

## Watsuji Tetsurô on Spatiality: Existence Within the Context of Climate and History\*

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In this paper I wish to initiate a dialogue between two philosophers: Martin Heidegger and Watsuji Tetsurô. The subject of this (fictitious) dialogue will be the problem of authentic self-understanding regarding the ontological category of spatiality. Before I go *in medias res*, I wish to make some preliminary remarks.

It is well known that Watsuji's *Ethics* (3 volumes, 1937–1949) took shape through a critical assessment of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927). This is remarkable, for the scope of Watsuji's philosophical endeavor differs largely from that of Heidegger. Heidegger aimed at retrieving the question of being, whereas Watsuji was striving to accomplish an ethical system that could meet the requirements of the time. This fundamental difference is to be held accountable for most of Watsuji's misunderstandings of *Being and Time*. These misunderstandings are not about side issues but refer to the core concepts of an ontology of man as being-in-the-world. One cannot but get the impression that, regarding these ontological concepts, Watsuji and Heidegger are talking at cross-purposes. Thus, one could doubt whether an examination of the philosophical relationship between Watsuji and Heidegger would be worth the effort.

Of course, there is much these two philosophers do have in common; at least five points could be mentioned: (1) Watsuji and Heidegger were deeply dissatisfied with the prevalent philosophical currents of the time, in particular Neo-Kantianism. Both strove for providing a fresh outlook on their relevant fields, that is to say, ontology and ethics, respectively; (2) both aspired to overcome the paradigm of subjectivity prevalent in Western philosophy since Descartes; (3) methodologically, both drew from hermeneutics and phenomenology; (4) both wanted to give an account of man as concrete being in the world; (5) Heidegger and Watsuji emphasized the notion of authenticity or authentic self-understanding, albeit differently. To be sure, any of these points is worth paying attention to, but still one could argue that, due to the aforementioned fundamental difference, bringing together these two philosophers would be only of historical interest and, thus, serve the purpose of, say, add some footnotes to the effective history of *Being and Time*.

However, I believe that a dialogue between Watsuji and Heidegger is of interest not so much for historical, but for systematic, reasons. As I will try to elucidate, a careful examination of how Watsuji interpreted Heidegger's conception of "Being-there" (*Dasein*) as being-in-the-world and how he implemented it into his own theory of "man-as-betweenness" (*aidagara*), could open new perspectives

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on the problem of how human existence ought to be understood. Of course this task cannot be covered in full within this paper. Hence, I will limit the dialogue between Watsuji and Heidegger to the problems of authenticity and spatiality of human existence.

The course of my argument is as follows: First, I will give a brief account of how Watsuji developed his notion of human existence as betweenness (*aidagara*) through a critical assessment of Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* (I); then, I will turn to a reconstruction of Watsuji's inquiry into spatiality understood as a phenomenological concretion of betweenness (II); after that, I will discuss the notions of authenticity and transcendence between Heidegger and Watsuji (III); finally, I will inquire into Watsuji's climatology, developed in his book, *Fûdo* (1935) (IV).

## I

In *Fûdo* (Climate, 1935), Watsuji begins his argument with a trenchant critique of Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*.<sup>1)</sup> The passage in question is well known so that I will confine myself to a brief summary. Watsuji's main points are as follows: (1) In his analytic of *Dasein* (Being-there), Heidegger overemphasizes the notion of temporality of *Dasein* at the cost of its spatiality. Therefore, (2) he is not able to grasp the dual structure of man as both social and individual existence. Hence, (3) his concept of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world is an abstraction, that is to say, Heidegger falls short of his own goal to give an undistorted description of the phenomenon of human existence within the context of the life-world. Furthermore, due to Heidegger's lack of appreciation of spatiality, he is not able to grasp the linkage between time and space and, thus, the connection between history and climate. Complementarily, in his *Ethics*, Watsuji adds another point: (5) Heidegger's notion of authenticity covers only the inauthentic mode of human existence, which is the aspect of individuality. As will be shown in this paper, Watsuji's criticism ultimately extends to the very foundations of Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein*, that is, the determination of the relation of *Dasein*'s facticity and its existence, or in other words, the relation of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) and project (*Entwurf*). Even though in Watsuji's criticism these terms do not appear explicitly, it is obvious that he is skeptical towards Heidegger's idea that *Dasein* has to transcend its facticity to attain an authentic mode of existence. Accordingly, the notion of authenticity developed by Watsuji confines ningen within the boundaries of facticity.<sup>2)</sup> From this brief account of Watsuji's criticism of Heidegger, I now wish to turn to an examination of Watsuji's project of an "ethics as a science of man."<sup>3)</sup>

1) Cf. WTZ 8: 1–2; Watsuji 1961: v–vi. For quotations of *Fûdo*, I use the translation of Bownas (*Climate and Culture. A Philosophical Study*, Tokyo: Ministry of Education, Japan, 1961; henceforth: Watsuji 1961), for quotations of Watsuji's *Ethics* (*Rinrigaku*), that of Yamamoto/Carter (*Watsuji Tetsurô's Rinrigaku. Ethics in Japan*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996; henceforth: Watsuji 1996). However, when necessary, I take the liberty to alter their translations. Watsuji's works in Japanese (*Watsuji Tetsurô Zenshû*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 1961 sqq.) are abbreviated as WTZ, followed by the number of volume and page. For English translations of Heidegger's terms, I rely on Macquarrie's and Robinson's translation of *Being and Time*, San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962.

2) Despite this criticism it is obvious that, in reference to the development of his project of an ethics, Watsuji greatly benefits from *Being and Time*. Notions like "understanding" (*ryôkai*), "spatiality" (*kûkansei*), "temporality" (*jikansei*) and, above all, "existence" (*sonzai*), which provide the conceptual framework of Watsuji's *Ethics*, are unintelligible if they are not situated within the context of Heidegger's existential ontology.

3) Watsuji's 1934 study, which bears this title, offers a tentative approach to the problems he wished to develop in full within his *Ethics* (cf. WTZ 9: 1–192). In this study, Watsuji develops his "method of an ethics as a science of man," for which he heavily draws from hermeneutics and phenomenology. I do not have the space here to expound on this in ↗

One of the core concepts of Watsuji's phenomenological hermeneutics of the life-world is *sonzai* (existence, being). Similar to Heidegger's notion of *Existenz*, it is a term that can be applied only for describing the being of man. Only *Dasein* or, respectively, *ningen* exists.

Watsuji determines *sonzai* as "the self-sustenance of the practical subject as betweenness" (WTZ 10: 25; Watsuji 1996: 21). Following the meaning of the Chinese characters *son* and *zai*, he expounds on this definition as follows: "The original meaning of the Chinese character *son*, of *son-zai*, is 'subjective self-subsistence.' It means maintenance or subsistence over against loss. [. . .] The original meaning of *zai* of *son-zai* lies in the fact that the subject stays in some place. [. . .] Now the place where the subject stays is a social place such as an inn, home, homeland, or the world. In other words, it consists in such human relations as that of the family, village, town, or the general public" (WTZ 10: 24; Watsuji 1996: 20–21). Thus, Watsuji concludes, *sonzai* "means that *ningen* possesses herself. We could also simply say that *sonzai* is the 'the interconnection of the acts of *ningen*' (*ningen no kôiteki renkan*)" (WTZ 10: 25; Watsuji 1996: 21).<sup>4)</sup>

For Watsuji, the fact that *ningen* cannot but be within practical relationships with others is grasped in full by the notion of *sonzai*. Moreover, this notion carries the whole meaning of human existence and, hence, it determines the conceptual framework within which any investigation into the ontological structure of man has to operate. In this idea, one recognizes a decisive difference between the notion of *sonzai* and the notion of existence as *Sorge* (concern, care) developed in *Being and Time*: Watsuji claims that the true meaning of "concern" has to be elucidated in relation with the phenomenon of being with others (*Mitsein*), whereas for Heidegger, the meaning of human existence has to be found in *Dasein's* radical individuation of "anticipatory resoluteness" (*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*) and "Being-towards-death" (*Sein zum Tode*). I will come back to this difference when I discuss the notion of authenticity between Heidegger and Watsuji.

What one has to ask now is, how Watsuji determines the ontological structure of "subjective self-subsistence." To obtain an answer to this question, one has to look into his explications of the meaning of human being as *ningen*, for it is human being that is concerned with subjective self-subsistence. According to Watsuji, the term *ningen* carries a dual meaning: "Man-as-betweenness (*ningen*) means 'world' (*yo no naka*) as such and at the same time, the 'individual persons' (*hito*) in the world. Accordingly, 'man-as-betweenness' is neither individual nor society only" (WTZ 9: 20).<sup>5)</sup> This definition implies Watsuji's disapproval of the theories of social contract developed by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau; it also draws a distinction between, on the one hand, his ethics as a science of man and, on the other hand, sociological theories of man. As Watsuji believes, his approach is the

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↘ detail; however, I wish to mention that for Watsuji, the problems of ethics are to be approached through a phenomenological description of the "factuality of everyday life" (WTZ 10: 51) and its ontological implications. Thus, I would like to characterize Watsuji's endeavor as a phenomenological hermeneutics of life-world. Having said this, it should be added that, for the very reason Watsuji develops such a description, the ontological categories he brings to light must have their correlates in the factual life-world; that is to say, the results of Watsuji's examinations can claim validity only inasmuch as they can be corroborated by concrete life-world experience(s).

4) Cf. WTZ 9: 33: "Evidently, 'existence' (*sonzai*) means subjective self-subsistence as betweenness, that is the self-possession of man-as-betweenness. If we connect the two facts that *son* means to possess consciously something and *zai* means a social place, then we can say that *sonzai* means nothing else but 'existing consciously in the world'."

5) Watsuji arrives at this definition through highly original interpretations of Buddhist scriptures, Japanese literature, and, above all, everyday language usage (cf. WTZ 9: 13–21). I do not have the space here to give an account of these linguistic interpretations; however, it has to be noted that they are not meant to replace the analysis of the concrete phenomenon of *ningen*.

more fundamental one. Borrowing from Heidegger, one could describe his ethics as a science of man as a “regional ontology,” that is, an endeavor to provide the ontological foundations for a specific area in science – in Watsuji’s case, anthropology, sociology, and philosophical ethics.

The problem that arises now is how the two aspects of *ningen*, that is, individuality and sociality, are related to each other. To solve this problem, Watsuji employs a unique, though as we will see, highly problematic version of Hegelian dialectics. For him, the method of dialectics is a means to come to grips with the “subjective, practical, and dynamic structure of human being” (WTZ 10: 25; Watsuji 1996: 21).<sup>6)</sup>

“On the one hand, the standpoint of an acting individual comes to be established only in some way as a negation of the totality of *ningen*. An individual that does not imply the meaning of negation, that is, an essentially self-sufficient individual, is nothing but an imaginative construction. On the other hand, the totality of *ningen* comes to be established as the negation of individuality. A totality that does not include the individual negatively is also nothing but the product of the imagination. These two negations constitute the dual character of human being. And what is more, they constitute a single movement. On the very ground that it is the negation of totality, the individual is, fundamentally speaking, none other than that totality. If this is true, then this negation is also the self-awareness of that totality. Hence, when an individual realizes herself through negation, a door is opened to the realization of totality through the negation of the individual. The individual’s acting is a movement of the restoration of totality itself. [ . . . ] Now, that *ningen’s sonzai* is, fundamentally speaking, a movement of negation makes clear that the basis of *ningen’s sonzai* is negation as such, that is, absolute negation.” (WTZ 10: 26; Watsuji 1996: 22–23)

How is one to make sense of these notions? First, one has to remember that, even though Watsuji’s dialectics is meant primarily to elucidate the ontological structure of *ningen*, the movement of dual negation must have some reference to “the factuality of everyday life” (WTZ 10: 51; Watsuji 1996: 49). One might put it this way: Whenever an individual acts, it insists on its individuality and, thus, negates a totality, that is, an association, community, or society it belongs to. In a second step, the individual has to negate itself, that is, it has to act in a way that allows its return to a community, which could also mean to form a new community. Albeit, in a purely logical sense, this is convincing (by definition, individual and totality are notions that exclude each other), on a practical level, the notion of negation becomes ambiguous. It is not clear how the idea that acting as an individual necessarily means to negate the totality of *ningen* has to be understood; it could mean abandonment, reformation, even destruction of society. Unfortunately, Watsuji never clears up this ambiguity, that is, he never goes into detail on how this negation could be understood within the context of human existence and practice. For this very reason, the dimensions of human conflict and social strife are shut out from Watsuji’s *Ethics*.<sup>7)</sup> The same applies to the second negation, that is, the negation of the individual and its return to totality. Again, Watsuji’s descriptions are lacking concreteness. All we can say is that, ontologically, the individual has to return to the totality it belongs to or that it has to establish relationships with other individuals, but we are not provided with any clue as to what this means for the individual and the totality in concrete.

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6) Rendering human existence dialectically is a common feature in Japanese philosophy of the time. It reflects the strong interest Japanese philosophers had in Hegelian thought. Nishida, Tanabe, and Miki are the best known examples.

7) For instance, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel renders this problem as struggle for recognition between master and slave. Watsuji’s explanations are lacking such concreteness.

This lack of concreteness is not the only problem. Furthermore, as can be seen clearly, in this movement, the totality of *ningen* gains superiority over its individual aspect. Put in Heidegger's terms, Watsuji's dialectics overemphasizes the aspect of *Dasein*'s facticity at the cost of its existence. Albeit it is true that, in a strict logical sense, neither the individual nor the totality "has precedence" (WTZ 10: 107; Watsuji 1996: 102), on a practical level the individual has to submit itself to society. Indeed, the notion of individual is grasped only in its negative relationship with a totality. It appears through the negation of a totality and, finally, has to return to it, which means that it has to negate itself. Hence, the individual is nothing more than a momentum of the movement of dual negation, and it cannot be seen why this movement should begin at all.

To gain a better understanding of what is at stake here, one has to turn to Watsuji's investigation of spatiality. The movement of dual negation already hints at the problem of spatiality, for the negation of the individual and its return to totality has to be understood as "movement of disruption and then of unification." (WTZ 10: 27; Watsuji 1996: 24) As this movement is caused "not [. . .] by the negation of one individual alone" (WTZ 10: 27; Watsuji 1996: 23), but by many interacting individuals, one has to inquire further into the notion of dual negation to give a phenomenological description of the relation between these individuals. This, Watsuji believes, can be achieved through an investigation of *ningen*'s spatiality.

## II

In many aspects, Watsuji's argument on spatiality is similar to that of Heidegger. Both of them conceive of spatiality as a fundamental aspect of the ontological constitution of man as Being-in-the-world. In *Being and Time*, the space of *Dasein*'s inner-worldly existence is explicated as symbolically structured space of meaning that constitutes an openness or space of possibilities within which *Dasein* can be. This space is not to be confused with the abstract space of the objective sciences, particularly the space in mathematics and physics, which are derivatives of the former. Watsuji follows Heidegger's insights when he claims that *ningen* is not oriented towards abstract points in an objective space but towards a space of a symbolic life-world, or, as he puts it, a space that is structured by "expressions" (*hyôgen*), which are the correlates of *ningen*'s "practical understanding" (*jissen-teki ryôkai*). Hence, for him, it is crucial to show how *ningen* is ontologically situated in the space of the life-world; in other words, Watsuji has to work out a concept of spatiality. So far, Watsuji and Heidegger are in accord. The differences between them are to be found on a more fundamental level: first, in how they articulate the symbolic contents of meaning the space of the life-world has for *Dasein* and *ningen* respectively; and, second, in how they render the problem of "understanding" (*Verstehen; ryôkai*). The first difference I will discuss here, the second one I will deal with in the following section.

For Watsuji, inquiring into the structure of spatiality serves the purpose of disclosing "the practical interconnectedness of acts (*jissen-teki kô-i-teki renkan*) [. . .] in its concrete structure" (WTZ 10: 28; Watsuji 1996: 24). In other words, the inquiry into spatiality is to provide a further clarification of the notion of human existence as betweenness.<sup>8)</sup> Hence, Watsuji focuses on the question of how human beings are related to each other in the space of the life-world, that is, he gives

8) As I would put it, it serves the purpose of bringing to light the ontological foundation of the dialectics of dual negation. Albeit Watsuji does not explicitly say so, his examinations point in that direction. Hence, I would argue that he aims at showing that only because *ningen* exists spatially can the movement of dual negation take place.

an account of the intersubjective dimension of spatiality: “The spatiality of this subject [i.e. *ningen*] must consist in the subjective betweenness of human beings.” (WTZ 10: 185; Watsuji 1996: 175) “Spatiality is [ . . . ] the manner in which multiple subjects are related to one another.” (WTZ 10: 164; Watsuji 1996: 156). Methodically, his investigation starts from the spatial factuality of everyday life and then unravels its ontological structure.

Says Watsuji: “The spatiality of human being is known to everybody in an ontic [*sonzai-teki*]<sup>9)</sup> way. People use transportation facilities and behave in a spatial fashion for the benefit of their ordinary lives. It is doubtful whether this facticity is grasped theoretically.” (WTZ 10: 163; Watsuji 1996: 156) Facilities for transportation and communication “give expression to a wide variety of relations between human beings.” (WTZ 10: 169; Watsuji 1996: 161) For Watsuji, these facilities hint at the fact that the very existence of *ningen* is characterized by a fundamental spatial “extendedness.”

“The spatiality exhibited by these phenomena of human transportation and communication is clearly subjective extendedness. It interconnects both subjectively and practically but lacks the same extendedness as an objective thing. This subjective extendedness arises because human beings, despite dividing themselves into a great number of subjects, nevertheless, strive to constitute a connection among themselves. If the subject under consideration were one and could not divide itself<sup>10)</sup>, then the practical movement through which human beings try to build connections among themselves by means of the facilities of transportation and communication would hardly arise<sup>11)</sup>. On the other hand, the movement of connection cannot occur under circumstances in which subjects remain many and are not susceptible to becoming one. Only because the subject that was originally one tries to regain this oneness in and through its disruption into many subjects does there arise a movement among these subjects. This practical interconnection of acts establishes *ningen sonzai*. From this standpoint, we can say that subjective spatiality is, in the final analysis, the basic structure of *ningen sonzai*. Our endeavor to grasp *ningen* not only as a human being but also as possessing the dual structure of individuality and, at the same time, sociality, leads us of necessity to this idea of spatial extendedness.” (WTZ 10: 173; Watsuji 1996: 165)

I will expound on these explications later in this section. However, I would like to mention first that, phenomenologically speaking, the extendedness of *ningen* must be complemented by some kind of directionality (*Gerichtetheit*) – to use Heidegger’s term. That is to say that, on the one hand, *ningen* cannot but orient itself towards something it encounters in the world, due to which orientation, betweenness, understood as interpersonal relationships, become possible. On the other hand, the beings (“expressions,” in Watsuji’s terms) *ningen* encounters are always situated within the context of *aidagara* so that, ultimately, the directionality of *ningen* is always contextualized by extendedness, that is, the spatial structure of betweenness. Thus, Watsuji claims that his notion of spatiality is more fundamental than that of Heidegger: “The spatiality that constitutes the structure of existence of a ‘being there’ as expounded by Heidegger, must be based fundamentally on that meaning of spatiality presently under consideration.” (WTZ 10: 185; Watsuji 1996: 175)

This leads us to Watsuji’s objections to Heidegger’s notion of spatiality. His main point is that

9) Heidegger’s expression in contrast to “ontological.” Watsuji too strives for giving an ontological account of *ningen* (cf. WTZ 9: 153)

10) Yamamoto/Carter translate this passage thus: “The subjectivity under consideration is the only one not susceptible to disruption.”

11) Yamamoto/Carter: “[. . .] could not otherwise arise.”

Heidegger renders spatiality solely within the context of the analysis of “things being at hand” (*Zuhandenes*). Hence, he was not able to take into account the most fundamental function of spatiality, that is, that it constitutes the betweenness of man and man. To be sure, Watsuji readily admits that Heidegger was not ignorant of the importance that the notion of spatiality has for an analytic of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world. In particular, he appreciates that Heidegger renders the problem of spatiality in a “more fundamental” (WTZ 10: 183; Watsuji 1996: 174) way than Kant and Bergson did. However, he objects: “the spatiality inherent in ‘being there’ [*Dasein*] is, in the final analysis, attributed to the relationship of concern between *I* and tools and has nothing to do with the relationship of communication among human beings. [. . .] The practical relationship between one human being and another is not a major element constitutive of the ‘concern’ [care, *Sorge*] he tried to expound. Or rather, it should have been its major element, but this he failed to grasp. This is why spatiality, even though it was conceived of as that structure which is characteristic of the existence of the subject, still stopped short of being a spatiality inherent in the practical interconnections of human beings. This is why he considered temporality of far greater importance than spatiality.” (WTZ 10: 183; Watsuji 1996: 174)

One cannot deny that Watsuji’s objections, though being convincing at first glance, are missing the point. It is true that Heidegger does not expound extensively on the intersubjective dimension of spatiality but mainly on the dimension of “things being at hand” (*Zuhandenes*; “tools” in Watsuji’s words). In this, Watsuji is right. However, it is also true that the inquiry into the things being at hand has a systematical function within Heidegger’s fundamental ontology that cannot be made consistent with the theory of ethics Watsuji has in mind. Hence, Watsuji’s claim that Heidegger should have taken into account the “practical relationship between one human being and another” is not convincing. However, his point that Heidegger’s emphasis on temporality corresponds with his one-sided notion of “care” (*Sorge*) is well made; I will come back to this in the next section of my paper.

Turning to Watsuji’s own explications, one notices that he applies the movement of dual negation to the problem of spatiality. Within this context, the notion of dual negation is replaced with that of division/disruption and connection, which is to say, that a totality of subjects has the tendency to divide itself into many individual ones and connect each other to form a totality again. Accordingly, the problems we pointed out in Watsuji dialectics reoccur in his rendering of spatiality. Similar to the movement of dual negation, the movement of disruption and connection seems to function like an automatism. Again, Watsuji’s descriptions are lacking phenomenological concreteness; one observes the same one-sidedness as in the dialectics of dual negation, which is to say that, again, the totality gains superiority over the individual, for the latter is determined only as a momentum in a movement that starts from where it ends, that is, the totality. As a result, due to Watsuji’s elaborations, the one-sidedness we noticed in the dialectics of dual negation appears to be ontologically justified. Accordingly, Watsuji claims that *ningen* cannot but return to totality, because it is ontologically always oriented towards betweenness.

### III

With Watsuji’s notion of spatiality, the conceptional framework for determining *ningen*’s authentic existence is almost completely worked out. In contrast to Heidegger, for Watsuji the constitutive moment of authenticity does not lie in the ontological structure of temporality but in that

of spatiality. Of course, Watsuji expounds on temporality too. However, it is obvious that these examinations do not bring to light any insights that would point at theoretical possibilities beyond the results of the inquiries into the structure of spatiality. As the notion of spatiality, that of temporality mirrors “the basic structure of *ningen sonzai* that was dealt with in the preceding chapter” (WTZ 10: 195; Watsuji 1996: 186), that is to say, the chapter where Watsuji developed the dialectics of dual negation. As Watsuji claims, spatiality and temporality are in “mutual relation” (WTZ 10: 235; Watsuji 1996: 223) with each other, which means that they are complementary notions for grasping ontologically the structure of existence (*sonzai*). Hence, the investigation of temporality is to provide nothing more than further clarification of the notion of spatiality. Therefore, Watsuji expounds again on *ningen's* extendedness; he describes the dynamic structure of human existence as a movement from an established betweenness towards a possible betweenness and, thus, introduces the notion of temporality within his inquiry into the structure of human existence.

“Just as the movement of negation was, in its extreme, the self activity of absolute negativity, so temporality is precisely the manner in which absolute negativity exhibits itself. That is to say, an established betweenness is, in its extreme, the absolute wholeness that consists of the nonduality of the self and the other [ . . . ] At the same time, possible betweenness is absolute wholeness, which also consists of the nonduality of self and other. By bringing to realization the nondual relationship between self and other, we return to our authentic home ground. This ultimate ground out of which we come is the ultimate *terminus ad quem* to which we return.” (WTZ 10: 195; Watsuji 1996: 187) This confirms what was stated above: within the structure of temporality too, *ningen* is ontologically determined as a being that cannot transcend the structure of betweenness; it cannot but sacrifice its individuality for the sake of returning to totality. Here too, *ningen's* possibilities of existence are limited by the structure of betweenness. As the notion of spatiality, that of temporality lacks proper appreciation of the notion of existence (*Existenz*) at the cost of facticity (*Faktizität*).

This is also mirrored in Watsuji's concept of agency. As he says: “An act is not something constructed out of various activities of the individual consciousness but the movement itself in which subject, although splitting into self and other, combines in a nonduality of self and other to form a betweenness.” (WTZ 10: 36; Watsuji 1996: 34) Based on the insights we have gained into the ontological structure of spatiality and temporality, we can interpret this claim as follows: Agency is always situated within the structure of betweenness, that is to say, agency is characterized by the movement from an established betweenness towards a possible one, whose movement is possible only because *ningen* is characterized by extendedness and is always oriented towards betweenness. As shown above, within this movement the individual functions as a mere momentum that brings about the restoration of the totality of *ningen*. Strictly speaking, for Watsuji there is no such thing as individual agency, but only agency of man-as-betweenness. *Ningen* cannot but exist factually (*faktisch*), which is to say that all its possibilities of existence are predetermined by betweenness.

We are now ready to grasp in full Watsuji's notion of authenticity. For Watsuji, *ningen* can exist authentically only within the movement of spatial disruption and connection, or, respectively, within the movement from an established betweenness towards a possible one. These movements are, as was shown above, to be understood as concrete representations of the movement of dual negation; thus, we can say that within Watsuji's *Ethics*, only through returning to totality can *ningen* realize its authenticity. At the same time, *ningen* realizes that its essence lies in the dynamic structure of the nonduality of self and other. Says Watsuji: “To come back to authenticity as self-aware arrival is



precisely to realize the nonduality of the self and other, which is established as the negation of negation. Only the nondual relationship between the self and other renders coming back to the authenticity of *ningen* possible.” (WTZ 10: 240; Watsuji 1996: 228)

For Heidegger, gaining authenticity depends on transcendence. The utmost possibility for *Dasein* to exist, which is how the notion of authenticity is rendered in *Being and Time*, means that in the mode of authentic existence, *Dasein* gains an insight into the fact that it is essentially “potentiality-for-Being” (*Möglichsein*). To experience its own essence, *Dasein* has to transcend, that is, to move beyond the context of everyday life which is represented by the infamous “they” (*das Man*), where all possibilities of being are “always already” (*immer schon*) put into practice; within everyday life, they have lost their original character of possibility and have been transformed into factuality. In other words, in everyday life, the being of *Dasein* is determined by the facticity of *das Man*, whereas in transcending *das Man*, *Dasein* leaves behind its facticity and moves into a realm of pure existence.<sup>12)</sup> This can be achieved, as Heidegger believes, through the “Being-towards-death” (*Sein zum Tode*), where *Dasein* experiences its “potentiality-for-Being-a-whole” (*Ganzseinkönnen*). Heidegger also calls this “authentic-potentiality-for-Being-one’s-self” (*eigentliches Selbstseinkönnen*).

This notion is the ultimate target of Watsuji’s objections. According to him, Heidegger’s fundamental error lies in the fact that he did not grasp the dual structure of *ningen*, but only rendered the individual aspect of *Dasein* (its individual self). This shows its consequences in full within the inquiry into authenticity. Notions like “Being-towards-death” and “authentic-potentiality-for-Being-one’s-self” give prove to Heidegger’s commitment to Western “individualism” (*kojin shugi*).<sup>13)</sup> Obviously, Watsuji has misinterpreted the transcendence of *Dasein* in the fashion of existentialism. For Watsuji, *Dasein*’s “authentic Self” (*eigentliches Selbst*) is nothing but the individual self insisting on its individuality and turning its back to all communal forms of existence. From his point of view, this self cannot but be called inauthentic: “The authentic self is the negation of the inauthentic self (equivalent to Heidegger’s authentic self) [. . .] What Heidegger calls *authenticity* is, in reality, inauthenticity. And when this inauthenticity becomes further negated through the nondual relation of self and other, that is to say, when the ‘self’ becomes annihilated, only then is authenticity realized.” (WTZ 10: 237; Watsuji 1996: 225)

For Watsuji too, authenticity consists in an experience of *ningen*’s “potentiality-for-Being-a-whole.” As for Heidegger, for Watsuji too, this experience depends on transcendence (*chōetsu*). However, to attain this, *ningen* must not individuate itself in the “being-towards-death;” rather, it has to annihilate its self and return to the totality.<sup>14)</sup> “Hence the total possibility [potentiality-for-Being-a-whole] of *ningen sonzai* must be found not in ‘being in its death,’ but in the nondual relationship between the self and other as disclosed in the direction of absolute totality.” (WTZ 10: 236; Watsuji 1996: 224) Obviously, Watsuji’s understanding of transcendence differs fundamentally from that of Heidegger’s. To show what is at stake here, I will now turn to an inquiry into Watsuji’s climatology.

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12) Of course, this is not to be understood in the fashion of existentialism, but as situated in Heidegger’s project of a fundamental ontology.

13) This criticism hardly catches the point. Watsuji ignores the fact that the notion of *Dasein* is meant to be more fundamental than notions like individual, subject, or *ego*.

14) Cf. WTZ 10: 237; Watsuji 1996: 225.

## IV

In *Fûdo*, Watsuji says: “The problem of climate affords a pointer for any attempt to analyze the structure of human existence. The ontological comprehension of human existence is not to be attained by a mere transcendence which regards the structure as one of temporality, for this has to be transcendence in the sense of, first and above all, the discovery of the self in the other and the subsequent return to absolute negativity in the union of self and other. Therefore, the ‘betweenness’ of man and man has to be the *locus* for transcendence. That is to say, the betweenness as the basis for discovering the self and other must be originally the place that ‘stands out’ (*ex-sistere*).” (WTZ 8: 18; Watsuji 1961: 12)

When Watsuji says, *ningen* “discovers” itself in transcendence, he hints at an understanding due to which this act of discovering becomes possible. The understanding at work in this transcendence is the aforementioned “practical understanding” (*jissen-teki ryôkai*).<sup>15)</sup> Due to this understanding, *ningen* realizes that it has to follow the movement of dual negation and, thus, return to the totality of nonduality of the self and other. If this understanding is to be called practical, it requires a certain context. This is provided by the place for transcendence, that is, betweenness. However, at the same time, betweenness is the very subject of transcendence too, for *ningen* is nothing else than betweenness. How is one to make sense of this complex relationship between the two notions of betweenness and transcendence?

On close inspection, one can distinguish two different meanings of the term betweenness used by Watsuji. First, it means concrete relationships, like relationships between husband and wife, siblings, or neighbors; second, it designates the ontological structure of human existence, that is, the absolute negativity exhibited in the movement of dual negation. Obviously, betweenness as it is used in the quotation above has to be understood in an ontological sense, whereas, when Watsuji renders concrete ethical phenomena, the first meaning is to be applied.

The problems I have pointed out in my argument ultimately derive from the fact that Watsuji made no clear distinction between these two meanings. For instance, *ningen*’s experience of its “potentiality-for-Being-a-whole” correlates with an understanding of the ontological structure of human existence (*ningen sonzai*). However, because for Watsuji the meaning of *ningen sonzai*, that is, the self-subsistence of betweenness, has to be understood primarily in a context of ethical concreteness, which is to say, that it has to be understood as sustenance of concrete relationships between man and man, he tends to pull the notion of authentic self-understanding down from the ontological to the ontic level. As a result, Watsuji stresses the aspect of facticity of *ningen* at the cost of its existence.

If the relationship between these two aspects is determined differently, the picture changes

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15) “Practical understanding” is Watsuji’s version of Heidegger’s “understanding-of-Being” (*Seinsverständnis*) and has to be distinguished from *rikai* which also can be translated into English as “understanding,” but, within Watsuji’s *Ethics*, designates an explicit act of understanding, such as Watsuji’s own theoretical endeavors. Watsuji’s *ningen* understands beings (*Seiendes*) it encounters in the world as something that opens up possibilities for its own being and, at the same time, brings beings (*Seiendes*) into being. Indeed, Watsuji claims that the very being of beings depends on the fact that they are understood within the context of betweenness (cf. WTZ 9: 31). However as shown above, according to Watsuji, those beings (“expressions,” as he calls them) are insolubly linked with the structure of betweenness which provides the basis for any “context reference” (*Verweisungszusammenhang*) *ningen* could possibly exist in. Therefore, the possibilities for understanding are limited by the boundaries of betweenness.

completely. Then, one could put it like this: Through standing out into the absolute negativity (i.e. betweenness in its ontological sense), *ningen* realizes the structure of its existence. That is to say, it understands the negativity of its own individuality and also that of the totality. Thus, it gains an insight into the limitations of both. In this insight lies the potential for change, that is, reform, modification, or development of communal forms of existence and of the individual self. Thus, not only the negation of the individual but the negation of totality too could be grasped in its true ethical concreteness. Unfortunately, Watsuji never takes into account this aspect of transcendence; because he makes no clear distinction between the two meanings of betweenness, he ultimately understands the return to totality as submission of the individual to the totality, which is society or any other communal relationship. Hence, we can say, that the one-sidedness in Watsuji's determination of the relationship between individual and totality is based on an ontico-ontological misunderstanding of the meaning of human existence as betweenness.<sup>16)</sup> What Watsuji's ontology of man lacks is a metaphysical notion of man-as-betweenness that, understood as the subject of transcendence, could serve as the condition of possibility of both individual and communal forms of existence. Only from the standpoint of such a metaphysical betweenness, does an insight into the potentiality and limitations of both aspects of *ningen* become possible.

Because of this conceptual deficiency, Watsuji's notion of authenticity never gains concreteness. Therefore, he fails at giving an account of the ethical consequences that the attainment of *ningen's* authentic self could have for everyday-life, which was to be, as mentioned above, the very concern of Watsuji's *Ethics*. Thus, Watsuji's objections to Heidegger's "abstract" notion of *Dasein* fall back on themselves. However, as mentioned above, in his criticism of how Heidegger determined the relationship between facticity and existence, he does make a point, for Heidegger's notion of authenticity, too, is one-sided, as it overemphasizes the aspect of existence on the cost of facticity. This contradicts Heidegger's original intentions, as existence always ought to go together with facticity; or, in other words, *Dasein* is always characterized by "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) and project (*Entwurf*), that is to say, explications should clarify that *Dasein* exists as "thrown-in project" (*geworfener Entwurf*). As Watsuji justly argues, the reason for this one-sidedness is to be found in Heidegger's rendering of temporality, where he puts too much emphasis on the aspect of future. Due to this, he is not able to grasp how *Dasein* is determined by its "having been" (*Gewesenheit*), that is, how it is determined historically, culturally, and socially. Heidegger's overemphasis of existence at the cost of facticity is to be seen in the same context. On an ontic level, the problem that arises is how the return from the "anticipatory resoluteness" (*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*) to the everyday-life within *das Man* has to be understood concretely. Indeed, Heidegger gives no clear account of the possibilities lying in the notion of "authentic Being-with" (*eigentliches Mitsein*). Hence, his notion of "authentic potentiality-for-Being-one's-self" (*eigentliches Selbstseinkönnen*) does not contain any hints at how authentic existence could be possible within the facticity of Being-in-the-world.

It has become obvious that, regarding the problem of how the relationship between existence and facticity ought to be determined, Watsuji and Heidegger are taking extreme counter-positions. Neither of them is convincing, the problem still unsolved. However, I would argue that, in *Fûdo*, Watsuji has provided the philosophical means to break this deadlock. This is to say, Watsuji's notion of climate

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16) N. B. Any attempt to philosophically make sense of Watsuji's commitment for Japan's wartime ultranationalism has to take into account this ontico-ontological misunderstanding.

could be rendered as a *locus* for self-understanding that serves an ontological purpose and, at the same time, could be related directly to the ontic dimension of human existence. To show this, I wish to return to Watsuji's notion of transcendence. The quotation from *Fûdo* given above continues as follows:

“Second, transcendence, in the sense of the temporality of betweenness, must have assumed some historical significance. Man does not reach constantly into the future within individual consciousness alone; rather, it is the betweenness that reaches into the future. Temporality of the individual consciousness is a mere abstraction that is only rendered possible on the basis of historicity [*Geschichtlichkeit*] of betweenness. Third, transcendence also means standing out climatically. In other words, man-as-betweenness discovers itself in climate. From the standpoint of the individual, this becomes consciousness of the body, but in the context of the more concrete ground of human existence (*ningen sonzai*), it reveals itself in the forms of creating communities, and thus in the forms of constructing language, the forms of production, the styles of buildings, and so on. Transcendence, as the structure of human existence, must include all these aspects.” (WTZ 8: 18; Watsuji 1961: 12)

Here, Watsuji offers a richer interpretation of the potentiality of human existence than in the *Ethics*, where the dimension of history and climate were not taken into account ontologically.<sup>17)</sup> Thus, he further develops the notion of transcendence. In the *Ethics*, transcendence was limited to betweenness. That is to say, both the subject of and the place for transcendence were determined as betweenness. In *Fûdo*, Watsuji adds historicity (*rekishi-sei*) and climaticity (*fûdo-sei*) as further aspects of transcendence. Both are characteristics of betweenness; hence it can be expected that the notion of *ningen sonzai* can be determined in a richer way, too. A richer understanding of *ningen sonzai* would have to be related above all to the possibilities of *ningen's* self-understanding.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, Watsuji assumes climate and history as concretions of *ningen's* spatiality and temporality. Since spatiality and temporality are forming a “mutual relationship,” the same applies to climate and history: “history is climatic history and climate is historical climate.” (WTZ 8: 16; Watsuji 1961: 10)<sup>18)</sup> Both are aspects of *ningen's* transcendence and, thus, afford a *locus* for its self-understanding. Standing out into climate, *ningen* discovers itself as being-in-the-world, and, at the same time, it gains an understanding of its bodily existence, which, in turn, finds expression in various “forms” and “styles” (*kata*) of culture, language, and consciousness. It is crucial to grasp these forms not as objects that are known by a subject, but as “expressions” that have been brought into being by *ningen's* activity and, thus, can become correlates of its understanding. Hence, the historical aspect of climatic understanding becomes evident. Says Watsuji: “The various measures which are thus discovered, such as clothes, braziers, charcoal-burning, houses, blossom viewing, dyes, drains, anti-typhoon structures, and the like, are of cause what we ourselves have devised at our own discretion. [. . .] We have discovered ourselves in climate, and in this self-understanding we are directed to our free creation. Further, it is not only we ourselves who today cooperate to defend ourselves or work against the cold, the heat, the storm or the flood. We possess an inheritance of self-understanding accumulated over the years since the time of our ancestors.” (WTZ 8: 12; Watsuji 1961: 6)

17) To be sure, in the *Ethics* too, Watsuji renders these subjects. However, there they are not linked directly with the inquiries into the ontological structure of *ningen*.

18) In the following, I will refer to this phenomenon simply as “climate.” However, when saying so, I take into account the interrelatedness of climate and history.

It is crucial not to misunderstand the relation between understanding and expression as something that takes place on a purely ontic level. Since this relation is a concretion of the “practical interconnectedness of acts” (*jissen-teki kô-i-teki renkan*), it requires an ontological interpretation. Therefore, we have to inquire into the existential structure of the mode of understanding that is at work in *ningen's* transcendence into climate.

As we have seen in the *Ethics*, *ningen's* self-understanding is purely factual, that is to say, it is wholly confined within the boundaries of betweenness. Albeit it is man-as-betweenness that stands out into climate, within the context of climate, the self-understanding of *ningen* gains more breadth, that is to say, *ningen* realizes not only the fact that it is determined by betweenness but also its potentiality for shaping it and, thus, can contribute to historical development. In other words, within the context of climate, “practical understanding” is to be understood as a mode of understanding due to which *ningen* discovers that it is determined and, at the same time, has the potential to transcend its limitations. Hence, climate could be rendered as the *locus* where *ningen's* factual limitations and its existential creativity complement or penetrate each other. On an ontic level, the notion of climatic understanding offers the possibility to determine the relationship between individual and communal forms of existence in a different way than in the *Ethics*. That is to say, in *Fûdo* Watsuji recognizes the role of the individual for establishing concrete forms of betweenness and, thus, avoids falling into the one-sidedness we observed in the *Ethics*. Furthermore, the notion of climatic understanding serves for elucidating the relationship between man and nature, understood as climate. Ontologically speaking, climate is nothing that stands in opposition to man, so that the relationship between both was to be described in terms of determinism, where one side exerts influence on the other. Watsuji rather determines climate as something that “belongs to human existence; therefore, the natural environment does not stand in opposition to the various species of mankind but is nothing else than their ontic contents.” (WTZ 11: 152)

The complementary relationship between facticity and existence is exhibited particularly in Watsuji's inquiries into Japanese traditional arts. I wish to mention two examples: gardening and the poetry of *renga*. In the art of Japanese gardening Watsuji discovers the mutual penetration of nature and culture. To successfully create a garden, the artist has to understand how nature and culture are complementing each other. That is to say, the artist, in his attempt to create “a refinement and idealization of natural beauty,” (WTZ 8: 189; Watsuji 1961: 190) has to put “some artificial order into the natural,” but also has to observe the order of nature as such. Therefore, he must neither strive for “covering up the natural by the artificial,” nor must he leave “nature simply untouched;” the point is rather that “the putting of some artificial order into the natural could be achieved [. . .] only by making the artificial follow the natural. And by the nursing of the natural by the artificial, the natural is, all the more, made to follow from within.” (WTZ 8: 189; Watsuji 1961: 190–191)

This could serve as an example of how, within the understanding of *ningen*, the two aspects of human existence, that is throwness and project, are forming a complementary relationship, that is, how they are penetrating each other. In a similar way, this relationship finds expression in the poetic form of *renga* (“linked verse”). 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.” (WTZ 8: 194; Watsuji 1961: 196)

In contrast to the elaborations in the *Ethics*, in this quotation Watsuji takes into account the role the individual plays for bringing into being a betweenness. Within the context of *renga*, the movement of dual negation does not terminate from where it began, that is a preexisting betweenness; it rather brings into being this betweenness by an activity where multiple individuals are negating themselves but, in and through this negation, “by chance” create a new totality. Within this movement, the individuality of each poet is sublated into a larger one. At the same time, the totality displays its limitations, that is, the fact that it depends on the individualities of the individuals.

In result, we can say that, in *Fûdo*, Watsuji renders the problem of spatial self-understanding in a different way he does in the *Ethics*. There, spatiality served the purpose for working out a counter-position to Heidegger’s notions of “anticipatory resoluteness” (*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*) and “Being-towards-death” (*Sein zum Tode*). The one-sidedness of this counter-position led to the problems discussed above. Because Watsuji did not take into account the momentum of existence in *ningen sonzai*, he failed at properly determining the relationship between spatiality and temporality. In contrast, the notion of climate allows for a different understanding of this relationship, due to which the notion of self-understanding too can be grasped more appropriately.

According to *Fûdo*, the grounds of *ningen’s* self-understanding are to be found not in the pure facticity of extended betweenness but in the climatical-historical structure of *ningen’s* existence. Being-in-historical-climate means that *ningen* has to realize that the climate is a *locus* for understanding its ontological structure, wherein facticity and existence are complementing each other, and, at the same time, is the *locus* where the relationship between man and man, man and beings, and man and nature, can find expression. However, this is to say that since *ningen* cannot but exist in climatic and historical contexts, its authentic self-understanding is essentially limited. In other words, because *ningen’s* existence means Being-in-historical-climate, it is impossible for *ningen* to gain full insight into its ontological structure. As was shown above, Heidegger determines the authentic (i.e. ontological) self-understanding of *Dasein* as unlimited, whereas in Watsuji’s *Ethics*, *ningen* is not able to transcend the boundaries of betweenness and, thus, cannot achieve insight into the complementary relationship of facticity and existence. Considering the interpretation of climate developed above, we can say that authentic self-understanding of *ningen*, properly grasped, implies both the aspect of limitation and that of transcendence, or as Watsuji says, of “free cultivation” (*jiyû naru keisei*; WTZ 8: 12; Watsuji 1961: 6).

In order to arrive at these insights, it was necessary to correct the theoretical flaws in Watsuji’s “ethics as a science of man” with Heidegger’s concept of “understanding-of-Being” and, vice versa, the one-sidedness in Heidegger’s notion of temporality with Watsuji’s concept of climate. Thus, the dialogue between Heidegger and Watsuji can be understood as mutual learning. In *Fûdo*, Watsuji expounds on this notion as follows: “When man becomes aware of the root of his being and expresses this awareness in an objective fashion, the way of how this finds expression is restricted not only by history but also by climate. There is yet to be a spiritual awakening that was not thus restricted. [. . .] If climatic conditioning has affected every part of mankind and has given to each part its own peculiar

merits, it is just from this that we can be made conscious of our own weakness and learn from another. This is again the means by which climatic limitation can be surmounted. Neglect of nature does not mean to surmount nature. This is merely lack of awareness within climatic limitation. However, climatic distinctions do not disappear as a result of the surmounting of limitations through awareness of them. The opposite is the case, for it is precisely by this recognition that their distinctiveness is created.” (WTZ 8: 119–120; Watsuji 1961: 117–118)

By initiating a dialogue between Watsuji and Heidegger, I neither aimed at replacing one philosophical concept with another (for instance Watsuji’s notion of “practical understanding” with Heidegger’s “authentic-potential-for-Being-one’s-self”) nor I carried out a “comparison” of their philosophical concepts. What I tried to accomplish was rather to translate the thought of Watsuji into that of Heidegger, and vice versa, in order to “surmount” their limitations, and, thus, achieve a clearer insight into the existential structure of man as could have been possible without this mutual translation. Albeit Watsuji is not explicit on this point, it could be argued that his climatology, as well as his ethical thought, are endeavors to show that, through “learning from another,” *ningen* can achieve an insight in its structure of existence where thrownness and project are complementing or penetrating each other. However, developing this hermeneutical potential in Watsuji’s thought would require an inquiry into the possibilities and limitations of what one could call “intercultural philosophy;” this is beyond the scope of this paper and shall be dealt with at another occasion.

## Watsuji Tetsurô on Spatiality: Existence Within the Context of Climate and History

### ABSTRACT

In this essay I wish to inquire into the problem of spatiality in the thought of Watsuji Tetsurô (1889–1960) and of Martin Heidegger (1889–1971). The purpose of this endeavor is not to add another chapter to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history) of Watsuji's encounter with Heidegger's thought, but to demonstrate its possibilities for a philosophy concerned with trans-cultural issues.

**Key Words:** Watsuji and Heidegger, spatiality, inter-cultural philosophy