

Tanabe Hajime's Understanding of Kantian Teleology

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Abstract

Tanabe Hajime's *Treatise on Kant's Teleology* (1924) was very significant in two respects. First, his understanding of Kant's philosophy was well above the common level of Japanese students of that subject at that time. Secondly, that treatise proved to be the turning point in the development of Tanabe's own philosophy. It seems that the encounter with Kantian teleology broke new ground for his philosophical thinking. In fact, after a few years he came to take a great interest in Hegel's dialectical way of thinking. Eventually his philosophy came to assume a different aspect. In this paper I explicate the metamorphosis which Tanabe's way of thinking underwent through his *Treatise on Kant's Teleology*.

As Tanabe states it, teleology, which Kant treats comprehensively in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, includes several parts of various historical origins. The meanings of the purposiveness, discussed in each part, are apparently differentiated. However, Tanabe categorizes the purposiveness discussed in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* into three types: the formal purposiveness, the inward purposiveness and the self-aware purposiveness, and examines whether the three types form a system of teleology, functioning closely together. I consider in order how Tanabe describes each type of purposiveness and how he succeeds in understanding Kant's teleology as the consistent development of the will of reason.

From such consideration I conclude that Tanabe's study of Kantian teleology led him inevitably to the concentration upon a Hegelian dialectical way of thinking. In this way I explain the necessity of his apparent metamorphosis into a dialectical thinker.

Key words: Tanabe Hajime, Immanuel Kant, power of judgment, teleology, purposiveness, Weltanschauung, dialectic

Preface

Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) wrote in 1924 his *Treatise on Kant's Teleology* in commemoration of the 200th year of the birth of the great German philosopher. This elaboration of his was very significant in two

respects. First, his understanding of Kant's philosophy was well above the common level of the Japanese students of that subject at that time. He embodied in that treatise his positive adoption of Kant's ideas, while other Japanese students strove to the utmost to interpret Kant. Secondly, that treatise proved to be the turning point in the development of Tanabe's own philosophy. Until that time he had been mainly concerned with Kant's philosophy from the Neo-Kantian epistemological viewpoint. But it seems that the encounter with Kantian teleology broke new ground for his philosophical thinking. In fact, after a few years he came to take a great interest in Hegel's dialectical way of thinking. Eventually his philosophy came to assume a different aspect. In this paper I will explicate just these circumstances in detail.

1. Tanabe's interest in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

Highly esteeming Kant, Tanabe engaged himself at the beginning of his study in epistemology following the Neo-Kantian method. In 1919 he arrived at his post as associate professor under Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) at Kyoto University. Thus he was influenced by Nishida Kitaro's original system of worldview. Presumably he came to desire his own philosophical system of worldview. This desire of his was strengthened during his stay in Germany from 1922 to 1924. At first he studied in Berlin under the eminent Neo-Kantian philosopher, Heinrich Rickert, but he moved soon to Freiburg in Breisgau to study under Edmund Husserl, the proponent of phenomenology, and became friendly with the latter's promising assistant Martin Heidegger. Obviously he did not accept much from Husserl's phenomenological method. Yet he was crucially stimulated by Heidegger's intention to remodel phenomenology into a kind of worldview-philosophy assimilating existentialism. Then, having returned home, he set about turning his interpretation of Kantian philosophy towards the formation of a systematic worldview. This time his subject was *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, that is, Kant's third critical work; not the first, nor the second.

As we know from the study of the development of Kant's philosophical thinking, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was the key to systematizing Kantian philosophy. He had outlined in the last part of *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the chapter, "On the Canon of Pure Reason", his plan for the systematic whole of philosophical knowledge, which, as we can justly suppose, represented his understanding of the concept at the time when he had just brought his first critical work to completion in 1781. He had stated there that all interest of *his* (or we can generalize the term as *our human*) reason is united in three questions that are lined up in order: 1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?¹⁾ In accordance with this plan he developed his philosophy. In his conviction he had already "exhausted all possible replies" to the first question in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Then, as he believed, he had given complete answers to the second and the third questions in *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). Yet, after that, he came to recognize that his answer until that time did not cover the whole range of philosophical knowledge and had to be revised. He supplemented namely his answer for the three questions with the teleological worldview as a peculiar product of the power of judgment²⁾. *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) explicates his revised answer in detail. With this work Kant's systematic philosophy exceeded the limits of mere epistemological groundwork for scientific cognition. It could now offer the vision of what the world can be and what the ultimate end of creation may be. Kant's philosophy became a *Weltanschauung*.

As Tanabe states it, Schelling and Hegel valued this breakthrough of Kant's thinking and adopted the

teleological worldview. It would not be too much to say that their grand systems of German Idealism were formed on the model of Kant's third critique. Therefore it was only just for Tanabe, a student of Kantian philosophy now intending a systematic worldview, to take a great interest in that work of Kant's.

2. Tanabe's disregard of the aesthetic judgment

Admittedly, Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is composed of several subject matters which do not have the same origin. Tanabe comments on that fact as follows:

Teleology, which Kant treats comprehensively in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, includes several parts of various historical origins. The meanings of the purposiveness, discussed in each part, are differentiated. And it seems that the functions of the mental faculty, so-called reflective power of judgment, cannot be treated without distinction, related to each of those parts respectively.³⁾

Therefore Tanabe categorizes the purposiveness discussed in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* into three types: the formal purposiveness, the inward purposiveness and the self-aware purposiveness. In his treatise Tanabe examines whether the three types form a system of teleology, functioning closely together, and which is the kernel of terminology in an eminent way.

But we must notice here Tanabe's bias for the teleological judgment in his treatment of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Although Kant places the aesthetic judgment and the teleological judgment as the two functions of the reflective power of judgment side by side, Tanabe simply disregards the former and concentrates upon the latter. He gives the reason for that as follows:

The aesthetic purposiveness consists in the self-sufficient harmony of the subjective consciousness in forming perceptions. It is not related to the reality of objects, but merely to illusions or the so-called world of capricious imagery. Consequently, it is not directly connected with the purposiveness, insofar as this from old competes with the mechanical causality in determining the real world. Thus the opposition of necessity and freedom, nature and morality, is not concretely included in the aesthetic purposiveness.⁴⁾

Obviously, Tanabe wants to characterize teleology as the important principle of forming a philosophical worldview competing with the mechanism in determining the objective reality of the world. From such a viewpoint the aesthetic purposiveness has to be regarded as crucially limited in its subjective formation. Hence the following conclusion:

Insofar as we consider teleology as related to the determination of real objects, as connected with the concrete harmony of necessity and freedom, the real synthesis of nature and morality, it would be proper for us to disregard for the present the aesthetic purposiveness.⁵⁾

Thus he restricts his subject to the teleology in the narrower sense of the word, that is, to the subject matter of the second part of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. This restriction, however, indicates

Tanabe's recognition of the function of the power of judgment. We can notice this, if we take the classification of human cognitive faculties by Kant into consideration. I will clarify this in the following.

According to Kant, "the power of judgment in general is the faculty for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal." As such, it is not wholly subordinated to the three main cognitive faculties: intuition (sensitivity), understanding and reason. Rather it should be regarded as an independent faculty insofar as it can intermediate between them. If we grade the three faculties according to the size of the universality of their products, reason, understanding and intuition stand undoubtedly in this order. Therefore the power of judgment can intermediate between the subsumed and the subsuming in three ways: 1) intuition-understanding, 2) intuition-reason 3) understanding-reason. We can recognize that Kant explicates the types 1) and 2) in the first part of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Namely, the judgment of taste, which predicates the subject to be beautiful, is formed, because the power of judgment combines the representation of the intuitive faculty harmoniously with the general, indeterminate uniting function of understanding. And the judgment, which predicates the subject to be sublime, is formed, because the power of judgment combines in some way the representation of the intuitive faculty with the magnitude and strength of the idea of reason which surpasses the empirical comprehension. Yet Tanabe excludes these types of judgment. Therefore only the teleological judgment in the narrower sense of the word remains for his consideration. Probably this indicates his intention to understand the function of the power of judgment not as the intermediation between intuition and understanding, nor between intuition and reason, but exclusively between understanding and reason.

Understanding is the faculty of conceptual cognition of nature. Reason is the faculty to form the idea of the systematic unity of the whole. Therefore the power of judgment, insofar as it intermediates between understanding and reason, intends to organize and unify various cognitions of nature toward a systematic unity directed by reason. This is a volitional operation. So in this case the power of judgment is nothing other than the will determined by reason. Restricting his subject to the intermediation between understanding and reason, Tanabe wants to characterize the function of the power of judgment or teleology as the realization of the will to systematize various cognitions of nature.

3. The formal purposiveness

What Tanabe means by "the formal purposiveness" is the scheme for unifying cognitions, *a priori* mapped out in human beings' mind. It enables the power of judgment to reflect on objects with a view to building a systematic unity of the whole and thus founds the teleological worldview. As I stated above, Tanabe considers the function of the power of teleological judgment exclusively in the intermediary spectrum between reason and understanding. So the formal purposiveness, as the basis for teleological judgment in general, is formed in advance by reason in view of its connection with understanding.

Reason is the faculty of the formation of ideas. Ideas contain, for example, systematic unity of nature, absolute universality, the highest law, and so on. These can never be found in the real world. Understanding is the faculty of the formation of concepts. It subsumes various data of sensitivity under its conceptions and thus constitutes empirical cognitions. Each of them is therefore itself a synthetic unity. Yet, within the whole, it is so much partiality that it is indeterminate as to how it can be connected with other cognitions. So reason directs empirical cognitions of understanding toward a systematic unity of the

whole. In accordance with this direction of reason the power of judgment functions in a teleological way with a view to harmoniously forming a system of all the empirical cognitions.

In fact, Kant already showed such a scheme mapped out by reason in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Tanabe rightly recognizes that. Namely, Kant spoke there, in "Appendix to the transcendental dialectic", of the "regulative use of the ideas of pure reason".⁶⁾ He argued that the ideas concerning the systematic unity of the whole world, although they are unable to confirm their objective reality, can yet direct and regulate various cognitions toward their ultimate unity. He explains this concretely in the form of the scheme for the classification of manifold cognitions of nature:

Reason thus prepares the field for the understanding: 1. by a principle of **sameness of kind** in the manifold under higher genera, 2. by a principle of the **variety** of what is same in kind under lower species; and in order to complete the systematic unity it adds 3. still another law of the **affinity** of all concepts, which offers a continuous transition from every species to every other through a graduated increase of varieties. We can call these the principles of the **homogeneity, specification and continuity** of forms. The last arises by uniting the first two, according as one has completed the systematic connection in the idea by ascending to higher genera, as well as descending to lower species; for then all manifolds are akin one to another, because they are all collectively descended, through every degree of extended determination, from a single highest genus.

A657-8, B685-6⁷⁾

This scheme is the basis for the systematic unity of manifold cognitions, as well as the teleological judgments. The power of judgment, insofar as it functions in the teleological way, serves as the executer of the systematizing intention of reason. It is also characterized there not as the determining, but as the reflecting power of judgment, because reason does not really give the universal, or the systematic unity, under which to subsume the particular, but merely directs it to organize manifold cognitions, as if the universal were given in the form of the systematic unity of the whole and each particular cognition were fit for this.

4. The inward purposiveness

By "the inward purposiveness" Tanabe means the realization of the scheme of reason. It is related to the objective world of nature. So it may also be called "the material" purposiveness. However, Tanabe characterizes it rather as "inward", because it indicates the systematic unity within an object. The object here meant is that within which the parts are arranged for the purpose of maintenance of the whole, so that they form a harmonious unity. Each part acts, as if it every time presupposes the whole as the effect of its act. Its act is judged as purposive. This kind of object is called organism. The organism forms a systematic whole not only as an individual in respect of the arrangement of its parts, but also as a genus in respect of the subordination of all the individuals. In fact, the cognition of the organism as the application of teleology to the natural world was the subject of the second part of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

Kant argued that teleology is useful as "the heuristic and regulative principle" in the field of organism.

Since he was convinced of the universal validity of mechanistic causality, he admitted no other determining cognition than that sort even in the field of organism. However, in consideration of the properties of the organic nature, he conceded that human cognitive faculty should be also directed by the teleological principle in search of further cognitions in the field of organism. As I stated above, Kant had to revise in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* the answer that he had previously given to the first question of philosophy: "What can I know?" in spite of his conviction in *Critique of Pure Reason* that he had already "exhausted all possible replies" to it. Now we can recognize that the revision was based upon that teleological supplement. Admittedly, with this revision his philosophy grew into a comprehensive *Weltanschauung*.

Although appreciating this development of Kant's philosophy, Tanabe comments that Kant failed to explain the connection between the formal and the inward purposiveness. Kant left the two types of purposiveness, which he described in different parts, separate from each other. Tanabe is of the opinion that both are consistently connected with each other as two stages of "the dialectic of the will." The passage, where he introduces this concept, is the following:

The formal purposiveness as methodological postulate is the requirement which the subject of scientific cognition propounds of necessity through its *will to cognition* (*Wille zur Erkenntnis*). This requirement is fulfilled in reality through the harmonious unity of the function of understanding with that of reason which is represented in that idea. There the purposiveness is realized for the reflective power of judgment which, as a higher ability of function, intermediates and combines between understanding and reason. Thus the power of judgment is the reflective manifestation of *the will to cognition* which is the root of it. It represents nothing other than the freedom of will effective through the empirical cognitions. This freedom propounds and realizes the postulate of the formal purposiveness. From this standpoint everything is given a meaning, insofar as it is subordinate to the free will of the cognitive subject. However, all things considered, such standpoint as the subjective purposiveness, which regards everything as subordinate to the subjective free will and fit for the requirements of this, is the immediacy of the purposiveness. Certainly, we cannot but begin with this standpoint when we consider the purposiveness of the natural world as the object of our cognition. Nevertheless, the dialectic (*Dialektik*) of our will does not stay at this stage. Once negating itself, our will must move from the stage of "being-in-itself" (*An-sich-Sein*) to that of "other-being" (*Anderssein*).⁸⁾

Tanabe characterizes the formal purposiveness as the postulate of the will to cognition, of which the manifestation is the power of reflective judgment. Then he argues that the formal purposiveness is just the immediacy of the will, because it only represents the formation of the subjective mind. The will cannot stay at this stage. The will means the power of accomplishment. Therefore it must once negate itself, or its immediacy, move to the other-being, and complete its intention in this. In Tanabe's opinion, the necessity of the movement of our will from the formal to the inward purposiveness is thus explicable.

Yet, since the formal purposiveness represents the idea of reason to thoroughly systematize all the cognitions, the natural world can never correspond to it in full scale. The will to cognition, going out of its immediacy into the natural world, can find itself realized only in some types of objects which are

miniaturized but analogous to the idea of reason. These types of objects are called organisms. Therefore, in the observation of the natural world teleology is applicable only to the organisms as the heuristic principle in order to explicate the inward purposiveness in their constitution.

5. The self-aware purposiveness

The formal purposiveness represents the immediacy of the will. It is characterized as the being-in-itself (*An-sich-Sein*) of the will. Then the will goes into the objective world and finds itself realized in the other-being (*Anderssein*), that is, in the inward purposiveness of the organism. Thus the will became the being-for-itself (*Für-sich-Sein*). Therefore, it is obvious that the self-aware purposiveness as the third stage of the dialectic of the will represents the being-in-and-for-itself (*An-und-für-sich-Sein*) of the will, although Tanabe does not himself characterize it in that term.

Having found itself in the inward purposiveness of the organism, the will returns encouraged into itself. Then it pursues with self-awareness its idea of unifying the whole world under the final end. The cognitions, which the will of reason or the power of judgment as its executor now forms and organizes, are characterized not merely as theoretical, but also as practical. As Kant clearly stated, "the final end of the Creation" for the power of teleological judgment is not any natural organism, but humankind under the moral law. Therefore the teleological organization of cognitions under the final end does not mean the mere theoretical function of the power of judgment. It represents at the same time the act of the individual to remodel the world in such a way that this might fit the requirement of morality. Such act is to be characterized as creative in the sense that it forms culture out of nature.

Tanabe appreciates that Kant noticed the possibility of synthesizing the epistemological theory and the moral practice by the power of teleological judgment under the final end of the Creation in the latter half of the second part of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Of course, as Tanabe remarks, Kant did not explain clearly enough his idea there. Rather Tanabe is convinced that Kant's argument there gives him the clue to the formation of his own intended system of *Weltanschauung*.

It is noticeable that Tanabe's interpretation of Kantian teleology is now dialectically oriented. As we saw above, according to Kant, the power of judgment is in general "the faculty for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal." So the power of judgment at the stage of the self-aware purposiveness subsumes each particular data, that is to say, particular act or particular cognition, under the final end, as if it can presuppose this in its comprehensive universality. If we write judgment in formula: S is P, P, the predicate, is here the final end as the universal, and S, the subject, is the particular act or cognition. The data, which can come under S, are variable according to the situation in which the individual stands. In consequence, manifold judgments with the same predicate stand side by side: S₁ is P, S₂ is P, S₃ is p, S₄ is P, and so on. The individual, passing the judgment, may be convinced of its justice. However, in reality, subjects are often opposed to each other. Two judgments, which predicate of the opposed subject the same universality, contradict with each other. The judgment "S₁ is P" and "S₂, or Non-S₁, is P" are contradictory to each other. This indicates that surmounting contradiction is the necessary condition for the realization of the final end as the universal. So Tanabe's consideration of Kantian teleology leads him inevitably to the study of Hegelian dialectical way of thinking. Therefore it is quite understandable that he soon afterward began to tackle Hegel's philosophy and, as a result of this,

underwent an apparent metamorphosis into a dialectical thinker.

Notes

- 1) *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge, 1998, p. 677.
- 2) Cf. Kiyoshi Himi, "Immanuel Kant's Four Questions and His Plan for Anthropology", *Suzuka International University Journal CAMPANA*, No. 10, 2004, pp. 71–78.
- 3) *Tanabe Hajime Zenshu 3 (The Complete Works of Tanabe Hajime, vol. 3)*, Chikuma-shobo, Tokyo, 1963, p. 18.
- 4) *Ibid.* pp. 19–20.
- 5) *Ibid.* p. 20.
- 6) *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 590–.
- 7) *Ibid.* p. 598.
- 8) *Tanabe Hajime Zenshu 3 (The Complete Works of Tanabe Hajime, vol. 3)*, Chikuma-shobo, Tokyo, 1963, pp. 38–39.

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