Modern Idealism in Disguise

On the Principles for a Critique of Hermeneutic Philosophy

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Introduction

Among comparative philosophers working on modern Japanese philosophy, Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) is perhaps best known for coining the term “Kyoto School” (although he may just happen to have been the first to use the term in print). He is typically, however, not known for much more—in this regard, his fate is similar to that of, say, Nishi Amane, who is generally known for little else than coining the term tetsugaku 哲学 for “philosophy.” Whereas English-speaking philosophers working on Japan increasingly have access to translated materials documenting the critical development of the Kyoto School’s inner circle (from Nishida via Tanabe to Nishitani), similar materials by one of the Kyoto School’s most formidable peripheral critics, Tosaka, are rather scarce. There is no question that Tosaka’s works were on the radar of all three of the Kyoto School’s main representatives. There is thus also no question that Tosaka’s thought, though at first glance offering no more than an external critique of the Kyoto School’s philosophical methods, is essential to understanding the internal development of Kyoto School thought, and may present us with a possible avenue for revitalizing it in our day and age.

A major motivation for translating the present essay—chapter eleven of The Japanese Ideology (1935)—is because it shows Tosaka at work as a philosopher. The lack of English translations of Tosaka’s works is somewhat remedied by Tosaka Jun: A Critical Reader (2013), were it not that the editors of this volume primarily appear interested in Tosaka as a social critic, rather than as a philosopher (this while Tosaka was originally trained in philosophy at Kyoto University). It is undoubtedly true that Tosaka stands as a formidable social critic of Japan then and perhaps even now, but the volume offers the comparative philosopher working specifically on the Kyoto School rel-
atively little of interest. We have to go back to the *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy* (1998) to find translations in English of Tosaka’s more philosophical-leaning essays. The space accorded to Tosaka in the later *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (2011) is, unfortunately, rather meager. The 1998 sourcebook contains chapter twelve of *The Japanese Ideology*, “Is the ‘Logic of Nothingness’ Logic? On the Method of Nishida Philosophy,” to which the chapter translated here can be considered an introduction. That is, chapter eleven casts the wide net in which, in chapter twelve, Nishida’s philosophy is ensnared. When read in combination, I believe the two chapters sufficiently clarify Tosaka’s philosophical critique of the Kyoto School.

Tosaka’s aim in chapter eleven is adequately to characterize the state of idealism as he finds it in Japan in his day and age. This characterization is relevant to what the Kyoto School is doing, since its philosophers are by Tosaka considered bourgeois *idealist* philosophers. That this means that they at the philosophical level prioritize ideas over matter is according to Tosaka trivially true. He sets out to identify what particular form idealism has practically taken *in Japan*. Idealism camouflages itself as it propagates itself throughout history, and the way to find out what its main traits are in the Japanese context is to consider the philosophical methods used by the adherents and imitators of the Kyoto School, who secretly embrace idealism while appearing to denounce it.

Tosaka comes up with three “positive determinations” of idealism in 1930s Japan. The first two determinations remain general (in that they are not quintessentially Japanese): Japanese idealism is metaphysical, and it is hermeneutical. That is, in Japanese idealism, meaning has under the influence of philosophical hermeneutics become a metaphysical principle existing independently from the facts it originally served to mediate and to which it in practice always had to return. The essay translated here thus comments heavily on hermeneutics, and goes to great lengths to investigate the concept of “meaning” and the perilous loss of its relationship with “facts.” These two determinations are informed by the third, which Tosaka considers typically Japanese: Japanese idealism is *literaturist* (文学主義的). Literaturism makes literary categories stand in for philosophical ones. Hermeneutics originally bases itself in theological categories, but in the Japanese case the hermeneutical enterprise is being supported by literary ones instead. From the historical-materialist point of view, however, the idea of the “literary
category” makes as little sense as that of the “theological” one; properly speaking, there are only philosophical and scientific categories, as both have a definitive relationship with objective reality. Literary and theological categories do not, and never will. Japanese idealist philosophers nonetheless employ a literaturized philosophy precisely because this frees them from the need to deal with objective reality—a reality that at the moment The Japanese Ideology appears in print naturally is none too appealing.

In the background here is an issue that Tosaka only briefly touches upon in chapter eleven, namely the connection between liberalism and Japanism. The Japanese Ideology has two main parts: chapters two to ten relate the principles for a critique of Japanism, while chapters eleven to nineteen do so for a critique of liberalism. Tosaka argues it is wrong to think that Japanism and liberalism are mutually exclusive: in fact, they go hand in hand. What connects the two is precisely hermeneutic philosophy. The Kyoto School philosophers are bourgeois idealists because they are liberals, and since liberalism in Japan has failed to be realized concretely at the political level, freedom is only possible in a circumscribed cultural (literary) realm. Practical unfreedom forces bourgeois intellectuals to imagine a realm in which they can fancy themselves supremely free: the realm of the Japanese spirit (thus linking Japanism and liberalism). Hence the title of Tosaka’s book; in Die Deutsche Ideologie (1846) Marx and Engels make mutatis mutandis the same point about German idealism. The difference is that in Japan, it is literaturized philosophy, as an offshoot of hermeneutic philosophy, that offers the tools needed to establish, maintain, and interpret the realm of fanciful meaning.

A few remarks on the translation. Tosaka tends to write long, meandering sentences, which in quite a few instances I have broken up into separate ones. I have done my best to convey the strong sense of irony and sarcasm that runs through Tosaka’s text and that is sometimes difficult to render adequately in English. I maintain the original division of paragraphs, and also attempted to, where possible, preserve the emphasis Tosaka places on certain terms. Typographical marks have been converted, but otherwise left unchanged. Single brackets have become double quotation marks.
Even in civic culture today, few are fond of the word “idealism.” Often and without giving it much thought, all sorts of things are made out to be idealist or idealistic. Both terms, however, carry definitive yet hidden systematic connotations, and part of the task of the present essay is to bring these to light. With the people who are criticized as idealist the label does not necessarily strike a nerve. They might retort that their thought, or someone else’s, is decidedly not idealist—that theirs is in fact a philosophy that combats idealism. To claim, of all things, that theirs is a thought that is idealist is to demonstrate one’s complete ignorance as to the main points of their thought and the meaning of idealism, or so they might say.

I see that according to them idealism is either the doctrine of ideas (イデア主義) or the doctrine of ideals (イデアール主義 or 理想主義). That is, idealism to them means one of two things. Either they admit as genuine existence only the state things are in when they are similar to reliefs of perfected forms, or they take ideals to have been provided by the heavens for us to impose on the reality that is given before our eyes, and think of the Sollen as capable of filling up the absolute abyss that exists between the real and the ideal. In a certain sense, this is exactly what idealism is. It is just that the problem is whether these so-called opponents of idealism are in actual fact not its emissaries. When one thinks of idealism, the likes of Socrates, Plato, and Kant immediately come to mind, but simply to oppose these philosophers does not constitute proof that one is an opponent of idealism.

Is it because Nietzsche intends to demolish the authority of morals and attempts to make values collapse in on themselves that he is called the enemy of idealism? Or is perhaps Dostoevsky the true enemy of idealism, since he in his later years distrusted the ideal of socialist progress (I will discuss materialism in a moment)? According to Shestov, who has recently been reintroduced to our country as the philosopher of “anxiety,” the original sworn enemy of philosophy, in other words the philosophy of tragedy/
nothingness, is precisely idealism (together with materialism!). A new sect of present-day theology thinks it must protect theology from Romantic idealism. Considered in terms of the international phenomenon that is the self-criticism (?) of bourgeois philosophy (this is not simply a philosophy that is characteristic of the bourgeoisie but rather the philosophy that exists to meet the specific needs of present-day bourgeois society), the philosophy of Nishida—the thinker characteristic of Japan onto whom a national and oriental light has been cast—is no exception to the rule either. In brief, it [Nishida philosophy] claims that idealism is nothing more than a philosophy of being, and no good because it is not a philosophy of nothingness. All the while many practitioners of Nishida philosophy speak in much the same way. Idealism has to be buried of course—together with materialism!

In the current period of international turbulence in which capitalism finds itself, it goes without saying that the plan to put to death a particular kind of idealism as representing the entirety of idealism is a very clever form of self-protection of a bourgeois philosophy (I conveyed the meaning of this term in earlier writings) put in today’s position. Let us eradicate “idealism”—but let us make sure that, to name some examples, Nietzsche survives in the arms of the politicians, Dostoevsky survives in the conscience of the men of letters, and that Shestov (nay, let it be the entire school (一味) from Kierkegaard to Heidegger) survives in the minds of the philosophers—better yet, we must not only have them survive but even bring about their revival (復興). In this way the disadvantageous parts of bourgeois philosophy that constitute a liability and a burden can, thanks to the sacrifice of idealism, be taken care of, or liquidated. In the circumstances our country finds itself in—which are perhaps similar to that of Russia, particularly in the decade following 1905—this operation is not only the technique of self-protection of bourgeois philosophy, but may in fact even be the technique whereby it extends its life, the method through which it feeds itself. It thus seems as if the time is ripe to write another volume of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.  

1. [According to Robert Stolz, “Tosaka often includes a parenthetical question mark... when he is using language that his own philosophy does not allow—or he thinks absurd in the given context.” See KAWASHIMA, SCHÄFER and STOLZ 2013, 5. —Trans.]
2. [A 1909 work by Lenin. —Trans.]
Secret codes are changed as a war progresses. Whether it is on the offense or defense, idealism also changes the symbols that make up its code. Now that the outer shell of idealism has grown particularly large, it has been cast away as “idealism,” and abandoned. Those deceived by this maneuver pick up the shell rather than the cicada, by which time the cicada has already moved and started chirping from a different tree. Modern idealism possesses the habit of camouflaging itself. That is why materialism is also not quite ordinary.

What on earth is this idealism—this cicada and its shell (the shell naturally also belongs to the cicada)? The number of idealisms, such as that of Socrates or Kant and every other “doctrine of ideas” and “doctrine of ideals,” is immeasurable. What is the true character of these bourgeois ideal luxury goods, which are like a flood? It is commonly said that the fundamental characteristic of idealism is the priority of ideas (観念) over matter (物質)—ideas come first and also are what follows (先にあり又先である). However, the content that the word “idealism” refers to is extremely rich, and overflowing with implications. Of the word itself we must say that it is rather meager. So long as we do not attempt to practically apply the word, it might be devoid of any meaning whatsoever.

Unless we at least focus on a specific type of idealism when we apply the word, it is of no use to us. Then again, suppose we merely focus on a type of idealism such as that of Berkeley, Kant, or Mach, then even though doing so means the word [“idealism”] is temporarily utilized and applied, by itself this does not yet bring about the development of the word itself. The problem lies with obtaining from idealism in general, which starts from ideas instead of matter, determinations (規定) of idealism that are more characteristically representative, more positively idealist. It is through such determinations that we first become able to utilize the word “idealism” practically today.

It is readily widely acknowledged that the first positive determination of idealism in the sense just conveyed can be discovered inside of metaphysics. That is, the weakness of idealism lies in its metaphysics, and it is materialism, its very opposite, that is anti-metaphysical. Then again, there is the kind of opponent of Marxism who argues that it is in fact precisely materialist Marxist philosophy that is truly metaphysical, and that exactly this [feature] constitutes its fatal flaw. According to these opponents, the panmaterialism (物質万能主義) (?) of Marxism is nothing but the ancient metaphysics of matter, and the search for things such as the labor value underlying phenom-
ena, the necessary character of history, or the realm of freedom, likewise unscientific and metaphysical. Their point is that since Marxism is neither epistemological nor positivist, it is a metaphysics. However, “metaphysics” as a category of bourgeois philosophy naturally cannot be a problem to us here. If one adheres to the category of materialism, metaphysics can be none other than a mechanistic speculative method. This is to say that it [materialist metaphysics] knew nothing of grasping objects at the level of their correlative movements (連関的な運動), but referred to the method of thought that conceived of objects as fixated into separate, discrete units.

In fact, however, the determination of idealism as metaphysics cannot be said to be practical when judged on the basis of the various circumstances we are presently facing. Since this determination originates with Hegel, who primarily uses it as a way to criticize Kant, if we exhaustively apply it then naturally even Hegel himself, because of his “idealism” (but note that put in this way that which explains becomes that which is explained!), ends up being metaphysical—but reaching this conclusion does not mean we have gotten to the bottom of the expression of this determination itself. In today’s bourgeois philosophy, for roughly the same reason that “idealism” has such a bad reputation, “metaphysics” likewise is not necessarily loved all that much either. Setting aside the countries where the words “métaphysique” and “philosophy” have customarily been interchangeable (such as France), in places such as Japan very few philosophers want to have their philosophy be called “metaphysics.” Regardless of the fact that the essence of their idealism lies in metaphysics, they spare no effort to denounce “metaphysics.”

It goes without saying that such a hidden metaphysics will never advocate basing itself in mechanism—in fact, in the majority of cases mechanism rather is subject to its condemnation. According to James and Bergson, the true nature of objects is not that they are fixed individual things existing apart from one another, but precisely that they constitute a flow. “Literary” realists praise Joyce’s novel that takes place over twenty-four hours, *Ulysses*, as “realism”—as [portraying] the very real itself, which is only distantly related to such things as mechanism. What is more, inside of modern-day hidden metaphysics we even find those who of their own accord think they subsume, or are based in, dialectics. Not only is the claim made that the line of transmission of (idealist) dialectics has, from ancient times up to today,
not once been severed, some disguised metaphysicians even boast that dialectics has at last arrived at its genuine (theological!) form.

One should recall that I have on multiple previous occasions mentioned that metaphysics is also in need of a slight alteration in its determination. According to my prior writings, modern metaphysics, whether it is mechanistic or has usurped dialectics, for the most part is nothing other than a hermeneutic philosophy. I think that the bulk of modern bourgeois philosophy, whether of superior or inferior quality, is properly metaphysical because almost all of it is a hermeneutic philosophy. Since modern bourgeois philosophy is metaphysical in this sense, it is positively worthy of the name “idealism.” Needless to say, to determine metaphysics (and by implication idealism) in this manner is in the context of the history of materialism not at all a new conception. As people know, it was already foretold by Marx in Das Kapital.

We can therefore propose as the second positive determination of idealism that it is a hermeneutic philosophy. Without using this determination, I fear that we will end up unable to specify adequately at what points today’s bourgeois philosophy positively exhibits and exposes itself as idealism.

Interpretation naturally is that of facts. There cannot be any interpretation of meaning where no facts are present. At the same time, it is also evident that there are no facts that do not await interpretation and are not accompanied by it. If it concerns past historical facts, it can be determined through interpretation what is factual and what is not. However, when it comes to, for example, facts derived from experiment, one might wonder where there is any room for interpretation. One may ask what part of the facts that we directly run into by ourselves is the result of interpretation. Once this question is posed, we end up having to admit that there may actually be no such thing as facts understood as pure facts, and that things are perhaps no more than simply impressions subsisting independently. What we call “facts” are in this sense nothing more than things interpreted as facts. Where there is no interpretation, there also can be no facts.

That is why the problem only becomes more serious when it concerns philosophy. Any philosophy that does not depend on, or go through, interpretation, cannot take up and handle objects. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that every philosophy is hermeneutic philosophy. Originally, to inter-
pret facts is to interpret the meaning that facts possess. Moreover, because it is always through having a fixed meaning that facts first qualify as facts (a fact that does not is a meaningless fact), it is evident that philosophy—which should obtain the hidden unity existing among objects by exposing the unobservable relationships apparently holding between them—must be especially adept at the art of interpretation in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the meaning that facts presumably have.

However, there is a problem with interpretation itself—this interpretation of the meaning that facts have. Facts possess meaning precisely in order for them to be utilized and developed. The meaning facts have therefore designates nothing other than their reproduction and developmental course (活路). What is important here is that every meaning that each fact possesses is in the final instance accountable to the facts themselves, so that facts, by temporarily passing through their meaning and returning to themselves, first become able to gain stability as facts. Meaning should return to the facts themselves, and fulfill its obligation to the original facts. Therefore, the interpretation of facts should always deal with them practically and proceed in order realistically to change them, or with the aim of doing so. The practical handling of the facts of reality always presupposes the most superior interpretation of the meaning that facts have.

However, it is none other than “hermeneutic philosophy” that stumbles over this function of interpretation. In the case of hermeneutic philosophy, interpretation deviates from its original task by forgetting about the practical handling of facts, which is why it was originally needed and what motivated it, and develops entirely as interpretation for the sake of interpretation (解釈としての解釈). That is to say, meaning ceases to any longer be the possession of facts, simply to become mere meaning; thus, meaning is substituted for the facts, to the point where the facts of reality even become facts that have been created by meaning. Attention must be paid to the given that this kind of “meaning” gains the ability to build up a world of meaning by relying only on the mutual connection between meanings themselves, in complete independence from that which originally constituted the matrix of meaning, namely the facts of reality and their reproduction and developmental course. For one meaning and another meaning to connect to one another, they formerly had to rely on their respective matrices of connections between facts, but now meaning ends up directly linked to meaning in an exceedingly
uninhibited and ingenious (?) way. A “world of meaning” replacing reality thereby makes its appearance. As long as the real world can be minimally matched up with the “world of meaning,” the former can be taken up and interpreted in any manner that suits meaning. This is the mechanism of so-called “interpretation” used in hermeneutic philosophy. What here appears a brilliant (?) imagination, idea, concept, or insight, is actually no more than uninhibited conception, the cheap association of ideas (観念連合), or easy, superficial speculation.

As the highly vulgar products [of so-called “interpretation”] can be easily noticed by anyone, so can these subtle weak points. In Japan as well in recent years the number of suicides has gone up drastically. Each case has in newspaper articles been accorded an extremely cunning interpretation. Having a passion for philosophy has a long history and is to be preferred to the latest novelty, namely the sort of interpretation according to which a daughter killed herself because her father joined the {communist party}.3 Perhaps because the newspapers do not care about the facts, it is fine to let even newspaper articles have their own independent meaning. However, if the weak points are hidden under the armor of philosophy, they become nothing more nor less than a hermeneutic philosophy, and it becomes more difficult for them to be exposed. At the same time hermeneutic philosophy has a serious name and a strict tone. Every now and then there are snippets [of hermeneutic philosophy] that hook up to what readers and listeners already know and that manage to move, pamper, and soothe them. Instead of analysis, demonstration, and inquiry, hermeneutic philosophy superficially touches upon a flurry of subjects. This is one of its most significant characteristics, enabling the now ecstatic, now tearful rejection of practically dealing with real facts. To “interpret” the world, that is, to conquer the world with one’s arms folded, is a fun job indeed. Even if this job requires one to consume rations along with one’s tears and has one sleep on a hard floor, it is thoroughly enjoyable.

I do not have to call attention to the fact that most of what is called “philosophy of life” is a hermeneutic philosophy. According to philosophy of life, interpretation is nothing other than the self-interpretation of life. And thanks to the auto-inspiration that is the interpretation of life by itself (the

3. [Words between curly brackets were originally removed by the censors. —Trans.]
scientific significance of life is the problem in the first place!), meaning can be described as a pure world of meaning subsisting independently of facts. There is no need to dwell here on the fact that philosophy of life moreover has an inseparable relationship in particular with so-called “philosophy of history” and “hermeneutic phenomenology.” That both are philosophies that are in conformity with the hermeneutic method, and that both moreover even reek of philological characteristics (hermeneutics is the method of philology), is something on which I have discoursed enough already.\(^4\) The important point here remains that the essence of hermeneutic philosophy is the conscious or unconscious attempt to avoid having to realistically handle things.

In the guise of philosophy, hermeneutic philosophy avoids dealing with practical problems. According to it, there is no philosophical meaning at all to everyday occurrences; essential are none other than problems of principle that exist independently of practical problems. It thinks that it suffices incidentally to apply the problems of principle to the practical problems, deeming it an unnecessary consideration to prepare such application beforehand. For example, society is a matter of meaning and develops on the basis of an ethical semantic relationship between the I and the Thou; whether this society develops in the direction of {commun}-ism or is headed toward fascism, though a practical problem occurring in politics, is not in the least a philosophical one. That hermeneutic philosophy is abstract is not because it theorizes objects at the level of the universal, and even less because it uses difficult words, but actually because it abstracts meaning from facts and principles from practical problems, to the extent that it ends up losing from sight the facts of reality and the practical relationship with it.

Well then, it should now be clear why precisely this abstractness properly is a trait of today’s metaphysics. That today’s metaphysics is completely incapable of resolving any practical problems philosophically is because it is nonsensical and humorous. That today’s academic or pedantic philosophy looks like a schoolteacher—lifeless and without conscience—has one of its

\(^{4.}\) [Tosaka devotes chapter two of the present book, “A Critique of Philological Philosophy” (「文献学」の哲学の批判), to this issue. This chapter, as far as I know, has not been translated into English. A useful summary of Tosaka’s argument in the chapter can be found in Pincus 1996, 164–5. —Trans.]
main root causes in this nonsensicality. And this metaphysics is at present the most powerful and pervasive form of idealism.

In order deliberately to avoid the practical problems occurring in the real world, this hermeneutic philosophy = metaphysics = idealism has to exceedingly and repeatedly break all ties with positive and natural science, or at least think it wise not to have a connection to them. The “philosophers of history” have not wholly forgotten to stress that historical matters—that is, “philosophical” matters, according to them—are different from matters of natural science. As if to say that the undertaking to try and see the essence that history and nature have in common—an essence that is, however, developing—is one only people who do not know history or who are blind to human culture engage in. To “hermeneutic” philosophers positive and natural science moreover have no significance whatsoever to philosophy. The scientific character of philosophy, in other words its objective character (from whence spring its positivistic and practical characteristics), is not at all a problem pertaining to hermeneutic philosophy. According to it, philosophy has a structure peculiar to itself that is completely different from, and has no relation to, science. The school of Heidegger disregards worldly affairs and wonders what on earth the relation can be between human existence as an original dwelling (本来的生活者としての人間的存在), *Existenz*, and positivistic worldly wisdom.

Such anti-scientism of the priestly class (although scientism—of which Le Dantec is representative—is not necessarily worthy of any respect) is the inevitable result of the advanced attempt of hermeneutic philosophy to avoid practical problems. As long as this anti-scientism was in the hands of Kant and the Neo-Kantians, it did not in all honesty reveal its true colors (this is actually also still the case for Hegel). However, now that in recent years bourgeois society has started to try to impute the blame for its own contradictions onto natural science, we have arrived at the point where anti-scientism has shown its true character.

If one asks what characteristics of science and especially natural science come to be opposed in our metaphysics of interpretation, then it is not the former’s rationalism, *a priori* restrictions, or inhuman simplicity—actually, we fear whether the demands (要求) of the *material technologies of production*, which are based in the practice of science, do not extend themselves
to [affect] the content of our interpretation. That the material technologies of production are to be executed in actuality and applied in practice is a fact that absolutely cannot be explained away hermeneutically, and which to the “interpretation” of the world must be extremely troublesome. That is why anti-technologism (反技術主義) (even though technologism is not in the least worthy of respect) forms the very core of the anti-scientism in metaphysics of interpretation. It is as if in recent years the responsibility for the various contradictions of capitalism has by the bourgeoisie been placed on the spontaneous deadlock of technology. What hermeneutic philosophy has summoned up can hardly paint a picture of our current time.

We accordingly need to heed the fact that hermeneutic philosophy = metaphysics too must have an organized system of categories in order to be a coherent philosophy. Naturally however, this organization of categories and the categories it contains can have no other use than exhaustively to interpret the world. The most classical and archetypal example of a logic whose purpose is to interpret the world is the story of the creation of the world as we find it in Judaism and Christianity—there is in fact none that is better. The story of creation interprets the order of the world in a framework that leaves no gaps. If it can explain how the world came into being and how it will end, and the course from that beginning to that end, then it is a complete “interpretation” of all things, leaving nothing further to be desired. The world has been deliberately created by God’s good will, its history develops according to a plan, and on the day the final judgment is passed, the world, God’s plan having been realized, ends. In this way the valuable temporal order of nature practically gone through by the actual world is replaced by an order in which a forgiving God pays off our debt with His grace. On the basis of this new pivot, the categorical zodiac signs of the metaphysics of interpretation are distributed.

I have previously called this kind of category theological. The attempt to try to support the order of the practical real world with these categories, which were originally based on a different world order, can hardly amount to anything, when considered from their meaning these theological categories cannot have a practical, actual, or demonstrable character, or in other words cannot be verified on this earth. These categories cannot be tested in the present, secular world, which has been ordered through the material technologies of production. This is why I have previously called these
categories “non-technological.” For now, suffice it to say that the philosophy of interpretation is based on theological categories.

What I have said thus far is no different from what I have repeated throughout many of my writings up to now. What we must be mindful of, however, is that recently in our country this metaphysics of interpretation has continued to take on a unique form of sorts. Its effects now bring us closer to the need to discuss the third positive determination of idealism. When we take up this third positive determination for consideration, I think it allows us to elucidate more clearly the aforementioned second determination of idealism (as hermeneutic philosophy) and even the first (as metaphysics).

Let us begin by focusing on a phenomenon that is close at hand. It is said that a little less than a year ago the Marxist camp suddenly retreated. What meaning this has is not entirely clear to me, but at any rate it is a fact that recently the satisfied fans of Marxism and onlookers sympathetic to it have been consolidated by the public. It certainly is of interest for where I am going with this story that this phenomenon appears to be attracting attention especially in the literary world. At this moment, the cultural formation based in Marxism has completely disbanded, and while it goes without saying that this does not at all mean that the Marxist cultural movement has disappeared, in the literary world especially the disbanding of a cultural formation causes a considerable stir, as everyone certainly knows and can readily observe. The left-wing literary movement is currently dispersed among a few core publications, and every now and then mixes with a literary unit that has not even the slightest conscious connection to it. Under the banner of a renaissance (文芸復興), one person has insisted that above all else the development of literature itself is in imminent danger and the fetters of traditional Proletarian literature must be struck down even at the expense of the consistency of the division into literary {factions}. Obviously, there is no difference whether one borrows the banner of a renaissance or not; the men of letters who are anti-Marxist or belong to the school of fine art (純芸術派) have out of pride welcomed this new phenomenon, or do so under the pretense of satirical revenge.

That this phenomenon to non-Marxist men of letters for all practical purposes signifies a *literary-supremacism* (文学至上主義) is a fact of which I think Marxist men of letters should be less negligent and which should give rise to concern. At any rate, however, the fundamental inclination of the literary world (although to think that such a separate world exists is my and other people’s mistake) is to, in its own literary way and in line with the status quo in Japan, adopt a reactive attitude toward Marxism, and it seems as if literary supremacism is today the most striking feature of this inclination. The reason [for this inclination] is that the great bulk of the “men of letters” think that the union of literature and politics, the thesis of traditional Marxist literary theory, is almost completely relinquished through literary supremacism.

On the other hand, what we should also pay attention to is the fact that literary criticism has in recent years become increasingly “philosophized” (哲学化). It goes without saying that this is the result of, first, a general revival (?) of bourgeois idealist philosophy through its reliance on the various camouflage I have mentioned thus far; and second, the dissatisfaction even among left-wing writers themselves, as a result of the aforementioned problem of the relationship between literature and politics, with scientific literary criticism that is based in the historical-materialist outlook. The appearance one after the other of literary critiques bearing a bourgeois idealist-philosophical stamp is the result of these two moments (契機).

Accordingly, there is the occurrence of the “literaturization” (文学化) of philosophy itself from the combination of, first, literary supremacism in literature; and second, the philosophization of literature. It is needless to say that philosophy and literature, when considered from their true significance, should share an especially inseparable connection, so that the philosophization of literature (literary criticism) and the literaturization of philosophy appear from the outset to be natural—something that is neither rare nor bad. However, in the current case, to say that philosophy has been literaturized is, in other words, to say that it must have gone through literary supremization (文学至上主義化).

However, it is precisely in literature that the word “literary supremacism” makes any sense. Even when their connection remains, as long as we are speaking of philosophy the word “literary supremacism” is perhaps meaningless. And not only that—to suggest it makes any sense is to
become unable any longer to expose the true nature of this *literaturization* of philosophy. It actually may be better to instead call this phenomenon philosophy’s *doctrine of philosophical supremacy* (哲学至上主義), were it not that this doctrine itself can at this point only be explained in different terms by means of reference precisely to the literary supremacism of literature. Since philosophy is not literature, originally there was never any fear it would turn into literary supremacism. In its stead, I think it is necessary to call the present novel transfiguration into which bourgeois idealism = metaphysics = hermeneutic philosophy is collapsing the *literaturism* (文學主義)* of philosophy. It is precisely literaturism that is the third positive determination of idealism.

However literaturistic philosophy may be (I explain the meaning of literaturism in what follows), without deploying the format of philosophy there is no way to use a system of categories to speak about things. And yet the categories of literaturistic philosophy are those of literature in particular. But what on earth does the term *literary category* mean?

As long as literature relies on words as a vehicle, literature first becomes viable through concepts. Even though one may perhaps be inclined to think of concepts as nothing more than abstract ideas that lack sensation, this is nothing more than the vulgar use of the word and an utterly incomprehensible superstition when considered from its logical use as a technical term. Among the various concepts that occur in literature, the ones that are comparatively more important and mobile (機動力) and that serve as the joints for the others are the fundamental concepts or the categories. But simply because a category appears in literature and is being used there, this does not mean we should immediately think of it as a literary one.

It should definitely readily be apparent upon giving it some thought that the categories that appear in philosophy/science and every other logic—that is, philosophical, scientific and/or logical categories—must ultimately not be different from the categories that occur in literature. If the categories were themselves by nature different in principle, then how in the world could there exist a fixed close connection, correspondence, coincidence,
or commonality between philosophy and literature? It is often said that when there is in principle no connection/correspondence/coincidence/commonality/et cetera between two things, then these things must categorically be different.

Therefore, the various categories that appear inside of literature are in no way different from categories in general, and the general categories, that have been born out of the worldview in which both philosophy and science are based, belong to the series of categories that are philosophical and scientific. I see that there are plenty of cases in which a certain category belongs primarily to literature, and another primarily to philosophy. A category that is called by the same name can moreover have a different appearance in the world of science or in that of philosophy. It is alright if we in this sense say that literary categories are different from philosophical or scientific ones. The problem, however, does not lie with the matter of deciding for every individual category to which world it does or does not belong. Instead, logic requires that we are troubled when in a categorical system possessing a fixed organizational order there are a number of different kinds of categories.

That science and philosophy share one kind of categorical series while in opposition to this literature has a categorical series that is different in kind is an arrangement that, logically speaking and considered from the prevailing view of categories, should not be. If we ignore this arrangement and suppose there to be a categorical order which we believe to be particular only to literature, and thus is categorically and principally different from the philosophical and scientific one, and when we furthermore use categories from the former carelessly, then these are what can be called literary categories (literaturistic categories).

The vice of the literary categorical order is that it regrettably includes a lot of categories bearing the same name as philosophical—general—categories, which, because they give rise to an extremely ambiguous situation, become highly malignant. The present situation is that words such as “reality” (リアリティー) and “reality” (現実), “truth” and “sincerity,” are each a philosophical category at the same time as they have been misappropriated by a certain kind of men of letters for use as a “literaturistic” category. Suppose there is someone who claims that his so-called literary categories are ultimately the same as philosophical categories, but that literature more finely grasps the latter because it makes them elastic and flexible, and that philosophy enables
nothing more than a grasp of those same categories that is more distinct and
universal yet coarse, then his philosophy or literature is eo ipso conceived
and written using literary categories—and a critique of such philosophy or
literature is here precisely my objective.

We cannot, however, grasp the true significance of literary categories as
long as we do not explain why they are frequently so loved by literaturists,
and why it is so difficult to notice their methodological vice. Their relation
rests in that instead of using scientific or philosophical representations,
literature naturally uses literary representations. What is actually the case
is that the categories or fundamental concepts used by literature as well
as philosophy and science ultimately belong to the same organization,
but that, when it comes to the stage of providing these various concepts
with an intuitive form, in other words when it comes to the technique
for obtaining the representations—sensuous ideas (感覚的観念)—that
correspond to the concepts, then literary representations are already no
longer the same as philosophical and scientific representations, and should
not be. In brief, philosophy borrows and uses philosophical categories and
philosophical representations; by contrast, even though literature uses the
same philosophical categories, it must borrow literary representations.

Just as representations and concepts end up being the same thing
when considered from the perspective of common sense, which lacks
sufficient logical training, in most cases when literary representations and
categories occurring in literature are taken together it is an evil practice
about which little can be done. Literature has various representations
and sensuous ideas that are unique to it. What a great job men of letters
could do if for now they would simply stick to making full use of these
sensuous ideas and representations. However, if they only slightly
comment on or critique literature, even men of letters must discover
inside of literature a framework of invisible steel bars running through its
various representations/ideas. When they do, it is as if they are seeking
out the various concepts and categories that occur in literature. Generally
speaking, however, today’s kind of men of letters, who possess the material
basis needed to shift to literary supremacism, when arriving at that point
directly expose their lack of philosophical training. That is, there naturally
is no other way to dig up the conceptual mechanism of literature than by
means of literary representations, and because of this it appears as though
the various categories of literature can only be devised by likening them to literary representations. By depending on literary representations—their specialty—men of letters fancy themselves to have the unique right to construct the various concepts and categories (but not representations) of literature. In that way the “literary” categorical order is built up. When a literary supremacist man of letters becomes a philosopher, he cannot help but become a literaturist.

I have differentiated literary representations from the categories/concepts (let alone literary categories) occurring in literature and have placed the stress of my philosophical interest on the latter, but this of course does not mean that I try to overlook the great literary value that literary representations have when considered from the perspective of literature itself. I do so because the issue of the means by which literature is created is here directly connected to that of its worldview. And not only that; the creation of the many immortal personages that appear in literary works is additionally by no means connected to the problem of concepts and categories—they must truly be one of the valuable products of literary representation. Philosophically speaking, the living side of literature might be the system of categories, but similarly, corresponding to this, the creation of personages such as Hamlet and Don Quixote, Bazarov and Carmen, is, literarily speaking, the value of the literary representation. I previously attempted to unite concepts and personages in a logical experiment, but because of what I conveyed above an impossibility crept into it; there was moreover the danger of being pulled into the swamp of literary categories.7

Although literaturistic categories are the logical basis in which many of today’s literary supremacist men of letters through their literary activity secretly place their trust, this basis is brought out into the light when it comes to their literary criticism. When superior men of letters who have developed literary representations try their hand at undertaking [literary] criticism that makes even the slightest amount of sense, it is a fact that it is not at all rare for them to degenerate into ridiculous critics—and this perhaps finds its cause in their secret trust in literaturistic categories. My point,

7. See the first chapter of my 『イデオロギーの論理学』 ([Logic of Ideology], in 『戸坂潤全集』2: 1–94. —Trans.]
however, is not about literature. The problem is the extremely remarkable case that in the bourgeois cultural society of our country it is philosophy itself that is based on such literary categories. This point becomes especially easy to see when, here once more, one person among the bourgeois idealist philosophers tries their hand at literary criticism, and it is again a fact that such philosophy originally, where it can be turned to [undertake] literary criticism, possesses “literary” strengths and weaknesses. What attitude this type of literaturistic philosophy adopts vis-à-vis positivistic science, the role of the technologies of production with regards to ideology, and rationalistic theory in general, and why it adopts this attitude, is a matter I can surely leave to the reader.

What also needs to be paid attention to is that philosophical consciousness, or the consciousness of [daily] life (生活), can appear to us on the one hand in the form of literary consciousness, and in that of political consciousness on the other. Accordingly, corresponding to how literary supremacism is the form literaturism takes when it appears as literary consciousness, the political expression of literaturism may be called literary liberalism. I treat literary liberalism in chapter 15 of the present work,8 and it recently appears to be about to become a theme worthy of attention in the literary world as well. The term “literary liberalism” expresses a phenomenon that is unique to Japan. Liberalism was originally a philosophical category at the level of politics. However, as the result of being solely carried by literary categories and of lacking any societal or historical material basis, [in Japan] the philosophical categories had been replaced by literary categories before anyone realized it. This is why in Japan today many men of letters are a kind of liberal (that is, they are “literary” liberals). The present condition, in which liberalism in Japan must find its support in the narrow world of literature instead of that of politics, tells the tale of how the liberalism characteristic of today’s Japan is primarily accepted only as a literary category. As long

8. [This short chapter is titled “The Characteristics of ‘Literary Liberalism’” (「文学的自由主義」の特質), and has thus far not been translated into English. I point the reader who is interested in Tosaka’s critique of liberalism more generally to the translation by John Person of chapter 19, “Liberalist Philosophy and Materialism,” in KAWASHIMA, SCHÄFER, and STOLZ 2013, 81–96; and for Tosaka’s critique of literary liberalism specifically, to the translation of the preface to the present work by A. Jacinto Zavala in DILWORTH, VIGLIELMO, and ZAVALA 1998, 339–47. —Trans.]
as we do not understand liberalism as a literary category, in practice today we cannot get to the bottom of the reason why the public thinks and talks about it as if it had an inseparable relationship with the representation of progress.

To say something on the basis of the literary categories is, judged from a quick glance at the facts, an extremely beautiful thing. However, ultimately it is nothing more than a 美人画 of [daily] life. To interpret the world according to literary categories is to make that interpretation the simplest, the smoothest. As a hermeneutic philosophy, and thus to the extent that it is a literaturist philosophy, it has no form that is suitable to its purpose. Simple theological categories could probably not thoroughly be made to possess this kind of so-called “anthropological” charm. That is why, having come to this point, hermeneutic philosophy advances into literaturism by in particular turning its eyes away from the divine to the human, thereby attempting to develop itself in a manner that is to its advantage. In so doing, the practical problems of reality (the word “reality” is unfortunately much favored by the literaturists), the genuine reality according to philosophical categories, are down to their principles avoided, reducing, for example, the outlook, plan, necessity and freedom of the practical world to the anthropological “passions,” and the contradictions of the real world to human “anxiety,” in both cases replacing the former with the latter. We can perhaps even say that such alluring metaphysics until now had never been available. Then again, a metaphysics that is so cynical and so lacking in the moral (actually, morality) is probably rather unusual (what men of letters call “moral” (モラル) is different from the morality (モーラリティー) of the practical world and originally nothing but a literaturist concept). Recent hearsay has it that the birthplace of the moral is to be found with André Gide, but the moralist Gide had early on been painfully struck by the “literary conscience” of the capitalist organization of the system of slavery of French-ruled South Africa. What his so-called “conversion” perhaps conveys is that his moralism, which already failed to stand firm as a complete literaturist metaphysics, announces the need to turn to a practical morality.

First, a metaphysics; second, a hermeneutic philosophy; third, a litera-

9. [Woodblock prints of beautiful women. —Trans.]
tourist philosophy. These three points added onto one another in order provide us with a specimen of a positively camouflaged “modern idealism,” at least as it presently occurs in Japan.

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