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Title	Chiastic Logic in Watsuji's Climatology
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Citation	メタフュシカ. 2002, 33, p. 1-23
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/66671
rights	
Note	

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Chiastic Logic in Watsuji's Climatology

Kah kyung Cho

Together with Kitaro Nishida who is the unquestioned standard bearer of modern Japan's philosophy, Tetsuro Watsuji contributed significantly to making the way of Japanese thinking known to the outside world. Watsuji's *Fūdo (Wind and Earth)* is his representative work in which he explores the unique sensitivity of Japanese people as they interact with their physico-cultural milieu.

Nishida abstracted from the phenomenal world as far as to uncover beneath it the topos (*basho*) of Nothingness. At this stage, mind is no longer separated from object. There is neither the interiority of the subject affected by the exterior influence, nor the objectivity constituted by the inner forms of intuition. Watsuji took apparently the opposite course in his search for concrete existence of man. To exist meant for him to stand into the specific geo-physically determinate space (*kūkan*). But because such space is always already thoroughly permeated by the language of felt awareness of man's being-there (*Dasein*), the mediation is complete between subject and object. Thus Nishida's conceptual abstraction and Watsuji's aesthetic intuition share in the final analysis the same premise: the primacy of the spaciality over temporality.

Hitherto, Watsuji has been better known for his work in the area of ethics and for his observations in art and art history. My main curiosity, however, was directed toward the logical aspect of his thought on space. This was stimulated in no small measure by the study which Augustin Berque has carried out amplifying Watsuji's climatological ruminations. What I met in Berque was still a Western logic that dominated through the ages from Aristotle to Descartes, but it was one embellishied and enriched by what Berque so graciously attributes to Watsuji's seminal mind.

A shorter version of this paper was originally presented in October 2001 at Kansai University. The occasion was the celebration of the 50th anniversary of its East-

West Cultural Institute, where I had the pleasure of meeting Professor Berque in person. I am very much indebted ro Professor Katsuhito Inowue not only for arranging this meeting, but also for his permission to print the fuller version of this paper in the journal *Metaphysica* of Osaka University. It is to be acknowleged here that at the invitation of Professor Gunshi Satomi I read a similar, though a somewhat more ethically focused paper on Watsuji in his seminar.

As a modem inquiry into the physico-cultural milieu of human being, climatology is a relatively young science. From its recent past, Alfred Biese (1856-1930) deserves to be remembered for his groundbreaking historical studies on the interactive relation between aesthetic feelings and physical environment.[1] But it is Watsuji Tetsuro (1889-1960) who looms larger in the background of climatological deliberations as we shift the focus from the historical to the philosophical. For it is he who initiated this particular form of space-oriented phenomenological inquiry, opening a significant "Eastern" perspective at the same time, and thus set the tone for a novel and "down to earth" self-understanding of man and his culture.

Watsuji's idea of a physico-cultural milieu was conceived in a gesture of challenging the monopoly of the temporality as the total horizon of inquiry into the ontological structure of man. To him, temporality by and in itself seemed to be too abstract and narrow. He was convinced that only the climatologically profiled "living space" could genetically and thus more effectively explain the historical nature of human existence. However, inspired as he was by vivid imagination in combining a wealth of perceptual data with meaning-endowing concepts, his research was hampered by the lack of a consistent methodology and disciplined reasoning. This is not to say that Watsuji depended exclusively on intuition and imagination. His sound instinct was to gain access to the "primordial" layer of the literally *weather-sheathed* "being-in-the-world" of man, shunning the conventional schematic division of subject-object. He made it clear that he was following the phenomenological and hermeneutic modes of description. But how consistently was he able to apply these methods?

The point of departure of such description is the decentralized subject which is no longer the detached consciousness as such, nor the sovereign reason lording

over the realm of nature as its scientifically controllable object domain. Rather, it is a "bodily" subject whose comportment to the world that envelops it has to be understood primarily in terms of reacting to and interacting with the elementary self-manifestation of nature. It is only appropriate to describe this state of man's being in the world as passively acted upon, as subliminally "attuned" (*gestimmt*). At this stage, man is not the self-transparent *Cogito sum* in active control of itself, Man's emotion, temperament and will are all permeated by the primary perceptions through which the world "announces itself' and in which man is involuntarily affected and awakened to "find himself' (*sich befinden*). Even the higher order constructs of the mind, such as language, art, culture and history, are eventually the outgrowth of this form of substantial *life*-and-*world* encounter. The primitive texture of life-worldly experience constitutes, progressively refined, the warp and woof of the higher-level conceptual tapestries called culture and science.

Watsuji was a thinker driven by his natural penchant toward the hidden origin and source of *intentional* meaning. The then dominant Hegelian type of conclusive rational system that seemingly found all the knowable truths and answers was suspect to him. He felt a strong sense of affinity with the unstable, ever forward pressing and questioning attitude of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and studied them years before they became popular figures of the twentieth century. The "origin" Watsuji searched has the dual aspect of being the first in time as well as being the closest in lived experience. Separately, the former becomes the task of hermeneutic interpretation of historical documents, the latter phenomenological problem of intuiting essences among experiential facts. But in Watsuji the historically interpreted and the intuitively exhibited meanings were often inseparable, as in the description of classical art works of Greek or Buddhist origin. It is only regrettable that the instruments of both phenomenology and hermeneutics available during his time were either as yet insufficiently fine-tuned for his task or they were underemployed by himself.

Thus a rather diffused conceptualization without firm methodical principles resulted in his being liable to the same kind of criticism to which the poetically imaginative mind of Herder was once subjected. Herder introduced, it may be recalled, in a conscious effort to counter the confining aprioristic, rational concepts of Kant's philosophical anthropology, the spatio-climatological dimension into the natural history

of mankind. He emphasized the role of human sensibility which is intimately tied with specific climatic conditions. But precisely this impressionistic approach had provided the occasion for Kant to criticize Herder's "hurry-scurry and widely roaming glance," and his "ever ready sagacity in spotting analogies" instead of "logical punctuality in determining the concepts, or the careful distinction and confirmation of principles."[2]

More to the point, there is a tendency in Watsuji to overplay the causal implications of climatological space. He does not hesitate to deduce from climatological determinants the existing ethnic diversity and plurality of moral orientation among nations. For instance, he says that it was *Nature's design* for a certain nation to have a climatic environment which "stimulates moral endeavor," while Nature gave another nation an environment "favorable for harmonizing duty and inclination." In the context in which Watsuji was making these contrasting remarks, (*Fūdo*, 376 f.)[3] the former is referring obviously to the nation that produced the rigoristic moral philosophy of Kant, and the latter may well be represented by Watsuji's own country whose climate may have attuned its people to seek reconciliation of moral differences. In either case, Watsuji operates on the assumption that nature is no longer just an object, but has metaphorically reversed its role into that of a subject.

This is a phenomenologically important insight into the *relational* structure of man who is not only cast into a place "in between" among fellow humans, but also situated "in the middle" of the world, i.e. surrounded by it, instead of facing or confronting it. Seen from the reverse angle, the world of nature is no longer the sum of all objects devoid of meaning in themselves, an "empty schema X." Rather than being ineluctably correlated to whatever intentional acts human consciousness chooses to perform and thus fill such emptiness, nature emerges as *milieu*, a living environment which organically interacts with human being. In this sense, living space and the Euclidian space are the extreme antipodes. As milieu, nature already is blended with culture. The most rudimentary form of such commerce begins at the level of mood (*Stimmung*) generated through climatic influence. But does this influence go really as far as Watsuji thinks it does? What is problematic is that, given his knowledge of Kant's aprioristic moral philosophy, Watsuji seems to underestimate the difficulty to reconcile the *rational will* with nature, especially

that part of nature which operates as inclination in human being. How could such a will that radically *transcends* nature in Kant's sense still be explained in terms of natural, i.e. climatological influence?

Surely Watsuji does not simply locate this transcendent will within the brute nature itself. He recognizes that nature understood as the origin of will is a culturally mediated concept. But even under that premise, the will totally shaped by nature and the will transcending nature are, with regard to the degree to which each of them is culturally mediated, quite asymmetrical. Much less can they be placed on the same scale as manifestations of nature's own "diversity." For the will to transcend nature pure and simple is the negation of this diversity. Watsuji's logical short-circuit can be prevented only if he takes the reversibility of "nature as object" into "nature as subject" as what it really is, namely, an analogy. As an analogy, nature elevated to the "subject" of climatology can by no means enjoy the same conceptual accountability and transparency as *Logos*, Reason or rational will, all of which have been accepted for their well fleshed out historical role as the subject in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and religion.

These concepts are *posited* as absolute, universally valid and unconditionally binding principles for all members of the real and possible community of rational beings. On the other hand, no such discursively reached unanimity in the power of something as great as *Reason* could be expected from a tradition in which man is defined as a part of nature. Here in Asia, what Max Weber called "demystification (*Entzauberung*) of the world" apparently did not keep pace with the wholesale reception of Western science. Speaking specifically of the Japanese culture, no matter how painstakingly the phenomena of nature may seem to have been subjected to esthetic differentiations, often with the aid of distinctly Western conceptual tools, Japanese poetry and letters continue to place a premium on the residual value of something ineffable or unsaid. In the area of morality, a similarly underdefined, vacuous buffer zone seems to exist in the name of human *nature*. It has the function of diverting or diffusing the harsh impact of the imperatives of rationalistic ethics. It is only with such a background in mind that one could speak, as Watsuji did, undoubtedly with some sense of elation, of "harmony between duty and inclination."[4] Thus what may be a conceptual impossibility in one culture, becomes a welcome pragmatic

virtue in another, even if it means bending the principle for the sake of "inter-human" accommodation or convenience.

The spatio-climatological determinism, toward which apparently Watsuji's position gravitates, can at most explain man's will to *conform* to nature. But it cannot explain the paradox of rational will turning against nature. This fact must inevitably have some consequences for the understanding of history. From Watsuji's climatological standpoint, only the kind of time proper to nature, namely, the circular and recurrent temporal pattern in history may be legitimized. Any universally progressive, eschatological sense of history to which nature is subordinated as a mere stage or "material cause", i.e. something to be *creatively* transformed by a nature-transcending will, remains a fortiori precluded. Yet the paradox is all the more striking when one notices that in modern Japan, and somewhat less conspicuously also in China and Korea, the ethos of progress predicated on technical exploitation of nature coexists with the traditional estheticism rooted deeply in religious feeling for nature. In order to displace the immanent teleology of nature, as happened for the most part in the Christianized West, a highly saturated historical consciousness, determined by the will to confer meaning to the seeming disarray of events in human history, had to come into being. Such meaning in history, often in the name of "revealed" divine will, is, after all, something *constructed* according to man's own purposive time plan and must be distinguished from nature's spontaneous "design."

Watsuji, of course, is critical of any attempt at privileging history which is disconnected from nature. For this reason, he would readily agree with those critics who suspect that Kant was using the "teleology of nature" as a mask for "the Providence or the Creator." (*Fūdo*, 376) If God should be behind the teleology of nature, asks Watsuji, then why did God need to create such diverse geographical regions, such a variety of climates and so many distinctly different people on earth? Wouldn't the creation of one or a few most optimal physical environments, and perhaps the selection of a most favorable type of human race, have better served the plan of God? But here again, Watsuji exposes himself to the charge that he is placing human being on the same level as landscape and climate. If it was God's creative genius to produce such diversity of geography and climate to which as many different ethnic characteristics correspond, then why shouldn't it be in his

power also to create a religion whose message can ring true universally *in spite of* all ethnic diversities and climatological differences? Ih other words, God would have preferred man to be free to choose the good, rather than conditioned by nature to be good. The origin of the Hebrew religion, for instance, may be initially correlated to certain characteristic features of "desert climate," but the subsequent spread of Christianity across the widest possible geographical regions may hardly be explainable in terms of climatological dynamics alone.

Thus it was not until Augustin Berque brought his mastery of qualification and analytical subtleties to bear upon climatological data that one could see what a methodically refined reasoning can do to render climatology absorbingly relevant, and at the same time to "resurrect" Watsuji's spirit before more discerning modern readers. The centerpiece of the methodological coup by which Berque gave a new, respectable meaning to the parole of *Fūdo* has several names, though none stands out as strikingly as the notion of *trajet.* It is defined as "corresponding to (both) subject and object"[5] in such a way that those two theoretical poles have to be "surpassed", i.e. their dualism dissolved into the "chiastic" process or "itineration". This means that subject and object have to be brought into a state of "incessant exchange." It is reminiscent of the description Hegel made on the dialectical movement of Spirit in his Preface to *Phenomenology of Mind.* But here the question of similarity is gratuitous, as the clearly intended contextual reference is to none other than the concept of *chiasm,* a term which Merleau-Ponty brought to such a wide currency, that it bears his own stamp throughout. As "pure exchange" between subject and object, it is to be differentiated from the dialectical "synthesis," into which Hegel[6] elevated and transformed the thetic and antithetic relationship between those two terms.

The words "Before" and "After" that appear juxtaposed in the title of our deliberations are meant to indicate this shift in methodology. As such, it does not simply chronicle the two periods in the popular reception of climatology in Japan: the first dating back to the time when Watsuji wrote his *Fūdo* (1935), and the second commencing with a new surge of interest in climatology signaled by the work of Berque (ca. 1980). Indeed there is a considerable temporal as well as topical hiatus between the two periods. Therefore, our focus is not so much on the different

standpoints of those two individual thinkers as on the process of the internal logic, especially with regard to the logical status of the *subject* in climatological thinking. From this point of view, the difference between the earlier and the later stages is not qualitative, but rather gradual, as a certain sense of continuity exists between them in terms of articulation and radicalization of the idea of subject. For with all the groping tentativeness that characterizes Watsuji's initial experiment, it is his major contribution to have caught a glimpse of the essentially *correlational* character between the climatic reality and the mores or the spiritual habitude of people.

Such a correlation belongs to a class of thinking which is entirely different from a mere causal pattern of thought. Let us assume the monsoon climate as A, and a volatile temperament of people as B. If we state that B was caused by A, then it is a simple climatological determinism, whereby the human subject remains as the merely static or receptive subject pole, to whom only "passivity" or at best "perseverance" in the face of dominant climatic conditions can be attributed. (*Fūdo*, 31 ff, 205 ff, 223) But if we say that "just as the change of seasons is sudden, so are also the temperaments of people shifting suddenly", a direct identification of A and B is avoided, and A as a "physical", climatic phenomenon is elevated to the position of a *subject* in a "metaphorical" sense. Here we have no longer a "deductive construction" from a single fixed substance, but an "inductive comparison" between two poles of activities, In the latter case, the "metaphorical relation between the climate and the temperament of people" is neither an arbitrary concurrence nor some kind of pre-arranged (metaphysical) parallelism, but "it is generated by various *interactions* that the culture has established between the two regions," (*FnN*, 62 f.) i.e. climate and temperament. For those two poles or regions are connected by way of a "reversal" (*ten-i*). And this reversal is made possible by the pervasive operation of language. This is where the hermeneutic element comes into play.

When, for example, Biese pointed out that the "*inborn* German feeling for nature" was "conditioned by climate and landscape," he was not describing a causal connection between two phenomena, but was in fact confirming the well known hermeneutical thesis that "being that can be understood is language."[7] He could not have said "inborn feeling," if it were the simple result of external causation by climate or landscape. For insofar as feeling is a form of "understanding" in a hermeneutical sense, Biese

knew that the felt awareness of the climate and landscape finds its appropriate expression in a *poetic* language. It is predominantly the langnage of "fairy tales," the germ of which is "a bit of purest poetry of nature - a genuine nature myth transferred to human affairs." Biese added that "the German medieval poetry, as a whole, epic and lyric, was interwoven with a hazy network of suggestive myth and legend."[8] But this proximity of the feeling-laden climatological language to myth does not mean an obfuscation of what otherwise could be more effectively dealt with in a rationally controlled thought process. The word "poetry" in Biese's phrase, "purest poetry of nature," must be taken in its primordial sense of "*poiesis.*" For at this interface, where man's immersion in nature's environment is immediate and complete, he is not at liberty to use the language with which he would *construct* reality in the manner of geometrical space by standing *outside* of it. Rather, as someone surrounded by an unfamiliar milieu, he must find the *first* word to poetically name it just as he *lives in it.* And it is the climate and landscape mediated by *this* language which Biese meant when he said, rather carelessly, that "the inborn German feeling for nature was conditioned by" climate and landscape.

In *Fūdo,* Watsuji begins his own methodological considerations with concrete "states of mind" drawn from everyday lived experience of climate. The language of such lived experience of four seasons (*kigo. kisetsugo*) is found not only in poetry and literature, but also in ordinary and *common* sense expressions, in greetings and friendly concerns about the others' well-being. Thus "feeling cold" is a phenomenon in which the structure of our immediate intentional experience is manifest. By *intentional* experience Watsuji means, quoting Heidegger's word "ex-sistere," that one stands already *outside* of oneself - in this case - in the cold. (*Fūdo,* 4 f.) My body actively touching the cold air and my passively being touched by it are one inseparable phenomenon, like the two sides of a coin. To say that we stand first by ourselves, opposite to the outside cold air, and then come into contact with the latter to experience the feeling of coldness, is an abstract construction. But more importantly, notice how "being outside" and "being in" something other than myself turns out to be - far from losing myself - a fundamental way of finding my very own state of being in the world. Conversely, climate is not something out there, occupying its own space independently of man. The milieu is what is constituted through the

interaction of man and climate, rather than being a preexisting empty space into which man and climate enter. Watsuji is quite clear about this *chiastic* exchange of the self with the other, and vice versa, when he says that "climatological phenomena are the ways in which humans understand themselves." (*Fūdo*, 13) The same intentional relation holds true if we magnify the situation in which man and cold air are intertwined and replace them by *culture* and *nature*.

It is this larger context in which Watsuji conceived his theory underlying *Fūdo* as a kind of "Archimedian" fulcrum with which the dynamics of human and cultural sciences are to be set in motion. As far as the search for the ground zero point of orientation goes, there was a similar attempt by Husserl, whose kinesthetic theory of "I move myself' was his answer to the question as to what constitutes the first step that "opens up" the world and its history. The major difference, however, is that Husserl thought of man's contact with the world still in terms of *active* self-control of the bodily subjectivity,[9] whereas Watsuji came much closer to employing the chiastic model of subject-object exchange within a specific milieu, as shown above in his description of the cold outdoor experience.

When Berque, speaking of this chiastic reversibility, remarks that "nature can be understood only through culture," (*FnN*, 155) this is especially true in the case of Japan, in the light of her people's high degree of sensibility for climate and landscape, nurtured by her rich tradition in arts and letters, religion and custom. But Berque's most philosophically penetrating observation on climatological chiasm is found in a comment he makes almost casually after describing the many subtle ways of nature's presence in modern cities: "Thus in Tokyo, like in other Japanese cities - although smaller in scale than in previous Edo - trees serve as an index of the immanence of *deities* in the residential quarters. The cleft in a superbly arranged cultural order - i.e. the city - is one left open toward nature. And as for nature, her opening is directed toward the highest of all cultural values, namely, the *holy* and *sacred*." (*ibid.* 325, free translation into English, italics mine)

If the holy and sacred is the extreme end at which nature, *mediated* by culture, comes to rest momentarily in her incessant itineration, it would seem an altogether futile exercise to determine which of these two members is still the true, albeit hidden, *subject*. Is it nature? Or is it culture? Who bears the greater burden in

maintaining the chiastic balance, especially when one keeps in mind the final goal, and the meaning, of its itinerary? Asking who the subject is, may be an old Western style question which the logic of chiasm would fain render obsolete. But when, in our modern world, both culture and nature seem to have moved so far away from what is sacred, and the absence of deities is a glaring reality in so many cityscapes, shouldn't it matter to ponder on the secret - on the *final cause*, so to speak - of the ancient chiastic movement of thought? Doesn't modern city planning, with its high-profile quota system for restoring the lost ecological balance, only compound the woe of covering up nature (*physis*) with more of the un-natural, man-made art (*technē*)? If ours is such a hopelessly subjectivistic age, wouldn't the reversal of this lopsided relation between nature as object and culture as subject hold the key to a possible redemption of the sacral value in this finite, secular setting of life on earth? And doesn't such a reversal mean, above all, that man's self-ordained centrality within the world *constructed* solely by him must now give way to the wisdom that what is held to be higher and '*founding*" is actually "*founded*' by what is below? The old name for that which lies underneath and serves as the foundation was - *subjectum.* It is an irony of a distinctively chiastic sort, that in reverse proportion to the ascent of man's subjectivity, nature treated as a mere *object* had sunk so low to the bottom that it should now begin to reveal itself as true *subjectum.* Only in this manner may we possibly make sense of the ecological crisis that arose in our modern time and has begun to stir dormant feelings for the sacredness of the earth again.

But in Watsuji's *Fūdo,* Berque immediately recognized *nature* as this underlying, i.e. founding, principle. He calls it "the enduring revelatory significance" of Watsuji's work to have shown that the Japanese culture - itself the prima facie subject - "let nature, namely, Japan's own environment, emerge as (the true) subject within the culture itself as the (quasi) subject," (*FnN,* 67, words in parentheses mine) Berque's praise of *Fūdo* in this Hegelesque description, however, does not come cheaply, as his repeated charges of its "determinism" indicate. He is especially critical of the fact that even while Watsuji and others have, for the most part, avoided the conventional "logic of subject" (*shutai-no ronri*) with good instinct, they could not "define the other logic that replaces the logic of subject." (*ibid.* 356 f.) There is a *polite*

ambiguity in Berque's hint that this failure may be "perhaps due to the fact that they (Watsuji and others) were not sufficiently clear about the limits of the logic of subject." On the other hand, Berque knew also that traditional Western logic falters[10] as soon as it confronts the peculiar, "illogical" twists and turns of the way Japanese think.

We say "polite" because Berque seems to be singling out neither the Western nor the Japanese tradition of "logic" as lacking in itself. In fact, he does not stop in front of the "illoglcal" even with regard to the typical Japanese architecture since the Middle Age, where an obvious asymmety or inconsistency dominates. Berque would go a great length to justify it, and ferret out an intricate internal logic unique to the situation. He argues, using some architectural and horticultural specimen, that the absence of symmetry and blockage of the overview of the scenery from a single standpoint - so contrary to the spirit of Cartesian rationalism - are intended precisely and carried out by design. (*ibid.* 1 97 ff.) Eventually this has to do with the Japanese mentality of separating and shielding the inner from the outer space, and guarding the concept of *place* (*basho*) with a greater jealousy than an Aristotelian logician would protect the category of substance.

Next we must also note an "ambiguity" in Berque's politeness toward the Japanese sensitivity. For, in the final analysis, it is not likely that Berque would compromise the universality claim of the traditional Occidental *Logos* and the standard of discourse set by Cartesian rationality. When he reserves for himself, at the end of his otherwise extremely thoughtful and balanced work, the right to scathingly criticize the pretension on the part of Japanese scholars to claim a higher authority for "place", "*fūdo*", "*kami*", "*tenno*" etc. than for *Logos*, (*FnN*, 361 f.) we must admit that it is certainly his hard earned right to do so. Compared with Karel van Wolferen's famous study on Japan[11] which was polemical in tenor throughout, Berque's approach has the distinction of having penetrated deeper into the Japanese psyche and held to it a mirror with a finer self-adjusting dioptrics than the Japanese themselves were able to do.

But the real issue is not about the tone of the critique, whether it be polite or polemical. It is about logic, and about where Berque stands with his heart when he is apparently pleading on behalf of the logic of chiasm. Since he spoke so openly for

the need of the Japanese to find a different kind of logic to replace the ineffectual logic of the subject, one would expect him to lead his way through the labyrinth of a non-Aristotelian logic so the world could understand the Japanese mind better. That, in fact, is what he has done admirably, much to the satisfaction of many a self-conscious Japanese reader. This satisfaction is derived from the knowledge that by and large the chiastic logic helped to articulate and confirm what Nishida, Watsuji and other representative scholars have carved out as essentially indigenous Japanese thought, and one that is presentable to the world's main stage of philosophy. What we need to be quite clear about, however, is the status of the chiastic logic *beyond and above* its obviously indispensable role within the problematics of *Fūdo* and related topics in the Japanese tradition. The truth of the matter is, though, that the chiastic logic has its salient place not only in Japanese esthetics. It thrives right next to Aristotle, within the Western tradition of metaphysics, much more so than perhaps Berque is aware of it .

Even before Berque gave currency to his cue word "trajectivity," scholars (Piaget, Durand, Deleuze, Guattari et. al.) from wide-ranging fields - anthropology, sociology, ecology, psychology and esthetics - have been drawn to this conceptual apparatus in order to capture the essence of *living* and *lived* experience amid the fluid phenomenon of life. But assuming that no one else joined the chorus for this new formula of the philosophy of *life*, Merleau-Ponty still would have given enough verve to this chiastic cadence to establish a school of his own. His *Phenomenology of Perception* has already attained something of a classical status in this regard. Indisputably, then, the logic of chiasm has become a part of the living stream of thought in modern Western philosophy. Not only that, Merleau-Ponty went a step further in denouncing the "presumption of absolute consciousness" and declared that "the disclosure of *this world*, of *the Being*, remains a dead letter as long as we do not uproot objective philosophy."[12] The apposition of "this world" and "Being" indicates a significant link between Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the living body (flesh), in which is anchored ultimately his chiastic logic, and the broader phenomenological problem of Husserl's "Life World" as well as Heidegger's ontological quest of Being. But before we pursue this point further, let us cast a brief glance at the problem that specifically concerns Asian philosophers.

Knowing that such a revolt against the traditional Western logic is coming from contemporary Western philosophy itself, we, philosophers in Asia, are bound to feel the increased pressure on *us* to react to this significant development. More than anybody else, however, it is Japanese scholars who happen to be in the front row to show a response one way or the other. It is because man like Augustin Berque stood proxy for the Japanese with a voice of *conscience* which they can ill afford to ignore. Here, "*conscience*" is meant as a distinctively French word with its inseparable cognitive and moral implications. One might wish to stress the moral dimension even more, extending it toward reflectively "sharing" an intimate knowledge, such as when one remains a "quiet witness" (*der stille Mitwisser*) to one's authentic self (Kierkegaard). In addition to being clearly audible to both sides of the conventional East-West cultural divide, Berque's voice valorizes the esthetic-ethical paradigms of traditional Japanese culture with such a love that the question of its origin, whether it comes from one's own or alien heart, becomes nearly irrelevant.

But the cold fact of the matter is that there are, on the one hand, those who are still fully devoted to their age-honored way of thinking and therefore need little encouragement to rejecting the universal validity claim of *Logos*. To them, as Berque has pointed out, (*KnN*, 245) there is only the "inner" and the "outer" viewpoint, and nothing in between. And the inner position has always the ultimate say. They are glad that Watsuji's logic of *Fūdo* and his ethics provide a much needed, if not perfect, alternative to the overbearing Western faith in Reason. For better or for worse, Berque's critique would have little impact on their complacent frame of mind.

On the other hand, the attitude of many other Japanese who specialize in Western philosophy is much less self-centered. They may have felt hitherto that the traditional Eastern thought belonged merely to a secondary "area study" program. And even after Berque has shown what *logical* depth structure can be salvaged from their own traditional thought, few of them may now be willing to admit that establishing a productive connection between Eastern and Western tradition is their proper philosophical task. They would certainly welcome the powerful voices uttered against the universality claim of Reason by Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. But it is unlikely that they would on that ground call into question the validity of what has been the backbone of Western philosophy for the past two millennia.

For them it is only proper to situate the problem of non-Aristotelian logic in a more global perspective. This means that even if they admit the significance of chiastic logic, they would not regard it as primarily rooted in, or represented by, the Eastern culture as explored in recent climatological studies. Their usual way of locating it contextually would be to point their finger at the now familiar caption: "Primacy of Perception." Just as this Merlau-Pontyan topic can forgo in its bibliographical index any reference to climatology, so can a chapter on chiastic logic be written in a phenomenological journal or lexicon in Japan without reference to Watsuji or Berque at all.[13] In the eyes of a Japanese specializing in Western philosophy, the "global" perspective is still very much dominated by the topics that *he* selects from current researches of Western scholars, and this often ignores what Western scholars have done on Asian philosophy. The philosophical professionalism in Asian nations to this day still thinks it honorable to leave the cultural divide between East and West intact.

This is understandable if a Western scholar without knowledge of Asian language and cultural background abstains as a rule from amateurish excursions into such alien territory. But what about ourselves? Aren't we so afraid of crossing the border that we, having crossed it once long ago, really don't want to risk it twice, even if that means choosing a return route to come home? After more than a century of selfless and self-forgotten immersion in the Western philosophy, has Asia ever produced an expert on Aristotle or Descartes, an expert who could supplement the *Organon* by a logic of chiasm, an expert who could upstage the *Discourse on Method* by formulating non-mechanistic and non-Egocentric rules and regulations of thinking? Ironically, this is not even a chauvinistic appeal, because the work of Western scholars like Berque has largely obviated such an appeal. In fact a respectable Asian counterpart of Berque is hardly needed, because, as has been mentioned above, radical critique and reversal of established theory always came from within the Western philosophy itself.

Now in spite of this contribution to the logic of *Fūdo* which has ingratiated itself to the Japanese mind, our studied assumption regarding Berque's own mind is that for him the reign of *Logos* is by no means diminished by his *tour de force*. *Logos* is a sovereign territory within which, as an enclave, the logic of chiasm may coexist.

The two logics are not mutually exclusive. The chiastic logic is an extension of the traditional logic by other means, such as the genetic, instead of the static, phenomenological description, or after the manner of an organic, instead of a mechanical model of cosmological explanation, etc. These other means are employed to supplement, not to supplant the existing logical system. Or perhaps it is fairer to say that even within the chiastic system, subject and object do not really disappear completely. While they may, in their incessant "itinerant" flux, refuse to be pinned down, they can be subordinated to the category of *relation*, which then functions as if it were the subject, but of a dialectical nature, by splitting itself into its opposite, the "object-pole," and mediating it with itself as the "subject-pole." Berque's concept "trajet" (*tsūtai*) addresses exactly this fluid, itinerant relationship between subject and object. It has already been pointed out how this movement bears resemblance to that of Hegel's Absolute Spirit.

As it happens, with his sweeping claim that the traditional *subject*-centered paradigm of logic must be reversed, Merleau-Ponty stood during his lifetime much closer to another contemporary philosopher than the world had suspected. His appeal to reverse the traditional logic was, by no means coincidentally,[14] inspired by the same concern that drove Heidegger to his critique of the Occidental logic. Both saw the need to let the *object* - the "things" rather than the subject or the representation (idea) of things - come *alive* and fully come to its own. The major difference was that Heidegger was more historically engaged and attempted his task of reversal simultaneously by evoking the ethos of heroic struggle[15] of ancient Greeks to tame Being - also known as *Physis*. In the process, he became a modern fellow traveler of Merleau-Ponty and a prime co-witness of the logic of reversibility in which the subjectivity, the tamer, had to become the tamed in the end.

In an article entitled "XIASMA: Merleau-Ponty und Heidegger,"[16] Rudolf Boehm discussed the fascinating topic that Merleau-Ponty chose the word "chiasm" as a "key to understand and to take issue with Heidegger." Merleau-Ponty's final answer was summed up in the following quotation from his work *Le visible et I 'invisible* (223): "Le monde perceptif 'amorphe' . . . , ce monde perceptif est au fond l'Etre au sens de Heidegger . . . ." This is a bold statement that can raise many eyebrows. If there is a discussion of the "life-worldly" mode of experience by Heidegger that

comes anywhere near Merleau-Ponty's sense of "perception", that may be the description of the "state of mind" (*Stimmung*) in *Being and Time*. But even here, the seemingly mundane "care" in its average everydayness is fraught with speculative import peculiar to Heidegger's quest of Being which, as "*transcendens* pure and simple," can hardly be brought down to the level of Merleau-Ponty's perceptual world. In a purely schematic sense, though, when "chiasm" is used as the keyword, there is an undeniable affinity between those two thinkers. Consider Heidegger's frequent reversal of the genitival (possessive) relationship, such as between Dasein and Sein, Thought and Being, man and language, man and technology, etc. It is difficult to decide who is a more chiastically engaged philosopher between him and Merleau-Ponty.

But the most significant lesson that comes out of Boehm's study is that, of the two relata, Thought and Being, for example, one that is founded (Thought) can never exhaust in its exchange relationship the meaning of that which "founds" it (Being). This may seem to suggest that, when translated into the relationship between *culture* and *nature*, nature asserts itself eventually as the "absolute subject", the consequence of which will be the disintegration of the chiastic balance. However, as long as the "founding" nature (as the subject) must depend on the "founded" culture for its own communication, the asserted primacy is negated (*aufgehoben*). Hegel's "Master and Slave Logic" comes instantly to our mind. Thus the ambiguity, or the "equivocation" of the exchange relationship simply persists as the very essence of Xiasma - it is *not* to be surpassed.

All this reminder of the self-criticism of *Logos* as part of the internal development of the Western philosophy brings us back to the simple question of logical status of the subject, as it was raised earlier by Watsuji, and after him more explicitly by Berque. But it is a high-stake issue concerning whether philosophy in our new century can evolve beyond the traditional cultural divide of East and West. At this divide, the status of *Logos* is now called into question from both sides, and the concept of chiastic logic stands as the focal point of attention. Watsuji and Berque are important participants in a trial case of this underlying logic of climatology as a human science. Berque is a Western scholar who worked himself into the heart of Japanese culture. As a net result, he has brought a heightened awareness to the

self-understanding of the Japanese, but the limit dictated by the low threshold of awareness of the Japanese with regard to the larger horizon of *Asian culture* had to remain Berque's limit also.

In a sense it was a good fortune that Berque could set himself to a well defined task of using the island nation of Japan as a model for his climatological studies. Her geographical isolation from the Asian continent, the concentration of her ethnically homogeneous population in a relatively confined space and the autochthonous development of Sino-Japanese culture over a lengthy period of time, all guaranteed an ideal description of Japan's culture in a nearly one to one correlation with climatological factors. By contrast, it would be extremely difficult to chisel an ethnically distinct profile of Benelux, French or German culture out of the largely identical climatological conditions of Western Europe. Therefore, Berque only very rarely strayed into an adjacent territory such as China which, even though lumped together with Japan and even India to the same monsoon climate by Watsuji, displayed vastly different physical characteristics and corresponding ethnographic features.

At this point, we cannot help imagining ourselves asking Monsieur Berque the *geographer* whether he could have engaged himself with as much gusto in a milieu so vast and seemingly devoid of "content" as the Chinese. The descriptions "vacuous vastness" and "absence of contents" were in fact the two recurring attributes Watsuji applied to China in his work. (*Fūdo*, 202 ff.) On the other hand, Watsuji prided himself on the Japanese attribute of delicacy and refinement. (*kime-no komakasa*, ibid. 214 ff.) Although this commonly recognized attention to finer details in thought and work retains its validity as a major positive feature of the Japanese style of life, it is an oversimplification to put the Chinese mind on the opposite end of the scale for being "vacuous" and "lacking in content." For one could make a positive use of this same negative attribute and turn it against Watsuji and say that his own descriptive technique applied on China was rather lacking in imagination and empathy. For one thing, wasn't Watsuji himself full of praise for the Chinese capability to be as fine and as particular about details as the Japanese, if not more so, and cited examples of jewel boxes, scroll paintings and sculptures during Han and Tang dynasty? (*ibid.* 214 f.) And yet his description of Chinese character and temperament was so

thoroughly negative as to make us suspect that he was overwhelmingly under the influence of the physical landscape of China, neglecting to see behind it the illustrious cultural accomplishments in religion, philosophy, art, poetry and folklores. After all, climatology is not about the raw nature, but about milieu, in which nature must emerge as blended with culture.

The "vacuity" and "emptiness of content" were quite consciously seized upon as the medium of equalizer for the lacking details in Chinese art and literature. The Taoist masters, according to Wing-Tsit Chan, "knew how to use the empty space as a constructive element in the Chinese landscape painting. . . . . Similarly, much was left unsaid in Chinese poetry, so as to enable the reader to play a creative role in bringing the poetic movement of thought to fruition."[17] Watsuji stood, bleak at heart and dizzy-eyed, along the vast and "empty" Yangtse River and forgot to recite even a single Chinese poem to enliven the land- and riverscape of this neighboring country to whose brilliant civilization he said he owed so much in the past. Didn't Berque himself evoke, on the other hand, a formidable battery of medieval and modern Japanese poesy to make a drop of rain, a flake of cherry petal, a pale crescent moon, teem with emotions and assume almost a human face? After all, what subtleties of observation and astuteness of conceptual analysis were concerned, didn't Berque outdo the Japanese on their own ground, in their own climate?

This is the reason why we were, though only in our passing fancy, tempted to enlist the competence of Berque's caliber in drawing wider regions of Asia into climatological comparatistics. For certain linguistic and logical characteristics such as the absence or abatement of the subject, and substitution of the "ambient" causality for the "linear" causality, a non-linear temporality etc., are common to Asian culture as a whole. Nevertheless, more of the symmetrical and correlational structure and hence more of the "Cartesian" sense of rationality dominated also in Chinese way of thinking, in their cosmology and philosophy of nature, than was the case with the Japanese thought. Speaking of the logic of chiasm, such a reversal through cultural penetration into what appears to be a mere given physical datum has been a discernible pattern in much of the Taoist literature as well. Thus a climatological handbook on China has yet to be written, if we are to fully take into account, for example, the theory of "*Feng-shi*" (wind and water) which is unique to

China and Korea.

In spite of so many negative things Watsuji had to say about China due to his short-circuit, deterministic inferences, he was still a tall Asian thinker who devoted to China a serious chapter of no less than twenty four pages (*Fūdo*, 199-222) under the title: "Special Form of Monsoon Type Climate." He also showed a genuine concem about the sadly declining fate of China during his time. Recalling that from this proud *Middle Kingdom* Japan inherted a splendid civilization which Japan "adored and strove to assimilate without reservation for over a thousand years until the Meiji Restoration," Watsuji concluded his chapter with a passionate appeal: "China must be revived. She must restore the grandeur of her culture like the one during the Han and Tang Dynasty. For the sake of world's new cultural progress, China's renaissance is indispensable." (*ibid.* 222) Then he lashed out at the corrupt Chinese military cliques as "the enemy of the Chinese people" for stubbornly holding on to a policy that threatened to turn China into an utter colony of foreign powers.

This was 1929, when Watsuji was forty years old. We know all too well what has happened to China since then. But how many of today's philosophers living in Japan share the similar heart-felt concern of Watssuji's even though under quite different circumstances? Should not we Asians wish that China return with all her old cultural glory as a modem nation? Watsuji was perhaps brutally honest when he urged the Chinese to take the lesson from Japan, even as Japan assimilated Chinese culture and "improved it considerably by *refining* it." What he all too obviously implied was that Japan, after having learned from China all that can be learned, had to look past China, past Asia, in order to play her bigger role in a global setting. Therefore China must take care of herself. But Watsuji was mistaken if he believed that the task of restoration of such a magnitude could be left in the hands of the Chinese people alone. China is the fountainhead of the entire Asian civilization, and its still unexhausted value is symbolically demonstrated by the successive waves of recent archeological excavations which revealed surprising details and many unsolved anthropological and archaeological questions. (e.g. Qin Shi Huang Di's tomb in Xian)

If all the sciences and arts of ancient Greece were not fostered and kept up continuously by so many nations of Europe throughout the ages, we would not have

become beneficiaries of human achievements that transcend national boundaries. To regard China just as another nation to be left to her own makeshift is an attitude unbefitting a member of the community of nations in Asia who owe so much to that great nation. But it is not just a matter of repaying the past debt. It has to do with preserving and upgrading the living spirit of humanity of which we partake. There is much yet to be repaired, much to be researched, and still much more to be refined about old China's legacy. Watsuji's motto of cultural refinement was executed in a *cross-culturally* updated form through the work of Augustin Berque - *nota bene* with Japan as the study case, as if she needed more subtle refinement! Nothing less than such a total loving devotion across the borders should be our guiding spirit for today's East-West cultural researches.

1 A. Biese. *Entwicklung des Naturgefühls bei den Griechen und Römern.* 2 Bde. Lipsius & Tischner 1882/84; derseibe, Entwicklung des Naturgefahls im Mittelalter und der Ncuzeit. Veit 1888.

2 Kant, "Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit von Joh. Gottfr. Herder," in *Kant's Schriften* (Akademieausgabe) Bd. 8. S. 45 . Watsuji himself quoted this remark of Kant in his work, *Fūdo*, Tokyo 1935, p. 473 f.

3 Watsuji Tetsuro, *Fūdo, Ningengakuteki Kōsatsu*, Tokyo 1935.

4 Compare Augustin Berque's following remark on this point (free translation): "As has been said often, it is evident that the Japanese refuse to unequivocally or decisively judge and condemn others. They have a high degree of sensibility for human frailty." Interestingly though, Berque adds the qualifying note: 'But this generosity applies only within a certain publicly admissible context." A. Berque. *Kūkan-no Nihon Bunka* (Japanese translation of *Vivre l'espace au Japon*), Tokyo 1994, p. 271 .

5 "Trajet" and "trajectivite" are rendered as "tsūtai' and "tsūtaisei" in Japanese. For a detailed analysis of these concepts see Augustn Berque, Fudo-no Nihon (abbrev. *FnN*), Tokyo 1992, pp. 181-191.

6 Hegel compares the movement of Spirit to the "Bacchanalian revel . . . . which is just as much transparent and simple repose." *Phenomenology of Spirilt*, transl. by A.V. Miller, Oxford 1977, pp. 27 f.

7 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Revised Edition, New York 1997, XXXXIV.

8 A. Biese, *The Development of the Feeling of Nature in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, New York 1905, p. 28 f. Biese quotes here (24) a passage from Vischer's *Aesthetik* that "German feeling was early influenced by the different forms of plant life around it. Rigid pine, delicate birch, stalwart oak, each had its effect, etc. " It should be noted, however, that those plants could exercise such an influence only because they were described and sung in poetry, and thus conditioned the folk soul to be receptive to such linguistically mediated plant qualities.

Biese states this uumistakably in his Preface (V): "I hold that literature, especially poetry, as the most intimate medium of a nation's feelings, is the chief source of information in an inquiry which may form a contribution, not only to the history of taste, but also to the comparative history of literature."

9 For Cho's critique on this view of Husserl, Cf. *Bewusstsein und Natursein*, Freiburg 1987, p. 251.

10 *Kūkan-no Nihonbunka*, transl. of Augustin Berque, *Vivre l'espace au Japon* by Miyahara Makoto, Tokyo 1994, p. 48 f. (quoted as *KnN.*)

11 Karel van Wolferen, *Nihon Kenryoku Kōzō-no Nazo* (*The Enigma of Japanese Power*, Japanese translation) Tokyo 1994

12 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, English trans. by A. Lingis, Evanston 1968, 193. Italics mine.

13 See for example the entry "chiasme" in *Genshōgaku Jiten*, Tokyo (Kōbundo) 1994, pp. 81, 251. Cf. also the entry on "A. Berque," p. 403.

14 Both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger were drawn to painting, e.g. to Cézanne.

15 Our own age is marked by the ubiquity of artificially constructed reality which bears the stamp of being arranged according to man's "subjective perception." Heidegger named such an artificially structured reality "World Picture." In a lecture dating back to 1938, but was published in 1950 under the title "The Age of World Picture" (Die Zeit des Weltbildes), Heidegger reminds us that a very different relationship to reality was the order of the day for the Greeks during the early stages of their world experience. Of this Greek view, he gave the following, at first somewhat puzzling description: "An entity does not become an entity just because man looks at it in the sense of representation (Vorstellen), as a kind of subjective perception. Rather, man is himself being looked at by the entity; he is called upon by the self-disclosing entity so as to tarry with, and respond to, the entity." (Free translation from the original): "Das Seiende wird nicht seiend dadurch, dass erst der Mensch es anschaut im Sinne gar des Vorstellens von der Art der subjektiven Perception. Vielmehr ist der Mensch der vom Seienden Angeschaute, von dem Sichöffnenden auf das Anwesen bei ihm Versammelte." Holzwege, Frankfurt 1950, S. 83. What is conjured here is not an anthropomorphic fable in which things of nature take on human faces and are looking at man. If it sounds like a fairy tale, then it is so only to the extent that man must have recourse to a poetic language in order to respond to the truth of entity which discloses itself "contradictorily." With this visual metaphor Heidegger was in fact hinting at the many contradicting faces of *physis*, whose rivaling modes of self-manifestation are far too unbridled for man's domesticated eyes to be registered in but one central perspective. A variation of the same visual metaphor is used in a fundamental way also by Merleau-Ponty in his essay *L'oeil et l'esprit* (1960), where he echoes Cézanne's paradigm that the painter's eye is not just over against things facing them, but is rather right in the things. Christoph Jamme addresses this highly provocative thesis which is brought home to us mainly by phenomenology - he named both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger - by the thesis that philosophy with its ingrained representational thinking has reached the very limits of what it can say, and hence a "partnership of art," specifically of painting, is called for in its further search for truth.

Phenomenology finds a new ground opening up before itself - a brute nature prior to domestication. Cf. Christopf Jamme, "Malerei der Blindheit", *Phänomenologische Philosophie und*

Malerei, in Günther Pöltner (Hrsg.), *Phänomenologie der Kunst, Wiener Tagungen zur Phänomenologie* 1999, Frankfurt a. M., 1999, S. 109 ff.

Heidegger's expression that an entity is looking at us, means thus "picture" is reverted to a living reality. World is no longer reduced to a static picture to be merely looked at, but it is restored to the fullness of its life, - such is none other than Husserl's Life-World. For Merleau-Ponty, this world is one accessible not through thinking, but through perception. The other word used by Heidegger, "contradiction," implies, to extrapolate Heidegger's sense of two-way "correspondence" between "Thought" and "Being" discussed in *Letter on Humanism*, actually the overwhelming primacy of Being over Thought. For it is Being that compels (man's) Thought to think of Being. Even his forgetfulness to think of Being is not a fortuitous accident, but an event meted out to him by Being. And while man thinks of Being, he is tossed around mercilessly by the brute force of Being.

16 *Durchblicke: Martin Heidegger zum 80. Geburtstag*, Frankfurt 1970, p. 369 ff.

17 Wing-Tsit Chan, *The Way of Lao Tzu*, New York 1963, p. 119 f.