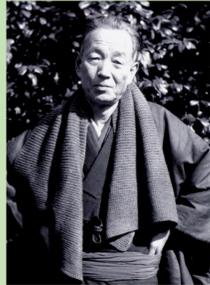


Milieu

Before the start of the discussions of an environmental crisis, the Japanese philosopher **Watsuji Tetsuro** (和辻哲郎) developed the concept of *fuudo* (風土). Translated by Augustin Berque as *milieu*, *fuudo* is a co-determined web of significations and symbols subjectively perceived and co-created by human beings. This milieu is always **historical**, as new individuals are learning from the meanings, values and usages already existing and adapting these to present situations.



Watsuji Tetsurō
和辻 哲郎 (1889-1960)

“What we usually think as natural environment is a thing that has been taken out from its concrete ground, the human mediance, to be objectified. When we think at the relation between this thing and human life, the relation itself is already objectified. This position leads thus to examine the relation between two objects; it does not concern human existence in its subjectivity. On contrary, this subjectivity is what matters in our opinion.” (Watsuji, *Fuudo*, 1935, 1, my translation).



Relational individual

The relational individual *exist always in* a specific milieu. Through one's life, one interacts with **many different milieus** directly (where one has been), semi-directly (where one's friends and relatives have been) and indirectly (books, media). The relational individual is **becoming** who she is through interactions with these milieus.

Any specific milieu is the result of a **process of co-creation involving multiples relational individuals and the natural environment**.

When two individuals meet in a specific milieu, the process of co-creation (partly) turns into **direct ethical negotiations**.

Ethics

Ethics emerges from our **constant cyclic and dynamic relation** with the world, generally through the milieu. The spectrum of ethics starts at the level of what we perceive and how, and how we make sense of it. We make sense of it always in relation with others, situated inside a specific milieu, not only environmental but also social (**participatory sense-making**).

Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is to use (behaviours) the ecosystems in a way and at a pace that allows for regeneration, and that can be continued indefinitely.

In my model, the key point of sustainability is the continuous **co-creation, conservation and transmission of a living meaningful milieu**. Ethical value is attached to the rich living significance of the historical milieu.

The transmission to **future generations** of a healthy and meaningful milieu contributes not only to their basic survival, but also to their ability to **flourish** as human beings. Future generations will have full power over the projects and ideals we are living for now.

“The individual dies, the relation between individuals changes, but while dying and changing, individuals live and their betweenness continues.” (Watsuji, *Fuudo*, 1935, 19-20, my translation).

Common Ground

Common **vulnerability** and fragility to changes in our environment of each of us as individuals, and of all of us as specie. It gives us a common ground to develop an environmental ethics. From two minimalist and consensual premises (1 and 2), one possible line of argument unfolds as follows.

- 1 We value **human existence**.
- 2 A healthy environment and a meaningful milieu are *necessary conditions* for human existence. = Environmental Sustainability
- 3 **Adaptability** is a *necessary condition* for our survival and environmental sustainability.
- 4 For an individual agent, **creativity** and better stimulation of ideas increase the chances of finding the appropriate solution to a problem.
- 5 Then, maximizing one's **diversity of experiences** (physical, intellectual, emotional...) is stimulating ideas and creativity.
- 6 So, in order to reach a better adaptability, we need to foster the diversification of experiences.
- 7 *First normative conclusion*
Principle of curiosity: Seek encounter and exchange with diverse unknown others.
- 8 *Second normative conclusion*
Principle of freedom of thought: Avoid dogmatic walls that exclude some experiences (including thought- and conceptual experiences).

Mutually healthy relation

We need to define what is a healthy interaction that **mutually enriches** the agents. When there are **abuses** (hierarchization and domination leading to assimilation), the interaction is **not** mutually healthy.

Keys from ecofeminism: **Difference** must be respected and not homogenized by a process of assimilation. The interdependence and **sameness at the ground** of the difference must be recognized.

- 9 **Objection of uniformisation**
More interactions will lead to uniformisation and less diversity.

A **response** to this objection is the definition of a mutually healthy relation above. However, if, to improve the relation, the agents should develop their common ground, then, their mutual difference is likely to decrease. So, in turn, diversity would decrease.

Conclusion

A possible way to get out of this circle may be to work on the idea of consensus. The common ground needed in each encounter and when developing a relationship can be a **temporary consensus sufficient to take common action**. Consensus is not harmony. Consensus can include mutually respected **tensions** as potential sources of creation and stimulation for improvement.

