

Jinrin and Sittlichkeit: A comparison between two theories of community

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Abstract

The Japanese representative philosopher Tetsurō Watsuji's ethical theory has been influenced by Hegel, as many interpreters of Watsuji's work have pointed out. It is sure that there are many resemblances between Watsuji's ethical theory and that of Hegel. However, the foundational concepts of Watsuji's ethical theory, namely, "aidagara (social relation)" and the dialectic of "kū (emptiness)," can be found in his work before his intensive study of Hegel. In this article, I aim to elucidate the key differences in terms of the foundational thoughts between Watsuji's theory of "aidagara" and Hegel's theory of "Sittlichkeit (ethical life)." I will argue that the inter-relation of subjects as "aidagara" for Watsuji is a "given" in the sense that it already and always exists, and that, in contrast to this, the inter-relation of subjects as "recognition" for Hegel needs to be achieved or restored.

Keywords: aidagara, jinrin, recognition, spirit, Sittlichkeit

Introduction

Tetsurō Watsuji (1889–1960) was not only a historian of Japanese culture and thought, but also a philosopher who established an original systematic theory of ethics. It has not been difficult for interpreters of his ethical theory to find Hegel's influence in his work.¹ According to Koyasu, for example, Watsuji acquired the concept of the "dialectic of negation" from Hegel [Koyasu 2010, p. 139; Takahashi 2002.]. Both Yuasa and Hoshino point to the influence of Hegel's theory of "Sittlichkeit" in the *Philosophy of Right* (*Philosophie des Rechts*) on "jinrinteki soshiki (the organization of ethical life)," with which Watsuji's principal work, *Ethics* (*Rinrigaku*), engages in detail [Yuasa 1981, p. 267; Hoshino 1993, p. 47]. At first glance, therefore, there appears to be a considerable resemblance between the ethical theories of Watsuji and Hegel. However, the two theories are not identical. In fact, the origin of both Watsuji's understanding of a human being as "aidagara (social relation)" and the dialectic of "kū (emptiness)" on which his ethical theory is based, can be found in his work before he began his intensive study of Hegel.²

In this article, I aim to clarify the essential difference between Watsuji's ethical theory and Hegel's theory of "Sittlichkeit" by understanding the core of Watsuji's ethical theory as positing the theory of "aidagara" and the core of Hegel's philosophy as positing the philosophy of "spirit." I will restrict this comparative discussion to the foundational level of two theories of community, because discussing in detail all the differences between the two theories would far exceed the scope of this article. In addition, many interpreters have already pointed out some differences between Watsuji's ethical theory and that of Hegel. However, the differences between the two theories of community at the fundamental level, which this article aims to discuss, have to my knowledge not yet been examined. This is why I have opted to limit the subject matter of this article. The difference between the two theories of community on the fundamental level concerns two points of view: the relation between theory and practice, and the foundation of community. I think that these two points of view can clarify the essential difference between the two theories of community.

First, I briefly discuss the process through which Watsuji's ethical theory emerged and his study of Hegel. I then clarify Watsuji's interpretation and criticism of Hegel's philosophy, which is set out in the book *Ethics as the Theory of Ningen (Ningen no gaku toshite no rinrigaku)*. Finally, I contrast the difference between Watsuji's ethical theory and that of Hegel on the fundamental level.³

1. The emergence of Watsuji's ethical theory and his study of Hegel

Shōzō Shinoda summarizes Watsuji's thought and its development as follows.

The totality of Watsuji's thoughts is like a cosmos, and is composed of three elements: his study of existentialism, of the history of Japanese culture and thoughts, and of ethics. These elements, in this order, express the development of his thought. The central matter of his study, which is expressed and is increasingly deepening in that order, is the "ningen." [Shinoda 1963, p. 56]

Informed by this summary, the development of his thought up until his first systematic ethical work is briefly examined here.

Watsuji began his studies by examining Nietzsche. He published his first book, *A Study of Nietzsche* (1913), after graduating from Tokyo University. Two years later, he published the first book on Kierkegaard in Japan. During this period, Watsuji was interested in an existential question: How should I live? [Komaki 1986, p. 69] He found an answer in "personalism," according to which the perfection and development of the "person" is most important, within the philosophy of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard [Karube 2010, pp. 62ff.]. Through this "personalism" and its connections with his view on "culturalism" according to which only "culture" as the heritage of humankind can properly form a "person," Watsuji's interest turned to the culture of

ancient Greece before settling on Japanese culture. His study of Japanese culture and thought led to numerous publications.⁴Watsuji therefore began his career not as a philosopher of ethics, but as a historian of Japanese culture and thought. In July 1925, he was invited by two Japanese representative philosophers, Seiichi Hatano and Kitarō Nishida, to become an assistant professor of ethics at Kyoto University and began to study ethics seriously.⁵ His first publication on ethics was an article entitled “Ethics: Meaning and Method of Ethics as the Theory of Ningen”⁶, after which his book, *Ethics as the Theory of Ningen*⁷, was published in 1934. Finally, his main work, *Ethics*, in which his systematic theory of ethics is expounded, was published in three books, in 1937, 1942, and 1949. Watsuji studied Hegel intensively at that time in order to establish his original systematic theory of ethics.

Watsuji appears to have begun to study Hegel’s philosophy from the 1930s, however, he makes little mention of Hegel in the article “Ethics” (1931). In this article, he intensively analyzes the philosophy of Karl Marx, Aristotle, Kant, and others, where a human being is considered a social being which is constituted of “aidagara (social relation).” Against our expectations, Watsuji’s references to Hegel are few. However, they are very interesting, because his interpretation of Hegel at that time is hinted at.⁸ He mentions in this article the difference between “Moralität (morality)” and “Sittlichkeit (ethical life)” in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* [OAE, p. 80]. Watsuji then interprets “Moralität” as “subjective moral conscience,” and “Sittlichkeit” as “objective, rational will.” [OAE, p. 80] It is very interesting that he asserts that “rinri” in his own sense is more similar [not identical with: T. H.] to “Sittlichkeit” rather than to “Moralität.” Additionally, Watsuji already states in his article that the relation between an individual and society is dialectical, but he had not yet developed the details of this dialectic relation.

In contrast to this article, Watsuji devotes much more of the discussion in his book ETN to Hegel, indicating that Hegel had become more significant to him.⁹ Watsuji’s fundamental idea in this book is the same as in his article, but there are some differences between these two works. First, the structuring of the contents has changed. Second, there are two significant developments in Watsuji’s thought occurring in his book, namely, that he identifies Hegel’s “Sittlichkeit” with his own ethical theory [ETN, p. 77], and that the relationship between an individual and society is considered as the dialectic of “double negation” as in Hegel’s dialectic. Additionally, Watsuji labels this dialectical movement as the absolute negativity of the dialectic of “kū (emptiness).” [ETN, p. 35]

While the article “Ethics” and ETN are, so to speak, “the methodological introduction” [Koyasu’s explanation in *Ethics as the Theory of Ningen* (Iwanami bunko, 2007)] to Watsuji’s ethical theory, Watsuji first revealed his systematic theory of ethics in his book *Ethics*. The significant development in *Ethics* is that he provides concrete details of his ethical theory as involving the “organization of ethical life (jinrinteki soshiki),” which clearly indicates Hegel’s influence. Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit” in *Philosophy of Right* contains “family,” “civil society,” and “state.” Similarly, the “organization of ethical life” contains, according to Watsuji, “family,” “relatives,” “society grounded in a region,” “economic organization,” “society grounded in a

culture,” and the “state.”

It is clear that Watsuji’s study of Hegel in the 1930s is likely to have contributed to a more systematic approach to ethics, as evidenced in his book *Ethics*.¹⁰ However, the relation between Watsuji’s ethical theory as “jinrin” and Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit” is more complex, as the translated terms suggest might be the case. Watsuji’s interpretation of Hegel is next examined in detail.

2. Watsuji’s interpretation and criticism of Hegel’s philosophy

In this section, first, I will explore why Watsuji translated Hegel’s term “Sittlichkeit” into the Japanese word “jinrin (人倫),” because his translation hints at his understanding of Hegel (I). In the next step, I will discuss Watsuji’s interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy in his book ETN (II).

(I) While Watsuji translated the German word “Sittlichkeit” as the Japanese words “kyakkanteki riseiteki ishi (objective, rational will)” in his article “Ethics,” he translated it into the Japanese word “jinrin” in his book ETN. However, according to Sekiguchi, he provided no justification for this choice, although it was not usual at that time to translate Hegel’s term “Sittlichkeit” as “jinrin.” [Sekiguchi 2007, p. 217]¹¹ According to Koyasu, Keizō Hayami and Ryūhei Okada translated it as “rinri (倫理)” in *Hō no tetsugaku* (Tettō shoin, 1931), which was the first Japanese translation of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* [Koyasu 2010, pp. 41ff.]. Shinichirō Nishi, who was a representative Japanese philosopher of ethics at that time, translated it as “kyakkanteki dōtoku (objective morality)” in the *Dictionary of Philosophy (Tetsugaku jiten)* [DP, p. 143]. Therefore, we can say that Watsuji had at least four options in order to translate the word “Sittlichkeit” into Japanese.

As Watsuji argued in his book ETN [ETN, 12], if the word “rinri (倫理)” involved an understanding of a human being as a social being (an entity that consists of social relations as “aidagara”), he could have used “rinri” in order to translate Hegel’s term “Sittlichkeit,” but he did not do so. Instead he used the word “jinrin (人倫).” One reason why Watsuji used the word “jinrin” is that in Japan at that time, the term “rinri (倫理)” had been used as a translation of the English word “ethics,” which was understood as the science of the subjective moral conscience of the individual [Koyasu 2010, pp. 41ff.]. However this situation does not fully explain why Watsuji chose the word “jinrin,” as he could have chosen another option such as “kyakkanteki dōtoku,” as used by Nishi. Therefore, it seems that there must have been another reason, and this can be found in Watsuji’s interpretation of Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit,” namely, that Watsuji identified Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit” with his own ethical theory [ETN, p. 77].

As we have already seen, Watsuji published his article “Ethics” before his intensive study of Hegel and discussed the foundations of his own ethical theory in which ethics is considered as “jinrin” which is identical to “aidagara.” [OAE, pp. 80f.] This suggests that the reason why he translated Hegel’s term “Sittlichkeit” as “jinrin” is that he found himself in Hegel’s ethical theory. It is likely that after Watsuji first gained his understanding of human beings as social beings

through his study of Marx, he decided to use the Confucian term “jinrin,” which means social and ethical relations between human beings, in order to demonstrate that the understanding of human beings as social beings is also traditional for Japanese people.¹² He then used the term “jinrin” for Hegel’s “Sittlichkeit” in the next step of his development.¹³ Watsuji, therefore, interpreted Hegel’s theory from the standpoint of his own ethical theory. How then did he interpret Hegel?

(II) Watsuji interprets the development of Hegel’s philosophy as the development from ethics, i.e., from the philosophy of “jinrin,” to the “philosophy of spirit.” This “ethics” must then be understood in Watsuji’s own sense [ETN, p. 77]. In other words, he reads Hegel’s ethical theory as a theory of “jinrin” in his sense. Furthermore, according to Watsuji, it is within the *System der Sittlichkeit* that Hegel’s ethical theory as an analysis of the nature of a human being is most clearly set out in its purest form. Interestingly, Watsuji highlighted that Hegel’s theory in *System der Sittlichkeit* had not yet become the “philosophy of spirit.” According to Watsuji, this transformation from the “philosophy of jinrin” to the “philosophy of spirit” occurred in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In addition, he interprets this transformation as necessary, as he finds the core of Hegel’s philosophy of spirit in “ethics,” and that “ethics” must, according to him, develop essentially into the “philosophy of spirit.” [ETN, pp. 75f.] We can see here that Watsuji finds an essential relation between the concept of “Sittlichkeit” and the concept of “spirit” in Hegel’s philosophy. He interprets this transformation as follows. “In *System der Sittlichkeit* the absolute realizes itself practically as the organization of ethical life (jinrinteki soshiki).” [ETN, p. 98] However, Hegel’s “philosophy of jinrin” focusses on the cognition of the absolute jinrin (Sittlichkeit), and for this reason, it becomes the self-cognition of the absolute, for Hegel identified the absolute jinrin with “nation (Volk)” in *System der Sittlichkeit*, but “nation” is not the true absolute because of its form and its individuality. Thus, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel identified the absolute with the self-cognition of the absolute spirit (the absolute knowledge as the self-knowledge of the spirit). Watsuji argues that “through this problem of cognition, ‘spirit’ has primacy over jinrin,” and “we can see clearly Hegel’s new standpoint in his concept of ‘spirit.’” [ETN, p. 98] Therefore, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the realization of “jinrin” is reduced to a stage in the self-cognition process of the absolute [ETN, pp. 98f.].

Here, we could ask whether Watsuji’s interpretation of Hegel is correct.¹⁴ This is surely an important problem. However, it is more important and more interesting for us to ask how Watsuji interpreted Hegel’s work rather than whether his interpretation is correct, for it implicates the essential difference between the standpoints of Watsuji and Hegel. We will now examine Watsuji’s interpretation of Hegel. His interpretation consists of three points.

- (a) Identity-thesis of spirit and Sittlichkeit (jinrin): Spirit (the absolute) realizes itself practically as the organization of ethical life, i.e., “nation” in the *System der Sittlichkeit*.
- (b) Transformation-thesis: However, the nation is not the true absolute because of its form

and individuality. Thus, Hegel had to transform his thought from “nation” as the absolute to the self-cognition of spirit as the absolute.

- (c) Primacy-thesis of spirit over *Sittlichkeit* (jinrin): We can see Hegel’s new standpoint according to which the absolute is the self-cognition of spirit in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Now, spirit has primacy over *Sittlichkeit*.

Interestingly, Watsuji’s interpretation of the development of Hegel’s philosophy is similar to Habermas’ [Habermas 1969] or Honneth’s interpretations [Honneth 1992] at first glance. In addition, it is also interesting for us that Watsuji pointed out Hegel’s “paradigm-shift” of his standpoint from a philosopher of practice to a philosopher of theoretical cognition¹⁵ long before the two European philosophers of the Frankfurter School did so after the 1960s. However, to what extent is Watsuji’s interpretation of Hegel correct? Point (a) is correct. It is certain that Hegel considered in the *System der Sittlichkeit* that the absolute (spirit) realizes itself in the “nation.” [Kōyama 1936, pp. 80f.; Kaneko 1989, p. 175; Siep 2014 (1979), p. 188] Point (c) is also correct. According to Hisatake Katō, Hegel turned to “intellectualism” during his time in Jena [Katō 1980, 97ff.]. However, point (b) is partly false. We are sure that the transformation occurred in Hegel’s philosophy during his time in Jena. However, the reason why it occurred, for which Watsuji accounts, is not correct. He discusses it as follows. Hegel identified the “absolute jinrin” or the “ethical totality” with the “nation” in *System der Sittlichkeit*. However, the “nation” is not the true absolute because of its form and individuality. Therefore, the alternate, which Hegel could choose as the true absolute, was only the self-cognition of the absolute spirit. However, the reason why Hegel had to change his philosophical project during his time in Jena was because he had to relinquish his ideal of the beautiful harmony of religion, philosophy, and the state, which he found in the ancient Greek polis [Katō 1980, p. 211]. That means that Hegel found the historical nature of spirit; his philosophy of history, whose object was the historical development of spirit, was born [Katō 1980, p. 211].

However, we can find the difference between Watsuji’s standpoint and Hegel’s by considering the way that Watsuji interpreted Hegel’s work. Therefore, his interpretation is more interesting to us, even if it is false in part. After all, Watsuji’s criticism of Hegel is that Hegel grounded “jinrin,” that is, his ethical theory on “spirit.” The true absolute on which “jinrin” can be grounded is, according to Watsuji, not “spirit” but “kū (emptiness),” which is the fundamental concept of Buddhism.¹⁶ According to Watsuji,

However, the absolute spirit can be the ultimate principle of the self-cognition of spirit, but not the ultimate ground of the ethical (jinrinteki) reality which contains also the irrational. [ETN, p. 108]

The indifference in which the difference is contained, which Hegel emphasizes, is both the

structure of all organizations of ethical life and “kū” as its absoluteness. [ETN, p. 108]

Here is the essential difference between the Frankfurter School’s criticism of Hegel and Watsuji’s criticism. Both the philosophers of the Frankfurter School and Watsuji criticized Hegel in that the inter-subjectivity melted down into the mono-logical subjectivity of the absolute spirit in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However, this agreement between the European philosophers and the Japanese philosopher is merely superficial. Habermas and Honneth criticized the change of the concept of spirit in Hegel’s philosophy. That is, they criticized the change from the inter-subjective concept of spirit to the mono-logical concept of spirit. However, they did not criticize the fact that the community was grounded in spirit. The foundational problem for them was what kind of spirit grounds the community of human beings. Against this, what Watsuji criticized in the first place was that the community is grounded in spirit, whatever it may be. In *System der Sittlichkeit*, this fundamental falsehood was only concealed by Hegel’s identifying “spirit” with “nation,” although from the beginning, the absolute was “spirit” for Hegel. However, for Watsuji, the true absolute in which the community as the ethical totality can be grounded is nothing but “kū” as the “absolute negativity.”¹⁷

3. Watsuji’s concept of “aidagara”

By examining Watsuji’s interpretation and criticism of Hegel’s philosophy, we have confirmed that there was a foundational difference between Watsuji’s standpoint on his ethical theory and Hegel’s standpoint on his theory of “Sittlichkeit,” although Watsuji identified Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit” with his own ethical theory. Due to this difference, it is to be expected that Watsuji’s ethical theory would differ from Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit.” This essential difference can be clearly understood by examining the concept of “aidagara,” which is at the core of Watsuji’s ethical theory, and the concept of “spirit,” which is at the core of Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit.” In the following, as I have already mentioned in the introduction, I will clarify the foundational differences between these two ethical theories of community from two points of view: the relation between theory and practice on the one hand, and the foundation of community on the other.

I begin with the article “Ethics,” which is considered to be the original text of Watsuji’s ethical theory, to explain his concept of “aidagara.” Following the publication of the article “Ethics,” the concept of “aidagara” does not change in Watsuji’s thought; this article offers an opportunity to engage with the concept in its clearest formulation, as it served as the foundation of Watsuji’s ethical theory.

Watsuji’s ethical theory is the theory of “ningen,” since the main subject matter of ethics must be “ningen.” This is the heart of Watsuji’s ethical theory. However, this statement in and of itself does not explain anything. A further question needs to be posed, namely, what is “ningen”? “Ningen” generally refers to a human being or human beings (a Japanese noun usually contains both the singular and plural forms). Some sciences already deal with human beings and therefore

the question correctly posed should be, what is a human being as the subject matter of ethics? According to Watsuji, this is the foundational question of ethics. A human being as a natural entity is not under consideration here, since that is the concern of biology, physiology, or bioscience, not ethics. A human being is, in terms of the subject matter of ethics, a social being. Watsuji derived this insight that a human being is, in essence, a social being, from his study of Marx. Watsuji considers the “material” in Marx’s materialism as the social relation of human beings, and he calls this social relation of human beings “aidagara.” Therefore, “ningen” is nothing but “aidagara” in so far as “ningen” consists of “aidagara.” According to Watsuji, it is a human being, understood as “aidagara,” that is the subject matter of ethics. However, what in specific terms is “aidagara”? Watsuji analyzes the structure of the foundational question of ethics after stating that the subject matter of ethics involves “ningen” as “aidagara.” According to Watsuji, “[t]he entity which asks what is ningen is itself ningen which is the very object of this question. In addition to this, the question itself, as a question which ningen asks, means an aidagara.” [OAE, p. 109] Therefore, we can elucidate what “aidagara” is through an analysis of the structure of this question. In the question, “What is ningen?” which consists of “aidagara,” the following two things are realized. The first is the identity of the subject and object. The second is that the identity of the subject and object means, in the case of the theory of “ningen,” “aidagara,” i.e., an inter-subjective relation [OAE, p. 109].

According to Watsuji, “aidagara” is not identical to the relation between subject and object. In addition, the relation that is considered as the opposition between subject and object is in fact “the opposition between outer nature and inner mind,” and this opposition emerges only “in the ‘theoretical subject.’” [OAE, p. 110] This is the framework of modern epistemology, in which the mind theoretically engages with the outer world. This is also the standpoint of theoretical sciences that consider human beings as natural entities, for example, physics. Watsuji believes, on the contrary, that a standpoint that considers the relation between subject and object to be only oppositional not only forgets that this type of understanding does not consider the social relationships between human beings and their own bodies, but also cannot be used to accurately understand the genuine structure of consciousness (subjectivity) itself. According to Watsuji, consciousness is essentially intentional (relational), and there is no subject or object without this relation, “This relation is primary over ‘I’ or ‘things.’ The relation has primacy.” [OAE, p. 111] Therefore, subject and object are originally united in the intentional relation. Watsuji simply calls this intentional relation “intentionality”¹⁸ or “the transcendental personality.” The oppositional relation between subject and object is only derived from the transcendental personality, which is the original unit of subject and object. According to Watsuji, genuine subjectivity occurs in this intentionality.¹⁹

However, Watsuji claims that the intentionality is not yet identical with “aidagara.” The intentionality is a one-sided relation, whereas “aidagara” is an inter-relational relation. Therefore, “aidagara” means the “inter-relation or community of subjects.” [OAE, p. 109] “We” is “the standpoint from which all human beings as subjects are related,” “therefore aidagara contains

the understanding of this inter-subjectivity of all human beings.” [ETN, p. 139] This standpoint of “we” has primacy over “the opposition of subject and object,” and “we” is found originally before “I am found.” [ETN, 75] “For I find myself though I find you or others, and we can find ourselves and others only because of aidagara.” [ETN, pp. 75f.] Therefore, that “ningen” is “aidagara,” that is, a social being, means that a human being is essentially conditioned by “the relation of actions” which is called “we.” Watsuji’s comments on the relation between “I” and “we,” or “aidagara,” appear to resemble Hegel’s concept of “spirit,” which at first glance is argued in the theory of “self-consciousness” in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I will argue this point.

“Accordingly, the theory of ningen, although it is a theory, must be fundamentally distinguished from all other theories in which object is observed by cognitive subject.” [OAE, p. 116] That is, ethics as the theory of “ningen” is a practical science, but not a theoretical science. Watsuji justifies this difference between practical science and theoretical science by referencing the Kantian difference between theoretical and practical reason [OAE, 116]. The use of theoretical reason is “cognition,” which means that the subject theoretically observes objects, while, in the case of the use of practical reason, the matter is the practical subject [OAE, p. 116]. Consequently, according to Watsuji, “[t]he theory of ningen as the theory of practical subject is distinguished from all other theories of theoretical object in this sense.” [OAE, p. 118]

As we have seen above, “aidagara” is the inter-relation of practicing subjects, which is called “we.” However, there is no argument in Watsuji’s ethical theory that argues how the standpoint of “we,” i.e., the inter-relation of subjects as community, is possible in the first place. This omission anticipates that there was no need for Watsuji to discuss it. That is, he regarded “aidagara,” i.e., community as a “given,” in Sellars’ sense.²⁰ For Watsuji, “aidagara” is *just found, but not founded*. It always and already exists everywhere. “Aidagara” therefore not only means community itself, but also the foundation of community. I think that this is why “he fails to consider the problem of relation between individuals, and only treats the problem of the relation between an individual and totality (society) in one step.” [Utsunomiya 1970, p. 141]

4. Hegel’s concept of spirit

I turn now to Hegel’s concept of “spirit” insofar as it is related to this discussion. Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit” is very closely connected to his concept of “spirit,” as Watsuji correctly pointed out. Watsuji’s concept of “aidagara” as the inter-relation of practicing subjects corresponds to Hegel’s concept of “spirit,” which raises the question as to what “spirit” is in Hegel’s philosophy. The answer can be found in an analysis of the development of Hegel’s practical philosophy and the concept of spirit which Hegel puts forth in his theory of “self-consciousness” in *Phenomenology of Spirit*.²¹ First, I will briefly explain the development of Hegel’s practical philosophy during his time in Jena, and second, examine the concept of spirit that is discussed in the theory of “self-consciousness” in *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Hegel had discussed his practical philosophy, i.e., the theory of “Sittlichkeit,” in connection with

the concept of spirit since *System der Sittlichkeit* which Watsuji evaluated as a model of ethical theory in his own sense.²² However, the structure of *System der Sittlichkeit* still relied on the framework of Aristotelian politics. This teaches us that Hegel could not yet accept modern individualism. Hegel only opposed the beautiful harmony of individuals in their nation, which is found in the ancient Greek polis and called the “absolute Sittlichkeit,” to modern individualism whose representative philosophers are Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and Fichte in “On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law.” However, through his engagement of “reflection philosophy,” which Hegel called Jacobi, Kant, and Fichte’s philosophy, he had connected his concept of spirit with the theory of consciousness, i.e., the concept of “reflection,” since the “manuscript of the philosophy of spirit in 1803/04.” In addition, Hegel linked the theory of natural state, which is argued in the modern theory of natural law, especially in Hobbes’ version of it, i.e., the struggle of all human beings in the natural state, with the concept of “recognition (Anerkennung),” which Hegel learned from Fichte. Through these two improvements, Hegel could construct a new version of the theory of “Sittlichkeit” as his practical philosophy, whose character consists of the following two points: the integrity of the modern theory of individual autonomy, that is, modern individualism within Aristotelian politics on the one hand, and the theory of the cultivation (Bildung) of consciousness, i.e., the theory of the necessary development from individual to universal consciousness, on the other. Consequently, Hegel accepted modern individualism; in other words, he saw the loss of the beautiful harmony of individuals in the ancient Greek polis as a necessary medium in his theory of “Sittlichkeit.” His theory appealed to the restoration of the beautiful harmony of individuals in their nation, which he reasoned man could only find in the ancient Greek polis, under conditions of his time. This indicates that *Hegel’s concept of spirit is now historicized*, in that it consists of the dialectical process from the immediate unity through its division to the reflected (mediated) unity. That is, the genuine unity of spirit must be mediated by its division; therefore, is not immediate unity, but reflected (mediated) unity. This restoration process of the unity of spirit is positioned on the cultivating process of consciousness, i.e., the developmental process from individual to universal consciousness. Consequently, Hegel’s practical philosophy in 1805/06 was organized in terms of the practical part that mostly corresponded to the “objective spirit” in *Encyclopedia* as follows: from the immediate unity of family which was named the “natural ethical life (natürliche Sittlichkeit)” in *System der Sittlichkeit*, through the struggle of recognition in the natural state as a division of the immediate unity of the family, to civil society as a market that is ruled by law, and finally to the political state (nation) as the mediated (reflected) unity that was named the “absolute ethical life (absolute Sittlichkeit)” in *System der Sittlichkeit*. The struggle for recognition functions then as a necessary medium to the (reflected) unity of spirit in the nation, which refers to the realization of recognition; in other words, as the necessary moment of the development from individual to universal consciousness.

It is clear that this concept of spirit in the “manuscript of the philosophy of spirit in 1805/06” is closely linked with the concept of spirit in *Phenomenology of Spirit* in which Hegel developed his

original philosophy which regards the truth or the absolute as the subject, i.e. “spirit” is clearly manifested. In what follows, relying on the argument put forth above, I will examine Hegel’s concept of spirit that is discussed in “B. self-consciousness” in *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

According to Hegel, consciousness in the narrow sense (Bewußtsein) is consciousness of an object, which considers an object as an independent entity (Ansichsein). Therefore, this consciousness is theoretically related to its object in the framework of the opposition between subject and object. In contrast, self-consciousness (Selbstbewußtsein) is the consciousness that considers not an object but itself as an independent entity. That is, Being on itself (Ansichsein) and Being for itself (Fürsichsein) is identical in self-consciousness. The chapter “A. consciousness” in *Phenomenology of Spirit* details the necessary process from consciousness to self-consciousness, and chapter “B. self-consciousness” details the necessary process from a belief in self-consciousness to its truth. There are two purposes in the chapter “B. self-consciousness,” which are to set out the conditions of self-consciousness as such and to argue that self-consciousness is essentially “spirit.” The important points of Hegel’s argument are as follows:

(I) The unity of theory and practice in self-consciousness. Self-consciousness in Hegel’s philosophy is the consciousness for which its object is not only its other, but also itself. It is immediately sure that its other is itself. In other words, self-consciousness has only certainty of the self. This form of self-consciousness is simply the immediate unity of (self-) consciousness and its other. Thus, its certainty does not yet become the truth. Therefore, self-consciousness aims to gain self-knowledge as the truth, the true knowledge that its object is in truth identical with itself, through the negation of the appearance of its object as its other. For that purpose, (self-)consciousness practically has something to do with its object. The relation between consciousness in the narrow sense and self-consciousness is that the true form of the consciousness of the object is consciousness of itself, that is, self-consciousness. Accordingly, the consciousness of the object is implied (aufgehoben) in self-consciousness in the sense that consciousness of the object is a constitutional element of self-consciousness; therefore, the theoretical relation of consciousness in the narrow sense is not only distinguished from the practical relation of self-consciousness, but also implied as a necessary element of this practical relation.²³

(II) Regaining of the body in self-consciousness. According to Hegel, self-consciousness is the consciousness that has a certain belief in the self, and its first form is “desire.” The object of self-consciousness as “desire” is “life.” This formulation of self-consciousness as “desire” indicates that the existence of the body is implied in self-consciousness. “Desire” always needs its object that must be negated by it, for self-consciousness has the certainty of itself in the self only through the negation of “life” as its other. This demonstrates, Hegel claims, that self-consciousness as “desire” is not self-consciousness in the true sense, for it cannot overcome the objectivity of the object.

(III) “Recognition” as a constitutional condition of self-consciousness. That “desire” cannot be sure that it is an independent entity reveals that “[s]elf-consciousness exists in and for itself when,

and by the fact that it so exists for another; that is it exists only in being acknowledged.” [PS, p. 111] According to Hegel, self-consciousness needs other self-consciousness to exist as it is. Hegel calls this relation between self-consciousness and other self-consciousness “recognition (Anerkennung),” but this relation is not given for self-consciousness in the first place. That is, self-consciousness must establish this relation through the “movement of recognition.” “Recognition” is the inter-relation of self-consciousness and other self-consciousness, in which the negation of the self (the affirmation of the other) turns into the affirmation of the self (the negation of the other), and in turn the affirmation of the self (the negation of the other) turns into the negation of the self (the affirmation of the other). At the same time, the negation of the self refers to a cultivation (Bildung) of the self from a singularity (the individual self-consciousness) to a universality (the universal self-consciousness), which is the historical aspect of self-consciousness. Then, the movement of “recognition” is a necessary medium in the cultivation process of self-consciousness from its singularity to its universality (spirit as universal self-consciousness).²⁴ Hegel considers the unity of individuality and universality as true freedom and this unity is called “spirit.”

(IV) Self-consciousness as a concept of spirit. The unity of self-consciousness and other self-consciousness, through the movement of recognition, is called “spirit.” Hegel formulates the “spirit” as follows: “I that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I.’” [PS, p. 110] According to Hegel, self-consciousness in “spirit” is independent from its others, even though it is simultaneously related to its others. Consequently, spirit as the inter-relation of self-consciousnesses is not immediate unity, but the mediated (reflected) unity of self-consciousnesses. This mediated (reflected) unity of spirit that is brought through the movement of recognition, which is therefore different from the immediate unity of spirit in the ancient Greek polis, is the true unity of spirit for Hegel. We can find the same process of spirit (immediate unity, its division, and mediated unity as the recovery of unity) in Hegel’s theory of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit* as in his philosophy of spirit in 1805/06, although they have different points of view and aims. This process of spirit is nothing but the historical character of spirit.

According to Siep, Hegel’s practical philosophy in his Jena period was grounded in the principle of “recognition.” [Siep 2014 (1979)] Hegel’s theory of “Sittlichkeit” from that time involved the social institutions required for “recognition,” in other words, the concrete forms of “recognition.” In the later *Encyclopedia*, the concept of “Sittlichkeit” belongs to the “objective spirit” which is grounded in the concept of “free will,” but the concept of “recognition” still functions.

Conclusion

There are many resemblances between Watsuji’s theory of “aidagara” and Hegel’s theory of “spirit.” It is noteworthy that both philosophers thought that inter-subjectivity has primacy over the relation of subject and object. However, while depending on the Kantian difference between practical and theoretical reason, Watsuji only distinguishes the practical science from the

theoretical science; however, the theoretical relation is also implied in the practical relation in Hegel's philosophy. That is, the standpoints of these two philosophers in terms of the relation between theory and practice are different. In addition, there is a more fundamental difference between Watsuji and Hegel concerning inter-subjectivity (community). I think that for Watsuji, "aidagara" is a given in the philosophical sense as understood and used by Sellars; therefore, that "aidagara" must be found, premised on the assumption that "aidagara" is the inter-relation of subjects, is always and already present to us. In contrast, for Hegel, the inter-relation of subjects as "spirit" must be established (or properly restored) through the movement of recognition. The true unity of spirit is the mediated (reflected) unity for Hegel, that is, restored but not in the sense that the very same unity is brought about. A community that is grounded in the mutual recognition of subjects is achieved only through the struggle for recognition, even if self-consciousness is essentially a social being, i.e., the "spirit." In this light, I consider that a key question for Hegel concerning how community or relationships can be restored, is radically absent from Watsuji's work. Hegel worried about how we could restore the standpoint of "we" under the conditions of his time, i.e., the unity of the nation which was, according to Hegel, realized in the ancient polis. However, Watsuji does not ask how the standpoint of "we," the inter-relation of subjects, can be established, and on this point, his ethical theory is in essence *ahistorical*. Watsuji's theory of "aidagara" can be seen as abstracting away from the historical aspects of Hegel's theory of "Sittlichkeit."

Finally, I would like to briefly mention some interpretative issues not discussed in this article. The absence of a historical viewpoint in Watsuji's theory provides the key means to address the issues raised. One issue concerns the different understandings of the dialectic of Watsuji and Hegel. Another issue concerns differences in what is needed between Watsuji's theory of "jinrin" and Hegel's theory of "Sittlichkeit" from the viewpoint of cultivation (*Bildung*). It is necessary to address these issues through a deeper understanding of Watsuji's personalism that grounds his early views on cultivation and how his personalism transformed into his theory of "aidagara." This would allow for a more informed insight into how Watsuji understood the historical aspects of "jinrin." Such proposed future studies would elucidate the link between Watsuji as a historian and as a philosopher of ethics.

Notes

- ¹ According to Kaneko, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel were especially important philosophers for Watsuji [Kaneko 1961, p. 177].
- ² According to Miyagawa [2015, pp. 239ff.], Watsuji's analysis of the dialectical unity or relation of "individuality and totality" had already been expressed in his lecture "Japanese Language and Philosophy (Nihongo to tetsugaku)" in 1928. The origin of his interpretation of Buddhism, on which his dialectic of "kū (emptiness)" is based, can be seen in *the Practical Philosophy of Primitive Buddhism (Genshi bukkyō no jissen tetsugaku, 1927)*. Here, I mention the English translation of this article. Watsuji's term "人間(ningen)" contains two meanings which are, according to Watsuji, essentially related, i.e., simultaneously an individual human being and the world of human beings (society). However, there is no English word that fully corresponds to the term "ningen," as Watsuji has pointed out. Robert E. Carter who translated Watsuji's *Ethics (Rinrigaku)* into English says the following: "The Japanese word ningen is usually translated as "human being," "person," or "man." But it also means the betweenness [aidagara: T. H.] of human beings. The customary English translation does not carry both sense of ningen." [Watsuji Tetsurō's *Rinrigaku*, translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 356] Consequently, I have chosen to use the word "ningen" in this article, following Yamamoto and Carter in *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku*. In addition, I have translated Watsuji's term "aidagara" into the phrase "social relation." Hegel's term "Sittlichkeit" is translated in this article as "ethical life." Here I have chosen to follow the practices of many English-speaking philosophers.
- ³ Here, I show the comparative correspondence between Watsuji and Hegel's key concepts. See the following table. In this article, I will primarily discuss the differences concerning the principle of community. The reason why I have chosen to do so has already been noted.

	Foundation of community	Institutional community	The absolute
Watsuji	aidagara (ningen)	jinrinteki soshiki	kū
Hegel	spirit (self-consciousness)	ethical life	Ideal or absolute spirit

- ⁴ For example, *The Recovery of Idols (Gūzō saikō, 1918)*, *Pilgrimages to the Ancient Temples in Nara (Kōji junrei, 1919)*: This English title is translated by Hiroshi Nara), *Primitive Culture in Japan (Nihon kodai bunka, 1920)*, and *A Historical Study of Japanese Thought (Nihon seishinshi kenkyū, 1926)*.
- ⁵ Seiichi Hatano (1877–1950) was a Japanese philosopher of religion. Kitarō Nishida (1870–1945) was Japan's most famous philosopher whose representative work is *An Inquiry into the Good* (1911). Nishida was also the central figure of the Kyoto School.
- ⁶ I refer to The Tetsurō Watsuji's original article "Ethics" which was edited by Tadashi Karube in 2017 (Chikuma gakugei bunko) when I quote from his article "Ethics." From here on, I use the abbreviation OAE.
- ⁷ I refer to *The Works of Tetsurō Watsuji*, No. 9 (Iwanami, 1962) when I quote from his book *Ethics as the Theory of Ningen*. From here on, I use the abbreviation ETN.
- ⁸ In this article, he only mentions Hegel five times.
- ⁹ Hegel's philosophy features more prominently in ETN, where, in particular, Watsuji analyzes Hegel's thinking concerning the System of Ethical Life (This title is translated by Knox), "On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law" (This title is translated by Knox), the Phenomenology of Spirit (This title is translated by Miller), and the Elements of the Philosophy of Right (This title is translated by Nisbet).
- ¹⁰ In fact, Iwao Kōyama (1905–1993), who was a Japanese philosopher of the Kyoto School and

published the book *Hegel* in 1936 (Kōbundō), lectured on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* at Kyoto University at Watsuji's request. Watsuji led a seminar at Tokyo University from 1935 on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, which indicates Watsuji's deepening appreciation of Hegel's work.

- ¹¹ According to Sekiguchi, Tadayoshi Kihira appears to have been the first to translate "Sittlichkeit" as "jinrin." [Sekiguchi 2007, p. 237]
- ¹² Confucianism is a set of a religious elements and teachings that were established by Confucius (551–479 BC) in China. Confucianism came to Japan from China in the sixth century. At the time, the Japanese people did not accept any religious elements of Confucianism, but only the teaching of it.
- ¹³ Therefore, in my forthcoming article, I highlight the change in the way in which the concept of "jinrin" is used between Watsuji and traditional Japanese Confucianism. The article is titled "Welche Anregungen erhielt Watsuji von Hegel?" and will soon be published by Mentis.
- ¹⁴ However, we must consider Watsuji's restrictions in terms of the texts that he could use in order to interpret Hegel's philosophy when we evaluate his interpretation of Hegel, for Hegel's works that were edited by the Westfalen Academy were not yet published in his time.
- ¹⁵ Heinz Paetzold says as the following: "Watsujis These ist, dass Hegel selbst eine Paradigmenwechsel vollzieht. Vom praktischen Philosophen geht er über zum Erkenntnistheoretiker. Wenigstens ist das so in der *Phänomenologie* (Watsuji's thesis is that Hegel carried out a paradigm-shift. He changes from a philosopher of practice to a philosopher of theoretical cognition. At the latest, it is so in the *Phenomenology*)." [Paetzold 2008, p. 176]
- ¹⁶ The Buddhist concept of "kū (emptiness)" which Watsuji uses here is from the Middle School of Buddhism whose central figure is Nāgārjuna (150–250). The concept of "kū" means that nothing supports itself, for everything depends on one another.
- ¹⁷ According to Watsuji, the totality of a human being, which is the dialectic unity of individuality and totality, is grounded on "kū" as the absolute negativity. "The first point to be argued is that of the double structure of a human being. ... A detailed grasp of this double structure will reveal that it is precisely a movement of negation. On the one hand, the standpoint of an acting 'individual' comes to be established only in some way as a negation of totality of ningen. ... On the other hand, totality of ningen comes to be established as the negation of individuality. ... These two negations constitute a single movement. ... Now, that ningen's sonzai is, fundamentally speaking, a movement of negation makes it clear that the basis of ningen's sonzai is negation as such, that is, absolute negation. The true reality of an individual, as well as of totality, is 'emptiness', and this emptiness is the absolute totality." [Watsuji Tetsurō's *Rinrigaku*, translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, pp. 22f.] A movement of negation on which the totality of a human being is grounded is, according to Watsuji, the dialectic of "kū." Watsuji's dialectic on which his ethical theory is grounded, is the dialectic of "kū," while we can call Hegel's dialectic the speculative dialectic or the dialectic of the "Ideal." I mention here briefly the difference between these two dialectics, because we must examine Watsuji's interpretation of Buddhism in order to discuss in detail the difference between the two dialectics. Hegel's "dialectic" has two meanings, that is, dialectic in the narrow sense and dialectic in the broad sense. Hegel's dialectic in the narrow sense is the negative-rational moment of the Logical. This moment corresponds to the essence of skepticism in the history of philosophy. In skepticism, a negation of something does not have a positive result. However, Hegel's dialectic in a broad sense has not only a skeptical (negative-rational) aspect, but also a positive-rational aspect, which is called the "speculative" aspect. The speculative dialectic is positive, for it "synthesizes" the opposition. Therefore, it has a positive result. Thus, for Hegel, the absolute is the "Ideal," which is a unity of being and thought. Watsuji's dialectic, which corresponds only to the negative-rational aspect of Hegel's dialectic, i.e., Hegel's dialectic in the narrow sense, does not have this "speculative" aspect (Interestingly, Hisatake Katō [1992] discusses the influence of the concept of "kū" in

- Buddhism through ancient skepticism from Pyrrhōn to Hegel). For Watsuji, the absolute is “emptiness.” This is the difference between Watsuji and Hegel’s dialectic.
- ¹⁸ Watsuji’s argument in this part is essentially influenced by Heidegger [ETN, p. 137].
- ¹⁹ Therefore, Watsuji distinguishes the transcendental personality from the “psychological ego,” which is opposed to the object [OAE, p. 114].
- ²⁰ Sellars criticized the concept of the “given” especially in cognitive theory. However, according to him, the concept of the “given” is used not only in cognitive theory, but also in many disciplines. “Many things have been said to be ‘given’: sense contents, material objects, universal, propositions, real connections, first principles, even givenness itself.” [Sellars 1997, p. 14]
- ²¹ I refer to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), when I quote from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. From here on, I use the abbreviation PS. Hegel argues in the theory of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit* as follows: “The detailed exposition of the Notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of Recognition.” [PS, p. 111] This means that we can elucidate what is spirit in Hegel’s philosophy by analyzing Hegel’s theory of self-consciousness and recognition.
- ²² The following discussion in this article refers mainly to Siep 2014 (1979).
- ²³ According to Halbig et. al 2004, Hegel’s social concept of self-consciousness is a “central knot between the practical aspect and the theoretical aspect in Hegel’s philosophy.” [Halbig et. al., 2004, 12] Klaus Vieweg pointed out the “free spirit as unity of the theoretical spirit and the practical spirit.” [Vieweg 2012, p. 50: This sentence was translated by T. H.]
- ²⁴ Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* clearly argues this point.

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