

Fūdo as the Disclosure of Nature

Rereading Watsuji with Heidegger

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One of the most important and least well-understood notions in Watsuji Tetsurō's philosophical oeuvre is the concept of *fūdo* 風土, which has been variously translated into English as "climate and culture," "climate," and "milieu." Due to the difficulty of translating this term into English, and to the unsatisfactory nature of these alternatives, we will leave this word untranslated here.¹ According to Watsuji, *fūdo* is a "general term which designates the cli-

1. Augustin Berque has made a case for translating *fūdo* as *milieu*. This usage has certain advantages, especially in terms of moving the reader away from the idea of an objective "natural environment." On the other hand, in English *milieu* primarily connotes a social environment; moreover, in my judgment it does not really convey the vital and all-important sense of nature as the ground of *fūdo*. The terms *climate and culture*, which were used to translate the title of Watsuji's book into English, have the virtue of suggesting the domains involved in this concept, but this pair is too cumbersome to use in translating every instance of the occurrence of the term *fūdo*. My hope is that others will follow my example and leave this term untranslated. Eventually, these gestures may result in the eventual promotion of *fūdo* to the ranks of foreign words, such as *phronesis* and *Dasein*, that have become part of the philosophical lexicon of English—at least among scholars of comparative and Asian philosophy.

mate, the weather conditions, the nature of the soil, and the geologic, topographic, and scenic features of a given land.² Watsuji eventually expands upon this formulation through myriad examples and theoretical asides which show that the term *fūdo* goes far beyond what is indicated in this initial definition; it is intended to capture the way in which nature and culture are interwoven in a setting which is partly constitutive of and partly constituted by a group of people inhabiting a particular place.

Watsuji insists upon this constitutive unity of self and *fūdo*, however, without ever really giving a complete or clear account of the nature and status of the unity at work here.³ The aim of this paper is to correct this shortcoming through a careful examination of the sense in which the self both constitutes and is constituted by the *fūdo* in which it is emplaced. I argue in this regard that the self can only be what it is through its living in, incorporating, and giving expression to a *fūdo*—all of which make possible an essential form of self-understanding—while a particular *fūdo* can only be what it is through its being opened up and *disclosed* by the self. Self and *fūdo* constitute, belong to, and are continuous with one another in these ways.

In the course of presenting and defending this interpretation of the relation between self and *fūdo*, I hope to accomplish three things. First, because Watsuji's basic philosophical method is, as Mine Hideki has observed, a makeover of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, the relation between self and *fūdo* will be articulated against the background of Heidegger's phenomenology, where I will show that it has important consequences for Heidegger's concepts of world, disclosure, and self-understanding, respectively.⁴

2. WTZ 8: 7. All translations from the Japanese in this and other volumes are my own.

3. Hans Peter Liederbach notes in this regard that the text of *Fūdo* contains all of Watsuji's philosophical thinking *in nuce*, yet *fūdo* itself is an enigmatic phenomenon which always seems to escape conceptual clarification; its ontological status, as he observes, is notoriously unclear. See LIEDERBACH 2001, 160–1.

4. See MINE 2004, 66.

Second, to the extent that self and *fūdo* belong to one another, *fūdo* is not an “objective” region of nature onto which we would then project “subjective” meanings; rather, it is the always already meaningful setting of a geo-cultural climate in which subjective and objective elements form an indivisible unity. The form which this unity takes has significant implications for the contemporary image of a disenchanting nature. I refer here to the way in which, with the growth and development of the natural sciences, qualities and values were evacuated from nature in order to make it intelligible in purely mechanical and mathematical terms—a process that results in a flattening out of our experience of the world. I suggest that this reading of *fūdo*, by showing us what it would mean to restore the “weight” of things, holds out the promise of a partial re-enchantment of nature.

Finally, I conclude with a brief survey of the prospects and problems posed by the interpretation of *fūdo* that I have presented here. On the one side, the constitutive unity of the self with its *fūdo* has some novel and important implications for ethical life. On the other, this unity also poses the question of how transcendence, the distance and difference that makes possible freedom and individuation, can be convincingly accounted for if the self is so completely identified with its insertion into nature. I suggest possible strategies for coming to grips with this difficulty by working out more fully what is at times only implicit or too thinly drawn by Watsuji himself.

FŪDO AND THE PRE-OBJECTIVE BEING OF NATURE

Watsuji’s work on *fūdo* often suffers from readers who miss its wider philosophical significance; many of these see him as advancing an out-of-date and now discredited geographical determinism in which the values, characteristics, outlook, and so on of different peoples and cultures are to be accounted for in terms of the features of the geo-climactic zones in which they live. While this criticism seems to be at times at least partly merited thanks to Watsuji’s own somewhat

unfortunate formulations and examples, what has often been overlooked is the theoretical space which he opens up here in his attempt to grasp the continuity between a specific natural environment and a particular group of people. He rejects an analysis of this continuity in terms of subject-object dualism, so that the way in which human beings are linked to what surrounds them is not to be understood in terms of a group of subjects facing or confronting an environment which would be an object for them. Ultimately, Watsuji maintains, we are not considering the relation between humans groups and their environment as if these were separate entities set in relation to one another, but rather must “see the appearance of human groups in the environment itself.”⁵

This will mean that self and environment belong together as aspects of a single, unitary phenomenon. Watsuji hence begins from a vision of the deep unity of human beings with the space of nature which they inhabit, observing that: “it is only by adding predetermined abstractions to what is in fact a concrete scene or landscape (*keikan* 景觀) that we are able to extract a ‘nature’ which stands opposed to ‘human beings.’”⁶ This way of viewing nature is seen in the expression “natural environment,” a term which he rejects because of its dualist implications:

What is usually thought of as the “natural environment” (*shizen kankyō* 自然環境) is an objectification which has the specific character of a *fūdo* as it is lived or experienced (*fūdosei* 風土性) as its concrete foundation. To think in terms of the relation between an entity such as the natural environment and human life is already to objectify human life. Hence this standpoint considers the relations between two objects without any connection to the human existence of an acting subject (*shutai* 主体). (WTZ 8: 1)

In this passage a distinction is made between *fūdosei*, or the nature which environs us as we encounter it in lived experience, and “natural

5. WTZ II: 156.

6. WTZ II: 155.

environment,” or nature as it is objectified in the third person point of view. The claim that *fūdosei* is the “concrete foundation” of the natural environment is part of Watsuji’s broader contention that the natural sciences presuppose and depend on the world of lived experience, which always encircles and contains the scientific standpoint such that science can never get fully behind and encompass this domain.⁷ With this, Watsuji rejects the objectifying thought of dualism for a return to what in phenomenological terms can be called the pre-objective being of the lifeworld.

This domain is experienced in the first person point of view, a viewpoint, moreover, which cannot be objectified because it is an untranscendable ontological horizon before which all objects appear. Foregrounding the structure of pre-objective being in this way also enables us to clarify the relationship between *fūdo* and *fūdosei*. I suggest that each term be seen as a particular dimension of this ontological horizon. More specifically, *fūdo* can be understood as a realm of potentiality which is actualized as *fūdosei*. As such, a *fūdo* is characterized—most importantly—by intelligible properties (e.g., qualities and values such as the beautiful, the graceful, the ugly, the serene, the dangerous, the sublime, and so on) which depend on a subject to experience them. And although these subject-related properties, as qualitative and normative entities, elicit actions and attitudes, they are not any less real, i.e., an object of awareness brutally *there* to be experienced, because they belong to a *fūdo*, and hence constitute a part of the world to which we are sensitive.

In this regard it can be said that each *fūdo* possesses a nascent intelligibility which is completed in the experience of those who encounter it. This appears as and in the concrete character of a region of nature as lived through, or what Watsuji calls *fūdosei*. *Fūdosei*, then, is neither neither objective nor subjective, but arises as a co-production of human beings and the *fūdo* which they inhabit. Each of these interac-

7. WTZ II: 108.

tional domains represent local variants on the lifeworldly dimension of nature, a dimension whose robust ontological status is a consequence of the broader philosophical promotion of lived experience to an ultimate horizon.

The structure of this ontology of lived experience, moreover, is such that the “phenomena of *fūdo*” (*fūdoteki keishō* 風土的形象) must be understood as “the expression of the human existence of an acting subject” and not as the result of an “objective” natural environment.⁸

These claims are difficult to interpret, but an important clue can be found in Watsuji’s *Ethics as the Study of the Human* 『人間の学としての倫理学』, a brief one-volume precursor to the much larger *Rinrigaku*.⁹ Here he makes the striking yet little noticed claim that

what things are is determined by human action. There are things because they are had (*motsu* 有つ) by people, hence they depend on human existence... because human beings have the wind, there is the wind. Because human beings can have the wind as calmly felt, the wind is calm. Or again, it is just because people mark out the wind as wind in having it that the wind exists.”¹⁰ (W TZ 9: 148–149)

Contrary to appearances, Watsuji is not advocating some version of an idealist position; rather, despite his vigorous criticism of Heidegger, he explicitly lays out his approach and basic principles in terms of Heidegger’s phenomenology. I maintain, therefore, that we must understand the claim that things “depend” on human existence to be “what” they are in terms of Heidegger’s understanding of human being as the openness or disclosedness which allows things to appear *as* this or that.

8. See W TZ 8: 1.

9. W TZ 9: 1–192.

10. One exception to the lack of attention to this passage is MOCHIZUKI 2006.

FŪDO AND WORLD

Early in the first and most philosophically promising chapter of *Climate and Culture*, Watsuji picks up an important interpretive thread with regard to this complex and profound relationship between the way we exist and the way in which things come to be disclosed, only to let it go shortly afterwards without, as is more often the case than one would wish, rigorous or sustained development. This occurs in his reference to Heidegger's notion of "*ex-istere*" or the quality of Dasein's always already standing "outside" of itself, out "there" in the world.

Heidegger introduces this term to show that unlike entities such as boulders or flowers or even lizards, the self is not simply contained by and so reducible to its physical body. Neither is it a sealed consciousness, an entity whose contact with the world is mediated by mental representations. Instead, the self exceeds the immediate location and moment of the body and the purportedly subjective inner sphere it contains in two respects. First, as we shall see in more detail, the self "stands beyond" (*ek-sists*) itself *through* and *as* an openness which makes possible encounters with entities *as* something or other at all. Second, the self is outside of itself insofar as it finds itself thrown into an inherited past, which it takes up in a present world of concerns for the sake of future possibilities and projects.

Watsuji's claim is that these are not the only or even the primary ways in which the self "stands" outside of or beyond itself. To be a practical subject is first of all to stand out beyond oneself and "be among other "I"s."¹¹ As Watsuji explains, "interactional being-in-relation-to-others (*aidagara* 間柄)... is the original place of standing out (*ek-sistere*)."¹² This entails, in turn, that we "first of all clarify being-in-the-world as being-in-relation-to-others-in-interaction (*aidagara*). Before

11. See WTZ 8: 10.

12. WTZ 8, 18.

we are related to things, we are related to people.”¹³ Although *aidagara* is the ordinary Japanese word for the relations or relationships that occur between people, and while there is a certain ambiguity in Watsuji’s treatment of this concept, in his work *aidagara* functions above all as an ontological category, that is, it picks out a dimension of the being of the human being and is not reducible to the ontic relationships of factual life. This will mean that the self as “ek-sisting” not only opens onto and is continuous with a world, as Dasein is, but also that the self first and foremost opens onto and is continuous with other selves.

Moreover, interactional being-in-relation-to-others (*aidagara*) is a form of being outside of oneself which, like the other forms, is not an activity that one can choose or decline to undertake—as one’s mode of being it is the way in which one exists. In the same way that I am always already thrown open to the intelligibility of the world, and just as my life necessarily unfolds within the structure of the three-fold temporal *ecstasis*, I have to live this interactional being-in-relation-to-others, which is constitutive of who and what I am.

Watsuji also uses the term *ex-sistere* at the same time to describe the nondual continuity of the self with the space of nature which environs it. He thus extends the meaning of the term “*ex-sistere*” to refer both to the temporal transcendence of Dasein and its opening onto a world as well as to the nondual continuity of one self with another and of all of these with nature.

This expanded account of the forms of Dasein’s self-transcendence reveals that *fūdo* is neither a purely subjective nor purely objective phenomenon, because Dasein’s existence as “standing out” collapses the distinction between inner and outer. The example Watsuji adduces is the experience of being cold. On this view, the coldness of the air and my being cold are two aspects of the same, single, unitary nondual phenomenon rather than an interaction between two completely separate

13. WTZ 9: 162.

and distinct entities, viz., a subject who has an inner experience (coldness) of an external, objective phenomenon (the cold).

Watsuji's example evinces his recognition that Heidegger's breakthrough was in thinking anew *how* we exist. Dasein is not a pure consciousness, a subject fully enclosed on and shut up inside of itself. Because Dasein exists as "out there," beyond itself and in the world, such that it extends into a world which extends into it, experience is never purely internal or external, subjective or objective, but rather is always a single scene in which these dimensions are unified. Watsuji does not address the question, however, of what these claims entail for our understanding *fūdo* as a whole.

To show this, we must look more closely at the first meaning of *ex-istere* for Heidegger (which he also refers to as "Ek-sistence"). In the passage from *Being and Time* which Watsuji alludes to, Heidegger maintains that the human being

is in such a way as to be its there [sein Da zu sein]. To say that it is "illuminated" means that it is cleared in itself *as* being-in-the-world, not by another being, but in such a way that it *is* itself the clearing [Lichtung].... By its very nature, Dasein brings its there along with it... *Dasein is its disclosedness* [...] Dasein exists, and it alone. Thus existence is standing out, into and enduring, the openness of the there: Ek-sistence.¹⁴ (HEIDEGGER 2010, 129; 2006, 133)

Our "standing out" beyond a realm of inner subjectivity means that we are "there," present to, and so open for, the meanings offered to us by things. We are, in short, the openness which enables us to take *x as x*, so that things can show up meaningfully for us, that is, we are the disclosedness or clearing (*Lichtung*) which allows a thing to appear *as* something or other. As the clearing, Dasein is "there" in and through the affectivity, language, and practices which partly constitutes its opening onto the world. Moreover, we belong to these things just as we belong to a time, a culture, or a history, none of these "belongs" to

14. The last two sentences quoted follow the previous sentences in a footnote.

us in any personal sense; consequently, we do not choose them but rather are “thrown” through them into a concrete situation which is itself embedded in a larger cultural and historical world already given and made, a world in which things already have a meaning and count as significant as revealed by the language and practices of a society.

This means that instead of a subject facing an array of objects, there is only the givenness of an always already understood and situated event, an unfolding standpoint which both constitutes our opening onto the world and is not separable from it, which Heidegger calls *In-der-Welt-sein*, or “being-in-the-world.” Being-in-the-world is an expression which signifies that we inhabit the world in a way which both opens it up and discloses a self, namely, as active, affective, and linguistic agents. Our inhabiting the world in this manner both opens up a space which makes possible encounters with other entities and enables us to interpret ourselves.

On this view, there are no disinterested, presuppositionless viewpoints, since the world is the always already understood context within which entities can show up meaningfully as anything at all. Instead, there are only various, involved, participatory standpoints which are not separable from what is disclosed in them. What is disclosed is what “shows forth,” “shows itself,” or “becomes manifest” in relation to the practices, language and overall form of life which constitutes our standpoint.¹⁵ Returning to Watsuji’s claim that things depend on us to be “what” they are, this would mean that a thing is disclosed or appears “as” something or other through the language, practices, and affective possibilities of the world to which we belong.

Since there is no perspective-free viewpoint which would show us what things “really” are, what shows up or appears is just what those things are—and access to appearances is access to the things themselves. In this sense, we can understand what appears as a manifestation of the thing itself rather than as a “mere” appearance. The idea that we

15. See HEIDEGGER 2010, 25; 2006, 29.

must take the appearances seriously goes against the grain of centuries of philosophic and scientific thought and restores a certain fullness to being; it is a remarkable claim with very profound implications for our view of reality when we consider the sorts of things we find in the appearances, such as moral and aesthetic qualities and values.

From these results it can be seen that for Heidegger the subject-object framework is derived from, and parasitic on, a more primordial qualitative and value-laden phenomenon in which the self is continuous with an always already meaningful structure of lived experience which is disclosed (*erschlossen*) to it. Heidegger calls this system of meanings which coherently shapes our activities and gives an identity to the self a “world.” Thus insofar as *fūdo* is the lifeworldly dimension of nature which we both open up and belong to it can be understood as a dimension of “world,” one which Heidegger himself overlooked.¹⁶ Like other aspects of a world, *fūdo* is disclosed through our language, affectivity, and practices, and hence in this sense can be said to “depend” on us to be what it is. Conversely, the self also depends on what is disclosed as *fūdo*, i.e., on *fūdosei* (just as it depends on other aspects of what is disclosed as a world) to understand and interpret itself, and so to be any kind of self at all.¹⁷

FŪDO AS THE DISCLOSURE OF NATURE

But incorporating the notion of *fūdo* into Heidegger’s concept of world does not merely requires us to enlarge our sense of what a world is; it requires us expand significantly upon Heidegger’s own account of disclosure. According to Heidegger, the affectivity of Das-

16. In fact, Watsuji defines “world” in the first volume of *Rinrigaku* as the historical, climactic, and social structure of human existence. See WJTZ 10: 22.

17. Tsuda Masao points out that Watsuji can be said to have expanded Heidegger’s notion of attunement (*Befindlichkeit*) to include attunement to *fūdo*, so that this passive and receptive relation to the world as determinative for Dasein would, in various modes or forms, be another fundamental *existentiale* of Dasein. See TSUDA 1999, 91.

ein (*Befindlichkeit*), in conjunction with a background of actions and cultural objects which are connected to other actions and objects in a web of practices, discloses the intelligible entities and structures of a shared world. The intelligibility of the world thus disclosed, in turn, is discursively articulated in language. This account has led some interpreters and critics to view Heidegger as advocating a version of pragmatic or linguistic idealism, insofar as it is our affectivity, practices, and language which would in some sense “constitute” the world and the things in it. Yet not only does such a reading go against Heidegger’s own rejection of idealism, it returns us to the dualistic framework of subject and object which Heidegger had overcome and undermines the metaphysical significance of his recovery of the appearances.

If, on the other hand, we see *fūdōsei* as a dimension of what is disclosed in our openness to a world, we can understand ourselves as rooted in the specificity of a nature which transcends our perception in its otherness and its resistance, shaping and constraining what can be disclosed, since nature must already be given for it to be lived through and hence opened up and made manifest *as* something or other. And to the extent that consciousness is not simply co-extensive with the whole of nature, there is always something of nature which does not show itself, something which remains hidden or withdrawn. It is this elusiveness and refusal of nature which Heidegger tries to capture with the concept of *earth* in his essay “Origin of the Work of Art.” Yet that part of nature which does appear in experience is not simply a sheer, unmediated givenness; something can only appear as “some” thing insofar as it already possesses a certain sense or meaning which is then disclosed and articulated by affectivity, practices, and language. Hence the appearances, as grasped in these modes of apprehension, are always already mediated. Disclosure is thus neither merely the result of the positing activity of the subject, nor is it an annunciation of the object, a self-giving of the thing in its total and univocal meaning.¹⁸

18. For Heidegger, too, of course, there is no pure, immediate, or uninterpreted giv-

This view of disclosure as the expressive articulation and so completion of an intelligibility which resides in things is incipient but never fully realized in Heidegger's account. Yet we must interpret Heidegger's all-important notion of disclosure in this manner if we are to make sense of Watsuji's claims about the ontological significance of *fūdo*, and integrate this concept into the Heideggerian framework which he adopts in his overall philosophical approach.

With this newly revised understanding of disclosure, we can turn to examine more closely *what* is disclosed as *fūdo* and how this process unfolds. We should begin by noting that despite the givenness of nature and the nascent sense or intelligibility which belongs to it, this will not mean that we encounter nature wholly untouched. *Fūdo* includes "objective" features such as geography and climate, but the "trail of the human serpent is over all," to borrow an expression from James: Watsuji draws our attention to the damming of rivers, forests shaped through both the planting and harvesting of trees, the draining of marshes, the reclamation of coastal areas from the sea, the flourishing and spread of certain species of plants and animals through the development of crops and the domestication of animals, the creation of huge swathes pastureland for these animals, and so forth.¹⁹ This re-shaping and modification of the natural world by human activity makes possible certain practices (e.g., rice cultivation, river rafting) and undermines others (e.g., the gathering of medicinal herbs in a primeval forest). It also opens up new possibilities for what can come to be disclosed in a world (e.g., holy cows, dairy farms) and eliminates others (e.g., sacred waterfalls). It is *this* face which nature mostly shows us in the unveiling of its appearances through our modes of disclosure.

Notwithstanding all of this, in his treatment of *fūdo* Watsuji never explicitly relates *fūdo* to the Heideggerian notion of disclosure. He

en. See, for example, HEIDEGGER 2010, 158/2006, 163. But one would need to look to Gadamer for an understanding of disclosure that comes closest to this.

19. WTZ 11: 100–3.

comes very close to this idea at one point, agreeing with Gabriel Tarde that the awareness of natural phenomena does not arise from sensation, but that from the outset we always already perceive such phenomena through a certain interpretation given by our native language and the commonsense and scientific theories of the age in which we live, all of which function as prisms through which we perceive the world. But he does not elaborate on this, nor does he ever return to this promising idea; instead his aim in addressing this issue was to show an example of the way in which the contents of consciousness can be communal and shared.²⁰

Watsuji *does* speak about the content of this perception of *fūdo*, i.e., about *fūdosei*, which he describes as a holistic experience rife with qualities and values. So, for instance, meteorological phenomena are apprehended in relation to the soil, the topographic and scenic features and so on of a given land and are laden with meaning. We do not simply encounter the “wind” or the “heat”: “A cold wind may be experienced as a mountain gust or the strong, dry wind at winter’s end in the Kantō region. The spring breeze may be one which disperses cherry blossom petals or which gently caresses the waves of the ocean. So, too, the heat of summer may be the kind which makes full greenery wither, or which entices children to frolic in the sea.”²¹ Insofar as Watsuji stays close to the phenomena in describing precisely what and how we experience the *fūdo* which surrounds us, he is practicing good phenomenology. But we are now in a position to go further than this and assert that *fūdo* is a domain which, as with other aspects of a world, is disclosed to us through the affectivity, language, and practices which we find ourselves always already underway in. Yet this process of meditation does not entail that what is experienced within a particular *fūdo*, namely, *fūdosei*, is merely a cultural interpretation of, or the projection of meaning onto, a “bare” nature; a *fūdosei* just *is* what it *appears* to us

20. See WTZ 10: 78.

21. WTZ 11: 11.

to be, viz., an enviroing space of nature charged with significance and richly textured with qualities and values.

I suggest, then, that one of the most important consequence of Watsuji's work on *fūdo* is that it endows the appearances of nature with a kind of ontological dignity and returns us to a richer, pre-modern conception of experience.

FŪDO AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Linking *fūdo* to Heidegger's concept of world-disclosure in this way has profound consequences for how we view the appearances of nature; it also has important—and not unrelated—implications for how we understand ourselves. This connection can be seen in Heidegger's declaration early in *Being and Time* that Dasein is a self-disclosing which is at the same time the opening up of a world. Thus insofar as *fūdo* is a feature of world, it is disclosed by the self; at the same time, *fūdo* is also a place where the self is disclosed. It is this latter aspect of the “worldly” character of *fūdo* which Watsuji expresses in the claim that “we apprehend ourselves in *fūdo*.”²² This phenomenon is broader than Heidegger's notion of self-understanding, and, as we shall see, both encompasses and enriches it.

For Heidegger, self-understanding requires an understanding of the world through an attunement to the public, yet tacit, context of goods, commitments, and ideals which define a society. This is because who we are and can become will depend on our taking up and aspiring to the normative possibilities that are part of this background of

22. Watsuji uses several terms to refer to this phenomenon, the most frequent two being *jiko wo miidasu* 自己を見いだす and *jiko ryōkai* 自己了解. The former term is frequently translated as *self-discovery*, but this term suggests that something one has been unaware of suddenly or newly comes to consciousness. But self-understanding is always already there; even if only implicitly, I always understand myself and my possibilities and projects. These two expressions are also used interchangeably by Watsuji with: seeing oneself (己れを見る), self-disclosure (自己開示), and grasping oneself (自己把握). I have generally used the term *apprehend* to cover these meanings.

shared intelligibility. And doing this, in turn, is what enables us to act and give direction to our lives, to interpret, evaluate, and understand ourselves. While this type of self-understanding appears later and in an expanded form in Watsuji's analysis, he begins with a phenomenon that precedes and makes possible this highly determinate sense of self, namely, what he calls "self-apprehension" (*jiko wo miidasu* 自己を見いだす), or a basic mode of self-awareness.

Although self-apprehension is more "primordial" than reflection, Watsuji maintains that it is still mediated. One of the primary ways this kind of awareness is mediated is through *fūdo*. So, for instance, I can come to be aware of myself as being cold, or feeling wistful, or desiring to go on a picnic through the *fūdo* I am in. But this self-apprehension is not the awareness of the self as a subject (*shukan* 主観); it is a revelation of the self as simultaneously individual and as interactional being-in-relation-to-others (*aidagara* 間柄). It is my individual body that feels chilly, and my individual consciousness that is permeated by wistfulness, but the self never achieves a pure or complete and autonomous individuality; in my coldness I reach for warmer clothes that refer to and are made possible by a whole world of factories, stores, and styles. Or the chill prompts me to remind my children not to forget their gloves and hat as they depart for school. My wistful mood, too, is not idiosyncratic and singular, but belongs to and is made possible by a certain cultural vocabulary and is even at times imposed on me by a *fūdo* that others live in and share, something that can be seen in the exchange of small talk about the weather with the others with whom we come into contact. So the experience of a *fūdo* is simultaneously an experience of responses, desires, attitudes, meanings, and possibilities for action which relate both to the self as an individual and refer beyond this individuality to others, disclosing me to myself as a being which is an individual who always exists in relation to others.

This unavoidable relational contact with others individuates the self while simultaneously revealing its ineluctably social nature. One can distinguish oneself as an individual, for example, only by stand-

ing out from or differing from others. We become individuals above all for Watsuji in what he terms a *movement of negation*, in which we reject a wider social whole to which we belong, negating its supremacy over us. One comes into one's own, for example, in resisting or refusing the expectations or requirements of one's role in the family, or by rebelling against the confines of a religious or political tradition which one once belonged to.²³ To these points I would add that even those among us who seem to have attained an uncontested individuality in self-expression, such as writers or artists, must first be immersed in and draw from the common pool of the language, culture, and tradition to which we all belong in order to create something new.

In all of these ways, then, the self establishes itself as individual. But although Watsuji acknowledges the existence of the individual, the manner in which the individual exists is not, as in the Western paradigm, self-subsistent and absolutely independent. The self is individuated *only* in and through its contact and association with others and its initial participation in social wholes.

Social wholes, in turn, depend for their existence on the existence of individuals. They do not subsist or exist in themselves, as if each were a kind of entity possessing its own reality which could exist apart from the individual members which compose it. In order to exist, wholes need individuals to commit themselves to them; each individual must give up some part of their own will and join together to form a collective entity, overcoming their separate interests for the sake of the interests of the whole. A church, school, or company, for example, could not function and be what it is without this kind of commitment

23. Naoki Sakai has criticized this process of individuation as a rebellion or the guise of a rebellion "that is always launched in anticipation of a pre-arranged resolution: it is a moment of deviation, but it always assumes a return to normalcy." See SAKAI 1997: 88. But, as Sevilla has pointed out, the possibility of social change can be found in Watsuji's suggestion that the individual might leave one social body for another or even found an entirely new group herself; moreover, in the third volume of *Rinrigaku* the individual is understood as that element in the totality which shapes and even directs the totality as it unfolds in time. See SEVILLA 2014.

from the individuals who compose it. Every whole also requires real individuals to freely shape and change it, otherwise they would be dead rather than the dynamic and living wholes which they are; one thinks here, for instance, of the range of active civic, religious, or governmental institutions found in any fully functioning society.

Neither individuals nor wholes exist, then, as absolutely independent and self-subsistent realities; to use Watsuji's Buddhist influenced terminology, both are "empty" of this kind of intrinsic nature. Instead, each of these aspects of the being of the human being depends on the existence of the other, in nondual fashion, to be what they respectively are. Therefore, when Watsuji asserts that the human being is both individual and social, the terms "individual" and "social" do not name two different entities which exist in an absolutely independent way—as if he were simultaneously asserting the mutually exclusive claims of atomistic individualism and social organicism. Such individual and social modes of existence are abstractions from the dynamic and concrete reality of human being in the world.

The human being, then, never exists as an absolutely independent individual—this is not possible for it. Nor does it exist as nothing more than element of a larger social whole, which would itself somehow exist in a self-subsistent and absolute manner. Hence Watsuji maintains that the human person never completely attains to either pole of this duality. Rather than being purely and absolutely individual or social, then, the self exists in the continual movement between these two poles, different situations and times will find the self moving closer to, or further away from, the individual and social poles which structure human existence.²⁴ Beneath this continual cycling between the poles of individuality and totality, then, we find a resistance to the inertia of viewing one's identity wholly in terms of either of these dimensions of the self. Instead, the ethical aim is for this dynamic oscillation between

24. WTZ 10: 142–3.

individual and social dimensions to be directed by a sense of individuality which is open to our interconnectedness with others.

Watsuji thinks that this phenomenon is reflected in the etymology of the very Japanese word used to translate human being, *ningen* 人間. *Ningen* is composed of two characters, *nin* 人, meaning “person” or in certain contexts, “individual,” and *gen* 間, meaning an interval of space, a period of time, or a mode of relationship “between” things. This character can also be read as *aida* and appears in *aidagara* 間柄. According to Watsuji, *gen/aida* 間 points us to the social space or place in which the self is located. Unlike the word “human being,” *ningen* gives expression to both the single parts (individuals) and the social wholes (families, organizations, societies, and so on) which make up human life. For Watsuji, that this term can encompass both of these meanings shows us something about what human beings are, namely, beings which are individuated yet at the same time which exist as members of various social groups. As he puts it, we are both individual and social at the same time.

A decisive difference with Heidegger becomes apparent here: the self-apprehension of *ningen*, unlike the self-understanding of Dasein, reveals the dual or hybrid nature of the self as both individual and social. Watsuji’s primary criticism of Heidegger, which is itself not without controversy, is that the ontological core of Dasein is still an individuated center of action and experience. This means that the concept of Dasein still only grasps the human as the essentially individuated and individual being that is at the center of so much Western theorizing about the self.

Despite what he takes to be a very substantial difference in this regard, Watsuji develops his concept of self-apprehension by building on the essential unity between self-understanding and the understanding of a world that Heidegger had first discovered and elucidated. Thus self-apprehension may start with the individual self-awareness which emerges in the sensations, feelings, and responses to a *fūdo*, and expand to include a recognition of the self as a being which is always situated

in relation to others, but it does not end there. What began as a primordial form of self-awareness develops for Watsuji into the self's taking itself to "be" a certain way in something like self-understanding or self-interpretation.

Watsuji shares Heidegger's conception of this self-understanding as interwoven with and inseparable from an understanding of a world. This relationship comes out most clearly in Heidegger's discussion of the tools, equipment, and cultural objects we use in order to act. These objects are used in order to do something for the sake of someone; moreover, they always refer to other useful things and users. In effect, something like equipment can only be equipment insofar as it is part of a larger referential context. Equipment must belong to a whole totality of other equipment, materials out of which it is made, and people whom it serves for it to have the being that it has. This referential totality is a network which we use and relate to, all, finally, for the sake of interpreting ourselves. So, for example, I use a pen to write an essay in order to pass a licensing exam, I pass the licensing exam in order to obtain a teaching certificate, I obtain the teaching certificate in order to teach middle school, which allows me to understand and interpret myself as a school teacher.

According to Watsuji, what Heidegger seems to overlook is the ways in which the totality of equipment depends upon the natural setting that environs any group of people. The forms that cultural objects take and their purposes are intimately linked to available materials, weather conditions, local terrain, and the like: ski slopes, trawlers, *dishdashas* (robes), levees, pirogues (canoes), gold mines, and conical hats emerge from and are tied to specific places. These, in turn, are indispensable elements of certain kinds of roles and projects that enable me to interpret myself as e.g., a mining company president, a *dishdasha* tailor, or a shrimp fisherman.

Watsuji also extends the notion of self-understanding beyond defined roles and the projects they entail to include both the internal and external dimensions of one's whole way of being in the world.

Thus I come to see myself as someone who has certain tastes and preferences which are tied quite directly to a specific *fūdo*, such as a preference for bright colors or for raw fish or certain spices, or an aversion to extremely cold weather, someone with a certain sensibility and an imagination populated by one set of images rather than another.²⁵ Externally, the self is able to see itself in everything from leisure activities and customs to lifestyles and forms of food preparation. Who we understand ourselves to be is expressed in architectural styles, types of clothing, modes of agricultural cultivation, forms of art, styles of cuisine, forms of worship, and so forth; all of these things, in turn, are shaped and at times even determined by the *fūdo* of a particular land.

What these examples show is that *fūdo* is in an important way constitutive of the self; I identify with and understand myself through the coal mining industry I work in or the weekend white-water rafting trips I take, the *dishdasha* which I wear or the food I love that are themselves responses to—and in the case of practices, also ways of disclosing—specific *fūdo*.

FŪDO: PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS

This close identification of the self with the *fūdo* that environs it also has significant implications for contemporary concerns about the troubled relationship between human beings and nature. One of the major themes to emerge in response to this crisis is a rethinking of our place in the world such that we come to see ourselves as part of the wider community of nature. Yet the argument can be made that the concept of “nature” is too general for a lived and experiential sense of our continuity with the dynamic and concrete natural environment which surrounds us. Here I suggest we can look to Watsuji’s notion of the self as constituted by its immersion in a specific locale, which places nature in relation to the self at a level that

25. See W TZ II: 137.

allows us to see *how* the self is continuous with nature: my tastes and preferences, for certain foods, certain kinds of weather, certain colors, certain leisure activities, certain experiences, and so on that help make me who I am all arise from the *fūdo* in which I live. In this way my self is engulfed by and emerges as an expression of my *fūdo*; if I can come to see this clearly, I can perhaps more fully identify with and feel the imperative to care for the local natural environment in which I have my very being. To speak instead of a relation to nature as a whole can be a subtle way of distancing ourselves from it; it certainly can be difficult to see how I can care for or experience an ethical obligation toward something so vast and abstract.

Nevertheless, there are still some difficult issues which must be sorted out here. The continuity of the self with its world in Watsuji's thought tends to erase the rigid distinction between what is natural and what cultural or artificial (this is in fact one of the main theoretical points of deploying the concept of *fūdo*), such that it becomes difficult to criticize actions and the production of artifacts which damage the environment as "unnatural," since all human activity can be seen from this viewpoint as one part of nature acting on another.

Moreover, this sense of the self as embedded in and emerging from the depths of a particular region of nature which is found throughout Watsuji's writings leads him at times—notwithstanding his own insistence to the contrary—to give too much weight to the way in which a *fūdo* is determinative for the self. This becomes apparent, for example, in his dubious analysis of the manner in which various national characters are shaped and almost even created by particular geographical conditions.²⁶ Despite this, Watsuji views culture less as a product of geo-climactic conditions than as a creative response to them, and it is in this transformative reception of environmental conditions that he locates something like human freedom or transcendence. He observes

26. Much of the text of *Fūdo* after the first chapter is devoted to illustrating this point. See e.g., W TZ 8: 24–156.

in this regard that the various artifacts and practices of a culture ranging from, e.g., clothing styles to architecture to festivals, “are in their origin what we ourselves have produced in and through our own freedom. We have not, however, devised these things with no connection with climatic phenomena such as the cold, the heat, and the humidity. We see ourselves in climate, and, in this self-understanding, we encounter our own free self-formation (*Wareware jishin no jiyūnaru keisei* 我々自身の自由なる形成).”²⁷ Our freedom in relation to the *fūdo* in which we are embedded is found in our ability to shape our identity through the creation of artifacts and practices which both constitute and articulate a certain self-understanding. This capacity is not unlimited, however, since these creations are constrained by and expressive of the specific climatic conditions to which they are a response.

This account of *fūdo* does not seem quite capacious enough to accommodate both the much fuller forms of transcendence which are evident in the complex identities of immigrants, of those who have lived in multiple countries, of those who live in multiple milieus at the same time (say, for instance, a Turkish-Armenian immigrant in California, or a Syrian-Indian Christian working in Japan), of those who develop a very different character from their compatriots, and the idea that *fūdo* in a very important sense literally makes us who we are.

To make sense of such cases while retaining Watsuji’s basic insight about the unity of people with their *fūdo*, we need a subtler and more complex account of the ways in which the self is both constituted by and is also able to transcend its *fūdo*. Though we do not have space to construct such an account here, we can give an indication of some of the issues involved. We saw earlier that certain features of a particular *fūdo*, such its wide open spaces, or its location near the sea, its particular scents and colors and flavors and so on, subject me to a sense which sediments over time into a sense for or taste for something, i.e., into a sensibility, as well as helps to shape a particular perspective on and

27. W TZ 8: 12.

orientation towards the world. Hence Watsuji maintains that the land one grows up on and continues to live on affects one to the very bottom of one's existence. He observes that those who move away from a place for a long time lose the whole wondrous sense of, and absorption in, a particular *fūdo* in the same way that those who leave their land at a very young age lose their native language. This sense of place is something, however, which is only given over time. If you take a person out of a place early enough in life (such as in the case of international adoption), who one becomes (and can become) can change radically.²⁸ On the other hand, if I move to another *fūdo* far removed from my own later in life, I bring a particular sense for things derived from my time in this earlier milieu with me. Nevertheless, the very receptivity which made possible this process of sedimentation can be understood as that which also opens me up to the acquisition of new and different preferences and tastes acquired from living in another *fūdo*. This adds yet another layer of sedimentation to my sensibility and may even break up or transform and enrich earlier layers.

Another form of distance and difference between self and *fūdo* becomes apparent when we consider that the interwoven natural and cultural texture of any *fūdo* is so dense and fertile that that the receptivity or openness of the self to what is encountered requires a direction or tendency such that one feature rather than another of what surrounds us exerts a stronger influence on us, so that we come to identify with one aspect of the natural and cultural topography we find ourselves amidst rather than another. One person, for example, may identify more strongly with the sensibility of the Deep South of the United States (and hence come to understand themselves above all as a Southerner), whereas someone else might be far more shaped by a particular geographical landscape in the same region and the opportunities for certain leisure activities it affords, so that he comes to see himself first and foremost as a fisherman, for example. What seems to be decisive

28. See WTZ II: 103.

here is the way in which one thing rather than another strikes the imagination, prompting one to bring some circles of sense in one's environment closer to the self rather than others. Hence the strong identification with one aspect of one's milieu rather than another shows that the self is much more than the simple expression of its *fūdo*. This form of transcendence, I suggest, can profitably be investigated as an instance and actualization of what Watsuji elsewhere describes as the "individual" dimension of human beings.

All of these examples show the various ways in which the self is emplaced in and belongs to, yet is capable at some level of transcending, a wider order which constitutes it. *Fūdo* is hence the place and space of the self, but not of a self which would be "in" or "on" this *topos* as a cat on a mat or shoe in a box, as if each were an absolutely distinct entity which would then come into relation with the other. Rather, *fūdo* is a dimension of the basic space and place in and through which the self is able to be continuous with the world. Yet this continuity does not mean that the self is simply reducible to that which surrounds it; instead, this is a form of unity constituted by the very difference and distance between self and *fūdo*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It should now be evident that the multiple ways in which the self is shaped, and even constituted, by being embedded in a particular *fūdo* reveal it to be far larger and more open and interwoven with all that surrounds it than is usually thought; this is a philosophically challenging and fertile view, yet there are still questions and difficulties that remain. Foremost among these, as we have seen, is how transcendence, the distance and difference that makes possible freedom, can be convincingly and rigorously accounted for if the self is so completely identified with its insertion into the place and space of *fūdo*.

Beyond problems such as this, however, we can indicate some of the most important implications of uncovering the full ontological sig-

nificance of Watsuji's concept of *fūdo*. To begin with, not only does the reading of *fūdo* we have presented clarify Watsuji's claim to have completely broken with dualistic accounts of a self detached from, and facing, the world and its places and objects; in this interpretation of *fūdo* we also find the expression of a novel dimension of ontological nondualism. Broadly speaking, nondualism is a view about the *way* in which things exist. According to this view, careful observation of experience shows that it is not possible to clearly define the boundaries of individual entities in a such way that each thing could be grasped as what it is independently of anything else. This is because all things depend upon one another to be the particular things that they are, so that nothing exists in a self-subsistent manner. And insofar as everything only exists in relation to everything else, it composes a unified whole. Yet although all things have their being in one another in this way, they do not dissolve into an undifferentiated "oneness" in this whole; experience by its very nature is differentiated: things in the world are distinct while not existing in complete independence from one another. Hence the self, too, exists in this way; it depends on and is continuous with the places and spaces it finds itself in without simply being absorbed or swallowed up by them, as would be the case, for instance, if it were understood to be nothing more than an expression and function of the *fūdo* in which it is emplaced. *Fūdo* can thus be seen as a concrete and quotidian facet of the nondual whole. We should note that in this regard, Watsuji's rendition of nondualism can be extended beyond the frequently noted framework of a form of the metaphysics of dependent origination in which the self negates the social whole and the social whole negates the self.

Watsuji's close and concrete description of ordinary yet essential features of our nondual way of being in the world also allows his views to be related quite readily to the work of thinkers in the phenomenological tradition; moreover, there is little doubt that he has something singular and significant to contribute to the project of overcoming of dualism in this tradition. Here we find another ontol-

ogy in which consciousness and thing, self and world, intertwine and mutually determine one another. Heidegger, for instance, is concerned to show the way in which our practices, language, affectivity, and historicity determine both the mode of being of *Das-ein* as well as what appears or becomes manifest to it. Although in his later work Heidegger alludes to the ontological significance of place, he never really develops, as Watsuji does, an account of the way in which both other people and the specific locale we find ourselves in are constitutive of the self, even as both of these are also determined or shaped by the self. In looking beyond Japanese philosophy to the wider philosophical world in these ways, Watsuji's work expands and opens up our sense of what being-in-the-world, which has been a phenomenon of the greatest significance for contemporary phenomenology, and nondualism, which has been a concept of the first importance in East Asian philosophy, are and can be.

Watsuji's theory of *fūdo* thus offers a novel, wide-ranging, and complex view of how the self comes to be what it is—one which moves beyond the problematic modern understanding of human beings as individual subjectivities ontologically decoupled from the natural environment which surrounds them.²⁹ In this vision, we find instead that the self and its consciousness are rooted in a source far greater and more profound than the awareness of a single individual: not only are we immersed in, and emerge from, the depths of the historical and social world, our lives both shape, and flow from, the vast life of nature.

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29. For a brief but informative description of the geographical naturalism underlying modern ontological individualism, see BERQUE 2004, 386–7.

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