# Tanabe's Logic of the Specific and the Critique of the Global Village

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF Tanabe Hajime, as yet little known outside the Japanese-reading world, is destined, I believe, to attract more and more attention as time goes on. Great injustice is done to Tanabe by treating him only as a Japanese thinker. Together with the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō and Nishitani Keiji, his is a world-class philosophy. In one sense, the endorsement rolls effortless and unoffending off the tongue; in another, it is a hard verdict to swallow. But it is just this verdict, in its thick and thin, that has me engrossed me in Tanabe's thought this past decade and more.

In a first and thin sense, to call these philosophers of the Kyoto school world-class is to say that they give to the world of their age the Japanese intellectual tradition at its best. If those raised in other modes of thought want to know Japan's contribution, they do well to include these Kyoto philosophers in the picture. As twentieth-century minds, they deserve to take their place alongside the most respected representatives of other intellectual histories. They belong in the ranks of Russell, Jaspers, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Ortega y Gassett, James, Whitehead, Croce, Aurobindo, and the like. The judgment is not simply the bloated bias of devoted disciples. Nor is it the ignorant flattery of foreign readers enchanted by the otherness of Japanese thinking or eager to defend the intellectual investment required to plow through these difficult works. It is a judgment of historical fact, and as such it has stood well the test of time and criticism both in Japan and

<sup>\*</sup> The text of this essay is a translation of a Japanese lecture delivered on 3 June 1995 in Kyoto to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the passing of Nishida Kitarō. The original is tentatively scheduled to appear in *Tetsugaku Kenkyū* 562 (October 1996), published by the Kyoto Tetsugaku Kai.

abroad. Still, this is the thin sense.

A second, thick sense is that in which Kyoto-school philosophy needs to be liberated from the confines of the culture and language that gave it birth in order to execute its full potential. It sees the audience of this philosophy as all those who gather on the world forum of ideas. It is therefore not just a collection of ideas that can be understood, criticized, and applied only by, nor even primarily by, those educated in the same Japanese particularity. The thick sense of being world-class removes the privilege of immunity from critique on cultural grounds. It also opens up the possibility of enhancing the role of the Kyoto school in history. At the same time, I think you will agree that the foreign reader comes at a disadvantage to understanding what Japan has done to philosophy, and that this disadvantage suggests certain limits of decency to the critique of what is, after all, distinctively Japanese. In that regard, the thin sense of Kyoto philosophy as representing the Japanese presence in the ranks of world intellectual history must never be brushed out of the landscape.

In this lecture, I would like to take up Tanabe's logic of the specific as a standpoint from which to consider the consequences, at home and abroad, of twentieth-century Japanese thought stepping out onto the world forum. Although newer editions of philosophical encyclopedias have taken a turn towards eastern thinkers more generous than in the past, the conversion has yet to reach the proportions of the thick sense. There are reasons for this, and Tanabe's logic of the specific, I suggest, helps us examine those reasons critically.

Let me at once add an important qualification. As far as I know, the suggestion of applying the logic of the specific to Japanese philosophy itself is not Tanabe's, but mine. Not only did he not make the connection between his logic and Japanese thought explicit, he speculated on the contradictory conclusion that Japan's specificity could provide a universal matrix for the other cultures of Asia. That he failed prodigally during the course of Japan's fifteen-year war with Asia to consult his own insight objectively is in part softened by his later repentance and reassessment of his own philosophical position. It is in the spirit,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> I have spelled this out in greater detail in "Tanabe's Logic of the Specific and the Spirit of Nationalism," J. Heisig and J. Maraldo, eds., Rude Awakenings: Zen, The Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 255-88.

if not the flesh, of that later "metanoetics" that I offer my own reading of the originality and applicability of Tanabe's logic of the specific. The primary backdrop against which I do so be the contemporary universal of the electronic age, the "global village," which has become something of a guiding fiction for the modern imagination.

#### THE ORIGINS OF THE SPECIES

In the background of the specific philosophical influences that combined to inspire Tanabe to his new logic lies the fact that it was forged in the crucible of a culture that had traditionally resisted the moral implications of its own historical conditioning and relativity vis-à-vis other peoples and cultures. When Western philosophy reached Japan around the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it did not flow naturally into the deep channels of a perennial philosophy or a collective awareness of the distinction between universal truth and vernacular representations of it. It streamed broad and shallow over a terrain unprepared for its deeper currents, washing occasionally into the mainstream of Buddhist thought with thinkers like Kiyozawa Manshi and Inoue Enryo, but generally no more than an object of curiosity. Nishida's genius was that he tried to conduct the philosophical tradition of the West into channels dug fresh and to the measure of the modern Japanese mind. From his ideas of pure experience, active intuition, and self-awareness to his logic of locus, Nishida was trying to construct concrete modes of thought able critically to receive the best that human reflection had to offer and to transmute it into the wisdom needed for Japan to take its place in the world.

Although Tanabe inherited this concern as a given, it is not until his idea of the logic of the specific that we see him clearly appropriating its fundamental inspiration in an original contribution. When Nishida introduced his logic of locus in 1926 in an attempt to bring the notion of absolute nothingness into clearer philosophical relief, Tanabe did not follow suit. Instead he began to work on the idea of "absolute mediation," which he had distilled out of his reading of Hegel. In a 1930 essay openly critical of the senior Nishida, he presented his idea as an alternative way to incorporate the idea of eastern nothingness into philosophy. That, coupled with his previous conviction that the political dimension needed to be pulled out of the shadows and into the light

of speculative philosophy, seems to have provided him the stimulus for announcing in 1934 his idea of the "logic of the specific."

Judgments of disciples have remained divided regarding the confrontation between Nishida and Tanabe over their respective logics. For my part, I feel that Nishida and his sympathizers overestimated the extent to which Nishida had already disposed of Tanabe's originality in his own categories. I am tempted to try here to dress that conclusion up in suitable texts and argument. The time allotted me gives me no choice but to leave it standing naked and defenseless before you. In any case, we may perhaps agree that their animosities drew strength from the affinities of that deeper aim of making philosophy a vehicle to draw the whole wide world out of Japan and draw Japan out into the whole wide world.

That having been said, it remains to lay out as simply as I can what I see as the chief marks of originality in Tanabe's new logic. Since I will be composing a position that ranges across thirty years and more of writings, a word about the way Tanabe worked out his position seems in order.

Not a few commentators have objected to Tanabe's attempts to bias his resume of earlier positions in the light of later insights. Without going too deeply into the "origin of his species," I would like to qualify this criticism somewhat. In early presentations, Tanabe himself gave two primary motives for developing a new logic. First was a practical concern with "seeking out rational grounds to the controls imposed by the society as a nation on its individual members." Second was what he felt as the need to revise general logic in the strict sense of the word.<sup>2</sup> Regarding this latter aim, Tanabe did make a number of attempts to clarify the origins of his idea and also to modify or retract earlier positions in response to critics.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the former aim, however, he behaved rather differently in the formative years of the idea, omitting mention of his critics and their criticisms. This is on the one hand, I believe, to Tanabe's generally Darwinian habit of argumen-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 種の論理の意味を明にする ["Clarifying the Logic of the Specific"], 田辺元全集 [Collected Works of Tanabe Hajime, hereafter cited as THZ] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1964), 6:466.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> In addition to the essay mentioned in the note above, see also his 種の論理に対する 批判に答う ["Response to Criticisms of the Logic of the Specific,"] THZ 6.

tation, which seems to hide from his reader the accumulated contradictions of his thinking by making periodic adjustments. His ideas unfold themselves forwards, the fittest surviving and the rest falling aside or remaining as mere vestiges, as if by natural selection. When he returns to the same theme again, he evaluates its descent only in terms of what has survived. It is always the latest stage that kept his attention. So long as he was moving forwards, the ontogeny did not detain him.

On the other hand, in the case of the logic of the specific we cannot discount the political situation in Japan where critical reflection on social structures had to contend with military escapades abroad and a growing totalitarianism at home. In that mood, the philosophical language of the Kyoto philosophers lost its innocence and even the most abstract notions were overlaid with meanings often far from their authors' intent. That Tanabe chose to deal with the practical, moral, and religious dimensions of the state philosophy in such circumstances only drew more attention to his writings, and in some measure—enough to prompt him to call for a repentance of the philosophical enterprise itself—derailed his primary aim from his broader philosophical convictions.

If we are to draw attention to the logic of the species as Tanabe's contribution to world philosophy, this derailing is far less interesting than is the fundamental inspirations behind it. Of such matters I speak with only timid authority, but I believe that the lasting originality we find in the *logic* of the specific is not the originality of a unified, fully self-identical system, the "pure logic" that he sought as a secondary aim, but a method of thinking, and that this thinking is not intrinsically bound to the particular interpretations of the Japanese state to which Tanabe first applied it.

### THE PERSPECTIVE OF TANABE'S LOGIC OF THE SPECIFIC

In order to locate as precisely as possible the defining traits of Tanabe's logic, I would single out, in a sequence of my own device, four interlocking and defining propositions that give us the dimensions of his new perspective.

1. The logic of the specific marks a shift from the formal, syllogistic function of species to an ontological description of absolute mediation.

The first step in Tanabe's reinterpretation of the notion of the specific is to dislodge the concept of species from its obligation to formal logic where it served as a mere category of classification pinched between the universal and the individual. To Tanabe it seemed that in comparison with the universal "One" and the individuals that make up the "many," the traditional role of species was merely ancillary: on the one hand, a way to group the many into units smaller than the great One; on the other, a way to break the immensity of the One up into unities larger than the mere individual. The reason it was so confined, as Tanabe points out, was that species lacked the ontological possibilities of the universal and the individual. True parity for the specific would require that it be seen as something fully real.

Tanabe made no secret of his debt to Hegel in his mature thought. The period immediately before the logic of the species was preoccupied with Hegel's dialectic and led him to strike out in a new direction of his own. All vagaries of his reading of Hegel aside, perhaps most important of all, he took from Hegel the idea of logic reflecting reality not as a mirror before an object, but as belonging to the same unfolding process. This entails two things. First, as Hegel saw, when the dimension of history is brought into the picture, the two-valued logic of the grammatical syllogism gives way to a dialectic in which negation and affirmation work incessantly to make the world, and our understanding of it, over and over again. In place of the principle of noncontradiction, he proposed that logic be grounded on a principle of absolute mediation. Tanabe concludes:

The logic of the specific is a dialectical logic, . . . both a logic and a denial of logic. The self-contradiction of existence and the reversibility of affirmation-in-negation and negation-in-affirmation cannot be expressed, still less, described, in terms of a logic that takes the laws of identity and non-contradiction as fundamental principles. . . . Existence destroys and transcends the logic of identity. . . . 4

The reference to the denial of logic is Tanabe's way of insisting that the logic of the specific is always a logic of an evolving reality, a way of seeing that only makes sense when it is engaged in seeing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> 弁証法としての種の論理 ["The Dialectic of the Logic of Species"], THZ 7:261-2.

Second, in making absolute mediation a logical principle more fundamental and fairer to reality than the principle of non-contradiction, Tanabe does not merely mean that reality is full of contradictions that require a continual give-and-take among our ideas about it, but that the very mediation that propels history through time as an interrelated totality itself belongs to reality. It was at this point that he struck on the idea of reinvigorating the syllogistic function of "species" as a link that joins the universal and the individual (the "Socrates is a man" that enables "all men will die" to be applied to the individual case as "Socrates will die"). This formal mediating function, he thought, might be extended beyond the abstract proposition to point to the actual ontological reality of the many participating severally in the One.

The direction in which Tanabe took his conviction that mediation is real and not just an abstracted reflection of the real, is as different from Nishida's logic of place as it is from what Hegel does with the same conviction in the Science of Logic. Tanabe's rejection of Nishida's "self-identity of absolute contradictories" as slipping into a contemplation of a static, quasi-Plotinean One has to be read today, I think, less as a fair appraisal of his senior colleague than as his way of underlining this utter reality he wished to grant to mediation. His departure from Hegel, however, is more studied, though the chronology is not altogether clear to me.

Hegel saw logical mediation as a misty reflection of reality, a selfestrangement of Thought from itself, a temporary detour away from phenomenal being in search of the essential substrate of things, which would eventually wind its way back to the self-consciousness of Spirit. In this way he argued that logic needs to be freed of its traditional attachment to abstract notions of the universal and the specific as mere names for common features shared by concrete individuals in order to show Thought functioning in the unfolding of history as a concrete universal and a concrete specificity.

In 1946, Tanabe tells us that his idea of a logic of the specific was "originally suggested by Hegel's objective Spirit." Despite a small

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> He states this in the opening paragraph of the "The Dialectic of the Logic of Species," THZ 7:253-4. See also Takeuchi Yoshinori, "Recollections of Professor Tanabe," in J. Heisig and T. Unno, eds., The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1990), 7-10.

number of references to this in his earlier essays, it seems to me that the critical catalyst did *not* come from his reading of Hegel at all, but rather from a decisive stimulus to break his idea of absolute mediation away from the imposing shadow of Hegel's Absolute Spirit.<sup>6</sup> This brings us to our next proposition.

 Specificity is defined primarily as the socio-cultural substratum of historical peoples.

Without the concrete leavings of history, the claim that mediation is as real as the real things that interact with each other sounds more like a rhetorical flourish than a critical statement. There is no reason why dialectical language at all should be less liable to read its own biases into the phenomenal world than static, two-valued logic is. This criticism, which the reader of Hegel's richly experiential and historical Phenomenology and Philosophy of Right can hardly avoid lodging against the dry and ethereal Logic, did not escape Tanabe. As a result,

structure of the scheme goes. Tanabe's first outline of the logic of the specific opens with a brief critique of Hegel's idea lack of concreteness in the Science of Logic, and makes a brief allusion to the Phenomenology of Mind. But in reading through the third part of the Logic, where the idea of the concrete universal is discussed and where Hegel makes his case for the cooperative interplay of universal, species, and individual, I have to say I find nothing terribly suggestive at all. Tanabe's idea is that the three parts of the Logic correspond to logics of the specific, the individual, and the universal respectively. I know of no one else that reads Hegel this way, and in fact Tanabe himself may have realized this later, as his main point here—that the logic of general predication found in part 1 (Being) "leaves no room for doubt that it corresponds to a logic of the species"—is not repeated in later writings. See 社会存在の論理 ["A Logic of Social Existence"], THZ 6:71-4. On the other hand, the influence of the Philosophy of Right on Tanabe's development of the idea of the nation is both explicit and to the point in his early essays.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to comments in the opening pages of the 1932 essay mentioned in note 4, he suggests in a 1938 essay カントからヘーゲルへの論理 ["Logic from Kant to Hegel"] that Hegel's critique of Kant needs to be complemented by a reverse critique in which Kant's concrete "Platonic" practical reason could challenge the abstract and "Plotinean" aspects of Hegel's Absolute Spirit (see especially THZ 5:400-4). There he fills out an idea that he alludes to in a 1931 essay ["Dialectics and Hegel's Philosophy"] (THZ 3:134). In addition, his longer essays on Hegel at that time often refer to taking the ethical and historical dimension of Hegel more seriously than Hegel himself had.

he could not propose his principle of absolute mediation as a logic—that is, as a way of seeing reality—without first mooring it in the temporal-historical process. This was the inaugural role he assigned to the idea of the specific.

In the background of his first essay on the logic of the species one can hardly fail to hear the echoes of the contemporary clamor among intellectuals for greater attention to concrete social praxis. Tanabe was aware that he was about something very contemporary, and he even takes a moment to pardon Hegel for having lived at an age where he could know no better.8 The direct catalyst for turning an ear to this concern with the social was his awakening to the importance of sociology for philosophy, and the most important of these influences was Bergson's Two Sources of Morality and Religion. This in turn allowed him to bring to the surface a concern that is already present in previous writings, namely the restoration of the moral dimension of philosophy. "It is in morality," he writes, "that we find philosophy's vital immediacy." Influences aside, the fact is that specific social praxis lay at the heart of the logic of the specific. It is the mediating force that binds the individual human being to the universal human race and that brings into relationship the absolute negational role of religion and the affirmative exercise of individual free will. The locus of the specific, Tanabe realized, must be sought in the societal dimension of the human, namely in human society. The question was where.

In order to play the role of the guarantor of concreteness, the specificity of the specific had itself to be both synchronic and diachronic: it had to refer to a particular epoch but also refer to what unfolds across epochs. In other words, its specificity needed to stand on a middle ground between the universal history of the human race and the individual history of men and women. Moreover, like the Christian Hegel, but unlike Nishida whose logic of locus frequently opened out into Buddhist metaphors of the wider natural world, Tanabe's logic of the specific seems to have assumed that the primary sense of history was that of human history. That Nishida's logic tilted always towards

<sup>8 &</sup>quot;A Logic of Social Existence," THZ 6:74.

<sup>9 &</sup>quot;A Logic of Social Existence," 6:166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> I understand this to be present in his somewhat oblique response to the criticism of Takahashi Satomi that the proper locus for absolute mediation is nature. See "Response to Criticisms of the Logic of the Specific"] THZ 6:406-7.

self-awareness and Tanabe's towards moral praxis is hardly accidental. All of these assumptions combined in Tanabe's decision: the specific would be identified as the concrete and immediate reality of the ethnic "closed society."

The idea of the closed society was, of course, Bergson's. The freedom of the Japanese language to omit distinction between singulars and plurals, together with Tanabe's own failure to give concrete examples, leaves a certain ambiguity, but there seems little doubt that it was Japan that he had in mind as a historical model. Now given the negative connotations of referring to a society as "closed" and the implicit reference to Japan, the immediate problem for Tanabe was how to introduce a process of conversion to a more "open" society. This was the stimulus behind his quest for locating a rational foundation for social existence. Throughout the years in which the logic of the species took shape, roughly 1934 to 1941, Tanabe chose to pursue this problem by focusing his attention on the most obvious rationalization of social existence at hand—the modern nation.

In contrast to so-called primitive or totemic societies, where the individual is absorbed into the group's will to preserve an disseminate its own life, the modern European nation is built on the seventeenth-century ideal of shifting the accent from the group's "will to life" to the "will to reason and morality" of the individuals as the political atoms that make it up. Tanabe saw the nation's essence to consist in a "will to authority" that brings a kind of molecular, rational unity to the whole. Accepting Hegel's idea that "membership in the nation is the highest duty of the individual," Tanabe adds that the essence of being a nation consists in opening up what ethnic specificity had closed, or as he puts it "elevating its individuals to the status of universal individuals."

The open society that Tanabe saw as the moral vocation of the nation follows Bergson's definition here in introducing humanity as the generic universal that uplifts individuals out of the limitations of specific, closed societies. But at the same time Tanabe took an important step away from Bergson in refusing, at least initially, to put all talk of "human society," "human nation," or "world community" on the same level of immediate reality as the specific substrate of ethnicity. He saw it rather as a negation of the specific, a kind of permanent

<sup>11 &</sup>quot;A Logic of Social Existence," THZ 6:155.

protestant principle that saved particular nations from inflicting their own cultural specificity on others in the name of universal humanity.

In a word, Tanabe saw the immediate reality of ethnic specificity as only a provisional form given to the social dimension of the human, but he could not conceive of any reformation or transformation taking place outside of the concrete structures of particular nations. Although he insisted that this does not imply any particular form of government or even any particular ideal of social structure, he could not avoid reference to participation in politics in general, and eventually reference to participation in the politics of Japan's wartime government. Looking back on these events after the war, he claimed that this is precisely what he did not mean by his new logic. We can take Tanabe at his word only on the assumption that he did not really mean what he wrote. His later writings seem to me to support just such an assumption.

3. Socio-cultural specificity is defined as a nonrationality that lies at the base of every human attempt to ground social existence rationally.

On first hearing, the orchestration of the nation as a social reality entrusted with introducing universality into ethnic specificity sounds offkey. The surface melody criticizing Japan as a society closed in on its own specificity harmonizes poorly with echoes of a colonial mentality running in subtle counterpoint. Was it not in the name of the Japanese nation that he encouraged young students on their way to the warfields? But at the same time, was not his distinction between the nation and ethnic specificity meant to choke the cultural supremacists on their own medicine? Looking back after the war at his logic of the species, Tanabe claimed that "my motive was to take up the philosophical question of racialism that was emerging at the time."12 While we have to wonder why he did not make that motive clearer in his original writings, I find nothing directly contradicting the claim. In any case, if the logic of the specific stands or falls on Tanabe's idea of the nation, then it falls. And fall it did. During a five-year period of silence after the war he left it flat on its face. To pick it up again he needed to distance social praxis from its former association with building up the nation. This is what his later writings do.

Insofar as Tanabe's logic revolved around the primary aim of seek-

<sup>12</sup> THZ 7:253.

ing rational grounds to the organization of individuals into a society, the idea of socio-cultural specificity could not avoid defining itself in terms of theories of social contract, ideals of democracy, and the critique of bourgeois society. But by the same token, as Tanabe himself admits, "Whether one is talking of nation or ethnic people or social class, they are all located in the position of a specific in contrast to the totality of humanity on the one hand and particular individuals on the other." The admission is important because his long attention to the role of the nation tends to obscure what it shares in common with the ethnic closed society, namely the essential and ultimately irradicable nonrationality of the specific. Only in bringing this aspect into clearer relief can we draw the line in the logic of the specific to Tanabe's later work and from there to our world today. 14

The key to drawing this line appears in a 1946 essay on "The Logic of the Specific as Dialectics," where Tanabe contrasts the positive and negative dimensions of the specific in new terms. 15 Negatively, as before, the specificity of the socio-cultural substratum is said to limit the individual, breaking the will to moral action in the name of ideals coming from outside of the ethnic group. Its totality is nonrational, opposing all who oppose it with the aim of mediating it through rational reflection, presenting itself as superior precisely because it is immediate and unreflected reality. Positively, however, it is also now said to be the foundation for culture, which arises through a process of education among the members of a society. In this sense, the unreflected immediacy of the specific society is transfigured into a conscious and mutual mediation among individuals. In place of earlier emphasis on the nation in contrast to the oppressive tendencies of ethnic or racial identity, the positive dimension reemerges in the context of a moral culture somehow seen to be superior to, though not exclusive of, political obligations to the nation.

<sup>13 &</sup>quot;A Logic of Social Existence," THZ 6:60.

<sup>14</sup> Here I part company with 氷見潔 Himi Kiyoshi's immensely helpful studies of the logic of the specific, 田辺哲学研究—宗教哲学の観点から— [Studies in the Philosophy of Tanabe] (Tokyo: Hokuju, 1990). For Himi, after Philosophy as Metanoetics the logic of the specific is no more than a smoldering ember that Tanabe never again managed to fan into flame.

<sup>15</sup> THZ 7:257-8.

Already in the early stages of the logic of the specific it is clear that Tanabe's insistence on absolute mediation as the only way to describe reality ultimately left him dissatisfied with Hegel's principle that "the real is rational and the rational is real." If there is rationality in the socio-cultural specificity that mediates a relationship between universal humanity and individual human beings, it would not do to chalk this up to the mere fact that ethnic groups exist. Rational attempts to create government and to rule by moral or religious ideals were always for Tanabe an imposition of human reason, not an inevitable law of nature. The interplay between the individual and society was simply too varied, too vital, to be fully rationalized. Quite the contrary, as the living soul of a people, the specific substratum that bound a people together into a socio-cultural unit was not only nonrational in the sense of being unreasonable or imperfectly reflected, but also nonrational in the sense of posing immediate limits to reason. Once we grant that this specificity is not a mere classifying category or a moral option that one can accept or reject, but an indispensable dimension of the human as a social being, the tables turn on Hegelian social philosophy: the nonrational becomes the foundation of the real and hence of the rational as well.

In pointing out the positive side of the specific, one should note that Tanabe never compromised his abiding distrust in the tendency of the specific towards herd thinking, collective superstition, and simply sloppy thinking. Nothing in his writings backs down from his belief in the irrevocable inhumanity of simple blind obedience to habits of thought inherited in the structures of language or cultural mores. Never one to honor common sense unduly, Tanabe located the tendency to think badly in the group and the overcoming of that tendency in private discipline. This was the original sense of the term in his first essays on the logic of the specific, and appeared again in redoubled force in the Metanoetics, where he announced that the irrationality of the specific was something he had personally "suffered" and hence hard to explain to those who lacked the experience of wartime Japan. 16 The disenchantment at waking up to one's own inability to critique collective patterns of thought taking shape in one's own time is, of course, a common enough experience, and belongs as much to the victors of

<sup>16</sup> THZ 7:259-60.

the war as to the defeated.

At the same time, revaluing the nonrationality of the specific seems to have drawn his attention to elements in vernacular wisdom and common sense that limit our attempts to be rational and give them a practical and objective raison d'être in time and space that mere private reflection cannot. No doubt old age and the approach of death aided this positive appreciation of the nonrational side of the specific substratum. Together, if it is not out of place for me to say so, they help understand the unaccustomed tinge of piety one sees in his later work.

4. Specificity's ultimate foundation is not the being of historical relativity, but absolute nothingness.

If there is a fundamental nonrationality at the heart of human society which it is our ambivalent duty as free, conscious individuals both to overcome and to respect; that is to say, if the specificity of social existence is both a spur to our innate drive to salvation from ignorance and a guarantee that we shall never be saved, then this aporia would amount to a final, irrevocable law of existence. Tanabe's agreement with existential philosophy on this score (in particular Heidegger and more so Jaspers) only makes sense in the context of his religious transformation of the pursuit of salvation.17 The cornerstone of his thought he shared with others of the Kyoto school, and it comes simply to this: the immediate reality of the human as a thinking social being, does not ultimately rest on any higher state or form of being but on an absolute nothingness that at once embraces and penetrates the inherent contradictions and relative nothingness at the limits of being. 18 In Tanabe's case, nothingness became the "subject" of the absolute mediation at work in the world of being. As such it was the principle behind the conversion of individuals only because it was also the principle behind the transformation of the socio-cultural specificity that gives individuality its immediacy. His language is dense, but clear:

Insofar as nothingness is nothingness, it is incapable of func-

<sup>17</sup> 実存哲学の限界 ["The Limits of Existentialist Philosophy"], THZ 7:3-24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> This distinction between relative and absolute nothingness, the core of Nishitani's magnum opus, Religion and Nothingness, is referred to by Tanabe in 実存と要と実践 [Existenz, Love, Praxis], THZ 9:283-4.

tioning on its own. Being can function only because it is *not* nothingness. . . . The individual is mediated by nothingness by a self-negating mediation of the specific in which the being of the specific functions as a nothing-in-being, thus making the individual a being-in-nothingness. 19

I throw up my hands at the very suggestion of telescoping into a few lines how the idea of absolute nothingness functioned in Tanabe's thought. I should have to read and re-read too much to speak with any confidence on such matters. Still, it is an essential ingredient to the logic of the specific and I feel I must say something of it.

In the logic of the specific, absolute nothingness appears primarily as the religious dimension to social existence. Tanabe rejected as mere "bias" Bergson's idea that religion is of necessity mystical. For him, religion was always a cooperative via salvationis in which the self-awakening of the individual could never be authentic without an accompanying overflow into the moral sphere of social praxis. Even the via mystica was always a via specifica trod in the midst of the concrete human community. This was the way in which he worked the religious dimension into his understanding of the nation. Furthermore, at least from the time of his logic of the specific, he was consistent in his claim that the function of religion is one of absolute negation.

Religion negates the nation in both a practical and an ontological sense. Practically, it is a way of salvation from the specific, since Tanabe uses the Buddhist term for "unconditional acceptance" or his own version "absolute acceptance." Ontologically, it negates not only the nation, but all immediate forms of socio-cultural specificity, as well as the self-subsistent being of individuals and the claim of the human race to universality. In negating all the affirmations of morality, reason, and power that function through the concrete mediation of the individual, the specific, and the generic in human social existence, the negation of religion is an absolute negation. As negation, it is not so much a denial of the fact of mediation as a denial of the affirmation that the mediation that binds society together is actually the work of the members who make it up. As absolute, the negation prevents the

<sup>19</sup> THZ 7:261.

<sup>20 &</sup>quot;A Logic of Social Existence," 6:147.

practical working out of salvation from being identified with a particular structures, which would land the state in some form of theocracy, which for Tanabe was no more than an absolutizing of the specific.<sup>21</sup>

In late writings the religious meaning of mediation gets stronger and clearer in proportion as the nationalistic side pales and fades into the background. Specific society, insofar as it closes itself off from the community of other societies, is seen as the self-alienation of the generic unity of absolute nothingness. Religiously, the specific is the locus for the enlightened engagement in the world (the relative gensō, to follow his Pure Land terminology), where absolute nothingness works to save the members of a society through mutual love and cooperation. "As the mediator of the totality of nothingness in the world of being, the individual becomes nothing and thereby becomes the convenient means for mutual instruction and salvation."<sup>22</sup>

But the role of religion in working for the self-awareness of generic unity is not only to bind the individuals within a specific society together but to open them to the wider world outside of their own community. In the same way that Tanabe adopts the Christian symbol of the communio sanctorum to speak of the relations among individuals, there is at least a hint that he had the Christian idea of the specific "local church" in mind when speaking of the religious dimension of the nation in relation to the ideal "universal church" of the entire human family.<sup>23</sup> In this scheme the nation loses the character of simple "immediacy" that Tanabe had given it earlier and in its place becomes simply a "convenient means" for working out a salvation that draws one across specific boundaries.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of this reorientation of the logic of the specific, and despite his insistence that "culture worship . . . is a symptom of the decadence

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> "A Logic of Social Existence," 6:149-53.

<sup>22</sup> THZ 7:258.

<sup>23</sup> The suggestion is Himi's, Studies in the Philosophy of Tanabe, 168.

At the prodding of Takahashi Satomi, Tanabe realized early on that there was a problem with exempting the specificity of society and nation from the rule of absolute mediation. But as the term he used for *immediate* did not on the surface indicate unmediated, it was not until he dislodged the nation from its central position in the logic of the specific that he reached a satisfactory solution to the criticism.

of culture,"25 it is surprising to see that Tanabe never recanted his earlier attempts to elevate the Japanese emperor religiously to the status of "avatar of Absolute Nothingness."26 At the height of Japan's transformation into a military state, Tanabe envisioned the emperor rising up symbolically out of the nation of mutually mediated beings to represent the higher reality in whose power all beings are ultimately joined one to another. His motives for repeating this idea, substantially unchanged, as late as 1947 are hard to fathom. At most we can say that as Tanabe's religious reflections drove his logic of the specific further and further away from the idea of the nation, they also overshadowed his curious attachment to finding a place of honor for the emperor in the logic. If there was any vacancy left, it was more than filled by the figures of Shinran and Jesus in whom Tanabe recognized true religious "cosmopolitans" rising above the epoch-specific conditions of their origins.

Several years ago at an International Zen Symposium on "Religion and Ethics in the Contemporary World" held here in Kyoto, Ueda Shizuteru ended his concluding talk with the suggestion that the proper standpoint for religion in the world was not one of transcendental aloofness—"6,000 feet beyond good and evil," as Nietzsche put it—nor of "two feet planted firmly on the ground," but a standpoint "one inch off the ground." The phrase, said to characterize the twelfth-century poet and monk Saigyō, seems to me just right to describe Tanabe's final position towards the specificity of social existence: always at enough of a distance to keep his presence of mind, but always close enough to keep from becoming absentminded.

#### THE VIRTUAL REALITY OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

As I mentioned at the outset, Tanabe's logic of the specific is not essentially a set of rules for inference or categories for classifying data. It is a critical perspective from which to frame questions about the world,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Philosophy as Metanoetics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), lxi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> As late as 1947 he published an essay, ["The Urgent Task of Political Philosophy"] defending the emperor as the symbol of absolute nothingness.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> "The Existence of Man: One Inch Off the Ground," Zen Buddhism Today (Kyoto: Kyoto Seminar for Religious Philosophy, 1990), 170-1.

in particular the human world, around us. Accordingly, it is a logic that grows and changes not primarily through dialogue with philosophical tradition but through contact with what it is questioning. And because of this, it is doomed forever to turn back on itself to question the biases of its own specificity. As a view on a radically historical and dialectical reality, the logic of the specific is always a question to itself. To set it aside simply because of the specific circumstances in which it grew, or because of the oversights that accompanied its adoption, is to subject oneself to its central criticism. In this sense, once the principle of specificity has been understood—though Tanabe's is hardly the only way of doing so—there is no escaping it. It may be dismissed as tautology or common sense, but its insight, once awakened to, is irreversible.

Late twentieth-century civilization's culture of "survival of the technologically fittest" has conditioned us to distinguish what is valuable from what is worthless in terms of novelty v. obsolescence, surfeit v. sufficiency, efficiency v. moderation; and in the process has created a vaster graveyard for lifeless religious and philosophical ideas than any civilization in history. Before we ask whether Tanabe's logic of the specific deserves to be buried there, I think it only fair that we slip on its lenses and have a look at the beliefs in whose name this transformation of the collective imagination has taken place. In what remains of this lecture, I propose to consider the idea of the "global village" and to show how Tanabe's logic of the specific, at least in the terms I have outlined it, reinforces the suspicion that most of us have known in our hearts all along: that the village is not global at all but hopelessly parochial.

The idea of the "global village," for all the fascination it evokes, is no more than a guiding fiction for a certain model of social development. Not only does it not exist in reality for the vast majority of the planet, it is in fact no more than a virtual reality even for who those count themselves its ranking citizens. In Japan, "belonging to the global village" has much the same meaning as "internationalization" or "cross-cultural communication." The surface contradiction of the words global and village does not startle or exhilarate quite the way it does in English, nor does its source seem to matter very much.

We owe the term, in fact, to the rare ingenuity of the Canadian literary critic, Marshall McLuhan, who introduced it nearly thirty years ago in these words:

Ours is a brand-new world of allatonceness. "Time" has ceased, "space" has vanished. We now live in a global village... a simultaneous happening. We are back in acoustic space. We have begun again to structure the primordial feeling, the tribal emotions from which a few centuries of literacy divorced us.<sup>28</sup>

. . . Visual culture lives by classification and labels and categories. Electrically, the involvement of everybody in everybody seems to be returning us to an Oriental condition of acoustic involvement and tribal responsibilities.<sup>29</sup>

Esoteric as those words sounded a generation ago, they ring much more reasonable today, and make experiential sense to "the community of users on the internet." It is as if the very nonrationality of tribal specificity that Tanabe saw as closing society is now being experienced as opening it. Already in 1964 McLuhan had envisioned the return to a collective yet paradoxically "open" tribal mentality that the electronic worldwide web signals:

Men are suddenly nomadic gatherers of knowledge, nomadic as never before, informed as never before, free from fragmentary specialization as never before; since with electricity we extend our central nervous systems globally, instantly interrelating every experience.<sup>30</sup>

But as exuberant as McLuhan sounds at one moment over the new global interconnectedness electronic media makes possible, at the next he laments the extent to which our awareness of what is happening to us lags behind. Regarding our tendency to think of the new electronic technology as simply an improved version of earlier machinery, he observes that "when a new technology strikes a society, the most natural reaction is to clutch at the immediately preceding period for familiar

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects (New York: Bantam, 1967), 63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> From a letter I received from McLuhan dated 20 June 1967.

<sup>30</sup> Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 358.

and comfortable images." What Jung had to say of the psychology of the slave was not lost on his assessment of the impact of electronic tools on our freedoms:

Every Roman was surrounded by slaves. The slave and his psychology flooded ancient Italy, and every Roman became inwardly a slave. Living constantly in the atmosphere of slaves, he became infected with their psychology. No one can shield himself from this unconscious influence.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, McLuhan was one of the first to announce the expropriation of the freedom to listen that was entailed in the acceptance of the media on a mass scale:

It would seem that there is some sense of compulsion among the marketers to assume the appearance of Little Red Riding Hood's granny. But this fear of detection is groundless. The modern Little Red Riding Hood, reared on singing commercials, has no objection to being eaten by the wolf. "Freedom to Listen," in a world where effective expression via newspaper or radio is reserved only for a tiny minority, is freedom to put up or shut up.<sup>33</sup>

McLuhan's oxymoron global village is not just a neologism but an attempt to accent the break in social structure. It was his way of denying just the clutch at the past and of hoping for an increase of conscious freedom. As it turns out, the willingness to put up with virtual reality has far from disappeared and the globalization of the tribal society is its prime example.

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, War and Peace in the Global Village (New York: Bantam, 1968), 126. I cannot resist adding a comment here. Lacking a type-writer culture, Japan managed to avoid educating a generation of children on computers with teachers who thought of them basically as only more efficient typewriters. Unfortunately, this advantage is more than offset by an obligatory school system that inflicts routines and examination procedures whose attachment to the modes of thought inherited from the industrial revolution is almost religious.

<sup>32 &</sup>quot;Woman in Europe," The Collected Works of C. G. Jung (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 10:121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> M. McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), 21.

On this point, it takes only minor adjustments of vocabulary to introduce Tanabe's logic of the specific into the picture here. As I have said, Tanabe was not given to draw on concrete examples from everyday life to argue the necessity of social praxis in philosophy. In this sense he is the exact opposite of McLuhan. What the two have in common, however, is a distrust of any universal, categorical "moral law within" as a foundation for ethical decisions and in its place an unrelenting stress on the need for self-awareness of the concrete foundations of the social world.34 For McLuhan understanding media as "extension" of the human mind and body across time and space is the cornerstone for morality in the global village. For Tanabe, the reform of society rested on awakening to absolute nothingness as the basis for the absolute interconnectedness of all persons into a single human community. As alien as their phrasings seem from one another, there are striking resemblances. Permit me one last citation from McLuhan to illustrate the similarity, before returning to Tanabe's critique. McLuhan remarks how not only technological advances but technological disasters reinforce the interrelatedness of the global village in sickness and in health:

The Dutch elm disease which was brought on by an accident during research experiments can be defeated at a cost of \$2,500 per tree, but it require that all of the trees be so treated. One tree cannot be saved by itself. Is not this somewhat like the human condition in general? These self-amputations which we call new technologies generate vast new environments against which the individual organism is quite help-less.<sup>35</sup>

## THE SPECIFICITY OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

There is much in McLuhan's presentation, if not everything, that needs

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> See my essay, "The Self That is Not a Self," J. Heisig and T. Unno, The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime: The Metanoetic Imperative (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1990), 278-9.

<sup>35</sup> War and Peace in the Global Village, 136.

a second look.<sup>36</sup> A comparison with Tanabe's perspective suggests four interlocking questions to me, which I shall lay out as succinctly as I can. In what follows I shall take the idea of the global village as a general expression of the emerging electronic culture without further reference to McLuhan.

First, as a universal ideal, the global village redefines the parameters of freedom of knowledge and expression for individuals members of a society, but at the same time tends to expropriate or at least greatly devalue the local, vernacular culture in whose specificity they find themselves incorporated.<sup>37</sup> The global village mocks the specificity of the vernacular for the "irrationality" of being "uninformed" or "unconnected." In effect, it denies the ontological parity that Tanabe insisted on for the specific and reduces it back to a mere category for classifying individuals according to certain secondary traits. It is no accident that we see nationalism resurrecting in our day in countries with the most advanced consciousness of belonging to the global village. That the two are not incompatible suggests that we need to make the same effort that Tanabe did in his late work: to reappraise the positive side of cultural specificity as an antidote to vestiges of nationalism that have poisoned the popular imagination since the emergence of the modern state.

Second, in depreciating locality, the ideal of globality implies that certain relationships are more important and more universal because less bound to specific cultural conditions, than others. It is a simple mistake of word association to suppose that the global village is global in the same sense in which the local village was local. It does not in fact embrace the totality of its members as the tribal village had done. Rather, it creates a cross-local, because translocal, aristocracy. The world becomes the parish of electronic media only in the sense that it inflicts a parochial specificity on those in the world that it reaches. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> The only book-length critical treatment of his views I know of is S. D. Neill's Clarifying McLuhan: An Assessment of Product and Product (London: Greenwood Press, 1993). It does not, however, deal explicitly with the global village.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> The phrase vernacular culture is based on Ivan Illich's idea of the "vernacular domain." I find it an altogether felicitous phrase, particularly in the context of belief in a universal language for the global village. But because I am convinced that electronic media cannot supplant the bond between cultures and geography, I prefer not to do away with talk of local culture too hastily. See Shadow Work (London: Marion Boyars, 1981), 29-51.

first universal language may link computers to one another at the level of programming code, but it is only by the privilege afforded a limited number of vernacular languages that this can in fact take place as advertised. The "global culture" at whose pillar this universal language is erected is as much a virtual, abstract reality as the computer is a virtual, abstracting mind.

Tanabe's perspective questions electronic technology's claim to true universality by alerting us to the negative aspect of the specific, the underlying substrate of specific cultural and social biases that the new technologies are said to be forming into a worldwide community. The better adjusted one becomes to the rules of human relationship that govern the instantaneous exchange of information and opinion, the more one becomes a member of the tribe. But no matter how large the tribe becomes, and from however many localities it draws, no matter what the extent of our recovery of the wisdom and sensibilities of preliterate societies, for Tanabe the mere fact of tribalism signals a society closed in on itself. In the actual preliterate society, there were no grammar mistakes. In the information-intensive society of electronic communications, the rules have swollen to proportions that require not only a special education to learn but a sophisticated elite to monitor. Of necessity the specificity must be closed, and for Tanabe this required a belief that the specific is actually universal.

Along with an appreciation of the disappearance and relocation of socio-cultural specificity in the global village, Tanabe's logic raises a third question. Perhaps the main reason the web of relations for the new village is assumed to be global is that it is spun of a universally available thread, in the same weave, and has no hem. In other words, it functions like a principle of absolute mediation. The web itself can only create in its individuals the sense of tribal belonging by taking over the image and likeness of God or Absolute Nothingness. It must insure the "unconditional acceptance" of all its villagers by itself being all-knowing, all-present, all-sustaining, all-reliable. Of course, no one in their right mind actually divinizes or absolutizes the operations of the interconnectedness. But without the assurance that it is at least committed to aiming at such divine providence, it would be hard to entrust oneself to its care.

At the same time, the individual participating in the global village assumes that the exchange of information itself is scientifically neutral,

value-free, non-moralizing. The network simply provides the "data" for moral decisions that affect the entire tribe. It does not take any decisions itself because it is not a moral agent. The effect is that the glut of data anaesthetizes social conscience, which in turn creates the need for a priesthood of specialists to sort out the information and determine what is relevant to the problems of the day. What remains of moral praxis for the mass of persons in this mammoth, borderless, traditionless tribe is once again restricted to a small circle of immediate acquaintances and responsibilities. The religious dimension of social existence, which Tanabe envisioned as building up relationships of selfless love and cooperation, ends up far more restricted than it was prior to the emergence of the global village. The function of religious selfawareness as the absolute negation of the self-subsistence and selfempowerment of social existence is unnecessary because it is already disposed of by seeing oneself as a citizen in a global community on whose Other-power one relies. The absolute mediation of virtual reality is a drug to social conscience: one cannot make decisions without it, one cannot make decisions under its influence. In the global village, the mass medium has become the opiate of religion.

The perspective of Tanabe's logic of the specific may not allow us to go far beyond the oracular rhetoric of the above remarks. Still, the fact that it gets us this far is not insignificant, if only because of the glaring absence of overtly religious philosophies in Japan questioning the evangel of technological development and internationalization. Furthermore, there is no other entrance to the forum of world intellectual history today than one that takes these questions seriously.

#### JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY AS WORLD PHILOSOPHY

Viewed from the standpoint of Japan, the admission of its vernacular philosophies to the forum of world philosophy carries the primary expectation that its vast treasurehouses of wisdom might become the rightful inheritance of thinking men and women everywhere. From the standpoint of Western philosophy, however, the arrival is greeted first of all with the expectation that Japan's former preoccupations with its own uniqueness have given way to the need for bringing other world philosophies to bear critically on the tribal dogmas in which that wisdom has ordinarily been cast. Neither of these expectations can be met

without the other, but neither can either be met by mere mutual exchange of specialists in one another's traditions. The two begin rather just where Nishitani Keiji says they begin—in rational dialogue:

Dialogue begins not from an undisputed object of faith, not from any central dogma, or "I," but from a letting go of the ego and a submission to reasonableness. . . . Its spirit is the spirit of inquiry and discovery. This spirit is something that Eastern dialogue by and large lacks.<sup>38</sup>

Nishitani attributes this to the absence of a long tradition of rationality, logic, and method. Though I lack the resources to disagree with Nishitani on this score, my own sense of the failure of Japan to enter the world forum of intellectual dialogue is that philosophy came to Japan without passing through anything like the Enlightenment of the West but inherited philosophy directly from the nineteenth century. I do not mean that over the past century its philosophers have not prized reason and methodical thought every bit as highly as their Western counterparts. Nor am I convinced that Japanese intellectual history shows overall more dogmatism than the Western. Indeed, its religious history is remarkably lacking in the habit of dealing fire and faggot to all other viewpoints of which the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment accused the Christian theologians of Europe.

But there is one crucial ingredient from the Enlightenment that is missing, one that has all but become common sense for the philosophical West and without which the whole idea of a world philosophical forum would not be possible: the *philosophes* were cosmopolitan by conviction and by education. Like the ancient Stoics, they exalted the interests of humanity as a whole above those of country or clan. Japanese thinkers lacked the experience that made it possible for Diderot to write to Hume: "My dear David, you belong to all nations, and you'll never ask an unhappy man for his birth-certificate. I flatter myself that I am, like you, citizen of the great city of the world." The conditions under which this question has arisen in Japan were due to outside influences, beginning with the prying open of the country in the

Nishitani Keiji, Nishida Kitarō (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 43.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> From a letter dated 22 February 1768. Denis Diderot, Correspondance, ed. Georges Roth (1955-), 8:16.

Meiji Era and reaching a climax in the reconstruction of the country after the Second World War.

My principal reason for claiming that Tanabe's logic of the specific belongs to world philosophy is that I see it as an attempt to incorporate this element of the Enlightenment into rational dialogue. During the formative years of his thought, Tanabe's critique of the specific lacked the cultural environment to ripen to full cosmopolitan fruit. Not even the liberal atmosphere of the "Taishō democracy" could stop it from going sour. It was only in his late writings, when the nationalistic edge to his logic has worn smooth, that Tanabe recognized how the critique of the specific, in essence, meant assuming the standpoint of "a citizen of the great city of the world."

If it is not entirely out of place for me to do so, I would like to conclude by proposing that accepting responsibility for that standpoint imposes three obligations on those who count themselves disciples of the Kyoto philosophers today. I am aware that in doing so I can hardly avoid sounding like a mail-order bride who arrives with a pittance for a dowry but at once starts making demands. Though time obliges me to be curt in the saying, my intentions are, I assure you, far less than a humble conclusion, a mere word of farewell spoken with one foot already out the door.

First is the obligation to encourage philosophy East and West to join forum in demystifying the idea of the global village and exposing the latent colonialism at its roots. This should be done not from the ethereal heights of abstract philanthropy but in that space of "one inch above the ground" from local, vernacular cultures. Tanabe's sense that philosophy finds its "vital immediacy" in the sphere of moral action must not be allowed to smother under the myths of academic specialization and value-free reflection.

Second, constructive steps should be taken to train more young foreigners in Japanese thought here in Japan. This is not accomplished by cutting holes through language and cultural barriers for them to crawl through with a minimum of effort. Let the challenge go out, however few there are to take it up, that Japan is ready at the end of the century to welcome and to cultivate the philosophical ambitions of foreign youth in the same spirit that the first generation of idealistic Japanese youth were received in Europe at the beginning of it.

Third, efforts to raise the standards of philosophical translation,

both to and from Japanese, should be given fuller support by the philosophical community itself. The ability of translators to move beyond the surface of the text and transfer meanings out of their local origins and on to the public, world philosophy forum have not kept pace with the advances in purely linguistic skills. Without minimizing the shock of one specificity encountering another, greater ingenuity is needed if philosophical thought is not to suffocate under the misplaced sense of duty to technical vocabulary and literalism.

In 1972, ten years after Tanabe's death, Takizawa Katsumi noted that the logic of the specific and the dialectic of absolute mediation had been completely forgotten, that not even in Kyoto did one hear talk any longer of Tanabe and his philosophy. "But," he goes on, "anyone who takes the trouble to plow through his prose will see that the aims of that philosophy and the sentiments of that philosopher disclose an unexpected depth and touch on the most fundamental questions of our own day." The fact that I stand before you here today, over twenty years later, is surely some proof that Takizawa was right. I only hope that in time he will have been proved *more* right.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> 淹沢克巳著作集 [Collected Works of Takizawa Katsumi] (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1972), 1:460.