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KEN C. KAWASHIMA, FABIAN SCHÄFER, ROBERT STOLZ (eds)
Tosaka Jun: A Critical Reader.
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To discuss a collection of translations and critical essays in a book review of this length would inevitably do violence to the subtlety and diversity of stylistic textures and approaches. It needs to be done, however, because this is a timely and necessary book. Compared to his contemporaries Nishida Kitarō and Watsuji Tetsurō, Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) has received scant attention in studies of Japanese philosophy. Nishida and Watsuji are complex thinkers, but with them it is still possible to discern a reflex that reduces Japan to an aestheticized essence immune from history and conflict. In contrast, for Tosaka the Japanese ‘custom’ (*fūzoku*) that presented itself as natural and timeless was historically constituted and ideologically overdetermined. Against philological and hermeneutical approaches that privileged eternity and fixed meanings, Tosaka conceived of the everyday as a force field shot through with antagonisms; against cultural particularity and the boundedness of place, he emphasized a Japan entangled in the global circuits of capital.

The editors’ preface positions Tosaka as a Marxist thinker attentive to both political economy and cultural–ideological formations, whose work carries resonances with critics such as Benjamin, Krakauer, Bloch and Gramsci. The introduction is by Harry Harootunian, the historian whose compelling engagements with Tosaka within the cultural discourse of interwar Japan brought Tosaka’s thought to the attention of scholars and students outside the confines of Japanese philosophy. The ten translated texts which form the first part of the book reveal the breadth and depth of Tosaka’s concerns: from questions of philosophy proper such as time, space and science, to engagements with the popular (laughter, journalism, film and their potential for social critique), to his interventions into the political present and his penetrating analyses of Japanese fascism: the blurring of boundaries between public and private attempted by the police and the impressionistic ‘literary’ liberalism that swamped intellectual discourse during the 1930s. Detached from its roots in economic and political theory, liberalism was reduced to questions of psychology and self-consciousness. It came to mean a

space of freedom from politics, materialism and rationalism; a space that was eventually filled with nationalist affect.

The second part of the book consists of original essays by scholars of Japanese philosophy and social, cultural, and economic history. These engagements work at a variety of registers: there are re-readings of Tosaka in the context of his own heightened political and ideological moment; discussions of the intersections of his ideas with the work of contemporaries such as Adorno, Benjamin, Horkheimer and Krakauer, as well as explorations of those categories in Tosaka's thought that prefigure contemporary Marxist theory (Rancière, Virno, Hardt and Negri). For Robert Stolz, Tosaka's analyses of the everyday and of the historical constitution of space and time provide insights into our own environmental crisis. Stolz shows that Tosaka's critique of Watsuji Tetsurō and the vitalist ideas of nature as dematerialized life force is relevant to today's Deep Ecology and the empathetic identification with nature it promotes (146–7). Fabian Schäfer reads Tosaka alongside the Frankfurt School, tracing both differences and convergences: both Adorno and Tosaka insist that philosophical knowledge should be aware of its own historicity, but Tosaka's ideas about journalism are more complex than the stark dichotomy between manipulation and emancipation which we find in the German critics. Likewise, Tosaka's conception of laughter is social and historical (as opposed to Bergson's socio-psychological theory of laughter), as highlighted by Katsuya Hirano. Hirano also discusses Tosaka's concept of custom as an overdetermined ideological formation where a multiplicity of enunciations are still accompanied by voices of contention and contestation (191). Tosaka's theory of technology, on the other hand, refines notions of matter, anticipating, as Takeshi Kimoto argues in his contribution, recent discussions of immaterial labour in Italian Marxism. Gavin Walker sees Tosaka's most important theoretical intervention into the debates on film in his focus on the medium as an epistemological device refracting social relationality (232). Ken Kawashima uses Tosaka's discussion of the police function for a critical historical analysis of the role of the police in the 1930s, when its ideologues dreamed of its merging with the people and the internalization of surveillance and control. Katsuhiko Endo explores in depth the ideological complicity between Japanese liberalism, fascism and empire.

The only thing that distracts from the intellectual brilliance of this collection are some editorial inconsistencies and omissions in the translation and explanations of terms, events and historical developments that are key to understanding Tosaka's moment and his thought. The Materialism Research Group (Yuibutsuron kenkyūkai), the national body (*kokutai*), the ethics textbook *Cardinal Principles of the National Body* (Kokutai no hongī, 1937) and the debate on the nature of Japanese capitalism between two schools of Marxist historians are often referred to, but are either translated without any explanation or rendered differently into English by different translators and authors, with the Japanese term and the English translation sometimes circulating separately. Schäfer translates *kaishaku no tetsugaku* as interpretive philosophy (153), while from the context and from Harootyan's introduction it is clear that what is meant is hermeneutics. Schäfer also uses Nipponism for *nihonshugi* (173), while the other authors use the widely accepted Japanism. This is the first collection that presents Tosaka's work to English-speaking scholars and students, but such inconsistencies can be confusing to readers outside the Japan field. Perhaps in the next edition these issues can be avoided by more involved editing: translating and explaining terms and events in the footnotes the very first time they appear in the text and then referring back to the notes, or compiling and appending a glossary.

There are also some minor problems on the level of style and language. The suffix *shugi* does mean '-ism' in Japanese, but there are some direct and literal translations that lead to awkward neologisms in English such as 'literature-ism' (186), 'control-ism' (277) and 'ethic-ism' (288). Chris Kai-Jones uses contractions like *that's*, *it's* and *doesn't*, while the other translators do not. There are some departures from the adopted romanization system: *ha* instead of *wa* when used as a particle (155), *jaanarizumu* instead of *jānarizumu* (155). In the index, the entry for interiority is glossed with *seimei* (life), clearly an error; there are also some typos ('bloshevism', *kōzo-ha* instead of *kōza-ha*, *kenbō* instead of *kenbo*) and the reference for Rancière should be to page 253, not 262. Tosaka was fully conscious of the resurgences of magical language and the epistemologies of intuition in his time; his own language is scrupulously clear and logical. We owe his texts the same attentiveness.

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