

Philosophy of Nothingness and Process Theology

Diogenes

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I. Radical empiricism and Nishida's theory of pure experience

John Cobb and Shizuteru Ueda have pointed out the congeniality between Nishida and Whitehead in their conception of “radical” experience which involves at least three issues:

- (1) Experience is a unified, concrete whole;
- (2) Experience is prior to the individual; it is from experience that an individual is born and that a subject-object dichotomy comes to be; and
- (3) Experience is active (Ueda 1991: 106).

Drawing attention to the fact that Whitehead did not use the term “pure experience,” Cobb notes the ambiguities of the problematic adjective “pure” used by William James. Cobb (1990) contends:

In the first, James says that pure experience is “the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection with its conceptual categories.” This could lead us to think that there are two kinds of experience occurring in succession; first, pure experience, and then, later, reflective experience. Yet in the second quote James says that “the instant field of the present is at all times what I call the ‘pure’ experience.” In that case reflective experience must also be pure since nothing can occur anywhere other than in the instant field of the present. Something of this ambiguity or tension may be present in Nishida as well. Whitehead emphatically agrees that the instant field of the present is where all experience occurs. He calls this concrescence, and concrescence is characterized by sheer immediacy. Speaking reflectively about the multiplicity of concrescences, we find that some of them involve reflection and some do not. But there can be no other locus of reflection than in the immediacy of concrescing experience ... In any case, from Whitehead’s point of view all experience is pure experience as defined in the second quote from James. This is by no means an unimportant point. Indeed, I take it that this is at the heart of Nishida’s project.

From this emerge two interrelated problems. The first is whether we should recognize this alleged ambiguity in Nishida's earliest work. The second is to what extent the concept of “concrescence,” one of the key words in Whitehead’s metaphysics, is relevant to Nishida’s theory of pure

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experience, and then, how the logic of *Topos* as a philosophical development of pure experience is related to the principle of relativity or solidarity in Whitehead's philosophy of organism.

The first problem is comparatively easy if we resolve Nishida's paradigm and realize that we cannot stand outside of pure experience: the moment we experience something, the very experiencing subjects that we recognize as ourselves have already been constituted by nothing other than pure experience. We need not recognize any ambiguities in pure experience nor tensions to be resolved in subsequent reflective considerations. From the traditional non-radical empiricists' viewpoint, however, Nishida's definition of pure experience seems to contain equivocation and even contradiction, a criticism put forward in Satomi Takahashi's review of *An Inquiry into the Good* just after its publication (Takahashi 1932).

Nishida responded to Takahashi concerning the equivocation of "pure experience," saying that the intent of the first chapter of *An Inquiry into the Good* was "not to discriminate pure from impure and indirect elements of experience," but "to demonstrate that perception, thinking, will, and intellectual intuition are of the same kind" (NW 1: 301). Pure experience in Nishida's sense was neither a passive reception of objective sense-data given before subjective mental operations, nor the raw material of experience which must be given form by an experiencing subject, but more fundamentally was "the subject-object called nature in its activity of self-constructing," to use a phrase of Schelling's *Philosophy of Nature* that is referred to by both Whitehead and Nishida (CN: 47–48, NW 1: 14). In order to understand this activity, Schelling had to leap to an intellectual intuition of nature which the empiricist would reject as metaphysical, but which Nishida comprehends within the range of pure experience at the outset.

Thus what Nishida calls pure experience, "the direct experience before mental operations," is not at all blind in the Kantian sense, for intuition without categories is blind only when we deny the existence of intellectual intuition and limit human reason (理性) to the inferior mental operations of the understanding (悟性).

"Pure experience" is a basic term (*Grundwort*) which signifies the metaphysically ultimate activity; the whole range of our experience, including both sense-perception and intellectual-intuition, is its explicit unfolding or development. So we might say that pure experience implicitly contains the absolute wealth of all kinds of experience just as pure light without color contains implicitly in itself all colors in nature. The experience that is known as the result of reflective analysis is always an abstract aspect of the self-unfolding of pure experience.

Cobb's identification of pure experience with "perception in the mode of presentational immediacy" is not relevant in this context, though he was correct to point out that all experience is (the self-unfolding of) pure experience in the case of Nishida, if we take the latter as "the instant field of the present." As pure experience is dynamic activity behind the subject-object dichotomy, it necessarily includes "perception in the mode of causal efficacy" as well as "perception in the mode of presentational immediacy" in the Whiteheadian sense.

The philosophy of pure experience, as Ueda aptly summarizes, contains the possibility of integrating three mutually conflicting tendencies in modern philosophy, namely empiricism, metaphysics, and existential philosophy, in both the backward movement going behind the subject-object dichotomy and the forward movement of unfolding pure experience as ultimate actuality and the authentic self. It is noteworthy that Nishida did not think that he succeeded in actualizing to the full extent this possibility in his first work. In the preface to the 1936 edition of *An Inquiry into the Good*, (26 years after he had first published it), Nishida admitted the limits of the theory of pure experience, and the necessity of reforming it in such a way that the world of pure experience should be interpreted as the world of historical reality, or as the world of creative activity (ποίησις) and action/intuition in the light of later developments of his philosophy.

An Inquiry into the Good lacks the “dialectic of absolute negation” which became characteristic of his later works, but develops the positive theme of pure experience. Its tone seems to us so simple and unsophisticated that we tend to overlook the importance of an original pure positivity in the development of negative dialectic in Nishida’s philosophy.

2. Beyond the Buddhist-Christian dialogue

John Cobb (1982: 146) wrote that, while studying Buddhist writers, he came to the conclusion that “what some of them described as *pratītyasamutpada* was what Whitehead called concrescence.” He subscribes to the tradition of Nagarjuna as he believes that “the distinctive attainment of Buddhist meditation is to realize that one is nothing but the many becoming one.” As the process of the many becoming one is called “conrescence” in Whitehead’s metaphysics, we must explicate the meaning of this key word and relate it to the Buddhist standpoint of radical relationality expressed as the triad of dependent origination, non-substantiality, and emptiness.

In the opening lines of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Nāgārjuna salutes the Buddha who preaches dependent origination in the eightfold negations. According to Hajime Nakamura (1980: 167–175), the world of incessant flux is paradoxically identified with the “unborn and immortal” realm by Nāgārjuna. The eightfold negation is nothing other than the transcendence of the abstract opposites through the dynamism of dependent origination. The relationality signified by *pratītyasamutpada* characterizes not only *samsāra* but also the whole reality of *samsāra/nirvāna*.

David J Kalupahana (1986: 4) has presented a new interpretation of Nāgārjuna as an empiricist in his translation with commentary to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Questioning the validity of the negativistic (*prasangika*) interpretation of Candrakīrti, he adopts a positivistic attitude towards the texts of *the Middle Way*. Taking a fresh look at Kumārajīva’s *Chung-lun* (中論), he finds no justification whatever for looking at Nagarjuna through Candrakīrti’s eyes when we have in Kumārajīva a more faithful and closer disciple of Nāgārjuna.

It is for Buddhist specialists to judge whether this interpretation is historically justified, but such a radical empiricism is important in its own right, because a skeptical and negative attitude towards language makes sense only if there is something absolutely positive at the very outset of experience. Moreover, it was under the strong influence of Nāgārjuna, through Kumārajīva’s translations and commentaries, that the tradition of Eastern Buddhism cultivated the paradoxical identification of the phenomenal world (*samsāra*) with the ideal (*nirvāna*). This tradition of *Mahayana* Buddhism may explain the popularity of *An Inquiry into the Good* in Japan. The experience whereby we realize *sūnyatā* must be pure in Nishida’s sense, so that we cannot be content with the negative way (*via negativa*) of deconstruction, but must try to discuss “pure experience” in the same way as the Buddha preached “dependent origination.” The *Middle Way* which transcends abstract controversies between opposing views would become nihilistic if we were not enlightened at the very outset by the absolutely positive light, a light defined by Nishida as “pure experience,” which, although it is beyond language, can be revealed through linguistic conventions (*vyavahāra*).

Cobb stresses the necessity of dialogue between East and West for mutual self-transformation, and puts forward the thesis of complementarity between Christianity and Buddhism in so far as they are articulated in linguistic official dogmas. A successful dialogue can reveal the nature of pure experience out of which these outer forms are born, signifying a small portion of totality by abstraction. One of the important features of Nishida’s later philosophy is the concept of *topos* (場所, *basho*), which Cobb found baffling in his dialogue with the Kyoto School. Nishida’s logic of *topos*, in his later developments of the theory of pure experience, is too large a topic to be

discussed in detail here. Instead, I shall now present the thesis of complementarity between *topos* and *process* in both Nishida's and Whitehead's theories.

3. Process theology and the logic of *topos*

Whitehead calls his metaphysics "the philosophy of organism" but not "process theology." The reason why his successors have been called "process theologians" is that the ultimate purpose of PR is to elucidate the relationship of the world to God in history. One of the main characteristics of this cosmological essay is the concept of dynamic process as actuality which subordinates the static (objective) beings as potentials. But the fundamental theme of the philosophy of organism is to "elucidate the paradox of the solidarity or the connectedness of things: the many things, the one world without and within" (AI: 293). Process theologians seem to have overlooked the importance of this paradox, i.e. the connectedness of actual entities which are mutually immanent in each other qua genuine individuals. What the philosophy of organism seeks to preserve is "the discovery that the process, or concrescence, of any one actual entity involves the other actual entities among its components" (PR: 7). The categorial scheme of Whitehead's metaphysics was invented to develop "all those generic notions adequate for the expression of any possible interconnection of things" (PR: xii). In order to elucidate the solidarity of the world, Whitehead introduces "the principle of relativity" as "the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual, that every item of its universe is involved in each concrescence" (PR: 22). He stresses the philosophical significance of this principle (PR: 50):

The principle of universal relativity directly traverses Aristotle's dictum, "A substance is not present in a subject". In fact if we allow for degrees of relevance, and for negligible relevance, we must say that every actual entity is present in every other actual entity. The philosophy of organism is mainly devoted to the task of making clear the notion of "being present in another entity". This phrase is here borrowed from Aristotle; it is not a fortunate phrase, and in subsequent discussion it will be replaced by the term "objectification".

The concept of substance is often roughly characterized as that which is always a subject, never a predicate (object). This definition is not adequate because it does not take into account two different aspects in the *definiens* of substance which Aristotle carefully distinguishes in his theory of Categories (1b). One is the aspect of grammatical predication which is schematized as "to be asserted of a subject (καθ' ὑποκειμένου λέγεσθαι)"; the other is the ontological aspect of immanence which is schematized as "to be present in a subject (ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶναι)." The primary substance (say, Socrates) is defined as "that which is neither present in any subject nor asserted of any subject," whereas the secondary substance (say, animal) is "not in any subject but can be asserted of some subject (say dog)." The concept of substance, whether primary or secondary, certainly implies an element of mutual externality or exclusiveness among substances, and this kind of disconnectedness is the target of Whitehead's criticism of the ontological tradition since Aristotle.

Whitehead replaces the Aristotelian phrase, "being present in a subject," by "objectification" (PR: 50). In this context, the object is always a universal element inherent in a subject, and "objective reality (*realitas objectiva*)" does not mean the reality of a thing which exists independently of any subject, as it is usually taken to mean in modern philosophy. Rather, it signifies the reality of other entities objectified for and immanent in an actual entity.

According to the principle of relativity, everything can function as an object, i.e. every being has “the potentiality for being an element in a real concrescence of many entities into one actuality” (PR: 22). What makes an entity “actual” is its subjectivity in the process of concrescence and an actuality without subjectivity should be rejected as “vacuous.” The subjectivity of an actual entity is always self-transcending; it gives itself as one object among others to the universe through the transition from subjective immediacy to objective immortality. In order to signify this character of self-transcendence, Whitehead replaces the concept of mere subject by that of “subject-superject” (PR: 233). The actual entity is to be conceived both as a subject presiding over its own immediacy of becoming, and as a superject exercising its function of objective immortality in other actual entities.

The actual entity as a superject is a universal, in the sense of its entering into the constitutions of other actual entities, because it has become a “being” and it belongs to the nature of a “being” that it is a potential for every “becoming.” The actual entity in its own subjective immediacy is an individual occasion of experience, in the sense that the same process of concrescence cannot happen twice, on account of “the insistent particularity of things experienced and of the act of experiencing” (PR: 43). The unity of opposites, such as the concept of an actual entity as a subject-superject and as an individual-universal, is a necessary condition for understanding the solidarity of the universe.

According to Jorge Luis Nobo (1986: 12), who has presented a new interpretation of the philosophy of organism, the concept of the “receptacle” or “the extensive continuum” is crucial for the solidarity of the universe. Nobo distinguishes the metaphysical extensive continuum from the physical spatio-temporal continuum, and tries to demonstrate that the (metaphysical) extensive continuum and eternal creativity are both sides of the same metaphysical coin. Extension and creativity will then be understood as distinguishable, but inseparable, aspects of “the one ultimate reality grounding the becoming, the being, and the interconnectedness of actual entities” (Nobo 1986: 207).

Against Nobo's interpretation it can be objected that Whitehead did not include the extensive continuum in the categorial scheme in the first part of PR, but classified it as one of the applications of the categorial scheme. How then can the extensive continuum and creativity be the two sides of the same ultimate reality? Nobo (1986: 400) forestalls this criticism, pointing out that the categorial scheme in the first part of PR should be considered neither as the definitive formulation of the metaphysical principles nor as spelling out the categories of the organic philosophy. I agree with Nobo that Whitehead's system has to be read in the making, not as a completed dead system. Yet the fact that Whitehead himself did not include the extensive continuum in his categorial scheme remains a problem for Nobo's view.

Apart from the problem of his faithfulness to the texts of PR, Nobo's reading of Whitehead is extremely interesting to us, for it provides a key for mutual understanding between process theologians and the Kyoto School.

The logic of *basho* (場所, *topos* or receptacle) was originally proposed by Nishida in order to overcome limitations of the “objective” logic which cannot handle the contradictions of self-transcending actualities. The logic of Whitehead's metaphysics is also characterized by the interaction between objectivity and subjectivity in the creative process which grounds self-transcending actualities. The difficult but fundamental problems which are common to Nishida and Whitehead necessitate a reinterpretation or reconstruction of both systems with a view to a new synthesis of process theology and the philosophy of *topos* in Nishida's sense.

The prospects for such reconstruction are bright, because the textual analysis of PR supports our reading of Whitehead in the terminology of both process and *topos*. The first part of PR is a prolegomenon to the whole system, the second explicates the philosophy of organism in debate with other philosophers, and the third and fourth offer “the cosmological scheme developed in terms of its own categorial notions without much regard to other systems of thoughts” (PR: xii). The third

part, titled “The Theory of Prehensions,” expounds the theory of process which contains “the genetic analysis” of an actual occasion. The fourth part, titled “the Theory of Extension,” develops the theory of *topos* which contains “the extensive analysis” of an actual entity in the “cell theory” of actuality (PR: 219). These two parts reveal the real internal constitution of Whitehead’s metaphysics, which provides the philosophical foundation for “process theology” as the final interpretation of the whole system. Therefore, the structure of PR itself helps us to understand that process theology does need the logic of *topos* already present in Whitehead’s theory of the extensive continuum.

What then is the metaphysical role of the extensive continuum? The notion of a “continuum” involves both the property of indefinite divisibility and the property of unbounded extension. There are always entities beyond entities, because nonentity is no boundary (PR: 66). The infinite openness of the extensive continuum is the essential characteristic of our being in the world (*In-der-Welt-sein*). Ueda refers to this openness within the world as “the double structure of *Topos* (Place)” in his explanation of the horizontal structure of experience. Ueda (1991: 11) writes:

The horizon moves as we move, but there is no horizon that has no direction beyond wherever we may go. This is because the horizon itself is finite in its essence . . . People do not always pay due attention to the fact the “beyond the horizon” belongs within the horizontal structure itself. I would like to emphasize specifically this point when it comes to understanding Nishida’s thinking. The double nature as such of the horizon and the “beyond the horizon” constitutes the horizon of experience. By this double nature is opened the depth dimension. We cannot comprehend the beyond, but when we understand that it is beyond our comprehension, this “incomprehensible” is an absolute limitation and yet at the same time constitutes in exactly such a manner an avenue leading to the infinite *topos* (*place*).

The depth dimension which Ueda refers to above is indispensable for understanding Nishida’s philosophy, because the unity of the opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*) first makes sense in this dimension of the logic of *topos*. The doctrine of the simultaneous interpenetration of all entities which Nishida inherits from *Hua-Yen* Buddhism is meaningless if one fails to recognize the paradox of infinite openness within the world.

Whitehead certainly recognizes this paradox of being-in-the-world, and develops the doctrine of mutual immanence in his philosophy of organism. Although we do not stand in a position of grasping the whole world from without, we “prehend” the whole world from within, in a limited sense. The *Hua-Yen* doctrine of mutual immanence can be made intelligible and convincing on the basis of the theory of the extensive continuum, which expresses “the solidarity of all possible standpoints throughout the whole process of the world (PR: 66).” All actual entities are related to one another according to the determinations of this continuum; all possible actual entities in the future must exemplify these determinations in relation to the already actual world. The reality of the future is bound up with the reality of this continuum, which is the *topos* of the creative advance of the actual world, i.e. the becoming, the perishing, and the objective immortality of actual entities. With regard to the role of the extensive continuum as the ground of the mutual immanence of all actual entities, Whitehead writes (PR: 67):

Every actual entity, in its relationship to other actual entities is somewhere in the continuum, and arises out of the data provided by this standpoint. But in another sense it is everywhere throughout the continuum; for its constitution includes the objectifications of the actual world and thereby includes the continuum; also the potential objectifications of itself contribute to the real potentialities whose solidarity the continuum expresses. Thus the continuum is present in each actual entity, and each actual entity pervades the continuum.

Most process theologians seem to overlook the metaphysical role of the extensive continuum here. They discuss only the unilateral immanence of one actual entity in another, i.e. immanence in the mode of causal objectification, and thereby fail to grasp that the philosophy of organism entails the mutual immanence of all actual entities.

One of the most controversial matters discussed in the dialogue between process theologians and the Kyoto School is whether the fundamental relation of the world to the metaphysical ultimate is “reversible” or “irreversible.” Process theologians often criticize the doctrine of mutual immanence or interpenetration in *Hua-Yen* Buddhism on the ground that the relation of temporal causality is non-symmetrical in the sense that the past and the future are irreversible. On the other hand, the Kyoto School stresses the radically reversible relationality in the concepts of *sūnyata* and *pratītyasamutpada*. Both fail to appreciate the potential value of Whitehead’s theory of the extensive continuum as a mediating link in the dialogue between them.

Yoshinori Takeuchi (1963: 21), an exponent of the Kyoto School, criticizes “process” thinkers such as Hartshorne on the basis of Nishida’s ideas of *topos* and the eternal Now:

Bergson and more recently an American philosopher, Professor Charles Hartshorne, think that all events of the past are restored in a metaphysical remembrance. It seems that Nishida thought through the problem above more radically: not only events of the past, but also those of the future, are all present in the eternal Now.

Conversely, having cited the above passage, Steve Odin (1982: 80) criticizes Nishida on the basis of the process idea of cumulative penetration:

In a symmetric theory of causal relatedness as posited by Nishida, relations are closed or determinate at both ends so that there is virtually no place for creativeness, novelty and freedom in such a framework. Nishida fails to address the critical problem at issue here, but instead ambiguously conjoins the notions of total interrelation and interpenetration with those of creativeness and free self-determination, despite the inherent contradictions which accompany this conjunction.

Odin’s criticism would be fair if Nishida really said that future events *qua concreta* are present in the eternal Now. In fact, Takeuchi’s comments are misleading in so far as Nishida never says that the future and the past have symmetrical relations in a deterministic sense. What Nishida calls “Eternal Now” is neither an object of mystical intuition nor the non-temporal abstraction of determinism, but the very condition for the possibility of spatio-temporal relations. Temporal experience is always and necessarily connected with the direct presence of something eternal, which Whitehead calls the extensive continuum and which Nishida calls the “eternal Now.” Radically symmetrical or reversible relationality holds in this eternal continuum, but not on the level of concrete actuality. It is not correct to regard the irreversibility of time as something like an axiom. Obviously we cannot go back in time, but the very possibility of asserting the impossibility of going back to the past shows that our past is directly present to us in the eternal continuum. If all we had were present images and if the past were not directly present to us, it would be impossible for us to tell what objects of the past these present images represent. Memory and anticipation would be impossible without the communion of the moments of time in the eternal Now, which Whitehead characterizes as the direct presence of the extensive continuum on each occasion of experience.

Thus the communion of the moments of time, far from being incompatible with the asymmetric structure of time, is a necessary condition for the possibility of a linear temporal series of cumulative experience. This series provides the elements of concreteness to the eternal continuum.

If Whitehead sometimes goes as far as Nishida claims in equating creativity and God with the metaphysical receptacle of the extensive continuum, that could found a synthesis of process theology and the philosophy of *topos*. The extensive continuum presents the ground of the mutual immanence of actual occasions, i.e. finite temporal actual entities, but it cannot guarantee the communion of God and the world in so far as God is conceived as the non-temporal and omnipresent actual entity. The extensive continuum is conceived as “a complex of entities (i.e. eternal objects) united by the various allied relationships of whole to part, and of overlapping so as to possess common parts, and of contact, and of other relationships derived from these primary relationships” (PR: 66). The extensive continuum defined in this way may well be called “the *topos* of relative beings,” which Nishida considered as the first of three degrees of the gradually deepening conception of *topos*.

In process theology, the dipolar God has been conceived either as a non-temporal actual entity or as a personal society of divine occasions. According to the logic of *topos*, I should like to present an alternative idea of God as the *topos* of relative Nothingness which is the transcendental ground of relative beings. The concept of God as the *topos* of the world is necessary to the Whiteheadian pantheism because “it is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World” (PR: 348). God is not only an actual entity but also the *topos* of both ideal (eternal) and actual entities. Accepting the ontological principle of seeking every reason in actualities, Whitehead postulates that the whole realm of unrealized disjunct potentialities should be located in the primordial nature of God as the principle of novelty. The dipolar God can be reinterpreted as the *topos* of relative Nothingness, as God is both the ground of actuality (in His primordial nature) and a chief exemplification of actuality (in His consequent nature).

In Whitehead’s metaphysics, neither the extensive continuum as the *topos* of relative beings nor the dipolar God as the *topos* of relative Nothingness is the metaphysical ultimate (the universal of universals) which can include both God and the world as the “contrasted opposites.” This ultimate is termed by Whitehead “creativity” (PR: 7), of which one can even say that “God is its primordial, non-temporal accident.”

In Nishida’s philosophy, the metaphysical ultimate is called the *topos* of absolute Nothingness, “in the true awareness of which there is neither God nor the Ego” (NW 5: 182). The mutual immanence of God and the World is characterized by the reciprocal dynamics of creativity in such a way that what is done in the World is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the World. The solidarity of God and the world as contrasted antistrophes (PR: 348) is grounded in the *topos* of absolute Nothingness, the dynamics of which Whitehead calls “creativity.” The fathomless ground of God’s self turns out to be the ground of ourselves in the dynamic creative process of the “inverse correlativity (逆対応)” because of “the absolutely contradictory self-identity” of the God-World relation.

4. Subjectivity in the historical world: Heidegger, Whitehead, and Tanabe

In Nishida’s logic of *topos* transcendental subjectivity as pure activity is grounded on the *topos* of Absolute Nothingness as the contradictory self-identity. As we have seen in the previous sections, this logic must be complemented by the dynamic creative principle of the historical world. In this respect an examination of Tanabe’s philosophy is necessary, for Tanabe reformulates Nishida’s concept of Nothingness from the temporal perspective of a human existence related essentially to contemporary society in the historical world. In Tanabe’s conception, transcendental subjectivity should be characterized as primordial temporality operating as the dynamic principle of

self-transcendence, and then this transcendence should be transformed into the immanent principle of the historical world through the mediation of primordial temporality with spatiality. His arguments always move from the relative to the absolute, conceived as the Ideal that regulates a finite human being's practice, though always beyond his or her reach. Whereas Nishida starts from Absolute Nothingness as the universal *topos*, and then considers history as "a self-determination of the dialectical universal," Tanabe starts from the experience of an individual which is irreducibly temporal, and then tries to relate the individual self to the contemporary society in the dialectical historical world.

In this section I shall discuss Tanabe's treatise, *From the Schematism of Time to the Schematism of the World*, which he wrote in 1932 after his return from Germany. This treatise may be considered as a synthesis of Nishida's metaphysical topology and the temporal analysis of human existence propounded by the young Heidegger, whom Tanabe had encountered at Freiburg in the early 1920s.

Nishida had shown that an individual's subjectivity is not a substance but an event which has its place in the universal *Topos* of Absolute Nothingness. Heidegger had reformulated the Kantian Schematism of time and transcendental imagination in such a way that a human being's subjectivity is not due to the atemporal pure ego, but is a transcendence characterized as an event of self-affection, which takes time because transcendence is primordially temporal. Tanabe may be seen as showing that transcendental subjectivity should be redefined as inter-subjectivity, in the sense that the self of an individual is essentially both existential and social, and that its subjectivity takes time and place in essentially dialectical unity in the historical world.

Another aspect of Tanabe's treatise is that his philosophy, like that of Kant's First Critique, concerns both science and religion; he links the existential analytic of Heidegger and the contemporary revolution of science, especially the new discoveries of relativity physics which break through the limit of the Newtonian principles presupposed by Kant. Synthesizing two mutually conflicting trends of modern philosophy, scientific and existential, Tanabe cites Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* in his treatise on Heidegger.

In *From the Schematism of Time to the Schematism of the World*, Tanabe discusses and criticizes Heidegger's revisionary reading and reformulation of Kant's theory of transcendental imagination in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Tanabe, appreciating Whitehead's theory of relativity and the metaphysics of *Process and Reality*, replaces a Kantian theory of Schematism of time by a Schematism of space-time as the extensive continuum in relativity physics, thus criticizing Heidegger's concentration on transcendental imagination and primordial time which he sees as suffering from the limitations of subjective idealism.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B29: A15), Kant proceeded from the thesis that "there are two sources of human knowledge which probably spring from a common, but to us unknown root, namely, sense and understanding." He began his transcendental inquiry from the point at which the common root of our faculty of knowledge divides and throws out these two stems. But what is the origin of these two components of human knowledge? If sense and understanding have a common root, we can comprehend them only when we discover wherefrom they spring. Identifying this common root with the transcendental imagination implanted in primordial time, Heidegger concludes that time is not only the form of the objects of experience but also that of the experiencing self, and that temporality is not the characteristic of empirical objects only, but is the ground of the free transcendence of the subject.

The finite self has a temporal character, and the fundamental determination which Kant provides for transcendental perception must, according to Heidegger (1962: 197), first become intelligible through this temporal character: "Time and *the I think* are no longer opposed to one another

as unlike and incompatible: they are the same.” In the Kantian perspective the ego is not “in time” though this does not mean that it is a-temporal. Rather, “the ego is so temporal that it is time itself and only as such in its very essence is it possible at all” (Heidegger 1962: 198). Tanabe agrees with Heidegger that the ego is not “in time” just because it is time itself, or “projects” time, but objects that Heidegger does not understand Kant’s argument against subjective idealism added in the second edition of CPR. Temporality without spatiality is an abstraction, and the laying of the foundation of the phenomenal world exclusively on the basis of primordial time tends to be idealistic in the subjectivist sense; there would be no such thing as the *external* world. The ego is not only temporal but also spatial in its dialectical unity. Kant stressed in his “refutation of idealism” that the temporal determination of myself is possible only through my knowledge of spatial (external) objects in the environment. In other words, the relation between time and space is more fundamental than that between time and myself as a spatial object. Temporality and spatiality constitute the extensive continuum as inseparable wholeness, though they are irreducible to each other. Time as pure self-affection is inseparable from external things in space. The relation between time and space must be dialectically reciprocal in such a way that both constitute space-time as the extensive continuum in which the subjectivity of an individual self should be reconceived as the inter-subjectivity of the social self. The *contemporary* world which the post-Newtonian relativity physics regards as essentially spatially related to but causally independent of the *here-present*, is irreducible to the actual world temporally related to the *here-present*. The external but communal character of contemporary actual entities is constituted by the Schematism of the Extensive Continuum, or what Tanabe calls the Schematism of the World. Concerning the relation between the causally independent but communal contemporaries and the creative advance of the actual worlds, Tanabe (TW 6: 24) cites Whitehead:

When the events belong to the contemporary domain (*Zwischengebiet*), they constitute the other worlds causally independent of me . . . In Whitehead’s philosophy of organism actuality is considered as process, and the inner development of events which are monads of becoming as the synthetic unity between space and time. These events are independent as monads (in the *contemporary* domain) and at the same time new individuals temporally constituted by the creative advance of totality.

Kant was the philosopher who first, fully and explicitly, introduced into philosophy the conception of an act of experience as a constructive function, transforming subjectivity into objectivity. The purpose of *the Schematism of the World* was to make this function reciprocal and more dynamic; for the subjective idealist the process whereby there is experience is a transition from subjectivity to apparent objectivity; Tanabe complements this analysis with the inverse impact of the world on an individual and explains the process as proceeding from objectivity to subjectivity as well, thus making the relation between an individual and the world completely dialectical.

Independent of Heidegger and Tanabe, Whitehead (MT: 166) stresses both the epoch-making character of the temporary ego and the importance of its environmental world in this way:

Descartes’ “*cogito ergo sum*” was wrongly translated, “I think, therefore I am.” It is never bare thought or bare existence that we are aware of. I find myself as essentially a unity of emotions, enjoyments, hopes, fears, regrets, valuations of alternatives, decisions – all of them subjective reactions to the environment as active in my nature. My unity – which is Descartes’ “I am” – is my process of shaping this welter of material into a consistent pattern of feelings. The individual enjoyment is what I am in my role of a natural activity, as I shape the activities of the environment into a new creation, which is myself at this moment; and yet, as being myself, it is a continuation of the antecedent world.

Whitehead characterizes the philosophy of organism as an inversion of Kant's philosophy. Whitehead "seeks to describe how objective data pass into subjective satisfaction, and how order in the objective data provides intensity in the subjective satisfaction; for Kant, the world emerges from the subject: for the philosophy of organism the subject emerges from the world – a superject rather than a subject" (PR: 88). The word "object" thus means an entity which is a potentiality for being a component of feeling; the word "subject" means the entity constituted by the process of feeling, and includes this feeling. This inversion of Kant would make no sense if the concept of transcendental subjectivity in the Kantian Schematism of Time were not replaced by the Whiteheadian concept of subject-superjectivity in the Schematism of the World, i.e. the extensive continuum.

The extensive continuum is a necessary prerequisite of Whitehead's concept of society as a spatio-temporal nexus of actual occasions; "a set of entities is a society in virtue of a defining characteristic shared by its members, and in virtue of the presence of the defining characteristic being due to the environment provided by the society itself" (PR: 89). The point here is that a society mediates temporal subjectivity with spatial objectivity in such a way that the nexus of actual occasions constitutes "public matters of fact." In the same way the Schematism of the World is closely related to "the logic of species" which Tanabe first launched in a celebrated paper, "The Logic of Species and the Schematism of the World." What Tanabe means by the logic of species is "the logic of social being" which dialectically mediates individual existence and universal *topos*. He conjoins temporal analysis of the subjectivity of an individual existence with the topological synthesis of the subject-superjectivity of the same individual as a social being.

5. Tanabe's philosophy after *Metanoetics*

Yoshiharu Hakari, one of the representative scholars of Non-Church Christianity in Japan, has propounded the thesis that grace cannot complete nature without abolishing it, thus overcoming both the Thomistic principle that *gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit* and the Kantian principle of religion within the limits of mere reason (Hakari 1990: 291–298).

This thesis may be considered as retrieving the leitmotif of Tanabe's *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, which presented the completion of nature through its annihilation as the paradox of grace (TW 6: 17). According to Tanabe this paradox marks the transcendence (μετα-νόησις) of natural reason as the self-power which, through absolute repentance (μετάνοια), has experienced death-resurrection by the grace of "Other Power," i.e. Nothingness-qua-Lovè. The range of *metanoetics* is wide enough to include both Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism; *metanoetics* can be viewed not only as a modern version of Shinran's *Kyogyoshinsho* (教行信証) but also as a "dialectics of Christianity," because it is "the philosophy which is not a philosophy," having abolished the self-power of natural reason (TW 6: 4, PM: 1). Neither is *metanoetics* theology nor buddhology as a dogmatic science based on any religious authority. It may also be viewed as a philosophy of religion which is not a religious philosophy based on any theological or buddhological dogmas of a particular denomination.

Keiji Nishitani points out that the unique characteristic of *metanoetics* consists in the absolutely critical use of "reason resurrected from death by grace," which does not come from the merely religious attitude of a penitent person (NKW 9: 259). *Metanoetics* has its own dialectics that aims to "dig" to a deeper foundation for both religion and philosophy. Nishitani recommends Tanabe's books on the philosophy of science written after *Metanoetics* as showing the full scope of his thought (NKW 9: 259). These include *An Essay on the Philosophy of Dynamics*, *The Development of Mathematical Philosophy from the Perspective of Historicism*, "A New Methodology of

Theoretical Physics,” and “*The Dialectic of Relativity Physics*.” Although the titles of these works do not suggest any connection with the philosophy of religion, Tanabe saw them as “summing up his lifelong philosophical thought.” In order to understand the significance of these works, we must ask what Tanabe means by “the philosophy of science.”

Just as the philosophy of religion should be distinguished from theology or a religious philosophy, in an analogous way the philosophy of science in Tanabe’s sense should be distinguished from the “scientific” philosophy which logical positivists advocated in the 1930s. As Hans Reichenbach (1951) emphasized in *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, logical positivists reduced the task of philosophy to the logic of science and the linguistic analysis of moral language. As theology and metaphysics were deprived of cognitive significance, “scientific philosophy” in this sense became an *ancilla scientiae* confirming the end of speculative philosophy in the age of technology and science. Although the influence of logical positivism has declined, “philosophy of science,” even when distinguished from “scientific philosophy” in the above sense, designates a special branch of philosophy whose task is to analyze the philosophical problems of scientific inquiry; it is usually considered as to be a self-sufficient branch of study, quite independent of and indifferent to the problems of “philosophy of religion.”

To the contrary, Tanabe saw the philosophy of science as complementary with the philosophy of religion: the former mediates science with religion, and the latter religion with science (TW 11: 305). Both science and religion are incomplete without philosophical reflection on their common but unknown foundation. How should one seek this foundation after Kant’s demonstration of the paradoxes and antinomies besetting the quest for it? If we apply a scientific method to the problems of religion, or a religious criterion to scientific discussions in a naive and unreflective manner, the result is disastrous for both religion and science. It is a grave mistake to assume that science supersedes religion or religion anticipates science, because they do not provide competing accounts of the same subject matter. According to Tanabe, the common but unknown root of science and religion can be unearthed only if we are aware of the basic limitations of our faculties in both science and religion; he interprets the Kantian paradoxes and antinomies of pure reason not only as marking limits of finite human reason, but also as lighting up the path of historical practice, which gives access to the Real, wherein the incommensurable perspectives of science and religion are dialectically mediated. In the essay, titled “Science, Philosophy, and Religion,” Tanabe (TW 12: 134) writes:

The critical spirit of philosophy cannot remain in a neutral standpoint concerning the relation between science and religion. The coexistence of religion and science considered as independent of and indifferent to each other is not a satisfactory situation. Philosophy has to break through the “statics” of theoretical reason and to undertake its own ideal in a humble awareness of its own self-contradictions in the “dynamics” of historical praxis . . . Reason must affirm its own destiny to walk the way of “action-faith-witness” after having been abolished theoretically but “resurrected” practically in the depth of antinomies and paradoxes . . . The task of philosophy is to mediate, i.e. to establish something like *analogia entis* between science and religion which do not admit any direct unification.

Tanabe compares the primal task of the philosophy of science with the solving of the *Koan* of science in the same way that Zen seeks Truth manifested as religious paradox. In *A Personal View of the Philosophy of Shobogenzo*, Tanabe seeks the universal Truth that cannot be manifest without paradoxes, as suggested by Dogen’s usage of “*Genjo Koan*” (現成公案, *Manifesting Truth*), and discusses the *coincidentia oppositorum* of science and that of religion (TW 5: 491).

What distinguishes Tanabe among the Kyoto school is that he thought through the problems of history and ethical practice from the standpoint of Nothingness. He criticizes and reformulates Nishida's philosophy of Absolute Nothingness so as to overcome any monistic or totalitarian interpretation of this philosophy.

According to Tanabe, philosophy cannot begin from a self-determination of wholeness because the totality of beings cannot be an object of our intuition. Rather, we can only move from "microscopic and local" analysis to "macroscopic and universal" synthesis, from differential equations to integral solutions. In his philosophy of science, Tanabe compares Nishida's conception of absolute Nothingness as *topos* with Lorentz's or Newton's idea of absolute space as something like a *sensorium dei*. Tanabe prefers Einstein's "relative and local" approaches to Lorentz's "absolute and universal" view, because the latter remains a mere dogma whereas the former has a firm foundation in experiment and observation (TW 12:4). Einstein's theory has its own concept of absolute existence, but this absolute is neither mere-space nor mere-time, but space-time as the four dimensional manifold which we can access through experimental measurements, or what Tanabe calls "action-realization," although we cannot "intuit" the totality of space-time.

One of the important amendments Tanabe made to Nishida's logic of *topos* is that he considered the "contradictory self-identity" as temporally mediated rather than as the absolute principle of immediate intuition. Tanabe criticizes Nishida's metaphysical topology of Nothingness for its lack of dialectics of dynamic temporal activity: philosophy based on the unity of opposites without temporal mediation remains a "speculative" mysticism without any positive principle of historical practice. In *the Logic of Species and the Schematism of the World*, Tanabe (TW 6: 241) writes:

Although ontology of temporal existence needs synthesis with spatial elements if it is to become a concrete ontology of a social being through the Schematism of the World, these spatial elements should not be considered as the spatial expression of the infinite *topos* of Nothingness, or the Eternal Now . . . *Coincidentia oppositorum* in the *topos* of Nothingness conceived as the mere spatiality is nothing more than the static unity of mystical intuition and cannot be the dynamic unity between time and space; this unity would be possible through the mediation of a subject's practice rather than through an immediate intuition of the substratum.

Tanabe transforms the unity of contradictories in the logic of *topos* into the contrasted opposites in the historical process of becoming, which involve novelty and discontinuous leaps at points of crisis. For him history has become "the overall *Koan*" in which the metaphysical topology of a static being is to be superseded by the innovative principle of nothingness in the historical world. Nothingness considered as mere spatiality which abstracts from a temporal becoming is the mere concept of pure nothingness which Hegel identified with pure being in his dialectics. The Absolute Nothingness which Tanabe sees as the creative principle of self-transformation is of another order.

Nothingness as the transformative principle of mediation is a key to understanding Philosophy as *Metanoetics*. Just as Pure Land Buddhists of the *Jyodoshinshu* (浄土真宗), abandoning their own self-power, call on the name of *Amida* Buddha as the savior of sentient beings and the mediator for their attainment of Freedom (*nirvāna*), in the same way Tanabe, underscoring the essential finitude of human existence, recommends both μετάνοια (repentance) and μετὰ-νόησις (transcendence of reason) as the necessary means by which we may attain freedom through dying to and being resurrected from the historical world by the grace of Other Power. If we were able to observe history *sub specie aeternitatis*, repentance and hope would be meaningless, because it would be folly to care about what has been determined in the past or will necessarily arise in the future, as Spinoza clearly stated in his *Ethics*.⁽⁶⁴⁾ But we cannot really observe history as if it were an object

of our intuition because our existence itself has a temporal “ecstatic” structure which is always going beyond or overcoming a previously determined self; it is a “thrown projection” as well as a “projected thrownness” that conforms to and mediates the determination of the past, a transformation of the determined into the determining, and therefore it has to be seen as “an opening up to nothingness.” Concerning the relation between the historicity of human reason and $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\text{-}\nu\acute{o}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, Tanabe (TW9: 67, PM: 62) writes:

Human reason must be driven through the impasse of contradiction to its own death. And, there, mediated by the transformation of absolute nothingness, it must be restored to a middle way that belongs to neither pole of the contradiction but develops in a new theory as a synthesis of both. This is a circular movement of creativity, a “revolution-qua-restoration” that forms the basic structure of history . . . In *metanoesis* the past is not merely a “thrownness” that has passed away and is out of our control, but a present incessantly renewing its meaning and caught up in an unending circularity in accord with the future that mediates it. We might say that “thrown project” is transformed into a “projected thrownness”.

Whereas Heidegger considers death as the ultimate possibility for *Dasein*, representing the utmost horizon of its existential projection of future potentialities, Tanabe, complementing “thrown project” with “projected thrownness,” provides a dialectical category for “the existential communion” between the dead and the living, which the mere existential analysis of *Dasein* does not recognize. This dialectics of “thrown project” and “projected thrownness” in the existential communion is quite similar to the Whiteheadian concept of subject-superject, and, therefore, to the concept of “objective immortality” whereby what is divested of its own living immediacy becomes a real component in other living immediacies of becoming (PRxiii). In *Either Ontology of Life or Dialectic of Death* dedicated to Heidegger on his 70th birthday, Tanabe criticizes Heidegger’s existential analysis of being-toward-death (*Sein zum Tode*) as a “non-relational (*unbezüglich*)” solipsistic singularity in that it ignores the essential relatedness of the living with the dead.

Tanabe affirms the *communio sanctorum* which unites the living with the dead (TW 13: 528). Whereas Heidegger dealt with death as a singular point on the horizon of existence, Tanabe may be said to have resolved and redeemed this singularity by placing it in a wider dialectics of life and death. Just as *Mahayana* Buddhists transformed the *Hinayana* concept of *nirvana* as absolute cessation into the saving principle of life in their conception of *aparatihita-nirvana* (the nirvana that remains in the world on account of great compassion), Tanabe transformed Heidegger’s solipsistic concept of death into an essentially communal one, thus expanding the context in which we can dialectically discuss both death and resurrected life.

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