

# Subjectivity, *Rinrigaku*, and Moral Metaphysics

Watsuji Tetsurō and Mou Zongsan

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This paper attempts to explore the notions of “subjectivity” developed by Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960) and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) in line with their respective theories of *rinrigaku* 倫理学 (ethics) and moral metaphysics (*daodexingshangxue* 道德形上學). Instead of examining ethical standards—concepts of right or wrong, good or bad for instance—these two contemporary philosophers stress that “subjectivity” is the fundamental element of ethics. Having been baptized in both Western philosophy and their own respective intellectual traditions, Watsuji and Mou did not confine themselves merely to what was given to them philosophically, but sought to produce philosophies of their own making; *rinrigaku* and moral metaphysics represent their “unique systems.”

By advocating ideas like communality (*zentai sei* 全体性), the individual (*kojin* 個人) and betweenness (*aidagara* 間柄), Watsuji makes the focus of his concern the existence of human beings (*ningen sonzai* 人間存在),

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an area that does not closely relate to metaphysics, whereas Mou stresses the indivisibility between Heaven (*Tian* 天) and morality (*daode* 道德) with his theory of moral metaphysics. The former basically (though not completely) follows the philosophical approach of Heidegger, whereas the latter heavily relies on Kantian moral philosophy, seen through a pair of Confucian glasses. The relationship between the two different philosophical approaches to ethics/morality and the notion of “subjectivity” is where the concern of this paper lies. In contrast to the broad and in-depth comparative research already undertaken on the Kyoto School and Western philosophy, it moves to uncover a philosophical dialogue taking place in the East, between two profound philosophical schools: the Kyoto School and New Confucianism.

### WHY WATSUJI AND MOU?

Of course, it is an open question whether or not Watsuji can be considered one of the “members” of the Kyoto School. Apart from the six criteria from the so-called “Western” perspective, suggested by John Maraldo,<sup>1</sup> there are basically two camps regarding what constitutes membership in the “Kyoto School.” One party claims that whenever the term “school” is used, it must point to a shared area of concern. As Ōhashi Ryōsuke repeatedly argues, “nothingness,” “absolute nothingness,” “emptiness” (*kū* 空), and “place” (*basho* 場所) are the themes common to the group of scholars properly identified as the Kyoto School. If it is confined to a group of disciples of Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime, it is more proper to identify it as “Kyoto philosophy” rather than as a “school” (see Ōhashi 1990, preface; 1995, 158–60; 2001, 12–13;

1. Maraldo argues that there are six criteria for defining the membership of the Kyoto School: their relationship with Nishida Kitarō; their connection with Kyoto University; their posture toward Japanese and Asian thought; their engagement with the question of the future of the race, including questions around Marxism, the ethnic nation, and the Pacific War; their posture toward Buddhism and religion in general; and their stance on Absolute Nothingness (MARALDO 2001). Maraldo says that these six criteria unveil the “ambiguous set” (*aimaina shūgō* 曖昧な集合) of the Kyoto School.

2004, 5–10).<sup>2</sup> The other party, as represented by Fujita Masakatsu and Takeda Atsushi for instance, holds that it is not a must for the philosophers of the Kyoto School to share a common theme, but that the appellation refers rather to an intellectual network centering around Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime (FUJITA 2001, i–iv and 234–37; FUJITA 2007, 182–84). The former camp does not count Watsuji in as the member of the Kyoto School, whereas the latter seems relatively liberal in its definition (though Watsuji is not in fact included in Fujita’s *Kyōtōgakuha no tetsugaku* 京都学派の哲学 [The Philosophy of the Kyoto School, 2001]). For my part, questions remain around the definition of phrases like “absolute nothingness” and “intellectual network.” Should Watsuji’s idea of an “absolute emptiness” (*zettai kū* 絶対空) that undergoes the activity of negation of negation (*hitei no hitei* 否定の否定) be considered as another form of “absolute nothingness”? Should the intellectual and personal interactions between Watsuji and Nishida be considered as signs of an “intellectual network”? If so, there would seem to be no sufficient reason for expelling Watsuji from the “school,” classifying him as an outsider to the Kyoto School or understanding him as doing only “Kyoto Philosophy.” Instead of continuing this debate over the boundaries of the “Kyoto School,” I am inclined to agree with James Heisig’s conclusion that it “was hardly a ‘school’ in any ordinary sense of the term, but rather the kind of spontaneous academic vitality that so often emerges around great thinkers” (HEISIG 2001, 5). Whether or not Watsuji should be considered as a member of the Kyoto School proper, he is one of the “great thinkers” who demonstrates a kind of “academic vitality.”

As for Mou, the debate does not revolve around his identity as a “New Confucian” but rather to which generation of New Confucianism he belongs. Zheng Jiadong suggests that Mou should be considered as the third generation (ZHENG 1990, 14–16), whereas Liu Shu-Hsien proposes he belongs to the second generation (LIU 2004, 137; 2007, 92). Like the Kyoto School, New Confucianism carries the hope of establishing a new and unique philosophical system, in contrast to Western philoso-

2. Ng Yu-kwan shares his idea, saying that “absolute nothingness” should be considered the common theme unifying the Kyoto School (NG 1995A, 1995B, and 1998).

phy. What makes the two different is that while the former seems not to take on the responsibility—or even burden—of “reviving” a particular intellectual tradition (although of course it does not deny Japanese traditions or Asian traditions more generally either), New Confucianism does take the “revival” of Confucianism, through dialogue and confrontation with Western philosophy, as its mission. As Zheng Jiadong points out, New Confucianism is a successor to both Classical Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in terms of the idea of “inner sage, external king” (*neishengwaimawang* 内聖外王); all three insist that from the ethical side, “inner sage” is their fundamental belief, and from the political side “external king” is their ideal. Unlike Classical Confucianism—exemplified by Confucius and Mencius, and the attempt to revive Zhou laws of etiquette and music (*liyuefagui* 礼樂法規)—and Neo-Confucianism—oriented around a Song-Ming effort to purge Confucianism of Buddhist influence—New Confucianism is considered “New” insofar as it adopts certain Western philosophical ideas in providing a metaphysical ground for the ethical ideal and state of life (*daodelixiang he renshengjingjie* 道德理想和人生境界) (ZHENG 1990, 7–9). By tracing the background for the emergence of contemporary New Confucianism, Liu argues that “in comparison to the Western culture, it [Chinese culture] does not develop adequately the political subject, the knowing subject, and the technical subject.... The Confucian tradition should never be misunderstood to teach only a secular ethics; in fact, the ideal of Heaven and Humanity in union (*T'ien-jen-ho-i* 天人合一) certainly has a transcendent aspect and hence religious import” (LIU 2003, 36).<sup>3</sup>

As such, we come to understand the importance of comparing Watsuji and Mou, especially in the context of ethics/morality. First, both Watsuji and Mou intend to innovate “new” philosophical systems, namely, *rinrigaku* and moral metaphysics, in keeping with the convictions of the founding members of the Kyoto School and New Confucianism. Second, both Watsuji and Mou intend to establish a new “ground” for ethics/morality in line with their own traditions. For example, Watsuji’s

3. This is an interpretation of “A Manifesto for a Reappraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture,” signed by Carsun Chang 張君勱, Tang Chun-I 唐君毅, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 and Hsu Fu-kuan 徐復觀.

philosophical interpretation of *ningen* 人間 embraces not only Japanese but also Chinese traditional thought, and Mou's moral metaphysics does not rely solely on the moral philosophy of Kant, but also on the idea of *Tian*. Third, both Watsuji and Mou focus on “subjectivity” in the course of developing their theories of *rinrigaku* and moral metaphysics. For Watsuji, *rinri* is defined as “the study of practical acting subjects” (*jissentekinaru shutai no gaku* 実践的なる主体の学) (WATSUJI 2007, 198), while Mou insists on a “moral consciousness with greater importance attached to subjectivity” (MOU 1997, 76). As such, there is ample reason to compare these two representatives of the Kyoto School and New Confucianism.

### WHY SUBJECTIVITY?

In the eyes of Watsuji and Mou, ethics/morality is not confined to a study of bad or wrong, good or evil, but must be rather a study of the subject. Watsuji not only defines *rinrigaku* as “the study of practical subjects,” but also holds that it is a study of the “matters arising between person and person”:

The locus of ethical problems lies not in the consciousness of the isolated individual, but precisely in the in-between of person and person. Because of this ethics is the study of *ningen*. Unless we regard ethics as dealing with matters arising between person and person, we cannot authentically solve such problems as distinguishing of good from evil deeds, obligation, responsibility, virtue and so forth. (WATSUJI 1996, 10)

By defining ethics as the study of *ningen* (*ningen no gaku* 人間の学), not only does Watsuji prioritize the “in-between of person and person” (*aidagara* 間柄) in contrast to the individual, he also gives precedence to *ningen* over good and evil, virtue and so on. As John Maraldo notes, “In Watsuji, ethics replaces ontology as first philosophy, and the ordered realm of the interpersonal replaces the authenticity of the singular person” (MARALDO 2002, 79).

The idea of “in between” is without doubt one of the main contributions that Watsuji makes—regardless of whether it is unique or not—to

the study of ethics. We should not overlook, however, the “persons” or “subjects” that lie “in between”, especially their relation to acts, in talking about ethics. As Watsuji himself writes,

Human relations... are *act-connections* between person and person like *communication* or *association*, in which persons as subjects concern themselves with each other. We cannot sustain ourselves in any *aida* or *naka* without acting subjectively. At the same time, we cannot act without maintaining ourselves in some *aida* or *naka*. For this reason, *aida* or *naka* imply a living and dynamic betweenness, as a subjective interconnection of acts. (WATSUJI 1996, 18)

Watsuji believes that subjectivity is the object of inquiry that determines the method of ethics:

By the way, our question was “what is ethics?”... Questioning belongs to the *sonzai* of *ningen*.... What is sought here is *ningen*, the *sonzai* of *ningen*, which is from beginning to end a practical acting subject, as well as subjective interconnections.... This means that the subjectivity of what is inquired into here is the second point that determines the method of ethics. This issue must be assessed from two sides: one, the “subjectivity” of the object of inquiry; two, that this subject is *ningen*. (WATSUJI 1996, 31–32)

For Mou too, subjectivity is primary—he holds that it should be considered the key element of Confucianism, as well as of Chinese philosophy in general. He contends that, in contrast to the overwhelming emphasis Western philosophy places on “objective knowledge,” Chinese philosophy concerns itself with subjectivity (*zhitixing* 主體性) and inner morality (*neizaidaoxing* 內在道德性).

Chinese philosophy emphasizes “subjectivity” and “inner morality.” The three main streams of Chinese thought—Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—all emphasize subjectivity, though only Confucianism, the mainstream of the three, gives a particular definition of “inner morality,” that is as moral subjectivity [*daodezhitixing* 道德主體性]. In contrast, Western philosophy does not pay attention to subjectivity as much as to objectivity. Its focus and development mainly have to do with knowledge. (MOU 1998, 5–6)

Undoubtedly, extensive and critical study is needed before we draw Chinese and Western philosophy into such a dichotomy. This is not the place, however, to judge Mou's analysis. "Subjectivity" is unquestionably his own top priority in examining Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism. Similar to Watsuji, Mou also stresses the importance of "interhuman" relationships in the study of subjectivity, although he does not confine them to the framework of *ningen sonzai*. Mou believes that the subject (*zhuti* 主體) of practice exists in relation to both matter (*shi* 事) and Heaven as well.

Chinese philosophy emphasizes practice.... The primordial meaning of philosophy is intellect [*mingzhi* 明智]. When intellect is made moral [*dexinghua* 德性化] and personal [*rengexhua* 人格化], it becomes that of the sage [*sheng* 聖].... The sage king [*shengwang* 聖王] finds in practice that his process is the activity of politics. Such activity comes from the self [*ziji* 自己] that is in relation with human beings, matter and Heaven. The success of politics, therefore, depends on the subject's rational [*heli* 合理] and harmonious [*tiaohe* 調和] relationships with others [*waijieren* 外界人], with matter and with Heaven. (MOU 1998, 15)

We now may understand why this short essay attempts to explore the meaning and significance of subjectivity. First, subjectivity plays the key role in the ethical/moral philosophical systems of Watsuji and Mou; second, it helps to unveil the differences between the philosophical approaches that Watsuji and Mou employ. In declaring that there should be one more agenda for the study of the Kyoto School, not only do we intend to compare it with another Eastern philosophical tradition—that is, New Confucianism—but also to attempt to elucidate the different philosophical approaches embedded in *rinrigaku* and moral metaphysics.

#### SUBJECT/SUBJECTIVITY: *NINGEN* AND THE SELF

As mentioned above, Watsuji defines *rinrigaku* as *ningen no gaku* 人間の学 (the study of *ningen*); *ningen* here refers to the interhuman or communal rather than the individual. *Rinri*, therefore, should

be conceived of as the “subjective interconnections” of *ningen*, that is, of practical acting subjects. And again, as above, according to Watsuji, subjectivity determines the method of ethics, that it “must be assessed from two sides: one, the ‘subjectivity’ of the object of inquiry; two, that this subject is *ningen*” (WATSUJI 1996, 32).

With respect to the method of ethics then, not only should subjectivity be considered as the “object of inquiry,” but so too should the “subject” of *ningen*. As indicated in the preface to *Ningen no gaku toshite no rinrigaku* 人間の学としての倫理学 [Ethics as the Study of *Ningen*, 1934], Watsuji’s objective is not to provide a systematic narration of *rinrigaku*, but only to address its meaning and method (WATSUJI 2007, 5). Watsuji believes that *ningen* must be grasped as a practical acting subject (*jissen-teki shutai* 実践的主体) (WATSUJI 2007, 191), as which it should neither be a contemplative subject (*kanshōteki shutai* 観照的主体) nor a contemplative object (*kanshōtekikyakutai* 観照的客体). “Subjectivity” must be assessed as the subject of *ningen*, as “*ningen* is embedded in we ourselves in a particular *aidagara*” (WATSUJI 2007, 190).

Like Watsuji, Mou also perceives the “subject” as embracing a relationship between human beings (*ren* 人), though not embedded in *aidagara*. For Mou, to be a subject indeed entails being in relationship with human beings, but also with matter and Heaven. Mou argues that there must be an ontological ground for human beings as subjects. Although it is not very clear whether Mou distinguishes the duality of subjectivity and objectivity from the contemplative perspective, for Mou the subject is definitely not limited to the existential level that Watsuji stresses, that is, to the facts of daily life (*nichijōteki jijitsu* 日常の事実).

Another difference between Watsuji and Mou is their understanding of the relationship between the communal and the individual. Watsuji emphasizes that there is a kind of dialectic relationship between the two, in which the communal takes priority over the individual:

In the continuous production of individual, it is absorbed by the communal.... *Ningen sonzai* should not be stopped at the activity of negation between the individual and communal, but rather revive the communal through the uncountable individuals in contrast to the division of self and others. (WATSUJI 2007, 35–42)

According to Mine Hideki, Watsuji does not provide a very clear picture of why precedence should be given to the communal over the individual. Mine questions why it is necessary to base the communal on the negation of individual, and why the activity of negation arises (MINE 2002, 80). Watsuji's disdain for the individual, as against the communal, on the level of object theory (*taishōronri* 対象論理) is much more obvious than Nishida Kitarō's, despite the criticism that has fallen upon the latter (MINE 2002, 68).

As for Mou, it seems that he does not concern himself much with the relationship between the communal and the individual. The interpretation of *rinri*, or *lunli*, in the context of five cardinal relationships (*wuchang*, *gojō* 五常) is different for Watsuji and Mou. For Watsuji, *jō* (常) refers to the five orders of *ningen kyōdōtai* 人間共同体 (community of human beings) found in the *aidagara* of father and son, ruler and subject, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend. For Mou, however, it refers not to the *aidagara* but to the situational difference embedded within the five relationships (MOU 1998, 34).

What then produces these different manifestations of benevolence? Mou emphasizes that it is Heaven that determines what is benevolent. Unlike Kantian philosophy, Confucianism does not merely stress the matter of “ought” and deny the ontological problem in view of morality. Although the idea of Heaven is not stressed by Confucius, this does not mean that it is disregarded. Mou argues that “it is Heaven that takes the responsibility of ontology, in which Confucius's benevolence and Mencius's nature [*xing* 性] are interlinked [*xiangtong* 相通] with Heaven and become united into one” (MOU 1997, 76).

In brief, Watsuji's definition of *rinrigaku* as the study of *ningen* indicates the existential orientation of *ningen*, especially the interconnections of practical acting subjects within *aidagara*, whereas Mou insists that there must be a metaphysical ground for determining the enacting of benevolence or nature. The difference between Watsuji's *rinrigaku* and Mou's moral metaphysics rests in the difference of their philosophical approaches—that is to say, Watsuji's Heideggerian approach as against Mou's Kantian approach. But why and how do Watsuji and Mou come up with these two different philosophical approaches? In what way do they relate to Watsuji's *rinrigaku* and Mou's moral metaphysics? What

significance do the two philosophical approaches have in terms of the contemporary Sino-Japanese philosophical interchange around ethics/morality?

### SUBJECTIVITY AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES

Flipping through the writings of Watsuji, especially those related to *rinrigaku*, it is not difficult to find the shadow of Heidegger. Watsuji himself explicitly admits that there are many things to learn from Heidegger in the examination of *rinrigaku* (WATSUJI 2007, 182, 191, 218). Of course, Watsuji does direct considerable criticism toward Heidegger—see for example, his criticism in *Fūdo* 風土 [Climate] of Heidegger’s overemphasis on time and neglect of space (WATSUJI 2004, 3–4). Watsuji’s concern for *ningen sonzai*, however, clearly demonstrates how influential Heideggerian agendas like that of *Sein und Dasein* are for *rinrigaku*. For Mou, on the other hand, it is widely known that Kantian philosophy played an important role for him in establishing his philosophical system, for moral metaphysics, though at the same time his criticisms of Kant’s moral philosophy should not be overlooked.

Emphasizing *rinrigaku* as the interconnection of the acts of practical acting subjects, Watsuji criticizes Kant for overstressing the “immediate consciousness in the individual” by overlooking its “ground of a definite betweenness”:

Kant took his departure from the facts of immediate consciousness in the individual, and inquired into the self-determination of the subject practically disclosed in these facts. But the practical interconnection of acts includes the mutual understanding of subjects on a deeper level than is the case with the consciousness of obligation of the individual. On the basis of these subjective connections, obligatory consciousness arises. And what is more, it arises on the ground of a definite betweenness; that is, on this basis, the relations of social ethics are established in the form of self-realization as a way of acting within this betweenness. (WATSUJI 1996, 33)

Considering *rinrigaku* as “a way of acting within this [subjective]

betweenness,” Watsuji is dissatisfied with Kant’s giving precedence to the individual instead of to the communal, or to be more precise, to the subjective connections between individuals. The subject that acts within betweenness should not be conceived of as indicating a duality between self and others, but on the contrary, as revealing the non-duality of self and others that form that betweenness. Watsuji states,

I think that all attempts to deal with ethics from the angle of analyzing individual consciousness are unfit, for ethics is the study of the subject conceived of as the practical interconnection of acts. An act is not something constructed out of various activities of the individual consciousness but the movement itself in which subjects, although splitting into self and other, combine in a nonduality of self and other to form a betweenness. (WATSUJI 1996, 34)

Prioritizing the communal over the individual, Watsuji employs the hermeneutic method of Heidegger, claiming that the communal *sonzai* can only be understood through the “expression” (*hyōgen* 表現) of the subjective *sonzai* of *ningen* (*ningen no shutaitekina sonzai* 人間の主体的な存在). From the theoretical point of view (*gaku no tachiba* 学の立場), *ningen sonzai* is a problem of understanding the expression of daily life. In order to obtain objectivity of understanding, we must look to the method of hermeneutic, in which it should be taken as a question of *Sein* rather than *Seiendes*. In other words, Heidegger does not follow a Husserlian phenomenology that emphasizes *Seiendes*, but rather holds that *Seiendes* can only be understood through its everyday expression as *ningen sonzai*.

Phenomena... are the expression of *ningen sonzai*. It is... *ningen sonzai* that is in question.... The existence of subjective *ningen* can only be established through its expression. On top of that, we must first grasp its expression and understand its existence through the interpretation it undertakes. (WATSUJI 2007, 255–58)

Instead of tracing the metaphysical ground of *ningen sonzai*, as seen in Mou’s metaphysics, Watsuji repeatedly says that we must go back to the “everyday expression of the subject” in order to grasp the dynamic structure of *ningen sonzai*:

Thus, the hermeneutic method as the method of ethics, consists in grasping the dynamic structure of *ningen's sonzai* through its most basic everyday expression... the effort to deal with everyday facts as expressions of the subjective constitutes the most important aspect of this method. (WATSUJI 1996, 43–44)

Mou emphasizes, however, that there must be a metaphysical ground—that is, Heaven—for morality, instead of confining it to an everyday expression of subject and its interpretation. By borrowing Kantian moral philosophy, Mou emphasizes that the highest virtue (*zuigaoshan* 最高善) is the necessary object (*birandeduixiang* 必然的對象) of practical reason in Kant, for whom it must refer to the existence of God. Although this sounds quite similar to the Confucian understanding that morality must somewhat relate to a kind of metaphysical ground, Mou criticizes Kantian moral philosophy for emphasizing morality rather than metaphysics, holding that therefore it can be only considered as a kind of metaphysics of morals (*daodedixingshangxue* 道德底形上學). The word “metaphysics” in Kant refers to “metaphysical exposition” rather than to the question of being or ontology. (MOU 1997, 76). Unlike Kant, Mou does not simply correlate morality with God and form a kind of moral theology (*daodedishenxue* 道德的神學), as he believes Confucianism does not concern itself with the theology that religion normally embodies.

In the eyes of Mou then, Kant is only concerned with moral theology and not moral metaphysics. Moral is an adjective in the phrases moral metaphysics and moral theology, meaning that they reveal a morality grounded in metaphysics or religion. “As it is not a religion, Confucianism does not posit a moral theology but a moral metaphysics. In Confucianism, Heaven takes responsibility for existence, in which Confucius’s benevolence and Mencius’s nature [性] are interlinked [相通] with Heaven and become united into one.... The Confucian metaphysics of morals definitely embraces a moral metaphysics” (MOU 1997, 76).

Mou’s insistence on having a “metaphysical ground” for morality is somewhat related to his analysis of the Confucian “subject.” Mou believes that “the emphasis of Confucius is benevolence, in which it correlates to subject. And the strength of moral consciousness concerns the subject” (MOU 1997, 77). For Mou, benevolence represents a sub-

ject, which can also be considered as reason (*li* 理) and the way (*dao* 道) (MOU 1997, 79). The Confucian subject is not confined to mere subjectivity, but also refers to objectivity, that is, the “metaphysical” ground of morality.

Again, the question of whether or not Mou’s understanding of Kant is convincing is outside the scope of this paper. My question is rather why does Mou want to insist on the metaphysical ground for Confucian morality but not ask the question of *Sein* that Watsuji highlights, and vice versa? What messages do the two different philosophical approaches have for the study of ethics/morality in the context of contemporary Chinese and Japanese philosophy?

For my part, I would propose that philosophy never goes beyond history, regardless of its concern for universality. As indicated in *Fūdo*, Watsuji had been highly influenced by Heidegger, since his days in Germany. It would be hard to imagine Heidegger having had such an influence if Watsuji had not had that first-hand experience. Of course, Heidegger was not Watsuji’s only dialogical partner: we also see in his work the influence of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Hermann Cohen and so on. Nonetheless, Heidegger remains the most influential figure. Unlike Mou, although Watsuji does undertake the study of traditional Chinese and Japanese thought, including Confucianism and Buddhism, his concern is not with reviving this tradition in the face of Western philosophy; rather, his philosophical agenda is to develop a kind of “universal” *rinrigaku* that goes beyond both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. Mou, however—as clearly seen in the “Manifesto for a Reappraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture”—is dedicated to the revival of Chinese philosophy, Confucianism in particular, in the face of the invasion of Western learning and philosophy in the early twentieth century. Unlike Watsuji, Mou had not gone abroad for any formal and first-hand training in Western philosophy, and the historical situation of China partly served as a factor leading Mou to take on the responsibility of reviving Confucianism. His reliance on Kant, therefore, is definitely not coincidental, but rather indicates Kant’s philosophical intimacy with the “moral metaphysics” of Confucianism.

SUBJECTIVITY, *RINRIGAKU* AND MORAL METAPHYSICS

We can say by way of conclusion that subject or subjectivity plays a key role in both Watsuji's *rinrigaku* and Mou's moral metaphysics. Both emphasize that it is the subject that underlies ethical/moral deeds. Mou even suggests that Chinese philosophy takes subjectivity as its particular concern, rather than the intellect that is the basic focus of Western philosophy. What distinguishes the two contemporary philosophers are first, that Watsuji puts his emphasis on the "betweenness" of subjects, whereas Mou is inclined to conceive the individual in relation to others, matter, and Heaven; and second, that Watsuji's *rinrigaku* heavily relies on Heideggerian philosophy, including his concern for *Sein* instead of *Seiendes* in his definition of *rinrigaku* as *ningen sonzai* while Mou borrows Kantian moral philosophy in strengthening his philosophical project of reviving Confucian moral metaphysics, arguing that there must be a metaphysical ground for morality—i.e., Heaven. Of course, questions remain whether these interpretations of Heidegger and Kant are persuasive.

A final significant distinction lies in their different understandings of *gaku* 学 or *xue* 學. As twice noted above, Watsuji defines *rinrigaku* as *ningen no gaku* 人間の学; the *gaku* here may refer to a kind of study (*manabu koto* 学ぶこと) that constitutes a relation of giving and receiving. It does not necessarily correlate to the metaphysics that Mou's moral metaphysics denotes. As we have seen Maraldo points out, in Watsuji, "ethics replaces ontology as first philosophy, and the ordered realm of the interpersonal replaces the authenticity of the singular person" (MARALDO 2002, 80). By contrast, Mou emphasizes that Chinese philosophy—including Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—is about "the study of life" (*shengmingdixuewen* 生命的學問), its focus the study of mind and nature (*xinxingzhixue* 心性之學), in which neither mind nor nature can be detached from Heaven, which is the metaphysical ground of morality. In the face of the question of modernity that was embedded in the historical and philosophical situations of Japan and China in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Watsuji and Mou's different understandings of study reminds us of the importance of putting one more agenda on the table as we examine the Kyoto School—putting

it into dialogue with New Confucianism indicates the richness of philosophical dialogue within as well as without the traditions of the East.

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