

PREFACE

Until today, people still ask me: Of all philosophers, why did you choose Watsuji Tetsurô? It has been a very long journey. It began in Osaka, in 2007, when I picked up a copy of the English translation of *Rinrigaku* from the library of the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute. In 2009, I was teaching him to my ethics students at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. He was one of our favorite ethicists, and we took him as our companion as we struggled with our mixed heritage of Asian (partly Confucian) sensibilities and liberal American training. By 2011, I was slogging through the *Collected Works of Watsuji Tetsurô* in Japanese, under the tutelage of Prof. Sueki Fumihiko at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto. Reading Watsuji, I was learning not only academic lessons but how to deal with the complexities of living in Japan.

It has been 10 years since I first encountered Watsuji. I am now a full-time lecturer at Kyushu University. Somewhat ironically, some of my classes involve teaching Japanese philosophy to young Japanese students, who occasionally find Watsuji too traditional for their tastes (and find me strange for liking him so much). It feels like so much has changed, but here I am, with Watsuji's books scattered on my desk, as it has always been from the start.

As a student, teacher, husband, friend, *gaikokujin*, and *sensei*, Watsuji has always been part of my life. This is why it is hard to answer the question of "why Watsuji." After all, I did not choose him once, but over and

over again. There were times he was forced on me. And there were times that I feel he chose me.

This book began as my dissertation, *Exporting the Ethics of Emptiness: Applications, Limitations, and Possibilities of Watsuji Tetsurō's Ethical System* (2015). Even when it was first written, the plan for it was to eventually be published as a reader-friendly book, with two simple ideas behind it. The first idea is that *Japanese philosophy is global philosophy*. Japanese philosophy is not just an exotic teaching from East Asia, but it addresses problems that concern us all—even Filipinos, Americans, Europeans, et cetera. Second, the relevance of Japanese philosophy is that it provides a radically different approach. There are of course exceptions within Japanese philosophy, but one strong tradition in Japanese thought is the “philosophy of nothingness/emptiness.” And this kind of thinking has a lot to say in a world of neoliberalism and its critics, in a society challenged by globalization and cultural clash.

The ideas are simple but they are difficult to convey. I hope you, reader, will join me on this bumpy ride. I think, there will be much to learn from the journey and where it is going.

I would like to give thanks, first of all to my wife, Catherine Jao. She is the first to read every single article I write. I owe much of my intellectual and spiritual development to her. Second, I would like to thank all the mentors who have guided me to where I am—Prof. Sueki Fumihiko, Prof. Kazashi Nobuo, Prof. James Mark Shields, Prof. Inaga Shigemi, Prof. Remmon Barbaza, Prof. Manuel Dy, Jr., Prof. Agustin Martin Rodriguez, and Prof. Nagai Hiroko. Not to forget my parents and brothers, my first mentors in learning how to think deeply. And last, I would like to thank all those involved with the publication of this book, the editors, and the editorial team. Without their kindness and warm support, this book would have remained in cobwebs.

Fukuoka, Japan
January 2017

Anton Luis Sevilla

Watsuji Tetsurô's Global Ethics of Emptiness
A Contemporary Look at a Modern Japanese
Philosopher

Sevilla, A.L.

2017, XXXIII, 258 p. 8 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-58352-5