According to Foucault, the most conspicuous resurgence of the problem of spirituality could be seen in the two fields of modern knowledge that were closely related to philosophy: that is, psychoanalysis and Marxism. Foucault argues that "in both Marxism and psychoanalysis, for completely different reasons but with relatively homologous effect, the problem of what is at stake in the subject's being and, in return, the question of what aspects of the subject may be transformed by virtue of his access to the truth...which are once again absolutely typical of spirituality, are found again at the very heart of, or anyway,

6 Ibid., 28.

7 See Foucault's discussion in *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2001), 347.

8 Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 487.

at the source of and outcome of both of these knowledge.”⁹ However, Foucault contends that Marxism and psychoanalysis should not be identified with religion. As he points out, “spirituality” and the rule of the “care of the self” were deeply respected practices within Christianity. Generally speaking, religion, including not only Christianity but also Buddhism, requires every individual to pursue particular practices, searches, and experiences through which he/she transforms him/herself in order to attain religious truth. In other words, Foucault thinks that whereas spirituality is located at the heart of religion, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, they are nevertheless distinct.

Here, I would like to argue that a consideration of Foucault’s account should prompt us to revisit Yanagida, for he was engaged in a philosophical elaboration of Marxism, drawing inspiration from ideas in the tradition of Buddhist thought. Despite the distinction between Marxism and religion that Foucault emphasizes, it can be said that Yanagida misidentified a Marxist “care of the self” with Buddhist practices, because in fact the practice of “care of the self” is itself important both in Marxist and Buddhist thought.

Nishida’s Philosophy and Self-Negation as the Care of the Self

Besides the problem of Marxism and psychoanalysis, as the natural outcome of the resurgence of spirituality there were also possibilities that in the philosophical context after the nineteenth century the philosophical “care of the self” intersected with the religious one. Arguably, one of the major philosophical projects to emerge in twentieth century Japan—Nishida Kitarō’s philosophy (*Nishida tetsugaku*)—itself inspired by modern European philosophy and Buddhism, may also be understood as “care of the self.” Insofar as Yanagida was heavily influenced by Nishida’s philosophy, this subject requires closer attention.

Based on the ideas of Bergson, William James, Hegel and others, Nishida’s philosophy tried to envisage a new principle that enabled the subject to access the truth. This is “self-negation” (*jiko-hitei*), a concept invented by mixing Hegelian dialectics with concepts from Buddhism. Reinterpreting “negation” as the moment that makes dialectics operate, Nishida argued that the subject could reach truth through a “negation” of the self. For Nishida, this Hegelian negation was similar to the Buddhist practice through which practitioners give up all personal desires to obey the true law of the world (*Dharma*). In other words, in order to access the truth that should emerge through the process of

⁹ Ibid., 29.

dialectics, Nishida was convinced that the subject had to undertake a transformation that involved voiding the self.

Needless to say, these ideas of the relationship between the subject and truth in Nishida's philosophy should be understood in the context of the problem of the "Empirico-Transcendental Doublet." Nishida's famous (or notorious?) jargon of "absolutely contradictory self-identity" (*zettai mujunteki jiko-dōitsu*) was invented to grasp the dialectics through which the individual as subject and the world as object interact mutually to form one "world," which he called the Worldly World (*Sekai-teki sekai*). In other words, Nishida also shared the view that the transcendental subject could not occupy a privileged position, and tried to suggest a philosophical rationale by which a mutual interplay between transcendental subject and empirical world would be understood as the totality called the "World."

Nishida contended that this mutual interplay always produced contradiction, and therefore he conceptualized totality as contradictory. Although Nishida's attention to contradiction is remarkable in relation to the Marxist critique of the contradictions of capitalist totalization, Nishida's totality could not problematize the problem of power. Marxism criticizes power relations whose structure works to benefit the dominant class, and examines contradiction as a symptom of this structure. In contrast, Nishida emphasized the existence of a meta-totality (called "nothingness" or "place") that would subsume the contradictions that could not be mediated by the present totalities, and thereby relativized any contradictions. This relativization led to the nullification of political conflict as an expression of these contradictions. Nishida's primary concern was to grasp the dynamics of the subsuming meta-totality, and for this he drew inspiration from Buddhist religious ideas. For Mahāyāna Buddhists, the world should be understood as a void (*Sūnyatā*) where any relationship, including contradictions, emerges, develops, and disappears, and the purpose of "self-negating" practices is to grasp and experience this void. Nishida suggested "self-negation" as the principle for reaching meta-totality as "nothingness" or "place," and in the 1940s he even discussed meta-totality as the imperial house (*kō-shitsu*) or the national polity (*kokutai*). This nullification of politics or power has been considered one of the most problematic points of Nishida's pro-Buddhist or pro-religious philosophy.¹⁰

10 Generally speaking, Nishida's philosophy has been criticized for its political ideology that identified the meta-totality with the imperial house or the national polity. However, I would suggest that the problem with Nishida's philosophy was not so much this identification as his understanding of the meta-totality. This is because even if he had identified

Yanagida inherited the principle of “self-negation” from Nishida. As he explains it himself, Yanagida had a strong interest in religious thought, and was therefore fascinated by the Buddhist flavor of Nishida’s philosophy. In 1950, Yanagida expressed his conversion to Marxism by criticizing idealism, including Nishida’s philosophy. Yanagida’s conversion might have been due to the loss of his only son, Yōichi, who died during his service in the Japanese Imperial Army in 1942. However, he seems to have maintained the principle of “self-negation” even after this conversion. Rather, his Marxism was underpinned by “self-negation”—the negation of himself as a follower of Nishida’s philosophy and idealism. In short, he tried to form a subject that could access Marxist truth through “self-negation.” This also means that Yanagida applied “self-negation” as a principle that would effect a break between the subject and capitalist totalization. As Foucault puts it, the care of the self matters in Marxism, because Marxism problematizes how to form subjects who are free from capitalist totalization but based on individuals who are defined by capitalism. Yanagida tried to utilize “self-negation” as the principle of a Marxist “care of the self,” and thereby envisage the possibility of a free subject. However, as soon as Yanagida envisaged this freedom, he replaced it with a form of submission.

During the 1940s and ’50s, the problem of “necessity and freedom” was widely discussed by Japanese Marxists in the “subjectivity debate” (*shutai-sei ronsō*).¹¹ For some Marxists engaged in this debate, the necessity of overturning the capitalist order through a revolution of the proletariat was unquestionable, yet they maintained that it was very questionable whether this revolution would be motivated or triggered by the proletariat’s recognition of their true self-interest. In this sense, they thought existing Marxist theory had to be revised. There is no evidence to clarify the extent to which Yanagida engaged in this debate, but it could be argued that his position was aligned with that of the revisionist camp. For Yanagida, if the revolution of the proletariat was triggered by a recognition of their self-interest, it was merely a repetition of the capitalist pursuit of private interest, and a true revolution in which class antagonisms were overcome would never be achieved. Therefore, he contended that it was necessary to envisage a totality in which there was no class struggle, and that only through subjectivation toward totality could the individual be free from capitalist totalization. Here, we can understand how Yanagida envisaged

the meta-totally with another political or cultural entity, it would have functioned equally to nullify politics.

11 For a discussion and analysis of this debate, see J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

the freedom of the subject in relation to truth, and why he applied Nishida's discussion of "self-negation" and meta-totality to his revision of Marxism.

To understand the problem of Yanagida's "self-negation," it may be helpful to look at Umemoto Katsumi (1912–1974), who is considered the most representative Marxist to have converted from the Kyoto School and a major participant in the "subjectivity debate." Initially Umemoto studied ethics under Watsuji Tetsurō, one of the core members of the Kyoto School, but gradually shifted his main concern to Marxism. After his conversion, Umemoto, strongly influenced by Watsuji and other Kyoto School philosophers such as Tanabe Hajime, reinterpreted Marxism. He adopted Buddhist ideas, such as those of Shinran, and argued for the importance of "self-negation." For Umemoto, "self-negation" was the moment to transcend the present politicoeconomic order dominated by the bourgeoisie under capitalism, and, through this transcendence, an individual would become a subject in service of the proletariat and its truth—the necessity of the end of capitalism—that is to be realized only by this class.

As J. Victor Koschmann points out, "as a result, it can be argued from the perspective of the 1990s that, rather than helping to open up the process of hegemony to an emergent, egalitarian process of articulation among contending force and demands, [Umemoto's] theoretical intervention had the paradoxical effect of reinforcing the rationale offered by those who sought to impose unilateral control on behalf of working class."¹² In short, Umemoto's Marxism contributed to inducing people to blindly follow the dictates of communist parties and states. Considering Viren Murthy's chapter in this volume, which raises important questions about Koschmann's critique of Umemoto, I would submit that this critique could be more precisely applicable to Yanagida.

For this argument, Koschmann refers to the post-Marxist theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, but a Foucauldian approach would be more useful to vindicate the critique of Yanagida, because it problematizes the relationship between the "care of the self" and power. According to Foucault, subjectivation to truth through "the care of the self" is a function of power, because specific power relations always define the production of any "truth." On this account, it could be argued that Yanagida's interpretation of Marxist theory would work to produce a subject submissive to a particular power, because he is more likely to be susceptible to the seductions of assuming the truth because of his religious inclination. While Murthy elucidates how the Buddhist element of "nothingness" in Umemoto's thought contributed to ensuring the contingency that would guarantee the freedom of the subject, I would argue that the Buddhist element in Yanagida reinforced the necessity of the subject's submission to the

12 Ibid., 128.

truth or power. To put it more concretely, although “self-negation” might have allowed Yanagida to pay attention to the moment of contingency that enables the subject to be free from capitalist totalization, Yanagida was actually more likely to become bogged down in another totality that Nishida’s philosophy always envisaged as the religious status reached through “self-negation.” Here, it could be argued that whereas the religious “care of the self” would be a subjectivation based on necessity, for a Marxist the “care of the self” should be to open up the possibility of contingency.

As a result, despite his critique of the state, Yanagida ultimately reinforced a power relation very similar to that of the state. In order to elucidate this problem, I shall examine Yanagida’s trajectory from the late 1930s to the aftermath of the war. In the next section, after roughly sketching out his background and career, I focus on his book *Nihon seishin to sekai seishin* (Japanese Spirit and World Spirit), published in 1939.

Japanese Spirit, Nation, and Ethical War

Yanagida was born in 1893 in a village in Kanagawa prefecture. Unlike most other members of the Kyoto School, but like Nishida himself, Yanagida did not enter an elite track in school. After graduating from elementary school, Yanagida did not receive his father’s approval to attend junior high school, which would have led to high school and then university study. Instead, he attended a normal school (*shihan gakkō*) to be trained as an elementary school teacher. According to his memoir,¹³ the social status of an elementary school teacher at that time was not high, so he was likely to have had a somber image of his own future. He graduated from Kanagawa Normal School (Kanagawa shihan gakkō) in 1913, and then began to teach at a rural elementary school. While teaching at several different schools, Yanagida tried to secure a certificate for teaching in a junior high or normal school. Finally, his efforts paid off, and he took a teaching post in Okayama Normal School (Okayama shihan gakkō). He worked there for two years, and then moved to Iwate Normal School. However, Yanagida was not satisfied with the life he led as a normal school teacher, and decided to take the entrance examination for Kyoto Imperial University (Kyōto teikoku daigaku).

In 1922, Yanagida was admitted to Kyoto Imperial University as a *senka-sei* student, that is, a kind of auditor. *Senka-sei* students were strictly separated from the formal students (*honka-sei*) and could not receive a degree even if

13 Yanagida Kenjūrō, *Waga shisō no henreki*, in *Jijoden: Yanagida Kenjūrō chosakushū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1967), 37–39.

they passed the exams. In the university, Yanagida chose ethics as his major, and his supervisor was not Nishida but rather Fujii Kenjirō, who gave a course entitled “Critique of Marxism.” Under the strong influence of German idealism, Yanagida wrote a thesis criticizing Marxism, and finished university in 1925. Yet even after completing his program, he could not find a university teaching position, and reluctantly had to return to teaching at a normal school. Interestingly, Nishida was also a *senka-sei*, and had to start his post-university career as a junior high school teacher. Here it is possible to see a parallel between Nishida and Yanagida. In 1929, Yanagida accepted a position as associate professor at Taihoku Imperial University (Taihoku teikoku daigaku) in Taiwan. At this time, he began a full-fledged study of Nishida’s philosophy, and came to find “the home of soul” (*tamashii no kokyō*) in it.¹⁴ Yanagida stated that although he had not been able to understand Nishida’s discussion, he realized at this time that what Nishida wanted to say might be understandable. As he moved through Nishida’s book, he came to feel Nishida’s philosophy touch his soul. On the basis of these experiences, he argued that his sympathy for Nishida was beyond logic or rationality, but was instead rooted in more an emotional or irrational dimension. Yanagida stayed in Taiwan until 1942.

In 1939, during his time in Taiwan, Yanagida published *Nihon seishin to sekai seishin*. Faced with the coming total war, he became concerned with the ideological glorification of the Japanese spirit and culture as it spread throughout Japanese society and including the colonized regions of the Korean peninsula, Manchuria, and of course Taiwan. At least, it is possible to understand that in this book he was critical of contemporary politico-cultural trends, and therefore tried to suggest an interpretation of the Japanese spirit and culture opposed to that of “fanatical” nationalists. In this sense, his attempt could be understood as a semantic “tug of war” (*imi no sōdatsu-sen*).¹⁵ As Nishida, although not successful, seemed to have done through his political essays written in 1930s and 1940s, Yanagida might also have dissented from the dominant discourse.

14 Ibid., 96.

15 This concept was originally suggested by Ueda Shizuteru. Ueda argues that Nishida’s intention in his book *the Problem of Japanese Culture* was not to justify the wartime ideology, but to dissent from it. According to him, the reason Nishida used ideological terms such as “Japanese culture,” the “Japanese spirit,” the “imperial way” (*kōdō*) and so forth, was that he tried to change the direction in which Japan was being forced by the extreme nationalists or militarists, reinterpreting dominant political concepts from his own philosophical standpoint. See Ueda Shizuteru, “Nishida Kitatrō: ‘Ano sensō’ to ‘Nihon bunka no mondai,’” *Shisō*, 857 (1995): 107–33.

Yanagida began his discussion with an attempt to define the Japanese spirit. He was convinced that the Japanese spirit was something that could be expressed through the dialectic between the subject as the self and the object as the other. To put it more concretely, Yanagida thought that the Japanese spirit was embodied in history, and history was made through the struggle of individuals with their environment. Individuals were limited by the environment, such as traditions or social conditions, and had no choice but to follow them. In this sense, the possibilities for individuals were defined by objective and material conditions, and the Japanese spirit was likely to be regarded as something embodied in such an environment. In response, though, individuals also tried to limit and define their environment. Trying to go beyond their limits, individuals became subjects who challenged and changed the social conditions or traditions of their development. As a result, a new environment that redefines individuals would emerge. This production of the subject was “self-negating,” insofar as individuals negated their basis to make a new basis. Thus, the new environment was not a mere negation of the old one, but rather a restoration of the old one. According to Yanagida, this was a process of recreating a nation’s historical tradition (*minzoku no rekishiteki dentō*). The Japanese spirit, he believed, should be the rationale underlying the process of recreating the tradition of the Japanese nation: “That we pursue our nation’s traditional spirit does not only mean that we as created beings repeat the past completely, but rather it must mean that we as creative beings pursue our individualities that will challenge the national tradition.... Thus, the Japanese spirit is subjectively-objectively grasped as the awareness of [the necessity of] this practice.”¹⁶ From this angle, Yanagida criticized the narrow interpretation of the Japanese spirit suggested by so-called patriots (*aikokusha*) or Japanese spiritualists (*Nihon seishin-ron-ja*). These groups assumed that the Japanese spirit was a unique and transcendental principle incompatible with Western thought and culture. For them, the relationship between the Japanese spirit and Western culture was “either-or” (*entweder-oder*), and students of Western thought should be denounced as unpatriotic scholars who would encroach on the Japanese spirit. In contrast, Yanagida argued this narrow interpretation was harmful to the development of the Japanese spirit and culture.

Yanagida tried to support this argument from two standpoints. First, he invoked the role of dialectics in Western culture. In this account, although patriots and Japanese spiritualists were likely to criticize the West as materialistic, the dichotomy between material and spirit underpinning their criticism was nonsense. With respect to dialectics, it must be understood that the high

16 Yanagida Kenjūrō, *Nihon seishin to sekai seishin* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1939), 8–9.

level of economic development and the mode of production in the Western countries was based upon their advanced spiritual culture. Only a nation with a strong spirit could form subjects who conquered and utilized the material conditions surrounding them.

Second, Yanagida looked at how the dialectic between Japan and the West was crucial for the Japanese spirit. As we have already seen, for Yanagida, the process of recreating the Japanese national tradition was an expression of the Japanese spirit, and this recreation was an overcoming of the current conditions that confined the Japanese nation. Thus, in order to pursue the Japanese spirit, the Japanese nation should challenge its confines if its current status was incompatible with the Western spirit, and in this fashion recreate the Japanese tradition as something that could subsume Western traditions. Yanagida was convinced that the Japanese nation had in fact developed by subsuming foreign cultures, and the receptive characteristic of the Japanese spirit and culture was evidence of its distinction from them. Mentioning Watsuji's discussion of climate (*fūdo*), Yanagida attributed this receptivity to the geographical situation of Japan. He argued that the monsoon climate had made the Japanese people submissive and passive. Yanagida proceeded to describe Japanese culture as a "culture of nothingness" (*mu no bunka*), and claimed that this "self-negating" culture might become the principle of integrating the Western spirit and the Eastern spirit.

Here, Yanagida also appealed to a cliché that Nishida and other members of the Kyoto school used repeatedly.¹⁷ His discussion easily leads to the typical argument of the Kyoto School. That is to say, the argument that because of the receptivity of the Japanese spirit, whose characteristic they defined as *Mu* (nothingness), the Japanese nation could carry out the mission of creating the World spirit that subsumed every nation's culture and spirit; finally, the Japanese spirit as the World spirit would become the basis on which every nation in its specificity would be integrated into one totality. In other words, Yanagida also shared the idea that Japan would work as the meta-totality that would subsume any supposed contradictions and conflicts, and on which dialectics would operate.

17 It was a common tendency among members of the Kyoto School to argue that the Japanese spirit and culture would work as a universal principle by which the West and the East could be integrated, and this integration was the historical mission that Japan should accomplish. Exemplary works that assumed this position include Nishida Kitarō, "The Principle of the World New Order" (*Sekai shin-chitsujo no genri*), and Kōsaka Masaaki, Kōyama Iwao, Nishitani Keiji, and Suzuki Shigetaka, *The World Historical Standpoint and Japan* (*Sekaihiteki tachiba to Nippon*).

In fact, Yanagida did not go on to advocate the Japanese “historical mission” to construct a new world order through war. Instead, he discussed the necessity and ethical value of the war. This means that Yanagida did not regard the war as a dialectical process through which a new totality would emerge, as the medium between nation-states. For Yanagida, the nation-state was an absolute entity. As he emphasized the centrality of environment, he considered the totality or whole that defined human beings. He argued that “our existence is fundamentally social,”¹⁸ meaning that the individuality of each person was defined by something like “species” or “community” (*shu-teki kyōdōtai-teki narumono*). The formation of the nation was based on this community or species, and this nation should maintain absolute sovereignty (*zettai no shuken*): “While [the nation] has the [sovereign] power to exercise a kind of unlimited control over individuals, it needs to maintain its independence against other communities as species by claiming genuine rights of existence and autonomy. Furthermore, a community needs to maintain its life, since it pursues incessant development.”¹⁹ Yanagida denied individuals the right of maintaining their own lives, because this would conflict with the totality. For him, as long as each individual was defined by the totality, the totality was more essential than the individual. At the same time, he did not admit the existence of a totality that could supersede the nation or the community as species (*shuteki kyōdōtai*). As a result, Yanagida advocated that the nation-state was the absolute totality, and war occurred as a struggle in which the absolute sovereignty of every nation-state was at stake. In this sense, war was even necessary and ethical.

Thus, Yanagida absolutized the nation-state. He argued that every individual had to devote his/her life to the nation-state, and that war was the best moment for individuals to realize the necessity and ethical value of their devotion, or “self-negation,” to the nation-state. Yanagida even found religiosity in such “self-negation,” because he thought that the absoluteness of the state would be equivalent to a divinity. Here we can see the strong influence of Nishida on Yanagida’s discussion of the necessity of “self-negation” for reaching a divine or religious totality. However, this influence seemed to cause a serious side effect, insofar as Yanagida finally negated the dialectics between the subject and its environment. For Nishida, and Yanagida initially, “self-negation” was the principle (or *tekhne*) of detaching the subject from its environment, but, in the conclusion of *Nihon seishin to sekai seishin*, Yanagida needed “self-negation” only to be submissive to the environment. Of course, this problem should be attributed to the aporia of Nishida’s logic, which located meta-totality in

18 Yanagida, *Nihon seishin to sekai seishin*, 129.

19 Ibid., 131.

a dimension distinct from the environment, but nonetheless identified the meta-totality with the nation-state or Japan that should be, as Yanagida contended, the environmental condition. As a result, in Yanagida's logic, "self-negation" intersected with submission to the environment.

Conversion to Marxism

Ironically, Yanagida would become keenly aware of the brutality of what he had argued in *Nihon seishin to sekai seishin* three years after its publication. In 1941 he returned to Kyoto, and on October 1, 1942, his son Yōichi died in military service. In fact, his death did not come on the battlefield, but during a drill at the Air Defense School in Chiba prefecture. For Yanagida, the pain of this loss nearly caused a mental breakdown. His family members turned to popular superstitions, such as fortune telling, physiognomy, palm reading, *Acala* (*Fudō myōō*), and so forth, in an attempt to erase the bad luck that had befallen Yōichi. In a state of deep grieving, Yanagida came to feel that discussions of any wartime ideology were ridiculous. He confessed:

As a result, it did not matter to me where the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere went. I came to be filled with resentment, thinking: "I do not care about ideas like 'The Eight Corners of the World under One Roof.' Don't fool me!" I really grew to loathe the right-wing leaders who supported such an absurd war and kept lying.... The members of the Kyoto School should not be identified with such people, but it gradually became intolerable for me to be included among the theoretical leaders of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.²⁰

Here, Yanagida's aversion to the war reached its peak. He could no longer advocate the necessity for or ethical character of the war. Yanagida realized that any rationalization of the wartime ideology, including the one by the Kyoto School, would inevitably lead to a justification of the reality of the war.

Nevertheless, Yanagida still did not give up on the possibilities of Nishida's philosophy. Rather, he became more inclined to pursue elements of "pure" speculation in Nishida's thought. Yanagida was convinced that under the extreme circumstances of the war, he should pursue neither honor nor interest, but the truth that could serve as a principle for considering the meaning of his life and death. He thought that "the war becomes more vehement day by day,

²⁰ Yanagida, *Waga shisō no henreki*, 114.

and I cannot predict when my house and body might be blown up in an aerial attack.... Now I am thinking of Nishida's philosophy as the truth of the world, and relying on it as an anchor.... If Nishida's philosophy is genuinely the truth, my trust in it must be unshakable, even if I am faced with the border between life and death."²¹ Thus, Yanagida decided to pursue Nishida's philosophy as the truth, but this decision seems to only underscore his ambivalence about the relationship between Nishida's thought and the war. For Yanagida, Nishida's philosophy should have been the truth, but nevertheless it led to a position of support for the wartime ideology. His decision could be understood as an attempt to examine whether this support was the consequence of a perversion of Nishida's philosophy by other members of the Kyoto School—including himself—or whether it was an inherent problem of Nishida's philosophy itself. This decision prompted him to relocate from Kyoto to Saitama—a move that had significant meaning for Yanagida's own thought. With this move, Yanagida attempted to detach himself from the academic society in Kyoto. In other words, he intended to negate his status in the Kyoto milieu. This self-negation would enable him to break with the other members of the Kyoto School, as well as his own past and, in this way, immerse himself in Nishida's philosophy proper.

As Yanagida committed himself to the pursuit of the truth of Nishida's philosophy, his concern with religion also grew. After the defeat, a discourse on the necessity of social revolution became dominant. This trend was mainly supported by the Marxist perspective on class struggle, but Yanagida was not sympathetic to Marxists. On the contrary, he was convinced that in order to achieve a genuine social revolution, a self-revolution of the human being (*nin-gen no jiko-kakumei*) through religion would be needed.

What is the self-revolution of the human being? It must be, needless to say, that the person who sticks to his/her self-interest breaks out of his/her own shell, and thereby comes to live in pursuit of the happiness of all societies and human beings, with this as his/her supreme principle. How does this revolution become possible? It becomes possible only when a person is reborn by experiencing the absolute love of a higher being who transcends his/her egoism. Otherwise, class struggle is merely the struggle for the material.²²

21 Ibid., 116.

22 Ibid., 130.

From this perspective, Yanagida argued against Marxism in public debates and radio programs, and succeeded in attracting a wider following. However, as he read the letters from his supporters, he became aware that in spite of his good intentions, his position stood on the reactionary side (*handō*). Whereas Yanagida was sympathetic with the idea of social revolution, his critique of the Marxist narrative of revolution promoted the very forces that became an obstacle to revolution. With this awareness, Yanagida began to turn, or “negate himself,” again.

In 1950, Yanagida published the essay “Nishida tetsugaku no chōkoku” (Overcoming Nishida’s Philosophy). Although his acceptance of Marxism had already been widely known, this essay served as a manifesto of his conversion from Nishida’s philosophy to Marxism. With this, however, he did not apostatize Nishida’s philosophy completely. Yanagida basically admitted the problems of Nishida’s philosophy that had been criticized by Marxists: first, it was a highly idealistic philosophy that was strongly opposed to materialism; second, it never dissented from but rather accepted the reality of the nation-state and capitalist society, and in this way worked as a philosophy of the status quo; third, it was an imperialist (*kōdō-shugi*) philosophy that absolutized the nation-state as the embodiment of divine will on earth. At the same time, Yanagida took to task the Marxist critique of Nishida’s philosophy. He argued that while Marxists continued to aggressively denounce Nishida’s philosophy, they never tried to grasp the essence of it that might be appropriated for developing materialism. This was the reason why he had not been sympathetic with Marxists, but because it was obvious that Nishida’s idealist philosophy could not resolve the real problems of class society, Yanagida came to be interested in a Marxism that resisted state power in order to emancipate the laboring class. Finally, Yanagida emphasized the necessity of broadening the possibilities of Marxism by adopting Nishida’s ideas. With the claim that “both Nishida’s philosophy and Marxism take the standpoint from which our world is understood as the self-definition of the dialectical world,”²³ Yanagida thought that they were the same in terms of dialectics. While he admitted the superiority of dialectical materialism, he felt that there was some inadequacy in its theoretical framework, and thus he argued that the materialist dialectic should be complemented by Nishida’s dialectics.

Yet, how could Nishida’s philosophy complement Marxism? Prior to “Nishida tetsugaku no chōkoku,” Yanagida published two books: *Kanenn-ron to yuibutsu-ron* (Idealism and Materialism) in 1947 and *Marukusu tetsugaku no kihon mondai* (The Basic Question of Marxist Philosophy) in 1950. In *Kanenn-ron*

23 Yanagida Kenjūrō, “Nishida tetsugaku no chōkoku,” in *Kanenn-ron kara yuibutsu-ron: Yanagida Kenjūrō chosakushū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1967), 508.

to *yuibutsu-ron*, he compared idealism and materialism, and tried to reconcile them. By contrast, in *Marukusu tetsugaku no kihon mondai* he became more critical of idealism, and attempted to vindicate materialism. This book shows more clearly his intention to complement the materialist dialectic with Nishida's philosophy.

In this book, Yanagida accepted the Marxist perspective on class struggle as accurate. He was convinced that class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would necessarily occur as the denouement of a dialectical development of history. However, in his account Marxist theory was inadequate for establishing the necessity of class struggle and the victory of the working class. This is because Marxism could not suggest anything other than the self-interest of the laboring class as the moment that triggered the struggle. If class struggle involved merely the pursuit of self-interest such as higher wages, how could it move the dialectic through which authentic history as the actualization of truth would be realized? For Yanagida, dialectics were the principle by which history was elucidated as the actualization of truth, and the materialist dialectic also had to be such a principle. Nevertheless, no one could successfully interpret Marxism in such a way.

Yanagida thus suggested that class struggle had to be underpinned by the working class's awareness of humanity, and this awareness would overcome the narrow perspective of self-interest. In capitalist society, the capitalist class eroded the humanity of the working class because capitalism established the totality as the state in which the laboring class was exploited. Furthermore, even the capitalist class also became a slave of capitalism, because it was compelled to thoughtlessly pursue the goal of profit. Therefore, the purpose of the struggle should not be the pursuit of self-interest within the framework of the capitalist state, but rather to overturn the totality that alienated both the laboring and capitalist classes, to establish a new totality that would redefine individuals who had belonged to both classes. Otherwise, the totality that defined the working class as the object to be exploited would not be fundamentally changed. Thus, in order to establish the new totality that would guarantee the humanity or authenticity of all human beings, the working class had to challenge its confines. Yanagida was convinced that the working class would become aware of the necessity of the new totality through class struggle, and that this awareness would be understood as a reflection of the dialectical process that recreated the totality through "self-negation."

Thus, it may be said without any question that class struggle is a political struggle to create a new mode of production in the period to come. This is nothing but the subjective action of human beings who create new

relations of production. How is this subjectivity formed? Needless to say, it is formed when the proletariat, as the children of the age, thoroughly reflect the reality of class society subjective-objectively, or objective-subjectively. An objective reflection implies the approach taken by social science, while a subjective reflection implies that of a revolutionary activist. The class or partisan characteristic of truth does not mean that truth is relative in relation to self-interest, but that actualizing the energy of history as productive will be reflected and embodied in the proletariat.²⁴

In sum, Yanagida understood the working class as a self-negating subject that realized the dialectic through the process of recreating the totality. He called the revolutionary action of the working class “active-intuitive” (*kōi-teki chokkan-teki*), which was a concept originally suggested by Nishida. This is because the working class undertook revolutionary action with an intuitive understanding of dialectics.

As we have seen, Yanagida tried to reinterpret Marxism utilizing a philosophical framework that took shape through his immersion in Nishida's philosophy. Through his speculation on Marxism, Yanagida succeeded in separating the meta-totality from the environment, which Nishida had considered to be equivalent. Yanagida contended that the dialectic was the principle through which the subject would negate his/her environmental condition (e.g., the capitalist state), presenting it as the basis for the recreation of a new totality. For Yanagida, the materialist dialectic of Marxism had to be a deeply self-negative one, and this was the point of overcoming Nishida philosophy. However, we can see the strong influence of Nishida on Yanagida's interpretation of communism as a condition that had to be achieved after the negation of the capitalist state. Yanagida obviously identified the ideal of communism with the embodiment of the meta-totality suggested by Nishida, and therefore argued that the goal of communism was a perfect totality in which human possibility and liberty would fully and infinitely develop in a self-negating manner. In other words, if communism could grasp and embody the meta-totality itself perfectly, it would enable the dialectic as development to operate without interruption, but the subject would be needed to pursue this ceaseless self-negation. After all, Yanagida would come to argue the necessity of the subject's submission to the ideal of communism as it was invoked by the communist party. In this sense, self-negation became precisely the same as submission to the party and here we can see the repetition of the same logic Yanagida raised

24 Yanagida Kenjūrō, *Marukusu tetsugaku no kihon mondai*, in *Kannen-ron kara yuibutsuro e: Yanagida Kenjūrō chosakushū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1967), 425.

in the 1940s, except that Japan, or the state, was replaced by communism. This was a part of the self-negating process by which Yanagida's own subjectivity took form, and through which he tried to access the sole truth.

Epilogue

In 1954 Yanagida visited the Soviet Union and China. This experience seems to have made a strong impression on him. In fact, he still had some doubts about these countries, which were cleared up during these visits. In his account, there were five distinctive points that he came to understand during this trip. First, the people in the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe loved peace and hated war from the bottom of their hearts. They vigorously worked toward establishing a genuinely peaceful and happy world under the planned economies of the socialist regimes. Second, the people in the Soviet Union seemed to live a happy life. In Japan, the general reputation of Stalinist authoritarian power was that it deprived people of their liberty, but in fact this was not so. Third, Yanagida realized that ordinary Soviets and Chinese were proud of their government and respected their politicians. He considered this to be evidence that communist politics worked well. Fourth, private interests fit completely with the public interest in socialist countries, as each person, throughout life, from birth to death, was insured by the government. They did not have to concern themselves with private problems and focused only on how they could contribute to society. Finally, there was a strong sense of humanism in the socialist countries. Under the socialist regime, all individuals were respected and treated equally, and the rights and freedom of every individual were guaranteed by forbidding them from encroaching on the freedom of others.

Thus, for Yanagida, the Soviet Union and China were countries that embodied the truth, or perfect totality. He stated that "this journey served the purpose of firming up my self-awareness as a materialist."²⁵ Here, the truth Yanagida espoused seems to have been completely subsumed by Marxism. He even articulated that "I feel that I have finally arrived at the goal of my life by becoming a materialist. When I knew the person named Nishida Kitarō, I had a similar feeling, but I can understand now that it was a fallacy that I had embraced subjectively and tentatively."²⁶ Nevertheless, as we have seen, the principle that supported his complete conversion to Marxism was the "self-negating"

25 Yanagida Kenjūrō, *Yuibutsu-ron jū-nen: zoku waga shisō no henreki*, in *Jijoden: Yanagida Kenjūrō chosakushū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1967), 230.

26 *Ibid.*, 190.

formation of his own subjectivity, which was originally discussed by Nishida as the rule of the “care of the self.”

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A Secret History

Tosaka Jun and the Kyoto Schools

Katsuhiko Endo

Iki lives in the future, holding the past in its arms.

KUKI SHŪZŌ, *The Structure of Iki*



Tosaka Jun as the “Godfather” of the Kyoto School

Chapter 9 of Takeda Atsushi’s *The Story of the “Kyoto School,”* entitled “Tosaka Jun’s ‘Kyoto School,’” begins:

It is unclear when and by whom the name *Kyōto gakuha* [the Kyoto School] was created.

Professor Emeritus Furuta Hikaru of Yokohama National University says that it may have been Tosaka Jun. It is understandable that there is a section called “The Kyoto School of Philosophy” in his *Lectures on Contemporary Philosophy*. It was published in 1934.¹

Takeda is referring to the section in Tosaka’s *Lectures on Contemporary Philosophy* in which Tosaka argued:

While, at this moment, I do not have the qualifications to make a decisive evaluation of Nishida Philosophy, I can, to some extent, depict its characteristics in this way. Accordingly, we must understand what kind of social and political characteristics this mode of thinking has. However, this is not all. Actually, Nishida Philosophy has developed into the Nishida

1 Takeda Atsushi, *Monogatari “Kyōto gakuha”: chishikijin-tachi no yūjyō to kattō* [The story of “the Kyoto school”: Friendship and conflict among intellectuals] (Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2012), 76. Unless noted otherwise, all translations from Japanese into English are mine.

School or, the so-called Kyoto School. Currently, it is a social being that has a definitive form.²

In his conversation with Tanaka Michitarō, Ueyama Shunpei testifies that (something like) the Nishida School “had begun to be loosely formed since 1931 or ’32.”³ If this is true, the formation of the Nishida School was a few years ahead of the publication of *Lectures*. These few years in the early 1930s can be understood as the time needed for the development of the Nishida School into the Kyoto School. During these years, Tanabe Hajime “made use of Dr. Nishida’s philosophy effectively” and “faithfully arranged and sutured Nishida philosophy’s theses.”⁴ This is how the Kyoto School was born according to Tosaka.

Regarding this, Takeda writes:

Without a “successor,” there is no “school.” By raising names such as Tanabe and Miki, it seems that the “Kyoto School” was safely born by the hands of Tosaka. (After this, Tosaka also clearly says, “thinking in this way, after all, today’s academic or bourgeois philosophy seems to be represented by Nishida = Tanabe Philosophy—the philosophy of the Kyoto School.”)

However, in order for a school to be formed and develop, the emergence of a “successor” is not enough. If that were that, a “school” would merely become a series of epigones or tagalongs and lose its life in the end. “Succession” should not be just succession but the emergence of one who criticizes it. In this case, however, “he” should not be “external” but an “internal” “critic” of the “school.” When Tanabe came to bear this responsibility, the formation of the “Kyoto School of philosophy” can be discussed for the first time.⁵

If Tanabe and Miki are considered internal critics, then, as successors, it would be natural to identify Tosaka as an external critic because of his “materialist” criticism of Nishida and his successors. However, what I would like to think of in this essay is Tosaka as another internal critic; that is to say, Tosaka as the successor of the Kyoto School of philosophy.

Further, this article discusses those who share, or succeeded to, “Tosaka’s Kyoto School” in the past and the present and in Japan and elsewhere. In so

2 Ibid., 80–81.

3 Ibid., 83.

4 Ibid., 81.

5 Ibid., 81–82.

doing, I aim to deepen our understanding of this “unorthodox” line of the Kyoto School of philosophy as well as shed light on its current state and future prospects.

Tosaka’s Kyoto School includes many who are not normally considered members of the Kyoto School. Nonetheless, insofar as Tosaka was an internal critic, and hence a successor of the school, they, too, should be considered as such.

Emulating *Senke* or, the Sen School of the Japanese tea ceremony, which is divided into the *omote* (mainstream) and *ura* (backstreet) (as well as *Mushakōji*), we will call the Kyoto School in question the *ura*-Kyoto School while the one that consists of those discussed in Takeda’s book as well as Harry Harootunian’s essay included in this volume should be considered as the *omote*-Kyoto School. In what follows I “fabricate” the “secret history” of the Kyoto School of philosophy as the history of the *ura*-Kyoto School.

World History, Vagabonds, and Tosaka’s *Iki*

The dialogue with Kuki Shūzō is the beginning of this secret history. Surprisingly, this man of *iki* played a significant role in the formation of the *ura*-Kyoto School.

As I will show below, Tosaka’s criticism of what he calls Japanism, or the Japanese ideology, can be read like that in Kuki’s work such as *The Structure of Iki*: at least in light of the former’s criticism, the latter’s hermeneutic-phenomenological analysis of the Japanese word *iki* is a perfect showcase of the Japanese ideology. Paradoxically, however, it is within this particular form of the ideology that I look for something common between the two; something that can be seen as the legacy of the Kyoto School of philosophy in Tosaka’s materialism.

In the introduction to *The Japanese Ideology*, titled “Problems in Contemporary Japanese Thought,” Tosaka writes that “Japanism in the proper sense takes its stand on the Japanist ‘understanding’ of ‘national history,’” and “What remains as Japanism among Japanisms is only the Japanist national history and, in conclusion, it is no longer anything philosophical.”⁶

6 Tosaka Jun, “Gendai shisō-jyō no sho-mondai” [Problems in contemporary Japanese thought], in *Nihon ideorogi-ron* [Theory of the Japanese ideology], *Tosaka Jun zenshū* [Complete works of Tosaka Jun] (*TJz*, hereafter), vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kesō shobō, 1978), 232, 233.

What is the Japanist national history? We may find its structure in Tosaka's criticism of Gabriel Tarde's concept of "society" in "Unconscious Falsity":

By virtue of the concept of society that we have now, we feel that Tarde's concept of society must be corrected in many significant aspects. Leaving the other points aside for now, at least we must draw attention to that which Tarde has chosen from the outset—society—as the problem that is destined to be negated. [For him] society is the fallen being that sprung forth at the moment when Adam and Eve lost paradise, so to speak. [If this were true] we must wait for the day when we witness our salvation from this human society and enter the city of God. Therefore, according to Tarde, society is something that certainly brings about a false form of logic—not just under certain conditions, but in all cases. Now, I will correct this point.⁷

In Tarde's history, according to Tosaka, "society" as a "problem" or a "fallen being" is located in the present. It is wedged in by "paradise," or the "city of God," as the negation of society in the present, which occupies both the past and the future. Let us begin with this as the structure of Japanese national history or of the ultimate Japanese ideology.

The history with this structure is world history, in which the members of the *omote*-Kyoto School of philosophy saw their *tachiba* (position), a kind of world history, from which the idea of *kindai no chōkoku* (overcoming the modern) emanates. However, this does not mean that the *omote*-Kyoto monopolized this position. As much as he criticized it, Tosaka also was its successor: hence, this history in question is, also, the genesis of the *ura*-Kyoto.

Harootunian, the leading successor of the *ura*-Kyoto School, elaborates on this "common ground" between the *ura*- and the *omote*- in his essay in this volume. Echoing Tosaka's remark on Tarde's concept of "society" as well as Kōsaka Masaaki's voice, he says, "in Kōsaka's thinking the present and its overcoming was 'above all' reducible to 'the problem of Japan.'" According to Harootunian, the "problem" as "society," or *shakai mondai* (social problem), is in fact "the present" itself and it was the "central question" for both Kyoto Schools: "the now infamous symposium on world history of 1942 (*Sekaiishi tachiba to Nippon*)..., in Kōsaka Masaaki's admonitory proclamation, proposed that the central question at hand is the present, and constituted a preoccupation found in the writings of virtually all of the people who, in one way or another, were associated with Kyoto philosophy, like Tanabe, Tosaka Jun, Nishitani Keiji,

⁷ Tosaka Jun, "Muishiki-teki kyoi" "[Unconscious falsity]," in *TJz* 2: 66.

Kōyama Iwao, Miki Kiyoshi and indeed Nishida Kitarō himself.” Moreover, in the Kyoto School’s world history, the present as society and as problem is none other than the modern: hence, the resolution of the problem peculiar to modern society in the present lies in the meaning of *kindai no chōkoku* (overcoming modernity) as clarified in Harootunian’s take on Miki’s and Heidegger’s criticisms of the modern.

Certainly Kuki was a part of this project; actually, quite a big one. Furthermore, there exists more than enough evidence of his involvement in the *omote*-Kyoto School, which Tosaka thoroughly criticized in the end. However, there is some “excess” in Kuki’s text that enables us to walk over the bridge from the *omote*- to the *ura*-. In order to find the location of the bridge, we first need to clarify what makes Kuki a central figure of the *omote*-Kyoto School of philosophy through Tosaka’s criticism of the Japanese ideology.

In fact, Tarde, whose concept of society, or of the present, Tosaka denounced, often plays a significant role in Kuki’s texts. This prompts us to speculate that, in the guise of criticizing Tarde, Tosaka was actually criticizing Kuki. The following quote from the introduction to *The Structure of Iki* leads us to think that this may be the case:

Another example is the German word *Sehnsucht*, “longing, yearning,” a word to which the German people gave birth and to which they possess an organic relation. *Sehnsucht* conveys the feeling of longing for a bright, happy world harbored by a people who were disturbed by a melancholy climate and military conflicts. This longing to escape to the land where lemon flowers bloom is not a mere homesick sentiment of Mignon. It is rather an earnest longing of Germans as a whole for the bright south of Germany in general. It is a longing for flight “away into distant futures which no dream had yet seen, into hotter souths than artists ever dreamed of, where gods in their dances are ashamed of all clothes” and what Nietzsche calls *flügelbrausende Sehnsucht*, both equally held dear by all German people. The penchant for agonizing longing eventually gives rise to metaphysical sentiments that constitute the presupposition that underlines the world of *noumenon*....

The Japanese word *iki* is one with meaning that is rich in ethnic coloring.⁸

8 Shūzō Kuki, *The Structure of Iki*, trans. Hiroshi Nara (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2008), 26. The quote, “away into distant futures...,” is from Pt. 3, Chap. 12, “On Old and New Tablets,” of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter A. Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 197.

“A bright, happy world,” “the bright south of Germany,” and “hotter souths” correspond to “paradise,” or “the city of God,” in the past and the future; and, the country that is “disturbed by a melancholy climate and military conflicts” to “society” in the present. What in the history of this structure did Tosaka mean to correct? “Problems in Contemporary Japanese Thought” provides us with a clue:

The last refuge [of Japanism] cannot be anything other than the “understanding” of what is said to be national history; the understanding that is, from the outset, Japanist. (To preliminarily present this conclusion as an assumption is the most convenient method.) Now then, the philosophical method necessary for it is not the categories of European totalitarianism or the like; rather, it is, in reality, nothing other than the philologism in question. In fact, however, this philologism itself is by no means unique to Japan: rather, contemporary representative philosophy in Germany is explicitly philologism (like M. Heidegger). Therefore, what remains as Japanism among Japanisms is only Japanist national history and, in conclusion, it is no longer anything philosophical.⁹

The “hermeneutic-philosophical method called philologism,” “like M. Heidegger,” itself is “by no means unique to Japan”: “what remains as Japanism among Japanisms” is, Tosaka says, only “Japanist national history” as “that in which the philologism is applied to national history.” We may see a trace of this application as a collaboration between Kuki and his German friend in the very last words from *The Structure of Iki*:

What must be recalled, we must keep in mind, is not the abstract universal of general concepts proposed by Platonic realists. It is rather a unique ethnic feature, a type of individual uniqueness advocated by nominalists. Here, we must dare to seek a convention of the Platonic epistemology by inverting its thought process. If such is the case, how can we tether ourselves to the possibility of *anamnesis*—“recollection”—of this meaning? No way but this: by refusing to consign our spiritual culture to oblivion. Only then can we remain steadfast, true to the passionate eros of our idealistic and unrealistic culture. *Iki* stands in an inseparable internal relationship to the idealism of *bushidō* [the Way of the Samurai] and the unrealism of Buddhism. *Iki* means that *bitai* “coquetry” that has acquired *akirame* “resignation” lives in the freedom of *ikiji* “pride and honor.”

9 Tosaka, “Gendai shisō-jyō no sho-mondai,” 232–33.

We cannot allow coquetry to take the form of *iki*, unless we as a people possess an unclouded vision of our destiny and an unabated longing for freedom of soul. We comprehend and understand completely the core meaning of *iki* only when we grasp its structure as a self-revelation of the being of our people.¹⁰

“*Iki* means that *bitai* ‘coquetry’ that has acquired *akirame* ‘resignation’ lives in the freedom of *ikiji* ‘pride and honor.’” Regarding the history in question, the Buddhist concept of *akirame* ‘resignation’ is to cast off or alienate oneself from “[modern Western] society” and from values unique to it (e.g., individual freedom or human rights) as abstract-universal, general concepts. It enables one to recollect (as the past) and long for “distant futures which no dream had yet seen” in which freedom of soul can be found. With *ikiji* ‘pride and honor’ in the Way of the Samurai, thus, at the risk of death, one throws oneself into the act to “close the distance” to this future.¹¹

Iki in this sense is the “feature,” or tradition, unique to those who belong to the ancestry of the Yamato people, the ethnic group that possesses the national language called Japanese. Under the hermeneutic-phenomenological thesis that “Language (logos) is the route to phenomena,”¹² philosophers like Heidegger and Kuki supposedly help their people recollect and long for the true meaning of the word; that is to say, grasp “its structure as a self-revelation of the being of” themselves.

For Tosaka, “what remains as Japanism among Japanisms is only Japanist national history” because, in Kuki’s history, to “close the distance” to “distant futures which no dream had yet seen” is limited to those who possess the necessary “tradition and kinship” to do so as well as the language to recollect it.¹³ This is how, Tosaka explains, hermeneutic phenomenology made in Germany enabled the Japanese to produce a Japanist national history.

In this way, it is more than possible to understand Kuki’s history as the Japanist national history criticized by Tosaka. Still, they are not separated as much as this possibility may suggest. In fact, Tosaka himself provides a clue for us to start looking into the legacy of the Kyoto School of philosophy in Tosaka.

10 Kuki, *The Structure of Iki*, 198.

11 Tosaka Jun, “Bunkengaku’teki tetsugaku no hihan” [Critique of “philological” philosophy], in *TJz* 2: 242.

12 Ibid.

13 Tosaka Jun, “Liberalist Philosophy and Materialism: Against the Two Types of Liberal Philosophy,” in *Tosaka Jun: A Critical Reader*, trans. John Person, ed. Ken C. Kawashima, Fabian Schäfer, and Robert Stolz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 95. The Japanese original is “Jiyūshugi-tetsugaku to yuibutsu-ron” [Liberalist philosophy and materialism], in *TJz* 2: 401.

In “The Fate of Japanism” Tosaka writes that “both as a form of idea and as an unfortunate idea, it carries quite a remarkable *ideological* disposition from the beginning. In other words, it is a ‘Japanese ideology.’”¹⁴ Here, he might have been just repetitive when he said “both as a form of idea and as an unfortunate idea.” Nevertheless, the following sentence from “Unconscious Falsity” makes us think twice: “We can call the form of the falsity that the idea surpasses historical reality—the present—utopia; and name the opposite form of the false as ideology (in the bad sense).”¹⁵

If the second meaning of Japanism (Japanese ideology as an unfortunate idea) were “ideology (in the bad sense),” the first meaning (“a form of idea”) would be “utopia” as the “form of the falsity that the idea surpasses historical reality—the present.” If “historical reality—the present” and “utopia” here corresponds to the present “disturbed by a melancholy climate and military conflicts” and “distant futures which no dream had yet seen,” in Kuki’s history, respectively, it is possible to think that what the word “history” means for Tosaka might share its structure with Japanist national history, but with a different future, which is “utopia” as the “the form of the falsity that the idea surpasses historical reality.” What is this idea of history in Tosaka or in the *ura*-Kyoto School in general?

Tosaka’s allusion to the two kinds of falsity, or of ideology (hence, of history), takes us to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s discussion of Heidegger and of history in *What Is Philosophy?* Tosaka’s complex stance vis-à-vis Kuki seems parallel to Deleuze and Guattari’s stance on Heidegger, and this may not be just a coincidence.

Deleuze had an older brother, Georges, who was a member of the French Resistance.¹⁶ Georges was captured by the Nazis and died when he was moved to Auschwitz. After that, young Deleuze continued to live in occupied Paris. During the years of Nazi occupation, Deleuze said, it was John Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* that supported him spiritually. Ironically, the book was written under the influence of Heidegger, who supported Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party. What has remained unknown for many is that it was Kuki who played an indirect, but crucial role in the writing of *Being and Nothingness*. In 1928, a year after *Being and Time* was published, Kuki moved to Paris after studying with, and developing a friendship with, Heidegger. Upon his arrival,

14 Tosaka Jun, “The Fate of Japanism: From Fascism to Emperorism,” in *Tosaka Jun*, trans. John Person, 60. The Japanese original is “Nihonshugi no kisu,” in *TJz* 2: 322.

15 Tosaka, “Muishiki-teki kyoi,” 67.

16 Shinohara Motoaki, *Dūrūzu: Nomadorōgi* [Deleuze: Nomadology] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1997), 28.

he hired a French language tutor in order to study with Henri Bergson, and the tutor happened to be Sartre. While he was studying philosophy as a Ph.D. student at Sorbonne at the time, Sartre was one of many outside Germany who were yet to learn about Heidegger's book. He was excited about this new philosophy that Kuki taught him in exchange for learning the French language and philosophy.

In fact, Sartre is not the only one who virtually connects Deleuze and Kuki. While Tarde plays an important role in some of Kuki's writings, it was Deleuze and Guattari who shed light on this long-forgotten French sociologist through their positive reevaluation.

Keeping these curious coincidences in mind, let us examine Deleuze and Guattari's take on Heidegger, which involves not only criticism, but also shows the closeness of the former's thinking with the latter's:

The Heidegger affair has complicated matters: a great philosopher actually had to be reterritorialized on Nazism for the strangest commentaries to meet up, sometimes calling his philosophy into question and sometimes absolving it through such complicated and convoluted arguments that we are still in the dark. It is not always easy to be Heideggerian. It would be easier to understand a great painter or musician falling into shame in this way (but, precisely, they did not). It had to be a philosopher, as if shame had to enter into philosophy itself. He wanted to rejoin the Greeks through the Germans, at the worst moment in their history: is there anything worse, said Nietzsche, than to find oneself facing a German when one was expecting a Greek? How could Heidegger's concepts not be intrinsically sullied by an abject reterritorialization? Unless all concepts include this gray zone and indiscernibility where for a moment the combatants on the ground are confused, and the thinker' tired-eye mistakes one for the other—not only the German for a Greek but the fascist for a creator of existence and freedom. Heidegger lost his way along the paths of the reterritorialization because they are paths without directive signs or barriers. Perhaps this strict professor was madder than he seemed. He got the wrong people, earth, and blood. For the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race—the very ones that Kant excluded from the paths of the new Critique.¹⁷

17 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 108–09.

It may be possible to read this as the criticism of Kuki if we replace “the Greeks” and “the German” with “the Yamato people” and “the Japanese,” respectively. At the same time, however, this quote seems to suggest that, if it were not the Japanese as the “wrong people,” or “pure...race,” but “rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race” who “rejoin” “the Yamato people,” one might not lose one’s “way along the paths of the reterritorialization” or along “flight ‘away into distant futures which no dream had yet seen.” The “minor race” may not “mistake” “hotter souths than artists ever dreamed of” for the future in Japanist national history as “ideology (in the bad sense),” but rightly identify it with “utopia” as the “the form of the falsity that the idea surpasses historical reality.”

After the above quote, Deleuze and Guattari write, “Without history experimentation would remain indeterminate and unconditioned.”¹⁸ “History” here is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the “history of revolutions” such as Heidegger’s history and the *omote*-Kyoto School’s world history as Japanist national history, and “experimentation” is “(revolutionary) becoming” that is the minor race’s “flight ‘away into a distant future”—a future as “the form of the falsity that the idea surpasses historical reality.” Can *iki* be experimentation as becoming—a minor (race) and its flight away into a distant future, which the French thinkers say, must be born out of the history of revolutions or Heidegger’s history?

On the one hand, “*iki* can be safely considered to be a distinct self-expression of an Oriental culture, or more precisely, a specific mode of being of the Yamato people.”¹⁹ On the other hand, however, Kuki also says: “A vagabond who maintains ‘continual finitude,’ an evil person who finds joy in the ‘infinity of evil’; an Achilles, who would not succumb to fatigue from ‘eternal’ pursuit—only these kinds of people know true coquetry. And this type of coquetry defines *iropposa*, ‘coquet,’ a basic theme for *iki*.”²⁰ Here, apparently, Kuki “summons forth” the “minor race” called “vagabonds” “by art or philosophy.” In so doing, is he tuning the history of revolutions (e.g., Japanist national history) into becoming-vagabonds as revolutionary becoming, in which one flies away into the distant future—the future as the opposite, or negation, of “ideology (in the bad sense)?” If that is the case, what is the relation between vagabonds and the Yamato people? Are vagabonds within the Yamato people?

18 Ibid., 110–11.

19 Kuki, *The Structure of Iki*, 30.

20 Ibid., 42.

Or, is Kuki talking about the contact of vagabonds and the Yamato people as the “real” origin of *iki*? Is there any possibility that the Yamato people themselves are hybrids of vagabonds as minor races?

Leaving aside these questions concerning the relation between vagabonds and the Yamato people in Kuki’s text (and beyond) for now, let us begin to investigate the traces of *iki* as becoming-minor (race)—Vagabondism—in Tosaka as well as those who have come after. We will begin with the following “evidence” found in *Theory of Science*, which was published in 1935, the year that *The Japanese Ideology* also came out:

We must say, in the end, that the process of the constitution of knowledge that guarantees, ensures, and examines the objectivity of knowledge results in, in short, human practice. Nevertheless, it does not remain in the stage of sensation, perception, observation, experimentation, or verification. In general, nothing but human activity, as a social being, within society—productive activity/political activity—must be the meaning of this practice. The history of human society develops through this practical activity of human beings. In this sense, the idea called practice cannot lose its historical and social content. Sensation and experimentation are nothing but aspects that arise when practice is limited to theoretical activity or intellectual activity.²¹

If we try to find in this quote *iki* in the sense of the closing of the distance to a future different from the one in the history of revolutions, it would be, first and foremost, “practice” as “productive activity/political activity.” Deleuze and Guattari might consider this what they call “experimentation.” According to Tosaka, “theoretical activity or intellectual activity” such as art, philosophy, and science should be a part of it: hence, “experimentation” “limited to” it should be the production of knowledge, as well as works (of art), necessary for the architecture of the future.

How should Tosaka’s *iki* in this sense, actually, manifest itself? If it is vagabonds who, originally, possess it (in the form of “coquetry,” or, love), who are they? How is it translated into Tosaka’s *iki* or, Vagabondism, and what kind of relationship should the intellectuals in the *ura*-Kyoto School have with the vagabonds for this translation?

²¹ Tosaka Jun, *Kagaku-ron* [Theory of science], in *TJz* 1: 147.

With Uno, With Nishida: The Economic Principle and the Genesis of *Iki* as Vagabondism

The economist Uno Kōzō and his article “The Organizing of Capitalism and Democracy” published in May 1946 (the 1946 article, hereafter) help us find the answers.²² As I will show below, there is much in common between the 1946 article and Tosaka’s discussion of fascism in “The Fate of Japanism.” This is not a coincidence. In the formative period of his theory that overlapped with that of the Kyoto School, Uno seemed to be quite attentive to the latter’s philosophical discourse and came to adopt a stance similar to Tosaka’s.

Uno was an enthusiastic reader of Tosaka’s journal, *Study of Materialism*, in the 1930s.²³ What is important for us is that, regarding the debate about the relation between science (Marxian economics) and ideology (historical materialism) that took place in the journal, he took the side of the minority that consisted of just Tosaka and Katō Tadashi—the side that insisted on the autonomy of science from ideology. Actually, in the postwar period Uno succeeded to Tosaka and Katō’s position, and debated with Umemoto Katsumi (who owed much to Tanabe philosophically) as well as Maruyama Masao.

Uno’s orientation toward *Nihon shihonshugi ronsō* (the debate on capitalism in Japan) that preceded the above debate explains why he took sides with Tosaka and Katō.²⁴ It may be safe to say that his relation to both sides of the debate, the *Kōza* School and the *Rōnō* School, is similar to the one that the Kyoto School of philosophy had to the Marxists, as Harootyan points out in his chapter in the present volume. Uno learnt from both schools even though he criticized them, and the knowledge and critical viewpoint gained from the debate became a foundation for his own economic theory. Nevertheless, the contribution of this great Marxian debate does not stop here: it is this debate that gives us a clue about the hitherto unexamined relation between the Uno school of economics and the Kyoto School of philosophy, as will be shown shortly.

22 Uno Kōzō, “Shihonshugi no soshikika to minshushugi” [The organizing of capitalism and democracy], in *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* [Selected works of Uno Kōzō] (*UKC* hereafter), vol. 8 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975), 277–91.

23 Uno Kōzō, *Shihon-ron gojū-nen* [Fifty years with *Das Kapital*] (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku shuppankyoku, 1973), 496.

24 As for the relation between Uno and the debate on capitalism in Japan, See Gavin Walker’s *The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

One of Uno's major criticisms of the Marxian economists and historians in both of the schools is directly connected to the standpoint he shared with Tosaka in the debate on science and ideology. According to his critical assessment, not only the *Kōza* School but also the *Rōnō* School took it for granted that it is the task of Marxian economics to validate, scientifically, the tenets of historical materialism, especially the historico-logical necessity of the collapse of capitalism. Contrarily, Uno endowed Marxian economics with the role of elucidating the conditions, or *keizai hōsoku* (economic law), under which capitalism could subsume a society (almost) completely (in the name of "real subsumption") and reproduce itself perpetually (in theory, at least) as *junsui shihonshugi* (pure capitalism) or *junsui shihonshugi shakai* (pure capitalist society). Based on this primary theory, called *keizai genron* or *genriron* (theory of economic principles), he also theorized, as *keizai seisakuron* (theory of economic policy) (or, more commonly, *dankairon* [stage theory]), the way finance capital distorts economic law, and also how the distortion creates "social problems" and necessitates *shakai seisaku* (social policy) (hence, biopolitics, as I will discuss below).

However, the claim on the autonomy of Marxian economics (science) from historical materialism (ideology) in this sense does not mean that Uno threw the latter out with the bath water. Quite the contrary—he insists that only insofar as economics is formed as such could it help radically resolve, that is to say, overcome, "the fundamental contradiction-qua-problem of capitalism" as historical materialism anticipates. What does he mean by this? What does "fundamental resolution" mean for him? If it is not a historical necessity but a contingency, what could bring about it?

As I will discuss in detail later, Uno saw hints of a radical resolution in Miki's "space capable of accommodating Japan's world historical position and an emergent Asia yet preserving capitalism in a new configuration";²⁵ that is to say, in "a temporally and spatially different kind of capitalism embodied in the regional East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as the solution to both a crisis that required saving capitalism from itself (and liberal failure) and satisfying the need to emphasize distance and difference from the 'modern' that is, overcoming the West." At the same time, however, he foresaw that the actually existing regional economic spheres in Asia and Europe would necessarily fail, and he argued that philosophy was largely responsible for this failure.

Uno considered that the "fundamental contradiction-qua-problem of global capitalism" realizes itself as a global agrarian crisis. Hence, he argued, regional economic spheres could be legitimized only insofar as they could guarantee

25 Harootunian, "Philosophy and Answerability," in the present volume.

the right to life for the people in the peripheries such as Java and Okinawa. In reality, however, the actually existing spheres were founded on expropriation in such agricultural regions, which thus deepened the crisis. He considered that as the fundamental reason for the failures.

If we consider those who were outside the spheres as “an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race,” Uno’s criticism of the actually existing regional economic spheres fits with Deleuze and Guattari’s criticism of Heidegger. And since we have already seen that the latter can also be understood as a critique of the *omote*-Kyoto School, it can be assumed that Uno’s criticism of philosophy was, largely, that of the *omote*-Kyoto School. For example: “While this [(*omote*-)Kyoto School’s] analysis prefigured later discourses that put into question the status of the subject, especially the instability of representation and conceptions of history no longer bound to the limited unit of the nation form, chronology identifying past with present and the authority of empirico-positivism as the ground of historical knowledge, it often subordinated this philosophic analysis to the demands of the Japanese state and its agenda calling for ‘total war’ and leadership in Asia.”²⁶

Uno’s criticism of the *omote*-Kyoto School of philosophy had much to do with the construction of his economic theory. Given that the Japanese Empire was the “absolute present,” or the future in the present (that can never be fully realized), for the *omote*-Kyoto School, Harootunian says, “it is difficult to disentangle this absolute present from the eternity claimed by capitalism’s conception of contemporaneity.” It is possible to understand this capitalism whose conception of contemporaneity claims eternity as what Uno theorized as pure capitalism in his theory of principles discussed above.

If this is the case, the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere was moving toward pure capitalism. In fact, Uno’s “real-time” analysis of the regional economic spheres in Asia and Europe during the war played a crucial role in the construction of his theory of principles as a theory of pure capitalism, which pronounces that capitalism could ensure its “eternity” only insofar as it excluded “minor races” or located them at the border of the inside and outside, in the name of “(relative) surplus population” and were grounded in them as the (hidden) foundation.

If Uno’s criticism of philosophy points to the latter’s replacement of “distant futures which no dream had yet seen” with pure capitalism, what would be Uno’s “distant futures” or “souths”? It is *keizai gensoku* (economic principles) as in Marx’s labor process, contra the economic law unique to capitalism.

26 Ibid.

This may be another and actually most important point of contact between the *ura*- and the *omote*-.

In his chapter in the current volume, Haver contends that “living labor” and “the labor process” in Marx correspond to “Nishida’s conceptions of *homo faber* as subject (*shutai*), and of a mode of production (*seisan yōshiki*),” respectively. It is possible that Uno saw “Nishida’s historical materialism” in Marx’s and understood Marx’s labor process, hence the economic principles, as Haver argues. From his youth Uno was an enthusiastic reader of Nishida and the latter’s influence seemed so large and persistent that there is very much a need for a serious study of their relationship.

In Haver’s comment that “the singularity of the present, the labor process as *process*, as the restlessness of becoming that is to say, is itself an orientation toward that which is incomprehensible according to the logic that subtends the existing mode of production,” the words “that which is incomprehensible according to the logic that subtends the existing mode of production” can be understood as “distant futures which no dream had yet seen.” But, the “future” is also the “present” because “the present [as the labor process] is the space of time, and that time is constituted in the movement from present to present.”²⁷ Moreover, this future in the present, or the present as the future, is “the making” contra “the made,” because this “movement from present to present” as the labor process or, living labor, is a “movement from the made to the making.”²⁸ In this case, “the made” should be considered as “non-linear periodic cycles, the modern myth of eternal returns,” which is “the capitalist mode of production” or pure capitalism itself.²⁹

For us, that is to say, for the *ura*-Kyoto School, the labor process (living labor) as our future in the present, or present as the future, must be one that includes the minor races or vagabonds. It is what Tosaka’s “productive activity/political activity” should be; and it is none other than what Nishida calls “historical formative activity” (*rekishiteki keisei sayō*).³⁰ Simultaneously, this movement from the made to the making is what it must “orient itself toward” or take flight toward: as Haver puts it, “In the labor process, we make our own world, but we do not make it just as we please.”

According to Haver’s reading of Nishida, “living labor, the labor process, is thus becoming itself.” We, the members of the *ura*-Kyoto School, consider it to

27 Nishida Kitarō, “Zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu” [Absolute contradictory self-identity], quoted in Haver’s chapter in the present volume.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

be what Deleuze called “experimentation,” or “revolutionary becoming,” which emanates from, and is differentiated from, Heidegger and the *omote*-Kyoto School’s world history. It is “an empirical, materialist concept of historical time in its essential irreversibility...; a concept that would enable us to conceive past, present, and future in their essential difference,” contra “non-linear periodic cycles, the modern myth of eternal returns,” which is pure capitalism as well as Heidegger’s and the *omote*-Kyoto School’s world history. In fact, when they say “Without history experimentation would remain indeterminate and unconditioned,” Deleuze and Guattari stand close to Nishida, who contends “the world moves from the made to the making.”

When Kuki declared that “*iki* lives in the future, holding the past in its arms,” this means for us that “*iki* lives in the future” as the labor process or living labor. At the same time, since we, the *ura*-Kyoto School, live in the labor process as the future (in the present) or more precisely, since we are the labor process itself as becoming, we are the *iki* as Vagabondism itself and must live as such. And world history may “determine and condition” what we must do now, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue:

The unilateralist strategy of imperial power involves a fundamental geopolitical rearrangement organized around three primary elements. The first element is the grouping of world powers into regional formations and the maintenance of hierarchy among them. Unilateralist geopolitical strategy can thus be imagined in the shape of a wheel with the United States as hub with spokes extending to each region of the globe. Each region is defined from this perspective as the group of local powers plus the United States as the dominant element. The North Atlantic region is defined as the Western European states plus the United States; the Latin American region as the Latin American powers plus the United States; the Pacific region as the East Asian states plus the United States; and so forth.

We should take into account, however, the unpredictability of these relations of force in international politics and recognize that regional formations can also act in contradiction with the hierarchical unity of imperial command. The regional model of imperial order is occasionally disrupted by the self-assertion of the various regional powers. Thus the back and forth movements of the European Union, sometimes favorable to the Atlantic alliance with the United States, at others open to the possibility of a continental unification with Russia, and at still others intent on achieving the autonomy of Europe’s political will. The ex-Soviet countries similarly vacillate between loyalty to U.S. projects, proposals

of greater European alliances, and resurrections of old geopolitical lines (between Russia and India, for example). We could read the creative Chinese experiments in a “democracy of the middle class” as an assertion of regional autonomy aimed at an Asian-centered globalization. Such regional developments and vacillations are also equally present in other parts of the world, for example, in the emerging Latin American projects of regional autonomy centered on Brazil and Argentina. Could one even imagine a project of regional autonomy in the Middle East? In all of these cases, regional formations play a contradictory, double-edged role in unilateralist imperial geopolitics, both as necessary parts of the unified order and as potentially autonomous forces that can break the order.³¹

If we read Walter LaFeber’s masterpiece, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History*, it would not be difficult to see the similarities between this and the world-historical situation in which Kuki, Nishida, and others lived. Actually, what Hardt and Negri foresaw seems to have been realized afterward: “We should take into account, however, the unpredictability of these relations of force in international politics and recognize that regional formations can also act in contradiction with the hierarchical unity of imperial command.... Potentially autonomous forces...can break the order.”

In particular, there is no doubt that “the creative Chinese experiments in a ‘democracy of the middle class’ as an assertion of regional autonomy aimed at an Asian-centered globalization” have a special importance for us. In many ways, this Chinese regional economic sphere that has come to realize itself as “One Belt One Road” (OBOR) and its increasing tension with the United States or the “empire” (that has clearly manifested itself as Trans-Pacific Partnership or, TPP), remind us of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere and its “clash” with the United States and its allies as LaFeber depicts it. We may even be tempted to see in today’s South China Sea the shadow of wartime Manchuria.

The *ura*-Kyoto School that lives in the *iki* as Vagabondism begins with the assumption that the current clash in Asia and the Pacific is one between an empire as the “organizing of global capitalism by finance capital” and a China-led regional autonomy that aims at the making of pure capitalism in the name of “socialism [or neo-liberalism] with Chinese characteristics,” just like the previous clash. Starting from there, we make the present as the future different from

31 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 318.

the one in the past that resulted in war and destruction. We make theory and seek knowledge for it. With the minor race. With being taught by vagabonds.

Fascism, Biopolitics, and “Becoming-Woman”

Uno’s analysis of the previous regional economic spheres in Asia and Europe that is condensed in the 1946 article enables us to see what is common between those of the past and the current Chinese one. Therefore, this commonality should not be considered a coincidence when Tosaka’s “The Fate of Japanism” discusses the Japanese version of “creative...experiments in a ‘democracy of the middle class’ as an assertion of regional autonomy aimed at an Asian-centered globalization.” The trouble is that for Tosaka “democracy of the middle class” characterized fascism as defined below. In fact, it may be not difficult to see in Xi Jinping’s “Sinocentric national history (as world history),” with its emphasis of the “return of Confucius,” a structure similar to that which Tosaka criticized as Japanist national history.

Nonetheless, I am not interested in demonstrating that China today is “fascist.” Rather, my concern with China’s regional economic sphere in the making as well as its increasing clash with the empire stems from that which it is our starting point to expand our “distant futures which no dream had yet seen.” Here the work done by the “founders” of the *ura*-Kyoto School helps us analyze the current situation.

At the beginning of “The Fate of Japanism,” Tosaka says “Japanism is first and foremost an idea, and even though it obviously broke out under particular, material conditions of society, it does not objectively reflect these material foundations.”³² If that is the case, the production of knowledge that helps us reveal “particular, material conditions of society,” including the process of the emergence of Japanism out of it, should be the first step of the practice called Vagabondism.

These “particular, material conditions of society” are, Tosaka says, “the particular and unique set of circumstances of fascism” in which the middle class plays a crucial role. According to him, first and foremost fascism “is a relatively advantageous method that seems to be succeeding in realizing its ultimate goal of extending finance capitalism.” It does so by “hid[ing] the contradictions of imperialism domestically through state power, and internationally by building up the perception that it can solve problems by force” “when monopoly capitalism becomes imperialistic.”

32 Tosaka, “The Fate of Japanism,” 60.

Who supports “state power” that “hide[s] the contradictions of imperialism domestically”? Who has “the perception that it can solve problems by force”? It is “the petit bourgeois, or the middle class in the broad sense, which experiences turmoil in their social consciousness through some particular domestic and international political circumstances,” “the middle class who have emotionally lost all of their belief in both the dictatorship of the proletariat and the explicit domination of the bourgeoisie.” Let us explore how Uno’s 1946 article and other work related this “democracy of the middle class” to wartime Japan’s “assertion of regional autonomy aimed at an Asian-centered globalization.”

In the article, Uno labeled the kind of regional economic sphere that was transformed into the “organizational method of militaristic imperialist policy” as “authoritarian organizing.”³³ As Uno put it, this “authoritarian organizing” of capitalism would correspond to what Tosaka called “extended financial capitalism” as the “contemporary capitalist system to which fascism corresponds.”³⁴ According to Uno, this transformation occurs when “workers’ autonomously organized criticism” is eliminated to “leave room for finance capital to act” freely for the sake of the pursuit of monopolistic profits.³⁵

If “workers” here were vagabonds, their “autonomously organized criticism” would be *iki* as Vagabondism. Its elimination can be understood as “hid[ing] the contradictions of imperialism...through state power,” but for the state to do so, it needs the middle class’s support or, legitimization, which is formed through the power of the Japanese ideology. This means that the Japanese ideology must have the effect of generating negative feelings such as hatred or animosity against vagabonds within the heart of the middle class.

In the revised version of *Theory of Economic Policy* (1957), Uno discussed this as a “middle-class movement.” In this movement, while one “revolts” against the “excessive profit through the management of company or security fraud,” one would consider that “finance capital represents the interest of the entire nation” or, in other words, one would become “loyal” to Mitsubishi, for instance, “insofar as its activity is limited within the normal range.”³⁶

33 Uno, “Shihonshugi no soshikika to minshushugi,” 291. However, it must be noted that Uno declared that Japan was a case of neither “democratic” nor “dictatorial” organizing, but rather of “bureaucratic” organizing.

34 Ibid., 278; Tosaka, “The Fate of Japanism,” 327.

35 Uno, “Shihonshugi no soshikika to minshushugi,” 284.

36 Uno, *Keizai seisakuron: Kaiteiban* [Theory of economic policy: Revised edition], in *UKC*, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1974), 180–81.

For Uno, it is “petit-bourgeois ideology” that drives the middle class to think and act in this way.³⁷ Maruyama Masao might call this mode of action found in the middle class in relation to finance capital *chusei to hangyaku* (loyalty and revolt). It is a kind of *bushidō* and hence Japanese ideology. Japanese ideology is petit-bourgeois ideology, what Tosaka called the “imperialist consciousness” that “has fascistic characteristics.”³⁸ In other words, it is an ideology unique to the organized methods of militaristic imperialist policy as extended financial capitalism, or of the authoritarian (or fascistic) organizing of capitalism that takes the form of regional economic spheres (e.g., Nazi Germany’s *Autarkie* or the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere).

At the same time, however, Uno recognized that regional economic spheres could be the “seed” (at least) of an effective method for solving the global agrarian crisis, which culminated in the colonial (agricultural) problem, manifested in such things as the collapse of the sugar industry in prewar Okinawa and Java.³⁹ It is a controlled economy in the sense of the “control of capital by the state,” and we assume that “capital” in this particular case means finance capital.⁴⁰ He suggests that the state that is “checked and controlled” by “autonomously organized workers” must control finance capital globally with the United Nations (and, probably, the institutions affiliated with it such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund).⁴¹

In this way, this democratic organizing of global capitalism needs the vagabonds’ “autonomously organized criticism.” What does this criticism consist of? And who are the workers as vagabonds?

Autonomously organized criticism as the source of a critique of political economy has as its content criticism of the “commodity-economic aspect of the capitalist mode of production.”⁴² In Uno’s words, “It is only the workers who can truly criticize it.”⁴³ In other words, those who produce autonomously

37 Uno, *Shihon-ron gojū-nen*, 288–93.

38 Tosaka, “The Fate of Japanism,” 322–23.

39 Uno Kōzō, “*Tōgyō yori mitaru kōiki-keizai no kenkyū joron, ketsugo*” [Introduction and conclusion of *A Study of Regional Economy Seen from the Sugar Industry*], in *UKC* 8: 355–402; Uno Kōzō, “Genryō-shizai to shokuminchi” [Raw materials and colonies], in *Gendai shihonshugi no genkei* [The archetype of contemporary capitalism] (Tokyo: Kobushi shobō, 1997), 7–74.

40 Uno, “Shihonshugi no soshikika to minshushugi,” 290.

41 *Ibid.*, 290, 277–78.

42 Uno, “Shihonshugi no soshikika to minshushugi,” 290.

43 *Ibid.*, 290–91.

organized criticism should be considered workers. They are also our “teachers” who teach us how to criticize political economy, reveal the “historicity of the economy of capitalist society,”⁴⁴ construct the theory necessary for the analysis of the current situation based on it and, finally, analyze the current situation for the sake of solving the fundamental problem of global capitalism that embraces the lives of everyone on earth (more or less).

The “commodity-economic aspect of capitalist society” that the “workers” who autonomously and organizationally criticize is, for Uno, the commodification of labor power and its impossibility.⁴⁵ While Uno came to grasp this through an analysis of Nazi Germany’s autarky as well as Japan’s Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere during the time when he was a part of Mitsubishi, we should not overlook the significance of Ōsugi Sakae’s contribution to his discovery of this key point for the construction of his theory. As he himself confessed in the interview, Ōsugi was Uno’s “favorite teacher” throughout his life.⁴⁶

In 1919, exactly a quarter-century before Uno’s analyses were compiled, Ōsugi wrote a piece called “Kokusai rōdō kaigi” (The International Labor Conference). I believe this was one of Uno’s earliest encounters with the problem of the commodification of labor power. The International Labor Conference and the Japanese school of social policy (the latter of which included Kawai Eijirō, one of Tosaka’s main targets in *The Japanese Ideology*) saw social policy, especially labor law, as the abolition of the commodification of labor power. Ōsugi thoroughly criticized their view by saying that it is exactly the commodification of labor power as well as its disavowal.⁴⁷ From this we may see the denial of the racial equality clause by the League of Nations (to which the International Labor Conference was attached) as the exposure of the impossibility of the commodification of labor power. The clause showed that a “free world” could be built only through the expropriation of those who were located outside it. This also teaches us that the impossibility of commodifying labor power that is necessitated by the commodification of labor power is the fundamental

44 Uno, *Keizai seisakuron*, 144.

45 Chapter 4 (“Labor Power: Capital’s Threshold”) of Walker’s *The Sublime Perversion of Capital* provides a detailed discussion of Uno’s account of the commodification of labor power and its impossibility.

46 Uno, *Shihon-ron gojū-nen*, 5–72.

47 Ōsugi Sakae, “Kokusai rōdō kaigi” [The International Labor Conference], in *Ōsugi Sakae zenshū* [Complete works of Ōsugi Sakae] (*OSz*, hereafter), ed. Masamichi Ōsawa, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Gendai shichōsha, 1995), 81.

problem of global capitalism and takes the form of global agrarian crisis, as the history that began around the time Ōsugi wrote this article shows.

The origin of the commodification of labor power through social policy lies in Gotō Shinpei's colonial policy that began with late nineteenth-century Taiwan. According to Bruce Cumings and Mark Driscoll, it was nothing but what Michel Foucault called biopolitics.⁴⁸ This also allows us to redefine biopolitics as politics concerning the commodification of labor power through social policy. Ken Kawashima's and Tomiyama Ichirō's respective analyses of the commodification of the labor power of Korean and Okinawan workers at zaibatsu-affiliated small factories in interwar Osaka were, actually, based on works by both Foucault and Uno.⁴⁹

Cumings, Driscoll, Kawashima, and Tomiyama demonstrate that education in national language, culture, and history is central in biopolitics as redefined above. It is a major part of social policy, and in the case of prewar Japan it took the form of *Kominka kyōiku* (education in Japanization). In other words, it was indoctrination in the Japanese ideology. Now, we know that education in the national language, culture, and history as an ideology unique to the middle class (or those who would like to become so) plays a central role in social policy and hence in biopolitics.

Education as biopolitics creates a middle class that supports fascism in the above sense while it also commodifies their labor power. Exactly how does it do so? A woman from Fukushima provided me with an answer.

Right after 3.11, I was listening to Radio Fukushima, a local radio station in Fukushima Prefecture, via U-STREAM. Between news programs, the announcers often read letters and emails from listeners. Among these was her voice. She was a woman in her sixties, living in an area from which it was "suggested" that people evacuate voluntarily. She was very articulate in her criticism of the national and local governments, and of the corporations involved in the nuclear business. She declared, "I've lived long enough; don't worry about me. Just protect the children and their future."

48 Bruce Cumings, "Colonial Formation and Deformation: Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam," in *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American–East Asian Relations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 69–94. On the relation between Gotō Shinpei's colonial policy and biopolitics, see Mark Driscoll, "Part I. Biopolitics," in *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 25–131.

49 Ken C. Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Tomiyama Ichirō, *Kindai Nihon shakai to Okinawa: Nihon-jin ni narukoto* [Modern Japanese society and Okinawa: Becoming Japanese] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōron-sha, 1990).

At the time I was listening to this, I thought it was a legitimate objection, the natural will of villagers who had been left in the cold for a long time. But, “theory that makes [us] think a situation inevitable from the outset prevents us from deepening our sympathy and empathy toward their resentment of the outrage, their abjection, and will, and from turning it into our own real feeling.... [I] just think that I can’t do anything about what is inevitable, so I just want to make its outcome contribute to a better future as much as I can.”

Thus in the middle class, fascism is created by making one impervious to the minor race’s resentment of the outrage, their abjection, and will, or, as Harootunian puts it in his chapter in the present volume, “experience, memory, and its vast tableau of uneven temporalizations” of vagabonds constitute “the sentient claims” of the everyday. This is exactly what teaching world history as Japanese ideology like Miki’s does: “Miki’s ‘answerability’ to history,” Harootunian argues, “sacrificed the temporality associated with the sentient claims of everyday life—experience, memory, and its vast tableau of uneven temporalizations—to what appeared to him as the higher necessity of totalization and the very abstraction of narrative movement he eschewed and the final (Hegelian) revelation of history’s meaning in reason.”

On the other hand, Harootunian points out, “Tosaka Jun’s powerful intervention...opened the way to rehistoricizing the everyday” and, for us, this rehistoricization must be “turning it [“experience, memory and its vast tableau of uneven temporalizations” of vagabonds] into our own real feeling” in order to be *iki* in the sense of Vagabondism. In the above case, it was a woman of a “minor race” who taught us that, and that might not be a coincidence. The above quote that expresses what “I thought” while listening to the radio is actually from Ōsugi Sakae’s “Petit-Bourgeois Feeling,” published in February 1918 in the second issue of *Critique of Civilization*,⁵⁰ and these words were originally the voice of Itō Noe, who criticized the attitude of male socialists, including Ōsugi himself, in the midst of the Ashio Copper Mine incident.

These voices of female vagabonds also remind us of Foucault’s question, “How does one keep from being fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant?” In his preface to Deleuze and Guattari’s first co-authored book, *Anti-Oedipus*, he writes:

I would say that *Anti-Oedipus* (may its authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quiet a long time (perhaps that explains why its success was not limited to a particular “readership”: being anti-oedipal has become a life style, a way of thinking

50 Ōsugi Sakae, “Shō-shinshi-teki kanjyō” [Petit-bourgeois feeling], in *OSz* 6: 12.

and living). How does one keep from being fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant? How do we get rid our speech and our acts, our hearts and our pleasures, of fascism? How do we ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior? The Christian moralists sought out the traces of the flesh lodged deep within the soul. Deleuze and Guattari, for their part, pursue the slightest traces of fascism in the body.

Paying a modest tribute to Saint Francis de Sales, one might say that *Anti-Oedipus* is an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*.⁵¹

To make “our speech and our acts, our hearts and our pleasures, of fascism” or, “fascism in the body,” is a goal of biopolitics. It is also its goal to “ferret out” and “get rid of” the fascism in that sense, and that has been what the *ura*-Kyoto School has been working on and will continue to do so. Let us consider how that has been done.

Shijyō no ai: Love Supreme or Market Love

In his review of Herbert P. Bix’s *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2000) as well as in some other places,⁵² Harootunian argued that “Japanese who disavow the importance of the emperor in their everyday lives still act as if he were the embodiment of the national community.” In this it is not difficult to hear the echo of Itō’s and Ōsugi’s voices. He calls this “the verbal gesture of a system of belief so deeply embedded in Japanese society—its cultural unconsciousness.” Combined with Tomiyama’s remark on “bodily gesture” as the meaning of culture, we may define the linguistic bodily gesture produced by the Japanese ideology as Japanese culture.

Harootunian calls Japanese culture as the Japanese ideology an “ambiguous silhouette.”⁵³ It is “a masking of some fundamental disorder that cannot be symbolized” (concealment) and also “provides a resolution and the promise of managing the unimaginable antagonism and unexpressable disorder produced by the unevenness and imbalance that have always shadowed their

51 Michel Foucault, preface to *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), xv.

52 Harry Harootunian, “Hirohito Redux,” *Critical Asian Studies*, 33.4 (2001): 4.

53 Harry Harootunian. “Ambiguous Silhouette,” in *Rekishi to kioku no kōsō: “senjo Nihon” no genzai* [The struggle between history and memory: The present of “postwar Japan”], trans. Katsuhiko Mariano Endo (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 2010), 93–94.

capitalist modernization.”⁵⁴ On the other hand, for both Harootunian and To-saka, the *kokushi* (national history) that, as a myth, takes the form of the doctrine of Imperial Way is the apotheosis of the Japanese ideology.

In the Acknowledgments of his *The Body of This Death*, William Haver acknowledged Harootunian by saying, “What counts for me as the world would surely be a safer place had I not encountered him; just as surely, it would be insufferably dull.”⁵⁵ In the book, Haver discusses the Japanese ideology’s concealment and disavowal of the global AIDS crisis as “some fundamental disorder that cannot be symbolized.” “Transcendence” as “salvation.”⁵⁶ That is the name of the Japanese ideology as ambiguous silhouette, given by this former student of Harootunian. The Japanese ideology as transcendence (and salvation) consists in, he says, “structures of intelligibility and comprehensibility on and around the pandemic,” which “render AIDS normative and routine” and also “chronic rather than a crisis”: in other words, “the unthinkable has been rendered thinkable, the impossible possible, the extraordinary normative.”⁵⁷ This must be what Harootunian meant when he declared that “fantasy,” that is to say the Japanese ideology, “structures reality.”⁵⁸

The above criticism by core members of the *ura*-Kyoto School is what separates the *ura*- from the *omote*-: it is the former’s criticism of the latter. In fact, Harootunian’s and Haver’s depiction of the Japanese ideology as an ambiguous silhouette seems to work perfectly as an explanation of what Uno called pure capitalism, the “city of God” in the *omote*-Kyoto School’s world history: pure capitalism as the “structures of intelligibility and comprehensibility on and around” the impossibility of the commodification of labor power. Like the Japanese ideology as transcendence-qua-salvation, it conceals and disavows, for example, the current situation in Fukushima by rendering it “chronic rather than a crisis,” just as economists refer to the Depression as a part of the business cycle in the name of “creative destruction” rather than a crisis of the Real.

Bushidō as Japanese ideology can be understood as a kind of “creative destruction.” However, for Haver that is not the end of the story. He sees the “ambiguity” in it; the ambiguity of the line that separates *iki* as the Japanese ideology from one as Vagabondism, for example (we should remember that *iki* is, partially or largely, *bushidō*). As for Tanizaki Junichirō, who is buried in

54 Harootunian, “Hirohito Redux,” 610.

55 William Haver, *The Body of This Death: Historicity and Sociality in the Time of AIDS* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), viii.

56 *Ibid.*, 3.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Harootunian, “Hirohito Redux,” 4.

the Pure Land School Buddhist Hōnen's hermitage, *Hōnenin*, where Kuki also sleeps, Haver says:

When Tanizaki writes at the end of *In Praise of Shadows*, an elegy for the loss of a material culture, that it is only literature that can be the last refuge of nostalgia, has he already marked nostalgia as neither the mere reminiscence of plentitude nor even the acceptance of the loss of plentitude, but as the recognition that that plentitude was always already “lost”? And that every recuperation of the plentitude of “Japanese culture”—and of “Japanese culture” as ontological plentitude—is the recuperation of an ontological plentitude that never was? The situation in Tanizaki is, I think, necessarily ambiguous, and because Tanizaki was never merely an ironist, must remain so—we owe him the acknowledgement of that ambiguity.⁵⁹

In the Acknowledgments of *The Body of This Death*, Haver writes that “Naoki Sakai and I have been talking, drinking, and arguing for years; in the instance of the present essay, I am especially indebted to him for discussions of Nishida, Ota, and Tanizaki.”⁶⁰ They may have been talking, drinking, and arguing about the relation between Ogyū Sōrai's *bushidō* as the Japanese ideology and Itō Jinsai's *bushidō* as, in our words, Vagabondism, or *iki* in the *ura*-Kyoto School. Itō's *bushidō* (a predecessor of Vagabondism) consisted of the “ethicality of a social action in reference to the human body as a locus of otherness which can never be entirely subsumed under intention.”⁶¹ On the other hand, Ogyū's *bushidō*, Japanese ideology characterized by “loyalty and revolt,” bears the “benevolent and virtuous presence of authentic Confucianism.”⁶² The former produces the subjectivity that prompts “change” while the latter makes one become “strikingly hostile to change and disintegration.”⁶³

From this, we assume that Itō's *bushidō* makes up the *ura*-Kyoto's “south” while Ogyū's is for the *omote*-Kyoto's. Both are regional economic spheres, hence they must correspond to the two types of autonomy that Nagahara Yutaka discussed in his *Tennō-sei kokka to nōmin* (The Emperor-System State and the Peasants) since, according to the author, macro-autonomy in the regional

59 Haver, *Body of This Death*, 176.

60 Ibid., vii–viii.

61 Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 249.

62 Ibid., 250.

63 Ibid., 249.

economic sphere presumes micro-autonomy at the village and street level.⁶⁴ Ogyū's *bushidō* as the Japanese ideology presupposes the protection of the right to life by finance capital and the state and, therefore it is "strikingly hostile to change and disintegration." As a result, it forms the "topos of empathy" (Sakai),⁶⁵ or community of the Same (Haver), which eliminates those who try to change it to the other type of autonomy. It is Itō's *bushidō* that brings about this other type that protects the right to life by and for itself, criticizing the kind of biopolitics that the other type employs.

According to Sakai, whether it is Ogyū's or Itō's, *bushidō* is in essence determined by love, or *ai*, "which has, as its content, reciprocity, determination, and so forth."⁶⁶ Similarly, Nagahara and Tomiyama found in what they called *sonraku-shinsei* or *dokyo-sei* (both of which may be translatable to "collective mentality") the force to create both autonomies as movements.⁶⁷

What determines Ogyū's *bushidō* is the "mutual transference usually called 'love,' in which one glorifies the putative image of one's identity in the name of one's other."⁶⁸ It is also said to be the "reciprocity...characterized as an exchange of equal value."⁶⁹ Accordingly, we will call it "market love" (*shijyō no ai* 市場の愛), the kind of love that pure capitalism asks for. It is a "channel of...transference in which one wishes to form a stable regime of mutuality with another" and, in this very sense it is a "wish for homosocial complicity with others."⁷⁰ What stands against this is Itō's *ai*, which we will call "love supreme" (*shijyō no ai* 至上の愛). Sakai distinguishes between these two types of *shijyō no ai*:

In spite of the fact that I encounter the others within the network of social relations that putatively represents both me and the others as oversaturated or overdetermined subjects, there is an aspect in which a singular thing encounters other singular things and which is irreducible to the relation of one subject to other subjects: unlike the encounter of subjects, which takes place in discourse and here is measurable, the encounter of

64 Nagahara Yutaka, *Tennō-sei kokka to nōmin: gōi-keisei no soshiki-ron* [The emperor-system state and the peasants: An organizational theory of consensus-building] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōron-sha, 1989), 174–55.

65 Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 249.

66 Ibid., 109.

67 Nagahara, *Tennō-sei kokka to nōmin*, 183–91; Tomiyama, *Kindai Nihon shakai to Okinawa*, 133–69.

68 Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 109.

69 Ibid., 109.

70 Ibid.

individual beings is in the final analysis without any terms of comparison, not even equality. In this specific aspects of the encounter of the singular, unlike the encounter of subjects, which takes place in discourse and here is measurable, the encounter of individual beings is in the final analysis without any terms of comparison, not even equality. In this specific aspects of the encounter of the singular, one meets another not only as vassal, child, wife, friend, or younger brother but also as stranger. And only when one can encounter the other partly as a stranger is ethical action possible. (I say “partly” because it is impossible to think of an encounter with a complete stranger, an other completely external to social relations.) Hence, *ai* prevails because the other is not near or familiar but partly alien to me. I enter the linkage of *ai* even with my parent, brother, or husband through the moment of their singularity, of their strangeness: the other is always encountered as a mixture of subjective position and strangeness which cannot be contained in a given discourse.⁷¹

From this, we understand that the “network of social relations” as *dispositif* is first and foremost the family. It is also the village and *roji* as an “extended family.” It intersects the other type of *dispositif* called market and, as a result, *ai* as *dokyo-sei* is transformed into two types of *ai* (market love or love supreme), which determines the nature of Japanese culture (Ogyū’s *bushidō* as Japanese ideology or Itō’s as Vagabondism) and, finally, two types of autonomy.

Itō’s *ai* (love supreme) and, subsequently, his *bushidō* (Vagabondism) originate in *dokyo-sei* as “family love.” But at some point vagabonds who possess them leave this particular *dispositif* called family to create a regional economic sphere as in the *ura*-Kyoto School’s future (in the present). Ogyū’s *ai* (market love) and *bushidō* (the Japanese ideology) try to capture them, bring them back to the family called the state, such as Nippon, and, in so doing, transform them back into family members called *Nippon-jin* (Japanese). This is, I believe, what Tosaka meant when he claimed that *kazoku-shugi* (familialism) occupies the essential part of the Japanese ideology:

In the face of the so-called family system that is collapsing day by day and furthermore is opposed to the authority of rational, social-scientific understanding, our family-system-ism (as a vague idea) of today is an excuse for the attempt to maintain capitalism under a kind of control-ism.

71 Ibid., 109–10.

Since its content is vague, it can be accepted easily in a highly tawdry fashion.⁷²

Familialism is “an excuse for the attempt to maintain capitalism under a kind of control-ism.” This is the relation between the Japanese ideology (as familialism) and extended financial capitalism as “the contemporary capitalist system to which fascism corresponds” that we have been pursuing. Tosaka discussed it more in detail as follows:

The familialists (who are found consistently among the majority of today’s Japanists of various types) have been trying to use the family system when giving a certain interpretation of and expression to actual society. They flatly refuse to admit the collapse of this system and, even if they admit it, they do so only as evil individualism. Either way, they hang Japan’s or their last hope and expectation on the family system. The difficulty with the problem of unemployment and poverty is subdued idealistically by virtue of this ideal called the family system. However, in reality its collapse in fact pushes family members out of the family (or household) and the family system and into the ranks of the unemployed or those who face the possibility of losing their jobs.⁷³

Women form the majority of “the unemployed or those who face the possibility of losing their jobs.” Tosaka considered this the most crucial reason for the collapse of the family system:

Women acquired their independence for the first time by paying for the cost of the collapse of family life that compromises the family system. What independence means here is only either economic independence (employment) or unemployment that makes them independent in terms of social status but not economically.... Modern women have begun to grow out of their [their position in the] traditional Japanese family system. This is an unfortunate sign that familialists (of various kinds) can never feel easy.⁷⁴

72 Tosaka Jun, “Fukkō-shugi no bunseki—kazoku-shugi no anarogī ni tsuite” [An analysis of restorationism—On the analogy of familialism], in *TJz* 2: 313.

73 *Ibid.*, 311–12.

74 *Ibid.*, 312.

Accordingly, women, especially those who live apart from their families for reasons such as economic recession or earthquakes, are the ones whom the “various kinds” of “familialists” mainly target as both recipients and teachers of the Japanese ideology. The Nadeshiko ishin no kai (Nadeshiko Restoration Association), a women’s support group for the Ōsaka Ishin political party, is a good example. Along with other women’s groups, it campaigned for the adaptation of the kind of junior high school history textbook that reflects the doctrine of the Imperial Way. The Nihon kyōiku saisei kikō (Japanese Institute for the Revitalization of Education), which promotes the same kind of textbooks as those favored by Abe Shinzō, has a sister organization called the Nihon katei kyoiku saisei kiko (Japanese Institute for the Revitalization of Family Education), whose slogan is “*Haha-oya wa Nippon no takara, Kodomo-tachi wa Nippon no ishizue*” (mothers are Japan’s treasure; children are the foundation of Japan). This may be enough evidence for this second coming of the Japanese ideology and its discourse.

“*Iki* Lives in the Future, Holding Active Joy in Its Arms”

The *ura*-Kyoto School has revealed the “essence” of *iki* in the sense of the Japanese ideology as familialism that is conspicuous in Ogyū’s *bushidō*. It can be found as the past and the future in Japanist national history, which Tosaka, the founder of the school, considered the ultimate Japanese ideology. It is taught through the various apparatuses or, *dispositifs*, and produces a subjectivity called “fascism in the body.” In this education now and then, middle-class women who are originally vagabonds play a crucial role.

The process of “ferret[ing] out” “fascism in the body” has been also that of revealing and teaching what *iki* as Vagabondism entails. It aims at “gett[ing] rid of” fascism. This itself is *iki* as Vagabondism, or as the “specific mode of being of” the *ura*-Kyoto School. This is close to the *sei* (life) discussed by Itō (an “honorary member” of *ura*-Kyoto). According to Sakai, “the social world is characterized by the word ‘life’ (*sei, sheng*, 3–26), which means ceaseless decomposition and regeneration: it never remains static, and so, there cannot be any original archetype of it to which one can return. The ideal society is the one under constant change and modification generated by the small and trivial ethical actions of people.”⁷⁵

As I have discussed elsewhere regarding Deleuze and Ōsugi, “the social world” as life, which involves “ceaseless decomposition and regeneration,”

75 Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 249–50.

can be thought of as the expenditure or consumption of labor power (Ōsugi) as power of action (Deleuze).⁷⁶ In other words, it is nothing but labor as “the small and trivial actions of people.” According to Spinoza as understood by Deleuze, the mode of production (education) and consumption (labor) of power of action (labor power) is determined by desire, or *conatus*, and the latter is determined by feeling or affect.⁷⁷

Conatus is close to what Tosaka called *shutai-teki nodo-sei* (subjective activity).⁷⁸ Since Tosaka seemed to think that the latter is close to Tarde’s “belief or want,”⁷⁹ Spinoza’s concept may be replaceable with Tarde’s (for us, at least). Also, since Tosaka viewed Kuki in the shadow of Tarde, desire in this specific sense can be regarded as similar to Kuki’s *iki*.

When *iki* as *conatus* is determined by market love, it becomes the Japanese ideology (e.g., Ogyū’s *bushidō*) in the form of familialism. In this case, labor as consumption of labor power (or power of action) produces the “south” as the topos of empathy, or community of the Same, which is “strikingly hostile to change and disintegration.” When market love is transformed into love supreme, *iki* as the Japanese ideology becomes Vagabondism (e.g., Itō’s *bushidō*). It consumes labor power as power of action so as to produce the “south” as an “ideal society,” one which “is under constant change and modification.” I believe that this is what Tosaka means by what he calls the “logic of feeling”:

In the logic of feeling, the conclusion is given from the outset and this conclusion that is preliminarily determined causes one to speculate in accordance with one’s own assumptions and expectations. The character of the logic of feeling that indicates its absolute difference from rational logic can be found in this point. Therefore, what is necessary in this speculation is not to follow the kind of conclusion that is deduced from it, but, rather, to observe how productive it is to draw the conclusion that has already been laid out. Purpose is determined from the beginning. Speculation is nothing other than a means that serves it. Obviously, this sort of thing cannot be allowed in rational logic, which is required to be phlegmatic. Those who simply cannot stand the cumbersomeness of strict

76 Katsuhiko Endo, “A Unique Tradition of Materialism in Japan: Ōsugi Sakae, Tosaka Jun, and Uno Kōzō,” *Positions: East Asian Cultures Critique*, 20.4 (Fall 2012): 1009–40; Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 231.

77 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 231.

78 Tosaka, *Kagaku-ron*, 145.

79 Tosaka, “Muishiki-teki kyoi,” 65.

logic, or those who have more actual and urgent problems, might use this sort of logic of feeling. Since logic develops out of the everyday needs of human beings, and since it is used according to necessity, there is no reason for the logic of feeling to disappear from human life for good.⁸⁰

For us, the objective is to acquire love supreme, Vagabondism, and ultimately the south as a democratically organized regional and global economic sphere. We speculate about how market love, the Japanese ideology, and the south as a community of the Same are transformed into the former. According to Tosaka, this transformation is a historical movement. In it, *iki* in the present as the Japanese ideology would be false in the future, while *iki* as Vagabondism that is false in the present would be true in the future:

Since time incessantly moves according to law, the truth that would be appropriate at a certain point in the past, or in the future, can be false in the present; and also, what is considered truth in the present would be false in the future if people continue to adhere to it in the manner that they do now. Truth can be false by virtue of historical movement.⁸¹

It is also possible to think of “what is considered a truth in the present” (*iki* as Japanese ideology) and “the truth that would be appropriate at a certain point in the past, or in the future” (*iki* as Vagabondism) as what Uno called *keizai-hōsoku* (economic law) and *keizai-gensoku* (economic principle), respectively. In the introduction to *Nihon shihonshugi to nōgyō* (Japanese Capitalism and Agriculture), published in 1959, which he co-edited with Uno, Tōbata Seiichi regarded a pure capitalist society that is assumed to be thoroughly governed by economic law as the “horizon that can be seen, but neither grasped nor brought to realization on earth.”⁸² In the same year, just as many contemporary Japanists are doing it now, he also called for the revival of the *bushidō* particular to the loyalists around the Meiji Restoration as the subjectivity necessary for the production of such a society.⁸³ We may assume many overlaps between such *bushidō* and *iki* as evident in, for example, *Musui's Story*, authored by

80 Ibid., 63–64.

81 Ibid., 67.

82 Tōbata Seiichi, introduction to *Nihon Shihonshugi to nōgyō* [Japanese capitalism and agriculture], ed. Tōbata Seiichi and Uno Kōzō (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1959), iii.

83 Tōbata Seiichi, “*Keizai-shutai no keisei-shi* [History of the formation of the economic subject], in *Keizai shutaisei koza* [Seminar on economic subjectivity], ed. Arisawa Hiromi, Tōbata Seiichi, and Nakayama Ichirō, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1960), 24.

Katsu Kokichi, the father of Katsu Kaishū, who was the mentor of Sakamoto Ryōma, the most popular “role model.”⁸⁴

The historical movement is the movement in which the reality structured by pure capitalism moves toward a democratically organized sphere through the transformation of subjectivity from one that Tōbata call for to one produced through the learning of Vagabondism. It is the labor process as the movement from the made to the making (Haver, Marx, and Nishida), life (Sakai), historical movement (Tosaka), and also what Uno called the “historicity of the economy of capitalist society,” on the basis of which, Uno contended, scientific theory such as his *keizai genron*, or *genriron* (the principle theory of economics), must be constructed. As for this relation between historicity and theory, Tosaka declared that

the theory that stands on, as its foundation, the actual necessity of the historical movement of society, in principle takes a certain form of truth organizationally (it does not apply to individual cases). In other words, the logic that has taken its genesis in that toward which the historical movement of society intends to move—the necessity that reality holds—is, in principle, true. Contrarily, the logic that is indifferent to such historical necessity, that is to say, that which does not have it as its foundation, always, in principle, possesses a certain form of falsity. Logic would be true insofar as it accompanies historical consciousness, and it would be false if it does not.⁸⁵

Tosaka affirms that Uno’s economic theory must be understood as teaching us how the historical movement toward pure capitalism can be one that moves toward a world governed by economic principles, that is to say, Vagabondism. In order to do so, we must first reveal (or speculate about) historicity as the logic of feeling (or of affection) that traces the transformation from the present to the future. This is precisely what has been involved in the succession within the *ura*-Kyoto School. In order to achieve this, we need the kind of labor power, subjectivity and, most importantly, love that it requires. We need to learn these from Tosaka and his successors.

According to Tosaka, knowledge as well as logic, or theory, as the organization of knowledge presupposes experience, including sensation or percepts.

84 Katsu Kokichi, *Musui’s Story: The Autobiography of a Tokugawa Samurai*, trans. Teruko Craig (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988).

85 Tosaka, “Muishiki-teki kyoi,” 67.

Insofar as historicity is a kind of logic in the name of the logic of feeling, it must stem from some experience. In this regard, Tosaka wrote:

The difficulty concerning the concept of experience presents itself in the problem that it must overcome a sort of dualism. For, in order for experience to be experience, that is to say, for it to be an experience that can be common in human society, or that is at least acknowledged and respected as an experience held by individual human beings, it cannot remain a mere experience. This is because, if it remains a mere experience, that is to say, if its essence is to be an experience of each individual that does not produce any value other than that, it inevitably can never be anything more than empiricist, and even solipsistic.... Experience is the starting point of knowledge that is trusted most in human society. Aside from being what one experienced, experience must be the content of what one will experience in the future and, further, humans in society might have experienced, have been experiencing, and will have experienced in due course or, in other words, everyone must necessarily experience once the conditions are given. This means that experience contains in itself something trans-experiential, or pre-experiential, that is, something that is no longer empirical.⁸⁶

I consider what Tomiyama called the “pre-sentiment of violence” as this something trans- or pre-experiential to which some specific experience—called the “the memory of the battlefield”—gives birth.⁸⁷ In an interview, Harootunian elucidates this subject:

You are right to call attention to my ethnic background—the son of Armenian immigrants who fled the genocidal pogroms in Anatolia inaugurated by the Ottoman Turks in the late 19th century and continued by their Young Turk and Kemalist successors. I was raised on stories about these massacres—my father is the only survivor of a family of 12 children (I know the name of only one of my aunts and none of the others), my mother escaped as a teenager with her mother into the Syrian desert and was rescued by local tribes people who helped them find their way to Beirut. She never told any stories. There is no good reason why I should

86 Tosaka, *Kagaku-ron*, 177–78.

87 Tomiyama Ichirō, *Senjyō no kioku* [Battlefield memories] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōronsha, 2006); Tomiyama Ichirō, *Bōryoku no yokan* [The pre-sentiment of violence] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002).

have taken up the study of Japan and its history, or indeed any national group, apart from the fact that such a decision was based simply on a prior, negative disposition enabled by the assimilationist socialization I and my generation were subject to in American schools. What I mean schooling for immigrants children when I went to school consisted of attempts to ‘Americanize’ the young, which resulted in forms of socialization designed to de-emphasize our ethnic backgrounds.⁸⁸

I cannot think of any “sentient claim of everyday life” that teaches us what it means to say “Tosaka...opened the way to rehistoricize the everyday”⁸⁹ better than this one does. The memory of the massacre of Armenians that Harootunian’s mother had never talked about (at least verbally) and his own memory of racism experienced in the form of an education in the national language (that is to say, biopolitics) brings about the pre-sentiment of violence in the present and future in the United States, Japan, and elsewhere and everywhere.

With this memory and sensation (or pre-sentiment), Harootunian has expanded the *ura*-Kyoto School with his friends and students quite spontaneously, and with them (or, in Tosaka’s words, “organizationally”) written history. I assume that Tosaka organized the Materialism Research Group (*Yuibutsuron kenkyūkai*) and published its journal, *Study of Materialism*, in the same way. We who gather in this volume and beyond share their memories and sensations, and expand the *ura*-Kyoto School further.

In the beginning of this essay, Tosaka already taught us that the *ura*-Kyoto School as the “theoretical-intellectual activity” itself is a part of a “productive-political activity” to push today’s situation that is becoming more and more like the time when Tosaka lived and died (or, more precisely, was murdered) toward the labor process as becoming itself.

Harootunian’s interpretation of Imamura Shohei’s 1971 documentary film *Nippon sengoshi: Madamu Onboro no seikatsu* (The History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Barmaid), teaches us the most important thing needed to extend and intensify the *ura*-Kyoto School:

He asks her how she feels about the war and its ending, whether she is saddened and suffers grief and remorse, against a backdrop of people expressing regret and pleading for godly intercession. Onboro responds

88 The interview is included in Katsuhiko Mariano Endo, “Yunibāsītī, fazizumu, koe: Harry Harootunian to rekishi” [University, fascism, voices: Harry Harootunian and history], in Harootunian, *Rekishi to kioku no kōsō*, 329–30.

89 Harootunian, “Philosophy and Answerability.”

cheerfully, saying how glad she is that the war has ended and what a nuisance it had been and expressing the necessity of now getting on with her life. As much as Tomotsu was obsessed with a never-ending postwar and the Occupation's destruction of the past, Onboro is indifferent to that same experience and the past that led to war and destruction; she sees the postwar and the Occupation as an opportunity for a new start. Much of the film is concerned with how she makes her way into the bar world of Yokosuka, the people, usually American men, she has become involved with, and her aspirations for financial independence and a comfortable life. Imamura emphasizes both her optimism and her energy, expressed continuously by behavior that is both autonomous and independent, despite the obvious fact that she is deriving her livelihood from the Americans. By contrast, Imamura's portrayal of a kind of "sanctioned" and "public" history centered on the Occupation and Japan's subsequent recovery under obvious U.S. direction suggest simply a "falsehood" (*uso*), even though it is necessary for maintaining the status quo. Onboro is living off the page, as it were, outside the official narrative of postwar Japan and postwar as Japan, recounting her experiences to the director's questions, so that her everyday life cumulatively writes a different history.⁹⁰

This clarifies what world history, "to the mission of" which the everyday is "yoked," and the everyday rehistoricized by Tosaka, both mean when Harootunian says, in his essay in the present volume, "Where Miki departed from Tosaka Jun's powerful intervention that opened the way to rehistoricizing the everyday was in his decision to yoke it to the mission of world history." Deleuze and Guattari may see in "sanctioned" and "public" history (like Miki's world history) filled with passive emotions such as sadness, grief, or remorse what they regarded as the History that they identified with history in Heidegger's thought.⁹¹ This also corresponds to what Deleuze called the "history of revolutions."⁹² The "official narrative of postwar Japan" is indeed the history

90 Harry Harootunian, "Japan's Long Postwar: The Trick of Memory and the Ruse of History," in *Millennial Japan: Rethinking the Nation in the Age of Recession*, ed. Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 117 (a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 99.4 [Fall 2000]).

91 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 108–09.

92 Gilles Deleuze, "We Invented the Ritornello," in *Two Regimes of Madness*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 379.

of revolutions in the name of *sengo minshushugi kakumei* (postwar democratic revolution).

On the other hand, “a different history” as life or way (Sakai), historical movement (Tosaka) and historicity (Uno) corresponds to what Deleuze and Guattari called “becoming (as experimentation)” and also what Deleuze called “revolutionary becoming.” The above quote teaches us that it is produced through the critique—critique as remix—of Heidegger’s history or history of revolutions. (Haver would call this the production of parody.)

Corresponding to the line in *What Is Philosophy?*, “Without history experimentation would remain indeterminate and unconditioned,”⁹³ Deleuze pointed out in *Expressionism in Philosophy* that “as Spinoza puts it, our desires themselves ‘are born’ from passions.”⁹⁴ What we as the *ura*-Kyoto School need to do in order to extend and intensify our revolutionary becoming out of the given situation in the given history is to remix the history of revolutions defined by passions as passive affections by featuring the “optimism and...energy, expressed continuously by behavior that is both autonomous and independent”; in other words, the kind of culture, or subjectivity, unique to women of the minor race like Madam Onboro or those crossing into Europe and beyond in the midst of the current migrant and refugee crisis. This culture is *kanashimi no rakkanshugi* (optimism with sorrow), which Nagahara sees in Negri; and it is determined by or born from active affections.⁹⁵ For me, nothing expresses it better than the active joy that Ōsugi learnt from Itō Noe. This is the ultimate expression of love supreme that our school needs before anything else:

We lose very often. However, no matter how many times we lose, we cannot forget the joy that we feel when fighting. It is the joy of not giving in. It is the joy of testing our own power. It is the joy of witnessing the spread of real fellowship among friends. It is the joy of being able to clearly see who is an ally or enemy in the world. And also it is the joy of foreseeing a future of ourselves, a future of society on the basis of those various joys. It is the joy of observing the advance of our own subjectivity.⁹⁶

93 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 110–11.

94 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 231.

95 Nagahara Yutaka, *Warera kashi-arū-mono-tachi: Hanshihonron no tame ni* [We defective commodities: For an analytics of anti-“capital”/ism] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2008), 329–34.

96 Ōsugi Sakae, “Rōdō-undō riron-ka Kagawa Toyohiko, zoku” [A theoretician of the labor movement, Kagawa Toyohiko, continued], in *OSz* 6: 168. The original Japanese for “subjectivity” was *jinkaku*: hence, an accurate translation is “personality.” I deliberately mistranslated it here.

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