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## Preface

This book is in two parts: reflections on Kant and on Marx. Although the two names would appear to split the book, it is in fact thoroughly inseparable; the two parts are interactive through and through. The whole of the project—what I call *Transcritique*—forms a space of transcodings between the domains of ethics and political economy, between the Kantian critique and the Marxian critique. This is an attempt to read Kant via Marx and Marx via Kant, and to recover the significance of the *critique* common to both. This critique is something that begins from a scrutiny, a rather elaborate self-scrutiny.

Now with respect to the pairing itself. Quite a few thinkers have sought to connect these two since the late nineteenth century. This was an effort to grasp a subjective/ethical moment missing in the materialism called Marxism. It speaks to the fact that Kant was not in the least a bourgeois philosopher. To him, being moral was less a question of good and evil than of being *causa sui* and hence *free*, and this compels us to treat other people as free agents. The ultimate message of Kantian moral law lies in the imperative: “Act so that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in any other person, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.”<sup>1</sup> This is not an abstract doctrine. Kant considered it a task to be realized progressively in the context of historical society. It might be that, in the concrete, his goal was to establish an association of independent small producers in opposition to the civil society dominated by merchant capitalism. This was an ideal conceived in pre-industrial capi-

talist Germany; later, however, in tandem with the rise of industrial capitalism, the unity of independent small producers was mostly disbanded. But Kant's moral law survived. Abstract as it might have been, Kant's position was a precursor to the views of the utopian socialists and anarchists (such as Proudhon). In this precise sense, Hermann Cohen identified Kant as the true primogenitor of German socialism. In the context of a capitalist economy where people treat each other merely as a means to an end, the Kantian "kingdom of freedom" or "kingdom of ends" clearly comes to entail another new meaning, that is, communism. If we think about it, from the beginning, communism could not have been conceptualized without the moral moment inherent in Kant's thinking. Unfortunately and unfairly, however, Kantian Marxism has been eclipsed by history.

I, too, came to connect Kant and Marx, yet in a different context from neo-Kantianism. From the beginning, the Kantian Marxists' recognition of capitalism appeared to me to be feeble. I felt the same way about anarchists (or associationists). While their sense of freedom and ethical disposition are noteworthy, what was undeniably missing in them was a theoretical approach to the forces of the social relations that compel people. For this reason, their struggles were mostly helpless and miserably defeated. My political stance was once anarchistic, and I was never sympathetic to any Marxist party or state. Yet at the same time, I was deeply in awe of Marx. My admiration for *Capital*, the book with the subtitle "Kritik der politischen Ökonomie" (Critique of the Economics of Nations) has only intensified year by year. Being a student of political economics and reading *Capital* closely, sentence by sentence, I was always aware of and discontented with the fact that Marxist philosophers from Lukács to Althusser did not really read it full-heartedly, but instead, only took from it what was suitable to their philosophical concerns. I was also discontented with the majority of political economists who deem *Capital* simply a book on economy. Meanwhile, I gradually recognized that the Marxian critique was not a mere criticism of capitalism and classical economics, but a project that elucidates the nature and the limit of capital's drive [*Trieb*], and furthermore reveals, on the basis of that drive, an essential difficulty entailed in the human act of exchange (or more broadly, communication). *Capital* does

not offer an easy exit from capitalism; rather only by its very exitlessness does it suggest a possibility of practical intervention.

Along the way, I became increasingly aware of Kant as a thinker who also sought to suggest the possibility of practice—less by a criticism of metaphysics (as is usually thought) than by bravely shedding light on the limit of human reason. *Capital* is commonly read in relation with Hegelian philosophy. In my case, I came to hold that it is only the *Critique of Pure Reason* that should be read while cross-referencing *Capital*. Thus the Marx/Kant intersection.

Marx spoke very little of communism, except for the rare occasions on which he criticized others' discourses on the subject. He even said somewhere that speaking of the future was itself reactionary. Up until the climate change of 1989, I also despised all ideas of possible futures. I believed that the struggle against capitalism and the state would be possible without ideas of a future, and that we should only sustain the struggle endlessly in response to each contradiction arising from a real situation. The collapse of the socialist bloc in 1989 compelled me to change my stance. Until then, I, as many others, had been rebuking Marxist states and communist parties; that criticism had unwittingly taken for granted their solid existence and the appearance that they would endure forever. As long as they survived, we could feel we had done something just by negating them. When they collapsed, I realized that my critical stance had been paradoxically relying on their being. I came to feel that I had to state something positive. It was at this juncture that I began to confront Kant.

Kant is commonly—and not wrongly—known as a critic of metaphysics. For the development of this line, the influence of Hume's skeptical empiricism was large; Kant confessed that it was the idea that first interrupted his dogmatic slumber.<sup>2</sup> But what is overlooked is that at the time he wrote *Critique of Pure Reason*, metaphysics was unpopular and even disdained. In the preface, he expressed his regrets: "There was a time when metaphysics was called the queen of all sciences, and if the will be taken for the deed, it deserved this title of honor, on account of the preeminent importance of its object. Now, in accordance with the fashion of the age, the queen proves despised on all sides."<sup>3</sup> It follows that for Kant, the primary

task of critique was to recover metaphysics' proper function. This in turn charged Kant with the critique of Hume, who had once so radically stimulated him. I now want to reconsider the relationship between Kant and Hume in the context of the current debate.

During the 1980s, a revival of Kant was a discernible phenomenon. In Hannah Arendt's pioneering work, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, and in Jean-François Lyotard's *L'enthousiasme: La critique kantienne de l'histoire*, the return to Kant meant a rereading of *Critique of Judgment*. The point taken was that 'universality'—a sine qua non for the judgment of taste—cannot be achieved, in reality, among a multitude of conflicting subjects. At best what one gets is a 'common sense' that regulates conflicting tastes case by case. This work appeared to be drastically different from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which assumed a transcendental subjectivity that watches over universality (a reading that I examine in the following chapters.) The political implications of this new appreciation of Kant were clear, not excepting those of Habermas, who sought to reconsider reason as "communicative rationality": It was a criticism of communism qua 'metaphysics'.

Marxism has been accused of being rationalist and teleological in its attempt to realize the grand narrative. Stalinism was indeed a consequence of this tendency: The party of intellectuals led the populace by reason embodying the law of history, and thus the infamous tragedy. In opposition to this, the power of reason has been questioned, the superiority of intellectuals has been denied, and the teleology of history negated. The reexamination of Marxism has involved public consensus and negotiation among multiple language games as opposed to the central control of reason, and heterogeneity of experience or complexity of causality as opposed to a rationalist (metaphysical) view of history; on the other hand, the present, which has hitherto been sacrificed by telos, is reaffirmed in its qualitative heterogeneity (or in the sense of Bergsonian duration). I, too, was part of this vast tendency—called deconstruction, or the archaeology of knowledge, and so on—which I realized later could have critical impact only while Marxism actually ruled the people of many nation-states. In the 1990s, this tendency lost its impact, having become mostly a mere agent of the real deconstructive movement of

capitalism. Skeptical relativism, multiple language games (or public consensus), aesthetic affirmation of the present, empirical historicism, appreciation of subcultures (or cultural studies), and so forth lost their most subversive potencies and hence became the dominant, ruling thought. Today, these have become official doctrine in the most conservative institutions in economically advanced nation-states. All in all, this tendency can be summarized as the appreciation of empiricism (including aestheticism) against rationalism. In this sense, it has become increasingly clear that the return to Kant in recent years has actually been a return to Hume.

Meanwhile, it was in the effort of going beyond the empiricist tendency—as a critique of Hume—that I began to read Kant. This, to state it outright, is a project to reconstruct the metaphysics called communism. It was Kant who provided the most lucid insight into metaphysics' proper role and the inseparable and inevitable tie between faith and reason. "Thus I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith; and the dogmatism of metaphysics, i.e., the prejudice that without criticism reason can make progress in metaphysics, is the true source of all unbelief conflicting with morality, which unbelief is always very dogmatic."<sup>4</sup> With this statement, it is not that Kant sought to recover religion per se; what he affirmed was the aspect of religion that tends toward morality, encouraging us to be moral.

In contrast to mainstream Marxists, Marx persistently refused to consider communism as "constitutive idea (or constitutive use of reason)" in Kant's sense, and he rarely spoke of the future. Thus in *The German Ideology*, Marx made an addition to the text written by Engels: "Communism for us is not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the dogmatization of communism as a "scientific socialism" was much the kind of metaphysics Marx refuted. But this is not contradictory to the fact that he nurtured communism as "regulative idea (regulative use of reason)." So the young Marx stressed the categorical imperative: "The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that *man is the highest being for man*, hence

with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being.”<sup>6</sup> For him, communism was a Kantian categorical imperative, that is, practical and moral par excellence. He maintained this stance his whole life, though later he concentrated his efforts on the theoretical search for the historico-material conditions that would enable the categorical imperative to be realized. Meanwhile, the mainstream Marxists, having derided morality and advocated “historical necessity” and “scientific socialism,” ended up constituting a new type of slave society. This was nothing short of what Kant called “all pretensions of reason in general [*aller Anmaßungen der Vernunft überhaupt*].” Distrust of communism has spread, and the responsibility for “the true source of all unbelief” lies with dogmatic Marxism. One cannot and should not forget the miseries of the twentieth century caused by communism, nor should one take this mistake simply as misfortune. From that juncture onward we have not been allowed to advocate ‘Idea’ of any kind—not even of the New Left, which came into existence by negating Stalinism—with a naive positivity. That is why “in accordance with the fashion of the age, [communism] proves despised on all ideas.” Yet at the same time, other kinds of dogmatism are flourishing in various costumes. Furthermore, while intellectuals of advanced nations have been expressing their distrust of morality, various kinds of religious fundamentalism have begun to gain strength all over the world, and the intellectuals cannot simply scorn them.

For these reasons, beginning in the 1990s, my stance, if not my thinking itself, changed fundamentally. I came to believe that theory should not remain in the critical scrutiny of the status quo but should propose something positive to change the reality. At the same time, I reconfirmed the difficulty of doing so. Social democracy to me would not offer any promising prospect, and it was finally around the turn of the new century that I began to see a ray of hope that led me to organize the New Associationist Movement (NAM) in Japan. Certainly innumerable real movements that seek to abolish the status quo are occurring in all corners of the world, inevitably, under the procession of the globalization of world capitalism. But, in order to avoid the repetition of bygone mistakes, I insist that a *transcritical* recognition is necessary.

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That is to say, a new practice cannot be initiated without a thorough scrutiny of existing theories; and the theories to which I refer are not limited to political ones. I became convinced that there is nothing that is unaffected by or outside of Kantian and Marxian critiques. In this project, henceforth, I did not hesitate to dive into all possible domains including the theory of mathematical foundations, linguistics, aesthetics, and ontological philosophy (i.e., existentialism). I dealt with problems with which only specialists are customarily concerned. Furthermore, part I (on Kant) and part II (on Marx) were written as independent reflections, so their rapport might be ostensible. For this reason, I had to write a rather long introduction in order to make the connection visible, if not to summarize the whole book.

Notwithstanding the complexity and variety of the theoretical subjects, however, I believe that the book is accessible to the general reader. The book is based upon a series of essays that were published in the Japanese literary monthly *Gunzo*, beginning in 1992. They were published alongside novels, which is to say that I did not write them in the enclosure of the academy and scholarly discourse. I wrote them for people who are not grounded in special domains. Thus the nature of the book is not academic. There are many academic papers on Kant and Marx that carefully research historical data, point out their theoretical shortcomings, and propose minute and sophisticated doctrines. I am not interested in doing that. I would not dare to write a book to reveal shortcomings; I would rather write one to praise, and only for praiseworthy works. So it is that I do not quibble with Kant and Marx. I sought to read their texts, focusing on the center of their potencies. But I think that as a consequence no book is more critical of them than this.

The main target of the book is the trinity of Capital-Nation-State. I have to admit, however, that my analyses of state and nation are not fully developed; the considerations on the economy and revolution of the underdeveloped (agriculture-centered) and developing countries are not sufficient. These are my future projects.

Finally, I include here only a small portion of my reflections on the particular historical context of Japan—the state, its modernity, and its Marxism—in which my thinking was fostered. I plan to deal

with these in a sequel. In fact, I owe much of my thinking to the “tradition” of Japanese Marxism, and *Transcritique* was nurtured in the difference between Japanese and Western as well as other Asian contexts, and in my own singular experience of oscillating and transversing between them. In this volume, however, I did not write about these experiences, but rather expressed them only in line with the texts of Kant and Marx.