

Shedding Dōgen's Light on Betweenness

What Watsuji Tetsurō's Interpretation of the
Shōbōgenzō Can Teach Us about His *Ethics*

Graham MAYEDA

Little has been written in English on the relationship between Watsuji Tetsurō's (1889–1960) earlier writings such as his book on the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen, Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253, and Watsuji's more famous later work, *Ethics* (*Rinrigaku*,¹ 『倫理学』). A comparison can nonetheless provide a useful perspective on Watsuji's *Rinrigaku*, as some of the schemas that he uses in the three volumes that comprise the work are outlined in the earlier text. These include: the dialectical relationship between self and other, emptiness as a transcendental condition of this dialectic, the spatial and temporal nature of human existence, and the relationship between culture (the concrete) and ethics (the ideal). This comparative perspective is an alternative to that adopted by other Watsuji scholars, who

1. Originally published in three separate volumes in 1937, 1942, and 1949. Reprinted in WTZ, vols. 10–11. Partially translated by Yamamoto and Carter in WATSUJI, 1996.

have rejected a link to Buddhist thought: Robert Carter and David Dilworth have instead pointed out the relationship between Confucianism and Watsuji's concept of *aidagara* (あいだがら),² while Sakabe Megumi has emphasized the Hegelian influences.³ However, when one reads Watsuji's *Shamon Dōgen*⁴ (『沙門道元』) and *Rinrigaku* back-to-back, similarities emerge that link Watsuji's ethics and Buddhism.⁵ Looking at *Rinrigaku* from the perspective of Watsuji's *Shamon Dōgen* is not intended to provide a new interpretative approach to Watsuji's ethics as a whole—rather, my aim is simply to foreground aspects of the text that may not have received adequate treatment by previous interpreters.

The relationship between *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku* may not have been fully explored in the English-language literature in part because of the influence of early interpreters of Watsuji. For instance, in “Watsuji Tetsurō: Cultural Phenomenologist and Ethician,” David Dilworth divides Watsuji's work into an early existentialist and individualist phase and a later phase in which Watsuji favoured an ethics based on the rejection of the self.⁶ In that essay, Dilworth attributes this shift to the influence of Natsume Sōseki (夏目漱石, 1867–1916), who was an inspiration for Watsuji;⁷ he noted how the shift in the novelist's books from individualism to a humanism that emphasized the

2. CARTER 2013, 138–40. See also MAYEDA 2006 and DILWORTH 1974, 3.

3. SAKABE 1988, 163.

4. *Shamon Dōgen* appeared as a series of essays that were eventually published together in 1926. Reprinted in WTZ 4: 156–246.

5. While the link between Watsuji philosophy and Buddhism has not been fully explored, it has been noticed by others. For instance, Sakabe discusses Buddhist strands in Watsuji's thinking, which he attributes to the influence of Nishida (1988, 162). In particular, Sakabe discusses the role of the concept of self-awakening (自覚) in Watsuji's 『人格と人類性』 [Personhood and human nature, 1938], 60–2. KŌSAKA Masaaki (1964, 101ff) also discusses Watsuji's ongoing interest in religion and the role that emptiness plays in religious philosophy.

6. DILWORTH 1974, 3. DILWORTH, VIGLIELMO, and JACINTO later break his work into four phases (1998), 223–6.

7. DILWORTH 1974, 7–10.

relationship between persons (*aidagara*, 間柄) was mirrored in Watsuji's philosophy. Dilworth writes:

When Watsuji later took the position in his *Rinrigaku* that *rinri* (ethics) had lost its original meaning in the modern world and had degenerated into *kojin dōtoku* (個人道徳), the ethics of isolated individuals, he was simply repossessing Sōseki's view in philosophical language.⁸

Dilworth's authoritative interpretation of Watsuji has perhaps made it difficult for later scholars to see a link between the Japanese philosopher's earlier work and his later ethics.

Dilworth also noted that Watsuji was not influenced by Buddhism in the same way as other Kyoto School thinkers. He acknowledges that Watsuji's concept of absolute negation (絶対的否定性)⁹ and his use of the term "emptiness" (空) evoked Buddhist terminology; however, he concludes that Watsuji's ethics was based more on Confucianism, *bushidō* (武士道), and Japanese notions of family and the importance of selflessness. He writes:

Watsuji's dialectic of absolute negation ending with explicit references to the ground of *emptiness* (*kū*, *śūnyatā*) and what he called "selfless emotion" of the Japanese spirit, indeed, remind us of central Buddhist ideas. But at the same time it should be stressed that Watsuji's position was not essentially a Buddhistic or religious one such as worked out in the Kyoto school. It was primarily his own original ethical position phenomenologically and existentially grounded in the *aidagara* intentionality of climatic-historical intersubjectivity. Watsuji, like Sōseki in his Way of *sokuten kyōshi*, seems to have refused, at least philosophically and methodologically, to embrace the solution of religion. His stress on such essentially Confucian values as the five relationships (*rin*), on trust (*shinrai*) and truth or sincerity (*shinjitsu*)—as well as on the unselfish love of the "heavenly true heart" (*tenshin na magokoro*) of Motoori Norinaga, on the Japanese emperor system, on the value system of *bushidō*, on the ethical intentionalities embodied in the Japanese house-

8. Ibid., 10.

9. For instance, see WATSUJI 1996, 117–18; WTZ 10: 124.

hold (family) and house and garden complex itself, and so forth—bear witness to this point.¹⁰

William Lafleur took a different view of the influence of Buddhism in Watsuji's writing. In an article that is in part a response to Dilworth's, Lafleur writes that "the Buddhist notion of *sūnyatā* or emptiness is the kingpin of [Watsuji's] thought, something without which it would make no sense and have no value."¹¹ Lafleur goes on to remark that the centrality of a Buddhist concept of emptiness in Watsuji's philosophy indicates that he did in fact embrace "a solution of religion."¹² However, Lafleur emphasized that Watsuji's approach to religion was profoundly different from that of Nishida and other Kyoto School thinkers. In this regard, he drew on an observation by Kōsaka Masaaki in the latter's book on Nishida and Watsuji that each philosopher had a different idea of what constituted religion: while for Watsuji religion was a cultural artifact, for Nishida, it was not.¹³

Dilworth and Lafleur's work in the 1970s does not exhaust all of the possible relationships between Watsuji's work on Dōgen and *Rinrigaku*. While Dilworth is no doubt right to note that Watsuji's work is truly philosophical and not religious in the sense that it was not inspired by personal religious experience in the same way that Nishida's philosophy was, this does not preclude a strong influence of Buddhism on Watsuji's *Rinrigaku*. However, I would specify that by "Buddhist influence," I mean that Watsuji was inspired by what he read and understood of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* (正法眼藏) and *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* (正法眼藏隨聞記); but this inspiration does not necessarily make Watsuji's philosophy *religious* philosophy. Indeed, as Watsuji

10. DILWORTH 1974, 17.

11. LAFLEUR 1978, 237, 238.

12. *Ibid.*, 239.

13. KŌSAKA'S analysis (1964, 109–10) is discussed in LAFLEUR 1978, 239–40. Kōsaka writes, "Watsuji included the study of religion as he did [the study of art] within the sphere of culture [文化]; in contrast, Nishida did not consider religion to be [solely] a cultural phenomenon."

carefully points out in *Shamon Dōgen*, the famous Zen teacher emphasized the importance of practising Zen, not thinking about it, while Watsuji does the opposite: he adopts a philosophical standpoint and approaches Dōgen's work in a purely intellectual fashion using what he calls a "logical" (論理的) approach.¹⁴

While I wish to explore similarities in the schemas introduced in *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku*, I am not aligning myself with Lafleur's interpretation of Watsuji, which presupposes that Watsuji adopted a "religious solution" in his ethics. In my view, such a presupposition leads to a strained interpretation of *Rinrigaku*. For example, even when reading Watsuji's discussion of the Confucian five relationships in *Rinrigaku*, Lafleur interprets this clear Confucian reference in terms of the influence of a Buddhist notion of emptiness derived from Nāgārjuna's explication of mutuality and codependent origination.¹⁵ Noting the centrality of the dialectical relationship of negation between the individual and the social in *Rinrigaku*, Lafleur goes on to conclude that this dialectic, derived from Buddhist concepts of mutuality, places Buddhism at the core of Watsuji's ethics.¹⁶ This unwarranted interposition of Buddhism into the dialectic of *Rinrigaku* unduly emphasizes the importance of Buddhism in Watsuji's thought at the expense of other influences.

While I suggest using Watsuji's work on *Shamon Dōgen* as a lens through which to read and interpret *Rinrigaku*, I do not go so far as Lafleur in considering Buddhism to be central to the later work. Instead, I propose to take a more straightforward approach to comparing Watsuji's exploration of Dōgen and his later *Rinrigaku*: rather than interpreting *Shamon Dōgen* through an orthodox Buddhist or Zen lens as Lafleur did in his interpretation of Watsuji's notion of emptiness in *Rinrigaku*, I instead propose to look for similarities between

14. WATSUJI 2011, 25–6; WTZ 4: 156–7.

15. LAFLEUR 1978, 244–50.

16. *Ibid.*, 250.

Watsuji's ideas as expressed in *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku* without drawing on Buddhist ideas outside of the two texts to interpret them. Indeed, I think this approach is most consistent with Watsuji's approach to Dōgen's texts in *Shamon Dōgen*, where he denied having any experience of the practice of Zen, and so confined himself to a philosophical instead of religious interpretation of the texts.¹⁷ I hope that this approach, which deals straightforwardly and directly with the continuity within Watsuji's thought throughout his life and not with its relationship to the thought of others, can provide an interesting angle from which to view Watsuji's ethics.

In the following sections, I outline some of my initial observations about similarities between Watsuji's text on Dōgen and *Rinrigaku*. These are:

1. His *exposition of the relational nature of human existence*. This can be seen in both *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku* through a back-to-back reading of Watsuji's discussion of the heart-to-heart (mind-to-mind, 以心伝心)¹⁸ transmission in *Shamon Dōgen*, in which he explains how the Dharma is transmitted *through the relationship between student and teacher*, and his articulation of human existence (*ningen sonzai* 人間存在) as betweenness (*aidagara*) in *Rinrigaku*.
2. The *conceptualization of emptiness as a transcendental precondition*. Watsuji's treatment of emptiness in *Rinrigaku* and *Shamon Dōgen* is similar in so far as it is a transcendental interpretation that makes emptiness a condition for the possibility of a dynamic dialectical rela-

17. WATSUJI 2011, 27–30; WTZ 4: 158–162. In these pages, Watsuji does not specifically characterize his approach as philosophical. Instead, he emphasizes that he takes a “layman’s” approach (2011, 27; WTZ 158); Watsuji doesn’t actually use the term “layman,” but instead speaks of studying Zen “outside the gates” [of the temple] (門外), and that his approach to religion is to consider it a particularized form of human cultural history (2011, 30; in the Japanese, he writes, 「また自分が文化史的理解のために道元を使おうとすることも、人類の歴史のうちに真理への道を探ろうとするものにとっては、当然のことではなくてはならぬ。あらゆる既成の宗教を特殊な形と認めるものには、宗教もまた人類の歴史の一部である。[WTZ 4: 166].

18. I prefer “mind-to-mind” rather than “heart-to-heart”, but I have retained the latter as it is the term that Bein uses in his translation of *Shamon Dōgen* (WATSUJI 2011).

- relationship between two concepts (individual and group in *Rinrigaku*; enlightenment and non-enlightenment in *Shamon Dōgen*).
3. The *importance of difference in one strand of Watsuji's thought*. While Watsuji opposed the individualistic ethics of Western philosophy, he still stressed the importance of individual difference and differentiation as a moment in the unfolding of the dialectic of the individual and the group in *Rinrigaku*; a similar emphasis on individual expression is to be found in Watsuji's interpretation of "entanglement" (葛藤), a chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō* of the same name.
 4. The *importance of both time and space*. the emphasis on the spatial nature of human existence in *Rinrigaku* is foreshadowed in *Shamon Dōgen*, where the temporal unfolding of the Dharma as the teachings of the succession of Zen ancestors is given a spatialized interpretation.

I turn now to each of these aspects of Watsuji's thought with the principal goal of shedding light on *Rinrigaku* from the vantage point of his earlier text. Of course, shining light on *Rinrigaku* inevitably results in a reflection of this light back onto the earlier text.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONALITY FOR WATSUJI

In the introductory chapter to *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji discusses the nature of human existence as *aidagara*. His goal is to ground ethics on the central role of relationality in human existence¹⁹ and to abandon an ethics based on what he considers to be a faulty individualism.²⁰ "The locus of ethical problems," he writes, "lies not in the consciousness of the isolated individual, but precisely in the in-betweenness of person and person."²¹ The parallel with Watsuji's *Shamon Dōgen* emerges in the section of the latter book in which he explains the face-to-face (*menju menju* 面授面受) transmission that he sees as central to Dōgen's message about the nature of Buddhist truth. Watsuji explains

19. WATSUJI 1996, 9–10; WTZ 10: 11–12.

20. WATSUJI 1996, 9; WTZ 10: 11.

21. WATSUJI 1996, 10; WTZ 10: 12.

that for Dōgen, the transmission of Zen cannot be captured in words alone—i.e., expressed solely in logical language.²² Instead, it is communicated by seeing “a person who understands and embodies the truth directly before your eyes.” Watsuji emphasizes the “betweenness” aspect of this experience: the transmission is not just achieved through seeing an enlightened one; rather, one must see the enlightened one and also be “seen by such a person.”²³ Watsuji summarizes:

We can say that when Dōgen allowed for logical expression on the one hand, while on the other he emphasized sagely intuition through *seeing* a master, and granted the rich content of intuition at the same time that he defended fixed ideas, he breathed philosophical life into such subjective facts as the heart-to-heart transmission and the master's seal of approval, which Zen held so dear.... Buddhism's truth cannot be grasped without face-to-face transmission between buddhas, but the truth transmitted face-to-face was expressed in the words of the buddhas and patriarchs and in no place outside their mysterious verses.²⁴

The truth that is communicated through the Dharma is the truth of a Buddha speaking to a Buddha: it is the reciprocal seeing of the heart/mind (心) of the master by the student and the seeing of the heart/mind of the student by the master. This mutual consciousness of the heart/mind of the master and the student is described by Watsuji as a kind of intuition: the student and the master do not talk about ideas and concepts, but rather, through the harmonization of their practice, which includes speaking about the truth, they both express the Way.²⁵ Thus the truth of Zen is embodied in the relationship between student and teacher, who both express it through their practice together.

22. WATSUJI 2011, 106; WTZ 4: 234–5.

23. WATSUJI 2011, 106; WTZ 4: 235: 「真理を体得し実現せる人を目のあたりに見、また見られることによつてのみ、真の捕捉理會が可能になるというのである。」

24. WATSUJI 2011, 106–7; WTZ 4: 235–6.

25. WATSUJI 2011, 109; WTZ 4: 238.

A similar notion is present in Watsuji's explanation of an ethics based on *aidagara*. For Watsuji, ethics emerges from the social and cultural practices of everyday life; it is not simply an idea arrived at by an individual contemplating what he ought to do separate from these practices. An ethics that emerges from concrete social and cultural practices is necessarily relational—i.e., it exhibits betweenness—because such practices involve interaction between people: they are embodied in the way we conduct ourselves together as a group and in the cultural practices that have ethical significance. In both *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku*, the encounter between people thus plays an important role. In *Shamon Dōgen*, the encounter between Zen teacher and student is the transmission of the Dharma and the fulfilment of the four great vows (*shiguseigan* 四弘誓願). The encounter also has an important place in *Rinrigaku*, in which Watsuji emphasizes the importance of the mutual seeing of I and Thou as the expression of *aidagara*. *Aidagara*, he writes, is not the result of two individuals seeing each other—i.e., it is not the result of the intentionality of individual consciousness; instead, the mutual seeing of I and Thou is an aspect of the nature of human existence as *aidagara*. Watsuji explains:

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.²⁶

The ethics based on this mutual seeing that characterizes human existence as *aidagara* is given expression through the concrete ethical life of society—i.e., it is expressed in particular ethical practices,²⁷ just

26. WATSUJI 1996, 69; WTZ 10: 73.

27. Watsuji explains that the law of ethics—i. e., the negative structure of human existence as the movement of negation between individual and group (WATSUJI 1996, 120; WTZ 10: 126)—is “put into effect through the basis of finite society (*supra* note 1, 121; WTZ 10: 127–8).

as the practice of the Dharma expresses the mutual seeing—the heart-to-heart transmission—between Zen teacher and Zen student.

Despite the similarities of the schema of the I-Thou relationship and the student-teacher relationship that I have indicated, it is important not to lose track of the differences between *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku*. In *Shamon Dōgen*, Watsuji is setting out his understanding of the heart-to-heart transmission of Zen and discussing the role of logical expression in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*; in *Rinrigaku*, he is engaged in a phenomenological investigation of the nature of human existence as *aidagara*. However, while the contexts are different, the schemas are similar: both involve being face-to-face with another (in Zen, teacher and student come face-to-face; in *Rinrigaku*, it is I and Thou), and in both cases, Watsuji is interested in what is expressed as and through this concrete relationship, which constitutes a pre-condition to the transmission of Zen on the one hand, and ethical action on the other.

In the case of Zen, Dharma is embodied in the practice of Zen; it is expressed through the relationship between teacher and student, both practising the Way thoroughly. The heart-to-heart transmission—the process of aligning the practice of both teacher and student with the Way—is central to Dōgen's understanding of Zen, Watsuji explains, because it is the transmission that embodies the way, not some abstract, eternal idea about the content of Zen doctrine or belief.²⁸ Watsuji writes:

Dōgen said, “The many buddhas and patriarchs are expressions of the truth.” In this case, we feel a deep interest in his not calling the patriarchs “people who express the truth” but simply “expressions of the truth.” The many buddhas and patriarchs are the personality that expresses Buddhahood, but Dōgen extracts that personality from the heart of that expression, which should not exist apart from that per-

28. WATSUJI 2011, 108; WTZ 4: 237.

sonality, allowing only the expression of Buddhahood to stand independently. Then he calls this “expressing the truth.”²⁹

By emphasizing that “the many buddhas and patriarchs are expressions of the truth”—Watsuji emphasizes that the truth transmitted by the Buddhas and ancestors is not some abstract content which each of these individuals expressed. Rather, it is the expression itself, expressed in a relationship of mutual practice, that is the truth that Zen conveys.³⁰

In *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji uses a similar schema of alignment between two individuals. When I and Thou meet, there is a mutuality of experience that expresses this alignment. This alignment is a process in which we are always already engaged—it is a feature of human existence as a mutual recognition of our relatedness to others.³¹ This mutual alignment expresses itself as cultural and social norms and practices. To give an example of this, Watsuji speaks of the “common” grief of parents who have lost a child. Parents know of each other’s grief without having to turn their individual consciousness towards the other; rather, they “feel the same grief at the same time.”³² The grief that each parent mutually feels is not like the Dharma that both teacher and student express through Zen training. But what is similar is that the significance—the meaning—of the death of a child is expressed as the mutual understanding of the two parents. Thus we see that the structure of the relationship between student and teacher as described in *Shamon Dōgen* is similar in structure to the betweenness that characterizes human existence in *Rinrigaku*: the mutuality of experience of the heart-to-heart transmission expresses the meaning of the Dharma; likewise, the mutuality of experience of two parents expresses the social and cultural meaning of the loss of a child. Moreover, just as heart-to-heart transmission is the alignment of both teacher and student with the Way, so

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. WATSUJI 1996, 70–1; WTZ 10: 74–5.

32. Ibid.

is the mutuality of the I-Thou relationship an expression of the mutuality that is the source of ethics according to Watsuji. There is no eternal message expressed by Zen—it is simply the heart-to-heart transmission embodied in thorough practice.³³ And there is no eternal ethics or a universal concept of grief at the loss of a child—it is simply the mutual understanding of two parents experiencing each other's grief.

EMPTINESS IN WATSUJI'S EARLY AND LATER THOUGHT

“Emptiness” (空) is a term frequently encountered in East Asian philosophy that puzzles readers. Watsuji's use of the term in his ethics is complex and at times very abstract. However, the discussion of emptiness is much simpler in Watsuji's book, *Shamon Dōgen*, and to the degree that it can be used to illuminate the use of “emptiness” in *Rinrigaku*, it may provide a good access point to the more difficult text. In *Rinrigaku*, emptiness has three important aspects. First, it is the transcendental pre-condition of the dialectic of self and group that characterizes human existence as *ningen sonzai* 人間存在.³⁴ Second,

33. WATSUJI 1996, 112; WTZ 4: 240. Watsuji writes, “This is what is meant by the word *dōtoku*. When the true Dharma is transmitted and received through the face-to-face transmission between buddhas, the “ability to speak” is attained” (WATSUJI 1996, 111; WTZ 4: 239). In other words, Watsuji interprets the truth of Zen as simply this expression of sincere practice between teacher and student. It is important to point out that Watsuji ultimately balked at Dōgen's understanding of Buddhist truth, which he condemns as not philosophical (WATSUJI 1996, 111–12; WTZ 4: 240–1). He is interested in the *Dōtoku* chapter of *Shōbōgenzō* because he understands it to be an articulation of truth through a dialectical process of development. What disappoints him is that Dōgen does not consider the truth to be an idea or concept, but rather simply the face-to-face transmission from teach to student. He complains:

Dōgen had no need to finalize a purely logical system of excellence. For him the proof of enlightenment that could be realized through self-cultivation and strenuous *zazen* was a fact that was difficult to displace.... When we think of excellence as an activity that develops itself, overtaking the self-cultivator and the master, then psychological explanations are... ruled out. This is the blind spot left in Dōgen's thought. As such, it is the only reason that the points Dōgen preaches on are not philosophy but religion. (WATSUJI 1996, 112; WTZ 4: 240–1)

34. Watsuji is clear about this transcendental status of emptiness when he writes that

this transcendental pre-condition is not abstract but concrete, since it manifests itself in the everyday acts and interactions that characterize human existence. Such acts include both those we do alone and those we perform together with others; the possibility of acting alone and acting together with others demonstrates the “room” that human existence as betweenness creates for a variety of concrete relations with others.³⁵ Third, emptiness makes possible a dynamic, dialectical movement between individual and group, and Watsuji defines ethical and unethical behaviour in terms of whether the movement is free or hindered, i.e., in terms of whether an individual’s choices and acts reflect the dual nature of human existence as both individual and social.³⁶ I will deal with each of these aspects in turn.

First, the schema of emptiness: Watsuji’s interpretation of Dōgen’s characterization of the totality of existence as empty is not a specific instance of the emptiness that Watsuji discusses in *Rinrigaku*; however, the schema that Watsuji identifies is similar to that used in *Rinrigaku*. According to Watsuji, Dōgen identifies all dharmas—i.e., the totality of phenomenal existence—as empty. It is not the case that enlightened beings display emptiness (Buddha-nature) and unenlightened ones

the infinite that lies behind all of the kinds of finite wholeness must be absolute emptiness. Conversely, the unity of difference and sameness that appears in all finite wholeness stands only on the basis of this absolute emptiness. Therefore, every community of human beings, that is, the whole in human beings, can become manifest only to the extent that emptiness is realized among individual human beings.” (WATSUJI 1996, 99)

「すべての有限なる全体性の根柢に存する無限なるものはかかる絶対空でなくてはならぬ。そこでまた逆に、かかる絶対空を根柢とするがゆえに、すべての有限なる全体性における異にして同の統一が可能となるのである。従ってあらゆる人間の共同態、人間における全体的なるものは、個々の人々の間に空を実現している限りにおいて形成せられるとすることができる。」(WTZ 10: 105)

35. Watsuji, like Heidegger, explains that even when we think we are alone, we are still characterized by our relationality (*Mitsein* in Heidegger’s philosophy: see HEIDEGGER 1996, 120 (reference to German pagination). Likewise, Watsuji explains being alone and being an individual as in a sense a “deficient” form of community (WATSUJI 1996, 81–82; WTZ 10: 86–87): this independence is defined and achieved through reference to a community that is lost or abandoned (WATSUJI 1996, 82; WTZ 10: 87).

36. WATSUJI 1996, 280–282; WTZ 10: 295–298.

lack it; rather, all beings are in essence empty and display this emptiness as their way of being-in-the-world.³⁷ As in *Rinrigaku*, emptiness is a kind of transcendental pre-condition, although in *Shamon Dōgen* it is a pre-condition for the existence of the *entire phenomenal world*, while in *Rinrigaku*, emptiness is given ethical significance as a pre-condition for *human existence* understood phenomenologically as betweenness. Both texts also explain the nature of the relationship between emptiness and phenomenal existence: in *Rinrigaku*, the individual and the group are moments in the movement of human interaction that characterizes human existence, and the precondition for this activity is emptiness; in *Shamon Dōgen*, enlightenment and delusion are moments or manifestations of the Buddha-nature that characterizes the totality of existence, and the precondition for this manifestation is that Buddha-nature is itself empty. Watsuji writes, “When Buddha-nature is considered to be total-existence, the emptiness of emptiness, it is natural that the idea of ‘heart-here-and-now-Buddha’ is interpreted in a special way.” This special way in which Dōgen understood emptiness Watsuji describes as emptiness manifest simply as “enlightenment, self-cultivation, Buddhahood, and Nirvana”³⁸: emptiness is not something divine, nor is it something eternal and unchanging.³⁹

This leads to the second aspect of emptiness common to *Rinrigaku* and *Shamon Dōgen*, namely, its concreteness. As I indicated earlier, the emptiness Watsuji discusses in *Shamon Dōgen* is not abstract but concrete. Thus the essence of the totality of existence is displayed sim-

37. Watsuji uses the terms “total existence buddha-nature” (悉有仏性) and “emptiness buddha-nature” (無仏性) interchangeably (WATSUJI 2011, 102; WTZ 4: 231), thus indicating that for Watsuji, emptiness is a transcendental pre-condition for existence that characterizes the totality of existence. Watsuji explains that emptiness is “the heart of the mountains and rivers and earth... the heart of the sun, moon, stars, and constellations.” Moreover, the world simply expresses this emptiness by its very existence: “this heart of the mountains, rivers, and earth is just the mountains, rivers, and earth” (WATSUJI 2011, 103; WTZ 4: 232).

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

ply and straightforwardly in the presencing of mountains, rivers and earth⁴⁰ just as the emptiness discussed in *Rinrigaku* is displayed simply and straightforwardly in the acts and interactions between people in a specific culture and society.⁴¹ Watsuji writes,

Dōgen rejects... pantheistic speculation. Heart-here-and-now-is-Buddha [*sokushin zebutsu* 即心是仏], which the patriarchs preserved, does not exist anywhere in non-Buddhist philosophy. Heart-here-and-now-is-Buddha exists only in the Buddhist patriarchs and in their writings, practices, and enlightenment, which *do* mind-here-and-now-is-Buddha and exhaust it.

Here, “heart” means the wholehearted Dharma of entirety, and the entire Dharma of wholeheartedness. It is the heart that makes the entirety of the universe one.... It is the heart of the mountains and rivers and earth. It is the heart of the sun, moon, stars and constellations.⁴²

The concreteness of emptiness in Watsuji’s exegesis of Dōgen is clear in his assertion that for Dōgen, Buddha-nature is manifest in the “heart of the mountains and rivers and earth” and in “the heart of the sun, moon, stars and constellations” just as it is manifest in the practice of the Zen ancestors, who manifest it by simply embodying it.⁴³ In embodying the Way, they express true reality through their personal-

40. WATSUJI 2011, 104 (WTZ 4: 233).

41. For example, when discussing the way in which human beings belong to a whole (such as a family, nation, etc.), Watsuji explains that

something whole that precedes individuals and prescribes them as such, namely, such a thing as “the great whole,” does not really exist. It is not justifiable for us to insist on the existence of a social group’s independence. In an attempt to come to grips with something whole, we are led to confront individual persons who are destined to be restricted and negated.... (WATSUJI 1996, 99).

個人に先立ち、個人を個人として規定する全体者、「大きい全体」とくごときものは、真実には存在しない。社会的団体の独立の存在を主張することは正しいとは言えぬ。我々はむしろ全体者を捕えようとして逆に制限し否定せられるところの個人を突き出したのである。(WTZ 10: 106)

Thus the whole is not something that exists apart from the individuals who compose it (WATSUJI 1996, 100; WTZ 10: 106).

42. WATSUJI 2011, 103; WTZ 4: 232.

43. WATSUJI 2011, 101; WTZ 4: 230.

ity.⁴⁴ For instance, Watsuji explains that Dōgen expresses true reality through his qualities of being

a passionate disciple who pursued the truth for the truth's sake... a passionate believer who advocated blind obedience to the patriarchs through the way he led his life... a guileless man of personality who practiced selfless love... a strong self-cultivator who conquered all natural desires for the sake of establishing the kingdom of truth.⁴⁵

This manifestation of Dōgen's personality is the concrete expression of the emptiness (buddha-nature) that is also expressed by mountains, rivers and earth.

Similarly, in *Rinrigaku*, the emptiness of *ningen sonzai* that makes human interaction and ethics possible is not something separate from the everyday existence of human beings—it is not an empty container or transcendent idea. Emptiness manifests itself statically as the opposition between individual and self (spatiality), and dynamically as the movement from group to individual and back again (temporality).⁴⁶ While this is stated rather abstractly, what Watsuji is pointing to is that human existence is simply the “practical interconnections of acts”—people acting in ways which differentiates them from the group (selfishly) and then in ways which return them to the group (selflessly). The concreteness of this is evident when Watsuji emphasizes that by characterizing human existence (*ningen sonzai*) as the practical interconnections of acts, he is indicating that “*sonzai* has nothing to do with the ‘being’ of an objective thing, nor with the logical ‘to be’”⁴⁷—in other words, the emptiness that characterizes human existence is not

44. WATSUJI 2011, 102; WTZ 4: 231.

45. WATSUJI 2011, 102; WTZ 4: 231. 「彼の場合について言えば、悉有仏性あるいは無仏性の真理は、彼の人格を通じて我々に接触する。この真理を体得した彼は、真理を真理のために追求する熱烈な学徒、生活の様式において教祖への盲目的服従を唱道する熱烈な信者、無私の愛を実行する透明な人格者、真理の王国を建設するために一切の自然的欲望を克服し得た力強行者、として我々の前に現われる。」

46. WATSUJI 1996, 223–4; WTZ 10: 235–6; and 233; WTZ 10: 245.

47. WATSUJI 1996, 235; WTZ 10: 246.

itself a thing, nor is it simply an abstract idea. Thus his ethics is a practical ethics in which ethical action is defined in relation to the social and cultural norms of a particular time and place.

In concrete terms, an individual's act has ethical significance because it occurs against the background of the cultural and social practices that express the ethical life of a particular, concrete historical culture. Thus mere eating—the stuffing of food into one's mouth to satisfy hunger—is given meaning when it is performed against the cultural norms for eating. As Watsuji explains,

As for our daily meal... we carry on in accordance with one prescribed form or another, and therefore, our eating cannot be mere motion. The manner of our eating is socially prescribed, beyond our own arbitrary will. If one eats something with one's fingers instead of with chopsticks, by choice, then this is itself an expression of some attitude already directed toward other subjects. If it happens at a table to which one is invited as a guest, then this will be taken as an expression of contempt toward the host; or if it should happen at a table at which only friends are present, then it will be taken merely as having fun or as directed toward the participants in an attempt to create a caricature of oneself.⁴⁸

Individuals may will things, but their motions are only “acts”—i.e., they only have ethical significance—when they are given meaning within the cultural and social norms of a society.⁴⁹ Just as emptiness is

48. WATSUJI 1996, 236–237. 「たとえば現前の食物を認め、これをおおうとする意志を持ち、明らかな意識をもって手を用い、その食物を口に入れる。これは物を食う動作であって行為ではない。そうしてこの動作にとっては、手づかみで食おうと口で音を立てようと、何ら意味の上に相違はない。しかし、我々の日常の食事は、何らかの作法に従ったものであって、単に動作であることはできない。そうしてその作法は我々自身の恣意を超えて社会的に定まったのである。箸で食うべきものを手づかみにするということは、もしそれが意志の選択決定によるとすれば、他の主体に対する何らかの態度の表示にほかならぬであろう。それが客として招かれた食事の席であるならば、主人に対する侮辱の表示となるであろうし、友人と会食の席であるならば己れを滑稽化して座をにぎわせる座興ともなるであろう。」 (WTZ 10: 247–8).

49. Another interesting similarity that I will not explore here is that Watsuji's Dōgen explains that Buddha-nature is expressed in the “personality” of the enlightened person (WATSUJI 2011, 102–3; WTZ 4: 231–2). Similarly, in *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji speaks of the contrast between the individual who is simply the negation of the totality, and the ethical

expressed concretely in the practice of Dōgen, a Zen ancestor—in his personality through which he practised and expressed what his fore-runners practised and expressed—the emptiness that is a transcendental condition of ethics is expressed concretely through the possibility of human action against the background of concrete social and cultural norms—there is a space in which individual and society mutually constitute each other that manifests itself as “observing the *mores* of eating with chopsticks.”

In addition to the transcendental role of emptiness, in both *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji describes the phenomenal manifestation of emptiness as a dialectical movement between two poles. This dialectical aspect is the third similarity between the two texts. At the outset of *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji attributes to human existence a form of dialectical relationship between being and non-being; he calls this dialectical relationship *sonzai*, which is an aspect of the form of being characteristic of humans as betweenness (*aidagara*). Watsuji describes this dialectic as follows:

This way of being, which is peculiar to *ningen*, or to be more precise, this transformation from being to nothingness, and from nothingness to being (hence, this way of becoming a human being), we attempt to express by the Japanese concept of *sonzai*.⁵⁰

As we have seen, Watsuji calls the condition of the possibility of this dialectical relationship “emptiness,” and the dynamic movement between being and nothingness that constitutes human existence he calls “absolute negation.”⁵¹ Thus emptiness is a transcendental precondition of the movement of absolute negation, which is a dialectical movement between being and non-being.

In *Shamon Dōgen*, Watsuji describes a similar dialectical concep-

individual who expresses this ethical existence through his or her personality (WATSUJI 1996, 253; W TZ 10: 267).

50. WATSUJI 1996, 19; W TZ 10: 22.

51. WATSUJI 1996, 23; W TZ 10: 26–7.

tion of the relationship between being and non-being and a similar notion of emptiness. However, in this case, emptiness is not solely an aspect of human existence; rather, Watsuji says that this emptiness goes beyond human existence and encompasses Dōgen's understanding of the totality of existence.⁵² Thus Watsuji's discussion of emptiness in *Shamon Dōgen* goes beyond ethics and articulates a phenomenological ontology.

What can be a bit complicated about the dialectic described in *Shamon Dōgen* is that Watsuji's interpretation of emptiness is couched in a discussion about enlightenment and delusion. Thus, rather than just talking about absolute emptiness and its relationship to the dialectic of being and non-being which characterizes the phenomenal world, Watsuji discusses this relationship through the lens of enlightenment and non-enlightenment. This is because in the *Bussbō* ("buddha-nature" 仏性) chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō* on which Watsuji focuses, Dōgen is trying to explain what Buddha-nature is: Is it something separate from people that they can attain if they become enlightened? Or is it something that people always already display? If the latter is the case, why are most beings deluded? The context of Dōgen's concern with Buddha-nature thus results in the triad of terms "Buddha-nature," "enlightenment," and "delusion" being superimposed on the terminology of "absolute emptiness," "being," and "non-being." However, Watsuji draws out the ontological consequences he sees in Dōgen's discussion of Buddha-nature by focusing on the fact that for Dōgen, the totality of being is emptiness (Buddha-nature). Thus the relationship between enlightenment and delusion tells us something about the relationship between the totality of being and the individual beings and phenomena into which we ordinarily consider the totality to be divided.

In *Bussbō*, Dōgen takes as his point of departure for explaining Buddha-nature the words of the Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra (vol. 25, sec-

52. WATSUJI 2011, 97; WTZ 4: 227.

tion 1): 一切衆生悉有仏性. This passage is conventionally read as “all living beings possess Buddha-nature through and through.”⁵³ According to Watsuji, Dōgen was dissatisfied with this interpretation because it separates Buddha-nature and human existence, making it seem as if the process of enlightenment is the process of deluded humans acquiring something separate from themselves. Dōgen, explains Watsuji, did not simply think that each individual had the potential to express her essence—“the possibility to become Buddha.”⁵⁴ Instead, each person, like the mountains and rivers, is already expressing Buddha-nature. Thus, Dōgen interpreted the sutra to mean that “the totality of existence is Buddha-nature”⁵⁵: Existence itself is Buddha-nature, and there is no separation between “true” or “transcendent” reality and mundane reality.⁵⁶

Dōgen's reinterpretation of the passage from the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* means that the transcendent and the immanent are not separate. Instead, Buddha-nature is constantly being expressed through the phenomenal world. How does this relate to emptiness? It is only because Buddha-nature is empty that it can manifest itself as the totality of reality. Citing the words of the fourth Chinese ancestor,⁵⁷ Watsuji explains what he thinks Dōgen meant by this. Watsuji writes:

If total-existence buddha-nature is understood in the way that Dōgen explains it, the question of existence-nonexistence does not arise. Total-existence, which is buddha-nature, is absolute existence that transcends existence-nonexistence. In this sense of buddha-nature, emptiness-buddha-nature is not lost. There the term “emptiness-buddha-nature” must not be understood to mean “There is no Buddha-nature *within* all living beings.” The Buddha-nature of total-existence *Buddha-nature* is the Buddha-nature of emptiness-*buddha-nature*.

53. WATSUJI 2011, *supra* note 22, 92; 「一切衆生、悉く仏性有り」WTZ 4: 222.

54. WATSUJI 2011, 92; WTZ 4: 222.

55. WATSUJI 2011, 93; 「悉有は仏性なり」WTZ 4: 223.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Dayi Daoxin 大鑿道信 (Jap., Daii Dōshin), 580–651.

Emptiness-*buddha-nature* is emptiness-*total-existence*. *Emptiness is total-existence*.⁵⁸

Buddha-nature is not something that itself exists or does not exist. It is also not something that exists as a potentiality within human beings.⁵⁹ To say that Buddha-nature is empty means that it is capable of being embodied, expressing and displaying itself as the phenomenal world. Its relationship to being and non-being—the ebb and flow of beings that are born and then die—is that it is empty and therefore capable of being expressed through both being and non-being.⁶⁰ This is similar to the relationship between emptiness and the two poles of the individual and the group in *Rinrigaku*: the absolute emptiness that characterizes human existence is what makes it possible for human beings to be in a constant process of asserting individuality and also belonging to a group.⁶¹

58. WATSUJI 2011, 97. 「もし悉有仏性を道元の説くがごとくに体得すれば、そこに有無の論は起らない。悉有、すなわち仏性は、有無を超越の有である。その仏性の意義は、無仏性というときにも失われるのではない。従って無仏性の語は、「衆生の内に仏性なし」というごとき意に解かされてはならない。悉有仏性の仏性は、無仏性の仏性である。無仏性は無悉有である。無は悉有である。」(WTZ 4: 227).

59. WATSUJI 2011, 100; WTZ 4: 229.

60. Watsuji writes that the relationship between the phenomenal world and buddha-nature is that the latter is the transcendental pre-condition of the former. He answers the question of the relationship between living beings and buddha-nature as follows. First, he explains the relative understanding, according to which the relationship between being and buddha-nature as “... the existence or nonexistence of *existence*-buddha-nature [being, 仏性有り] and *emptiness*-buddha-nature [non-being, 仏性なし].” He then contrasts this with a non-relative understanding of emptiness (buddha-nature), which is the pre-condition of the dialectic of being and non-being “because both ‘existence-buddha-nature’ and ‘emptiness-buddha-nature’ are words that manifest buddha-nature”, which “appears this way as total-existence: that is, as emptiness” (WATSUJI 2011, 100; WTZ 10: 229) 「有仏性も無仏性も、ともに仏性を現す言葉だからである。」

61. WATSUJI 1996, 117; WTZ 10: 123–4. Watsuji explains that the assertion of the individual and of a relationship between individuals are both evidence of a more primordial relatedness (Ibid., 115; WTZ 10: 121–2). This primordial relatedness is what Watsuji calls “emptiness”. It is the transcendental pre-condition to both individuality (“An individual becomes an individual by negating emptiness (i.e., authentic emptiness) as her own fundamental source” (WATSUJI 1996, 117; WTZ 10: 124) and association (“an individual revolts against ‘emptiness’ itself through the medium of her revolting against an association, whatever it may be” (Ibid.).

The dialectical structure of Buddha-nature in *Shamon Dōgen* can help us to understand the nature of ethics in *Rinrigaku*: Watsuji's phenomenological ethics can never be by a purely rational or abstract ethics. The emptiness of Buddha-nature described by Watsuji in *Shamon Dōgen* means that Buddha-nature is not something to be understood through conceptual thinking—it “serves to burn the distinction between phenomenon and substance to ashes.”⁶² Instead, it is something that is to be embodied,⁶³ something to be expressed through the master's personality.⁶⁴ Likewise, in *Rinrigaku*, ethics is ethical behaviour that is embodied in the acts of *ningen* as the movement of negation whereby individuals assert themselves by denying community, but community asserts itself when individuals abandon their individual perspectives and acknowledge their intersubjectivity. Emptiness cannot be reified or objectified—in the context of Watsuji's exegesis of Dōgen's thought, emptiness becomes obvious when one drops deluded views, and in the context of Watsuji's ethics, emptiness becomes obvious when one abandons the false dichotomy between the individual and the group and accepts the role of both the reflective individual and social *mores* in the definition of ethical behaviour.

While it is useful to highlight similarities between *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku*, as I wrote in the previous section, one must not overlook the differences between the two texts. Buddha-nature as explained by Dōgen (and interpreted by Watsuji) and the movement of negation that characterizes *ningen sonzai* are not the same thing. But the schema Watsuji uses to explain both is similar and can help us to elucidate both *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku*. Many commentators have noted the Buddhist resonance of this use of “emptiness” (*kū*) to describe the transcendental precondition of the dialectical movement that char-

62. WATSUJI 2011, 100; WTZ 4: 229.

63. WATSUJI 2011, 101; WTZ 4: 230.

64. WATSUJI 2011, 102; WTZ 4: 231. There is also an interesting discussion of the role of personality in ethics in WATSUJI 1996, 140–1; WTZ 10: 149–50.

acterizes human existence.⁶⁵ Thus it is not surprising to see parallels between *Rinrigaku* and *Shamon Dōgen* in this regard. However, while emptiness is the transcendental pre-condition of the ethical relationship in *Rinrigaku*, in *Shamon Dōgen*, it is given a more ontological interpretation as the “totality of existence.” This may provide an interesting window on *Rinrigaku*, which, along with Watsuji’s later philosophy, commentators have claimed to be solely an ethics without exploration of the ontological roots of morality.⁶⁶ But emptiness also has a phenomenological interpretation in *Shamon Dōgen* because Watsuji interprets the process of Zen training as a way in which Buddha-nature—for Watsuji, a transcendental pre-condition of the phenomenal world—becomes manifest to oneself and to others. It is this phenomenological aspect that Watsuji primarily develops in his later work.

DIFFERENCE IN WATSUJI’S PHILOSOPHY

One other theme that I would like to take up to show both the continuity and discontinuity between Watsuji’s *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku* is the interplay of sameness and difference, the totality and the part. This is addressed in Watsuji’s discussion of Dōgen’s *Entangling Vines* (葛藤) chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*. I am interested in this theme because it is often overlooked in *Rinrigaku*. Watsuji understands “entanglements” as an interplay of sameness and difference. While there is only one truth that is communicated by all the patriarchs—the truth of one’s own true nature,⁶⁷ each individual expresses herself dif-

65. See DILWORTH 1974 LAFLEUR 1978.

66. For instance, Sakabe notes the following difference between Nishida and Watsuji: While for Nishida, human beings are related to the “all-embracing cosmic field” through human creativity (*poiēsis*), Watsuji’s thought lacks any fundamental link between human existence and the totality of existents in the universe. It is for this reason that Watsuji’s thought is limited “to the domain of ethics” and “disregards any living interrelationship (through productive imagination) between human beings and the cosmos” (SAKABE 1988, 162–3).

67. WATSUJI 2011, 112–13; WTZ 4: 241–2.

ferently. Watsuji writes: “through face-to-face transmissions the possible explanations of the way are unlimited. As individuals are different, words can differ.”⁶⁸ The disputes that arise from these different expressions are what Watsuji believed Dōgen meant by “entanglements”:

I think we can certainly grasp that expressing the truth can appear in thousands of even tens of thousands of different forms. However, if the expression of the truth appears in various forms, where should we recognize the ultimate Buddha-Dharma when we encounter contradicting and conflicting words? Dōgen replies that the Buddha-Dharma manifests itself just where all the differing views become mixed up in one another. The words he uses to express this thought is “entanglements.”⁶⁹

Watsuji understands the development of Buddhist truth as a kind of dialectic. He writes,

If we translate the meaning of entanglements that is developed here into our own language, it must be closest to the dialectical development of *idée*. It grows by way of wrapping around contradiction. Therefore it constantly calls to mind the movement of resistance and denial. Such disputes are the seeds that sprout limitless disputes. Thus those seeds of dispute hold the power of enlightenment.⁷⁰

I am not really sure that this interpretation is what Dōgen meant to express by explaining the relationship between teacher and student as an “entanglement.” But one must remember that Watsuji is interested in giving a philosophical interpretation of *Shōbōgenzō*. This is evident in the way that Watsuji interprets Dōgen as a dialectical *philosopher*:

68. WATSUJI 2011, 114; WTZ 4: 242.

69. WATSUJI 2011, 114; 「道徳が千差万別の形にあらわれるものであることを、確かめ得ると思う。しかしもし道徳がかく多様な形に現れるとすれば、矛盾し撞着する道に出逢った場合我々はどこに究極の仏法を認むべきであるか。道元は答えていう、さまざまの異なる見解が相錯することそれ自身の上に仏法が現れるのであると。この思想を表示するものが彼の「葛藤」の語である。」(WTZ 4: 242).

70. WATSUJI 2011, 115. 「ここに展開せられた葛藤の意義は、我々の言葉に訳すれば、イデーの弁証法展開というに最も近いであろう。それは矛盾の纏繞を通じて伸びて行く。だから不断に抗立否定の動きを呼び起こしている。かかる論争は無限に論争を生ぜしむべき種子である。そうしてその論争種子は解脱の力量を持っている。」(WTZ 4: 243).

The Buddha-Dharma is simply the flow of thought as it develops through contradiction and opposition. It is the continuity of limitless entanglements. Therefore it is impossible to inherit the Dharma without entering into intricate logical refutation, argument, assertion, and the like.⁷¹

I doubt that Dōgen was really interested in the “flow of thought” and the development of an *idée* through the dialectical process of the development of *logos*. However, even if it is not an accurate interpretation of *kattō*, it is an interesting harbinger of the place given to dialectic in *Rinrigaku*. Moreover, it highlights how the dialectic of sameness and difference has always played an important part in Watsuji’s thought.

In Watsuji’s *Shamon Dōgen*, the dialectic relationship between the various interpreters of the Dharma is a dialectic that manifests sameness (the unity of the Dharma) and difference (the different interpretations and expressions of it). Similarly, in *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji uses a dialectic schema of identity and difference to explain the relationship between the individual and the totality as the movement of negation that characterizes *ningen sonzai*. Indeed, Watsuji emphasizes that his ethics is not a communitarian ethics, because while individuals must “forsake their individuality” to realize the social, “individuality is not extinguished without residue,” for “as soon as an individual is negated, it negates the totality so as to become an individual once more.”⁷² Thus “the *sonzai* of *ningen* is not only the movement of negation between the individual and the whole. It must also consist in the restoration of totality through indefinite numbers of individuals opposing each other in their disruption into self and other.”⁷³

71. WATSUJI 2011, 115. 「仏法とはまさに矛盾対立を通じて展開する思想の流れなのである。無限なる葛藤の連続なのである。従って理論的に綿密な反駁、討論、主張などに入り込むことなしには嗣法することはできないのである。」(WTZ 4: 244).

72. WATSUJI 1996, 23; WTZ 10: 27.

73. WATSUJI 1996, 24; WTZ 10: 27. This point is often overlooked. For instance, in Tani Tōru writes that “Watsuji regards the recovery of totality as being the most fundamental matter at hand.... For Watsuji, it is... the recovery of totality that is regarded as the

Other scholars have noted the characteristics of Watsuji's dialectic in *Rinrigaku*. For instance, Carter distinguishes it from Hegelian dialectic, noting that when the individual and the social interact, they do not create a greater unity.⁷⁴ However, as critics of Watsuji have noted, ultimately, he appears to have given Japanese culture a transcendent importance, which in turn led to ultranationalism.⁷⁵ Sakabe attributes this to Watsuji's failure to preserve his early appreciation of difference—an appreciation of “the pluralism of world cultures”—in his later work.⁷⁶

However, one might also attribute this failing to an uncritical application of the dialectic of *Shamon Dōgen* to *Rinrigaku*, in which the universality of the Dharma is uncritically carried over to the unifying force in Watsuji's ethics, namely, the concrete historical culture of Japan as the interconnection of acts in which a distinctly Japanese ethics manifests itself, according to *Rinrigaku*. However, further consideration of this point is necessary to arrive at a satisfying conclusion. For now, I just wish to emphasize how *Shamon Dōgen* emphasizes the importance of difference and disagreement in the expression of the Dharma and to highlight the reappearance of the importance of difference in *Rinrigaku*, which is not a purely communitarian ethics.

TIME AND SPACE AND *NINGEN SONZAI*

A final point that is raised in both the early and later texts is the interplay of time and space. The relationship between the two has always been a key theme for Watsuji, so it is not surprising to see it arise in both books. The relationship between temporality and spatiality in Watsuji's philosophy is not a point that I will develop in too much

ultimate good” (TANI 2002, 512–3).

74. CARTER 1989, 143.

75. See generally HEISIG and MARALDO 1995.

76. SAKABE 1988, 165.

detail because I have written about it extensively,⁷⁷ and it is a feature of Watsuji's philosophy that has been very thoroughly and thoughtfully explored in the writings of other interpreters.⁷⁸ However, it is worth noting that similar themes are present in Watsuji's interpretation of Dōgen.

In *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji emphasizes the interplay of time and space as a fundamental feature of *ningen sonzai*. In regard to space, he gives priority to the subjective nature of space, an aspect of human existence as *ningen sonzai* that is the transcendental condition for the possibility of objective (mathematical and scientific) notions of space.⁷⁹ This subjective notion of space—the spatiality of *ningen sonzai*—is a relationship between self and other that pre-exists the assertion of a separation between the individual and the totality.⁸⁰ Put more simply, the spatiality of human existence is the primordial relationship in which human beings always already stand to each other and their environment. In Watsuji's words, human existence is spatial because “the basic unity of the structure of being inherent in *ningen* cannot be conceived of apart from the community of *ningen*.”⁸¹

But human existence is not only spatial. Instead, for Watsuji, *both* temporality and spatiality are essential aspects of the movement of negation that characterizes *ningen sonzai*: the temporal aspect is the dialectical movement that consists in the assertion of the individual, the denial of the individual and the assertion of totality, and the “return” to the self, which, never having been completely erased, remained as a “residue” in the totality;⁸² as I explained, the spatial

77. See MAYEDA 2006.

78. Among Western interpreters applying Watsuji's work in creative ways, see BERQUE 1994 and MCCARTHY 2010.

79. WATSUJI 1996, 177–8; WTZ 10: 187–8.

80. WATSUJI 1996, 227–8; WTZ 10: 239–40.

81. WATSUJI 1996, 228; 「人間の存在構造の根源的統一というごとき主体的空間性に即して考察するほかはないのである。」(WTZ 10: 240).

82. WATSUJI 1996, 231, 233. “Return to the self” refers to what Watsuji describes as 「本来性への還帰」(WTZ 10: 243).

aspect is the fact that *ningen sonzai* is primordially in a mutual relationship with others⁸³—i. e., it is betweenness, *aidagara*—and it has a dialectical structure of I-Thou.⁸⁴

Watsuji advocates an ethics that reflects this kind of spatial and temporal understanding of human existence. For instance, he interprets ethical concepts such as “trust” and “truth” in terms of the development of the spatio-temporal nature of *ningen sonzai*.⁸⁵ While this may seem abstract, Watsuji is simply using space and time to highlight how such ethical concepts are best understood in the context of the relationship between an individual and the group (the spatial aspect) and the evolution of this relationship, which strengthens and wanes, breaks and is re-established over time (the temporal aspect).

Ethics, Watsuji writes, is the actualization of each person's ability to “return” or “come back” to his or her true self as *ningen sonzai* in what Watsuji calls a “nondualistic manner.”⁸⁶ If this “coming back” movement is interrupted, unethical behaviour can arise:⁸⁷ when “one-sided fixation of good and evil” occurs, it prevents “good and evil from being transformed into each other. This fixation,” Watsuji writes, “gives rise to evil.”⁸⁸ In concrete terms, it is perfectly natural for a person to assert herself as an individual by denying the group, i.e., by differentiating herself from the group and its values. But if this movement stops here and the individual does not recognize her ethical obligations, she does not “return” to her true self, which we have seen is part of the

83. WATSUJI 1996, 231; WTZ 10: 243.

84. WATSUJI 1996, 233; WTZ 10: 245.

85. For instance, Watsuji explains the concept of trust in this way: he explains that trust in human relations is only possible because of the structure of *ningen sonzai*, which “consists of spatio-temporality.” Trust is not an ethical goal to achieve—rather, its possibility is concretely anchored in the structures of human existence (WATSUJI 1996, 271; WTZ 10: 285). For a similar analysis of truth, see WATSUJI 1996, 279, 281; WTZ 10: 295, 296–7).

86. WATSUJI 1996, 281. 「人間は無数の自他分裂によって対立しつつ、自他不二的にに帰来する。」(WTZ 10: 296).

87. WATSUJI 1996, 281.

88. WATSUJI 1996, 282; WTZ 10: 298.

natural movement of human existence as *ningen sonzai*. This return to the “true self” is a recognition that relationship to others is a fundamental part of one’s existence. Practically, it means acting in a way that others in the community approve of. This does not mean that for Watsuji, ethical behaviour is simple conformity to established social norms. Rather, he recognizes that acts that depart from previously-established social and cultural norms can be ethical⁸⁹—the important thing is that the behaviour be approved by a group even if it is novel. Watsuji also accepts that ethical behaviour can mean leaving one’s native community and joining another; such behaviour recognizes the essential relatedness of human existence, but it expresses it through a different set of values than those of one’s native community. Only the failure to return at all to the touchstone of community is the kind of failure to “return” to one’s authentic or true self that gives rise to unethical behaviour.⁹⁰

When compared to Kant’s categorical imperative, Watsuji’s approach is quite concrete. It is not an abstract universal concept of moral obligation, but rather a notion of morality tied intimately to a specific socio-cultural context. Moreover, acting morally does not have the same sort of pietistic quality as it seems to have in Kantian philosophy.⁹¹ Instead, Watsuji’s concept of ethics is natural in the sense that

89. WATSUJI 1996, 134; WTZ 10: 141–2. Watsuji is careful to note that the good is not necessarily simply the adherence to a new set of communal values, but rather it can also involve the attempt to benefit community and others (Ibid.).

90. WATSUJI 1996, 284; WTZ 10: 299–300. There is also a good discussion of the movement between individuality and group that constitutes ethics at 134 (WTZ 10: 141–2). Some have characterized Watsuji’s concept of ethical behaviour as a return to the norms and values of the group (TANI 2002, 73). However, Watsuji rejects the idea that the good constitutes in returning to the values of just any community. For instance, he emphasizes that adhering to the values of a closed community whose values do not reflect fundamental human values cannot lead to ethical behaviour (WATSUJI 1996, 123–4).

91. I acknowledge that this is a bit of a caricature of Kantian ethics, which has many interpreters. For instance, Bernard WILLIAMS criticizes Kantian morality for its abstractness and the way that it ignores the role of emotions (1973, 225–9). In contrast, Onora O’NEILL considers Kantian ethics to be “constructivist”, by which she means to “reason with all possible solidity from *available* beginnings, using *available* and *followable* meth-

it is the expression of an inherent aspect of human existence as spatial and temporal—i.e., as rooted in a specific social and cultural milieu.

In reading *Shamon Dōgen*, one cannot help but see a similar interplay of spatiality and temporality in Watsuji's interpretation of Dōgen's discussion of Buddha-nature. Earlier, we examined the dialectical structure of the emptiness-Buddha-nature that expresses itself both as enlightenment and as delusion. I have already noted the spatial and temporal aspects of Watsuji's notion of dialectic. But the interplay of time and space is also present in more subtle ways in the text, for instance in Watsuji's discussion of how Dōgen interpreted the manifestation of Buddha-nature as the practice of the Zen ancestors. According to Watsuji, the Zen ancestors constitute a lineage of practitioners who have harmonized with the way. However, each ancestor expresses Buddha-nature through her own unique personality (人格).⁹² Thus the lineage is not just a linear temporal succession of Zen masters who express an eternal idea or concept of the Dharma in the same way. Rather, each ancestor expresses the Way through his (or her) own personality, which is naturally responsive to the social and cultural environment in which each one lived. Watsuji writes:

Just as Dōgen's own self-cultivation was guided in large part by a strong personality, the method of self-cultivation he teaches also relies on the strength of this personality. The innermost meaning of the practice of the patriarchs is not transmitted by fixed general concepts; it is transmitted as the strength of a living personality. People accept directly through personality that which they cannot grasp with the intellect.

ods to reach *attainable* and *sustainable* conclusions for relevant audiences" (*Towards Justice and Virtue: A Constructive Account of Practical Reasoning* (1996, 63). She explains how Kant himself used this practical metaphor (59–64).

92. WATSUJI 2011, 66–7. Here, Watsuji explains that for Dōgen, ethical behaviour is not measured by the number of people one helps but by "embodying *within oneself* the Buddha's intention to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings" (「彼にとっては、衆生の悩みをいかなる程度に「助け遂ぐる」かよりも、衆生救済の仏意をいかなる程度「自己の内に」体現し得るかが問題なのである。」(WZ 4: 198).

Therefore, self-cultivators must directly study the tradition that is embodied in a teacher's personality.⁹³

The ancestors lived in a specific time, but they *also lived in a specific place and in a specific social and cultural milieu*—this is the interplay of the temporal and spatial in Watsuji's understanding of the Zen lineage.

Watsuji's understanding of Dōgen's Zen is also spatialized in another way: it is embodied in a historical figure, but it is expressed through practices, including sitting (座禪), walking (經行), eating (応量器)—indeed, all the aspects of monastic life. It is for this reason that Watsuji emphasizes that for Dōgen, expressing the Way requires one to become a monk. He cites Dōgen's words from the fourth fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, where Dōgen explains that while it is true that the truth of Buddhism is within all people, “the only way to grasp it is to enable yourself to become a monk.”⁹⁴ On this view, the lineage of Zen ancestors is not just a passing on from a past moment to the present moment of the truth that the Buddha realized—it is not like the passing on of knowledge from teacher to student in an ordinary school or university. Rather, the lineage is embodied by teachers through their unique personality that reflects their society and culture, and who have become monks in order to be able to do the practice that manifests the truth of the Buddha.

Interestingly, Steve Bein specifically uses a spatial concept to translate how the ancestors transmit the Dharma. The Japanese term Dōgen uses in *Shōbōgenzō* is *jūji* 住持.⁹⁵ What would normally be translated as “transmit”⁹⁶ or “maintain,”⁹⁷ Bein, using the translation of Nishijima

93. WATSUJI 2011, 56. 「道元自身の修行が主として人格の力に導かれたものであったごとく、彼の説く修行法もまたこの人格の力に依頼する。仏祖の行履の最奥の意味は、固定せる概念によって伝えられずに、生きた人格の力として伝えられている。人は知識として受け得ないものを、直接に人格をもって承当して来たのである。だから修行者は師の人格に具現せられた伝統を直接に学び取らなくてはならぬ。」

94. WATSUJI 2011, 58; WTZ 4: 190.

95. WATSUJI 2011, 96.

96. DŌGEN 1980, 33.

97. DŌGEN 2002, 60.

Gudō and Chodo Cross, translates as “dwell.” Here is the relevant passage from Watsuji's text as translated by Bein:

According to Dōgen, total-existence Buddha-nature is the central truth of Buddhism. It is not only the truth Śākyamuni preached about. “It is simultaneously the brains and eyes of all the buddhas and all the masters and teachers. It has already been studied for 2,190 years, through just over fifty generations of successors. For twenty-eight generations in India, successors *have dwelt in it* from one generation to the next, and for twenty-three generations in China, successors *have dwelt in it* from one generation to the next. The patriarchs in the ten directions *have dwelt in it.*” In other words, total-existence Buddha-nature is “what” (*Was*), which only the “descendants of the patriarchs”—who were immensely strong—inherited from generation to generation, and in which they dwelled.⁹⁸

The term *jūji* is the origin of *jūjishoku* 住持職, which was later abbreviated to *jūshoku* 住職, the title used to refer to the head monk resident in a particular temple (sometimes translated as “abbot”). If one emphasizes the first kanji (住), which means to “reside,” then this spatial aspect of the transmission becomes obvious. But if one emphasizes the second kanji, a spatial notion is also present, since the term can mean “to hold” or “protect” or “preserve” (as in the important Buddhist term, 行持, “continuous practice,” one of the chapters of the *Shōbōgenzō*). Perhaps a translation that is most in line with Watsuji's interpretation of the lineage of ancestors as both temporal and spatial might be “reside in and embody,” which gives a sense of a physical practice taking place at a particular location maintained over a stretch of time.

The context in which the relationship between space and time is explored in *Shamon Dōgen* and *Rinrigaku* is profoundly different. But it is helpful to approach Watsuji's understanding of ethics as manifest in the concrete acts of individuals primordially situated in both an environment and a set of socio-cultural practices from the point

98. Ibid.

of view of *Shamon Dōgen*. Just as ethical behaviour as described in *Rinrigaku* is defined in relation to these concrete practices, so too is Watsuji's understanding of the (ethical?) behaviour of Zen ancestors grounded in their concrete personality and expressed through a set of monastic practices. Ethical acts are ethical only against the background of socio-cultural practices; a Zen ancestor's acts likewise express Zen in a particular socio-cultural milieu through the personality of the teacher expressed through a set of practices passed down from ancient times that is still practised today. Watsuji's description of Zen practice as embodied practice can be helpful for understanding what Watsuji might have meant in *Rinrigaku* when he describes how an individual "returns to" herself through ethical behavior rooted in a specific set of socio-cultural practices.

Of course, one must not make too much of the similar schemas used in both texts. In *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji is writing solely about *social* existence as the background context of ethical action, whereas in *Shamon Dōgen*, he is writing about the nature of the *totality* of existence as expressed through the practices of the Zen ancestors. Nevertheless, it is helpful to think of the manifestation of the spatial and temporal nature of Buddhism as the practices through which one comes to embody the Buddha-nature that one always already has as a means of understanding the manifestation of the spatial and temporal nature of ethics in specific cultural and social practices, which Watsuji calls the "interconnection of acts."⁹⁹ But whereas Watsuji's concept of Buddha-nature is inherently "universal," in that it expresses something

99. WATSUJI 1996, 244. Here, Watsuji discusses clearly how individual acts stand "within the context of manifold and inexhaustible connections. Even when we extract a fragment and investigate it, we must not forget that even this fragment arises from the aforementioned connections as its inexhaustible background" (ibid). He then goes on to explain, through an example, how this background is the "age" and the "society" that gives meaning to an individual's acts and choices (WATSUJI 1996, 245). 「我々は日常的に行爲の海の中にいる。そうしてその行爲の一一が右のごとき重々無尽の連絡の中に立つものにほかならない。我々はたといその一断片を抽出して考察する時でも、それがまさしく一断片として右のごとき連絡を背景とするということを忘れてはならない。」(WTZ 10: 256).

fundamental about the totality of reality, an ethics that is only manifest in a set of particular historical and cultural practices is only provisional and relative. Perhaps the tragedy of Watsuji's ethics is to forget this difference and to give to a particular ethics, embodied in Japanese culture, a universal meaning.

CONCLUSION

I hope that this essay has provided a provisional sketch of the benefits that can come from reading Watsuji's work as a body rather than as separated into distinct phases. I have tried to illustrate this by reading *Rinrigaku* together with, and against the background of, *Shamon Dōgen*. The goal was to demonstrate similar schema—the similar shapes that Watsuji's thought takes in both texts. My hope is that by identifying the schema in a lesser-known text, aspects of the better-known work might become clearer. Of course, the theme of both works is fundamentally different, as are their style and structure. However, the exercise can nonetheless be useful to an interpreter of Watsuji, since it can highlight how the carrying over of a pattern of thought from one context to the other—from *Shamon Dōgen* to *Rinrigaku*—may have led Watsuji to overlook the differences between the two contexts, thus creating blind-spots in the later work. Perhaps the adoption of the dialectic schema from *Shamon Dōgen*, developed in a context of Watsuji's universalistic interpretation of Buddha-nature, may have led to the introduction of a problematic universalism in his ethics. But I leave the exploration of this problem to another time.

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