

# Philosophy in the Age of Globalization, But in Which Language? Translation, or Loving the Experience of Enduring *Pathos*<sup>1</sup>

ONO Fumio

Associate Professor, Doshisha University

*Abstract: Philosophy has always proclaimed itself to be an act of thinking that is based on ‘universality’. However, in which language do we achieve this universality? In this era of globalization, if the position of English as the new lingua franca is stable, then in which language should we or can we philosophize? And what does it mean these days to philosophize in Japanese, not just for Japanese speakers but also for Non-Japanese speakers? In order to investigate these issues, we first focus on the thesis, “The Problem of Japanese Language and Philosophy” written by Tetsurō Watsuji (1889–1960). Rather, based on the thought of this outstanding, modern Japanese philosopher, who addressed such questions sincerely, we attempt to consider the type of framework involved in thinking about them, and ways to clarify how we should comprehend the concept of philosophy in the age of globalization. Watsuji searched for a way to philosophize in Japanese, particularly in “pure” or “everyday” Japanese, so that the language would be rooted in the ethics associated with practical, man-to-man communication. Watsuji’s attempt, however, required too much ‘purity and homogeneity’ in the language, and therefore resulted in little consideration of the foreign or hybrid. Referring to the fundamental relationship between philosophy and translation, as elaborated by Martin Heidegger, Antoine Berman, Gilles Deleuze, Pierre-Félix Guattari, and Hannah Arendt, we also attempt to find new possibilities for understanding philosophy, in the concept of translation as a dual experience, which involves both suffering, as one endures exposure to otherness, and pleasure, when one receives*

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper, which addresses the special theme of the Journal, is a newly revised, major rewrite of a paper on the subjectivity of translation and education, which was originally published in Japanese (Ono 2015), and the revised version in German on the theme, “Bildung in foreign languages, Globalization and multilingualism” (Ono 2018). In this paper, based specifically on the discussion in chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the original paper, the author attempts to address, in a new way, using additional information, the relationship of philosophy in a particular language to universality, and to consider the relationship between philosophy and language, and between philosophy and translation, by referring to the essential connections between philosophy, translation, and the experience of enduring *pathos*.

*and welcomes it. Philosophy as translation will thus be defined anew, or again, as loving the experience of enduring pathos.*

## **Introduction**

Philosophy has always proclaimed itself to be an act of thinking that is based on ‘universality’ It is said that there is no (or little) place for particularity; there is only room for universality when it comes to ideas and the truth. A typical case is found in the *characteristica universalis*, or universal language, imagined by Gottfried Leibniz, which is an attempt to sophisticate natural languages into universal characters, based on the model of mathematics. Leibniz wanted to modify language to enhance its universality, because language itself is, in fact, defined by its particular nature. Philosophers have often dreamed of bringing philosophy closer to mathematics. However, the more they deny the particularity of language, the more entrenched it becomes, much like Freud’s ‘return of the repressed’

In this day and age, when it is well known that ‘English language imperialism’ has gained strength and momentum in the wake of globalization, how do we face the reality of academia forging ties with English to the exclusion of other languages? If the position of English as the new *lingua franca* is stable, then, in which language should we or can we philosophize? There have been many languages of philosophy, of course, and thus, many linguistic approaches to philosophy. With regard to the journal, *Tetsugaku*, German and French still enjoy certain privileges today in the study of philosophy, along with English. However, German and French in philosophy are beginning to rank lower in either relative or absolute terms. This might be considered to be a serious matter by German and French philosophers, or by those who studied in Germany and France, but is the situation the same for other languages; for example, Japanese, Korean or Arabic?

What is the difference between philosophizing in German or in English for Japanese philosophers, apart from the struggle for cultural and linguistic hegemony? Of course, German and French remain practically indispensable for philosophers insofar as the following assumption still survives: one should read Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and Adorno in German, and Descartes, Bergson, and Lévinas in French. With the expansion of globalization in recent years, the number of books and papers in English on Heidegger has continued to increase, and it is anticipated that more and more philosophers will read Heidegger only as an English translation.

Nevertheless, Heidegger remains Heidegger, and German will probably hold its position for the moment.

Is it then possible for the Japanese language to be a philosophical language in an ‘authentic’ sense (or was it actually once such a philosophical language)? Is philosophy in Japanese still significant for Japanese speakers in the age of globalization?

Modern Japanese philosophers have struggled somewhat with the question of whether it is really possible to philosophize in Japanese, and whether philosophy in Japanese is comparable to German or English philosophy. This is not just a question of *cultural eugenics* but one that concerns the accessibility of the Japanese language as it relates to the ‘universality’ of philosophy. Furthermore, the meaning of philosophizing in Japanese is simultaneously questioned, not only for Japanese speakers, but also for Non-Japanese speakers; in other words, is philosophy in Japanese as a ‘world philosophy’ on the same level as world literature or world religion? Therefore, the issues raised here by the question, “What meaning does philosophizing in Japanese have?” are related to (1) the meaning for Japanese speakers, (2) the meaning for Non-Japanese speakers, and (3) universality.

The first point concerns not only ‘importing’ or accepting Western philosophy, and ‘indigenizing’ it in Japanese society, but also producing Japanese philosophy and developing a ‘philosophical culture’ in Japan. As for the second point, it is, in contrast, aimed at translating or ‘exporting’ Japanese philosophy into other cultures. In this case, significance in both the particular and universal dimensions is expected, resulting in both the production of a philosophical-spiritual culture that is peculiar to Japan, as well as elements that can translate across cultures. The latter relates to the subject of the third point, the question of ‘universality’ in Japanese philosophy.

Nevertheless, we are not concerned in this paper with directly answering these questions; it is not our purpose here to give a definitive, yes-no answer to the question of whether or not we can significantly philosophize in Japanese, or to explain in detail whether philosophizing in Japanese still has meaning.<sup>2</sup> Instead, based on the thought of the modern Japanese philosopher, Tetsurō Watsuji (1889–1960), who addressed such questions sincerely, we attempt to consider the type of framework involved in thinking about them, and thus clarify how we should

---

<sup>2</sup> As to whether or not there is a privileged language for philosophizing, without hesitation, we can answer, “No”. That is because there is not a single natural language that we use in which we could not think and in that sense, no language can deny any other language the right to engage in the practice of philosophy. Common sense tells us that this is true, but nevertheless there still remains such question solidly.

comprehend the concept of philosophy in the age of globalization. Referring to the fundamental relationship between philosophy and translation, we also attempt to find new possibilities for understanding philosophy in the concept of translation as a dual experience, which involves both suffering, as one endures exposure to otherness, and pleasure, when one receives and welcomes it.

### 1. The Problematics of the Thought of Tetsurō Watsuji

In order to investigate the problems at issue, we consider the thesis “The Problem of Japanese Language and Philosophy (日本語と哲学の問題)” (1935) written by Watsuji. Watsuji was one of the most outstanding and remarkable philosophers of modern Japan. He was a member of the so-called Kyoto School of Philosophy and later became a Professor of Ethics at the Imperial University of Tokyo. The philosophy of Watsuji is widely known for the historical studies of ideas in Japan, cultural studies of Japanese tradition, typological works on climate and culture as well as the philosophical-anthropological works of ethics based on the *betweenness* of human beings.<sup>3</sup>

In this thesis “The Problem of Japanese Language and Philosophy”, Watsuji attempts to develop a new ontology based on the nature of the Japanese language after his encounter with Heidegger’s *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)* during his stay in Germany (1927–1928). Soon after returning home, Watsuji gave a public lecture entitled “Japanese Language and Philosophy” in December 1928 to the Kyoto Society of Philosophy, which had been revised and included in his work *A Sequel to the Study of the Japanese History of Ideas (続日本精神史研究)* (1935). In the beginning of the thesis, Watsuji states as follows: “In this thesis, I attempt to make a historical study of ideas in order to interpret a fundamental aspect of the spiritual activities of the Japanese nation by considering the nature of the Japanese language

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Carter notes that, Watsuji was “one of that handful of philosophers in Japan during the current century who brought Japanese philosophy to the attention of the world. Like those in the Kyoto School, he sought to understand the richness of Japanese culture anew, while at the same time distancing himself from it through his study of Western cultural and philosophical thought. The result was both a dialogue with Heidegger and others in the West and a robust rediscovery of the vitality of Japanese ways” (Carter 1996, 1).

to be one such activity” (Watsuji 1962, 506).<sup>4</sup> It goes without saying that the act of interpreting the “spiritual activities of a nation” which operate within a language is nothing new. It was inherited from German Historicism conducted by J. G. Herder, Brothers Grimm, W. von Humboldt, and others. However, it is at least worth noting that Watsuji’s intention was partly to develop a Japanese version of this perspective. It is from this perspective that he is able to make additional criticisms of Heidegger.

The *Dasein* is fundamentally emphasized by him [Heidegger] as the individual and never a human-being who has the dual nature of individuality and sociality. Therefore, he analyzes the nature of language only as comprehensive communication between the individual and instruments, never as practical communication between man and man. [...] If the structure of a social being were thought of apart from its *social body*, it would have nothing to do with the difference of language and the spiritual nature of nations. It is the sole way to correctly solve the problem and so that we understand the nature of the place of social beings. Additionally, a path to the nature of place is provided to us by a phenomenon called *Fūdo* or *Suido* [climate]. (Watsuji 1962, 508)

Watsuji insists that *Dasein* is already a completely social being and it is, therefore, necessary for ontology to understand “the nature of the place of social beings”. He also refers to such sociality as a “*social body*” and considers it “the particularity of expressing the *Dasein*’s self-comprehensibility”, namely “the particularity of languages” (Watsuji 1962, 509). Thus, for Watsuji, such sociality must concretely express itself in language.

On that note, Watsuji’s awareness of the issues was not limited to accepting *Dasein* under the concept of the “*social body*” or to analyze how a language — which is its expressed form — ought to be. In addition, while revealing the characteristics of the Japanese language, he attempted to respond to the subject of giving birth to a philosophy based in the Japanese language. In that sense, for Watsuji, the problem of philosophy could be none other than the problem of the Japanese language. Watsuji writes:

---

<sup>4</sup> So far there is no English translation of this thesis, and therefore the following citations are translated into English by me. The same also applies to the citations from Karatani (2002), Isomae (2013), and Berman (1999).

Now, when we regard the Japanese language as a particular but complete expression, in other words, as an objectively understandable expression of a Japanese spiritual life that derives from its historical and national nature, we are first of all interested in the fact that we have fewer scientific and philosophical works written in pure Japanese, although we have a rich heritage of literature and historical works written in pure Japanese that we can proudly present to foreign cultures. This doesn't mean that the Japanese do not think scientifically and philosophically. Everyone must admit that the Japanese have attempted to contemplate deeply and think philosophically in the fields of Buddhism and Confucianism, even in the ancient era. In this regard, however, it is clear that they did not attempt to produce such thought *in pure Japanese*, in other words, that the expression of thought, a great part of the spiritual life, has never appeared in Japanese. (Watsuji 1962, 509f.)

The understanding expressed here is, simply put, that in comparison to other works of literature and history, scientific and philosophical works were rarely written in Japanese. I assume he is pointing to classic Japanese literature such as the *Man'yōshū* (a book of the oldest collection of Japanese poems in existence from AD 759), *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters composed in AD 712), *Nihon Shoki* (The Chronicles of Japan finished in AD 720), *Kokin Wakashū* (a collection of Japanese poems from ancient times, published around AD 905), or Dogen's (1200–1253) Buddhist Studies from the Middle Ages and the studies of Confucianism during the Edo period. Still, we must question what he means by “pure Japanese” here.

It is true that the “*pure Japanese*” that Watsuji mentioned is derived from a *corollary* of the counter-consciousness that one “can proudly present to foreign cultures”. It is no wonder that a type of cultural nationalism would arise in this person who just returned home from his study abroad. Actually, after his travels to Europe, he finished his famous work of cultural typology, *On Fūdo* (風土 *Climate and Culture*, 1935). In this book, he attempted to make a comparative study of cultural characteristics of various areas in Eurasia based on his phenomenological-hermeneutic analyses of climate and culture. According to Watsuji, the distinction between nature and culture is integrated in the *Fūdo* (climate) from which each characteristic of each nation arises. He classifies three types of climate: the monsoon (South and East Asia), the desert (West Asia), and the meadow (Europe). It is true, on the one hand, that such a typology itself is interesting and unique. On the other hand, it is based on a kind of cultural

essentialism. As Naoki Sakai appropriately criticizes, it is realizable only through the “transferential and countertransferential exchanges between Asian cultural essentialisms and the narcissism of the West” (Sakai 1997, 126).<sup>5</sup>

The mechanism where *internal homogeneity and purity* is constructed through facing the *exteriority* remains in force even in Watsuji’s expression of “pure Japanese”, which is used in stark contrast to “Buddhism and Confucianism” “in the ancient era”. Such “purity” is derived from a counter-consciousness against Chinese language and Chinese characters.

When Japanese people accepted the highly developed concepts and knowledge of Buddhism and Confucianism, they could not easily express their logical content in Japanese, even though it was so free and rich in intuitive and particular expressions. Therefore, they thought through Chinese texts and wrote through the Chinese language. Consequently, the Chinese language became a system of Japanese thought and it has been Japanese gradually. (Watsuji 1962, 510)

As far as logic is concerned, the nature of the Japanese language that Watsuji defines here is *never unusual*. Based on the history of the evolution of the Japanese language through the establishment of the Japanese writing system using both *Kanji* (Chinese characters and Sino-Japanese vocabulary) and *Kana* (the Japanese characters), he one-sidedly assigned logicality and conceptuality to the Chinese language and intuitiveness and emotionality to, as it were, the *primitive* Japanese language. In other words, it only repeats the metaphysical dichotomous pattern of the ideology of *Kokugaku* (the nationalistic study of ancient Japanese thought and culture), such as *Kanji* versus *Kana*, “reason” in Chinese literature versus “emotion” in traditional Japanese poetry, *Kara-gokoro* (Chinese spirits) versus *Yamato-gokoro* (Japanese spirits), and *Masurao-buri* (the masculine and tolerant style of poetry) versus *Taoyame-buri* (the feminine and delicate style of poetry).

This is true for now; however, although Watsuji’s consideration of the problems did not stand out over others, he did address at least one topic that could

---

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion on identity based on “homosociality”, see Sakai (1997), especially in Chapter IV. In this book, Sakai points out that “practice is essentially antagonistic”, but the fact is sometimes denied because of an urge “to displace the anxiety brought forth in a specific practical relationship”. Here we can find “a strange complicity between Asian cultural essentialisms that willingly internalize the stereotypes imposed on them by racism and what Robert Young refers to as the narcissism of the West” (Sakai 1997, 126f.).

not be ignored. That is the subject of engaging in philosophy in ordinary everyday language. Before we look into this subject, let us verify what he understood the everyday language to be. In the passage following the previous quote, he states:

However, it brought about circumstances that there is always a gap *between* scientific and philosophical language *and* the literary and everyday language. That is why the Japanese language could keep its relatively pure state as a language. It was rich in expressions for the pre-reflective experience and has always been connected with emotional expressions without developing the pre-reflective natural thinking into logical expressions. (Watsuji 1962, 510)

What is depicted here as everyday language does not refer to the academic terminology of the Chinese language, which controls concepts and intellectual reflection, but a language that controls the “natural thinking” and “experience” before such conceptual reflection. Watsuji believes that it is precisely in everyday language that “emotion” is kept in its complete state and that “everyday language, apart from academic concepts but close to the expression of the arts, still maintains a pure state of language as naïve as possible” (Watsuji 1962, 512).

With that said, we should focus on the theory that there is a “gap” constantly present between the two. Though Watsuji himself had deemed the gap to be so, by no means does it exist on its own. Rather, it should be understood once again as something that is derived from the characteristics of the Japanese language itself where they accepted Chinese *Kanji* characters and created a dual reading system based on the original Japanese pronunciation of the meaning of those characters (*kun'yomi*) and the pronunciation based on imported Chinese words that were associated with those characters (*on'yomi*). The writing system known as *Kanji* is something that has been brought inside but will always exist as an outside foreign object. As Kojin Karatani points out, it is a subject that is both accepted and continually being eliminated at the same time (Karatani 2002). That is to say, as it becomes internalized, it will forever continue to preserve its exogenous nature. This effect is a “gap” which appeared in Watsuji’s consciousness.

Kojin Karatani points out that a “[n]ational language is complete when it is forgotten that it came from a translation of a written language (e.g. from Latin or *Kanji*) and instead is felt that it came from direct emotion and from within” (Karatani 2002, 21). When Watsuji stated that “when the German philosophers of a century’s past fiercely freed themselves from the shackles of the Latin language



which held them captive for the longest time, that very act had perked up and livened up philosophy” (Watsuji 1962, 551), he had at this point “forgotten” that this “perked up and livened up” philosophy could not have resulted without being translated from a written language. Perhaps he could have not imagined that in reality no language or philosophy could “free oneself” from a kind of “shackle”.

## 2. Everyday Language, Philosophy, and Practical Communication of Humans

Despite some controversial ideas, Watsuji’s analyses of the nature of Japanese language contain several interesting issues. For example, originally in Japanese, the concept “know” is not very developed in the intellectual or cognitive sense but rather, it has been understood through the concept “way”. Another example is that the word “*aru*” (be) originally meant “*motsu*” (have), primarily because the Japanese believed that being was having. Above all, the investigation into the question “what is to be?” in the latter half of this thesis is one of the landmark achievements of the study of the Japanese history of ideas. Therefore, it can be considered a good example of *philosophy in Japanese* prior to some works from the Kyoto School such as Shuzo Kuki’s *The Structure of ‘Iki’* (1930), Junzo Karaki’s *On Evanescence* (1964), and Hiroshi Ichikawa’s *The Structure of ‘Mi’* (1985) or Megumi Sakabe’s philosophical works such as *Hermeneutics of Persona* (1976) and *Philosophy of ‘Fureru’ or Touching* (1983). Furthermore, Watsuji’s study of Japanese linguistics has, in a sense, some similarities with Motoki Tokieda’s “language process theory” in *The Principles of Japanese Linguistics* (1941), which is one of the most unique and interesting studies on the linguistic theories of modern Japan. It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to argue all of this in detail.

I would rather bring our focus back once again to the reason why Watsuji considered that philosophy in Japanese has not developed further. This is because, so Watsuji explains, the concept of “pure Japanese” has not been developed within academic concepts, and the everyday language, unlike the academic terminologies, includes “experience” and “emotions” in its pure form.

If that were true, could the everyday language and Japanese language then never become the language of philosophy? According to Watsuji, that is not the case. He explains his perspective as follows: “Even if the former Japanese language was so, it does not cancel out a new possibility of the coming Japanese language”

(Watsuji 1962, 522). Because Japanese is used as a daily language, “possibility” is already included within “reality”.

The Japanese language is not a *thing* that can be viewed but it is the way of our being. Therefore, to consider a possible aspect of the Japanese language means that we are being under conditions of what the Japanese language already is and we ourselves must walk along the way of what the Japanese language must become. [...] That is to say, one must rely on the pure *meaning* of the Japanese language (without bringing in from the outside the conceptual content that does not originally exist within the meanings of the language) and question and contemplate on our own. (Watsuji 1962, 523)

This quote is saying that the Japanese language is not a subject to be viewed but rather must be understood as a living practice itself. When he says that the “Japanese language is the way of our being”, the Japanese language will appear to be an active agent of a practical-bodily subject (*shutai*) rather than a theoretical-epistemological subject (*shukan*). For Watsuji, the “pure Japanese language” as a daily language exists as a process of *becoming* that folds within itself the way of *being*. To him, being aware of “how to become” and to linguistically express the *meaning* that is the foundation is the act of “contemplation” and philosophy.

If I may add further reflections here, when it comes to the dichotomies in Watsuji that are constantly referenced, that is to say, differentiated from *conceptual knowledge*, *understanding-based awareness*, *observational understanding*, etc., specifically the *practical communication of humans* is the source of the *meaning of pure Japanese*. As such, when Watsuji puts the *betweenness* of humans at the root of ontology, he makes this *practical communication of humans* the essential element in his ethical conception. In this argumentation, as always, the Japanese language is understood as something that has developed the characteristics of the latter more than the former of such dichotomies, that is to say, the Japanese language is “excellent for expressing the emotional experience” and that it is a language deeply tied to the practice of daily living. From there, we arrive at the ideology that Japanese is a language rooted in ethics known as *the practical communication of humans*.

Therefore, in Watsuji’s mind, there is an emotional experience that came *before* the epistemic, conceptual understanding and a concrete expression of the *betweenness* that is rooted in the ordinary lives of humans. For Watsuji, to engage in

philosophy in the daily language means to develop directly such experience and expressions towards theory through languages. This requires the double action of maintaining the *gap* and filling it at the same time. However, from his point of view, this also means to consider ethics as the first philosophy and to see ethical practice as the underlying theory.

If we look quickly at the issues with this, we see that Watsuji's idea of *practical communication of humans* does not include foreigners. Ultimately, it is most likely not the type of practical ethics that would constantly lead to its rationale being questioned by the *experience of the foreign* (Heidegger/Berman), which likely would have occurred between the self and the other. Following Sakai, it is said that what Watsuji lacks is the "undecidability of the social, inherent in the 'being-in-common' with others" and "[w]hat is achieved in his use of the term *shutai* is, in fact, a displacement of the practical relation by the epistemic relation" (Sakai 1997, 145).

### 3. Translation, Experience, or Being Tongue-Tied

In the opening, I mentioned English hegemony as the *lingua franca*. Would placing German, for example, in opposition to the dominance of English solve this problem? Of course not. That is because if we were to simply place German in opposition to English, though it would provide some relativization, it would simply end in adding privileged members to the academic world.

Should we then refuse to use English as the academic language in opposition to this hegemony? No, we should not.<sup>6</sup> Simply refusing to participate in the system would ultimately lead to endorsing the hegemony and there are also opinions that state this refusal is not the same thing as criticism. Furthermore, if globalization advances further, no matter where one lives, it is no longer possible to be unaffected by it and there is concern that before you know it, life could erode away. Thus, no matter which path one chooses, it does not seem possible to avoid such difficulties.

So, what does it mean to philosophize in Japanese when faced with the difficulties before us, as we try to avoid both narcissistic self-satisfaction and spoiling the particularity of the philosophy through the use of a universal language?

---

<sup>6</sup> To be more precise, there is also the option of not involving ourselves in a battle over hegemony (e.g. to completely reject English or quit living as a scholar). As such, I must also admit to feeling that I would like to punch some holes in the system and bet on the possibility of changing the system itself.

There now appear to be two ways to look at the language of philosophy from a new perspective. The first is to think of the language of philosophy as having characteristics that are not pure but hybrid. For example, when we talk about the *unique* historical conditions in which the Japanese language developed under the interlinguistic influence of Chinese, and probably other languages such as Korean, we implicitly assume, sometimes without even being aware of it, that foreign languages are themselves homogenous, having never been influenced by other languages. Needless to say, making such an assumption is a serious error. Nonetheless, when faced with the untranslatable while translating, we are often apt to insist that it results from the very *richness* of the Japanese language in sense and meaning or, to put it the other way around, from the *poorness* of foreign languages. For instance, European languages also developed out of linguistic and cultural translations, such as the Arabic cultures in the Golden Age of Translation, the existence of ‘Christian Hebraists’ during the age of Renaissance, the vulgar language in the Reformation, the Germanization of Greek and Latin classics, and Shakespeare’s English in German Romanticism. In this sense, translation is a very normal condition for the language of philosophy.

Still, come to think of it, even if I thought only in my native language, this would not be a stable experience either. For example, behind the trends of “Cool Japan”<sup>7</sup> and Japanimation, to this day, there are conscious and subconscious mixed feelings about the Japanese language among former colonial countries. Assuming that all are of a uniform quality, would the Japanese spoken and written by generations of Koreans in Japan or the Ainu or Okinawan people be considered the “pure Japanese language” as put forth by Watsuji? Like it or not, the Japanese language is a post-colonial language as pointed out by Jun’ich Isomae when he said that “historical circumstances lead us Japanese speakers to live both as the perpetrator and the victim of its colonization” (Isomae 2013, 20).

Watsuji concluded his thesis with the clarion call, “Oh philosophers who would think in Japanese, come to life!” (Watsuji 1962, 551) He also mentioned that “philosophy far removed from the daily conversation is never a happy philosophy” (Watsuji 1962, 550f.). If we look only at the calls and propositions, it looks as though it is all *good* and there is no room for objection. In this day and age, when contemplating and expressing oneself in Japanese could be considered a *poor and inferior* act in academia, perhaps Watsuji’s calls should act as a foundation to accept

---

<sup>7</sup> “Cool Japan” is a brand strategy adopted by the Japanese Government in order to promote Japanese cultures internationally and to make them be an engine of economic growth.

the ordinary life as it is, or perhaps after all this time, still inspire us (if I may dare to use the problematic jargon of the Kyoto School of Philosophy) as celebratory words of the “world-historical viewpoint” of the Japanese language and philosophy in Japanese. At best, this will give us Japanese speakers and users a place to exist and at worst, such a call would at least tickle our romantic narcissism.

Even so, as made clear above, because neither the concept of a national language nor the concept of everyday language can be “pure” in Watsuji’s sense, I cannot respond to this call wholeheartedly and sincerely even though we may be living in a time where philosophizing in Japanese is facing difficult and critical challenges and even if there are rich possibilities in the act of contemplating in Japanese as a response to this crisis.

Of course, it would be not a simple problem that can be resolved by using *hybridity* as a solution to the issue of purity and homogeneity. Therefore, there is a second approach to the language of philosophy, which is, in accordance with Antoine Berman, a way of understanding philosophy as an experience of translation or rather, as the translation of an experience.

When Berman was developing *traductologie*, the idea of *the experience of the foreign* (*l'épreuve de l'étranger / die Erfahrung des Fremden*) that was taken from the words of Heidegger reading Hölderlin seems to give us some pointers. In other words, it provides us with an understanding that the experience of learning something proper is *a dual exercise* that occurs simultaneously with the experience of the foreign (Berman 1984; Berman 1999). Berman writes:

Experience is a broadening and an infinitization, a passage from the particular to the universal, the experience of scission, of the finite, of the conditioned. It is voyage (*Reise*) and migration (*Wanderung*). Its essence is to throw the “same” into a dimension that will transform it. It is the movement of the “same” which, changing, finds itself to be “other”. (Berman 1984, 74 / Berman 1992, 44)<sup>8</sup>

And Heidegger, to whom Berman referred when he defined the concept of experience, states the following in *Way to Language* (*Unterwegs zur Sprache*):

---

<sup>8</sup> I am referring to the original text in French, with some partial corrections to the English translation.

To undergo an experience [eine Erfahrung machen] with something — be it a thing, a person, or a god — means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us. When we talk of “undergoing” an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure [durchmachen] it, suffer [erleiden] it, receive it as it strikes us [das uns Treffende vernehmend empfangen] and submit [annehmen] to it. It is this something itself that comes about, comes to pass, happens. / To undergo an experience with language, then, means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language by entering into and submitting to it [German addition mine]. (Heidegger 1985, 149 / Heidegger 1971, 57)

To have an experience means, in this context, to endure, to suffer, to bear, and to simultaneously receive what is coming to us, and therefore, to welcome the foreign and the other with hospitality. Thus, Berman emphasizes, along with Heidegger, that “such is the translation: experience. Experience of works and of the being-work, of languages and of the being-language. Experience, at the same time, *of itself*, of its essence” (Berman 1999, 16).

We cannot over-emphasize the importance of Berman’s description of the essential connection between translation and experience, because translation, like experience, is “the movement of the ‘same’ which, changing, finds itself to be ‘other’”; translation is the act of discovering what is proper, as well as the act of enduring and suffering the foreign, that is, of welcoming *the beyond*. That is why translation as experience brings clarity as to the form of the conflicts in this dual exercise. It also questions the self-evident framework that brings out differences between the proper and the foreign, and describes the economy in which such differences occur. In other words, the experience of translation is a heuristic one in which one’s own thoughts are perceived as unstable, as if one were standing on an edge or a threshold.

In contrast, how then can we understand Heidegger’s statements in an interview with *Der Spiegel* titled, “Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten (Only a God Can Save Us)”, which took place in 1966:

Heidegger: I am thinking of the special inner kinship between the German language and the language of the Greeks and their thought. This is something that the French confirm for me again and again today. When

they begin to think, they speak German. They assure [me] that they do not succeed with their own language.

SPIEGEL: Is that how you explain the fact that in the countries of romance languages, especially among the French, you have had such a strong influence?

Heidegger: [It is] because they see that despite all of their great rationality they no longer make a go at it in today's world when it comes to an issue of understanding this world in the origin of its essence. One can no more translate thought than one can translate a poem. At best, one can paraphrase it. As soon as one attempts a literal translation, everything is transformed.

SPIEGEL: A disturbing thought.

Heidegger: It would be good if this disturbance were taken seriously in good measure, and people finally gave some thought to what a portentous transformation Greek thought underwent by translation into the Latin of Rome, an event that even today prevents an adequate reflection upon the fundamental words of Greek thought [underlines mine]. (Heidegger 1976, 217 / Heidegger 1981, 62f.)

No matter how caricaturistic this romantic fantasy is, Heidegger was convinced, at least, that philosophy belonged to the German language, and that, contrary to Berman's description, thought cannot be translated. Although it may not be obvious, were we to ask today if this type of philosophical ethnocentrism has now been removed from the world of philosophy, we, unfortunately, could not reply in the affirmative. Are there then two Heideggers, namely, an ethnocentric Heidegger, on the one hand, and an *ethnoeccentric* or *ethnodecentric* one on the other?

Let us not try to close the question too hastily. Instead, let us develop the discussion of philosophy and translation further in the last chapter of the conclusion, by referencing the work of Heidegger's student, Hannah Arendt, who learned about and succeeded in the richest of possibilities associated with the interpretation of his concept of experience as endurance (*das Durchmachen*) and suffering (*das Erleiden*).

Before that, we ask one additional question concerning the image we should have of translation. As emphasized above with Berman, "translation occupies an ambiguous position" in which the "contradiction between the reductionist aim of culture and the ethical aim of translating can be found" (Berman 1984, 16 / Berman 1992, 4).

However, if we simply consider that such experience of translation occurs always only between one's own language and a foreign language, is it not a kind of fallacy? If the experience of translation, as Berman says, is really "the movement of

the ‘same’ which, changing, finds itself to be ‘other’”, does translation not occur within one’s own language on a daily basis? If such questions are considered to be legitimate, then Deleuze’s and Guattari’s understanding, as quoted below, will perhaps help us understand what translation means in this context:

It was Proust who said that ‘masterpieces are written in a kind of foreign language.’ That is the same as stammering, making language [*langue*] stammer rather than stammering in speech [*parole*]. To be a foreigner, but in one’s own tongue, not only when speaking a language other than one’s own. To be bilingual, multilingual, but in one and the same language, without even a dialect or patois. To be a bastard, a half-breed, but through a purification of race. That is when style becomes a language. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 98)

To stammer in one’s own language is like the intrinsic experience of constantly feeling convulsions and tremors in the process and experience of forming one’s own self. Etymologically to say, the original intention of such a concept was that the concept of experience was to get through a peril and that in itself would be to receive pain or suffering as one tries and goes through something (*ex-perīrī* in Latin from *per-* in Proto-Indo-European). Instead of words coming lightly and easily, and certainly not to silence oneself, at the threshold of what becomes a word and what does not, the stammering of the tongue, the quivering of the lips, and the hesitations are the *creaking* of existence. It is as though the party of concerned individuals lost their concernedness, as if they were left with a fractured identity so that when they take a step forward, they trip on their own feet. The subjectivity in stammering in a language, or something being with the *creaking* of words, must be the subjectivity in translation in this way.

If so, the “ambiguous position” occupied by translation should be found not only between several languages but also within a single language. In other words, the experience of endurance and suffering can occur not just in translation between the proper and the foreign but also in translation within one’s own language, or even within one’s own monologue. Translation can therefore be equated with the experience of wonder, through the discovery that one’s ‘own’ language always already belongs to someone else; in this sense, we are all “bilingual, multilingual, but in one and the same language” and “[bastards, half-breeds], but through a purification of race”.



### **Conclusion: Philosophy as Loving the Experience of Enduring *Pathos***

At the end of our inquiry, we will return to the ‘origin of philosophy [*archē philosophias*]’. In Socrates’ well-known words, it is said that philosophy begins in wonder [*thaumazein*], as derived from Plato’s *Theaetetus* [155D]: “μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη” (Plato 1903). This assertion is translated as follows in standard English language versions: “That is because you are a philosopher, for philosophy begins in wonder” (Plato 1892, 126) by Benjamin Jowett, and “[f]or this feeling of wonder shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only beginning of philosophy” (Plato 1921a, 155) by Harold N. Fowler. The former completely lacks the nuance of “pathos”, and in the latter, the word “pathos” is translated as “feeling”.

When compared to these cases, it is remarkable that Arendt’s translation of this sentence emphasizes the meaning, “to endure” of the word, “pathos”, as follows: “for wonder is what the philosopher endures most; for there is no other beginning of philosophy than wonder” (Arendt 2005, 32).<sup>9</sup> She continues further:

*Thaumazein*, the wonder at that which is as it is, is according to Plato a *pathos*, something which is endured [...]. The wonder which man endures or which befalls him cannot be related in words because it is too general for words. [...] It is from the actual experience of not-knowing, in which one of the basic aspects of the human condition on earth reveals itself, that the ultimate questions arise [...]. The philosopher, who, so to speak, is an expert in wondering and in asking those questions which arise out of wondering [...]. Since the *pathos* of wonder is not alien to men but, on the contrary, one of the most general characteristics of the human condition. [...] [The philosopher’s] distinction from his fellow citizens is not that he possesses any special truth from which the multitude is excluded, but that he remains always ready to endure the *pathos* of wonder and thereby avoids the dogmatism of mere opinion holders (Arendt 2005, 32–36).

---

<sup>9</sup> By the way, Plato’s German translator Otto Apelt translated as follows: “Denn gerade den Philosophen kennzeichnet diese Gemütsverfassung, die Verwunderung. Denn diese, und nichts anderes, ist der Anfang der Philosophie” (Plato 1921b, 51). *Pathos* was not interpreted as endurance here, either, but simply as an emotional state (Gemütsverfassung).

Conventional translations have always placed the emphasis only on the meaning of wonder, and have therefore neglected to translate *pathos* as such or have, at least, given little thought to its meaning. As Arendt appropriately mentions, the ultimate experience of philosophy is the speechless experience, the experience of not-knowing.

However, such a moment of speechless experience as defined by Arendt, which is found in the sense of being remote from political life and the plurality of living together with others, was destroyed by philosophers. As a result, the Socratic insight of bringing the experience of the *pathos* of wonder into the world in which he lives with others was lost (Arendt 2005, 36). Through these criticisms, Arendt attempts to open up the philosophical experience to such plurality, to turn again the experience of the *pathos* of wonder to otherness, politics, speech, and therefore to *logos*.

To engage in philosophy in this way may be, as previously mentioned, inseparable even from stammering in one's own language. If the act of philosophy is experienced in its original sense, that is to say, rooted in the experience of suffering and peril, then at that moment the act of philosophy is replaced by words, as in the act of translation, and will continually experience the *entanglement of the tongue*. Constant re-reading, so as to be faithful and honest, with all the mistakes, excesses, upsets, and disturbances that are likely, can serve as a catalyst for questioning one's own foundation, which is the purpose of philosophy.

As such, there is no reason why we cannot hope that this stammering and entanglement of the tongue will contribute even in some small way to cracking the structure of linguistic hegemony.

Finally, we come back to Watsuji, who once wrote that "it is obvious that there is no *universal language* separated from any particular language" (Watsuji 1962, 509). This assertion itself is completely appropriate. Watsuji encounters here the problem of how Japanese, as a particular language, can be translated into the universality that the language of philosophy demands: this is the theme of philosophy and translation. However, in developing his thought on *betweenness*, Watsuji made the concept *transparent*, and changed direction toward a search for the homogeneity of "philosophy in [the] pure Japanese language". As a result of this, the themes of "the experience of the foreign" and "the *pathos* of wonder" that must be aroused by translation faded into the background. Is it not the case, however, that the very nature of human *betweenness* is to be primarily a place where one can experience the foreign and the *pathos* of wonder? As long as we are true to

Watsuji's understanding, as mentioned above, even the universal language of philosophy cannot help but include a moment of translation.

Therefore, if we are to consider Watsuji's concepts of "practical communication between humans" and the "social body" as meaningful in this day and age, it will by no means be through the homogenization of the "pure Japanese language"; rather, in contrast to Watsuji's own words, to philosophize in Japanese is to practice the act of translation through "the experience of *pathos*", even if it means stammering in one's own language. Even if there is some form of "purification", some "bastard" or "half-breed" will accompany it. When this happens for the first time, the question Watsuji raised regarding the basis of human *betweenness*, which runs through language, ethos, and ethics, will be renewed as a substantive ethical practice. This seems to provide us with new food for thought with respect to the reality that we live together with others.

Once again, philosophy is an experience of translation, namely an experience of endurance and suffering. However, this endurance of otherness can simultaneously be a pleasure to receive and welcome, providing an opportunity for openness to respond to the foreign, and to transform oneself. Indeed, *philosophy* [φίλος-σοφία] is none other than the act of *loving wisdom*; however, as long as philosophy begins in the *pathos* of wonder, its love must aim not merely for wisdom, but also for the experience of the *pathos* of wonder. *Philosophy*, as a result, is the act of *loving wisdom* produced in this place of duality — in the "ambiguous position" of suffering and pleasure — or rather, if we might dare to say, the act of loving the duality, ambiguity, and *betweenness* of experience. To reiterate the idea developed by Arendt of "love for the world" (*dilectio mundi* / *amor mundi*),<sup>10</sup> to love the experience of enduring the *pathos* of wonder, of speechlessness, and of not-knowing belongs also to translation itself.

## References

---

<sup>10</sup> Arendt defined "love for the world, which makes it 'worldly'" (Arendt 1996, 66) by interpreting the texts of Saint Augustine, as follows: "For the 'world' is the name given not only to this fabric which God made, heaven and earth; but the inhabitants of the world are also called the world... all lovers of the world are also called the 'world'" (ibid.). Arendt's concept of love deeply connects with that of worldliness and of politics; however, it is beyond the scope of this paper to argue its connection in detail. See *Love and Saint Augustine* (Arendt 1996) and *The Human Condition* (Arendt 1958).

- Arendt, Hannah (1958) *The Human Condition*. (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press).
- Arendt, Hannah (1996) *Love and Saint Augustine*. (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press).
- Arendt, Hannah (2005) *The Promise of Politics*. (New York: Schocken Books).
- Berman, Antoine (1984) *L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*. (Paris: Gallimard).
- Berman, Antoine (1992) *The Experience of the Foreign. Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*. Trans. S. Heyvaert (Albany: State University of New York Press).
- Berman, Antoine (1999) *La traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain*. (Paris: Édition du Seuil).
- Carter, Robert E. (1996) "Introduction to Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku", in *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku*. Trans. Yamamoto Seisaku & Robert E. Carter (Albany: State University of New York Press).
- Deleuze, Gilles & Félix Guattari (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press).
- Heidegger, Martin (1971) *On the Way to Language*. Trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper One).
- Heidegger, Martin (1976) „Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten“, in: *Der Spiegel* 30 (Mai, 1976), SS.193–219.
- Heidegger, Martin (1981) "Only a God Can Save Us: The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)", in: T. Sheehan (ed.), *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*. Trans. W. Richardson, pp.45–67.
- Heidegger, Martin (1985) *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, in: *Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910–1976*, Bd.12, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann).
- Isomae, Jun'ich (2013) *Sikii no Shikō. Tasha, Gaibu, Kokyo [The Thought of Threshold. Others, External and Home]*. (Tokyo: Hosei University Press).
- Karatani, Kojin (2002) *Nihon-Seishin-Bunseki [Psychoanalysis of Japanese Thought, or Analysis of Japanese Spirits]*. (Tokyo: Bungeishunju).
- Ono, Fumio (2015) "Tetsugaku to Hon'yaku no Sabujekuto, Aruiwa Jibun Jishin no Gengo nioite Domorukoto: Watsuji Tetsurō 'Nihongo to Tetsugaku no Mondai' Saikou", in: *Rinsho Kyoiku Ningengaku [Record of*

- Clinical-Philosophical Pedagogy*] (Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University) Vol.13, pp.3–12.
- Ono, Fumio (2018) „In der eigenen Sprache stottern: Über das Philosophieren auf Japanisch und die Erfahrung des Fremden“, in: Ruprecht Mattig et al. (hrsg.) *Bildung in fremden Sprache? Pädagogische Perspektiven auf globalisierte Mehrsprachigkeit*, Bielefeld: transkript Verlag, SS.235–256.
- Plato (1892) *Theaetetus*, in: *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. IV [Third edition]. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Plato (1903) *Theaetetus*, in: *Platonis Opera*. John Burnet (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Plato (1921a) *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12. Trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/London: William Heinemann Ltd).
- Plato (1921b) *Platons Dialog Theätet*, übersetzt und erläutert von Ott Apelt, dritte, verbesserte Auflage, (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner).
- Sakai, Naoki (1997) *Translation and Subjectivity. On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Watsuji, Tetsurō (1961) *Climate and Culture. A Philosophical Study*. Trans. Geoffrey Bownas (Tokyo: Yushodo).
- Watsuji, Tetsurō (1962) “Nihongo to Tetsugaku no Mondai [The Problem of Japanese Language and Philosophy]”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshu [Complete Works of Watsuji Tetsurō]* Vol. 4, (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten).
- Watsuji, Tetsurō (1992) “Nihongo to Tetsugaku [Fragments and Memorandum: Japanese Language and Philosophy]”, in: *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshu [Complete Works of Watsuji Tetsurō]* the supplementary volume 2, (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten).