

Absolute Nothingness as actionless action: in comparison to Dao

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Абсолютное Небытие как бездеятельное действие : по сравнению с Дао Макото Одзаки

Abstract. We are now seriously facing the natural and biological crisis as a reaction against human activity of production, as Heidegger already warned. In the original beginning human spirit and nature are assumed to be in harmony with one another, and therefore after original sin God aims to reconcile God and man as the recovery of their ideal unity. In Buddhism, too, it is supposed that human beings are originally the Buddhas, despite their degeneration and deviation into the sinful entanglement. To retrieve the essential God-man unity might be parallel to the self-realization of one's own original essence, i.e., the Buddha-nature; the Buddha means that person who has realized his own essential nature completely. The word of nature has two meanings: rivers, mountains, plants, animals etc., and the human inherent property of original essence. All things in the universe originate from the one principle of Nothingness as ultimate reality, according to Daoism advocated by Lao-tzu and Zhuang-zhi in the ancient China, and to follow nature is regarded as the best way of living in the manner of inactive naturalness. Even today's ecology may be rooted in this kind of naturalism in conformity with one's own original essential nature. Hence, in Buddhism the self-enjoyment of one's own original essence is equivalent to the self-realization of one's own nature as the repetition of eternity in the present in the form of actionless action entertaining what it is originally in essence, i.e., genuine freedom without any bondage, which might be similar to the Daoist inactivity of naturalness. This might be the consequence of the continual activity of self-negation of Emptiness as appearances, common to the Whiteheadian process as reality. Even so, however, Daoism never gets in touch with the active causality in experience like the Buddhist *karma* (action and its potential consequence), but instead regards all phenomena as spontaneous emergence.

The Kyoto School philosophers, Nishida, Tanabe and Watsuji expound the substrata of Confucianism and Daoism from the standpoint of the Buddhist basic principle of Absolute Nothingness or Emptiness in confrontation with western thought in pursuit of synthesizing the multiple elements into a higher integrity in the dialectical way. Viewed from Tanabe's logic of species as social ontology, how to unify the socio-political activity in the secular

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world with the Daoist inactive naturalness may remain unsolved, and this may also be valid to the Buddhist view of appearance as reality without negative mediation.

Keywords: Absolute Nothingness/Emptiness, inactive naturalness, actionless action, original essence, one's own self, appearance as reality

Резюме. В настоящем, как уже предупреждал Хайдеггер, мы серьезно сталкиваемся с природным и биологическим кризисом как с реакцией против производственной деятельности человека. Как предполагается, человеческий дух и природа изначально находятся в гармонии друг с другом, и поэтому после первоначального греха Бог стремится примирить человека с Божественным, для восстановления их идеального единства. В Буддизме также предполагается, что человек изначально является Буддой, несмотря на его вырождение и смещение в греховные связи. Восстановление сущностного единства Бога и человека может быть осуществлено параллельно с самореализацией собственной изначальной сущности, т.е. Будды-природы; под Буддой понимается человек, полностью осознавший свою сущностную природу. Слово природа имеет два значения: реки, горы, растения, животные и т.д., но также присущее человеку свойство изначальной сущности. Все вещи во вселенной происходят из единого принципа Небытия, поскольку, согласно Даосизму, отстаиваемому Лао-цзы и Чжуан-Чжи в древнем Китае : следовать природе считается лучшим способом жизни, согласно неактивной естественности. Даже сегодняшняя экология может быть укоренена в этом виде натурализма в соответствии с собственной изначальной сущностной природой. Следовательно, в Буддизме самоудовлетворение собственной изначальной сущности эквивалентно самореализации собственной природы : как повторение вечности в настоящем в виде бездеятельного действия; представляющего то, что изначально является сущностью, т.е. подлинной свободы без всякой привязанности; и которая может быть подобна Даосской бездеятельной естественности. Это может быть следствием непрерывной активности самоотречения от Чистоты как явления, свойственной реальности процесса Уайтхеда. Но даже и в этом случае Даосизм никогда не соприкасается с активной причинно-следственной связью в переживании подобно Буддийской карме (действие и его потенциальное следствие), а вместо этого рассматривает все явления в русле самопроизвольного возникновения.

Философы Киотской школы Нисида, Танабе, Вацудзи излагают субстраты Конфуцианства и Даосизма с точки зрения Буддийского основополагающего принципа Абсолютного Небытия или Чистоты в противостоянии с западной мыслью : в стремлении синтезировать множественные элементы в высшую целостность диалектическим путем. Если рассматривать логику видов Танабе как социальную онтологию, то вопрос объединения общественно-политической деятельности в светском мире с Даосистской неактивной естественностью может остаться нерешённым; и что также применимо и для Буддийского взгляда на возникновение – как на реальность без негативного посредничества.

Ключевые слова: Абсолютное Небытие/Безграничность, неактивная естественность, бездеятельное действие, изначальная сущность, свое собственное существо, возникновение как реальность.

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Заключение

1. Nothingness and inactivity

To begin with, what is meant by the word of Dao? The Dao is identical with Nothingness which is indefinite and unlimited *per se* as ultimate reality from and to which everything comes and returns. From Dao *qua* Nothingness issues One, from One occurs Two, from Two emanates Three, and from Three arises everything. Or, from Nothingness emerges being, and through being originates everything. There was no word in the beginning of Heaven and Earth, but then there arose word in the matrix of everything, in contrast to the Biblical statement according to which there was the Word in the very beginning. Contrary to the western thinking begun with Being and Word (Logos), for Lao Tzu and Buddhism Nothingness or Emptiness precedes Word/Logos as the distinguished characteristics of eastern thought. The modern Japanese Kyoto School philosophy might be in line with this tradition in confrontation with western thought. Especially, Nishida's idea of Absolute Nothingness comes from the complex of Lao Tzu and Buddhist tradition. Even the mathematical concept of 0 stems from the Indian Buddhist idea of Emptiness, though the western tradition never goes beyond One and Being.

The Daoist idea of inactivity in combination with naturalness signifies the self-realization of freedom transcending causality as a dialectical unification of subjective action and objective causality, free will and fate, as the inward self-enjoyment of mind without entailing matter and the social order or institutional systems represented by Confucianism. The sages entered to the forest mountains without exercising the political power to reform the already existing society are confined to the individualistic tendency towards the inwardness of their own minds in search of tranquility. On the contrary, the modern Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji employs the idea of Absolute Emptiness as the fundamental principle of human existence, i.e., ethics, in terms of which human activity is to be manifested and developed in the forms of the individual existence and the social organization in the mutual self-negation as a result of the perpetual emptying function of Absolute Emptiness in the socio-historical dimensions.

The problem is how to mediate the secular world to natural inactivity as true freedom without escaping from the socio-historical actuality in which the human subject of action in question is involved? In other words, how to realize true freedom as actionless action in relation to the actual society in which evil and injustice, even under the pretension of good and justice, are superposed and accumulated in the complex structures, beyond the harmony with nature as the surrounding circumstance? What is at issue is how to construct a harmonious correlation with the social substratum based upon the natural environment on the level of species for the attainment of the genus-like universality.

2. Nature

Another Daoist philosopher Zhuang-zhi says that there is great beauty in Heaven and Earth without saying, there is the obvious laws in the cyclic time of four seasons without utterance, and there are principles and laws of becoming of all things without discussion, and hence sages inquire into the cause of heavenly beauty and thus realize its truth. The ancient sages contemplate the truth of the universe, and this attitude of contemplation or intellectual intuition remains up to the modern philosophy of Nishida. Hereby Heaven and Earth are the same as nature, and the primary object of sage's contemplation is nature but not culture as the human construct, which is the limitation of the age. On the contrary, in modern times human subjective activity becomes predominant over nature, even agriculture is not natural but the product of human activity in connection with nature. Therefore, Nishida articulates the correlation between human subjective action and the objective given nature in the formation of the historical world to create valuable things, one of whose results is the progress of science and technology together with the advance of knowledge. The socio-historical development gives rise to the emergence of the legal state existence which is based on the substrative natural land. So, it might be of high importance to consider the relationship between nature and culture in terms of the human subjectivity of free action to transform the given actual world into the ideal harmony. In this regard, it might be highly significant to apply Whitehead's analysis of the human experience in which the subjective act of becoming in the present and the objective being in the past are integrated into a higher unity of a new actuality in the temporal process as well as in the spatial extension. For Whitehead, peace is a harmony of harmonies, and the present era of human civilization should be aimed at a world-wide harmonious society. To attain the future goal, ancient naturalism represented by Lao-tzu should be reviewed from a comparative perspective of the world intellectual history as the primary substratum of human thought in cooperation with the social practice of reformation of the already existing actual world by synthesizing the different elements of human ideas appeared so far in history.

3. Original essence

In comparison to Buddhism, particularly in the later developed Mahayana Buddhism, the concept of inactive activity *qua* original naturalness is also found as the self-realization of one's own essence, i.e., absolute freedom, above and beyond any bondage of the causal destiny, opposed to the pessimistic escape from the mundane world, as a dialectical unification of eternity and time through negative mediation in personality. This is the result of self-emptying activity of Absolute Emptiness as the middle way which is neither free action nor causal destiny as a higher unity of them,

i.e., the original state of one's own essence in appearance, resembling to the Aristotelian *entelecheia*. Hereby the notion of *entelecheia* is ruled by the *steresis* and noetic-goal given and resonant force with the final achievement of the inherent place organizing the subject's natural telic life-activity in the bipolar and dynamic essence of the world which might also be in resonance with the Buddhist idea of active causality in connection with eternal original essence. So, Nichiren elucidates inactive naturalness in such a way that what is eternal signifies that authentic state of non-action, not-doing, which spontaneously brings about the ontological status of one's own original essence in conformity with appearance, i.e., the full self-actualization of absoluteness in the relative phenomenal world (*The Oral Transmission of the Subtle Meanings*). In this regard, Tanabe also interprets Kant's teleology as a dialectical unification of natural necessity and personal freedom, a reciprocal identification of mechanistic causality and free will in which the subjective self is in coincidence with the objective world, as the religious experience (Kant's Teleology). Hence, there might be some parallel between East and West concerning absolute freedom whereby natural causality is integrated with the personal aim of a free willful subject in negative mediation.

4. Lao-tzu vis-à-vis the Buddha

Although in the early period of the transition of Buddhism from India into China, the Buddhist idea of Emptiness is explained by Lao-tzu's idea of Nothingness as the expedient method, however, later the distinction is made between them in that the former is devoid of substantiality of any entity which co-dependently originates in the chain of causes and effects in the phenomenal world, while the latter is ultimate reality as the root source of generation and corruption of everything. Hence, from the Buddhist viewpoint, Confucius and Lao-tzu are regarded as the preparatory steps for the final development of Buddhism as the necessary moments of the constitution of the whole truth in the self-unfolding historical process of the primordial hidden Law. Consequently, according to the Tendai interpretation, Lao-tzu is conceived of as the transfiguration of the Bodhisattva *Kasyapa* reborn for paving the way in China in the role of the forerunner and then the true way of Buddhism is opened. Even so, however, the contrary view of the Daoist side is that the Buddha *Sakyamuni* is the reincarnation of Lao-tzu in India, and this view might be influenced by Buddhism reversely.

In this regard, Tendai articulates that in the previous ages when the Buddha did not exist all sages and wise men are regarded as the forerunners in preparation for the emergence of the Buddha (*The Subtle Meanings of the Lotus Sutra*), and hence Nichiren holds that all sages and wise men born after the Buddha *Sakyamuni*'s passing are recognized as the transfigurations of the Buddha *Sakyamuni* (*Letter to Mr Shijo Kingo*).

Despite their similarity on the surface, there is the difference between them in that the Buddhist doctrines explicate the causal relationship of human actions, i.e., *karma*, as well as the Buddha's salvific activity, whereas in Daoism everything is ascribed to spontaneous emergence. In this regard, Whitehead's analysis of causality of human experience has a closer affinity with Buddhism than Daoism.

5. Evil

As regards the opposition between good and evil, Confucian and Lao-tzu take part in the side of human nature as essentially original goodness with the optimistic bent in line with Neo-Platonic and Christian theology according to which evil is just appearance without its own reality as a temporal absence or devoid of goodness. This tendency prevails even within the Mahayana Kegon (Hua-yen) Buddhist school in contrast to the Tendai school retaining the stark opposition between good and evil. Nishida seems to take the same line formerly, but in his last significant thesis demonstrates God's assumption of demonic evil in the final analysis, and this stance might be in accordance with Tanabe's retention of the radical evil in human freedom inherited from Kant and Schelling as well. On this matter, even Whitehead inclines towards the optimistic view of the triumph and restoration of good over evil on the Christian tradition.

6. The pre-word

The Dao which can be expressed in words is not the eternal Dao, and the name which can be uttered is not its eternal name. In Buddhism, too, although the supreme truth cannot be expressed by language, nonetheless, the sage contemplates truth of all things and expresses it in words. In the highly developed form of Buddhism, i.e., Tendai systems of thought, ultimate truth is not only beyond words and language but also expressed in them as well, leading up to the mutual identity of truth and words. This differs from Zen Buddhism opting for denying the words or language which are the temporal steps to unexpressive truth. This is also the consequence of the ceaseless self-emptying activity of Absolute Emptiness in the realm of appearance: words or letters are nothing but truth itself. Without language, human beings cannot exist as the authentic human beings distinct from animals. Lao-tzu and Zen Buddhism emphasize the half-truth on the way of attaining ultimate truth self-manifesting and expressing in words. The other aspect of the self-expression of truth in words might be reflective of the Chinese way of thinking with the stress on actuality vis-à-vis the Indian way of searching for eternity.

7. Being as event

It is the well-known fact that Heidegger translates Lao-tzu's text into German in collaboration with the Chinese scholar, and hence it is not deniable that Heidegger's thought may be influenced by Lao-tzu, for example, his topological idea of the four fields of Gods, humans, sky and earth may bear the resemblance with Lao-tzu's utopic world. Another similarity between them may be seen in the returning movement of all things to their own original sources of Nothingness in Lao-tzu and of Being itself as the western historical beginning in Heidegger. Even if so, however, according to Heidegger, Being itself but not beings or entities has been forgotten since Plato, and instead beings are sought for, resulting in the achievements of science and technology. For Lao-tzu, all things in the universe spring out of Nothingness as ultimate reality and return to it in the reverse course. This means the identity of the end and the beginning; at the end all things begin again to come out of Nothingness *qua* ultimate reality, a new course of production of actual entities restarts, making cyclic repetition infinitely. Heidegger's anticipation of the last God in the other beginning which has been deeply concealed and forgotten in the ground of the first beginning to be restored and enacted in a new era of history signifies that the future hope is to be actualized by return to its hidden origin. So, for Heidegger, Being is identical with *Ereignis* (Event) and the beginning as well; for him, Being is at the same time nothingness, though nothingness is weak as compared to Lao-tzu's Nothingness and Nishida-Tanabe's Absolute Nothingness which is another expression of the Buddhist Emptiness. Heidegger's basic idea of *Ereignis* as Event of Being might also be another expression of God's Incarnation in the form of human being, as K. Löwith, J. Steiner, R. Safranski point out. Heidegger's Christian religious root and background might not be deniable from the western intellectual historical perspective. In any way, Heidegger's Being does not exclude Nothingness at all. According to him, the beginning or history is the essential occurrence of the truth of being, and the last god is the oldest, most inceptual and highest god as the essential occurrence of that which is called eternity (*The Event*, 196-7, 232).

With respect to the identity of the end and the beginning, Hegel also suggests that only at the end is the beginning realized fully, and this circle repeats spirally so long as history continues. In Buddhism, too, the result is attained only by returning to its original beginning, signifying infinite repetition of circle on a cosmic scale. Buddhism and Christianity, including Greek philosophy and Confucian and Daoist traditions, are in parallel in some way in the deep structure of thought, despite their ostensible differences, as John Hick articulates the possible plural incarnations of ultimate reality in a diversity of forms of the divine self-manifestations in history. So, Whitehead also says that the dogmas of religion are the attempts to formulate in precise terms the truths

disclosed in the religious experience of mankind, but its precise expression can never be final [Whitehead, RM 57, 125].

8. Art

For Whitehead, truth is the conformation of appearance to reality, the purposeful adaptation of appearance to reality is truthful beauty whose perfection is art, and it is the perfection of art to return to nature. Art is the interweaving of absoluteness upon relativity, and the teleology of the universe is directed to the production of truthful beauty. Hereby we can see the affinity between Zhuang-zhi and Whitehead in respect of natural beauty and truth in contemplation. He says that science and art are the consciously determined pursuit of truth and of beauty. In them the finite consciousness of mankind is appropriating as its own the infinite fecundity of nature [Whitehead, AI 272]. Appearance is clear and distinct in consciousness, whereas reality lies dimly in the background; human art seeks truth lying in the vague background for clear consciousness. Hereby it may also be obvious that the distinctive feature of inactive naturalness on the Daoist position has the intimate relation to the artificial pictorial expression of nature such as rivers and mountains in terms of the harmonious conformity of appearance with reality. For Whitehead, a combination of beauty and truth refers to the attainment of perfection of harmony as value permeating through the poetic view of nature [SMW 87, 93], sharing with the Daoist poetic-picturing thinking of cosmic nature. All aesthetic experience is feeling out of the realization of contrast under identity [PR 280]. Contrast under identity is poetically symbolized in the mountain and river picture with the dark and bright contrast under the whole identity of nature only by using the black ink in the Chinese traditional art.

9. Change

According to *the Book of Change*, the negative and the positive elements change into each other, and this is nothing but the Dao. While Lu Xiang-shan interprets it literally, Chu Hsi significantly explicates that the change of the negative and positive element is not the Dao as such, but the Dao is the cause of change. Chu Hsi constructs a new metaphysics and ethics by integrating Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, i.e., new Confucianism which is also imported to the pre-modern Japan serving as the ideology for the feudal system of political power. The Dao is the principle of change, and the modern Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji's ethical system may correspond to this distinction between the fundamental principle and the phenomenal historical world of change in the guise of western style of modernization. Watsuji's systematic ethics might be a kind of syncretism or eclecticism of eastern and western ideas which is composed of the two phases of the fundamental principle of Absolute Emptiness and

its self-development in the socio-historical realms in parallel to Chu Hsi's metaphysics underlying the Japanese intellectual history and to Hegel's dialectical logic as the secularized Christian theology; for Hegel, Reason, Spirit, equivalent to God, is the subject of history and history is the predicate of it. In Chu Hsi's metaphysics the logic of substance or essence and its activity or operation is crucial, influenced by Buddhist thought, and Watsuji adopts this logic and applies it to the historical changing world, likewise Hegel. Anyway, Nishida, Tanabe and Watsuji, affiliated with the Kyoto School, are the pioneers of the synthesis of the compound and complex ideas of Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist tradition with new western thought in a manner of creative advance into novelty.

10. Time

What is at issue in this compound unity of the different schools is primarily concerned with the relationship between being and nothingness in general. It might be a concrescent unification of the diverse data inherited from the past traditions into a novel form of arising mediated by the free subjective action in the present experience of human beings with the intelligent aim towards the future *à la* Whitehead. For Whitehead, perishing, presupposed by the prior arising, entails arising in succession, and this is the concept of time as perpetual perishing which is equivalent to supersession with the asymmetrical irreversible direction ever accumulated by the past. He says that to perish is to assume a new function in the process of generation,, perishing is the initiation of becoming [AI 291, 237-8]. This is supported by Aristotle saying that the corruption of one thing is the generation of another, and *vice versa* (*Generation and Corruption* 318a24-25). For Aristotle, time is the number of movement in respect of before and after (*Physics* 219a). There is no time without motion: time does not occur without event. In other words, time has no its own reality but actual entities or events create time. This echoes with the eastern wisdom of the classical Chinese of Change according to which the end is identical with the beginning, implying an infinite repetition of circles as the ontological principle of time. Perishing is always accompanied by arising, forming a temporal flow as a discontinuous continuity negatively mediated by the moment of perishing *qua* self-negation. In this regard, Christian Wolff also defines time as the successive order of the continuing series (*Philosophia Primo sive Ontologia* 572). Kant also says that all appearances exist in time, in mere succession, existence is perpetually vanishing and recommencing [CR 168-9].

11. Negative mediation and place

Hereby it is obvious that Tanabe's concept of negative mediation plays a crucial role in the structural analysis of time in contrast to the static place whereby everything is contained in the last resort. The distinctive feature of Tanabe from Nishida's position of the ultimate place as Absolute Nothingness lies in the dynamic self-conversion in and through negation in the temporal process in which truth is to be revealed as the self-manifesting movement. While Nishida represents the traditional agricultural and geometrical backgrounds based upon the stable space, Tanabe is engaged in thinking in the perpetually changing socio-historical contexts of the modern industrial urbanized world.

As Nishida suggests, human knowledge and ideas are reflective of the social productive styles, and as Watsuji also explicates, they are correlative to the natural and geographic circumstances as well. Watsuji constructs a systematic theory of ethics in terms of Absolute Emptiness in such a Hegelian way that the basic principle of Absolute Emptiness is to be self-manifested and self-realized in the forms of the individuals and communal societies in alteration through the mediation of human subjective action, leading up to the totality of the state existence, or even the world government, in the end. This might be akin to Tanabe's dialectic of species, sharing with the Hegelian assertion that the Absolute is not thought anywhere else than in the phenomenal world, i.e., history is regarded as the self-manifestation of Absolute Spirit or Reason: what is rational is actual, and *vice versa*. By contrast, Nishida does not extend his logic to the actually existing political entity but confines himself within the intelligent contemplation of truth, as a result of the intuitive Zen practice from the individualistic standpoint.

With respect to the mathematical implications of time, Nishida sees the ceaseless succession of temporal flow as always present as a whole and in entirety from the integral perspective, whereas Tanabe retains a constant progress of novelty, ever-new discontinuous leaps in the forward movement of time from the infinitesimal standpoint. While Nishida has the affinity with the Neo-Platonic viewpoint of the intelligible world, the eternal archetype of the chronological phenomenal dimension, Tanabe stands on the historical horizon of transient events in the temporal flowing sequences. In effect, on the one hand, Nishida sees time from above, the eternal dimension, and on the other, Tanabe from below, the human experience of free subjective activity; While Nishida is close to the Greek static contemplation, Tanabe is akin to the Hebraic dynamic movement in history. This might be the reason why Tanabe demonstrates the Christian dogmatic in terms of his own logic of species with the stress on the historical actuality of Jesus over against the mythological figure of the *Amitabha* Buddha.

12. Divine in comparison

Nishida's idea of Absolute Nothingness might be closer to Lao-tzu's, whereas Tanabe's has the intimacy with the Buddhist Emptiness which has no its own substance but occurs as the phenomenal entities or events in and through self-negation. In contrast to Karl Barth's idea of the eternal pre-existence of Jesus in the vertical dimension, much influenced by the Greek metaphysics, J. Moltmann and W. Pannenberg stand on the historical horizon in which the future arrival of the Kingdom of God and the second coming of Christ are to be expected from the apocalyptic perspective of the Biblical tradition of Messianism. This is the duality of Christianity constituted by the Greek ontology and Hebraic-linear historical consciousness in anticipation of the actualization of divinity on earth. In East Asia, including Japan, however, there is no such a historical tradition of the expected coming of the divine sovereignty in the indefinite future. Rather, under the cyclic four-seasons natural circumstances agriculture supported by the stable land is prevailing, and Nishida's position well represents this type of social activity, instead of the linear progressive expectation of the Messiah. On the contrary, Heidegger's notion of waiting for the mature time might be stemmed from the Biblical source in which the last God is anticipated to come about in the other beginning which has so far deeply been hidden in the first beginning of western history of metaphysics, i.e., the early Greek onset, in the metaphysical guise. Tanabe's position bears a historical turn to the western culture mainly driven by Christianity and Greek metaphysics from the traditional agricultural society the substratum of which is unchanging space of the natural land.

Hegel's assertion that the Absolute is to be self-actualized in the phenomenal world history has the affinity with the Tendai (*Tian-tai*) Buddhist philosophy according to which the truth of all appearances in the universe signifies that appearances are nothing but truth, that is, truth is self-manifested in appearances: the self-identity of appearances and truth. This is another expression of Emptiness whose reverse-side is phenomena in the actual world in terms of self-negating activity of Emptiness. This character may reflect the Chinese thinking propensity for actuality rather than mere abstract truth, and it is more intensified in Japanese Tendai thought of original enlightenment, entailing the direct self-identity of ordinary human beings and the Buddha without self-negation. Likewise, Hegel may be inclined towards a sort of optimistic identification of the given actuality as the self-manifestation of the Absolute, e.g., the present state existence is regarded as the Kingdom of God on earth. This kind of self-affirmative tendency, particularly in East Asia, might be pertaining to the agricultural society based on the stable land with the conservative mentality. In Hegel, however, Spinoza's notion of the self-identity of God as the free cause and the infinite

modes of the universe as the effect may be influential, though there is no time-process in Spinoza.

13. Post-mathematical scheme

What is drastically happening today around the world, i.e., the biological threat to humankind, suggests the limitations of the mathematical-physical model on which Nishida's and Tanabe's philosophies are based. In fact, Tanabe started with mathematics and his doctorate is concerned with the philosophy of mathematics, culminating in the historicist development of mathematics and the possible unification of relativity and quantum mechanics in the latest stage of his thinking. His mentor Nishida's ultimate idea of Absolute Nothingness *qua Topos* may come from both projective geometry, much influenced during his high school period, and the traditional agricultural environment in his homeland. His contemporary philosopher A.N. Whitehead, too, is originally a mathematician in analogy with which his conception of process as reality is developed under the influences of relativity and quantum physics as well. Their thoughts might be the intellectual products limited by the 19th-20th centuries historical circumstances in which mathematical physics is predominant. Even so, however, after the late 20th century genetic biology has rapidly been advanced and such a new area of bio-ethic has also been explored as a complex construction of heterogeneous unity. These recent manifestations might be parallel to the historical change from the atomic-nuclear to the biological weapon in the war strategy as well.

As Heidegger already predicted the crisis of modern mechanistic civilization productive of mass uniformity entailing the self-alienation of humanity, the urban style of intensive living may today be in the possible collapse owing to the current biological danger on a worldwide scale. The modern mechanistically urbanized style of living has gradually lost its primary natural background of the agricultural society in which nature and human activity are cooperative with each other. The biological threat to humankind implies the necessary return to nature as the substratum on which human activity is based, and the cooperation of nature and human activity is urgent in establishing a higher synthesis of them in addition to the climate problem. Hereby it might be highly significant to investigate into Lao-tzu's naturalism according to which the end comes back to the beginning again in terms of the ontological principle of time reflecting natural movements of celestial bodies. Heidegger also foresees the advent of the other beginning which has deeply been hidden in the first beginning of western metaphysical history in anticipation of the last God as the return to the primordial origin. Thereby the past and the future are in coincidence with one another, and a new history may commence to retrieve the forgotten and concealed origin as the event of Being in the full manifestation. In fact, Lao-tzu's implicit influence on Heidegger might be

recognizable in his idea of the other beginning besides the prototypical Christian idea of the second coming of Christ. In this regard, Hegel also expects the emergence of the third religion which is neither Catholic nor Protestant in the future.

14. One's own self

On the other hand, the Japanese medieval Buddhist Nichiren (1222–1282) also explicates that at the last stage of the long journey of the Buddha's salvific activity the disciples who have so far been edified by him finally reach the full enlightenment upon a conscious return to their hidden original beginning of which they have profoundly been sunk into oblivion (*The Principal Image of Contemplation*). This signifies the coincidence of the original cause and the present effect occurring at the eternal now as a unification of linear and cyclic time. The mutual identity of cause and effect in an instant moment of mind as the event of sudden enlightenment does not exclude the distinction of them in the temporal process of the immensely long gradual course of edification/enlightenment. The content of ultimate enlightenment is no other than the self-enjoyment of one's own inactive naturalness beyond and above activity as the self-realization of one's own original essence in appearance, and this state of mind might implicitly be in affinity with Lao-tzu's inactive activity of naturalness as authentic freedom. In this sense, Lao-tzu may be encompassed within the Buddhist ambit from the perspective of absolute self-identity of all self-manifestations of ultimate absoluteness in history as merely one phase of an infinite succession of the self-transformations of the eternal original Buddha in the end. Heidegger's another later notion of releasement (*Gelassenheit*) also bears the resemblance to Lao-tzu's inactive naturalness, i.e., freedom of letting beings be, without being forced by beings, as well. The self-realization of one's own innate nature of the eternal original essence in appearance as the genuine freedom of inactive naturalness may in some way correspond to the Aristotelian concept of *entelecheia*.

15. Emptiness as appearance

Tendai establishes the contemplation of mind by integrating the three aspects of true reality, i.e., Emptiness, Appearance, and the self-identity of them at the third stage of the interpretation of the Lotus Sutra. The self-identity of Emptiness and appearance is inclined to lead to the direct self-identity of the opposed aspects without self-negation within itself under the Chinese and Japanese intellectual circumstances of the priority of factual actuality over abstract truth, and this is the so-called Original Enlightenment in the medieval Japanese Tendai school according to which human beings are identical with the Buddha in essence. This direct identification of human beings and the Buddha, however, must not be taken literally, otherwise it would turn

out to be a false identification lacking the active mediation between the original essence and appearance. This may collapse into a kind of mere naturalism devoid of human willful practical endeavor to attain ideality on their own part with the result of ethical corruption.

What is then authentically meant by the self-identity of Emptiness and appearance? This is the necessary consequence of the self-emptying activity of Emptiness in the form of perfect fusion of the three parties of Emptiness, appearance, and the self-identity of them. The concept of true reality of all phenomena signifies not only the true reality of all phenomena but also the true reality *qua* all phenomena: all phenomena are nothing but true reality itself. In other words, there is no true reality apart from all phenomena. This is the authentic meaning of Emptiness as Appearance in its self-conversion through negation as the perpetual self-manifestation of Emptiness in the phenomenal world. In this sense, even Hegel's assertion that God is to be self-manifested in history might be akin to the Buddhist doctrine of the self-identity of Emptiness and Appearance in ultimate reality. In other words, all phenomena reveal their own original essence in a diversity of appearances; each discloses its hidden potentiality fully in the light of eternal origin. This may be the significance of eternity as inactive activity of genuine naturalness inherent in one's own self beyond any dare doing in the realm of the secular world, as Nichiren suggests. This is also what original enlightenment should be meant in its authenticity, without the immediate and direct identification of Emptiness and appearance which is devoid of self-negation through mutual conversion.

16. Appearance as reality

In this regard, the Buddhist doctrine of phenomena as reality has in some way an affinity with Whitehead's conception of process as reality in which there is no reality apart from the perpetual arising and perishing process of actual entities, without searching for substance behind or beyond appearance. Whereas the Buddhist doctrine displays the ten aspects of reality such as appearance, nature, essence, power, activity, cause, conditions, effect, retribution, and the ultimate self-identity of them, Whitehead employs the efficient and final causation, the objective immortality of the past, eternal objects (universal forms), the primordial and consequent nature of God in the main. The difference between them lies in the fact that while the Buddhist doctrine is prevailed by the logic of space, i.e., the cyclic type, for Whitehead the logic of time plays a central role as the irreversible asymmetry of temporality towards the future which is reflective of the Judo-Christian tradition. In the East, on the one hand, due to the agricultural social activity based on the invariable static substratum of space-land cyclic time is predominant, and on the other, linear time is representative of the West

in search of attainment of the ideal aim in its desert proto-cultural origin. Today in the globalization of the world the opposed types of time may come to be in fusion in the direction of a higher possible unity.

Even within the Buddhist ambit, however, there is the difference between Tendai and Nichiren in that whereas Tendai stands on the contemplation of mind, Nichiren takes the position of practical action to realize eternal truth in the actual world, which might be similar to Fichte's concept of *Tathandling* (act, action, acting) in connection with historical time. For Nichiren, to learn about Buddhism, it is above all necessary to know of the appropriate historical time for the development of the Buddhist truth (*The Selection of Time*). According to him, Buddhist truth takes the self-developmental course in history step by step rather than the at once disclosure of full truth. Therefore, it is crucial to discern the cause from the effect in the Buddha's salvific activity in engagement with human beings: is it now rightly the time of harvest or the time of seeding? While the harvest refers to the effect as a completion of salvation, the act of seeding pertains to the cause as the primordial origin of the attainment of Buddhahood, and Nichiren identifies himself as engaging in the primordial act of seeding in the eschatological time after the Buddha *Sakyamuni*'s extinction. This might be resulted from the fact that a new actual entity occurs through vanishing in successive process of time as perpetual perishing, as Kant, Fichte and Whitehead suppose. In the event, Nichiren identifies himself as the eternal return of the eternal original Buddha in the successive historical era of the post-*Sakyamuni* in terms of the acting status of his own personality as the restoration and resuscitation of the concealed root origin in depth. In this regard, Nichiren may enjoy the self-realization of his own eternal essence in action and person in the form of self-identity of Emptiness and appearance, of potentiality and actuality, i.e., actionless action of original naturalness, the full self-actualization of essence in the appearance as *entelecheia à la* Aristotle.

17. Eternity

With respect to the notion of the eternal now or the absolute present upon which Nishida and Tanabe place the special emphasis, attention should be paid to the relationship between eternity and time in such a way that the present is not directly connected with eternity but rather only through the mediation of the past. This is because the absolute can be attained through the opposition between the relatives, i.e., the present and the past; the genuine absoluteness is to be realized solely through the mediation of the relativity of the past and the present. In other words, it is unfeasible to unify the present with eternity directly without the past, but on the contrary, one can reach eternity as the absolute past beyond the relative past in opposition to the present to the extent that eternity is mediated by the relative opposition between past and future,

otherwise eternity as the absolute would degenerate into a relative being devoid of absoluteness among other relatives. This is evident in terms of the triadic logic of species as the dialectic according to which universal eternity is to be actualized in the present through the mediation of the particular species-like entities such as some specific period or duration of historical time. Namely, there are the correspondences: the genus-like universality corresponds to eternity, the species to the past, and the present to the individuality respectively. Most may tend to lean to the direct relation of the present and eternity as a contact point of them, without mediating the past, but this might be inadequate due to its failing to synthesize relativity of the relative entities and absoluteness properly.

In this respect, J. Moltmann makes a distinction between the two kinds of eternity: absolute eternity and relative eternity, i.e., aeon. Likewise, in the Buddhist Lotus Sutra, too, on the surface, the Buddha *Sakyamuni* reveals his own attainment of Buddhahood in the far more remote past as the immensely long and long aeons ago, i.e., the finite eternity, in depth of which is the authentic infinite eternity hidden, as adumbrated there. This implies that absolute, infinite eternity cannot be directly disclosed by itself, but rather only through the mediation of the relative, finite eternity. This might be tenable from the triadic dialectical perspective of the relationship between time and eternity, as construed above. The relational structure of time and eternity is composed of the reciprocal relationship between the cause and the effect in terms of the conduct of the Buddha's salvific purpose for human beings. This is projected into the future in the form of the proleptic appearance of the Bodhisattva in anticipation of the fulfilment of the past promise. The idea of the anticipated Bodhisattva as the acting person on the ontological status of the cause vis-à-vis the Buddha as the completed effect might be in its future-orientation in line with messianism in general. The indeterminate future in potentiality is to be brought about into actuality in the present through the mediation of free subjective action with a view to realizing the aim. Anyway, in contrast to the Lotus Sutra Buddhist propensity for history, the problem of how to construct history, including the socio-political state existence, remains blur on the side of Daoism.

18. Ecological roots

Today, it is worthy of notice that the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess is in pursuit of deep ecological movement in terms of the Scandinavia natural environment as well as the Indian Upanisadic identity of Brahman and Atman (the universe and the self) and the Daoist ideas of inactive naturality and the same root of all things in the entire cosmos. Besides, Spinoza's notion of the identity of God as the free cause and God as the infinite modes of the universe (the results) is also much influential as well, according to the eminent Japanese scholar of Nordic studies, Prof. Dr. Kazuhiko Ozaki

at Meiji University. His grand project of Nordology attempts at an imaginative construction by reverting to the prototypical mythology in relation to Daoist inactive naturalism, shedding a new light on the environmental issues and ecology in the nascent eschatological situation of the world. His main threefold works of the Nordic mythology, the Uppsala School religious philosophy, and the elaborate Nordic research may contribute to the exploration of the correlation between nature and humankind from the standpoint of Nordic intellectual history in which the universal principles of unification of the individual and totality, co-existence of one and many, and reconciliation of spirit and nature play the important roles towards the future prediction of a new world after the destruction as the retrieval of the original ideal in the end.

Conclusion

In contrast to the western general tendency towards searching for transcendent Being as ultimate reality, the Buddhist and Daoist ways of thinking are conversely involved in Emptiness as non-substantiality of any entity and Nothingness as the root source of all phenomena. While sciences and technology are developed in terms of Being, nature and spirit are separated from each other, resulting in the destruction of nature. The Daoist idea of Nothingness is in correlation to inactive naturalness as authentic freedom which is in part overlapped with the Buddhist notion of actionless action as the full self-realization of one's own original essence, corresponding to the Heideggerian releasement. Emptiness turns out to be appearance reversely due to its perpetual self-negating activity in the form of appearance as reality, sharing with the Whiteheadian process as reality. The Daoist proposition that all things in the universe are originated from and ascribed into the one principle of Primordial Nothingness may be consonant with the current ecological and biological advance, conquering the natural crisis involved in the globe. The Buddhist concept of actionless action as the self-manifestation of Emptiness might be in accordance with the Aristotelian self-realization of essence in appearance, i.e., *entelecheia*. Nishida, Tanabe, and Watsuji pursue to compound western and eastern thought in terms of Absolute Nothingness or Emptiness in the novel form in encounter with western culture in the modern era of cosmological evolution of human spirit. The idea of Absolute Nothingness or Emptiness in relation to nature and action may contribute to resolving the complex matters commonly and inevitably entangled in the present world.

Even if so, however, the problem of how to harmonize the social activity of construction of the state existence in relation to historical time with nature remains still unclear on the Daoist part. It may be insufficient to enjoy oneself by virtue of contemplation of truth in the artistic attitude in divorce from the socio-political actuality. In this regard, Tanabe's logic of species might be cogent in the context of

socio-historical dynamics in cooperation with the Whiteheadian causal analysis of experience structured by subjective act of becoming and objective being in the actual temporal process.

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