



A dialog with a puzzled profile: Poetry of an old pedological discussion

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Defining and classifying are fundamental needs in the everyday life of humans. Among quite a few relevant examples in pedology, stands the question of whether soils and some types of sediments should or can be distinct. This issue is as old as soil science itself and is possibly very much related to the never ending debate regarding “the definition of soil”. As is the case in many fields, the necessity of humans to create and keep a uniform common language might collide with different cultural and/or scientific perspectives. Such is the case with the wide variety of soil classifications found throughout the world. One can easily note this diversity when reading publications that address two similar regolith profiles from different locations round the globe. In some cases it would be impossible to correlate two comparable profiles when using different classification systems. This contradictory situation is one of the most challenging topics in pedology. This whole background gave the inspiration for the following poem, titled “A dialog with a puzzled profile”:

Are you a soil or a sediment?
Ask the oak, see if he knows.
Ask him whether these are peds
Or maybe a bedrock under his toes.

And if you're a soil, what are you?
It depends on the viewpoint, you see:
Some define me with Soil Taxonomy,
While others with WRB.

For Hutton and Lyell I'm a weathered rock,
Yet Hilgard and Dokuchaev dispute.
If you ask me, well I'm a 'pedosediment',
I couldn't care less for the suit.

If it helps you I'll be whatever it takes,
Making sure that no one will lose.
I know it depends very much on the platform
Where experts are setting the rules.