

An inquiry into the study of Japanese TV animation's semiological potential through a Watsuian lens

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Abstract :

With the studies of new media attracting interest from diverse academic disciplines each year, the philosophies and schools of thoughts pertaining to how humans react and interact with them seem more and more relevant as we keep on progressing through new ages of technology. This study, as a bypass result of our own research, will aim to bring to light new aspects of articulating those through a transcultural discourse while maintaining Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurô's logics of thought as the central pillar.

Keywords :

Philosophy of Media ;Watsuji Tetsurô ; Japanese TV Animation ; Anime ; Aidagara ; Theories of the imaginary

Introduction

During his formative years, now renowned Japanese philosopher, Watsuji Tetsurô found a deep fondness for Buddhist art. This appreciation of artistic expression can be seen throughout his writing of *Fûdo* when depicting the human being¹ not only as dependent but also a product of his surrounding environment. Be it the climate, the people or their resulting culture, this human being was seen as an irrevocably influenced and influencing existence. This observation stems predominantly in the understanding of Watsuji's theorization of the double-negation² of self in that, the ethical aspiring human must first reject his self for the world while also reject the world in order to satiate and cultivate his self to serve that same world. Put simply, it is constant dynamics that should be repeated until the end to achieve an as perfect as possible existential balance. Not only that, but according to his *Rinrigaku* theories, human beings are

¹ Human being will refer henceforth to the Watsuian *Ningen* in its existence through interactions of personal and social sphere of acts.

² The double negation or *nijû hitei* 二重否定 as theorized by Watsuji through his study of his predecessor Nishida Kitarô's philosophy of the self. This phrase articulates the movement of rejection of continuous self to become the whole then only to reject this whole and come back to the self in order to keep a certain ontological hybridity through this balancing act of good/bad modes of existence. This is how Watsuji mostly defines an ethical *Ningen*. For further explanation, we shall refer to Erin Mccarthy's definition: "For Watsuji, one is not fully human or ethical until one acknowledges the dynamics tension between the individual and social aspects of *ningen* and the necessity of continuing to move between the two poles; that is, negating the individual (collapsing the difference between self and other) and negating the social so as to reassert one's status as an individual. *Ningen* is thus back-and-forth movement of what Watsuji calls "double negation" (*nijû hitei* 二重否定)", Erin Mccarthy, Watsuji Tetsurô, p.512.

also simultaneously expressed and expressing through their navigation of spatio-temporal assertions. What proves to be, as we called them, constant dynamics between people and then in an object-people relationship will be a key point in the following study.

However, this paper is not aiming to only be theoretical in substance but also aspire to bring the subject of Japanese TV animation as to illustrate our arguments as a last step. We chose to use this medium as a case study as it is a fascinating terrain for semiological discourse especially when it pertains to the theories of imaginary³. Due, not only, to its still perceived newness in the world of media studies⁴ but mostly to its permeability for transmedia understanding. This article will be designed as to be a review study of Watsuji Tetsurô's philosophy⁵ and how it applies to the theories of imaginary as a creative and communicative process while later focusing on a fresh look at Japanese TV animation to illustrate our argumentation.

The theories of the imaginary

Before we undertake any discourse relating to Watsuji's thought theories, it is pertinent to first explain in more detailed considerations what will be the cement to this philosophical edifice, namely the theories of the imaginary. While a quick definition was given earlier, we feel it necessary to insist on their importance regarding the flow of the following argumentations, notably since those theories lay the groundwork supporting of what is thus defined by its main thinkers as *mythogenesis*, closely related to human's capacity of creativity.

“Our memory constitutes a reserve of imaginaries which we can bring to life against pressure from the present or the unknown of the future. This personal imaginary is much more than an informed memory, it is a real narrative reconstruction that can take the form of a personal myth [...].”⁶

Most of the main imaginary French theorists agreed to accept imagination as a kind of umbrella term related to anything pertaining to studies of creation, creativity, the human mind, images, and its symbols among other things. Although in a worry to be as precise as possible when delving in those particular studies, Durand wrote extensively about how : “those swarms of images “constellations” can be grouped beyond a discourse's temporal logic into coherent series”⁷. And through these constellations as they are thus called, Wunenburger intervenes to argue for different categorizations of those imageries depending on whether they are personal or communal entities. The previous quotation brings three important facts to light :

³ This article will focus its philosophical groundwork regarding theories of the imaginary on French philosophers Durand and Wunenburger in order to prevent an over-abundance of references.

⁴ We define it as “newness” in consideration of the TV medium being popularised and widely distributed during the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, making its related studies recent discourses.

⁵ The focus will mostly be on the problematics regarding the definition of Ningen through culture and creativity and the Aidagara principles related to it.

⁶ Wunenburger, *L'imaginaire*, p.21.

⁷ Durand, *L'imaginaire*, p.40.

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- Wunenburger focuses here on the memory issued imageries⁸, meaning that personal experience plays a pivotal role into shaping what's kept as ideal conscious or unconscious image traces. (We shall explain further ahead the problematic of consciousness as one of the human's creativity determinants.)
- Those memories originated imaginaries will compose reserves seemingly imperious to human beings most elemental principles, that is, time⁹.
- These reserves, constellations, can be brought to life through narratives and personal myths.

While the first two touch upon the structure of the imaginary itself, we shall now focus more on the third principle. It is thanks to that memory stocking and re-presenting skill¹⁰ that a human being can build upon creativity. That is indeed the pure definition of the earlier referred *mythogenesis* act : the birthing of myths. As a particularly socially oriented living being, the human will oftentimes seek to impart shards of their acquired experience no matter if it is in a worry for survival or just for the sake of entertainment through social connections. By building upon these myths through the narrative process of imaginary constellations, the human being is indeed making use of his creativity to literally integrate himself, as an individual ego, into the totality. Durand followed the same thought path by affirming that :

“this faculty of “creator imaginary” that allows the contemplative to access a *mundus imaginalis*, an “intermediary” world, *malakut* in the Iranian tradition, where “the bodies spiritualize themselves and the spirits embody themselves.”¹¹

By putting their creativity into a social use, human beings thus design a whole new sphere of interactions. By Watsuian terms it would be similar to bringing out a part of the *Ningen* ego¹², creating first and foremost a one-sided sphere of action (the bodies which spiritualize themselves act), then by bringing it to life through *mythogenesis* (the spirits which embody themselves act) as Wunenburger described earlier, transmuting this one-sided sphere of individual-focused acts¹³ into a fully-fledged social sphere which has then become permeable for human peers to more or less interact with. And it is this

⁸ When we dissertate on the specifics of memory issued imaginary, it is under Wunenburger's comprehension as “The imaginary of an individual is, for example, inseparable from the great political symbols and myths that models his representations of the national territory, the institution of power, the social transformations etc. The articulation between these two levels of imaginary thus illustrates a dialectic between the shared imaginary and the private imaginary.”, Wunenburger, *L'imaginaire*, p.59. Hence, by definition an imaginary born from personal experiences with ego-related affectivity, historical facts and general education.

⁹ In this respect, we can already theorize that the concept of imaginary escapes one of Watsuji's ethical *Ningen* specific bond by enduring through lifetimes. Although that is also where it becomes clearer that, while considering imaginary as a personal structure it is indeed an ethical prospect of *Ningen Act* by staying as an individually restricted manifestation of ego. But when one starts to consider imaginary as a reserve (constellation) it will fit rightly into into a societal tool of aesthetics communication.

¹⁰ Both these actions whether they be consciously made or not, rely on exercised and possibly trained will. So, they and their resulting creation act would be best defined as “skill” instead of any other innate type of categorization in our opinion.

¹¹ Durand, *L'imaginaire*, p.50.

¹² An aspect structurally different for each individual through never-ending responses to personal life experiences: past, present and future personality forging.

¹³ What is to be understood here as “individual-focused acts” is the selfish amassing of personal experiences through memory building and categorizing them into imagery constellations. The term “selfish” here is not to be taken as pejorative qualificative but as unequivocally “self-centred” actions.

permeability of communication that makes it suitable to be looked through a Watsujiian philosophical lens.

Traces and interactions between the theories of the imaginary and Watsuji's work

Now that we understand the structural dynamics of the theory of imaginary's *mythogenesis*, we can more accurately start to question how Watsuji's logic of *Ningen* ethics come into play when human's skill of creativity is conjured.

“The imaginary is integral of an invention, that produces, maintains and renews imagination's images. It constitutes an ability or intentionality characteristic of the spirit or conscience which, through the image, gives itself thought contents that differ from the tangible perceived and the abstract thought. [...] We can however admit that a part of the imaginary doesn't engage a subject conscious of itself, a *Cogito*, but imposes itself to us to the point that it invades our conscious by dispossessing it of itself”¹⁴

This hybrid nature of the creation through imaginary as articulated by Wunenburger puts further emphasis on the similarities with Watsuji's logic when discoursing on the ethical establishment of the individual into their social sphere. The imaginary is foremost a continuously shifting environment via back-and-forth movements between ego-fuelled personal thought process and the receptive community that will interact with it. We remarked earlier on this three-sided dynamics' permeability of individual – imaginary constellation – community. That Wunenburger admits to the simultaneity of the conscious – unconscious acts¹⁵ fuelling this pattern embeds itself with the Watsujiian logic of existence as an ethical *Ningen* which does specify that the perpetual dynamism of interaction between the individual's acts with their society. A similarity that goes even further through the intelligence that Watsuji did define the ethical *Ningen* such as :

“A human being loses his self-conscious essence when he stops the movement of independence and spends hours in idle slumber in a community, falling victim to “the crowd.” This justifies an individualism that denies altruism or self-sacrificing as nothing more than a crowd-oriented instinct.”¹⁶

He will, of course go through many more definitions fitting what he hopes to design as the ethical *Ningen* but this specific phrasing is striking by the acceptance that ego-centred act is a starting point for the individual to interact with the community and not the opposite. Although we must be cautious of the fact that Watsuji does express this ego-centred origin of act to be “bad” and that only through interaction with the “good” community-oriented self-projection can this “bad” become an acceptable “good”, or in other terms : a necessary evil of sorts. The theories of imaginary however never categorize the ego-originated imagination nor the community-targeted creation in terms of either good or bad. Hence, while

¹⁴ Wunenburger, *L'imaginaire*, p.17.

¹⁵ The phrase “act” is used purposely in its Watsujiian definition of “Interconnections of acts consist of the subjects launching the movement of coming back to themselves through their extendedness, that is, through the countless disruption/oppositions between the self and other. Hence, the act is, first of all, an interactivity between subjects. No act occurs in a place where the opposition between self and other does not occur. Second, the act, shouldering established human relations by itself, nonetheless operates in the direction of possible human relations as well.”, Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, p.235.

¹⁶ Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, p.135.

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theories of imaginary thinkers do not apply moral judgement to their subject of study¹⁷, Watsuji was indeed much interested in weighing the ethical worth of every aspect of the individual when confronted and confronting the societal world. It is indeed a very much debated question that Watsuji would put ontological precedence on the community over the individual, but this article will not be developing this issue further as our main point of interest is only in the similarities of dynamics between theories. Albeit the erasing of the self to integrate into the community while always needing to escape the community to return to the self is typical of the dynamics of nurturing the self through external interactions that similarly exist in the creation and expansion of imaginary constellations. For this permeable reservoir of ego-based and manipulated experiences to be wilfully interacted with by a community is further proof of the legitimacy of creativity's social aspects.

“To be truly ethical, there must be a sense of community and solidarity and solidarity that arises from a sense of shared history and an interconnection of social and cultural activities expressed in the real space/time world.”¹⁸

The imaginary constellation assembling and its constant evolution engraves itself into a resulting logic of community creation. In other terms, the individual, by being interacted with by their surrounding world, will unconsciously edify personal sets of constellations¹⁹ then consciously put those altered version of image-logic out for the community to interact with again. Once more we are faced with a steadily vacillating dynamics, however, they are also now positioned as existing concurrently to a space/time world logic²⁰ all while not being shackled by it. Although it might seem as an obvious affirmation, we must carefully consider the freedom imaginaries benefit when they end up transcending the self by integrating themselves into the whole. We can presently conclude that the self-built and then self-expressed (through creativity) imaginaries have indeed a real potential of being theoretical community manufacturers through a Watsujian lens.

Personality building as Watsujian aesthetics dynamics

This brings us to the problematic of defining whence this sometimes innate, sometimes manufactured creation through imagination capacity. The answer seems to be found within studies on ego and personality building studies such as Anton Luis Sevilla's comparative work.

“One core element of personality as a task is the task of self-transcendence : “Man is a being who surmounts and transcends himself.[...]” Creativity is our birthright, as personality.”²¹

And from there Sevilla goes on to explain the two-fold tasks need to manifest this creativity as “accept

¹⁷ Those same philosophers would mostly be interested in the conscious – subconscious or formed – innate aspects of the process of imagination.

¹⁸ Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, p.345.

¹⁹ Those personal sets of constellations as we call them while indeed structurally influenced by the substantial direct life experience of the subject, will be transmuted through the subject's unique personality. Personality here being defined as this rebounding movement of self from one to community and how they chose to constantly redefine their re-presenting sensibility through these back-and-forth projections.

²⁰ Wunenburger even argued that “The imaginary is not from the get-go a form of the irrational but must be seen more as a space-time “illogic”, of which we can update the restrictions.”, Wunenburger, *L'imaginaire*, p.48.

²¹ Sevilla, CCCC, p.230.

ourselves and our uniqueness” while “we must open ourselves up to fully experience and encounter the events, people, realities that we are to transform. Personality in its self-fidelity is never a self-enclosed ego”²². However, Watsuji in his *Rinrigaku* accepts the ego mostly as a consciousness making up the thinking process of the *Ningen*. The fact that he would only seem to accept it as a gear for consciousness leaves us to reflect on Sevilla’s perception on creativity as first and foremost something already here and to be built upon, not something that is built and not innate. We do need to point out that Sevilla’s study mainly express creativity from the personality through the prism of “Creative ethics” to manifest “moral imagination”. Implying thus the possibility or near-certitude of the existence of amoral imagination²³. Especially since Sevilla expresses that moral imagination is a dynamics of constant movement between “the ascent of freedom” and “the descending movement of compassion”. A state not quite unlike Watsuji’s understanding of *Ningen* ethical existence through the *Aidagara* logics as both sides are necessary for a perfectly ethical balance but shall never be fixed aims for fear of disrupting the whole relationship system. For both cases absolutes must be avoided.

“Instead, one’s creative vision becomes a manifestation of a dynamics acceptance of the world and a participation in its movement. Furthermore, seeing one’s creative vision as a vision amongst other visions of and by the whole, one becomes part of a creative *discourse*, where one considers one’s own vision, that of others in the past, present, and future, and the *shared* vision that can be formed from the society and history of creative personalities.”²⁴

The individual who produces culture through a process of imaginary-based narrative creation is thus not only consciously taking the steps to integration into the whole, but also modelling parts of this whole into their personal selves for others to influence and be influenced by this remnant shard of individuality. So creating ethical schematics of not only transcending the self, as previously described, but conjointly modifying the ontological supervenience of the self (here, personality) into a whole-like level of importance²⁵. This is a pivotal observation as this overreaching from individuality towards community, from the one towards the whole while not fully coming back into the one as previously expected²⁶ proves the definite possibility of the systemisation of the ego into otherness, becoming a socially accepted logic of systems, namely : becoming semiology²⁷. What is crucial to understand about this shift is that, while previously used theories of imaginary do create a philosophically comprehensive environment for the study of images, their creation, and human beings’ movement-based relations to them, that such a field, when appropriately used in an interactive social setting will become semiology, means the very real possibility of educational use. In his writings, Durand did allude that:

²² Sevilla, Ibid.

²³ We take care here not to express this notion as “immoral” but amoral. Meaning it does not ascribe to any law of conduit but more of an innate imperative preceding any societal constraint.

²⁴ Sevilla, CCCC, p.250.

²⁵ In his own studies on Kant’s philosophy, Watsuji himself accepted creativity as an act beyond the individual: “The will in Kant is, then, in essence, supraindividual and universal spontaneity; that is creativity”, Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, p.252. Although whether or not Watsuji personally saw the act of creativity as such, personal further research from ourselves need to be done in separate writing.

²⁶ As shards of the one will forever stay part of the whole as a social imaginary constellation.

²⁷ Semiology which can be understood as a meaning producing system from the visual.

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“in order to form itself, every symbol needs dominant structures of the sapiens innate cognitive behaviour. Thus, to form the imaginary levels of “education” superpose themselves : the geographic ambiance (climate, latitude, continental situations, oceanic, mountainous, etc.) first, but already regulated by the parental education symbolics, the mage (ludic) level, the learning then. Finally, the level that René Alleau calls “systematic”, meaning the level for the symbols and conventional allegories that society establishes for the good communication of its members between themselves.”²⁸

This educational potentiality is tightly related to not only earlier discourse on society-based constellation sharing but also on Watsuji's understanding of individual uniqueness structured through *Fūdo* logics. Education is thus produced through socially accepted constellations of imaginaries, while it is also this same education through creative experience that will shape communication and interactions in-between Ningen. Thence, designing a complex web of interdependent ethical Ningen acts relying on an individual's creative skills expressed through the medium of art²⁹.

“*aesthetis* involves a kind of a priori relationship between a subject and object, rather than a relationship between beings and ‘objects’ in a community, one that entails the capacity for change and development. It also assumes that artistic creativity and ‘aesthetic intuition’ of experience involves only a vertical connection between mind and form, subject and art-object; and that this integration of experience will be, ultimately solipsistic and totalizing. [...] These are of value precisely because of the particular way in which they express the interdependence of individuals in creation and artistic experience.”³⁰

Aesthesis, or as expressed at the start of this article, the giving birth of personal myths, is an integral reason as to why art and media studies are notably relevant nowadays in a hypermodern society grasping with over-abundant, never-ending streams of audio-visible informations. The individual subjects receiving and interacting with these aesthetics-produced forms of social interactions would seem in need of education concerning the appreciation of these asynchronous, often one-sided communications.

Japanese pop cultures: A case study for TV animation

This is where the final parts of our current inquiry starts, with the study of a particular form of media aesthetics found in Japanese TV animation. We chose this production of culture for multiple reasons and among the most pertinent, two of them: one being the TV specific serial format of distribution and the other being the flagrant aspects of community building around Japanese animation in particular.

“It is thus a temporal journey that the imaginary contents (dreams, desires, myths, etc.) of a society are born in a confused but important stream, consolidates themselves by “dramatizing” themselves into “actancial”³¹ uses positive or negative, that receive their structures and values of diverse social

²⁸ Durand, *L'imaginaire*, p.60.

²⁹ Shields does build upon such considerations by arguing that: “Human relationship, the ground and locus for ethics, is ‘empty’ of substance, unreal – aesthetic.”. Shields, *The Art of Aidagara*, p.276.

³⁰ Shields, *The Art of Aidagara*, p.274.

³¹ Written as “actanciels” in the text, meaning based upon the performativity of the imaginary contents.

“confluences” to finally rationalize themselves, thus losing their *mythogenic*³² spontaneity, into philosophical structures, ideologies, codifications.”³³

What we aim to focus on here, through Durand’s understanding on the use of those imaginary content is that it can go even beyond the image-related representation. But such contents, when aligned into actable narratives, can be demonstrated through the performative function of body movement (in the case of theatre, live cinema etc.) or illusion movement (in our present case study of the artificially streamed images in the animation aesthetic medium). Moreover, when talking about the animated medium in itself, not only does it prove to be a fantastical resource through its seemingly limitless representability³⁴ but the obsessive nature of its image flow possesses an educational prowess explaining why most youths and adults find themselves fascinated by the small screen. However, this reason is one among others:

“The televisual session doesn’t belong to the active ritual register, like the processions, or even spoken, like the prayers, but assimilates itself more into the fascination and possession processes. [...] If the effect is already specific to the cinema, projected in public rooms, it [the parade of images] sees its manifestations amplified by the intimacy in which we seat ourselves, by the relaxation provoked by the domestic well-being. [...] The television offers an easy and nearly always available opportunity to live by procuration, to be freed from our here-and-now. [...] By forgetting the screen, by seeing only the image we know a kind of experimentation in transgressing the limits, of mute euphoria, because lost our awareness of existing and we exist only as we are.”³⁵

“Nonetheless the programs are yours in another way: your path across them produces your niche, and your niche or segment generates a you, a TV self. This process might be called possession, but then we must carefully distinguish possession from ownership. [...] From the point of view of ownership, affective possession appears consonant with privatization, with taking something out of circulation and holding onto it. The self appears individualized, personalized, privatized – working on itself in a process of self-segmenting so to speak.”³⁶

While Wunenburger emphasizes on the ritualistics pertaining to television watching as a way to melt one ego sphere of interaction with a whole through a special intimate setting with the television object itself, Lamarre expresses here a self-structuration of the ego that bears close resemblance to the concept of “personality” as studied earlier through Sevilla’s writings. It is not just mere coincidence of phrasing but indeed further proof of the now understood fact that a human being’s ego is definitely structured and transmuted by itself through socio-cultural appreciation and affectivity. It is especially telling in this case of televised consumption where the subject is the active chooser of his passive growth. While, of course, the content itself is not particularly made only for the one individual but for an implicit community, the subject will most likely choose a product that will suit his tastes : affirming, hence amplifying them.

³² Written as “mythogénique” in the text, meaning upon the qualifications of creating personal myths.

³³ Durand, *L’imaginaire*, p.63.

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³⁵ Wunenburger, HAT, p.26,27.

³⁶ Lamarre, *Anime Ecology*, p.137.

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What seems to be gained in self-tailored entertainment culture might be lost in lacking diversity of media content. The “what” is a form of safe self-satisfaction where disappointment need not be feared. That state of affairs is true for many more media than just televised animated series. An avid reader who despises detective stories will try to steer clear from any similar form of narratives and only read what is closer to their “niche”. We do have to specify that Wunenburger states the importance of the intimacy shared with the medium and its content while in a context of general media studies. He later uses the news as an illustration to instantaneity and overabundance of information reception. Lamarre however does specialize his writings on the question of Japanese animation. Both proving that not only the medium-object itself but also its content and its delivery format have an impact on an individual's self-building of their personality. Personality, we must insist, builds itself from personal experience of back-and-forth interactive movements between the self and the whole. What is additionally fascinating about the serial televised media is, not only in its ritualistic form as theorized earlier but also in the mediatic structure itself: the rapid successions of images and its episodic format. Earlier we wrote about the obsessing nature of the artificially manufactured image-stream of animation, and we have to add to that the “serial” or “episodic” aspect of such contents communication.

Japanese serial animations as community builders

The longer an individual will interact with another sphere of social content, the more will they form webs of affectivity towards it. However, the social content we're studying here is not really structured as such and is really a one-sided media aesthetic content provider. The biggest difference, apart from the obvious lack of human reciprocity, is the fact that instead of an individual interacting on a same spatio-temporal setting as other human beings, the subject here will act towards an apparently closed vessel without receiving human specific action in exchange, namely a social dead-end. Moreover, the aesthetic object the individual will be acting with, situates itself on a, as expressed earlier in the study, contingent but different spatio-temporal logic.

“Technically, Naville distinguishes the visual and audible field from the verbal field: the visual field would be continuous and permanent (proprioceptive images haunt even the sleep). This visual field, always immediate and signifying, would be provided its proper logic, which Auguste Comte was already supporting when talking about a specific logic of the images – and also a logic of sensations – [...] “Our world is a world all new of instantaneity. The “time” is abolished, the “space” has disappeared.”³⁷

Here, through Naville and Comte's media research, Brunier does relate the filmic ontological sphere with a plane independent of logical spatio-time waypoints while only offering an imaginary based mostly on the “logic of sensations”. And it is exactly this logic of sensations that consumers of this specific brand of constellations built into artificially performative content are looking for. Hence creating a new way of social interactions devoid of the actual reciprocity cherished by Watsuji on his study of *Ningen*. These are

³⁷ Burnier, LPSSIO, p.58.

what can be called “parasocial interactions”.

“The study of parasocial interaction explores a special case of anthropomorphism, the tendency for people to engage with fictional television characters as if they were real human companions. [...] Horton and Wohl (1956) coined the term “parasocial relationships” to describe these one-sided relationships with media figures [...].”³⁸

This specific brand of social actions³⁹ has been understood as some kind of simulation of sociality or even an escape from actual interactivity with fellow human beings. What counts in those one-sided interactions⁴⁰ are the sensations brought forth by playing into obsessive contents format and the delights of an entertained affectivity. The actual, substantial relationship building exercise is absent, with only remnants of simulated reciprocity (originating from the entertained ego itself. For example, compared to reading a novel, a manga, the affective implication of the subject is multiplied for the case of watching even just one episode on a television. While the choice of the program indeed belongs to the individual, their spatio-temporality will be defined by this one choice, stripping them of some aspects of freedom as a result. If the individual shows affectivity towards the chosen program, then they will see a part of their private life ritualized around watching said product. This process can be seen as a form of social contract build around compromise: a book can be bookmarked to be finished later but a show most likely will be watched from start to finish with commercials as the only break from this activity of passive fantasizing. Hence, television era humans have been able to also transcend in some form their incident social relationships. Through this ritual of choosing, preparing for, and focusing on their medium of choice, Human beings are no longer always constrained to social interactions imposed to them by their societal circumstances⁴¹. Not only are they now seemingly active manufacturers of their personality building entertainment, but they can also be the recipients of new forms of chosen social relationship building activities. This last one, is especially important as it categorizes itself as a risk-free social experience activity. However, in contradictory accounts, Japanese TV animation has been able to build upon this one-sidedness of affectivity and create subsequent substantial communities through shared knowledge, interests and niche. One specific community answers to the *otaku*⁴² definition of like-minded individuals having created, through media contents communications, their own brand of inter-social recognition of affectivity toward content providers (here, televised animations). By definition, through one-sided content consumption, individuals seem to have managed to design a proper *Ningen* interdependent social sphere of existence.

³⁸ Gardner and Knowles, LMYR, p.157-158.

³⁹ We shall not use the term “interactions” here as it is indeed a one-sided affectivity being expressed.

⁴⁰ We knowingly use an oxymoron here in order to better illustrate the psychological enginery being created from these parasocial interactions where the subject does feel affectivity and feels fantasied reciprocity from an object which can only provide but not react.

⁴¹ What we mean to articulate through this phrase is

⁴² Lamarre will describe those individuals as “the figure of a limit-experience of the social relay technology of television media. The otaku both consumes or consummates this social technology and threatens to push its limits and ruin it.”. Lamarre, *The Anime Ecology*, p.178. In other words, the *otaku* provides a template of socially-deprived individuals able to forge their own media social sphere.

Conclusion

In this article we were able to articulate three main points. Those being the very real human capacity for image and symbol processing through personal experiences and dynamics with themselves and the community, the whole. Those dynamics namely being a back-and-forth perpetual movement from the self toward the multiplicity which helps not only in design a self-centred architecture (the ego, personality) while also being able to influence the multiplicity's own ethical aesthetics-based structures.

It is especially the second part of this constant and moving interaction that led us to help confirm the substantial possibility of Watsuji Tetsurô's logics of *Ningen* acts and ethical existence to also be applicable to aesthetics creations, meaning the cultural contents production and consummation from individuals and communities.

Then we ended our reflections stream through the illustration of such personality building from imaginary, conducing to community building mentality via the example of the Japanese TV animation medium.

This study is only an inquiry into such possibilities and more research has been and still need to be done in order for findings to be more accurate and pertinent. However, we can safely affirm that studies on individual and social imaginations do lead to a better understanding on how those same individuals build upon themselves, transcend their given personalities and can also benefit the community they belong to. Whether these benefits are indeed positive or negative do depend on their use and their receptivity od such media contents.

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