



Horizons and In-Betweens : On the Interpretation of Western Philosophy in Japan and its Hermeneutical Situation

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Horizons and In-Betweens:*

On the Interpretation of Western Philosophy in Japan and its Hermeneutical Situation¹⁾

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1.

In a recent paper, Charles Taylor has argued to recognise the “understanding of the other” as a pressing and challenging problem for human sciences today²⁾. We can understand Taylor’s claim as a reaction to the accelerating experience of plurality of world- and life-orientations going along with the processes of globalisation; albeit this experience is also characteristic for modernity, a subject matter to which Taylor has devoted much of his scholarship³⁾.

For those being familiar with Taylor’s work, it will not be surprising that, in his paper, he stresses the significance Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics has for coming to grips with this problem. It is well known that Taylor always has shown great sympathy for hermeneutical philosophy⁴⁾ but, at least to my knowledge, he never before has so clearly expressed his indebtedness to Gadamer, especially regarding the concepts of “dialogue” and “fusion of horizons.”

While employing Gadamer’s hermeneutics for conceptualising the “understanding of the other,” for Taylor is nothing else but a natural extension of his work, it raises serious reservations in other quarters. Since the 1980s, a lot of criticism has been brought up against Gadamer’s hermeneutics, doubting its usefulness for making sense of the other, that is the culturally alien. Because the hermeneutics of effective-history, so the argument goes, aims at the reaffirmation of one’s own cultural tradition, it must fail in doing justice to those others who belong to a different, if not a none Western culture. Based on this criticism, it has become fashionable, at least in the German-speaking world, to pit a so-called “intercultural hermeneutics” against Gadamer⁵⁾.

*Key words: hermeneutics, in-between, Charles Taylor, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Watsuji Tetsurō, Walter Benjamin

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- 1) This paper is based on a lecture I gave under the same title at the International Conference “Global Philosophy? European, Asian and American Perspectives” which was held at the University of California, Berkeley, on October 2–3, 2014. For the purpose of this publication, I have made some minor additions to the original text.
- 2) Charles Taylor, “Understanding the Other: A Gadamerian View on Conceptual Schemes,” in: Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections. Selected Essays*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2011, pp. 24–38.
- 3) Among Taylor’s numerous contributions, cf. first and foremost: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1989. Recently also: Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2007.
- 4) Cf. Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers 2*, Cambridge Mass.: Cambridge University Press 1985.
- 5) Cf. Alois Wierlacher, “Mit fremden Augen oder: Fremdheit als Ferment. Überlegungen zur Begründung einer interkulturellen Hermeneutik deutscher Literatur”, in: *Das Fremde und das Eigene. Prolegomena zu einer interkulturellen* ↗

However, on closer inspection, it becomes evident that the differences between the two are far from being that decisive as Gadamer's critics claim them to be. In fact, as Axel Horstmann has pointed out, intercultural hermeneutics makes ample use of concepts central to Gadamer's hermeneutics, particularly the concept of dialogue, so that, according to Horstmann, in the whole discussion, no new theoretical insights have been generated⁶⁾.

And yet, there are, as I believe, good reasons for challenging Gadamer on this plane, precisely in order to enrich our understanding of hermeneutic philosophy. It is not my intention to make another attempt at doing away with the hermeneutics of effective history; I rather wish to excavate some of its presuppositions that have been (most likely unconsciously) covered up by Gadamer as well as by his interpreters like Taylor. Thus, we will also be able to better assess the significance Gadamer's hermeneutics has for the problem of understanding the other. For this purpose, I will inquire into a notion of Gadamer that is seldom discussed, that of hermeneutical "in-between," and hopefully will, thus, be able to contribute to the task of hermeneutics, which is, according to Gadamer, "to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes places"⁷⁾.

2.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer determines the "in-between" as "the true home of hermeneutics."⁸⁾ Hermeneutics takes its position between "strangeness and familiarity that a transmitted text has for us [. . .] between being an historically intended separate object and being part of a tradition."⁹⁾ As the context of the passage reveals, this is meant as a criticism against the romantic hermeneutics and historicism. Therefore, when speaking of "in-between," Gadamer is far more concerned with distinguishing his own approach from the methodological operations of historicism resulting in objectifying one's own tradition, than keeping distance from the all-too-familiar understanding of ones allegedly unbroken stream of tradition. In other words, Gadamer's rendering of the "in-between" is determined by his own hermeneutical situation, as is his response to this situation, that is to defend against the methodological consciousness in historical sciences the ontological turn in the meaning of understanding that Heidegger had brought about.

From this situation follows that Gadamer determines understanding as essentially motivated by the "temporal distance," the hermeneutical significance of which "has remained entirely peripheral in previous hermeneutics"¹⁰⁾. What is meant here, is the distance between the understanding present (*ver-*

↘ *Germanistik*, ed. A. Wierlacher, München: iudicium 1985; Wolfgang Michel, "Zur Geltungs- und Anwendungreichweite interdisziplinärer Forschung in der interkulturellen Zusammenarbeit. Hermeneutik – Sozialpsychologie – Medienwissenschaft und Literaturwissenschaft", in: *Das Fremde und das Eigene*, *ibid.*, pp. 94; Elmar Holenstein, *Menschliches Selbstverständnis. Ichbewußtsein – Intersubjektive Verantwortung – Interkulturelle Verständigung*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 1985, part. III; Thomas Bargatzky, "Die Ethnologie und der Begriff der kulturellen Fremde", in: *Kulturthema Fremdheit. Leitbegriffe und Problemfelder kulturwissenschaftlicher Fremdeitsforschung*, hg. v. A. Wierlacher, München: iudicium 1993; Ram Adhar Mall, *Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen. Interkulturelle Philosophie – eine neue Orientierung*, Darmstadt 1995; cf. also Theo Sundermeier, *Den Fremden verstehen. Eine praktische Hermeneutik*, Göttingen 1996.

6) Axel Horstmann, "Interkulturelle Hermeneutik. Eine neue Theorie des Verstehens?", in: *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 1999, Vol.47: 3, pp.427–448, esp. pp.441–446.

7) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (tr. Barden and Cumming), New York: Crossroads 1985, p.263.

8) Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.263.

9) Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.262–263.

10) Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.263.

stehende Gegenwart) and the past that has to be understood (*zu verstehende Vergangenheit*), both belonging to the same tradition that has been handed down by effective-history. Being “a positive and productive possibility of understanding,” the temporal distance is an indispensable condition for the beginning of all understanding, that is “when something addresses us.”¹¹⁾ Only when we are addressed by something in our own tradition, we experience the tension between strangeness and familiarity, as which the “in-between” emerges. Something of the handed-down past becomes questionable, and it is our responsibility to articulate an answer, that is to respond by examining our prejudices (whether they can stand the test of tradition) and, thus, giving an interpretation of the truth of the questionable thing (*Sache*). This is, when the “fusion of horizons” takes place, that is, when a present interpretation is mediated with the truth of its tradition and, thus, the unity of both is affirmed.

It lies in the very nature of any response of this kind, that it conceals aspects of the interpreted thing that seemingly bear no immediate significance for the response itself. This is the case with Gadamer, too. His hermeneutics of effective-history is in itself an event within the effective-history of hermeneutics. Every critic who blames Gadamer’s hermeneutics for being of no use for intercultural understanding should bear this in mind. For our purpose it is important that Gadamer himself has noticed the limitations of his notion of “temporal distance.” In a footnote that has been inserted in the *Gesammelte Werke* he admits that “it is distance – not only temporal distance” that helps us to distinguish the true from the false prejudices¹²⁾. What Gadamer has in mind here, is the dialogical relation between I and Thou, where our prejudices are put to the test¹³⁾. The distance between I and Thou goes indeed beyond the scope of effective history, and yet, this self-correction is not sufficient to prove the significance Gadamer’s hermeneutics might have for understanding the other. As we will see below, the notion of dialogical in-between, when applied to the hermeneutical situation that is constitutive for philosophers in modern Japan, makes necessary certain modifications of the concept of horizon that conflict with a notion of understanding Gadamer never abandoned, that is, as something that is submerged in the truth of the thing it has to understand¹⁴⁾. Hence, we are in need of a description of the “in-between” that explores in greater detail the relation between horizon and understanding.

3.

Admittedly, it was not while reading Gadamer, that my attention was drawn to the problematic aspects of the concept of “in-between,” but while examining the hermeneutical situation of modern Japanese philosophy, exemplified by one particular philosopher, Watsuji Tetsurō, who, through a critical appropriation of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, developed an alternative concept of in-between. Watsuji came across this book during his sojourn in Berlin, in 1927, and it motivated him, as he himself witnesses, to an in-depth inquiry into *Ethics as a Study of Man*, so the title of a book of Watsuji, published in 1934¹⁵⁾.

11) Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.266.

12) Hans Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck 1995, vol.1, p.304, footnote 228 (my translation). Cf. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.2, p.8–9.

13) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.2, p.35–36.

14) Cf. Gadamer’s rendering of truth concerning representations of works of art in *Truth and Method*, pp.99–108.

See also Gadamer’s reflections on “Der ‘eminente’ Text und seine Wahrheit” (1986), in: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.8, pp.286–295, esp. p.291.

15) Watsuji Tetsurō, “Ningen no gaku toshite no rinrigaku”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, ed. Abe Yoshishige, Nakamura ↗

For the purpose of this paper, I refrain from giving a detailed account of Watsuji's ethical-anthropological thought; I rather will draw our attention directly to the notion of in-between/betweenness, *aida/aidagara*, which is, according to Watsuji, the fundamental structure of human existence, *ningen sonzai*. Watsuji arrives at this notion by following a quite peculiar path, as we will see below.

At the time he went to Berlin, Watsuji was already recognised as a distinguished scholar in the field of intellectual history of Buddhism. However, he became aware of the philosophical significance of Buddhist thought only after he had encountered *Being and Time*. He obviously had great expectations that Heidegger's analytics of being-in-the-world would help him to find a philosophical answer to a question that might be described as the driving force behind his thought in general and which he had posed already in 1913: "How is an authentic life in modern times possible?"¹⁶⁾

This question was, of course, motivated not so much by Watsuji's studies in Buddhism but by the specific historical situation of Japan at that time. Only half a century had passed, since the country had been forced to open itself towards the rest of the world, especially to Western countries, and was, to use Harry Harootunian's pithy phrase, "overcome by modernity"¹⁷⁾. The problem, how to cope with modern Western concepts like individualism, freedom, society, democracy, etc. was hotly debated among Japanese intellectuals; Watsuji too got involved in these debates, even though his philosophical approach to this problem stands out.

Albeit Watsuji draws on the works of Husserl, Scheler, Kant, Hegel, and many other Western philosophers, for him, Heidegger is the pre-eminent point of reference. This is evidenced by the key function, Heideggerian terms have in his discourse: Temporality, spatiality, authenticity, and, most of all, understanding, which he, following Heidegger, interprets not as a means of method, but ontologically. As a fundamental aspect of human existence, understanding means to disclose possibilities of being. However, Watsuji's project of an *Ethics as a science of man* determines how he conceives these terms, in particular the concept of understanding. Albeit the question of how an authentic life in modern times is possible resonates with Heidegger, at least at an ontic level, Watsuji's solution points to a completely different direction. He pays no heed to the significance the fundamental ontology has for Heidegger's analytics of being in the world and the concept of understanding. (Therefore, many of his, albeit productive, misunderstandings arise.) Hence, unlike Heidegger, he is not interested in revealing the supreme possibility of understanding as "anticipatory resoluteness" in the experience of "Being-towards-death." He rather aims at giving a description of how understanding establishes the "practical interconnectedness" of "I and Thou"¹⁸⁾.

One major result of Watsuji's discourse is his conceptualisation of human existence as *ningen*, which can be rendered in English as "man-in-between." The term was coined in the third century, when the Buddhist scriptures were translated into Chinese. Originally, *ningen* means "world of human beings" in contrast to the other four worlds of Buddhist cosmology. The grapheme *gen/aida* reads *loka* in Sanskrit, meaning "open space" or "clearing," while the first part of the term, *nin/hito*, refers to the human being. In Watsuji's time, its meaning had significantly changed. Now, *ningen* was used in everyday language to designate the individual human being, while, at the same time, it was used in

↘ Hajime et al., Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 1990, vol.9.

16) Watsuji Tetsurō, "Memorandum", in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, supplement volume 1, p.29, pp.39–40.

17) Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton UP 2001.

18) Watsuji Tetsurō, "Rinrigaku", in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.10, p.164.

academic circles as a term for translating Western philosophical concepts like *anthropos*, *homo*, *man*, and *Mensch*. According to Watsuji, these definitions are concealing *ningen's* ontological structure of *aidagara*, which means that “*ningen* is the world (*yo no naka*) and, at the same time, man in the world”¹⁹.

The ethical significance of this structure is spelled out as mediation between the particular individual and the totality of the ethos. (In this respect, Watsuji very much resembles Aristotle and Hegel.) According to Watsuji, individual and ethos are forming a relation of dual negation²⁰. For our purpose it is important to note that, ontologically speaking, “individual persons do not subsist in themselves [. . .] The whole [i.e. the ethos] also cannot subsist in itself”²¹. Neither the individual nor the ethos “has ‘precedence’.”²² If we follow Watsuji, to exist in *aidagara* means that man cannot but exist in relation with others and, at the same time, inasmuch an individual, constitute these relations. In other words, the individual is not only depending on others but also has, within limits, the capability to “shape freely” the ethos it belongs to²³. In other words, the in-between can be conceived as the locus where both individual and ethos are mediated with one another.

Obviously, Watsuji was attracted by Heidegger’s emphasis on the finitude of human existence. However, he articulated it in terms of the relation between I and Thou, which has, according to him, first and foremost, a spatial character. This is meant when he claims that human existence had to be understood “not only as *zeitlich* but also as *ortlich*”²⁴. Drawing on the original buddhist meaning of *ningen* and by analysing phenomena like transportation and communication, which make possible common practices and understanding, he determines the interconnectedness spatially as “subjective spread between the self and the other.”²⁵ That is to say, with the term “spatial,” we are not referring to an objective space as in natural sciences. Human existence is “spatial” inasmuch it cannot but exist in relation with others, that is as *aidagara*. It is this betweenness, that comprehends all possibilities of understanding.

This is not the place to judge the accuracy of Watsuji’s reading, the appropriateness of his criticism, or the persuasiveness of his ethical discourse. I will rather inquire into the bearing, his notion of in-between, *aidagara*, has to the problem of how he was able to carry out his interpretation of human existence as *ningen* in the first place.

4.

The in-between between Heidegger’s *Dasein* and the Buddhist notion of *ningen* can not be comprehended as a distance that could be bridged in a comparison, as if Watsuji had held *Being and Time* and the Buddhist scriptures against each other and then decided what to pick from which. Also, Watsuji did not take, first, a firm foothold in his own tradition and, then, attack Heidegger. Besides, relying solely on his own tradition, he would have lacked the conceptual means to challenge Heidegger on

19) Watsuji Tetsurō, “Ningen no gaku toshite no rinrigaku”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.9, p.130.

20) Cf. Watsuji Tetsurō, “Rinrigaku”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.10, p.26–27.

21) Watsuji Tetsurō, “Rinrigaku”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.10, p.106.

22) Watsuji Tetsurō, “Rinrigaku”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.10, p.107.

23) Watsuji Tetsurō, “Fūdo”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.8, p.12.

24) Watsuji Tetsurō, “Kokuminsei no kōsatsu”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, supplement vol.1, p.394.

25) Watsuji Tetsurō, “Rinrigaku”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.10, p.236.

his own grounds. In these two examples, the in-between is conceived of as space that lies between two disconnected entities. The true meaning of in-between emerges when we take into account its dynamic aspect, which is similar to the aspect of interpretation in Watsuji's notion of ethical *aidagara*. Albeit, this brings us closer to the meaning of "in-between" in *Truth and Method*, it remains questionable whether we can grasp his interpretation in terms of "fusion of horizons."

First, we have to look into the relation of understanding and tradition in Watsuji's hermeneutical situation. Again, the contrast with Gadamer is helpful. It is clear that Watsuji's tradition is not to be conceived as "substance" that "both prescribes and limits every possibility of understanding any tradition"²⁶⁾, because, for him, the understanding of his tradition is, in at least one important aspect, made possible not by the tradition, but by something from outside. Because Watsuji integrated Heidegger's notions of understanding, being-in-the-world, etc. into his own horizon, he was able to interpret *ningen* as outlined above.

If we take into account that, in Gadamer's "fusion of horizons," the act of interpretation is submerged in the tradition that has to be understood, we hesitate to call the integration of Heideggerian concepts into the horizon of Watsuji's tradition a fusion. According to Gadamer, the mediation of interpretation and tradition is of such completeness that the interpretation is no longer identifiable as such; in order to let emerge in full the truth of the tradition, the interpretation has, if we are allowed to borrow Watsuji's words, to negate itself completely. And yet, the concept of negation in Watsuji differs in one crucial point, as it does not presuppose a substantial totality (see above). Hence, the act of interpretation has a quite different function from that one it has in Gadamer. It is not meant to affirm a substantial tradition but rather to bring about a radically new interpretation of it. A brief reflection on Watsuji's rendering of the Japanese poetry form of *renga* (linked poem) will show better what is involved here.

In the composition of a *renga*, many poets are involved. As Watsuji says, every poet creates a poem that "is forming a world on its own" and, at the same time, has to be in accordance with the poems created by the other poets: "Each verse in a linked poem has its own independent existence, yet there is a subtle link that unites these so that one existence evolves into another and there is an order that reaches through the whole. As these developmental links between verse and verse are usually forged by different poets, the coordination of the imaginative power of a single poet is deliberately cast aside and the direction of the development given over to chance. Thus, the composition of the whole is the product of chance; yet, because of this, it becomes all the richer, with the kind of twist and turn that could not be expected of a single author."²⁷⁾

After the explanations given above, the passage is not difficult to understand. It exemplifies the mediation of particular and totality in an in-between. Here, the particular, that is the individual poem, is not submerged in the totality, that is the complete *renga*-poem. Albeit limited by the other poems, every individual poem is still recognisable as such; it does not disappear behind the totality of the *renga*. Thus, the complete *renga*-poem is nothing substantial like the work of arts, Gadamer discusses in *Truth and Method*, but rather something that comes into being only through the collaboration of a plurality of poems, which, at the same time, are brought into full play by their totality. The distance that allows for distinguishing each individual poem from the others and from the totality is nothing

26) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.269.

27) Watsuji Tetsurō, "Fūdo", in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū*, vol.8, p.194.

else than an in-between.

This structure of complementary mediation can be applied to Watsuji's hermeneutical situation. Similar to the *renga*-poem, Watsuji's notion of *ningen* has multiple authors. First of all, it is a result of a "collaboration" of Heidegger's analytics of Being-in-the-world and Buddhist cosmology. Watsuji's part in that collaboration could be understood as that of a midwife who helped giving birth to a new interpretation of *ningen* in that he asked the right questions at the right time. And yet, his hermeneutical situation is more complex than the structure of the *renga*-example, because, in a *renga*, the focus is not on how the links between the individual poems affect each other, but on their relation to the totality, whereas, for Watsuji, the horizon of his own tradition not only contributes to the emergence of something new, but is shaped through the encounter with Heidegger in the first place. This is not to say that there would not have been such a horizon before 1927; this would be nonsense. But it is to say that the encounter with Heidegger has revealed possibilities lying hidden in Watsuji's tradition that otherwise would have stayed in concealment and, thus, could not have been able to contribute to the emergence of the notion of human existence as *aidagara* at all.

Of importance is, furthermore, the notion of "chance," that is contingency. It gives us a hint to the fact that situations like the session of *renga*-poets or Watsuji's encounter with Heidegger are not entirely at the participants' disposal. Their in-between emerges in a discontinuous moment. We can call this, following Walter Benjamin, a "constellation."²⁸⁾ In a constellation, the continuous stream of history is interrupted. The historian (for Benjamin, the historian who is trained in dialectical materialism) breaks out of it a single moment or aspect that fits the requirements of his time, that is, he establishes a simultaneous relation between past and present. The example of the French revolution given by Benjamin can be put into parallel with Watsuji's situation. Remember his question for the possibilities of an authentic life in modernity; it could only arise in a concrete historical situation, that is in the encounter with Western modernity. As the French revolutionaries understood their situation in terms of a new Rome²⁹⁾, for Watsuji and his contemporaries a vast array of possibilities of how to make sense of their situation was at hand, ready to be broken out of the stream of history.

And yet, it can be doubted whether the understanding Watsuji and his compatriots arrived at can be called "historical." The presuppositions that would allow us to do so, are far too challenging to be fulfilled. As we have seen, the concept of effective-history cannot be applied to Watsuji's hermeneutical situation. The same applies to Benjamin's philosophy of history – illuminating as his concept of constellation may be. Albeit constellations and their interpretations are discontinuous events, we have to presuppose the continuous stream of history out of which single moments can be broken out. But what kind of concept of history could be applied to a situation that comprises Heidegger, Buddhist thought, and Japanese modernity? Even if we follow Gadamer and renounce the claim of historicism to gain full understanding of history, that is, if we admit that only limited understanding is true understanding, we would find it difficult to establish any historical continuity between these three poles. I leave it open for discussion, whether it makes sense to speak here of "spatiality of understanding."

28) Walter Benjamin, "Der Begriff der Geschichte", in *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann/Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1978, vol.I.2, pp.691–704, esp. pp.703, 704.

29) Walter Benjamin, "Der Begriff der Geschichte", *ibid.*, p.701.

5.

We can now return to the question of the significance Gadamer's hermeneutics has for understanding the other. Throughout the argument, it should have become obvious that Gadamer helps tremendously, first, in conceptualising the problem; without the hermeneutics of effective-history it would have been far more difficult, if not impossible, to reveal the possibilities lying hidden in Watsuji's notion of *aida/aidagara*. Second, the fact that Gadamer applied Heidegger's concept of existential understanding to the problem of historical understanding can hardly be overestimated, for it is indispensable to come to grips with so-called intercultural constellations.

It is precisely this aspect, Charles Taylor drew on for his appropriation of Gadamer's hermeneutics. Taylor makes an important point when he defends the idea of "coming to an understanding with an interlocutor" against all attempts to reduce understanding to a method for "knowing an object."³⁰⁾

However, we must not forget that Gadamer's solutions to the problem of understanding cannot be applied to the problem of understanding the other without some significant modifications. First of all, the concept of horizon has to be expanded; defining it as "substance" is only one possibility in very specific cases that, moreover, require specific presuppositions, most of all the continuity of effective-history. This leads to the second point, Gadamer's emphasis on continuity. It leaves us clueless when we are to make sense of hermeneutical constellations like in Benjamin or Watsuji. Third, the notion of in-between needs greater specification in order to accommodate, for instance, Watsuji's concept of *aida/aidagara*. Fourth, the concept of understanding itself. As shown, submerging the act of interpretation in the substance of what has to be understood fails to make sense of hermeneutic situations like that of Watsuji's.

Most remarkably, even when carrying out these modifications, we cannot do away with Gadamer, as it is he who still helps us asking the right questions. We should not blame Gadamer, if we aren't asking them at the right time.

30) Charles Taylor, "Understanding the Other: A Gadamerian View on Conceptual Schemes," *ibid.*, p.25.

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ABSTRACT

In the West, philosophy in Japan is chronically understudied. This is partly understandable, but, in particular for hermeneutical philosophy, unfortunate. This paper argues that a careful inquiry into the hermeneutical situation in which philosophy in modern Japan developed, could enrich our understanding of hermeneutical philosophy as such. It claims that, for an adequate description of this hermeneutical situation, more refined conceptual means are required than current hermeneutics (especially the hermeneutics of effective-history) can provide. In particular, Gadamer's concepts of *horizon* and *hermeneutical in-between* ought to be reconsidered. For this purpose, this paper engages in a dialogue between Gadamer and Watsuji Tetsurô (1889–1960) whose notions of *aida* (in-between) and *aidagara* (betweenness) could serve as a remedy for some of the shortcomings inherent in the hermeneutics of effective-history.

Key Words: hermeneutics, in-between, Charles Taylor, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Watsuji Tetsurô, Walter Benjamin