

**Watsuji Tetsuro's Contributions
to Political Philosophy***

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[T]he hermeneutic method as the method of ethics consists in grasping the dynamic structure of *ningen sonzai* through its most basic everyday expressions. *Ningen sonzai* in its everydayness, constantly manifests itself in the practical connections of life, expression, and understanding; and yet it does not become aware of this as expression. Hence, the effort to realize it as expression is a philosophical activity that assumes the form of a hermeneutic method.¹

The man who is isolated – who is unable to share in the benefits of political association, or has no need to share because he is already self-sufficient – is no part of the *polis*, and must therefore be either a beast or a god. Man is thus intended by nature to be a part of a political whole, and there is therefore an immanent impulse in all men towards an association of this order.²

The authority of totality operates here in the guise of the state, and social ethics is protected from destruction by this authority. But the real state includes communities of *sonzai* and societies of mutual interest (*Gesellschaft*) as its substance. There is no state that is nothing more than a mere legal construction. The solidarity expressed legally falls short of expressing the way of *ningen*, if it is not backed by the community of *sonzai*.³

Introduction

Rinrigaku (the Science of Ethics) is indisputably Watsuji Tetsuro's *magnum opus*, and the work is said to have signified the apex of his academic and philosophical achievement which began with the publication of its first volume in 1934 and was completed with publication of the third volume in 1949.⁴ It was, to say the least, a major critique of and challenge to modern (Western) philosophical anthropology then in vogue, and still continues to generate considerable interest and even controversy. The recent publication of the English translation (1996), though not the entire work, is indicative of this trend.

As will be discussed below, his original contribution to the science of ethics is based on the Japanese concept of *ningen* (人間、human being), thus his dictum that the study of ethics is the study of *ningen*.

Watsuji's *Rinrigaku* is more than a treatise on ethics; rather it can be

read as a work of political philosophy, if political philosophy is defined as a reflection on the nature and essence of the political community (the nation). Watsuji turns out to be more of an Aristotelian and for all intents and purposes this can be shown through parallels between their structure of discourse. Watsuji saw in Aristotle the prototypical science of ethics as the study of *ningen* as well as the role of the *polis* (the nation) in the moral development of people in everyday life.

At the same time, there are some differences between them as well. Watsuji's unique conceptualization of *ningen* as "the betweenness," and as "the dialectical unity of opposites" can be seen as going beyond Aristotle's *Politics*. In his conceptualization the ethical drama of *ningen* unfolds in the process of "double negation," where the self-reflexivity of *ningen* is discernible for the development of national morality. For Watsuji, the structure of *ningen sonzai* as the basis of social ethics is primarily determined by its climatic-historical "betweenness," or "burden," though reflexively turning toward a possible universality or "one world". Watsuji's nation turns out to be of a particular type whose position and implication in world history is both problematic and suggestive.

Watsuji as Aristotelian

In the first volume of *Rinrigaku* (1934), Watsuji examines the practical philosophy of Aristotle, Kant, Cohen, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx and assesses the extent to which their ideas can be identified with the science of ethics as the study of *ningen*. In trying to identify the relevance of his *Rinrigaku* to the history of Western thought, it is no accident that Watsuji goes back to ancient Greece when the word ethics first appeared. Watsuji finds Aristotle's concept of ethics very congenial, though not identical, to his concept of ethics as the study of *ningen*.

Aristotle was recognized as the first philosopher who wrote a systematic treatise on ethics.⁵ Nonetheless, as pointed out by some (Watsuji

refers to J. Barnett, *The Ethics of Aristotle*), the title of the *Nicomachean Ethics* did not derive from Aristotle himself, but from a later generation. Aristotle intended neither to establish Ethics as an independent study (he never used the word ethics as a noun), nor to separate the study of ethics from that of politics. The point is that Aristotle ensured that both *The Politics* (*Politike*) as well as the *Nicomachean Ethics* dealt with political matters. Separating the two is not without some relevance, because they were written in different times, and have been compared superficially. Ethics does not seem to be a part of Politics, as Watsuji himself demurs. Nonetheless, judging from the contents, Ethics in all respect anticipates Politics, and Politics too is premised on Ethics.

In other words, Ethics questions how man can attain the Good, and the answer is that Politics as governance forms men's character (personality), which in turn facilitates man's good behavior. Politics in anticipating such questions, thus seeks to provide and elucidate types of governance, political institutions, and systems. Thus for Aristotle, Ethics and Politics constitute one method which concerns the life of political man (men in the *polis*), and part of political institutions in a more encompassing Politics (*politike*).⁶ Understood thus, Watsuji continues, nowhere did Aristotle contemplate the relationship between Ethics and Politics in opposition to each other, as in the case of modern interpretations.

However, it does appear that Aristotle is contemplating the "Good" from an individual standpoint in parts of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which in fact later became the model for later study. On a closer look, it must be concluded that only when these parts of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are treated from the standpoint of the *polis*, is Ethics constituted as one single science as such. As is spelt out at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, what ethics begins to study is bound to be completed as philosophical anthropology (*he peri ta anthropeia philosophia*) through an investigation of the subject from the standpoint of both the individual and social organizations. Watsuji further

contends that this philosophical anthropology truly corresponds to his ethics as the study of *ningen*.⁷ Aristotle called the philosophy of man, the Politics (*Politike*), which was meant to be the science of man in the *polis* (*polites*). It should be noted too that Aristotle showed us clearly that man should be grasped not merely as an isolated individual, but as social being. It can be said, thus, that Aristotle's science of man (*anthropos*) is at the same time the science of society so that its contents reveal the dual characteristic of human existence.

Aristotle called such *politike* the master science (*arkhitektonike*), and treated it in a teleological manner in recognition of the highest *telos* which is *praxis*; the other sciences are to be subordinated to it. This is the science of *ningen* which accordingly purports to grasp the highest *telos*, the Good of *ningen* (*anthropinon agathon*), but to repeat, not from the standpoint of the individual alone. Watsuji stresses that, when the two are compared the *telos* of the *polis* is greater than that of the individual's and he quotes Aristotle⁸ thus:

True, the end of the individual is the same [in kind] as that of the political community, [and from that point of view we might also say that the end of the individual is the Good of man]; but, even so, the end of the political community is [in degree] a greater thing to attain and maintain, and a thing more ultimate, than the end of the individual⁹

As mentioned above, according to Watsuji, Aristotle's Ethics were concerned with the "Good" of man, meaning not of the individual, but of *ningen*. Thus when his Ethics dealt with the "Good" as a problem of individual consciousness, Aristotle *did* start his investigation by abstracting from individual existence, as a matter of methodological convenience. It is true that each *telos* even if subordinated to the higher *telos* (the Politics) must be self-sufficient. For Aristotle, self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) does not mean that man should lead an isolated life, but should be a member of the *polis*, because

he is born as a social being (*politikos*).

Watsuji asserts that the highest *telos* is not merely for men as individuals, but for *ningen*. Methodological abstraction was for convenience, and not to be taken as admitting that the individual existence was the entire reality. According to Watsuji, this "methodological individualism" did subsequently generate the image of the Universal State in Hellenism, and gave rise to individualistic ideas in modern bourgeois society as if that abstraction was taken for the real. Politics was supposed to bring the abstract individual existence back to the dual characteristic of *ningen*, but Ethics was treated as independent of Politics and was thus subsequently misunderstood as private.

As discussed above, Watsuji contends that Aristotle did recognize the dual characteristic of man (thus *ningen*) as both individual and social so that Aristotle's idea of a human being is not one that is isolated from the *polis*. Therefore, Watsuji argues, Aristotle's contradictory insistence on the self-sufficiency of individuals, and on the *Polis* existing "prior to individuals"¹⁰ must be seen in the context of the unity of the two. Watsuji's interpretation here is that:

we have to see Aristotle's study of *ningen* in terms of the unity of contradictions. It is certainly contradictory to admit the individual as the basic reality, and to insist that the *polis* existed prior to individuals. It points to the problem of the dialectical relationship between the individuality and the totality of *ningen*.¹¹

Thus it can be said that Aristotle did not insist on individualism over against holism of his predecessors. When he abstracted the individual existence first in his study of man, it was for the purpose of clarifying the practice of *logos* or reasoning thereby distinguishing man from animals and plants as a methodological convenience. Even though he perceptively grasped the dual characteristic inherent in man's social existence, he did not emphasize at the outset the essence of *ningen* as the dual characteristic of individual and

society. Even the practice of *logos* (man as rational animal) is not merely individual.

Aristotle did define man as a social being. Man and woman cannot exist alone, thus by nature they come to unite as a family. But, in this case, as was pointed out earlier, the totality (wholeness) of a family comes prior to the husband or wife or child as an individual. The demand of everybody's life is satisfied in the totality. When a *telos* higher than the satisfaction of everyday demands is contemplated, families together form a village; the most natural village is one that is derived from the same family. Furthermore, when many villages come to a union with an almost self-sufficient society, we see the *Polis* emerge. The *Polis* as based on the necessity of life continues to exist for the good life. In a three-stage development, the *Polis* is the *telos* of families and villages. Thus, according to Aristotle, each is by nature an expression of the *telos* so that if the families and villages are based on the essence of man, the *Polis* is based on an even deeper essence. Thus, man is by nature a political animal (man in the *Polis*) so man is by nature *ningen*. So here too, one can see a parallel between Aristotle's political animal and Watsuji's *ningen*.

Although Aristotle did grasp perceptively the dual characteristic inherent in man's social existence, [the individual and society], Watsuji demonstrated that he did not fully realize the two aspects of *ningen* coming into unity. Even the practice of *logos*, by which Aristotle distinguished man from animals or plants, is not devoid of its sociality. Watsuji contends that Aristotle should have begun his ethical inquiry from the dual characteristic, and not from an abstraction of individual existence. For Watsuji, the Japanese concept of *ningen* provides the basis for the renewal of the "concreteness" (具体性) of ethical problems precisely because the problems of ethics as the study of *ningen* are those involved "as a result of this dual structure of human being."¹²

Ethics as the Study of *Ningen*

The most distinguishing feature of *Rinrigaku* arises from the Japanese concept of *ningen* as a relationship between individuals and society. This dual characteristic, Watsuji claims, is inherent in the essence of *ningen*. If we separate the two aspects of *ningen* as the study of man and the study of society respectively, we end up taking the abstract for the real, concrete being. This has happened in modern anthropology, Watsuji argues, which removed the human being from social groups, and dealt with him as if he was "a self-sustaining being." Thus the study of the problem of man in anthropology is preoccupied with that of spirit, body, or the self.¹³ Watsuji claims that the study of ethics must be based on the Japanese concept of *ningen*. In the first line of *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji states that:

The essential significance of the attempt to describe ethics as the study of *ningen* consists in getting away from the misconception, prevalent in the modern world, that ethics is a problem of individual consciousness *only*. This misconception is based on the individualistic conception of a human being inherent in the modern world.¹⁴

In order to understand the significance of *Rinrigaku* before identifying its contributions to political philosophy, an overview of Watsuji's concept of ethics as the study of *ningen* is required. In his hermeneutic, etymological analysis of the four concepts, which all express the essence of *ningen*, he defines more clearly that ethics is the study of *ningen sonzai* (human existence). "The four basic concepts," as Watsuji calls them, are *rinri* (ethics), *ningen* (human being), *yononaka*, or *seken* (society), and *sonzai* (existence).

The concept of ethics is expressed in Japanese by the word, *rinri* (ethic), which is composed of the two Chinese characters, *rin* (倫) and *ri* (理). *Rin* in Chinese means *nakama* (仲間, fellowship) which signifies a system of human relations of the kind that "a definite group of persons have with respect to each other," and at the same time, embraces individual persons as determined by

this system.¹⁵ The Confucian tradition of “the grand *rin*”(大倫) of human beings (the most important kinds of human relationships) comprises each *nakama* (fellowship) of parent and child, lord and vassal, husband and wife, young and old, friend and friend. And “each *nakama* is nothing but a manner of interaction through which people have definite connections with each other.”¹⁶ *Rin* (fellowships) conceived of as “ways of *ningen*” does not exist in general. It is found in a specific form of practical relationship among human beings.

It is important to note that the basis of each relationship is a moral rule which exists prior to the individuals entering into the relationship. Thus, as Watsuji explains:

[n]ow it is not the case that father and son first of all exist separately, and then come to relate to each other in this way later on. But rather, only through this relationship does the father obtain his qualification as father, and the son his qualification as son...only by virtue of the fact that they constitute ‘one fellowship,’ do they become respectively father and son.¹⁷

The actors, however, cannot exist apart from these relationships, i.e., the actors exist only together with the practical relationships. “But when dynamic human existence is actualized repeatedly, in a definite manner,” Watsuji explains:

we can grasp this pattern that constantly makes its appearance in separation from the basis of this dynamic sort of existence. This pattern is *rin* of *gorin gojo* (五倫五常) – the moral rules that govern the five human relations – as transformed into *noematic* meaning.¹⁸

The *rin* thus is a moral relational pattern repeatedly actualized, to which *ri* (理, reason, law) in Chinese is added to express that pattern, which is taken to mean that “ethics consists of the laws of social existence.”¹⁹

Watsuji's example above does not necessarily imply that ethics as such are therefore established once and for all. There is always the possibility of deviation from the established patterns, or even of extinction. In this sense, he argues:

we can say that communal existence contains the danger of extinction on each and every occasion...human existence as such infinitely aims at the realization of communal existence by virtue of the fact that human beings are *ningen*. Because of this, the pattern of practical connections already realized serves, at the same time, as a pattern yet to be achieved. Therefore, although ethics is already what is without being merely what should be, it is also regarded as what should be achieved infinitely, without thereby being a mere law of being.²⁰

Thus his illustration of the grand *rin*, or *gorin gojo* is not meant to "revitalize the ideology of social ethics of ancient China," but to "restore the significance of ethics as the way inherent in human beings," the point being that "through and through, ethics is concerned with those problems that prevail between persons."²¹ This illustration clarifies the original meaning of the concept of ethics as the relationship between person and person, the communal nature of human existence, the resulting patterns of fellowship (i.e., *nakama*, practical connections), which is the formal definition of ethics. Thus he develops the argument that the nature of ethics has to be examined by asking what each person is in his/her "concreteness," and for Watsuji it is *ningen*.

The hermeneutic, etymological analysis of the Japanese concept of *ningen* reveals that this concept includes the dual characteristic of an individual and society i.e., *ningen* defined as the betweenness (*aidagara*, 間柄) of individual and society. According to Watsuji, the literal meaning of the Chinese character of *ningen* (人間) indicates the betweenness of human being (i.e., the public). The Japanese historically interpreted the meaning of *ningen* to signify *hito* (人, an individual) just as the German word *Zwischen den*

Menschen (or *das Zwischenmenschliche*) was abstracted to denote *Mensch* – an individual human being²². The fact that this historical misunderstanding of *ningen* as *hito* (an individual) *albeit* unconsciously did occur socially proves to him something important in that *ningen* means *hito* (an individual) as well. In the historical evolution of the Japanese word, *hito* comes to mean the “other” as opposed to oneself, as in term “one speaks”; it (*hito*) further denotes the public (世人). In other words, the Japanese word, *hito* retains the original meaning of the betweenness (the public). *Ningen* therefore is not only the betweenness of *hito*, but also the betweenness of the self with the other and the public. Considered thus, what enables *hito* to be the self and the other is the fact that the concept is already based on the betweenness of *hito* (人は人と人との間柄, *hito wa hito to hito to no aidagara*). Therefore *ningen* is defined as both oneself and the other, or individual and society (the public).

What do words like *homo* or *anthropos* mean in this connection? Watsuji clarifies that *homo* or *anthropos* do not contain in themselves the meaning of the other (i.e., the public) even when they are used in the plural or used to mean “him” to emphasize someone being named. In French, *homo* in its usage comes to separate *homme* and *on*, just as in German, (even though deriving from the same adjective *Mann*), the word, *Mensch* (individual) is an entirely different word from man (the public). In English the word man means *hito* (individual) excluding all the connotation of the self, the other and the public.²³

The Japanese concept of *ningen* as clarified above is therefore that a human being is “capable of being an individual and at the same time also a member of a society.” *Ningen* gives most adequate expression to this double or dual characteristic, “a distinctive conception of human being.” Watsuji asserts furthermore that:

if we want to conceive of a human being in its concreteness, then the two must be one single ‘study of the human,’ of *ningen*... For

the attempt to comprehend the individual and society as the double or dual characteristic of *ningen* and thereby to uncover there humankind's most authentic essence, can by no means be implemented from a standpoint that presupposes a primary distinction between individual and society.²⁴

The concept of *ningen* expressed by the Japanese word, *seken* (世間) or *yononaka* (世の中) and *sonzai* (存在) also reveals *ningen* as subjective existence, spatio-temporal (also climatic-historical in Watsuji's sense), as briefly discussed below. The Japanese word, *yononaka* or *seken* (the public, society) is composed of the Chinese characters of *yo* and *naka*. *Yo* (世) of *yononaka* (世の中) denotes the meaning of society as used in everyday life in the phrases such as "yo-no-naka-ni-deru" (entering into society), "yo-wo-suteru" (abandon the society), or "yo-watari" (living in the society), thus a word *yo* by itself undoubtedly carries the meaning of the human community (society). As Watsuji explains, *yo* initially meant a generation (代) or time (時), on the one hand, and *naka* (中) or *aida*, the spatial betweenness, on the other hand. As the everyday use of *yo* (世) came to denote the meaning of the community and time (temporality), and, likewise, *aida* (間) or *naka* (中) came to mean the spatiality associated with the human relations. For example, the everyday usage of "danjo no naka" (between man and woman), or "fufu no naka" (between husband and wife) illustrates the relationship as the practical relationship between person and person. That is why *aidagara* (the betweenness) and practical interconnections (*kouiteki renkan* – 行為的連関) came to mean the same.

It should be noted here, however, that the betweenness or relationship is not a static space as expressed in the phrase such as "between the desks," or "in the water," but is a living, dynamic betweenness, as *ningen sonzai* is "an incessant movement."²⁵ What is more, *yononaka* (society) as practical interconnection necessarily included the meaning of "subjective extension," which is betweenness (*aida*, *naka*) as much as the transitory practical

interconnection of acts is the dynamic movement of *ningen*. Therefore, it must be pointed out that when people grasped the meaning of *seken* or *yononaka* as community or society, they at the same time grasped its spatio-temporal character, the climatic-historical character of society.

The meaning of the Japanese word, *sonzai* (existence) is also understood as the "practical interconnection of acts" of *ningen*, or strictly speaking, *ningen sonzai* (human existence). Again, back to the original meaning of the word, *son* (存) of *sonzai* (存在) does not simply mean something is there, but "the self-sustenance of the self" as it denotes the temporal, subjective, practical action of *ningen* (as in the case of Confucius). *Zai* (在) means "being in a certain place," not only in a spatial sense, but also in a social sense as in the phrases *zai-shuku* (在宿, being in an inn), *zai-taku* (在宅, being at home), and *zai-kyo* (在郷, being in a hometown) exemplify. *Zai* thus clarified is suggestive of the fact that there exists a being as a subjective action in some human relationship. That men come and go freely in the human relationship indicates a subjective, practical communication taking place within a betweenness of persons.

It is equally true to say that no one can be in a society without such practical action. Thus *son* and *zai* taken together means the subject's self possession in the betweenness, thus *ningen* possesses its own being. *Sonzai*, therefore, is strictly speaking the practical in the connection of acts, *ningen sonzai*.²⁶ As Watsuji elsewhere elucidates the meaning of *sonzai*, "[i]f it is tenable to hold that *son* (存) is the self-sustenance of the self and *zai* (在) means to remain within human relations, then *son-zai* is precisely the sustenance of the self as betweenness." That is, it means that *ningen* possesses itself. We could also simply say that *sonzai* is "the interconnection of acts of *ningen*." Hence, in the strict sense of the word, "*son-zai* is only applied to *ningen*."²⁷

Implications

In the preceding discussion, Watsuji hermeneutically revealed the four basic attributes (ethics, the received meaning of *ningen*, society, existence) which Watsuji used to be conceptualize concept of *ningen*. As Watsuji contends, on the basis of the evolved meanings of the word the Japanese have produced “a distinctive conception of human being” according to which *ningen* possesses “the dual character of being subjective communal existence as the interconnection of acts, at the same time, it connotes an individual that acts through these connections.”²⁸ According to this idea, *ningen* is the public while at the same time the individual human being living within it. In the same way, we recall (i.e., *yo-no-naka*) how the betweenness (*aidagara*) came to mean the same as practical relationships so that *ningen* refers not merely to an individual human being nor merely to society. The difference between *ningen* and *anthropos* lies precisely in the fact that the nature of *ningen* is disclosed in the dual characteristic of being both “public” and “individual” human beings. Thus, *ningen* cannot be conceived of as an isolated individual, which is abstract and illusory. Understood thus, Watsuji makes an important point that:

What is recognizable here is a dialectical unity of those double characteristics that are inherent in a human being...in so far as *ningen* also refers to the public, it is also refers to that community which exists between person and person, thus signifying society as well, and not just isolated human beings. Precisely because of this meaning, it is *ningen*. Hence, oneself and the other are absolutely separated from each other but, nevertheless, both become one in communal existence. Individuals are basically different from society and yet dissolve into society. *Ningen* denotes the unity of these contradictions. Unless we keep this dialectical structure in mind, we cannot understand the essence of *ningen*.²⁹

So it is here that Watsuji's point of departure from Aristotle is recognizable, for human existence (*ningen sonzai*) is disclosed in the dialectical unity of the opposites of individual and the public. Also Watsuji's description

of *ningen* as a dynamic being is recognizable here in the fact that human existence is "an incessant movement" towards the reunification of the individual and the public. It is thus in the structure of *ningen sonzai* that a movement of negation is recognized. Furthermore, the reunification of the individual and the public manifests itself in the double negation constituting "a single movement."³⁰:

The negation of negation is the self-returning and self-realizing movement of the absolute totality that is precisely social ethics. Therefore, the basic principle of social ethics is the realization of totality (as the negation of negation) through the individual.³¹

Thus, a possible solution to Aristotle's "reunification" problem of ethics and the *polis* (the nation) can be seen in the dialectical unity of the opposites at the level of the structure of solidarity, which inheres in these system of social ethics. As Watsuji suggests, "[w]e shall try to grasp solidarity from the viewpoint of the community of *sonzai*," which can be followed "pyramidically, from the simple *sonzai* community relating two persons up to the complicated one of the national connection."³² It can however be shown schematically here.

There are two moments involved in the double negation for the reunification of the above concepts. One moment of negation is seen when the acting subject or group comes to establish the individual as against totality (the negation of totality). In the second moment the negation of the individual occurs when the individual self-reflexively "surrenders to the totality." As Watsuji states, "[a]part from the self-awareness of an individual, there are no social ethics." If the situation can be related to social groups, the second moment is disclosed when the solidarity with its own law of social ethics is recognized as a "defective form of solidarity." This dialectical process of unity/disruption/ reunification seems endless, for the movement of negation is incessant, and "in any totality whatsoever, the individuality is not extinguished without a residue."³³

It is also important to observe that, since many forms of solidarity “overlap pyramidically,” “each *sonzai*-community always has both a private and public character; the closer the community of *sonzai*, the more privacy is intensified.” Whenever “privacy” mediates the unity of social ethics, it will not thereby cease to be private, though it prevents the emergence of truth inherent in *ningen*. Larger organizations such as societies of mutual interest (*Gesellschaft*), or what Watsuji calls “egoistically connected societies” may draw lessons concerning communal structure from the community of *sonzai*, without making *sonzai* communal. They may formally make use of “trust, sincerity, service, responsibility, obligation,” etc., without much substance, revealing “deprived forms of social ethics.”⁸⁴ Watsuji points out, “these deprived forms make us conscious of solidarity all the more strongly.”

On the other hand, the communal character of the state with its legal system of social ethics becomes a “uniformly tightened system” with little flexibility where each structure of solidarity is given expression in legal fashion so that “responsibility and obligation are imposed compulsorily.” The state with a legalist bent, while protecting social ethics from destruction, assumes the authority of totality. Because of the fact that the solidarity expressed legally falls short of expressing the way of *ningen*, if it is not backed up by the community of *sonzai*, Watsuji speaks of the real [concrete] state which includes “communities of *sonzai* and societies of mutual interest (*Gesellschaft*) as its substance.”⁸⁵

In the last section of the third volume of *Rinrigaku* published in 1949, Watsuji explores the ways in which Japan participated in the formation of what he called “one world,” when the emergence of the Cold War was discernible. One point looms large and consistent with his perspective is that each nation is shaped by its own historical-climatic conditions and that none of us should expect the advent of the “universal state” as such. Instead, he advocates the idea of the unity in diversity, which shuns the idea of the cultural assimilation of one nation by another. The realization of the idea of

the unity in diversity is quite compatible with participation in the formation of the "one world," by not wiping out one's own particularity, but rather promoting it as the task for the future. We need more than ever before to acquaint ourselves with the historical-climatic perspective, so he suggests. The necessary first step is to "know yourself," or your own cultural traditions, to cultivate the sense of what constrains our perspective. The policy of "national seclusion" (鎖国) weighs heavily on Japan even today he claimed. Particularly lamentable for him was the belief that Japan created itself in isolation. Even after the "sudden" repeal of that policy, Japan hardly reflected on the significance of this experience; his particular apprehension was Japan's inability to transcend this myopic view of the world. Adopting foreign cultures by way of accepting their cultural activities becomes in turn a means of shaping Japan's own national character. This perhaps is the most important "ought" (*sollen*) or requirement for Japan to participate in the formation of the "one world." This point echoes his voice that was inscribed in the first volume of *Rinrigaku* thus:

The significance of world history lies in this; that the way of *ningen* is realized in a variety of climatic and historical types. Just as the universal is capable of being universal only through its particular materialization. In this way, only where each historical nation aims at the formation of totality in its particularity, do international relations become possible, in the true sense of the word. An approach that attempts to be international by ignoring nationality is nothing more than an abstract illusion.⁸⁶

Endnotes

- ¹ Watsuji Tetsuro, *Rinrigaku*, 2 Vols., Iwanami, Tokyo, 1937,1965, p.47; *Watsuji Tetsuro's Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996, p.43.
- ² Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, edited and translated by E. Barker, Oxford University press, Oxford, 1946, 1969, p.14.
- ³ Watsuji Tetsuro, 1937, p.29; Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, p.25.
- ⁴ Yuasa Yasuo, *Watsuji Tetsuro*, Chikuma Gakugei Bunko, Tokyo, 1981, 1995.
- ⁵ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by H. Rackham, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1926, 1968.
- ⁶ Watsuji Tetsuro, *Ningen no Gaku to shitenno Rinrigaku*, Iwanami, Tokyo, 1934, pp.44-5.
- ⁷ Watsuji Tetsuro, 1934, p.47; *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1181 b 15.
- ⁸ *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a 25-b 11.
- ⁹ *The Politics of Aristotle*, p.355.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.18ff.
- ¹¹ Watsuji Tetsuro,1934, p.53.
- ¹² Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, p.22.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.13.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.9.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.12.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Watsuji Tetsuro,1934, pp.10-4.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp.10-4.
- ²⁴ Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, p.14.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.186.
- ²⁶ Watsuji Tetsuro,1934, pp.35-9.
- ²⁷ Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, p.21.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.22.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p.25.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p.24.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p.23.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.25.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ Watsuji Tetsuro,1937, p.30; Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, p.26.