

## EXTENSION AND OBFUSCATION: TWO CONTRASTING ATTITUDES TO THE MORAL BOUNDARY

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### *Abstract*

At the dawn of environmental philosophy, Asian thought, especially Japanese thought, was expected to be a plentiful source of inspiration to improve the relationship between human beings and nature. However, the influence of Asian thought upon environmental philosophy seems to be very limited, or remains superficial. Concepts and theories in this field are almost all Western, while genuine Asian concepts and theories hardly appear outside studies about particular Asian cases. This paper compares the modern, Western, environmental mind and the natural thought found in Japanese culture. Through this comparison, we see the characteristics of both more clearly, in terms of advantages and limitations. To this end, this paper, firstly, analyzes the concept of anthropocentrism, secondly, shows how Western environmentalism attempts to overcome anthropocentrism, and thirdly, considers anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism in Japanese culture.

### I. *Three Types of Anthropocentrism*

Criticism and defense of anthropocentrism frequently appear in studies of environmental philosophy. Some researchers have become wearied by repeated disputes about anthropocentrism and turned their attention to more practical fields. Environmental pragmatists in particular “resist the dominant trend to homogenize environmental philosophy” and “cannot tolerate theoretical delays to the contribution that philosophy may make to environmental questions.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is unclear how philosophic researchers can contribute toward the solution of environmental issues. This paper does not aim for the homogenization of environmental philosophy, either. However, for the further development of comparative environmental philosophy, analyzing the concept of anthropocentrism more precisely has great significance. This task might not contribute toward policy making directly, but it could better clarify our view on our relationships with nature.

#### 1. **Anthropocentrism<sup>1</sup> and Non-anthropocentrism<sup>1</sup>**

There are three types of anthropocentrism: The first type, anthropocentrism<sup>1</sup>, means that

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Light and Eric Katz, “Introduction: Environmental Pragmatism and Environmental Ethics as Contested Terrain,” in *Environmental Pragmatism*, ed. Andrew Light and Eric Katz (London: Routledge, 1996), 4.

the world is made for human beings or exists to be used by human beings. In the epoch-making essay “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” Lynn White Jr. stated that this kind of anthropocentrism in Christianity is the underlying cause of the modern environmental crisis.<sup>2</sup> Non-anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> regards the world as made not only for human beings but also for other beings, or existing for no reason. Anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> might be regarded as a religious anthropocentrism.

## 2. Anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> and Non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>

In the studies of applied ethics, principally in environmental ethics, the second type of anthropocentrism is typically used. Anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> is an ethical type of anthropocentrism. In the framework of anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>, only human beings are moral objects. Non-human beings are not granted membership of the moral community; humans have responsibility “for” nature, but not “to” nature.<sup>3</sup> In other words, non-human beings have instrumental, but not intrinsic value.<sup>4</sup> Although legal systems can be extremely anthropocentric<sup>II</sup>, and theoretically a perfectly non-anthropocentric<sup>II</sup> society could exist, it is difficult to imagine an individual or a group that behaves either totally anthropocentrically<sup>II</sup> or totally non-anthropocentrically<sup>II</sup>.

## 3. Anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> and Non-anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup>

Anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> is also an ethical concept, or more precisely speaking, a meta-ethical and axiological concept. This idea claims that the source of values lies in the valuations of valuers, namely human beings. Anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> is used in this paper as a synonym of subjectivism. Non-anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> is the idea that there are values that exist independently of individual judgment. The arguments about this type of anthropocentrism have a close relationship with the arguments about the concept of intrinsic value. Anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> might be confused with the attitude that regards nature as having only instrumental value for human beings, but this would be an incorrect association. To acknowledge human beings as the source of all values does not necessarily require one to regard nature only as natural resources, nor does it hinder one from admitting the intrinsic value of nature.

Even for anthropocentrists<sup>III</sup>, it is obvious that water is valuable for animals and plants, even if those animals and plants are totally useless species for human beings and for the stability of local and global ecosystems. Filthy soil can be harmful to human health, but at the same time, it is an indispensable habitat for many types of organisms. In nature, there are certainly values relevant for other beings, but not for humans. However, we can think about the values for non-human beings only if we comprehend what is valuable for them through scientific research, reasoning, and empathy. If there are values we cannot recognize at all, no

<sup>2</sup> See, Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155 (March 1967): 1203-07.

<sup>3</sup> Passmore made the difference between “responsibility for nature” and “responsibility to nature.” See, John Passmore, *Man’s Responsibility for Nature, Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1980), xii.

<sup>4</sup> Intrinsic value also has several meanings and is a very confusing concept. In this paper, intrinsic value is always used as a non-instrumental value. For further analysis of the concept of intrinsic value, see, John O’Neil, *Ecology, Policy and Politics: Human Well-being and the Natural World* (London: Routledge, 1993), 8-25; Paul W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 71-80.

matter how valuable they are, they will not merit our consideration. Value does not have to be for human beings, but it has to be understandable for human beings. Every value we can consider has its source in the value systems of human beings in this sense. In other words, the idea of anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> cannot consider values beyond human understanding, although it does not deny the possibility that the existence of a non-instrumental value of nature can be proved in an understandable way for humans. Therefore, the concept of non-instrumental values is compatible with anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup>.

Non-anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> is the idea that there are values in nature beyond our understanding that we should protect or promote. For example, if you want to protect nature principally and primarily for the sake of God's will, regardless of whether we fully understand why it is valuable, your attitude can be called non-anthropocentric<sup>III</sup>. Contrary to the case of anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> and non-anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup>, anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> is compatible with secular environmental thought, while non-anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> might be regarded as a religious belief.

As mentioned above, anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup> does not mean that one must regard nature only as natural resources, nor does it mean one is hindered from admitting the intrinsic value of nature in theory, but it is still not easy for anthropocentrists<sup>III</sup> to identify the intrinsic value of nature. Intrinsic value is usually expected to be defined as value that is independent from the interest of human beings, but it is a difficult task to define such value without a neutral observer beyond human beings. We will return to this problem later.

Now, we have seen three types of anthropocentrism and the correspondent types of non-anthropocentrism above. Each type of anthropocentrism can be combined with other types of anthropocentrism or non-anthropocentrism. In the following sections, we will take a general view of Western environmentalism and Japanese natural thought, and consider how both are constructed.

There are a number of theories in environmental philosophy. The character of Japanese culture also varies depending on the region and the time period. Furthermore, Japanese culture is a blend of several religions and philosophies, e.g. Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto, Taoism, and other local cultures. Their attitudes to nature vary greatly. If we simplify Western environmental philosophy and Japanese culture down to two monotone units, or arbitrarily choose some of their features when we make comparisons between them, we will miss the richness in both and the meaning of the comparison will be diminished. However, through the analysis of the anthropocentrisms/non-anthropocentrisms that they contain, we can see there are remarkable differences between the Western environmental mind and Japanese natural thought regarding the human-nature relationship.

## II. *Extension: The Western Strategy to Overcome Anthropocentrism*

Although Western environmentalism varies widely, most environmental theories and practices seem to consist of non-anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> and non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>, aside from stewardship, which consists of anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> and anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>. Most Western environmentalists deny that the world is made for human beings, and claim that certain or all beings are moral objects in their own right. Another common element seen in much Western environmental thought is the frequent mention of "extension" or its synonyms<sup>5</sup>. As Lynn White pointed out, mainstream Christianity, which is one of the foundations of Western culture,

features strong anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup>. Many people engaged in environmental issues believe anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> has to be overcome to improve our relationship with nature, though some researchers such as Passmore have shown that anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> does not necessarily prompt us to exploit nature<sup>6</sup>. The road to reconciliation with nature in the future seems similar to the road to liberate slaves taken in the past, in the view of many Western environmentalists<sup>7</sup>. This association provides strong motivation. The boom of counter culture probably raised ardor for non-anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup>, too. Anyhow, it seems that many Western environmentalists believe the extension of the moral community is the essential way to attain peaceful coexistence with nature. Thus, non-anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> and non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> are interwoven into the fabric of Western environmental philosophy. Their extension strategy consists of three steps: 1) determine which characteristics make human beings the possessors of intrinsic value, 2) point out that the same characteristics are found in other beings, and 3) extend the moral community enough to include all beings having those characteristics.

There is variation in the degree of and reason for this extension. Some claim that the moral community should include all sentient beings; some claim intelligence should play a decisive role in drawing the boundary of the moral community; and some claim holism. To show the various extensions, Western environmentalists often use a figure of concentric circles in which the smallest circle indicates the anthropocentric<sup>II</sup> boundary. A different figure, such as a sector figure, is sometimes used, but human beings, at least in part, are located at the center or the foundational part of the figures, as the core of the moral community.<sup>8</sup> Although these figures are useful when taking a general view of the different forms of environmental philosophy, they might be slightly misleading if they do not maintain a cautious distance from the monotheistic worldview. Otherwise, the figures might give the impression that non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> is possible only through expansion of anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>, which is connected with anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup>. Or, perhaps those figures indicate the remnant of anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> in researchers' minds. Actually, for people who do not have an anthropocentric<sup>I</sup> cultural background, it might be inappropriate to regard the extended boundaries as non-anthropocentric, because human beings always remain at the foundation of the moral community. Furthermore, the extension is still based on similarities to human beings. Non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> might not be as non-anthropocentric<sup>I</sup> as environmentalists believe. We need to keep in mind that extension is a peculiar form of the transition from anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> to non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>, which premises the *Weltanschauung* of anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Callicott claims to distinguish the individualistic approach and holistic approach in his classic essay. See, J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair." *Environmental Ethics* 2 (winter 1980): 311-338. This distinction is highly significant for animal ethics and environmental ethics, and extensionism is more essential for animal ethics than environmental ethics. However, extensionism is also very often referred to in the literature of environmental ethics. For example, Leopold, who gives great inspiration to Callicott's holistic environmental philosophy, is one of the earliest thinkers to claim the extension of ethics. See, Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 201-26.

<sup>6</sup> John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature, Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Likening environmental and animal protection to emancipation from slavery is often seen in environmental thought. For example, Roderick Nash regards "environmental ethics as marking out the farthest limits of American liberalism" and introduced many examples of this comparison in his book. See, Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 4-12.

<sup>8</sup> See, Nash, *The Rights of Nature*, 5, 7.

The problem here is not the implication that human beings are morally more important *for us* than other beings. It is difficult, even absurd, for a human society not to regard human beings as the most important beings, in terms of morality. If we regard the moral status of human beings as equal to that of other beings, practices such as the slaughter of cattle, the harvest of crops, and the damaging of instruments must be defined as murder. If a society adopts radical egalitarian non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>, it will confront serious aggravation of security and will hardly be sustainable. To preserve social order and subsistence, we cannot help but give human beings privileged status. Thus, realistic non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> takes a non-egalitarian form on account of the welfare of human beings.

However, extensionists require us to admit the intrinsic value of non-human beings. Their requirement cannot be on account of human beings, because intrinsic value is supposed to be unrelated to the benefit of human beings. Thus, the ideal moral community for extensionists seems, on one hand, to be able to be reached through the extension based on values independent from the interest of human beings. On the other hand, it seems to retain a moral order that depends on the interest of human beings. This is simply inconsistent.

There are ways for extensionists to deal with this problem: 1) renounce their non-anthropocentric<sup>II</sup> ideal and adopt an anthropocentric<sup>II</sup> approach, e.g. stewardship, cost-benefit analysis, and so forth, 2) develop theoretical inquiries and make them consistent (many theoreticians in this field prefer this way), or 3) cling to radical egalitarianism and become daydreamers or eco-terrorists. However, there are activists who do not recognize this problem at all, and believe that their claim is culturally neutral, and that it has universal validity. Some of those people behave arrogantly; consequently, they provoke antipathy toward their actions.<sup>9</sup> Some radical groups are so hostile to other cultures that they cause others to question whether or not they really care about nature, or if they are just using environmental issues to attack other cultures.

Arrogance and hostility aside, it is still a widespread attitude among extensionists that extensionism has universal validity, though most of them have respect for other cultures. They know that commitment to environmental issues is easily disregarded as a personal hobby. Thus, they attempt to demonstrate that the intrinsic value of nature is objective and that nature needs to be protected regardless of our preferences and cultural backgrounds, and prefer to talk about the rights of nature and our responsibility to nature. However, it is a difficult task to accomplish in a secular way. Consequently, adherents of expansionism sometimes appear as if they are adherents of a new religion<sup>10</sup>. If they cannot give any substantial reasons in support of the intrinsic value of nature, but rather ask us to simply have belief in nature, as they have done until now, it means they have taken the position of non-anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup>.

By denying anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup>, extensionists seem to take a secular position. At the same time, they claim that nature has intrinsic value, and that it should be superior to instrumental

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<sup>9</sup> A good example of this case is anti-whaling groups in Japan. As many researchers pointed out, whaling is no longer important for the Japanese economy or for Japanese food culture. However, the verbal and physical harassment meted out by activists made not only local fishermen and their families, but many Japanese in a wide area concerned about this issue, not for the protection of whales but for the preservation of the whaling tradition. Current anti-whaling discourse and activities might make Japanese more stubborn. The pro-whaling campaign is, indeed, an “anti-anti-whaling campaign.” See, Anders Blok, “Contesting Global Norms: Politics of Identity in Japanese Pro-Whaling Countermobilization,” *Global Environmental Politics* 8 (2): 39-66.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Robert A. Sirico, “The False Gods of Earth Day,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 22, 1994.

value in most cases. However, they have not succeeded in proving the validity of their arguments. In the end, we can say that extensionism, a common factor of modern Western environmental philosophy, aside from stewardship, consists of all three types of non-anthropocentrism.

### III. *Obfuscation: Japanese Attitude to the Boundary between Beings*

Literature written by Westerners who visited Japan in the pre-modern and early modern times tells us of their deep admiration of Japanese landscapes and the “love of nature” in Japanese culture. After many years, in the age of environmental crisis, Japanese culture is often referred to as an example of a culture in harmony with nature. Indeed, Japanese culture has rarely been criticized as the cause of environmental destruction, but on the other hand, it is widely known that Japanese culture has not played an important role in preventing pollution so far. Much of the classic literature of environmental philosophy also refers to Japanese natural thought, but only superficially. The essay written by Lynn White, which instigates the anthropocentrism controversy, also mentions *Zen*, which does not have its origin in Japan, but was highly developed in Japan and introduced to the West with a Japanese name. However, White thought *Zen* was too deeply conditioned on Asian history to apply to the West. Thus, he did not continue the investigation of Asian thought further. Instead, he recommended re-examination of Christian tradition and proposed Saint Francis as a patron saint for ecologists, and proposed the study of Saint Francis’ ideas. Passmore, on one hand, praised Japanese culture for its “love of nature,” and on the other hand, saw pollution in Japan as one of the harshest environmental disruptions and as an example showing the limitation of Japanese thought in protecting nature. Callicott wrote more extensively than White and Passmore to examine Japanese thought in his book about comparative environmental philosophy<sup>11</sup>. However, he did not deeply involve himself in the theoretical analysis of Japanese natural thought, either. This section develops the theoretical analysis of Japanese natural thought by referring to preceding research and pointing out, by using the three concepts of anthropocentrism, the tendency in Japanese natural thought - obfuscation of the moral boundary, which contrasts with moral extension.

#### 1. **Boundary between Humans and Nature**

For the investigation of Japanese natural thought, it deserves special mention that the Japanese language did not hold the concept of nature as an antonym of culture and artifact for a long time. In the 18th century, the Dutch word *Natuur* was translated into *Shizen*, which was originally used as an adjective or adverb to mean natural or naturally, for example, “It is very natural for you to get angry if he told you such a terrible lie.” After that, the word *Shizen* started to be used as the antonym of culture and artifact in Japanese language. It is very interesting not only etymologically, but also for our research, because it means the distinctions between nature and culture, nature and artifact, and non-human beings and human beings, the

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<sup>11</sup> See, J. Baird Callicott, *Earth’s Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback* (Barkley: University of California Press, 1994), 92-108.

most basic dichotomies in Western philosophy, did not clearly appear in Japanese traditional thought. Much less, traces of anthropocentrism<sup>1</sup> are rarely found in it. There is no anthropocentric<sup>1</sup> account of the Creation, either in Buddhism or in Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan. Although we sometimes see descriptions that place human beings higher than other beings in Buddhist literature, the distinction between human and non-human is, in general, not strict in Japanese culture.

Nakamura Teiri's study about fairy tales might be a good example to help us understand the difference between Japanese culture and Western culture with regard to the position of human beings.<sup>12</sup> According to his research, in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, there are only six cases of metamorphosis from animal to human, while there are sixty-seven cases from human to animal. Furthermore, in five of six cases the subjects are originally humans who were changed into animals once and recover their original form in the end. There is only one case of actual metamorphosis from animal into human in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*,<sup>13</sup> and most of the metamorphoses from human to animal are described as degradation caused by evil agents, e.g. witches and devils. Humans change their shape to non-human, but usually it is involuntary, temporary, and undesirable. They do not lose their human minds and recover their human forms in the end. In most cases animals can metamorphose into humans only if they are originally humans; otherwise, they can change their form only superficially by wearing clothes, such as the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood*. We see here a strict distinction between human and non-human.

In contrast, the *Nihon Mukashibanashi Kiroku (Record of Japanese Old Tales)*, contains forty-two cases of metamorphosis from human to animal and ninety-two from animal to human; more than twice the number of human to animal metamorphoses<sup>14</sup>. As opposed to *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, there are cases of voluntary metamorphosis from human to animal, and after metamorphoses they become truly animal. In the reverse cases, from non-human (not only animals but also insects) to human, the metamorphoses are also essential. They get married to other human beings and their children are genuine human beings. They are depicted as the same as human beings, not only physically but also psychologically, even if they recover non-human shapes. After further examination, Nakamura concludes that non-humans that do not metamorphose into the shape of a human are also regarded as potential humans in Japanese folklore.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Boundaries between Non-human Beings

Nakamura's research can be counted as an example that shows that the boundary between human beings and non-human beings in Japanese culture is unclear. Moreover, I would like to further argue that the boundaries between non-humans are also unclear in Japanese culture. This is shown in the changes of the Buddhist attitude to plants.

<sup>12</sup> See, Nakamura Teiri, *Nihonjin no Dobutsukan: Henshintan no Rekishi* (Tokyo: Kaimeisha, 1984), 1-22. In this paper, names of Japanese people are written in the Japanese way: family names come first, given names follow them.

<sup>13</sup> In this case a fox changed its form into a merchant. Because foxes are often described as animals having the ability of metamorphosis in East Asia, Nakamura suggests there might be influence of Asian folklore on this story. See, Nakamura, *Nihonjin no Dobutsukan: Henshintan no Rekishi*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> English Title is translated by me for the convenience of readers of this paper.

<sup>15</sup> See, Nakamura, *Nihonjin no Dobutsukan*, 14-15.

The idea that unconscious beings can attain Buddhahood is rarely found in the literature of ancient Indian Buddhism<sup>16</sup>. Originally, plants were regarded as having intellect in ancient Indian Buddhism, but later plants were regarded as similar to stones. Some researchers think that it is because ancient Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism that it started to introduce vegetarianism.<sup>17</sup> In China, however, plants are promoted to the rank of those that can attain Buddhahood by some Buddhists. Among them, the Tiantai School started to claim that every being, even plants and dust, have the potential to attain Buddhahood. After Tiantai arrived in Japan and changed its name to Tendai, it became one of the most influential Buddhist schools in Japan and developed an egalitarian tendency, probably under the influence of Shinto. “*Somokukokudo Shikkaijobutsu*” (roughly translated, it means “including grasses, trees and soil, every being will attain Buddhahood”) is the typical idea that shows the obfuscation of the boundary between beings in Japanese natural thought. In this idea, every being, regardless of whether or not it has sense, sensitivity, or life, has the potential to attain Buddhahood. Its first appearance was in a piece of Tendai literature that is assumed to have been written sometime between 869 to 885.<sup>18</sup> The expression of this idea has variations, e.g. *Sansensomoku Shikkaijobutsu* or *Sansensomoku Shituubussho*, but the meaning is basically identical. This idea pervades Japanese culture so deeply that we can find innumerable examples in classic and modern literature, lyrics of songs, poetry, and works of subculture such as *Anime* and *Manga*.

A dialogue between a Japanese bonze and a Chinese bonze recorded in the Heian period (794-1192) provides an example that illustrates the peculiarity of the Japanese attitude to nature. The Japanese bonze eagerly asked the Chinese bonze how individual trees and grasses practice asceticism and attain Buddhahood, but the Chinese bonze was interested in principles and abstract problems, and had little interest in the Japanese bonze’s question.<sup>19</sup> It shows, according to Okada Mamiko’s opinion, the Japanese attitude of regarding non-human beings as their companions of asceticism.<sup>20</sup> The attitude to plants unique to Japanese Buddhism seems to be implying that not only the boundary between human and non-human, but also the boundaries between different non-humans are obfuscated in Japan. This could be a reason why vegetarianism is unpopular in Japan compared to other countries that have many Buddhists. Moreover, it suggests that this lack of clarity persisted not because Japanese people did not perceive it, but because there is a tendency in the Japanese intellectual climate to obfuscate the boundaries between different types of beings.

### 3. Conservation and Animal Protection in Pre-modern Japan

The research and records cited above might make you think that Japanese natural thought is a typical example of non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>, or if not, at least that Japanese culture has an

<sup>16</sup> See, Okada Mamiko, “Higashijia teki Kankyoshiso to shite no shitsuubusshoron,” in *Higashijia Bukkyo: Sono Seiritsu to Tenkai*, ed. Kimura Kiyotaka Hakase Kanreki Kinenkai (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 2002), 355-72.

<sup>17</sup> See, Okada, “Higashijia teki Kankyoshiso to Shite no Shitsuubusshoron,” 357-58.

<sup>18</sup> See, Sueki Fumihiko, *Heian Shoki Bukkyo Shiso no Kenkyu: Annen no Shiso Keisei o Chushin to Shite* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1995), 397.

<sup>19</sup> See, Sueki, *Heian Shoki Bukkyo Shiso no Kenkyu*, 153.

<sup>20</sup> See, Okada, “Higashijia teki Kankyoshiso to Shite no Shitsuubusshoron,” 367. Omine Akira also explains that nature has the aspect of a companion in Japanese traditional culture. See, Omine Akira, “Probing the Japanese Experience of Nature,” *Chanoyu Quarterly: Tea and the Arts of Japan* 51 (1987), 7.



affinity for non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>. However, there is no substantial evidence that Japanese acknowledged the intrinsic value of nature; rather, historical records tell us that Japanese conserved natural resources mainly for the sake of human beings. There were regulations commonly known as *Sessho Kinshi Rei* (*Ordinance of Prohibition against Killing*) established in Japanese ancient and medieval periods. The earliest one was established in 675 and is casually understood by many people as evidence that Japan accepted the Buddhist precept that prohibits killing.<sup>21</sup> However, this regulation only prohibited hunting with traps in a certain period, and eating animals that are useful for human life. It does not strictly prohibit killing in and of itself. Other similar regulations are also incompatible with non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>.

*Shorui Awaremi no Rei* (*Ordinances of Protection of Living Things*) can be counted as exceptions. They were gradually enforced by *Shogun* Tokugawa Tsunayoshi from 1682 to 1709, and strictly ordered to promote the welfare of non-humans. The original intention of the ordinances was anthropocentric<sup>I</sup>, to cultivate the affection of people. However, he later became superstitious, the welfare of non-humans was required excessively, and because the inflexible bureaucracy's enforcement of those laws was impractically strict, the lives of people and the finances of the government were severely damaged. Despite Tsunayoshi's last will to keep the ordinances, they were abolished shortly after his death, and they are now regarded as some of the most notorious ordinances of the past.

Regarding natural resources, at the end of the pre-modern period in Japan, Rutherford Alcock, author of *The Capital of the Tycoon*, requested that Japan produce more coal to fuel foreign ships. A government official replied to him that the natural resources of Japan were property used by the Japanese from generation to generation, and could not be consumed rapidly.<sup>22</sup> This dialogue suggests a tendency toward sustainability on the part of the Japanese at that time, but there is still no trace of non-anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup>.

#### IV. *Obfuscation and Extension*

After reviewing the research in the previous sections, we can confirm two things about Japanese natural thought. First, it is clearly non-anthropocentric<sup>I</sup>; there is no trace of anthropocentrism<sup>I</sup> and humans are regarded as not very different from other beings. Second, it is anthropocentric<sup>II</sup>. The Japanese conserve nature and treat non-human beings as beneficial to human beings.

However, the second analysis might be too simplified and a little confusing. Besides the subsistence and welfare of human beings, extensionism has other reasons to desire the protection of nature: the intrinsic value of nature itself. Stewardship grounds conservation as a duty of human beings mandated by God. Then, Japanese natural thought can ground environmental protection on what? Many environmentalists think anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> is a selfish and heartless attitude to non-humans. However, the reputation of Japanese culture is, in general, quite different from that.

Murakami Haruki's acceptance speech at the International Catalunya Prize ceremony gives

<sup>21</sup> See, Nakamura Ikuo, *Nihonjin no Shukyo to Dobutsukan: Sessho to Nikujiki* (Tokyo: Yoshikawakobunkan, 2010), 52.

<sup>22</sup> See, Watanabe Kyoji, *Naze Ima Jinruishi Ka* (Tokyo: Yosensha, 2011), 178.

us a key to understanding this point. After referring to the tsunami in 2011, he likened human beings to lodgers without an invitation.<sup>23</sup> Though his speech has made a great impression on people since the catastrophic disaster, adopting the attitude of a human being a lodger, a plain member without privilege, is undoubtedly a common attitude in Japanese culture.

A steward is required to understand the master's intention so that he can fulfill his duty. He cannot simply do whatever he wants. Nevertheless, he has a special status among others. Many extensionists, as I pointed out above, believe their ideology is culturally neutral and has universal validity. They criticize stewardship based on a Christian background, but they seem to want to be a secular steward of this planet.

Lodgers do not have privilege or special duty, either. If a lodger claims he should be a steward, it would give us an impression of *hubris*. A lodger is required to keep his place clean, to respect others, and to be courteous. Courtesy to nature is often referred to in Shinto discourses, too. Miyazaki Hayao, a very influential animation director whose works have won many international prizes including one Academy Award, is well known for his concern about environmental issues. He also suggests considering environmental issues in the light of courtesy toward nature.<sup>24</sup> Human beings are regarded as uninvited guests in Japanese natural thought. Consequently, one can say that Japanese natural thought has a strong consciousness of anthropocentrism<sup>III</sup>. It acknowledges the selfishness of human beings in using nature, and at the same time, requires them to be courteous. It is in contrast to Western environmentalism, which attempts to represent Nature or God's will.

Extensionism has one more problem if it wants to cooperate with Japanese culture. By extending the boundary, some parts of nature, such as non-human mammals, are included in the moral community, but the rest, such as plants, insects, and non-living objects, are excluded. Extension premises a boundary, and that boundary is emphasized by extension. It is totally different from the tendency in Japanese natural thought toward obfuscation; in fact, it is antithetical. It is the very opposite of what happened in East Asian Buddhism. Extensionists distinguish some beings from the rest, though they are not in the position of other beings, and cannot have an idea of their ethics. Thus, extensionism might sometimes seem arrogant, introducing arbitrary discrimination in nature, for many Japanese. It is a contrasting view on extensionists, because in the literature of environmental philosophy, as mentioned above, we often see that they liken extensionism to the emancipation from slavery. They usually *criticize* anthropocentrism<sup>II</sup> as *speciesism*, a kind of racism, but are not *criticized* as discriminators.

Thus far, we have seen the analyses of Western environmentalism, especially its secular form, extensionism, and Japanese natural thought. The differences between Western environmental philosophy and Japanese natural thought have also been demonstrated. Does it mean that they are incompatible and need to be homogenized? I believe they are still compatible and, in fact, need to cooperate without homogenization. There are actually similarities between them. The most notable similarity between Japanese natural thought and extensionism is that in both of them it is widely accepted to regard a human as a "plain member" of nature.<sup>25</sup> Humans have enormous power to change the environment, so much so that they need to behave very carefully, and are thus also expected to use their ability to protect and promote the stability of

<sup>23</sup> See, Murakami Haruki, "Unrealistic Dreamer," Catalunya International Prize Acceptance Speech, June 9, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> See, Miyazaki Hayao, *Shuppatsuten: 1979-1996* (Tokyo: Studio Ghibli, 1996), 257.

<sup>25</sup> See, Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 204.

the ecosystem well. However, it does not necessarily mean that their moral status is higher than other beings. Stewardship does not share this point. But it has a different point in common with Japanese natural thought. Both of them look squarely at the reality that humans do use nature for their own sake, although the same phrase does not always express the same nuance. This difference in nuance can cause misunderstanding, and sometimes even antipathy. Philosophy can contribute to help avoid such a situation by defining concepts precisely.<sup>26</sup>

The reason Japanese natural thought needs to cooperate with Western environmentalism is clear. As many researchers have already pointed out, Japan is, like other countries, confronting difficulties in promoting environmental protection. In Japanese culture, “love of nature” is expressed beautifully with respect and courtesy for nature in admirable ways. For example, consolation ceremonies, *Kuyo*, for non-human beings (not only living things, but also non-living things) are widely held in Japan. The objects of the ceremony are not only cattle and pets, but also wildlife, instruments, harmful insects, and so forth. Many Japanologists refer to *Kuyo* as a good example of respect and courtesy for nature in Japanese culture. However, this type of ceremony is always held after killing and destruction. Respect and courtesy sometimes appear after the action. And, like the case of *Kuyo*, showing respect and courtesy can relieve a sense of guilt and might promote further destruction<sup>27</sup>.

Furthermore, the same action can also be conducted both with and without respect, and it is difficult in many cases to distinguish whether the action is conducted with respect. Even an action conducted with respect and courtesy can, however, still damage nature. In short, having respect and courtesy is not action, but disposition. Thus, after one causes pollution without any respect for nature, one can pretend as if one has much respect. For effective and just regulation, we need to talk about the rights of humans and, if appropriate, the rights of non-humans. Extensionism has a strong affinity with rights ethics because it is based on the concept of intrinsic value.

On the other hand, it is also advisable for proponents of Western environmental philosophy to cooperate with those of non-Western thought so as to not be accused of cultural imperialism. Additionally, as Ronald Sandler says, “public discourse regarding the environment tends to be framed almost exclusively in legislative and legal terms, so it is tempting to become fixated on what activities and behaviors regarding the environment are or ought to be legal.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, the rights ethics approach has been the most popular approach in the field of environmental philosophy so far, but it is not omnipotent. To claim nature has rights sounds like a very strong argument only if we can verify it. However, even if we succeed in demonstrating the existence of the rights of nature, the opposite sides also have rights to pursue their own lifestyle and economic activities. In fact, there is no guarantee that rights theory will always work for protection. To promote environmental policies, to establish environmental

<sup>26</sup> My paper on the whaling controversy also aims to solve the emotional entanglement on that topic. Kumasaka Motohiro, “Nihon no Hogeï wo Meguru Ronso no Bunseki: Goikonnan no Gennin wo Saguru,” in *Shinkaron to Heiwa no Ningengakuteki Kosatsu* (Tokyo: Gakubunsha, 2012), 109-20.

<sup>27</sup> Some researchers pointed out this function of *Kuyo*. See, for example, Shimada Kiyoshi, “Taiwan no Minkanshinko ni Miru Shinrei, Hito, Shizen no Kankei: Hikakushukyobunkateki Shiten kara.” Nittai Koryu Center, [http://www.koryu.or.jp/08\\_03\\_03\\_01\\_middle.nsf/2c11a7a88aa171b449256798000a5805/a7ee25afe8d4b6a6492576fe001dcd51/\\$FILE/shimadakiyoshi2.pdf](http://www.koryu.or.jp/08_03_03_01_middle.nsf/2c11a7a88aa171b449256798000a5805/a7ee25afe8d4b6a6492576fe001dcd51/$FILE/shimadakiyoshi2.pdf) (accessed May 30, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Ronald Sandler, “Introduction: Environmental Virtue Ethics,” in *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, ed. Ronald Sandler and Philip Cafaro (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 2.

laws, to set a common value of nature, and, if it were an intrinsic value of nature, to protect it, we need to consider the relationship between our disposition and nature, or more precisely speaking, how nature shapes our character, and what disposition is desirable for environmental protection.<sup>29</sup> Environmental deontology needs to be supported by environmental virtue in order to be performed. That is why environmental virtue ethics has appeared as a strong new stream of this field in recent years. However, most researches on environmental virtue ethics focused mainly on Western virtue and heroes/heroines. Japanese thought might be able to offer much-needed variety in the field of environmental virtue ethics.

## V. Conclusion

We have considered the different meanings of anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism, and by applying analysis of them, clarified the difference between Western environmental thought, ultimately extensionism, the so-called “non-anthropocentric” group, and Japanese natural thought. The difference between them does not need to be resolved by homogenization; rather, it offers the practices and theories of environmental issues a rich view on the relationship between humans and nature.

It is almost unavoidable that comparative studies lack depth in specific topics in comparison to specialized ones. Environmental philosophy and Japanese culture are simplified in this paper, too. Finally, for the further development of comparative study, I expect more critiques and complements from both sides, especially from Japanologists.

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<sup>29</sup> One of the earliest studies on the relation between nature and individual and collective character is the following. Holmes Rolston, III, “Valuing Wildlands,” *Environmental Ethics* 7 (Spring 1985), 23-48.

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