

The Wayⁱ forward? - Shinto and a 21st Century Japanese Ecological Attitude

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The Wayⁱⁱ forward? - Shinto and a 21st Century Japanese Ecological Attitude

Abstract

Shinto can be sufficiently isolated from other Japanese ideological traditions in order to be considered separately from them. Upon investigation, one discovers beliefs, values, themes, an attitude and a worldview that are specific to Shinto spirituality and in many cases integrated into everyday Japanese life. Shinto worships of spirits which permeate the world and is concurrent with a Japanese self-identification of being 'at one' with nature and natural phenomena. These beliefs can be shown to lead smoothly to ecocentrism and potentially an holistic ecological attitude of 'respect for nature'. Such an attitude would be bolstered by the Japanese importance of maintaining a 'mindful heart'. That Shinto beliefs are already latent in Japanese society indicates that it would not be unreasonable to propose the possibility of the Japanese assuming such an attitude in practice. One can imagine implementation of various Shinto values and themes making an immediate eco-friendly impact on daily life. Certainly, Japan is in dire need of a change in treatment of the environment, as is evidenced by a gamut of environmental problems. I hope to convince the reader that the beliefs and values exhibited in Shinto spirituality could play a fundamental role in developing a Japanese ecological attitude.

The Wayⁱⁱⁱ forward? - Shinto and a 21st Century Japanese Ecological Attitude

Introduction

In this essay, I hope to convince the reader that the beliefs and values exhibited in Shinto spirituality can play a fundamental role in developing a post-modern Japanese ecological attitude fit for the needs of 21st century Japan. In order to do so, various preliminary clarifications will be necessary. I will first clarify what is to be understood by 'Shinto Spirituality' and give an overview of the beliefs it holds and values that can be found within it. I will argue that Shinto traditions are widespread enough throughout Japan to be considered as a basis for a national attitude and explain why I have chosen the term 'ecological attitude' over the more common 'environmental ethic'. At this point it will be important to explain the concept of *makoto no kokoro*. Brief reasons will then be given for assuming the proposed attitude is necessary. As a final clarification, I will pre-empt and counter the accusation of my proposal being over-romantic and naïve.

Having made these clarifications, I will explore the Japanese relationship with nature, primarily through its artistic traditions, and then consider quotidian attitudes. By means of the aesthetic ideal of responding truthfully to the encountered world, we will discover the unconscious identification with nature typical of the Japanese psyche. Subsequently, we will consider how the idea of a world that is the manifestation of spirits which at the same time inhabit it could be developed into an ecocentric attitude of 'respect for nature' which goes beyond Taylor and Leopold in holistic scope. As we shall then see, the arguments of Japanese evolutionary biologist, Kenji Imanishi, lend added credence to the possibility of such a development in expounding an ecological worldview which embodies much of the reasoning that could lead to the ecocentric attitude. The popular acceptance of Imanishi's scientific writings encourages the idea

that the Japanese might adopt such an attitude more readily than other cultures. I will go on to suggest ways in which, by assuming such an attitude, particular Shinto values might be put into practice in everyday Japanese life, making an immediate difference by commencing at the individual level. Before concluding, I will try to counter possible objections to my proposal. Finally, I will offer a selection of case studies of contemporary environmental movements which exemplify some Shinto-influenced elements of the kind of attitude proposed.

I. Clarifications

Before explaining why I consider my claim to be justified, it is first necessary to attend to the following questions.

- What is to be understood by 'Shinto spirituality'? and
- What are its 'beliefs and values'?
- Why identify 'Japanese' with 'Shinto'?
- What is an 'ecological attitude'? Why not use the more conventional term 'environmental ethic'?
- What are the reasons for claiming that there is not yet such an attitude at present?; and
- Why is there a need for it?
- Is this romantic advocacy for religious atavism?

Shinto Spirituality

Shinto

Previous to a discussion of 'Shinto spirituality', it is necessary to establish what is meant here by 'Shinto'. Commonly known as the native religion of Japan, which stretches back into the country's prehistory, the cluster of beliefs, values and rites that has come to be known as Shinto is difficult to define succinctly. There are three main reasons for this: its historically close relationship with other religions, its variant forms and its recent status as a 'non-religion'.

History in a nutshell

After their cultural importation from China one-and-a-half thousand years ago^{iv}, Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist beliefs and practices proceeded over time to be combined and exchanged with those of Shinto. This relationship was particularly true

between Buddhism and Shinto to the extent that, for example, before too long, the grounds of many Shinto shrines were also home to Buddhist temples^v. This extremely close relationship was by no means just a physical one but metaphysical, too. The two religions spent centuries struggling over how to explain one in terms of the other. Of particular focus was the role of the Shinto kami within the Buddhist cosmological system. At one point in history the kami were considered to be Buddhas at their most enlightened form^{vi}, at another, they were lesser spirits in need of enlightenment^{vii}. A typical contemporary example which illustrates the extent to which these two belief-systems merged is that given by Ian Reader^{viii}.

Not long after his arrival in Japan, two of Reader's Japanese colleagues invited him on a two-stop visit to a local Shinto shrine and a local Buddhist temple. He noticed that at the shrine, the two men did not clap twice and ring the bell, as is formal Shinto custom in order to 'summon the kami'^{ix}, but simply bowed their heads in prayer, which is the standard Buddhist procedure. Subsequently, when they arrived at the Buddhist temple, the two clapped before praying – Shinto-style. Furthermore, when this was noted to them in conversation later by Reader, not only did the two men seem unperturbed by their glaring 'mistakes', but they were also surprised at Reader's puzzlement. Reader's personal example is one of many that could be given to show that even in a practical, everyday sense, the defining lines between Shinto and Japanese Buddhism are very blurred.

Ironically, this overlapping internal relationship which Shinto came to share with Buddhism may have helped to 'protect' it from being smothered by the addition of Confucian and Daoist doctrines to the cultural-religious melting pot.^x As a consequence, it is far less problematic to isolate Shinto from these latter two than it is to disentangle it from Buddhism^{xi}.

As Buddhism spread throughout early Japan, it also almost certainly helped unify the many localised variants of the indigenous, animistic nature religions which made up what is probably more appropriately called 'proto-Shinto'^{xii}. This distinct local variation, still a characteristic of modern-day Shinto traditions, will have arisen naturally from the

geographical make up of the Japanese archipelago: the compartmentalised inhabited parts of Japan are mostly estuarial coastal basins, separated from each other by the ridges of the mountainous land which runs its whole length^{xiii}. Through the dual action of giving added unity and identifying its own beliefs with many aspects of kami worship, Buddhism provided what proto-Shinto was lacking: geographical continuity and a sense of identity. Whereas proto-Shinto had no central originating founder figure, no central texts or doctrines, Buddhism had all of those things and thus lent a religious essentialism to the native religion which will have been almost completely existential in religious nature^{xiv} at that time.

These borrowed benefits lasted in some form or other right up to the time of the Meiji Era state-ordered separation of all things Buddhist from Shinto. Artificially stripped of its Buddhist pillars, there was an urgent rush to fortify the latent Shinto pseudo-essentialism which remained. Notoriously, this rush resulted eventually in depending upon a militantly colonialist nationalism which became synonymous with Shinto as it was increasingly abused to meet the ends of the political establishment and by which today it is still haunted.

'State Shinto'^{xv}, to all extents and purposes thankfully – and inevitably - crumbled following the end of the Second World War. In the aftermath, the Shinto creed was to find a more natural balance between its originary, very localised focus around each shrine, the loose network of Shinto shrines which provided it with a national identity and the people themselves.

With this highly-simplified micro-history, I hoped to begin to give the reader not only some orientation, but also reassurance that it does make sense to talk about Shinto as a distinct entity. I trust this reassurance will grow as this essay progresses.

Shinto types and Lineages

Putting one's finger on exactly what is 'Shinto' is further complicated by its many variant types. Aside from those already mentioned we have, for example, 'popular' 'folk', 'domestic', 'sectarian', 'imperial household' and 'new' Shinto. On top of that there

are numerous Shinto lineages such as fukko, watarai, ryoubu, suiga, yui-itsu and yoshikawa^{xvi}. However, just as it is still possible to discuss an abstract denotation like 'Christianity' despite its innumerable, variations, so we should not be discouraged here. Between lineages, types, shrines and the beliefs and actions of the people themselves we can, in searching for a Wittgensteinian family resemblance, find the Shinto for which we are looking.

Shinto as 'non-religion'

Before moving on to explore Shinto spirituality, note should be made of the supposed dubious status of Shinto as a 'religion'. On multiple occasions in my own experience,^{xvii} I have been told by a Japanese person that they are in no way religious, only to be surprised by their ritualistic behaviour at a shrine or meditation at a Zen temple. There are at least two perfectly understandable explanations for this seeming inconsistency: etymological and politico-historical. Firstly, the word Shuukyo, commonly used as the Japanese translation of 'religion', was initially created to describe the foreign Western religions in the nineteenth century^{xviii}. Moreover, it has connotations implying the following of a specific doctrine, which Shinto does not possess. On top of this, the (Meiji, Taisho and early Showa) political establishments took advantage of this etymological loophole to sponsor Shinto as a tool for its nationalist agenda, despite having decreed an official divorce of religion from the state. The seemingly contradicting statements and actions of Japanese people on this issue become immediately understandable in knowledge of these facts.

Shinto Spirituality

Spirituality

There are two main misconceptions concerning the term 'spirituality' which are useful to point out prior to a discussion on Shinto spirituality^{xix}. Firstly, religious or spiritual experiences are often thought of as very private, personal events. Indeed, such experiences often constitute the most intimate, defining moments of our lives. However, one should not forget the significant communal aspect of many such

experiences and of spiritual life in general. Whether one be praying as a member of the church congregation, grieving at a funeral or drunkenly cheering on the transportation of the kami through the streets during the local matsuri, the large public dimension of spirituality cannot be denied.

The second misconception regards the mystical, metaphysical overtones carried by the term 'spirituality'. Hypothesising and intellectualising, we can easily forget that spiritual experience is more than just the occasional, all-consuming epiphany that we have in our most intense moments. More often than not we carry our spirituality around with us in our day-to-day life, repeatedly rediscovering it in the very real world around us.

Shinto Spirituality

When exploring Shinto, it is useful to distinguish between the two facets of spiritual identity^{xx}: essentialist and existential. Existential Shinto spirituality refers to a person (or group) who identifies him/herself as Shinto because he/she acts like a Shinto practitioner. For a simplistic example: "I visit Shrines and worship the kami, and therefore I am Shinto". Essentialist Shinto spirituality, on the other hand, describes a person who primarily identifies themselves as Shinto and as a consequence acts in a Shinto way. A second simplistic example: "Because I am Shinto, I (must) visit Shrines and worship the kami". In reality, spirituality consists of a complex mixture of these two elements, ever in flux. As we have seen, throughout Shinto history, a happy balance has never really been struck between existentialism and essentialism. It is thus worthwhile of to differentiate between the two in order to gain a holistic picture of the religion.

Kami

It would be impossible to discuss Shinto without mention of the kami. The world as viewed through Shinto eyes is often described as 'teeming with kami'^{xxi}, 'permeated by kami'^{xxii} or 'kami-filled'^{xxiii}. 'Kami' has often been translated as 'gods', 'spirits', or even 'God'. Bocking however, reflecting the views of most modern scholars, recommends

that the word be left untranslated, since no single-word translation is capable of capturing its complete sense.

How are we to understand 'kami', then? Kami are experienced spiritually as a presence in the encountered world which inspires wonder or awe^{xxiv}. They are particularly evident at times when one senses the vital energy in natural entities or phenomena. Such feelings are sometimes comparable to the Western aesthetic idea of the sublime. Certainly, under the towering Fuji, at the foot of a thundering waterfall, in the midst of a summer storm or struck by a plummeting gorge, the presence of kami is felt. However, it is also there when marvelling upon the intricate minutiae of a beautiful flower, in the caress of a gentle breeze, the magic of birdsong and in the brief midnight encounter with a darting fox caught in headlights. Sensing kami can be uncomfortable, too, when hearing the wind moaning through trees, for example. The vital energies or powers sensed in each of these awing presences are not the kami per se. Mono, mi or tama are the Japanese terms used to describe the vital energy or power perceived in experiencing the kami^{xxv}. The very presence of this power is the kami.

It should be noted that the kami do not discern strictly between the 'natural' world and the 'man made' world. For Shinto, humans are very much part of nature and therefore so, too, are all human creations. Thus, the presence of the Kami can also be sensed in buildings, cars, music and other products of human labour.

The world as seen with a Shinto mindset can be thought of as an interconnecting, overlapping whole of internal relations. Therefore, through any one experience where the presence of the kami is felt, one has access to experiencing the power of nature as a whole. Such awe-inspiring moments are not ever-present, of course. A Shinto practitioner is almost if not just as likely to get as caught up in the worries and trivialities of his/her daily life as any other human being. Nevertheless, experiencing the kami can shake a person out of those myopic tendencies and reawaken him/her to the greater wonder of the world, like being stopped in one's tracks by the life-power of a giant, ancient tree. In fact, the first form of Shrines were no more than spaces with

specially designated trees^{xxvi} called *shinboku*^{xxvii}, probably marked off by a *shimenawa* straw rope – a sight still very common in contemporary Japan. In this manner, a noteworthy tree is marked off as sacred, as being the residing place of a particular kami.

The concept of how it is exactly that a kami resides in a tree (or waterfall, rock, volcanic crater or any phenomenon) is not easily explainable. A *shinboku* sacred tree, for example, is thought of as both the manifestation and the abode of the kami^{xxviii} it enshrines. Kami thus ‘permeate’, ‘riddle’ or ‘fill’ the natural world. The expression ‘the natural world’ is meant in its widest sense here and not as just a collection of material objects and beings. Kami can be present in seasons or particular times in seasons (e.g. harvest) or even in Time^{xxix} itself, just as they are present in meteorological phenomena and even concepts^{xxx}. Even people, dead or living, can become kami or manifestations thereof.

Until the conquering American forces obliged the emperor Hirohito to publicly renounce his divinity shortly after Japan’s surrender in 1945, he was regarded as a living kami and descendent of the sun kami, Amaterasu. This lineage concluding in imperial divinity is detailed in the *Kojiki* and was generally accepted from at least the time of its writing. It is also in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* where we learn that the entire Japanese people are descended from kami, with different tribes or families being the progeny of a different kami. Amaterasu, whose illumination of the day is so crucial, headed the flat kami hierarchy, making her a predictable ancestor for an emperor of divine blood.

The ancestral relationship with the kami is an important reason for the closeness the Shinto practitioner feels to the kami. On top of this, the natural world, teeming with Kami, is alleged to have been created by those first ancestral kami. The kami world and human world are not separate, distinct realms, but over time one has evolved into the other. Furthermore, all the elements of the world they created are human kin. From a spiritual point of view, then, there is a sense of continuity with and relatedness to the natural world.

It is thought that the historical origins of the emperor's own kami status can be found in the local, geographically compartmentalised tribes which dotted the Japanese archipelago previous to its unified nation status^{xxxix}. There exists only incomplete archaeological evidence from this prehistoric time but what little there is seems to show that each group, or uji, had its own protective spirit, identified with the leadership of the clan. This spirit is called *ujigami*^{xxxix}. When one clan predominated over another it is likely that it subjugated the weaker clan's *ujigami* in the subsequently combined religious hierarchy. The Yamato uji, which became the most powerful and eventually formed the first unified Japanese state, probably had the sun god Amaterasu as its *ujigami*. Amaterasu will then have become the chief national kami guardian and was firmly established as such in the Yamato-commissioned *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*. The Japanese emperor, supposedly a direct descendent of the Yamato leaders of the time, has therefore retained his kami status and identification with Amaterasu and with the nation itself. As the imperialism of the early twentieth century proves, this identification of nation, leader and the divine could be politically abused with catastrophic results, and yet despite Hirohito's renunciation, there are still those who hold imperial Shinto beliefs.^{xxxix}

It is interesting to note that despite the dominance of the Yamato clan and as such of Amaterasu, the other *ujigami* were not 'eradicated' in deference to a purely sun-worshipping religion. The different local faiths were amalgamated into an interwoven fabric of kami-based religious practices and to a large extent retained their local variance. This may be indicative of the inseparability felt at the time of the kami from the local land and its inhabitants. It also demonstrates a readiness to accept polytheism. The idea of kami as protectors of the land is so entrenched that to this day many Buddhist temples have their own kami which act as protectors of the land upon which the temple is situated.

In addition to imperial divinity, a further manner in which kami can be human is exemplified in the story of Sugawara no Michizane^{xxxix}, who after dying in exile in Kyushu was thought to have come back to haunt the capital that expelled him in the

form of various catastrophic natural disasters. In order to pacify his angry spirit, he was given a kami name^{xxxv} and an important shrine^{xxxvi} was built with the hope that in revering him thus he would be appeased.

Holographic Entry Points

Exploring the multifaceted natural and ancestral presences of the Kami adds further intricacy to the interconnecting, overlapping view of the world as seen through Shinto eyes. As aforementioned, this holographic character of the Shinto world results in the entire power of nature being accessible through a single awe-inspiring encounter with the presence of kami. Kasulis aptly dubs these doorways to the spiritual realm 'holographic entry points'.

Although one can discover a holographic entry point from anywhere and at any time in one's daily environment, the communal dimension of spirituality typically leads to certain places or objects being 'labelled'. In Shinto, some examples of communal pointers to these entry points are the red torii gates marking the sacred grounds of shrines; shimenawa ropes adorning the impressive bodies of prominent natural objects, sumo wrestlers and sacred buildings and places; and norita prayers designating moments to revere the spirits.

What do these entry points reveal to us about the Shinto spiritual realm when we step into the bubble of awe provided access to by the holographic entry points? At least six common themes can be identified to reveal Shinto values: naturalness; simplicity; taboo; purity/purification; separateness and community; intoxication^{xxxvii}.

Values of Shinto Spirituality

1. Naturalness

That the value of naturalness is held in high esteem would seem to be an inevitable consequence of the beliefs in the pervasiveness of kami in the natural world. When we remember that a natural object wherein a kami is thought to reside can also be thought of itself as a manifestation of the kami, then we realise that the whole of

'nature' – the world around us - can be thought of as kami. Witnessing the world is witnessing the kami and vice versa.

Less apparent is the other form of naturalness that is of traditional value. This could be described as 'cultivated' naturalness – products of the labour of humans upon natural objects. There are countless examples in Japan, but we can think of the bonsai trees or the meticulously trimmed gardens of a village shrine. A 'Westerner'^{xxxviii} would be more likely to consider such things as unnatural in that the nature is no longer wild and untouched by humans but imposed upon and constructed to suit human tastes. A Japanese gardener would probably disagree and testify that in doing so he is allowing certain qualities of naturalness to show themselves even more than they would untouched. In doing so, as long as he/she is true to the character of each individual plant, then the product is a 'natural' one. While it is not unlikely that these Japanese traditions might have something to do with facilitating the presence of a kami, the disagreement between the 'Western' and Japanese viewpoints is symptomatic of the different place each allocates to the human with regard to the 'natural'. In the 'West' humankind is typically considered separate from nature, whereas in Shinto-based Japanese thought, humans and therefore the fruits of their labour are part of the 'natural' world.

2. Simplicity

The Shinto value of simplicity is not completely distinguishable from its value of naturalness. One only need go to an ikebana^{xxxix} exhibition, for example, where to the unaccustomed eye the minimalist representations of natural beauty appear bare and highly contrived. Although ikebana and other offshoots of the tea ceremony are actually of Buddhist origin, the value of natural simplicity is something it absorbed following its arrival in Japan in becoming Zen^{xl} Buddhism and not a property it introduced to the country^{xli}. Going often hand in hand, the Shinto values of naturalness and simplicity can be found in many indigenous areas: the rustic Shrine architecture and decoration; Shinto ritual (and other traditional) music^{xlii}; in the

plainness of Japanese pottery, painting, poetry and noh theatre; and even in its cuisine.

3. Taboo

Taboo cannot of course be considered a value, although mention of it helps to clarify the values that arise as consequential reactions to taboo. The attitude of Shinto towards blood and death suffices here before moving onto the related values of purity and purification.

Shinto traditionally prefers to deal with death as little as possible. Thus, it is extremely common in Japan to be 'born Shinto and die Buddhist'^{xliii}. This does not mean that people start out being of the former religion and then convert to the latter midway through their lives. It reflects the nature of religious ceremony and ritual within Japanese life. Being life-reaffirming and this-worldly, with its spirits located in the immediate material environment, Shinto is a natural choice for birth, coming of age and marriage ceremonies. Buddhism, on the other hand deals with the possibility of life after death in a more positive manner than Shinto and so becomes an equally rational choice for funerals.

To further illustrate the Shinto comprehension of and dislike for death we can turn to one of the earliest stories in the Kojiki: the story of Izanagi's death. Izanagi is the female deity who together with her partner, the male deity Izanami, spawns almost all other kami, the Japanese lands and its people.

Having already given birth to myriad kami, Izanagi is fatally injured giving birth to the fire kami. Upon her subsequent death, she descends into the underworld. Izanami, distraught, follows her in an attempt to bring her back^{xliv}. However, when he finds her, she is shamed by him seeing her ugly rotting body and in a mixture of angry rage and lonely possessiveness gives chase in an attempt to trap him forever in the underworld. Izanami barely escapes and manages to obstruct the door to the underworld with a rock. Frustrated, Izanagi threatens to ensure the death of one thousand people every

day if he does not unblock the doorway. Not to be outdone, Izanami proclaims that if this is to happen, he shall create one-and-a-half thousand lives every day.^{xlv} With this pledge and in sealing off the underworld, the story establishes Shinto's emphasis of this living world over the world of the dead.

Related to the disassociation of Shinto with death are its beliefs concerning blood. Undoubtedly influenced by similar Chinese beliefs, early Japanese thought associated blood with the life force *ki* or *tama*. Loss of blood was loss of life force and since death is reviled by Shinto, the bleeding, sick and the menstruating are considered impure. People in these conditions are not normally supposed to enter the shrines^{xlvi}. Even if a visitor to a shrine is not sick, bleeding or menstruating, he/she must always purify himself using the small water trough provided at the entrance of every Shrine.

4. Purity and Purification

Following his triumph over death and defiance of the vengeful Izanagi, Izanami immediately seeks to cleanse himself of the impurities he accumulated in the underworld. In the process of this cleansing, Izanami gives birth to many more kami. One of these new deities is Amaterasu, born from his cleansed eye. That the sun kami, the imperial progenitor, is born from a purifying process, gives further emphasis to the importance of purity and purification in Shinto. Water is doubly significant here: as symbolic of this mythical moment but also as a chief agent of cleansing and purity in itself. In addition to shrine water troughs, water as purifier also features in Shinto ritual. A Shinto priest might scatter water in mid-rite to purify the area, for example. Less common, yet very striking, is the *misogi* ritual performed under the torrents of a waterfall.^{xlvii}

There is a second way in which the values of purity and purification manifest themselves in Japan: newness, or freshness. Sometimes cleansing is not enough to guarantee purity and something totally new must be created or assumed in place of the sullied predecessor. This shows itself in various ways in modern Japan. The most visible Shinto example is the rebuilding of the main Shrine at Ise every twenty years.

From my own experience as a teacher in Japan I was surprised at how people from such an ancient culture were astounded by the ‘ancientness’ of buildings that were just a few decades old. There would often be fearful talk in such cases of the possibility that such buildings might be haunted: identifying even slight aging with the conspurcation of death. Similar concerns were the reason that in early Japan, the capital was moved each time an emperor died. There are even serious plans to make a ‘new start’ by moving today’s capital from Tokyo to a totally new location.^{xlviii}

5. Separateness and Community

As we have seen, the world as viewed through Shinto eyes is a holographic whole consisting of internally related elements. Since humans are very much considered as part of the world, they are no less separable from the world than they are from each other. As an individual, one is part of a whole – part of a community – and, through each individual, one may in a sense access the whole. This phenomenon can be seen at various levels: between the individual person and his/her community, between a village and its district, between a district and the prefecture, between the prefecture and the region, and finally between each region and the nation. At each step there is a balance of local individuality and communal solidarity; at any point one has access to the whole while participating in just a part of it. It is in the same manner that through the awe-inspiring presence of immediate kami, one experiences the power of nature and the world as a whole.

6. Intoxication

It would be extremely unusual to walk the grounds of a shrine, witness a Shinto ritual or attend a Shinto *matsuri*^{xlix} without coming across at least one small cup of sake. Commonly accompanied by some form of food, sake is left as an offering to the kami, who are renowned for enjoying the ‘good things’ in life and loving parties. Sake, traditionally the Japanese alcoholic beverage of choice, also has the familiar social function of releasing tensions and breaking down hierarchical barriers. This is demonstrated in the regular after-work *enkai*^l held by every department of every

organisation in the country. At such gatherings one is never to pour one's own cup, but must wait to be served by others while simultaneously being ever-aware of any other colleague's need to have a refill. Thus, while on the one hand sake encourages communality by restricting social pressures, it also demands its own empathetic etiquette.

Sake of course is made from fermented rice – the staple Japanese cereal – and comes from the land. Like whisky or wine it is also very regional and reflects the character of each distillery's locality.

Spiritual Characteristics of Shinto

Having discussed the idea of the holographic entry point and some of the values specific to Shinto spirituality, we might want to take a step back and look at some of the characteristics typical of Shinto spirituality as a wholeⁱⁱ. Firstly, nothing and nobody can be complete without being conceived as connected through internal relations to the enviroing world. Second, the importance of the awe–inspiring power of the world is evident in its being both the key to and result of experiencing the presence of kami. A third characteristic of Shintoⁱⁱⁱ is the significance of ritual practice. We notice this in the unconscious nature of Shinto spiritual identity, exemplified in the rejection by most Japanese people of an essentialist Shinto identity, while they simultaneously demonstrate frequent existential Shinto spirituality in their daily life. Not to be forgotten is the comfort of ritual, especially as the divisions between religion and daily life become blurred. One only need look at the faces at a matsuri to witness this. Fourth and finally there can be a kind of latent nostalgia for a mythical past in the actions and traditions of Shinto. This can be misplaced and abused as in the case of the militarist State Shinto claiming superiority and authority over the rest of the world based on ancient cosmological ethnologies. However, it might also somehow encourage promise for the future when old solutions to present problems are rediscovered.

Sacred Time and Sacred Place

Before closing this introductory outline of Shinto spirituality, there are two further Shinto concepts I would like to note: those of sacred space and sacred time. The

tranquil bubbles of sacred spaces - designated by torii, shimenawa and other markers - act as holographic entry points to the true power and sacred nature of the world as a whole. That power, revealed by the presencing of the kami, manifests itself in every being, place, nook and cranny of the world. Therefore, these specially designated sacred spaces should not be the only locations considered worthy of spiritual attention. The material world as a whole can be conceived of as a sacred space by extrapolating from the basic Shinto beliefs. The sacred space of the shrine grounds can be thought of as being there to help us remember of that, but sanctity of nature is not limited to that space.

Sacred time is the temporal dimension of the sacred bubble surrounding moments of experiencing the kami. At such times one is more thoughtful, caring and 'pure' in one's thinking: time slows down. Once out of the sacred time zone, however, attention is resumed to focusing on daily issues and worries. Sacred time is also the time calendrically designated for public worship of the kami: matsuri and holidays. At such times one remembers one's social interdependency by participating publicly in celebration. Hierarchies and distancing formalities are resumed the next day, however. Just as we can speculate upon the potential extension of sacred space to the entire world it spiritually represents, we might wonder whether the extra care and communal solidarity exhibited during sacred time could be spread further to encompass more of daily life.

Why identify 'Japanese' with 'Shinto'?

In postulating that the beliefs and values exhibited in Shinto spirituality might play a fundamental role in developing a post-modern Japanese ecological attitude, it could be argued that I have implicitly suggested that being Shinto is an intrinsic part of being Japanese. While, strictly speaking, this is not the case^{liii}, there are several reasons for leaving this assumption as it stands.

Shinto is unique to and native to Japan^{liv}. Although a minority would profess to 'being' Shinto^{lv}, in some shape or form practically all Japanese people engage in Shinto ritual. Furthermore, many Shinto values have found their way into the national value system

and even into the value systems of other religions, becoming second nature to the Japanese. Finally, despite its disastrous finale, the nationalist religious movement that culminated in State Shinto did impose itself at the national level to leave a lingering religious unity and continuity to Shinto.

An Ecological Attitude

‘Ecological’

The term ‘ecology’ has its etymological roots in the two Greek words: oikos, meaning ‘house’ and logos meaning ‘discourse’. Taken literally, then, ‘ecology’ speaks about one’s dwelling – about how one lives at home. Contemporaneously, the Chambers Dictionary defines ‘ecology’ as ‘the scientific study of plants, animals or peoples and institutions, in relation to their environment’^{lvi}. The modern definition retains some of the connotations of ‘home’ in using the words ‘in relation to’ here. The word ‘environment’ on the other hand, refers to that which is in our environs, around us.

Despite the encouragement of writers such as Cooper to consider a richer sense of ‘environment’^{lvii}, I chose the qualifier ‘ecological’ over ‘environmental’ firstly due to the connotations of detachment that the latter radiates. ‘Environmental’ is more implicating of anthropocentrism by placing the observer^{lviii} in the centre. It is the slightly more decentralised slant of ‘ecological’ that appeals with an idea of the observer being embedded in the world, rather surrounded by it. Moreover it suggests that other^{lix} members of the world are similarly embedded and ‘at home’. ‘Ecological’ retains the flavour of internally related constituents rather than extricably distinct wholes. Finally and more subjectively, the etymological derivation of ‘ecological’ implies that ideally one should be at ease with the world within which one is embedded, not forcing oneself into relations with a separate and foreign body. Admittedly, choosing ‘ecological’ over ‘environmental’ may betray certain assumptions regarding the nature of the human relationship with the environment. Furthermore, it is clearly the more appropriate term to be using when involving Shinto, whose values of interconnectedness and views of humans as part of nature clearly suit this term better.

‘Attitude’

As to why I have chosen to pursue the basis of an ecological attitude rather than ethic, I’d like to respond with three points:

1. My aim is not to suggest a strict code of conduct or even to lay out a definitive list of values from which to draw a Japanese ethic. I hope merely to suggest a basis for a way of relating to, thinking about and behaving towards the natural world, from which a stricter ethic might eventually – but not necessarily - crystallise.
2. I wish to discover a way of relating to the world, particularly in order to address the environmental problems apparent in the 21st century, rather than attempting to justify why that particular way is ‘right’ (aside from attending to the recognised problems.)
3. The term ‘attitude’ is particularly appropriate to a Shinto-based or even Japanese-based approach which has a fundamental attitude of its own in *Makoto no Kokoro*. This missing element of the Shinto account given above is most appropriately introduced here.

Makoto no Kokoro

We have mentioned already the importance of a clear, pure mind when passing through and beyond the torii. Encountering the presence of the kami is only possible if one’s heart and mind are open to experiencing the awing power of the natural world. This pureness of heart and mind is called ‘*makoto no kokoro*’ or simply ‘*magokoro*’^{lx}. ‘*Kokoro*’ is somewhat difficult to translate, meaning both ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ – a kind of mindful life force of the individual or ‘mindful heart’^{lxii}. ‘*Makoto no*’ translates as ‘of truth’ or ‘of sincerity’. ‘*Kokoro*’ alone is yet another example of the difference between the ‘Western’ and Japanese mindsets. The Cartesian worldview typically divides body from mind, whereas its Japanese counterpoint considers the two as one. *Kokoro* can be thought of as a kind of ‘resonant responsiveness within the overlap between the world and the person’^{lxii}. Therefore, to be *makoto no kokoro* is to respond truthfully or sincerely to the world in a given situation. A person who responds to the world

sincerely with a mindful heart is receptive to the holographic entry point and breaks down the boundaries between self and the world in order to experience its full power. Walking through the torii thus, a person will feel a nestled part of an interconnected whole, embedded in the world: at home.

Makoto no kokoro is perhaps the most fundamental virtue of Shinto^{lxiii} and similarly of other religions in Japan. Rather than being understood as a code of conduct, its existence as a sincere and accurate responsiveness to the world is better described as an attitude. This concludes my reasoning behind choosing to pursue an 'ecological attitude' over 'environmental ethic'.

The Lack of and Need for an Ecological Attitude in Japan

As we shall see in a little more detail later, there are environmental movements, organisations and individuals in contemporary Japan which serve as examples of people who are beginning to be part of a shift in approach to the natural environment. However, there is no broad sweeping, collective attitude which is capable of rising to the ecological issues of 21st century Japan. A national attitude is necessary due to the pervasive degradation of the natural environment throughout the country and the fact that other parts of the world are suffering ecologically as a result of Japanese ecopolitics (or lack thereof). Some of the specific problems will be outlined later, but suffice it to say here that Japan is rife with ecological problems, many worsening^{lxiv}, and this constitutes proof that an appropriate attitude does not exist. From an eco-centric point of view, these problems also constitute the need for such an attitude. For weightier, anthropocentric reasons for this need, we can firstly look at the lives and quality of lives lost in the Minamata and Ashio disasters. The irresponsible use and damage of natural resources and lives affected, coupled with such problems as the aging population, threaten the economy and political power of Japan. Plundering other countries will inevitably result in further political problems and contribute significantly to the global ecological crisis. The great lack of and need for a better Japanese ecological ethic, while not comprehensively deduced here, is undeniable.

Romantically advocating religious atavism?

I am not advocating a re-conversion of the Japanese people to Shinto. In particular I certainly do not wish to condone the kind of nationalism which gripped Shinto and the nation in the first half of the twentieth century. Nor am I proposing that a possible Japanese ecological ethic be founded on Shinto values and practices alone. While hoping that my understanding of the nature of contemporary Shinto and the role it plays in Japanese society is not unrealistic or naïve, what I am hoping to show is much less radical than it might appear. I am aiming to demonstrate that some of the values and practices typical of Shinto spirituality, being already second nature to most Japanese, could be easily mobilised as contributors to the beginnings of an ecological behavioural shift appropriate to natural and human environmental needs.

II. Nature, the Japanese and Identifying with the World

Nature and the Japanese

Through centuries of kami worship, the Japanese have developed what they feel to be a close relationship with nature^{lxv}. This closeness often extends to a sense of being 'at one' with nature and natural phenomena^{lxvi}. Certainly, as a people they have unrelentingly exhibited an intimacy with nature^{lxvii}, not only through their religions and in particular Shinto, but also through the plethora of artistic traditions endemic to Japan.

Gardens

We have already touched upon the meticulously groomed traditional gardens as a typical example of Japanese natural aesthetics. Whereas the miniature and decorative character of garden arrangements can be seen as ruthless subjugation and controlling of nature, the careful modifications can also be seen as 'drawing out' selected aesthetic qualities already visible in the plant to the attentive eye.

Music

Nature plays an important part in the philosophy behind the playing of traditional music. If a personal example can be permitted, for the duration of my stay in Japan I studied the *Shakuhachi*^{lxviii}. At one of my first lessons, the teacher demonstrated to me the surprising variation in sound attainable from a perforated wooden tube. Such capacity for timbre alteration could produce in even the shortest of phrases a progression from 'whispering, reedy piano [growing] to a ringing metallic forte only to sink back into a cotton-wrapped softness, ending with an almost inaudible grace note, seemingly an afterthought'^{lxix}. The teacher then explained that the different sounds of the *Shakuhachi* were the sounds of different natural phenomena. One of these was, unsurprisingly, the sound of the wind. In playing the instrument by using the 'wind' from his/her own lungs and trying to make a sound from it that most accurately mimicked the wind itself, there is a musical equivalence between the aesthetic

intentions of the shakuhachi player and the Japanese gardener. He/she is drawing out from the wind a sound that makes it even more evocative of itself to the human mind than when it was just 'raw' wind. My breath becomes a more wind-like wind.

Poetry

Basho and Mirroring the World

In the Japanese literary tradition there are few who tower so high as the pinnacle that is Basho at his haiku-writing best. We can take, for example a haiku that is probably his most famous:

Breaking the silence
Of an ancient pond,
A frog jumped into water –
A deep resonance.^{lxx}

A reader unaccustomed to haiku may find even this, considered a masterpiece, quaint though simplistic and trivial. Even to the more experienced haiku student it is at first sight an objective study of natural cause and effect: a frog jumping into a pond. The greatness of the poem, however, resides in its symbolism achieved while in no way presenting itself as symbolic. Upon further consideration we come to realise that the still pond is at the same time the meditative mind of the poet and both are disrupted by the same external disturbance. It is a perfect metaphor of the subject mirroring the world. Its power is further enhanced by adding unifying the meditative reader with the mind of the poet and the pond he describes.

Basho's own explanation and advice regarding this poem follows on from these realisations:

'Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and

do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one – when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural - if the object and yourself are separate – then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit.^{lxxi}

From *Makoto no Kokoro* to *Koto no Kokoro*

Basho reminds us here of *makoto no kokoro* - the Shinto virtue of truthful resonant responsiveness to the world. With *makoto no kokoro*, a person reflects ‘the whole in themselves and thereby [reflects] themselves into the whole’^{lxxii}. Can the same be said of a poem which responds truthfully to the world? Indeed, Motoori Norinaga^{lxxiii}, an important Shinto philosopher, spoke of *koto no kokoro*: the kokoro of words. *Koto no kokoro* is the spirituality of words as expressed in their written form and sound. What made it possible for Norinaga to reason that words and poetry could have kokoro was their overlap, their internal relation with humans, whose kokoro we have already discussed. Following this line of thought, Norinaga pointed out that as a consequence, all overlapping entities have their own kokoro – not just living beings and plants, but also non-living things, including language.^{lxxiv} The world can respond to itself and to us just as we can respond to it.

When read with an appropriate responsiveness, then, the combined kokoro of poet, poet’s world and listener is able to create true poetry with a sincere, wholehearted, mutually responsive triangular internal relationship. In *makoto no kokoro*, the world shines through and reveals its power. This cannot happen if, as Basho stresses, ‘your feeling is not natural – if the object and yourself are separate’. Likewise, the shakuhachi player must be inseparable from the wind when seeking that specific timbre; the gardener must not feel separate from his garden. In Japanese art, there should be no sense of division: everything is part of the same interconnecting whole and the subject/object dichotomy dissolves. Japanese artistic traditions are evidence of this aesthetic and importance of being one with nature existing throughout the ages to the present day.

Unconscious Identification

The Japanese identification with nature – which undoubtedly goes hand in hand with the age-old beliefs and internal relations with kami^{lxxv} - is so ingrained that it is largely unquestioned and inexplicable upon further analysis. Close observation of seasonal changes plays a large role in contemplation of nature in Japan – evident in many activities of second nature such as the quasi-religious celebration of the cherry blossom or the fact that no letter or poem is complete without an opening reference to the present season. On a personal note, a question I was often asked in polite conversation in rural Japan was whether Britain or Switzerland^{lxxvi} has four seasons. Despite my responding in the affirmative, I would usually then be subject to a brief explanation of the four seasons in Japan. Upon reflection this could demonstrate several things. Firstly, it both confirms the Japanese self-awareness in terms of the importance of the seasons (and by extension, nature) to their identity while at the same time betraying an unwillingness to ‘share’ that identity with another culture. It underlines the subconscious idea that Japan is unique in its relationship to the seasons and nature. This would seem to imply that the idea amongst the Japanese people of their identification with nature is so entrenched that it has become fundamental to their self identity. Subsequent generations of foreign scholars of Japan have been particularly receptive to Japanese advocacy of this identity to the point of further convincing the Japanese of its veracity. As a consequence, these ‘beliefs concerning the general sensitivity of the Japanese people to nature kill off the incentive for the Japanese themselves to ask any further specific questions’^{lxxvii}. This is certainly not to say that a relationship, perhaps even a unique relationship, does not exist but it signals the possibility of a situation where a gulf might arise between actual beliefs and beliefs of what those beliefs are – or more succinctly, a gulf between behaviour and belief.

We can draw an interesting parallel between the unthinking assumptions of Japanese ‘at one-ness’ with the world and examples of daily interaction with the kami. Kasulis relates a brief encounter with a Tokyo businessman who has stopped to offer a hurried prayer on at a shrine on his way to work.

“Why did you stop at the shrine?”

“I almost always stop on the way to work.”

“Yes, but why? Was it to give thanks, to ask a favour, to repent, to pay homage, to avoid something bad from happening? What was your purpose?”

“I don’t really know. It was nothing in particular.”

“Well, then, when you stood in front of the shrine with your palms together, what did you say, either aloud or silently to yourself?”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“Did you call on the name of the kami to whom the shrine is dedicated?”

“I’m not really sure which kami it is.”^{lxxviii}

Such empty responses could lead to accusations of merely going through the motions, denying an attitude of Makoto no Kokoro. Indeed, another meaning of the word matsuri, used primarily for the boisterous communal celebration of the kami passing amongst the people, is ‘meaningless ritual’ or ‘ostentations display’^{lxxix}. But I think it would be presumptuous to jump to such conclusions as ‘if one cannot explain exactly what something is then perhaps it does not exist’^{lxxx}. The business man after all did do something as he stopped to pray. The ritual is part of existential Shinto spirituality and does not become worthless just because the person doing it cannot explain it. On the other hand I would be equally cautious of an attitude of ‘what we cannot speak of we must pass over in silence.’^{lxxxii} There is plenty to learn from - and much to be wary of – those things which lie between the stages of thought and action^{lxxxii}. In the case of this essay we are exploring the essence of the rift and possibility of a link between Shinto values and ecological behaviour.

III. A Holistic Attitude of Respect for Nature

From kami to biocentrism...

The Shintoist beliefs that natural elements are manifestations of worldly spirits, along with the resultant interconnected human identification with nature, leads smoothly to a form of biocentric egalitarianism resembling that advocated by Paul Taylor. Taylor, following Schweitzer, goes beyond sentience-based environmental ethics. He argues that each living thing is of equal inherent worth - and therefore to be accorded intrinsic value - by reason of its possessing a 'teleological centre of life', pursuing its own good in its own distinct manner. His 'biocentric outlook' has four main parts which are very reminiscent of a Shinto outlook:

1. Humans are members of the community of life on the same terms which apply to nonhumans.
2. The Earth's natural ecosystems are a complex web of interconnecting elements, each part interdependent up the others.
3. Each individual centre of life in its own way pursues its own good.
4. It is incorrect and prejudiced to claim human superiority in terms of inherent worth.

If we assume the biocentric outlook, concludes Taylor, then we are already acting as moral agents and are thus 'adopting a certain ultimate environmental moral attitude toward the natural world'. He calls this attitude 'respect for nature'^{lxxxiii}. In adopting an attitude of respect for nature one is morally bound to promoting and protecting the good of all living things as individuals. Obligations to groups, species and ecosystems are derived from the interests of their individual constituents^{lxxxiv}.

From a Shinto perspective, the kami which permeate the living world are spirits with very human traits who can be angry, happy and even die. They therefore need to be treated delicately, often placated, and looked after, too. In abstract form, to compare this Shinto worldview with the biocentric outlook might appear to be missing the point:

a tree doesn't need street parties or sake – it needs nutrients, water, space and sunlight. However, this is to oversimplify the characteristics of kami, who simultaneously manifest themselves in natural objects thereby requiring the attention specific to each object as presented to us. Certainly, a shinboku sacred tree will be made sure to receive all its practical, natural needs as well as its spiritual ones and doubtless live a long and healthy life. Taylor would remind us that his biocentrism is egalitarian and not selective in giving only certain impressive natural beings special treatment as does Shinto in practice^{lxxxv}. The misunderstanding here is the spiritual role of the venerated natural objects, acting as holographic entry points to the kami-filled natural whole. However, this does not have to inevitably lead to a spiritual hierarchy in practice. These selected objects can act merely as representative for the larger biotic whole and the way it should be treated. Any eventual Shinto attitude of respect for nature must recognise this representative role.

...and beyond

However, if we take Shinto as the leader here, stopping at biocentric egalitarianism would be premature. Shinto of course believes in kami permeating all parts of the natural world, not just those that are alive. It goes beyond the life-centred to include non-living things – such as water, rocks, cherry blossom and celestial bodies – and natural phenomena - from rivers, mountains and the land itself, to lightning, seasons and the wind.

Leopold and Ecocentrism

Aldo Leopold also went beyond biocentrism, although in a slightly different way, in his own search for a 'Land Ethic'. Leopold urged his readers to realise their symbiotic relationship with the earth^{lxxxvi} and to push back the ethical 'frontier' in order to value the biotic community, 'the land', in itself. Of this community, which includes the living and the non-living elements of nature, we are equal members. It is not, I think, an unrealistic stretch of the imagination to conclude that a similarly all-encompassing respect for nature could be derived from Shintoist beliefs. However, Leopold valued the community, the ecosystem, first: individuals are of value only as they are parts of the community. In contrast, the kind of ecological values drawn from kami beliefs

would, like Taylor, consider the individual as of primary value and communities, species of value only due to the individuals that make them up. I will suggest later why a Shinto-influenced attitude of respect for nature might actually be able to accommodate both the top-down and bottom-up valuations of 'the land'.

Religiously, the belief of spirits in nature is a form of animism, and advocating a rejuvenation of such beliefs would not be consistent with the aims of this essay. It is the implicit values which accompany these beliefs that are of principle interest. Most of these values are visible in Japanese daily life, but they also reveal themselves in more promising, structured forms. One particularly tantalising example of this can be found in the work and thought of Japanese biologist Kenji Imanishi.

Kenji Imanishi

Well before the likes of Hawking and Dawkins in Britain, Imanishi's short book, 'The World of Living Things'^{lxxxvii} had a massive impact in Japan at all levels of society upon publication in 1941^{lxxxviii}. Imanishi's distinctive view of nature and how it should be studied challenged the western-dominated international views and, in laying the groundwork for much of the subsequent scientific, ecological and philosophical scholarship in Japan, was also prescient of modern ecological studies. His refreshing alternative to modern neo-Darwinism is 'essentially...an ethic of how to relate to and understand nature'^{lxxxix}. His fundamental starting point was his perspective that everything developed through internal differentiation of one thing^{xc} and therefore all are related 'in terms of blood, soil or living space'^{xcj}.

As a biologist he felt strongly that natural objects could not be studied satisfactorily without examining them living in their natural environment. This was because he considered the subject and its environment to be part of each other, 'flowing into each other'. Another object of Imanishi's criticism, which often accompanied the decontextualised study of natural things, was the habit of studying the bodies of dead animals and plants as representatives of the former live versions. As a result he felt that biology was often the study of dead things with 'life' tacked on afterwards. Rather

than study the world as full of mechanically moving objects propelled by 'instinct', in his own biological explorations he wanted to start with the 'living' of things, with their own intentionality as central to the organisms. One of the characteristics of living things as opposed to dead ones is that they move and/or grow. However, their nature is not to move or grow in a lab, but 'out in the world', and so understanding those living things requires seeing them in their environment. Thus, environment is an extension, or part of, the living self, of life.^{xcii}

Imanishi also disagreed with the Darwinist interpretation of evolution as motivated primarily by 'survival of the fittest'. He saw rather much more cooperation between individuals, groups and species than conflict. Originating from one whole, it made sense to him that rather than fighting for space living things existed as part of an ever-harmonising whole^{xciii}.

Of further interest to our purpose here is Imanishi's reasoning that both so-called living and non-living things, can be described as having a 'life' and 'mind' of their own, regardless of whether they are 'alive'. He concludes this partly from following on from his first principle that all things came from one origin and that therefore 'living things', and 'non-living things' have a common origin – they are related. Non-living things, like living things, can still be encountered and have their own environment without which their story is incomplete.

Incidentally, the conservative establishment has endorsed Imanishi's distinct worldview as being an example of the 'unique Japanese approach' to science, as have the *nihonjinron*^{xciv} writers, for their own political and ideological means. However, this should not be confused with, nor detract from, the way in which his scientific and philosophical thought inspired non-academics in Japan. This inspiration must have been partly due to its agreement and compatibility with the world view of the Japanese people. Furthermore, his concepts of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of the world; his biocentric perspective; his idea of 'mind' in non-living things and his rejection of an intrinsic competitiveness to life all sit comfortably alongside the elements of Shinto we have covered.

Close to the surface

The purpose of mentioning Imanishi's work was to show an example of home-grown thought in a completely different discipline which was – unusual for academic texts – very popular with the general public and which seemed to pull together various aspects of a Shinto worldview. I would suggest that such examples and the enduring Shinto traditions show that the idea of the intrinsic value of natural beings resides at least semi-consciously in the minds of the Japanese. I contend that while the degraded state of the Japanese environment is not to be coveted by the conservationists of other countries and cultures, the potential in Japan for adoption of an attitude of respect for nature should be the envy of non-Japanese environmental ethicists.

IV. The Ecological Attitude in Practice

Implementing Values

We have already begun to look at how the values implicit in beliefs in kami might provide a basis for a holistic attitude of respect for nature. Although it is not the task of this essay to draw out a list of specific rules of conduct, considering some possible examples of these may be useful in convincing the reader of the practical difference the proposed attitude could make. To do so, we should return to the six themes of value we found in our examination of Shinto spirituality. How might these areas of value be substantiated in practice with regard to the ecological attitude advocated? We shall have a brief look at some suggestions for the everyday employment of these values, at an individual and community level.

1. Naturalness

The value of naturalness would already be implicit in a holistic attitude of respect for nature anyway. Aside from using this traditional value to encourage care of nature and animals and natural objects in general, however, there are other ways in which the Japanese fondness for naturalness, especially cultured naturalness, might be used to create a more environmentally friendly society.

One example would be the impact a heightened awareness of naturalness could make to Japan's unsustainable demand for timber. Its traditional use of wood for construction and disposable chopsticks has permanently scarred the face of both its own and other countries' landscapes. Taking advantage of Japan's aesthetic appreciation for a natural 'look', and remembering the appreciation for cultured naturalness, one could advocate replacing the materials for such products with something more sustainable yet which maintained a traditional appearance. One already sees examples of this in Japan. I have stumbled upon convincingly 'wooden' hand rails, made of concrete and/or plastic, which deceived not just the eye but also

the sense of touch. One comes across similar materials used to give a 'natural' setting in Japanese onsen^{xcv}. The greatest accomplishment would be to make a similar move to washable chopsticks which maintained the natural effect. Convincing people to do this would be a much harder task than just making such chopsticks. It would be convincing the public to use – and society to adapt – to such a move which would prove the real challenge. One would have to deal with the opposing Shinto value of purity, which has created a culture of renewing chopsticks at every meal.

The issue of nature as cultured nature also arises as a threat to the 'real' parts of nature being unnecessarily manipulated. For example, it is not easy to find Japanese rivers that do not have concrete banks or bottom. As a result, rivers are no longer allowed to naturally migrate from their courses over time in order to adapt to their environments, and to the naturalists eye, at least, they are an eyesore. This is often given as an example of the frivolity of the modern Japanese attitude towards nature. However, given the history of natural disasters as a result of rivers flooding the crowded inhabited plains, it is unreasonably harsh to do so. Suddenly removing the concrete banks from all rivers would now cause human and environmental devastation. One might argue in return that much of the flooding threat is a by-product of excessive deforestation higher up in the rivers' courses. The threat of flood as it stands, however, is a reality, and I would propose instead that potential implementation of the value of naturalness might take the form of restricting unnecessary concreting of river segments that pose little flooding threat.

Nevertheless, building upon its tradition of cultured nature could be fundamental in Japan's practical applications of an attitude of respect for nature. The future of Japanese and world conservation will increasingly be about integrating the human and the natural as harmoniously as possible rather than separating the two as per the controversial Anglo-Saxon-inspired practice of supposedly untouched nature reserves. The nature-human harmony displayed by Shinto and Zen-inspired architecture serves as a possible glimpse into this future^{xcvi}.

2. Simplicity

Japan's lack of inhabitable land has resulted in an economy of space which makes most other countries in this regard appear ostentatious. As a result, everything is geared towards taking up as little space as possible. This already creates a demand for a simpler style of living than might have been the case were there more space available. There are of course other spheres of life to which this value of simplicity could be brought in order to further discourage waste. A form of extravagance that the visitor to Japan is usually quick to note is the excessive packaging used for any product purchased as a gift. On top of already grandiose packaging by the manufacturer, the retailer might easily add several extra layers of wrapping and bags which, when considered in terms of national volume, must have a significant negative environmental consequence. Convincing a change in this and similar wasteful traditional behaviour however would be difficult given the opposing traditional importance accorded to the wrapping of presents and presentation in general. Perhaps efforts could be made to promote wrapping materials made of recycled paper or from alternative renewable resources

3. Taboo

Death and Destruction

The Shintoist taboo concerning death and the dead would make using it in the environmentalist's favour problematic due to the unpleasantness surrounding its mere mention in Japan. If this dilemma could be surpassed, the historical negative association with death in Shinto could play a significant role in a Shinto-based ecological attitude. Without wanting to state the obvious, an attitude of respect for nature would aim to minimise unnecessary death and harm to any species or ecosystem – human, non-human, even non-living. A raised awareness amongst the Japanese of the plight of their endangered marine mammals; the reality of the ecological distress caused by heavy metals in their rivers and seas; the death and destruction of South-East Asian forests and the people and wildlife dependent upon them; and the fatal consequences of purchasing endangered animal products and

other lethal implications of ecologically disrespectful behaviour – all might be boosted by a more explicit association with the unsavoury subject of death.

Impurity and the Feminine

Another taboo subject is that of uncleanliness and impurity. How the values of purity and purification can be integrated into an ecological attitude we shall discuss next. It should be mentioned *here* that Shinto taboo plays a part in latent subjugation of women and the feminine in Japanese society. The traditional view of menstruation as unclean results in many women still avoiding the shrine grounds while menstruating (although adherence to the rule is diminishing^{xcvii}). Similarly, female members of the Shinto priesthood are increasingly in compliance with the rule. However, as can be seen by the small number of Shinto priestesses, the role of women in the native religion is minimal, particularly in the higher ranks. This inequality is reflected in Japanese society as a whole. Such a social and religious situation would have eco-feminists' alarm bells ringing immediately - and rightly so.

Motoori – Celebrating Life and the Feminine

Motoori Norinaga, an early figure in the Native Studies movement that eventually culminated in State Shinto, tried to address this dangerous sexual imbalance more than two-hundred years ago. His target was the samurai philosophy, Bushido, 'the way of the warrior'. Bushido was intellectually rooted in a syncretism of Confucianism, Shinto and Buddhist philosophies and so being not completely distinct from Shinto, was also capable of influence upon Shinto thought. Bushido encouraged men to overcome their essentially 'feminine'^{xcviii} humanity and adopt the 'masculine'^{xcix} warrior ideology. This encouraging of men to deny their human nature was of great concern to Norinaga as it allowed no place for *makoto no kokoro*. It denied men the opportunity of sincere expression of their 'mindful hearts'. In doing so, all that was worldly became the feminine and therefore something to be controlled, dominated and kept at bay^c.

The other major worry of Norinaga as a Shinto scholar was the glorification and obsession with death essential to Bushido. He saw the warrior mentality - advocating death and the masculine over life and the feminine - as a threat to a society reflective of Shinto values. He located these values in the earliest identifiable literary roots of Shinto, including the Kojiki. Unfortunately, in going back to the 'source' he encouraged those who came after him to follow suit. Starting from the work of his 'disciple'^{ci}, Atsutane, the subsequent scholars of the Native Studies movement manipulated the interpretations of early texts to find justifications for an increasingly aggressive nationalism that would have shocked Norinaga^{cii}. Unsurprisingly, his sensitive appeals for a rediscovery of the female and a rejection of the glorification of death were sidelined and forgotten in such a climate.

Norinaga's approach serves to show that asking for a redressing of the gender balance in Shinto would not be unrealistic at all and could even be seen as correcting a meandering from the religion's true 'path'. Doing so might act as a catalyst for the rest of society and in assuming a leading, progressive role would probably reward the religion with more popular attention. Embracing the feminine as an equal part of the world would hopefully have the ecological consequences espoused by eco-feminist writers and would be a critical part of a holistic attitude of respect for nature. Moreover, reviving criticism of the destructive warrior mentality might also help to allay fears that adopting Shinto ideals should be automatically associated with imperial militarist ambitions.

Removing Stigma

Eliminating the restrictions stigmatising femininity might also allow for a reconsideration of the link between sickness, death and impurity – at least in a more practical way. Certainly it would be valuable in understanding and appreciating the role of sickness and death in an ecosystem, where life in one part of the system often depends on the death or sickness of another part.

There are certainly barriers to a totally gender-balanced Shinto. The myth of impurity and death originating in the female kami Izanagi can not be amended, and similar

taboos in Buddhism mean they are doubly ingrained in Japanese culture. However, the mythical role of Eve in genesis has not totally impeded Christian feminists from recent successes and Japanese Buddhism may follow suit if Shinto were to make the first move.

As a final point under the heading of taboo, it should be underlined that one of the prime characteristics of Shinto is a celebration of life. It is a religion which worships this world, and not something which comes after or that lies beyond. It chooses this world as it is presented to us and any successful attitude of respect for nature ultimately requires such a worldly outlook.

4. Purity and Purification

One would think and hope that applying the concepts of purity and purification to an ecological attitude would be easier than integrating some of the other Shinto values. The problems of river, sea and air pollution fall directly under this category and constitute some of Japan's greatest environmental challenges - past, present and future. Furthermore, the Shinto value of purity is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture at the most fundamental level. The heightened Japanese sense of hygiene and their bathing habits have earned them the reputation of being the world's cleanest people^{ciii}. Public everyday cleansing activities are not always grounded on practical rationale. They are a rare example of ritual that has originated in religion and spread – as ritual – to the secular. In many institutions and private companies cleaning is a daily routine, where everyone participates at times specifically scheduled into the quotidian agenda. It is not uncommon to see people at these times 'cleaning' something that does not require it^{civ}. If another personal example can be forgiven: in the year I spent teaching at a state senior high school in Japan, not one day that passed without the mid-morning twenty minutes of cleaning time, when all staff and students dropped whatever they were doing to participate. At my assigned spot on the grass outside the reception of the school, it was common to see students 'raking' the spotless lawn, with not a dead leaf or twig in sight.

It is worth noting that despite the love of bathing, the Japanese are much less wasteful of water than one might expect. A Japanese household will typically fill the bathtub and after thoroughly scrubbing themselves clean using a tap, shower or bucket, take it in turns to bathe in the same water over the course of an evening. The bath water is shared even with guests. What with these habits of sharing and cleanliness already second nature to most Japanese; extrapolating to actively pursuing a cleaner natural and human environment looks promisingly feasible.

The concept of purity as newness can be damaging and wasteful to the environment, as touched upon above regarding the issue of disposable chopsticks. The familiar snap of the gastronomic ritual that is the splitting of a fresh pair of chopsticks^{cv} represents another place in daily life where the value of purity has taken firm root. A public awakening to the environmental damage done at home and abroad to sustain this luxury might help people to see the wood as not so 'pure'. Working with the value of naturalness, as suggested above, would be helpful in finding an alternative to this wasteful habit. I am unaware of the feasibility of reusing chopstick wood to produce new chopsticks, but perhaps the concept of purity and 'starting afresh' might sit comfortably with recycling in this manner. The Japanese are certainly sticklers for other forms of recycling.

5. Separateness and community

The double-sided coin that is the Shinto value of separateness as part of a community would be integral to the proposed attitude of respect for nature. It could work principally on two levels. Firstly, ecological attention would start at the local level, responding to the particular needs and nature of the immediate natural and social worlds. In fact, the most effective examples of Japanese environmental movements are mostly highly localised.^{cvi} Perhaps the more challenging application would be instilling an ecological respect for the wider community, especially at the national and international levels. Despite an undeniable sense of regional and national identity in Japan, and a relatively high level of international awareness, it often betrays its prehistoric roots as a highly compartmentalised society. This results in blinkered

ignorance of the problems next door – particularly environmental problems - even if they are responsible for the inflicted damage. Too often an attitude of ‘what can’t be seen doesn’t exist’ prevails in social, political, environmental and other areas of Japanese life. This is to some extent a generally global human failing, and yet seems at odds with the communal solidarity integral to Japan. Better understating of the fact that what happens at home can have consequences in another’s home, might help to improve wider communal sensitivity.

Japan has proved with its meteoric rise to economic superstardom that it can mobilise its tradition of communal solidarity to move towards a common goal. If it can similarly emulate the economic, industrial and technological achievements of the now complete Meiji Restoration with the much needed Ecological Restoration^{cvii} the results would surely be an international example to follow^{cviii}. That the former restoration largely incurred the need for the latter does reveal weaknesses in the communal structure of the type we have noted here, however. Hopefully the attitude necessary for a total Environmental Restoration would by definition remedy that weakness.

It is worth mentioning here the use the media could be put to in establishing a national ecological attitude in Japan. The power and effect of the media in Japan is impressive and the rate at which new trends and crazes it promotes come and go is startling. Its potential for promoting (the right kind) of respect for nature should not be underestimated. The business incentive, if not state sponsored, for such an ecological campaign would of course have to be there for this to happen.

6. Intoxication

Sake is made, of course, from rice – the omnipresent pride of Japanese agriculture. The word for rice still in the paddy is *ine* from the characters for living (*i*) and breath (*ne*). This living breath was considered of divine kami status and thus the post-harvest offering of sake to the kami is not only about pleasing the kami with a good drink (as outlined above) but primarily a token of thanks to the kami for providing the nourishment essential to life for the Japanese. The sacred relationship of sake and its

symbolism of vital preciousness is integral to its ritual use in binding the emperor to the land and his people (and imperial right) as it is to the union of man and wife in Shinto ceremony. It invites the kami into the body and connects people and their promise to the larger world^{cx}. The special, yet slightly dwindling^{cx} status of sake in contemporary Japan is a sign that people still feel appreciation for the agricultural gifts of the land. This appreciation could be harnessed to bolster biotic awareness of the value of the earth and avoidance of waste.

The aforementioned entertainment and much needed relaxation provided by the enjoyment of sake are possible thanks to a productive relationship between humans and their environment. Without promoting such activity to the point of over-consumption and waste, if appreciation of the fact that the roots of entertainment lie in the abundant gifts of the earth can be maintained by all even during the more intoxicated times of life, then the promise of an authentic attitude of respect for nature as a whole is all the more hopeful.

The preceding short segments provide examples of the way in which each spiritual value might be manifested in a holistic ecological attitude of respect for nature in practice. Such an attitude would be enforced by maintaining the four further spiritual lessons we gleaned from Shinto: a sense of connectedness running through all worldly elements; an awareness and appreciation of the awe-inspiring nature of the world, to be found in its every part; the encouragement of ritual repetition in instilling good habits; and a sense of nostalgia that is enough to provide a guard against rash changes in custom, while resisting dewy-eyed romantic fantasy and conservative nationalism .

To this should be added the significance – as already discussed – of expanding the barriers of the concepts of sacred space and sacred time. Any aspect of the world can act as a holographic entry point revealing the power of the interconnected world of which it is a part, and respect for nature should not be restricted to specifically assigned times of day or year. If all the while we strive for makoto no kokoro and are ‘mindful with our hearts’ we realise that the nature within the sacred is representative

of and manifested in the world without. Both should be treated with respect and careful attention.

V. Japanese Environmental Problems

We have come this far without looking explicitly at the environmental problems that make a change in attitude and policy so urgent in Japan. Several have been touched upon along the way, but it would be worthwhile detailing some of those problems before concluding, in order to convince the reader that the predicament is both genuine and desperate. The environmental problems of Japan are linked and exacerbated by further critical economic and demographic (to name just two) issues which, for lack of space, I omit here.

Japan's recent history of ecological degradation is largely a story of toxic wastes. The century of terrible consequences to the natural and human environment caused by the Ashio copper mine epitomises this story and has given the area the dubious reputation of being the origin of the nation's environmental problems. Although it certainly was not Japan's first case of environmental pollution, the combined dumping and deforestation of the copper mining and refinery of the Furukawa company eventually destroyed the lives of whole communities, polluted large swathes of agricultural land and wiped out freshwater life in the Watarase river and beyond^{cxix}. It set the scene for future ecological disasters and the accompanying negligence of the political establishment whose unswerving commitment was to economic development at all costs.

Similar horrors to those of Ashio occurred at Besshi, Hitachi and Kosaka copper mines in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Of international renown is the Minamata disaster, in which a whole town was scarred forever by the consequences of methyl mercury mass pollution of its bay. Shortly after this, photochemical smog was present in Tokyo, asthma was dangerously on the rise in many industrial areas and further disastrous cases of methyl mercury marine pollution surfaced. In the 1960s and 1970s many rivers, lakes and sea bays became critically polluted by organic substances and industrial wastes. Eventually, the government passed laws which restricted some causes of pollution and protected the human – and to a lesser extent – non-human victims of pollution^{cxii}.

Japan still suffers from many hazardous environmental situations, however and is 'pockmarked with thousands of dangerous hotspots – from garbage dumps and clandestine toxic waste sites to aging incinerators belching dioxin'^{cxiii}. New ecological issues include groundwater contamination by organic solvents and the pollution caused by off-flowing organic chemicals lavished upon the ever-proliferating number of golf courses throughout the country. Japan's problems are not all home-grown – acid rain falls there thanks to the mass of pollution churned out by its near neighbours. But Japan is far from innocent itself when it comes to inflicting environmental distress upon others. The well documented mass destruction of South-East Asian forests in order to satisfy its massive appetite for wood products is proof of that^{cxiv}, as are recent foiled attempts to smuggle waste to the Philippines^{cxv}.

These are just a few of the many possible examples that could be given. However, it is already sufficient proof to demand a fundamental change in environmental outlook. I believe that a new outlook could at least in part be informed by looking at some of the values present in the Shinto tradition, that it could take the form of a holistic ecological attitude of respect for nature and that it would need to be assumed at the individual, communal and national levels in order to be truly effective for the nation. Such a proposal may seem far fetched and unrealistic, particularly in choosing Shinto values to form part of its basis. However, these values can already be found under the surface of society and if they could be harnessed as a unity and driven forwards together, the result would be one of the easier ways of establishing a quick and acceptable change. Leopold regarded ethics as arising out of environmental limitations upon freedom^{cxvi}. If a proto-ethical ecological attitude is to be adopted by Japanese people, then it would make much more sense that it arose from their own socio-cultural milieu than from a foreign source.

VI. Possible Objections

I admit that my proposals are in no way free from difficulties, and I have tried to point out or at least hint at some of these along the way. Nonetheless, I would not be surprised to encounter a variety of possible further objections. In order to counter some of those, I will outline six I can foresee might be made.

1. My proposal is problematic in recommending Shinto ideology be used once more on the national agenda, as it has a long history of being used as a political tool to propagate extreme nationalism and militarist ambitions.
2. Drawing from Shinto for this purpose is suspect, since Shinto has not developed an official stance towards development (or any sort of official singular doctrine/set of ethics).
3. To suggest such a conclusion betrays an overly romantic view and literary understanding of Shinto religious traditions and the social reality is quite different.
4. When it comes to environmental conservation, the famed Japanese 'love of nature' is a myth which refers to a love of narrow natural symbolism.
5. If Shinto can play such a fundamental part in a new Japanese environmental attitude, why is it that the Japanese have allowed their various environmental problems to become so serious? Surely there would be no such problems if Shinto were to hold the promise you say it does.
6. Even if you can explain 5, there remains the issue of Japan's relation to the outside world and for example its major contribution to SE Asian logging atrocities and dumping toxic substances in Philippines.

Response to 1

Talking of Shinto influence at the national level is a matter to be undertaken with extreme care and would be viewed very suspiciously if done irresponsibly. However, most major religions have similar skeletons in their closets. To renounce any consideration of a religion's ecological worth due to former nationalist ties would be to

rule out most religions from such potential discussions. Moreover, I propose harnessing Shinto values already semi-present in the everyday lives of Japanese people, not imposing a defunct ideology. Finally, Shinto ideology does not by default lead to aggressive nationalism. In fact, with reference to the thought of Motoori Norinaga, it could be concluded that the true nature of Shinto (if such a thing could be said to exist) is quite the opposite of what became militarist State Shinto, although the difference between the two philosophies may be the consequence of apparently slight shifts of emphasis in interpretation of the 'roots' of Shinto.

Response to 2

I do not see this kind of objection as relevant here. That contemporary Shinto has not yet managed to officially produce a unified ethical viewpoint on development (or on anything) does not really bear upon what I am proposing in this paper. I have only tried to locate elements of Shinto that might be of value to an attitude of respect to nature. I am not even proposing a distinct ethical viewpoint myself, but merely the beginnings of a proto-ethical approach.

Response to 3

Objections 3 and 4 are a little trickier than the first two. This approach, proposed by a non-native, will likely draw accusations of naïve romanticism and probably arrogance also^{cxvii}. Consequently, I tried to address this objection towards the beginning of the paper. There are texts that I have been very wary of for precisely these over-romantic and or inaccurate interpretations^{cxviii}. Equally, I have tried to avoid adhering too closely to the type of research from the pre-war era that – five years before the attack on Pearl Harbour – concluded ominously:

‘If Shinto be adequately explained in the world, Japan will have made a return balancing all that she has received from the world in the past, and more. For, once the full meaning of Shinto be realised by the world, it will vitally influence all progressive conceptions of spirituality, in every enlightened country, and will rescue divinity from the burial mounds of intellectualism and materialism^{cxix}’

Although my understanding of the 'social reality' will be far inferior to many, particularly to the Japanese people themselves, I have tried to base my discussion as much as possible on the more practical implications of Shinto spiritual values, along with some of my own everyday observations from the time I spent in Japan.

Response to 4

The academic debate on whether the Japanese 'love of nature' is a gross misunderstanding of the reality in Japan will undoubtedly continue for some time^{cxx}. It is certain that there are many contradictions between what is said in Japan and the environmental reality. Japanese conceptions of nature are full of metaphor and symbolism, it is true, and I think this can be explained at least partly by the phenomenon of the holographic entry point. While I would thus tentatively conclude that a Japanese 'love of nature' does exist, I still do not think this fourth objection really addresses my aim here. Whether there is a 'love' of nature is not an issue. What is of concern here is the existence of a relationship and identification with nature. However, most important is the reality of the values and themes that I am proposing as contributors to an attitude of respect for nature. Questioning the existence of those values would be much more critical to the goal of this paper.

There is a further related objection I can envisage arising as a consequence of this response: is the Japanese relationship towards the environment really any different to that of other cultures? This is a pertinent question and equally hard to respond to in brief. Apart from my own conviction that the Japanese relationship to nature is different from any other, as exhibited by countless attitudes and beliefs, I think it is inevitable that each culture has a unique relationship with its natural environment. That relationship is defined by the properties of the environment and the enviroined. At any one place and time, these two elements are unique and therefore the relationship formed at their interface will likewise be unique. Is it very different? Well, that would depend on what scale one was using. That it is different enough to merit discussion seems beyond question^{cxxi}.

Response to 5

This kind of objection is a little harder to respond to. However, I would first point out that modern Japanese culture and society are an amalgamation of an enormous number of contrasting behaviours and values originating from a plethora of differing sources. Scattered amongst those are influences that can be at least partly attributed to the Shinto tradition. That the melting pot of differing ideologies, combined at time with international pressures, has resulted in an attitude insufficiently respectful of nature cannot be blamed upon Shinto alone. Neither can one assume that simply because supposedly nature-friendly Shinto elements were present in the melting pot that they should have overpowered any other opposing forces. I am proposing, as much as is possible, that some of the values that can be thought of as Shinto be looked at in isolation, and furthermore that they can, consciously combined, make a positive contribution to the initial stages of a change in ecological attitude.

In addition to this, one might like to consider what differences those latent Shinto values might already have made to the state of Japan's natural environment. After all, Japan has been inhabited for millennia with proportionally very little inhabitable space available for accommodating its population. Its forests, despite being largely secondary growth, are nevertheless extensive, and as a whole the archipelago is still renowned for its natural beauty just as much as for its modern hyper-technological urban landscapes. Totman has remarked that "Japan today should be an impoverished, slum-ridden, peasant society subsisting on a barren, eroded moonscape characterised by bald mountains and debris-strewn lowlands."^{cxix} Might it be that some of the ecologically practical decisions made over the centuries by tribal and political leaders to avert such a 'hellscape' were at least in some part spurred by values found in kami-worshipping traditions? We can at least postulate that religious versions of events accompanied the practical explanations any time these decisions were made^{cxix}.

There are critics who would even accuse Shinto of specifically having helped to bring about the current dire ecological situation in Japan.^{cxxiv} This accusation is levelled largely at Shinto's contribution to the selection of only some places, individual plants and animals and seasonal characteristics for natural veneration while neglecting the larger whole. I would agree that Shinto probably has been a part of this metaphorical, narrow, Japanese 'love of nature' as exhibited particularly in Zen aesthetics. It does after all, single out unique places and beings for 'sacred status'. However, the idea of these natural exceptions acting as holographic entry points has been overshadowed in this narrow love of nature. Properly understood, natural phenomena as representatives of the sanctity of nature as a whole could act as eco-spiritual 'flagship species', revealing the value of the whole through their individual interconnectedness.

Response to 6

Japanese international ecological atrocities remain without question a very serious issue. However, there is no longer such a need for the inward-looking focus that was required to rebuild post-war Japan which propelled it to the heady heights it enjoys today as an industrialised heavyweight. The time is ripe for focusing outward, on one's environment - be it local or international. That Shinto and Japanese culture possess a strong sense of community gives hope to the possibility of extending this to maintain a more caring, respectful ecological attitude towards other nations.

VII. Case Studies of Japanese Ecological Movements

Case studies

To further allay any lingering doubts following my responses to these objections, particularly the latter four, I will give some brief examples of present Japanese environmental movements as starting points which show how people power can change the national policies. After all, an ecological attitude of respect for nature would be a function of united attitudes of individuals. Additionally, I will highlight motivations behind these movements which could be described as being related to Shinto values.

The Movement Opposing the Nuclear Waste Storage Facility, at Rokkasho in Aomori Prefecture

By choosing to invest heavily in advanced plutonium systems and nuclear power based on uranium, Japan faces a dilemma. In adopting the controversial use of nuclear power to replace the heavily-polluting oil and coal-burning energy sources, it is choosing a doubly risky option due to the unpredictability of earthquakes that might rupture containments of nuclear waste. In Rokkasho village, a recently constructed nuclear complex – one of the worlds largest – has two major purposes: dealing with low-level radioactive waste disposal and accommodating temporary high-level radioactive waste storage. A coalition group founded in the local community - formed originally to oppose the storage of nuclear waste in the area through relentless petitioning, protest and the filing of lawsuits - has had some success in restricting progress and expansion of the facilities. Although it is an ongoing project and far from achieving anything like closure of the plant, the most noteworthy aspect of the movement is its manifestation of a ‘new consciousness of Japanese grassroots environmental activists’^{CXXV}. It is one of the first such groups to adopt a philosophy that reaches beyond protection of the local and a ‘Not In My BackYard’ (‘NIMBY’) mentality. Instead they appeal for a change in their society’s energy consumption and

consideration for all victims thereof.^{cxxvi} Most relevant to this essay is the extension of the concept of community beyond the local or even national to include, in theory, all humans at risk. Second is the emphasis on frugality and simplicity in lifestyle that would result in reduced consumption.

The Movement to Save Kushiro and Hakata Bay Wetlands

Close to forty percent of wetlands of the Japanese archipelago have already fallen victim to industrial development, disposal of waste and land reclamation. The remaining sixty percent is similarly threatened. Two significant areas of that remainder are constituted in Kushiro and Hakata Bay. Citizens groups and organisations have been thus far largely successful in convincing authorities to refrain from these activities. Their arguments are largely conservation-based and centre around the value of the unique nesting and feeding conditions offered by marsh vegetation to various breeds of migratory birds, most significantly the endangered Japanese red-crowned crane. However, the birds serve as just one example of the natural value at stake. Maintenance of the wetlands has an inextricable impact upon water tables.^{cxxvii} The peoples' movements demonstrate an example of a resurgent ecocentric valuing of nature for its own sake which is increasingly – albeit gradually - endemic in Japan.

Anti-Golf and Tree Movements

Land subsidence, destruction of traditional agricultural land, chemical contamination of water supplies and the drying of ponds, lakes marshland and natural springs are just some examples of the environmental devastation caused by the development of golf courses. There are over two thousand courses in Japan – amounting to an environmentally significant amount of land being involved. A coalition of groups opposing local golf course construction has now united to form the 'Global Anti-Golf Movement'. Not only have they blocked hundreds of proposals for new courses nationwide, but its example has inspired groups in South-East Asia to found similar initiatives^{cxxviii}

The movement has also teamed together with 'The Live Tree Trust Movement' to concoct one of its tactics of blocking golf course construction in Gifu. By law, trees are sold separately from the land in which they are situated.^{cxxix} As a consequence, trees have certain rights^{cxxx} which are successfully appealed with the outcome of halting golf course construction.

The general opposition of golf course construction reveal values of purity (of chemically polluted water), naturalness (valuing a more 'natural' expanse of land than groomed greens and bunkers), community (against the exclusivity of golf course land and the impact upon the community that houses it) and simplicity (golf courses are an extravagance economically and spatially, especially in Japan). These are all values we found in Shinto spirituality. The separate rights for individual trees and the land may reflect the kami traditions of beliefs in distinct kami inhabiting each space in nature. A culture of panentheistic monotheism would be less likely to protect the parts over the whole.

Conclusion

I hope that I have shown that a holistic ecological attitude of respect for nature could be built at least partly upon the values revealed in Shinto spirituality. Shinto values are already close to the surface of society and if identified and mobilised as a unit, a swift alteration of attitude towards the natural world might be possible. To be truly effective, a change would need to be assumed at the individual, communal and national levels simultaneously – true to the Shinto ideal of the part being indivisible from the whole. Furthermore, the Shinto establishment must take a lead in redressing the gender balance, undoing the subjugation of the feminine and the natural. Traditionally-allotted bubbles of sacred space and time should be properly understood as providing examples of how the *whole* world should be treated at *all* times. Maintaining such heightened awareness should be associated with the pursuit of upholding a constantly *makoto no kokoro*. Only this way will a damagingly narrow conception of nature be avoided. Extending the world of the *kami* to a global level, other nations need not be seen as competitors or resources, but as equal parts of an ever-harmonising whole. Finally, Shinto has a head start as a tradition of worshipping this world. However, in its celebration of life, it must be able to look death in the face, so as not to be blind to human and environmental devastation. It has not been my objective to provide a list of concrete rules of conduct implied by a new ecological attitude. Nonetheless, I hope some of the examples of possible practical implications might have convinced the reader of the eventual feasibility of drawing up such a list.

Tanaka Shozo

As a final note I feel that this essay would be incomplete without mention of Tanaka Shozo, Japan's first great conservationist pioneer^{cxxxii}. In a life that spanned the Tokugawa and Meiji eras and socio-political upheaval that surrounded the transition between the two, he devoted every moment to social and environmental justice. The principal causes he championed were the rights of the people whose lives were ruined by the Ashio mine and the 'murdering' (as a result of damming) of Yanaka village. Spiritually he amalgamated a unique blend of native Shinto values, Buddhist

compassion, various new religions and even Christian charity. The Shinto values he exhibited in all aspects of his life. His love for his country was epitomised in never relinquishing his faith in the emperor. At the same time, he remained a constant critic of the nation's hostile foreign policy. He lived a life of extraordinary simplicity, sticking stubbornly close to nature and his agricultural roots, though offered various luxuries as a member of the newly formed Diet. He strove for purity of mind and action, and truth and transparency in politics – a perfect example of *makoto no kokoro* comparable with the likes of Gandhi and Danilo Dolci^{cxxxii}. Needless to say that as a leader of grass roots environmental, public health and human rights protest groups, he encouraged communal solidarity while retaining ultimate individuality as part of that whole. Growing accustomed to innumerable setbacks on the way to what little success he achieved in pursuing justice, Tanaka retained his motivation with an ever philosophical approach. His concept of disaster as a 'gateway to joy' should provide the Japanese – and all of us – with inspiration when pondering the prospects of an ecological restoration, particularly one inspired by Shinto in Japan.

i Shinto is translatable as 'The Way of the Gods', although, 'god' is only a very approximate translation of 'kami' and 'Way' not to be overemphasised.

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iv See, for example, Reader (1998), p. 30

v Grapard, p. 74

vi Teeuwen, p. 95

vii Teeuwen, pp. 95-96

viii Reader (1991), pp. 1-2

ix A word often translated as the 'gods' or 'spirits' of Shinto, but explained in more detail below.

x Kasulis, p.100

xi However, it has not remained unaffected by contacts with any of these ideologies and more than one scholar has speculated on Daoism having reached Japan early enough to have fundamentally affected the writing of the *Kojiki*. See Barret.

xii Kasulis, p. 92 and Sonoda, pp. 35-36.

xiii Ibid and Karan p. 12.

xiv Kasulis, pp. 95-103

xv 'To all extents and purposes' because, as explained in Bocking, this term is sometimes still used to refer to the contemporary ideology of holding Shinto to be integral to the state.

xvi Bocking p. 174

xvii Confirmed many times in Shinto literature. See, for example, Reader (1991), pp. 5-6 and Kasulis, pp. 29-31

xviii Kasulis, pp. 29-31

xix As described in Kasulis, p.2-3.

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- xx Ibid, p. 4-6.
- xxi Callicott, p.96
- xxii Reader (1991), p. 25
- xxiii Kasulis, p. 17
- xxiv Kasulis, p.11
- xxv Kasulis, p.11
- xxvi Nelson, p. 45
- xxvii Translated as 'Sacred Tree'
- xxviii Reader p. 84
- xxix For an idea of the variation in kami-types, see Vol. I of the Kojiki.
- xxx Ibid.
- xxxi See Kasulis pp. 74 - 76
- xxxii (uji + kami).
- xxxiii Kasulis, pp. 140-147
- xxxiv Related in Kasulis, pp. 79-80; Reader (1998), pp. 38-39 and Reader (1991), pp.25-26.
- xxxv (Temman Tenjin)
- xxxvi Kitano Shrine and another in Kyushu.
- xxxvii As expounded by Kasulis, pp. 38 – 70.
- xxxviii Although I feel uncomfortable using the term 'Western' in this sweeping manner, I have done so when I have felt can be excused in this essay. Western is not necessarily the antonym of 'Japanese'. It is used quite often in this area of literature, but I think is often unfair to continental Europe: I feel that often the term 'Anglo-Saxon' would be more appropriate. Otherwise, what I mean by this term is that part of the world whose thought is primarily rooted in Greco-Judeo-Christian thought, particularly of a Cartesian tradition.
- xxxix Japanese flower arranging
- xl And other forms of Buddhism, although artistic simplicity in this sense is particularly identified as a Zen trait.
- xli Kasulis pp. 42 – 47.
- xlii See Malm, pp. 47-65.
- xliii Reader (1991)
- xliv We are reminded here of the tale of Orpheus and Euridice.
- xliv Kojiki, Vol I, pp. 8-9 and Reader, pp 24-24
- xlvi See Nelson, pp. 122-132.
- xlvi Other purifiers in Shinto are salt, thrown by Sumo wrestlers to 'purify' the ring, and fire – the theme of various Shinto matsuri, such as the Aso mountain fire festival in Kyushu.
- xlvi This project is called the 'New-Capital Project'. See Karan, pp. 281-282
- xlix This can be translated as 'Festival' and in a Shinto context is normally connected to a Shrine or directed towards thanks for to Kami.
- I A word which most commonly is translated for the invited foreigner as 'drinking party' despite the multi-course meals being accompanied by sake.
- li As highlighted by Kasulis pp. 165 - 170
- lii And of the Japaneseness of the once-foreign religions it has influenced.
- liii As demonstrated by national censuses for example,
- liv Aside from a handful of recent foreign converts and Japanese expatriates
- lv As explained above.
- lvi The Chambers Dictionary
- lvii See Cooper
- lviii Usually the human observer.

lix Non-human.
Ix Kasulis p. 24
Ixi Kasulis, p. 25
Ixi following Kasulis, see Kasulis, p.25
Ixi Bocking, p. 115
Ixiv Detail of and the scale of these problems will be outlined below..
Ixv Kallan and Asquith, pp. 2-3 !
Ixvi Kallan and Asquith
Ixvii Ibid
Ixviii The Japanese bamboo flute.
Ixix Malm p. 173
Ixx Basho p. 9. A translation of: Furuike ya, kawazu tobikomu, mizu no oto.
Ixxi Basho, p. 33
Ixxii Kasulis, p. 27
Ixxiii (1730 – 1801)
Ixxiv Kasulis, p. 26
Ixxv See Kallan and Asquith, pp. 2-3; Kasulis, p. 43; Nelson, pp. 188-189; Sonoda
Ixxvi My countries of origin.
Ixxvii Ackermann, p. 43
Ixxviii Kasulis pp. 27-28
Ixxix Earhart 1970, p. 13
Ixxx See also Kasulis, p. 28
Ixxxi Wittgenstein, TLP, point 7.
Ixxxii ...or between Shinto values and Japanese environmental behaviour.
Ixxxiii Taylor BE, p. 101
Ixxxiv Eventually, says Taylor, applying the commitment undertaken by the attitude of respect for nature, requires the development of rules and regulations in order to deal with inevitable practical difficulties such as accommodating conflicting interests. Such implementation in our case here, however, goes well beyond the scope of this essay.

Ixxxv A rather Orwellian form of biocentric egalitarianism
Ixxxvi Leopold, p.117
Ixxxvii A translation of Seibutsu no Sekai
Ixxxviii Despite this impact, the English translation was only published in 2002.
Ixxxix Imanishi p. xxxviii and back cover.

x c Imanishi p. xxxv
xci Imanishi, p. xxxix
xcii Imanishi, p. 41.
xciii Imanishi, p. xxxvii fn.
xciv Popular 'studies of Japaneseness'
xcv hot springs
xcvi Callicott, p. 107
xcvii See Nelson, pp. 122-132
xcviii taoyameburi
xcix masuraobumi
c Kasulis p. 117

ci Atsutane thought of himself as the disciple, despite never having met Motoori.

cii Kasulis, pp. 120-128.

ciii Karan, pp.91-91

civ Ian Reader has written on this

cv The chopsticks arrive still joined – a sign that they are unused.

cvi As we shall see below.

cvii Term coined by Fritjof Capra

cviii Callicott, p.108

cix Nelson, pp. 179-189

cx Kasulis, pp. 56-58

cxii Karan, p. 359 and Strong

cxiii Karan, pp.361-362

cxiiii Karan, p.362

cxv See Schreurs; and Dauverne.

cxvi Karan, p. 363

cxvii Leopold, pp. 201-204

cxviii I must admit that although I have read fairly widely around the subject, the texts have all been in English. To have read the Japanese equivalent would unfortunately have taken more than was available to me.

cxix Picken and Ono are examples here.

cxix Mason, p. 179

cxx See Asquith and Kalland.

cxxi Many books and articles on the subject are proof. Examples are: Earhart; and Kalland and Asquith.

cxxii Callicott, p. 108

cxxiii e.g. to restore deforested areas contributing to floods and or land subsidence. See Sonoda, pp. 40-41 for evidence of this.

cxxiv One example is in Callicott, p. 105

cxxv Karan, p. 368

cxxvi Karan, p.368

cxxvii Karan pp. 370 - 371

cxxviii Karan pp. 364 - 372

cxxix Karan, p.362

cxxx Christopher Stone would undoubtedly be pleased.

cxxxi Possibly the world's first pioneer.

cxxxii Strong – on sleeve and in Introduction.