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September 12, 1909, in Dalian

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The Relations Between Things and Three Types of People

A lecture sponsored by the *Manshū Nichinichi Shimbun*, September 12, 1909, in Dalian

Natsume Sōseki

Translated by Angela Yiu

Sōseki traveled to Manchuria and Korea during September and October of 1909. He delivered three lectures while in Dalian, and the one translated here was thought to be lost until it was discovered in a microfilm of the Manshū Nichinichi Shimbun (Manshū Daily News) in 2008. The lecture was originally printed in the newspaper in five installments, from September 15 to 19, 1909 and was most likely based on a reporter's transcript.

Coming Up with an Idea

This trip to Manshū¹ was meant to be a relaxing affair for sightseeing and leisure, but I have found myself extremely busy with experiencing and observing various things during my travels, and there doesn't seem to be enough time to see it all. The director of the newspaper *Manshū Nichinichi Shimbun*, Mr. Itō,² asked me to give a talk, and finding it hard to turn down a friend's request, I agreed, but I really don't have a solid idea of what to talk about. To begin with, it's not easy to come up with an idea; it may not be so hard to rehash someone else's idea or to talk about things written about in books, but coming up with something you want to say and something that you want people to listen to is not so simple. Even if I have a flash of inspiration, it doesn't necessarily mean that I can make others see what I have in mind. To make an idea clear to others is what one calls "*to elaborate*"³ in English. This is like stretching words out infinitely, the way you blow through a bamboo tube to shape candy figures. It's exactly like school lectures or foreign books—an endless reiteration of what you already know very well. You go on and on with an absurd explanation of minor details that should well be put to rest, but unless you do so people will not understand, so that is the only way to make people see your point. If you just provide an outline, your idea will not be clear. You hear people say, "I can't give a talk just for your sake, at the expense of self-humiliation." You see, sometimes people accept a request to give a lecture but do not bother to take time to

explain things clearly, so no one understands the lecture at all. Other times, people don't really have an idea of what to talk about, and the audience ends up saying, "What a bag of nonsense!" Both scenarios result in self-humiliation. That is to say, since you can devalue yourself by what you say, you have to admit that talks and lectures are nothing but trouble. But at the same time, it is trouble that is well worth taking.

A Lecture for Face Recognition

Back in Japan proper I hardly ever go out, and not only do I avoid giving talks and lectures, I have neither ideas for talks nor ways *to elaborate*. So what about this evening? It's not as though the air in Dalian has brightened up my mind, allowing me to explain everything clearly to you. Partly because I accepted Mr. Itō's request lightly with an "Okay, I'll see what I can do," and partly because things inevitably took their own course, my initial thought of telling you a story has ended up as a lecture. Well, even then, this is nothing more than a lecture for the purpose of remembering each other's faces if we happen to run into each other in Japan.

What Brought Me to Manshū

Manshū is full of surprises. I had never thought of it as such a fascinating place when I was in Japan proper. For a summer retreat in Japan, one can go to a hot spring or a beach, and there are plenty of activities, including climbing Mount Fuji, that would be inexpensive to undertake. I myself can't ascertain why someone like me, who doesn't like going out, would travel to Manshū. Something in the air set me aloft and brought me here. In other words, I came simply because I wanted to come, so there's no reason to expect an impressive talk. I am good friends with President Nakamura of South Manchuria Railway (Mantetsu),⁴ and when I asked him what on earth is it that Mantetsu does, he called me a fool. He told me to come see with my own eyes how it operates and what it is that Japanese there do. So despite my normally secluded life, I came all this way to see Manshū and learn about it for future reference. I was planning to travel with President Nakamura, but the doctor forbade my scheduled departure because of my stomach ailment. I finally left Tokyo on September 2, boarded the ship in Kobe and sailed for four days, and thanks to splendid weather I had no problems at sea despite my aversion to sailing. In the past, when I went abroad I was rendered half-dead and half-alive, but this time, I sailed the vast ocean as though gliding on a green field, saw the beautiful scenery off the shore of the Chōsen peninsula, arrived at the port of Dalian, and went straight to President Nakamura's residence. But that night I was made to drink whiskey and my stomach became upset. The next day, after seeing various places in a horse-drawn carriage and finishing the day's outing with Western cuisine, my condition took another turn for the worse.

A Single Suit

Just as I was wondering what I should see in Manshū, I realized researching or even just seeing Manshū adequately would take at least twelve months. As you can see, because I only possess this single suit on my back, I thought I would travel from the northern part of Manshū to Chōsen while the suit lasts. I have no thoughts of being contracted for profit by Mantetsu; I am simply occupied with sightseeing and scarcely have a moment to spare to give thoughts to a talk. But does that mean I am a person with no time to spare? Far from it. It's just that I don't have enough spark in me to generate a flash of inspiration and *elaborate* it *systematically* into a talk.

What My Fellow Japanese Are Doing Here

Manshū, especially Dalian, is the starting point of the South Manchurian Railway and the final destination of transportation from Europe to Asia. That means it is the beginning and the end of the railway. Many Japanese live here, and many make a living along the railway. As for what they do, needless to say they run Manshū, exploring and managing sources of wealth wherever they find them. There are also educators and doctors as such who, for the most part, are here not to excavate wealth but came to Manshū anyway. As to how this development is carried out, it is still an unknown for an amateur like me, who just landed in Dalian four or five days ago. Some of you have been here three or four years, or even five or six years, so I am sure you know much more than a newcomer like me. But allow me to say, however, that most Japanese here possess an *interest* in managing Manshū and developing its resources.

The Profound Interest of Society

Yet I myself have no intention of developing Manshū's sources of wealth for financial gain, nor do I know how to profit from transporting soybeans by railway or from mining coal. We are all of us human beings, but there is a great difference between us when it comes to matters of this sort. While I am happy to spend my days lolling around at home engaged in a business that scarcely makes any money, you devote every single minute to the development of Manshū. The difference between us is tremendous. It's as though we occupy two polar extremes, and this is where society is profoundly interesting. Three or four years ago I was asked to give a lecture somewhere.⁵ I gave a rather pompous theoretical explication of the distribution and development of people. I'd like to say a little more about that today. Since time is limited, I won't be able to cover everything. But allow me to start midway and to tell you just enough for us to be able to recognize each other's faces, as I promised earlier that I would do.

Three Types of People

Let me begin by saying that there are three types of people. This may sound like something out of an elementary school textbook, but...well, there really are three types of people.

First, there are people who illuminate the relations between things; second, there are people who effect change in the relations between things, and third, there are people who savor the relations between things. I arrived at the categorization of these three types through quite an intricate process of theoretical inquiry, but I shall spare you the details and jump right into the explication of the three types.

People Who Illuminate the Relations Between Things

First, what kind of people are those who illuminate the relations between things? These are people who are constantly studying these relations in all their variety. For example, here's a table, a cup, a tray, and a teapot. There are those who study the location and the *proportional* size of these things in relation to one another. Then there are those who study the substances that constitute these objects and the ratio of the chemical components these substances contain, such as oxygen, carbon, nitrogen. These are scholars in the fields of physical sciences, such as chemistry, natural philosophy, and physics. In more general terms, these are scholars of philosophy, who lump smaller categories together to create larger ones.

People Who Change the Relations Between Things

Second, "people who change the relations between things" refers to those who drag the tray this way, or who fill the cup with water and then drink from it, resulting in a changed relation between things as compared to before. That is to say, a certain change occurs in the *factors* that constitute the actual reality of things. For example, Mantetsu employees are in the railway business; they run trains in order to transport soybeans and mine coal, and they sell these things. Other examples include military officers who attack enemies to defeat and kill them. Both Mantetsu employees and military officers belong to the second type of people.

People Who Savor the Relations Between Things

Third, people who savor the relations between things are those who, for instance, place a teapot in the middle of a table to gaze upon it. They think, hmm, that's interesting, what a dainty little thing, what a pleasing color, what an understated earthenware, and so on. This is what it means to savor the relations between things. This third type of person will not see the point of leveling hills to build a railway or cutting down trees for wood (here, as the speaker made this comment, he looked in the direction of President Nakamura, Vice President Kunisawa, and other executive officers). It is highly interesting to clarify all three of these ways of relating to the world, and indeed human beings must combine some components of all three of them. People who are capable of only one of them will not be able to survive in society. It would be dull if you spent all year savoring just one thing, such as the way horses run, and unless you possess all three capacities in some measure, you have no value as a human being. For instance, consider how we enjoy

effecting changes in certain relations between things. In the case of a novel, if you can't figure out the relationship between a man and a woman, whether they will stay together or break up, you are not in a position to say, "Oh, that's interesting" or "how enjoyable."

Now, two or three days ago I paid a visit to Lüshun and was given a guided tour from the Nihyakusan Kōchi to the battery located at Higashi Keikanzan.⁶ According to the army lieutenant's explanation, by setting up a telescope on the mountain on the opposite side, the opponents were apparently able to see the Japanese army landing. When I asked in which direction Dalian lay, he answered that it lay on this side. I had completely mistaken its direction. Apparently, the train from Dalian makes a loop around the area. On the following day, a second lieutenant showed me around, and the location of the mountain and battery I had learned about the day before was now in an entirely different direction. This kind of error in thinking occurred because the relations between things were not clear to me. So if someone like me were to attack Lüshun, I would be rather pessimistic about the outcome. When an army plans to attack and kill enemies, it has to be absolutely certain from the start about the relations between things. Whether you are laying railroad tracks or digging tunnels, it will be pointless to keep hitting hard rocks, so it is important to make the relations between things clear. Furthermore, whether it is to change, or attempt to change, the relations between things, or to fully activate the three types of people within us, one has to come to grips with one's goal in order to appreciate and take advantage of the inherent differences in the three types of relations.

All Phenomena Reflected Through the Eye of Tasteful Interest

If I am considered a man of letters, then I belong to the type of people who savor the relations between things. The train is an interesting thing. It burns coal and turns it into smoke that bellows from its chimney. The smoke transforms into a myriad shapes. Indeed, what an interesting thing the train is. Speaking of trains, the British artist Turner drew pictures of trains. His painting of a train coming in on a flooded track was praised as a masterpiece. There's also a German painter who traveled to the United States to paint. His paintings are full of strange things—factories, docks, five or six giant smoke stacks piercing the sky, high rises, and so on—things that appear common and unremarkable to us are rendered artistic and beautiful in his art. These painters are people who savor the relations between things. But it is not enough just to savor. Even though people like us do not aim at illuminating the relations between things, to some extent we do wish to do so. Similarly, people who *change* the relations between things also must incorporate aspects of all three modes in their daily activities. People set goals in particular cases and keep the two other types of relations as references to their actions.

Excessively Busy People

When I landed at the dock, the first thing I saw was the construction of the port. It was still unfinished, and construction was rapidly underway. There was an enormous shelter,

and I was told it could easily hold up to two army divisions. Then there was a mountain of soybeans. Overall, it looked like a burnt-out field from the dock. I also saw tracks for electric cars and gigantic smoke stacks. The power station was running in full gear, and there was a Central Development Laboratory.⁷ That's where they extract beautiful silk filament and weave fabric from cocoons and brew whiskey from sorghum, and so on. The economy looks good, and the outlook for running Manshū optimistic. People in Dalian have good complexions and seem very healthy and active. The Electric Park is wonderful and well laid out,⁸ although it would be even better with greater financial backing. From the point of view of someone who savors the relations between things, I would say the ideas are fine, but the execution requires more effort. And yet the idea is to create an electric park that will far surpass attractions in Europe and the United States in style, so I am sure it will turn out to be a fine thing. Russia Town is particularly beautiful, and the Yamato Hotel is impressive—too good, really, for the likes of me. As for the President's residence, it even boasts a huge *dancing room*. I have never seen one so big and impressive. The President lives in such a magnificent place because he is in Manshū; I can't imagine that he could live like that in Japan. I suppose this makes it worth coming to Manshū (the speaker looks at the President). For settlers of Manshū, there are many different kinds of occupations. Transporting soybeans, mining coal, running electric trains, installing electric lights, constructing the Electric Park, sprucing up the parks, setting up shooting ranges, etc., there is plenty to do in a new land. All this certainly wouldn't happen in Tokyo. Tokyo is already somewhat developed, so progress will take place only incrementally. Much as even someone like me dreams of living in a better house, I don't sell soybeans or mine coal to generate profit, so I have to make do with a shabby little shed. If left to our desires, which know no bounds, we will inevitably end up gravitating toward the style of first-rate nations in Europe and the United States. Following that trend, Manshū will no doubt progress in material development.

Since coming to Manshū and taking in the various sights, I have come to a certain realization that I think you may share. That realization has to do with the fact that my travel dates are limited. As I said earlier, I have to go back to Tokyo before my suit wears out. In addition, I don't have an unlimited sum of money to spend. So I rush about, trying to accomplish as much as possible. In other words, before I fully understand A, I move on to B, and before I fully understand B, I move on to C. It's as though the inside of my head is moving in a *cyclic order* that goes round and round with no stop. I think this may be similar to your situation in Dalian. To begin with, new ventures in a new land know no end. It's like a game of *go*, once you place the first stone, you have to start thinking about the second and third move. The same goes for setting up new ventures and facilities in rapid succession in order to keep the wheel of fortune turning. You live and exist to support those ventures, and you endeavor to change the relations between things. You are in a mental state of *restlessness*, marked by extreme agitation. I don't know if any of you suffer from a loss of appetite, but I am sure you find yourself busily moving from

one thing to another. In the sense that you have no time to savor anything, I imagine your condition is no different from mine since arriving in Manshū for sightseeing.

Those Who Are Scarce in the New Land

To begin with, moving from one thing to another takes place very rapidly, and to examine their relations the way the Central Development Laboratory does—asking how to transform things, what the relations are between one thing and another, and how to benefit from change in order to generate profit, and so on—is the work of one in a thousand people. Thus, those who truly understand the relations between things are scarce, particularly in this newly settled land. And at the same time, there are very few people who savor the relations between things.

Piteous People

It can be difficult to make others understand what it means to savor the relations between things. Some people may even ask why it is necessary to do so. I cannot but feel sorry for those people. When my friend was studying abroad in Germany, his landlady asked him if all Japanese appreciate music. When he said no, that even he himself did not understand music, she told him this was a kind of handicap. Indeed, it is a kind of handicap to not be able to savor the difference between musical notes. But my friend was not particularly bothered by that. As another example, if you have a taste for beef, you will feel sorry for people who cannot appreciate how delicious it is. If one has a taste for beef but another does not, from a third person's perspective, one cannot help pitying the one who lacks the taste for beef. In this life of great *intensity*, it is a pity not to be able to savor things that others can savor. Those who can truly savor life will find that there is no one else who can savor life better than yourself. But this does not mean that if you break down the intensity and spread it out over the years that you can savor life more. To savor *life*, some turn to religion, and some to literature and art, in an effort to transform a flat existence to a multi-faceted life of many interests and tastes.

A Time for Savoring Things

Since things come and go without a moment's rest in Dalian, similar to my study trip here, it is highly unlikely that there is actually time to savor anything. There is little doubt that material development in Dalian will soon surpass Europe and the United States, and until we stand shoulder to shoulder with the West there will be no rest in progress, so it is hard to imagine that there will be any leeway for savoring the relation between things. The rising nation of the United States has devoted itself to the development of material civilization, and the number of musicians, writers, and artists are small in proportion to its progress. However, the United States is wealthy, so it is more developed than our country. That is to say, the United States senses that its monotonous drive for progress has left its people unable to savor the relations between things and has therefore recently

been sending scholars to study abroad. Dalian will follow in these same steps. After this initial stage of being driven by the pursuit of material civilization, you will enter a second stage of gaining a margin in which to savor things, and will enter an age of appreciating things from many angles. When you enter that stage, you will be able to savor what my fellow artists and I do. It is very different from what you do, but when the time comes, you will begin to hear what we say in our talks and lectures, and that is when I will give a talk or deliver a lecture for you.

The Great Discoveries by Two Scholars

Recently, Dr. Shiratori came to research history here.⁹ He is a historian, and since history is a branch of *science*, he belongs to the type of people who illuminate things. Apparently Mantetsu financed his research, so one might ask what is the purpose in illuminating the relations between things? What does that mean for Mantetsu as a railway company? Since President Nakamura is here this evening, I will say a few words about Mantetsu. Mantetsu is a railway company, and its job is to transport soybeans and mine coal. But apparently Dr. Shiratori is said to have discovered a monument from the capital of the Juchen Jin dynasty,¹⁰ confirming its whereabouts. To Mantetsu, the discovery of the Juchen Jin capital is in fact practically useless. Yet, even though it is irrelevant to the business of the railway company, Mantetsu supports the scholar's urge to fully illuminate the relations between things. In doing so, Mantetsu breaks the monotony of its existence in Manshū, driven only by material development, and provides a new angle to life here. To discover a monument of the Juchen Jin capital and ascertain its whereabouts is a great historical discovery. But from a layperson's point of view, it is a worthless effort that is neither remarkable nor profitable. Yet to Dr. Shiratori, it is truly wonderful to be able to illuminate the relations between things from a specialist's perspective, and that should be cause for celebration in society. It is the work of Mantetsu—soybeans and the burning smoke of coal—that enables discovery and research resulting in the illumination of the relations between things. It is truly interesting to savor the relations between these things; that smoke and soybeans lead to the construction of a port, bring about great scholarly discoveries, and cause things to *change*. This is what is interesting about all this. Furthermore, Mr. Hashimoto has also recently come here.¹¹ He is a professor at the Sapporo School of Agriculture, and he came to assist Dr. Shiratori and to conduct his own research in his field of specialty, which is livestock science. But he is not one to make money from livestock, nor is he here to make a profit. He came to research livestock in Mongolia under the sponsorship of Mantetsu. Like Dr. Shiratori, Dr. Hashimoto also illuminates the relations between things. Amid the frantic work of laying tracks for an electric railway and creating an electric park in Dalian—as though operating in a state of emergency—the research activities of these scholars transform and add new angles to what was once flat and dull. That is truly impressive.

Beyond the Scope of Business

Finally, after Dr. Shiratori and Dr. Hashimoto, someone like me is also invited here, but I can hardly count myself in the same league. I have simply come to see what it is that you do here. It is apparent that the major business in Manshū is Mantetsu, and Mantetsu is engaged in the transportation of soybeans, coal mining in Fushun, the construction of the seaport, and so on. Furthermore, there are many other subsidiary businesses connected to those, so Mantetsu really has its hands full. In between, Mantetsu also invites scholars like Dr. Shiratori and Dr. Hashimoto, who illuminate the relations between things that have nothing to do with coal, soybeans, and port construction. The fact that Mantetsu sponsors those who lie outside the scope of their business in order to foster a multi-faceted life in Manshū is commendable.

A Complex Life

In conclusion, while you are entrusted with the management of Manshū to bring about change, by coming into contact with people who illuminate the relations between things and people who savor the relations between things, your life will become fuller and eventually more complex as you react to things around you. However, if you do not simply wait for opportunities to arise, but actively cultivate all three of these modes of engaging the world, I believe you will become more fulfilled. Finally, I beg your forgiveness for my inability to express my ideas fully in words.

Translator's Notes

This translation of *Mono no kankei to san'yō no ningen* (The Relations Between Things and Three Types of People: A lecture sponsored by the *Manshū Nichinichi Shimbun*, September 12, 1909, in Dalian) is based on a reprint published in the magazine *Ronza* (Forum), September 2008, Asahi Shimbunsha, 184-92. The subheadings in the text were added by *Ronza*. For the discovery, see *Asahi Shimbun* evening news, May 24, 2008.

1. I retain the reference to the geographical entity of Manshū (for Manchuria) and later Chōsen (for Korea) used in the Meiji period (1868-1912).

2. Itō Kōjirō attended the same college preparatory school (which

later became the famous Dai'ichi Kōtōgakkō [First Higher School]) as Sōseki. Sōseki wrote in his diary, "A letter came from Itō Kōjirō. He has joined Mantetsu and is in charge of the newspaper" (August 13, 1909). A few days later, he wrote, "Itō Kōjirō came to visit. He talked about *Manshū Nichinichi Shimbun* for an hour and a half" (August 17, 1909).

3. In this translation, words that appear in the original newspaper article in English are rendered in italics.

4. Nakamura Yoshikoto (a.k.a. Zekō), Sōseki's close friend from youth and the second president of Mantetsu.

5. This refers to the lecture "The Philosophical Foundation of Art" (Bungei no tetsugakuteki kiso), delivered soon

after Sōseki joined Asahi Shimbun in spring 1907. *Sōseki zenshū* (The Complete Works of Sōseki), vol. 16 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 64-137. Discussed in Angela Yiu, *Chaos and Order in the Works of Natsume Sōseki* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 83, 85, 89, 95.

6. Nihyakusan Kōchi was a high ground in Lüshun where one of the fiercest battles was fought between the Japanese and Russian armies in the Siege of Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). It was so named because it was 203 meters above sea level. Higashi Keikanzan was a battery built by the Russians in 1900 to defend against Japanese assault. On December 18, 1904, the Japanese military bombed and took hold of the battery.

7.
The Central Development Laboratory (Chūō Shikenjō) was set up by Mantetsu for industrial and agricultural product development.

8.
The Electric Park was built on the highland of Fushimidai in Dalian. Instead of trees, various kinds of electrical decorations were installed for entertainment.

9.
Shiratori Kurakichi (1865-1942), historian and professor at Gakushūin

and Tokyo Imperial University. His areas of specialty included Manchuria, Korea, Mongolia, and Central Asia, and he established the Tōyō Bunko book collection in 1923 with Iwasaki Hisaya.

10.
The Jin dynasty (1115-1234), also known as the Juchen (C. Nūzhen) dynasty, ruled an empire formed by the Tungus Juchen (or Jurchen) tribes of Manchuria. The empire covered much of Inner Asia and all of present-day North China. See *Britannica*

Academic, s.v. “Jin dynasty,” accessed March 13, 2018, <https://vpngw.cc.sophia.ac.jp/+CSCO+1075676763663A2F2F6E706E71727A76702E726F2E70627A++/levels/collegiate/article/Jin-dynasty/24121>.

11.
Hashimoto Sagorō attended the preparatory tutorial school Seiritsu Gakusha in Kanda Surugadai, where Sōseki commuted for about a year in 1884.