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Permeating Each Others' Hearts

Natsume Sōseki and Watsuji Tetsurō on Ethics and the Unity of Self and Other

It is well known that philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960) was influenced by his teacher, author Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916). There are many indications of how profoundly Watsuji was touched by Sōseki's unrelenting devotion to justice and fairness and his rejection of selfishness. However, the influence goes beyond this personal level: there are many aspects of Watsuji's ethics that can be clarified through a comparison with Sōseki's ethics of the artist set out in his works such as *Theory of Literature* and "The Philosophical Foundations of the Literary Arts." This article focuses on four points at which the ethics of Sōseki and Watsuji touch: the possibility of ethics depends on the interpenetration (浸透) of the experience of self and the group; the tension (張り) inherent in human relations; the importance of pursuing ideals, which are embodied in relationships; and the transcendent status of experiencing in itself. While these basic elements of the ethics of Sōseki and Watsuji overlap, Watsuji's phenomenological method enables him to overcome the essentialism inherent in Sōseki's psychologism. It also enabled him to use not only the interpenetration of thoughts and experiences but also the interconnection of human acts to demonstrate the fundamental characteristics of human existence that make ethics possible—indeed, that *are* ethics..

KEYWORDS: Watsuji Tetsurō—Natsume Sōseki—phenomenological ethics—ethics in art

Many researchers have noted the influence of author Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916) on the young philosopher, Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889–1960).[1] For instance, Karaki Junzō believed that Watsuji's interaction with Sōseki prompted the philosopher to shift from his initial interest in Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche to the study of ethics.[2] In this light, it makes sense to study Sōseki's ethics of the artist to help us understand some of the features of Watsuji's ethics such as his notion of betweenness (間柄 *aidagara*), which plays a key role in his three-volume *Ethics* (『倫理学』), written between 1937 and 1949. A comparative study can shed light on Watsuji's understanding of the nature of the relationship between the individual and the group, which has remained controversial in the literature: Yuasa Yasuo points to the common criticism that Watsuji prioritized the group over the individual,[3] while Utsunomiya Yoshiaki

1. Watsuji's first positive impression of Sōseki seems to have been when the young man read the author's short novel "London Tower" (『倫敦塔』), published in 1905 (Watsuji 1916, reprinted in Karaki 1963, 414; see also WTZ 18: 312), although he had read Sōseki's poem "Military Service" published the previous year (WTZ 18: 311). Watsuji first corresponded with Sōseki in 1913, and he also met him by chance that same year. Thereafter, he frequently visited Sōseki at home, where he took part in a study group. Shortly after Sōseki's death in 1916, Watsuji wrote a tribute to his teacher titled "A Reminiscence of Natsume Sensei" (『夏目先生の追憶』), which attests to the deep impression he made on Watsuji. Dilworth, Viglielmo and Jacinto Zavala briefly discuss the influence of Sōseki on Watsuji in the introduction to the selections of his work in their *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy* (1998, 223). Karaki Junzō and T. James Kodera also write about Sōseki's influence (Karaki 1963, 11–14; Kodera 1987), and likewise Yuasa Yasuo and Katsube Mitake in a discussion recorded in Yuasa 1973, 20–22 (see also Yuasa 1981, 29, 31).

2. Karaki 1963, 14.

3. "In Watsuji's ethics, the whole always takes precedence over the parts; the individual takes on a 'persona' only in specific relationships" [translation] (Yuasa 1981, 271). Yuasa writes that this precedence should really be recognized simply as a feature of some societies, rather than as a

reproached Watsuji for modeling the relationship between the group and the individual on the relationship between the whole (全体) and its parts (部分).[4] While provocative in itself, such criticism also highlights the need to clarify exactly what Watsuji's views were. An examination of how Sōseki's ethics might have influenced Watsuji sheds light on such questions.

This paper focuses on four ways in which Sōseki's philosophy of literature may have influenced Watsuji's ethics. First, both thinkers argued that the possibility of ethics depends on the interpenetration (*shintō* 浸透) of the experience of the self and the group. Second, human relations involve an inherent tension (*hari* 張り). For Sōseki, this tension exists within human experience: there is a tension between the flow of consciousness, which we habitually follow, and the resistance against this flow that the ethical actor must demonstrate. Rather than focusing on the tension within experience, Watsuji points to the tension between the group and the individual—to be human is to exist within the dialectical movement between these two poles.[5] Third, both had a relational understanding of ethical ideals: ideals are not simply abstract ideas; they only exist within a particular relationship or way of being with others. This is evident in Sōseki's description of the role of

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universal characteristic. In this light, he believes that Watsuji's ethics has some value, because it sheds light on the societies for whom this precedence holds true (276).

4. Utsunomiya writes:

> [B]ut can the individual really only be a negative moment (*hiteiteki keiki*) of the whole?... Does the individual really only exist in relationship to the whole? Is it not rather the case that the individual is an individual only in relationship to another individual? Perhaps the true meaning of the individual whom [Watsuji] contrasts with the whole is not really an individual per se, but more like a part of a whole, similar to [the relationship] between each cell and an organism; in other words, [the individual is] nothing other than a structural element of the whole. In order to capture the relationship between individuals as such, Watsuji introduced the category of the 'many,' thus creating the scheme "individual"—"the many"—"the whole." The whole is made up of many individuals, and yet in order to constitute the whole, the many individuals must 'abandon their individuality and become one.' However, if we accept that the individual is only truly an individual within the relationship between individuals, then the individual loses her own individuality, and the problem of [understanding] the relationship between each individual vanishes. (translation, Utsunomiya 1980, 107)

For an excellent summary of the criticism of Watsuji by both Utsunomiya and Yuasa, see Honda 2019.

5. Watsuji 1996, 124.

the author, which is to communicate ethical ideals by placing the people about whom they write in relationships that embody them. Similarly, for Watsuji, an ethical life, like that of Jesus or the Buddha, is a life in which one's experience of the absolute is embodied in one's relations with others.[6] Finally, both recognize a transcendent aspect to reality that manifests itself as our capacity for relating to others. Adopting the phenomenological psychology of William James (1842–1910), Sōseki considered this reality to be the flow of consciousness, which is at the same time the flow of life itself.[7] In contrast, adopting a phenomenological stance, Watsuji considered the relational nature of human experiencing itself to be a manifestation of the "absolute" (絶対者).[8] The absolute is not a transcendent reality in the sense of something separate from the reality of each human being: rather, Watsuji conceived of it as an experience of the inter-relationship of all beings as the unfolding of experience in general.[9]

The primary task of this paper will be to elaborate on these four resonances between the theory of experience underlying Sōseki's philosophy of literature and Watsuji's phenomenological ethics. However, before pursuing this task, I would like to explain briefly why it is justified to study these resonances.

The relevance of sōseki's philosophy of literature for interpreting watsuji's ethics

The suggestion that we study Watsuji via Sōseki may at first seem puzzling. Sōseki was a writer, not a philosopher, and he focused solely on the ethics of artists rather than develop a general ethical theory. Moreover,

6. Watsuji 1996, 122.

7. For a thorough discussion of the resonance between Sōseki's theory and that of William James, including the elements of Zen Buddhism that Sōseki mixed in, see Lamarre 2008.

8. Watsuji 1996, 122; WTZ 10: 129.

9. Watsuji had in mind the examples of Jesus Christ and Gotama Buddha, who experienced an awakening to the Absolute which they then sought to integrate into their everyday relationships (Watsuji 1996, 122; WTZ 10: 129). The experiential nature of the Absolute is most clear when Watsuji writes about the voice of conscience as "a voice invoking absolute negativity" (絶対的否定性への呼び声), which he describes as "a voice of negation from one's innermost" (自己の内奥から否定の声) and "a negation at the rear of one's self" (自己の奥底に否定が存する) (Watsuji 1996, 137; WTZ 10: 145).

his theory of literature was inspired by philosophers who were not of interest to Watsuji such as William James and Herbert Spencer. Finally, there was a long gap between Sōseki's writing on the subject, which was roughly between 1903 and 1907, and Watsuji's ethics, of which the first volume was published in 1937.[10] However, when one reads Sōseki and Watsuji together, the similarities become clearer. In a talk on the philosophy of literature in 1907, Sōseki wrote:

> [T]he excellent character of the author will permeate (浸みわたる) the hearts of readers, spectators, or listeners.... It will become part of their flesh and blood, handed down to their children and grandchildren.[11]

The writer relates to others through her novels, but this relationship is not just indirect; through her texts, the author embeds her ethical views into the "flesh and blood" of her readers. Her writing enables her to permeate the being of readers so thoroughly that their whole way of seeing the world is affected.

In *Ethics*, Watsuji wrote in similar language about the interpenetration of the experience of oneself and another. Just as the ethical views of the author permeate her audience, according to Watsuji, my experience is influenced by that of the other:

> Activity inherent in the consciousness of "I" is never determined by this "I" alone but is also determined by others. It is not merely a reciprocal activity in that one-way conscious activities are performed one after another but, rather, that either one of them is at once determined by both sides; that is, by itself and by the other. Hence, so far as betweenness-oriented existences are concerned, each consciousness interpenetrates the other (浸透する). When Thou gets angry, my consciousness may be entirely colored by Thou's expressed anger, and when I feel sorrow, Thou's consciousness is influenced by I's sorrow. It can never be argued that the consciousness of such a self is independent.[12]

In this passage, Watsuji, much like Sōseki, emphasizes that the relation-

10. Of course, Watsuji's reflection on ethics began far earlier, in part since he was hired to teach ethics at Kyoto Imperial University in 1925.

11. Natsume 2009a, 197–198; Natsume 1986, 90.

12. Watsuji 1996, 69; WTZ 10: 73.

ship between people is not a relationship between two completely separate individuals, but rather a sort of interpenetration or "permeation" (浸透) of the consciousness of one by the other. As David Dilworth writes, Watsuji "points to an experiential horizon… which transcends the plane of abstract individuals," a "horizon of dialectical immediacy prior to the subject-object and self-society dichotomies."[13]

The similarity that is evident in the juxtaposition of the two passages justifies a comparative study of Sōseki and Watsuji.[14] Sōseki's views may have helped Watsuji to formulate the basic philosophical question in his mature work, which is an inquiry into the relationship between the individual and the group. And perhaps it also provided the outline of an answer—this relationship is one of tension (*hari* 張り) that is premised on a fundamental interpenetration of self and other (*hitari* 浸り). Indeed, betweenness (*aidagara* 間柄), Watsuji's term for the relational nature of the human mode of being (人間存在), is essentially a combination of these two features—tension and interpenetration.

A comparative study is also justified based on Watsuji's own account of his relationship to the author. When one reads Watsuji's reminiscence of Sōseki, written eight days after the author's death, it is clear that he was deeply moved by his character, and that the ethics in his novels had a profound effect on Watsuji's outlook. Indeed, he was most impressed by Sōseki's love of humanity, and yet surprised by how it manifested itself as a desire for justice and a deprecation of individualism. Watsuji wrote,

> One cannot understand Sensei's personality without thinking about his passion for justice and his effort to drive out selfishness from love. Sensei could not forgive individuals for loving themselves even though self-love is

13. Dilworth 2005, 47. Dilworth does not mean that the "horizon of dialectical immediacy" is prior to the splitting of subject and object in the sense of temporally prior. Nor do either he or Watsuji mean that it is transcendentally prior. For Sōseki, the priority is dependent on the degree of focusing—what Sōseki calls differentiation—that occurs within the flow of consciousness itself. In the case of Watsuji, both the individual and the community are moments in the development of the absolute as experience.

14. Other scholars have noted the influence. David Dilworth refers to a passage in Karaki Junzō's *Watsuji Tetsurō* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1963), where Karaki maintains that the expression *hito to hito no aidagara* used by Watsuji in his works was inspired by a passage in Sōseki's *Kōjin* (*The Wayfarer*) (Karaki, 12; Dilworth 2005, 47).

> naturally the strongest form of love. Sensei was constantly vigilant against such selfishness within himself. As a keen observer of human psychology, he expressed to us [his students] how this selfishness constituted a grave dark side of human nature.... For Sensei, it was more important to treat others justly than to love.[15]

As we have already indicated, the influence of Sōseki on Watsuji perhaps contributed to the latter's shift from what Kōsaka Masaaki calls his "Sturm und Drang" period toward ethics.[16]

What unites Watsuji and Sōseki is the view that ethical ideals are embodied in concrete relationships; they are in no way simply abstract ideas. In Sōseki's literary theory, the novelist expresses ideals through a description (in a novel or poem) of a particular relationship between people, or in some cases a relationship between people and objects, especially natural ones. Watsuji's contention in his middle and late philosophy that human existence is characterized by "betweenness" (*aidagara* 間柄) is a theoretical way of explaining Sōseki's intuition that ethical ideals are not abstract but must be expressed through concrete relationships.

In the remainder of this article, we will undertake a comparison of the similarities between the views of Sōseki and Watsuji by showing four different ways in which their philosophies resonated with each other.

Resonance one: interpenetration between individual and group

Tension and unity are two sides of the same coin: tension presupposes a relationship. For Sōseki, the flow of consciousness is what gives each individual's life a sense of unity,[17] and it also unifies groups that share ideas and feelings. In *Theory of Literature,* he discusses in detail how individual consciousness can affect the consciousness of the group,[18] and he also points out how the participation of all humans in the flow of consciousness allows a skilled author to portray relationships whose ideals "permeate the hearts" of

15. Translation of Watsuji 1963, 416.
16. Kōsaka discusses the four periods of Watsuji's philosophy in Kōsaka 1964, 176–181.
17. Natsume 2009c, 126.
18. Natsume 2009c, 136–142.

her readers.[19] In the case of Watsuji, it is because the thoughts and feelings of each person penetrate those of others and because the acts of each individual occur within the interconnected acts of others that communication is possible and individual acts have meaning.

Despite the different philosophical bases for their theories—Sōseki's philosophy is rooted in psychology while Watsuji's is phenomenological—the two use similar terms to refer to unity: Sōseki writes about "permeation" (*hitaru* 浸る), whereas Watsuji tends to use "penetration" (*shintō* 浸透). Let us now examine how each characterizes the unity at the heart of human experience.

Permeation in Sōseki's ethics

Sōseki's ethics presupposes that human experience is intersubjective and dynamic: each person's experience offers a perspective on a single continuous flow of experiencing that we all share. Sōseki refers to this shared consciousness as "group consciousness" (集合意識)[20] or "mutual consciousness" (相互意識).[21] He explains the nature of consciousness by drawing on William James' phenomenological psychology,[22] from which he adopts the idea of a "continuous stream of consciousness" (意識の連続).[23] This stream is at once the stream of our experience and that of life itself.[24] It is in constant "flux" (推移),[25] and its apparent unity gives rise to the assumption that if follows the laws of cause and effect, with each new moment of consciousness affecting the next.[26]

Of course, just because the flow of group consciousness is shared, this does not mean that the content of each individual's consciousness is the same: we are not all mind readers. In fact, the opposite is true, and Sōseki

19. Natsume 2009a, 198.

20. Natsume 2017, 420.

21. Natsume 2017, 446.

22. Matsui, 119–120; Yamoto 1971, 88–92. Sōseki relies on other psychologists in addition to James such as Lloyd Morgan (1852–1936), author of *Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (London: Walter Scott, 1894), and Karl Groos (1861–1946).

23. Natsume 2009a, 163.

24. Natsume 2009a, 165.

25. Natsume 2009a, 164; Natsume 1986, 39

26. Natsume 2009a, 163.

sets up a dialectic within the flow of consciousness—a dialectic of self and other, sameness and difference—which has profound implications for how we understand the nature of interpersonal relationships. This is most obvious in his explanation of why some individuals are more attuned to the trends of group consciousness than others. While we all share in the flow of consciousness, some individuals are better at noting its patterns and directions.[27] This differentiation gives rise to what Sōseki calls the "three types of focus within group consciousness" (三種の集合的F).[28] Each of these types represents a different way in which the consciousness of one person is able to penetrate group consciousness. The first type is "imitative consciousness" (模擬意識),[29] which is the ability to imitate others—to cry "Fire! Fire!" upon hearing another do so and then to flee. It is evident that the ability to imitate others is essential for our survival as a society.[30] The second type is intuition—some people are able to anticipate the direction in which social trends are going without knowing how they do so.[31] Sōseki calls this the consciousness of those with "talent" (能才) because one must have attained a certain level of understanding in order to have such insight.[32] Finally, there is the consciousness of the genius (天才).[33] Such a person can do more than foresee the next trend, the next cresting wave of group consciousness.

27. Sōseki writes:

> The consciousness of ordinary people comes and goes according to the dizzying multiplicity of phenomena; they are as easily fooled as those monkeys in the Chinese legend who were kept happy with four acorns in the morning and three at night. They are easily manipulated by appearances; they sink or swim and run themselves ragged at the prospect of whatever treasure is before them at the moment. The things they encounter every day are myriad and multiple, but they are simply carried away by them into a glimmering confusion. It is a continuous stream, like a procession of carriages, horses, and people endlessly reflected in a mirror. But those [like the genius] who are able to screw themselves tightly to that single core and remain forever unmoved will, according to the form and quality of this core, be able to gather together the limitless floating dust and discover for themselves one or two perspectives to live by. (Natsume 2009c, 130–131; Natsume 2017, 430)

28. The "F" is shorthand for "focus," meaning here the "focus of consciousness." Natsume 2017, 420.

29. Natsume 2017, 420–423.

30. Natsume 2009c, 123.

31. Natsume 2009c, 125–127.

32. Natsume 2017, 423–427.

33. Natsume 2017, 427–435.

Rather, she is able to see many steps ahead. To use a phrase from Friedrich Nietzsche, her meditations are "untimely"—she sees so far ahead that her thoughts are disruptive for ordinary society.[34]

Sōseki is clear that what distinguishes the ordinary person from the genius is not the content of consciousness (for everyone who shares in its flow will eventually arrive at a particular idea if it becomes sufficiently prevalent in society), but rather the speed and timing with which each develops this content. He writes:

> ...[T]he waves of consciousness of the genius differ from those of everyone else only in terms of stage, while the process and order of their transformations do not contradict each other in the slightest—indeed, they are in perfect accord with one another.[35]

This "perfect accord" is what permits ideas developed by one person to "penetrate" (染み渡る) the heart and mind of another.

As we have seen, for Sōseki, our experience of life is a continuous flow of consciousness shared by all of us. However, the content of the consciousness of two individuals is not identical at any given moment. Nevertheless, the more attuned we are to the trends of the era in which we live, the more often we are able share thoughts and feelings. What is not yet clear, especially in Sōseki's *Theory of Literature,* is what the relationship is between the self, the other, and group consciousness. As we will see in the next section, Sōseki characterizes the relationship between self, other and the flow of consciousness as a kind of tension. It is this model of "tension" (*hari* 張り) within shared consciousness that has similarities with Watsuji's understanding of betweenness (*aidagara* 間柄), the term he uses to characterize the relational character of humans.

Permeation in Watsuji's ethics

In the case of Watsuji, interpenetration takes place at two levels: at the level of the dialectic of individual and group, and at the level of the movement of absolute negation itself. In the first case, human existence is characterized by moments in which individualism is asserted and the group is rejected,

34. Natsume 2009c, 128.

35. Natsume 2009c, 130; Natsume 2017, 429.

but also moments in in which we identify completely with a social group by adopting their values and norms and adhering to social rules.[36] Watsuji calls this back and forth process a "negative interdependent relationship" (否定的な相依関係).[37] In the second case, the condition for the possibility of this negative interdependent relationship is the emptiness in which the movement of negation of absolute negativity (絶対的否定性の否定の運動) that characterizes this relationship takes place.[38] Watsuji calls this a "kind of absolute wholeness,"[39] thus indicating the interpenetration that it presupposes. It may be difficult to think of this wholeness as being a kind of interpenetration, but Watsuji tries to make this clear when he writes that

> an established betweenness is, in its extreme, the absolute wholeness that consists of the nonduality of the self and the other.... [I]t is authenticity (*honraisei*) as the ground out of which we, fundamentally speaking, come forth.[40]

Watsuji associates this ground with what is called in Buddhism "the original face before your parents were born" (本来の面目),[41] a reference to a famous *kōan*, a tool of Zen practice for helping the Zen practitioner to align with reality.[42]

Let us begin by examining the first aspect, the negative interdependent relationship. In Watsuji's account, this kind of interpenetration has both a subjective and an objective aspect. The subjective element is the interpenetration of my experience with yours. The objective element is what Watsuji calls the "practical interconnection of acts" (実践的行為的連関): all of my acts take on meaning because they are embedded in a network of the acts of others.[43]

In regard to the subjective aspect, Watsuji's explains that our experience

36. Watsuji 1996, 145, 186; WTZ 10: 152, 195.

37. Ibid.

38. Watsuji 1996, 117, 124; WTZ 10: 124, 131.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid. I do not really like the translation of *honraisei* (本来性) as "authenticity" because it loses the connection with the Zen kōan of the original face (本来の面目) that Watsuji invokes. I discuss this point further below.

41. Watsuji 1996, 187; WTZ 10: 195.

42. For more on the use of *kōan* in Rinzai Zen practice, see Hori 2003, 3–90.

43. For a description of Watsuji's view, see Sevilla 2017, 11 and 42.

is inherently relational: we cannot find an experience of the pure "I." He explains this relational nature of experience as follows:

> My seeing Thou is already determined by your seeing me, and the activity of my loving Thou is already determined by your loving me. Hence, my becoming conscious of Thou is inextricably interconnected with your becoming conscious of me. This interconnection we have called betweenness is quite distinct from the intentionality of consciousness. Activity inherent in the consciousness of "I" is never determined by this "I" alone but is also determined by others. It is not merely a reciprocal activity in that one-way conscious activities are performed one after another but, rather, that either one of them is at once determined by both sides; that is, by itself and by the other. Hence, so far as betweenness-oriented existences are concerned, each consciousness interpenetrates the other. When Thou gets angry, my consciousness may be entirely colored by Thou's expressed anger, and when I feel sorrow, Thou's consciousness is influenced by I's sorrow. It can never be argued that the consciousness of such a self is independent.[44]

Watsuji follows up this theoretical description with a practical example—the streetcar.[45] Even though we may be surrounded by strangers on a streetcar, our thoughts and feelings are influenced by those around us: we all feel impatient when the streetcar is delayed as we are rushing to work, we all feel apprehensive if one passenger yells at another, and we share a common joy when every passenger on the car is going to a sporting event (as long as no fans of the opposing team are onboard!). These shared feelings point to the subjective form of interpenetration—the "interpenetration of consciousness" (意識の浸透)[46] or the "consciousness of betweenness" (間柄的意識).[47]

While what Watsuji calls the subjective aspect of shared consciousness takes on the principal role in Sōseki's account, for the former there is another

44. Watsuji 1996, 69; WTZ 10: 73.

45. WTZ 10: 70.

46. WTZ 10: 64.

47. WTZ 10: 73. Johnson calls this the "porosity or openness of one consciousness to another" (Johnson 2019, 90). He also highlights this porosity as a feature that distinguishes Watsuji's notion of the relationship to others from that of Heidegger. He writes: "Watsuji arrives at a very different conception of the self from that found in the notion of Dasein. The practical subject differs from Dasein first, to the extent that direct relational interaction is constitutive for it, and second, insofar as the kind of self it is that is so constituted is able to be continuous with and extend into others, who, in turn, are able to extend into and be continuous with it" (ibid., 99).

way in which each person is always together with others—through human acts. This is the objective aspect of relationality—each act takes on a meaning in relation to the context of human actions in general (行為的連関). Our association and interdependence with others are thus not only subjectively experienced but objectively manifest through our acts.[48] The recognition of an active facet to human existence gives rise to its dynamic dialectical structure, as acts unfold in time.

Watsuji gives many examples of the objective manifestation of the interconnection between individuals: roads, traffic patterns, railroads, radio broadcasts, the postal system, indeed, communication in general.[49] Such interactions are objective not simply because they are physical but rather because they are "public." For instance, public paths and alleys reflect the historical pattern of movements in a village, and they develop and extend over time as villages become connected, prefectures or provinces form, and the public road system emerges to reflect the political organization of the state.[50] In this way, the public forms of transportation and communication point to our fundamental interconnection.

As we have seen, Watsuji's ethics presupposes a profound interrelationship between the self and the group, which Watsuji captures in regard to the subjective element using a term similar to that used by Sōseki—*interpenetration* (浸透). Moreover, in the realm of action, acts are "interconnected" (連関). Everything we do and experience as humans implies that we are always already in a relationship with others. This is *betweenness* (*aidagara* 間柄), a fundamental feature of human existence.

As we can see, there are correlates to Sōseki's notion of "penetration" (浸り) in both the subjective (experiential) aspects of Watsuji's philosophy, in which case the term he uses is "interpenetration" (浸透), and in the objective aspects, in which case the term he uses is "interconnection" (連関). The intersubjective nature of experience evokes the "flow" of the consciousness that Sōseki describes in his theory of literature. The objective aspect evokes Sōseki's account of the role of the author, which is to portray in a poem or a novel the relationship between the characters by reproducing a con-

48. Watsuji 1996, 18.
49. Watsuji 1996, 155, 159, 163.
50. Watsuji 1996, 161.

versation or describing the way they act toward each other. These physical and communicative acts can have meaning precisely because they take place against a background of shared human feeling. However, while Watsuji's objective aspect is embodied in the patterns of interrelated activities that exist outside of our mind, this aspect remains interiorized in Sōseki's psychologistic analysis.

I mentioned earlier that there is another level of Watsuji's philosophy—the level of the absolute—at which interpenetration takes on an important role. We will discuss this below in the section on transcendence in Watsuji's philosophy.

Resonance two: the role of tension in sōseki and watsuji

Tension in Sōseki's theory of literature

In *The Theory of Literature* and "Philosophical Foundations of the Literary Arts," Sōseki notes that tension is a fundamental feature of human existence, which exists between two poles, the undifferentiated wholeness of the "flow of consciousness" (意識の連続), and the differentiated consciousness (分化した意識) that results when self and other emerge from the flow of consciousness in a process of differentiation and distancing.[51] The tension that Sōseki points to between the undifferentiated and differentiated consciousness is the difference between simply following one's habits of thought, which he considers to be an immersion in the undifferentiated flow of consciousness, and adopting an ethical standpoint, which requires one to focus on particular parts of one's experience (through differentiation and distancing) and directing this experience along particular "vectors."[52] In

51. Natsume 2009a, 173. To demonstrate the tension that is created between self and other, Sōseki uses a fun metaphor: the process of making *mochi* covered in *kinako*. He writes: "We latch on to our consciousness and throw it out there, latch on to it and throw it out there—throw it out there just like an *awamochi* maker plucks out individual bits of pounded rice *mochi* and tosses them into a dish of *kinako* soybean flour" (Natsume 1986, 51). Of course, once thrown into *kinako*, the tension between *mochi*-maker and *mochi* is gone; but in the case of consciousness, the tension persists—as Sōseki says, we "latch on to our consciousness" (意識を攫む, Natsume 1986, 172) in a way one does not do with *mochi*.

52. Ibid., 171. The reader may find this distinction between immersion in undifferentiated consciousness and taking a standpoint within this consciousness by differentiation and distanc-

this way, each human is torn between wanting to simply remain immersed in the flow of undifferentiated consciousness and following her habits, and wanting to assert her individuality by taking up a stand within the flow and making choices to direct it.

As we saw in the previous section, according to Sōseki, consciousness, like life itself, is continuously unfolding and is characterized by a kind of unity. However, tension can be created within the flow of experience by those who seek to direct how their lives, and hence their conscious experience, unfolds. To account for this, Sōseki explains that it is possible to focus on particular aspects of the flow of consciousness and so differentiate those aspects of the flow from others. When individuals begin to focus on differences within the flow of consciousness, they recognize that they have a choice at each moment whether to follow along with the flow or direct it in a particular way. To make this point clear, Sōseki compares himself with a visual artist—both may observe the grass, but only a painter can differentiate the many shades of green. Indeed, Sōseki writes that Titian could distinguish fifty shades where he sees only one.[53] The artist is able to distinguish particular kinds of experiences within the general flow of consciousness and interrupt the flow by focusing on it from a particular perspective. This power of differentiation then gives the artist a choice, for instance when selecting a colour for painting the sea of grass waving in a field. Sōseki explains:

> The differentiation among the contents of consciousness indicates that there is a wide range of possible streams of continuity these contents can follow, which, in turn, indicates that there is a considerable latitude in choosing among the possible ideal forms—that is, among the specific types of continuity of consciousness from which we choose in leading our own lives....[54]

As we will see in the case of Watsuji's philosophy, an inherent tension—

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ing to be a bit imprecise: it is. The metaphor is evocative, but it lacks philosophical precision. However, I think the association of the flow of consciousness with habit and the process of differentiation as a resistance of habit can be helpful: one may observe the cherry blossoms every spring and share in the feelings this habitual practice engenders, but one can also inquire into the nuances of feeling and how they are evoked. It is in doing the latter that the artist can evoke similar feelings in her readers by depicting the cherry blossoms or blossom viewing in a particular way.

53. Natsume 2009a, 174; Natsume 1986, 53–54; see also Natsume 2009c, 133.

54. Natsume 2009a, 177; Natsume 1986, 54.

a push and pull—exists between the individual and society. This tension between the individual and the person who merely follows along with the group also exists in Sōseki's philosophy: the artistic genius resists the flow of consciousness that carries most of us along most of the time by focusing on an aspect of it. In so doing, he is able to identify the nuances within it, to "see within it what others fail to notice, to hear what others do not hear, and to feel or think what others have missed."[55] The genius is so fascinated by the area of consciousness on which he concentrates that he becomes an "oddball" who "will not comprehend the customs of society, nor will he conform to the niceties of the world. In some cases, he will lack even the most basic moral sensibility."[56] Thus, for Sōseki, to assert individualism requires resistance to the group, but at the same time, the group reacts to this resistance with fear and loathing. And so, similar to Watsuji's philosophy, when we make a choice in life and assert our individualism, our inherent connection with others creates a tension (*hari* 張り) within the flow of consciousness,[57] and as a result, geniuses who choose to focus in ever greater detail on a particular aspect of the flow find themselves in "conflict with the trends of the age."[58]

Tension also surfaces in Sōseki's philosophy of literature because we have a tendency to assert our difference from others and then lapse back into normalcy. In this way, our existence is an inherent tension between asserting individuality and reabsorption into the group. We may live selfish lives by simply allowing experiences to take us where they may; or we can take a stand and pursue ideals that we perceive within its currents. But we can never do wholly one or the other thing; we shuttle back and forth between the two. This dynamic tension is dependent on the underlying unity that Sōseki sees as the possibility of ethics: the creation of ideals depends on the one hand on differentiating the otherwise unitary flow of consciousness—literally pulling it apart and examining it more closely, as if in freeze-frame

55. Natsume 2009c, 132; Natsume 2017, 432.

56. Natsume 2009c, 134; Natsume 2017, 434; see also Natsume 2009c, 131.

57. Natsume 2009c, 132, 135.

58. Natsume 2009c, 128. Sōseki doesn't directly use the term tension (*hari*), but such a tension is clearly evoked not only by his description of how the talented person pulls consciousness in a particular direction but also in the social consequence of doing so, which creates a "conflict with the trends of the age" (Natsume 2017, 427).

—but in order for ethics to be possible, the ideals articulated by the author or poet must be able to permeate the consciousness of the readers.

Tension in Watsuji's ethics

Tension also plays a key role in Watsuji's ethics: he characterizes the relationship between self and the group, which he terms "betweenness" (*aidagara* 間柄), as a kind of tension rather than as relationship of contradiction.[59] In other words, the assertion of the individual is not simply the negation of the group and vice versa.[60] Instead, human existence, conceived relationally as betweenness, exists between the assertion of individuality and assertion of the group. He writes:

> From the standpoint of subjective spatiality, an individual cannot simply be a disconnected point. Of course, an individual obtains her individuality precisely through the negation of community, and precisely because of this, she cannot have an independent subsistence. That she is established through the negation of community means that she finds that other individuals exist and she distances herself from them. This gives rise to the opposition between subjects, such that the self stands opposed to the other, and there appears also a "tension" (*hari* 張り) that spreads over these subjects. The self and the other are distanced from one another, so it does not follow that they are self-subsistent without connection. Rather, the truth is exactly the contrary. It means that they become relative to one another. For this reason, this distance turns out to be, at the same time, a field in which the movement of the connection as well as the unification of subjects, takes place. What was grasped as subjective spatiality is exactly the connection between subjects who stand opposed to each other in the form of self and other.[61]

As we can see, the relationship between the individual and the group is not one of contradiction but of tension.[62] Humans exist within a field of relations that Watsuji calls "subjective spatiality" or "subjective extendedness" (主体的空間性). The individual is not just an isolated point, but rather

59. Watsuji 1996, 346–7.
60. Watsuji 1996, 187–8.
61. Watsuji 1996, 187; WTZ 10: 187.
62. See also WTZ 10: 187–8 and WTZ 10: 236.

exists in a web of dynamic relationships with others. This field or web maintains the tension between its points.

In practical terms, what Watsuji is describing is the fact that each human has moments in which he struggles to pull away from the group, but also moments in which he returns to it, though the group to which he returns may take on a different form from the one that he left, and his relationship to the group may also evolve. Whereas for Sōseki it is only the genius and ethical author who feel the tension between acting justly and fairly and acting in one's self-interest, according to Watsuji, to be human is to constantly be located in inherent tension between individual and group, and thus *betweenness*, the fundamental characteristic of human existence, is likewise characterized by a tension between the two moments of the self and the group. Thus whereas Sōseki juxtaposed selfish and ethical action, Watsuji sees all human activity as "ethical" in that it operates within this fundamental tension between individual and group.

As we have seen, in Sōseki's approach, the flow of consciousness—the flow of life itself—takes on a foundational status as that which is most real.[63] Watsuji departs from this problematic essentialist psychologism; in adopting a phenomenological method, he clarifies that the tension between self and the group is in fact a facet of relationality—of betweenness—and therefore a fundamental feature of human existence (*ningen sonzai* 人間存在).[64]

63. Sōseki writes: "Consciousness is the only thing that can be said to exist—to really exist" (Natsume 2009a, 163). Watsuji notes a similar tendency to essentialism in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. According to Watsuji, for Husserl, there is still something primordial that does not exist in subjective space and time: consciousness. Watsuji writes:

> Husserl argues that basic temporality is precisely the intentionality of consciousness itself and that this intentionality is constructed within basic consciousness. Therefore, basic consciousness is itself not temporal because it is the ground of temporality. That is to say, in the nontemporal stream of consciousness, the primary contents of experience (i.e., "consciousness of …") are discriminated from each other and the intentionality of these experiences turns out to be prephenomenal temporality that serves to construct phenomenal time. (Watsuji 1996, 212)

64. As Erin McCarthy explains, citing John Maraldo, "*Ningen* is a dynamic concept of self, one that John Maraldo has suggested be understood, not as a metaphysical entity, rather as an interrelation" (McCarthy 2011, 13; citing Maraldo 2002, 185). She goes on to write, "*ningen* is *both* an individual *and* in relation at the same time, and to isolate either of these two aspects of being human, for Watsuji, does not express the fullness of what it is to be a human being" (ibid.).

He thus abandons Sōseki's psychological materialism by reconceiving the tension between the moments of human existence as a feature of our capacity to enter into relationships rather than positing an entity like the flow of consciousness. The unity at the base of existence in Sōseki's model is thus replaced by a dynamic movement of difference—the movement of the tension between the individual and the group.

While Watsuji's philosophy is in some sense an improvement over Sōseki's problematic adoption of Jamesian phenomenological psychology, it introduces difficulties of its own. One of the most pernicious is the nature of the tension (*hari*) that constitutes betweenness (*aidagara* 間柄): while it is clear that one pole of the tension is the individual, it is not always clear what constitutes the other. Is it the group? Is it the other? Is it society? I suggest that if we take the influence of Sōseki on Watsuji seriously, we should abandon the view that the tension is between two entities, either the individual and the other or the individual and a specific group. Rather, the tension is simply a feature of betweenness itself: it is a tension between the individual and *any possible group*.

Because relationality has both a subjective and an objective aspect in Watsuji's philosophy, the tension manifests itself both in our experience and in our acts. For instance, when we leave home for the first time to go to school or to work, we feel free, but at the same time, we sense the tug of family and friends. However, the relationality is not reducible to the experience of tension; the tension between individual and group also manifests itself "outside" our thoughts and feelings in the world of action. Each time we act, it is against a background of the acts of others. And many of these acts follow long-established patterns. Thus when we choose how to dress for the first day of work or school, or when we decide how to comport ourselves in the classroom or the workplace, the meaning of our forms of dress and comportment are derived from pre-established norms. Each person acts out their individualism within, or at least in relation to, the network of acts of those around us. Thus betweenness, the fundamental characteristic of human existence as relational, involves both these sorts of tension—an experiential tension and tension between the acts of the individual and the group.

As we have seen, in Watsuji's philosophy, tension is a fundamental feature of human existence as ethical existence. While for Sōseki, the tension is between the individual who "goes with the flow" and the genius who

pursues ideals and arouses ethical motives in others, Watsuji explains how this tension is manifest both at the level of subjective experience and at the objective level in terms of the interconnection of human acts.

Resonance three: a relational notion of ideals

In regard to the third resonance, the ethics of both Sōseki and Watsuji depend on a relational notion of "ideals": ideals are defined through our relation to others, and we actualize them by acting in a way that helps others to realize and align with the relational nature of human existence. Sōseki explicitly uses the term "ideals" (理想). The role of the ethical artist is to focus on and then express particular streams within the flow of our shared experience that express ideals such as bravery, truth or authentic feeling. Because of the power of her vision, which his rooted in a shared flow of consciousness, the artist is able to express something true about human existence. Watsuji rarely uses the term "ideals," preferring instead to speak of the realization of "supreme values" (最高の価値) or "goodness" (善),[65] which is the manifestation of what he calls "absolute wholeness." When our actions express goodness, they manifest absolute wholeness in concrete relationships.[66]

While they share similarities, there are also marked differences between the views of Sōseki and Watsuji that result from the philosophical orientation each adopts: the former adopts a psychologism with a tendency toward essentializing consciousness, while the latter arguably avoids essentialism by rooting his ontology of relationality (*aidagara*) in the movement of absolute emptiness. The difference in orientation can be seen in their explanation of how we discover and manifest ideals. Sōseki's ideals correspond to a particular focus within consciousness which he calls a "continuity of consciousness."[67] In contrast, for Watsuji, Christian love or Buddhist compassion, the two exemplary values to which he consistently returns, are not simply aspects of experience, but rather, they are ways of taking responsi-

65. Watsuji 1996, 134.
66. Ibid.
67. Natsume 2009a, 173.

bility in our relationships that we discover once we align ourselves with the movement of absolute negativity that constitutes human existence as relational.[68] For Watsuji, the fundamental principle of ethics is the dual existence of humans as both individual and social, and moral action the manifestation of the "absolute wholeness" that makes this dual existence possible.[69] Thus the pursuit of ideals is the infusion into social relationships of the absolute wholeness that such relationships presuppose. In practical terms, moral action is pointing to how reality is freely and spontaneously expressing its fundamental nature.

Ideals in Sōseki's philosophy

For the most part, we are self-absorbed, simply going where the flow of our consciousness and our inclinations take us: in other words, we live by habit.[70] But we are also able to direct the flow of consciousness in a particular way—in essence, direct our life down a particular stream within the flow of consciousness as a whole. When we choose to do this, we are living in accordance with what Sōseki calls an "ideal." He writes:

> [O]ur ideals gradually evolve as we make choices concerning what sort of sequence we want our continuous consciousness to follow and what sort of contents we want to include in it.[71]

Thus, for Sōseki, an ideal is a "kind of life," i.e. a story about it—the meaning we want our life to have.[72] The story helps us to make choices: it provides a focus within the flow of consciousness, a way of discerning among otherwise undifferentiated experiences and choosing meaningful ones.

It is important to note that not just any ideal—not just any story—will do. Rather, Sōseki is clear that the various ideals one pursues in life are ways of "understanding... the problem of how one should live."[73] Thus, to make choices in pursuit of an ideal is to touch what Sōseki calls the "essence of life"; some ideals, some stories, are closer to the essence of life than others.

68. Watsuji 1996, 139.
69. Watsuji 1996, 124; WTZ 10: 131.
70. Natsume 2009c, 131, 138.
71. Natsume 2009a, 168; Natsume 1986, 44.
72. Natsume 2009a, 168, 207; Natsume 1986, 44.
73. Natsume 2009a, 208; see also 212.

Thanks to the fact that ideals touch the essence of life, a life lived in accordance with an ideal will not be purely selfish, because it will be aligned with this essence and inspire others to resist lapsing into habit to instead pursue ideals themselves. For instance, Sōseki explains that the role of the ethical author is to create a "receptive affinity" between herself and the reader[74] by means of which she can influence the choices the reader makes and encourage them to realize this essence.

Sōseki distinguishes three primary ideals within the flow of consciousness: streams of consciousness dominated by the intellect, streams dominated by feeling, and streams dominated by heroic action. For instance, the philosopher focuses primarily on the intellectual experiences within the flow of consciousness,[75] leading her to see the world in an abstract way through the lens of generalizing ideas. The author follows a different stream—a different "continuity of consciousness":[76] she analyzes objects in terms of emotions and seeks to clarify the nature of a relationship "in order to savor those relationships more fully than before."[77] The person of action is animated by values such as heroism or decisiveness. Individuals may choose to pursue one of these streams in its pure form or mix them together.

Because ideals are not mere ideas but rather streams within the flow of consciousness, they can be embodied not just in thoughts but in the con-

74. Natsume 2009a, 208. Watsuji clearly felt that Sōseki was the type of author who could achieve this. He wrote:

> Sensei was not a writer of the eye but of the mind. He was a psychologist, not a painter. He was a thinker more than an observer. He was much closer to being a philosopher than a novelist. As a result, one should not mind too much that his works lack an air of realism. (Although if one accepts realism in the sense that Dostoyevsky used the term in characterizing his own works, then Sensei, too, was a realist.)
>
> I myself observed Sensei's remarkable [fixation] on the idea. I believe that it is entirely the way he communicated it that made his work so splendid. What I mean by this is that Sensei's text gave one the strong feeling that it had been (carefully) crafted. However, this feeling quickly disappeared in the face of the idea it embodied. In it, the reader felt as if he were standing before Sensei's naked mind.
>
> In reading his work, we are not simply hearing the report of a person's life; we hear rather the divulging of the interior journey, the experience of a person who has sought the way (*michi*). (translation, Natsume 1963, 419)

75. Natsume 2009a, 176.

76. Natsume 2009a, 209.

77. Natsume 2009a, 178; Natsume 1986, 59.

crete relationships between individuals or between humans and non-human objects. The role of the author is to express the insights that she gains about emotions by means of the relationships she describes between objects or people. Sōseki gives the example of expressing love:

> [O]ne can express a relation of love via some thing—well, this is much clearer if we make it a person rather than a thing. To express a relation of love via a person is the ideal of eight or nine out of ten people we call novelists. This relation of love can be further differentiated into various types. For example, there is the love that results in a marriage, or the feverish love one succumbs to like a disease—but these old-fashioned kinds hardly ever appear in novels nowadays. More cynical varieties might include a woman who marries even as she remains infatuated with another man, or a couple who finally realize their dream of being together and who begin fighting the very next day.[78]

The example of love focuses on the ideal of feeling. But authors can also address the forms of relationships particular to other ideals. An author might choose to depict the relationship that a hero has to a particular object or toward other humans, for instance by depicting a mountaineer who, foolish though it may be, bravely decides to climb Mount Fuji in winter.[79] Or she might describe a person resolving to cross a desert or to swim across an ocean strait. The continuity of consciousness that embodies the ideal of the hero is portrayed through a particular relationship of the hero to an object like a mountain, a desert or an ocean. Of course, they can also be portrayed in human relationships, as Sōseki did with such tenderness in all of his novels.

To summarize, for Sōseki, to live ethically is to pursue an ideal. An ideal is more than just an abstract idea: it is a particular stream within our consciousness on which we focus and which we develop. These ideals include truth (the ideal of the philosopher), heroism (the ideal of the person of action), or the expression of emotions (the ideal of the artist). These ideals are embodied in relationships between objects or humans. This is why the goal of the writer is to describe certain objects (natural objects and people) and the relationships between them in a way that depicts a particular pos-

78. Natsume 2009a, 183; Natsume 1986, 67.
79. Natsume 2009a, 184.

sibility of being—the instantiation of a particular ideal.[80] The pursuit of these ideals involves the selection within the continuity of consciousness of certain experiences that together give meaning to the undifferentiated flow. Through the pursuit of such ideals, Sōseki explains, we "render the purpose of our existence into something higher and more distinguished" because life is now lived for some identifiable purpose.[81] Indeed, these ideals are not just a way of giving our individual lives purpose—they can serve as the ideals for the group as a whole.

While superficially compelling, Sōseki's theory of ethical ideals lacks philosophical precision; indeed, he has some difficulty explaining what an ideal is within the terms of his Jamesian theory of consciousness. He proposes that an ideal is a particular way of directing the stream of consciousness that involves taking up a standpoint within it and then noting how certain patterns—ideals—can be observed in the flow. However, Sōseki is not especially clear about what it means to adopt a standpoint within the flow of consciousness; sometimes, this seems to be no more than a metaphor. Moreover, it is hard to know how these standpoints can be established if they themselves are abstractions from the flow of consciousness:[82] how can the self be part of the flow of consciousness and at the same time separate itself sufficiently from it to identify within it elements that are consistent with the ideal which that part represents?[83] It was not Sōseki's concern to explain in detail how this occurs; his general point was that the author must be able to identify gradations within a general social understanding of what it means to be a hero or a person embodying one of the other virtues.

Ideals in Watsuji's ethics

Ideals play an important part in Watsuji's ethics. Human existence is inherently relational: it is the relationship between group and individual, which is dynamic and constantly changing. But while human existence is always ethical in nature and each of our choices affect others, it is nonetheless better to

80. Natsume 2009a, 212.

81. Natsume 2009a, 198.

82. Natsume 2009a, 171.

83. Perhaps Sōseki would have acknowledged that such a separation is impossible. The model of a feedback loop similar to Heidegger's notion of the hermeneutic circle would have worked better.

make good choices and to promote harmonious relationships. Unsurprisingly, this is the role of ideals. In European philosophical traditions, we tend to think of ideals as ideas or concepts. But in Watsuji's philosophy, because human existence is inherently ethical in the sense that all of our thoughts, feelings and actions are rooted in this dynamic relationship to others, ideals, too must be conceived of relationally. To pursue an ideal for Watsuji means to treat others in a way that is consistent with relational structure of human existence itself. Or as John Maraldo explains in an essay on human dignity and human rights:

> [I]f to be human means to be in reciprocal relationships in which we bestow dignity on one another through respect, then the claim to rights would be a claim to enjoy appropriate relationships, namely, those that realize this law or structure.[84]

I would go a step further and argue that Watsuji explains what an appropriate relationship is: it is one animated by Christian love or Buddhist compassion.[85]

To live in a way that our relationships take the appropriate form, we must first come to understand the nature of human relationships. Watsuji does not explain how we do this, but he does describe what we learn: when we understand the tension in which we all exist between individualism and responsibility to others, we are able to realize Buddhist compassion or Christian love.[86] Thus within any given relationship, we have the possibility of understanding it from the standpoint of the absolute unity of self and other. However, we can only discover this by abandoning unquestioned notions of self and other, most of which are based on conventional group norms. Ideals must be realized within relationships such as the family, the

84. Maraldo 2019, 144.

85. The list is not meant to be limited to these two relationships. Similar notions exist in every religion. However, these are the two religions that Watsuji discusses in depth in *Rinrigaku*.

86. Watsuji explains: "[O]bedience to gods or to the authority of the whole, that is the abandonment of individual independence, and the manifestation of love, devotion, or service have always been proclaimed as 'goodness.' This can be illustrated through a simple expression, the Japanese term *nakayoshi*, which refers to the realization of socio-ethical unity" (Watsuji 1996, 134). In other words, when we realize the relational nature of human existence (its "socio-ethical unity"), we express love and compassion.

workplace, the neighbourhood, the nation and so on.[87] However, these relationships are not bound to take on their traditional forms; rather, because of the relational nature of human existence, the forms are just the location where our understanding of the absolute unity of self and others can be actualized. Watsuji explains:

> [H]uman existence… infinitely aims at the realization of communal existence by virtue of the fact that human beings are *ningen*. Because of this, *the pattern of practical connections already realized serves, at the same time, as a pattern yet to be achieved*. Therefore, although ethics is already what is, without being merely what should be, it is also regarded as what should be achieved infinitely, without thereby being a mere law of being.[88]

The forms of relationships may be an inheritance, but they are also "patterns yet to be achieved." This is because the evolution of these patterns is itself a reflection of the inherent relational nature of human existence which is in a constant state of flux or development. Confucius inherited the rites of the Zhou dynasty, but he sought to breath new life into them by seeing them as the manifestation of the four virtues (human-heartedness, righteousness, wisdom and ritual propriety).[89] Old forms can be revitalized: what it means to be a "family" today is much different than what it meant one hundred years ago, and yet the family continues to be a form of human relations in which one can act morally.

My contention that Watsuji's ethics involves the pursuit of ideals differs somewhat from that of other scholars. Kyle Michael James Shuttleworth has suggested that the ideal in Watsuji is authenticity (*honraisei* 本来性). *Honraisei*, he writes, is "an ethical ideal which regulates [the dynamic between individual and community]",[90] and therefore ethics is the pursuit of authenticity. I take a slightly different view because I do not interpret *honraisei* as being itself the ethical ideal. *Honraisei* is something to be realized, but it actualizes itself in human relations as the ideals of love and compassion. This is why Watsuji writes that when we awaken to emptiness, we realize

87. For a discussion of how Watsuji's ethics is instantiated in concrete communities, see Sevilla 2017, §1.3.

88. Watsuji 1996, 12; WTZ 10: 14. Author's emphasis.

89. Shen 2014, 46.

90. Shuttleworth 2019, 247.

Buddhist compassion, or when we put ourselves entirely in God's hands, we realize Christian love.[91] Part of the confusion can be traced to the fact that Carter and Yamamoto translate *honraisei* as "authenticity." In my view, this is a poor translation because *honraisei* is meant to evoke the *kōan* of the "original face," which in Japanese is called *honrai no menmoku* (本来の面目), and reliance on the translation is what leads Shuttleworth to describe *honraisei* as a regulative ethical ideal. The realization of the emptiness of "self" and "other" is an essential pre-requisite to ethical action, but this realization manifests itself in the ideals of infinite love and compassion. As Watsuji writes,

> regarding the possible connection of human beings, people show a concern so great that it is beyond imagination. This is so because the direction of this possible connection is, in the extreme *the direction in which a human being tries to return to her [original face]*. The present concern is not with ["one's original face"]; nevertheless, this concern does lurk in the background in the form of possibility.[92]

What this quote points to is that ethical action is the consequence of or manifestation of the process of returning to one's original face (*honraisei*). This means that ethical action is the manifestation of this original face (the absolute or simply reality) unfettered by the petty preoccupations of individuals or the tyranny of unquestioned community norms.

This interpretation is consistent with the way that Watsuji discusses freedom, which he acknowledges is "a basic concept of ethics."[93] While in the philosophy of liberalism, freedom is conceived negatively as freedom from coercion,[94] the kind of freedom that is essential to ethics is freedom to "self-initiate without a cause outside of itself."[95] We have the capacity to act freely in this way, Watsuji explains, because we share with "God as Creator" the freedom to realize ourselves in the created. In ethical terms, the manifestation of this freedom is the movement of negativity, which gives us as indi-

91. Watsuji 1996, 123.

92. Watsuji 1996, 188. I have substituted "original face" for "authenticity" and "one's authentic countenance," the terms used in the translation of Carter and Yamamoto.

93. Watsuji 1996, 137.

94. Watsuji 1996, 138.

95. Ibid.

viduals the ability to revolt against social norms, but in so doing, to realize our socio-ethical obligations to others by breathing new life into the forms of social relations. As Watsuji writes, this is "the freedom of revolting against one's own foundation… [that] can be *developed from the foundation itself*."[96] Understood in this way, Watsuji's claim that ethics is "the study of human existence" (人間の学としての倫理学) takes on a dual meaning: the nature of human existence is relationality (*aidagara*), and it is because human existence is at its base ethical that we are able to express the Absolute, which is constantly expressing itself freely as the movement of negation.[97] To act ethically, then, is not simply to realize our authentic self, but to act from out of our original nature (*honraisei*).

Thus, Watsuji points to Jesus and the Buddha as paragons of virtue because the ideal in accordance with which they lead their life is that embodied in the very nature of human existence itself, i.e., in relationality (*aidagara*), a fundamental feature of human existence that is in turn rooted in a fundamental feature of reality itself. Both the individual and the group are possible only because the nature of human existence is betweenness; and therefore, neither the individual nor the group alone are authoritative unless their ideals and goals reflect this nature.

My contention that Watsuji's ethics relies on ideals is consistent with the fact that he resorts to aspects of Confucian philosophy to illustrate his theory that human existence is inherently ethical. Indeed, many scholars have rightly pointed to his repeated references to Confucian concepts such as the Five Relationships (*gorin* 五倫: ruler-ruled, older-younger, parent-child, husband-wife, friend-friend).[98] Jordančo Sekulovski has proposed that the forms of concrete relationships should take a primary place in Watsuji's thought, and that the goal of his ethics is to "empower the *rin* (as a form)" by means of *aidagara*, the fundamental nature of human relationality, in order to allow these basic forms to be realized in ethical life.[99] I would agree if what is meant by this is that the patterns of human relationships such as the Five Confucian Relationships are where compassion or love can be

96. Watsuji 1996, 138. Author's emphasis.
97. Ibid.
98. Dilworth 1974, 17,
99. Sekulovski 2019, 202–204.

realized, or as Maraldo writes, community is a place where people can live together in harmony.[100] Such a view is consistent with the fact that Watsuji conceives of the patterns of human existence as the "noematic meaning" (ノエーマ的な意味) of "dynamic human existence."[101] The ethical ideal is to see that well-established forms of human relationships are just the manifestation of the movement of the Absolute. To use Confucian terms, the fact that this dynamic activity is the movement of negation and that it is empty (空) means that the Five Relationships can be places in which to manifest the foundational Confucian value of *ren* (*nin* in Japanese; 仁), variously translated as "humanity" or "human-heartedness."[102]

Thus for both Sōseki and Watsuji ethical ideals manifest themselves relationally. In Sōseki's case, the ethical task of the author is to study human relationships and to distinguish fine gradations within them. Through this study, she is able to depict relationships that evoke ideals that resonate with the age in which she lives, thereby touching the hearts and minds of her readers and inspiring them to pursue similar ideals within their relationships.[103] Similarly, in the case of Watsuji, divine love and compassion—the forms that the absolute interconnection between people takes—must manifest themselves in actual "socio-ethical organizations" (人倫的組織) and "socio-ethical wholes" (人倫的全体)[104] such as monastic communities, families, neighbourhood or friendship communities and the state.[105] By returning to the absolute and awakening to the ideal of interrelatedness in which the movement of sameness and difference between self and the totality is realized, avatars of ethical life such as Christ or Gotama Buddha were able to realize love and compassion as ideal forms toward which to strive in actual concrete relationships.

100. Maraldo 2019, 144.

101. Watsuji 1996, 11.

102. See Katsube Mitake's explanation of the nature of emptiness in Watsuji's philosophy in Yuasa 1973, 27–28. As Katsube explains, "emptiness" (空) is meant to point to the fact that experience is just a series of moments of experience. This is what he means when he says that "emptiness" does not mean the absence of something (何もない), but rather that the essence of that thing, be it an individual thing or the whole, is emptiness (個別性も全体性も「空」に帰してしまう). Cf. Yuasa 1973, 27.

103. Natsume 2009a, 197–8.

104. WTZ 10: 127.

105. Watsuji 1996, 122–3.

To complete this section, I would like to emphasize that we should not simply gloss over the differences between Sōseki and Watsuji's understanding of ideals. For Sōseki, ideals are essentially patterns of consciousness such as "righteousness," "justness" and "bravery" that are acted out in real life. It is not surprising that this model of ethics led Sōseki to be constantly disappointed by human selfishness, because he searches for ideals within the flow of shared human consciousness rather than recognizing the nature or source of this consciousness. For this reason, the ideals expressed in poems, novels, and other art forms are too fragile—too human—to guide human behaviour in the push and pull of social convention and individual desire. In contrast, ideals for Watsuji are not ideas or patterns of consciousness—they are ways of acting in particular forms of relationships that reflect the fundamental unity of all beings. Buddhist compassion and Christian love are only realized through constant mindfulness of the dependence of myself on others. When one lives with such interdependence in one's heart, Watsuji believes, any form of relationship, be it family or friendship, can glow with the light of life itself. While Sōseki's approach was very intellectual, Watsuji's was experiential and embodied—our experience of the interrelationship of self and other must animate how we treat those with whom we have concrete relationships such as our parents, our siblings, our friends and so on.

Resonance four: transcendence

A persistent puzzle in Watsuji's thought is the role of the transcendent dimension, which he calls "absolute totality" (絶対的全体性),[106] and which he characterizes as the dialectical movement of negation within absolute emptiness (絶対空).[107] Does Watsuji intend for the relationship between concrete human existence and the transcendent dimension to be understood as transcendental, meaning that the absolute is the condition for the possibility of concrete existence? Or is the relationship meant to be metaphysical, in which case the experience each person has of being

106. Watsuji 1996, 23, 224; WTZ 10: 26, 236.

107. Watsuji 1996, 68; WTZ 10: 71. For a discussion of the Buddhist influence in Watsuji's theory, see Sevilla 2017, Chapter 5, and Sevilla 2016.

stretched between the individual and the group is simply a moment of the development of the transcendent itself?[108]

A comparison with Sōseki's philosophy can help us to resolve this issue. As we have seen, implicit in Sōseki's adoption of William James' phenomenological paradigm is a metaphysical proposition—our experience is simply "the flow of consciousness," and the self is therefore a fragment of or limited perspective on this flow.[109] Thus, the assertion of individuality—the taking up of a standpoint from which to make choices—is a manifestation of a moment in the flow of consciousness through internal self-differentiation (分化).[110] I suggest that there is a similarity between this model and Watsuji's, except that the latter has eliminated the psychologism from Sōseki's model. The key feature of that model is that the individual subject is an abstraction from the self that is always embedded in and inseparable from the flow of experience. However, within the flow of experience, there are moments of differentiation and focusing: they are like waves, with the apex being a moment of focusing, and the trough being indistinct as we approach the threshold of consciousness. Sōseki explains that as we grow older, we develop a "capacity for distinction" which allows us to see in the waving grasses not just a green mass but a myriad of different shades of green.[111] Also, the refinement of consciousness develops over the ages of history as societies evolve.[112] Thus within consciousness, there develops moments of clear seeing—the focus of consciousness—and moments of unclarity at the threshold or "periphery" of consciousness.[113]

Similarly, for Watsuji, the moments in which we assert individuality are simply an extreme within the movement of negation between the poles of individual and community.[114] And similar to Sōseki, these poles are actually moments of awareness—the assertion of the individual is a moment of "self-awareness," and the assertion of community is awareness of the community

108. I call this "metaphysical" because it implies a certain relationship between the immanent and the transcendent, between everyday individual experience and the transcendent.

109. See also LAMARRE 2008, 60–1.

110. NATSUME 2009A, 166–7; NATSUME 1986, 42–3.

111. NATSUME 2009C, 76.

112. NATSUME 2009C, 57.

113. Ibid.

114. WATSUJI 1996, 23.

will (Watsuji uses the term "superindividual will").[115] However, Watsuji manages to avoid the essentialism inherent in Sōseki's psychologism, in which consciousness appears to be a kind of substance, by explaining that both the individual and the community are "empty." However, by this he does not mean that they are non-existent or non-being, but rather that they are "absolute totality."[116] Thus absolute totality—reality—is the movement of emptying—of the coming and going of phenomena. And because human existence is also characterized by this coming and going, which Watsuji terms the "movement of negation," ethics is simply "the negation of negation" which is "the self-returning and self-realizing movement of the absolute totality."[117] Watsuji's metaphysics thus avoids essentialism by recognizing reality, not as a series of focused and unfocused conscious experiences, but by pointing out that the flow of our experience is the manifestation or result of the constant emptying out that constitutes reality: life comes and goes, and thus experiences arise and recede. Thus one way of understanding Watsuji's model is to see its similarities with that of Sōseki, but then acknowledging that the difference lies in the use of European philosophy, especially phenomenology, to describe this characteristic of reality as emptiness.

However, Watsuji was not satisfied with the presuppositions of most Western philosophy, which in his view assume an "ego [that] exists as independent from the outset,"[118] rather than presupposing relationality and deriving independence as a moment of relations. To avoid swinging to the opposite extreme and prioritizing the group or the community over the individual, Watsuji explains that by relationality he means "subjective practice," the "activities inherent in human relationships" that "do not allow themselves to be contemplated," but which nonetheless demonstrate interconnection. Communication and transportation cannot be directly observed—they are not reduceable to newspapers, roads or trolley cars. Rather, these objects are the physical manifestation of a subjective practice that displays the relational quality of human experiencing.[119]

115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Watsuji 1996, 68.
119. Watsuji 1996, 177.

The interpersonal nature of the phenomena that Watsuji investigates allows him to avoid the essentialism to which psychologism is prone: consciousness is not in itself a substance—it is simply subjective experiencing. But it also allows him, like Sōseki, to consider the individual's experience as derivative of or a manifestation of subjective experiencing itself, which is, as the movement of negation, absolute totality. When one expresses it this way, Watsuji's approach may seem obscure. But the model that he has in mind here is that which the Zen monk Dōgen expressed as "dropping through bodymind" (身心脱落), which Carter and Yamamoto translate as "dropping off of body-mind." Watsuji explains that there is a point in meditation when one is conscious, one is experiencing, and yet the sense of being separate from the experiencing itself disappears. Writing about the fact that human bodies are never absolutely separate, he explains:

> The second example [of this lack of absolute separation] is that a human body that, while carrying on its subjectivity to an extreme, finally dissociates itself from every sort of relational capacity. This body is neither that of a man nor a woman nor is it to be conceived of as a believer belonging to any religious association. A believer possesses one of the capacities prescribed by a betweenness-oriented existence, and hence, a believer's body has a necessary connection with some religious association. Then, is what remains left at the extremity a human body standing before God as one of His creatures? Even she who prays alone in separation from all connection still has her body that kneels and clasps its hands in veneration. But this is precisely a body that is affiliated with God, which is obviously revealed through this prayerful facial expression. Thus, it is not so much an absolute independent body as an absolutely dependent body. That is to say, in the extremity in which we examine the individual independence of a body, we reach a point at which individual independence necessarily perishes. This is what in Buddhism is described as "the dropping off of body-mind." Even Buddhists who abandon every kind of human privilege in aid of gaining absolute enlightenment and who remain tenaciously engaged with Buddhist truth with a willingness to kill even the founder of Buddhism in order to detach from a connection with all religious association, nonetheless finally ends up sitting meditation, which is to a great extent a bodily activity. When they break through this bodily meditation, their body becomes entirely emptied. That is to say, the subjective body terminates in absolute emptiness (*zettaikū*), when its individuality is carried to

> the extreme. This is a real feature and characteristic of the individuality of a human body.[120]

In both the Judeo-Christian and the Buddhist examples in the above paragraph, absolute subjectivity is experienced as an awareness without conditional subjectivity—without the everyday sense of a self separate from others. But whereas for Sōseki, each person's consciousness is part of a reified flow of consciousness, in Watsuji's model, each person has the capacity to "drop through body-mind" and realize that their experience is simply *being aware*: not some substance, but simply experiencing—the original face (*honrai no menmoku*).[121] Or to use the Christian terminology Watsuji invokes, we experience our absolute dependency on God as the creator of each moment. It is at this point, Watsuji writes, that the individual realizes themselves, but paradoxically, it is the moment in which a sense of individuality dissolves: "the pursuit of the absolute independence of the individual terminates, in truth, not with the individual but with the Absolute, where the individual is more than likely to lose its own reality."[122] And it is at this point that ideals such as love, which is the "consciousness of the 'unity of the self and other'"[123] manifest themselves, not as ideas, but as experiences.

Watsuji's position is not meant to be a mystical one—he does not require you to have sat zazen in order to understand the nature of absolute emptiness. Nor does he think that through zazen you will gain some special type of experience. Indeed, he also uses the example of activities other than sitting zazen. The nature of human existence as *ningen sonzai* (人間存在) is manifest simply in the fact that we ride the streetcar, drive an automobile, use a letterbox or public telephone, listen to the radio (or a podcast), read the newspaper and so on.[124] According to him, the fact that we participate in such activities or use such objects tells us something about the intersubjective nature of human existence:[125] the fact that we do these things indicates that

120. Watsuji 1996, 67–8; WTZ 10: 70–1.

121. I just wish to emphasize that we are dealing here with Watsuji's understanding of the *kōan* of the Original Face, not the understanding of the Zen teacher that must be realized by the student.

122. Watsuji 1996, 81.

123. Watsuji 1996, 83, citing Hegel's analysis of love.

124. Watsuji 1996, 39.

125. Watsuji 1996, 40.

each of our acts is oriented towards the world and to others, and therefore each act manifests our nature as betweenness. But he goes even further—these activities are a manifestation of life itself. He explains:

> Even though one personality performs her self-creative activity in entirely her own way, she consists, nonetheless, in the creative activities of a superindividual life. The past, which we understand in the sense that we manifest the totality of the past in our activities, is both the past peculiar to our personality and, at the same time, the past of a superindividual life. This means precisely that we possess the past in betweenness. We grasp this fact through the existence of *ningen*.[126]

Here, Watsuji uses language much like that of Sōseki: our experience actually points to experiencing in general, which is the "activity of superindividual life."[127]

Watsuji's ethics is a study of the nature of human modes of being (人間の学としての倫理学); and this study reveals that human activity and human experience are always the manifestation of the possibility of experience itself unencumbered by what Sōseki called the abstract differentiation into self and other. Thus Watsuji's ethics shares with Sōseki the view that experiencing is fundamental to human existence; but he avoids giving to this experience the status of a substance, the "flow of consciousness." Rather, for Watsuji, the fundamental nature of human existence as experiencing is what is meant by Watsuji's description of betweenness as "subjective spatiality," the relationship that emerges from experiencing itself.[128] Insofar as our experience contains moments of experiencing our separation from others and our unity with them, this points to the whole of our experiencing as the movement of what he calls "the Absolute," understood as the movement of negativity within absolute space. By comparing and then distinguishing Sōseki's psychological model with the intersubjective phenomenology of

126. Watsuji 1996, 206; WTZ 10: 218.

127. Unfortunately, Watsuji sometimes mixes up the level of experiencing as "the activity of superindividual life" and ordinary experiencing that presupposes a self separate from others. Thus when he points to fashion as an example of the manifestation of experiencing in itself, he steps down to the level of "communal experience" (Watsuji 1996, 74–5), mistaking this for the experiencing that is the "activity of superindividual life."

128. Watsuji 1996, 166.

Watsuji, we gain some insight into the role of the transcendent in the latter's philosophy: my experience is always the manifestation of the movement of reality—its coming and going—which is not a substance, but a constant movement of emptying and creating.

Conclusion

Sōseki was an inspiration to Watsuji. The purpose of this paper was to show that the influence was not just of a general nature: Watsuji's ethics engages with issues originally taken up by Sōseki in his work on the ethics of the author. The similarities include the notion that we live together with others not simply on the sociological level, but also on the experiential level: our experiences and ideas are able to penetrate (浸る, 浸透) the experiences and ideas of others. Likewise, both thinkers see an inherent tension at the base of ethical action, be it a tension within the flow of consciousness (in the case of Sōseki) or a tension inherent in relationality itself due to the natural evolution of the relationship between individual and group (in the case of Watsuji). The difference is that penetration and tension are interpreted by Watsuji through the phenomenological lens that he adopts in his work rather than by means of a theoretical consciousness. The categories of temporality and spatiality that are essential to that lens enable him to show that it is not just our experiences that interpenetrate—our acts, too, all occur within a web of interconnected actions (実践的行為的連関).

While Sōseki was clear that the ethical author must embody ideals and inspire others to live likewise, he was not that clear about the fundamental mechanisms underlying his ethics. When pressed, he threw up his hands. For instance, when questioning what the cause is of the flow of consciousness that constituted life itself, he said that this constituted an aporia—a *kōan*[129]—that he could not himself penetrate. However, Watsuji was able

129. Sōseki wrote:

[W]hat we call life consists of a continuity of consciousness.... We wish nothing more than for this continuity to continue. I can't explain why we wish for this. Nobody can explain that. All we can do is acknowledge it as a fact.... [T]o proceed further and try to determine the ultimate cause behind this tendency is futile. It would require us to resort to something like a Zen kōan, such as the one that asks: If all things can be returned to a single cause, then what is the cause of that cause? (Natsume 2007a, 167; Natsume 1986, 41)

to dissolve this aporia to some degree through phenomenological analysis. Ethical ideals, it turns out, are not just ideas or patterns of consciousness, as Sōseki thought, but ideal forms of relationships such as parent-child or friend-friend: relationships that are given life by our awakening to our original or true selves—the absolute unity between self and others. This absolute unity is something that we experience when we are able to set aside the abstractions of the everyday self and realize "the flow of consciousness" without adopting a perspective: it is simply experiencing itself as the movement of negation within absolute emptiness.

Watsuji managed to turn Sōseki's pessimism into a form of optimism. For while Sōseki recognized the tension between the self and the continuity of consciousness which is life itself, he felt that to maintain ideals, one had to constantly struggle against reabsorption into the whole. It is for this reason that he considered a love of truth to be utterly incompatible with love of oneself: to emphasize oneself is to give up ideals and to simply seek one's own pleasure within the flow of consciousness, i.e., to let the tension between the ethical standpoint and the flow of consciousness utterly collapse. However, for Watsuji, the tension between self and community is positive even though he calls it the movement of negation.[130] While Sōseki constantly sought the unattainable ideal, Watsuji sees the struggle itself as ethics; indeed, this struggle is the basic law of human existence as ethical existence: it is the manifestation of "the movement in which absolute negativity returns back to itself through negation."[131] Thus Watsuji, whose disposition was naturally sunnier than that of Sōseki, manages to transform the latter's pessimism about human nature into a positive feature of human existence. For Watsuji, the inability to reach the ideal is not a problem; to strive to realize it is itself to live ethically as *ningen sonzai*.

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Abbreviation

WTZ 『和辻哲郎全集』[*Complete works of Watsuji Tetsurō*] (Tokyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1961–1963).

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131. Watsuji 1996, 119.

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