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Philosophia, Ethica and Aesthetica in the Far-Eastern Cultural Sphere: Receptions of the Western Ideas and Reactions to the Western Cultural Hegemony

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Let us begin by pointing out a plain fact. While both in China and Korea the category of “Chinese philosophy” and “Korean philosophy” are retrospectively recognized as an official designation and currently used, the Japanese academia until now does not use the term of “Japanese philosophy.” Why did the divergence take place and what was the socio-historical background for this divergence? Here is my first question. Based on this query, we will then expand the field of our investigation onto the domain of ethics and aesthetics. This would provide us with the basic knowledge on the knowledge in the Far-Eastern cultural sphere in the modern era. This also leads us to the question of translatability of key concepts in Asian cultures and, in extension, the possibilities of Oriental philosophies must be examined. “Possibilities” here imply at least three questions. First: is the Western philosophical tradition capable of referring to the Oriental tradition? Second: can the Occidental academic tradition of referring to the Orient be regarded as compatible with the scheme of “dialogue” between the East and the West? And third: In what way can the global reciprocity be attainable without being caught by the hidden desire of “monopolizing” the knowledge for the benefit of those who possess it?

1

The term 哲学 (“tetsu-gaku”) was invented by a Japanese Nishi Amane 西周(1829-1897) in 1860 as the translation of Western term of “philosophy.” China accepted the same neologism 哲学 “zhé-xue” in 1890s and the same combination of the two Chinese characters was also transmitted to Korea by 1884. The Chinese character “zhé” is a combination of “clear-cut” and “mouth” (“bien articulé oralement”) and from which is derived the secondary meaning designating a person bestowed with wisdom in Confucian tradition. “xue” means a house where the knowledge is transmitted from master to disciple. Previously, Nishi had proposed a term of 希哲学 (“ki-tetsu-gaku”), probably named after a passage by the Chinese neo-Confucian scholar, Zhōu Lián-xī 周濂溪(1017-1073), namely “a person worthy of the name looks after the cleverness” (Bian 2005:89) The first character “xī” 希 corresponds to the Greek notion of “philo-” in Chinese. But the notion of “philo” could not survive, probably because of Japanese preference of two-word terms in idiom formation (Yabu 2005).

Etymologically the term which lacks in “philo” may be a mistranslation as it means literally “sophist learning” to which Socrates opposed his idea. Yet “zhé” may also be interpreted as an abbreviated form of “先哲” i.e. “teachers of intelligence,” which would be in good tune with the idea of ‘following faithfully the trace of one’s master.’ And yet one should keep in mind that Nishi was strongly impressed by the contrast between the Chinese classical Confucian learning and the Western Philosophy. For him, the progress made by A. Comte’s positivism and J.S. Mill’s inductive method were a revelation. To his eye, even the Neo-Confucianism of the Sung Dynasty looked outmoded and remained in stagnation, as it was lacking in renewal and innovation. In contrast, the Western philosophy, which he absorbed while in Nederland, was perceived as making steady progress through equitable tradition of fair debates.

Thus “philosophy” was recognized by the Japanese of the mid 19th Century as a new Western scholarly method which stood in sharp opposition to the Chinese Confucianism in stagnation. According to Nishi, the Confucianism is “deductive” in its application of personal moral to the ruling of the society as a whole, whereas Western philosophy is “inductive” in its search for the truth in accordance with Western natural science, where judgements were based on observations and analysis. But Nishi’s pro-Western stance was challenged by one of his colleagues. Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹(1828-1902), who also studied with Nishi in Holland, remarked several shortcomings of the Western philosophy in the mirror of Chinese scholarship. While the Western philosophy puts emphasis on “knowledge” (知 “zhī”), it tends to overlook the “action”(行 “háng”), and it does not much care about “purifying the spirit”(洗心 “xiǎn xīn”). Thus Nishimura found the Western philosophy is lacking in ethical dimension judging from the Chinese criteria. Clearly Nishimura is referring to the Neo-Confucianism of Wáng Yáng-míng 王陽明(1472-1528) who claimed that the concordance of thinking and doing (知行合一) is essential in ethical judgement. Nishimura’s reserve may well be compared with Aristotle who included *theoria* (*hē theorētikē epistēmē*) and *praxis* (*hē praktikē epistēmē*) in the category of episteme. And yet, it may be fair to observe that even nowadays Chinese scholars tend to think that ethical dimension (人倫) is relatively lacking in the Western philosophical tradition (which stands in sharp contrast to Western accusation of Chinese lack in human right).

1-1

The anecdote suggests one of the cultural conflicts which occurred at the introduction of Western philosophy in Non-Western, and in this context, Far Eastern cultural sphere. In the formative years of Japanese ‘modern’ academia under Westernization from around 1880s, philosophy was first established as a university discipline. Let us have a brief look at the first generation. Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心(1863-1913), Japanese pioneer of Western style art historical study, was one of the first graduates from the Tokyo University. He is known to have learned Hegelian philosophy from an American professor E.F. Fenollosa (1853-1908) before his graduation in 1880. The courses for “Indian and Chinese Philosophy/ies” were introduced in the following year of 1881 at the department of philosophy as neighbouring disciplines to “Western philosophy” in the faculty of letters. The notion of “Oriental Philosophy” 東洋哲学 was promoted by Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎(1855-1944), first recipient of the chair of philosophy. Clearly Inoue felt the necessity of supplementing Western discipline with Eastern traditions and he coined the term of “Oriental philosophy” by way of analogy. Behind his intention of establishing a “synthesis of the East and the West,” we may detect his nationalistic intention: The East should show that it is perfectly equipped with an equivalent of Western philosophical tradition and can rival to the West. Though his approach is criticized as superficial and judged syncretic at best, Inoue non-the-less made it clear that a passive reception of the Western academic discipline was not enough for an Eastern nation-state to modernize its scholarly outlook (Shimomura 1965/2005:22).

Curiously, however, “Japanese philosophy” was absent in the curriculum proposed by Inoue, and it remains so until today. For more than 120 years since the founding days, it seems that the department of philosophy in Japanese university is satisfied with the triple subdivision into Western, Indian and Chinese philosophies. The Indian philosophy department succeeded domestic *siddham* studies in the Buddhist temples (since the 9th century) and grafted to it Western philology of Sanskrit and Pali reading. The Chinese philosophy department maintained more or less faithfully the legacy of exegesis of Chinese Confucian or Taoist classics, without strongly influenced by Western scholarship. In the meanwhile, Western philosophy in Japan mainly consisted of translating important classics and expounding them. Though it is commonly said that “*philosophieren*” was in fashion among students of the pre-war period, Western style meditation or reflection did not directly take root in Japan but gave way either to the zen Buddhist practice or to the faith in Christianity through conversion.

Predominant in the pre-war high-school study in humanities (which covered only less than 5 % of the population) was a scholastic philology which was conducted through the reading training of Western original texts such as Descartes, Kant and Schopenhauer, not to mention Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. It may be worth mentioning that, here again, the Western idea of “philology” highly appreciated by a Nishi Amane, was surreptitiously replaced by the kind of exegesis which Nishi despised in his Confucian learning. Meticulous reading of the classics and the attempt of their translation into Japanese (which were quite often too difficult for the usual readers to understand) as well as the introduction of the latest Western contemporary outcomes constituted (and still constitutes) most of the Japanese academic activities in Western philosophy department. Dialog and debate, which resided at the ideal core of Western philosophical tradition, were replaced by the authoritarian monolog delivered by professors from the platform of the classroom. As far as the number of chairs and students are concerned, the “Western Philosophy” occupied the main place in modern Japanese academia of philosophy, and the Indian and Chinese philosophies took secondary and auxiliary positions. Such was, in brief, the Japanese pre-war institutional mimicry of the Western scholarly department of philosophy.

1-2

In China, a Jesuit missionary, Julio Aleni (1582-1649) first provided a phonetic transcription of “philosophia” (斐錄所非亞) in the 17th century, without being understood by the Chinese. It was in 1898 that Yán Fù 嚴復(1854-1921) gave another phonetic transcription for “philosophy” (斐洛魁非) in his translation of A. Huxley’s “Evolution and Ethics,” and by referring to the Japanese terminology, he gave the term of “zhé-xué” in his translation of J.S Mill’s *On liberty* in 1903. While Yán concentrated on English writings, Wáng Guó wéi 王国維(1877-1927) used the same term in his introduction of German philosophers like I.Kant, A. Schopenhauer and F. Nietzsche through the magazine he edited: *Educational World* 『教育世界』 (1901). It is said that *Principle of philosophy* 『哲学要領』 (1903) by Cài yuán péi 蔡元培 (1867-1940) contributed to the consolidation of the terminology in the Chinese language. Cài became President of the Beijing University in 1917, and invited to the university Hú Shì 胡適(1891-1962), former student of J. Dewey, and a Columbia University Ph.D. holder. And it was not until the publication of Hú Shì’s *Outline of History of Chinese Philosophy* 『中国哲学史大綱』 (volume 1 was published in 1919 under the May 4th nationalist Movement in protest against Japan’s 21 demands after the W.W. 1), that the Chinese traditional thinking as a whole was for the first time categorized under the terminology of philosophy (“zhé-xué”) (Kōsaka 2005:62).

Here the contrast between Japan and China is already clear. Japan, which had invented the term of “tetsugaku,” as the translation of “philosophy,” never applied it to the native genealogy of thinkers. In contrast, China thus openly declared that it has its own history of philosophy which is worth being compared with the Western philosophy. By referring to the Hegelian schema of progress, Hú even claimed that Chinese philosophy will take a position in the future philosophy of the world. Another key person in this context is 馮友蘭 Féng Yǒu-lán (1895-1990), who published the history of Chinese thought as *History of Chinese Philosophy* 『中国哲学史』 in 1931 under the Japanese aggression called Manchurian Incident. Féng regarded the institutionalized Confucianism as fossilized and sterilized phase of the doctrines of the ancient philosophers and claimed that the genuine Chinese tradition was restored by the modernity introduced through the reform by 康有為 Kāng Yǒu-wéi (1858-1927).

Beside the fact that Feng's conception apparently follows Hegelian concept, it also had the merit of being in good tune with the Marxist interpretation. However, this may also reflect a Chinese native way of understanding history as a recuperation of the lost tradition (Kôsaka 2005:65).

Thus "philosophy" in Chinese term is no longer regarded as a translated notion from the West but was to be treated by the posterity as an innate and inherent category proper to Chinese thinking. A paradoxical consequence is that nowadays most of the Chinese professors of the Chinese philosophy department share the conviction that "zhé-xué" existed since antiquity in China and that "philosophy" is nothing but the Western equivalent (the only exception being specialists of vocabulary history). The official interpretation in China did not accept such an interpretation as to maintain that the term was introduced in China through the Japanese translation of the Western notion of "philosophy." And more importantly, the spirit of practice in Marxist philosophy was in good terms with the Chinese ethical tradition of the Wang Yan-min school, where, practice and knowledge used to be tightly connected with each other so as to encourage political as well as spiritual revolution (though in China scholars put more emphasis on mental speculation while in Japan the Yang-ming studies gain extremely ethical dimension).

1-3

In Korea, Yu Kiljun 兪吉濬(1856-1914), who had studied at the Keiô Gijuku school in Japan, recorded the etymological idea of "philosophy" in his 『西遊見聞』(1884), relations of his stay in the U.S.A.. It was in the 1890s, that the enlightenment thinking of J. Lock and J.-J. Rousseau, the utilitarianism of E. Bentham as well as the idea of natural law by R. de Montesquieu reached the Korean intellectuals. Among the early scholars, one should mention the name of 李定稷 Lee Chungiik (1841-1910) who studied E. Kant. Far from being a refuge from the reality under Japanese pressure and occupation, studying philosophy in Korea is said to have been recognized as a practical way of understanding and overcoming the suffering and the perseverance inflicted by Japan upon the Korean race.

It is also worth mentioning that the colonial rule gave birth to the nationalist resistance. Among leading philosophers of the generation, 申南激 Shin Namchol (1907-1958), 朴到祐 Park Chiwoo (1909-1949) are graduate from the Keijo Imperial University in Seoul and became leading Marxist philosophers in North Korea after Korea's liberation from Japanese rule. 田元培 Chon Wonbae (1903-1984), graduating from the Kyoto Imperial University, participated in the foundation of the Korean Philosophers' Association in 1933. 金斗憲 Kim Tuhon (1903-1981), graduating from the Tokyo Imperial University, became a leading scholar in Western ethics at the Seoul University. 安浩相 Ahn Hosang (1902-1966) obtained his Ph.D from the Bon University and published *Lectures of Philosophy* 『哲学講義』 in 1942, and was to be nominated first Director of the Department of Education in South Korea. 韓稚振 Hahn Chiijin (1901-?), graduating from the South California University and author of the first general introduction of philosophy published in Korea, 『最新哲学概論』(1936) was to be kidnapped to the North Korea and went missing.

After the defeat of Japan in 1945, and especially since the Korean War in 1952, the People's Republic of Korea established the so-called Subject thinking 主体思想, a North Korean interpretation of Marx-Leninism, in which the people are designated as the subject carrying out their own destiny of realizing the revolution. The Institute of Philosophical Research in Pyeongyang published a *History of Korean Philosophy*, based on the materialistic ideology in 1960. The Japanese translation of the book in 1962 seems to have exercised deep impact on some intellectuals of the Korean Republic. Park Jonghong 朴鐘鴻 (1903-1976), authority of the epoch, for example, searched for the framework of Korean philosophy by studying the important spiritual father of modern Korean thought, Choi Hanki 崔漢綺(1803-1875). Of course Park's studies were conducted not from the Marxist point of view, which was strictly prohibited under the military rule, but primarily in reference to the English empiricism (Li 2003).

Generally speaking, Korean students of philosophy have not taken seriously Japanese research in philosophy. Not only in Confucian studies but also in Buddhist studies, Korea believes to be staying in a superior position to Japan since the antiquity, and would not recognize any merit in Japanese cultures, which have been taxed of vulgarity and believed to have any other merit than corrupting Korean good manners. Even the apparent neutrality in Japanese scholars' philological approach has been judged by the Korean intellectuals as the proof of Japan's intellectual irresponsibility for their colonial rules and usurpations. Until recently South Korean nationalist scholars had good reason to intentionally ignore Japanese philosophical studies. Those Japanese who manifested guilty consciousness toward Korea were mostly Marxists. The contact with them could easily constitute death penalty in South Korea under military dictatorship, whereas non Marxist Japanese students were mostly a-politic and ideology-free philologists. Their scholarship, lacking in morality by definition, was judged *de facto*, and should have been judged *de jure*, worthless for Korean engaged nationalists. It was not until 1999 that the Korean Association for Studies of Japanese Thought was founded in the Republic of Korea, and it is publicly declared that its main purpose consists of criticizing remaining traces of imperialist ideology deeply rooted in Japanese philosophy at large.

1-4

Chinese intellectuals, for their part, traditionally show little interest in Japan if not as a convenient transit port for the importation of the latest Western knowledge. While an important amount of Western books were retranslated via Japanese translations in the pre-war period, little attention has been paid on what was happening in Japan. The situation has not changed in recent years. Of 1701 scientific papers on foreign philosophy which the Research Center of Philosophy of the Chinese

Institute of Social Sciences published between 1978 and 2000, only 87 articles treat Japan, covering no more than 5 percent of the total items (Bian 2005:74).

It is true that the Japanese publications in series like *World Classics* (which means in reality Western classics) or (Western) *Thinkers of the 20th Century* have been recently translated into Chinese. Still the Chinese readership is naturally not interested in the way Japan has received and digested these Western classics and contemporary Western thinkers. Simply retranslation from the Japanese is promoted and permitted by the authorities for the convenience' sake: partly because translated terminology in Japanese by way of Chinese characters is quite helpful (if not always re-utilizable), and partly because Japan is exonerated from the quasi-total dis-communication with the Western scholarship that China has suffered since the Stalin era and especially during and after the Cultural Revolution.

However what is happening in recent years is a great challenge in Chinese intellectual history. Just think about the Chinese translation of a book on J. Derrida published in Japan which was put into Chinese by a translator who did not have any notion of French original and for whom the English translation remained linguistically inaccessible. A simple glossary (which the Japanese publishers are unwilling to put, for fear of discouraging domestic purchase) would not suffice to avoid interminable confusions in terminology. Despite effort of standardization, the Chinese characters to transcribe main Western contemporary authors tend to differ from one translation to another, making simply impossible to identify identical authors (even for authors themselves who usually have no command of the Chinese language) unless spelling in alphabet were given in bracket (which has been often misspelled up until in the 90s, but in recent years Chinese publications took the habit of mentioning original spelling, making the identification of Western authors' names easier than the Japanese translations, which are usually lacking in them).

The most serious problem which still remains nowadays is the lack of communication. Many Chinese specialists in foreign languages, who are translating latest Western publications, are not always highly respected by Chinese professors in Chinese Philosophy Department. Few top ranking Chinese scholars in Chinese philosophy willingly speak foreign languages, and do not know how their utterances are deformed in interpretations into Western languages. Among Chinese scholars, those who are fluent in Western languages have little contact with those who are capable in Japanese. And Most of the Japanese scholars in Chinese philosophy are, even nowadays, poor at speaking Western languages, and few are motivated to publish in Chinese. And most of the Western scholars in Chinese studies no longer speak Korean or Japanese as easily as their elderly distinguished teachers once used to be... In short philosophical dialog or tri-log in Far-East cannot be achieved without relying on the exceptionally talented scholars.

2

Despite these inner difficulties which still remain, the Oriental philosophy gained a certain reputation in the West. Okakura Tenshin, whom I briefly mentioned, proposed a triangular structure of the Oriental spirit. If India excels in religious spirituality (which is expressed in the emotion of Buddhist "mercy"), China boasts its intellectual dimension in ethical thinking. Combining these two main Asiatic currents, Japan appears as an embodiment of the aesthetic aspect of Oriental culture. Though debatable for its highly nationalistic formulation, this triangular structure curiously reminds us of the configuration of *šēfirōt* in Hebraic Kabbarah thought, in which "*Tif'eret*" or beauty is articulated from the combination of "Hesed" or mercy and "*Gēūrāh*" or justice (Izutsu 1991:287). Okakura also compared the position of Japan as "the beach where each successive wave of Eastern thought has left its sand-ripple as it beats against the national consciousness" (*The Ideals of the East*, 1904).

Though extremely schematic, this vision was partly justified by the following publications. Just as Okakura's own *The Book of Tea* (1904) was a manifesto of the Oriental aesthetics, 辜鴻銘 Gū Hóngmíng (1857-1928), the legendary Confucian scholar of the Qing Dynasty, published in English, *Spirit of the Chinese people*, and the book was translated into German as *Der Geist des Chinesischen Volkes u. der Ausweg aus dem Krieg* (1917) as a Confucian ethical message to Europe under the war. The same year Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the first Nobel Prize laureate from Asia in 1913, published his *Nationalism* so as to denounce Western and Westernized hegemony (including that of Japan) in defense of the search for spirituality. Contemporary to Paul Valéry's "Crise de l'Occident," these publications by Oriental authors also prelude Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the Occident* (1920).

2-1

Okakura's vision of the Asian Civilizations which was proposed at the beginning of the 20th Century attains a certain maturity in the 1930s, when attempts were made to theoretically elaborate the so-called Oriental aesthetics. As we have already examined elsewhere the revival of Chinese aesthetics notions in Modern era (Inaga 2001), let us limit here to the examination of the so-called Japanese aesthetics. The only vocabulary of Japanese aesthetics which were admitted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* are "yūgen" "wabi" and "sabi." Why could only these three concepts, among so many others, obtain a "civil right" so to speak in the English language?

The term "yugen" 幽玄 appears for the first time in Arthur Waley's *No Plays of Japan* (1928) which explains the term as "meaning that which lies under the surface, vague and opposite of the obvious, suggestion rather than a manifestation." Though the notion stems from Chinese classic, it was elaborated by the medieval Japanese aesthetics and performance arts. "sabi" 寂び for its tern, appears in the book on *Nogaku* (1932), by Beatrice Lane Suzuki (-1938) treating the same Noh medieval play. The third expression "wabi" 侘び is seen in 鈴木大拙 Daisetsu Suzuki (1870-1966)'s highly influential *Essays*

in *Zen* (1934), with the phrase “Eternal Loneliness is something known pre-eminently in Japan.” Daisetsu also explains “sabi” as follows: “Sabi consists in rustic unpretentiousness or archaic imperfection, apparent simplicity or effortless execution, and richness in historical associations.” This being said, our next question would be: why were these specific terms frequently discussed during the 1930s?

First it must be pointed out that in contemporary Japan, Zeami 世阿弥(1364-1443), known until then, as the Noh play actor, was recognized for the first time in 1910s as a play writer and singled out in the historiography of Japanese literature. Simultaneously, the aesthetic term of “yugen,” which had never been particularly remarked, became a key-term in the Japanese history of Ideas. A hypothesis as for the succession from “yugen” to “sabi” seems to be advanced and established around Oota Mizuho 大田水穂 Oota Mizuho (1876-1955), who, by claiming this succession, rehabilitated the haikai poetry master, Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉(1644-1694) together with his aesthetics of “sabi” (Inaga 2005).

Oota’s idea showed a clear distinction from the dominant views which had been proposed by previous scholars of national studies. Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769), who initiated the rehabilitation of the ancient poetry, estimated the “masuraoburi” “manlich” vigorous archaic style of the 万葉集 *Manyōshū*, the *Collection of Ancient Poems* (759) of the 8th Century as the highest achievement. And Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801), famous scholar for his study in the Mythology, *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and the *Tale of Genji* 源氏物語 (1008), in contrast, appreciated highly technical rhetoric of the neo-classical 新古今和歌集 *Shinkokinwakashū* (*New Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*) edited in 1201. If a very schematic interpretation is allowed, the medievalism may correspond to the rehabilitation of the vernacular literature of the late medieval Europe, which is simultaneously alien to Greek archaism and Roman classicism, but contains a core to the Renaissance of the national literature.

2-2

Contemporary Japanese scholars in “national literature” 国文学 were searching for the “essence of the national literature.” Hisamatsu Sen’ichi 久松潜一(1894-1976) distils three spirits, i.e. “*makoto*” (“truthfulness” corresponding to the archaic style), “*monoaware*” (emotional attuning to the passing world which contains a sentiment of resignation typically expressed, according to Motoori in the *Tale of Genji*) and “*yugen*.” Clearly Hisamatsu is trying to synthesize the above mentioned three characteristics by claiming that the early medieval antithetical literary spirits like “*aware*” and “*okashi*” (more or less lyrical comic) are fused into profundity by the medieval notion of “yugen.” Likewise, Okazaki Yoshie 岡崎義恵 (1892-1982), by referring to German philology of F. Schleiermacher or W. Dilthey, insisted upon the importance of the “fusing” as a distinctive character of the Japanese literary history. This idea shows a clear similarity with the notion of “Rahmenlosigkeit” or frame-less-ness proposed by Tsudumi Tsuneyoshi 鼓常良(1887-1981) in his *Kunst Japans* (1927) as a basic concept of Japanese aesthetics in contrast to the Western tradition where a clear distinction in maintained between literary and artistic genres.

To these medieval revivalist interpretations, a Marxist scholars, 近藤忠義 Kondō Tadayoshi (1901-1976) riposted by saying that “*yugen*” reflects escapist spirit of the Medieval period which was concocted by the sedimentation of the corruptive maturity of the feudalistic aristocratic society of the previous late ancient Heian period. Though Kondō’s view of medieval era is negative (and the similar view is still a dominant official interpretation of the Japanese literature taught in mainland Chinese normal schools), he non-the-less shares with the proponents of the medievalism the idea that the medieval period created a matrix of the Japanese character. In addition we may detect that, despite their oppositions, they all saw in the “*yugen*” notion, not an aesthetic element but a principle of coordinating national character. This functionalistic approach leads the contemporary Japanese scholars to the search of the Japanese-ness as an essence of the Oriental aesthetics (Let us note here a clear aggrandizing of “Japanese” into “Oriental” aesthetics- an aspect which we critically studies in Inaga 2001).

A typical case would be Oonishi Yoshinori 大西克禮 (1888-1959), who published 『幽玄とあわれ』 *Yugen and Aware* (1939) and 『風雅論「さび」の研究』 *Fūga ron or a study of “sabi”* (1940). Professor of Aesthetics at the Imperial University of Tokyo, Onishi took a phenomenological approach in his study of Japanese poetry. Following the Western model of aesthetic categories, Oonishi explains Japanese aesthetics as derivations from the Western basic concepts. He states as follows: “Because of the advantageous position of the art-aesthetic moment in the West, the three fundamental aesthetics categories, “the beautiful,” “the sublime” and “the humorous” are transformed into “the graceful,” “the tragic,” and “the comic” respectively in the West, whereas in the East, because of the advantageous position of the nature-aesthetics moment, they are generated as “*aware*,” “*yūgen*,” and “*sabi*” respectively” (Otabe 2002:155).

2-3

Oonishi is satisfied by allocating to several Japanese aesthetic terms an auxiliary position of the Western aesthetics categories. Still, throughout his minute analysis of *waka* poems, Oonishi points out that a clear distinction between art and nature, which characterizes the West, is lacking in the Japanese poetics, where the human self tends to fuse into the nature. He also looks into the “subtleness” and “stillness” of the Japanese aesthetic contemplation which shows particular interest in the “*Dunkelheit*” (German in the text) and the “*Tiefe*” which refuse clear verbal articulations. The famous essay 陰翳礼賛 “Eloge de l’ombre” (1933) by a modern Japanese writer, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō 谷崎潤一郎(1886-1965) was almost contemporary to Oonishi’s sober philosophical reflection. Although Oonishi regarded Japanese aesthetic concepts as “irrelevant” in Western

context, it must be recognized that the Orientals of the epoch were searching for aesthetic concepts which may be classifiable by, but not reduced to, the Occidental category.

The essence of Japanese aesthetics had to be formulated in the delicate margin between compatibility with Western canon (which was the condition for acceptability) and irreducibility to Western specificities (which was the condition for the claim of originality). The spiritual profundity (“*Dunkelheit*” or “*Tiefe*,”) which was useful so as to give the impression of not easily accessible to Western analytical apparatus was also a necessary condition to meet the Western expectation, and which was subject to an inevitable tendency to obscurantism by which the Japanese aesthetics was marked. Heidegger’s famous notion of “*Verborgtheit*” and the idea of “*ālētheia*” were not tangential to this inclination. Our third question is to ask if these conditions was inherent to Orient (and especially to Japan, in our present context) or was it rather concomitant with the Western inner logic of philosophical and aesthetic studies.

3

As we have seen, Okakura, Tagor or Gu were among the rare Orientals philosophers and aestheticians who could articulate their ideas directly in Western languages. In contrast, the following generation (at least in Japan) like Oonishi or Tanizaki, no longer manifested their ideas directly in Western languages. And what they murmured in their native tongue was the merit of obscurity of their aesthetic appreciations. Even Okakura eloquently manifested the value of the lack of eloquence as one of the essential aesthetic features of the Orientals. Why was such a negative attitude dominant? And how was the Occidental reaction to the Oriental self-assertion?

Let us examine one of the most intransigent cases. French extreme-right nationalist critics, Henri Massis (1886-1970) accused such Orientals as “Okakuras, Coomaraswamys, Tagores” of “pseudo-Orientals.” In Massis’ view, all of them were products of Western education, and therefore they were armed with the weapons that the West had provided them (Hue 2000). Similar logic is still prevailing. Western academia expects from the East “fundamental contributions” which the West cannot expect of its own accord. And yet, “contribution” deserves to be recognized as contribution so long as it is “digestible” or “edible” in the Western logic of philosophy. However, so long as it is “digestible,” it is at best regarded as an addendum to the Western episteme. On the contrary, if something typically Oriental thinking is shown to the West, it simply would not be accepted because it is alien to the very notion of philosophy.

This mechanism of inclusion and exclusion can lead to an absurd consequence: Exemplary contributions from the East are not typically Eastern, as it is always and already conform to the Western philosophy. And typically Eastern contribution cannot be appreciated as such but rejected in the West, as it is not belonging to the Western category of philosophy. As Nietzsche said in his *Wille zur Macht* that “thinking rationally simply means interpreting according to the schema that we cannot get rid of” (Nietzsche 1954:358). Such tautological immune system of the Western philosophy not only accounts for the ways the Japanese aesthetics has been formulated in an obscure and negative fashion by Oonishi Yoshinori in the late 1940s, but also partly suggests the logical reason why fundamental contribution from the East could not be recognized as such in the Western forum of philosophy.

3-1

Karl Löwith (1897-1973) who was in exile in Japan during the W.W.2 due to his Jewish origin, made a revealing observation in this context. According to him, Japanese students study all the philosophical works from Plato to Heidegger in their study room at the second floor but they usually live in a purely Japanese fashion at the first floor (Löwith did not mention “Western” philosophy, for “philosophy” did not mean for him anything but Western philosophy). The problem is that he could not find any ladder to connect the two floors. Though a common-place, his remark shows a basic condition in which Western philosophical knowledge was accepted (or wisely put aside) in a non-Western cultural sphere, named Japan, in the modern era. Between the Westernized second floor and the domestic first floor, what kind of relationship the knowledge could or had to entertain? Or if the connection is not established and cannot be maintained as Löwith remarked, what could it mean?

When we talk about the possibility of inter-cultural dialog, we suppose as prerequisite those individuals who are capable of articulating his/her own idea in a common working language. However Löwith’s parable suggests that there is a discontinuity between philosophical formulation in Western language and pre-philosophical vernacular cultures. In order that an Oriental is capable of taking part in an intercultural dialog, he or she must be ready to bridge the connection between the first and the second floor within oneself by way of inner dialog. One is requested to translate one’s own vernacular language into another philosophical language which is supposed to be universally valid (and recognizable in the Western academism). And this translation process inevitably accompanies a sense of self-betrayal, which an H. Massis maliciously revealed. *Traduttore è traditore*, indeed, but without this self-deceit one cannot put up a ladder between the first “vernacular” floor and the second “global” floor (Inaga 1999).

3-2

Shimomura Toratarô 下村寅太郎 (1902-1995), a distinguished scholar in the history of science, gives a relevant account on this inevitably a-symmetrical passage and lack of reciprocity. While the Western thinking (including Islamic thinking) is argumentative and dialogical, he observes that the Oriental thinking tends to avoid verbal utterance. Confucius declared that clever utterance and embellishment lacks in morality (巧言令色鮮仁). It is of course a simple hypothesis to recognize in the refusal and voluntary avoidance of verbal utterance the essential characteristics of the Oriental philosophy and

aesthetics. Still, so long as the West intends to find out in the East something antithetical and oppositional to the West, it was a logical consequence that the Oriental themselves had to single out as their essence something that is not easily assimilated to the Western logic (Shimomura 1965/2005:25). “*Sabi*,” “*wabi*” or “*yūgen*” may be palpable examples of the sort. It was the Western own desire to summon the unknown that invited the unwelcome. And a Japanese scholar in aesthetic, Oonishi had to choose the specific aesthetic terms in Japanese literature while being quite logically aware in advance that these key concepts he analyzed would be of little relevance in the Western philosophical context.

Here lies the logical mechanism of Western refusal of the so-called Oriental philosophy. Since G.W. F. Hegel’s famous denial of recognizing any philosophical episteme in the Orient (in his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*) (Hegel 1980:138ff.), up until the categorical condemnation of the Kyoto school philosophers to Nazi sympathetic totalitarianism by recent American theory-oriented Japanese studies (Maraldo, Arisaka, Parkes 2005), the consistency is remarkable. And this systematic will of Western self defense also finds its illustrations among such divergent thinkers as M. Heidegger (who monopolizes the Philosophical thinking as the Greek-German heritage in his *Was ist Philosophie* in 1957) and A. Danto (who manifests his unwillingness to draw any lesson from the Oriental thought and moral philosophy) (Danto 1972:x-xi).

3-3

The reverse side of the same logic stigmatized the Oriental Philosophy. Indeed, if the Oriental Philosophy can exist as something worth being recognized as such by the West, it has to verbally articulate the thinking which is supposed (by the Western logic) to refuse the verbal articulation. Verbalize what should remain by nature non-verbal. Here is the birth trauma of the Oriental Philosophy as it was anticipated by the Western dialectic. This imperative constitutes the self-treachery from which the Oriental Philosophy cannot be recognized by the West. In other words, the Oriental philosophy can exist only as a self-negation. To give logical attire to what refuses to be harnessed by the very logic itself without thereby damaging or denaturalizing it. Such was the impossible task that the Oriental philosophy had to assume.

At the same time, this logical impossibility of the Oriental Philosophy leads to another important consequence. If the Western philosophy relies upon the dialectic (*dialektikē*) and dialog (*dialogein*), the Oriental Philosophy, as it is defined according to the Western logic, does not (have the right to) enter in the process of dialectic with its Western counterpart, because the Oriental Philosophy refuses (and should refuse by definition) *logos*. How is it possible to make a dia-log with something which refuses to be attuned to *logos*. Or, to put it another way, a dialog with what is inevitably denaturalized by assuming the logical attire, cannot be anything but a falsification. Consequently, Oriental philosophy can exist in so far as it reveals its incapacity of holding a dialog with Western philosophy. And yet this incapacity of dialog also implies, quite logically, that the Oriental Philosophy is by definition useless for the Western Philosophy, for it is lacking in dialog capability. The only possibility left for Oriental philosophy would be to logically analyze in a Western style the refusal of logical thinking in the Oriental thinking. And this lack of symmetry and the refusal of reciprocal knowledge is not the default of the Oriental philosophy. Far from that, it is the logical consequence of the prerequisite which the Occident imposed upon the Orient as its only possible and logically tolerable response to the Occident.

Here, the conventional hypothesis of dialog between the West and the East is negated by the very inherent logic of the philosophy itself. For, the only possibility of the Oriental philosophy resides in its impossibility to dialoging with the Western philosophy. If such were the reason why many Western philosophers since Hegel refused to acknowledge the Orient the right to have its own philosophy, their fear should be justified. For the Oriental philosophy worthy of the name defies the Western philosophical tradition to maintain its dialogical principle itself, and menace it with self destruction. Indeed how is it possible to dialogue with what refuses to dialog? The destruction of the dialogical principle would be a logical consequence of the definition of the Oriental philosophy itself which the West has formulated and framed.

K. Löwith was deploring the lack of connecting ladder between the East and the West. However, once the connecting ladder is placed, unexpected logical chain would bring about a catastrophe. Needless to say, “the Orient” here is only an operational sign of our philosophical exercise and it may be interchangeable with other potential menaces which the West (also an operational sign) is capable of conceiving. In front of this exercise of elementary logics, we should understand better the reason why the West has to fear the redskins, the yellow peril and black power. The phantom of an Henri Massis is still surviving and hovering around. One cannot entertain philosophical dialogue so long as one is overlooking this self imposed refusal of dialog with the Orient through which the Occident has defined itself.

It is more than symptomatic that Izutsu Toshihiko 井筒俊彦(1914-93), unquestionably the best Japanese contemporary philosopher, international authority of the Islamic thought, and an exceptional philologist conversant with more than thirty languages, gave a talk on “Beyond dialog-A Zen point of view” at the occasion of the meeting in Teheran on “L’impact planétaire de la pensée occidentale rend-il possible un dialogue réel entre les civilisations” held at the Centre Iranien pour le dialogue des civilisation, on Oct. 1977 (Izutsu 1991:375-408). Whether Izutsu’s endeavor was also a prisoner of the Western logic of philosophy or he was pointing to the way to liberate it from its ontological limit of knowledge is still an open question.

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P.S. after the symposium, a critical survey is published, Suzuki Sasdami, Iwai Shigeki eds. *Wabi, Sabi Yûgen, Nihonteki narumono heno dôtei* (Wabi, Sabi, Yûgen or a way to the 'Japaneseness') (in Japanese), Tokyo: Suiseisha, 2006. Also refer to Shigemi Inaga, "Is Art History Globalizable?," in James Elkins ed. *Is Art History Global*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp.249-279, which examines the case of the discipline of art history in Japan.