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TOWARDS A MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF SCIENCE—SCIENCE DEBATES IN INTERWAR & WARTIME JAPAN, 1920-1945

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TOWARDS A MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF SCIENCE

—SCIENCE DEBATES IN INTERWAR & WARTIME JAPAN,

1920-1945

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Abstract

In the wake of imperialist wars and cultural revolutions in the late 1910s and 1920s, intellectuals and activists in Japan and China faced the immediate task of finding their positions vis-à-vis the scientific innovations originated in the West. To many, these scientific innovations and new discourses represented both opportunities to intervene dominant national political discourses, and at the same time, a trap for them to continue dealing with their troubled relationship with modernity which was deemed “Western.” In my dissertation I focus on the debates between the materialist and idealist schools on issues surrounding science in Japan, although similar debates in China will be discussed for contextualization purposes. In particular, I examine how different groups of Japanese Marxist thinkers successfully and unsuccessfully defended a materialist concept of science in direct opposition to idealist movements at the time which advocated spiritualism, aestheticism, romanticism and a return to the Japanese Spirit. This study seeks to illuminate how the evolvement of this materialist criticism reflected the need of the Japanese materialist discourse to engage with new scientific developments in Japan and to pursue more precise definitions of science.

A few key historical moments I examine include the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the change of the socio-political environment and scientific discourses in Japan thereof, the dissolution of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) followed by the establishment of the Materialism Research Association (*Yuibutsuron Kenkyūkai*) in Japan in 1932, and the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium in Japan in 1942. In these historical moments, some

Japanese intellectuals have successfully affected change in the political and ideological arenas, and undoubtedly, some have failed.

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Introduction

This dissertation is dedicated to the examination of the ways in which different groups of Japanese Marxist thinkers articulated and defended a materialist conception of science in direct opposition to idealist movements in philosophy, culture, and literature in interwar and wartime Japan. My study seeks to illuminate how the evolvement of this Marxist materialist criticism reflected the need of the Marxist discourse to engage with new scientific developments, as well as to answer to the political responsibility of refuting imperialism in Japan. This study of materialism aims to shed light on how materialism as a philosophical doctrine articulates the relationship between science and politics.

In fact, not only in Japan, intellectuals and activists in early twentieth century China were also confronted with a similar task of defining and defending their positions vis-à-vis the scientific innovations originated in the West. Hence, while attempting to articulate the relationship between science and politics, the Japanese and Chinese intellectuals also found themselves in a position where they would need to tackle the “East’s” troubled relationship with “Western modernity,” at whose ideological core were materialism, positivism, and the idealization of science. Although the majority of this dissertation will be dedicated to the study of Japanese Marxists’ theories of science, all the debates should undoubtedly be understood against the backdrop of this bigger historical picture of the “East’s” ideological struggle against “Western modernity” in the early twentieth century.

The first important historical moment for this period was the Manchurian Incident in 1931, which signaled the beginning of the Japanese imperialist and military expansion in Asia. The period of transition from just after World War I to before the Manchurian Incident was characterized by a flourishing scientific environment, supported by both private foundations and national grants, as well as the construction of new research laboratories, both private and national. It was often referred to as the first “science boom” in Japan. The second important historical moment that I want to point out as context for this dissertation is the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium which took place in 1942 shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack. This symposium highlighted the second period of Japanese imperialism, which was marked by a much more straightforward instrumentalist attitude towards science. It was within this context that the Japanese Marxists gradually moved towards a strong materialist position surrounding the issue of science.

Theoretically, this research shares the same objective with the Japanese materialist-Marxist, Tosaka Jun (1900-1945), of trying to pursue a precise definition of science. It will touch upon the three different aspects of science identified by Tosaka in his writings: the ideological, the epistemological and the productive (or material) aspects of science. In particular, analyses of the ideological and the epistemological aspects of science were used by Tosaka as an intellectual weapon against the imperialist state’s discourse of building a “scientific empire,” as well as its actual wartime policies of actively implementing scientific innovations for war efforts.

Among Tosaka’s idealist contesters were the Kyoto School philosophers, the Romantic School intellectuals, and surprisingly, intellectuals within the Marxist camp itself, most importantly Fukumoto Kazuo (1894-1983) and Kurahara Korehito (1902-1999), both of who argued for a more “idealist” stance within Marxism. The second chapter of this dissertation,

“Darwinism and Naturalism: Resituating Prewar Japanese Marxism,” is an attempt to understand and analyze this idealist versus materialist inclinations within Japanese Marxism.

Central to my research is also the “East’s” troubled relationship with modernity. This struggle against “Western” modernity led to many Japanese intellectuals’ taking up an anti-science position. The anti-science camp was comprised of philosophers, literary critics and authors from various idealist traditions, namely, the Kyoto School, the Romantic School, the Japanese Naturalists, and the New Sensationist School. They claimed that science is part of “Western” culture, which was imported into Japan from the “West,” and hence, science could and should be overcome. Notably, this claim was largely based on a definition of science as an inevitably “Western” field of study and practice, and ultimately, a cultural product.

Notably, despite disagreements within the Marxist camp, such a culturalist conception of science, followed by an absurd attempt to annihilate science as part of “Western culture,” was never a position taken up by the Japanese Marxists. In fact, the Marxist camp had always been pro-science. The mission, if I may, of the prewar Japanese Marxist camp had always been the (re)establishment of Marxism through science, be it the social sciences or a materialist conception of science. The idealism in Kurahara’s and Fukumoto’s Marxist theory was rooted, rather, in the naiveté in their understanding of the relationship between man and nature, and ultimately, their idealization of human beings as active agents in society.

In analyzing Tosaka’s refutation of both pro-science and anti-science idealisms, I hope to illustrate in this dissertation the Marxist-materialist attempt to reestablish the legitimacy of scientific knowledge. Above all, this dissertation is a study of Tosaka’s reinvention of Marxism in Japan through science, which made necessary the articulation of the man-nature relation in

Marxism, and with it, the relationship between natural and social histories, and above all, Marxism's own relationship with the natural sciences.

Many previous studies on science and technology in modern Japan have directly or indirectly demonstrated the relationship between scientific research and the Japanese empire. I hope to contribute to this area by differentiating the ways in which science and technology relate to the Japanese empire, but more importantly, by showing how certain social character of science rejects being written into the imperialist discourse. For instance, the distribution of scientific knowledge as a way to "enlighten" the working masses not only refused being written into the imperialist discourse in Japan, but also became for Tosaka and other materialist thinkers almost the only hope to fight imperialism after the crackdown on anti-governmental organizations in the late 20s and early 30s.

Hence, at its broadest, the implications of my project consist in the tackling of the contemporary myth that class struggle is no longer an applicable form of political struggle in advanced Capitalist societies. Through studying the trajectory of Marxism in prewar and wartime Japan, I intend to demonstrate the necessary quest for a logically and historically accurate definition of the connections between class struggle and scientific developments. It points to a new direction of class struggle in societies today where exploitation has become much less visible. I believe this is the only way to realize class struggle in advanced Capitalism, namely, by firstly specifying the ways in which science and technology have both altered the forms of exploitation and revolutionized means of political struggle against dominant individuals and parties in our society. To put it simply, the new basis of class struggle, as it was pointed out by Tosaka Jun in *Nihon ideorogiron* and his other writings, is first and foremost the masses' acquisition of scientific knowledge and truths.

By framing my project in a way that opposes materialisms to idealisms, I emphasize Japanese Marxists' attempts to conceive of a materialist theory of science in opposition to the many idealist conceptions of science. By virtue of this distinction between materialism and idealism, my approach to the debates on science in modern Japan is a fundamentally philosophical one, as it emphasizes that this philosophical partisanship gives rise to opposing understandings of the results and objects of scientific research. This is in line with the positions taken by the subjects of my study. The reason for such a strong philosophical position was inseparable from intellectual radicalization in the 1920s and 1930s in Japan (and China), as the driving force of the radicalization process was precisely a growing sense of philosophical awareness among the Japanese (and Chinese) intellectuals. It was a time when people believed that ideas could save a people or a nation. Moreover, by putting the Marxist discourses on science on the same level as other scientific discourses, I also intend to show that the results and objects of scientific research are and should be an object of philosophical debates, and not merely topics to be discussed within scientific communities.

Through reconfirming the centrality of the debates on science in both the intellectual and the political arenas, I intend to rethink through Japanese materialist-Marxism the connections between science and social critique, or even, a revolutionary doctrine. Hence, the first chapter of my dissertation will be dedicated to the examination of the connections between science and revolution. The second chapter examines the idealist stance within the Japanese Marxist camp and its rootedness in a naiveté toward the natural sciences. The last two chapters of my dissertation is an attempt to outline Tosaka's criticism of different idealist traditions both within and outside of the Japanese Marxist camp, and more importantly, his materialist conception of

science. Eventually, I hope, this materialist conception of science conceived of by Tosaka points to new possibilities of non-partisan class struggle.

Chapter I: Science and Revolution

i. Introduction

In the wake of imperialist wars and cultural revolutions in the late 1910s and 1920s, intellectuals and activists in Japan and China faced the immediate task of finding their positions vis-à-vis the scientific innovations that originated in the West.¹ In this chapter, I will examine how Japanese and Chinese intellectuals and activists' different responses to the question of science and technology played into the power struggle between the "East" and the "West" in Japan and China respectively. Importantly, the self-conscious declaration of a materialist stance against an idealist one, or vice versa, formed an integral part of these responses. Moreover, these ideological and philosophical debates surrounding science and technology were all meant to be prescriptive not only with respect to how scientific research should be carried out, but also to immediate political matters. By analyzing the connections between science and revolution in Japan and China, I hope to shed light on the political character, or the "politicality," of science.

The question of whether and how to modernize was never merely a question of science and technology for the two "non-Western" countries: *science and revolution* always came together. It is both a historical fact and a reference to the political character of science. Science

¹ A version of this chapter was presented for the *Global History Collaborative* at The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan in July 2016.

² On the role of intellectuals in society in general and in interwar and wartime Japan in particular, read Christopher S. Goto-Jones' account of the *Kyoto School* in his book, *Political Philosophy in Japan: Nishida, the Kyoto School, and Co-Prosperity* (London & New York: Routledge), 11-15.

³ While some intellectuals stood up against the suppression of the imperialist state (and other imperialist powers, as in the case of China), some undoubtedly succumbed to its power. Tatsuo Arima accounted for the submission of the Kyoto School intellectuals to the state and its imperialist efforts and ideologies in his book, *The Failure of Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969). In his analysis, Arima defended the *Kyoto School* intellectuals as a rebellious force against the Japanese imperialist state.

has never been neutral. Science was (and still is) a field intricately bound to politics in Japan and China in that it had complex implications in national movements, cultural discourses, and socio-political events. This chapter is part of an attempt to understand the so-called “East’s adoption of western science” without assuming that it is a mere process of imitation. It will focus on the general scheme of the power struggle between the “East” and the “West,” how the “adoption of western science” played a part in that struggle, and through that, the analysis of the political character of science.

Scholars of modern Japan and modern China have spoken little about scientific positivism or scientism in this period. The topic of competitive westernization seems to have taken over in the discussion of science, modern technology, progress and industrialization, in the studies of science in the “non-West.” For whatever reason, the “latecomers to modernity” are not scrutinized in the same way as the recognized modern imperial powers for perils in the ideas and theories they produced vis-à-vis the so-called “adoption of modern science.” While it is true that certain form of idealization of science does not necessarily fall into the category of positivism, especially when the intention of the idolizer is not of science but of politics, the idealization of science in modern Japan and China should not be dismissed so quickly of its theoretical meanings. On the contrary, I argue that the studies of science and technology debates in Japan and China offer great insight into the problem of scientific positivism.

The subjects of my study—intellectuals in Japan and China in the early twentieth century, were aware of their double roles in the society:² as political actors, whatever they proposed in the debates of science carried immediate political meanings; yet, as producers of ideas, intellectuals

² On the role of intellectuals in society in general and in interwar and wartime Japan in particular, read Christopher S. Goto-Jones’ account of the *Kyoto School* in his book, *Political Philosophy in Japan: Nishida, the Kyoto School, and Co-Prosperity* (London & New York: Routledge), 11-15.

realized themselves by reaching conceptual clarity or by building a system of ideas, which may or may not be applied directly to the political status quo. The fact that intellectuals played an important and yet ambivalent role in politics in Japan and China in the studied era leads to the necessary adoption of the sociological approach, which is the approach that this study will undertake. That means the object of my study will not be limited to the circulating ideas, but also the occupation of these intellectuals, in other words, the social environment in which these ideas were produced. The underlying question is whether these so-called intellectuals, or producers of ideas, could affect change under their very specific socio-political circumstances, and if yes, how.

The early twentieth century was a difficult time for intellectuals in both Japan and China for different reasons. They had to fight imperialism, but from opposite sides. The Chinese intellectuals were fighting imperialist powers from outside of China; whereas the Japanese intellectuals' struggle against imperialism was more of a domestic battle against the imperialist state. Many ideas and their producers were being prosecuted by the powers they tried to subvert in both countries. Interestingly, it was in this time, which was when the lives of the subverting were at stake, their ideas seemed to manifest the utmost power and clarity against the subverted.³

³ While some intellectuals stood up against the suppression of the imperialist state (and other imperialist powers, as in the case of China), some undoubtedly succumbed to its power. Tatsuo Arima accounted for the submission of the Kyoto School intellectuals to the state and its imperialist efforts and ideologies in his book, *The Failure of Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969). In his analysis, Arima defended the *Kyoto School* intellectuals as a rebellious force against the Japanese imperialist state. I argue against this position in my dissertation. In his book, *Political Philosophy in Japan*, Goto-Jones points out that the Japanese intellectuals "have little influence over the most powerful forces of social control, such as the police or military" (22). While that is a truthful description of the political environment in which the Japanese intellectuals wrote their works, it should be not the only criterion against which one evaluates the influence of these works, nor should it be a reason that sufficiently explains the intellectuals' acquiescence in state's war efforts. I will return to this discussion of the political powerlessness of the intellectuals later in the chapter.

The philosophical opposition, idealism versus materialism, was an important conceptual tool that the intellectuals used to understand the various systems of thought, the -isms, that they tried to translate from the West to their own culturo-political contexts. Politically, it was a criterion according to which enemies can be recognized, alliances established. Epistemologically, the opposition was a powerful tool to organize debates, because it informed and thereby clarified the implications of differences in the positions vis-à-vis the discussed issues. There was a process of intellectual radicalization in the 1920s and 1930s in both Japan and China,⁴ which I argue was inseparable from their growing philosophical awareness.

Notably, this chapter, as well as this dissertation as a whole, is not a comparative study. The analysis of both China and Japan in the first chapter is part of my attempt to offer a more comprehensive picture of the science and technology debates in the context of Asian modernization and social movements. The general focus of this dissertation is in Japan. But the interest of the Japanese intellectuals, such as Miki Kiyoshi, Kada Tetsuji, and Rouyama Masamichi in the theory of “East Asian Cooperative Community” (*Toua Kyōdōtai*), and the proposal of “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (*Daitoua Kyōeiken*) by the Japanese government during wartime, suggested that in order to understand the political and philosophical partisanship in Japan at the time, one needs to look at the network of nations in East Asia, aside from Japan’s relationship with the West.

Another reason for examining the relevant science and technology debates in China in the same period is to seek to understand how the contestations between different conceptions of science, in particular the contestations between the idealist and the materialist conceptions of science, which gave birth to different policies with respect to scientific practices, related to the

⁴ Grieder, Jerome, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1981), 281. Goto-Jones, *Political Philosophy in Japan*, 13-14.

intellectual defiance against or acquiesce to the imperialist powers. Importantly, by no means do I imply that the prevalence of the materialist stance or the idealist stance was *directly* responsible for the outcome of war or peace, imperialism or anti-imperialism. There were indeed many factors that led to the outbreak of war, the rise of imperialism, the success or demise of a party. To take into account all those factors and to investigate the causation in historical events is not the purpose of this dissertation. In this dissertation, I will focus on examining the various ideas that acted as a substantial political force in the studied period.

i. The “East’s” Troubled Relationship with Modernity

1920s saw the first “science boom” in Japan brought about by WWI.⁵ Historians have produced theories about the direct connections between Japan’s participation in WWI and the “science boom” in the 1920s. The least that can be concluded from previous scholarship on science and technology developments in this period is that the Japanese state, having survived WWI and consolidated as a nation state, saw the need to further strengthen its power through science and technology. Specifically it was done through the establishment of new research institutes, laboratories, private and public grants, the addition of new facilities to the university, and the initiation of the first major science education reform.⁶ This urge to secure the nation with the help of science and technology was felt by many scholars, researchers and scientists at the time. For example, Sano Riki, professor of architecture at Tokyo Imperial University, among

⁵ Mizuno, Hiromi, “The Science Room as an Archive: Taisho Japan and WWI,” in *The Decade of the Great War: Japan and the Wider World in the 1910s*, ed. Tosh Minohara, Tze-ki Hon, Evan Dawley (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014). Also see James Bartholomew, *Formation of Japanese Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁶ For more on the New Science Education Movement, please read Hiromi Mizuno, “The Science Room as an Archive: Taisho Japan and WWI,” in *The Decade of the Great War*.

others famously claimed that “the only thing that could secure the future of the nation” was science.

In many ways, science and technology became the most important weapon with which the East could defend itself against the invasion of the West. But the concept of science caused uneasiness among the Japanese intellectuals because of its close affinity with modernity and modernization. Beginning in the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japan embarked on a journey of rapid modernization in the hope to guard itself against the threat of Western imperialism, only to find itself falling irrevocably into it.

Toward the end of the Meiji period, critical voices of modernity began to arise for various reasons. For one, into the 1910s and more so in the 1920s, reflections on the cultural and social changes brought about by modernity caused the critics to plunge into fear of the demise of Japanese culture. Tanizaki Junichrō’s novel,⁷ *Naomi (Chijin no Ai)*, serialized subsequently in *Osaka’s Morning News* and the periodical *Female (Josei)* in 1924, depicted perfectly the anxiety and anguish of an ordinary Japanese toward the clash of Western and traditional Japanese cultures, and the probable disappearance of the latter. For another, Japan’s competition with Western imperialist powers in Asia raised cautiousness in Japan toward its “over-westernization.” All the vices of western civilization were assembled and packed into the concept of modernity. So, it needed to be overcome. But if modernity needed to be overcome, what about science? If science were to be overcome as well, not to question if that was possible or not, with what Japanese people could arm their nation against the West? This was the

⁷ Tanizaki Junichrō (1886-1965) is one of the most influential modernists in modern Japanese literature. In his work, he often juxtaposed “Western influence” and traditional Japanese culture, and expressed anxiety toward the loss of Japanese culture due to the dominance of Western culture and values.

dilemma the Japanese intellectuals and scientists were caught up in in the 1920s all the way to the end of the WWII in 1945.

Similar crises took place in a parallel context in the early twentieth century China, parallel in the sense that China also had to deal with the threat of Western imperialism, but unlike Japan by the twentieth century imperialist powers already settled within China. The 1911 Revolution, which brought about the downfall of the Qing monarchy, marked the beginning of modern China. The New Culture Movement, beginning roughly in 1915 ending in 1927, was a manifestation of the Chinese intellectuals' fear of the West and their desire to rescue their nation by replacing the crumbling culture of the past with a new culture inspired by Western science (“*saixiansheng*,” literally “Mr Science”) and democratic ideals (“*dexiansheng*,” literally “Mr Democracy”).⁸

There were of course debates among New Culture intellectuals with respect to their conceptions of science, democracy, and the relationship between science and politics, etc., but they all agreed that China needed to “catch up” with the West in terms of science, politics and culture. Notably, the majority of these intellectuals shared the background of a Japanese and/or Western education, which explained the urgency they felt to “enlighten” their fellow countrymen with their newly acquired knowledge from more “advanced civilizations.” However, in the 1920s, voices attacking the total westernization and modernization agenda of the New Culture Movement began to increase. In 1923, voices representative of the traditional Chinese values came into an official conflict with the voices of New Culture, resulting in the famous “Science and the Philosophy of Life” (“*Kexue yu renshengguan*”) debate among Zhang Junli, Liang Qichao, Hu Shi, Ding Wenjiang, and Wu Zhihui.

⁸ Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 204-207.

The debate more than anything highlighted the troubled relationship Chinese intellectuals had with Western modernity after almost a decade of “Western learning” (“*xixue*”), specifically, with a materialist culture built upon scientific ideas and rationality (*lixing*) tied to a scientific understanding of the world. It was almost as if the Chinese intellectuals would have to choose an aspect or coherent aspects through which they evaluate all that which was “Western.” I will return to this debate later in the chapter.

Despite the apparently different relations China and Japan had with Western imperialism (one had survived it by becoming the imperialist power in Asia, one had not survived it), intellectuals in the two nations shared a similar trajectory in actively engaging, copying, learning from the so-called “Western modernity” in an attempt to both reform the socio-political life within the nation, as well as to fight the enemies without. It can be argued that scientific knowledge, ideologies and methodology were utilized by the intellectuals as a new language, a new paradigm for proposing radical socio-political reforms; whereas science in the sense of building laboratories, research institutes, and factories, training scientists, and doing experiments, etc., was encouraged by political leaders and some intellectuals as a means to strengthen the military power of the nation. In all these proposals for and against science, one can already see that science does not carry a singular meaning, but multiple meanings which were attached to different political agendas.

In the “*Kexue yu reshengguan*” debate, for example, Zhang Junli listed in his essay “*Renshengguan*” (“The Philosophy of Life”), the five points that differ science, or a scientific understanding of the world, from a view of life, the five points being: objectivity or universality (*keguan*), methods of reasoning (induction and deduction), the emphasis on analysis (*fenxi*), the search for causal relationship (*yinguolü*), and the “uniformity of the course of Nature” (*ziranjie*

bianhua xianxiang zhi tongyi).⁹ The most important of all for the New Culture intellectual was the first quality he attributed to science, namely, objectivity or universality. In fact, the other four qualities more or less reiterated the first quality from different perspectives. The objectivity of science, as Zhang explained, was manifested in the fact that “be it classical physics which originated in England, or the theory of relativity which originated in Germany, they were applicable universally. And there is only one and the same mathematics in this world, be it Chinese mathematics, or British mathematics.”¹⁰

What Zhang pointed to here is the undeniable universal character of science—the *scientificity* of science as a field where knowledge of the world is organized. And the very scientificity of science derives from the above listed principles (objectivity, methods of reasoning, analysis, etc.) employed in the process of producing scientific knowledge. To Zhang, scientificity, which gives science its universal character, as opposed to science in the sense of laboratory work and weapon development, was at the central kernel of what he meant by “science.”

However, later in his article, Zhang used a different meaning of “science” in order to prove his point that while China should push for development of science within the nation, it needed more urgently a new unifying culture that was neither completely western nor traditionally Chinese. According to Zhang, the crux of the crisis in China at the time lay not in laboratories, factories or scientific progress, but in finding a “proper philosophy of life” (*zhengdang zhi renshengguan*) for the public.

⁹ Zhang, Junli, “Renshengguan” (“The Philosophy of Life”), in *Kexue Yu Renshengguan (Science and the Philosophy of Life)* (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 2008), 33-36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

In this argument, one can recognize a change in the meaning of “science” or “kexue.” The multiplicity of its meanings allowed the New Culture intellectual to argue for the disjunction between the popularization of science and the popularization of the “scientific spirit.” In other words, at the epistemological level, Zhang promoted scientific thinking to the masses; however, at the ideological level, Zhang demanded that China remain independent from the influence of Western culture, and therefore, from “scientific spirit.”¹¹

Again, this speaks to the troubled relationship the Chinese intellectuals had with science which was deemed “Western” and an essential component of modernity. There was an underlying intention in many New Culture intellectuals, despite their promotion of science, to reject the influence of “Western science” on the superstructure of the Chinese society. By 1923, when the “Science and the Philosophy of Life” debate took place, the influence of Western culture had become gradually visible in the Chinese society, the danger of losing traditional Chinese culture a real threat. If the New Culture Movement was triggered by the issue of cultural identity, by 1923, almost ten years after its initiation, it ran into an impasse for the very same reason.

Especially after Liang Qichao’s post-WWI visit to Europe (1919-1922), the criticism of Western culture, in particular toward its materialism and positivism, was fueled by the disillusion of science and modern technology by Europeans themselves.¹² The implication of Zhang and Liang’s proposals under the name of “a philosophy of life based on traditional Chinese values” was nothing but the promotion of science merely limited to the infrastructure of society, a science completely decontextualized from Western culture and discourses.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

¹² Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 256-257.

The proposal seemed feasible except that it eliminated the aspects of science which are not material. It refused to deal with, for instance, the ideological aspect of science, where science is not only objective but also political. To Zhang and Liang, the question of ideologies belonged to “the philosophy of life,” and hence, should be discussed within contestations of traditional Chinese values.

In Japan, the troubled relationship with modernity was manifested in a symposium called “Overcoming Modernity” (1942) which was held shortly after the Japanese military’s attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. A small group of Japanese intellectuals, the majority of whom belonged to the Kyoto School (*Kyotogakuha*) and the Japanese Romantic School (*Nihonromanha*), gathered together to discuss how to “overcome modernity.” An obscure slogan it may sound to today’s audience, in 1942, in the midst of WWII, it meant something very specific: the defeat of the West.¹³ Even more specifically, it meant not only the defeat of Western imperialist powers in the War, but also the purging of Western influence in Japanese culture. Hence, the general focuses of the symposium were on the return to the “Japanese Spirit” (*nihon seishin*), classical Japanese poetry, and traditional Japanese aesthetics on the one hand, and a critique of reason and objectivity on the other. Because reason and objectivity were deemed as the spirit of the Enlightenment, which was the beginning of Western modernity. The Japanese intellectuals, despite their disagreement on the remedy to the spiritual crisis of the Japanese people, all agreed on the existence of the crisis and that it was rooted in Japan’s import of the West’s dying culture.

¹³ For instance, Richard Calichman states in his book on the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium that “the modernity to be overcome was associated with the West itself, such that overcoming modernity and overcoming the West were seen as essentially the same thing.” Calichman, *Overcoming Modernity: Cultural Identity in Wartime Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), IX.

One can say that the symposium was an occasion for culturalists to announce their different diagnoses of the sick “Japanese Spirit.” It was indeed part of their endeavor to assist their nation in winning the Asiatic-Pacific wars. In fact, the thirteen participants did not shy away from stating their support of Japan’s war efforts. For example, Kamei Katsuichirō (1907-1966), a leading figure of the Romantic School and an ex-communist, commented on the Pearl Harbor attack and praised the soldiers died in the attack as war heroes.¹⁴ Examples like this prevailed in the symposium.

The overarching culturalist, nationalist tone of the symposium bespoke more than the participants’ ambition of a grand cultural enterprise based on the “Japanese Spirit,” but more importantly, their intentional avoidance of the problem of science. As Mizuno points out in her book, *Science for the Empire*, although science was the topic that troubled them most as far as modernity was concerned, “when it came to science, however, evasion and silence prevailed.”¹⁵ In a sense, the culturalist agenda of the “Overcoming Modernity” intellectuals was an extensive cover-up of the real problem the Japanese had with modernity: “Western science.” While the right-wing intellectuals knew very well that science cannot be overcome, practically or theoretically, they turned to Japanese culture for its unifying, purifying function. The only things they could hold on to that were “uniquely Japanese” were things belonging singularly to Japanese culture: Japanese literature, aesthetics and the Japanese language.

At the end of the day, the proposal of the “Overcoming Modernity” intellectuals within Japan with respect to science was not so different from that of their Chinese counterparts who promoted Chinese traditional values when it came to finding a “philosophy of life,” namely, the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵ Mizuno, Hiromi, *Science for the Empire: Scientific Nationalism in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 1-2.

instrumentation of science in the “material” or practical sense of the term, plus a total rejection of science in all its other aspects. One can argue that the rejection of science was even extensive in the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium in that even the epistemological aspect of science was evaded. The Japanese intellectuals’ proposal of a new renaissance based on the resurrection of the “Japanese Spirit” was meant to be a cultural project that swept across epistemology, ideology, aesthetics, and ontology. But at the same time, ironically, they openly supported Japan’s war efforts, to which the instrumentation of science was integral.

Notably, this culturalist trend was not only prominent in the 1940s when Japan was deep into the Pacific War, but it was present from the 1920s, when Japan had its first science boom after WWI. It was indeed a very peculiar phenomenon worth looking into, because, on the one hand, laboratories, research institutes, grants were blooming in Japan, on the other hand, there was a general ambivalence or even silence toward science and technology as a topic to be discussed, apart from among the Marxists and Marxian theorists, and among the technocrats and scientists whose work directly engaged science and technology. Even among the Marxists, who were mostly active in the 1920s, the discussion revolved around proletarian literature and a cultural movement.

By 1942, when the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium took place, the culturalist voices completely took over the Japanese socio-political arena. The only rational voices that still remained to carry on the discussion of science and technology came from the materialist Marxian theorist, Tosaka Jun (1900-1945), and his group, Materialism Research Association’s (*Yuibutsuron Kenkyūkai*, or *Yuiken* for short, 1932-1938). In this sense, Tosaka and the Yuiken participants were the only people who *actually* dealt with the problem of modernity, for they tackled the kernel of modernity, which is the problem of science being “Western.” It is perhaps

not surprising that when the Japanese army invaded Manchuria in 1931, the JCP was one of very few groups who publicly condemned the “Manchuria Incident”; and Yuiken, its “Marxian decedent,”¹⁶ one of even fewer groups who criticized Japanism (*Nippon shugi*) and implicitly the imperialist wars.

Although the New Culture Movement was essentially also a cultural movement, its case was slightly different from the culturalist movements or schools in Japan when it came to science, in that the universality of science was crucial in the Chinese intellectuals’ imagination of a new culture. The Chinese intellectuals were attracted to science by its claim of universality. Scientific knowledge in the New Culture era was far from being neutral, but the bearer of the promises of a new culture, or even a new political order. When the May Fourth Movement erupted in 1919, the New Culture intellectuals began to go through a process of radicalization, and the relationship between science and politics became even closer.

Both historical moments—the “Science and the Philosophy of Life” debate and the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium, as well as the bigger movements of which these moments were a part, reflected an intricate connection between science and patriotic/nationalist activities in the context of Asian modernization. In order to examine this connection, one would first need to examine the more fundamental question of the politicality of science. In what sense is science

¹⁶ The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) dissolved around 1932-1933, as the majority of its members were arrested under the Peace Preservation Law (*Chi'an Ijihō*). The law was enacted as early as 1925, and revised in 1928. It stipulated that, “organizations or individuals who knew of and wanted to join the organizations that have in their objective to overturn the existing national polity or to repudiate private property will be subject to imprisonment of no more than eighty years.” The situation radicalized after the Konoe cabinet ordered the “National Spiritual Mobilization Movement” (*Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin Undo*) in 1937, which put civilian organizations, including labor unions, under the joint supervision of Ryokitsu Arima, who is the head of the movement, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and Ministry of Education. Finally in 1938, with the promulgation of the “National Mobilization Law” (*Kokka Sōdōinhō*), it gave the imperial government the right to mobilize natural resources, labor, and industries, and to control the media.

political? Is the politicality of science expressed in the interrelations between science and politics as two separate fields, and hence outside of the field of science? So, it comes down to the instrumentalization of scientific discourse, knowledge and ideologies by politics. Or, is politics unavoidable also within the field of science?

ii. The Politicality of Science

To set boundary to the field of science, a theorist of science needs to determine, first and foremost, whether he or she mainly speaks of how scientific research improves productivity of steel in the factories, or how ideologies emerged alongside scientific discoveries affect cultural activities and social organizations, etc. The former and the latter pertain to very different aspects of science. The very definition of science as a field was the primary question that a lot of the above mentioned Japanese and Chinese intellectuals struggled with. In Japan, the Yuiken intellectuals were among the very few who attempted to define science in a comprehensive manner in Japan at the time.

Yuiken was preceded by another group of Marxist scientists, Proletarian Science Research Association (*Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūjo*, short for Puroka, 1929-1933) led by Miki Kiyoshi. The group was mostly comprised of social scientists.¹⁷ Puroka functioned as a local academic organization associated with the Japanese Communist Party, and part of the JCP's plan to form a united front. JCP's "1927 Theses" rebuked Fukumoto Kazuo's advocacy of a party made up solely of professional revolutionaries.¹⁸ Unlike Puroka, Yuiken mostly consisted of

¹⁷ Iwakura, Hiroshi, *Aru senki shita no teikō (Resistance in a Time of War)* (Tokyo, Kadensha, 2015), 77.

¹⁸ Beginning from the "1927 Theses" Fukumoto, once the leading ideologue of the JCP, gradually lost his power in the party. For a more detailed history of the power struggle and change of trajectory of the JCP

philosophers and natural scientists, centered in Tosaka Jun and Oka Kunio. It had a total of 116 members. Also unlike Puroka and the JCP, Yuiken was *not* openly anti-war and anti-fascist, but focusing rather on the scholarly issues surrounding materialism, in particular a materialist understanding of science and technology.

In this context, Tosaka published his two key books on materialism and science: *Kagakuron* (1935) and *Nihon ideorogiron* (1935). In *Kagakuron*, and in parts of *Nihon ideorogiron*, Tosaka dealt with three different aspects of science that he identified: the epistemological, the ideological, and finally, the material or productive.¹⁹ Together the three aspects paint a comprehensive picture of a materialist understanding of science. According to Tosaka's conception of science, a materialist understanding of science ensures that science, far from being independent of politics, is intricately bound by politics. The three aspects relate to three ways in which science can be referred to as being "political."

Notably, the material or productive aspect of science is only at the periphery of this dissertation, despite its importance, as it is the least discussed aspect of science in Tosaka's writings. On the one hand, one can argue that this is a critical limitation of Tosaka's materialist theory of science. On the other, the material or productive aspect of science was also the most discussed and regarded to when it came to the "scientific empire of Japan," Tosaka's decision to focus on the epistemological and ideological aspects of science can also be understood as strategic refutation of a simplistic notion of science as it was utilized by the empire. Arguably, it

from the "1929 Theses" to the "1932 Theses," in particular the disagreement between *Rōnōha* and *Kōzaha*, please read Itō, Makoto, *Value and Crisis: Essays on Marxian Economics in Japan* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 22-26. Also read Rees, Tim, Andrew Thorpe, *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 294-300.

¹⁹ For an in-depth analysis of the epistemological aspect of science, please read Chapter III and IV, the ideological aspect of science, Chapter I and II.

was also inseparable of Tosaka's position as a materialist philosopher, and what he understood to be materialism at its core.

The question underlying much of Tosaka's work, as well as this dissertation, is why Tosaka chose *not* to tackle the issue of science and modernity as a philosopher or historian of science, or an anthropologist who endeavors to extend the anthropological approach to all objects of scientific research, human and nonhuman. But rather, Tosaka chose a politico-philosophical stance—one of which the decisive criterion is the political, and furthermore, a partisanship—materialism in opposition to idealism, in the debates on science and technology. This decision of Tosaka also highlighted the strong philosophical partisanship, i.e. division between the materialist and the idealist camps during the interwar and wartime era.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that: Tosaka's materialist theory of science presupposes, first of all, the unavoidability of politics in the field that is called "science," and second of all, the systematic correspondence between scientific knowledge and reality (*jitsuzai*). The theoretical crux of this dissertation lies in the understanding of the relationship between the first and second propositions of Tosaka's materialist theory of science. The first proposition ensures that all questions of science have political repercussions, and hence should be rendered questions of politics.

It goes one step further than the sociology of scientific knowledge developed at the University of Edinburgh, and by historians of science such as Thomas Kuhn, Harry Collins, Bruno Latour, etc., in treating politics, more specifically, a politics that is partisan and materialist in nature, not merely as social context to which one recourses retrospectively for understanding scientific revolutions but as doctrines prescriptive of developments and new practices in the field of science. This part of the thesis speaks directly to the productive and ideological aspects of

science that Tosaka points out, which are aspects that most Marxists choose to elaborate on. This is not a tautology. By recognizing the existence of the productive and ideological aspects of science, one recognizes that science not only deals with established facts and activities in the laboratory that establish those facts, but also with modes of production, forces of production, and sets of ideas that influence social norms, all of which are of political significance in a society.

Instead of calling it the “politicality of science,” Tosaka, influenced by Marx, referred to the unavoidability of politics in science the “classed nature of science” (*kagaku no kaikyūsei*), implying that the politics in science was necessarily class politics. Indeed, Tosaka discussed no other politics than class politics in his work, which revealed his rootedness in Marxist Philosophy.

When one speaks of the practical activities (*jissen katsudō*) of a social being (*shakaijin*), one speaks of how his social class determined the difference in his consciousness from someone of a different social class. This is where the so-called “classed nature of science” (*kagaku no kaikyūsei*) took place. “The classed nature of science” under different circumstances can lead to both an increase in the scientificity (*kagakusei*) [of science], as well as damage. That is to say, it can cause distortions in important aspects of scientificity.²⁰

Here, we can see that Tosaka recognized the ambivalent, if not completely conflictual, relationship between the politicality (or the “classed nature”) and the scientificity of science. That being said, Tosaka also insisted that class politics does not only affect scientific results on a superficial level, but also fundamentally influence its methodology.²¹ Hence, Tosaka argued that scientists simply cannot defy the dominance of class politics in the field of science, no matter

²⁰ Tosaka, Jun, *Kagakuron* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1973), 68-69.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

how much they are “levelheaded or love truths.” This is another way of saying politicality permeated into the kernel of science, into what makes science scientific—methodology, and thus, is unavoidable, regardless of the will of the scientists.

Unavoidable, however, is not to say necessary. Tosaka went on to admit that the ideal situation for the production of scientific knowledge is without the influence of any “philosophy of life” or “philosophical point of view” (*tetsugaku teki sekaikan*).

Especially, one will ask what is the difference between bourgeois natural sciences and Marxist natural sciences? If there is such a thing as the ideal (*risō teki*) natural sciences, it has to be the only natural sciences that exist. From the perspective of “pure science” (*jyunsui na kagaku*), it would be meaningless to speak of things such as class antagonism (*kaikyū tairitsu*). When one speaks of the social sciences, it is the same. The ideal (*risō teki*), pure (*jyunsui na*) economics would be the only economics. However, it is a fact that that the natural sciences are not ideal, nor pure. And this fact is a fact that won’t be able to change, practically or theoretically. In fact, the so-called “pure natural sciences” in the sense of natural sciences completely independent of any philosophical point of view (*tetsugaku teki sekaikan*) cannot be the ideal (*risō teki*) situation for the natural sciences. If it is the ideal (*risō teki*) situation, it cannot be the real natural sciences which possess such purity (*jyunsuisa*).²²

In other words, according to Tosaka, it is simply *impossible* for the natural sciences and the social sciences to be “pure” or “ideal” in the sense of being completely free of class ideologies in

²² *Ibid.*, 70.

their methodology. The so-called “pure science” or “neutral science” is only in the imagination of the scientist.

Tosaka calls this unavoidable politicality of science the “classed nature” (*kaikyūsei*) or the “ideological nature” (*ideorogīsei*) of science.²³ The way Tosaka uses “ideology” here is not the same as he speaks of the “ideological aspect” of science, which implies “ideology” in the broad sense of the term, but “ideology” as it is strictly defined by Marx: “the ideas of the ruling class.”²⁴ Anachronistic might this statement sound, Tosaka goes one step further than the sociology of scientific knowledge in studying not merely the social conditions of the production of scientific knowledge. He points out that the ruling ideas of the epoch directly affect the scientific methodology of the epoch as well as the object of scientific research.

Unfortunately, such an in-depth analysis of the connections between science and politics did not happen in the New Culture intellectuals’ promotion of science. The New Culture intellectuals seemed to be caught between the seeming antagonism between science, which threatens to overtake the philosophy of life (*kexue baoban renshengguan*), and a return to metaphysics (*xuanxue*).²⁵ Hypothetically, if one were able to forge a conversation between Tosaka and the New Culture intellectuals, Tosaka would perhaps offer a third option to the

²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁴ Marx defined “ideology” in *The German Ideology*: “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas... The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production.”

²⁵ Hu Shi was one of the leading figures of the New Culture Movement and belonged to the pro-science camp in the “Science and the Philosophy of Life” debate. In the preface he wrote for the compilation of the debate in 1924, he proposed the term “a scientific philosophy of life” or “a scientific view of life” (*kexue de renshengguan*), which he claimed was a topic completely evaded in the debate, but instead the focus of the debate was on the antithesis between “kexue” and “renshengguan.” Hu, Shi, “Xu er” (“Preface II”), in *Kexue Yu Renshengguan (Science and the Philosophy of Life)*, 17.

argument between the “science” camp and “philosophy of life” camps: while the scientists cannot suspend the inevitable impact of ideologies and other social conditions upon science, it also does not mean a return to metaphysics.

The establishment of scientific knowledge still presupposes that there is a match between the object of scientific study and the produced knowledge thereof. This match is the basis of the field of science, the foundation of scientificity. Politics, including class politics, ideologies, and imperialism, however permeates the process through which the match is established. As far as scientific knowledge is concerned, Tosaka seemed to suggest an infinite contestation between the two qualities of science: politicality and scientificity.

Tosaka also proposed the concept of “a scientific understanding of the world” or “a scientific worldview” (*kagaku teki sekaikan*) which does not and should not exclude politics. The concept is comparable to what Hu Shi put forth as “a scientific view of life” (*kexue de renshengguan*), both of which implied a materialist understanding of science where science is not limited to the acquirement of established knowledge but extends to a politico-philosophical perception of the world.

Needless to say, the so-called “[scientific] worldview” (*sekaikan*) is nothing but a most universal (*ippan teki*), most unified (*tōitsu teki*) “scientific image of the world” (*kagaku teki sekaizō*, it refers to the German word “Weltbild”).

“Worldview” (*sekaikan*) is a direct view (*chokkan*) of the world. This is not a simple translation of the word. It is a way of stating the fundamental relation the word “worldview” refers to: “worldview” is a direct (*chokusetsu teki*), immediate (*mubaikai teki*), unconstructed (*mukōsei teki*) representation (*mosha*) of the reality of the world (*sekai jitsuzai*). Science is the final results

of all the processes [of representation] through scientific means and ideologies.

In this way, a unified scientific image of the world, a scientific worldview, a direct view of the world, in other words, a unified representation or reflection of the world is achieved.²⁶

This passage shows that Tosaka not only equated “a scientific image of the world” to “a scientific worldview” and “a unified representation of the world”—all these different wordings did not seem to indicate any real differences in their meanings, but he also saw the necessary use of scientific knowledge in the construction of ideas, thoughts, values, and ideologies of the public. This is what differentiates Tosaka from a simple science advocate: more than advocating science itself, Tosaka promoted a materialist conception of the world through science, the ultimate disillusion of all superstitions, religion, spiritualism and above all, the emperor’s political-spiritual brainwashing.

Now if one returns to the topic of science and patriotism, it is a complex issue impossible to tackle in just a few sentences or paragraphs. To the least, it is clear that in the cases of Japan and China, the historical condition of imperialist threats partly caused the close link between science, or “a scientific worldview,” and patriotism. If the productive aspect of science empowers the nation, “a scientific worldview” which is linked to the epistemological aspect of science, empowers the public. The New Culture Movement sprung from the idea that the liberation of China from imperialist threat was inseparable from a public armed with scientific knowledge. The 1930s of Japan was almost contrary to the New Culture era. The 1930s represented the last chance with which materialist thinkers could reverse the course of Japanese

²⁶ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 73-74.

imperialism by, now the interesting part, exactly the same means—empowering the public with scientific knowledge. Science in the eyes of Tosaka and the other Yuiken participants was anti-imperialist and anti-nationalist.

Tosaka's analysis of the politicality or what he called the "classed nature of science" showed that aside from the historical condition of imperialism, science in and of itself is intrinsically political. Science both manifests and is conditioned by politics. This intrinsically political nature of science also seems to imply a link between science and patriotism or nationalism. This would lead to two difficult questions, which I would only be able to post but not answer here. The first question pertains to the intricate connections between class politics and patriotism/nationalism in both Japan and China in the early twentieth century. Did class struggle take advantage of patriotism (in China) or anti-nationalism (in Japan), or was it the other way around?

The second question is: are patriotism and nationalism comparable? If so, what roles could science play with respect to the interests of the nation, and how do these roles relate to each other? Answers to the second question would be essential for intellectuals to understand their respective intellectual responsibilities when it comes to science and scientific discourses, which brings us from history back to the present.

Chapter II: Darwinism and Naturalism:

Resituating Prewar Japanese Marxism

This chapter primarily deals with how Kurahara Korehito (1902-1999), his Marxist cohorts, and other prewar thinkers conceived of the relation between man and nature, or more precisely, how Kurahara and his Marxist cohorts lacked contemplation of the relation.²⁷ In this chapter, I will look into the connections between Japanese Naturalism and prewar Japanese Marxism (1920s to 1933), to what extent they were both influenced by Darwinism and Social Darwinism. Due to the influence, which was deeply rooted in naiveté toward the issues of human nature and the relation between man and nature, both movements were susceptible to confused scientific statements at their core. Japanese Marxism, in particular, promised a materialist critique of the socio-political situation in Japan at the time, but in fact failed in the part where it accounted for the individual subject of the society, for the account remained idealist in nature.

After its victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan quickly rose to the status of an imperial power comparable to imperial powers in the West. During WWI (1914-1918) Japan faced challenges of shortage of research facilities, scientists and engineers, and materials needed for military related research and production, which led to more military and corporate control over science and technology than

²⁷ Versions of this chapter were presented at the American Oriental Society Annual Meeting in October, 2016, and in the *Global Japan Studies Workshop* at The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan in June, 2016.

the previous century.²⁸ After WWI, in the “transition” era of the 1920s, Japanese military and political leaders had become fully aware of the importance of scientific research in developing military advantage against other nation states, while at the same time, Japanese scientists pushed for independence in science and technology in the hope for their research to be recognized by the world science community.²⁹ Although the two groups came from the opposite intentions—one for the instrumentalization of science and technology, the other for their independence, they both ended up being the major motivating forces behind Japan’s science boom in the 1920s.

Also in the same period, scientific ideas and ideologies that could potentially serve the imperialist cause, in particular the cause of “building a scientific empire,” emerged and fell into the locus of debate between the Marxists and the naturalists. It is however important to note that aside from the debate between the Marxists and the naturalists surrounding the issue of human nature, the technocratic movement (1920s-1945),³⁰ the Marxian materialist group—Materialism Research Association’s (*Yuibutsuron Kenkyūkai*, or *Yuiken* for short, 1932-1938), and a few sporadic works by Japanese scientists,³¹ the 1920s and 1930s to the end of WWII were marked by intellectuals’ reticence toward science and, in contrast, enthusiasm for cultural discourses. By looking into the debate between the Marxists and the naturalists, I intend to not only decipher the peculiar silence of the Japanese intellectuals toward science in an era of science boom, but also

²⁸ Bartholomew, James, *Formation of Science in Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 199-201. Also see Susan Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

³⁰ Hiromi Mizuno covered the history of the technocratic movement in Japan (1920-1945) in the first two chapters of *Science for the Empire*. She examined the movement from the establishment of the Kōjin Club (Kōjin Kurabu) in 1920, to the technocrats’ proletarianization in the 1920s, to the movement’s abandonment of its agenda of class struggle and its absorption into the imperialist, nationalist agenda of building Japan into a “scientific empire.” Mizuno, *Science for the Empire: Scientific Nationalism in Modern Japan*, 19-68.

³¹ For instance, the works by mathematician Ogura Kinnosuke (1885-1962) on science and ethics.

to reveal their profound confusion toward the political implications of science and scientific ideas.

More specifically, this chapter will focus on different theorists' and cultural groups' position vis-à-vis the question of the relation between man and nature, and how it correlates with their conception of human nature, which later turned out to be susceptible to imperialist values. The specific topics dealt with in this chapter include Darwinism's influence on Japanese Naturalism and early Marxism in Japan, "hon'nō" (instinct, a concept used extensively within Japanese Naturalism) as a scientific ideology, and the humanist idealism in prewar Japanese Marxism.

At its broadest, this chapter contributes to the demonstration of the danger of ideas. Implicitly, it asks the following questions: did the agenda of building a powerful "scientific empire," which emerged in the 1930s, benefit from, if not depend upon, certain naïve understanding of science, human nature, and the relation between man and nature, in the 1920s? Sociologically, the focus will be placed on intellectuals who were receptive to the new ideas emerged in the field science in the 1920s, for they were the ones who put forward conceptions of human nature, science and society which later were assimilated into the imperialist discourse in the 1930s. These intellectuals include the Japanese naturalists, the early Romantics (not the Romantics from the Romantic School in the 1930s who were clearly anti-science), and the JCP (Japanese Communist Party) Marxists. However, instead of examining them as "the scientifically capable imperial *subject* obedient to the state and imperial duties,"³² I am more interested in the sociology of these individuals and groups, i.e., their network and relationship, their social status, political power, all of which are related to the production and the "effectiveness" of their ideas.

³² Mizuno, Hiromi, "The Science Room as an Archive: Taisho Japan and WWI," 369.

i. Naturalism (Shizen shugi)

In Kurahara Korehito's 1928 essay, "Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi" ("The Way to Proletarian-Realism"), he famously asserted the fundamental difference between the realism in Naturalism (*Shizen shugi*) and the realism of proletarian literature being the way in which they conceived of the relationship between the individual and society.³³ In protesting against the individualism (*kojin shugi*) of the realist-predecessor, Kurahara proposed the opposite, a realism that sought to represent the individual as embedded in the web of social relations. By framing proletarian literature as the successor of Naturalism with respect to realism, but its adversary with respect to the individual-society relationship, Kurahara inadvertently revealed several theoretical obscurities in prewar Marxist movement in Japan, especially with respect to the natural sciences.

Kurahara Korehito studied in the Russian division of the Tokyo Foreign Languages University. After graduation he studied abroad in Russia for two years (1925-1926).³⁴ Upon his return to Japan, he joined the *Puroretaria Geijutsu Renmei* (Proletarian Arts League), one division of the Marxist camp in Japan at the time. He subsequently joined *Nappu* (short for *Zen Nihon Musansha Geijutsu Renmei*, All Japan Proletarian Arts League) in 1927, when it unified the three divisions of the Japanese Proletarian Literature Movement. The base of *Nappu* was the journal *Senki* (literally *Battle Flag*, May, 1928 – December, 1931), for which Kurahara was a major contributor. In 1930 Kurahara left again for the Soviet Union, commissioned by the

³³ Kurahara, Korehito, "Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi" ("The Way to Proletarian-Realism"), in *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikei Vol. 6* (Tokyo: Katokara Shoten, 1973).

³⁴ Notably, the Russian Revolution took place in 1917.

Communist Party there to work for Comintern. From Moscow Kurahara brought back the determination of initiating a full-blown Communist cultural revolution in Japan.³⁵ However, before the new political agenda could be put into practice, he was arrested in 1932 along with many other Marxists and Marxist sympathizers under the Peace Preservation Law (*Chi'an ijiho*) (enacted in 1925, revised in 1928). With the rest of its official members arrested in 1933, the Japanese Proletarian Literature Movement was put to an abrupt end, so was the first trend of Japanese Marxism. As one of the very few Marxists who refused to commit *tenko* (conversion from their Communist commitment) in prison, Kurahara continued to be influential among the leftist literati in post-war Japan.

“Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi,” published in one of the earliest issues of *Senki*, was undoubtedly widely read by Kurahara’s supporters at the time, as well as by contemporary scholars of Japanese Marxism, as a piece that set the tone for Marxist movement in Japan between 1928-1933, which was the heyday of Japanese Marxism as a cultural movement.³⁶ Part of the influence of Kurahara’s essay was due to the fact that it aroused intense dispute both within and outside of the Marxist camp. Contemporary critics of Kurahara’s agenda, despite their many differences, seemed to agree on the assessment that “the movement killed itself by constant infighting and by subjugating literature to a political straitjacket even before authorities

³⁵ In 1931, Kurahara established *Koppu* (short for *Nihon Puroretaria Bunka Renmei*, Japan Proletarian Culture League) as the central organ of the planned mass cultural movement. For more detail on *Koppu*, see Mats Karlsson’s “Kurahara Korehito’s Road to Proletarian,” in *Japan Review*, No. 20 (2008), 232-233.

³⁶ For further reading on Kurahara’s importance in the formation of *Nappu*, read Satō Shizuo’s “*Wakaki hi no Kurahara Korehito*” (“Kurahara Korehito in His Young Days”), in *Minshu Bungaku* (Tokyo: 1988-07), 133-142. I argue in this chapter and in the following one that a second unofficial trend of Marxism, or rather, a Marxian materialist trend centered in Materialism Research Association, in prewar Japan has consciously distanced itself from its previous culturalist tendencies.

had the chance to crush in.”³⁷ One of Kurahara’s critics was the Marxist writer, Tokunaga Sunao, who repelled Kurahara’s political agenda for its suppression of writers’ creative powers.³⁸ In post-war literary critique and current scholarship on proletarian literature, it is generally accepted that the proletarian literature movement led by Kurahara and a few other literary figures “failed” by 1933. With the subsequent discontinuation of the journal *Bungeisensen* (*Literary Front*), *Senki*’s strongest rival on the left, whose objective was to form a unified front of the left,³⁹ the political arena of Japan was taken over by the imperialists. It echoed the political circumstances in the Third Reich, where the three competitive powers—communism, liberalism, and fascism, ended in the defeat of the other two by fascism.

Without judging the ambiguity of the statement of “failure” of a cultural-literary movement, I see the need to reread Kurahara’s polemic essay, “Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi,” beyond the dichotomy of politics versus art, individual versus society. There are not only many hints in the essay that revealed unsettled theoretical difficulties within prewar Marxist movement, but also hints that indicated connection between the naturalists and the JCP Marxists. By analyzing these theoretical difficulties, I aim to trace a certain lineage of naturalism from the

³⁷ Karlsson, “Kurahara Korehito’s Road to Proletarian,” 235. In his essay, Karlsson attempts to refute that judgment and salvage Kurahara’s literary proposal as “an unbiased, critical type of realism largely in line with received notions of literary quality.”

³⁸ Tokunaga, Sunao, “Sōsaku hōhōjō no shintenkan” (“The New Change in Creative Method”), *Chūō kōrō* 48:9 (1933).

³⁹ *Bungeisensen* (1925-1934) was the base for *Rōgei* (short for *Rōnō Geijutsuka Renmei*, the League of Peasant Artists). In comparison to *Senki*, *Bungeisensen* was more opened to literary works that fell on the spectrum of left-wing politics, but it was criticized by *Senki* writers, who were following Kurahara’s agenda of a politicized literature, for emphasizing too much on the particularity of art (“*geijutsu no tokushu sei*”). See *Purogei* (short for *Nihon Puroretaria Geijutsu Renmei*, Japan Proletarian Arts League)’s official statement against *Bungeisensen* (1927), “Zasshi ‘Bungeisensei’ wo bokumetsu suru” (“To Eradicate the Journal *Bungeisensen*”), in *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikei Vol. 6* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1973), 433. Honda Shūgo, for example, characterizes Kurahara’s achievements as his refusal of the naturalistic realism of *Bungeisensen*. Honda, Shūgo, “Kurahara Korehito ron,” in *Gendai sakkaron sōsho*, ed. Nakajima Kenzō et al. (Tokyo: Eihōsha, 1955).

earlier naturalists (in the 1900s), the early romanticists (active around the same time), to the later naturalists (roughly from the 1910s through the 1930s),⁴⁰ and the JCP Marxists (1920s-1930s).

In “Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi,” Kurahara famously accused Japanese Naturalism of falsely portraying individuals as separate from society. According to Kurahara, Japanese Naturalism’s realism was expressed in its realist approach in the depiction of the socially isolated individual, which, Kurahara affirmed, *was* realism by definition. But the more “real” realism—proletarian realism, portrayed individuals as inseparable from society.

The point of departure of naturalist literature [in Japan] is within the individual. Moreover, it is within the individual who is severed from the society (*shakai kara kirihanasete*). They [the naturalists] are always searching for something absolute within the individual, and finally, they reached “true biological nature of man” (*ningen no seibutsu honsei*). According to them, the life (*seikatsu*) of man (*ningen*) is, after all, nothing else than the instinctual life (*hon’no seikatsu*) of man (*ningen*). They are influenced by the developments in biology and physiology at the time; philosophically they correspond to “conceptual materialism” (*kannenteki yuibutsuron*). As a matter of fact, many of the naturalists observe life from this perspective, and then portray it accordingly. Hence, social life, which is not directly related to human instinct (*ningen hon’no*), is completely outside of their view.⁴¹

⁴⁰ In my discussion of the later naturalists, I include the writers of I-novels (*shishōsetsu*). *Shishōsetsu* is a literary genre in which the author is often believed to refer to real events in his or her life in his supposedly fictional writing.

⁴¹ Kurahara, “Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi,” 115-116.

As one can see here, the way in which the individual (*kojin*) is portrayed becomes for Kurahara the crucial point in determining the “correctness” or “falsity” of the literary realism, and thus fundamentally dividing proletarian realism and the bourgeois realism of the naturalists. Apart from the dichotomy of individual versus society, which divides proletarian realism and naturalism, another dichotomy Kurahara established in his essay is between the imaginary (*kūsōteki*), conceptual (*kannenteki*), subjective (*shukanteki*) character and the realistic (*genjitsuteki*), concrete (*gutaiteki*), objective (*kyakkanteki*) character of art, which divides romanticism and various branches of realism.⁴² Last but not least, the arguably most questionable dichotomy Kurahara claimed, which is already insinuated in the passage quoted above, is between the natural sciences (represented by naturalist realism) and the social sciences (represented by proletarian realism). Kurahara structured his argument for proletarian realism based on the three dichotomies.

What did Kurahara actually postulate with these dichotomies? First of all, by the dichotomy between individual and society Kurahara in fact proposed the opposition of two different understandings of human being, and deeming both legitimate. One defines man by his instinct (*hon'nō*) or biological nature (*seibutsu honsei*); the other defines man by his social relations or his relationship with society. An intrinsic logical difficulty, or indeed dilemma, of this proposition is that Kurahara was incapable of proving the truth of one conception of man over the other without arbitrarily claiming the superiority of one over the other. Because although the apparent goal was to displace one realism with the other, he did not, or perhaps *could* not, refute one conception of man with the other. This is indeed the logical flaw that underlies the whole essay: that Kurahara could not prove the falsehood of the Darwinian

⁴² *Ibid.*, 114-115.

conception of man: that man is defined by his animal instincts. However, in order to promote his culturo-political agenda of a “proletarian realism” movement, he had to prove the deficiency, if not falsehood, of the former realisms in Japan as cultural forms. What caused the dilemma was the new “developments in biology and physiology,” namely, Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, as well as all of its ideological repercussions, which appeared at the time irrefutable.

Here, the connections between Japanese Naturalism and the natural sciences gradually unfold, along with the awkwardness of prewar Japanese Marxism in relation to the natural sciences. The introduction of Darwin’s evolutionary theory (*shinkaron*) took place in the Meiji period.⁴³ Darwin’s *Descent of Man* was first translated into Japanese in 1881, which marked the first introduction of Darwin’s work into Japan.⁴⁴ It was followed by the translation of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, which first appeared in Japanese in 1896, and then one or more different versions of translation appeared in every decade from the 1890s.⁴⁵ Herbert Spencer’s works were translated into Japanese around the same time. The first translation appeared in 1877. His *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1861) was translated into Japanese in 1880, still one year earlier than Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*. Spencer and his Social Darwinism, according to the liberal political thinker, Maruyama Masao, took root in Japan ideologies rather quickly, and “dovetailed perfectly with certain already accepted, traditional Japanese concepts” unlike in the case of Europe.⁴⁶ As Julia Adeney Thomas points out in her book, by late Meiji

⁴³ For more on the introduction of Darwinism into Japan, please refer to Bartholomew’s *Formation of Science in Japan*, 226. Also, Julia Adeney Thomas’ *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 84-108, 158-176.

⁴⁴ For a bibliographical survey of Japanese translations of Darwin’s works from 1896—1974, see Eikoh Shimao’s article, “Darwinism in Japan, 1877-1927,” in *Annals of Science*, 38:1, 97-102.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 98-100.

⁴⁶ Maruyama, Masao, “Japanese Thought,” *Journal of Social and Political Ideas in Japan* 2 (April 1964), 42.

“Social Darwinism crept into education theory as Japanese children were taught to see the different peoples of the world climbing the trail of progress, with Europeans and Asians on top moving down through Arabs to Africans and aborigines.”⁴⁷

Many scholars, including Bartholomew and Thomas,⁴⁸ have argued that Spencer’s Social Darwinism was much more influential and well incorporated into Japanese political thoughts as a tool of bureaucracy than Darwinism. Thomas points out that the reasons of Social Darwinism’s popularity in the Meiji period were multifold. It could be attributed to Meiji intellectuals’ reverence and citations of Spencer’s works, which included intellectuals from both the pro-democracy camp and the pro-oligarchy camps in the People’s Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō*), and the popularization of the Spencerian theory of social evolution in the education system, among others.⁴⁹ Many of these factors were contingent upon the political turbulences in Japan at the time, more specifically, the need of various social and political groups to “climb the social ladder” so that they would become the “fittest” who survived. In such a situation, the Spencer’s evolutionary sociology came in handy as a theory that could defend the often times brutal political struggle.

While I agree with this historical observation of the popularity of Social Darwinism in the Meiji period, I would like to point out precisely the contingency of its popularity. Moreover, if one were to understand Social Darwinism *partly* as an ideological extension of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, it would lead the discussion back to Darwinism itself as a scientific theory. That is

⁴⁷ Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity*, 162.

⁴⁸ See Bartholomew’s “Science, Bureaucracy, and Freedom in Meiji and Taishō Japan,” in *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition*, ed. by Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity*, 162. “It was Spencer rather than Darwin whose view of evolution got top billing, and it was the social implications of evolutionary theory rather than the biological ones that caused the great stir. A new Japanese cosmopolis was constructed not by science but by sociology.”

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity*, 162-163.

to say, the part of Social Darwinism that was utilized by Meiji intellectuals was not so much Spencer's extensive sociology, but rather, it was his ideology of the absolute value of social progress and its basis in human competition. This ideology then has to be sourced to the implication of the Darwinian conception of man that the advantages and disadvantages of a human individual in society (not only in the natural environment) were predetermined naturally. In fact, due to this underlying assumption of Social Darwinism, it was forfeited by Japanese intellectuals by the 1890s as being "inadequate as a state ideology," because it denoted Japan's inevitable, naturally ordained defeat by the West.⁵⁰ Its major advocates such as Katō Hiroyuki and Baba Tatsui also lost their political influence, but the influence of Darwinism as a scientific theory continued in Japan.

Darwinism, which prescribed an understanding of the essence of man as a species, as well as a *natural morality*, was influential in the cultural discourses in Japan beginning in the late Meiji period. The best proof was the strong presence of the Darwinian conception of human being in early naturalist works in the 1900s and in many of their contemporary literary works. Then comes the question: did this wave of Darwinism also affect Japanese Marxism? How did prewar Japanese Marxism relate to Darwinism and the "new developments in biology and physiology"?

Before that, I will return shortly to the question of the influence of Darwinism on Japanese Naturalism. Even though Japanese Naturalism was seen by the early naturalists and its critics as an emulation of the naturalism of Zola and Balzac, it was in fact a forceful literary trend of its own, centering on the depiction of dark human desires, particularly physical desires. The theme of dark desires remained throughout the naturalist discourse, even after the

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 166-168.

introduction of the autobiographical “I-novels” (*shishōsetsu*) trend by novelists such as Shiga Naoya and Chikamatsu Shūkō, etc. In a way, the term “naturalism” was used by the Japanese novelists to create a literary space to explore human nature, to which the natural sciences have given new dimensions beyond the confinement of conventional social values.⁵¹ Following this line of thought, I argue that the “nature” (*shizen*) in Japanese “naturalism” (*shizenshugi*) has nothing to do with what is now commonly called nature, which evokes the external objectifiable reality or environment, but rather, it connotes quite the opposite: an internal look into “human nature” (*ningen honsei*) for the universal qualities that fundamentally define human. In this very sense, Japanese Naturalism constituted a deviant participant of the stabilization of the terminology of nature in Japan in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries by isolating the individual from the state.⁵² To the Japanese naturalists Darwinism provided the ideological tool to discard the state, and as Kurahara pointed out, social duties, to embark on a journey of incessant search for internal “truths.” Thus, Japanese Naturalism is a perfect case for understanding the interrelations of scientific ideology and cultural discourse.

The limitation of Kurahara’s essay and of his appointed trajectory of Marxism lies precisely in his inability to recognize the “scientific ideologies” embodied by the naturalist conception of man. Instead, he treated the ideologies as irrefutable scientific ideas. The false judgment also misled Kurahara into recognizing Japanese Naturalism as a form of literary

⁵¹ Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 81. “Zola’s naturalism, which had a profound impact on the literary world of the early 1900’s, provided a new foundation for romantic protest against social tradition.”

⁵² For analysis of the stabilization of the term “nature” in Japan, see Yoshida Tadashi, “Shizen to kagaku” (“Nature and Science”), in *Shizen*, ed. Sagara Tōru, Bitō Masahide, and Akiyama Ken, *Nihon shisō* Vol 1 (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1983). Also, see Thomas’ “The Acculturation of Japanese Nature,” in *Reconfiguring Modernity*, 158-178.

realism based on scientific understandings of the human psyche, borrowed from the natural sciences, while in fact it was much closer to a cultural discourse of *truth*.

In fact, as far as [the individual life of man] (*ningen no kojinteki seikatsu*) is concerned, [the naturalists] are objective (*kyakkanteki*). Yet, as they demand of themselves the objectivity (*kyakkan-sei*) of natural scientists, they do not possess the objectivity of social scientists. In this lies the fundamental reason why their [the naturalists'] realism (*rearizumu*) is unable to capture society in its entirety (*zentai-sei*).⁵³

Here it is obvious that Kurahara deemed naturalist literature, empowered by the natural sciences, as “objective” with respect to the reality (*genjitsu*) of individual life, and he diagnosed its problem to be the limit of its realism. However, I argue that in Kurahara’s writing there is confusion between reality (*genjitsu*) and the truth (*shinjitsu*) of human life. Disagreeing with Kurahara, I believe that Japanese Naturalism was defined more by its search for the “ugly truth” inside than by its psychological realism. For example, Suzuki argues along the same line of thought, that “the ‘nature’ in Naturalism had already assumed the traditional connotation of the word *shizen* (originally pronounced *jinen*), which had been used as an adjective or an adverb (rather than a noun)—meaning ‘as is’ (*ari no mama*), or ‘by itself,’ ‘naturally’ (*onozukara*).”⁵⁴ Although Suzuki never directly points out the difference between the two meanings—the “real” (or “reality”) and “truth,” both embodied in the Japanese word *shizen*, she is aware that the latter meaning is present in the “nature” in Naturalism.

More telling is perhaps Shimamura Hōgetsu’s 1908 essay, “Bungeijō no shizenshugi” (“Naturalism in the Literary Arts”), where he articulated the formula: “Realism aims to represent

⁵³ Kurahara, “Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi,” 116.

⁵⁴ Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 82.

reality. Idealism aims to represent ideals. Naturalism claims to represent Truth. The word Truth is the life (*seimei*) and the motto of Naturalism.” Hōgetsu was one of the leading figures of Japanese Naturalism. His formula “Realism: reality, Idealism: ideals, Naturalism: Truth” would very well refuse Kurahara’s assessment that Japanese naturalists were interested in representing the objective reality of human life. Hasegawa Tenkei suggested that the Naturalism that the Japanese literati advocated had more to do with rebelling against the falsity, the artificiality and the hypocrisy of the Japanese society, than asserting a literary realism.⁵⁵ Japanese Naturalism only utilized the scientific discoveries of Darwin and other biologists and physiologists as an ideological foundation for their idealistic pursuit of the true essence of man against the falsity of the society. If one compares the vocabulary and rhetoric of the naturalists to that of the early Romantics, such as Takayama Chogyū, one will be surprised to find how similar they are in terms of their embrace of “hon’nō” as the truth of human life.⁵⁶ Ugly as this truth may be, it is what fundamentally makes us human, and society is its corruption. This *romantic* rebellion against social tradition inspired by Darwinism is a trait that Japanese Naturalism shared with many literary trends at the turn of the century. However, known for his acute opposition to Japanese Naturalism, Kurahara not only missed the romantic nature of the movement completely, but also attacked his ideological enemy wrongly for its bourgeois realism.

So, what does Kurahara’s false attack on Japanese Naturalism reveal of prewar Japanese Marxism, centered in the proletarian literature movement? First and foremost, it shows the strong culturalist tendencies of prewar of Japanese Marxism. Japan in the 1920s saw the emergence of a

⁵⁵ Tenkei tried to clarify what “nature” meant in Japanese Naturalism in his 1902 essay “Shizenshugi to wa nanzo ya”: “in other words, this Naturalism is the name given to the thought of a group of people who claim that ‘man should maintain a natural state.’”

⁵⁶ For meaningful comparison, please read Takayama Chogyū’s 1901 essay, “Biteki seikatsu o ronzu,” where he argued in a Nietzschean position for the liberation of human nature or instincts (*hon’nō*) against the restraint of morality (*dōtoku*) and rationality (*risei*).

plethora of literary, cultural and political theories and schools, which was the result of the relatively peaceful political environment after the end of WWI, as well as of the incentive of thinkers, literati, politicians to understand the reality of the post-war Japanese society. The first and second establishments of the Japanese Community Party, in 1922 and 1926 respectively, and the proletarian literature movement as a whole, were part of this socio-political orientation of trying to resolve the conflicts that still prevailed in what seemed to be a successfully modernized, westernized society.

When Kurahara wrote “Puroretariya-Rearizumu e no michi” in 1928, he had the naturalists before him who had been active for about three decades in the cultural arena, conservative theorists of the older generation such as Nishida Kitarō and Watsuji Tetsurō, who were in the process of spreading their influence, and also the liberal literati such as Tanizaki Junichirō, Uno Kōji, Nagai Kafū, and Kawabata Yasunari, etc. Among all of these political actors, Kurahara has chosen the naturalists as his foremost enemies. As the leading ideologue of the proletarian literature movement, Kurahara’s decision bespoke the overarching culturalist agenda of the movement. It became even clearer when Kurahara visited the Comintern in the Soviet Union in 1930, that the strong influence of the Soviet Union has led him to believe that a cultural revolution was the only remedy to the social conflicts in Japan.⁵⁷

In fighting the naturalists, Kurahara along with other proletarian literature writers attempted to claim a cultural space for Marxism in Japan. In order to achieve that, the Marxists resorted to the social sciences. This explains the peculiar juxtaposition of the natural sciences and the social sciences, the individual (*kojinteki*) and the social (*shakaiteki*), human instincts

⁵⁷ It is important to note that, Kurahara’s proposal of a cultural revolution in Japan was very much in line with Fukumoto’s (the theoretical backbone of the second establishment of JCP) Leninist reading of Marx, which emphasized class struggle, and the socio-economical level (over the material level), and partisan politics which the JCP was unable to actualize.

(*ningen no honsei*) and social standpoint (*shakaiteki kanten*), in Kurahara's essay, in that the so-called social standpoint, or the social sciences (examination of society from a scientific point of view), signifies for the young Marxists nothing less than the essential weapon of their cultural-political struggle. By establishing the juxtaposition, emphasizing the absoluteness of the antithesis, they were able to establish Marxism against its competitors in the field of culture.

However, notably, this juxtaposition or antithesis was not in any way supported by Marxist theory. Marx and Engels dealt with the difference between the natural sciences and the social sciences as a critical theoretical issue, which led to the famous division of labor between Marx and Engels, with Marx focusing on the socio-economical aspects of Communism, and Engels on coming to terms with the natural sciences. This theoretical scheme of somehow uniting the natural sciences and the social sciences, and thereby synthesizing the communist struggle with new discoveries in the natural sciences, remained an important topic in Lenin's work.⁵⁸ It was only until Stalin, in the Soviet Union's line of Marxism, that the emphasis on the natural sciences was dropped for a total politicization of the communist struggle, the "scientific struggle" displaced by ideological contestation.⁵⁹ Obviously, Kurahara (who studied abroad in the USSR in his youth and visited the USSR again in 1930) adopted the Stalinist interpretation of Marxist theory.

⁵⁸ See Lenin, V. I., *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972).

⁵⁹ The Italian Marxist philosopher, Sebastiano Timpanaro, discussed Stalin's position vis-à-vis the natural sciences and materialism in general in his article, "Considerations on Materialism," in *New Left Review* 1/85, May-June 1974, (London). "In fact, Stalin's brochure, as well as his other writings, lack any specific interest in the natural sciences or the relationship between man and nature; there is a complete absence of any emphasis on the 'passive side' of consciousness, on the way in which man is conditioned by his own physical structure and the natural environment... The so-called dogmatism of Stalin and his followers did not in reality consist of a coherent materialist position, but rather of a 'politicization' (in the pejorative sense) of Marxist theory—in other words an immediate reduction not only of science to ideology, but of ideology itself to an instrument of propaganda and petty justification of adventitious political positions, whereby the most abrupt changes of policy were in each case legitimated with pseudo-theoretical arguments and presented as congruent with the most orthodox Marxism."

As far as the opposition of the individual and society was concerned, Marx himself never stated such an opposition. The furthest Marx went in stressing the social existence of human being was in “Theses on Feuerbach” (1845) where he famously claimed against the abstract universal humanism of Feuerbach that “the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual,” but rather, “it is the ensemble of the social relations.”⁶⁰ In arguing for the human essence being the “ensemble of social relations” Marx did not propose the dichotomy between individual and society, or even between an isolated individual and an individual as a social being, but denied it. According to Marx, since the essence of man is the “ensemble of social relations,” there is no *a priori* quality that universalizes humanity abstractly, but more importantly, it is impossible for any human to not to be social. One might be able to *contemplate* “single individuals,” as through the old materialism of Feuerbach, but it is impossible to conceive of individuals who are completely severed from social contexts. In a word, the ideological opposition between individual and society, so often utilized by Kurahara and other young Marxists in Japan to criticize the individualism of other cultural trends, is not actually supported by Marxist theory.

The danger in reducing class struggle to a cultural category lied not only in the above-mentioned distortions of Marxist theory, which resulted from the need for cultural propaganda on the one hand and the lack of theoretical rigor on the other, but also in the affinity of Marxism and Liberalism, in this case, the official camp of prewar Japanese Marxism and Japanese Naturalism, as well as other liberal literary trends existing in Japan at the time. The absence of a consistent theoretical ground could very easily turn the newly founded Marxist camp into a cultural trend that possessed no actual partisan power. It was more or less what happened to the JCP toward the

⁶⁰ Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach” (translated from its German title, “Thesen über Feuerbach”) (1845), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>.

end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. The majoring of the JCP members and sympathizers were captured by the state police under the Peace Preservation Law and forced to convert their political beliefs (*tenkō*). The cultural movement was abolished by 1933, as Japan entered the dark era of wartime social control.

Apart from its strong culturalist tendencies, Kurahara's misjudgment of his naturalist "enemies" also revealed two theoretical weaknesses of prewar Japanese Marxism: firstly, the obscurity in its conception of the relation between man and nature, and of human nature in general; secondly, its ambivalent relationship with the natural sciences. Without yet going into a full-length discussion of the Marxist debate on humanism and anti-humanism, it suffices to say here that both Kurahara and Fukumoto, the two theoretical leaders of Japanese Marxism in the 20s (in particular the former), lacked an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of human nature. Overall, they abided by a humanist position, although not without inconsistencies.

As far as Fukumoto is concerned, he was arguably better armed with theories in that he was more conscious of his humanist socialist position. In his "1927 Theses," "1932 Theses," and his post-war reflections on pre-war Marxism, he consistently asserted his loyalty to the Marxist slogan that "the standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society or social humanity," which he took from Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach."⁶¹ His insistence on historical materialism and the humanist standpoint constituted less of a deviation

⁶¹ The original text in German is: "Der Standpunkt des alten Materialismus ist die 'bürgerliche' Gesellschaft; der Standpunkt des neuen die *menschliche* Gesellschaft, oder die vergesellschaftete Menschheit." Fukumoto, "Wareware wa ima ika ni shite sentōteki yuibutsuron wo tataikai tori uru ka" ("How are we able to fight for a militant materialism today?") (1926), *Fukumoto Kazuo chosaku shū* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kobushi Shobō, 2010), 373. Fukumoto's post-war reflections on pre-war Marxism can be found in his essay, "Tosaka-ryū *Nihon ideorogī ron* o kentōsuru" ("Examination of theories of Japanese ideology by Tosaka and his followers") (1966), *Fukumoto Kazuo chosakushū* Vol. 10 (Tokyo: Kobushi Shobō, 2010), 293. Fukumoto translated "human society" ("*menschliche* Gesellschaft") and "social humanity" ("vergesellschaftete Menschheit") into "ningenteki shakai" and "shakaiteki ningensei."

from orthodox Marxism to Stalinism than a devoted alliance with the humanist Marx in *The German Ideology* (1845-46) and “Theses on Feuerbach.” Fukumoto’s criticism of Tosaka was precisely on his materialist stance, that Tosaka’s materialism was still dictated by his affinity to “Nishida’s philosophy” and hence lacked a clear perspective on human independence (*jishusei*) and humanity in general.⁶² Under the ensign of Materialism, a debate on human nature and the relation between man and nature took place. This topic demands a more detailed examination in a separate chapter.⁶³

With respect to Kurahara, the ideologue of the proletarian literature movement, the diagnosis is much easier. Kurahara by embarking on the journey of promoting a cultural revolution in Japan has let the ambiguity and complexity of the philosophical issues surrounding materialism be overwritten by the urgency of class struggle, or in fact, of the power struggle of the Communist party. Kurahara never produced a clear thesis on human nature, nor did his communist cohorts. But rather, he remained ambivalent toward two incompatible theories of the essence of man, one being animal instincts, the other being social relations; one can be sourced to Darwin, to a way of theorizing the man-nature relation that reduces humanity to a species, the other to Marx, specifically to the early Marx of *The German Ideology* and “Theses on Feuerbach.”

Kurahara was critical of the bourgeois and individualistic nature of the first definition of man, namely that man is fundamentally defined by instincts, but his criticism was far from the actual problem of the definition. The actual problem was that Japanese Naturalism’s claim that

⁶² Fukumoto, “Tosaka-ryū *Nihon ideorogī ron* wo kentōsuru,” 307.

⁶³ The debate between Fukumoto and Tosaka on Marxism will be examined in Chapter III of this dissertation.

human nature is determined biologically, man is defined by his instincts, was a scientific ideology, and, if I may, it still remains a scientific ideology today.

Kurahara in his polemic writings not only acquiesced to a series of scientific ideologies given birth to by scientific discoveries in biology, but also was oblivious of the awkward relationship prewar of Marxism in Japan shared with the natural sciences. Instead, he channeled the theoretical difficulties to the polemic between politics and art, a battle waged on the culturalist home ground.⁶⁴ The direct result was that prewar Japanese Marxism continued to be at odds with the socially and culturally established notion of man in Japan at the time—an essentially Socialist-Darwinist understanding of man based on a convergence between physiological and moral values.

The unresolved problem of the relation between man and nature in prewar Japanese Marxism caused the revolutionary slogan of “humanity being social” to never become more than a revolutionary slogan. Their failure to refute scientific ideologies emerged from the new sciences had other repercussions, one being the unresolved naiveté of the cultural discourses in Japan toward positivism. The truth is positivism, in particular scientific positivism, keeps being repackaged by various cultural discourses and sneaking into every corner of daily life in Japan even today.

ii. “Hon’nō” and Scientific Ideologies

What is a scientific ideology? And why is not distinguishing a scientific ideology from science potentially dangerous? A scientific ideology, according to Georges Canguilhem who was

⁶⁴ For analysis of the relation between art and politics from a historical, culturalist perspective, read Harry Harootunian’s *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

the first to discuss the term extensively as a valid epistemological concept, is essentially a product of an epistemologist, and as an ideology it “comes to an end when the place that it occupied in the encyclopedia of knowledge is taken over by a discipline that operationally demonstrates the validity of its claim to scientific status, its ‘norms of scientificity.’”⁶⁵ In this case, the scientific ideologies derived from Darwin’s scientific discovery that populations evolve over the course of generations through a process of natural selection. The ideological element in the naturalist understanding of man lied in, firstly, its mystification of “hon’nō,” or instincts, and secondly, its value judgment that man being driven by “hon’nō” is *good*, whereas when these instincts are repressed by social restrictions, it is bad.

In conceiving of human nature,⁶⁶ prewar Japanese Marxism although appeared to contest with the naturalists, in fact shared with the naturalists the idea of a human nature that is inseparable from what they both referred to as “hon’nō.” The 1920s saw the emergence of competing “scientific ideologies” from various schools of thought, including the early Marxists, the Eugencists, the technocrats, the naturalists, etc. By competing “scientific ideologies,” I mean that they competed in offering representations of the society, or the individual, that claim to be “scientific” through mimicking the newly acquired knowledge or technological processes in the field of science. In the case of the early Marxism and the naturalists, however, I argue that they shared more similarities in their scientific ideologies on human nature and the relation between man and nature, than discrepancies. More specifically, other prominent figures in prewar Marxist

⁶⁵ Canguilhem, Georges, *Ideology and Rationality in the History of the Life Sciences*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, 1988), 33.

⁶⁶ For analysis of Marx’s conception of human nature from a Marxist perspective, please read Norman Geras’s book, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (London: Verso, 1983). Walliman, Isidor, *Estrangement: Marx’s Conception of Human Nature and the Division of Labor* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981). Paul Heyer approached the same topic from a History of Science perspective in his book, *Nature, Human Nature, and Society: Marx, Darwin, Biology, and the Human Sciences* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982).

movement in Japan, such as Nakano Shigeharu, Tokunaga Sunao, and Aono Suekichi, did not so much attempt to answer the question of what constitutes human nature than acquiescing to the doctrines laid down by the leading theoreticians, such as Kurahara and Fukumoto. The major theoretical disagreement within the Marxist camps either revolved around literary representation, as in the case between Nakano and Kurahara,⁶⁷ or around the relationship between the Marxist cultural leaders and the masses. Hence, it can be said that Japanese Marxism in the 1920s had little interest in human nature, the relationship between man and nature, or the natural sciences.

This explains why when Kurahara attacked his culturo-political enemies and thereby set the tone for the Marxist movement as a cultural movement whose goal was class struggle, he took the naturalist proposition that human nature is defined by “hon’nō” for granted. He merely added to the formula that “hon’nō” only referred to the part of human nature that is an abstract, supra-class (*chō-kaikyū*), whereas in class struggle, and only in class struggle, a concrete, classed (*kaikyūteki*) human nature comes forth. Again, this shows the immaturity of the theoretical core of the cultural movement—a “classed human nature” (*kaikyūteki ningensei*) is a term that falls short of theoretical support or contextualization, not to mention that the term by itself is almost incomprehensible.⁶⁸ It is because for Kurahara, the main enemy in the sphere of politics was not the positivists, or the neo-Kantians, but their class enemies, namely, the bourgeoisie and their literary representatives.

What is “hon’nō” exactly? What made the definition of human nature raised by Kurahara and the naturalists (and the early romanticists like Takayama Chogyū) was precisely that it was unclear what they meant by “hon’nō” exactly, apart from its obvious connection with the new

⁶⁷ More on Nakano and Kurahara’s argument on literary representations, please read Karlsson’s essay, “Kurahara Korehito’s Road to Proletarian,” 253-254.

⁶⁸ Kurahara, “Geijutsuteki hōhō ni tsuite no kansō” (“Reflections on Artistic Methods”) (1931), *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū Vol. 55* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967).

discoveries in biology. There was a general mystification of the term in that time period, which, as I argued earlier in this chapter, was propelled by a romantic rebellion against social confinements and an affirmation of the individual. For instance, Chogyū famously claimed that, “What we call instincts (*hon’nō*) is what humanity naturally (*jinsei honzen*) demands,” and then he went on to make an ideological statement, “when what humanity naturally demands is satisfied, it is called a beautiful (*biteki*) life (*seikatsu*).”⁶⁹ With definition like this, one would expect a system of ideas that contextualizes the meaning of each term, or at least one would expect answers to the basic questions, such as how the historicity of man and the historicity of nature can be explained, how man relates to nature, and whether what is acquired socially can be turned into part of human nature, all of which these thinkers were not able to provide. Without a theoretical system in place, the Marxists themselves were not able to refute the individualism or bourgeois inclinations embedded in the other references to humanity. All the debates were merely a matter of ideological contestation.

What attracted the naturalists to the natural sciences, and specifically to Darwinism, and perhaps partly, the Marxists to the social sciences, was the fact that once ideas make claims to *scientificity*, they immediately appear much more powerful and trustworthy due to their seemingly firm grasp of truth, in comparison to ideas that do not. Hence, as a historical, epistemological product, scientific ideologies should be analyzed within their historical context rather than judged according to their truth or falsity. This is not to dismiss outright the possibility that a scientific ideology as an idea or a system of ideas can accurately represent a given socio-historical condition and, thereby inform collective actions. Contrarily, it could be a very effective stimulus in a cultural, social, or political movement. The potential danger, however, lies in not

⁶⁹ Chogyū, “Biteki seikatsu o ronzu” (1901).

being able to control the repercussions of the ideology, because unlike a scientific statement, a scientific ideology cannot be proven true or false. Thus, the theoretician runs the risk of falling into an endless and often futile ideological competition. Arguably, this was precisely the outcome of the polemic between Kurahara and the naturalists.

With the early Marxists, it never came to point where any of them clarified the difference between what they and the naturalists called “hon’nō” and a materialist understanding of human needs. This sense of materialism, which is linked to “a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist,” as Walter Benjamin famously put it in his 1940 essay “On the Concept of History,” would have helped the Marxists resolve the awkward opposition between what seems to be indissoluble desires of the individual and the political struggle for a classless society. But unfortunately, the reality was that the Japanese Marxists were irrevocably stuck in the naturalists’ romantic, idealistic discourse of “hon’nō.” What’s more, this naïve understanding of human nature left room for an idealist understanding of human being where the essence of a human being could be fulfilled by moral, or even, national values.

The truth is at the height of imperialism, no discourse on individual instincts or “hon’nō,” or discussion of the innate social being of man, was forceful enough to hold back the ruthless march of imperialism. But perhaps, the crude but powerful demand of satisfying the basic material needs of the working masses could have been the source of a profound rationality.

iii. Humanism

How can one distinguish the notion of basic human needs from the idea that human nature is defined by its biological composition? Moreover, how is materialism to escape from the

accusation of it being committed to the latter, namely, a form of vulgar materialism? With respect to the problem of vulgar materialism, Fukumoto, who adopted a subjective idealist position in the matter of class struggle, was not only very aware, but also an acute critic himself.⁷⁰ However, as far as idealism versus materialism is concerned, it can be argued that Kurahara theoretically oscillated between subjective and humanist idealism on the one hand and vulgar materialism on the other due to his ambivalence toward the question of the essence of human being. Kurahara's theoretical writings in reality did not consist of either a coherent materialist or an idealist position. This oscillation marked the theoretical shortcomings of the leading ideologue and of prewar Japanese Marxism itself. The affirmation of a human nature, or more precisely, the incapability of consciously denying a human nature, was both a sign of Kurahara's influence by the anthropocentric bourgeois culture and of his ignorance toward scientific discoveries of his day. The theoretical need to clarify the relationship between science and Marxist philosophy in this case was overwritten by the urgency of political actions.

This trait of prewar Japanese Marxism to prioritize political expediency over philosophical clarity bespeaks the influence of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union upon JCP. Arguably, there was a general "politicization" of Marxist theory happening in the Soviet Union at the time, a transition from the partisan politics of Lenin to the dogmatism of Stalin, which tended to reduce theories and science to an instrument of propaganda.⁷¹ What took place within JCP in the 1920s echoed that transition, whereby theory became a servant of practice, and

⁷⁰ Fukumoto, "Wareware ha ima ika ni shite sentōteki yuibutsuron o tatakai tori uru ka," 379.

⁷¹ For further reading on Lenin and Stalin, read E. H. Carr, *The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin, 1917-1929* (UK, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

a pseudonym of the struggle for power. Indeed, if the Japanese naturalists and the *Geijutsuha*⁷² in general defended the doctrine of “art for art’s sake” (or “l’art pour l’art” in French, “geijutsu-shijōshugi” in Japanese), absolutizing the value of artistic expressions, the early Japanese Marxists were guilty of instrumentalizing science, art, philosophy and other fields of human activity for the singular purpose of power struggle.

In a word, science (*kagaku*), philosophy (*tetsugaku*), art (*geijutsu*) are that which prescribe to the entirety of activities of the mind (*seishinteki kōdō*).

Hence, we have to adopt the practical viewpoint that in order to carry out the mission of liberating the proletariat, a mission informed by history, we are allowed to adapt science, philosophy and art [for class struggle], and utilize them as tools. Toward art, our attitude cannot be an exception.⁷³

Here, I prefer the use of the term “power struggle” instead of “class struggle” despite the consistent use of the latter in Kurahara’s writings, because, historically speaking, the establishment of the JCP did not so much spring from prominent conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat than the introduction of Marxism by theorists such as Fukumoto in the 1920s. Moreover, the relationship between the working class and the intellectual leaders always remained a difficult issue within the whole Marxist movement in Japan.⁷⁴

⁷² The *Geijutsuha* (which can be directly translated into “the School of Aesthetics”) included a variety of theorists who debated literary strategies for portraying the experience of the alienated individual in modernity, all the while defending the separation and autonomy of art from political engagement.

⁷³ Kurahara, “Marukusushugi bungei hihyō no kijun” (“The Basis of Marxist Artistic Criticism”) (1927), *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū Vol. 55* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967), 151.

⁷⁴ “Taishūka,” which means to popularize, or to make accessible to the masses (*taishū*), was a constant focal point of discussion among the proletarian literature writers and theorists. In 1928, debates on the “taishūka” of proletarian literature were published on *Senki*. In January 1928, Kurahara published the essay “Musun kaikyū geijutsu undō no shindankai” (“The New Stage of Proletarian Art Movement”), insisting on the accurate representation of the masses (*taishū*) in proletarian art and the importance for proletarian art to be accepted by the masses. This indirectly showed the growing rift in the relationship

It is true that the struggle for power of the party in itself in no way constitutes a “politicization” of Marxist theory in the derogatory sense of the term, quite the opposite, it is a founding principle of Marxism-Leninism. However, when the party does not effectively represent the working class, “power struggle” of the party no longer corresponds to “class struggle.” This was an implicit risk of the power struggle of the JCP and its immediate reduction of science, art and philosophy to an instrument of politics. The emphasis of propaganda, political effectiveness, the rise to power, could potentially lead to the party’s losing sight of the interests of the working masses. That was arguably the case with the JCP, as questions such as the relation between man and nature, the dependence of man with respect to his environment, the relationship between science and humanity, all of which have implications for the interests of the workers, were thrown out of the window in exchange for political expediency.

In Kurahara’s 1931 essay, “Reflections on Artistic Methods,” he endeavored to articulate the humanism in the artistic expression of proletarian literature through demonstrating class difference as a concrete attribute of human nature. By the same token, he denounced the false humanism embodied by bourgeois literature which only pursued “abstract human qualities” and neglected the depiction of class.

Indeed, romance (*ren’ai*) is a part of human (*ningen*) life, and at times, a very important part. However, it is only a part but not its entirety. Through it one cannot represent the entirety of what constitutes human (*ningen*). The thought that one can somewhat represent humanity (*ningensei*) in its completeness belongs to the petite-bourgeois sentimentalists (*kanjōshugi-sha*). Not only is

between the proletarian leaders and writers on the one hand and the working masses on the other, which Kurahara had noticed and tried to remedy. In May the same year, Kurahara published “Puroretaria-Rearizumu e no michi.”

isolated romance an abstract concept, as an aspect of humanity (*ningensei*), it also does not constitute concrete humanity (*ningensei*), but only abstract humanity, that is, a universal quality of humanity...Yet, when depicting class struggle, the classed (*kaikyūteki*), concrete humanity (*ningensei*) emerges, as opposed to abstract humanity (*ningensei*) beyond class (*chō-kaikyūteki*).⁷⁵

Despite Kurahara's attempt to differentiate proletarian writers' humanism and bourgeois writers' humanism, his argument, similar to that in "Proletarian Realism," ironically fell victim to an abstract language which mainly utilized a series of conceptual dichotomies: concrete *versus* abstract, classed (*kaikyūteki*) *versus* beyond class (*chō-kaikyūteki*), particular (to express particularity, Kurahara used the term "living," or "ikita" in Japanese) *versus* universal (*ippanteki*), etc. The task of articulating class humanism in proletarian literature turned into a competition with bourgeois literatures for the more truly "human" literary tradition. Or perhaps, it was the other way around: Kurahara saw that the competition with bourgeois literatures entailed proletarian literature to prove its humanism against the common accusation of it being otherwise.

Notably, by 1931, the proletarian literature movement led by Kurahara and others was close to its demise. Many participants and sympathizers had been arrested and tortured by the state police (Kurahara himself was arrested in 1932). "Reflections on Artistic Methods," published in *Nappu* in September and October 1931, could be seen as Kurahara's final attempt to defeat his targeted cultural enemies, namely, the *Geijutsuha*, as well as his defense of the proletarian literature movement against its accumulated criticism over the years.

⁷⁵ Kurahara, "Geijutsuteki hōhō ni tsuite no kansō," 207.

A significant part of the essay was dedicated to the “problem of love” (*aijō no mondai*) in proletarian literature.⁷⁶ In the face of the criticism of proletarian writers sacrificing love (*aijō*) for class duties (*kaikyūteki gimu*), Kurahara rejected with the affirmation of the embodiment of “concrete humanity” (*gutaiteki nigensei*) in proletarian literature, in opposition to the “abstract humanity” in bourgeois literature. Furthermore, Kurahara devalued love portrayed in bourgeois literature as individualistic and confined to the context of family or romantic life. However, Kurahara stopped at defining a concept of love beyond the individual realm, for instance, “love for the party,” or “love in the context of class struggle,” or simply for “a collective form of love.” Instead, he turned the discussion of love or passion, back to the discussion of “natural” versus “social” dichotomy again.

However, when [proletarian writers] depict human beings, we immediately think of the problem of the social human (*shakaiteki ningen*), and not the problem of sexual desires (*seiyoku*) and appetites (*shokuyoku*). In other words, sexual desires, appetites and other “human passions” (*ningenteki kanjō*) should also be depicted from a unified social viewpoint and the viewpoint of class.⁷⁷

This is a curious turn in Kurahara’s defense of proletarian literature against the more “romantic” literary traditions. In fixating on the dichotomy of “natural” and “social,” and in aligning “natural” with human passions, “social” with class obligations (*kaikyūteki gimu*), he inadvertently acknowledged the necessary suppression of personal passions in one’s service to the party. Kurahara’s defense of proletarian literature turned into a defense of the seemingly elitist party, for it left the impression that there was a discrepancy between the interests of the avant-gardes of the movement and the interests of the working masses. What’s even more

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

problematic was the implication that the Marxist avant-gardes were the moral guards of the “unified social viewpoint,” whereas the working masses were irrevocably determined by their biological make-up.

But why didn’t Kurahara argue that class struggle is essentially grounded in the fight for fulfilling basic human *needs*? It would mean that class struggle has little to do with the private, personal form of love, and yet, it is still rooted in the interests of the working masses. Kurahara in his arguments seemed to have led himself into an impasse where he was forced to defend the voluntarist nature of the movement and to acquiesce to the mismatch of interests. I argue that Kurahara’s dilemma has much to do with his inability to perceive the possibility of denying a human nature. So it led him to believe that all human needs are sourced to the static nature of human being, whose representation was taken over by bourgeois literature, and so partisan interests fall into a different realm, which means the social realm.

As a result, Kurahara ended up accepting both vulgar materialism and Darwinism embodied by the Japanese naturalists, and subjective idealism and voluntarism, which was the path he pointed to for the movement. What in fact needed to be asked but wasn’t, was the difference between primary and secondary needs (*yoku*), and how class struggle relates to each respectively. And moreover, is there a scientific ideology embedded in the naturalist agenda of absolutizing “the true biological nature of human”? What was needed was a critical look into the dubitable option between vulgar materialism and voluntarism.

What he also failed to accomplish with his excessive use of empty conceptual antitheses was the clarification of the relation between Marxism and humanism. That Marxism needs to be humanist was taken for granted. In order to defeat bourgeois culture, Kurahara insisted, Marxism had to prove itself to be even more humanist. Ironically, this strategy revealed precisely how

influenced Kurahara was by his bourgeois counterparts. It also showed a lack of understanding of humanism from Kurahara beyond the interests of the individual. In fact, the humanism Kurahara proposed functioned more like a discourse of spiritual values, a link between the Marxist politics and the individualist bourgeois values, than a well-grounded philosophical stance.

Kurahara in “Artistic Methods” did show a certain level of understanding of early Marx.

As I said before, what we usually call “humanity” (*ningensei*) does not actually exist in reality. What exists is the nature (*seishitsu*) of the individual of a certain class. On this matter, Marx states, “the human essence is the ensemble of the social relations.” That is to say, what we call “humanity” (*ningensei*) is not something that does not change at all. It is nothing but the product of social relations. Because the social relations that define a certain human being are extremely complicated, the nature (*seishitsu*), activities, and thoughts of each human being are completely different. As the popular saying puts it, “so many men, so many minds.”⁷⁸

Whether Marxist theory is intrinsically humanist or anti-humanist, or if it alters its position vis-à-vis the question of humanism depending on the stage of the revolutionary activities, has been a heavily contested topic among Marxists. What Kurahara is taking for granted here is actually at the center of the debate: by claiming that the human essence is the ensemble of the social relations, does Marx renounce the existence of a human nature? It is clear that in this passage, Kurahara interpreted Marx’s statement as “there is a human essence, and it is *constituted* by the social relations surrounding that particular human being.” An anti-humanist could interpret the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

same quote from Marx in a way that rejects a human nature, and argues that according to Marx there is nothing that qualifies as a graspable essence that makes us fundamentally human.

In Kurahara's writings, he neglected a critical aspect of humanism, namely the relation between nature and human. It is implicit in Humanism's emphasis on human agency or human action that human being by exerting his subjective power establishes a hierarchy between himself and his external environment. This environment includes both the social and the natural environment. Yet, in Kurahara's humanist statements, nature or the natural environment is completely absent. Kurahara used only one meaning of "nature," which is "nature" as in human nature, as in the constant quality that defines and thereby separates human beings from the rest of the world. This in itself is in fact the most humanist statement.

There is a hard to ignore similarity between Kurahara's use of "nature" and the "nature" in Japanese Naturalism. The "nature" in Japanese Naturalism was inseparable from the incessant search for the inner truth of human existence, and moreover, the truth searching process relied upon applying moral values to physical desires (*yoku*). Although Kurahara oscillated between a human nature defined by physical desires and a human nature defined by social relations, he shared with the Japanese naturalists the methodology of applying absolute moral values to human nature, be it biological or social. What's more, both "natures" have little to do with the natural environment, and instead, referring to something intrinsic of human being. Therefore, it is fair to say that prewar Japanese Marxism never escaped the humanism and the concept of nature in Japanese Naturalism. In fact, more than anything, it transcribed the humanist discourse for partisan politics, while leaving many questions regarding the essence of man, the relation between man and nature, the relationship between the natural sciences and the social sciences, and the limits of nature, unanswered. All these unanswered questions, along with the idealization

of human nature, left open a dangerous path behind the revolutionary movement where the intellectuals, politicians, scientists, and government officials supportive of the imperialist cause in the 1930s could enter and apply new values to humanity.

Chapter III: Materialist Epistemology Against Idealist Ontology

i. Science and Modernity

In 1935, in publishing consecutively *Kagakuron (A Theory of Science)* and *Nihon ideorogiron (A Theory of Japanese Ideology)*, Tosaka Jun (1900-1945) claimed a position vis-à-vis modernity that had not been taken by Japanese intellectuals before. These two books were written in the context of rigorous critical activity in the philosophy of science, as well as in the context of contestation in the issue of modernity. Like other relevant works in the period, they both attempted to answer questions regarding the condition of the Japanese society, such as the imperialist wars,⁷⁹ Japan's relations with the "West," the division of wealth, the militarization of the country, and the increased number of factory workers. However, Tosaka answered these questions with a radical shift from cultural theories conjoined with a theory of social progress, or regress in some cases, to materialist theories of science and politics. It is also important to note that, what Tosaka attempted with *Kagakuron* and *Nihon ideorogiron* was not only a reestablishment of science against anti-modernization theories, but also a reinvention of Marxism in Japan through science, which made necessary the articulation of the man-nature relation in Marxism, and with it, the relation between natural and social histories, and above all, Marxism's own relation with the natural sciences.

With this shift, Tosaka launched into fierce polemics against the two idealist schools which put forth the cultural theories that accounted for Japan's spiritual decline—the Romantic

⁷⁹ By "imperialist wars" I mean Japan's military activities in Asia in the 1930s, which started much earlier than the global war. The turning point of the socio-political environment in Japan is the Manchurian Incident in 1931, which signaled the beginning of the Japanese imperialist and military expansion in Asia.

School (*Nihon romanha*) and the Kyoto School (*Kyōto gakuha*). In this chapter, I align the Romantic School with the Kyoto School as a brand of idealism in Japan in the 1930s and 40s for the reason that their romanticism was heavily based on a theory of the Spirit of the Poet as a unifying power of worldly conflicts.⁸⁰ Together they were the three important participants in (and against) the imperialist discourse in Japan in the 1930s to the end of the war. This chapter aims to illuminate mainly the epistemological and ontological controversies between Tosaka Jun and the central figure of the Kyoto School, Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945). It is partly to mimic Tosaka's theoretical trajectory, but also because a lot of the cultural disputes surrounding modernity could be sourced to difference in epistemology and understanding of the condition of the human existence.⁸¹ Although Tosaka did make what he called a “scientific critique of culture” targeting the Japanese Spirit (*Nihon seishin*) in *Nihon ideorogiron*, it will not be the focus of this chapter. The primary question underlying all Tosaka's materialist works was: in what sense is Marxism scientific, and other –isms prevalent in Japan at the time, such as Asianism, Japanism, and Romanticism, were not?

Japan's modernization—whether Japan was successfully modernized, when exactly was the beginning of Japanese modernity (*kindai*), and the relationship between that which constitutes modernity and pre-modernity, had been the locus of debates among politicians, governmental officials, writers, scientists, etc., since the restructuring of the Japanese polity in 1868. Again and again, modernity was consolidated by the affirmation of a past by contrast, although a different past every time, depending on the ideologies and practices identified as

⁸⁰ Analysis of other forms of idealism existent in the studied period, such as the humanist-idealism of the *Geijutsuha*, the scientism of the technocrats, or certain idealism imbedded in Marxism in Japan in the 1920s, however, will be the subject for other chapters.

⁸¹ Nishida was the teacher of Tosaka Jun, Miki Kiyoshi, and Nishitani Keiji. Tosaka broke with him when coining and criticizing “the Kyoto School” (“*Kyōto gakuha*”) in an essay in 1932. After the break, Nishida continued to show sympathy toward Tosaka's philosophical works.

“modern.” While it was difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint modernity in a comprehensive manner apart from it being a rupture from the past, its essential features always had to do with the emergence of certain types of scientific practices. Be it the industrialization of Japan, the secularization of society, the introduction of natural sciences into Japan, all modernization and anti-modernization theories came down to locating historical progress, and then assessing Japanese society accordingly. In all cases, developments in science and technology were key in determining whether Japan was “advanced” enough compared to the “West.”

The two approaches to modernity preceding Tosaka, despite their seeming opposition, confirmed the existence of an irreversible rupture in time, and thus ultimately of modernity itself: one retrospectively discovered a historical turning point, followed by an affirmation, the other rejected modernity for a return to the disrupted past. For example, the Japanese naturalists (*shizen shugi*) in the 1900s and 1910s headed the trend of raising retrospective awareness of Japan having become modern. They traced back to Tsubouchi Shōyō’s (1859-1935) *Shōsetsu Shinzui* (*The Essence of the Novel*, 1885-1886) as the beginning of a modern literature in Japan for its attempt to establish novel as an independent artistic genre away from morality.⁸² The naturalists’ relationship with the natural and social sciences deserves further scrutiny, but for now, it suffices to say that their conception of literature has its origin in their faith in understanding human nature *scientifically*. Then in the 1920s, with the rise of humanist-idealism there began a general antimodern reaction in Japan centered in *Geijutsuha* and the Kyoto School. The reaction continued in the 1930s and 1940s with the rise of the Romantic School. It culminated in the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium hosted by Kamei Katsuichirō (a founder

⁸² Shōyō’s *Shōsetsu shinzui* (*The Essence of the Novel*, 1885-1886) was pointed out by the Japanese naturalists as the founding text of modern Japanese literature, against the moralizing, didactic (the two together could be a good translation for the Japanese term, *kanzenchōaku*) literature of the past.

of the Romantic School), and two literary critics from the journal *Bungakkai* (*Literary World*), Kobayashi Hideo and Kawakami Tetsutarō, in 1942, which, as its title implied, called for a total overcoming of modernity and a return to the Japanese Spirit (*Nihon seishin*).⁸³ For example, Kamei Katsuichirō argued for a revival of Japanese culture through poetry, which he deemed as the embodiment of the pure Japanese Spirit, i.e., the spirit of the classics (*koten no seishin*), as a way of escaping “the West’s dying culture of modernity.”⁸⁴ Another example was the Kyoto School philosopher Nishitani Keiji’s interpretation of modernity as a state of conflicted viewpoints of the world, and the natural sciences “imported from the West” contributed to this un-unified vision. It was implicit in the text that Nishitani proposed an overcoming of the natural sciences with the help of a unified Japanese culture.⁸⁵

However, what Tosaka accomplished in *Kagakuron* and *Nihon ideorogiron* was nothing less than offering a third stance vis-à-vis modernity, or more precisely, a stance that abolishes cultural discourses of modernity altogether. Instead of locating the irreversible progress in society in general, Tosaka located it only in the forces of production, so that the issue of modernity was altogether dismissed, because according to Tosaka nothing annulled the past in its entirety. There was no irreversible progress with regard to the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor. As far as Marxism was concerned, even the annihilation of class would not lead to a *predetermined* perfected humanity; it could not be written into a teleology of moral progress.⁸⁶ What had always been taking place in history was the objective progress in the forces of production resulting from the advancement of science and technology on the one hand, and

⁸³ For an analysis of the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium against the backdrop of the relationship between Japan and the imperialist “West,” please read Richard Calichman’s introduction essay in the book he edited, *Overcoming Modernity: cultural identity in wartime Japan*.

⁸⁴ Kamei, Katsuichirō, “Gendai seishin ni kansuru oboegaki,” in *Overcoming Modernity*, 49.

⁸⁵ Nishitani, Keiji, “‘Kindai no chōkoku’ shiron,” in *Overcoming Modernity*, 54-55.

⁸⁶ Tosaka, Jun, *Nihon ideorogiron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2012), 379.

changing forms of class antagonism on the other, and the two possessed no necessary relation with each other.⁸⁷

In this way, Tosaka managed to reject the anti-modern position by defying any attempt to restore a mystified view of the world, as well as the resolutely modern position by forsaking the belief in the promises of the sciences—in their absolute objectivity, as well as their capacity to resolve all social problems. What Tosaka called for, which is comparable to Latour’s manifesto that “we have never been modern,”⁸⁸ was a reexamination of the fabricated boundaries of science and politics in the era his contemporary Japanese scholars called “modern”—a cultural term that carries no historical meaning beyond itself. His goal was to unmask the mutual limitation of science and politics, their interrelation. Like Latour, Tosaka overwrote modernity, the history of rupture, a cultural history, with the interrelated histories of science and politics; but unlike Latour, Tosaka was committed to a materialist philosophy as opposed to a comparative anthropology program. Notably, when the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium took place in 1942 at the height of Japan’s militarism, Tosaka devoted his intellectual labor to building a countering materialist camp, the Materialism Research Association (or, *Yuiken*, 1931-1938), despite three arrests by the state police,⁸⁹ to refute the imperialist discourse founded on anti-modernization idealist theories. Along with the issue of modernity, Tosaka also dismissed the juxtaposition between the “East” and the “West,” between one that modernizes, the other waits to be modernized, between one that invented and thereby owns science, the other only borrows.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 388-389.

⁸⁸ Latour, Bruno, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Massachusetts, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁸⁹ Tosaka had in total three arrests, respectively in 1935, 1938 and 1944, and eventually died in prison in 1945.

ii. The Three Aspects of Science: The Epistemological Aspect

The epistemological aspect of science is often neglected by Marxists. The epistemological questions pertaining to science are where scientificity and politicality often stand mutually exclusive. If “the unavoidability of politics” points to partisanship (*tōhasei*) in and of scientific knowledge, which is fundamental to Tosaka’s theory of science, the second proposition refers to another quality of scientific knowledge imbedded in Tosaka’s materialism: the match between the conceptual structure that captures the world and what is “really there,” or simply, reality (*jitsuzai*). In answering the epistemological question, Tosaka endeavored to establish a firm link between Marxism as a revolutionary doctrine and scientific knowledge, and thereby, re-establish Marxism scientifically. In a word, in Tosaka’s materialist theory of knowledge also lies his attempt to salvage the notion of “truth.” This chapter will examine the dichotomy and relations between the political and “truth” characters of scientific knowledge, more particularly, Tosaka’s materialist epistemology and the ways in which Tosaka used it to defy the idealism of the Kyoto School which was the dominant philosophy in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s.

Tosaka organized *Kagakuron*, besides the first two introduction chapters, “the Preliminary Concepts of Science” (“*kagaku no yobi gainen*”) and “Science and Reality” (“*kagaku to jitsuzai*”), into three themes and chapters according to which he tackled the question of the relation between science and reality, which he equated with the question of the “construction of knowledge” (*chishiki kōsei*).⁹⁰ The three themes were what he called the theoretical question of scientific methodology (*hōhō*), the social question of ideology, and finally, the question of the overall system of the sciences, to which he gave the name, the “scientific world” (*kagakuteki sekai*). The structure of the book shows that *Kagakuron* centers on

⁹⁰ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 77-78.

epistemological discussions, that is, the construction of scientific knowledge, as well as the influence of social factors upon it.

Among the three aspects of science, the productive aspect of science, where Tosaka scrutinized issues such as technological advancement, productivity, the relations between nature and society, was no doubt that which most easily gave away Tosaka's political allegiance to Marxism. Yet, it received the least attention in *Kagakuron*. *Kagakuron* was a book in which Tosaka excelled as an epistemologist, whose main concern was the nature of scientific knowledge. The writing and publishing of *Kagakuron* was in many ways what separated Tosaka from earlier Marxists of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), such as Fukumoto Kazuo, Kurahara Korehito, and Nakano Shigeharu, in that it revealed the philosopher's intent to rethink the scientificity of Marxism. Notably, along with the dissolution of the JCP due to the pressure of the imperialist state, Marxism had lost its status as a social science by the early 1930s. When Tosaka wrote *Kagakuron* and *Nihon ideorogiron*, he was aware that the tide of Marxism as a revolutionary practice had ebbed, while the tide of fascism was in.⁹¹ Nonetheless, Tosaka held onto the perhaps only hope that still remained in reestablishing Marxism: by reestablishing its scientificity. Without clarifying the relationship between science and politics, between the "scientific world" and the Marxist revolutionary program, it was impossible to clear the road for Marxism in Japan. In this sense, *Kagakuron*, the book on scientific knowledge, is nothing less than the groundwork for the reconciliation between the two levels of materialist Marxism, i.e., that of "scientific struggle" towards a demystified, disenchanted vision of the world, and that of class struggle.⁹²

Tosaka's contemplation on the nature of knowledge in *Kagakuron* constituted an attack against his idealist contemporaries, namely the Kyoto School and the Romantic School, through

⁹¹ Tosaka, *Nihon ideorogiron*, 282.

⁹² Timpanaro, Sebastiano, *On Materialism* (New York: Verso, 1985), 70.

explaining the fundamental theoretical difference between the materialist and the idealist camps on issues of reality, objectivity, and the relationship between human conceptual networks and the external world. Behind the mass of new terminological devices, behind the opposition of policies regarding Japan's militarization, Tosaka discerned two principal philosophical trends, and thereby invariably aligned himself with the materialist tradition of Bacon, Feuerbach, Marx and Engels, as opposed to the idealist tradition of Kant, Hegel, and later the neo-Kantians, from which the Kyoto School inherited. For example, on the objectivity of knowledge, Tosaka criticized Kant for denying the possibility of representing things (*mono*) "as they are" (*sono mama*), and for replacing the "objectivity of things" (*mono to iu kyakkan*) with "the subjective objectivity of knowledge, which is the unity of the constitution of knowledge itself."⁹³ For Tosaka, the crux of materialist epistemology lied in knowledge's accessibility to the "*sono mama*" of things, whereas idealist epistemology denied that accessibility, and instead turned inward to the human mind or spirit in search for "objectivity." Hence, in order to understand Tosaka's materialism and its criticism of idealist thoughts in Japan, one would have to first of all follow him through his quest for "*sono mama*"—what qualities *exactly* of things that he believed can be known, what cannot, how one can obtain that knowledge. And why did Tosaka choose to express objectivity with the Japanese phrase "*sono mama*" or "*ari no mama*," as opposed to "*mono jitai*," a term used interchangeably with "*sono mama*" in his criticism of Kant's epistemology but not consistently throughout the book, which is a more obvious Japanese equivalent of "things in themselves"? If materialist epistemology was the first step Tosaka took to found Marxism scientifically, that is, against the falsity of idealism, that will also be where I begin.

⁹³ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 50-51. "chishiki no ko no kōsei no kessoku ni teochi ga nakatta to iu shukan no kyakkansei."

iii. A Demystified Vision: Tosaka's Epistemology

Unlike others who were committed to the topic of science and technology in the same period, such as mathematician Ogura Kin'nosuke's *Kagakuron (A Theory of Science)*, materialist-Marxist philosopher Aikawa Haruki's *Gijutsuron (A Theory of Technology)* (1935), or materialist philosopher Saigusa Hiroto's series of books (1939-1951) on modern Japanese technology, Tosaka did not write a history of science or technology in Japan, but rather, he focused on the nature of scientific knowledge, and began with questioning the possibility of ("kagaku to jitsuzai") and the means ("kagaku no hōhō") through which external reality can be known.⁹⁴ In many of these works that dealt with science and technology, the authors did trace the establishment of these scientific categories in Japan. However, what they failed to do, that Tosaka attempted in *Kagakuron*, was to question whether and how objective truths could be attained by the sciences. This tendency of avoiding the subject of objective truths or simply taking it for granted that objective truths can be attained in science is repeated in current scholarship on science and technology debates in Japan. It is true that the adoption of new research techniques, or even more so, "paradigms," is only conceivable in certain socio-political environment, with the founding of certain institutions.⁹⁵ But by avoiding the issue of objective truths in the studies of science, the commentators, now or then, risk acquiescing in a relativistic stance on scientific knowledge without meaning to.

⁹⁴ Saigusa Hiroto, like Tosaka also a founding member of the Materialism Research Association, wrote a series of books on modern technology, from *Nihon no chisei to gijutsu (Japanese Intellect and Technology)* (1939) to the conclusive work of *Gijutsu no tetsugaku (Philosophy of Technology)* (1951).

⁹⁵ Thomas Kuhn famously put forth the concept of "paradigm" in his 1962 book, *Structure of Scientific Revolution*, as his contribution to the sociology of scientific knowledge. Kuhn proposed to see achievement in science as emergence of a new problem-solving model (a "paradigm") against an old model. Kuhn's conception of science was one that evolved around scientists as problem-solvers and their scientific community built upon shared rules and standards for scientific practice. Kuhn, Thomas, *Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

Of course, by choosing the object of inquiry, namely, whether it was a “kagakuron” (“a theory of science”) or a “gijutsuron” (“a theory of technology”), a science commentator had in many ways already determined for himself the questions to ask. In the case of *gijutsuron*, the question of objective truths would most likely not come up, but instead, questions regarding productivity, systems of machines, and the relationship between technology and the economy, would be raised. This speaks to, whether the commentators were aware of it or not, a fundamental difference between science and technology, and more deeply, to the fact that, unlike technology, what is called “science” is related to the philosophical quest for truths and the philosophical discipline of epistemology, that is, whether and how something can be known, and known as truths.

Epistemology was one of the main battlefields of Tosaka and the Kyoto School philosophers. Perhaps more telling of Tosaka’s materialist agenda than the content of his epistemology was the limited amount of ontological discussion in *Kagakuron*, despite his perfect awareness that the Kyoto School philosophers’ emphasis on ontology. He translated the question of the ontology of consciousness (*ishiki*) to that of knowledge (*chishiki*),⁹⁶ not unlike the way in which the philosophical term of epistemology was invented in 1854.⁹⁷

At the basis of Tosaka’s theory of knowledge, Tosaka’s ontological explanation of consciousness reveals the part of Tosaka’s materialism that surpasses the limits of epistemology. The question of where consciousness (*ishiki*) originates seems to have pushed Tosaka to argue ontologically for a materialist theory of the mind. That is, confronted with the question of *ishiki*, Tosaka as a materialist found himself having to answer that intelligence has as its ground of

⁹⁶ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 54-58.

⁹⁷ J. F. Ferrier, *Institutes of Metaphysic: The Theory of Knowing and Being* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood And Sons, 1854). Ferrier coined the term epistemology as a countering philosophical discipline to ontology.

knowledge a material origin, despite his unwillingness to refute Kyoto School's idealist ontology with a materialist ontology.

Why things can be grasped as they are (*ari no mama*)? –This is my explanation.

First of all, one cannot forget the fact, which is at first sight commonplace, ostensibly meaningless, that however free, autonomous, self-referential consciousness (*ishiki*) is, it is given birth to by the brain. If philosophers say that questions of consciousness such as whether consciousness (*ishiki*) is given birth to by the brain do not matter, it is because they have no objection toward accepting the hypothesis. At the moment, there are no other options but to think that consciousness (*ishiki*) is an unknown entity of the biological substance of the brain or a certain state or function of the brain. All philosophers who recognize physiological truths will have to assume this thesis. If philosophers do not assume it, how do they explain the happening and formation of consciousness (*ishiki no hassei to seiritsu*)? If one does not give such an explanation (and so long as one does not offer immortality of the soul as a scientific thesis), one will be faced with the question: isn't what we give here the only possible explanation [of consciousness]? How do philosophers have any right to refute this explanation?⁹⁸

This is a fascinating moment in Tosaka's *Kagakuron*. Tosaka's objective of writing a materialist theory of knowledge temporarily submits in the question of consciousness (*ishiki no mondai*) to the necessity of acquiescing to ontological claims about the birthplace of consciousness. In order to establish what he meant by *kagaku* or science, which entailed the matching between the

⁹⁸ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 54.

conceptual world and the external material world, Tosaka found himself having to affirm first of all the existence of the external world, and second of all, that consciousness does not take place in a world independent from the material world, but it originates there. Or as Tosaka put it, “the question of consciousness” (*ishiki no mondai*) cannot be separate from “the question of nature” (*shizen no mondai*), or simply, consciousness *is* a part of nature.⁹⁹

But, why did Tosaka give such a naturalist ground to his materialist theory of knowledge, which seemed to lead toward “vulgar materialism” and away from the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels? Why did Tosaka see a necessary link between “things can be known” and “things exist,” and moreover, between “things can be known” and “that which knows things exists and it exists in the same way that things exist”? The answers to these questions define Tosaka’s materialism. A great deal of it comes down to understanding the relationship between his materialism and its idealist counterparts.

It would be fair to say that the uncertainty which existed in the various Marxist camps in Japan as to the way in which materialism should be understood was not dealt with until Tosaka’s writings on science and materialist philosophy. The ambiguity surrounding materialism, which in this case was oftentimes overwritten by the urgency of class struggle (*kaikyū tōsō*) by Japanese Marxists in the 20s, arguably, goes all the way back to Marx himself.¹⁰⁰ With Tosaka, the question of materialism not only took center stage again, but also came to be seen not so much as a problem of theoretical definition, but of polemic. The “naturalist” tendencies only seem out of

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ Timpanaro, *On Materialism*, 40-45. Timpanaro argues that the Marx of *Capital* is more materialist than the Marx of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, and that even in Marx’s mature thought, his work on materialism is more on the socio-economical level than on the “natural” level. Hence, Timpanaro believes that the conception of “nature” is ambiguous in the origin of Marxist theory, which in and of itself demands clarification with regards to the question of “nature.”

place in Tosaka's overall epistemological agenda in *Kagakuron* because his polemic against very specific idealisms is not fully comprehended.

In a nutshell, Tosaka's materialist polemic was directed, first of all, against Kantian epistemology, upon which Nishida Kitarō's theory of pure experience (*junsui keiken*) was based. Second, against the idealist ontology founded on Nishida's theory of spiritual nothingness (*mu*). The first is a question of scientific knowledge versus experience, in particular, of how knowledge establishes its objects, and then accordingly, its objectivity; the second is primarily a question concerning the relationship between man and nature, and between the two historicities—the historicity of human society and that of nature.

In the second chapter of *Kagakuron*, "Science and Reality" (*kagaku to jitsuzai*), Tosaka organized his first polemic through formulating a critique of Kant's epistemology. It is important to note that Tosaka did not distinguish science (*kagaku*) from general knowledge (*gakumon*). More specifically, he defined science as "collected, organized knowledge" whose function is to "reflect a certain unit of reality."¹⁰¹ In a way, Tosaka's critique of Kant is less of a total philosophical refutation of Kant's conception of knowledge than a correction of the Kantian epistemological argument for the legitimacy of science as a form of knowledge. In fact, the goal of Kantian epistemology was no other than to establish the scientificity of knowledge. In this sense, Tosaka inherited no less from Kant and Hegel, and from German Idealism in general, than Nishida did. By inheriting from and then refuting Kant, Tosaka aimed to re-establish the scientificity of science against the anti-science Kyoto School philosophers. This antagonism undoubtedly resonated with the antagonism between Marx and the young Hegelians.

¹⁰¹ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 45, 68.

Tosaka accomplished all of this by articulating what he believed to be the actual relationship between science, with which human beings know the world, and reality, that which is to be known. So, the crux of the matter lied in “reality,” or *jitsuzai*, because what Tosaka defined as “reality” in turn defined the realism (*jitsuzai ron*) that Tosaka attached to scientific practices. By reality Tosaka meant the material reality, or sometimes, he simply used the term, things, or *mono*. In *Kagakuron*, Tosaka basically used *jitsuzai* (reality), *mono* (things), *jitsuzai sekai* (the real world), *bussuitsu* (matter) interchangeably. With this somewhat loose reference to reality, Tosaka did not so much theoretically define reality as such but eliminate in the realm of reality what he thought did not belong—reality is *not* what the human being senses, imagines, or even cognizes.

By excluding human psychology from the realm of reality, Tosaka characterized his “reality” with exteriority and materiality. In externalizing, materializing what was called “reality,” Tosaka declared his position in the matter of realism which had been the subject of debate in different disciplines in Japan since the 1880s: reality is *not* mere contents of our thought. Rather, realism vis-à-vis the issue of epistemology has to do with reliance on technological practices in the lab through which scientists can *scientifically* prove that what is spoken of “reality” is true. Tosaka here renounced first of all, the naturalists that came before, who resorted to psychological realism for establishing the authenticity of their literature—a literary realism that the naturalists traced back to Tsubouchi Shōyō, and second of all, his contemporary Romantics and ontologists, who conjured external reality away with either the Spirit of the Poet or spiritual nothingness (*mu*). Tosaka argued against a definition of reality based on a preconceived formula, such as the formula of “reality is human nature” by Shōyō, and

instead, advocating an understanding of “reality” that is inseparable from the human activity of forming knowledge of “what’s out there.”

Tosaka’s materialist theory of knowledge thus consists in the identity (*dōitsu*) between the system of knowledge that human beings try to form of external reality and reality itself. This identity presupposes the existence of external reality and processes of knowledge forming with regards to the external reality.

Thus, when one thinks about it, knowledge itself is a form of structure (*kōseibutsu*). In structuring there is an end (*mokuteki*) and the means (*shudan*) for that end, and knowledge is what stands between the end and the means. That said, if one asks what the objective or the end of structure is, it is, as I said before, nothing other than the representation [or literally, creating a model of] (*mosha*) of reality (*jitsuzai*).¹⁰²

Tosaka’s affirmation of the correspondence between knowledge and reality means that he recognized achievement of these knowledge-forming processes, which was nothing other than truths, while admitting the obtainment of truths to be an ongoing process of transformation.¹⁰³ By stating that truths transform in time as our knowledge of things deepens and becomes richer, Tosaka thereby declared his departure from what he calls “naïve realism” (*bokuso jitsuzairon*) which believes that the final truths of things can be grasped once and immediately.¹⁰⁴

It was in this sense that Tosaka equated the question of the relation between science and reality with that of the construction of knowledge (*chishiki kōsei*). The latter is essentially a human activity that takes place in time, and whose goal is to raise private, subjective knowledge

¹⁰² Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 64-65.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

to a publically universally recognized status, i.e., the status of scientificity (*kagakusei*), in the society. The only means to achieve that is not through some *a priori* concepts that promise cognition (as in Kant), but through scientific experiments, Tosaka argued.

According to Kant, knowledge is, by taking the exemplary senses given to subjectivity as material, and then, according it to *a priori* (which has nothing to do with the things being cognized) subjective rules (such as space, time, categories, schemes, principles, etc.), the outcome of the arrangements. In this way, knowledge, and furthermore, experience (*keiken*) and understanding (*ninshiki*) in the broadest sense, namely, knowledge, or truths (*shinri*), that have acquired objectivity, become something that is not grounded on the objectivity of things, but rather, is based on a form of subjective objectivity (*shukan no kyakkansei*), which is the unity of the constitution of knowledge itself.¹⁰⁵

Here lies Tosaka's major critique of Kant's epistemology: his idealism in the construction of knowledge as a social product. According to Tosaka, Kant's belief in the impossibility to know "things in themselves," as well as his retreat to properties pertaining to the knowing subject for the authority of knowledge constitutes Kant's idealist stance in epistemology. The outcome is the false objectivity of "subjective objectivity" (*shukan no kyakkansei*). If one reads Tosaka's refutation of Kant carefully, one will notice that Tosaka did not refute the Kantian epistemology

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 50-51. In this passage, Tosaka uses the very important formula of "knowledge (*chishiki*) = truths (*shinri*)," which I translate into "knowledge, or truths," as the formula implies that Tosaka sees the identity between knowledge and truths. It is also important to note that in the Japanese language, nouns have no plural form, so "*chishiki* = *shinri*" technically could be translated either into "knowledge = truth" or "knowledge = truths" in English. But I insist on the plurality of "truths" in the English formula, given the context of what has been discussed thus far, namely, Tosaka's idea that truths are discovered and altered in time.

completely. Tosaka agreed with Kant on the beginning of knowledge: things imposing themselves on our senses and thereby giving rise to sensations. However, disagreeing with Kant, Tosaka argued that the object (*taishō* in Japanese, *Gegenstand* in German) of knowledge *is* both an object of consciousness subject to concepts and cognitive rules and an objective existence (*kyakkanteki na sonzai*) in the world; its being the former, an object of the Critical Era, does not stop it from being the latter, an object in the external world.¹⁰⁶ The key to pass through the barrier set between consciousness and the external world by the Critical Era, Tosaka emphasized, is the activeness of the knowing subject, who finds private sensations insufficient for establishing knowledge and turns to experiments (*jikken*) as a source of authority. In order to achieve true objectivity with the social product called “knowledge,” Tosaka stressed the necessity of testifying processes, that is, the need to always go back to the things examined for proof of the correctness of the knowledge. To put it in Tosaka’s own words, “experiment is what guarantees the scientificity (*kagakusei*) of science.”¹⁰⁷

Tosaka regarded experiments (*jikken*), along with technology (*gijutsu*), as indispensable components of practice (*jissen*), as the active side of human’s relationship to nature.¹⁰⁸ This is a representative moment of Tosaka’s materialist-Marxist project in that it signifies Tosaka’s departure from a socio-economical interpretation of practice often taken by the revolutionary Marxists of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) in the 1920s, to a more materialist conception of practice that echoed at once the historical materialism of the Marx of *The German Ideology*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 91-92. Also, Lenin, V. I., *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, 45-46. “The sophism of idealist philosophy consists in the fact that it regards sensation as being not the connection between consciousness and the external world, but a fence, a wall, separating consciousness from the external world—not an image of the external phenomenon corresponding to the sensation, but as the ‘sole entity.’”

¹⁰⁷ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 135.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

(1846) and the materialism of *Capital I* (1867). Not unlike the mature Marx, Tosaka with his materialist scheme turned away from the “revolutionary man” to the “working man,” for whom practice meant his activeness not only with respect to his own social conditions, but also with respect to the material world. The immediate implication of this materialist scheme of human actions is, of course, that there is also a passive side of this relationship. It is confirmed in Tosaka’s epistemology: that the proof of objectivity lies not with the knowing subject, but with the reality to be known. The “working man,” also the “knowing man,” insisted Tosaka, always has to turn to the external world, not toward the perfection of his means, for proof of the correctness of his knowledge.

Having gone through these testifying processes, knowledge thus reaches the status of true objectivity, stated Tosaka, and it is only in this way it becomes *science*. In other words, according to Tosaka’s conception of science, science in the epistemological sense is nothing but knowledge that achieves verifiability; science is a testified representation of things “as they are” (*sono mama*). What Tosaka offers here is an account of science that fits neither into the sociology of scientific knowledge nor into the positivist account of science. The former is often accused of relativism, while the latter finds difficulty in accounting for scientific revolutions and the ideological aspect of science. No doubt, the field of sociology of scientific knowledge only emerged in the late 1960s, long after Tosaka’s death, but one can certainly find hints in Tosaka’s theory of science that could potentially reform, extend, if not totally renounce, the field. Thomas Kuhn in the postscript of *Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962), a foundational work of the sociology of scientific knowledge, tried to respond to the accusation of his relativism, but the ambivalence of his refutation only affirmed the legitimacy of the question: “A scientific theory is usually felt to be better than its predecessors not only in the sense that it is a better instrument for

discovering and solving puzzles but also because it is somehow a better representation of what nature is really like,” but Kuhn went on to negate the “match”: “the notion of a match between the ontology of a theory and its ‘real’ counterpart in nature now seems to me illusive in principle.”¹⁰⁹ By forgoing the “match” for a historical study of revolution of paradigms, did Kuhn not already fall victim to relativism? Isn’t this a problem underlying most of the sociological work on science, namely, their ambiguity, or sometimes, even indifference towards truths?¹¹⁰

If one summarizes Tosaka’s statements on scientific truths into “reality can always be known scientifically, insofar as there is a constant process of getting to know the external world,” it is obvious that Tosaka’s intent on rejecting relativism did not impede his other intent, which was to understand the socio-historical limitations on the methods and conditions of the production of scientific truths. Tosaka’s conception of science was open to the modification of truths, the change of scientific models, and the possibility of different layers of reality.¹¹¹ Thus, Tosaka’s polemic against empirio-criticism consists in firstly, his disqualification of experience *by itself* as a sufficient method of establishing truths, secondly, his affirmation of different social factors as being conditions of the production of knowledge in both the natural and the social sciences.¹¹² Tosaka’s criticism of Ernst Mach’s positivism and his influence on the “scientific spirit” of the “bourgeois natural scientists” would prove crucial in understanding the complex

¹⁰⁹ Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 206.

¹¹⁰ Latour in proposing his comparative anthropology against the asymmetrical anthropological approach that characterizes modernity emphasizes the importance of confronting scientific truths, “To this end, [comparative anthropology] must become capable of confronting...the true knowledge to which we adhere totally. It must therefore be made capable of studying the sciences by surpassing the limits of the sociology of knowledge and, above all, of epistemology.” Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 91-92.

¹¹¹ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 65.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 152-153.

relationship between the Japanese Marxists and the scientists in this period, in particular on the issue of the autonomy of science.

Returning to the ontology-epistemology question, why did “reality” need to exist for Tosaka’s theory of knowledge? If Tosaka’s theory of knowledge was founded on the rejection of Kant’s doctrine of *apriorism* when it came to the justification of knowledge, it meant that Tosaka would have to look for other means to justify knowledge.¹¹³ Now we know that this means is experiment (*jikken*). Experience, which includes the procedures of observation, measurement, and analysis (of the measurements), is part of experiment but insufficient by itself, according to Tosaka. Although he did not specify what constitutes experimental practices in science, it is clear by now that experiments are the back-and-forth practices of the scientists between scientific models of representation and that which is represented for the purpose of testing if the former relates to the latter in a matching way. That is to say, experiment signifies the link, given by practice, between what happens within our mind and the external world. Then comes the question, if one wants to justify experiment as a valid practice, wouldn’t one also need to affirm the existence of its sources, namely that the objects it engages lie outside of the thinking mind and have their own claim to existence? Hence, Tosaka’s justification of knowledge also demands his affirmation of the *existence* of external reality, as it is the point of origin that knowledge constantly goes back to test its validity. The secret of Tosaka’s *Theory of Science* is thereby revealed: what founds the materialist epistemology lies beyond epistemology—the ontology of things (*mono*).

¹¹³ This term is borrowed from Karl Popper’s criticism of Kant’s epistemology, specifically, his use of “*a priori* justification” for induction on experience. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002).

How do we understand this seeming deviation from dialectical materialism, of which Tosaka was also allegedly an advocate?¹¹⁴ This is a question to which this dissertation, given its scale and nature, is unable to offer a comprehensive answer, as it requires research into the whole tradition of dialectical materialism. Nonetheless, this seemingly undialectical moment in *Kagakuron* could perhaps shed light on some of the philosopher's fundamental struggle in formulating a materialist theory of science: on the one hand, the Marxist tradition pulled him towards a more dialectical materialism, on the other hand, the sciences, especially the natural sciences, had as their ground a materialism that was “vulgar” in the way it identified consciousness (*ishiki*) with matter (*busshitsu*) and certain biological functions. Were these fluctuations in fact in Marx himself, resulting in two materialisms in Marx, and hence different meanings of nature and science thereof? The fact that Tosaka was only one among a group of Marxists (Engels, Lenin, and some contemporary Marxists, such as Timpanaro) who tried to establish a stronger link between Marxism and the natural sciences through examining human struggle not only on the socio-economical level but also on the “natural” level could potentially support a reading of Marx in this direction.

In either case, how to reconcile the two materialisms—one speaks of matter and reality, the other speaks of representation of things and the influence of knowledge upon and by social structures, is at the center of Tosaka's theory of science. Without giving a comprehensive explanation of the undialectical moment in Tosaka's materialist epistemology, I want to suggest political reasons as to why the philosopher wants to build a materialist philosophy based upon the results of the sciences. For Tosaka it all came down to, I argue, formulating a theory of

¹¹⁴ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 169. Tosaka claims that the connection between dialectics of nature and historical materialism lies in dialectical materialism, or a materialist dialectics. He further states that dialectics of nature and historical materialism represent respectively the two departments of dialectical materialism—the natural and the social.

science in defiance of the spiritualism prevailing in Japan at the time. Here I speak of spiritualism in the broader sense, not in the narrow sense of the spiritualism of nothingness by the Kyoto School. For instance, in Tosaka's discussion of "Nippon ideorogī," a term with which Tosaka evoked different ideologies, such as Japanism (*Nihon shugi*), Orientalism (*Tōyō shugi*), Asianism (*Ajia shugi*), he described a wave of unstoppable affects (*kanjō*) under these names sweeping across Japan.¹¹⁵ Japanese spiritualism at its broadest, as it was portrayed by Tosaka, pertained to a socio-political condition of the country being dominated by patriotic emotions under the apparently unifying term of Japanese Spirit (*Nihon seishin*), but in actuality it existed without a standard form. The movement as a cultural, intellectual trend was characterized by the incessant search for what was culturally uniquely Japanese. Tosaka identified this movement of spiritualism to have begun invading the press, literature, and the science circles since two to three years before the publishing of *Nihon ideorogiron*, so roughly between 1932 and 1933, conditioned by a current of nationalism across the world, including the rise of Hitler in Germany and of Mussolini in Italy.¹¹⁶ I argue that the subordination of civil life to a national (and international) tide of affects was what propelled the philosopher to form an opposing tide: a philosophical partisanship unified under materialism, but, as I pointed out earlier, it was a materialism that is not without fluctuations within itself.

The passages in *Kagakuron* concerning biological properties of the human brain, the historicity of nature, and the origin of human consciousness, show the fearlessness of the philosopher in acknowledging the accomplishment of the sciences thus far, oftentimes at the

¹¹⁵ Tosaka, *Nihon ideorogiron*, 132.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 134. Some of the key thinkers pointed out by Tosaka in relation to this Spiritualist movement include Kihira Tadayoshi (1874-1949), Takasu Yoshijirō (1880-1948), and Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960). They were an older generation of philosophers—the same generation as Nishida, who shared a cultural program surrounding the Japanese Spirit. Watsuji, much like Nishida, was very influenced by German Romanticism, in particular, by the works of Hegel.

expense of what has already been established in the corresponding philosophical traditions. This fearlessness could come from nowhere else but the urgency of constructing a rational, demystified vision of world. If a rational community consists of a collectivity of men each of whom act according to his own reason, not controlled by his affects or the opinions of others (as it is shown to us by Spinoza in *Tractatus Politicus*), a demystified community entails a materialist epistemology which defines what we know is *true* of this world and what should be left aside as nonsense and superstitious. In this sense, the more “vulgar” or undialectical materialism in Tosaka, which sometimes dealt with matter and the natural world (*shizen kai*) as if they could provide explanation for all human activities, was rendered necessary for his political agenda, because it provided the philosophical ground for truths, since according to Tosaka’s definition truths are nothing but knowledge that has been tested of its matching with “a ‘real’ counterpart in nature.” Given the overall objective of *Kagakuron* being the construction of knowledge, it is difficult to believe that the epistemologist actually advocated a mechanical theory of the human mind, rather than defying the philosophical maneuvering of concepts of the human mind. So, in the scheme of demystification concepts with strong spiritual overtones, such as “awareness/cognition” (“*ninshiki*”) or “consciousness” (*ishiki*), were to be either replaced by a valid term or dismissed as nonsense; “*ninshiki*” thus meant nothing but to represent reality (*jitsuzai wo mosha suru*); “*ishiki*” was a more complex example, because at one point Tosaka wanted to reduce it to “something given birth to by the brain,”¹¹⁷ but the term was important in his discussion of the man-nature relationship, which is beyond epistemology. Having said that, it is clear that the ontology of things in this case is in the service of a materialist epistemology, which in turn serves the building of a demystified community against a mystifying empire.

¹¹⁷ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 53-54.

Tosaka's epistemology was also directed to a more specific philosophical opponent: the idealisms of the Kyoto School and the Romantic School. I will focus on the Kyoto School due to their philosophical complexity and systematicity in comparison to the Romantic School. The opposition was between a materialist epistemology and an idealist ontology, which thrived on a world of meanings, but meanings that had lost their grasp on reality.

If Tosaka's critique of Kant's epistemology led to a materialist epistemology founded on truths and truths-testing procedures, i.e., experiments, Nishida's *development* of Kant's epistemology led to displacement of immediate knowledge (*chokusetsu no chishiki*) or knowledge from intuition (*chokkaku*) by immediate experience (*chokusetsu keiken*) and intuition. One could say that the Kantian critical knowing subject turned into an intuiting and introspective subject who had lost all interest in knowing the external world in Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū* (*An Inquiry Into the Good*).¹¹⁸ In this sense, both Tosaka and Nishida inherited and departed from Kant, but have taken the completely opposite direction. Unlike Tosaka who worked toward the construction of knowledge, Nishida was committed to devaluing knowledge in general and validating experience and consciousness as the only reality.

In summary, Tosaka and Nishida's philosophical opposition is threefold. First is their opposing theory of reality (*jitsuzai*).

The realm of pure matter (*junsui buttai kai*) independent from consciousness (*ishiki*) is an abstract concept. There is no other absolute reality (*shinjitsuzai*)

¹¹⁸ Nishida, Kitarō, *Zen no kenkyū*, (*Aozora bunko*), <https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000182/files/946.html>. First published in 1911. It was the first book of Nishida Kitarō, and also the theoretical foundation of the Kyoto School.

but the phenomenon of consciousness (*ishiki genshō*). The absolute reality (*shinjitsuzai*) of immediate experience can be justified by the same token.¹¹⁹

Here, instead of using the usual term “jitsuzai” for “reality,” Nishida chose the term “shinjitsuzai,” implying with the prefix “shin” (which means “true”) that there was certain truth attached to what I will call the “internal reality.” Importantly, unlike Tosaka’s clear definition of “truth” in *Kagakuron*, *Zen no kenkyū* not only fell short of a definition of “truth,” but also applied the qualities of “true” and “real” more or less interchangeably to the phenomenon of consciousness throughout the text as a means of suggesting its singularity and absoluteness. On the other side, external reality was conjured away as an abstract concept which was no more real than pure experience, if real at all. However, Tosaka as a materialist, who defined matter (*mono*) as objective reality and truths as representation of *mono* as it is, rejected any realm independent from the realm of *mono*; and as an epistemologist, he criticized the idealist philosophers by revealing that “consciousness” in their context meant ahistorical, eternal “meaning” (“*imi*”).¹²⁰ Tosaka further contested that the relationship between real consciousness (*jitsuzai suru ishiki*) and real nature (*jitsuzai suru shizen*) should not be a question of hermeneutics, nor relying on analytical resolutions from philosophical theories of consciousness, but rather, it should be and is a question inseparable from the results of the sciences.¹²¹

The difference in the materialist and the idealist philosophers’ understanding of reality led to their further difference in their theory of experience. While Tosaka’s materialist epistemology was based on the methodological argument that experience alone is insufficient for the construction of scientific knowledge, Nishida in *Zen no kenkyū* aimed to utilize what he

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 56.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

defined as “pure experience” to forge definite links between a certain free mental state and a state of subjective unity (*shukanteki tōitsu*), and finally, a subject-object unity (*shukaku no tōitsu*). Below is Nishida’s definition of pure experience (*junsui keiken*).

Hence, pure experience and immediate experience are identical. When one experiences the state of consciousness directly, in a state where the subject and the object are still not separate, and knowledge and the object of knowledge are one, this is the most pure kind of experience.¹²²

When it comes to “subject-object unity,” “pure experience” then reaches beyond a merely psychological function and has connotation of possessing unifying power toward the objective world, which means, toward social and political conflicts. At the heart of Nishida’s idealist scheme of unity under the condition of “pure experience” is his inheritance of the Kantian view of the mind, except that he reverses the order of *a priori* concepts and experience in the process of cognition by locating a state of “pure experience” prior to any dividing, organizing operations of concepts or categories. Naturally, Nishida leaves no space for practice, which presupposes influence of social organizations, institutes, or political powers, in his ontology of pure experience, since pure experience represents nothing but the primordial state of consciousness prior to all private experiences and even thought (*shii*).¹²³ In place of the Kantian concept of the beautiful and other *a priori* concepts, pure experience becomes the intrinsic quality of humanity for Nishida that primordially ensured unity and universality. Historically, Nishida’s ontology based on the categories of pure experience and spiritual nothingness offered great spiritual and

¹²² Nishida, *Zen no kenkyū*. See Book One, Chapter One, “Junsui keiken.”

¹²³ See *Zen no kenkyū*, Book One, Chapter Two, “Shii.”

humanist values to the imperialist discourse.¹²⁴ Even though it could be argued that Nishida's philosophy was used against its own intent by philosophers of the "Philosophy of World History," a subgroup within the Kyoto School, for the actual unity of a people in the condition of war, yet it is undeniable that Nishida's philosophy opened up theoretical possibilities whereby actual conflicts can be equated to theoretical contradictions and then resolved theoretically.

Tosaka, however, dismisses philosophical explanation of the singular and fundamental quality(s) of human consciousness as "a world of meanings" (*"imi no sekai"*) or "a world connected meanings" (*"imi no renraku kai"*) beyond time, which bears no necessary connection with "cognition, i.e., knowledge."¹²⁵ This is no less than renouncing any idealist philosophy of the mind as illusions.

Last but not least, Tosaka and Nishida contradict in their understanding of consciousness (*ishiki*), specifically, its relationship with the external world.

Usually, what is called "the phenomenon of consciousness" is considered to be a phenomenon in the realm of matter (*buttai kai*), particularly attached to the nervous system of animals. Yet, if one thinks about it, the most immediate and primitive fact is the phenomenon of consciousness (*ishiki genshō*), not the phenomenon of matter (*buttai genshō*). One's body is nothing but a part of the

¹²⁴ Timpanaro, *On Materialism*, 31. "Today the struggle within bourgeois culture is—to put it very schematically—between two idealisms: a historicist and humanist idealism and an empirio-criticist and pragmaticidealism...Humanism has, however, in the countries of advanced capitalism been subordinated [by empirio-criticism] but not destroyed, since its services are to a certain extent still necessary. For every exploiting class always needs a discourse on 'spiritual values.'"

¹²⁵ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 56. "Cognition, i.e., knowledge" is a translation of "ninshiki (cognition) = chishiki (knowledge)." In my understanding, by this formula Tosaka means cognizing as a process of constructing knowledge, which then implies testing procedures in relation to the external world.

phenomenon of consciousness of the self. Consciousness is not inside the body, but the body, conversely, is inside the consciousness of the self.¹²⁶

In this passage Nishida tries to present, and arguably has misrepresented, with the language of phenomenology an account of consciousness given by the natural sciences that has infiltrated into the common sense of the Japanese public at the beginning of the twentieth century. The goal of this passage and in a way the whole book is to refute this common sense (*jōshiki*). The passage shows that Nishida, although belonging to an older generation of philosophers than Tosaka and other participants of the science and technology debates in Japan, was well aware of the new developments in the sciences when he wrote *Zen no kenkyū* in 1911. Nishida's development of an idealist philosophy of "the good" could be seen as the outcome of the struggle between the "western" sciences and Japanese traditional values within the Japanese education system since the beginning of the establishment of the German university system in Japan in the 1970s;¹²⁷ the later, despite its constant change of content—from the Japanese Classics to a modern Japanese literature, came to represent an antithesis of science which was regarded as inherently western and foreign. Notably, Nishida received his philosophy education at Tokyo Imperial University precisely at a time when the conservative reform of the education system was taking place. Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū* in many ways embodies the humanist, romantic recall of the old moral program before the modern sciences disillusioned the public with a worldview devoid of meanings and spirits. Thus, Nishida protests with his "theory of the good": while scientists resort to qualities of the brain in the matter of individuality (*kojinsei*), he endues "the

¹²⁶ Nishida, *Zen no kenkyū*. See Book Two, Chapter Two, "Ishiki genshō ga yuiitsu no jitsuzai de aru."

¹²⁷ For detail of this struggle from the scientists and engineers' perspective, please refer to Chapter Five, "Science and Bureaucracy," of James R. Bartholomew's book, *The Formation of Science in Japan: Building a Research Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989).

realization of individuality” with endless unifying power toward the world and regards it as the most direct form of “the good.”¹²⁸

If Nishida’s reversal in *Zen no kenkyū* of the relationship between consciousness and body from what he believes to be the results of scientific research is the foundation of Nishida’s idealist ontology, his theory of “the standpoint of subjective nothingness” (*mu no kyōchi*) is Nishida’s idealist ontology in its full-blown form. As Tosaka points out, the ultimate question of Nishida’s philosophy is the question of Being (*sonzai*), and whether Being is fundamentally material or spiritual.¹²⁹ According to Tosaka, although “subjective nothingness” bears a façade of mysticism and metaphysics with religious overtures, it is in essence the dialectics of self-consciousness (*jikaku*). Nishida simply gives this “purest” state of self-consciousness the name of “subjective nothingness.” By the same token, Tosaka renounces the theory of “subjective nothingness” as a proper theory in itself, as it does not so much contemplate Being but give a name to the “theoretical meaning of Being.”¹³⁰ Tosaka adds that dialectical materialism is the only possible theory of Being, but without proposing a contesting materialist ontology.

An underlying ambivalence in Tosaka’s materialism is his attitude toward an ontology of *mono* (in Japanese, *mono* can mean things, physical matter, or matter), that is, a materialist ontology. Tosaka’s passage on consciousness where he asserts that “there are no other options but to think that consciousness (*ishiki*) is an unknown entity of the biological substance of the brain or a certain state or function of the brain,” or here his suggestion of thinking about Being within a materialist doctrine, no doubt constitutes an attack from a materialist ontology on an idealist ontology. In these cases, the ontology is no longer in the service of a materialist

¹²⁸ Nishida, *Zen no kenkyū*. See Book Three, “Zen,” Chapter Twelve, “Zen kouji no moku teki.”

¹²⁹ Tosaka, *Nihon ideorogiron*, 240.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

epistemology, whose end is a demystified worldview deriving from scientific knowledge, but is an end in itself. It seems to relate to an aspect of science that is not merely epistemological, but attempts to articulate the *origin* of knowledge, as well as the historicity of human society in general as being within the historicity of nature. In this direction, Tosaka goes as far as to admit that consciousness has a point of origin in natural history, so does the opposition between matter (*mono*) and mind (*kokoro*), being (*sonzai*) and consciousness (*ishiki*), object (*kyakkan*) and subject (*shukan*).¹³¹ It is in this sense that the realm of consciousness (*ishiki kai*), where both spiritual and worldly unity is to be found for the idealists, is a part of and thereby subordinated to the realm of nature (*shizen kai*). All of these keys together could open the door to a materialism that is profoundly different from the one put forth as the main epistemological program in *Kagakuron*: a materialism that has an undeniable “naturalist” tendency, and furthermore, realizes the ontological dependency of human beings upon their own physical being as well as their natural environment. The implications of this possible but undeveloped second materialism in Tosaka are manifold. It could serve as basis for a revolutionary agenda different from the classical class struggle model proposed by the JCP through taking into account a profound ambivalence of science in relation to the interests of the working masses. It could perhaps help illuminate the different materialisms in Marx. Or, it could point to more meanings of science than what Tosaka himself offers in the text. Indeed, one wonders if the first implication was already in action in Tosaka’s promotion the popularization of science (*kagaku no taishūka*), whose aim was to arm the masses (*taishū*) with science against the exploiting and mystifying empire.

¹³¹ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 57.

Chapter IV: Science and the Masses

By the time Tosaka started to conceive of a materialist struggle in Japan based on a reinvention of Marxism through theories of science and technology in the early 1930s, one can argue that the struggle of prewar Japanese Marxism had already failed. It had failed both in the practical and the theoretical sense. Practically, the Japanese Marxists did not survive the brutal crackdown of the authoritarian government. In fact, the crackdown was total: it led to the death of major activists such as Kobayashi Takiji, the arrest of most of the leading figures of the JCP, and the closure of the two Marxist journals, *Senki* (Battle Flag, 1929-1931) and *Bungei sensen* (Literary Battlefront, 1924-1930). Theoretically, the program of a cultural movement, despite its many modifications, had shown to be ineffective and insufficient in organizing the working masses into a struggle that fitted its interests. If its interests were met, the same working masses that were called to be unified under a socialist revolution would not have been so easily summoned by the imperialist cause of the Empire after the mere eradication of its leaders. Hence, the task first initiated by the Japanese Marxists in the 1920s now, as intractable as before, had been handed down to the Marxist philosopher, namely the task of (re)thinking the masses (*taishū*).

I have shown in Chapter III, a re-establishment of Marxism in Japan was attempted by Tosaka in *Yuiken* via discussions of a “new” materialism primarily based on a scientific epistemology. To understand the implications of this “new” materialism, one then has to put it in the context of a previously failed collective undertaking to organize and understand the interests of the masses. In other words, Tosaka’s materialism, along with his seemingly technical

theorization of science and technology, was nothing but part of an attempt to re-think, re-imagine, and re-organize the masses at a time when the power to decide the course of history was again usurped from the hands of the majority by a few.

In fact, Tosaka was not the only “thinker of the masses” at the time. The 1930s of Japan had witnessed the rise of a strong current of nationalist thought: Japanism (*Nippon shugi*), which Tosaka famously compared to the rise of fascism in Europe. One saw a similar competition and succession of mass movements in Japan and in Europe where the lower class of the society subsequently endorsed opposing systems of ideas as if they had represented their interests similarly. Tosaka’s *The Japanese Ideology* (*Nippon ideorogiron*, 1935) was undoubtedly the most comprehensive critique of Japanism which not only drew the parallel between Japanism and fascism in Europe, but also made plain the affinities between Japanism and liberalism. Most importantly, the condition in which this piece was written—the preceding failure of Marxism as a social and cultural movement, as well as the present enthusiasm of the Japanist thinkers in “enlightening” the masses,¹³² made *The Japanese Ideology* above all a profound reflection on the masses, its weakness and potential power in facing cultural control.

In this reflection also lay the key to understanding the political intention underlying all of Tosaka’s works, including his most technical pieces that dealt with theories of science and technology. It offered an answer to the question of “Why science?” Why did Tosaka believe that the reestablishment of Marxism in Japan had to be through science, and not a cultural revolution, or even the reestablishment of the Communist Party? Having analyzed Tosaka’s scientific

¹³² Tosaka, Jun, *Nihon ideorogiron*, 31. Tosaka writes, “Japanism is even screaming that they need to enlighten the masses! ... The majority of scholars of hermeneutics and scholars who believe in the absoluteness of literature (*Bungaku shugi-sha*) are busy researching on metaphysics and self-consciousness, which makes them believe that the masses is worth no more than a cup of black tea. This is why I state that, the liberalists are giving effective support to the ‘enlightenment movement’ (*Keimou undou*) of the Japanists.”

epistemology in Chapter III (mostly based on a close reading of his *A Theory of Science*, also published in 1935), I will devote this chapter to the analysis of the connections between his scientific epistemology and his political agenda for the masses.

i. Taishū-ka: Literature versus Science for the Masses

Prewar Japanese Marxism was far from being a consistent social, political trend. It was known for fervent debates on strategies concerning the masses and popularization within the proletarian literature movement; it was also known for the divide between the *Rōnō* and *Kōza* factions within the JCP concerning the stage of social revolution the Japanese society had achieved. It seemed, however, that the more the leadership of prewar Japanese Marxism had swayed, the more their revolutionary path had stayed the same. The two outstanding theoretical tendencies of prewar Japanese Marxism remained consistent until its demise: humanist idealism and historical materialism.

It would be fair to say that prewar Japanese Marxism was essentially a humanist struggle. By humanist idealism I mean the idealization of a certain human nature, which, in this case, is closely linked to the political struggle for a more just society. All major theorists of prewar Japanese Marxism had articulated this standpoint in their work.¹³³ In fact, Fukumoto Kazuo had retrospectively attacked Tosaka in the 1960s for the lack of humanism (*ningensei*) in his developments of Marxism.¹³⁴ It was both an accurate and inaccurate accusation: accurate precisely for the reason stated above; inaccurate in the sense that, I argue, Tosaka's materialism

¹³³ See Chapter II.

¹³⁴ Fukumoto, Kazuo, "Tosaka-ryū *Nihon ideorogī ron* o kentōsuru" ("Examination of theories of Japanese ideology by Tosaka and his followers") (1966), *Fukumoto Kazuo chosakushū* Vol. 10 (Tokyo: Kobushi Shobō, 2010), 293.

consists in a view of science that puts it in an essentially *positive* relation with the working masses. I will return to this point later.

Historical materialism pointed to the Japanese Marxists' obsession with locating Japan at the correct historical stage. Here existed the major divide between the *Rōnō* and *Kōza* factions. The *Kōza* faction (*Rōnōha*) led by Fukumoto believed that Japan was "semi-feudalistic" (*han hōkenteki*) and hence called for a two-stage revolution which entailed first of all a "democratic revolution" (*Minshu shugi kakumei*); whereas the *Rōnō* faction, directly opposing that view, recognized Japan as a bourgeois society and advocated a socialist revolution in Japan. The outcome of this internal strife was Fukumoto's loss of power in the party, followed by a purge of the JCP by the Japanese state police as it was viewed as an immediate threat to the centralized government. Despite their seeming antagonism, the two factions shared the urgency for a united front led by a revolutionary party.¹³⁵ Together the two *-isms* pointed to the failure of a certain form of socialist struggle, which Tosaka, standing at that particular historical moment, would need to reform, if not to reject completely.

The question of the masses (*taishū*) was at the crux of the proletarian literature movement. It was an issue quarreled over throughout the movement, but most fervently in 1928. The question of the masses pointed to two central challenges of the movement: first of all, the popularization (*taishū-ka*) of proletarian literature, second of all, a more covert challenge, the problem of leadership.

¹³⁵ Hiromi Mizuno, however, argues that the two factions represented two lines of action. She states, "To Japanese Communists, the conflict between the *Kōza* and the *Rōnō* factions meant not just a different analysis of Japan's past and present but also a different line of actions required for a socialist revolution in Japan's future." However, I argue that, even in Mizuno's argument, one can see a shared scheme of actions between the two factions, namely the ultimate goal of a socialist revolution. Mizuno, *Science for the Empire*, 82.

Ironically, despite claiming to be a cultural and social movement for the working class, the proletarian literature movement leaders had always struggled with popularizing their literary products among the workers. It led to debates on content (whether it was engaging to the workers or not),¹³⁶ the representation of workers and peasants, and artistic value versus the political function of literature. For instance, as early as 1926, when the proletarian literature movement was still at its burgeoning stages, Aono Suekichi already identified the major challenge of the proletarian literature movement to be “delivering literature from the hands of the intelligentsia to the hands of the proletariat.”¹³⁷ The vivid metaphor of delivering literature from the hands of the intelligentsia to the hands of the proletariat bespoke signs of an elitist literature movement in which the intelligentsia are the authentic creators of art, whereas the workers are merely the bearers (*Träger*) of manual labor and producers of industrial products.¹³⁸ It implied that the bearers of manual labor were incapable of producing intellectual works, and therefore, remained confined in the tedious activities of the factory, both physically and mentally. In contrast, the intelligentsia, free from those manual obligations, would be capable of producing art that enlightened and liberated the workers from their otherwise dim future.

¹³⁶ Nakano Shigeharu wrote an article discussing the “omoshiroka,” literally the interestingness, of proletarian literature to the workers. It was published in the 1928, June issue of *Senki*. “Ihayuru geijutsu no taishūka ron no ayamari ni tsuite,” *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikēi* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Katokawa Shoten, 1973), 124-131.

¹³⁷ Aono, “Natural Burgeoning or Willful Consciousness” (“Shizen seichō to mokuteki ishiki”) (1926), *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikēi* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Katokawa Shoten, 1973), 73.

¹³⁸ “Träger” derives from the verb “tragen,” literally “to bear.” It is the term Marx uses extensively in *The Capital* to refer to the “carrier” of certain social, productive function, hence, the capitalist the “träger” of the limitless movement of capital, the laborer the “träger” of manual labor. Marx uses this term to imply the passivity of both the capitalist and the laborer vis-à-vis the movement of capital. But at the same time, it could be read as Marx’s criticism of personal attack against capitalists, for they are only “carriers” of their social function, so only the Capitalist system should be criticized, but not the capitalists personally. Here, I am invoking the term for the first meaning, namely the passivity of the laborer vis-à-vis the movement of capital.

The great promoter of the popularization of proletarian literature, Kurahara Korehito, published in January 1928 a manifesto for United Front, calling all the artists on the left to write literature for the masses.

We have no right whatsoever to sell our art to the masses by force, nor do the masses have any duty to read our art. That said, our movement has grown from a movement of the avant-garde into a broader movement of the masses. Art movements have departed from the era of the intellectuals [*ishikiteki bunshi*] and arrived in an era in which the [revolutionary] subject has to be the masses, despite the fact that their consciousness is behind [*ishiki no okureta*]. In times like this, how should we produce [*seisan*] art?¹³⁹

In this passage, Kurahara ostensibly provoked his audience by using the term “seisan,” a verb usually used to describe the production of goods in the factory, to describe the production of art. By drawing a parallel between the two very different productive activities, Kurahara wanted to persuade the readers of this manifesto, the revolutionary avant-gardes, into believing the comparability of their intellectual labor to the manual labor of the workers. The seemingly provocative wordings of the revolutionary ideologue, however, concealed his not so implicit message: the masses are intellectually behind, and as a result, need to be enlightened. In other words, the intelligentsia, who are the true owners of proletarian art, should solicit the masses to join the movement by translating “high art” into “low art” for them. It is in this sense that literature is produced (*seisan*) for the masses.

¹³⁹ Kurahara, “Musun kaikyū geijutsu undo no shindankai” (“A New Stage of Proletarian Art Movement”) (1928), *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikei* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Katokawa Shoten, 1973), 97-98

Later that year, in an article serialized on *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, Kurahara openly articulated literature's mission of "edifying the masses" (*taishū no kyōka*).¹⁴⁰ In Chapter II, I have discussed the powerful influence of Soviet Marxism-Leninism on Kurahara. By 1930, upon Kurahara's return from his second visit in the Soviet Union, he had strengthened his belief in emulating a cultural revolution in Japan. But in fact, as early as 1928, at the height of the proletarian literature movement, Kurahara had shown hints of intending to transform the literature movement into a full-blown cultural revolution, making literature ultimately a tool for edifying the masses.

I understand the so-called problem of "making art for the masses" [*geijutsu no taishūka*] in the two meanings listed below.

1. To make art works that carry social values [available] for the masses [*taishūka*].
2. To produce popular works of art [*taishūteki sakuhin*] which do not necessarily carry or carry little artistic values [*geijutsusei*], but have propaganda values in edifying the masses [*taishū no kyōka*].

The second point is not so much a problem of art, but a broader problem of educating the proletariat [*kyōka senden*]. Hence, when we speak of the problem of art, we can only discuss it strictly in the first sense [of making art for the masses].¹⁴¹

This confusing message put the very meaning of "*taishūka*" under the spotlight. While Kurahara set out to differentiate the artistic versus political meanings of "*taishūka*," what he actually

¹⁴⁰ Kurahara, "Rironteki na sanshi no mondai" ("Several Theoretical Issues") (1928), *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikēi* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Katokawa Shoten, 1973), 148-149.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

promoted here was to overwrite the first meaning of “*taishūka*” with the second, in other words, to subsume art under politics. Read closely, the first point simply reiterated the term “*taishūka*,” but the second point made it clear that even works of art without artistic values need to be produced for propaganda purposes. Therefore, Kurahara’s intent of clarifying the meaning of “*taishūka*” is indeed to legitimize its second meaning, namely “to produce art works for propaganda purposes.”

As far as the translation of “*taishūka*” is concerned, I make the deliberate choice to not to translate it into “popularization,” which is the normal translation of the term in English today, the reason being the fervent contestations on the very meaning of the term during the proletarian literature movement, as discussed above. “*Taishū-ka*,” verbalized from the noun “*taishū*,” by definition refers to a process through which something is made proper, available, and adequate *for* the masses. The tactics of the process, which would directly affect the outcome of the transmitted item, is where the Marxists went separate ways. Nakano Shigeharu, for instance, rejected popularization (*tsūzokuka*) of proletarian literature for maintaining the artistic values of their works and the integrity of socialist realism.¹⁴² His famous opponent, Hayashi Fusao, contrarily endorsed popularization, equating proletarian literature (*puroretaria bungaku*) with popular literature (*taishū bungaku*), “making art for the masses” (*taishūka*) with popularization (*tsūzokuka*).¹⁴³ The hidden message of Hayashi’s proposal was the unbridgeable divide between the intelligentsia and the working class. My translation of “*taishūka*”—“making art for the masses,” is an attempt to highlight the contested methods through which literature is made

¹⁴² Nakano, “Ihayuru geijutsu no taishūka ron no ayamari ni tsuite,” 125.

¹⁴³ Hayashi Fusao, “Puroretaria taishū bungaku no mondai” (“The Problem of Popular Proletarian Literature”) (1928), *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikēi* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Katokawa Shoten, 1973), 140. Hayashi converted out of Marxism after his arrest in 1932 and eventually joined the *Japanese Romantic School* (*Nihon Romanha*), which supported Japan’s war efforts.

available for the masses, and more importantly, the ambiguity of literature with respect to the interests of the masses. Namely, how can literature be *for* the masses in the sense that it serves its most fundamental interests, and not just making it its object or passive consumers? On a deeper level, this was the question that all these Marxists struggled with when they spoke of “*taishūka*.”

Or, should the intelligentsia simply take over the revolution by prescribing for the masses what they need? As Kurahara gained power in the party and in the movement, and as the political situation aggravated for the Japanese Marxists in the early 1930s, he eventually drove this debate into the Stalinist direction of promoting propaganda art. In the conclusive statement issued on the matter by the committee of *Narupu* (short for *Nihon Proretaria Sakka Doumei*, Japanese Proletarian Writers League) in 1930, it became clear that the goal of “*taishūka*” is nothing but to “instill the revolutionary ideology into the workers and the peasants.”¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, little of the present scholarship on Kurahara and the proletarian literature movement problematized this ascent of Stalinism toward the end of the movement.¹⁴⁵ It mistook it for the triumph of politics in the ideological opposition between art for art’s sake (*geijutsu tame no geijutsu*, the maxim of *Geijutsuha*)¹⁴⁶ and the politicization of art.

The culturalist, Stalinist leadership of Kurahara had predicted the outcome of the proletarian literature movement: proletarian literature could never truthfully represent the interests of the masses, literature *for* the masses (*taishūka no bungaku*) could never become literature *of* the masses (*taishū no bungaku*). At the end of the day, the literature created within

¹⁴⁴ The Committee of *Narupu*, “Decisions Concerning Making Art for the Masses” (“*Geijutsu taishūka ni kansuru ketsugi*”), *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikai* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Katokawa Shoten, 1973), 314.

¹⁴⁵ Mats Karlsson, for instance, points out Kurahara’s belief in art’s most important function being propaganda, but he fails to problematize that as a theoretical and practical strategy within the bigger picture of socialist movement in Japan. Karlsson, “Kurahara Korehito’s Road to Proletarian,” in *Japan Review*, No. 20 (2008), 237.

¹⁴⁶ For more on the debates between *Geijutsuha* and the Japanese Marxists, see Chapter II.

the agenda of “*taishūka*” in the propaganda sense of the term belonged to the elitist leaders of the movement, and not to the masses. The need of “delivering” literature from the hands of the intelligentsia to the hands of the working masses” predetermined the failure of the delivery.

This leads to discussion of the second challenge of the Marxist-socialist movement in Japan and also of Tosaka’s decisive shift in his leadership of Marxism in Japan from a humanist-culturalist struggle to a materialist struggle which emphasized the organization of the masses through knowledge. The failure of the preceding humanist-culturalist struggle revealed the weakness of a workers’ movement that was primarily top-down, with a strategy of “cultural control” which arguably was not completely different from the cultural control of the imperialist state, but coated in a humanist ideology that appealed to both sides. If anything, after the tragic closure of the Marxist-socialist movement in Japan, the gap between the working masses and the intelligentsia had only grown wider in front of the threat of imperialism. The working masses, now without a representing party, remained mostly unorganized due to austere restrictions to public gatherings under the Peace Preservation Law (*Chi’an Ijinhō*). Although the Marxists had recognized the urgency of fighting imperialism in Japan,¹⁴⁷ they were either already imprisoned or in great physical danger under the same law.

Hence, Tosaka and the other Marxian thinkers still at large were faced with the task of rethinking the masses in a new struggle, one without the estranged leadership of the intelligentsia. As a former Neo-Kantian trained under Nishida Kitarō, Tosaka’s conversion to Marxist materialism in such a time was perhaps a most counter-intuitive because of the immediate physical danger it implied, but also a most obvious decision for the very same reason.

¹⁴⁷ If “the 1927 theses” marked the official division between the *Rōnō* and the *Kōza* factions, “the 1932 theses” was the turning point of the socialist movement in Japan in that it recognized the foremost task for the JCP was to fight imperialism.

The freedom of thought was deprived of the people by the state. In Tosaka's writings, materialism had taken on a set of new meanings not exactly the same as Marx and Engels' materialism, and even further away from the bourgeois materialisms before Marx. Tosaka's materialism was first and foremost defined by the nature of its philosophical partisanship; in other words, it was a system of thought that was meant to defy another or other system(s) of thought, in this case the various idealisms prevalent in Japan at the time. Second of all, Tosaka's materialism was defined by its strong basis in science, more specifically, in scientific knowledge which can be converted into a more general form—commonsense (*jōshiki*).

In other words, the materialist struggle Tosaka proposed instead of the previous humanist-culturalist struggle attempted by the JCP Marxists consisted of mainly two components: the first component pertained to “the superiority of materialism as a system of thought” (*yuibutsuron no shisō toshite no yūetsusei*), so it was a philosophical struggle against Japanism (*Nippon shugi*) and liberalism (*jiyū shugi*); the second component was related to a materialist worldview, so it was an epistemological struggle against mind control from the state.

A third system of thought that stands in opposition to Japanism and Liberalism is undoubtedly materialism. Only materialism can scientifically criticize [*kagakuteki ni hihanshi*] Japanism and Liberalism individually, and the two together as being interrelated to one another. If one pays attention to this point, the superiority of materialism as a system of thought could indirectly prove itself here. It, however, only refers to thoughts and ideas, but in order to solve actual problems, one would have to lay out the whole [materialist] theory from beginning to end, which includes a unified mechanism of ideas.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Tosaka, *Nihon ideorogiron*, 32.

From this passage quoted from *Nihon ideorogiron* one can see that what Tosaka meant by “the superiority of materialism as a system of thought” was founded on the capacity of materialism to “scientifically criticize” the existent idealisms which dominated the intellectual arena of 1930s Japan, centered in The Kyoto School, The Romantic School, and the *Geijutsuha*. In that sense, the materialist struggle Tosaka called for was, first of all, a battle of the intelligentsia against the above listed schools and their ideas.

The second component of the struggle can be sourced back to Tosaka’s attempt to reestablish Marxism in Japan through science.¹⁴⁹ The reestablishment of Marxism was not an end in itself; rather, to Tosaka Marxism was inseparable from the “enlightenment” of the masses in the double sense of political awareness and the acquirement of “commonsense.” The failure of the Marxist movement in the 1920s had proved that the mobilization of the masses merely through cultural activities was insufficient and ineffective, because only the passion of the masses was taken into account as the essential driving force of political struggle, but not their *reason*. Hence, the second component of Tosaka’s materialist struggle consisted in the resistance of the masses against the imperialist state. The first step of the resistance was for the masses to become sober-minded about the ideologies and the fictional racial unity of a people that the state employed to persuade the nation to enter wars. Only in this way, Tosaka argued, the masses would stop being the driving force of any movements or activities that did not actually serve their interests.

Therefore, when Tosaka proposed science for the masses, or making science available for the masses, (*kagaku no taishūka*) in place of the agenda of art for the masses, he in fact intended to do nothing less than reimagining the working class as a political community organized by

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter III.

knowledge, as opposed to being naively led by an elite group. It was an implicit critique of any kind of political leadership that had no interest in advancing the rationality of the masses. One can see a deep sense of rationalism embedded in Tosaka's proposal of a materialist struggle, as well as the urgency of divorcing culture from politics.

ii. "Commonsense," or jōshiki: Science as Critique

To understand Tosaka's vision of a political community organized by knowledge, one needs to first of all delve into his conception of *jōshiki*. Is *jōshiki* simply the Japanese equivalent of "commonsense," or is there a difference between the two terms? And more importantly, if the rise of the *jōshiki* level in a society represents the attainment of "science for the masses," what constitutes the transformation from scientific knowledge to *jōshiki*? Why is the transformation necessary?

Tosaka dedicated Chapter Three of *Nihon ideorogiron* to the analysis of *jōshiki*, immediately after his critique of philology in Chapter Two and before his examination of the philosophies of Enlightenment in Chapter Four. If the critique of philology was to renounce a taken-for-granted method of knowledge acquisition, namely to study the classics, the conception of *jōshiki* was Tosaka's attempt to put forth a new method through which knowledge could be examined, acquired and put into practice by and for the masses.¹⁵⁰ It was only after he conceived of *jōshiki* he could then set out to reconsider the tradition of "enlightenment" in the context of wartime, post-revolutionary Japan. In this sense, in Tosaka's political agenda the advancement of

¹⁵⁰ Tosaka's critique of philology was clearly targeted at Heidegger, who he pointed out combined philology with philosophy of existence, and The Kyoto School, which was very influenced by Heidegger's philosophy.

jōshiki served as nothing less than the foundation for an “enlightened” multitude who would be able to stand up against the mystifying government.

Unlike philology, which idealizes and idolizes the classics,¹⁵¹ *jōshiki* for Tosaka meant a more “democratic” way in which knowledge was established and distributed. Tosaka started his analysis of *jōshiki* by offering a genealogy of the term, which he identified with the English term “commonsense” and the German term “Gemeinsinn.”¹⁵²

In a way, philosophy in the sense of the science of literature [*bungakuteki kagaku*] always starts from the commonsense of that particular time.

Therefore, it usually happens that the philosophy that reflects on commonsense starts from the stage of being commonsense itself. The Greek term “doxa” [*dokusa*] is precisely such a philosophical term that reflects on commonsense.

Viewed from the formula “true knowledge [*shin no chishiki*] = learning/scholarship [*gakumon*],” commonsense would be nothing but the opposite of truth [*shinri*] (as far as Plato is concerned). However, when philosophy pays attention to the special anarchistic quality of commonsense or “doxa,” this understanding of commonsense [as the opposite of truth] already means a departure from the very concept of commonsense.¹⁵³

Tosaka traced the origin of the concept of commonsense to the Greek term “doxa” as a way to explain the complex relations between knowledge and commonsense: while they appear opposite to each other, they can also be transformed into one another under certain circumstances. He pointed out the double meaning of “doxa”: it is both the knowledge of scholars of nature that is

¹⁵¹ Tosaka, *Nihon ideorogiron*, 55-56.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 65.

being circulated among the commoners and common ideas emerged naturally among the commoners.¹⁵⁴ In both meanings, there is a sense of “democracy” in the process in which “doxa” is produced, which necessarily puts it in an antagonistic relation with what is officially recognized as knowledge, as knowledge means “knowledge produced by the Greek aristocrats.”

Following his analysis of “doxa” and commonsense in Greek philosophy, Tosaka then moved on to similar analyses of the conception of commonsense by Thomas Reid and Immanuel Kant before offering his own interpretation and agenda with the term. In this sense, Tosaka defined his “commonsense” very much against Reid’s and Kant’s usage of the term. As far as Kant is concerned, Tosaka pointed out that Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is basically a critique of the “bourgeois commonsense,” specifically of its dogmatism and absoluteness, through endeavoring to establish the boundary of knowledge. However, Tosaka criticized Kant’s attempt for precisely reiterating the invincible foundation of bourgeois commonsense.¹⁵⁵

When it comes to Reid, the founder of the Scottish School of Common Sense, Tosaka rejected his theory of commonsense for its alignment of the integrity of one’s reason with the particular *content* of the commonsense possessed by one.¹⁵⁶ Contrary to Reid, Tosaka liberated the concept of commonsense first from the individual capacity for reason, then from its content. He kept Reid’s basic understanding of commonsense as a reflection of the capacity for reason innate to humanity, but for Tosaka the capacity for reason was always spoken of in the plural form.

In order to ensure that commonsense is only spoken of in the plural form, Tosaka conjured the term “the level of commonsense” (*jōshiki suijun*). In fact, one can argue that

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

whenever Tosaka used commonsense in his text, he always meant a leveled commonsense or the level of commonsense of the masses, but never commonsense of a particular individual.

When commonsense is seen as the level [of knowledge of a society],¹⁵⁷ one can then see the inherent uniqueness of the concept. Commonsense in and of itself, in other words, not to be related to other problems, is nothing but a level [*suijun*], and thus has little to do with its content. When one thinks carefully about commonsense as content [*naiyōteki jōshiki*], one realizes that it is actually not commonsense in and of itself, but the collection of knowledge.¹⁵⁸

In other words, imbedded in Tosaka's conception of commonsense, a term that he exerted his effort in rescuing from its precedent conservative or bourgeois history, was a leveling process within the society not in terms of material standard, but in terms of knowledge. Tosaka attributed the uniqueness of the concept of commonsense to precisely this implied leveling process, which he deemed inseparable from science becoming available to the masses, namely, what he promoted as "*kagaku no taishūka*."

Arguably, Tosaka in his emphasis on the leveling of intellectual capacity deviated from the conventional Marxist discourse of class struggle and the redistribution of wealth in the society. And yet, this reinvention of the concept of commonsense could also be seen as Tosaka's fundamental critique of the elitist leadership of Japanese Marxism, and more broadly of all his contemporary schools' and cultural trends' intent to monopolize knowledge. He asked the essential question of political struggle, namely how the masses can know their own condition, and thereby become critical, as opposed to always being passively informed.

¹⁵⁷ "Suijun to shite no jōshiki, jōshiki sui jun to shite no jōshiki."

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

This explained Tosaka's decision to exclude the connotation of *content* from his concept of commonsense.

When commonsense means only the content of commonsense, it becomes a form of “knowledge-centrism” [*chishiki chushin shugi*] or even “academic-centrism” [*gakujutsu chushin shugi*], which renders commonsense nothing but an academic concept. In fact, commonsense often takes on such a negative meaning for many Japanese academics lately. For instance, they believe that commonsense is that which is vulgarized [*hizokuka*], popularized [*tsūzokuka*] of science or art.¹⁵⁹

This can be seen as Tosaka's implicit critique of the JCP Marxists' strategizing of the popularization of proletarian literature. According to Tosaka, the need of popularization presupposed a form of “knowledge-centrism” or “academic-centrism” where the intelligentsia and the masses were polarized into two groups of unequal power, namely, the content giver and the content receiver. That means, whatever that was “delivered” to the masses by the intelligentsia was always already a vulgarized, toned-down version of the real thing.

Therefore, in opposition to Kurahara and other culturalist Marxists' *taishūka* debates centered in elevating “cultural level” (*bunka suijun*) of the masses, Tosaka proposed the alternative of focusing on the “commonsense level” (*jōshiki suijun*) of the masses. Tosaka argued that unlike “cultural level” which emphasized a single aspect of knowledge (*chishiki*) of the individual, the politicality of commonsense lay in the fact that it is general insights (*kenshiki*) (of everything) acquired by the individual through interacting with others in the society.¹⁶⁰ Notably, here Tosaka injected the Marxist notion of social relations into his concept of the commonsense.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

To take it one step further, Tosaka stated that the rise of the “commonsense level” of a society corresponded directly with the self-organization of the masses.¹⁶¹

This idea of self-organization of the masses occupies the center and the summit of Tosaka’s whole political agenda founded on a scientific epistemology.

The so-called “*taishūka*” doesn’t mean to make something closer to the average level of the majority [*tasūsha*], but rather, it means to offer pathways to something so that it is approachable to the majority. In order to do so, a society needs to be organized [*soshikisareru*] on the basis of the masses [*taishū*], or the majority [*tasū*]. Hence, the term “*taishūka*” in the correct sense of the term cannot leave out the meaning of the organization of the masses [*taishū e no soshiki*].¹⁶²

Importantly, Tosaka here did not reject the popularization of science for sake of retaining the “purity” of scientific knowledge, but quite the opposite, he rejected it for the idea that the results of science should always have the interests of the masses in mind.¹⁶³ If one can speak of enlightenment at all, then enlightenment in Tosaka’s political agenda can only mean to instill commonsense to the masses, thereby to rationalize the masses, so that collectively the Japanese society as a whole can withstand trends of Japanism and movements of cultural control.¹⁶⁴

Of course, this is a very positive, if not positivist, understanding of science and scientific knowledge in that it denotes the power of critique always imbedded in scientific knowledge. But

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 87. A similar passage can be found in *Kagakuron* as well, in the chapter on “Science and Society.” Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 162. This shows the idea of self-organization or enlightenment of the masses was not merely the central idea behind the critique of Japan ideologies, but was also the agenda behind Tosaka’s theories of science as well. Or more exactly, the organization of the masses was the underlying intent of the author in all his works.

¹⁶³ Tosaka, *Kagakuron*, 166.

¹⁶⁴ Tosaka, *Nihon ideorogiron*, 31.

one can also argue that it is not a strictly positivist conception of science, because Tosaka's formula of "enlightenment equals acquirement of scientific knowledge" does not speak to science in general, or in all of its aspects, but strictly to the epistemological aspect of science. In other words, here Tosaka pointed solely to the path of maximizing the intellect of the masses, whereas the intellectuals who supported Japanism utilized the passion of the masses.

I'd also like to point out that Tosaka in *Kagakuron* and his other works on science and technology did not solely exert himself in the theorization and radicalization of scientific knowledge, and that his works did cover technology, as well as other aspects of science, including the productive aspect of science (which concerns machines, modes of production, etc.) and the ideological aspect of science (as discussed in Chapter I and II).

However, I disagree with some scholars of Tosaka who portrayed Tosaka as a philosopher of cultural critique for the reason that he firmly rejected the culturalist program of the JCP Marxists. The intention of him to put forth a new concept of "commonsense level" was nothing but to propose a new program of resistance outside of the culturalist tradition of Japanese Marxism. I also disagree with scholars who regarded Tosaka as a theorist of science and technology, with both fields in equal terms, in that Tosaka has never argued that the advancement the intellect or the intelligence of the masses can be achieved through technique or technology.¹⁶⁵ If one agrees that Tosaka's ultimate agenda is the empowerment of the masses,

¹⁶⁵ Takeshi Kimoto, for instance, offers a reading of Tosaka's 1935 essay "Theory of the Intelligentsia and Theory of Technology" (which was included in *Nihon ideorogiron*) that puts the theory of technology at the center of Tosaka's philosophy. Kimoto also argues that by upholding the concept of "immaterial technique," Tosaka anticipated "recent discussions of immaterial labor and the general intellect by theorists such as Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno." However, I do agree with Kimoto that Tosaka attempted to "organize a different kind of politics based on a broad coalition of the masses," but I argue that the new politics is based on the making available of science, as opposed to technology, to the masses. Kimoto, "Immaterial Technique and Mass Intelligence: Tosaka Jun on Technology," *Tosaka Jun: A Critical Reader* (Ithaca: the Cornell University East Asia Program, 2013), 195.

technique or technology in this case has to be rendered second in terms of its “power of enlightenment.”

What I propose here instead is a Spinozist reading of Tosaka’s theory of science. In order for the masses, or the multitude, to use Spinoza’s term, have an active and constructive function in national politics, Tosaka called for a maximization of the intellect of the masses and simultaneously a restriction to the passion of the masses so that the masses could organize themselves, truthfully represent their own interests, even though their interests could be in conflict with those of the individual, and above all, to achieve a balance of power with the state. The foundation for such an agenda was to make science readily available for the masses, but this was where the ambiguity existed in Tosaka’s politics, namely that science for the masses would empower the more rational masses against a mythologizing state, but it would be prevented by the state for exactly the same reason.

In other words, the political struggle of the masses became a very uncertain activity in that it refused clear leadership of the intelligentsia or the party, plus it would be subject to the censorship of the state. In a way, this adequately represented the only means of struggle available to the Japanese public and Tosaka himself at the time. But in its most ideal circumstances, the masses would reach so high a level of commonsense that there would be a contract between the masses and the state where the masses would grant the state the right to represent their interests only insofar as the state would truly work for the interests of the countless anonymous workers who have not only offered their labor power but also their intellect to their nation.

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