

The Crisis of Japanese Identity in the 21st Century and Watsuji Tetsurō's Ethics

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Abstract

According to some thinkers, in the 21st century, the Japanese society is facing a crisis of values. The postmodern approach to the individual and society may be one of the causes of this problem. In this point of view, an inadequate grasp of the relationship between the individual and the society seems to play an important role. The problem of this relationship was elaborated by the early 20th century philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō who endeavoured to re-define the role of an individual in the society. This paper attempts to examine the contemporary problem of Japanese identity from the perspective of Watsuji's conception of interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: ethics in Japan, contemporary Japanese society, individual and society, emptiness, betweenness

Izveček

Po mnenju nekaterih mislecev se japonska družba v 21. stoletju sooča s krizo vrednot. Postmodernistični pristop do posameznika in družbe je lahko eden izmed razlogov za ta problem. V tem vidiku neustrezen pristop k odnosom med posameznikom in družbo igra pomembno vlogo. O problemu tega odnosa je razpravljala Watsuji Tetsurō, filozof iz zgodnjega 20. stoletja, ki si je prizadeval, da bi redefiniral vlogo posameznika v družbi. Ta članek tako raziskuje sodobne probleme japonske identitete iz perspektive Watsujijevega pojmovanja medosebnih odnosov.

Ključne besede: etika na Japonskem, sodobna japonska družba, posameznik in družba, praznost, vmesnost

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Foreword¹

In the 21st century, it seems that Japanese society is facing a phenomenon that some may consider as a crisis of values. Some scholars would argue that it emerged from a postmodern approach to the individual and the society. It is arguable if it is the major cause for the contemporary crisis of values in Japanese society. There is an on-going public debate on the value system of the Japanese in mass media. However, the debate itself is not of my concern in this paper. I am working on the assumption that the value crisis is present in the contemporary Japanese society and I will solely focus on an ethical aspect of this crisis. By an ethical aspect I mean the relationship between the individual and the society, a major pillar of Watsuji Tetsurō's thought, which I consider particularly topical here. The findings of my paper are predominantly based on a qualitative textual analysis of Watsuji's work *Ethics* which points to a crucial aspect of the problem of Japanese identity from a philosophical perspective which I consider to be up to date in many ways.

Causes, Symptoms and Consequences

Since the postwar period, the emphasis of the Japanese value system successively shifted from communitarianism to individualism (Oyama 1990). The individualism in the original sense of the word is based on a balance between individual rights for liberty, equality, and public responsibilities. However, in the case of Japan, it seems that in the postwar pursuit of denouncing the totalitarianism, the Japanese over-emphasized freedom and right of self-determination of the individual and equality.

This kind of individualistic approach was accompanied with the neoliberalism focused rather on the individual, and the society was regarded as derived. However, that approach proved to be non-functional, because it ended in overemphasizing the individual's definition of his own values at the expense of social ones. Instead of the integration of the individual into the society, it apparently led to a disintegration of social solidarity and weakened an affinity with the community, which was considered as secondary to the autonomy of

¹ This paper is partially based on remarks originally presented at the *5th International Symposium of Young Researchers* held at the Autonomous University of Barcelona on 4th July 2014. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Blai Guarné Cabello for discussion about some relevant points of Watsuji Tetsurō's ethical thought and the identity of Japanese.

independent and free individuals who are brought together conditionally on their own terms. Accordingly, the community was regarded as a hindrance in living as one sees fit and the individual was regarded as the one who independently decided his preference to remain or not to remain within its framework. As a result, the individualism and neoliberalism tended to be misunderstood, leading to a misconception that individuals are free to do almost anything as long as it does not violate a law or offend others (Kobayashi 2000).

However, it should be definitely mentioned that the inclination to this kind of individualism that became rampant in Japanese society found its expression on the right of self-determination and development of political participation as well, as evident especially in the 60's and 70's. Nevertheless, this rather positive transition was accompanied with the aggressive asserting of egoistic interests, the gradual dissolution of local communities, the increasing number of nuclear families, single-parent families and divorces in a way remarkably similar to Europe and the United States, not to mention the feeling of alienation from the society (e.g. *hikikomori* 引き籠り) and the alarming number of violent misbehaviour cases at Japanese schools.

Furthermore, during the 60's and 70's in Japan, there was a substantial increase of the so-called new religions which continues until the present day (Kisala 2006). This social phenomenon is one of the significant responses to the crisis of spiritual identity. The new religions such as Buddhist-based Sōka Gakkai (創価学会), Risshō Kōsei-kai (立正佼成会), or Bussho Gonenkai Kyōdan (佛所護念会教団) aspire to saturate the contemporary search for values with the resurrection of past assurances in the context of present-day social issues by means of attempting to draw upon tradition and yet remain relevant and to date. Although they share a certain stress on identification with the community, they deal with the identity of the individual, at the same time.

The membership in community is critically important to the individual in Japan (Carter 2013, 138). The individual tends to be seen as having no importance outside his group or community identifications. However, given that a group or society that does not provide individual with assurance and sense of security, not to mention self-realization and self-fulfillment, there is no way to guarantee good-working social relations.

Generally speaking, the social constraints imposed on individuals by the traditional structures were liberated and obviously, the Japanese, traditionally profoundly influenced by the principle of self-restraint and dissolving the ego into the group, are inclined to lose a sense of devotion to the social structures to which they belong, as elsewhere in other modern societies. The contradiction between individual and social interests imposes an excessive strain on every individual and, naturally, the whole society. I assume that this kind of conception of interpersonal relationships hinders the awareness of a person's identity and also the adequate ethical relationships. The confusion of approach to other people is a timeless issue which certainly cannot be definitively untangled. However, for those who are engaged in contemporary Japanese society research, Watsuji's conception brings a very inspirational outlook which may open new perspectives on variety of issues related to Japanese identity.

Watsuji's View of Human and Social Relations

Watsuji Tetsurō (和辻哲郎, 1889–1960), together with Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎, 1870–1945) were the two most seminal thinkers of a reflective phase of Japanese philosophy. Both of them were strongly influenced by phenomenology and well versed in various writings of Western philosophers. To a great extent, both of them, like many other Japanese intellectuals at that time, had tried to develop and articulate a synthesis of Eastern and Western thought. While Nishida is credited with having introduced phenomenology to Japan, Watsuji contributed to the intercultural dialogue by elaborating phenomenology into a systematic study of ethics.² His quest for a phenomenology, Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintō-based interpretation of Japanese society is accompanied with a harsh criticism of Western individualism, that has become predominant at that time in Japan.

Watsuji's philosophy strives to articulate a more comprehensive view of humanity and the human relations grounded in the grasp of contradiction between the individual and the society. In his point of view, the individuality of human cannot be considered alone, isolated from sociality, because any individuality is inevitably immersed in the world, which is always shared, whether as a shared time or as a shared space. The individual isolated from the context of society or

² Whereas Nishida employed phenomenology to elaborate the original concept of pure experience (*junsui keiken* 純粹經驗), Watsuji applied phenomenology to ontology and Japanese intellectual tradition-based ethical system.

community of other individuals, is actually a non-existing abstraction. That is because such a consideration of human is only temporal, but not spatial as well. Provided that people are mere individuals, the ethics would also be only a matter of individual consciousness. However, since there is no *nakama* (倫)³ to relate to ethically, then there is nothing ethical there in Japanese sense of the word:

The locus of ethical problems lies not in the consciousness of the isolated individual, but precisely in the in-betweenness of person and person. Because of this, ethics is the study of *ningen*. (Watsuji 2007, 20)

Since Watsuji radically disapproves a purely individualistic assumption of social human being of Western individualism and expresses his viewpoint on humans as essentially social, his ethics is sometimes labelled as communitarian. However, such a sweeping generalisation is the very source of misconceptions about Watsuji's ethical system. In fact, his ethical system is not communitarian as it is not liberal.

Communitarian social theory contends that the identity of individual is not independent of society and must be understood within a given social context. The individual independence and autonomy, then, is not a social concern. To this extent Watsuji's viewpoint could be considered communitarian, but here should be mentioned that Watsuji also draws on Buddhist metaphysics manifested in the Japanese language. Specifically, it is his understanding of humanity as the so-called "movement of double negation".⁴ Since we, human beings, are both individuals and yet we are involved in groups or communities to fulfil our individual role in fact means to negate our social involvement. On the other hand, to fulfil our social role means to renounce a great part of our individuality in order to emphasize and confirm our group membership.

Emptiness

Such an act of double distancing either from our individuality or our sociality, is, simply put, the negation of negation or the movement of double negation. In the movement of double negation, the distance between self and other disappears and

³ *Nakama* (倫・仲) originally meant "companion", "fellow", and "circle of friends". It is the initial character of compound word *rinri* (倫理) which means "ethics" or "morals". (see Watsuji 2007, 21)

⁴ The society emerges from negating the individual and consequently the individual emerges from negating the society. This movement of double negation establishes provisionally (until another act of negation) both the society and the individual.

their mutual negation results in absolute emptiness. The term “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*, *kū* 空) implies that neither the individual nor the society has actual intrinsic identity. The identity exists only potentially. Instead of identity, there is just pure potentiality. This way the emptiness could be conceived as an empty space open to any imposition, any possibility. The moment that the choice is made or imposition is realized, a myriad of other possibilities no longer exists and a myriad of new possibilities emerges.

As Robert E. Carter explains in the English translation of *Ethics (Rinrigaku* 倫理学), according to Buddhist teaching, “everything is deprived of its substantiality, nothing exists independently, everything is related to everything else, nothing ranks as a first cause, and even the self is but a delusory construction” (Carter 1996, 350). Even the emptiness itself is empty, which means that it lacks a concrete identity. The emptiness has no distinctive features, it has no attributes, it changes persistently into countless alterations. It is impossible even to define the emptiness as a “summary” of both the negation of the individual and the negation of the society. Every effort to define the emptiness fails because rationality is unable to describe something utterly irrational. However, the negation of what originally is negative gives rise to the provisional identity or also, to be precise, the non-identity, which is ever-changing by means of contradiction. In other words, since the emptiness is the very foundation of our individual and social identity, the identity itself is finally self-contradictory (Carter 1996, 348).

In a purely Buddhist approach, from the dualistic nature of human being, from our intrinsic emptiness, a constant tension emerges. The tension between individuality and sociality establishes impermanent and changeable character of human being. Ignoring or denying this *dharma* only leads to attachment (e.g. to things or life) and suffering. The ever-changing character of human being is underlied by the emptiness as the matrix that grounds all distinctions. The emptiness here serves as the background to all foregrounds (Miyagawa 2008, 208–9). In everydayness of life, such a feature is represented by the so called “betweenness” (*aidagara* 間柄) between us, a permanently emptying relational space in which both good and evil only exist as possibilities. In other words, the emptiness represented by betweenness between us is itself empty, yet it makes possible all kinds of social relationships and distinctive features of these as well.

Betweenness

Watsuji's *Ethics*, published in several volumes from 1937 to 1949, to a great extent challenges inherently Western conceptions of the relationship between the individual and the society. In the first part of the book Watsuji focuses on rethinking the ontological foundation of human existence. Beginning with a critique of modern ethics as a "problem of individual consciousness only" (Watsuji 2007, 9), he asserts that the concept of the individual is but "one moment of human existence" and therefore should not be understood as "totality of human" (Watsuji 2007, 19). Furthermore, he considers the individuality of humans to be merely an abstracted view of the human nature as an isolated ego. Similarly, sociality, as well as individuality, is merely one aspect of human being. However, society is only a society when comprising of individuals. Neither the individual nor the community is able to exist independently (Watsuji 2007, 154). On the other hand, the individual is only an individual in relation to other individuals recognizing his otherness. Generally speaking, neither the individual nor the society exists separated from the other. Ultimately, a human consists of individuality and sociality, so he necessarily cannot be independent of interpersonal relationships in society. Ethics, then, is the study of human interactions with others.

According to Watsuji, humanity is constituted neither by individuals nor by society, but rather in the dialectical movement between the two. The existence of the individual is embedded within the social web of betweenness. When referring to actual human being, betweenness is the network of relationships that embeds humanity in sociality. It embeds human in his social meaning (such as being an inhabitant of a certain state or a member of a certain church). However, as already mentioned above, it must be asserted again, that the crux of betweenness as a foundation of both the individual and the social character of human being is not just an obligation to the community, but a "double negation", of both the individual and the society. Betweenness within society becomes evident in language as a means of communication and general sharing (Watsuji 2007, 58). Living in the same betweenness ensures us that when we come into conflict, we share the same desire to reach a compromising solution (Carter 2013, 142). To a great extent, the betweenness determines the everyday being in the world as a common sense, but also is determined by the people within it. Betweenness as a

common sense is an expression of social climate, which reciprocally determines and is determined by history and environmental conditions (Watsuji 2007, 78).⁵

Movement of Double Negation

As individuals, no matter how we try to extricate from it, we are never separated from social relationships. We share a common language, tools, a cultural heritage. We are even born in this world already within a network of relationships as family members. And last but not least, we become members of various groups on our own initiative. We attend lectures at schools, work in companies and we join sports clubs. As individuals, we voluntarily attend the group and this way negate our individuality or negate the group by choosing not to attend them.

This is precisely the notion of movement of double negation put into practice of everydayness. For example, one personally, as an individual, dislikes a big family party, but since one is not only an individual, but a brother, mother-in-law, nephew or granddaughter, attends the party and shares a festive time with his relatives. When one, for example, loses touch with his family or his job, insisting on an assumption that he is an independent individual, he renounces a very important part of his social bonds. On the other hand, when one as a member of society neglects his own creativity and blindly supports viewpoints and deeds of others, one renounces individuality. This is precisely the moment when dialectics between the individual and the society is instantly stuck and ceases. The individualism interrupts and this way prevents the individual from being an active part of the whole which is based on active individuals. In a broad sense not only individualism, but also the other extreme, totalitarianism, interrupts dialectic of mutual negation, and ultimately silences the dialogue between the individual and the society. That is why it must be emphasized again and again that neither social relationships nor individuality is superior to the other.

Such an utterly Buddhist idea of middle path void of all extremes is, according to Watsuji, the very essence of humanity, which is selfless, empty and embedded within the social web of betweenness. The more relationships we make, the more the space between extends. On one hand, our social aspect unfolds, on the other hand, our individual aspect unfolds as well. To be a human means constantly to shift between being an individual and being a member of the greater whole such as

⁵ For further reference see Watsuji 2011.

family, community, church, or state (Watsuji 2007, 138–9). The individuality does not exist without the whole from which it separates and against which it demarcates itself. And conversely, the society does not exist without being consisted of active individuals. The individuality emerges from negating the totality and vice versa.

Self, Other, and (non-)Duality

The basis of real unity is neither the community, nor the individual, it is the mutual relation between them. The more the individual fulfills himself in the society, the more can the society achieve an ethical unity (Couteau 2006, 283). This works on an assumption that the betweenness is the very foundation of human relationships and that the structure of human (*ningen* 人間) is equally individual and social. It is expressed in the original meaning of compound *ningen* as “being individual” (*hito* 人) and “being between” (*aida* 間) in conjunction. Thus, *ningen* refers to the social orientation of a human being and consequently to the individuality of human being. Hence, the above mentioned clearly shows that the “between” is not a space between two mutually independent entities, which belong to certain hierarchy, but ultimately is the space of mutual relationship (Mochizuki 2006, 48).

There is another very important remark on the space between individual and social being that should be pointed out here. The space is also an arena of interacting with others and as such, it both joins and separates us. In the mutual interaction, the community on one hand and the individuality on the other takes its shape. On one hand, in a community, the identity of self disappears, on the other, as individuality, social impositions disappear. Both the social and individual identity as separate entities fade away, both subsume into the non-duality. In the space of non-duality, there is no distance between self and other and the betweenness shrinks to nothingness. As a result of this non-duality, the most distinctive characteristic of human beings is benevolence.

However, the fact that being human means being benevolent does not mean that there should not appear problems and contradictions in our mutual relationships. On the contrary, there is a myriad of problems in interpersonal relationships we have to deal with. The problems that unavoidably arise when one human relates to another, require at least a decent sense of appropriate attitude.

Along with the sense of appropriate attitude, there are also expectations and principles that are required for human beings living in any community.

As the space of betweenness persistently shrinks and extends, the ethics of relationships emerging between people develops accordingly. A human renouncing social relationships, in this regard, is not considered as an individual, it is not even a human being. It is because since there is no space to relate to other humans and there is no way for him to engage in the dialectic of his own individual and social aspects which evolves and cultivates not only his sociality, but also his individuality. That person is not a complex being, he lacks the crucial aspects of humanity, so he is—in simple terms—inhumane. Any community (e.g. a family or a church) as a whole develops together with its elements, the individuals, whose relationships give rise to it. This way continual disintegration of community (as a whole) leads to its subsequent restoration. In other words, duality brings about non-duality and non-duality brings about duality. Hence, true ethics, according to Watsuji, is a return to an authentic unity through an initial contradiction within the self, and between the self and the other in the betweenness. The awareness of the mutual interconnection of everything blurs the borderlines of separation and former duality of self-other disappears in non-duality. Here becomes clear how significant the dialogue between the individual and the society is. An incessant movement of the dialectic between the individual and the society returns humans back to themselves (Mochizuki, 2006, 49–50).

An Interpretation of Watsuji's Ethics in the Context of Value Crisis of Japanese Society

The afore mentioned outline of relation between humanity, betweenness and emptiness implies that, in Watsuji's terms, the dialogue between individuality and sociality, that is supposed to occur incessantly in betweenness, falls silent. Or, to be more illustrative, the individual unable to put up with a social pressure to integrate into society who finally resigns on himself or the society, brings about the cessation of dialogue (Couteau 2006, 285–6). The society composed of resigned individuals certainly is unwilling to comply with common interest and also ends silent towards the individual. Without even a slightest hint of a response, there is no relationship. In Watsuji's point of view, the ethical system, establishing itself in dialogue, is a fundamental law of human existence. What is more, for him it is the very quintessence of human existence in the world (Watsuji 2007, 22).

That is why our attitude to this principle matters when attempting to find our own identity and restore the disintegrated relationships in society.

In ethical social relations, the crucial value is a responsibility, whereas an individualistic approach (which, according to Watsuji, barely has anything to do with humanity) asserts freedom and right to self-determination. To establish harmony (*wa* 和) between those is presumably a solid basis for functional social relationships. Even though the crucial individual and social values are contradictory, yet in a dynamic nature of their mutual negation, in the “space” of emptiness, the dialectic relationship emerges. After all, to paraphrase Watsuji, the ethics is all about the dialogue between the individual and the society. Dialogue progresses only in dialectic and vice versa.

Following the red thread running through the ethical system of Watsuji, we come to figure out that his way of grasping the ethics is far from examining whether the Japanese act ethically or not. Rather, he analyses their way of thinking and acting and reveals their ethical characteristics. Hence, Watsuji’s study of ethics does not concern the ethical “ought” as frequently seen in the “Western” approach, but the actual way of thinking and acting. His ethics refers to a system of relations that are important for a proper interpersonal association, including some sense of the appropriate attitudes to embody in dealing with others. Watsuji’s ethical thought as a complex synthesis of Shintō, Buddhism and Confucianism, is not interested in theoretical ethical ideals or individual moral consciousness. The sphere of interest for Watsuji was the actual subjective way of human existence (Miyagawa 2008, 222). That is also why he tried to examine the conditions of human being in the network of betweenness and did not separate the individual and social aspect of human being.

Presently it may seem to us that there comes a time when “ought” becomes required to some extent. The crisis of values is the cardinal problem of any postmodern society worldwide and Japan is not an exception. However, when trying to deal with the problem, no matter how large scale it is, we should always keep in mind that what works in a certain milieu, it might not necessarily work in another one. It surely does not mean that the principles and rules of community and society have been forgotten and left for good and the Japanese are unable to bring them back or recreate them without any imperative. On the contrary, if Watsuji’s deductions of ontological foundation of human being were true, then the

appropriate individual and social settings must be able to reset at anytime and any place.

As we have already become acquainted with the crucial point of Watsuji's ethics, which is that neither individuality nor social relationships is superior to the other, we should be aware of what the actual ethical conduct means for him. The true ethical conduct primarily aims to the achievement of relative harmony. Harmony is the key achievement of community in shintoistic point of view. Shintō, the indigenous religion of Japan, is based on harmony, a spirit of thankfulness and sincere effort. To lack any of these qualities is unacceptable and shameful. To lack these qualities means to risk losing face in front of the whole community one belongs to, and for Japanese, that is the worst failure of all. The key to achieving harmony lies in humans themselves, in their ability to be trustworthy and truthful (Couteau 2006, 286). However, this is impossible without having a *kokoro* (心), which is a crucial personality trait in Japanese society. The word *kokoro* is usually translated as "heart and mind". It implies that the mind and heart (body) are united. To put it starkly, notion of *kokoro* suggests, on one hand, that human reason should be compassionate and, on the other hand, that human feelings should be reasonable. A person who expresses his own *kokoro* is trustworthy and truthful, he is a person with whom another person does not have to hesitate to enter into an intimate relationship. A person with *kokoro* is someone with no ulterior motive who displays a unity of his acting and feeling, reason and feeling and, naturally, body and mind.

Trust and truth that serve as a root to benevolence in human *kokoro*, have the critical importance in all positive ethical human relationships. The virtue of sincerity (*makoto* 誠) serves as the foundation of trustworthiness, truthfulness and honesty. To be sincere means that a person will act as he says he will act. Hence, that person is perceived as one that can be counted on to deliver to his word. Furthermore, it connotes a recognition of one's intrinsic agenda that one attempts to express in one's behaviour and acting. In any community and society, sincerity reveals an attitude of mutual trust as an integral part of what is already embedded in the betweenness of interpersonal relationships (Carter 2013, 145–6).

The betweenness is not only the space where human beings meet each other, it is an apparent empty space profoundly etched by cultural tradition. As we are born into the world, we are not *tabula rasa*, for we have already been influenced by

climate and culture through the experience of our mothers. As we grow old, we encounter our family, other relatives, schoolmates, weather changes, cultural customs and many other stimuli. The exposure which occurs in such an encounter teaches us much about relationship strategy, drawing on the centuries of previous experience which is inevitably included in the betweenness. To be aware of the betweenness between humans and the mistakes that we made in our past relationships, helps us to figure out possibilities for resolving current issues with others as they arise (Carter 2013, 143).

Conclusion

Watsuji's ethical system, even though it is very complex and profoundly elaborated, harbours some very important contradictions that every interpreter of his work should pay attention to and that should be definitely mentioned here. Undoubtedly, Watsuji's work defends Japanese culture as well as the emperor so it is not surprising that he is frequently criticized as a reactionary. Thinkers such as Sakai Naoki harshly criticize Watsuji's concept of "being on good terms (*nakayoshi* 仲良し)" within the society: "Watsuji proposes a kind of ethics whose central guiding principle is to be 'on good terms' with others: It is a kind of ethics that permits one to neglect other social and ethical concerns in order to remain on good terms with others." (Sakai 1991, 175) Also, Watsuji seems to underline the social aspect of existence to an extent that he considers a nation to be the apex of ethical being (Yoshizawa 2006, 373–4).

Moreover, he seems to overemphasize confidence in the community or the society as a whole, in spite of the fact that it does not consist solely of ethically acting persons. Behind the cover-up of so called "public welfare", there could be a hidden manipulation. In any society, there is always a threat of abuse of authority under the false pretext of "socially convenient" that results in an unethical acting. Also, Watsuji seems to underestimate the problem of responsibility. In words of Jeffrey Wu: "... In the end, Watsuji seems to have been oblivious to the possibility that the community could also betray the individual, which was the case for many in the context of total war." (Wu 2001, 101)⁶

⁶ For further reference considering critical views on Watsuji see Bellah 1965; Bernier 2006; La Fleur 2001; Mayeda 2006; Nagami 1981; Sakai 1991.

Despite the fact that Watsuji never promoted or defended totalitarianism, his reliance on *nakayoshi*, self-sacrifice and social unity as ethical values remarkably resonates with the official rhetoric that was used in Japan of thirties. However, we should be very careful when attempting to interpret Watsuji's ethical system in term of politics. It would also be short-sighted to denounce it as a whole because of that.

From a philosophical perspective, Watsuji's ethics is an inspirational contribution to find a new intellectual ground of self-comprehension and re-definition of social and individual identity in Japanese society. It is a theoretical challenge to understand oneself better and to set conditions of new initiation of dialogue based on the middle path between the liberal and the communitarian attitude, between the individualism and the totalitarianism. Nevertheless, the actual application depends purely on the individuals who consciously decide to apply such a middle path of benevolence, trustworthiness, truthfulness and sincerity. In other words, it requires *kokoro* displaying the humanity and reflecting the humanity of others in betweenness (Couteau 2006, 287).

In the end, Watsuji's thought is imbued with the Buddhist notion of emptiness and maintainance of harmony between individuality and sociality. There certainly is no room for the egoistic approach or pure altruism in the betweenness between humans. The emptiness provides humans with empty selves that fills in mutual interaction and then empty again and again. Now, in a disagreement or argument, there are no selves to be offended. The striving to win in a quarrel or humiliating our opponent in a fight is only a matter of ego. In the relationships, the individual ego should be suspended because it hinders the achievement of consensus or agreement. Without any consensus or agreement, there is no way to become a functional and effective community and society.

As we share the same betweenness, it is in our interest to strive for a positive resolution of our conflicts, disagreements and quarrels without passion for winning at all cost. The sincere display of *kokoro* consolidates our truthfulness and trustworthiness in the eyes of others and ourselves. This sincerity leads to group harmony. Trustworthiness and truthfulness are not mere theoretical demands, but are to be found in the actual actions through and by which they are connected to one another. Even those who act in such a way as to seemingly reject the truthfulness or trustworthiness, those who lie, offend, break promises, and do harm to others nevertheless inevitably rely on the expectation that others act truthfully

and do not figure out their hidden intention. So in the end, every social interaction is based on the trusting relationships that we can rely on (Yoshizawa 2006, 218). A group, community or society (on a larger scale) which provides its members with a strong sense of belonging by means of trusting relationships on one hand and a forum for self-realization and personal fulfilment of *kokoro* on the other, is supposed to meet the needs of anyone anywhere in the world.

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