

Abstract

The Milieu as Common Grounds for Global Environmental Ethics

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This doctoral dissertation develops the concept of milieu (*fūdo*) inspired by the Japanese Philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō and applies it in the fields of environmental ethics and global political philosophy. It aims at building a motivational framework that supports sustainable ways of life and that can be consensual in the global context of pluralism of worldviews. The concept of milieu captures how we act within and perceive our surrounding environment as covered by webs of meanings and values that are culturally, historically and geographically situated. It covers the external dimension of relational interdependence, the internal dimension of phenomenological experience, the temporal dimension of dynamic changes and the spatial dimension of global interconnection. Individuals are shaped by and shaping the milieus they are living in. Insofar as individual phenomenological agents contribute to shaping their milieu, they are morally responsible for the imprints left by their ways of life. Individual moral responsibility for environmental harm is thus rooted in the inseparable relation between individuals and their milieu, and directed towards sustainability. Further, if flourishing human life is concretely intertwined with meaningful adaptable and nurturing milieus, then these must be included in the definition of sustainability. Finally, as most environmental problems have a global scope that goes beyond situated milieus, the question of how to build common grounds in the context of pluralism of worldviews is addressed.

Keywords: *environmental ethics, common grounds, milieu, global ethics, vulnerability, fūdo, sustainability, individual moral responsibility, consensus, interventionism, globalization, transmission, decision-making.*

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