

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



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Fūdo 風土: From Ordinary Term to Philosophical Concept

One of the most important and least well-understood notions in Watsuji Tetsurō's philosophical *oeuvre* is the concept of *fūdo* 風土. The aim of this talk is to provide an explanatory overview of this concept, including a summary of its history and usage. This task is made more difficult by the complexity, richness, and philosophical novelty of this notion, on the one hand, and by Watsuji's own piecemeal, inconsistent, and ambiguously formulated presentation of it, on the other. These factors have led to an array of conflicting interpretations concerning the scope and nature of this concept. The difficulties of understanding have been further compounded by the widespread use of the word *climate* to translate *fūdo* into English, which is a misleading simplification that does not reflect the complex meaning that Watsuji attributed to this term. For this reason, I elect to leave this term untranslated.

The rest of this presentation adjudicates between conflicting interpretations of *fūdo* and shows how the semantic and philosophical dimensions of this term, as well as the cultural and historical background in which it is situated, come together for Watsuji in the coherent whole of a new philosophical concept—one which reveals the way in which the self and the natural environment belong together as aspects of a single, unitary phenomenon.

David W. Johnson received his Ph.D. in philosophy from The Pennsylvania State University. He has been a visiting researcher at the Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg (Germany), the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (Japan), the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Japan), and the Pompeu Fabra University (Spain). His book, *Watsuji on Nature: Japanese Philosophy in the Wake of Heidegger*, is forthcoming from Northwestern University Press in the summer of 2019.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. It is organized by Torsten Weber and Isaac Gagné. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration via <https://dij.tokyo/hihusg> or email (gagne@dijtokyo.org) is greatly appreciated.

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