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On the Relation between Watsuji Tetsurō's
Ningen Rinrigaku and Mencius' Five
Relationships—A Critique from the perspective
of Mou Zongsan's Moral Metaphysics
從牟宗三道德形而上學角度分析和辻哲郎人
間倫理學與孟子五倫之關係[§]

譚家博

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關鍵詞：和辻哲郎、牟宗三、間柄、道德形而上學、儒學

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Abstract

Watsuji Tetsurō's idea of *aidagara* (間柄, often translated as 'betweenness') is an essential concept in his *ningen rinrigaku* with a robust Confucian heritage. As he begins his reflection on *aidagara* from Mencius' concept of *gorin* or 'five relationships' it seems that Watsuji tries to reinterpret *gorin*. However, unlike Yangmingism and the twentieth-century Chinese New Confucianism, Watsuji does not emphasise individual subjectivity. Instead, in both *Rinrigaku* and *Fūdo*, Watsuji reduces individual self into *aidagara* and *aidagara* into the Buddhist notion of *Kū*.

In light of Mou Zongsan's moral metaphysics, this paper argues that Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku* fails to provide a consistent interpretation of Mencius' teaching of *gorin*. According to Mou, an individual's subjectivity whose mind nature is granted by Heaven *precedes* and *produces* mutual relationships among human beings. However, such idea of Heaven is omitted in Watsuji's anti-Neo-Confucian understanding of *Mencius*. Instead, Watsuji argues that the individual's moral consciousness arises from *aidagara*, which is the negations of self and others. In fact, his notion of self-negation contradicts with *Mencius* 7A. However, instead of accusing Watsuji of misunderstanding *Mencius*, this paper suggests one may understand Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku* as non-Confucian ethics instead of a consistent interpretation of *Mencius*.

摘要

「間柄」是和辻哲郎的人間倫理學中深受儒學影響的重要概念。他對間柄的反思始於孟子的五倫概念；故此，和辻似乎嘗試重新詮釋五倫。然而，與陽明學及二十世紀中國新儒家相反，和辻並不強調個人主體性；反之，在《人間倫理學》及《風土》裡，和辻把個人主體還原成間柄，又將間柄歸於佛教「空」的概念。根據牟宗三的道德形而上學，本文認為和辻的人間倫理學無法為孟子之五倫提供一致的詮釋。根據牟宗三，個人主體所具有天賦之心性乃先於並生出人倫關係。然而，「天」的概念卻不見於和辻對《孟子》的反理學詮釋。和辻認為個人道德意識緣起於作為對自我與他者否定之間柄，可是自我否定之主張卻與《孟子·盡心上》的說法相違。然而，本文指出，除了批評和辻曲解《孟子》以外，讀者或可理解和辻的人間倫理學為一非儒學的新倫理學，而非對孟子的一致詮釋。

1. Introduction

Confucian legacy is significant in Watsuji Tetsurō's 和辻哲郎 (1889-1960) work *ningen rinrigaku* (人間倫理學) where his reflection on human relationship begins with Mencius' notion of *gorin* (五倫, five relationships). It seems that Watsuji tries to provide an alternative interpretation of Mencius.¹ According to Watsuji, human society consists of *gorin* as a fellowship. The ontological foundation of such fellowship, however, is not an individual self who establishes interpersonal relationships with others. It is *aidagara* where the self and the others are negated. As we shall see in this paper, *aidagara* refers to the mutual relationships between the self and the society as well as the spatiality from which the self, others and the society arise. *Aidagara* arises from the historical-climatic conditions, which is explained by the Buddhist teaching of co-dependence, known as *Kū* or emptiness.

If one regards Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku* as a reinterpretation of *Mencius*, his interpretation seems inaccurate. Watsuji's argument for self-negation contradicts with Mencius who seems to argue for self-affirmation. Mencius postulated that moral self is linked to Heaven, as he claims, 'He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven.'² (*Mencius* 7A:1) Accordingly, this paper selects Chinese New Confucian philosopher Mou

1 Lam Wing Keung has written a similar article comparing Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku* and Mou's moral metaphysics. However, my approach to the comparison between Watsuji and Mou is different from Lam's. Lam identifies Watsuji as Heideggerian while Mou as Kantian in order to explain their differences. By contrast, in this paper, I compare Watsuji's interpretation of *Mencius* with Mou's. See Lam, Wing Keung, 'Subjectivity, Rinrigaku and Moral Metaphysics: Watsuji Tetsurō and Mou Zongsan', *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy: Neglected Themes and Hidden Variations*. ed. Victor Sōgen Hori, Melissa Anne-Marie Curley (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture, 2008), 129-144.

2 Trans. Chan, Wing-tsit, 'Mencius', *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 78.

Zongsan's 牟宗三 (1909-1995) moral metaphysics to articulate Confucian metaphysics and demonstrate how Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku* departs himself from Confucianism. Both Watsuji and Mou employ Continental philosophy to rediscover the foundation of human existence. However, while Watsuji calls for self-negation, Mou calls for self-affirmation. By constructing a dialogue between Watsuji and Mou, we shall see the reason why Watsuji overlooks the relation among mind, nature and heaven and how the concept of self-negation in *aidagara* contradicts with the teaching of 'exertion of mind' and 'preservation of mind' in *Mencius* 7A:1.

Like other modern East Asian philosophers, Watsuji did not exclude himself from the influence of modern Western philosophy. 'The Japanese of Watsuji's generation cut their philosophical teeth by reading Kant, Hegel, the utilitarians, the positivists, and the existentialists.'³ In particular, Watsuji was impressed by Raphael von Koeber (1848-1923) who taught him Western philosophy at Tokyo University.⁴ As David Dilworth indicates, '[i]nfluenced by Neo-Kantian historiography, by Husserl's phenomenology, and Scheler's value-philosophy, as well as by the theoretical ground in these areas being explored by Nishida [at] Kyoto University, Watsuji went on to explore various cultural-historical intentionalities of the East and the West in a series of influential works.'⁵ According to Nagami, Watsuji paid 'more to those existentialists who fought the mainstream of Western rationalism.'⁶ Watsuji was originally 'attracted by Western universalism and individualism, in his case through the work of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, and yet find it finally unsatisfactory.'⁷ As a result, Watsuji's

3 McCarthy, Erin, *Ethics Embodied: Rethinking Selfhood through Continental, Japanese, and Feminist Philosophies*, (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2010), xiii.

4 Piovesana, Gino, *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought 1862-1996*, (London & New York: Routledge: 1997), 132.

5 Dilworth, David, 'Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960): Cultural Phenomenologist and Ethician,' *Philosophy East and West* 24, no. 1 (1974):6.

6 Nagami, Isamu, 'The Ontological Foundation in Tetsurō Watsuji's Philosophy: Kū and Human Existence', *Philosophy East and West* 31, no. 3 (1981):280.

7 Bellah, Robert, 'Japan's Cultural Identity: Some Reflections on the Work of Watsuji Tetsurō',

philosophy turned back to Eastern tradition in *ningen rinrigaku*. Robert Bellah suggests that although Watsuji tried to 'reconcile Japanese particularism and world culture', at the end he merely constructed a 'Japanese particularism with a new Western inspired philosophical rationale'.⁸ By contrast, Lam Wing Keung argues, 'Watsuji does undertake the study of traditional Chinese and Japanese thought, including Confucianism and Buddhism, [but] his concern is not with reviving this tradition in the face of Western philosophy; rather, his philosophical agenda is to develop a kind of "universal" *rinrigaku* that goes beyond both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions.'⁹ For Watsuji, 'Heidegger remains the most influential figure',¹⁰ because 'Watsuji himself explicitly admits that there are many things to learn from Heidegger in the examination of *rinrigaku*. Of course, Watsuji makes direct considerable criticism toward Heidegger ... [e.g.] his criticism in *Fūdo* 風土 [Climate] of Heidegger's overemphasis on time and neglect of space.'¹¹ In *Fūdo*, Watsuji argues that 'it is only when human existence is treated in terms of its concrete duality that time and space are linked and that history also (which never appears fully in Heidegger) is first revealed in its true guise. And at the same time the connection between history and climate becomes evident.'¹²

Watsuji's criticism of Heidegger suggests the reason why he rejects 'Western individualism' and embraces 'Eastern traditions' including Confucianism: *the duality between sociality and individuality*. Such duality, according to Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku*, is found in Mencius' idea of *gorin*. For this reason, Watsuji begins his *ningen rinrigaku* with Mencius' concept of *gorin*. The question is whether Watsuji's reinterpretation of Mencius' concept of *gorin* in *ningen*

The Journal of Asian Studies 24, no. 4 (Aug., 1965):593.

8 Ibid.

9 Lam, Wing Keung, 'Subjectivity, Rinrigaku and Moral Metaphysics: Watsuji Tetsurō and Mou Zongsan', *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy*, 141.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. 138.

12 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *A Climate: A Philosophical Study*. trans. Bownas, Geoffrey, (Tokyo: Ministry of Education Japan, 1961), v-vi.

rinrigaku is consistent with the context of *Mencius*.

Among all modern Confucian interpreters, this paper chooses Mou Zongsan as a counterpart of Watsuji for several reasons: firstly, both interpret *Mencius* with the help of modern Western philosophical concepts. As Lam indicates, while Watsuji employs Heidegger's terms to construct his *ninigen rinrigaku*, Mou uses Kant's framework to formulate his moral metaphysics,¹³ like moral autonomy and subjectivity, as we shall see in this paper. While this paper focuses on the differences between Watsuji's and Mou's interpretations of *Mencius*, one should be alert with the Western philosophical language they employ.

Secondly, in spite of different cultural and historical backgrounds, both Watsuji and Mou aim to defend the legitimacy of their cultures by articulating the *essentiality and legitimacy* of the cultural differences between the East and the West in the twentieth century. As Furukawa Tetsushi argues, according to Watsuji, the 'Japanese word *rinri*, the principle of social existence, shows that to the Japanese ethics is not a question of individual consciousness, but one of the relation[s] between man and man.'¹⁴ Watsuji discovers the philosophical ground of betweenness or *aidagara* in his reading of *Mencius* to characterise Japanese culture. By contrast, Mou argues that the Kantian concept of moral subjectivity is the essence of Chinese culture found in *Four Books*. 'The morally self-aware mind is of course the moral subject. ... If you dislike talking about the subject, then how can you talk about Chinese culture?'¹⁵

Thirdly, while Mou and Watsuji share similar philosophical backgrounds and ambitions, they have very different interpretations of *Mencius*. Mou finds a

13 Lam, Wing Keung, 'Subjectivity, Rinrigaku and Moral Metaphysics: Watsuji Tetsurō and Mou Zongsan', *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy*, 141.

14 Tetsushi, Furukawa, 'Watsuji, the Man and his Work'. *A Climate: A Philosophical Study*. Watsuji, Tetsurō. trans. Bownas, Geoffrey, (Tokyo: Ministry of Education Japan, 1961), 229.

15 Mou, Zongsan, 'Lecture 4: The Character of the Confucian System', *Nineteen Lectures*, ed. & trans. Lee, Julie Wei. 65. 30th March, 2014. <https://nineteenlectures.wordpress.com/>. Accessed on 25th December, 2019.

metaphysical ground of moral subjectivity behind the *gorin* in his reading of *Mencius*, namely, mind nature (心性), and argues that it is an essential value of Chinese culture.¹⁶ Mou is alerted of the consistency among *Four Books* and frequently refers to Neo-Confucian commentaries on *Mencius*. By contrast, instead of investigating Neo-Confucian commentaries on *gorin*, Watsuji is interested in the ethical application of *gorin*, namely, *aidagara*. Specifically, Watsuji does not explore Confucian's debates on the metaphysical ground of *gorin* between Cheng Zhu school (the study of nature and reason 性理學) and Lu Wang school (theory of mind nature 心性論). As we shall see, traditional Confucian metaphysical concepts like Heaven (天), nature (性) and mind (心) have little theoretical importance in Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku*.¹⁷ Therefore, this paper indicates his interpretation of *gorin* as 'anti-Neo-Confucian' (反理學).¹⁸

This paper argues that by introducing the concepts of *aidagara*, *Fūdo* and *Kū*, Watsuji's anti-Neo-Confucian understanding of *gorin* is inconsistent with the context of *Mencius*. Firstly, in his anti-Neo-Confucian explanation of *gorin*, Watsuji does not ground *aidagara* on individual moral consciousness or Heavenly reason. Instead, he argues that the existence of *aidagara* precedes that of the individual self and everything arises from *Kū*. Secondly, Mou, in his moral metaphysics, acknowledges individual moral self as the ontological foundation of the mutual human relationships to preserve moral autonomy, which is in contrast with Watsuji's concept. While Watsuji claims that moral feelings arise from interpersonal relationships, Mou believes that moral feelings arise from the inner

16 See, for example, Mou, Zongsan, *Zhong Xi Zhe Xue Zhi Hui Tong Shi Si Jiang* 中西哲學之會通十四講 [14 Lectures on the Integration between Chinese and Western Philosophies], (Taipei: Student Book Ltd, 1990).

17 For the terms 'anti-Neo-Confucian', see Yang Ru-bin 楊儒賓, *Yi Yi De Yi Yi Jin Shi Dong Ya De Fan Li Xue Si Chao* 異議的意義：近世東亞的反理學思潮 [The Meaning of Opposition: The Trend of Anti-Neo Confucianism in Modern East Asia], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2012).

18 I borrow the term 'anti-Neo-Confucian' from Yan Ru-bin. According to Yang, the anti-Neo-Confucian 'criticism of subjectivity ... involves the transition from "transcendence"[超越論] to "ethicality" [倫際性]'. Following Yang, who listed Watsuji as an anti-Neo-Confucian, I indicate Watsuji's approach to *Mencius* as 'anti-Neo-Confucian'. See *ibid.* vi.

mind nature of human beings granted by Heaven, which is a transcendent substance. Finally, since Watsuji does not acknowledge the relation among mind, nature and heaven in *Mencius* 7A:1, he denies the independence of individual moral subjectivity from *aidagara*, and his understanding of *gorin* is inconsistent with the context of *Mencius*.

2. *Ningen Rinrigaku*: Immanence of Individual's Moral Subjectivity Within Interpersonal Relationship

This part aims to reconstruct the role of *aidagara* in Watsuji's ethics. Firstly, I reconstruct the Confucian legacy embedded in Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku* and explain why Watsuji perceives Mencius' idea of five relationships or *gorin* is equivalent to *ningen* (the human world). Secondly, following Nagami's argument, I argue that Watsuji regards *aidagara* as the ontological foundation of *ningen*, while the foundation of *aidagara* is *Kū* (emptiness). Finally, I argue that as Watsuji's adapts of the Buddhist teaching of emptiness and no-self, he rejects the independence of individual moral subjectivity from *aidagara*.

2.1 *Ningen* as Human World Consists of *Gorin* as Human Relations

As a Japanese philosopher living in the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century, Watsuji was significantly influenced by Confucianism. Robert E. Carter suggests that besides Buddhism, 'Shinto and Confucian ideas need to be recognized as important as well.'¹⁹ According to Isamu Nagami, Watsuji 'was influenced by his father, a doctor who adhered to Confucian ethics, and taught Watsuji the meaning of loyalty and devotion through his medical practice. His

19 Carter, Robert E., 'Interpretive essay: strands of influence', *Watsuji Tetsuro's Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*. trans. Seisaku Yamamoto & Robert E. Carter (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1996), 326.

father also opened his eyes to the significance of *michi*, which becomes one of the central notions in his later philosophy.²⁰ David Dilworth indicates that ‘the moral sphere of Confucian ethics (*rin*) becomes grounded by Watsuji in an existential or religious sphere of what he called “the absolute negativity of the subject” (*shutai no zettaiteki hiteizeiaa*) in which the concrete whole is realized ... such syncretic tendencies [are] bridging the spiritual traditions of the East in the broad multivariate framework of Neo-Confucianism rather than Buddhism.’²¹ Alistair D Swale even argues that Confucian influence on Watsuji's ethics is more critical than Buddhist influence, for ‘Watsuji posits Confucian-style “cardinal relations” within these broader Buddhist concepts just mentioned.’²²

While Watsuji widely adopts Confucian language in his book *Rinrigaku*, he shows little interests in Neo-Confucian discussions on the idea of mind, nature and heaven. As Nakajima Takahiro observes, ‘Watsuji described Confucius as one of the “teachers of humankind”’. According to Nakajima, Watsuji claims that ‘the core doctrine of Confucius did not consist of a “religious God” but of a “way of humanity”’,²³ as he quotes from Watsuji's *Confucius*:

‘It was sufficient [for Confucius] to understand and realize the Way. The Way is a Way of humanity [人道], not the words of a God or a way to enlightenment. No fear or anxiety afflicted him if he followed the ethical way of humanity, that is, if he realized humaneness and practised loyalty and tolerance. That is why his doctrine had no need for mysteries of any shade, no demand to

20 Nagami, Isamu, ‘The Ontological Foundation in Tetsurō Watsuji's Philosophy: Kū and Human Existence’, *Philosophy East and West* 31, no. 3 (1981): 280.

21 Dilworth, David, ‘Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960): Cultural Phenomenologist and Ethician.’ *Philosophy East and West* 24, no. 1 (1974): 17.

22 Swale, Alistair D, ‘The Ethics of Watsuji Tetsurō’, *Morals and Society in Philosophy*, ed. Brian Carr, (London: Curzon Press, 1996), 43.

23 Nakajima, Takahiro, ‘The Restoration of Confucianism in China and Japan: A New Source of Morality and Religion’, *Facing the 21st Century*, ed. Lam Wing-keung and Cheng Ching-yuen, (Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture, 2009), 42.

“believe by virtue of the absurd” (*credo quia absurdum*). The Way is completely a way of reason. The most remarkable characteristic of the doctrine of Confucius is his recognition that the Way of humanity is significant on an absolute level.²⁴

Based upon his perception of Confucius’ philosophy as a secular humanism rather than a religion, Watsuji develops his anti-Neo-Confucian reinterpretation of Mencius in his *ningen rinrigaku*. Rooted in the discussion of *gorin* in Confucian ethics, Watsuji’s *ningen rinrigaku* is translated as *ethics of the human beings*. In fact, his *rinrigaku* covers not only ethics but also the human’s ways of living.

‘The word *rinri* [倫理] consists of two words: *rin* and *ri*. *Rin* means *nakama* [仲間], that is, “fellow”. *Nakama* signifies a body or a system of relations, which a definite group of persons has with respect to each other, and at the same time signifies individual persons as determined by this system.

... This manner is *rin* or *gorin gojo* [五倫五常] (that is, the moral rules that govern the five human relations) as transformed into noematic meaning. The term *ri* signifies “reason” and is added to the term *rin* for the purpose of expressing emphatically the aforementioned manner of action or relational pattern. Therefore, *rinri*, that is, ethics, is the order or the pattern through which the communal existence of human beings is rendered possible. In other words, ethics consists of the laws of social existence.²⁵

Watsuji’s pragmatic understanding of the term *ri* (理) in the quotation above

24 Quoted in *ibid.* 43. Watsuji, Tetsurō 和辻哲郎, *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū* 和辻哲郎全集 [Complete works of Watsuji Tetsurō], (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), Vol. 6, 334.

25 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*. Yamamoto, Seisaku & Carter, Robert E trans. (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1996), 10-11.

is radically different from the Neo-Confucian definition of *ri* as Heavenly reason (天理). According to Zhuxi 朱熹 (1130-1200), *gorin* means orders²⁶ which are the 'ways of achievement for all under Heaven' (天下之達道也) as he quotes from *Doctrine of the Mean* 20,²⁷ while *rin* are 'persistent principles without changes' (常理不易).²⁸ By contrast, for Watsuji, 'reasons' (*ri*) are merely the normative principles governing the 'proper' manner *between* two persons in a particular relationship,²⁹ which are not persistent, and are dependent on human relationships.³⁰ Therefore, Yang argues that *ri* has less important than *rin* in Watsuji's ethics. 'The concept... of "Heaven reason" in Cheng Zhu school can hardly gain an important role in the system of Watsuji's ethics.'³¹

According to Watsuji's interpretation, the kanji *rin* means *nakama* (仲間, fellowship). He refers to the *gorin* (五倫 five relationships) or *jinrin* (人倫 human relationships) in *Mencius*, namely 'parent and child, lord and vassal, husband and wife, young and old, friend and friend' (*Mencius* 3A:4)³² which are

26 Original text: 倫，序也。父子有親，君臣有義，夫婦有別，長幼有序，朋友有信，此人之大倫也。 See Zhu, Xi 朱熹, 'Teng Wen Gong Zhang Ju Shang' 滕文公章句上 [Teng Wen Gong I], *Zhu Xi Yu Si Shu Zhang Ju Ji Zhu* 朱熹與四書章句集注 [*Zhuxi and Collected Commentaries on Four Books*], 陳逢源 ed., (Taipei: Li Jan Shu Ju, 2006), 96.

27 See Zhu, Xi, 'Ren Yi Li Zhi Deng Ming Yi' 仁義禮智等名義 [On the Terms of Ren Yi Li Zhi], *Zhuxi and Collected Commentaries on Four Books*, 355.

28 See Ji Yan-ru 紀晏如, 'Er Cheng Zhi Dao Lun De Nei Han Ji Qi Si Xiang Shi Bei Jing' 二程治道論的內涵及其思想史背景 [The Formation of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yis' Political Philosophy and the Intellectual Background], *Chung Ching Journal of History*, no. 19, (Dec, 2016): 53-89.

29 Similarly, Korean Confucian philosopher Chong Yak-yong develops the idea of 'humanity as two persons' (二人成仁) and reject the Neo-Confucian metaphysical discussions of the origin of moral capacity. See Yang Ru-bin, *The Meaning of Oppositions: The Trend of Anti-Neo-Confucianism in Modern East Asia*, 327-362.

30 Early before Watsuji. Japanese Confucian philosopher Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666-1728) had already refuted Zhuxi's account, for Ogyū claimed, 'it is written that the sage-kings manifest human nature and create the Way, not Heaven and earth naturally contain such Way.' (先王率人性而作為是道也，非謂天地自然有是道也) See Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠, *Dai Nihon Shisō Zenshū* 大日本思想全集 [*Collection of the Great Japanese Thoughts*], (Tokyo: Dai Nihon Shisō Zenshū Kankō-Kai, 1931), Vol. 7, 15-16.

31 Yang Ru-bin, "Watsuji Tetsurō's On 'aidagara'", *The Meaning of Oppositions*, 403-404.

32 While five relationships also appear in *Doctrine of the Mean* 20, this paper only focuses on *Mencius*.

‘the most important kinds of human fellowship.’³³ According to Carter’s reading of *Doctrine of the Mean* 20, *gorin* manifests ‘the three virtues of wisdom, compassion, and courage’.³⁴ ‘These relational rules and virtues had as their purpose the creation of a social environment in which human beings could interact with a high degree of comfort, encouraging self-development and peaceful social interaction needed for the creation and maintenance of a harmonious society.’³⁵ While one should treat different people with different rituals according to the principle of *gorin*, according to Carter, all rituals share the same grounds, which are ‘mutual trust’, ‘social solidarity’, and

‘the sense of being a member of one large family extending from the humblest peasant to the emperor, on the one hand, and from generations yet to be born through generations of ancestors who have come before, from whose shoulders we stride forth to try our own hand at life, is the ground of that relatedness which comprehends the importance of the interconnectedness of lives.’³⁶

As the relational rules and virtues are related to the ‘interconnectedness of lives’, Watsuji introduces the term ‘fellowship’ to explain the term *rin*:

‘“fellowship” is nothing but a manner of interaction through which people have definite connections with each other. Hence, *rin* signifies *nakama* [仲間] (in general) and, at the same time, a specific form of

33 Ibid.

34 Original text: 知仁勇三者，天下之達德也。In *the Doctrine of the Mean*, *gorin* is known as the ‘ways of achievement for all under Heaven’ (天下之達道也) while three virtues are known as the ‘virtues of achievement for all under Heaven’ (天下之達德也). Both are related to the key terms ‘Heaven’, as it is written in the same paragraph that ‘if one knows about the human one cannot be ignorant of Heaven.’ (思知人，不可以不知天) In other words *gorin* is regarded as a way of ‘knowing Heaven’.

35 Carter, Robert E., ‘Interpretive essay: strands of influence’, *Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, 327.

36 Ibid.

practical interconnection among human beings. From this, it follows that *rin* also means *kimari* (agreement), or *kata* (form), that is, an order among human beings. The *rin* are conceived of as ways of *ningen* [人間].³⁷

Watsuji defines ethics as a study of the practical interconnection among human beings within *ningen* (人間),³⁸ which means the 'sphere of human beings'. According to Chinese linguist Wang Li, the kanji 間 (*aida* or *gen*) is an alteration from of the Character 間,³⁹ which has at least two senses: 'interstice'⁴⁰ or 'between'.⁴¹ *Gen* as interstice implies space and *spatiality*, while *gen* as between implies 'betweenness'.

While the term *ningen* is a Classical Chinese term used in Buddhist cannons, it loses its Buddhist religious sense. Liao Qin-bin argues that although Watsuji's idea of *ningen* is inspired by the Buddhist concept of six realms of samsara (六道, *rokudō*), Watsuji narrows its meaning as a realm of human beings which is equivalent to 'society'.⁴² According to Liao, Watsuji aims to establish alternative which were different from both idealism and materialism. As such, Watsuji's

37 Watsuji Tetsurō, *Rinrigaku*, 11.

38 *Ningen* was originally a Buddhist term. According to Buddhism, there are six realms of existence (六道 *rokudo*), namely, hell, life in starvation, life as a beast, life as a human, life as demigod and Heaven. In the Karmic cycle (輪迴 *rinne*).

39 See Wang, Li 王力, *Gu Dai Han Yu Zi Dian* 古代漢語字典 [A Dictionary of Classic Chinese], (Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Co, 2000), 1564.

40 For example, 'There are the *interstices* of the joints' (彼節者有間) [*Zhuangzi* I.3.2], Guo, Xiang 郭象, *Guo Xiang Zhu Zhuang* 郭象注莊 [Guo Xiang's Commentary on Zhuangzi], (Taipei: Jin Feng Chu Ban You Xian Gong Si, 1987), Vol. 1, 206.

41 For example, 'Suppose the case of a state of ten thousand chariots; let it be straightened *between* other large states' (千乘之國，攝乎大國之間) [*Analects* 11.26], Zhu, Xi, *Zhuxi and Collected Commentaries on Four Books*, 207.

42 Liao, Qin-bin 廖欽彬, 'Jin Dai Ri Ben Zhe Xue De Jiang Hu Ru Xue Guan :Yi He Shi Zhe Lang De Ri Ben Lun Li Shi Wei Li' 近代日本哲學的江戶儒學觀:以和辻哲郎的日本倫理史為例 [*Edo Confucianism in Modern Japanese Philosophy: with the Example of Watsuji Tetsuro's History of Japanese Ethics*], in Tsai Cheng-feng 蔡振豐 & Lam, Wing-Keung 林永強 eds. *Ri Ben Lun Li Guan Yu Ru Jia Chuan Tong* 日本倫理觀與儒家傳統 [*Japanese Ethics and Confucian Tradition*], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2017), 185.

ningen rinrigaku aims to answer the questions ‘what is human being’ and ‘what are the reasons and principles for being human’.⁴³ Because *ningen* is human society, it inevitably involves interpersonal interactions. As Pauline Couteau explains,

‘An exclusively independent individual is an illusion; it would be no more than a corpse, a mere physical body in which no real human being could exist. A full “human being” is inseparable from both his individual and communal dimensions and, indeed, can only be said to truly exist by virtue of these relations. ... the study of reciprocal human existence turns out to be ethics itself ... [which] was to analyze the meaning of *world* to include the *betweenness* of persons (the public).’⁴⁴

As we have seen above, Watsuji acknowledges both senses of *gen*, namely, spatiality and mutuality, in his concept of *ningen*. On the one hand, *gen* refers to the ‘spatiality of human beings and the bodily nature of their existence’; on the other hand, in such spatiality, each individual interacts with each other (mutuality). For ‘the concept of *ningen* is determined in terms of the dual characteristics of “public” and “individual” human beings’.⁴⁵ Therefore, Carter claims that in Watsuji’s philosophy, ‘[e]thics is concerned with those problems that arise between persons, as individuals and as members of society.’⁴⁶ In other words, it is appropriate to conclude that for Watsuji perceives *ningen* as the human world and human society. To explain the formation of *ningen*, Watsuji introduces the concept of *aidagara*.

43 Ibid., 184.

44 Couteau, Pauline, ‘Watsuji Tetsurō’s Ethics of Milieu’, *Frontiers in Japanese Philosophy*, 279.

45 Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku*, 16-17.

46 Carter, Robert E., ‘Interpretive essay: strands of influence’, *Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, 341.

2.2 *aidagara* as the ontological foundation of Human World

Aidagara (間柄) is commonly translated by scholars as ‘betweenness’,⁴⁷ which explains the dialectical relation between the publicity and the individuality of *ningen*. For Watsuji, an isolated individual is impossible to exist. For all human beings are *being in the world* as Heidegger claims, while in the world ‘a person is a person “together with others”’.⁴⁸ However, it is misleading to define *aidagara* as an objective spatial relation ‘between object and object.’ As Watsuji said, human relations

‘are *act-connections* between person and person like *communication* or *association*, in which persons as subjects concern themselves with each other. We cannot sustain ourselves in any *aida* or *naka* imply a living and dynamic betweenness, as a subjective interconnection of acts. A betweenness of this sort and the spatio-temporal world combine to produce the meaning conveyed by the words *se-ken* (the public) or *yo-no-naka* (the public).’⁴⁹

Here Watsuji introduces the idea of *seken* (世間, the public) as ‘a knowing or stirring subject’ which ‘is the community as subject, that is, the subject as community existence, which transcends the individual subjects involved in this interconnection of acts.’⁵⁰ In other words, ‘subjectivity’ in Watsuji’s context does not refer to individual subjectivity, but refer to the intersubjectivity of a society,

47 For example, Lennerfors, Thomas Taro and Murata, Kiyoshi eds., *Tetsugaku Companion to Phenomenology and Japanese Philosophy*, (Cham: Springer, 2019), Vol. 1; Vojtíšková, Kristýna, ‘The Crisis of Japanese Identity in the 21st Century and Watsuji Tetsurō’s Ethics.’ *Asian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2015): 129-44; and Agra, Kelly Louize Rexzy. ‘Ontology or Ethics: The Case of Martin Heidegger and Watsuji Tetsurō.’ *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2016): 163-91.

48 Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku*, 17.

49 Ibid. 18.

50 Ibid.

which ‘indicates a human existence that is historical, climatic and social’.⁵¹ From the standpoint of Watsuji, an individual subject can only exist as a ‘relational being’—not only a social being but also a historical and climatic being. As Nagami Isamu said, ‘[i]n *aidagara* man cannot be regarded as an individual nor as a mere social entity, but as the inevitably relational being who is related to man, nature, and the society to which he belongs.’⁵² In short, *aidagara* is the spatiality which conditions the existence of individual and society.

From Watsuji’s point of view, *the existence of aidagara precedes the existence of an individual subject*. *Aidagara* is not only a mutual relationship between humans, but also a *space* between humans, and the *place* from which individual consciousness arises, which agrees with the etymological study of *aida* or *gen* as we have seen in the previous section.⁵³ As Higaki suggests, Watsuji’s concept of space is influenced by Nishida Kitaro’s concept of *basho* (場所),⁵⁴ which is regarded as the ontological ground of an individual’s ‘pure consciousness’.⁵⁵ According to Higaki, *aidagara* is ‘the “relationship” between You and I’, and 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.’⁵⁶ Carter also argues that ‘*aidagara* ... implies spatial distance separating thing and thing (*aida*), indicating

51 Ibid. 19.

52 Nagami, Isamu, ‘The Ontological Foundation in Tetsurō Watsuji’s Philosophy: Kū and Human Existence’, *Philosophy East and West*, 284.

53 While most interpreters focus merely on the etymology of *aida*, the etymology of 柄 (*gara*) also supports the argument for *aidagara* as the ontological foundation, as it has the meaning of ‘foundation’. For example, in *Yi Jing*, ‘modesty is the root of virtue’ (謙·德之柄也) (*Ji Ching*, Xi Ci II, 7), and ‘control’. See Wang, Li. *Dictionary of Ancient Chinese*, 470.

54 For the relationship between Nishida and Watsuji, see Higaki, Tatsuya, ‘Tetsurō Watsuji’s Theory of Betweenness, with a Focus on the Two-Person Community’, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, no. 41, (2016):455-467.

55 For the concept of *Basho*, see Nishida, Kitarō, “Basho.” *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays by Nishida Kitaro*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 49-102; Cheung, Ching Yuen, ‘Philosophy of Life: Henri Bergson and Nishida Kitaro’, *Mécanique Et Mystique Sur Le Quatrième Chapitre Des Deux Sources De La Morale Et De La Religion De Bergson*. ed. Abiko, Shin, Hisashi Fujita, and Yasuhiko Sugimura, (Hildesheim: Olms, Georg, 2018), 223-242.

56 Higaki, Tatsuya, ‘Tetsurō Watsuji’s Theory of Betweenness, with a Focus on the Two-Person Community’, 457.

both that we *can* come to meet in the between *and* that we are at a distance from one another. ... *Aida* indicates that betweenness is spatial, whatever else it might be, and so we exist within a definite space, a spatial *basho* or “place”.⁵⁷ Similarly, Conteau suggests that ‘Watsuji uses the word *Kūkan* 空間 (space) when referring specifically to the place of “betweenness,” echoing Nishida’s use of *basho* ... *Kūkan* designates the space of self-awakening, not in a metaphysical but in a practical, everyday sense’.⁵⁸ In short, *aidagara* as an interpersonal relationship is the place⁵⁹ from which an individual self-consciousness arises.

Now the question is how individual consciousness arises from *Kūkan* created by *aidagara*. According to Nagami, the individual consciousness is formed when ‘*aidagara* relation discloses a “place” or human existence in which dialectical movement moves itself’.⁶⁰ From Watsuji’s perspective, self-consciousness arises from the first encounter between the individual self and others or the perceiving subject and the perceived object, while subject-object or self-other distinction has yet to exist. *Aidagara* arises from objective conditions, which Watsuji indicates as *Fūdo*. According to Watsuji, subjective self-consciousness arises from the objective climatic condition through the expression of feeling:

‘We have considered the problem in terms of individual consciousness in the experience of cold. But, as we have been able to use

57 Carter, Robert E., ‘Interpretive essay: strands of influence’, *Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, 338.

58 Conteau, Pauline, ‘Watsuji Tetsurō’s Ethics of Milieu’, *Frontiers in Japanese Philosophy*, ed. James Heisig, (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 2006), 282.

59 However, besides spatiality, *aidagara* also contain *temporality*. According to Watsuji, the ‘past mutual relationships’ also affect the contemporary mutual relationship. ‘If it is supposed that the act is an interactivity of subjects and that each of these activities is determined by the established relationships between these subjects, then it is obvious that the act is burdened with the mutual relationships of the past.’ In order to articulate the duality of spatiality and temporality, Watsuji introduces the concept of *ningen sonzai* (人間存在) and distinguishes it from Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*. See Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku*, 241, 227-228.

60 Nagami, Isamu, ‘The Ontological Foundation in Tetsurō Watsuji’s Philosophy: Kū and Human Existence’, *Philosophy East and West*, 285.

the expression “we feel cold”, without any contradiction, it is “we”, not “I” alone that experience the cold. We feel the same cold in common... Thus[,] it is primarily “we” in this “mutual relationship” [*aidagara*] that discover ourselves in the cold. ... we find ourselves-ourselves as an element in the “mutual relationship”—in climate⁶¹

While Geoffrey Bownas translates *aidagara* as the mutual relationship in the quotation above, it is necessary to acknowledge that *aidagara* has a sense of *spatiality* or space. *Aidagara* is the place where individuals and society arise from historical-climatic conditions (*Fūdo*). At this point, the feeling of coldness is not *individualistic* (“I”) but *social* (“we”), for all human beings should have the same feeling of coldness. Besides, such a feeling is neither subjective nor objective. If one assumes that ‘we’ is the feeling subject and ‘coldness’ is a felt object, ‘we have admitted that the “cold” and “we” exist as separate and independent entities at this “cold” pressed upon us. However, it is impossible, in existential reality, for us to feel “cold” from the independent existence of the cold. Instead, it is by feeling cold that we discover the cold.’⁶²

As we have seen above, ‘*Fūdo* (climate) reveals itself as the place in which various modes of man’s contact with nature, man, and society, as well as man’s productive modes, are conditioned.’⁶³ Therefore, Watsuji argues that cultures are conditioned by human-climatic interaction. *Aidagara* as individual-social interactions involves only human beings, while human-climatic interaction involves both human and nature. In *aidagara*, an individual is conscious of his/her self existence as a relational being to society and nature. As such, individuals and

61 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *A Climate: A Philosophical Study*. trans. Bownas, Geoffrey, (Tokyo: Ministry of Education Japan, 1961), 4. Also, Watsuji, Tetsurō, ‘A Phenomenology of the Cold’, John C. *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis & John C Maraldo. (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 859.

62 Nagami, Isamu, ‘The Ontological Foundation in Tetsurō Watsuji’s Philosophy: Kū and Human Existence’, *Philosophy East and West*, 285.

63 *Ibid.*, 286.

society arise from *aidagara*.

2.3 Emptiness as the ontological Foundation of Aidagara

If *aidagara* were an entity producing *ningen*, Watsuji's ethics would have no difference from Hegel's philosophy, who believes that the human world is the historical development of the Absolute Spirit.⁶⁴ The Absolute Spirit is a Being which reveals itself in history. However, as a spatiality, *aidagara* is not a Being. *Aidagara* is neither self nor others; in other words, *aidagara* is the *negation of self and others*. The isolated individual self-consciousness must be negated in order to become a relational being. However, 'others', who are by definition, isolated and separate from the individual self, must also be negated in order to become relational beings. Therefore, *aidagara* is the negation of self and others. As Nagami quotes from Watsuji: 'Neither self nor other originally are themselves. Self and others appear as the result of the negation of the negation. They are no longer united: Self is not other, but self itself; other is not self, but other itself. Self and others originally are united so that they are related unparallelly. The "unparallel" means the negation of self and other.'⁶⁵

In fact, for Watsuji, an isolated individual self-consciousness does not exist. By contrast, Watsuji argues that self-consciousness, including moral consciousness, arises from *aidagara* as the interconnection between *I and Thou*. He claims,

I am I through becoming conscious of something. [The] Consciousness of "I" cannot be isolated from its "objects of consciousness" ... we must describe the intentionality of consciousness

64 See Hegel, G.W.F., *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, ed. & trans. Robert F. Brown & Peter C. Hodgson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Vol. 1.

65 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Ningen no gaku to shite no rinrigaku*, 213. Quoted in Nagami, Isamu, 'The Ontological Foundation in Tetsurō Watsuji's Philosophy: Kū and Human Existence', *Philosophy East and West*, 286.

as “I am conscious of *something*”. However, in our daily lives, we look at, doubt, or love a *Thou*. That is to say, “I become conscious of *Thou*”. My seeing *Thou* is already determined by your loving me. Hence, my becoming conscious of *Thou* is inextricably interconnected with your becoming conscious of me. This interconnection we have called *betweenness* [*aidagara*] is quite distinct from the intentionality of consciousness. ... [For] ... so far as betweenness-oriented existences are concerned, each consciousness interpenetrates the other. When *Thou* gets angry, my consciousness may be entirely coloured by *Thou*’s expressed anger, and when I feel sorrow, *Thou*’s consciousness is influenced by I’s sorrow. It can never be argued that the consciousness of such a self is independent.’⁶⁶

While *aidagara*, as a process of negation is *not a being* or *an entity*, it is not accurate to call it a *non-being* either. Non-being is not sufficient to be the ontological foundation of being. As a dynamic and interactive relationship, *aidagara* involves changes, while changes inevitably involve a transition from being to non-being. Before two persons encounter each other, the person-to-person relationship has yet to exist (non-being). As soon as they encountered, the relationship exists (being). Accordingly, *aidagara* as a relationship is a shift from non-being to being, which depends on external conditions, namely, *Fūdo*.⁶⁷ In order to explain the dependence of *aidagara* on *Fūdo*, Watsuji introduces the Buddhist concept of *Kū* (空 or emptiness). As written in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* by Nāgārjuna, *Kū*⁶⁸ refers to things ‘originating dependently’. ‘Since there is no

66 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku*, 69.

67 Here Watsuji may be influenced by Kierkegaard who argues that history is the process of ‘coming into existence’, which is a transition from non-being to being because Watsuji is one of the earliest Japanese philosophers who introduces Kierkegaard to Japan. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, ed. & trans. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); ed. Giles, James, *Kierkegaard and Japanese Thought*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

68 For further discussion on Nāgārjuna’s concept of emptiness, see Garfield, Jay L. ‘Dependent Arising and the Emptiness of Emptiness: Why Did Nagarjuna Start with Causation?’ *Philosophy*

dharma whatever originating independently, no *dharma* whatever exists which is not empty.⁶⁹

Buddhists believe that everything originates dependently. *Kū*, therefore, means 'co-dependent origination'. Interpersonal relationship and climatic relationship, from which the individual self originates co-dependently, also originate co-dependently. Because the self exists co-dependently on external climatic conditions, Watsuji adopts Buddhist teaching of *Kū* in his account on self-consciousness and argue for the Buddhist teaching of *muga* (無我, no-self). Under the teaching of *Kū* and *muga*, moral self-consciousness is also negated by the 'co-dependence'. According to the teaching of Twelve Nidānas, self-consciousness consists of six classes: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and intellect-consciousness (*Samyutta Nikaya* 12.2), which arise from sensation. In this sense, moral consciousness merely arises from moral feeling perceived by the six senses. As Watsuji claims, 'no matter which aspect of consciousness we may lay hold of, none can be said to be essentially independent. The independent consciousness of *I* is acquired only when isolated from any connection at all with other consciousness.'⁷⁰ '[A]bsolute wholeness is absolute negation and absolute emptiness. ... every community of human beings, that is, the whole in human beings, can become manifest only to the extent that emptiness is realized among individual human beings.'⁷¹

Knowing the reason why Watsuji negates moral self-consciousness, in the following section, we shall turn to Mou Zongsan's moral metaphysics, who introduces Kantian ethics to reformulate Mencius' ethics and emphasises the independence and priority of individual moral self-consciousness. In the light of which, we shall see why, according to Mou, individual moral self-consciousness

East and West 44, no. 2 (1994): 219-250.

69 Lafleur, William R. 'Buddhist Emptiness in the Ethics and Aesthetics of Watsuji Tetsurō.' *Religious Studies* 14, no. 2 (1978): 244.

70 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsuro's Rinrigaku*, 80.

71 *Ibid.* 99.

does not arise from external conditions but an individual's mind nature which is granted by Heaven.

3.Mind Nature Theory: Transcendence of Individual's Moral Subjectivity from Interpersonal Relationship

This section aims to explain why in *Mencius*, Mou argues that individual moral self-consciousness precedes mutual relationships and arises from the individual's mind nature. Firstly, I summarize the task of Chinese New Confucianism and why moral metaphysics is necessary. Secondly, I posit that the mind nature of the individual moral self is the ontological foundation of *gorin*, according to Mou's interpretation. Thirdly, I argue that Watsuji's interpretation of *gorin* is inconsistent with *Mencius* as he fails to acknowledge the relations among mind, nature and Heaven in *Mencius* 7A.

3.1 The Task of Chinese New Confucian: Reconstruction of the Moral Self

New Confucianism began in early twentieth-century China in response to the prevailing hostility against traditional Chinese culture at that time.⁷² In *A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture* (1958) signed by Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, Hsu Fokuan, and Chang Junmai, New Confucian philosophers strongly condemn the anti-traditionalists' radical denial of traditional Chinese culture, particularly 'Marxist-Leninism [who] denies the possibility of individualized human nature except insofar as it is determined by economics.'⁷³ By contrast, according to New Confucian, traditional Chinese

72 See Yu, Yih-Hsien, 'Modern Chinese Philosophy', *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Accessed July 19, 2019. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/mod-chin/>.

73 Chang, Junmai, 'A Manifesto for A Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese

culture assumes the transcendence of individualised human nature from social-economic conditions. Thus, New Confucian philosophers reinterpret Wang Yangming's idea of 'mind nature theory' (心性論).⁷⁴ According to New Confucian,

'The human will in the application of moral principles is unlimited in its involvement, and accordingly the fulfilment of "hsin-hsin" [mind nature] is also unlimited. ... In that sense, whoever acts conscientiously and knows nature knows also Heaven; whoever regulates his emotions serves also Heaven. Human nature reflects the nature of Heaven; the morality of man is also that of Heaven. What man does to perfect his own nature is also what gives praise to the manifold manifestations of universe.'⁷⁵

New Confucian philosophers refer to Wang Yangming's interpretation of *Mencius* 7A:1, 'He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven. To preserve one's mind and to nourish one's nature is the way to serve Heaven.'⁷⁶ Heaven refers to the universality of moral principles. According to Wang's interpretation, moral principles do not need to be learnt. Instead, they are innate knowledge. When one is fully conscious of one's innate moral capacity and manifests it, one knows the moral principles. Therefore, Wang argues that 'the mind is nature while nature is Heaven. The mind of the sage

Culture', *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1977), Vol. 2, 475.

74 It should be noticed that moral autonomy is not only found in Wang Yangming's mind nature theory but also may be found in Zhuxi's study of nature reason (性理學). See Lee Ming-huei 李明輝, 牟宗三先生的哲學詮釋中之方法論問題 [The Hermeneutical Problems in Mou Tsung-san's Philosophical Interpretation], *Collections of Chinese Literature and Philosophy Research*, no. 8, (Mar 1996): 175-196.

75 Chang, Junmai, 'A Manifesto for A Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture', *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, 464.

76 Trans. Chan, Wing-tsit, 'Mencius', *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 78.

is purely Heavenly reason, so they do not need to learn.’⁷⁷ According to Mou, human nature (which is morally good) is granted by the Way of Heaven (天道), when one exerts one’s own mind to manifest virtues from one’s own human nature, one knows the moral principles.⁷⁸ Influenced by Wang, Mou suggests that ‘the mind nature is the Way of Heaven’ (心性即天道). Mind nature is ‘the internal resource and force for Confucian moral practice, which is manifested as a *moral creativity*’; and because everyone has the same mind nature, it is not only subjective but also ‘objective’.⁷⁹

3.2 Individual Moral Self As the Ontological Foundation of Interpersonal Relationships

Having discussed the theoretical background of New Confucianism, in this section, we shall see why Mou argues that the individual moral self is the ontological foundation of interpersonal relationships. In doing so, Schmidt clarifies New Confucian idea of moral subjectivity by introducing Mencius’ analogy of a child falling into a well to clarify the idea: ‘when men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they all have a feeling of alarm and distress ... The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of humanity [*ren*]’.⁸⁰ (*Mencius* 2A:6) In Mou’s term, the feeling of commiseration (惻隱 *ce yin*) is the ‘trembling’ (震動) of one’s mind as a result of external stimulus. Schmidt argues that through such ‘trembling’ an individual self becomes a ‘moral subject which is “*ningen*” in

77 Wang, Yangming 王陽明, Wu Zhen Lu 悟真錄, *Collection of Wang Yangming* 王陽明全集, Vol. 3, 146.

78 Mou Zong-san 牟宗三, *On the Achievement of Moral Good* 圓善論, (Taipei: Student Book Co, 1985), 132.

79 Liao Xiaowei 廖曉輝, Comparative Study between Mou Zongsan and Lao Sze-Kwang—with the Centre of the Reconstruction of Confucianism and Philosophy of Culture 牟宗三·勞思光哲學比較研究——以儒學重建和文化哲學為中心, (New Taipei City: Hwa wulan Press, Mar 2012), 57.

80 See Chan, Wing-tsit, ‘Mencius’, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 65.

Watsuji's terminology'.⁸¹ According to Schmidt, on the one hand, the feeling of commiseration is 'active', as it is a subjective feeling of an individual self. On the other hand, such feeling is also 'passive', since it arises from the suffering from the child.⁸² Based on the observation above, Schmidt concludes that Confucian ethics 'is based on the relationship between the self and others'.⁸³

However, Schmidt's claim that 'Confucian ethics is the relationship between the self and others' seems to be inconsistent with the analogy of a child falling into a well in *Mencius* 2A:6. Unlike Watsuji, Mou disagrees that Confucian ethics 'is based on the relationship between the self and others'. From his point of view, the feeling of commiseration is not an emotion arising from an external situation, but from the moral judgement made by one's mind. Mou argues that the word *qing* (情) should not be translated as feeling or emotion but as the 'real case' (實情) of the original human nature,⁸⁴ which is 'purely a morally rational nature' (純義理之性).⁸⁵ Commiseration is indeed not an event, albeit concrete. It has [moral] universality⁸⁶ as a moral judgement according to human nature granted by the Way of Heaven. Commiseration, therefore, is not determined by the relation between the man (as a moral subject) and the child (as a moral object), but by the relation between the man's human nature (which undertakes moral judgement) and the Way of Heaven (which brings moral universality). Even if the child falling into a well is an illusion, the moral truthfulness of commiseration remains constant.

81 Schmidt, Stephan, 'Dang Dai Dong Ya Lun Li Xue De Liang Zhong Zhu Ti Gai Nian —Lun He Shi Zhe Lang、Tang Jun Yi He Mou Zong San Dui Zhe Xue Lun Li Xue De Jin Lu' 當代東亞倫理學的兩種主體概念—論和辻哲郎、唐君毅和牟宗三對哲學倫理學的進路 [Two Concepts of the Subject in Modern East Asian Ethics: The Approach to Philosophical Ethics in Watsuji Tetsuro, Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan], *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (Jun 2009): 156.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Mou, Zongsan, 心體與性體 [*Mind Substance and Nature Substance*], Vol. 3, (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 461-462.

85 Mou, Zongsan, 圓善論 [*On Perfect Goodness*], (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 22.

86 Mou Zongsan, *Nineteen Lectures*. §2, 31.

Unlike Mou, Watsuji insists that the moral feeling of commiseration is not yet 'moral'. Morality is not granted by Heaven; rather, it is approved by society. He claims, 'An attempt to explain moral sentiment on the basis of the fundamental facts of consciousness, falls victim to being considered an extreme instance of abstraction', for

'the feeling of obligation may arise [when] the feelings of the tribe must be added here, and the self's feeling of dissatisfaction with the past must be transformed into the feelings of societal expectation. Here ... the relationship of society to an individual intervenes quite suddenly. The emergence of obligation depends on this relationship alone. ... *a developed stage of feeling of obligation* is, in truth, none other than a developed stage of this socio-ethical organization. The feeling of approval or disapproval is simply an experience one has from within this organization.'⁸⁷

Watsuji concludes, 'if the feeling of obligation is derived in this way, then it is clear that the concepts of conscience, responsibility, the moral personality ... which are based upon this feeling of obligation, could not have been derived from the moral sentiment.'⁸⁸ In short, Watsuji argues that one's moral judgement is not merely follow one's subjective moral feelings but depend on the relationship between the society and an individual, which arises from *aidagara* as the duality of sociality and individuality. Humanity, righteousness, prosperity and wisdom should be defined in terms of the *social obligations* among interpersonal relationships of *society*, namely, *gorin*. In the following section, I argue that Watsuji's emphasis on social obligations and communal approval, together with his disregard for the idea of mind, nature and Heaven contradict with the context of *Mencius*.

87 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku*, 128.

88 Ibid.

3.3 Watsuji's Disregard for the Distinction between Fate and Nature

This section discusses Mou's demonstration for the transcendence of individual moral subjectivity based upon the remarks of *Mencius* 7B:24 and 7A:1. Firstly, 7B:24 distinguishes an individual's moral feelings and virtues from physiological needs and bodily desires: the former is determined by an individual's nature as moral good (性善之性, or the original nature 本然之性) granted by *the Way of Heaven* while the later is determined by 'fate' (命) or 'the nature as inborn' (生之謂性). Secondly, there was the unity among Heaven, human nature, and an individual's mind acknowledged in 7A:1. As the moral capacity of one's mind is granted by the Way of Heaven as soon as one 'exerts' one's mind (盡其心), one knows Heaven (知天). As we shall see in the following sections, while Watsuji's interpretation of *gorin* in terms of *aidagara* is consistent with Mencius's teaching of humanity's innerness and righteousness, it is inconsistent with 7B:24 and 7A:1 because of the absence of Heaven-human relationship in *ningen rinrigaku*.

Watsuji's claim of moral principles as social obligations assuming communal approval might be refuted by Mou's claim of the moral universality embedded in an individual's innate moral preference illustrated in *Mencius*. If moral principles are approved by a society arising from particular historical-climatic conditions, it varies with spatio-temporal conditions and loses *universality*. A moral principle may be disapproved by the Japanese society during the Edo period but approved in the Meiji Era. By contrast, Mou insists that an individual self's moral preference contains *moral universality* granted by the Way of Heaven in *Mencius* 7B:24, where Mencius distinguishes moral feelings from bodily desires:

'It is due to our nature [性] that our mouths desire sweet taste, that our eyes desire beautiful colours, that our ears desire pleasant sounds, that our noses desire fragrant odours, and that our four limbs desire ease and comfort. But there is also fate [命] (*ming*) [whether these desires are satisfied or not]. The superior man does not say they are man's nature

[and insist on satisfying them].

The virtue of humanity in the relationship between father and son, the virtue of righteousness in the relationship between ruler and minister, the virtue of propriety in the relationship between guest and host, the virtue of wisdom in the worthy, and the sage in regard to the Way of Heaven [天道]—these are [endowed in people in various degrees] according to fate [命]. But there is also man's nature [性]. The superior man does not (refrain from practising them and) say they are matters of fate.⁸⁹ (*Mencius* 7B:24)

According to Mou's interpretation, in the quotation above, there are two senses of the term nature (性): *nature as inborn* (生之謂性) and *nature as moral good* (性善之性, also known as 本然之性 *original nature*).⁹⁰ Nature as inborn refers to the external conditions (known as *fate* - 命限), which is found in both bodily desires and moral motivations. While one naturally prefers to drink cold drinks in the hot summer, the availability is determined by external factors: when all cold drinks are sold in the market, it is not available. Likewise, while one naturally prefers to love one's parents, the aliveness of one's parents is determined by external factors. An orphan can never manifest filial piety to his/her parents.

However, even moral practice is also limited by external factors, Mencius argues that it involves a sense of *moral obligation* determined by the will of an individual and a *moral commitment to the Way of Heaven*, while bodily desires do not. Similarly, Mou argues that one should still 'endeavours to fulfil one's natural

89 Trans. Chan, Wing-Tsit, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 81.

90 In order to explain the unity of human nature and Heaven, following Neo-Confucian commentaries on *Four Books*, Mou introduces the concept of *Cheng Ti* (誠體 substance of *cheng*) as a substance unifying Heaven and human nature. The term *cheng* or *makoto* (誠) comes from the *Doctrine of the Mean* 20: 'Sincerity [誠 *cheng*] is the Way of Heaven. To think how to be sincere [誠者 *cheng zhe*] is the way of man.' See trans. Chan, Wing-Tsit, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 107; Also, Mou, Zongsan 牟宗三, *Mind Substance and Nature Substance 心體與性體*, Vol. 1, (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003).

duty', for the manifestation of virtues is a 'response to the Way of Heaven'.⁹¹ Here an *individual's human nature is equivalent to the Way of Heaven*. Mou quotes Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085), "This very mind is Heaven. Exhaust it, and you know human nature; know human nature, and you know Heaven. You grasp it right where you are; you cannot look outside." Here the mind is substituting for the Way of Heaven, and in order for the mind to stand in for Heaven it must take on an absolute sense, under which the moral order is the cosmic order and vice versa.⁹² In short, while the physiological needs manifested in desire satisfaction and the virtues manifested in *gorin* are limited by external conditions, the latter involves an individual's moral obligation to Heaven.

However, in *Rinrigaku*, Watsuji fails to acknowledge the relation between moral feelings and the Way of Heaven in *Mencius* 7B:24. Although Watsuji distinguishes sympathy from 'common emotions', he does not annotate sympathy with Mencius' idea of Heaven. Rather, he argues that moral feelings like sympathy are different from common emotions because they involve *others* in the acts of '*feeling with*'. '[T]rue sympathy lies in our ability to feel another person's emotional experiences and to share them. Thus, together with a friend, we may lament the death of her child and share her grief. ... my consciousness tends to take on a gloomy air overall because I feel my friend's grief. ... In this case, my ego consciousness is penetrated by her grief.'⁹³ In this regard, moral feelings assume no self-obligation to human nature or Heaven; instead, they merely involve the social obligation to others. When one 'feels with' other's feelings, one's consciousness is penetrated by others' emotions.

Advocates of Watsuji's interpretation may argue that Watsuji's concept of moral feelings as 'feeling with others' feelings' is included in the concept of nature

91 Mou, Zongsan 牟宗三, *On Perfect Goodness* 圓善論, (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 151-152.

92 Mou, Zongsan. *Late Work of Mou Zongsan*, trans. Jason Clower, (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014), 165.

93 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku*, 70-71.

as a moral good. According to *Mencius* 7B:24, the ‘virtue of humanity in the relationship between father and son, the virtue of righteousness in the relationship between ruler and minister, the virtue of propriety in the relationship between guest and host, the virtue of wisdom in the worthy, and the sage in regard to the Way of Heaven’.⁹⁴ All these virtues seem to be manifested in several *interpersonal relationships* where one’s consciousness is penetrated by others’ feelings. By contrast, desires for beautiful colours, pleasant sounds, fragrant odours, ease, and comfort, do not necessarily involve any interpersonal relationship. However, ‘the sage in regard to the Way of Heaven’ is not an interpersonal relationship. Watsuji’s account of moral feelings as ‘feelings with others’ feelings’ fail to indicate the relationship between Heaven and human nature, which is also emphasised in *Mencius* 7A:1, as being discussed in the following section.

3.4 Watsuji’s Disregard for the Relations among Mind, Nature and Heaven

As we have seen in section 3.3, Watsuji argues that moral practices assume only social obligations and moral feelings are ‘feeling with other’s feelings’ or ‘penetration by others’ emotions. However, in this section, we shall see that according to Mou’s reading of *Mencius* 7A:1, morality in *Mencius* assumes an individual’s moral commitment and obligation to *Heaven* which provides moral universality rather than merely a society. As it is written in *Mencius* 7A:1:

‘He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven. To preserve one’s mind and to nourish one’s nature is the way to serve Heaven. Not to allow any double-mindedness regardless of longevity or brevity of life, but to cultivate one’s person and wait for [destiny (*ming*, fate, Heaven’s decree or

94 Trans. Chan, Wing-Tsit, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 81.

mandate) to take its own course] is the way to fulfil one's destiny.'⁹⁵

According to Mou, 'exerting one's mind' means the 'complete actualisation of the mind', which is 'the mind of humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom'.⁹⁶ When one has completely manifested one's mind, one knows one's nature as the moral good. 'Knowing one's nature' refers to the 'testimony in practice.'⁹⁷ When one knows one's nature, one knows Heaven, because one's human nature originates from Heaven. Everyone shares the same human nature granted by the Way of Heaven. 'Heavenly reason, the original mind of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom ... and morality are not individual objects but the *real states and real reasons* [實事實理] of the sphere of spiritual values uniquely manifested by human beings'.⁹⁸ Mou quotes Liu Jiuyuan's 陸九淵 (1139-1192) commentary on *Mencius* 7A:1 and argues that the 'mind [in *Mencius*] is only one mind. My mind, my friends' minds, ... are all the same. *The substance of mind is so enormous* that if I have [merely] exerted my own mind, I am united with Heaven.'⁹⁹ Likewise, Mou quotes Cheng Hao, 'the mind is Heaven. When the mind is exerted, nature is known. When nature is known, Heaven is known. One cannot pursue externally.'¹⁰⁰ Similarly, 'preserving one's mind' means the preservation of 'the mind of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom', while 'nourishing one's nature' means the preservation of human values which are different from animality.¹⁰¹ When one preserves morality, one 'serves Heaven', because 'Heaven purely as *righteousness and reason* [義理] is a transcendent substance. Since it is such a transcendent substance, it is honoured. ... To "serve Heaven" is to magnify the profound and boundless Way of Heaven, which gives births to beings [生物] with respectfulness and no infraction.' To serve Heaven,

95 Ibid. 78.

96 Mou, Zongsan 牟宗三, *On Perfect Goodness* 圓善論, (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 132.

97 Ibid. 133.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid. 134.

100 Ibid. 135.

101 Ibid.

one ‘honours [Heaven] as an absolute value’ of moral practice.¹⁰²

In the eyes of Mou, Heaven as metaphysical substance¹⁰³ is the source of *moral universality*. The moral universality found in moral preference originates from *the Way of Heaven*, which is known as ‘concrete universal’¹⁰⁴ (具體的普遍):

‘The Chinese idea of “Heaven” is also responsible for the existence of the myriad things [the phenomenal world]. Hence “The Way of Heaven procreates and transforms.” ... Confucianism speaks not of a moral theology but of a moral metaphysics, since Confucianism is not a religion. In Confucianism, there is a Heaven to be responsible for being. Confucius’s *ren* [仁] and Mencius’s *xing* [性 human nature] were certainly in communion with Heaven, certainly in communion and therefrom united with Heaven. This *ren* and *xing* cannot be sealed off. Therefore[,] the Confucian metaphysics of morals necessarily implies a moral metaphysics.’¹⁰⁵

The unity of human nature and Heaven is achieved in the act of ‘exertion of mind to know nature’.¹⁰⁶ In order to support his reading of *Mencius* 7A:1, Mou quotes *the Doctrine of the Mean*¹⁰⁷ which explicitly suggests that an individual

102 Ibid. 136.

103 Following Cheng Hao, Mou argues that in *Book of Documents* and *Yi Ching*, ‘Di [帝], Heaven [天] and the Way of Heaven [天道] ... all refer to [the same] transcendent entity... namely a “metaphysical substance” [形而上之實體]’. See Mou, Zongsan, *Mind Substance and Nature Substance* 心體與性體, Vol. 2, (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 24.

104 Mou Zongsan, *Nineteen Lectures*. §2, 29.

105 Ibid. §4, 71.

106 Following Cheng Hao, Mou declares that the unity of human nature and Heaven is achieved by *cheng ti* (誠體). See Mou, Zongsan, *Mind Substance and Nature Substance*, Vol. 1, 340-375.

107 Mou assumes the consistency among *Four Books*, and therefore it is appropriate to employ the idea of *cheng* in his interpretation of *Mencius*. As Watsuji does not challenge such an assumption, this paper does not challenge it either. For the discussion on the consistency and intertextuality among *Four Books*, see Tsai, Cheng-Feng 蔡振豐, *Korean Confucian Chong Yak-yong’s Study of Four Books: A Discussion from East Asian Perspective* 朝鮮儒者丁若鏞的四書學：以東亞為視野的討論, (Taipei: National Taipei University Press, 2010).

moral self has a moral commitment and obligation to Heaven:

“Heaven’s command is called one’s nature [*xing*]. Following one’s nature is called Dao. Cultivating Dao is called teaching. ... the noble man [*junzi*] is guarded and vigilant where he is not seen, is fearful where he is not heard ... Therefore the noble man is vigilant in his solitude ...” This vigilance in solitude is achieved through one’s inner moral capacity [*xingti*, nature-substance] of “Heaven’s command is called one’s [moral] nature”. One’s moral capacity is mentioned first. The moral capacity is the subject, but this subject must go through the discipline of vigilance-in-solitude before it can be manifested. The solitude of vigilance-in-solitude, the solitude itself [*du*, being alone] comes from the idea of one’s inner moral capacity [*xingti*, nature-substance].¹⁰⁸

Mou argues that the teaching of ‘being vigilant in solitude’ (慎獨) in *the Doctrine of Mean* ‘is speaking about the subject; it is opening up the subject from the aspect of practice [moral cultivation].’¹⁰⁹ In solitude where there is the absence of others, an individual moral subject has solely moral obligation to his/her human nature granted by Heaven instead of a society or interpersonal relationships. As Mou quotes Zeng Zi’s (曾子, 505-432 BC) words from *Great Learning* 3, “‘You are one whom ten pairs of eyes are looking at, whom ten hands are pointing at. How stern they are! Wealth enriches the house, virtue enriches the body, an expansive heart accompanies a robust body. Therefore[,] the noble man must make his mind sincere.’” All of which is strict moral consciousness.¹¹⁰ The moral practices in *gorin*, therefore, involve an *individual’s obligation to Heaven*. One ‘serves one’s parents’ is not because filial piety is communally approved by society. Instead, *one serves one’s parents so that one could serve Heaven by manifesting*

108 Mou, Zongsan, *Nineteen Lectures*, §4, 76. For Mou’s analysis on the concept of solitude and sincerity, see Mou, Zongsan, *Mind Substance and Nature Substance*, Vol. 1, 340.

109 Mou, Zongsan, *Nineteen Lectures*, §4, 75.

110 Ibid. 71.

the virtue of filial piety.

Although Watsuji does not mention neo-Confucian commentaries on the idea of Heaven appeared in *Mencius* 7A:1, he argues that an individual's solitude mentioned above can hardly affirm the independence of an individual's existence. Instead, it is a negation of an individual self in front of the Absolute:

‘ ... the voice of conscience is heard from the standpoint of the individual's independence and not from that of the animal crowd. This voice was heard in Socrates' mind as well as in Confucius' If it is supposed that one hears the voice of negation from one's innermost, then there exists a negation at the rear of one's self. This negation is exactly what we have comprehended as the law presiding over a human being. It is the negation that makes an individual an individual. Furthermore, this negation attempts to return to its foundation by negating itself. It speaks as the voice of conscience. Hence, we can say that the voice of conscience is, basically speaking, “a voice invoking absolute negativity”. It is little wonder that this has been interpreted as the voice of the Absolute and has been referred to as *God's command* or *the devil's voice*. Thanks to this voice, we do not stop at mere negation but are lured to advance to the negation of [the] negation.’¹¹¹

According to Watsuji, in solitude, one hears the voice from the Absolute and establishes a relationship with the Absolute, one must negate oneself. Watsuji refers to Kierkegaard, who argues that in God-man relationship because one is not God, one must negate oneself in order to be united with God. ‘The independence of an individual is entirely dissolved in God.’¹¹² Likewise, Confucius and Mencius

111 Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku*, 137.

112 Ibid. 80. In *Work of Love*, Kierkegaard argues that in order to manifest universal love, one must deny oneself and fully depend on God. Robert C. Roberts argues that the concept of 'self-denial' is also assumed in Kierkegaard's discussion of Religiousness B in *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*. See Kierkegaard, Søren, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong,

also negate themselves in front of Heaven so that they may return to the 'foundation of individual existence',¹¹³ namely, human nature as moral good.

However, Mou argues that Heaven in *Mencius* is not God, and there is no self-negation in the relation between the mind and Heaven in *Mencius* 7A:1. In *On the Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy*, Mou argues that Kierkegaard's 'consciousness of conversion assimilates one's own subjectivity' which is an act of 'self-negation' (自我否定). Nonetheless, Heaven in Confucianism is very different from Christian God, for 'Heavenly commands are determined by human's moral decisions. ... in "honouring", our subjectivities are not commended to God. Instead of self-negation, we undertake self-affirmation [自我肯定].'¹¹⁴ Therefore, neither 'exertion of mind' nor 'preservation of mind' in *Mencius* 7A:1 requires self-negation; instead, both involve self-affirmation.

As 'exertion of mind' and 'preservation of mind' are acts of self-affirmation which assume the unity of mind, nature and Heaven, moral practices in *gorin* are merely *means* of self-affirmation. The 'relational rules' of *gorin* arise from an individual's moral consciousness of the embedded human nature as a moral good. As Mou claims,

'the normal ethics [倫常 *rinjo*] is based upon the moral minds of the human being who legislate the same "the relative degree of affection" [親親之殺], while everyone is based upon the same spirit to manifest "the relative grades in honouring" [尊敬之義].¹¹⁵ How can one regard the ethical degree of affections as external property like whiteness? They

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 52; Also, Roberts, Robert C., 'Dialectical Emotions and the Virtue of Faith', *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. Perkins, Robert L., (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 73-94.

113 Ibid.

114 Mou, Zongsan 牟宗三, *On the Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy* 中國哲學的特質, (Taipei: Student Book Ltd, 1998), 21-22.

115 From *the Doctrine of the Mean* 20, 'The relative degree of affection we ought to feel for our relatives, and the relative grades in honouring of the worthy give rise to the rules of propriety.'

belong to human moral values ... when the mind cannot realise why the *matters of values* are formed, it can never acknowledge the righteousness as the *inner* but the *outer*.¹¹⁶

As mentioned above, the inner righteousness¹¹⁷ is an innate virtue of human nature granted by the Way of Heaven. When an individual moral subject has moral self-consciousness of his own human nature, he/she makes moral judgements by legislating ‘the relative degree of affection’ and manifesting ‘the relative grades in honouring’, *from which gorin arise*. A Parent-child relationship arises from the child’s self-consciousness of his/her natural inclination to filial piety; he/she is conscious of such inclination because his/her nature is granted by the Way of Heaven. Therefore, *an individual self-consciousness exists before gorin*. As Mou claims,

‘If to be at ease is not *ren*, then if you felt uneasy would not this *ren* appear? This is self-awareness. In present-day parlance it is what we call moral self-awareness. The morally self-aware mind is of course the moral subject. If you are talking about moral consciousness how can you not talk about the subject? It is only because the moral consciousness is strong that the subject will appear before everything else.’¹¹⁸

Even if Mou’s claim of Heaven as a metaphysical substance is rejected, Watsuji’s concept of self-negation still contradicts the context of *Mencius* 7A:1, which seems to be in favour of self-affirmation. According to Watsuji, *gorin* in *Mencius* reveals the duality of sociality and individuality of *ningen*, namely, *aidagara*. Since *aidagara* arises from *Kū* and the negation of self and others, an individual must undertake self-negation in order to know the reality of human

116 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *On Perfect Goodness* 圓善論, (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 18.

117 The ‘innerness of Humanity and Righteousness’ (仁義內在) is an essential doctrine discussed in *Mencius* 6A. Mencius insists that humanity and righteousness are one’s innate moral capacity rather than a product of socialisation. See Mou Zongsan, *On Perfect Goodness*, 79-86.

118 Ibid. §4, 73.

existence.¹¹⁹ In other words, *Mencius* 7A:1 must be understood as a process of *self-negation rather than self-affirmation*. 'Nature' should be interpreted as *aidagara*, which reveals the duality of sociality and individuality in *ningen* while 'Heaven' should be understood as *Kū and Fūdo* from which *aidagara* arises. Neither nature nor Heaven should be understood as substances. 'Exertion of one's mind' and 'preservation of one's mind', therefore, should be interpreted as the negations of self and others. In order to examine whether such elaboration is justified, one must analyse the *kanji* of 'exertion' (盡, Mandarin: *jin*, Kan-on: *shin*) and 'preservation' (存, Mandarin: *cun*, Kan-on: *son*) with the help of Chinese philology.

From the philological perspective, one can hardly argue that *shin* and *son* in *Mencius* 7A:1 imply self-negation. According to Wang Li, *shin* originally means 'the emptiness of vessel' and therefore imply the meanings of 'exertion' or 'exhaustion',¹²⁰ while *son* means 'to miss' or 'to exist' which is 'contrast with to die [亡]'.¹²¹ Several non-Neo-Confucian Chinese philologists agree with Wang's definitions when they interpret *Mencius* 7A:1. Zhao Qi (趙岐, ?-201) argues that *shin* means 'exertion', for when 'the mind is exerted, and nature is exhausted, one can sufficiently inherit Heaven'.¹²² 'When one knows one's original ownership [of moral nature], one knows what Heaven has actually granted.'¹²³ Similarly, Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777) argues that one should exert one's mind because 'the morality of Heaven and human are all enlightened in the mind'.¹²⁴ Jiao Xun 焦

119 Human existence is known as *ningen sonzai* (人間存在) in Watsuji's *Rinrigaku*. In his interpretation of the *Doctrine of the Mean* 20, Watsuji defines the Way of Heaven merely as 'the form of truthfulness', while *makoto* (誠 *cheng*) arises from 'trust-relationship' and is 'an attitude assumed in response to trust consists of the realization of socio-ethical unity via the path of negation and hence reveals the authentic feature of *ningen sonzai* [人間存在]'. See Watsuji, Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsuro's Rinrigaku*, 273-274 & 276.

120 Wang Li, *A Dictionary of Ancient Chinese*, 779.

121 Ibid. 213.

122 Original text: 盡心竭性，足以承天。Zhao Qi 趙岐, Ruan Yuan 阮元 and Sun Shi 孫奭, 孟子注疏 [*Annotations of Mencius*], (Beijing: Chung Hwa Books Ltd, 1936), Vol. 4, 48.

123 Original text: 知吾性固有此者，則知天實賦之者也。Ibid.

124 Original text: 天人道德，靡不豁然於心。Dai Zhen 戴震, 戴震全書 [*Complete Collection*

循 (1763-1820) also claims that the ‘exertion of mind’ presupposes that ‘there is a human mind dominated by a spiritual power which thinks through the legitimacy [of actions] before taking actions’.¹²⁵ None of the above-mentioned philological studies above is in favour of Watsuji’s concept of self-negation. In fact, while *shin* means the ‘the emptiness of vessel’, it does not mean *Kū* which is dependent origination. Instead, the emptiness of a vessel presupposes the existence of a vessel. Likewise, the exertion of mind presupposes the existence of mind. Christianity emphasises the differences between God and an individual self. Therefore, the unity of God and an individual self requires self-negation. However, Confucianism emphasises the equivalence of *mind*, *nature* and *Heaven*. Even though Chinese philologists do not assume Heaven, nature and mind as substances, they acknowledge that human nature is granted by Heaven. The exertion of mind and preservation of mind are acts of self-affirmation rather than self-negation: one affirms one’s mind and nature are granted by Heaven and then completely develop one’s moral capacity.

To conclude, Watsuji’s interpretation of *gorin* in *ningen rinrigaku* can hardly be consistent with the textual context of *Mencius*. Watsuji’s understanding of moral feelings as ‘feeling with others’ and his concept of self-negation in *aidagara* disregard for the distinction between nature and fate in *Mencius* 7B:24 and the relations among mind, nature and Heaven in *Mencius* 7A:1. Moral feelings are different from bodily desires because the former involves moral obligations to Heaven rather than a society. By contrast, *ningen rinrigaku* insists that *gorin* assumes ‘communal approval’ and social obligation. Finally, as Watsuji misunderstands the idea of Heaven as God in his interpretation of *gorin*, he fails to acknowledge the equivalence among mind, nature and Heaven in *Mencius* 7A:1. Since Heaven is *within* an individual mind, an individual should undertake self-

of *Dai Zhen*], Zhang Dai Nian 張岱年 ed., (Hefei: Huangshan Publishing House, 1994), Vol. 6, 11.

125 Original text: 盡心者，人之有心，為精氣主，思慮可否，然後行之。 Jiao Xun 焦循，孟子正義 [*Elaborations of Mencius*], Shen Wen Zhuo 沈文倬 ed. (Beijing: Chung Hwa Books Ltd, 1987), 875.

affirmation rather than self-negation when he/she intends to manifest his/her Heavenly granted nature. *Aidagara* assumes the negation of self and others, but self-negation essentially contradicts with the teaching of 'exertion of mind' and 'preservation of mind'. Therefore, Watsuji's interpretation of *gorin* is inconsistent with the context of *Mencius*.

4. Conclusion: The Absence of Heaven-Human Nature Relationship in Watsuji's Interpretation of *Mencius*

Through the comparative study between Watsuji's *ningen rinrigaku* and Mou's moral metaphysics, this paper clarifies the reasons why Watsuji's interpretation of *gorin* is inconsistent with the context of *Mencius*. Specifically, Mou's moral metaphysics begins with an individual moral subjectivity. Although Mou employs Kantian ethics and Neo-Confucian meta-ethics in his interpretation of *Mencius*, his interpretation of *gorin* is more consistent with *Mencius*. Unlike Watsuji, Mou investigates a wide range of textual evidence from *Four Books* to support his reinterpretation of mind nature theory. According to Mou, *gorin* arises from an individual moral consciousness of 'the relative degree of affection' and 'the relative grades of honouring'. These relational rules do not assume 'communal approval'. Instead, they only assume an obligation to Heaven (*Mencius* 7B:24). Accordingly, when an individual is conscious of his/her nature as a moral good granted by Heaven, he/she should 'exert' and 'preserve' his/her mind so as to completely manifest his/her moral capacity. The exertion of mind and preservation of mind in *Mencius* 7A:1, therefore, are acts of self-affirmation rather than self-negation.

However, self-negation is an essential concept in Watsuji's reinterpretation of *gorin*. According to Watsuji, *gorin* reveals the real feature of *ningen* as a network of relationships, which arises from *aidagara*, while *aidagara* arises from *Kū*. Since *aidagara* is the duality of sociality and individuality, in order to reveal human

nature, one must negate self and others.

Comparing with Mou, Watsuji misunderstands the idea of Heaven in *Mencius*, which results in his misinterpretation of *gorin*. He did not discuss the relations among mind, nature and Heaven in *Mencius* 7A and 7B in *Rinrigaku*. More importantly, Heaven is not God, and therefore, Watsuji's idea of self-negation fails to explain the Heaven-Human relationship which requires self-affirmation. Although the nineteenth-century Chinese philologists like Dai Zhen and Jiao Xun disagree with the Neo-Confucian idea of 'mind-substance' or 'nature-substance' used in Mou's moral metaphysics, they still acknowledge the theoretical significance of Heaven in *Mencius* and are in favour of self-affirmation rather than self-negation.

Instead of accusing Watsuji of being misinterpreting Mencius' notion of *gorin*, we may regard Watsuji's discussion of *gorin* as a new philosophy which is different from Confucianism. Maybe Watsuji does not concern with the consistency between Mencius' teachings of *gorin* and 'the exertion of mind to know Heaven'. His *ningen rinrigaku* is a new ethics—neither Confucian nor Buddhist, because he only adopts Mencius' notion of *gorin* but rejects his idea of Heaven. In fact, Watsuji adopts only Nāgārjuna's concept of emptiness but rejects his belief in the karmic cycle. As Couteau indicates,

‘It is no coincidence here that Watsuji bases his own analyses of community on practical being in the world, given that traditional Confucianism focuses on the “political” world and the rules belonging to and governing social communities. Where Confucianism grounds these rules in Heaven, Watsuji focuses on the concrete study of human beings in the world.’¹²⁶

126 Couteau, Pauline, 'Watsuji Tetsurō's Ethics of Milieu', *Frontiers in Japanese Philosophy*, ed. James Heisig, (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 2006), 284.

Watsuji's anti-Neo-Confucian approach distinguishes himself not only from Neo-Confucian and twentieth-century Chinese New Confucianism but also from Mencius' ethics. While Mou's moral metaphysics rearticulates the necessity of the relationship between Heaven and the individual's moral self in Confucian ethics, Watsuji borrows the idea of *gorin* from *Mencius* to construct his *ningen rinrigaku*. Although Watsuji begins his ethical reflection with *Mencius*, it is vital to be aware of the fundamental differences between Watsuji and *Mencius* discussed above.

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