

TANABE'S PHILOSOPHY IN THE COMPARATIVE CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT. *As Hegel suggests, there is no philosophy apart from the history of philosophy. Each philosophy represents the spirit peculiar to its own period. Heidegger, too, holds that every philosophy is the sound of Being, and the history of philosophy is the history of Being. This is true for the Kyoto School philosophy of modern Japan represented by Kitaro Nishida, Hajime Tanabe, and Tetsuro Watsuji, who made to endeavor to construct a new synthesis of Western and Eastern philosophy in the critical, confrontational, and creative ways in the given historical contexts. In particular, Tanabe (1885-1962) attempts at the dialectical unification of Christianity and Buddhism in the last resort from the standpoint of Absolute Nothingness. As, in Whitehead's conception of Process, actuality is composed of the past objective being as the given data and the present subjective act of becoming, so it might be highly significant to analyze the constitutive elements of Tanabe's system of thought from the historical and comparative contexts.*

KEYWORDS: *Confucianism, change, Upanishad, dialectic, negative conversion, Absolute Nothingness, the state, the species*

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1. Confucian Influence

Tanabe does not presuppose any pre-existent entity such as God or the Eternal Ideas prior to the actual world. The origin of the world is mysteriously incomprehensible and unrecognizable for human beings, according to him. Human beings can start only from the end as the given facts of the world. His standpoint is not from above but from below, being restricted to the historical perspective without the transcendental realm. This echoes to natural sciences and Confucian standpoint. Confucianism is secular in character and not transcendental in its basic structure accorded with the given society. The backgrounds of Tanabe's thinking lie in Confucian culture and Buddhist tradition as well.

The historical origin of Confucian culture is found in the oldest Chinese literature, the *Book of Change*, in which dual elements of the positive and the negative in opposition are alternately convertible and changeable. The basic structure of nature represented by the movement of the sun and the moon is applicable to all aspects of human society, including the way of life. The alternation of the positive and negative element generates all phenomena in the universe, and this is the basic principle of the Change. On the one hand, the historical background of Tanabe's thought lies in Confucian culture, and on the other hand, it is also much influenced by the Buddhist notion of Emptiness, which rejects any pre-existence of the original source of the world but whose reverse side constitutes the dependent origination of all phenomena in the nexus. This means that there is no original source of phenomena in the world, but rather that phenomena have no their own substantiality or own being eternally. All phenomena in the universe arise and perish alternately, and are constituted by the inner relationship between the cause and the effect. This causality is called *pratityasamutpada* in Sanskrit, which might correspond to A.N. Whitehead's conception of concrescence. The Confucian idea of Change and the Indian Buddhist notion of the dependent origination might be in some way parallel to each other from the standpoint of the occurrence of phenomena. That Change has no substance but only operation or activity may suggest the latent correspondence of Confucian and Buddhist conceptions.

Even so, however, there is another stream within the wider sense of Confucian culture, i.e., Laozi's and Zhangzi's idea of Nothingness. Their ideas of Nothingness are different from the Indian Buddhist notion of Emptiness in that the former is characterized by the original source of all phenomena in the world, whereas in the latter there is no original reality prior to phenomena. In other words, Laozi's and Zhangzi's ideas of Nothingness are emanational in character, while the Buddhist notion of Emptiness never presupposes such pre-existent reality from which phenomena come about and into which they return. This difference between them is significant, and contributes to the preparation for the settling of the Buddhist notion of Emptiness in Confucian culture. They are not the same or identical, but merely similar on the surface.

The difference between Laozi's and Zhangzi's idea of Nothingness and the Buddhist notion of Emptiness might be reflected in another way within the ambit of

the Kyoto School of Philosophy, namely between Nishida's and Tanabe's concept of Absolute Nothingness. Whereas Nishida leans towards Laozi's idea of Nothingness, though there is some mixture with the latter, Tanabe authentically points to the Buddhist notion of Emptiness. Nishida's thought may reflect the very traditional heritage of the Eastern intellectual history in general without explication of the literal references. This is due to the fact that the intellectual tradition in Japan comprises many different elements and streams of various ideas which originally came from the diverse cultural backgrounds and regions but are actually mixed with each other in content in the long historical formation of the intellectual cultural heritage.

2. Nishida's Background

This is evident in Nishida's first writing, *A Study of Goodness*, in which the basic idea of pure experience is introduced with reference to William James who makes use of that idea. Even so, however, Nishida's idea of pure experience is very similar to Laozi's thought in content in that subject and object have not yet been separated from one another in pure experience. The oneness of subject and object in pure experience proceeds to separate itself into the opposed entities, i.e., subject and object, and this process might be quite parallel to the Laozi's famous phrase that from Nothingness issues oneness, then from oneness issues the two, i.e., the positive and the negative, then from the twin issues the three, and finally from the three issue all things. Nishida himself might be not well aware of the exact reference of the literature but be generally conscious of the traditional intellectual heritages. In the same writing it might be not hard to find out the hidden influence of the Buddhist theory of consciousness with regard to Berkeley's thought that existence is nothing but perception, i.e., all phenomena are appearances in the mind, or such idealism. The Confucian concealed influence might be obvious in that Nishida identifies the idea of God as innumerable changeable phenomena in the universe in contrast to the Christian idea of the transcendental and personal God. For, according to *the Book of Change*, the Chinese letter of *Kami*, the translation of the English word "God", means the infinite activities of the twin principle of change, i.e., the positive and negative, in the universe. This signifies the immanence of God in the universe, but not transcendence like the European idea of transcendent Being or God. As Liederbach points out, the diverse ideas and various thoughts originated from different cultural areas such as, India, China, and Europe, co-exist without the coherent structural unity in the Japanese intellectual tradition, and Nishida, too, is not the exception.

Another highly developed concept of the later mature stage of Nishida's thought is that of "Absolute Self-Identity in Contradistinction" which is expressive of a dialectical unification of the opposed. This dialectical concept is reflective of the Buddhist notion of Emptiness which is neither being nor nothing, originated from in the Indian Buddhist School of *Nagarjuna* and further developed in the Chinese Buddhist School of *Tien-tai*. In contrast to the Indian tendency towards the negativity of actuality, the *Tien-tai* School overturns the negativity into actuality towards which the Chinese way of thinking tends. That is, Emptiness is not only neither being nor

nothing but also being and nothing as well. The double negation turns out into affirmation. This Chinese propensity for the affirmation of actuality has influenced the Japanese Buddhist thought, entailing the full affirmation of actuality particularly represented by the Tendai School of Original Enlightenment in the medieval period. Nishida's dialectical concept is not exempted from the underlying current of thought in the Japanese intellectual history. As a result, Nishida's expression of Absolute Self-Identity in Contradistinction, for his critic, Tanabe, sounds more affirmative of self-identity of being rather than negativity.

The fact that Nishida's concept of Absolute Self-Identity in Contradistinction is dialectical in structure also reflects the ancient Chinese idea of Change in which the opposed elements of the positive and the negative are alternately changed into the other, are to be unified in a higher level, and so on endlessly. The archetypal structure of the ancient Chinese idea of Change is operative not merely in Confucianism but also Buddhist philosophy. The dialectical structure of Change is fundamental in Eastern thought in general, and this might be the reason why even modern Chinese system of politics takes the form of Marxism whose logic is dialectical.

2.1. Indian Influence

In the ancient India there were the two main streams of thought, that is, *Upanishadic* or *Vedantic* and Buddhist thought. The crucial difference between them is that while in the former the original source of the universe is set up as the objective principle of *Brahman* which is identical with the subjective principle of *Atman*, in the latter there is no original source from which the universe is emanated but every actual entity has no its own eternal being as substance, i.e., all phenomena are ultimately empty, and vice versa. This emptiness is nonetheless ultimate reality structured by dialectical logic. Buddhist thought excludes any pre-existing entity such as *Brahman* from which the universe is issued and created, the very essential characteristic of Emptiness.

The Neo-platonist Plotinus' idea of the One is supposed to be under the influence of the *Upanishadic* or *Vedantic* idea of *Brahman* as ultimate reality, and Nishida, too, is affected by Plotinus' theory of emanation. On this point Tanabe attacks Nishida's tendency towards the theory of emanation which is diametrically opposed to the Absolute Nothingness, Tanabe accuses him of regressing into the affirmation of Absolute Being in the final analysis. According to Tanabe, Nishida's concept of Absolute Self-Identity in Contradistinction implies the self-identity of Being without the inner moment of self-negation. For Tanabe, Nishida's last concept of Place or *Topos* as Absolute Nothingness has the connotation of self-identical Being despite its ostensible sound of Nothingness. Tanabe's criticism of Nishida should be reviewed and analyzed from the Japanese intellectual perspective in which a diversity of ideas arising from the different origins are coexistent with each other in complexity. A subtle distinction between Nishida and Tanabe with regard to their fundamental principles of Absolute Nothingness may entail a fertile development in a comparative manner.

In contrast to Western logic of subject, Nishida stresses the logic of predicate from the standpoint of Emptiness or Absolute Nothingness, and this might be implicitly common to Tanabe as well. From the standpoint of the transcendental dimension, the subject of history is God or Absolute Spirit for, e.g., Hegel and the Christian theologian Karl Barth, and not vice versa. For Hegel, history is the predicative field of God's action, that is, history is no other than the process of the self-manifestations of God. Or, for Barth, too, Being of God is in Becoming, that is, the human person Jesus is the self-revelation or incarnation of God in history. For both of them, the transcendental Being or God is the subject of history, and human history is the place or process of the Divine activity. The western way of thinking tends to set up the original source or cause at the eternal beginning prior to history in such a way that the creator God creates the universe consequently. This way of thinking is not except for Indian *Upanishadic* or *Vedantic* philosophy, according to which the universe is created and emanated from Brahman as ultimate reality. Contrary to the emanationist way of thinking, the Buddhist principle of Emptiness denies the pre-existence of any original cause of all phenomena, and Tanabe stands firmly by this non-substantial being of any kind.

3. Heidegger on Beginning

This is also contrary to the ancient Greek way of thinking as the European cultural origin in which ontology as the science of being predominates. So, Heidegger seeks for the primordial Being that has been long sunk into oblivion and deeply hidden since even the pre-Socratic age. For Heidegger, ultimate reality is not beings appeared in space and time but Being itself concealed in the first beginning, i.e., the pre-Socratic age, of western history. On this point, Tanabe is very critical of Heidegger as persistently clinging to Being, the typical western thinking.

In the later Heidegger Being is identical with *Ereignis*, i.e., the Event of Being, and the Beginning. For him, there are two kinds of concepts of beginning, i.e., the first and the other beginning. The first beginning is the ancient Greece, especially the pre-Socratic age, and the other beginning, in which the last and ultimate God should appear, is now to be established as a consequence of the end of the decline history begun from the first origin. The other beginning, however, is not different from the first beginning but deeply hidden in the first beginning; it should be the retrieval of the essence primordially concealed in the ground of the first beginning once more in the eschatological era of the present time. On this point, Tanabe never refers to Heidegger's important idea of the other beginning, though touching upon the event of being, *Ereignis*. This might be due to the fact that the concept of the other beginning plays the central role in the so-called the second major work of Heidegger, i.e. the *Contributions to Philosophy*, which was published only after his death, and which Tanabe never knows during his time. In this regard, it should be pointed out that Heidegger's concept of the other beginning has rather the affinity with the Buddhist eschatological idea of the so-called *mappo* era, in which the old history of salvation ends and a new history begins again, particularly represented by Nichiren based upon

the implications of the Lotus Sutra.

3.1. *Watsuji on Negativity*

The contemporary philosopher with Tanabe within the ambit of the Kyoto School of Philosophy, Tetsuro Watsuji, who moved to Tokyo University as Professor of ethics later on, employs the concept of Absolute Nothingness, or even Absolute Emptiness more frequently, as the fundamental principle of his grand work, *Ethics*. According to Watsuji, human existence is structured by the principle of Absolute Negativity, and the basic law of human existence is formulated as the perpetual self-returning movement of absolute negativity in and through self-negation in the actual realms of society and history. As a matter of fact, Watsuji himself studied the early Buddhist philosophy and obtained doctorate from Tokyo University, and consequently his usage of the concept of Absolute Emptiness rather than Absolute Nothingness sounds more accurate philologically than both Nishida and Tanabe. The dialectical logic of Absolute Emptiness is quite clearly described in his brilliant work *Ethics* throughout, and this reflects the influence of Hegel's method. For Hegel, the subject of history is God, whereas for Watsuji the principle of Absolute Negativity is the same place as God; God is replaced by the abstract notion of Absolute Negativity which is the principle of continuously self-negating movement manifesting itself in the concrete space and time, i.e., the human society and history. So, it might be not hard to discern the implicit traces of Hegel's dialectical method of interpretation of the historical development of human beings in Watsuji's dialectical logic of Absolute Emptiness or Negativity.

According to Watsuji, there is no badness or evil which cannot be turned out into goodness in the end. Badness is the state at which the movement of self-negation of Absolute Negativity, i.e., Absolute Nothingness, stops and does not go further to negate itself. This sounds a kind of monism of goodness, as in the case of Christian theology according to which badness or evil is the temporal absence of goodness and overcome by goodness in the last resort. This echoes to Hegel's monistic tendency towards the realization of the Kingdom of God in history. On this point Watsuji also differs from Tanabe in that in the latter goodness and badness or evil are diametrically opposed to each other, and goodness is always accompanied by the potential badness, and vice versa. In other words, either of them is not superior to and disappeared or reduced to the other without its own reality. They are dualistic in nature and mutually convertible to one another. Goodness is not assumed to be predominant or the conqueror over the badness. Both of goodness and badness are dualistically symmetrical in the final analysis. This tension between them is retained throughout in human existence, and hence, for Tanabe, the political state existence is, too, not exempted from this duality; the state existence as such is neither good nor bad, but on the contrary, an existence in balance between goodness and badness as the expedient medium of absoluteness or universality in the realm of relativity or specificity. Whether the state existence is the realization of absolute universality, i.e., good, or not depends on the human action.

As regards human action, Watsuji and Tanabe are in agreement with each other. For Watsuji, the basic structure of human existence is nothing but the relationship or connection between subjective actions of human beings in general, and for Tanabe, too, the subject of history is none other than human beings. This means that the subjective action is central in playing the negative mediation between absoluteness and relativity, between the universal genus and the particular species like a human society or the state existence. This might reflect the fact that in Japan the Confucian tradition has long been predominant without postulating the transcendental Being or God as in the case of the Christian Europe.

On the relationship of the individual and totality or wholeness, Watsuji also identifies Absolute Negativity as Absolute Totality as well. For him, there are two kinds of concepts of Totality or Wholeness: one is the relative totality and the other is absolute totality. The relative totality is to be realized in and through negation of the individual in the infinite direction of absolute totality that is identical with Absolute Negativity or Nothingness. Absolute Totality is never realized at once at any step of the historical development but always on the way of being realized towards the ultimate objective in history. *In concreto*, relative totality is realized as a human society at each step of historical development of human beings, while absolute totality is aimed at the infinitely remote point or the original principle from which every form of human society comes to be realized in the structure of space and time. On this point, as Leaderbach duly points out, Watsuji's Ethics as a whole might be oriented towards the realization of the totality as a social system rather than the individual. In other words, the moment of the individual is regarded as a vanishing point into a society on the level of totality. The relative totality in the form of a social entity is rather emphasized than the individual. Tanabe, too, places the stress on the state existence as the substratum for the individuals in his early stage of the Logic of Species, though later on modifying it immediately after the World War II. Both Watsuji and Tanabe might be inevitably involved in their own situations of that age. Even so, however, Tanabe quickly recognizes the importance of the individual action of repentance for evil and sin, and this might be entailed by his logic of negative mediation promoted by the perpetual activity of the double negation of Absolute Nothingness based upon the Buddhist principle of Emptiness.

4. Whitehead on Experience

With regard to the subjective action, Whitehead explicates the structure of experience in terms of subjective becoming and objective being in the process of perpetual arising and perishing of actuality. Upon the termination of the subjective act of becoming, the subjectivity is lost and transformed into the objective being which is the same as the superject (Whitehead's own new term) as being immortal functioning as causality in succession of time. In comparison to Whitehead, Tanabe, too, places the emphasis on the subjective action of the individual in relation to its environmental entity, i.e., the species-like society. The society on the level of species has the duality of the realization of the universal genus and of regressing into the past inactive self-

estranged being which might be regarded as Whitehead's concept of superject without subjectivity. The superject as the past being functioning as efficient causality may be conceived of as the self-estranged or alienated being which is lost of subjective activity any more. One aspect of the species-like entity, i.e., society, the highest level of which is the state existence, is capable of being the realization of the universality, whereas the other aspect of it is the self-estrangement from the realized universality. Here Whitehead and Tanabe may correspond to each other in the explication of the fundamental structure of human experience in terms of the duality of subject and object, or action and its superjected inertial being or the self-estranged past inactivity. Moreover, both of them stress the moment of negation in the form of perishing or negative mediation as the dialectical movement. While Whitehead's concept of the past entity as objectively immortal being is seen from natural perspective, Tanabe's notion of species has the highly developed connotation of social system like the state existence in history. Tanabe's standpoint is much more directly influenced by Hegel's dialectical logic of socio-historical existence. Tanabe aims at constructing the legal system of the state existence for the purpose of the perpetual realization of the universal genus-like truth in the actual world of human beings. In other words, the state existence has the dual structure of oscillating between the universal genus, i.e., good, and its regression into the self-estrangement, i.e., bad.

5. Tendai on Badness and Evil

The dual tension between goodness and badness might be the unique point of Tanabe's triadic logic of species, though improved and modified upon the immediate affection of the defeat of the war. Even so, however, in the Japanese intellectual historical perspective there might be the implicit influence of the Tendai (*Tien-tai*) Buddhist thought behind his idea in addition to his confrontation with German Idealism, especially Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Kant's idea of radical evil might be the secularized Christian idea of original sin, or latently affected by it, Fichte's idea of inertia may come from physics and natural sciences, and finally Schelling's idea of badness and evil may be a deep insight into human freedom. Human free action is structured by the dual opposition between goodness and badness, the positive realization of universality and its regression into the negative inertial inactivity or non-subjectivity as the self-estrangement or alienation from the realized universality. Hereby it might be clear that whether the universal genus-like truth is to be realized or regressed into its self-estrangement depends on the individual's free subjective action. The perpetual activity of double negation is to be carried on by the individual action with the aim of realizing the universality in the socio-historical realm of human existence. On the other hand, there might be the hidden influence of the Tendai Buddhist thought on Tanabe. According to the Tendai doctrine of evil and badness, even the Buddha has the inherent possibility of doing badness and evil in principle, in spite of his perfect personality. The inner duality of goodness and badness even in the Buddha makes a sharp contrast to Christian theological idea of

evil and badness which is merely the temporal absence of goodness; in other words, goodness is the last conqueror over evil and badness due to God's perfection of goodness without imperfection of badness and evil.

6. Buddha and Christ

According to Hegel, God has the self-cyclic movement in which the eternal unity of God and man lost by the fall made by the human free action, i.e., the original sin, should be resumed by the help of the mediator the human person Jesus as the Christ who is the self-negation of God as the self-estranged form in history and is returned to the original unity in eternity through the event of resurrection. This means that cycle which is presupposed at the eternal beginning and lastly reached to its beginning only by coming to the end. This also signifies to include the difference within itself, and return to itself in and through the other; God has to become the other, different from Himself, and nevertheless, resume the original eternal unity of Himself and the other, and return to Himself in his self-negating movement as self-estrangement in mediation.

This might be parallel to the Mahayana Buddhist cannon, the Lotus Sutra-widely spread as the most comprehensive in content-in which the historical Buddha reveals the eternal original Buddha as his own essence who manifests Himself in different forms and with various names in the entire universe. The different historical Buddhas manifested in various realms of the universe are none other than the self-negation of the eternal Buddha in the corresponding diverse spaces and times on the whole of cosmos. From the viewpoint of the eternal Buddha's ceaseless salvific activity, it might be said that even Jesus is regarded as one of the self-manifestations of the eternal Buddha in a different cultural zone on earth. So, the idea of incarnation of God in the human form of Jesus is not heterogeneous but rather akin to the Buddhist thought. In the Indian historical context, Jesus is seen as one of the *avatara* (incarnation) of the Vishnu God according to the *Upanishadic* and Hindu tradition. Even Schelling does not preclude the plurality of God's self-manifestations in the world. For Indians, the only oneness of God's incarnation in Jesus may be untenable.

From the Buddhist standpoint, the self-manifestations or incarnations of the eternal Buddha in the different worlds is in consequence with the basic principle of Emptiness which operates ceaselessly continuous self-negation. That is, the eternal Buddha does not stand by and in Himself apart from his divisions in many parts in such a way to negate Himself in a variety of forms and names throughout the universe. So, the Lotus Sutra, in particular concerning the revelation of the eternal Buddha, the principle of Emptiness or Negativity, is applied to the infinite saving activity of the Buddha on the scale of whole cosmos.

From the side of God or Eternal Being, God descends down into the human person Jesus on the historical horizon, so to speak, vertically from above, and this direction is opposed to Tanabe's one from below. The vertical dimension of God's descent into the human world is also presupposed by Karl Barth's idea of the eternal pre-existence of Jesus Christ as the primordial or original history (*Urgeschichte*) prior

to its temporal history in actuality. In contrast to Barth as influenced by the Greek thinking, Juergen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg convert the vertical direction of from above into the horizontal one of from below, from the Biblical apocalyptic perspective, and this historical direction is in some way in accordance with Tanabe's orientation towards history. According to Pannenberg, although the Kingdom of God, the imminent coming of which Jesus believed in, has not yet arrived on earth, nevertheless, it has already been realized in the person of Jesus Christ in anticipation. From the Biblical apocalyptic perspective, the Kingdom of God as a whole is expected to be realized in the end of world history, together with the second coming of Christ. This is the eschatological expectation of the realization of the Kingdom of God in history.

Tanabe demonstrate Christology in terms of his own triadic logic of species, but never refers to the second coming of Christ in the end of history. For Tanabe, in his early stage of the logic of species, Christ is the archetype of the state existence in which the Absolute is manifested, or the state existence is comparable to the appearance of the Absolute. Later on, however, he modifies the nature of the state existence as the mean or balance between goodness and badness in the form of the expedient being of the Absolute. This is cogent with the species nature of the state existence between the universality and individuality. Conversely speaking, the state existence in itself is neither good nor bad, but comes up and down by realizing the universality or degenerating from it. Hereby the individual's free subjective action is important for retaining the state existence as the realization of universality.

7. Eternity and Time

Tanabe identifies Absolute Nothingness as eternity. For him, eternity is not only beyond time as being non-generative without beginning, but is also made to become immanent in time at every present to realize itself as the result of the self-limitation. If eternity begins to generate, then it must be generated in time with beginning and hence would be limited by time and be subject to time. But such a thing would entail a denial of eternity. Time is not merely the immanent dynamics contained in eternity, but also cooperates with eternity to disrupt eternity in and through negation to become temporal in succession. But, what is the subject of the conversion of eternity from transcendence into immanence? The subject is none other than the self as the individual existence which acts in freedom in mediating between eternity and time. The self's free subjective action at every present is the driving force of letting eternity be immanent in time and move from the past to the future in order to realize its eternal essence in actuality. The past cannot be expressive of eternity without both beginning and generation any more, and is mediated by the possible uncertainty of the future to be renewed and resurrected at every present. The past is re-opened and recurs in the higher repetition. The repetition is the symbol of eternity in the spiral movement. Time, participating in eternity without generation and beginning in the direction of the past, is characterized by its uncertainty belonging to the coming future and retains the possible end of the past, never being endless and imperishable

towards the future. Eternity is to be renewed at every present through the mediation of the subjective free action of the individual existence in the continuous process of ever higher repetition. Eternity in the self-negation becomes real and successive in time in and through the present in which both the past and the future are mutually negated to each other for the purpose of converting the past end into the occurrence of the new future. Eternity is repetition in such a way that the self freely acts as the subject of the self-consciousness of Absolute Nothingness wherein the opposition between the past and the future is cancelled and nevertheless conserved in a higher dimension of time.

In this way, although eternity as such is both non-generative and without beginning in character, nevertheless, it becomes time in and through self-negation, and in doing so, comes to the end of time and constantly begins anew at each present. Time cannot be included simply in eternity, but eternity retains the dynamism of time as the origin of time, and realizes it in the indefinite openness for the future. While the past endurance and future creation negate each other at the present, declining into the bottom of Nothingness, their negative tension becomes the mediating moving power at the end, and a reformative action is to be realized towards the future. As a movement of negation against non-temporal totality of space, the contemporaneity of each present is apprehended by the differential vibration, in which the end is identical with the beginning, and is superposed in repetition into the integral cooperative system. As a symbol of eternity, the present contemporaneity, which is realized in the existing individual, is infinitely extended, deepened, and even lifted up in the double form of contemporaneity of contemporaneity upon eternity as the ground of it. In terms of the structure of time, the movement of each present, as a contemporary negative mediation, is a unity of the past and the future at the present, and at the same time, the repetition in eternity from moment to moment attempts to realize the transcendent unity of the dynamic connection of locality and non-locality. The cooperation in opposition of individual existences and their contemporariness in time are to be mediated to repeat their cooperation as a dynamic symbol of eternity which mediates their contemporariness in time. Mathematically speaking, the differential corresponds to death as perishing, whereas that state in which it is negated and positively repeated up to a symbol of eternity qua Absolute Nothingness is the resurrection. This basic structure may not be concretely apprehended other than by means of the dialectic of existential cooperation.

8. Hegel's Dialectic

For Tanabe, Hegel's dialectic seems to be still confined to continuous identity and not yet fully developed into the existential dialectic which is characterized by negative mediation in the proper sense. Heidegger, too, for Tanabe, seems still clinging to the immediate standpoint of life with the immanent idealistic intentionality, rather than to the transcendental repetition mediated by the cutting act of Nothingness in a higher returning movement in and through conversion, without retracing back to the primordial origin of Nothingness itself.

Human beings should act in reformation in front of death to make eternity temporal as the interruption of its endurance, and resurrect and renew it in the depth of moving origin of being, i.e., Absolute Nothingness, entailing the end of being enduring since the past countless eons and simultaneously opening up a new era in reformative action for the future. Human existence as a creating element participates in eternity in the way that return is identical with renewal in the form of the existential cooperation as the spacious extension as well as the repetitive progress in time through the conversion in negation from death to resurrection.

On the relationship between the state existence and the individual, Tanabe criticizes Hegel's dialectical logic for still clinging to the self-identity of being. For Tanabe, if the subjectivity of the state existence, which is to be mediated by the individual freedom, were directly unified with the subjectivity of God, and there were no conversion in negation of the individual and hence in no need of the mediation of the Other power but only the self-effort of the individual, then the state existence could be merely a finite God on earth as a self-limitation of God and never signify the negative mediation to the revelation of God. But on the contrary, the negation of its finitude, together with the negation of the finitude of the individual spirit, would be converted into the preservation and retention of the content of the world from the eternal God. It would turn out to be optimistic *status quo*.

On the part of Hegel, according to Tanabe, the opposition in negation and reciprocal conversion between the state existence and the individual cannot become self-conscious in action, and the concretization of the individual and its simple subsumption under the state existence are interpreted in a way of the self-identical logic. Religion then turns out to be the immediate revelation of God without the mediation of the state existence to which the individuals are opposed in action, and the political practice of the state existence as the species-like substratum which mediates between God and the individuals in negation is not required any more. This is a kind of the theory of emanation and immanence entailing the divinization of the given actuality. This is the reason that what is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational. Thereby the linear progression prevails over the cyclic mediation.

According to Tanabe, the construction of the state existence is negative in character as the expedient, and only in so far as it is constantly renewed in the reformative practice, it can be made to exist in action through the mediation of the individual. The individual existence is based upon the principle of Absolute Nothingness, whereas the state existence is the dynamic balance between the negation resulting in a constant renewal in reformation and the affirmation retained by the past tradition. The former is the revelation of the subjectivity of God, while the latter is the mediating manifestation of the substratum of God. God as Absolute Nothingness becomes manifest and present through conversion in negation of the both of the state existence and the individual.

The state existence on the level of species-like society is such a substratum as the expedient on the basis of which the individual is to be negated. This may be analogous to Christ as the archetype of human beings in communicating the truth that

the relative is identical with the absolute to us. Therefore the state existence is such an expedient as mediating between the individual and the substratum on which the mutual love among the individuals is communicated, and is made to exist as far as it is to be renewed in conformity with its historical mission by the constant practical action of the individual; it is so as a moment of negation within Absolute Nothingness as the expedient. It is not such a specific being as is subsumed under the universal God according to the self-identical logic as in the case of Hegel.

For Hegel, from Tanabe's viewpoint, there is no mediation of the state existence which is mediated between the individual and the universal genus, but rather the individuals are subsumed under both of the species and the genus. In other words, the individuals should be negated by the state existence which is negative in mediating the individual to the genus and which is ascribed to Nothingness owing to its self-negation and by standing in opposition to the universal divine goodness which is the ground of its existence. In the later Plato, in particular in his *Nomoi*, according to Tanabe's interpretation, Absolute Goodness arises from the practical mediation of Absolute actuality qua ideality as the second order, and in doing so, the species comes to the terms to the absolute unity with the genus solely through the negative mediation of the state existence.

9. The State Existence

The individual, which is made to return and resurrect through the absolute conversion from self-negation as death, cannot directly possess its self-identical continuity. It is feasible only for wise men but not for ordinary persons. By the individual action based upon the Absolute Other is the state existence mediated to Absolute Nothingness or Totality on the level of genus in the form of practical unification of them. In short, the genus-like universalization of the state existence is mediated by the individual's political practice at each time. On the one hand, the state existence as the species-like substratum has the possibility of its expedient character of being in the form of being qua nothingness which is negatively mediated by the individual, and on the other, it is also possible for the state existence to arrogantly mistake itself as absolute substratum by which the individual is wholly negated as a consequence of the denial of its own negativity. Consequently, the state existence is inevitably destined to perish and disappear from history by God's judgment of the world. If the state existence in regard to God as Absolute Nothingness is not negatively mediated by the individual practice, due to its *status quo*, i.e., standing in opposition to God, then it cannot escape from being denied by God. The individual as a free existence, too, cannot escape from the bondage of radical evil tending to stick to its own being in opposition to God. It is only by means of repentance for the individual to be taken into the love of God. While being taken into God's love through the mediation of repentance, the individual can be mediated to God in and through its political practice of reformation of the state existence. Only in so far as the species-like substratum of the state existence is mediated to the practical action of the individual, it is permeated by the religious principle of Absolute Nothingness as

the expedient being, and is recognized as the substratum in relation to the ever negating practice of the individual in the form of being qua nothingness.

Tanabe's concept of the Absolute Other comes from Shinran's Pure Land Buddhism in which the other Buddha called *Amitabha* or Amida in the other world than our world is merely an image projected from the standpoint of our world's historical actuality. As John Cobb admits, even if the Amida Buddha may be regarded as the Christ, he is defective of historical reality as compared to Jesus Christ. So, Tanabe shifts the otherness of the Absolute into the event occurring in our historical actual world. This is evidenced by his central notion of absolute actuality as ideality properly pertaining to our actual world. The emphasis is placed on the reformation of our historical actual world through the mediation of the individual practical action participating in Absolute Nothingness that is identical to Absolute Other. Furthermore, Karl Barth's concept of the Absolute Other, too, is relevant to our human historical world in which the transcendental God as the Absolute Other becomes immanent and real in the form of the human person Jesus as the divine incarnation. Both Tanabe and Barth are common in taking the historical actuality of our world as being at issue to be resolved by the dialectical relationship of eternity and history in terms of the human subjective free action or God's free will for the salvation of humankind.

10. Synthesis

On the whole, Tanabe attempts to synthesize Eastern and Western ideas in a higher level of harmony in correspondence to the contemporary historical situations, and his thought might be seen as eclecticism or a sort of creative syncretism, as pointed out by some Marxist critics such as Jun Tosaka and Kanichi Kuroda. As a consequence, he identifies Absolute Nothingness with God or Absolute Other, despite their different cultural historical origins. Not only Tanabe but also Nishida undertake the same way, and this may be the manifestation of the distinguished characteristics of the very traditional Japanese culture of syncretism in which Buddhism and Shintoism are mixed and compromised. Even in the Chinese intellectual history the three different religions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are arranged into a compromise and regarded as the same. Within the ambit of Buddhism, the supreme canon, the Lotus Sutra, is estimated as the most comprehensive in content on account of its synthesis of different sutras; this might be most evident in the Japanese Tendai School on Mt. Hiei whose founder Saicho takes the Lotus Sutra as the integral and unifying fundamental principle of all sutras and various teachings. Shinran and Dogen, from whom Tanabe is immensely affected, are not except for this tendency, and their interpretations are much influenced by the thought of the Lotus Sutra. So, even though Tanabe does not explicitly mention or refer to the Lotus Sutra, his thought maybe not outside of the underlying current of the Japanese intellectual historical tradition.

From such a perspective, it might not be surprise that Tanabe attempts at synthetic unification of Japanese Buddhism, Christianity and Marxism as the second

religious reformation, and also at negative mediation of such world religion and political practice for the salvation of humankind on the globe today. A higher unification of world religion and world politics through their mutual mediation in negation is still the ideal reflective of the post-war world situations as a logical consequence of his triadic dialectic of genus, species and the individual. What is highly significant here may be the relationship of religion and politics in terms of negative mediation and the act of repentance for evil and sin as the moment of negation within the mediating unification of religion and politics. This is due to the fact that human beings are primordially involved in radical evil from time immemorial, and Tanabe is the first in modern Japan to take sin and evil latent in human existence with seriousness with respect to the problem of the relation of religion and politics in general. His deep insight into repentance might be derived from the Buddhist tradition in which the triad factors of precept, meditation and wisdom play the important role in attaining Buddhahood. So, it might not be incident for Tanabe to take into consideration the repentance as the indispensable element of the negative mediation of religion and politics or the state. In this regard, his view is not optimistic but profound in its religious significance.

At the same time, as relates to the construction of a new synthesis of Western and Eastern philosophy, as well as attempting at the dialectical unification of Christianity and Buddhism, and likewise focusing on mediating unification of religion, politics and the state – we are to note that all these areas are characterized by extreme deepness and broadness. Moreover, although Hegelian and Whiteheadian constructions are highly significant to analyze the constitutive elements of Tanabe's system – both Hegel and Whitehead (and their philosophies) are among the most difficult of all philosophical approaches. All the more, their both general vectors are ultimately directed at the Idealist (Dualist, Anthropocentric) pole of rational knowledge.

Therefore, we cannot ignore the proposal of the Biocosmological (neo-Aristotelian) approach – to reinstate in contemporary rational knowledge the equal significance of the Aristotelian RealCosmist pole, with its Organicist – AnthroCosmist essence. In this, the actual fact is that Hegel's and Whitehead's philosophies are deeply enrooted in Aristotle's realistic Organicism, although both ultimately are directed at the opposite Plato's pole of Dualist anthro- and sociocentrism.

To the point, Biocosmologists consider Eastern philosophy as mainly the form of (autonomous) Integralist knowledge of which essence is the substantive integration of the knowledge (principles, mechanisms, patterns, data) equally taken from both poles (Plato's and Aristotle's) but doing this on its own (Integralist) cosmological foundations of Transcendent essence (Khroutski, 2013). From this standpoint, Biocosmology evaluates Tanabe's fundamental principle of "Absolute Nothingness", or the Buddhist notion of "Emptiness", or classical "Being", or Hegel's "Spirit", or Whitehead's "God" precisely as the forms of this Transcendent substance, essential (and solely capable) for the integration of all the constituents of an actual

sociocultural (harmonious) development. Notably, in respect to Integralism, Pitirim Sorokin has advanced a unique Triadic sociological theory, presented in his main four-volume work "Social and Cultural Dynamics" in the 1937–1941 (Sorokin, 2010).

11. Actuality and Original Enlightenment

Tanabe's stress on the socio-political action rather than contemplation may be influenced by the Marxist socio-historical practice oriented towards the reformation of the state existence. After the World War II, Tanabe regards the Japanese emperor as the symbol of Absolute Nothingness, and this might be seen as the affirmation of the given actuality from the critical side. The propensity for the affirmation of historical actuality is the eminent distinction of the Tendai School's thought of Original Enlightenment in the medieval Japan according to which all phenomena are nothing but the self-manifestations of truth, in other words, appearances express truth itself without any negative mediation, appearances are immediately rendered as truth. But this thought is viewed from the standpoint of contemplation, but not of action. Even if so, however, the tendency towards the affirmation of historical actuality pertains to the Chinese way of thinking, and this might be reflected on the Tendai's interpretation of the reciprocal self-identity of appearance and truth. This tendency is further deepened in the Japanese Tendai School in that human beings are originally the Buddhas, they are identical to each other without any moment of self-negation within themselves in the extreme way. This tendency to affirm actuality might be reflective of the general mentality of Japanese people, and even Tanabe might be not exempted from it. Therefore there is some ambivalence in Tanabe: on the one hand, he aims at a self-negating action in the reformation of the actual society, and on the other hand, he is still bound up with the traditional mentality of affirming the actuality. This may be the distinctive situation expressed by Nishida's concept of "absolute self-identity in contradistinction". In contrast to the Indian way of thinking oriented towards eternal ideality, Chinese and Japanese ones tend to shift into the affirmation of socio-historical actuality. Emptiness turns out to be actuality in the reverse. In terms of the essential nature of Emptiness, Emptiness must not be confined to any stage of self-development, but further undergo to continue its self-negating activity in the last analysis.

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