

#### 4. Tetsuro Watsuji

##### Connections and Existence

In our world, there is nothing without being connected to everything else. This statement is almost like a cliché (if not completely), though things like ‘the butterfly effect’ are still commonly misunderstood. But realizing and properly understanding the meaning of being connected defines our viewpoint on ourselves and the world as we know it. It also raises questions about God. I will use this statement as a model, an attempt to reach higher understanding of the world, and I intend to discuss whether it is useful or not.

My essay builds up on the following points:

1. What are connections?
2. What are the arguments for and against the everything-is-in-connection model?
3. What does it mean if we use this model? How does it affect our worldview?
4. How does this model appear in education and history?
5. What is the *real* subject of examination when one does experiments (or tries to understand anything at all)?
6. Knowing everything
7. A short introduction of chaotic systems
8. Defining ourselves

First of all, why did this model appear in the first place? Though studies on connections only started in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for us, people they were always a common experience. We need others to feel comfortable, because humans are ‘social animals’. We are almost completely depending on our environment, we are constantly trying to be more independent, to rise above our circumstances, like raising crops instead of collecting them in the wild, yet, the weather, war, epidemics, crime and at last the inevitability of death are still threatening us. Being close to someone and being lonely, having our needs satisfied or being in fear of losing everything without a chance to do anything to protect ourselves – these feelings are essentials of human nature, and they show us that we are no islands.

Then what is the difference between thinking in connections and thinking as it is? One possible explanation is that because connections, instead of being physical things, are relations of things, hence they are hard to comprehend, and that is why we tend to think in

*things* (or at least *think to think* in things, I will explain this theory later). Still, there is something missing from this model, and it is *us*. One great pre-kantian debate was basically about the connection between our thoughts and actual things of the real world. Of course, even after Kant, the matter is still not completely settled. It is also an important question in the scientific worldview, although it was only realized when quantummechanics became a thing. The realization was more or less the following: observation *does* affect it's subject. It applies in every branch of science where observation is needed, even if in some cases, the effect is not that spectacular. It is because to see an event, an observer has to be there, and as it appears, it becomes an influence by becoming a *circumstance* of the happening. In quantummechanics, the reason is that to see something small, we have to send electrons to it's surface, but electrons will necessarily cause some changes, the smaller the object is, the more effects this method has (util subatomic level, where this method is just plain useless).

Another famous example is *statistics* – the results are greatly depending on how the questions are verbalized, who asks who in what manner, personally or in paper form, and of course, that how they choose the slice of population. Humans are acting and talking depending on who is watching.

Still, this model becomes impractical after a certain point. To live our daily life or to create functioning machines we simply do not need to know *every* circumstance.

But is it not frightening to know that we are affected by unknown factors?

Besides the ensuing deterministic consequences of a theory like this, predicting anything seems impossible. Also, what exactly are we doing when we observe 'the world'? Is it the *world* that we observe, or is it just the *connection* between it and us? When Kant wrote about the *Ding an Sich*, he claimed that it is imposstible to observe a thing as it is. Does that mean that we are incapable of undertanding ourelves as we are, too? Taking the connections in the picture means even more – it looks as if we are observing something that happens between two (or more) mysterious parts, and we might not even know what our observation really is.

Wittgenstein were constantly asking himself what can he be sure of. In our everyday life, we are acting like we were sure of a lot of thing, like gravity will be the same in the next minute, or our hands do not disappear when we are not watching them. And it works, only someone insane would claim that being scepical of things like these would be more *effective*. For any normal person, these things are just the way they are. Science is different, as it is openly claims that it uses models, and does not try to discover how things essentially are. Practicly, we are doing the same – we think and act by models created so we can live normally, not in constant fear of the unknown. Philosophy has this one particular role: asking ourselves whether our currently used model is the best we can come up with. Our world is not just a bunch of things together, and people cannot come up with anything without hearing and seeing others talking and acting. Thinking the other way results behavioural patterns like selfishness, turning the individual against society in a destructive way instead of a constructive, and missing the chanse to properly undertand events.

One big mistake in various school systems is concentrating on lexical knowledge, which is basically teaching a bunch of things separately, as it were a list, without enlightening the connection between them. Students who have the background to realize the connections are the lucky ones, but others would need help in learning the pattern in which they can later on think in relations.

Also, *acting* when it is needed is a skill that comes from the realization that we can affect our environment and each other. It is interesting to see that iconic historical figures were always the ones who claimed that 'we can change it'. We are not helpless bystanders, we can form our society to something other than it already is. It shows that it is not an evidence for everyone.

We make effects and we are affected. The subject of examinations are these causes and effects. Back to Kant, he also said that thinking in causes and effects (and between the boundaries of space and time) are our *a priori* schemes, things we cannot get rid of. When we are looking at things, we project these schemes onto them. It is possible, that the world does not work that way, but we cannot think in any other way.

In this case, existence equals being in connection.

And that is where God comes to the picture. There were various attempts to find God a place in this system. He was the ineffable environment, the ruler of this environment, the first cause and the cause of the first cause (a paradox as it is), the one thing in connection with everything at once and the thing that is not in connection with anything in this world at all. Some said God only is in connection with our thoughts, but we have no clue how does it work. Why it is important for us? Because these views are *completely* different from each other, and it matters how we see the question of God, how we answer it for ourselves, and how we understand other opinions. For example, if we approach the topic as God is not in connection with the world, he practically does not exist for us, as we cannot connect with him in any way. If that is the case, why would the concept of God even matter? Or one could say that He is in touch with us, even if we cannot possibly know how. But then God is a *factor* in the world, because He affects us, and we affect everything else. By discovering the causes of how we act, think and talk, we can distinguish if we are effected by something higher force, or not.

But can we come up with a method to discover all causes and effects? It is highly improbable, if we consider that in this model, every existing thing appears as a factor. Let us say that we want to write down *all* factors to understand them. Let us say that everything that exists is a point, and every point is in connection with ten other points. We need slightly more paper and ink than the *whole world* that we can see, so we have place to write down all the points *and* which points do they connect. It is very unlikely that we can do something similar. Only a demon of Laplace would be capable of doing such a thing – of course, only if God does not affect the world actively, or his choices are completely predictable (for example, the demon knows what would a perfectly good being choose to affect and how), in which case, this demon could predict every upcoming event right away, with perfect

accuracy. But we have no demon like that, and even if we could get in possession or become one, it is likely that we would not want it.

In the age of the Internet, connections became more visible than they ever been. Studies on the Internet shows us how chaotic this web of connections is. Predicting what will happen in the *next few hours* is even more impossible than weather forecast, which is so unreliable because in a longer term (and a week is not considered a short term) we can only predict with the same accuracy if we know a *lot* more elements, like if we want to know what will happen *for sure*, we got to know the current state of every air molecule around the surface, along with the geographical formations, the happenings on the Sun, below the ground, and what humans will do (like building new factories, etc.). Chaos theory tries to make systems like these a bit more friendly (and exploitable).

Neuroscience could not yet go further than observing the physical connections in our brain. For example, when we think about something, chemical signs are traveling between our braincells, which are in connection with other braincells, and by this physical process, we are somehow proceed to think in abstract terms and use our fantasy – but what is still missing, discovering the connection between the physical and the mental phenomena. But this much we can hypothesise: at the basics, thinking is made up of connections. There are no *things* in our head, as braincells are more or less identical, only their connections to each other make them mean what they mean.

I am in connection with others, therefore I exist for them. I cannot define what I am, only in the context of what I am connected to - what am I affected by, and what do I affect. I can never fully comprehend these connections, hence my existence will always be something of a mystery. My environment fully defines me, and I am defining my environment by being a part of it.

But it also means that I can affect. Maybe I do not have a choice, as I can only do what my environment allows me to do, but the knowledge of being in connection also effects me. By letting other people know this, iconic historical figures changed a great segment of their environment, but it was only possible by getting in connection with all those people who could make the change. Nobody ever did anything on their own, and by making this statement one of our principles, arrogance can not be a thing.

Discovering the causes and affects we project onto our environment is the only way to know anything about us. Not the real self beneath the effects, but the one that exists *by our concepts*, the deepest self we can ever get known of. The discovery can never reach an end, that is why it will always be motivating. Our self-definition will always be incomplete, but every new discovery should give us a reason to cheer. If we stay open to this discovery, there is no way we could ever get bored.