

# **Testurō Watsuji's Theory of Betweenness, with a Focus on the Two-Person Community<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT** *This article discusses the problem of betweenness that Tetsurō Watsuji describes in his book *Ethics*. There, he takes up the very special theme of the two-person community, which seems to be a kind of solipsism-space constituted by two persons closely related to each other. But this contains the possibility, for Watsuji, to develop an examination of the intensive space known as MA, which is not only a subject matter of comparative cultural studies, but also of philosophy.*

**KEYWORDS** *Testurō Watsuji; Betweenness; Kyoto School; Two-person community*

**RÉSUMÉ** *Cet article traite le problème de l'entre que Tetsurō Watsuji a exploré dans son livre intitulé *L'Éthique*. Il y approfondit le thème très particulier de la communauté de deux-personnes, qui semble tenir en un espace-solipsisme constitué par deux personnes très intimes. Mais cela ouvre la possibilité, pour Watsuji, d'explorer plus profondément l'espace d'intensité nommé MA, qui intéresse beaucoup de notions non seulement culturelles mais vraiment philosophiques.*

**MOTS CLÉS** *Testurō Watsuji; L'entre; École de Kyoto; Communauté de deux-personnes*

## **Introduction**

Testurō Watsuji (1886–1969) is a Japanese ethical theorist famous for his *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study* (1935) and *Ethics as the Study of Man* (1934). He was professor of ethics at Kyoto University, where he joined Kitarō Nishida, the founder of modern philosophy in Japan, and he was affiliated with the Kyoto School of philosophy, but later on he moved to Tokyo Imperial University. A characteristic of his theory is that he approaches the nature of space and betweenness from a particularly Japanese perspective. His thoughts on space can be read as a peculiar kind of criticism of trends of thought in modern Europe.

His *Culture and Climate*, which was highly praised by Augustin Berque, and which has become world-famous through its translation into Western languages, begins with a critique of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962), which will be discussed later. Here,

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Watsuji emphasizes the essentiality of the spatial dimension in human existence, in contrast with Heidegger's prioritizing of temporality. In his *Ethics as the Study of Man*, Watsuji takes up the formation of the Japanese word for *human* and states that human existence is itself an existence of betweenness or relationship (the Japanese character for human being, *ningen*, literally means *between persons*). For Watsuji, space is betweenness, and betweenness is an important aspect of existence itself. The self does not exist as a metaphysical self in the Western sense, grounded on the structure of the self-affection of time, but first and foremost within space. It is not the individual that exists first, but rather the relationship. Watsuji's thought can thus be understood as a precursor of a theme often discussed in the twentieth century, namely the priority of relations over substantive individuals.

But if this were all, then it would seem that Watsuji has simply planted relational ideas, characteristic of the twentieth century, into a non-Western soil. Watsuji's thought on betweenness, however, possesses a uniqueness that is not confined to this kind of relationism. A text that displays this vividly—and in some sense even grotesquely—is *Ethics* (1937–1949), a book intended as a systematic presentation of his philosophy. In a section of this work Watsuji discusses what he calls a two-person community, a married couple or closely associated partners. Watsuji's ideas are on the whole rather moderate, but his discussion of the two-person community displays in a vivid way the radical gist of his philosophy.

Normally, we formulate a relationship between two persons as You and I, but for Watsuji, the I is from the beginning nothing but a privation of the relationship with the other. In the case where the other is a multiplicity or a society, the self would be defined as nothing but a relationship. But in the case where the other is a singular individual, then that individual would also be nothing but a relational being. Here, it is inevitable that the space of the You and the I seems to be closed off in a peculiar way, but at the same time is in fact structured in such a way that it is nowhere closed off. This is because although the space is a betweenness, it lacks the You and the I—it is a Nothingness of betweenness, something like a zero-point of betweenness.

This article presents Watsuji's theory of betweenness, focusing on his discussion of the two-person community.

### **Watsuji's two-person community**

Watsuji discusses the "two-person community" in Chapter 3, section 2 of *Ethics*, under the topic of "family." As is apparent from the section's subtitle, "Sexual Love and Married Couples," Watsuji deals with the family form of married couples. However, his conception of "two-person-ness" in this section is very strange. This is because Watsuji argues that, as partners, a married couple should keep no secrets from each other, revealing themselves openly, but with respect to other members of the family such as their parents and siblings, as well as the local community, while forming a self-contained and hidden space.

With a few exceptions, Watsuji does not take up his unique ideas on two-person-ness until this section, and even here his discussion of *Ethics* seems to be nothing but a stepping stone for the development of his theory of community from the family to the state; furthermore, Watsuji himself does not develop his ideas on two-person-ness

in much detail. Again, it is possible to read this section as the espousal of an old-fashioned feudal ethics regarding chastity after marriage. However, Watsuji's discussion of the two-person community has many important implications reflecting his overall philosophy.

First, let us consider the place of this discussion within Watsuji's thought. It bears repeating that an important concept for Watsuji is the concept of "relationship." By "relationship," he is referring to a kind of spatiality that involves differences and their dynamic tensions, but at the same time makes such differences possible. But what does it mean to emphasize this kind of "relationship"?

The answer to this question is a simple one. The purpose of emphasizing "relationships" is to indicate that nothing whatsoever exists prior to such "relationships." Watsuji's target here is obviously the first-person "individual," and in particular, the self presented as a temporal being in Heidegger's phenomenology, as depicted in *Climate and Culture*. Watsuji's aim seems to be to dismantle this kind of selfhood through his conception of space. Yet this gives rise to the problem of what the basic unit is, when we deal with relationships. If Watsuji is to reject taking the individual or subject as the unit, then there can be only one answer. It is that the "relationship" itself is the basic ontological unit for Watsuji.

What if, for a moment, we regard the basic unit of "relationship" as an issue of first or second "personhood"? The phenomenon of "relationship" itself seems to demand spatiality, and yet at the same time it seems to be based on a principle of duality. If that is so, then the "relationship" between You and I will be the basic unit for discoursing about everything. And what corresponds to this "relationship" will be neither You nor I but the peculiar and pure space constituted by the "two persons." The place of this kind of "relationship" can be said to refer to a pure "place-ness" in which the self and the other are undifferentiated.

If we situate Watsuji within the current of thought of the Kyoto School, which was heavily influenced by Nishida, then this immediately calls to mind the discussion of the "release from solipsism" as pure experience. Yet while Watsuji's "relationship" is a kind of pure experience, it is rather a peculiar situation, involving a duality and at the same time having a solipsistic tinge.

Of course, if we consider the relation between Nishida and Watsuji, the situation is not so simple. On the one hand, Nishida's discussion of the release from solipsism in his *Study of Good* (1960) is a depiction of the world as pure experience. On the other hand, while Watsuji's discussion of two-personhood is in one respect an escape from solipsism (denial of a closed self), it is directed toward the two-person relationship (and the two-personhood therein). And the direct, gapless relationship between the two persons is, in Nishida, akin to pure experience (de-personhood), depicted as the state of being undifferentiated from the world.

Furthermore, Watsuji develops his discussion in a way that contrasts with that of Nishida, who thoroughly probes pure experience to the bottom. For Nishida, pure experience is something that goes vertically down and down in space. Watsuji, however, presents a situation in which two-level persons are pushed out horizontally. In contrast to Nishida, who discerns the phase of "nothingness" in vertical depth and develops

political arguments from this phase, Watsuji constructs society and the state by expanding his discussion of two-personhood to the relationship to the impersonal others. This is a crucial difference.

Finally, the peculiarity of Watsuji's theory of two-personhood, when it is conceived purely as a theory of the Other, is considered. As pointed out earlier, insofar as this kind of two-personhood functions as the basic unit of pure experience, it is closer in content to the pure experience of one person, even if it is called two-personhood. Although it is a "relationship," it is a relation with a "gapless Other," so to speak. Consider how other commonsensical theories of the Other start from the unintelligibility or alienness of the Other, we can see that Watsuji's theory is a little bizarre. Considering the place of this discussion in Watsuji's overall philosophy, it does not seem valid to simply say that this is a self-justificatory account of the un-modernistic worldview of the Japanese (and of Japanese society), where the self and other are undifferentiated. (Normally, this kind of relationship would be depicted through the relationship between mother and child. However, Watsuji does not have the mother-child relationship in mind at all; the relationship that Watsuji is discussing is the sexual relationship between an adult male and female.) Watsuji is concerned not with two opposed persons, but with pure experience, where everything is unified in the betweenness with Other. And he is taking this up not as a mother-child relationship, nor as a relationship of dependence, but as a *systematic principle of "two-personhood."*

Since this two-person relationship is the basic unit of the community, the two persons are at the same time self-sufficient. Thus, to intentionally distort the meaning of terms, these two persons can be said to be a *solipsistic two-personhood*.

With the aforementioned in mind, this article now examines the pure-experiential "relationship-ness" of Watsuji's theory of two-personhood, a two-personhood that seems even solipsistic.

### **The presupposition of Watsuji's theory of the two-person community**

How does Watsuji depict his theory of the two-person community? To consider this, it is necessary to examine the context in which this discussion occurs. The core of Watsuji's claim is that there are two kinds of "relationships." These are the "betweenness" of the self and other, and the "betweenness" of the self and environment. This claim, which is also repeated in *Culture and Climate* and at the outset of *Ethics*, presents the issue of spatiality in contrast with temporality and prescribes in a direct way what a "relationship" is.

As is well known, this is basically a criticism of Heidegger's depreciation of "spatiality" in his analysis of *Dasein*, arguing for the introduction of a spatial principle into the foundation of the subject's existence. However, what we must ask is what Heidegger (and Husserl) wanted to claim by situating time at the centre of their discussion. Thinking from this direction, insofar as discussions situating temporality at their centre were unable to let go of the self or selfhood as first-person-ness, we can see that a critique of the temporal self leads to the question: *is the self really something first-personal?*

Let us retrace Watsuji's argument in *Climate and Culture*. For instance, Watsuji explains the phenomenon of coldness, using Heideggerian terms such as existence/ecstasy/ex-sistere. Watsuji rejects the assumption of a differentiation between subject and object. He insisted that coldness is something existing objectively and that the self feels it only accidentally and the idea that coldness exists only as a subjective sensation. Coldness is neither an objective existence nor a psychological phenomenon. To feel coldness is to directly live coldness in a spatial *place* and to form the self in that place. Building on Heidegger, Watsuji writes:

When we say that we feel cold, we ourselves are already dwelling in the outside cold. To say that we ourselves come into relation with coldness means nothing other than that we ourselves are *out* in the cold. (Watsuji 2010, p. 12, emphasis in original)

Thus, when we feel cold we discover ourselves in coldness itself ... When we *first discover the coldness*, we ourselves are already out in the cold ... to 'go outside' is a fundamental principle of our own structure, and our intentionality is also based on this. (Watsuji, 2010, p. 13, emphasis in original)

In Heideggerian terminology, this can be said to be a rephrasing of Nishida's idea of pure experience, where the subject and object are undifferentiated. It is not within the domain of the subjective that the self is the self. The self is so structured that it is from the outset outside of itself, and there it rediscovers that there is a self. Yet this differs from Heidegger's account in that the structure of "going outside" itself is strongly related with the place-ness of the "climate and culture," and in that it employs the notion of "relationship" as a framework for understanding this structure in a concrete way. If coldness is neither an objective existence nor a subjective feeling, then what exactly is it? It must be something embodying a manifold of relationships.

In the first place, coldness itself is something that can only be discerned within the "relationship" called "us." If the coldness is something that goes beyond the realm of the self, then it is from the outset a communal existence. There, the "us" is exposed as something that precedes the self. This is also in accord with Nishida, for whom pure experience, in which the subject and object are undifferentiated, is not something solipsistic, but is a domain that exists prior to the domain of the solipsistic.

Furthermore, Watsuji (2010) makes it clear that the "us" is in relation with other phenomena enveloping coldness, such as "warmth and hotness," "wind, rain, snow and sunshine." We may in general be able to call this "climate." But this kind of "climate" can only exist in relation with the

soil quality, terrain and landscape of a certain region. Just as we discover ourselves in joy or in pain within the wind scattering flowers, so we discover ourselves losing vigour in the sun shining directly on the trees during a drought. (p. 15)

It is as if Watsuji, borrowing Heidegger's scheme, is trying to indicate pure experience, as discussed by Nishida, within its various bifurcative modes. While depicting the experience where the subject and object are undifferentiated as something that precedes all concrete experience, Nishida deepened his theory in the direction of the

“nothing” at the vertical “base,” using the logic of the “self-limitation” called “awareness.” Watsuji, however, although influenced by Nishida, articulates pure experience into the double-layered complex of relationships called the self and other, the self and the land. In contrast with Nishida, whose theory of pure experience has a mystic dynamism of going toward the “place of nothingness” through limitation and deepening, Watsuji’s theory clearly traces pure experience horizontally (spatially) in its level articulativeness.

Returning to the article’s introduction, we can see that Watsuji’s discussion is ultimately a clear criticism of Heidegger. Heidegger himself does not depict a vertical or horizontal expansion of the spatiality of pure experience. This is why Watsuji (2010) writes: “A temporality not based on spatiality is not yet a true temporality. The reason why Heidegger remained in this kind of temporality is because his *Dasein* is nothing but an individual” (p. 4).

Although Watsuji does not go into details here, the notion of bringing the self back to its origin was significant for Heidegger’s ontological project. Here, the concept of “affection” or “self-affection,” employed frequently in phenomenology, plays an important role in the structure in which the self relates to itself. However, for Watsuji and Nishida, who escape the scheme of temporality, what is important is the limitations and bifurcations in space. This is natural, insofar as Watsuji, in contrast to Heidegger, for whom existence was “nothing but an individual,” emphasized inter-personality and climate and culture via the spatiality of “relationships.”

### **The rarefication of first-personhood**

Summarizing our discussion so far, Watsuji describes the self, either in *Climate and Culture* or in *Ethics*. Here, he is trying to grasp in a broad and concrete way a Nishida-like place-ness, where the subject and object are undifferentiated, in contradistinction to an individual in the Heideggerian sense. What, then, will happen to that which can only be described as individual?

Watsuji discusses this kind of first-personhood in Chapter 3 of *Ethics*, entitled “Organisations of Human Relations.” He expands his discussion from the private to the public, from the family to the local community. Although his discussion is centred on the notion of “family,” the expansion proceeds from the two-person community to a three-person community, and then to a community of siblings. There, the individual corresponding to the Heideggerian *Dasein* plays only a very limited role.

It is true that Watsuji is examining a private existence. However, for Watsuji the private, as the word itself indicates, is nothing but a privation, namely a “privation of the public.” The I is fundamentally a state in which the spatial moment has been reduced to a kind of point, and if one tries to grasp this temporally, the only state one can reach is an isolated subjectivity lacking all connection. And it need hardly be said that for Watsuji, this kind of isolated spatiotemporal existence is nothing but an abstraction, where the public nature of the self, the relationships that are already involved whenever the self discovers itself, is “abstracted away.” The isolated individual expresses nothing but a “privation” of the public, in this case of the climate-cultural communal existence.

Watsuji (2007) does not regard the private as an existence in a positive sense. It has reality only as an abstract term of a “relationship”:

To lose the possibility of participating [in the public] is not to essentially lose the possibility of participation, but to *not desire participation*, and to *not be allowed participation*. Thus, the privation of the public is essentially to *be rejected public-ness* within the public. Herein consists the private being. There is thus no such thing that absolutely lacks public-ness, that is, *something essentially private*. (p. 91, emphasis in original)

The private is only one branch of the group or relationship, and it cannot subsist by itself. Thus, if we follow Watsuji's argument, insofar as the first-person self is something private, it does not exist.

The self does exist, but it is not something first-personal. It is possible to discourse about the self, but it is only a part of a “relationship.” This is an extremely radical criticism of the first-person way of thinking. Nishida, while maintaining the undifferentiated-ness of pure experience as his base, in one respect has an escape route from this kind of problem, namely the self-limiting method of “awareness.” Watsuji, however, for whom the private domain is nothing but a privation, cannot admit the existence of an original, private self, including the Heideggerian being turned toward death.

Yet is it not impossible for the central nucleus that constitutes society to be dispersed? Here, it is noteworthy that what Watsuji presents is the two-person community. The aim of Watsuji's two-person community argument is to recover something that is a “relationship” and yet is not quite “public,” but rather something close to the “I,” as the centre of a world utterly deprived of the “I” or self.

Thus, Watsuji (2007) is able to discuss the other as a “relationship” that is just barely a “private existence.” He depicts this relationship as “a two-person relation where the self and other are literally nothing but the self and other, an *extremely intimate* I-Thou relation because it rejects the participation of every other person” (p. 95). Here, we can say that the “exceptional other” itself is at stake. This kind of two-personal other (which Watsuji does not posit as a reality) is the basis upon which the discussion expands from the first-personal to the third-personal.

We, who are trying to trace the steps toward the realisation of communal existence, can find our point of departure just here. It [the two-person community] is at once a markedly *private existence*, and yet indicates the realisation of a markedly *communal existence*. This is the reason why we are able to approach the structure of solidarity through the privation of public-ness. (p. 95, emphasis in original)

For Watsuji, whose emphasis is on the “relationship,” the point of departure is not the individual. Rather, it is a “private” “communal-ness” mode of “relationship.”

### **What is the two-person community?**

We have seen how Watsuji postulates the two-person community as a basic concept for laying down an ontology of “relationships.” What kind of two-person-ness is depicted by this concept? Here, Watsuji (2007) begins making some rather bizarre claims:

In an intimate I-Thou relation, the self and other not only *accept* each other's participation into the *innermost depth* of each other's existence, but they also *demand* such participation, as is expressed in the idiom, reveal the 'bottom of each other's hearts'. Therefore nothing is hidden between the self and other. So far as one is capable of awareness, one's existence is through and through open to the participation of the other. (p. 96, emphasis in original)

Thus in the two-person community, the 'I' disappears and everything becomes public. Yet, it is public only between the two persons; it is not public at all with respect to any other person. Indeed, it is this secrecy and hiddenness from other persons, the understanding that only I participate in You, that realises ever more strongly the community between two persons. (pp. 97-98)

Although inevitable, Watsuji's account here is a bit misleading. This account gives the impression that the "I" exists prior to the two-person community, and then afterwards the two-person community arises between two persons. If the account is read in this way, it will be extremely peculiar. That absolutely nothing should be hidden between two persons, that everything should be exposed to the other—this is an extremely bizarre two-person relationship. However, if we understand this intimate two-person relation as a model of the "I," something that is hidden in secrecy from the outside community, something deprived of public-ness, or in other words the fundamental form of the "private," then the account makes sense.

We should also examine the intimacy and secrecy of this kind of two-person-ness in light of the fact that Watsuji concretely and strongly emphasizes that the two-person existence is a sexual, bodily existence (he specifically has in mind the community of a married couple). While criticizing the evolutionary claim that two-personhood emerged from the animalistic impulse for sex, Watsuji depicts the bodiliness (sexual bodiliness) of two persons as constituting the foundation of ethics:

When a man and woman share their existence in love, they participate in each other with their entire body and soul. They disclose their existence to each other through and through, leaving nothing that may reject the other's participation. However, this mutual participation stoutly rejects the participation of any third person. (p. 115)

This account also needs some commentary. If one were to read only this, one would think that Watsuji is discussing a very romantic kind of love in connection with his theory of two-personhood. Furthermore, if one were to understand this discussion in terms of "married couples," it would appear as a display of a very old-fashioned ethics against adultery or infidelity, and as such it could be criticized as ultimately being nothing but a discussion relying on extremely patriarchal premises.

However, when Watsuji depicts the sexual I-Thou relation as an epitome of two-personhood, there is no "hidden" "secret" domain "prior" to the community, where the two persons reveal themselves to each other through and through. There is first the "relationship," and if first-personhood appears as a privation of this relationship,

then the self is nothing but that which is discerned as a privation of the two-person relation.

Is it not a matter of course that this two-personhood seems to be something “private?” This can also be seen in the circumstance where the acts of the two persons are “hidden” spatially. It is precisely in this sense that the relation between two persons is something that cannot be explained in terms of an animalistic impulse or the evolution thereof. What is important here is the fact that Watsuji is extracting the archetypal situation where the two persons completely reveal themselves to each other, but at the same time it is precisely this two-personhood that is spatially “hidden.”

Insofar as this is so, *although Watsuji's two-person community seems to depict a kind of limit of the two-person relationship, it is rather a radical concretization of the “relationship” that Watsuji regards as fundamental.* This is also understandable that Watsuji emphasizes the two-person community as the core of his expansion of the two-person community into other forms of community, namely the parent-child community, sibling community, as well as from the family community to the regional community.

This is an important point. From the standpoint of the standard Japanese way of thinking, this kind of de-personalised, unified relationship is usually conceived in the form of the “parent-child relation.” Many theories of Japanese culture give such a depiction. Watsuji, however, presents the intimacy of the married couple or sexual couple as something different in nature from the parent-child relation. Furthermore, the two-personhood of the parent and child is not a step toward the genesis of the self.

Consider Watsuji's (2007) concept of the parent-child relation. What is at stake here is the three-person community formed by the combination of the two-person community with a child. In this case, the child is not a member of the two-person community, but is only an external being. Furthermore, even when the discourse is expanded into the three-person community, the centrality of the two-person community is unaltered:

The three-person community is not a mere addition of a third person to the two-person community. It is essentially a three-person community, and its structure is completely different from that of the two-person community. The two-person community demands within itself a thorough erasure of the I, and is defined as a strictly closed, private existence with respect to the outside. ... However, in the three-person community, this kind of private existence *cannot be permitted.* (pp. 166–167, emphasis in original)

The child is depicted as an existence necessary for the social emergence of the two-person community. Here, it seems that Watsuji is discussing the *Aufheben* (sublation) of the Hegelian dialectic. For with the expansion of the two-person community into the three-person community, the “privacy” of the two-personhood is rejected, and the road is opened toward the public scene (an expansion of the family as a unit). Yet, for this reason, even in the conglomeration of families, the fundamentality of two-personhood is unchanged. This can also be seen in the account that Watsuji gives after his discussion of the sibling community (the complex multi-dimensionalization of the three-person community), which is a variant of the three-person community formed by parents.

While Watsuji (2007) claims that the married couple community is at the core of the two-person community, parent-child community, and sibling community, he says that this centrality is not a temporal priority. Rather the order is principled and strict:

What we are concerned with is the before and after of the mediation relation. The father-mother-child community is mediated by the married couple community, but the married couple community is a community of sexual being and is not mediated by the father-mother-child community. To interact as man and woman has nothing essential to do with the child's qualification as a child. Likewise, the sibling community is mediated by the father-mother-child community, but the father-mother-child community does not need the sibling community in order to subsist. In this sense, the married couple community, father-mother-child community and sibling community form a unilateral *stratified relation* that cannot be arbitrarily inverted. (p. 203, emphasis in original)

Following this, Watsuji inquires further by taking up the subject of Hegelian marriage and love, as well as cultural anthropological studies of families, such as that of Durkheim. And even in the stages in which the family becomes something more comprehensive, he keeps the married couple community at the centre of the community. It would be the principle that comes from the idea that the two-person couple is the model of the betweenness.

This is deeply related to the spatiality of the public and private. Whatever is explicitly presented as public has, as an opposite aspect, a hidden, private part. While the family community functions as something private with respect to its outside (the *spatiality of the house* defines this function), with respect to the married couple it is public. The regional community beyond the family also forms a group as something hidden with respect to its outside (here, geographical borders will initially be a significant factor), but it is itself a public existence. Watsuji depicts this kind of reversed intertwining of inside and outside that the public and private display in a sort of hierarchical structure.

It is true that one could criticize Watsuji's structure of subsumption as having a kind of nationalistic bias. In examining the range of Watsuji's *Ethics*, it is important to discuss his attitude in this regard. But here I want to consider the opposite direction, for Watsuji, the innermost private part of the subsumption structure, the most hidden part which *no longer has an inside*, is the two-person relation described as the I and Thou. This can be seen as an Otherness with a bizarre, private nature.

### **A direct and mediate relationship**

This notion can be examined from two points. As mentioned at the outset, the first is Watsuji's relation to the theme of Nishida's pure experience and the I and Thou (and the discussion of the Kyoto School that expands this theme). The second is the developmental potential of the claim as a theory of the Other.

Watsuji's relation with Nishida and the Kyoto School can be considered from the following perspective. For Nishida, the state where there is no distinction between subject and object, as pure experience, is the foundation of all experience, and the self arises from this state as a limitation. Watsuji, however, conceives of this emergence of

the self in terms of a sexual two-person relationship. It is true that Watsuji discusses the internal, hidden, and secret aspect of two-personhood and does not, like Nishida, immediately unify pure experience with the world itself. Yet for Watsuji, two-personhood is the pure relationship upon which everything else is based. As such, is it not one form of pure experience where the subject and object are undifferentiated?

What is important, however, is that Nishida inquires into pure experience in its various forms, weaving into it awareness and place, Absolute Nothingness, along with the Other and death. When Nishida discusses place-ness, pure experience is no longer a simple undifferentiated-ness of the self and world, but is, on the one hand, that from which the self emerges from the world and nothingness by "limitation," and, on the other, something that is vertically probed into, toward the depths of "Absolute Nothingness," all the while containing within itself multiple vertical aspects. After his "Absolute Nothingness" period, Nishida introduces the moments of negativity such as Otherness and death as moments of self-limitation and weaves these into his theory of the self and other. However, Nishida's theory of the Other in his *Self-aware Limitation of Nothingness* is characterized by a mutuality in which the self and other are both within the same (nothingness of the) world, and yet within that (nothingness of the) world, they each discover their own "bottom." Thus at this stage, there is no difference in that the self is related with the world, and that the Other emerges from there. Nishida therefore presents the Other as a concept that (like death and eternity) contributes to a kind of horizontalization of Absolute Nothingness.<sup>2</sup> The bodily moment should therefore have some bearing here, but Nishida does not explore this aspect (at least at this stage, before he goes into his theory of poesis).

For Watsuji, in contrast, there is first neither the self nor the world, but the undifferentiated-ness of the self and other (the two-person world), *with its spatial arrangement of relationship-ness*, and it is from this spatiality that all order emerges. Thus, even though this undifferentiated-ness is a domain prior to the self, it is always a "relationship" with an Other, whose spatial moment is concretized as "climate and culture," "environment," and "land."

For Nishida the task was to extract the domain of the self as a limitation of pure experience. Whereas for Watsuji, the pure experience of "relationship" remains a two-person relation, and this two-personhood spatially expands outwards by forming hierarchically a nexus of mutual reversals of the private and public. The private is nothing but a privation. For this reason, Watsuji does not emphasize the "limitation" discussed by Nishida. Rather, he shows interest in the multi-layered, spatially infinite expansion of "relationships," as well as in the technological and cultural objects produced by this expansion. He therefore does not take up Nishida's vertical deepening or the self-formation of the self for which the deepening functions as a springboard. Both Watsuji and Nishida deal with the same place-ness of pure experience, but Watsuji's place-ness is from the outset markedly horizontal, in stark contrast to Nishida, who, in his discussion of place, frequently employs the word "bottom."

### **Self/Otherness as intensional space**

Retracing the peculiarity of Watsuji's discussion of the I and Thou, what we see is an *almost careless conjugation* of a theory of the self and other, necessary for the comple-

tion of the self's relationship-ness, with a much too grotesque depiction of the directness of the self and other that displays in full the sexual body. The peculiarity of Watsuji's argument lies in the way in which he so easily connects the theoretical on the one hand with the concrete on the other.

This peculiarity stands out if we compare Watsuji's theory with other forms of the theory of the Other. Consider Emmanuel Levinas: he developed ideas about the Otherness of the Other that can be said to be extreme, exposing the Otherness within the absolute absence of relationship. Watsuji's discussion is the direct opposite of this. For Levinas, the Other was something that cannot be reached no matter what (see Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 1969). What is at stake for Watsuji, however, is the *gapless* "relationship" with the Other itself. Yet there is a similarity between the theories of Levinas and Watsuji in that for both, the absoluteness of the relation with the Other precedes the self. This is related to the fact that after his discussion of the gap from the absolute Other—an Other called the "face"—Levinas begins speaking of the erotic physical relationship as the fundamental aspect of the relation with the Other. Yet, thought simply, it is a marked fact that in contrast to Levinas, who thoroughly investigates the "Otherness" of the Other, Watsuji presents his theory of the Other in the form of "not me," on the basis of the directness of the body.

This is related to the fact that Watsuji was a philosopher of persona. The body that Watsuji discusses has its characteristic, in one respect, in his theory of the persona as face/mask, but at the same time, the body for Watsuji is not something that merely contributes to the intelligibility (or unintelligibility) of the face and its expressions.<sup>3</sup> The face is saturated, as by a "shadow," by the animalistic body, as well as the climate-cultural territorial-ness of such a body (insofar as the face is a mask, it is always an illusion). The directness and nakedness of sexual relations can be said to be the "relationship-ness" itself of such a bare body. The persona/face/personality cannot be depicted except as based upon this kind of intimate and immediate two-personhood.

The distance-less Other to whom nothing is hidden—here is a world prior to the self. To repeat, this kind of Other is not a unification with the mother or the undifferentiated consciousness of the baby that is often presupposed in theories of Japanese culture. There would be no *symmetrical* branching off of the horizontality of personhood in such a relation. The child is strictly precluded from the two-person community. The two-person community itself comprises the contradiction of being at once a direct community of the sexual bodies and the most fundamental mediation. For the primordial bodily relationship of the married couple, the child is nothing but a third-personal existence; the two-person community excluding the child is in principle (not temporally) prior. This self-other relation is not a confinement into oneself as exemplified by the mother-child relation, but is at once a completely private internal-ness and a completely public external-ness.

Simply put, it is an internality with nothing private and a between-ness that is closed off, but not an individual's closed-off-ness. It is a space such that it is a relationship but not yet a public relation, and although it lacks a term for forming a relationship, it is itself half closed. From a commonsensical perspective, this spatiality is bizarre. However, if we look beyond this bizarreness a bit, this discussion of between-ness

seems to depict the coexistence and ambiguity of the two mutually contradictory elements of “distance” and “relation” that between-ness embodies, without reducing it into a mere opposition. It is not a merely extensional spatiality, but a spatiality that is pregnant with a heterogeneous intensity, which, at the same time, markedly displays a kind of fundamental non-self-ness and non-opposition-ness.

A mode of space that has an intensity, but does not expand this into a contradiction—this kind of spatiality is something that can be concretized, not only in the aspects of principle, but also in the cultural aspects variously described by Watsuji himself as a history of ideas. It is true that Watsuji tended to describe this in the context of Japan, in particular in the context of cultural history. Yet I believe that retracing his account in detail will, despite the fact that Japan is Watsuji's intellectual backdrop, serve as a case study for a theory of space in general.

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### Notes

1. Part of this article was first published in Japanese in *Nihon Tetugaku Genron Josetsu (Introduction to Elements of Japanese Philosophy)*, especially Chapter 4. But I have modified many paragraphs for this article.
2. In addition to the Other, Nishida discusses death (life involving death) and eternity (the eternal now) as paradoxical phenomena involving the transformation of a vertical limit into something horizontal. The Other is, in the same sense, a moment of negation introduced into negation-less pure experience.
3. See Watsuji (1963). It is true that Watsuji discusses the peculiarity of the face within the body by employing the concept of “mask,” but at the same time he writes that the “mask” is something that moves. This indicates that the “mask” itself is predicated upon the body, which is its background “shadow,” and its dynamic relations. At the same time, as in his account in *Ethics* (1934), Watsuji suggests that the “mask” leads, through the persona (personality), to the social totality. In this sense, for Watsuji the face is not so much the manifestation of a direct Otherness as it is an empty mask, a mediation, as indicated by the fact that it is epitomized by the Noh mask.

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