

## **Migration and Environment or about the Human as Climatic Being: Tetsurō Watsuji's Dialectical Concept and How It Can Be Applied to the Issue of Migration**

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The interaction between migration and the environment is essential, but it is not usually the focus of philosophical reflection. In this article, the author explores the nexus of migration and environmental protection, based on a new and expanded conception of the subject. The subject, according to this view, emerges from a new synthetic blend of a Buddhist-Shinto-Confucian-European model. This approach should allow for a deeper and more differentiated understanding of the relationship between human beings, human beings and nature, and lead to new perspectives in understanding humans as climatic beings. This broader approach is necessary for a better understanding of migrants, but also to win them over as new allies for environmental protection. At the end of the article, a practical example is presented to illustrate the theoretical explanation.

**Keywords:** intercultural philosophy – Japanese philosophy – environmental philosophy – social philosophy – migration – Human-Between – Tetsurō Watsuji

### **Introduction**

The interaction between migration and the environment is essential, as it determines our future as well as the geopolitical alignment of societies around

the world. At first sight, however, migration, environmental development and nature conservation may not seem to be compatible.

I suspect that this is due to the fact that the concepts and the relevant fields of research are different. They only occasionally overlap. Moreover, both environmental protection and the concept of migration are still in their infancy, philosophically speaking, since they have so far been treated primarily as questions of sociological, anthropological, or environmental research. Only in the last few years has there been an increasing number of publications (e.g., Cole 2022; Parkes 2021; Di Cesare 2020; Miller 2016) that prove the urgency of such an elaboration, both theoretically and practically. So far, however, there are few philosophical studies, at least as far as I know, that reckon with the correlation between migration and environmental protection (Nail 2016).

But why do philosophers fail to deal with this important connection much more broadly or intensively when political, economic, environmental research proves that, on the one hand, migration can be prompted by environmental destruction, and, on the other hand, we have many fellow citizens<sup>1</sup> with an immigrant background whom we need as partners for environmental protection? Do these questions not open any ontological dimensions? And why can these issues, which touch on themes of political, social and ecological philosophy, not be brought into a context? The answer is complex, and I am not sure if it is possible to present a detailed solution in such limited publication.<sup>2</sup>

What I have read so far shows that research in philosophy is mostly carried out in different areas: On the one hand, philosophers in the field of political and social philosophy deal with the issue of migration and the question of opening or closing borders, the ethical treatment of migrants, the question of citizenship, and so on (Cole 2022; Miller 2016, 2008). On the other hand, there are philosophers who reflect on environmental issues, environmental protection and the new relationship between human beings and nature (Parkes 2021). But if we treat these areas, in research or

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<sup>1</sup> Citizen is used here as “a person who has the legal right to belong to a particular country.” See Oxford Dictionary:

<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/citizen?q=citizen>

For a wider discourse of the concept, please see Hall (2017, 23, 24, 88, 160) and many others. Please also see the citation of T. Nail in the following pages.

<sup>2</sup> This article sketches an outline of the problem and does not claim to cover the full depth of the subject. It is a project that has already been started and will be prepared in another publication in appropriate length and detail.

philosophically, *as separate* from one another, we will not be able to get to the heart of the problem – namely, not just what it means to have to migrate because of natural disasters and environmental pollution, but also what it means *to have to live in exile* and to be forced nonetheless to understand the importance of environmental protection in this difficult situation.<sup>3</sup>

## I. What is Migration?

In order to approach a solution to this question, the concept of migration should first be briefly outlined from a philosophical perspective. Donatella Di Cesare writes about her own research and about the research field, which is still in its infancy: “This book is the first of its kind to outline a ‘philosophy of migration.’ Not even philosophy has thus far recognized the migrant’s citizenship rights” (Di Cesare 2020, 1). And she continues: “To migrate is not a biological drive, but rather an existential and political act” (Di Cesare 2020, 2).

However, precisely this statement, which diagnoses migration as an *existential and political act*, puts its finger on the heart of the problem and defines it as a virulent philosophical problem. J. Vernooij continues and explains the term as follows:

Migration [is] a word of Latin [-] *migratio*, means not only moving to a new land but also transition (*omnia migrant*) and at the same time the transition of the meaning of the word in the metaphorical sense. It can be a *peregrinatio* and a *commutatio*. It is a process and an end of process. It is a double meaning, and it is good to know that beforehand (Vernooij 2004, 199).

The double meaning described here by philosopher Joop Vernooij calls for dialectical and in-depth philosophical reflection. Yet migration as an existential act unveils aspects that require more than theoretical reflection; beyond this theoretical challenge, there exist factual problems that in recent years have been associated with the process of globalization and with new levels of environmental destruction, all of which require innovative and perhaps even ambivalent solutions.<sup>4</sup> The philosopher Philipp Cole writes:

Many millions of people do not have a secure place within this global system but are positionless, displaced, struggling within those border zones,

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<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank the referees for the reference to the book by Thomas Nail (2015).

<sup>4</sup> In the last few months, the number of people spread around the world has reached a new alarming level. According to alarming reports by the UNHCR, never before have so many people been on the move. See: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/climate-action-brief-february-2023> (Accessed 22.06.2023.)

subjected to the sovereign power of states to determined who belongs and who does not, regardless of where people are or how long they have been there. ... However, I could also see their situation as a product of that global order, as a sign that the system is working all too well, and that regimes of international protection are not designed primarily to protect the displaced but rather to protect the global order of states by confining these disruptions to marginal places, to keep placeless people contained within the global order despite their location outside of it (Cole 2022, 2).

This globalization process causes a system of “unequal” poverty and environmental destruction and therefore can be blamed, among other serious events and actors as war, autocratic systems, etc., for migration flows and a worldwide spreading of the people (Parkes 2022, 55 – 59, 65 – 67). As far as the role played by environmental destruction goes, according to a 2023 UNHCR report, 70% of all refugees had to leave their home country because of environmental pollution.<sup>5</sup> These are staggering figures, but along with them comes the important question of who these people are, who is on the move, and how can we grasp this phenomenon, especially when it is moving faster than it can be recorded statistically?

To understand the predicaments that occur in the lives of migrants as well as their proximate circumstances and in order to look for solutions for a better model of cohabitation, different academic disciplines try to formulate the origin and impact of migration by researching individual aspects along with the political consequences. They work on different issues pertaining to migration and ask:

Do states have a moral right to accept or to refuse immigration willingly? What are our obligations to “illegal” migrants and “economic refugees”? Do immigrants have a moral claim to be admitted as part of the political community of the country into which they immigrate, i.e., as citizens? (Wellman, 2022)

But all of these research fields rarely grasp in any detail the question of migration and the *philosophical dimension of the personal lives of migrants*. Thomas Nail writes:

The first problem is that the migrant has been predominantly understood from the perspective of stasis and perceived as a secondary or derivative figure with respect to *place-bound* social membership. Place-bound membership in a society is assumed as primary; secondary is the movement

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<sup>5</sup> See also: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>

back and forth between social points. The “emigrant” is the name given to the migrant as the former member or citizen, and the “immigrant” as the would-be member or citizen. In both cases, a static place and membership are theorized first, and the migrant is the one who lacks both (Nail 2016, 3).

This is an important statement that describes the migrant’s status as an “outsider,” but the sketch of such a problem conceals the deeper layer of the issue: When considering migration and migrants solely from a spatial perspective, there is a lack of understanding for the socio-individual positioning, for the feelings and for the external difficulties that migrants face, such as the loss of their loved ones, but also the loss of language and the consequences of this. The spatial perspective also lacks the memory issue, which is a problem of intersubjective time. Such an analysis can only be achieved by viewing human existence as an intersubjective network.<sup>6</sup>

Migration, according to my understanding, occurs when there is not only a change in place but also an intersubjective and cultural change that is articulated in a difference between the source and destination culture in terms of at least one cultural practice or artefact such as language, clothing, religion, cultural tradition, etc. In any case, with a kind of visible or perceptible break with the previously prevailing *intersubjective environment*, with a kind of cultural change and interpersonal displacement. Such breaks are definitely constituted by the loss of the language and the *impossibility of turning back home*.

Yet, what causes such a break with the previously existing environment and why is this crucial? Is it only a matter of geopolitical change or is this something deeper, i.e., something that touches human existence directly and irreversibly?

In fact, it is not so much the change in clothing or even landscape – mountains, valleys, etc. – which are probably missed but can also be found elsewhere in the beauty of attractions in nature in the new environment. It is mainly the *ruptures in the inner, intimate social environment* that convey this idea of being thrown out of the former (intersubjective) environment and into a new, unknown one. For intersubjective connections not only shape our immediate social environment, but they also modify our perception and ultimately determine our *final ontological location*. In order to represent these interconnections and to understand the fractures, which occur within individual structures, but also to connect them with our issue of environmental protection, it is useful to move away from the model of the solitary individual prominent in European philosophy and change to a more comprehensive

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<sup>6</sup> See Nail (2016, 7).

approach to the human being. To do so, I work with the concept of “ningen 人間” which was *philosophically reworked and expanded* by the Japanese philosopher Tetsurō Watsuji, who lived and worked from 1889 to 1960.

## II. The Human as Individual-Social-Natural Being, or Being as “Wind and Earth” 風土

Tetsurō Watsuji<sup>7</sup> is one of the most famous ethical philosophers in Japan and is seen by many as the reference figure for a new, culturally synthetic approach to ethics and ontology (Brüll 1989, 149 – 150). He “...was a thinker whose work extended across a remarkable range of topics in cultural theory; intellectual history, religion, the arts, and above all, philosophy” (Johnson 2019, 3). In his works *Climate and Culture* (Watsuji 1961/1988)<sup>8</sup> and *Ethics as a Science of Man* (Watsuji, 1936).<sup>9</sup> Watsuji developed a remarkable *climatology of existence* (*Klimatologie des Daseins*), where he introduced his *philosophical elaboration* of “ningen 人間” – “human-between,” with which he created a new dialectic social-individual being as counterpart to the European egoistic subject (cf. Jones 2003, 136; Johnson 2019, 17 – 30). *Ningen* refers to a human being in all of the roles and connections, and it includes *also nature* as inherent in one’s personality.

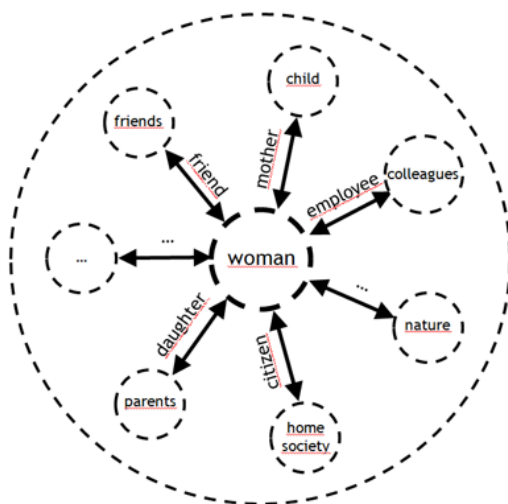
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<sup>7</sup> For more about Watsuji, see Heisig (2001), especially as concerns the involvement of some philosophers from the Kyoto School (as well as Watsuji) in supporting the ultra-right nationalist movement in Japan at the time. Christopher Jones (2003, footnote 8, 137) notes: “To some extent, Watsuji himself was responsible for this shift in the interpretation of his work, since he became involved in a number of semi-official ‘think tanks’ during the 1930s and 1940s. Like those of his senior colleague Nishida Kitarō, Watsuji’s connections were closest with the Navy, and he was involved with Captain Takagi Sōkichi’s Shisō *kondankai* (Philosophical Chat Group), which met in the early 1940s to discuss the future direction of the war in Asia. Indeed, Watsuji even participated in the authorship of the infamous *Kokutai no hongi* (Fundamentals of the National Polity, 1937), published by the Ministry of Education, which became the official handbook of Japanese ultra-nationalism during the war years.” As far as Watsuji’s entanglement is concerned, it is similar to the case of Heidegger; his philosophy cannot remain unused, above all because it offers great methodological advantages from an ethical and intercultural point of view and, ultimately, when elaborated in a new context, can help to achieve a humanistic outlook after all.

<sup>8</sup> *Fūdo: Ningengakuteki kōsatsu*. Literally translated, the title means *The Climate: An Anthropological Consideration*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ethics as a Science of Man* (*Ningen no Gaku Toshite no Rinrigaku*), published in 1936, introduces a famous reworking of the term “human-between,” or “ningen 人間” in Japanese. This important work of Japanese ethics was translated into German quite well by Hans Martin Krämer (2005). A shortened version in English, see Watsuji (1971).

Watsuji developed philosophically the concept of the “*human-between*” anew in the context of Japanese and European linguistic and philosophical culture (Brüll 1993,150 – 154; Johnson 2019, 102 – 105). He generated it from the Buddhist-Shinto-Confucian-European roots, and ultimately presented the person as a new dialectical being, i.e., as a being which is constituted as self and society *simultaneously*. To provide a brief explanation of this complex model and to assist in envisioning the “*human-between/ningen*” concept, the small drawing below can be of help:<sup>10</sup>



According to the *ningen* model, people are individuals, each determined by several individual aspects, yet also internally involved in a multiplicity of networks.<sup>11</sup> Within this elaboration it is possible to be simultaneously a wife, mother, daughter, colleague, and/or citizen, and also to include the nature as a part of the personality. In this intersubjective net, each interconnection is determined by different loyalty – a loyalty, which is exhibited simultaneously, but also lived out along different vectors, depending on the respective focus and intensity. On the one hand, the reciprocity of the interconnections – their interlocking and respective foci – determine the intensity of the respective connections. On the other hand, they enable multiple and simultaneous loyalties,

<sup>10</sup> The drawing was produced by the author of this article.

<sup>11</sup> The whole circle, inside and outside, is the self.

any and all of which may play an important role through expanding or reflecting the nexus of existence (cf. Watsuji 1996, 11, 21, 61, 62, 236, 239, 241).

Due to this manifold network, a person is *simultaneously individual and social, with all of this occurring in one being*. In this human mode of being, society is formed by connecting with other people through language, emotional interconnections, making tools and cultural artefacts, as well as common religion or cultural practices. This social side is connective and empathic, but according to Watsuji, it cannot unilaterally dominate, for then we would dissolve as individuals, we would become faceless or *man*, as Heidegger puts it (Watsuji 2005, 123 – 126). Therefore, the social side in us must be negated again, in order to enable the individual side to appear more prominently in the foreground. Yet the individual side cannot itself always play the leading role because the human individual cannot live for and by itself, as an individual in isolation. So once again this side is negated in us, and the social aspect once again emerges even more strongly (Watsuji 1996, 116 ff).

On this point Watsuji writes:

In this way, the negative structure of a betweenness-oriented being is clarified in terms of the self-returning movement of absolute negativity through its own negation...Indeed, there are three moments that are dynamically unified as the movement of negation: fundamental emptiness, then individual existence, and social existence as its negative development. These three interactives with one another in practical reality and cannot be separated (Watsuji, 1996, 117).<sup>12</sup>

The implication of Watsuji's thought is that *ningen*, although being subjective communal existence through the interconnection of acts is, at the same time, an individual who acts through these interconnections. And Watsuji insists that this subjective and dynamic structures are precisely what prevents us from accounting for *ningen* as "thing" or "substance" (Watsuji 1996, 19). According to Christopher S. Jones, "Watsuji saw it as a corrective to (what he identified as) the overemphasis on individualism and isolated subjectivism in Western political philosophy" (2003, 136). Watsuji criticizes

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<sup>12</sup> Here, Watsuji combines the traditional Buddhist philosophy of absolute emptiness (or of the fundamental emptiness) as well as the "negation of negation," as can be found in the works of several philosophers from the Kyoto school and in European concepts of individual and social being.



Heidegger's concept of *eksistence*, or "standing out," in order to capture the way this relation between one Dasein and another in the direct relational contact and interaction of *aidagara* [betweenness] parallels the relation between Dasein and its world (Johnson 2019, 79).

This is very important because, unlike as happens in European-American philosophy, in which the subject can denote things and substances (all despite being *separate from objects and from the world or nature*), Watsuji presents a type of human being that plays all roles: it is a dual, relational existence that is generated and destroyed again through the "negation of negation" (Watsuji 1996, 23, 117, 118, 145). Accordingly, being is viewed as a whole and it represents a dialectical individual-social existence, which in its spiral structure is laid out spatio-temporally as a double helix. This means that the being simultaneously lives intersubjectively on several time levels and moves in alternative spaces (Watsuji 1996, 155 – 235). This is important not only for understanding the human being in general, but it helps also to understand the migration of people in a better, more nuanced fashion.

For migration in the sense of *ningen* not only shows the detachment of people from their traditional place, but it also represents the process that tears them away from their familiar environment. Therefore, as a result of forced movement or forced flight, people leave behind not only places (or social and natural environments), but, above all, they *move away intersubjectively*, as they have to leave their fathers and mothers, their children, and thus launch these relationships, which had previously been part of their intimate social existence, into an equally uncertain, cold and unloving future (Boteva-Richter 2021, 72; Gheaus 2013, 1 – 23). The intersubjective rupture does not only change the immediate ontological structure in the sense of interpersonal alienation: the suffering of social fragmentation also initiates a suffering of alienation from the human-environment-unit.

And here we come to the interconnection at the heart of our issue: in order to engage these new citizens as equal actors on the one hand, and as fellow environmentalists on the other, we should establish and elaborate the connection between old and new members of society, as well as between humans and nature, with a spirit of community and comradery. A spirit that can help and heal the fractures of the self and build a new home, a home as intersubjective web woven as a just and warm place to live. Understanding the subject as *ningen* can be helpful here, as it not only supports the so-called integration of the new fellow human beings. It can also help to protect the

environment, since this subject as *ningen* not only lives a double helix existence as individual and society, but also includes nature as part or aspect of its identity. David Johnson writes:

Watsuji's concept of the human being as a hybrid, dynamic, and nondual entity – as well as his understanding of the practical subject as *aidagara* [betweenness] underscore the degree to which his appropriation of the subject pole of the Dasein-world dyad is a transformation; it also reflects the myriad ways in which the self is, above all, a relational being...[And it is] not only – as in the manner of Dasein – through its compartments but also insofar as subjective space is part of the relational structure of the practical subject itself (Johnson 2019, 122).

By elaborating human existence as a hybrid, synthetic, European-Japanese type of being that is based not only on Buddhist-Shinto-Confucian traditions, but also on European roots, Watsuji succeeds in modelling existence that is human and a climatic being in itself, transcending nature and its phenomena. In his work *Climate and Culture*, he develops the concept of *fūdo*, which is composed of the characters for wind and earth (風 and 土 respectively). His elaboration of the climate concept is shaped in a very specific way: as part of nature, the climate surrounds us and is in us, because “[a]ll of us live on a given land and the natural environment of this land ‘environs’ us whether we like it or not” (Watsuji 1988, 1). It also affects us directly as humans and especially as we are “engaged in practical activities” (Watsuji 1988, 1). This can be illustrated in a very vivid way with the example of the “feeling of the cold.” Cold as a natural phenomenon is something that not only surrounds us, but directly transcends us, because

[i]t is undeniable fact, that we feel cold. But what is this cold we feel? Is it that air of a certain temperature, cold, that is, as a physical object, stimulates the sensory organs in our body so that we as psychological subjects experience it as a certain set mental state? If so, it follows that ‘cold’ and ‘we’ exist as separate and independent entities...But is this really so? How can we know the independent existence of the cold before we feel cold? (Watsuji, 1988, 2)<sup>13</sup>

And he continues:

As far as the individual consciousness is concerned, the subject possesses the intentional structure within itself and itself “directs itself toward something.” [Especially as] [t]he “feeling” of “feeling the cold” is not a “point” which establishes a relationship directed at the cold, *but it is in itself*

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<sup>13</sup> Original version: *Fūdo-ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (2001, 10).

*a relationship in virtue of its "feeling"* and it is in this relationship that we discover cold (Watsuji 1988, 2).<sup>14</sup>

But feeling cold reveals not only a kind of *continuity between us and the environment*. Feeling cold is not only an individual, but also a social experience, and as such, it unveils our dialectical structure. According to this way of understanding, it is "not 'I' alone but 'we,' or more strictly, 'I' as 'we' and 'we' as 'I' that are outside in the cold" (Watsuji 1988, 2).<sup>15</sup> Therefore in freezing together "[w]e feel the same cold in common" (Watsuji 1988, 4)<sup>16</sup> and "the basic essence of what is 'present outside' is not a thing or subject such as the cold, but we ourselves" (Watsuji 1988, 4).

Such a simple natural phenomenon as feeling cold shows the dialectical structure of subjects as individual-social-beings, but also it refers to community with nature and its phenomena. Reflected in this way, *ningen* is not merely a subject who faces, and reflects, nature as a natural *thing*. Here, in this elaboration, nature is *part of human existence*, that is, a kind of individual-social aspect. Put another way, nature is part of our intimate, inner self. According to this thesis, we stand in a kind of inner-outer-relationship with nature, i.e., the nature is one inner aspect, along with language, religious orientation, preferences, and inclinations, etc. And at the same time nature is outside us, confronting and endangering us with earthquakes, floods, and other forces against which we have to protect ourselves. But nature also inspires and helps us in our cultural development by forcing us to build houses, to develop agricultural methods, to stimulate production and innovation in industry, art, morals, customs, etc., each respectively unfolding in accordance with the prevailing climate (Watsuji 1988, 10–20). This shows our deep interconnection, where "[i]n other words, we find ourselves – ourselves as an element in the 'mutual relationship' – in 'climate'" (Watsuji 1988, 5).

The climate and its phenomena perfectly illustrate the mutual relationship between humans and the environment and reveal the structure of existence as *inclusive of nature and its phenomena*. The cold, which is taken as an example here, pervades our bodies not merely as the passing breath of a gust of wind. The cold penetrates us and the membranes of the cells. While we might freeze,

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<sup>14</sup> This markup is by the author of this article and is not from the primary source. Original version: *Fūdo-ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (2001, 10 – 11).

<sup>15</sup> Original version: *Fūdo-ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (2001, 11).

<sup>16</sup> This is the original author's own markup from the primary source. Original version: *Fūdo-ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (2001, 13).

we now become...no...we are one with the cold, we are cold in our body, inside as well as outside (Watsuji 1988, 2 – 5). This means that, in the moment of freezing, we are one with the environment, since we and the environment transcend those climate phenomena and experience them in reality. Through the penetration of the cold or the breath of wind, the *cold/the wind becomes part of our existence, the wind and the cold are therefore within us, and we are in the wind.*

*Feeling cold is therefore an immediate, existential experience that shows us that we as humans are not simply reducible to reason; in the cold we are rational and natural at the same time, and by protecting ourselves from freezing or dying, we prove this and exist naturally-culturally in the same breath (Watsuji 1988, 5 – 7).*

Climate is thus bodily. But bodily existence, as understood by Watsuji, has a dialectical component: the bodily existence of an individual being is one with the bodily existence of society, i.e., an individual being-to-death is interwoven with a social being-to-life (Watsuji 1988, 19 – 20). Sociality actually expresses the climatic structure of existence which results from the above-mentioned cultural actions, and which defines our I as We (Watsuji 1988, 11). Here, through this transcendent relationship, on the one hand, we as humans subjectify nature by cultivating it, and, on the other hand, nature naturalizes us by nourishing us and delighting us with beauty (Watsuji 1988, 1 – 12).

And it is here, through this individual-social structure that integrates nature into both the individual and social aspects of the self, and also through the extension of the human as an individual-social being living in intimate interaction with others, that a place is created where just and equal relationships can be built between the old-established sedentary and the new society members and where they can be enlisted as fellow environmentalists.

By accepting and understanding the extended dialectical structure of the self, one can interconnect with migrants in an equal and respectful way. These connections that extend their being in the form of relationships like those of mothers and fathers also link us as fellow citizens and friends, transcending nature as an additional aspect of identity to be valued and protected.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The fact that migrants and people with a migrant background make up to 40% of the population not only in Vienna, but also in many German cities, shows that both, the long-established residents and the migrants, need each other for support and for the protection of the environment.

### III. The Practical Side of “Ningen”: Human and Nature Culturally United in a “Gartenpolylog”

Even if political action in this regard is delayed, there are already civil society projects that take up this idea. A project of this sort can be seen in the example of the organization “Gartenpolylog,” which one of our colleagues, Ursula Taborsky, founded in Vienna in 2017.<sup>18</sup> This project is a practical attempt to translate a philosophical idea into everyday practice and thus to be of practical use by bringing migrants together with members of the already-resident population. It all began under the name of “Intercultural Gardens,” a name that emphasizes the importance of culturally diverse communities working together.

In these gardens, people from all over the world come together to work the soil, sow, tend, harvest, cook and enjoy the harvested produce together around a table. In this way, through practical activities, people engage in dialogue and exchange memories, experiences and knowledge as well as ways of living in nature (through the senses). And precisely here, where “[p]eople with different origins and experiences intermingle in everyday life within community gardens,”<sup>19</sup> they are able to live in diversity through the mediation of nature and interconnection as *ningen*. Precisely here, where “the gardens open up enriching perspectives,” “while also presenting beneficial challenges ...in living and working together”<sup>20</sup> all of the individual-social aspects such as language, cultural practices, memories, etc. can be shared and exchanged. Here, the gardens act as mediators and bring the migrants and non-migrants together, also helping them to become partners in loving and protecting nature.

### IV. Conclusion

Based on a new relational ontology, this article attempted to explain migration and provide an insight into lives of migrants, as well as to set a new course for the relationship between humans and nature. On this basis, the European’s disturbed relationship to nature can be overcome and the necessary nature conservation can be seen as part of self-empowerment. Starting with the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō’s concept of *ningen*, “human-between,” and its application to migrants, an attempt has been made to briefly outline an understanding of the ontological situation of these people and their embeddedness. This new concept is associated with a special relationship to

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<sup>18</sup> See more online: <https://gartenpolylog.org/en>

<sup>19</sup> Mission statement of Gartenpolylog, see more online: <https://gartenpolylog.org/en>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

nature, which is, an aspect of identity, as a part of the self. At the end of the article, a practical project, “Gartenpolylog,” was presented, where a civil organisation wants to cultivate a peaceful and environmentally friendly coexistence and live in a vivid exchange. Despite its brevity, the article attempts to link important topics such as migration and environmental protection and to highlight the subject matter and the need to analyse both fields in an interconnected manner.

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