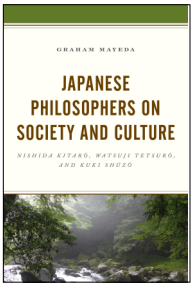
Book Symposium

Graham Mayeda, *Japanese Philosophers on Society and Culture: Nishida Kitaro, Watsuji Tetsuro, and Kuki Shuzo*



Graham Mayeda, *Japanese Philosophers on Society and Culture: Nishida Kitaro, Watsuji Tetsuro, and Kuki Shuzo*

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Reflections on Interpreting the Views of Nishida, Watsuji, and Kuki on Society and Culture

I am very grateful to the three scholars, Steve Lofts, Ellie Palmer, and Kyle Shuttleworth, who took time to read my book with such care and attention. Their comments have given me much to reflect on, and they have also shown me how much more I still have to learn.

I am also grateful for their assistance in making the work of Watsuji Tetsurō, Kuki Shūzō, and Nishida Kitarō better known. I admire the philosophy of these three Japanese scholars for two reasons: they transmitted and translated into a modern idiom important trends in East Asian thought, and by engaging with European philosophy, they provided a different perspective on many of the European philosophers whom they studied. For example, many of Kuki's texts around the time Heidegger's *Being and Time* appeared allow us to hear the echo of that book's reception in both Europe and Japan. Similarly, Watsuji's criticism that Heidegger failed to accord sufficient attention to the spatial and intersubjective aspects of human existence resonates with similar observations in recent scholarship.[1] Finally, reading the work of Nishida furnishes insights about countless European philosophers. The ability of these three Japanese thinkers to provide a new window into several philosophical traditions and to shed light on specific works is a testament to their brilliance and importance.

In this response article, I propose to restrict myself to picking up a few threads here and there from the articles of Lofts, Shuttleworth, and Palmer. However, before doing so, I wish to describe my approach to the work of Nishida, Watsuji, and Kuki, which has always remained at the very first step of philosophical inquiry: interpreting their words to explain clearly what they thought. What struck me in studying these three philosophers is that no matter how different the approach of each, they share the conviction that

1. See for example: Olafson 1998, Hatab 2000, Hodge 1995, McCarthy 2011, Leman Stefanovic 1986. See also the work of Günter Figal on the spatiality of aesthetics, which is based in part on the phenomenological hermeneutics of Heidegger.

our experiences and intuitions about the nature of reality and human existence can be expressed in thoughts and ideas. This is not surprising: philosophy as generally practiced today involves formulating and expressing thoughts about human experiences and social, ethical and political dilemmas. But what surprised me in the approach of the three philosophers is that each tried to use thoughts and ideas to describe the teachings of Buddhism. This seemed at odds with what I have learned about Buddhism, which I have always understood to be a set of instructions about a form of practice—a kind of doing—rather than a system of ideas about what we are doing.

The apparent contradiction of a philosophical study of what I took to be a practice turned out to be at the heart of the philosophy of Nishida, Watsuji and Kuki: each man in his own way grapples with the difficulties inherent in a philosophical approach to the problems that Buddhism engages. Thus, by dint of studying their work, I was able to appreciate the degree to which Buddhism—or more broadly, an insight based on experience—could be adequately (or inadequately) engaged on the philosophical level. Watsuji's description of the way that we are attracted to and rejected by the community that is captured by his concept of relationality (*aidagara*) struggles precisely because it must describe conceptually something that is lived through our interactions with others. Nishida likewise takes up the dialectic of self and other at various points in his philosophy. But the part of his philosophy that interested me the most was his attempt to use various idioms drawn from European philosophical traditions to describe the possibility of experiencing the world just as it is without interference from our concept of self. Indeed, Nishida's logic of the predicate, the part of his philosophy with which I have engaged the most, is, as far as I understand it, an attempt to grasp the relationship between the everyday way that we relate to the world, which is primarily through our thoughts and feelings, and the condition for the possibility of that mode of experiencing that is grounded in experiencing in itself.[2] Finally, among the three philosophers, Kuki's ethics points most clearly to the tension between experiencing and thinking, because it points to ethical imperatives expressed in the concrete ways that we experience our relationship to others, rather than deducing these imperatives from ideas about how to relate to others. For instance, he points to the inherent

2. Maraldo 2017, 303, 334–6.

tension between the Bodhisattva vow to liberate all beings and the apparent difficulty—perhaps even the impossibility—of completely understanding the needs of the others one is committed to liberating. Among the three thinkers, Kuki is the one who is most content to avoid conceptualization and instead use his philosophical writing to point directly to the problem of ethics as it is expressed in our clothing, our manner of speaking, and the concrete ways that we interact with others (Kuki uses the example of the clothing, behavior and ethics of *Iki*).

Given that what interests me the most about the philosophy of Nishida, Watsuji and Kuki is the difficulty of using philosophy as a tool to point to our ethical obligations, I have tried my best to explain clearly what each philosopher meant. But precisely because of the difficulty (or perhaps impossibility) of using philosophy and conceptual thinking more generally for this end, no book or article that I have written ever gets past the first step, which is to express the ideas that I have glimpsed in their work and to try, as best I can, to provide a coherent interpretation of their thoughts.

Of course, as the three commentators point out, I inevitably take a false step in my attempt to explain the philosophy of Nishida, Watsuji and Kuki because my attempts at interpretation introduce my own perspective into the account. Thus, my interpretations may only serve to identify my own misunderstandings of their philosophy. Perhaps in an attempt to avoid the inevitable self-condemnation that must follow, I will here attempt to describe the lens through which I have viewed their philosophy so that readers can judge for themselves.

Approach to interpreting nishida, kuki, and watsuji

I have always read the philosophy of Nishida bearing in mind that he did Zen practice,[3] and I have worked from the assumption that this practice inspired him to think about the world around him in a new way. It is not a Zen way of thinking about the world, but it is Nishida's way of thinking about the world after experiencing an aspect of Zen practice. Because this experience came primarily in the first half of Nishida's life, it is tempting to see his philosophical oeuvre and its various phases as different ways of

3. Yusa 2002, xvii–xviii; Carter 2013, 16–17, 40.

trying to express what he thought the experience he had through practice meant about how one should think about the world, i.e., how one should practice philosophy. Nishida's career as a philosopher really begins with the publication of *An Inquiry into the Good* in 1911; but at that point, Nishida was already forty-one years old, and the basic problem that he sought to take up in subsequent years remained essentially the same, at least in my view.[4]

My approach to the work of Kuki takes inspiration from Kadowaki Shunsuke, who pointed out that ethics was central to Kuki's thought. As I looked further into this, it became apparent that at least one source for his ethics originated with the Buddhist exhortation to lead one's life in a way that our encounters with others not be in vain, i.e., to live in such a way that one's own life helps all beings.[5] Naturally, it is very difficult to lead one's life in this way because it is challenging to reach other people—they are always turning away from us, both figuratively and literally. Thus, ethics is really the practice of the struggle between an ideal and the impossibility of its realization: anyone who has tried to live in accordance with an ideal understands this. But what is interesting about Kuki is the way that he expresses it so vividly by means of examples drawn from art and aesthetics. These media are particularly good at conveying the emotional aspect—what it feels like to be stuck between the challenges of samsara and the ideal of liberation. Kuki manages in his philosophical work to capture this dilemma, which is usually the domain of art, aesthetics, and real life.

Finally, my interpretation of Watsuji always begins with what he learned from his teacher Natsume Sōseki, about whom Watsuji writes so poignantly in his reminiscence of Sōseki eight days after his teacher's death.[6] Sōseki's works beautifully capture how the relationship between two people can completely color one's experience of the world. Indeed, in *Kokoro*,

4. This view is shared by YUSA 2002, xix. Nishida himself wrote in 1937:

Because I have developed my system of thought over a very long period of time, my philosophical ideas might be said to have changed in various ways. But as a matter of fact, I think they have not changed all that much. I began my career as a philosopher when I wrote *Zen no kenkyū* (*A Study of Good*) in 1911. Since then a considerable amount of time has indeed elapsed. I too have changed with the times in various ways, but I can say that the basic spirit of all my subsequent philosophical ideas had already emerged in that work. (NISHIDA 1998, 37).

5. KUKI 1935, 260.

6. WATSUJI 1916.

perhaps Sōseki's most famous novel, the main character's recognition of the injustice with which he treated a friend, driving the latter to his death, makes it impossible for him to love others, including the one he admires the most. Is there not here, in the stories of Sōseki, the root of Watsuji's interest in a dialectical understanding of the relationship between individual and group? Watsuji writes in *Ethics,* "Activity inherent in the consciousness of "I" is never determined by this "I" alone but is also determined by others."[7] Does this not describe how in *Kokoro* Sensei's relationships with others are permeated by the regret for the injustice of his treatment of the friend he drove to his death? In any event, I have always sought to find, at the base of Watsuji's highly conceptual dialectical system, a fundamental emotional truth of this kind.

As the reader can see from my approach to these philosophers, I have not gotten past the stage of interpreting their work. However, I hope that it is equally evident that I recognize the inherent limits of these interpretations, which are anchored in the perspective I have adopted to their work—a perspective that is perhaps peculiar to me. Nonetheless, I have always striven to find in the work of Nishida, Kuki and Watsuji confirmation that my interpretation can at least be justified. And I have tried to allay my doubts in this regard by setting out as clearly as possible what I understood each to be trying to say in the texts that I have studied.

Culture: things and ways of doing

Having explained my general approach to interpreting the work of each philosopher, I turn now to an explanation of how I approached the work of these three philosophers on the theme of society and culture. As I explained in the introduction to *Japanese Philosophers on Society and Culture*, my study of what Nishida, Watsuji and Kuki wrote about culture begins with the concrete ways that people practice culture. I adopted this approach because I understood this to be what each philosopher was most interested in explaining. Watsuji is the most explicit on this point: his philosophy aims at least in part at explaining why Japanese art and other cul-

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

tural practices take the form that they do.[8] His philosophical reflections aim to demonstrate how these practices point to the way that time and space interact: cultural practices evolve through history and by dint of humans interacting with each other, and these interactions take place in the broader context of how we go about in the natural and physical world.

Kuki's treatment of the culture of the *Kaseki* era (1804–1829)—particularly, the floating world of the pleasure quarters from that period—likewise focuses on concrete practice. Indeed, Kuki goes into great detail about the manner of dress and comportment of *geisha* (he spends much less time on the comportment of their male patrons). Even the ethical ideals that guide the life in the floating world manifest themselves in the comportment of the *geisha*, which Kuki maps as a system of taste characterized by the tension between opposing terms.

Even Nishida, the most abstract of the three philosophers whom I study in the book, is interested in how cultural practices manifest the worlding of the world, which he calls the historical body. Action and interaction—between humans and between humans and world—are the manifestation of the structures of human existence. In his lectures "The Historical Body," he writes the following about human society:

> Society develops through production and language—without them, societies do not develop. The question of social development has been a recurring one in various contexts of discussion; and language and tools have been advanced as the basis of the development of all societies. Without language and tools societies are not established. The use of language and tools manifests the fact of historical bodily production. The historical human body produces in particular ways. Our life is social in character in the sense of being a creative element of history. For a living creature life is physical, and apart from that there is no life; but for human beings we have to add that

8. He writes at the beginning of *Climate and Culture*:

> In our relationship with the cold, we come to engage ourselves, individually and socially, in various measures for protecting ourselves from the cold.... The various measures that are thus discovered, such as clothes, braziers, charcoal-burning, houses, blossom-viewing, dykes, drains, anti-typhoon structures, and the like, are of course what we ourselves have devised at our own discretion. (Watsuji 1988. 5–6)

I took this to mean that culture is precisely these concrete ways of doing things, and that his purpose in the book is to explain their "climatic" nature.

> there is no existential life apart from the historical human body. The historical body possesses language and tools, and these already implicate its social life. Apart from this there is no human life.[9]

According to Nishida, society is something constantly changing and evolving: this change is manifest in the concrete products of human activity—its language, tools, and cultural products. As Kobayashi Nobuyuki explains, in Nishida's later philosophy, *praxis* is thought in terms of *poiesis*: "*Poiesis* must be regarded as the act of creating things using materials, tools, and techniques; therefore, we cannot consider *praxis* (practical actions) without the ever-present involvement of 'things.'"[10] Thus cultural products and practices are one of the places where we can see the historical world in action as the dialectical relationship between subject and object, creating and created.

Lofts suggests in his article that there is a more fundamental approach to understanding culture that takes as its point of departure not specific cultural practices or objects, but rather the conditions for the possibility of culture. These conditions are not simply ideas, but rather the manifestation of the creative potential of a concrete historical culture. Lofts writes that he sees in the philosophy of Watsuji, Kuki and Nishida "statements that determine the universal function of the different objective forms of spirit that are world-forming." He goes on to explain that the proper approach to studying cultures is to examine the process of forming cultures, which he labels "objective," rather than focusing on the cultural products and practices unique to a particular culture, which he labels "subjective." The proper approach involves studying the "factum" of culture rather than focusing on the "facticity" of cultures. In other words, the study of culture should be philosophical rather than adopting an approach that properly belongs to the domain of the social sciences and cultural studies.

Lofts approach is influenced by both Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger. Drawing on Cassirer, Lofts suggests that rather than conceiving of culture simply as cultural practices, a more fundamental way of understanding culture is as the "critique of culture," in which "critique" has the sense of Kantian transcendental analysis, viewed through the lens of

9. Nishida 1998, 52

10. Kobayashi 2022, 189.

Neo-Kantianism and hermeneutic phenomenology. Drawing on Cassirer, Lofts describes the transcendental preconditions for culture as "the internal logic of the different sense-bestowing horizons of objective spirit that are world-forming and establishes their logical function in the construction and reconstruction of culture." Drawing on Heidegger, Lofts suggests that if one digs a bit deeper, one finds at the base of cultures as a horizon of meaning a "creative nature situated at the bottom of the historical world."

I am quite sympathetic to the approach of both Cassirer and Heidegger, and indeed, I had hoped that in my explanation of the cultural and social philosophy of Watsuji, Kuki, and Nishida, I would be able to identify what they considered the conditions for the possibility of cultural activities to be. In each case, that transcendental precondition appeared to be each philosopher's theory of the interaction between individual and group, which each investigated in order to uncover a more fundamental structure underlying the apparent separation between the pole of the individual and that of the group. Kuki, Watsuji and Nishida each used their own variation of a phenomenological method to expose this structure. In other words, each philosopher considered culture to be something experiential, and that by studying culture, one could uncover something about the nature of experiencing in general.

Of course, because each of Watsuji, Kuki and Nishida had a different approach to the nature of human experience, each identifies the nature of experiencing differently. For Watsuji, cultural practices reveal the temporal and spatial nature of human existence.[11] For Kuki, cultural practices manifest a certain aesthetic sensibility that is inherently intersubjective[12]—i.e., an aesthetic sensibility points to the way that people interact with each other, which involves sharing certain interpretations, but also being unable to share them. It is the tension between what is shared and what cannot be shared that gives rise to ethics.

Finally, for Nishida, I acknowledge the obvious Hegelian bent that his notion of the historical world indicates. However, I wished to make it clear in the book that the interactions between people are central to Nishida's understanding of how the historical world manifests itself. I explained:

11. Mayeda 2020, 114.
12. Mayeda 2020, 133, 165.

> What we learn about who we are and who the others are is that we are social and cultural beings in the sense that our actions both create our communal existence as a social and cultural existence, and our actions are in turn formed by the activity of the historical world, which is a social and cultural world.[13]

Again, for Nishida as for Watsuji and Kuki, the fact that cultural creative processes are the manifestation of the intersubjective world points to the fundamental tie between culture and ethics.

Lofts seems to consider Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger to be philosophers who approach culture in a truly philosophical way. I certainly see aspects of the philosophy of culture of each Japanese philosopher that would resonate with this interpretation of Cassirer and Heidegger. For instance, Cassirer emphasized the fact that a philosophical approach to culture uncovers the intersubjective nature of human existence. He wrote:

> Culture is… an "intersubjective world": a world that does not exist in "me", but rather a world that is accessible to all subjects, and in which they all take part. [T]he form of this partaking is completely different than [the way subjects take part] in the physical world. Rather than relating themselves to the same spatio-temporal universe of things, individuals are located in and united by collective activity. Insofar as they undertake this activity together, they meet and come to know each other through the medium of the various worlds of from out of which they create culture.[14]

What I tried to demonstrate in my book was that cultural practices also point to shared experiences, which in turn point to the intersubjective nature of human existence and human experience.

There are also Heideggerian overtones to Lofts' proposal that culture should be seen as "an existential project of self-realization in the sense of a lived, embodied self-understanding and self-actualization of a specific culture." On this view, the study of culture is meant to uncover the "creative nature situated at the bottom of the historical world." Perhaps Heidegger's later philosophy can shed some light on Nishida's philosophy; however, I would resist a tendency to objectify the "historical world" or to identify it

13. Mayeda 2020, 217.
14. Cassirer 2011, 79

with the "self-actualization of a specific culture." This tendency is evident in Loft's interpretation of *iki* as "a revitalization of the Yamato-heart/mind as the *entelechy* that forms the inner actualizing power, the vital principles of the Japanese spirit...."

I also resist a similar interpretation of Watsuji and Kuki: I do not think that either meant to recover the original spirit of Japanese culture in the sense of a concrete spirit identified with a specific historical past. Rather, I had assumed that for each, the study of culture reveals something about the way that a group of people live together and interact together—i.e., studying culture reveals the shared context from which specific cultural practices take meaning.

Moreover, I had not considered Nishida's "historical world" to be an actually creative power. If we were to take this approach, I believe we risk overlooking Nishida's warning that "the standpoint is not a standpoint." He writes:

> The religious standpoint, I say, is the standpoint that is not a standpoint. And yet from it appears an endless stream of "great wisdom and great practice." Therefore it is written: "One drop from the source of Sōgen [a reference to the sixth Zen patriarch, Hui-neng] will enable one to enjoy enlightenment without end."[15]

Nishida's ideas of a "historical world", of a place (*basho*) where form and image face each other, or the place of absolute nothingness, are not actual places separate from the world: they are simply the activity of the world itself. To put this another way, there is just seeing without a seer.[16]

Interpretative approaches to nishida's work

Palmer suggests that I have overlooked the different phases in Nishida's philosophy. This is certainly a valid criticism, which I addressed earlier in this article. In my view, the phases of Nishida's thought are tied together by the fact that throughout his life, he was attempting to address the same issue: how to articulate the way we experience the world when the

15. Nishida 1987, 113
16. NKZ 6: 95; Maraldo 2017, 348.

very nature of this world is itself experiencing. The subject is particularly challenging because if one is not careful, one risks drifting into a form of panpsychism in which the essence of the world is simply a form of communal awareness. No doubt there are many insights to be gained by placing, as Palmer suggests, more emphasis on the change of idiom in the various phases of Nishida's philosophy rather than focusing on the unity provided by a single problematic. However, I have tended to focus on the problematic because otherwise it is difficult to understand what Nishida meant.

Palmer also suggested that I examine Nishida's terminology in more depth. Specifically, she proposes paying more attention to the difference between *ware* and *jiko*, two different terms for the self. A close reading of Palmer's text indicates that this suggestion arises from her own interpretation of Nishida's philosophy, which is different from mine. On Palmer's interpretation, before our experience is divided into two poles—self and other—consciousness at a more fundamental level is essentially communal. She writes:

> This deeper self-awareness is not merely an individualistic consciousness but an awareness of one's place within the larger context of existence. Simultaneously, in this self-awareness, *jiko* acknowledges the perspective of the individual as well as that 'our self [*jiko*] does not have its origin in the individual...; rather, its origin is communal consciousness (共同意識)."

Later, she writes that "selves are individuals but are never separate; they are situated within a larger context of relationality, where the boundaries between self and other are fluid and permeable."

I am a bit hesitant to accept that Nishida's view is that fundamentally, we exist "within a larger context of relationality, where the boundaries between self and other are fluid and permeable." This suggests to me that concrete, actual relationality is primordial, or else that there is a lack of distinction between various possible objects, including me and you. In my view, what Nishida meant was that true reality is a context of *possible* relationships. His inspiration for this web of relationality seems to be the *dharmadhātu*—the Buddhist notion of the total field of all possibilities.[17] Here, each possible

17. See my forthcoming article in the *Journal of Japanese Philosophy*: "Nishida Kitarō, Arthur Schopenhauer, and the Metaphor of the Mirror."

thing exists in a relation to every other. However, these relationships are possible relationships, not actual ones. Indeed, as the actual world manifests itself, certain possible relationships between things must recede into the background as others become actuality.

On this interpretation, *basho* is the field in which the activity of manifesting and receding plays out: it is true reality understood as empty because it must allow for some possibilities to become actualities and others to become impossible (or remain unrealized possibilities). In this place, the self reflects itself within itself—the formlessness of *basho* takes concrete form. This is also described as the self reflecting itself within itself—the self awakening to itself—because concrete forms are nothing other than true reality (one's true self—reality in itself), understood as the total field of all possibilities, manifesting itself as actualized reality in a given form. It can also be described as self-awakening because this actualization of reality is a sort of awakening without a subject that does the awakening.[18]

Another aspect of Palmer's interpretation of Nishida seems to be that one should carefully distinguish between the self and *basho*: while it might be true to say that basho envelops the self, it is not true that one's true self is identical with *basho*. I am not quite sure what Palmer means by this, because awareness of oneself is simply the true reality awakening to itself. Perhaps what is meant is that *basho* is, like Plato's *chora*, the place where the activity of reality is taking place, and this is different than the self. If by "different" is meant that my experiences are the differentiation of true reality into the appearance of a self separate from others, then this is correct in my view. But if by "different" is meant that *basho* is a thing that envelops something separate from it, namely the self, then I think this misunderstands the relationship between *basho* and self. This is why in *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, Nishida writes

> The individual determines itself only in relation to other individuals. The idea of a unique self-detemining individual has no meaning. In order for the individual to determine itself there must first be what I have called the determination of a 'place' [*basho*], i.e., a unity of absolute contradictories.
>
> ...

18. For a helpful description of this process, see Minobe 2022 at 63.

> The self-determination of the individual over against other individuals does not merely mean that the individual transcends the determination of the universal, and does not mean mutual opposition, such as between two points. The individual always has the significance of being determined by the universal.[19]

What Nishida calls the "self-awakening" (*jikaku*) of true reality is simply the self-awakening of reality to itself. This is why Nishida writes that "place" (*basho*) is the place where the phenomena of consciousness are established (i.e., where actual experience is established). And experiencing is established because *basho* enables self and other to be opposed to each other.[20] To put this another way, creativity (the presenting of the object) and differentiation (this flower is red, that one is yellow) are two aspects of the same reality: that, in my view, is the insight that is captured in the logic of the predicate.

The relationship between phenomenology and hermeneutics

Shuttleworth raises an important point about Watsuji's method, which I described, as phenomenological. It would have been more precise to describe as a phenomenological hermeneutics along the lines of the philosophy of Heidegger. As I explained in the chapters of the book on Kuki, for Heidegger, understanding how humans experience the world requires investigating the way in which we always already seem to go about in the world as if it were meaningful.[21] When we investigate why this is so, we discover that the world is meaningful because humans are always in the process of experiencing it with an idea of who they are, be it a baker, a lawyer, a parent, a child, etc.[22]

Like Heidegger, in *Fūdo,* Watsuji is interested in demonstrating how our experience of the world (as hot, cold, humid, etc.) takes place in a context of meaning. The cold of the air is not experienced as a specific temperature or a particular physiological reaction, but rather it is experienced in a mean-

19. Nishida 1970, 6–7
20. NKZ 4: 208–9.
21. Mayeda 2020, 150
22. See for instance Heidegger 1996, 150, Heidegger 1923, 15–17.

ingful context: we stiffen ourselves against a cold wind, we sit nearer the brazier, or we change our clothes. Indeed, the forms that our clothing, shelter and food take are particular to our cultural context, and this cultural context develops in part in response to the natural environment in which we live. Thus the things that we do are meaningful in part because of a set of cultural meanings that develop in relationship to the natural environment that we share with others. Indeed, all of human cultural activity, including "literature, art, religion, and manners and customs" are climatic phenomena in this way.[23]

In *Ethics as the Study of Human Beings,* a text written in 1934, Watsuji was critical of phenomenology, instead preferring the hermeneutic method. His focus in that case was on identifying a suitable method for ethics. His criticism aims not so much at Heideggerian phenomenology, which as we have seen, is understood as the hermeneutics of facticity—the fact that humans, in their everyday life, already exist within an interpretation of the world around them. Rather, Watsuji focuses on the *epoché*—the "bracketing" of everyday life that is so essential to Husserl's method. Recall that this bracketing is necessary because in a pure phenomenological analysis, which focuses on our experiences alone, we cannot allow a belief—such as the belief in the existence of a perceptual object—to intrude on the analysis. Instead, we must "bracket" this belief and, adopting the phenomenological attitude, identify experiential markers that distinguish various modes of experience such as perception, dreaming and imagination.

Watsuji objects to this method because it would necessarily require bracketing the presupposition of intersubjectivity that is a part of the natural attitude—the understanding of our world within which we ordinarily function. The consequence of this is to prioritize the individual's experience, which would fail to capture precisely the phenomenon essential to Watsuji's ethics, namely, the intersubjectivity or human existence, which Watsuji calls *aidagara*. Watsuji sees a similar fault in Heidegger's phenomenology—his desire to uncover the phenomenological structures that make everyday interaction in the world meaningful dictates a method with at least some of the faults of Husserl's, since it, too, requires bracketing every-

23. WATSUJI 1988, 5–7.

day life and digging behind the assumptions of our usual way of going about in the world to uncover its phenomenological structures.

Ikeda Takashi discusses Watsuji's criticism of the Heideggerian phenomenological method expertly in "Ethics Can Only Be Hermeneutic and Not Phenomenological: A Critical Assessment of Watsuji Tetsurō's Thesis." I will not go into the details of Ikeda's discussion here, but in other works, I defended Heidegger against Watsuji's criticism by pointing out that Watsuji fails to see that the ontic-ontological difference could serve as a model for otherness and therefore of relationality in Heideggerian philosophy.[24] In Heideggerian philosophy, transcendence can never become completely immanent (the ontological is not reducible to the ontic)—as long as one is alive, one's understanding of oneself is oriented outside to one's possibilities. The ontic-ontological difference provides "a concept of the oppositional relation between two existents that cannot be reduced to a relation of understanding," i.e., that cannot be reduced to the understanding of an individual.[25] This is the kind of difference that is necessary to constitute the social dimension of Watsuji's philosophy.

It is perhaps understandable that Watsuji did not perceive the aspects of Heidegger's philosophy that permitted a richer understanding of the intersubjective nature of human existence. All that Watsuji had to go on at that time was *Being and Time*, which focused primarily on temporality, lacking the second half that was meant to discuss existential spatiality. Moreover, it was only in Heidegger's later philosophy that he truly grappled with the fact that to maintain otherness, the hermeneutic method must preserve a space for what cannot be completely understood by the individual. The concept of ἀλήθεια—unconcealment—that was the initial model for understanding in *Being and Time*, was eventually recognized by Heidegger to be a model for the limits of understanding. This is because the clearing that is opened through understanding has its boundaries—the clearing ends where the forest begins. Moreover, the process of disclosure must necessarily remain hidden if what is disclosed—the phenomenon—is to appear.[26] There is always some otherness that resists appropriation in a given interpretation.

24. Mayeda 2006, 119.
25. Mayeda 2006, 204.
26. See Figal 2020 185, 186.

Shuttleworth asks if Watsuji's criticism of phenomenology changes my characterization of his method in *Fūdo* as phenomenological. I think the answer to that is 'no'—because Heideggerian phenomenology is the hermeneutics of facticity—our experience is always inherently meaningful because the world in which we live for the most part is one that is familiar to us. And part of this meaningfulness is the cultural meanings handed down to us through history. Watsuji's great contribution to this approach is to point out that these meanings are developed as a result of a facet of human existence—its betweenness. Humans exist in relationships to other humans, and we all exist in relationship to our natural environment.

References

Abbreviation

NKZ 『西田幾多郎全集』[Complete works of Nishida Kitarō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1978–1980), 19 vols.

WTZ 『和辻哲郎全集』[Complete Works of Watsuji Tetsurō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961).

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