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## On Thetic Judgment

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Tanabe Hajime  
On Thetic Judgment

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It occurs that we forget the distinction between the things and ourselves, and follow down the “stream of consciousness.” This is the case, for instance, when we gaze absentmindedly (無心にて) at the blue skies, lying on the grass on a spring day. In this situation, there is no consciousness of the blue sky separate from me nor of me perceiving it. The distinction between the things and ourselves disappears, and in consciousness only the clear blue sky remains. We cannot call this clear sky an object since only that which stands opposed (*gegenüberstehen*)<sup>1</sup> to us can be called an “object” (*Gegenstand*). Here, however, there is nothing of the kind, but only content of consciousness. Of course, we cannot call this state “knowledge”<sup>2</sup> either. Knowledge is only established when there is a subject that knows and an object that is known, but what we find in the case of our example is a state of unification entirely devoid of any such distinction. Many scholars call this “pure experience.” This means that [the fact] is experienced purely and as is, in consciousness, and that it has not yet undergone any act of processing (*Bearbeitung*),<sup>3</sup> such as abstraction or distinction. Pure experience of this kind is in a certain sense the original form of all mental acts. Insofar as our mental acts become

1. [The German term figures directly in the text, following 対立する.]

2. [The term 認識, translated here as “knowledge,” corresponds to the German “*Erkenntnis*,” sometimes rendered in English as “cognition.” Cf. for instance THZ 2: 180, where Tanabe himself offers both “*Erkenntnis*” and “knowledge” as translations.]

3. [加工作用, with the German term indicated in *furigana* (ベアルバイツング).]

conscious to us, they all appear in this form. Whether we claim that we recall a past consciousness by transcending the present consciousness or think of an object independent of consciousness, we can only do so in present consciousness; in this respect, all our mental acts are pure experience. But in accordance with the meanings contained in [pure experience], various different mental phenomena are produced. Now, I use this word exclusively to designate an experience which—regardless of the aspect considered—is purely unified and truly has no other meaning than itself. In other words, this is identical with what can be called a “self-sufficient experience” (自全経験).

Let us return to our previous example. The state of being absorbed in gazing at the sky, while lying on our backs on a warm spring day, is clearly a pure experience. But after a moment, I return to myself from this state where I had been forgotten. At that moment, my soul is already no longer in a state where it has melted away in the spring light; I am *here* as an *ego* (自我) and the sky is *there* as an object independent of me. In other words, the pure and unified state of experience is broken, and I enter the state of discriminating and dualistic knowledge that is perception. Generally, even if different types of sensations and representations<sup>4</sup> become conscious, they do not necessarily become perceptions. When we do not particularly turn our attention towards them, we are simply in a state of pure experience, but when we do turn our consciousness [towards them], this state of pure experience splits, and the sensible representations are distinguished from the *ego* and posited (*gesetzt*)<sup>5</sup> as objective objects.<sup>6</sup> Following Riehl, I call this act “thetic judgment” (*Das thetische oder setzende Urteil*).<sup>7</sup> (Strictly speaking, pure experience is not entirely devoid of any act of attention. It is simply that since [the attention] advances while continuing to face a certain con-

4. [Up until 1916, Tanabe used the term rendered here as “representation” (写象) as the equivalent of *Vorstellung* (sometimes rendered in English as “presentation”). After that, he preferred 表象.]

5. [措定せられる. Tanabe adds *the furigana* ゼツツエン to the first term, ie. the German *setzen*. The Japanese *suru* allows Tanabe to dispense with German conjugations, a luxury the English language does not afford us.]

6. [Objective object: 客観的对象.]

7. RIEHL 1879, 2: 43.

tent, it does not break the state of pure experience. What causes it to break is the turning about of attention.)

If we define thetic judgment simply, we might say that it is the judgment which posits the sensible representation (the content of consciousness) as an object of the *ego*. “Content” thus designates all that becomes conscious in the state of pure experience, already explained, when the *ego* and the object are not yet distinguished. It must be noted here that consciousness and content do not exist separately; generally, consciousness is nothing but the term for that which binds together the individual contents. As opposed to [the content], the object is *Dasjenige, das ich mir, oder dem ich mich innerlich gegenüber gestellt habe* [that which, internally, I have put before myself, or before which I have placed myself]<sup>8</sup>; in consciousness, it is that which stands before the *ego*, independent of the *ego*. In other words, in this case, consciousness is no longer one, but contains a distinction. Here the following problem arises: how do such objects appear, in opposition to the *ego*, from within the unified state where they were included as content of consciousness?

When the object appears from the content of consciousness, as we have said in the above, we turn towards the content which is to become an object for us. This turn is thus an act of attention, and as Wundt says, attention is an internal activity of volition and establishes itself from the element of feeling (*Gefühlelement*).<sup>9</sup> Here, the representational side, founded on sensation, and the emotional and volitional<sup>10</sup> side of attention come to appear in the content of consciousness.<sup>11</sup> The representational side is not something that is originally produced as content of consciousness by our will; it is the given (*das Gegebene*)<sup>12</sup> which cannot be freely modified by will. Thus, this side demands to be distinguished from the emotional and volitional side.<sup>13</sup> The act by which, acknowledging this demand, the emotional and volitional

8. LIPPS 1907, 21.

9. [感情の要素、ゲフユール and エレメント accompany 感情 and 要素 respectively in *furigana*.]

10. [情意的。The term 情意 is sometimes seen translated as *Gemüt* or “mind,” sometimes as “feeling and will.” The pages by Wundt to which Tanabe is referring allow us to disambiguate.]

11. WUNDT 1902, 266–70.

12. [所与, with the German term indicated in *furigana*: ダスゲゲーベネ.]

13. WUNDT 1897, 94–7.

side (i.e. the *ego*) posits the representational side as an object facing it, is precisely thetic judgment.

This judgment is something very fundamental and the process mentioned in the above is clearly not conscious, but is established almost instantaneously. For this reason, many people do not admit this type of judgement. However, I consider it an important judgment which constitutes the foundation of knowledge. Considered simply—from the standpoint of pure experience as previously discussed—as content of consciousness, all sensations and representations in general are nothing but mere facts entirely devoid of the distinction between truth and falsehood. However, once they are no longer simply facts of consciousness, but are posited as objects for the *ego* through objective perception, the distinction between truth and falsehood arises. For instance, in the case of “hallucinations,” the representation posited as an objective object is subsequently falsified, since it contradicts the general system of knowledge, and it then becomes clear that it is nothing more than a subjective representation. And as this type of distinction between true and false has been recognized as a characteristic of judgment since Plato and Aristotle,<sup>14</sup> I think it is appropriate to consider the thetic act as a type of judgment.

The thetic act should be recognized as a judgment not only due to its consequences (as we have just argued), but furthermore, if we consider the act itself psychologically, it includes elements which are absent from simple acts of representation. If we compare, for example, the moment we call to mind a certain representation through imagination, and actual (実際の) perception, then we notice, in the latter, a type of demand and an emotional and volitional attitude of acknowledging<sup>15</sup> this demand, which are absent in the former. This is what the Stoics named *συγκατάθεσις* [assent], and it is the critical element which is recognized by Brentano—who is known for having provided an innovation to modern logic<sup>16</sup>—as the sole property of judgment.<sup>17</sup> His thought certainly contains errors, as has been

14. PLATO 1871, 338–9; ARISTOTLE 1873, 52.

15. [The term for “acknowledge” (承認する) corresponds to the German “*anerkennen*.” Cf. for instance THZ 1: 46, where Tanabe explicitly uses the term for “*Anerkennung*” in quoting Rickert.]

16. SCHALLY 1899, 28.

17. BRENTANO, 1874, 1., 266–7.

shown by Sigwart,<sup>18</sup> Jerusalem<sup>19</sup> and others, but it is nevertheless generally accepted that judgment is characterized by this critical attitude.<sup>20</sup> In other words, in thetic judgment there is a demand that the perceptual representation be distinguished from the *ego* and posited as an objective object, and the *ego* acknowledges and attests to (確立) this demand. Consequently, “thetic judgment” clearly possesses this [critical] element. Accordingly, even from a psychological standpoint, we have sufficient grounds for calling it a “judgment.”

What calls for attention, regarding this critical element, is negation as opposed to acknowledgment. Ordinarily, in logic, affirmation and negation are considered as two types of qualities (*Qualität*)<sup>21</sup> of judgment opposed to one another. This distinction has existed since Aristotle<sup>22</sup> and is pertinent in a logical perspective. But when the motives of negative judgement are examined in a psychological perspective, we discover some subtle differences with regard to the case of affirmation. First, as Wundt claims, at the foundation of the formation of judgment, there is a collective representation (*Gesamtvorstellung*),<sup>23</sup> which we analyze into S and P, i.e., subject and predicate.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the content of judgment is established through the synthesis of the two elements thus distinguished.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, “to speak of a transition from S to P is wholly false [since]<sup>26</sup> we never have an S first, and then tack a P onto it”<sup>27</sup>; rather, from the start, the foundation of judgment is the collective representation which includes the S-P relation. Consequently, as long as it does not contradict the pre-established system of knowledge, the connection S-P is naturally established as an affirmation. Negation emerges when the content of the collective representation

18. SIGWART 1873, 1: 79.

19. JERUSALEM 1895, 83.

20. JAMES 1890, 1: 283–6; WINDELBAND 1904, 1: 170; MILL 1878, 421; RICKERT 1904, 101; HÖFFDING 1887, 174; JERUSALEM 1895, 82.

21. [質, with the German term indicated in *furigana*: クワリテート.]

22. ARISTOTLE 1873, 53.

23. [集合写像, with the German term indicated in *furigana*: ゲザムトフォルシユテルング]

24. WUNDT 1903, 3: 575.

25. SIGWART 1873, 1: 71.

26. [This logical connection, implicit in Bosanquet’s text, is made explicit in Tanabe’s translation of the quote.]

27. BOSANQUET 1888, 1: 86.

is clarified through analysis and synthesis, and is subsequently rejected and abolished for contradicting the existing system of knowledge. In the case of “thought judgments” which Wundt calls “secondary forms of thought” (*sekundäre Gedankenformen*),<sup>28</sup> the collective representation is produced by our thinking; this connection [S-P] is therefore loosened, and negation and affirmation tend to oppose each other. But in the collective representation based on intuition, which precedes thinking (i.e., the “primary forms of thought” (*primäre Gedankenformen*)<sup>29</sup>), the demand of this connection is considered as coercive and as a necessary connection which cannot be influenced by our will; consequently, only in certain cases (e.g. when impressions are ambiguous) can judgments become negations, but normally all judgments are affirmative. This is why Sigwart does not consider negation to be as fundamental a class as the affirmation to which it is opposed.<sup>30</sup> Now, if we consider the case of thetic judgment, it is the most primordial judgment objectively positing sensation and representation, and it precedes acts of reflexive thinking. Since we are necessarily forced, in every case, to posit sensations and representations as objective objects, there is no negation in thetic judgment. If this demand is negated, [this negation] already contains an act of reflexive thought, and once thetic judgment reaches this stage, it is called an “existential judgment” (*das existentielle Urteil*).<sup>31</sup> Lipps speaks of the first in terms of “*Denkakt*” [thought act],<sup>32</sup> and of the second, i.e. what he calls *Wirklichkeitsurteile* [judgments of reality], in terms of *Denktätigkeit* [activity of thought].<sup>33</sup> In existential judgment, that which has already been posited as object through thetic judgment is further reflected on, and depending on its concordance with or contradiction of the existing system of knowledge, [the object] is either affirmed or negated; this is why these

28. WUNDT 1907, I: 43–4. [Tanabe writes 第二次的思想形式, indicating the original German in *furigana*: ゼクンデレゲダンケンフォルメン.]

29. [第一次的思想形式, with the German term indicated in *furigana*: プリメレゲダンケンフォルメン.]

30. Sigwart 1873, I: 150.

31. [In German in the text, following 存在判断.]

32. [*Denkart*] (i.e., type of thought or way of thinking) in the original text, but this is no doubt a typographical error, as attested by the reference in question; furthermore, in a text of a slightly later date, Tanabe again mentions the Lippsian *Denkakt* in a passage dealing with the very same issue as here. Cf. THZ I: 111; translation, TANABE 2013, 142.]

33. LIPPS 1907, 53.

two directions [i.e. negation and affirmation] can be considered as mutually opposed. Even so, for the reasons stated above, I do not maintain that only existential judgment is to be recognized [as a judgment] to the exclusion ofthetic judgment. They only differ in terms of stages of development, but they are the same in terms of their being judgments. (Opinions concerning existential judgment differ among thinkers, but this is my understanding of the matter. Cf. Sigwart, *op. cit.*, 1: 79; Jerusalem, *op. cit.*, 83; Brentano, *op. cit.*, 266–7; for further details, please refer to our discussion in the following.)

Since ancient times, it is generally admitted that judgment contains a subject, “S,” and a predicate, “P”; and *as* judgments, boththetic judgment and existential judgment involve these elements. That is, “S” is the very sensation or representation of which we are conscious in the present; or in other words, from the point of view of pure experience, “S” is a sensation or representation as content of consciousness. On the other hand, “P” is the meaning of this content, i.e. its being an object independent of the *ego*. In fact, as we have shown,thetic judgment is established so instantaneously and so inevitably that its process does not become sufficiently and clearly conscious, and its elements subsequently become known as the result of an analysis; S and P are thus not clearly distinguished, and they do not always become conscious. However, from the perspective of the content of this judgment, I believe this interpretation is valid. Since existential judgment is realized on the level of reflexive thinking, both elements are here clearly distinguished; the representation “S” is normally subsumed under the concept to which it pertains; its being an objective object is also established in a concept of *Sein*, and takes the form “A is” (“*A ist*”).<sup>34</sup> There is, however, a certain school of thought (Marty, Höfler, Meinong, among others), represented first and foremost by Brentano, which defends the idiogenetic theory (*[die] idiogenetische Theorie*).<sup>35</sup> Negating the necessity of subject and predicate in judgment, these thinkers claim that existential judgment merely contains the conceptual element “A,” whereas “*ist*” is not an element that is to become predicate. According to Brentano, “when we say ‘A is,’ this sentence is not, as many have believed and still do believe, a predication (*Prädikation*)”<sup>36</sup> in

34. [The German figures directly in the text, following the Japanese 「Aあり」.]

35. JERUSALEM 1895, 67. [The German expression figures in parenthesis, specifying 一元説.]

36. [説定, with the German term indicated in *furigana*: プレデカチヨン]

which being (*Sein*)<sup>37</sup> is connected as a predicate to the subject A. It is not the connection of the characteristic (*Merkmal*)<sup>38</sup> “being” with A; rather, A itself is the object of our acknowledgement.<sup>39</sup> However, we would have to say that this argument is insufficient. As represented content, A “is discovered. It is *there*<sup>40</sup>; and we cannot say that I acknowledge it,<sup>41</sup> and even if one were to try to reject it, I do not know how one is to do so.”<sup>42</sup> As Sigwart says,

If we were forced to acknowledge “A,” we would only be capable of acknowledging that we actually make a representation. But this acknowledgment is not the affirmation of the existence of A. Because this affirmation has to do with the fact that A is part of the real world which surrounds me, that it is perceived by me and that it can act upon me and upon other things.<sup>43</sup>

It is certainly true that Brentano’s view does not recognize “A” as this type of representation, but as an object independent of the *ego*; nevertheless, we can grasp the object nowhere else than in its representation. What we acknowledge is nothing but “A” as a representation to which the predi-

37. [Even though Brentano’s text reads “Existenz,” Tanabe writes 存在, indicating *Sein* in *furigana* (ザイン).]

38. [徴表, with the German term indicated in *furigana*:メルクマール.]

39. BRENTANO 1874, 276: [Differing slightly from Tanabe’s rendering, Brentano’s text reads as follows: “Wenn wir sagen, “A ist,” so ist dieser Satz nicht, wie Viele geglaubt haben und noch jetzt glauben, eine Prädikation, in welcher die Existenz als Prädikat mit A als Subjekt verbunden wird. Nicht die Verbindung eines Merkmals “Existenz” mit “A,” sondern A selbst ist der Gegenstand den wir anerkennen.”]

40. [Tanabe’s italics. そこにあるものである.]

41. [Tanabe’s translation here differs from Jerusalem’s text, which rather says “whether I acknowledge it or not” (cf. note 39).]

42. JERUSALEM 1895, 68. [The original German text translated here by Tanabe reads: “Der vorgestellte Inhalt ist Gegenstand meines Bewußtseins, ich finde ihn vor, er ist da, mag ich ihn anerkennen oder nicht, und ich weiß nicht, wie man es anstellen soll, ihn zu verwerfen.”]

43. SIGWART 1888, 50. [We have been unable to find any passage corresponding to Tanabe’s quote. On the page in question, Sigwart affirms, in short, perception as the ground of the affirmation of the existence of a given thing, but there is no mention of the acknowledgment of representations. The lines that most adequately correspond to Tanabe’s “quote” are the following: “Ohne auf die schwierige metaphysische Frage nach dem Begriffe des Seins überhaupt einzugehen..., können wir in dem vorliegenden Gebiete als allgemein zugestanden voraussetzen, dass der Grund, die Existenz von irgend einem Ding oder einem Vorgang zu behaupten, die Wahrnehmung, in der äusseren Welt die unmittelbare sinnliche Wahrnehmung ist.... wer in diesem Sinne behauptet, dass etwas in der Welt existire, behauptet, dass es irgendwie an irgend einem Orte und zu irgend einer Zeit wahrnehmbar sei.”]

cate of its being an independent object is affixed. Both existential judgment and, naturally, thetic judgment, which serves as its foundation, contain the abovementioned S and P and are established through their synthesis. However, as the content of [thetic judgment] differs slightly from that of ordinary judgments (namely, this process is instantaneous and necessary in thetic judgment, and its content is clarified analytically only after the fact), it has either been misunderstood or entirely rejected as a judgment.

As I believe that by now the formation and the content of thetic judgment are almost clear, I would like, in the following, to briefly consider its significance for epistemology. As we have seen in the above, in the state of pure experience there is no room for talking about knowledge. It is merely the unified state in which subject and object are not yet separate. However, when we engage in an act of attention, this unified state is broken up, and what up until now had been the content of consciousness as pure experience, appears with the demand of being posited as an objective object. It is not something new that emerges due to the internal volition (i.e. due to the act of attention). What was originally in the content of consciousness, enters into a new type of relation with the act of attention. Consequently, as internal volition, the act of attention comes to form a type of experience which can be unified under the term “*ego*.” For this reason, what we call “object” is not produced by the *ego*; on the contrary, both (i.e. the *ego* and the object) are only meaningful insofar as they are mutually opposed and co-dependent (相互相俟ちて). That is indeed not to say that their distinction becomes conceptually clear to a sufficient degree in thetic judgment. Rather, considering its significance, this is how I understand it. If this [distinction] becomes clear, we are already in existential judgment. Since this judgment emerges following an adequate (相応) development of the concepts of *ego* and object, a thetic judgment with the same meaning has already taken place. In fact, this [thetic] judgment is the most fundamental knowledge, the foundation of all objective knowledge. However abstract a thought (思想) is, insofar as it relates to objective objects, it cannot but presuppose the being of these objects. And the being of these objects is precisely established by this thetic judgment. In the end, from the standpoint of empiricism, being is nothing but “to be perceptible.” In other words, being originates in pure experience and is established through thetic judgment. In this sense, [the thesis] *esse est percipi* is valid. But the reason why until now

many empiricists have fallen into subjective idealism is that, having failed to acknowledge thetic judgment, they dogmatically determined sensations and representations to be subjective in essence (本来). If, in order to explain objective knowledge, one were to seek a characteristic (*Merkmal*)<sup>44</sup> objectivizing the something of the sensations and representations<sup>45</sup> which one has thus considered as subjective, this approach flips the facts upside down and makes the goal entirely unattainable. As there is no reason why being (有) should emerge from nothing, nothing objective can come from inside what is subjective in essence. Subjective idealism is a natural consequence of this [reversal of the facts].<sup>46</sup> Rather, the content of consciousness, which appears in pure experience, originally transcends the subject–object [distinction], and from within it, the objective object appears in opposition to the subjective element of the *ego*. Subject and object (客観), *ego* and object (対象),<sup>47</sup> are after all the names given to two different systems that are parallel to each other in pure experience, and one cannot be said to follow nor precede the other.

The object which thus appears in opposition to the subject is itself governed by laws and is not influenced by subjective will. Knowledge is always established when this object makes the subject acknowledge a certain aspect which the object has developed according to its own laws. The point of unification of these two sides is none other than pure experience. We call the feeling which emerges when the subject is forced to make this acknowledgement “necessity” (*Notwendigkeit*)<sup>48</sup> of knowledge. Furthermore, among the objective objects posited by perception, there is something which has a particularly intimate and inseparable type of relation to the emotional and volitional element that is our *ego*: namely, our body. This concept is established where there is a certain parallel relation between the emotion and volition [on the one hand] and sensations and representations [on the other], which form this concept; further, parting from the bodies of the others—posited

44. [徴表, with “*Merkmal*” indicated in *furigana*: メルクマール.]

45. [感覚写象の或もの.]

46. Cf. the section on knowledge in WUNDT 1897.

47. [Tanabe distinguishes between two terms for “object”: 客観 and 対象, corresponding respectively to *Objekt* and *Gegenstand*.]

48. [必然性, with the German term indicated in *furigana*: ノートウエンデヒカイト (sic).]

as having external shapes similar to the body related to my *ego*—I posit, through an act of analogical inference, the *egos* of the others in intimate relation to these bodies of the others; and I come to empathize [with them] by projecting onto them the feelings of my *ego*. The previously mentioned feeling of necessity thus extends to the other *egos*; and the anticipation emerges that, like myself, they are to acknowledge [the object]; this is what we call “universal validity” (*Allgemeingültigkeit*)<sup>49</sup> of knowledge.

We can thus understand that a theory of knowledge that takes its starting point inthetic judgment does not take the standpoint of a subjective idealism, but rather that of an objective idealism. Knowledge is established in consciousness, but this consciousness is not my subjective present consciousness, but rather the eternal present which swallows up past and future; it is the pure and unified experience, beyond the distinction between self and other. After all, reality (実在) should be sought nowhere else.

\* When we had finished the first draft of this translation, it came to our attention that Takeshi Morisato had already translated this very text in collaboration with Timothy Burns, without, however, having published their results. Through the generosity of Mr. Morisato, we were able to compare the two versions, a process which allowed us to improve our translation in numerous places. In a later round of corrections, additional keen observations made by Mr. Morisato further helped establish the present text. For this we wish to express our deep gratitude to Morisato and Burns.

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49. [普遍妥当性, with the German term in *furigana*: アルゲマインギルチヒカイト.]

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