PHILOSOPHY AS METANOETICS

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Philosophy as Metanoetics

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CHISOKUDŌ

Cover design: Claudio Bado

2nd, revised edition, 2016
First published 1986, University of California Press

ISBN: 978-1537712567

Nagoya, Japan
http://ChisokudoPublications.com

Contents

Foreword, by James W. Heisig *1*

Translator's Introduction, by Takeuchi Yoshinori *31*

Preface *53*

1. The Philosophical Meaning of Metanoetics *71*

2. Absolute Critique: The Logic of Metanoetics *115*

3. Absolute Critique and Historicity *143*

4. Metanoetics and the Philosophy of Freedom *217*

5. Absolute Mediation in Metanoetics *260*

6. From Pascal to Shinran: Metanoetics as Absolute *Gensō* *313*

7. Metanoetics and the Theory of the Three Minds *351*

8. Metanoetics as a Religious View of Society *393*

The Singular Life and Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime, by Takeshi Morisato *447*

Index *489*

Foreword

James W. Heisig

High up in the foothills of Mount Asama in Kita-Karuizawa a block of black marble rests peacefully at the edge of a solitary wood; on it is inscribed the epitaph *My search is for truth, and it alone.* The words sum up a lifetime of total, nearly fanatical devotion to philosophy that raised Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) to the ranks of the most original and influential thinkers of modern Japan. That they might also mark a milestone on the path from East to West, and back again, is the hope in which this translation is being published.

Despite the numerous delays that this first book-length issue of Tanabe's work in English has suffered, it could hardly come at a more opportune time. For one thing, the impact of the collision of Western "being" with oriental "nothingness" has sent a tremor through received traditions that seems now to be commanding equal concern on both sides. For another, the translation of several books of Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) over the past two decades and the recent appearance of Nishitani Keiji's (1900–1990) *Religion and Nothingness*, all of them important responses to this very challenge, help Tanabe's own contribution to emerge in clearer relief to the Western eye than it might have done on its own. In the estimation of Takeuchi Yoshinori (1913–2002), whose own considerable writings distill years of discipleship under all three teachers, there is no better way to survey the state of the question in Japanese philosophy than to triangulate from the standpoints of

Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani.[1] Nor, I would add, is there any more representative statement of Tanabe's position than *Philosophy as Metanoetics.*

I

The epitaph carved on Tanabe's tombstone was of his own phrasing but was intended for quite another context. It appears in a late essay on the problem of death composed for a festschrift to honor Martin Heidegger on his seventieth birthday. There, no sooner does he express his gratitude to Heidegger as a teacher than he immediately takes his distance in the name of a weightier demand: "Of course, my search is for truth, and it alone." When Tanabe's family and intimates agreed to Tsujimura Kōichi's choice for the epitaph, they were no doubt thinking of the nobility of the ideal it expressed. But more, the words must have reverberated with their memories of a temperament so thoroughly bent to philosophy that it could not bring itself to compromise the raw, cold force of truth for the warmth and comfort of social relationships. Everything I have heard and read about Tanabe portrays him as a man who never hesitated to rise to the demands of a new idea whatever its source—be it books or teachers or students or colleagues—and never let go of what he judged valuable, even when it meant parting company with those whose influence on him had been most decisive.[2] To see his grave, anonymous and undated, one cannot

1. Takeuchi Yoshinori,「田辺哲学と絶対無」[Tanabe's philosophy and absolute nothingness], Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, ed.,『絶対無と神』[Absolute nothingness and God] (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1981), 198.

2. The Japanese reads: 私の希求するところは真実の外にはない. It appears in「生の存在学か死の弁証法か」[An ontology of life or a dialectics of death?],『田辺元全集』[Complete works of Tanabe Hajime] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963–1964), 13: 529. Tsujimura had edited this essay and translated it into German, with the collaboration of Hartmut Buchner, as a contribution to *Festschrift Martin Heidegger zum* 70. *Geburtstag* (Pfullingen, 1959), 93–133.

The immediate impetus to commit such a sentiment to print seems to been a Latin

help but think it fitting that the ego he had slowly sacrificed to the rigors of a most uncommon self-discipline should now, in death, have been effaced once and for all.

Even accounts written of Tanabe while he was still alive agree that he was a man of strong and tautly stretched moral fiber, demanding much of others but always more of himself, never letting up, never pampering himself, stern and ascetic, even scrupulous in his life-style, a singularly humorless personality who never smiled in the presence of his students and commanded an almost terrified respect from them inside and outside the classroom. Even in the company of colleagues and peers he was not given to joviality or banter. He always welcomed serious questions, naive though they might be, but would not put up with clever wordplay, caricature, sarcasm, or willful abstraction from real problems. Throughout the thirty years he spent at Kyoto he avoided sightseeing and side trips, "fleeing the world as if it were a virus."[3] Nor did he take up his pen for light or popular composition; his writings, like his life, were the very incarnation of the philosophy he practiced. In the words of a senior colleague, "this severity may be seen as a hard and self-fortifying armor of moral *Sollen* designed to carry Tanabe beyond the sentimentalism to which his inner warmth of affection might have led him."[4]

The last sixteen years of his life were spent in the relative isolation of a small mountain cottage where he wrote and studied almost

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proverb Tanabe came across in Carlyle: *Amicus Plato, magis arnica veritas* (*Sartor Resartus*, chap. 2), though the saying itself is much older. The original Greek proverb, stemming from a passage in Plato's *Phaedo* (91) and referring to Socrates, was given its form in Ammonius's *Life of Aristotle.* Latin translations and variants are to be found in Erasmus, Luther, and Cervantes.

3. Aihara Shinsaku,「田辺先生について」[Professor Tanabe], in 『田辺哲学』[The philosophy of Tanabe] (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1951), 270.

4. See Takahashi Satomi,「田辺元君の死を悼む」[In memoriam Tanabe Hajime],『思想』[Thought] 9, no. 459 (1962): 1258–9. In his eulogy, Takahashi likens Tanabe's philosophical disposition to a blend of the temperaments of Kant, Schelling, and Schiller. See also the special issue of 『理想』 [Ideals], 1963, no. 2, devoted to Tanabe.

without interruption. During the summer months he would receive visitors, but for at least half of the year he was virtually cut off, often snowbound, with only the postman to negotiate his contact with the outside world. Still, a glance through late photographs of Tanabe showing him sitting in the fields of Kita-Karuizawa, gesturing amicably, or smiling an almost boyish smile, and a comparison of the tone of his last essays with those written during his time in Kyoto reveals how much his manner had mellowed in his late years—"rounded out and filled up," as Japanese would have it.

As a teacher Tanabe enjoyed extraordinary popularity. The hall in which he lectured was regularly filled to overflowing with both students and teachers from the department of philosophy and other departments. He was engaging but never entertaining. "Like a lion roaming restlessly about in its cage," one of his former students recalls, he would stalk back and forth across the front of the lecture hall speaking freely and without notes, but in a way that showed meticulous preparation and impeccable organization of ideas. So seriously did he take his lectures, normally held twice a week, that he had the custom of refusing all visitors the day before.[5]

One of the most attractive aspects of Tanabe's philosophical teaching and, if I am rightly informed, the one that caused him most pain to the end of his life, was his keen social consciousness. The Japanese army's overrunning of Manchuria in 1931 affected him keenly, but not nearly so much as the alliance with Germany and Italy that led to Japan's involvement in the Second World War. Outraged by the irrational tendencies of the state at the time, he is said often to have compared the plight of intellectuals with the persecution of Galileo by the Roman church. The occasion on which the wife of the minister of finance, a schoolmate of Tanabe's wife, came to pay a visit only to be roundly shouted out of the house is only one illustration of his

5. See Ōshima Yasumasa,「教師としての田辺先生」[Professor Tanabe the teacher], in *The Philosophy of Tanabe*, 273–84.

passionate involvement with political issues. Like Plato, who helplessly beheld the decline of Athens, Tanabe knew the painful dilemma of the "unhappy philosopher," unable either to leave his country or to belong fully to it,[6] a dilemma eloquently spelled out in the Preface with which this book opens.

Of itself, the bare skeleton of Tanabe's philosophical career might well give the impression of an inveterate skeptic who spent his time pulling up stakes and breaking camp with one philosophical position after another and was never able to bring his own thinking to any kind of final synthesis. Such an impression is likely to be confirmed by the present book, which faces tradition from a position of "neither/nor," argues for the ultimate futility of all philosophy, and proposes instead a "philosophy that is not a philosophy." Such impressions work injustice to Tanabe's total effort. The itinerary of Tanabe's ideas is not a tale of *ressentiment* born of difficulties with systematic philosophy but of an alert sensitivity to the failure of ideas to match the actuality of his experience. Indeed, I have the impression that there has been no philosopher in Japan before or since who has been so concerned with constructive and systematic presentation as Tanabe. But with the sources for an adequate assessment of Tanabe's philosophy locked away in fifteen heavy volumes of *Collected Works* published in Japanese (to give an idea of just how heavy, the work translated here takes up one half of one of the volumes), and very little else in Western languages to rely on,[7] it is necessary to give some fuller shape to the story of his thought,

6. Ibid., 269. It should be noted that there were certain left-wing students in Kyoto who tried to use Tanabe's ideas for their own purposes and in the process circulated their share of distortions. Since the essay being cited here was read by Tanabe, however, we have reason to presume he approved of it.

7. References to Tanabe in the West begin about 1959, with Tsujimura's translation referred to above (n. 2); an English translation of his "Memento Mori" in the opening volume of *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, 1–12. A later German translation appeared in Yagi Seiichi and Ulrich Luz, eds., *Gott in Japan* (Munich, 1973), 113–26, as well as an extended reference in Takeuchi Yoshinori's English essay, "Buddhism and Existentialism: The Dialogue between Oriental and Occidental Thought" in W. Leibrecht, ed., *Religion and Cul-*

if only to disarm the reader of misconceptions to which *Philosophy as Metanoetics* might lead.

II

Draw the lines between the stages of development of Tanabe's philosophy as one will, there is no telling the story without constant reference to his clashes of mind with those whose influence on him was strongest. While he cannot be said always to have represented his adversaries fairly or to have understood them as they wished to be understood, the best measure of the seriousness with which Tanabe faced any philosophical position seems to be the degree of turmoil and counterposition it spurred him to in his own thinking.[8]

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ture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich (New York, 1959), 301. Takeuchi later expanded these remarks in his contribution to the entry on "Japanese Philosophy" for the 1967 *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* A brief resume of Tanabe's thought based on secondary sources was included in Gino Piovesana's *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought, 1862–1962* (Tokyo: Enderle, 1963), 145–58. In 1967 and 1971 first drafts of the Preface and an extract of chapter 4 of the present book were printed in *Japanese Religions* (5/5: 29–47; 7/2: 50–75). In 1969, *Monumenta Nipponica* published an English version of the opening chapter of *The Logic of Species as Dialectics* (24/3: 273–88); and in 1971 a translation of Tanabe's "Zu Hegels Lehre vom Urteil" was printed in *Hegel-Studien* (6: 211–29).

While these translations have stirred a certain amount of interest in the German-speaking world, there has been virtually no major work done on Tanabe elsewhere in Europe or in America. The only book-length treatment of Tanabe to appear in a Western language is Johannes Laube's *Dialektik der absoluten Vermittlung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1984). Although Laube had previously published a number of articles on Tanabe's thought, and includes a good bibliography of source materials, his book falls under some suspicion for its alarming overdependence on a single work that Tanabe had prepared for a more popular audience and published in 1949 under the title *Introduction to Philosophy.* His more recently published critiques of Fritz Buri's treatment of Tanabe in *Der Buddha-Christ als der Herr des wahren Selbst* (Basel: Paul Haupt, 1982), 81–112, however, applies rather more rigorous standards. See *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 67 (1983): 154–5; and *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 27 (1985): 207–18).

8. I rely chiefly here on the following sources: Tsujimura Kōichi,「田辺哲学について」[Tanabe's philosophy], in his edited selection entitled『田辺元』[Tanabe Hajime] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965), 7–62; Nishitani Keiji,「田辺哲学について」[Tanabe's philoso-

Tanabe's philosophical career began in 1913, when he took up the post of lecturer in the Tōhoku Imperial University's Department of Natural Sciences. Within two years he had published a book of reflections on science which marks the first important watershed for the philosophy of science in Japan. This was followed by a series of articles written one after the other in quick succession, and a second book on scientific logic. Given these pioneering efforts, the preoccupation of Japanese philosophers after the First World War with neo-Kantian thought, and the encouragement given by the government for study abroad, it was only natural that Tanabe should have been drawn to the work of Cohen and Natorp (rather than to Rickert, Windelband, and the Heidelberg School) and felt it his special calling to travel to Marburg in order to learn for himself at first hand. Once returned, he might not only make their thought better known but also pursue a critique of his own in the light of the other interests he was cultivating at the time: the recreation of Kantian transcendentalism through phenomenology, the vitalism of Bergson, and the notions of pure experience and absolute free will circulating in Japan through the writings of a brilliant young philosopher in Kyoto named Nishida Kitarō. In 1918 Cohen died, and Tanabe's dream evaporated.

Fortunately, he had already attracted the attention of Nishida, who recognized his talents and helped him secure a post as assistant professor at Kyoto University's Faculty of Arts and Letters. As noted above, Tanabe was already familiar with Nishida's thought, and in fact had been one of the first to recognize the significance of his struggles

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phy], in Nakano Hajimu, ed.,『田辺元集』[Tanabe Hajime collection] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1975), 399–424. This volume is a completely revised edition of the former, appearing in the series *Library of Japanese Thought*, no. 23). See also Shimomura Toratarō,「田辺哲学の発展とその性格」[The development and character of Tanabe's philosophy], in *The Philosophy of Tanabe*, 23–52; Kōsaka Masaaki,『西田哲学と田辺哲学』[The philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe], reprinted in vol. 8 of『高坂正顕著作集』[Collected writings of Kōsaka Masaaki] (Tokyo: Risōsha, 1965), 235–372; and Kōyama Iwao,「田辺哲学の史的意識と特色」[The historical consciousness and distinctiveness of Tanabe's philosophy], ibid., 3–22

with the Marburg School and the epistemological limitations of Kant's thought. (Most of this was worked out by Nishida piecemeal between 1913 and 1917 in a self-tortured, drawn-out experiment with neo-Kantianism that nail by nail sealed the coffin on his own interests and those of his successors in neo-Kantianism. The results were later published under the title *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness.*) "Even were I to go abroad," Tanabe is said to have remarked to one of his colleagues at the time, "I could not find a better teacher than Nishida."[9]

While Tanabe was in Kyoto, his dream of study abroad came to life again through Nishida's encouragement, and in 1922 he left for Europe with a grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education. The first year he spent in Berlin studying under Alois Riehl, who urged him to go next to Heidelberg and cast his lot in with Rickert. Tanabe would have none of it, and moved instead to Freiburg to study with Husserl and pursue his fascination with phenomenology. During this period he was invited to Husserl's home to address a small gathering on Nishida's philosophy. The impression he left, reports of which reached Nishida directly from a German philosopher who had been present, was highly favorable.[10] Husserl seems even to have nurtured the hope that Tanabe might bring phenomenology to the Orient, much as Heidegger was expected to carry on the tradition in Germany. As things turned out, Tanabe had other ideas. Disenchanted with the promise of the movement, he turned instead to the ideas of the young Heidegger, who had been tutoring him privately in German philosophy. Through this contact he came to the grandiose idea of working out a systematic philosophy that would bring together a "philosophy of life" and a "philosophy of the human sciences."

In 1924 he returned to Kyoto, his head buzzing with new ideas but almost no forethought of the new obligations that would await him

9. Aihara, "Professor Tanabe," 262.
10. Ibid., 264.

as a favored young disciple of Nishida who had studied under Husserl. Before he could begin work on his own projects, he found himself thrown back into the grip of Kant. The initial impulse came from what he was later to refer to as "the fateful external circumstances" of the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of Kant's birth, for which he was asked to deliver a memorial lecture. His preparations drove him deep into an investigation of Kant's teleology and surfaced in an attempt to carry critical philosophy through to its ultimate conclusions: to answer the demand for a metaphysics without falling into either the dogmatism of German idealism or the epistemological muddle of neo-Kantianism.

Even though the results of his work on Kant were much acclaimed, and helped him to see how the Kantian teleology leads in the end to a religious standpoint, this seems to have been an academically difficult time for Tanabe, unsettling in the extreme. Luckily, it was not long before he had shaken free and was on his feet again, thanks to his rediscovery of Hegel. At first his aim was simply to right what he saw as a lack of dialectic in his own thought, but soon he found himself faced with major confrontations on three fronts at the same time—with Hegel, with Marx, and with Nishida.

Tanabe began his long engagement with Hegel by way of Fichte and Schelling, on whose thought he lectured for two years, followed by two years on Hegel's *Encyclopedia* and then thirteen years on the *Phenomenology*. These efforts led him not only to appreciate the genius of the Hegelian dialectic but to see how, when carried out absolutely, it led to what he called a standpoint of "absolute mediation." Meanwhile, the social philosophies of such thinkers as Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945), whose company he had shared in Freiburg, and Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) forced him to recognize the seriousness of the challenge that Marxist thought posed to the intellectual community in Japan. A keen sensitivity to the historicity of the philosophical task and the moral dimension this entails had always been present just under the surface of Tanabe's thought, but now broke out with full force and resulted in

what many still consider his most original contribution to philosophy: the "logic of the specific." Finally, these two complementary ideas—the formal dialectic of absolute mediation and the concrete reality of the specific—prompted a growing critical posture to two similarly complementary ideas that Nishida was working on: the "logic of locus (topos)" and "active intuition."

The consequences of Tanabe's confrontation with Nishida, which may be dated formally from a 1930 essay fitted out with the reverently ambiguous title "Looking to the Teachings of Professor Nishida" and was to carry on even after Nishida's death in 1945, were unexpectedly divisive. Just two years before, it should be remembered, Nishida had retired from Kyoto University, leaving Tanabe to assume the vacant chair. Tanabe rose to the challenge with great outward intensity and even greater inner turmoil. Students noticed a nervous edge to the usual earnestness of his lectures; the scattered streaks of gray in his hair spread visibly. Patching together scattered and parenthetical remembrances of this period, I conclude that it was far less the prestige of the appointment that weighed heavily on him than the lingering presence of the absent Nishida.

What began as no more than a slight crease in Tanabe's esteem for his mentor ended up as a yawning chasm of discord that neither was able to bridge. They grew further and further apart until they could not suffer one another's company and in fact could hardly read one another's writings without misunderstanding.[11] It is no accident, for example, that *Philosophy of Metanoetics* does not once mention the name of Nishida, even though various aspects of Nishida's thought come up for explicit criticism; nor that Nishida's last essay, "The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview," completed in the same year, submits Tanabe to criticism in no less anonymous a manner. This is not to say that they did not continue to learn from their differences, and even

11. See Abe Yoshishige,「田辺元君と私」[Tanabe Hajime and I], in *The Philosophy of Tanabe*, 256.

to sharpen or alter their views, but only that their personal relations had soured to the point that those who counted them both as their teachers were helpless to do more than look sadly on as their sympathies for each other deteriorated further and further.

At the same time, there is no denying that this daring departure from his teacher set Tanabe off in the direction of his most creative philosophical years and opened a way for others to appropriate Nishida's thought more critically. Had there been no such head-on clash with Nishida by someone of his own intellectual stature, it is arguable that there would be no Kyoto School as it is known today, and little if any contact between Nishida's thought and the West, but only a tradition of "Nishida Philosophy" scattered throughout Japan. In this sense, Tanabe may rightly be reckoned the founder of the Kyoto School.[12]

In any event, it was against the backdrop of these confrontations that Tanabe turned his attention to the philosophy of religion in *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, a book that set him squarely on the existentialist standpoint he was to uphold for the rest of his life. The argument of the book moves elliptically around a confrontation with Shinran (1173–1262), founder of the True Pure Land sect of Buddhism, on the one hand, and a series of confrontations with Western thinkers—Eckhart, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger—on the other. Tanabe hoped to locate an Archimedean point outside of the world of philosophical tradition from which to dislodge that world and set it spinning in a new orbit. Proclaiming it the standpoint of one "sinful and ignorant" yet trusting in Other-power, he set about a religiously motivated "non-philosophy" that would undermine the claims of the "saints and sages" based on self-power. The inconsis-

12. In saying this, I cannot fail to mention the important role that Kōsaka Masaaki played in stabilizing the position of the school. The exemplary lucidity and fairness of his comparative studies of Nishida and Tanabe, and of Nishida and Watsuji Tetsurō, have set the highest of standards for Japanese historians of philosophy. One can only hope that increased interest in the Kyoto School will inspire their translation into Western languages in the near future.

tency entailed by the claim to abandon philosophy by means of purely philosophical arguments, all of which are intended for public scrutiny and critique, was not lost on Tanabe's disciples.[13] But neither was the sense that only a convinced sage can make the kind of transition from knowing to unknowing that he was trying to elaborate in the "philosophical religion" of a metanoetics.[14]

To be sure, it is the great and ineluctable paradox of the book that only reason can ultimately persuade reason of its own debilities. At the same time, the sense of finitude that Tanabe was attempting to convey is qualitatively different from what we find in Nishida and Nishitani. Theirs is a position closer to Heidegger in the sense that its primary focus is the existential condition of being human. Tanabe ventured to take the further step of grounding the critique of reason in a recovery of basic sincerity that can come only from shifting the focus to one's own individual experience of existential limits. To miss this shift of focus is to deprive the book of its greatest originality.

After *Philosophy as Metanoetics* Tanabe returned to many of the concerns, if not the language, of his "logic of the specific" in the attempt to fill out his philosophy of religion. Given the experience of the war itself, and the harsh measures that had been taken during the time immediately following the war against a number of key figures in Kyoto University's Department of Philosophy for their supposed complicity in bolstering the myth of nationalism, Tanabe let his past political philosophy lie where he had left it—at the idea of a social democracy that would preserve the best of communism and democracy—and turned his gaze to wider horizons. Against all the culture-worshiping voices of intellectuals raised to invigorate the national spirit for the restoration of Japan, he insisted that it was necessary that Japan commit itself positively to a sociohistorical praxis based on love—an idea that

13. Nishitani Keiji,「西田哲学と田辺哲学」[The philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe], in *The Philosophy of Tanabe*, 200.

14. "The Historical Consciousness and Distinctiveness of Tanabe's Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Tanabe*, 22.

began in the form of "nothingness-*qua*-love" and evolved to a triunity of God-*qua*-love, love of God, and love of neighbor—and aimed at world peace.[15]

At the same time, he returned to his interest in science, carrying on what Takeuchi has described as his lifelong "guerrilla warfare" against the inflated claims of natural science. The progress gained through an accumulation of knowledge, he saw, was ultimately no more than the working out of the innate methodological fragmentariness of science itself, which impeded a true synthesis of knowledge, and suggested that the contradictions the new physics was uncovering at its own foundations should be read as existential *kōan*.[16] In this way, the "metanoetic" spirit of his later writings is apparent in his attempt to define the goal of philosophy as to insert itself into both science and religion, so that the two might unite and cooperate in promoting love and peaceful collaboration among the peoples of the earth.[17]

In 1951 Tanabe's wife of thirty-five years died after a protracted illness, leading him to what was to be the final great confrontation of his life: the encounter with death itself. In memory of his wife, whose long devotion to him and whose exemplary attitude to her approaching death seemed to embody the philosophy he had been writing about so assiduously for so many years, he composed a short *waka*, or Japanese poem. Rendered literally and without meter it reads:

> My wife who gave her life on my behalf and died has been reborn and lives within me.

This intensely personal experience of the transformation of life into death and death into life attracted Tanabe's attention to the Christian

15. See Mutō Kazuo,「政治・社会：田辺博士の社会民主主義の哲学」[Politics and society: Dr. Tanabe's philosophy of social democracy], in *The Philosophy of Tanabe*, 138–53.

16. Takeuchi, "Tanabe's Philosophy and Absolute Nothingness," 216.

17. On this point, see Ueda Yasuharu's article,「田辺哲学における生物学」[Biology in Tanabe's thought], in Takeuchi Yoshinori et al., eds.,『哲学の世界』[The world of philosophy] (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1985), 205–27.

symbol of the *communio sanctorum*, and wiped away the last vestiges of vitalism from his dialectic of absolute mediation to make room for a new dialectics of death that was central to the writings of his last decade.[18]

III

As with any abridgment of ideas woven tightly together over the course of a lifetime, it is impossible to pull out the main threads without getting tangled up along the way. In the case of Tanabe, the stubbornest snarls are those that gather at his notions of the logic of the specific and the dialectics of absolute mediation. Because of the importance of these notions for understanding the transformation his thought went through in *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, it is worth trying to clarify our account a bit at these points.

The term "logic" in "logic of the specific," as also in the case of Nishida's "logic of locus," does not refer in the first place to a formal metalanguage yielding inference and proof or to a generalized theory of semantics, but simply to a cluster of principles or linguistic recommendations for carrying on theoretically. The Japanese word, however, slides back and forth between these two senses rather more easily than Western philosophical terminology, allowing Tanabe to develop a rational theory about the workings of irrationality in history (which is what the logic of the specific is ultimately all about) with an occasional sideswipe at the strictures of formal logic, particularly its principle of self-contradiction, but not obliging him to a thorough review of the formalities of traditional logic.

In contrast then with traditional logic, which places the category of species below genus and above individual, and seems to deny it anything but an ancillary role in order to account for the varieties of particulars belonging to the same universal class, Tanabe proposed that

18. See Takeuchi, "Tanabe's Philosophy and Absolute Nothingness," 215–17.

species be understood as the substratum of human Existenz itself, the ground of the "will to life." His aim was to replace the series of negations he saw worked out in Hegel, in which the individual is made to pass through the specificity of history to a transcendent universal, with a positive affirmation of the permanent role of the specific. In other words, to account for the basic structure of consciousness, it does not suffice to state that we are born as individuals into the human race, and then turn to a phenomenology of our generic humanity; nor is it enough simply to carry on a phenomenology of the processes operative in the individualizing of transcendental or generalized values in specific historical societies (after the manner, say, of Rickert's *Kulturwissenschaft* or Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaft*). The concrete specificity of a tribe or people or nation is more than a theoretical filter after the manner of what the young Hegel called a "national imagination." It is the most immediate ground of human being, an immediate, formal disposition not existing itself but forming a concrete substrate in terms of which the individual formally actualizes its genus in history.

Where Hegel and Marx seek to locate rationality in a generic substratum of spirit or matter working itself out in history, Tanabe's specific begins from a radical irrationality of pure desire for life at the core of human consciousness, a desire defined by social conditions. Although attracted to Schelling's idea of an irrational, unconscious impulse to will outlined in *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, Tanabe wanted to define the specific as a kind of social archetype that is more clearly visible in the uniting symbols of a society, such as the totemic imagery that he found treated in the works of Lévy-Bruhl, than in any purely individual expression.

It is not hard to see how, on this basis, Tanabe should come to see a positive significance in acknowledging the emperor of Japan as a symbol of the sacredness of the nation. But neither is it hard to see how such statements might be misinterpreted, as in fact they were both by nationalist-minded intellectuals before and during the Great War and by critics of nationalism after it. No fair account of Tanabe's logic

of the specific can fail to see, however, that its goal was a "theory of national existence" that would serve as a direct critique of the blind nationalism he saw inspiring Japan's engagements in Asia and fascism in Europe. Taking the distinction between "open" and "closed" societies from Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, he strove to show how a society based on a "closing of the specific" subjugates a particular race or people to the irrationality of its particularity, cutting it off from affinities with generic humanity or blurring the distinction idealistically (his criticism of Hegel's genus-nation and Kant's "world citizen"), and how only an "opening of the specific" to genus through the dialectical mediation of rationality has any hope of promoting freedom in history. It is therefore altogether wrongheaded to suppose, as some Japanese historians were to do from post-War bandwagons, that Tanabe had composed his *Philosophy as Metanoetics* in order to dissociate himself from nationalist views he had once espoused. Not only did he never hold such views, but the lectures on which the work were based were delivered during the war.

The second nodal idea, the "dialectics of absolute mediation," represents the formal lining to the material logic of the specific. For Tanabe, the concrete individual of history, while grounded in the contingent definition of its locus as a being in the world ("the specific"), is also the subject of freedom and spontaneity. The unity of these two dimensions is worked out as a dialectic of what he calls "determination-*qua*-reverse determination," and it is this dialectic in turn that defines the nature of human rationality. In other words, the fullness of reason demands not only that the individual exert its freedom *from* its contingency but also that it make itself free *for* that contingency, and this can be accomplished only through an absolute negation of reason. In mediating the "will to life" of its specific contingency, the individual exercises the "will to power" of its particular freedom, and vice versa.

What distinguishes this from Hegel seems at first to be no more than a procedural device: Tanabe begins at the moral standpoint that Hegel only arrives at three-quarters of the way through the *Phenom-*

enology, namely with the conviction that dialectical mediation must never be viewed contemplatively as a static unity between every I and Thou but always and primarily as an ongoing process, full of struggle and confrontation, between the specific and individual within which the I-Thou dialectic takes its meaning. This shift from a generative account of the emergence of the individual to a concrete, existential account served two additional purposes, however. First, it established the role of the logic of the specific as a hermeneutic device for reading philosophical texts. Second, it set up a direct, and we can only say in hindsight greatly exaggerated, opposition between his "dialectics of *absolute mediation*" and Nishida's "self-identity of *absolute contradictories*." That Tanabe, wrongly I think, traced the philosophical pedigree of Nishida's position to the emanational logic of Plotinus and the neo-Platonists need not detain us here. More important is the fact that this confrontation further stabilized his commitment to a radically historical I, the subject of rationality, engaged in a permanent mutual mediation with its specificity, the realm of the irrational in history. Whatever harmony may be achieved between individuals, this fact plants a fundamental irrationality and "egoity" at the core of the I which sooner or later will pull on rationality until it is torn out by the roots. This radical negation was the beginning of the conversion that Tanabe called metanoesis.[19]

The key problem here was to ground the conflict and mutual mediation of specificity and individuality. Tanabe's commitment to rationalism would not allow him to find such a ground in an absolute irrationality, since that would effectively sterilize the position of the individual subject and disallow its freedom. But neither could he find it in the absolute rationality of the free subject, since that would effectively dehistoricize the individual. He therefore came to speak of a principle of self-alienation at the core of *everything* that is. Formally put, this means that the absoluteness of absolute mediation stems from

19. See Kōsaka, *The Philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe*, 322.

the fact that the mediation between individual and the specific in human life is itself mediated by the general impossibility of unmediated existence. It is not just that the two dimensions are engaged dialectically with each other as a result of the free choice of the subject, but that neither can be what it is except in terms of an essential internal contradiction: to be what it *is*, it must appropriate to itself the other, which it *is not.* There is no specificity without individuality, no individuality without specificity—in short, nothing unmediated in the human world, and therefore no actual achievable unity of opposites. It is not only the individual but also species that suffers the self-alienation of a desire for unmediated existence frustrated by the concrete demands of mediation.

Apart from the role accorded the specific, which was pointed out earlier, the logical scheme of what Tanabe is doing again looks like vintage Hegel. And indeed it would be, but for the fact that Tanabe had already shifted the accent of absoluteness from the realm of being and reason—and therefore also from a personalized and anthropomorphic view of the world—to the realm of nothingness. The consequences of this shift of the concrete universal from absolute being to absolute nothingness unfolded gradually in Tanabe's thought until he was able to display the full compass of his dialectic of absolute nothingness in *Philosophy as Metanoetics.* To appreciate that what is taking place here is not just a crude distortion of Hegel's thought to an Eastern eye but an original rereading of its religious dimension, it is necessary to speak briefly to the question of what Tanabe understood by nothingness.

The infrastructure Tanabe has in common with Nishida. Both approached Western philosophy from a basic stance of absolute nothingness. That this happens to be a prejudice of Eastern intellectual history should trouble us no more than the fact that philosophy itself began under the Western prejudice of the supremacy of being. (I assume "prejudice" here to carry the fuller meaning that Gadamer has restored to it.) This absolute nothingness is not some cold and cal-

culating metaphysical negation of everything that is or might be, but first and foremost "an awakening to the drive to know the truth about what it is to be alive; it is the very stuff of human Existenz." In other words, the standpoint of nothingness does not begin from reflection on the world of objects but from reflection of the self upon itself; and it finds its moorings not in the everyday external realities of perception but in the realization that all things functioning in existence are "shadows emptying the self of itself and projecting it back into itself."[20] Where Western philosophies of being begin from an ontological reflection on science and myth, the standpoint of nothingness rests on a primarily psychological realization of the world akin to religious experience.

Just how that "realization" (or self-consciousness) is conceived in practice is no less open to a variety of viewpoints than Western ontologies. In fact, Tanabe's break with Nishida began with a disagreement over the latter's "standpoint of absolute nothingness," which he considered so bound up with the self-consciousness of a realm of universal ideas that he even revolted for a time against using the term at all. In the end, the common bond proved too strong and fundamental to be sacrificed so simply, and Tanabe returned to the notion of absolute nothingness in *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, where it is said to become manifest in the absolute mediation of absolute Other-power to the subject of metanoesis. (This Other-power has the curious logical quality of having been deduced a posteriori from the personal experience of a transcendent force, and at the same time of having been postulated a priori after the manner of the Hegelian Absolute Spirit.) Thus while Nishida took absolute nothingness as the transcendent ground of all reality, toward which the self that has let go of the subject-object dichotomy breaks through to face reality as it is, Tanabe ultimately came to understand it as the ground of a transcendent force that breaks in upon the self from without. For Nishida,

20. Nishitani, "The Philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe," 164–5.

the quality of "religious experience" associated with absolute nothingness is reviewed by the self-conscious subject philosophically and at a remove from historical conditions; for Tanabe, this very review itself belongs to history and therefore demands an absolute "disruption" of the conscious subject and an absolute "crisis" in reason.

This two-dimensional understanding of absolute nothingness, namely in its logical and its experiential functions, affected Tanabe's dialectic of absolute mediation in three ways. First, it carried the Hegelian dialectic of the *Phenomenology* to what he saw as its inevitable conclusion (close to what Hegel himself did in the *Encyclopedia*,[21] though Tanabe does not acknowledge this): the outright rejection of an abstract and nonmediated absolute, antecedent to and transcendent to the relative beings that make up history.[22] Second, under the rubrics of the Shin Buddhist notions of *gensō* and *ōsō* it raised absolute mediation to the status of religious experience, not only at the level of the experience of the transcendent but also at the level of the return to care for one's fellow living beings. And third, under the influence of Kierkegaard, it shifted the ideal of the I-Thou relationship from Hegel's unity of the self with the other through self-negation to a "nothingness-*qua*-love" that lets go of self-power altogether, and thus elevated the I-Thou relationship to the same level as the individual-specific relationship, if not actually above it. In each case, the dialectics of absolute mediation that was forged to undergird the logic of the specific ended up transfiguring it.

21. Consider the following passage which Hegel quotes from the *Vorbegriff* to the third edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Sec. 61 ff., in Book 1 of *The Science of Logic:* "There is nothing, nothing in the heavens or in nature or in the spirit or anywhere, which does not contain both immediacy and mediation."

22. One is tempted here to start drawing comparisons with Whitehead, as indeed Ueda has hinted ("Biology in Tanabe's Philosophy," 207), but the clear burden of any such attempt would be to show that beyond the level of logical formalities about the interdependence of God and the world, Whitehead had produced any clear notion of subjectivity capable of facing the questions that are central to Tanabe.

IV

The logic of the specific that governs the "will to life" of historicity, and the dialectic of absolute mediation that governs the "will to power" of the individual, are brought to term in what may be called a "logic of envelopment"[23] that characterizes the "will to salvation" at the level of genus. The working out of this final step is the philosophy of religion that Tanabe began with *Philosophy as Metanoetics* and enhanced during the years of his retreat to Kita-Karuizawa.

At the start of his confrontation with Nishida in 1930, Tanabe accused his teacher of a mystical erasure of the distinction between philosophy and religion by stressing the "self-consciousness of absolute nothingness." Not only did Tanabe later return to use that term himself, as already noted, but he did so in a way that threatened the distinction far more than Nishida had ever done.[24] How this works out in practice will be clear enough from the text of the translation that follows. While this is a trait that, to one degree or another, all the thinkers of the Kyoto School have in common,[25] we need not trouble ourselves with those differences here. It is enough if we can lay a finger on the principal peculiarities of the way Tanabe brought "religion" into his philosophical thought.

23. The word 摂取 is a Buddhist term, referring to the protection and assimilation of the believer by Amida Buddha.

24. Funayama Shin'ichi reckons that if Tanabe had broken from Nishida earlier, his thought might have developed in a more profitable and less religious direction than metanoetics and a philosophy of death (*Ideals*, 33; see page 3, n. 4). I could not disagree more.

I would also note that in the earlier stages of this translation, Professor Takeuchi had often inserted the qualification "religious" before the words "self-consciousness" and "consciousness" to stress the point, feeling that it might otherwise have been lost on the reader. I later took the liberty of deleting these additions in the hope that our prefatory remarks would suffice to make the point.

25. Nishida's final essay, "The Logic of Locus and a Religious Worldview," a translation of and commentary on which should be forthcoming soon in the pages of *The Eastern Buddhist*, the opening essays of Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1982) and Takeuchi's *The Heart of Buddhism* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) all attest to the same tendency.

To begin with, Tanabe abstained stoically from association with any one religious tradition, Eastern or Western, in order that he might the better address the problem of religion in a more general sense. Some of his commentators judge him closer to Christianity, others to Shin Buddhism, and still others to Zen. The evidence to support any of these conclusions is there in abundance, but only because it was his goal to keep equidistant from all three, thereby to work a general dialectical synthesis of the philosophic core of Zen Buddhism (concern with totality), *Nenbutsu* Buddhism (concern with the individual), and Christianity (concern with the specific).

In the second place and within these perimeters, Tanabe saw no reason to extend his investigation of religion outside of Buddhism and Christianity, the two major world religious traditions that must in any event be drawn into a philosophical encounter between Eastern nothingness and Western being. To all other forms of religion, he simply closed his eyes. My own suspicions, as yet unconfirmed, are that this was in part a device to avoid having to face the fuller religious dimensions of Shinto as part of Japanese historical specificity, in spite of the way it was being used for nationalistic purposes repulsive to his moral sensitivities.

Third, in treating Buddhism and Christianity he did not oblige himself in any strict sense to the same historical and textual standards that he applied to philosophy and science, preferring to countenance these traditions in a direct and for all practical purposes ahistorical manner. Indeed, so little did he bother with theology (aside from a scattering of ideas from Augustine to Bultmann that attracted his philosophical appetite) and denominational distinctions, that he all but reduced the Christian Scriptures to the Gospel accounts. Likewise, his understanding of Shin Buddhism, the crux of his argument in the present book, is based on a highly original but critically suspect reading of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.[26]

26. Nakayama Nobuji takes Tanabe to task here in the second and third chapters of his

In the fourth place, he lopped off from religion the whole dimension of ritual and symbolic expression, as well as of dogmatic constructs based on faith in special revelation, a strategy he found he could support by a radical appeal to the method of demythologization.[27] Here too, for all the importance he gave the notion of the specific, not to mention the immediate historic setting of his "metanoesis," the historical-institutional aspect of the religions he studied is brushed to one side.

Fifth, Western reflections on religion are restricted to their philosophic aspects. Poetry, literature, music, the arts, and so on that speak to religion in a nonphilosophic manner are all but neglected, a bias he tried to set straight in some late writing on poets such as Rilke, Mallarmé, and Valéry.

Lastly, he did not harass Western intellectual history for its misrepresentations of Buddhism and oriental religions, of which he would have found more than enough to complain about in Hegel, perhaps in order to avoid attracting like criticism of his own reading of Christianity.

There is no point in faulting a philosopher for not doing what it is not, or what he does not see it as, the business of philosophy to do. But even when we have to do with a thinker so heroically single-minded in his pursuit of philosophy as Tanabe, the complaint that his generalizations simply do not fit the facts of religious consciousness in history is serious. Without the continued nuisance of data, philosophy can-

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book『仏教と西田・田辺哲学』[Buddhism and the philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe] (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1979). The main thrust of his argument centers on two points: that Tanabe had failed to distinguish the coming-to-faith from the actual state of faith achieved in coming-to-the-Pure-Land, and had misrepresented the radical otherness of Other-power. Similar complaints are lodged against Tanabe's reading of Shinran's notion of *zange* (repentance) in his late works.

As the offhand, scissors-and-paste comparison of Tanabe and Nishida in the early chapters of this book makes amply clear, Nakayama is far more out of his depth in the world of philosophy than Tanabe was in Shin Buddhism. The book contributes too little to our understanding of Tanabe to warrant more than the rubric of a footnote.

27. For a resume and critique of Tanabe's position here, see Mutō Kazuo,「非神話化：自然神学の問題と関連して」[The relation of demythologizing to the problem of natural theology], in *Absolute Nothingness and God*, 104–30.

not sustain the moral edge that Tanabe always insisted on. At the same time, fairness requires that students of religion acknowledge how right his philosophic instincts were at times in getting to the heart of problems that other approaches tend to obscure.

To return where we began, the judgment that Tanabe's writings grind away the edges between the religious and philosophical dimensions of the human is no more true than the same conclusion he once drew in regard to Nishida's writings. There is of course no denying a tension in Tanabe's late work. On the one hand, it is clear that "metanoesis" and dependence on Other-power are closer to religious faith than Nishida's "self-consciousness of absolute nothingness." On the other, his notion of absolute critique does not permit him to leave the realm of philosophy to chase after the "absolute freedom from error"that he associated with faith, dogma, and theology.[28] But to conclude, as one commentator has done, that there is no more religion in Tanabe as a person than one finds in his philosophic texts, and that therefore he is an "unchurched religious vagabond" with whom millions of people in Japan and Europe who cannot make a home for themselves in any specific religious tradition can identify,[29] is both naive and indiscreet.

There is far too much in Tanabe's late writings suggestive of what we might call with Jaspers a "philosophical faith" to lump him together with the largely unreflected and untutored religious consciousness of the secularized world. If one limits religion to standing within a particular confessional tradition and practicing its rites in public, it is easy to classify him as irreligious. A broader perspective, such as I believe the last two hundred years of intellectual history oblige us to, surely allows the possibility of characterizing a critique of the religious dimension in self-consciousness as itself a religious act. Though Tanabe himself would not have welcomed the comparison, his religiosity falls squarely

28. Nishitani, "The Philosophies of Tanabe and Nishida," 197.
29. Laube, *Dialektik der absoluten Vermittlung*, 222.

in line with a Western tradition that goes back at least as far as Plotinus and the neo-Platonists.

Moreover, there is far too little of Tanabe's private papers (practically nothing compared with the copious correspondence and diaries that Nishida left behind), to permit such a conclusion. Attempts to speak of Tanabe's inner religious life must remain at best hunches from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous. What we can say, it seems to me, is that Tanabe saw in the abstractions of philosophy a defense behind which to safeguard his private life and feelings from public view, and yet from whose privileged position he could address the modern soul directly. The personal metanoesis he performs for us in *Philosophy as Metanoetics* under the continually repeated leitmotiv "sinful and ignorant as I am" so rarely touches down on the solid ground of particular historical fact that the reader cannot but slide over the words after a while.

Since I find it hard to imagine that Tanabe was not aware of this as he was writing, I can only conclude that he had taken what was originally a genuinely personal (though in its details genuinely impersonal) sentiment and turned it into the mask of an Everyman so that his readers might gradually be led to think "sinful and ignorant as *we* are," and be drawn into the same experiment of life-and-resurrection through Other-power that Tanabe was conducting himself. Far from being an asbestos cloak that protected his inward self from catching fire, the outer mask then takes on the glow of a religious conviction burning within.

Confessional writings based on religious experience are nothing new to Western philosophy, but it is hard to know just where to place Tanabe's brand of metanoesis in their ranks. One thinks of Augustine, Pascal, Hamann, Kierkegaard, and Blondel, to mention but a few possibilities for comparison. Yet the peculiar blend of self-criticism without autobiographical detail, appeal to religious experience without firm commitment to a given religious tradition, sharp moral sense without

an ethical theory,[30] and overall critique of the rational subject that we find in Tanabe undermines the likenesses from the start. The difficulty of locating his "metanoetics" in intellectual history implies more than the fact that every speculative thinker of rank enjoys some degree of distinctiveness from every other. The context itself has shifted from Western philosophy's objective associations with religious experience to an oriental understanding where the very grounds of distinctiveness rest in the experiencing subject. More particularly, it has shifted to the Japanese philosophy of the Kyoto School, where this context forms the vanguard of a confrontation with Western thought.

V

The translation of this book has had an odyssey all its own, which bears brief telling if only because of the many delays involved in its publication, first announced some fifteen years ago. Around 1965 UNESCO, which had been collaborating with the Japanese Ministry of Education to sponsor and publish English translations of Japanese philosophy in Japan, made it known to Shimomura Toratarō that it was interested in Tanabe's work and would offer a grant for its translation. Shimomura conveyed the offer to the other editors of Tanabe's *Collected Works* at a meeting in Kyoto, and the decision was reached to translate『懺悔道としての哲学』(*Philosophy as Metanoetics*).

One of the group, Takeuchi Yoshinori, then professor of philosophy at Kyoto University, was entrusted with the task. Takeuchi approached Yamamoto Seisaku, a gifted young philosopher who had just returned from doctoral studies in the United States and who has since distinguished himself as the translator of Whitehead's *Process and Reality* and as one of the foremost process thinkers in Japan. In

30. In spite of this, Nishitani takes the notion of *Tat* as the "alpha and omega" of Tanabe's endeavors. See his memorial lecture, devoted largely to *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, "Tanabe's Philosophy."

rather short order, Yamamoto prepared a rough draft of about 80 percent of the book. After checking it himself, Takeuchi sent sections of the English typescript to UNESCO, who in turn contacted its publishers for an opinion. The judgment was favorable but cautioned that stylistic improvements were needed. Anxious to have the polishing done by someone familiar with Japanese philosophy in the Kyoto tradition, Takeuchi invited Valdo Viglielmo (whose translation of Nishida's *A Study of Good* UNESCO had published in 1960) to assist him in the work.

At the time Viglielmo was busy with a translation of Nishida's 『自覚における直観と反省』[Intuition and reflection in self-consciousness] and in need of assistance himself. For several years Takeuchi and Viglielmo spent their summers together in Japan, giving their mornings to Tanabe and their afternoons to Nishida. About half of the untranslated portion was passed on to Jan Van Bragt and Hase Shōtō; the rest they decided to do on their own, the grant having already been exhausted. In the hope of publishing the book in 1968, Takeuchi issued a draft of the Preface in 1967. Once again, in 1971, it being felt that publication was imminent, an earlier draft of part of the fourth chapter that had been polished stylistically by Gerald Cooke of Bucknell University was published.[31]

Soon thereafter it became clear that UNESCO was intending to discontinue its publishing ventures, though no formal statement was made to this effect. Still incomplete, the manuscript book fell into a temporary limbo until 1980, when Takeuchi persuaded the responsible authorities to release the rights for publication to the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Nagoya. Once again Viglielmo began his summer visits to Japan to work with Takeuchi on the remaining chapters. In fall of 1984, the entire manuscript was handed over to the Institute to prepare for presentation to the University of California Press, which had already expressed interest in it.

31. See above, n. 7.

Over the twenty years of interrupted labors, the translation had lost its sense of unity and consistency of phrasing and style. For better or worse, it fell to me to take up the task, restoring portions lost in the shuffle of papers from one draft to the next, polishing the rough edges, and tracking down the notes. From the first I was struck by the precision and almost mathematical balance of Tanabe's prose, well suited to the sources and topics he was treating.

(I was not at all surprised recently to come across the following comment by Aihara Shinsaku, a leading philosopher who had studied under Tanabe at Kyoto University: "The secret of Tanabe's ability as an author to draw such a large number of readers lies in the highly fascinating way he has of orchestrating complicated theoretical works in the clear and critical tones of rationality."[32])

The deeper I got into the work, the more did my admiration grow for the immense labors that had thus far gone into the translation and the more convinced I became that nothing short of a total review would do justice to the work already invested in it. With the encouragement of both Takeuchi and Viglielmo, I spent the next several months shaping and reshaping the winding sentences and massive paragraphs (one of which runs no less than twelve pages) into what seemed to me more flowing and digestible segments, until the text reached the form in which it is presented here. Rather than yield to the temptation to take the still more arbitrary step of inserting subtitles into the text, it was decided to follow the somewhat dated procedure of including at the head of each chapter the major themes treated there. I am only too aware that my contribution is one that others could have carried out with greater eloquence than I can command and that Tanabe's brilliance was often diminished through my phrasing of his ideas. For this I beg the reader's indulgence and correction.

In the course of preparing these remarks, I have been tempted again and again to make predictions about the reception Tanabe will

32. "Professor Tanabe," 263.

receive in the West, particularly among those philosophers of religion and theologians whose interests have drawn them to Japanese philosophy and the Kyoto School. On each occasion I have found my mind the same blank slate with no higher inspiration to guide my hand. Part of the problem, no doubt, is the enigma the Kyoto School itself presents to Japanese philosophy as a whole. Neither Nishida nor Tanabe, surely the two "classical" philosophers of modern Japan, have left behind disciples in the strict sense of the term. There are no Nishideans or Tanabeans to be compared with the Kantians, the Hegelians, or the Heideggerians of the West. One Japanese critic has singled out four reasons for this in the case of Tanabe.

First, Japanese academics are not yet prepared to compare the level of Japanese philosophy in any form with its Western counterparts. Second, the demand that philosophy be defined, as Tanabe himself had done, as the result of one's own highly subjective quest chills one philosopher's relationship to another's systematic thinking, as if before an antique that should be looked at but not touched. Third, there may be something badly wanting in the academic quality of Tanabe's own thought as such. And finally, a philosophy that concerns itself with absolute nothingness abandons the canons of philosophy for those of religion, turning even the philosophy *of* religion into a philosophy-qua-religion.[33]

It is surely an irony of some significance that on each point of this assessment, it is the very opposite view that has been promoting Western interest in contemporary Japanese philosophy. Aside from a growing revisionist strain, one would have to say that the cutting edge in American and European philosophy still rests in the area of a critique of the limits of speculative language and logic, and that it is this concern more than any other that accounts for the recent spate of comparative studies on Buddhist thought and mainline Western philosophies. Tanabe's arrival at a comparable critique, though one worked out in

33. Nakano Hajimu, "Commentary," in Nakano, ed., *Tanabe Hajime*, 454–6.

what we might now consider a dated language, has remarkable affinities with the thrust of this concern. At the same time, if one may view the revisionist stance—especially the return to classical metaphysics—as an attempt to reconstruct what has been torn down by largely critical philosophies, there would seem to be great promise in pursuing a standpoint of nothingness that offers a positive alternative precisely by upholding its critique of the rational metaphysics of being. There is no knowing what the fate of oriental philosophy in the countries of the West is to be. For now we can only say that the question has risen up too strong and clear above the voice of the past to be silenced without a suitable reply.

In going through the papers of Jan Van Bragt after his death in 2007, I came upon a copy of the present volume which had been copiously annotated with his own reflections and suggested improvements to the translation. These proved very helpful in the preparation of the Italian and Spanish translations and it seemed only fitting that they be applied to this English translation as well.

To complete this new edition, a special essay has been prepared by Morisato Takeshi to provide a fuller picture of Tanabe's life and its relationship to his thinking.

Nagoya, Japan
1 September 2016

Translator's Introduction

Takeuchi Yashinori

1

Tanabe Hajime[1] was born in Tokyo on 3 February 1885. Already from his elementary and middle school days his extraordinary intellectual abilities were in evidence. After completing his studies at the First High School, he entered the Tokyo Imperial University to study mathematics, and during the course of his studies he transferred to the Department of Philosophy, graduating in 1908 with a brilliant academic record. Regarding his first published work, an essay entitled "On Thetic Judgment" published in the *Journal of Philosophy* two years later, Takahashi Satomi remarks:

> The piece not only showed the young Tanabe's talent for scholarship but contained hints of sympathy with the intuitionism of Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), Japan's foremost modern philosopher. At the time I was not even aware of the term "thetic judgment," and was amazed to find someone writing so splendidly on it. I was greatly encouraged by the prospects of having such an able young colleague as my senior.[2]

1. Although even in academic circles in Japan one will often hear Tanabe's personal name pronounced *Gen*, after its Chinese reading, instead of the Japanese reading, *Hajime*, this is incorrect.

2. Cited from Takahashi Satomi,「田辺元君の死を悼む」[In memoriam Tanabe Hajime]『思想』[Thought] 9, no. 459 (1962): 1253–9.

After graduation Tanabe served for a time as an English teacher at the Fourth Tokyo Municipal Middle School, where he himself had been a student, and later moved to the Kaisei Middle School, where his father was serving as principal. In 1915 he moved again, this time to Sendai, where he took up the post of lecturer in the philosophy of science at Tōhoku University. His next essay, "The Significance of Description in Physical Cognition," dates from this period.

Concerning his transfer from mathematics to philosophy, Tanabe was later to reflect in a public lecture:

> Having graduated from the Faculty of Science in high school, I enrolled in the Faculty of Science at Tokyo University with the intention of specializing in mathematics. In the course of the first three months at the university, from September to November, I realized that I lacked the qualifications to become a mathematician and shifted to the Faculty of Letters. Even now I can recall how poorly I did in my mathematical exercises. As I listened to the lectures of such teachers as Professor Takagi and Professor Sakai, both of whom are present here today, I found the material extremely interesting and intelligible. Even the reference material cited was clear to me, but somehow, when it came to the exercises, everything got muddled.
>
> Having completed my studies in mathematics at High School, I presumed I would continue in the same line at university, only to find that I had no ability when it came to actual mathematical problems. Convinced that I lacked the talent to become a mathematician, in the following year I transferred to arts and letters, in which I had also been interested for a long time.[3]

No doubt there is some truth in Tanabe's self-deprecating comments. Still, it should be borne in mind that even after changing his major field, Tanabe maintained his lively interest in mathematics and the natural sciences. Among his major works we find such mono-

3. "The Development of Mathematics Viewed from the History of Ideas," in『田辺元全集』[Complete works of Tanabe Hajime] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1962–1963), 5: 95.

graphs in his early period as *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* and a massive volume entitled *A Study of the Philosophy of Mathematics*, and in later years, *Historicism in the Recent Development of Mathematics*, *Methodology in Theoretical Physics*, and *The Dialectics of the Theory of Relativity*. When we see how faithfully Tanabe devoted his energies to these researches throughout his life, it becomes clear that his own judgment about his "lack of talent" for mathematics is hardly the whole story. Had he been a Western scholar, he might not have hesitated to state more openly his reasons for changing fields: a disenchantment with the state of mathematical studies in Japan at the time.

My own personal recollections of talks with Tanabe as well as the many things I have heard from older colleagues lead me to suppose that what first attracted him to mathematics was the rigor of its approach to truth, and that what led him into philosophy was his discovery of how bogged down in technical intricacies the study of mathematics had become at the university. A comment by one of Tanabe's close friends, Ueno Naoaki, probably reflects his mood at the time accurately:

> Tanabe entered the Department of Mathematics in the Faculty of Science while I entered the Faculty of Law. Both of us later became disgusted with the content of our courses We discussed the matter together, aired our disappointment, and found ourselves kindred spirits.[4]

Another school friend, Fujiwara Tadashi, aptly describes Tanabe's personality after transferring to the Philosophy Department:

> During his university days Tanabe was serious and aloof and did not readily seek out friends or indulge in idle chatter. Indeed, apart from academic topics he almost never spoke at all. His approach to his studies was the very soul of gravity. After listening to an important lecture

4.「田辺元追想」[In memory of Tanabe Hajime], publisher's supplement to vol. 11 of the *Complete Works*.

> he would pore over his notes carefully and then compare his teachers' interpretations with the pertinent passages in the original texts. This was especially true in epistemology: wherever he went, he carried about with him the Reclam edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, checking his notes against the text meticulously and making corrections. In this way his critical faculties grew stronger and sharper day by day, until eventually one had to wonder whether he had come to the school to learn or to criticize his teachers' lectures.[5]

Given the high intellectual standards Tanabe had set for himself, it is no surprise that he quickly found himself attracted to the work of Nishida and undertook to study his thought earnestly. Nishida's first book and a major milestone in Japanese philosophy, *Zen no kenkyū* (*A Study of Good*)[6] was published in 1911, the year after Tanabe's first essay, though most of it had already appeared in the *Journal of Philosophy* between 1907 and 1909. In addition, Nishida had given a lecture to the Philosophical Association of Tokyo University in November of 1909 entitled "On Reciprocal Relationships in Pure Experience." Quite by coincidence the text of this lecture appeared in the same journal one month before Tanabe's essay. All of this helps to explain why Tanabe should have attached such importance to Nishida's standpoint of pure experience from the very outset of his academic career and why he should have made it the foundation of his own thought.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that already in Tanabe's first essay, "On Thetic Judgment," we find the core of what was later to become his own original philosophical contribution. Departing from Nishida's standpoint of pure experience, Tanabe there attempts to grasp, by way of thetic judgment, the primordial form in which the subject-object opposition is generated and in which pure experience is transformed into judgment. Later he advanced a unique interpreta-

5.「田辺元君の学生時代から」From Tanabe's school days], publisher's supplement to vol. 3 of the *Complete Works.*

6. English translation by Valdo Viglielmo, *A Study of Good* (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Education, 1960).

tion of Hegel centered on Hegel's theory of judgment, thereby laying the cornerstone for "Tanabe philosophy." In that sense, this early essay makes a fascinating study in itself.

Tanabe's third essay, "The Limits of Logicism in Epistemology," was published in 1914 and drew explicit mention by Nishida. It is not clear precisely when Tanabe first turned to Nishida for philosophical guidance. I am told that Tanabe wrote a letter directly to Nishida asking for advice, but have not been able to confirm any further details. Tanabe's name appears for the first time in Nishida's diary only in 1913, after Nishida had moved to Kyoto University. The entry is dated Sunday, 6 April, and reads:

> In the morning I left for Tokyo There I accompanied Tokunō to the university, where I gave a lecture on "History and Science." Later, in the evening, there was a dinner party. Among those in attendance were Professors Inoue,... Suzuki [Daisetsu], Yamazaki, Tokunō, Miyamoto, Tanabe Hajime, Takahashi [Satomi], and Itō [Kichinosuke].[7]

In his lecture Nishida discussed the methodological differences between the natural sciences and the historical sciences. He also introduced ideas of Windelband and Rickert, and even made reference to the hermeneutics of Dilthey. Tanabe's fourth essay, "Natural Science vis-a-vis Intellectual Science and Cultural Science," may be said to have been written directly under the influence of this lecture, though already in Tanabe's second essay we find Nishida's work cited. For his part, Nishida's first published reference to Tanabe's work is to "The Limits of Logicism in Epistemology."[8] The essay is important because it shows not only at how early a stage Tanabe had assimilated neo-Kantian epistemology and begun a sharp critique of the theories of Rickert and Cohen based on Nishida's notion of pure experience, but also how rapidly his own philosophical position was maturing.

7.『西田幾多郎全集』[Complete works of Nishida Kitarō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003–2006), 18: 9.

8. Ibid., 1: 278. See also 19: 227, citing a letter of Nishida to Kuwaki Ayao.

II

Philosophy as Metanoetics was published by Iwanami Shoten in April of 1946, a year and a half after the completed manuscript had been sent. In his Preface, Tanabe describes in very moving terms how he came to write this work. The basic framework for his metanoetics, as he explains, was laid out in a final series of lectures delivered in the Faculty of Letters at Kyoto University during November and December of 1944. In fall of that year, he goes on, "I also offered an outline of my lectures in the form of a public lecture with the same title sponsored by the Kyoto Philosophical Society." It was customary on such occasions for a professor about to retire from the Department of Philosophy to give a farewell address that would bear witness to the deep fund of knowledge he had acquired. In Tanabe's case, however, the lecture coincided with the final days of World War II, at the very time that the fate of Japan was being decided.

The atmosphere was tense as the hall filled to overflowing. The audience sat spellbound, not knowing what to expect.

"The people of Japan watch in alarm as their nation sinks deeper and deeper into hell," Tanabe began, and against this background of grave concern for the future of our country proceeded to set forth his ideas. Those of us who lived through the political situation described in the Preface to this book understood at once that his words of warning could be uttered only by a philosopher willing to risk his life for his convictions. Apart from the footsteps of the indignant few who left the hall in the middle of the lecture, the audience hung on Tanabe's every word with utmost seriousness. Kōsaka Masaaki, who was also present on the occasion, records his impressions in the following words:

> At the time I did not have the leisure to attend Tanabe's lectures at the university, nor was there much chance to visit him at his home. Thus I was glad to be able to hear the public lecture he gave at the Kyoto Philosophical Society. I was deeply moved by the feelings of despair and powerlessness pervading his entire lecture as well as by his

> exposition of the concepts of *zange* (metanoia) and *tariki* (Other-power), and was surprised at the startling change he had made in his philosophical position.[9]

Earlier, as Amano Teiyū reports,

> not only students attended Tanabe's lectures, but also professors from the Philosophy Department and other departments, as well as graduates from Kyoto and even from the Osaka-Kobe area, so that every Tuesday, which was the day set for his lectures each semester, came to be known as "Philosophy Day."[10]

As the war intensified and more and more young men set off for the battlefields, and as even the teachers and students who remained behind were conscripted into the labor force, the numbers of those able to attend his lectures diminished noticeably. Nonetheless, Tanabe exerted ever greater energy in the preparation of lectures on such topics as "Absolute Knowledge" (October 1942–March 1943), "The Logic of Self-Consciousness" (1943), and "Metanoetics" (1944). In this way, the five-year period between the time that his collected essays on the logic of the specific were published in the *Philosophical Studies* and the publication of *Philosophy as Metanoetics* in 1946 came to represent a dramatic turning point both for Tanabe's thought and for the fate of the nation as such. And yet, as Kōsaka has shown, even those closest to Tanabe in the Kyoto school of philosophy found it difficult to keep abreast of the changes in his thought. Ōshima Yasumasa, Ueda Yasuharu, and I were among the fortunate few who were able at that time to continue receiving instruction from him, and thus were able to follow the development of his thought closely during that period.

On the day Tanabe and his wife left Kyoto in July of 1945, Ueda and I saw them off at Kyoto Station. I can still recall vividly, as if it

9.『西田哲学と田辺哲学』[The philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe] (Nagoya: Reimei Shobō, 1949), 131.

10.「人間としての西田博士」[The human side of Tanabe], in『田辺哲学』[The philosophy of Tanabe] (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1951), 257–61.

were yesterday, the agreement we made in the crowded streetcar on the way home that the one who survived the war should transmit Tanabe's thought to future generations. I knew at the time how much he had weakened in body and spirit, and feared that he might not have much longer to live. But I also felt—as I still feel today—that the ideas Tanabe was thinking through in the composition of the present book were of extraordinary significance. The importance of the mission that might fall into my trust, coupled with a sense of my own powerlessness to carry it out, caused me considerable unrest and tension. When I learned that Tanabe had recovered his energies at his mountain home in Kita-Karuizawa and was seeing his work to completion, I was more than relieved.

The greater part of the thought set forth in *Philosophy as Metanoetics* is therefore directly connected with the tense wartime situation in which we studied and reflected on philosophical problems. For this reason I find it unfortunate that its publication in the immediate postwar period, which was also a time of uncommon intellectual turbulence, should have overshadowed its true origins and caused it to be absorbed into the general atmosphere of mass appeals for national repentance being generated by opportunistic politicians.

III

By way of introduction to Tanabe's philosophy of metanoetics, I should like to quote at length from my personal correspondence with him. On 7 July 1944 he wrote to me as follows:

> ... I found the detailed passages you referred to in Matsumoto's work on the future Buddha Maitreya and his Pure Land, and they have proved most useful. While I wish to express my gratitude to you for having kindly lent me this book for the time being, I would also ask you to see if by any chance that work and its companion volume on Amida's Pure Land can be found in any secondhand bookstore so that I might have them with me permanently. I have been intending to ask you to do this

for some time, but other business has delayed my writing. At any rate, I am not in any particular rush, nor are these books absolutely essential, but I should be happy if you could do this favor for me if you happen to be in the area of a secondhand bookstore.[11]

Recently I have become interested in a somewhat different subject, "analytic dynamics," and I have been reading books in that area in the hope of finding a relationship between dynamics and the Great Compassion. (Perhaps it will turn out to be the path that Leibniz took.) While proctoring examinations I have become engrossed in the poems of Rilke's *The Book of Hours* and am delighted to have been able to understand his religious symbols to some extent. At this time of national crisis I must look like a mere bystander with these pursuits of mine, but I am too old and frail to do anything else. My one hope is that I might assimilate thoroughly within my being the way of transcendence to "death-and-life," and so prepare myself to participate in the task of leading those who will choose to take that path in the future. The national mood is extremely somber, and yet I feel a strange sense of light streaming over me that fills me with indescribable gratitude. It seems to me that there can be no other path toward national rehabilitation than for our people as a whole to engage in repentance. My philosophy of metanoetics may come to have a strange kind of historical objectivity about it....

That year the academic year was shortened and examinations were begun toward the end of June. At the time I was often asked by Tanabe to purchase books on Buddhism for him. I have ten or more postcards from him that year with requests similar to the one cited above. By the beginning of September he began to ask me about commentaries on Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* and *Ganshō-ge* (*Ode to Rebirth in the Pure Land*). At the end of one of those postcards he wrote: "I have been considering the important questions raised by the reflections of the two sages Hōnen and Shinran on the *nenbutsu*, but the material

11. The two volumes he refers to are Matsumoto Bunsaburō, 『彌勒浄土論』[Treatise on the Pure Land of Maitreya] (Tokyo: Heigo, 1904), and 『娯楽浄土論』[Treatise on the Pure Land of Enjoyment] (Tokyo: Kinkō, 1911).

is difficult and I am having a hard time finding my way through it." Obviously Tanabe was busy preparing his lectures on "Metanoetics," which were to begin in October. The relationship between Hōnen and Shinran was a question Tanabe dealt with specifically in chapters 6 and 7 of the present work,[12] leading us to suppose that he was already nearing the conclusion of the manuscript. Incidentally, Tanabe's reference to Rilke marks the first time I had heard him mention the great German poet, of whose work he had already acquired a profound understanding. Thereafter, whenever I would hear him talk about Rilke, I could not help recalling the deep religious concern of this letter and the impression it made on me at the time.

A second letter I should like to cite was written a little more than a year later, immediately after the end of the war. As noted above, Tanabe was living in his mountain home in Kita-Karuizawa, where he had fled to escape the bombings. As his students, we were concerned about the austere life he was leading in that remote place and asked him to keep us informed of his situation in detail. This was his response, dated 27 August 1945:

> As I have finished my work in life and my frail and sickly state can only make me a burden to others, I wish to continue my retirement in this place. My health will not improve. My arms and legs are weak, and my sight is failing. But despite the severe food shortage—at times one cannot avoid a state of near starvation—my ability to work has not been seriously impaired. My efficiency has improved markedly since my Kyoto days. On these points, as far as work is concerned, I find this place excellent for me. It is a great help to have few distractions. Thus, if possible, I should like to live here permanently....
>
> I purposely refrain from mentioning the war, which would only be a source of pain. The course Japan takes from now on will be an

12. A preliminary draft of these two chapters, based on lecture notes, was published separately, with Tanabe's permission, by one of his students, a sociologist named Minami Dentarō, in 1944 under the title fit『私観教行信証の哲学』[A personal view of the philosophy of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*].

> extraordinarily difficult one; the rebuilding will not be easy. I especially fear an impasse in the financial and economic realms, and we shall have to be prepared for an aggravation of social problems. It is doubtful whether our livelihood can be maintained. Economic reform is essential above all. Even though academic studies are necessary, for a time their decline may be unavoidable. The state of the world is such that academic pursuits are out of the question. I am extremely pessimistic about the postwar period....
>
> May there not possibly come a time when religion will be sought for the sake of people's spiritual peace and enlightenment? If so, it would signal that the period of repentance for the entire Japanese people has begun. I myself have the feeling that my philosophy of metanoetics has opened the way for such action. Be that as it may, my work seems to have responded coincidentally to the temper of the times, and I am rewriting it with the strong desire to have it published. Each day I write as much as I can.

Between the time he wrote this letter and composed the Preface to *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, his assessment of the state of postwar academia and culture in general changed somewhat. I remarked earlier that Tanabe's metanoetics had developed in advance of the postwar situation. Yet once his work was completed and it came time to add a Preface, he showed himself keenly aware of the state of affairs and moved by the timeliness of his own call for repentance a year before:

> Of course, I despise the shamelessness of the leaders primarily responsible for the defeat who are now urging the entire nation to repentance only in order to conceal their own complicity. Metanoesis is not something to be urged on others before one has performed it for oneself. Still, it is clear that we the nation of Japan, having fallen into these tragic and appalling circumstances, should practice metanoesis (*zange*) together as a people. Since I am one of those who believe in the collective responsibility of a nation, I am convinced that all of us should engage in collective metanoesis (*sō-zange*) in the literal sense of the term.[13]

13. See Preface, 66.

The repentance that Tanabe had hoped for was in fact not carried out by the Japanese people. Even those who felt moved by his deep concern for Japan not only did not heed his call but did not understand it fully.

Instead of the metanoesis that Tanabe saw as necessary for authentic national rehabilitation, Japan took the speedy but superficial road to recovery whose consequences we see about us today, a recovery that we may say without exaggeration was restricted to the material and economic realms. As was the case with postwar Germany, there is no concealing the fact that our restoration took place at the cost of evading, if not directly sacrificing, the most fundamental issues. Creative energy for spiritual recovery declined rapidly in inverse proportion to the recovery of material prosperity.

Many spoke of the advent of a nihilistic mentality. Nothing was emerging in postwar Japan to speak to the needs of the new generation in the way that existentialism and dialectical theology, for example, emerged out of the experience and confusion that the devastations of World War I had wrought on philosophy and the philosophy of religion. It seemed that the brutalities and severities of World War II had not allowed people the emotional margin they needed in order to reflect their situation accurately in literature and philosophy. For my own part, I am inclined to think that the basic reason for this phenomenon lies in a neglect of the sort of groundwork for spiritual self-consciousness that Tanabe propounded in his metanoetics. As a result of this neglect a far more serious problem hangs over us than if Tanabe's expectations had been fulfilled. Perhaps, as with all highly significant historical prophecies, Tanabe's very failure demonstrates all the more clearly how close he was to the heart of the matter. But more than that, the problem of metanoetics looms before us as a challenge to the future. In his own words:

> Speaking frankly, I would say that the occupying powers themselves have yet to achieve a harmony between democracy and socialism, and that this will remain a difficult problem for them in the foreseeable

> future. But so long as that problem is not resolved, it is inevitable that these nations will be beset by a host of difficulties both internal and external. All nations, be they democratic or socialist, have their own need to perform metanoesis.[14]

IV

After completing his study of the philosophy of metanoetics, Tanabe produced a number of major works in rapid succession. From October of 1945 he turned his attention to writing *The Dialectics of the Logic of the Specific*, which he completed in February of 1946 and published in the August issue of the *Philosophical Quarterly*. Together with its complement, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, this work represents the mainstay of his thought at the time and the foundation for his final period.

Although there is some difference of opinion as to how to divide Tanabe's lifework into periods, I am largely in agreement with Kōsaka Masaaki[15] in defining a second period in terms of the three works that make up volume 3 of Tanabe's *Collected Works*: *Kant's Theory of Teleology* (1924), *Hegelian Philosophy and Dialectics* (1932), and *A General Theory of Philosophical Method* (1933). Everything prior to these would belong to his first period. A third period may be circumscribed by his *Collected Essays on the* "*Logic of the Specific*," published in *Philosophical Studies* between 1932 and 1941 and making up volumes 6 and 7 of the *Collected Works.* The fourth period would then be centered on his concern with metanoetics. Of this final period we may now speak in greater detail.

Tanabe's encounter with Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* was central to the development of his *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, and while his criticisms of a number of Western philosophers in this connection were

14. See Preface, 68.

15. *The Philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe*, 65–76.

rather severe, he never hesitated to proclaim his indebtedness to them. We find the same standpoint dominant in his *Dialectics of the Logic of the Specific*, where he exerts himself more directly to bring the truth of religious existence into contact with social praxis. In *Existenz, Love, and Praxis* (1947), he pursues this concern with the social praxis of religious love through a criticism of Kierkegaard's existentialism for its excessive emphasis on the importance of becoming an individual and the ethical imperative of religious love. In that work he also took up the problem of superseding Plato's later dialectics by means of the faith of the Gospel. During this period, Jesus' teaching of repentance was becoming central in Tanabe's religious view of society, and was developed concretely in *The Dialectics of Christianity* (1948).

Tanabe's own assessment of these developments was that his philosophy was drawing closer and closer to the core of Christianity. His last essays, however, seem to show a standpoint closer to Zen, his affinities with which are clear from *Hegelian Philosophy and Dialectics* (1931) and other works. But these differences are not of great weight when set in the balance against his overriding concern with the fundamental problems of the philosophy of religion. Here I am in full agreement with Nishitani Keiji when he claims that the cornerstone of Tanabe's thought can as well be Buddhism or Christianity or Shin or Zen, or all of these or none of these, since his is really a philosophy—or more accurately, a philosophy of religion—in the genuine sense of the term.

Tanabe's pilgrimage in the philosophy of religion, which looks in one sense to have been an aimless wandering from Dōgen to Shinran, from Shinran to Jesus, and then back again to Zen, was actually a consistently rigorous and highly disciplined spiritual journey. In seeking to satisfy the existential requirements of philosophy, Tanabe almost seems to have made a "leap" from a philosophical position to a religious one in working out his position of "absolute critique" in which the essential problems of religion are to be treated in terms of genuine religious subjectivity. Indeed, seen from the standpoint of absolute critique, "philosophy as metanoetics" appears to be almost a confession, or a conver-

sion of philosophy itself into religion, so that his thought can unfold as an honest encounter and dramatic confrontation between the two realms. But seen from the standpoint of orthodox religion—that is, from the viewpoint of theology and religious doctrine—Tanabe would appear to be making his judgments from without, or to retreat to philosophy each time he gets to the verge of a genuine religious position. I would rather say that Tanabe struggled to sustain a sort of "philosophical faith" created from philosophy but transcending philosophy. Just as the road from the grove of trees at the base of the volcano Mount Asama, where Tanabe had his cottage, twists and turns until it makes its way to the magnificent panorama at the summit, so too does the philosophical position he spoke of as "nothingness-*qua*-love," "Great Nay-*qua*-Great Compassion," or "death-and-resurrection" always loom large in the heights ahead, no matter how many twists and turns his thought takes along the way.

One further point to be emphasized in this regard is that Tanabe himself repeatedly made clear that even in *Philosophy as Metanoetics* Shinran's influence on his thought was an indirect one. Consider, for example, the following passage:

> I do mean to imply that this was how the Pure Land doctrine set forth by Shinran effected a conversion in my philosophy. It is only that when the critique of reason that takes place in philosophy progresses to the point of an absolute critique and thus reaches the end of its tether, a way to the suprarational "death-and-resurrection" of reason is necessarily thrown open....
>
> In short, it has been the destiny of my life philosophy that it necessarily develop into metanoetics. It is not that I mean to graft Pure Land Shin faith in Other-power onto philosophy, but rather that the confrontation of philosophy with my personal experience of reality has forced me to develop my thought in this direction.[16]

16. See Chap. 1, 106..

By the same token, he has the following to say regarding his relationship to Zen:

> I was also surprised to find that once I had arrived at belief in Other-power, I found myself feeling still closer to the spirit of Zen, whose emphasis on self-power is generally considered opposed to Pure Land doctrine. Nor was this the last of my surprises. A key to solving a problem in mathematical philosophy, which would at first glance seem to be rather far removed from religious concerns, also emerged at this time. I refer to the puzzle of infinite-set theory, over which I had cudgeled my brains for many years in vain.[17]

These ideas were later carried out in various works published between 1949 and 1955 on the philosophy of mathematics and the philosophy of science. Of course this "new direction" had already begun in sections of *Existenz*, *Love*, *and Praxis* dealing with Plato's later doctrine of Ideas and their relation to number, Plato's notion of division, and the Dedekind cut.[18]

Meantime, Tanabe's notion of the mediation between dynamics and the Great Compassion flowed like a steady undercurrent through his later essays, culminating in two important final pieces, "An Ontology of Life or a Dialectics of Death?" (1961) and "My View of the *Ch'an-yuan*" (1960).[19]

As Tanabe states in his preface to *Existenz*, *Love*, *and Praxis*, his understanding of Christianity was also broadened by his metanoetics, as had been the case with Zen. I can testify personally to the fact that at the time he was working on his metanoetics, Tanabe's interest in the study of early Christianity was every bit as strong as his devotion to the study of Buddhism. Already in January of 1943, for instance, he had read Schweitzer's *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul*, which played

17. See Preface, 58.

18. *Complete Works of Tanabe Hajime* 9: 446–57.

19. The *Ch'an-yuan chu-ch'uan chi* is a collection of famous Zen sayings dating from the Tang dynasty in China. Only the preface remains.

such a prominent role in his later *The Dialectics of Christianity* (1948). I myself once borrowed Tanabe's copy of the book, the margins of which were filled with notes, and remember feeling that I was learning a great deal more from those detailed scribblings than from the actual text itself.[20] From the very outset, then, his study of Christianity had an indirect influence on his philosophy of metanoetics, which in turn served to deepen his understanding of Christianity.

Tanabe's long "third period" that produced the *Collected Essays on the "Logic of the Specific"* was crystallized in new form with the publication of *Philosophy as Metanoetics* followed by *The Dialectics of the Logic of the Specific.* These two volumes, which we have referred to as the mainstay of his final period, represent the result of an intellectual and spiritual leap. The fact that he felt he had resolved the problem of the logic of the specific demonstrates how convinced he was of the truth of his metanoetics. In hindsight, we discover that already in his third period, Tanabe's ideas on metanoetics have begun to take shape, thus showing a continuous line of development from the logic of the specific to metanoetics. At the same time, *The Dialectics of the Logic of the Specific* is more than just a completion of the logic of the specific; it signals a new approach to the same problem, which dates from the composition of *Existenz*, *Love*, *and Praxis.* And this confirms the view that the logic of the specific represents the thought of a lifetime, the central problem of his philosophical career, or perhaps we should rather say a labyrinth of problems that land us in endless complexities.

I once asked Tanabe what sort of changes his concept of the specific had undergone in being applied to such issues as race, class, and nation. His response was that to think dialectically one must always do philosophy in confrontation with the real world. At the time I did not

20. I recall receiving a postcard from Tanabe dated 17 January (1945) in which he remarked, "I have already finished reading it [the Schweitzer volume], so you may have it at any time." I believe it was also at this time that I borrowed his copy of the English translation of Gustav Deissman's *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), the margins of which were similarly filled with notes.

fully grasp his meaning. But now that I reflect on the matter, it strikes me that just as philosophy as metanoetics can only arise metanoetically, that is, from a standpoint wherein philosophy itself becomes existential and subjective metanoia, so, too, does the dialectics of the logic of the specific represent a system of thought that demands a perspective on the real world. Herein lies its difficulty and its danger, which can be faced only by way of a metanoetics. The complementary and interrelated nature of the philosophy of metanoetics and the dialectics of the logic of the specific remains one of the fundamental problems of Tanabe's philosophy to which I should like to return at a later date.

v

While he was composing *Philosophy as Metanoetics, Existenz*, *Love*, *and Praxis*, and *The Dialectics of the Logic of the Specific*, Tanabe's idea of metanoia took on fresh nuance. Without entering into details here, let us conclude by singling out the main features of the idea as expressed in the first two of those works.

Tanabe conceived of *zange* in terms of the Greek terms μετάνοια or μετανόησις, which refer to a sort of "thinking-afterward" or "repentance" that entails the painful recollection of one's past sins, a feeling of remorse accompanied by the strong wish that those sins had not been committed. But this reflective afterthought is not the central issue for Tanabe. Since metanoia is the "action" of self-negation, one cannot simply establish the self and then practice metanoia. What is required, in the first place, is rather a breakthrough of the self through which metanoia clashes head-on with the radical evil that negates our existence at its very core, where one boldly faces the discipline of a death that lets go of the self. Metanoia begins at the point where, in the midst of suffering, one recognizes the evil of the self and abandons its right to exist. Tanabe distinguishes this "voluntary despair" from a "rebellious despair," showing the former to be a profound and self-conscious grasp of a compound negation in which existence and value are intertwined.

From there he proceeds to argue for the dual nature of this negation. The reason that voluntary metanoia can negate and break through the self is that it is a self-negation prompted by an absolute nothingness that transcends the self. Because of its grounding in this transcendent absolute nothingness, the self-negation of metanoia possesses a twofold negative structure in which the self acts while being acted upon. This activity of self-negation, supplemented by transcendence (absolute nothingness), effects a conversion from negation to affirmation, from death to life. This is the second meaning of metanoia: metanoia as conversion or transformation. Tanabe's own mysterious experience of conversion is related in the Preface to the present work, where he reveals how his philosophical torment and his awareness of his personal shortcomings came together to provide the platform for a spiritual leap.

The complete death and self-negation wherein one acts while being aided and acted upon by absolute nothingness signal the start of a new life, a life in which one *lives* as one who has been *brought to life.* Here we can no longer speak of either life or death in the strict sense, but of a restoration of existence in which both life and death have been swallowed up. Conversion in this sense consists in the religious practice of a faith and action directed toward the transcendent negation of absolute nothingness at work in the self. In other words, it is "absolute nothingness-*qua*-love" or "Great Nay-*qua*-Great Compassion." Since a resurrected existence based on the love and salvation of such absolute transforming power spells the end to the acquisition of self-identity by one's own power (Tanabe uses the Shin Buddhist notion of "self-power" *or jiriki*), it does not entail the absolute extinction of sin. On the contrary, one's self-awareness of sin only grows deeper and keener, and the voluntary despair of the self continues to torment the self with suffering and sorrow. In spite of this—or rather, precisely because of it—the purification and joy of salvation are bestowed, and sadness is transformed into bliss, in the midst of one's sinful condition. Moreover, since metanoia means an absolute transformation by

absolute nothingness, the return to affirmation from negation requires this transformation to be repeated again and again. Through this repetition, the self comes to an awareness of metanoia as a dynamic and unending process of development.

In the third place, in considering the basic structure of *zange*, Tanabe based himself on a distinction he had worked out at the time of his *Hegelian Philosophy and Dialectics* (1931), contrasting the *differential* standpoint of action and faith with the *integral* standpoint of immediate intuition. In this way he could insist that metanoia is achieved in an active faith of religious existence that abandons contemplation of existence as a totality. Thus metanoetics, as a "meta-noetics," surpasses the position of mere contemplation (philosophical speculation). This in turn allows him to argue that his is a "philosophy beyond philosophy." In the terms of the Kegon (Huayan) school of Chinese Buddhism, it is at one and the same time a suprarational philosophy where reason (*ri*) is thoroughly destroyed by fact (*ji*) and a philosophy where reason and fact interpenetrate each other (*riji-sōnyū*) without hindrance or obstacle (*riji-muge*).

In the fourth place, Tanabe deals with the question of the transcendence of the speculative position by appealing to a philosophy of absolute criticism. The overcoming of speculative metaphysics in "meta-noetics" is achieved by the path of an absolute critique that results from carrying out the critique of reason to its ultimate consequences. Kant's position grounds philosophy, both theoretical and practical reason, in the autonomy of reason alone, exempting nothing that exists, not even God and the state, from his critique. But he did not allow reason the full rein of its critique inasmuch as the reason that is performing the critique is not turned around to criticize itself. If reason is not made to perform this task, Tanabe argues, it must perforce fall into a state of utter confusion and end up in antinomy. Hegel's philosophy is marked by the attempt to pursue Kant's critique of reason to its limits in both its theoretical and practical dimensions, and on this basis to set philosophy up as a practical dialectics. It is here that we

find his profound notion of "reconciliation with destiny through love," which Tanabe sees as exemplary for the philosophy of metanoetics. No less important is Hegel's location of the self-awareness of the sinfulness of human existence and its transformation by means of religion at the heart of his dialectics.

However, inasmuch as Hegel ended up retreating to a rational standpoint concerned with a purely conceptual and speculative structuring of the totality of being, he left his thought open to the critical corrective of Kierkegaard's attacks. Accordingly, in the fifth place, Tanabe's philosophy makes use of the notion of metanoia to undertake a spirited presentation of Kierkegaard's dialectics of religious existence.

In a sense, Kierkegaard's notion of "repetition" corresponds to the demand for constancy in metanoia, but what it lacks is a self-consciousness of the element of compassionate *return to* care for the world that must underlie the element of *going forth* on the way of one's own salvation, a distinction that Tanabe develops through Shinran's ideas of *gensō* and *ōsō* respectively. This leads to a sixth characteristic of metanoia: its unending "repetition" through which the self incarnates itself in faith and practice. It is in this process, where "the turning (conversion) of the self on its own axis empathizes with and arouses the turning of an infinite number of other axes (one's neighbors)," that we see Tanabe making Kierkegaard's profound but incomplete grasp of the logic of "return" more concrete. God's love must join with our love of God and our love of one another to form a trinity that may be described as a "nothingness-*qua*-love." It is here that Tanabe ultimately comes to turn metanoetics back to social praxis grounded in religious love.