

APPROACHES TO NATURE AESTHETICS: EAST MEETS WEST

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Nature aesthetics is examined as an approach to environmental ethics. The characteristics of proper nature appreciation show that every landscape can be appreciated impartially in light of the dynamic processes of nature. However, it is often claimed that natural beauty decreases if humans interfere into nature. This claim leads to the separation of human culture and nature, and limits the number of landscapes which can be protected in terms of aesthetic value. As a solution to this separation, a non-dualistic Japanese aesthetics is examined as a basis for the achievement of the coexistence of culture and nature. Ecological interrelationships between human culture and nature are possible by means of an aesthetic consciousness in terms of non-hierarchical attitudes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Aesthetics and Ethics	
Nature Aesthetics and Eastern Philosophy	
2. PROPER APPRECIATION OF NATURE	6
The Picturesque Beauty of Nature	
A Broader Concept of Beauty	
Proper Nature Appreciation	
Contribution of Science	
The Possibility of Unscientific Approaches	
An Alternative Approach to Nature Aesthetics	
3. ONTOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS OF NATURAL BEAUTY	34
The Subjective Perception of Beauty	
The Objective Existence of Beauty	
Negative Aspects of Carlson's Position	
A Difficulty with Positioning Human Beings	
Natural Beauty in Eastern Philosophy	
Nature Aesthetics Based on Transcendentalism	
4. ETYMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE OF NATURE	56
The Value of Etymological Analysis	
Nature: The Force of Becoming	
The Concept of Unity in Religious Traditions	
The Ever-Changing Nature	
Approaches to Aesthetics Based on Theoretical Notions	
5. JAPANESE GARDENS: AN PRACTICAL APPROACH.....	72
REFERENCE LIST	83

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics and Ethics

In order to contribute to the solution of contemporary environmental issues, environmental ethicists have tried to improve our attitudes toward nature in terms of discussing human values and perspectives. Philosophical questionings of the relationship between humans and nature have developed in diverse ways. Nature aesthetics is one of these philosophical approaches to environmental ethics. Thus, its aim is not to judge degrees of beauty in environments, but rather to provide a justification for developing ecological attitudes in light of the aesthetic value of environments.

Aesthetics is not only theoretical but also practical. Generally, if someone thinks something is aesthetically valuable, he or she tries to protect it. The aesthetic consciousness directly influences human behavior without reasoning. This insight-oriented approach may be considered irrational (or nonrational), and thus, weak as a ground for environmental ethics. However, if it is correct that there is a close connection between aesthetic feeling and human behavior, aesthetics is promising as an approach to environmental ethics.

The close connection of aesthetics and ethics is discussed by G. E. Moore in *Principia Ethica*. A bare recognition of beauty in the object is not the only element of aesthetic appreciation. Some kind of feeling and emotion is included in the proper appreciation of beautiful objects. Moore points out that when cognitive elements of

beauty in the object and aesthetic emotions are combined, highly valuable wholes can be formed. He writes, “all of these [aesthetic] emotions are essential elements in great positive goods; they are parts of organic wholes, which have great intrinsic value.”¹ Furthermore, according to Moore, aesthetic enjoyments can be recognized not as subjective judgments, which are valuable because of the goodness of individuals, but as a means to enhancing ethical behavior and social progress toward goodness as a whole. For this reason, Moore writes that aesthetic feeling is “the ultimate fundamental truth of Moral Philosophy.”² I believe that Moore’s remark is correct. Aesthetics is not simply the discussion of subjective enjoyments. It is also a promising approach to raising ethical consciousness. As such, I believe nature aesthetics is one of the most influential approaches to environmental ethics.

Nature Aesthetics and Eastern Philosophy

Generally, the main focus of the study of aesthetics is art. Aesthetic objects and paradigms (what and how to appreciate art) have been discussed in relation to works of art. Nevertheless, when we see things in the world, we perceive some sort of feeling or thoughts toward them. If we realize aesthetics as a broader judgment about tastes with regard to things, anything in the world can be the object of aesthetics. Nevertheless, not everything can be judged under the same aesthetic paradigms. Nature aesthetics is not the aesthetics of art but of nature; thus, it requires different aesthetic paradigms from those of

¹ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 190.

² *Ibid.*, p. 189.

art. Accordingly, we need to develop appropriate standards of the judgment of beauty in nature.

Allen Carlson is one of the most important figures in the field of nature aesthetics. He focuses not only on natural environments but also on other environments, including urban and rural environments. Carlson calls this broader subject environmental aesthetics. His book, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture*, is a great source for understanding various aspects of environmental aesthetics.³ In the introduction to this book, he discusses the differences between aesthetic objects in art and the environment. The significant difference between them is that the former is framed, while the latter is not. Unlike art, environments are not bounded either spatially or temporally. Moreover, natural environments do not have either a designer or a design. According to Carlson, “the appreciation [of environments] must be fashioned anew, with neither the aid of frames, the guidance of designs, nor the direction of designers.”⁴ What concepts do we need, in particular, for achieving nature aesthetics?

I develop this basic argument of nature appreciation in chapter one. In light of the advancement in nature appreciation in Western culture, I examine what qualities in nature should be aesthetically appreciated. This examination indicates that natural science has contributed to the development of nature aesthetics. Nonetheless, it is still possible to achieve proper appreciation of nature without depending on scientific information. At the end of chapter one, I introduce an alternative approach to nature aesthetics.

³ Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁴ *Ibid.*, xviii.

In chapter two, I focus on the concept of beauty *per se*. Beauty can be perceived differently depending on the ontological characterization of aesthetic value. Two major approaches are value subjectivism and value objectivism. The former think that beauty is in mind of subjective being. Contrary, the latter approach shows that beauty exists objectively in the world. Depending on our perception of beauty, we encounter different problems. Perhaps there is not a single answer for the definition of ontological characteristics of beauty; yet, I explore the most appropriate understanding of beauty for the achievement of environmental ethics.

It is often claimed that Eastern philosophy contains more helpful guides to nature aesthetics than Western philosophy. For instance, Japanese people have been significantly sensitive to natural beauty; accordingly, Japanese religio-cultural notions are full of expressions of nature. Nature has been adopted as a motif of various art styles. In Japanese art, nature has been appreciated in light of aesthetic paradigms which work as bases for nature aesthetics. Nevertheless, in spite of its potential to contribute to the development of nature aesthetics, natural beauty based on Japanese traditional thoughts has not been discussed fully. Thus, I explore the possibility of the contribution of the Japanese tradition to nature aesthetics in terms of examining traditional Japanese value of nature and comparing it with the aesthetic paradigm of nature.

It is not possible to discuss all aspects of Japanese value of nature in this essay because this value has been developed as a result of the fusion of diverse indigenous and foreign religions and cultures. As a helpful approach to understanding metaphysical and epistemological notions of nature, I develop the discussion of Japanese value of nature from etymological analysis of Japanese words for *nature* in chapter three. Some

important notions of the value of nature and of the relationship between humans and nature are disclosed through this etymological analysis. In terms of this analysis, I discuss whether the Japanese view of nature is helpful as a basis for environmental ethics.

As a conclusion to this essay, I examine the implications of Japanese gardens in chapter four. Gardens are products of the natural and the artificial. Because art and nature depend on different aesthetic paradigms, there is a potential for aesthetic conflicts when appreciating gardens. These conflicts may be overcome in light of the harmonious relationship between art and nature. In some gardens, art serves as a model for nature; in others, nature serves as a model for art. Either type of garden overcomes aesthetic conflicts in terms of one of two aesthetic paradigms, a nature paradigm or an artistic paradigm. Japanese gardens are classified into neither of these two types of gardens. They are included in gardens based on the dialectical relationship between art and nature, which are generally difficult to aesthetically appreciate. Nonetheless, most people do not have difficulties when appreciating Japanese gardens. How, then, do Japanese gardens overcome aesthetic conflicts? I begin by developing an answer for this question following upon Carlson's suggestion that Japanese gardens solve the problem of aesthetic judgment by the achievement of uncovering the essence of nature. I then approach nature aesthetics in terms of discussing characteristics of the essence of nature and ways to uncover the essence in traditional Japanese gardening.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROPER APPRECIATION OF NATURAL BEAUTY

The Picturesque Beauty of Nature

The beautiful scenery of nature attracts many people's attention. It is an important factor for human activities such as city planning, recreation, and art. However, nature has often been conceived negatively in Western countries. Originally, symmetry and geometrical features were the chief characteristics used to describe beauty.⁵ As a result, irregularity in nature was not attractive to Western people. The preference for regular forms was closely associated with a Christian understanding of the world based on biblical texts. Nature's irregularity, complexity, and dynamism were believed to be a symbol of God's wrath. The interpretation of the world in terms of the Judeo-Christian accounts restricted positive appreciations to works of God. Greatness and vastness were attributes of Deity rather than of landscape.⁶ However, because of the development of natural history science, people began to expand their understanding of the world. Such conceptions as majesty, grandeur, and vastness, which involve both admiration and awe, began to be used to describe not only God but also Space and Nature.⁷ Nature's characteristics, which were negatively perceived, began to be aesthetically appreciated in terms of the aesthetics of the sublime. This significant shift in people's perceptions of

⁵ This tendency is repeated in Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (University of Washington Press, 1997).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

beauty can be examined through poetry, painting, and various artistic works in relation to seventeenth-century science.

For example, Marjorie Hope Nicolson documents changes in people's perceptions of mountains in her book, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, irregularity in nature was believed to be caused after the Fall because of human sin. People did not have a positive image of irregular shapes in nature. Nature without geometrical structure was not considered to be aesthetically appreciable. For example, Thomas Burnet says, "the earth as it first appeared must have been 'smooth, regular and uniform, without Mountains and without a Sea.'"⁸ For Burnet, mountains and oceans are negative factors that detract from the beauty of the world. Furthermore, he desires a regular pattern of the basin holding of the sea and writes, "If the Sea had been drawn round the Earth in regular Figures and Borders, it might have been a great Beauty to our Globe."⁹ From the contemporary standpoint, regular forms in nature inhibit the dynamism of nature; however, in the traditional Western culture, people had different aesthetics values and were not attracted to nature as dynamic. Nevertheless, Burnet himself began to notice the new emotions inspired by the grandeur of nature when he traveled in mountainous areas.¹⁰

The large shift in Western people's perceptions of nature was caused by scientific discoveries in the seventeenth century. One of the significant discoveries was the existence of mountains on the moon, which afforded new arguments about mountains on

⁸ Ibid., p. 203.

⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 215.

Earth.¹¹ Astronomy played an important role in establishing a new concept of majestic nature. The vastness of the cosmos introduced the concept of infinity into the Christian understanding of the world. For example, the concept of infinite space has contributed to a change in the interpretation of creation stories. The six “days” of Creation was reinterpreted as the six “millenniums” of Creation.¹² This reinterpretation enhanced the understanding of the formation of the Earth; yet millenniums were still not a sufficient geologic span. Moreover, one came to think that “The cosmos created to infinity and eternity by a God of Plentitude must be infinitely filled with every sort of variety and diversity.”¹³ For example, Henry More, a Cartesian philosopher, discovered the new aesthetics of nature and “rejoiced in every aspect of its richness, fullness, diversity, variety” in the Divine Dialogues.¹⁴ Diversity also became a positive characteristic of nature. Because of the development of astronomy, geology and other scientific studies, mountains were no longer considered to be ruins. They became a part of God’s great creative work.

Eugene C. Hargrove points out, “A recognition that the world was ‘God’s work’ prepared the way for the aesthetic enjoyment of nature analogous to the enjoyment of art created by human beings.”¹⁵ People began to see aesthetic value where they had not recognized it before. Natural characteristics such as vastness, massiveness, chaos, and disharmony became aesthetically appreciable due to the growing interest in sublimity.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 131.

¹² Ibid., p. 251.

¹³ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 130–140. The quotation is on p. 138.

¹⁵ Eugene C. Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* (Denton: Environmental Ethics Books, 1989), p. 87.

Various sorts of natural entities became the object of aesthetic appreciation. People began to describe the picturesque beauty of nature. For example, John Muir portrays the beautiful scenery in Yosemite Valley in the way: “Pursuing my lonely way down the valley, I turned again and again to gaze on the glorious picture, throwing up my arms to inclose (enclose) it as in a frame.”¹⁶ Everyone agrees that Yosemite Valley is beautiful. One may think that he or she wants to put its beautiful scenery in a frame. However, natural beauty cannot be appreciated adequately by this sort of visual appreciation. Beauty in nature cannot be described by the two-dimensional visual mode. Such senses as smell, texture, and sound need to be included in nature appreciation. Moreover, functional characteristics of nature also need to be included. If we merely put nature in a frame, much of the natural beauty will be missed.

The appreciation of picturesque beauty has been developing; yet, the unframed beauty of nature has not been fully recognized. There are many natural objects or places which are not visually attractive; however, it does not necessarily mean that they are not valuable compared to visually beautiful places if we know the proper kind of appreciation of nature. Visual beauty is not sufficient to describe natural beauty. We need a broader concept of beauty in order to understand the true aesthetic value of nature.

A Broader Concept of Beauty

If a visual appreciation is not sufficient for nature aesthetics, what natural elements other than visual appearance can we value aesthetically? How can we expand

¹⁶ John Muir, “A Near View of the High Sierra,” *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence* Second Edition, ed. Richard G. Botzler and Suzan J. Armstrong (The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1998), p. 109.

aesthetic properties of nature? To achieve a proper appreciation of nature, we need to examine what properties of nature count as aesthetic properties and how they can be valued properly. First, in order to clarify aesthetic properties of nature, I examine several of the values in nature discussed by Holmes Rolston, III.

When people look at nature, they recognize various kinds of values in nature. Some of them are instrumental, and others are intrinsic, and some possess both characteristics. Rolston, in his book *Environmental Ethics*, describes fourteen values carried by nature.¹⁷ Those values are life-support value, economic value, recreational value, scientific value, aesthetic value, genetic-diversity value, historical value, cultural-symbolization value, character-building value, diversity-unity values, stability and spontaneity values, dialectical value, life value, and religious value. His definition of aesthetic value under this categorization is the value through which human experience can be enriched in terms of science and art.¹⁸ Both art and science focus on intrinsically attractive factors which go beyond everyday personal needs. Rolston states, “Sensitivities both in pure science and natural art help us see much further than is required by our pragmatic necessities.”¹⁹ Artists can help us see the beauty in nature by illustrating an ideal form of a natural entity, that is, a natural essence in an individual existence, sometimes by modifying imperfections of nature. Likewise, science makes us appreciate nature by abstracting biological qualities in natural things. Rolston’s understanding of aesthetic value is very narrow. He expands the concept of natural beauty later in his book.

¹⁷ Holmes Rolston, III, *Environmental Ethics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 3–27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

However, aesthetic value as described in the fourteen values is restricted to a narrow understanding of natural beauty. Beauty within this classification is still based on the regular and complete characteristics of objects. In his view, irregular patterns or orders are not aesthetically appreciated as they are. We need to include other values described by Rolston in aesthetic value in order to broaden the aesthetic qualities of nature further.

Before we proceed to examining other values carried by nature, let me consider a fundamental problem about the characteristics of aesthetic value. The question is whether aesthetic value is instrumental or intrinsic. There are three types of values: anthropocentric instrumental value, non-anthropocentric instrumental value, and intrinsic value.²⁰ Most natural values are regarded as instrumental. If natural objects are used for the benefit of human beings, they are anthropocentrically instrumentally valued. If they are valued for their functions in natural cycles, those things are valued instrumentally, but non-anthropocentrically. The last form of value, intrinsic value is appreciated for its own sake without any instrumental purposes. If we describe aesthetic value based on human aesthetic experience and its influences on enhancing human pleasure, the beauty of nature can be valued under the category of anthropocentric instrumental value. In fact, it sounds possible to develop an anthropocentric argument for environmental preservation stating

²⁰ The definition of the term *anthropocentric* is vague. Because of the ambiguity of this term, intrinsic value also can be described with such terms as anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric. For example, Hargrove proposes anthropocentric intrinsic value. He regards “anthropocentric” as a description of the position of valuers. According to his definition, any value created by human beings is regarded as anthropocentric (a human value). On the other hand, J. Baird Callicott and Rolston advocate non-anthropocentric intrinsic value in terms of describing the object of valuing. According to their accounts, if we value for the sake of non-anthropocentric beings or things, value can be non-anthropocentric. However, Callicott’s and Rolston’s positions are not the same because Callicott’s non-anthropocentric intrinsic value is anthropogenic (created by humans) but focused on a nonhuman object, while Rolston’s non-anthropocentric value exists externally independent of the existence of valuer (a subjective being). Rolston argues that intrinsic value is created out of the autonomous purposes of a nonhuman organism.

that preserving something beautiful is good because beautiful things instrumentally increase pleasure among people. One may think that he or she can promote environmental protection for aesthetic experiences of future generations. However, the focus of environmental ethics should not be to find anthropocentric instrumental justifications for promoting environmental attitudes, for such justifications could be used to destroy nature if humans become extinct. Moreover, imposing instrumental value on aesthetic objects and experiences may cause the problem of aesthetic consumption.

Hargrove explains:

If the object, viewed instrumentally, is damaged by tourists trying to create aesthetic experiences in their minds by exposing themselves to the object, the object becomes expendable and is consumed by the efforts to create these mental states or feelings.²¹

Natural objects may be neglected if we focus on human aesthetic experiences as instrumental triggers for intrinsically valued human pleasure. In this way, anthropocentric instrumental aesthetic arguments can lead to environmental destruction when the viewing that creates the value instrumentally slowly destroys it. Therefore, in this essay, I focus on aesthetic value which can be appreciated intrinsically (for itself), not as a means to something else.

Among the fourteen values described by Rolston, there are six values which can be appreciated from a non-anthropocentric standpoint, either instrumentally or intrinsically. These values are life-support value, genetic-diversity value, historical (in particular, natural historical) value, diversity-unity values, stability and spontaneity value, and life value. All of them except natural historical value and life value, by which

²¹ Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, p. 127.

Rolston means intrinsic value of life, are also anthropocentric instrumental values; however, they can also be used in non-anthropocentric instrumental and intrinsic arguments.

First, let me focus on life-support value. This value designates natural forces which sustain all kinds of life forms. It includes the interrelatedness among organisms, biochemical reactions, geologic features, climates, and so forth. These forces, in Rolston's words, are "ecological values," and are necessary for the sustenance of human existence. At the same time, we can suppose that they were valuable even before the appearance of human beings. Therefore, life-support value can be appreciated for more than its anthropocentric instrumental value. Likewise, genetic-diversity value, diversity-unity value, and stability and spontaneity value can be valued positively independent of anthropocentric considerations.

Genetic-diversity value began to be highlighted as a great resource of the economy with the development of the biotech industry. Genetic information about various kinds of organisms has been patented as if it were human properties. In terms of anthropogenic manipulations of genes for maximizing or improving the potential of genetic functions, it has been believed that greater genetic value can be bestowed on organisms. However, as Rolston points out, recognizing economic value in genetic material and its products is possible "because humans tap in to capture and redirect some form of value already there.... There is a kind of genetic richness located in organisms in ecosystems, and genetic-diversity value is a puzzling hybrid between human economic

values and values inlaid biologically in life itself.”²² These biologically inherent values are closely associated with natural historical value. Genetic diversity is a product of evolutionary history over a long period of time assuming that the theory of evolution is the correct interpretation of natural history. It is possible to find economic value in it; however, it is still valuable as it is independent of any economic value ascribed to it.

As explained previously, the diversity and the unity of nature were not always fully appreciated in Western culture. Due to the shift in our world views as a result of scientific developments in the seventeenth century, people confronted the diversity and the interrelatedness of nature, and obtained new knowledge of the world. If they only noticed the diversity, they might have falsely conceived of nature as chaotic. Nature’s plurality-in-unity helped us see the intelligibility of nature. However, this feature is not simply a contribution to our understanding of nature. Rolston states:

The mind is a mirror of these properties [diversity and unity] in nature, and there is even a sense in which the mind, founded on the cerebral complexity and integrating capacity, is a product of nature’s tendency both to diversify and unify. When this mind reflects, in turn, on the natural world, it can assign value at once to diverse particulars and to the universal and global regularities that underlie and permeate these particulars.²³

By confronting both diversity and unity in nature, people have developed a new understanding of the world. Its contribution to both metaphysics and epistemology is undeniable. However, these qualities are inherent in nature. They can be appreciated not only for its contribution to expanding our knowledge about nature but also for their own sakes as interesting features of nature.

²² Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

There are constancies and contingencies in the natural world. Natural regularities can be considered valuable because they are the source of natural dependability. Human beings and nonhuman organisms depend on these predictable characteristics of nature for sustaining their lives. For example, the stages of the growth of organisms are sustained by regular biochemical and physical reactions. Expressions of genes, the growth of cells, developments of nerve systems, and various sorts of reactions are ruled by certain principles. If there were no regular interactions, things would end up with chimerical forms. There could be no growth or development. Moreover, no science would be possible without such natural order. Scientific analysis are possible only on the assumption that things follow certain rules. Therefore, regularity in nature is an important factor both for biological functions and the construction of scientific hypotheses. However, the opposite value, the stochastic characteristics of nature, also cannot be ignored. There would be no biological progress or improvement if there were no contingencies. This contrary quality was valued negatively especially in Western culture as an unintelligible characteristic in the context of the Newtonian mechanistic view. Nevertheless, it enhances our understanding of nature and can be valued positively in terms of its openness to the unpredictable possibilities of evolution. Rolston writes:

What the Darwinian revolution did to the Newtonian view was to find nature sometimes a jungle and not a clock, and many have disliked the change. Contingencies do put a bit of chaos into the cosmos. But you can have a sort of adventure in Darwin's jungle that you cannot have in Newtonian clock. Openness brings risk and often misfortune, but it sometimes adds excitement. Here nature's intelligibility, aesthetic beauty, dependability, and unity are checked by the presence of spontaneity, and this can be valued, too.²⁴

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 20–21.

The intermingling of constancy and contingency in nature is a unique and fundamental characteristic of nature. It sustains human life, but goes beyond anthropocentric necessities.

I have shown that these values can be a step toward non-anthropocentric valuing. In addition to these qualities, natural historical value, which is inlaid in the dynamic process of nature, is intrinsically appreciable as an interesting factor in nature. The next question is whether these values carried by nature can be regarded as aesthetic properties of nature. This question can be answered by coming to understand the focus of nature aesthetics. Rolston explains that “we are dealing not with painting but with happenings in a living system, and deeper aesthetic sensibilities are required.”²⁵ Following this argument, one can say that biological, chemical and physical features, and historical value in natural processes can be regarded as aesthetic properties if he or she values these qualities aesthetically with deeper sensitivities.

Before proceeding to the next section, in which I discuss proper appreciation in nature aesthetics, let us consider what it means to value objects aesthetically. Our mode of seeing things aesthetically is called the aesthetic attitude. The definition of this attitude is not simple. There are various ways to define the aesthetic attitude. As a helpful guide to developing an appropriate attitude in nature aesthetics, I focus on the definition by Jerome Stolnitz.²⁶

Stolnitz distinguishes the aesthetic attitude from our usual attitude, what he calls “the attitude of ‘practical’ perception.” People often value things instrumentally for

²⁵ Ibid., p. 242.

²⁶ Jerome Stolnitz, “The Aesthetic Attitude,” in *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics*, ed. John Hospers (New York: The Free Press, 1969), pp. 17–27.

fulfilling our further goals. This attitude based on anthropocentric instrumental judgments is “practical,” and in such an attitude, “we perceive things only as means to some goal which lies beyond the experience of perceiving them.”²⁷ The practical attitude is common in our lives; however, people sometimes look at things simply as they are independent of their instrumental value. According to Stolnitz, this intrinsic valuing is the “aesthetic” attitude of perception:

I will define “the aesthetic attitude” as “disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone.”... For the aesthetic attitude, things are not to be classified or studied or judged. They are in themselves pleasant or exciting to look at.... To maintain the aesthetic attitude, we must follow the lead of the object and respond in concert with it.²⁸

In terms of the argument about environmental protection based on human aesthetic experiences, if Stolnitz’s definition of the aesthetic attitude is correct, our attitude of looking at nature and protecting it for enhancing our pleasure is not aesthetic, for such attitude is not based on intrinsic valuing of nature. On the contrary, when we see natural objects and value their qualities (either non-anthropocentric instrumental values or intrinsic value) intrinsically, we see things aesthetically.

Stolnitz insists that “no object is inherently unaesthetic.”²⁹ Anything can become an aesthetic object if we contemplate it intrinsically. This suggestion is true in nature aesthetics as well. Every natural thing can be aesthetically appreciable, but in terms of different paradigms. One of the aesthetic paradigms is two-dimensional appreciation. Nevertheless, as I stated previously, this sort of appreciation is not proper in nature aesthetics. Since the purpose of nature aesthetics is protecting not only visually beautiful

²⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 19–21.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

landscapes but also visually unattractive things, we need to examine the proper paradigm of appreciating nature.

Proper Nature Appreciation

With regard to investigating the proper appreciation of nature, Carlson focuses on differences between appreciation of art and nature. According to Carlson, the appreciation of art qua art must be appreciation qua creation of an artist; therefore, art appreciation is considered to be artist or designer centered. An artist has some intentions when he or she engages in creative activities. Thus, when we appreciate an artwork, we appreciate not only the object itself, but also its design by an artist. Carlson calls this sort of appreciation “design appreciation.”³⁰ There are some exceptions. Some styles of art, for example action painting, do not have initial designs; therefore, they cannot be appreciated in the same way as designed art works.³¹ However, these are not major styles of art. Thus, it is still possible to say that appreciation of art is design oriented. On the other hand, nature does not have a designer unless you believe that the world was created by the divine force. Even if one accepts the theistic account of the creation of the world, it is clearly different from the design appreciation of works of art, which is composed of three factors: appreciation of the initial design, the object embodying this design, and the individual who embodies the design in the object.³² Therefore, it is not proper to include appreciation of nature in design appreciation in general. Since there is no artist in the creation of nature, Carlson says, “the relevant forces are the forces of nature: the

³⁰ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, pp. 107–109.

³¹ See *Ibid.*, pp. 109–114.

³² Carlson points out these factors as three key entities of design appreciation. See *ibid.*, p. 109.

geological, biological, and meteorological forces which produce the natural order by shaping not only the planet but everything that inhabits it.”³³ What we can appreciate in nature is the natural order, which produces dynamic natural beauty. Carlson points out that the appreciation of nature should be order appreciation. Natural elements, which appear in the process of becoming, can be positively valued according to Carlson’s order appreciation. Therefore, all elements in nature can be appreciated impartially in terms of order appreciation. This appreciation leads to the concept of positive aesthetics proposed by Carlson, which I discuss in the next chapter.

One can value visually ugly objects and hazardous events such as fire and volcanic eruptions in a positive manner. Rolston shows how positive accounts of nature can overcome ugliness:

Consider how our attitudes toward fire have changed since being informed by ecology. Fire sanitizes and thins a forest, releasing nutrients from the humus back into the soil. It resets succession, opens up edging, initially destroys but subsequently benefits wildlife. It regenerates shade-intolerant trees. Fire is bad for a culture that wishes to exploit a forest or even to view it scenically this year and next; fire is bad for a hiker caught in the flames; but we no longer think that fire is bad for a forest. . . . It is temporarily ugly, as is the elk carcass, in that the normal growth trends have been halted. But the temporary upset is integral to the larger systemic health.³⁴

Rolston admits that there is temporal ugliness. However, this perpetual perishing is the beginning of creation, and “in this perpetual re-creation there is high beauty.”³⁵ If you scale down and see only a part of nature, you may see ugliness. But if you should scale up and see the dynamic process of nature, then, you will recognize natural beauty. Nevertheless, if one does not have sufficient information about ecosystems, he or she

³³ Ibid., p. 220.

³⁴ Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 242.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 241.

may fail to see beauty in nature. In order to understand the true beauty of nature, proper information or education concerning the natural order is necessary. Therefore, science, which contributes to enhancing our knowledge about nature, plays an important role in nature aesthetics.

The Contribution of Science

Important elements which enhance our aesthetic sense of nature lie in education and scientific information. L. Duane Willard points out that “the aesthetic tastes of people can be changed and developed through exposure and education.”³⁶ Even if one thinks that particular natural objects or landscapes are not attractive, he or she will be able to recognize the beauty of nature by coming to understand geological or biological features, historical background, ecological balance, etc. Willard distinguishes these characteristics which can be obtained through scientific education from visual beauty, and calls them “nonaesthetic values.”³⁷ However, I believe that the nonaesthetic values in Willard’s remarks can be aesthetically valued. For example, the interrelatedness of organisms is a biological fact, which enhances our understanding of nature. According to Willard, this feature is not aesthetic value because it is not directly associated with the beauty of visual appearances. However, as I discussed in the previous section, this kind of biological fact can be valued aesthetically because it is a part of the nature’s dynamic processes. All elements which enhance dynamic beauty can be included in aesthetic properties of nature.

³⁶ L. Duane Willard, “On Preserving Nature’s Aesthetics Features,” *Environmental Ethics* 2 (1980): 297.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

Carlson discusses a role of science in the development of nature appreciation in his theory of positive aesthetics.³⁸ Either in the case of nature or of art, the aesthetic appreciation requires the proper categorization of aesthetic objects; if we have some information about an object and understand it correctly, we can appreciate the object properly. For the proper categorization, the knowledge in light of natural science is necessary. Our response to natural beauty is different whether or not we have knowledge about the natural world:

The positive aesthetic appreciation of previously abhorred landscapes, such as mountains and jungles, seems to have followed developments in geology and geography. Likewise, the positive aesthetic appreciation of previously abhorred life forms, such as insects and reptiles, seems to have followed developments in biology.³⁹

Various information concerning the creative work of nature is necessary in order to fully understand the aesthetics of nature. If one has some knowledge about nature, he or she may come to be interested in nature. Many places which are not beautiful can be considered to be interesting in light of proper information. This is an important contribution of science because one's interests can enhance his or her empathy and understanding with other living organisms and natural objects. Eventually people can be encouraged to think that nature is aesthetically valuable.

Hargrove shows how interest has achieved full aesthetic status by examining the aesthetic views of nineteenth-century scientists as revealed in their field notebooks. These journals show that even if some places are not beautiful in accordance with picturesque standards of beauty, they attracted people in terms of their scientific interest. Scientists

³⁸ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, pp. 85–95.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

such as William H. Brewer found themselves to be aesthetically attracted by landscapes which were not picturesque and “outside of the realm of conventional beauty.”⁴⁰

Hargrove points out that current environmental preservationists claim interest when beauty is lacking in natural objects or landscapes. For example, the establishment of Yosemite and Yellowstone in the nineteenth century were justified primarily in terms of their geological, aesthetic, and biological interest.⁴¹ Such scientific interest, continues to play an important role in the justification of environmental protection even today.

The close connection of the development of natural science and nature appreciation is also implied by Aldo Leopold. He portrays the deeper beauty of cranes and their habitat in his essay “Marshland Elegy”:

Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. The quality of cranes lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words.... Our appreciation of the crane grows with the slow unraveling of earthy history. His tribe, we now know, stems out of the remote Eocene. The other members of the fauna in which he originated are long since entombed within the hills. When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. He is the symbol of our untamed past, of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the daily affairs of birds and men.⁴²

Aesthetic appreciation of cranes and a marshland has developed in light of such biological facts as the interrelatedness of flora, fauna, and geological features and their evolutionary history. Since natural science unravels these facts in nature, there is a synchronic development between science and nature aesthetics.

⁴⁰ Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, pp. 88–92. The quotation is on p. 91.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

⁴² Aldo Leopold, “Marshland Elegy,” in *A Sand County Almanac* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 95–101, citation on p. 96.

As previously stated, visual qualities of landscapes are merely superficial elements of nature. Natural beauty lies in the temporal and spatial dynamic movements of nature. In the words of Rolston, we can see aesthetic qualities in “form, structure, integrity, order, competence, muscular strength, endurance, dynamic movement, symmetry, diversity, unity, spontaneity, interdependence, lives defended or coded in genomes, creative and regulative power, evolutionary speciation, and so on.”⁴³ All of these qualities are fundamental elements of nature appreciation. Science discloses these characteristics of nature and thus enhances our aesthetic consciousness toward nature. Natural beauty can be understood in terms of our deeper understanding of nature. Indeed, science, which enhances our knowledge of nature, is undoubtedly an important factor in nature aesthetics.

The Possibility of Unscientific Approaches

Science has been playing an important role in a contemporary society as a means of conceptualizing the world. We believe that science is an objectification of the world, and we judge whether or not certain information is dependable in terms of scientific analysis. What is verified in scientific research tends to be recognized as truth, if there is a reasonable ground for justifying a theory. As a result, unscientific world views tend to be neglected, for such views are not demonstrated by scientific methods. However, the neglect of unscientific concepts results in insufficient accounts of the world.

I hold that our excessive dependence on science does not provide sufficient approaches to nature aesthetics for the following reasons. First, science does not

⁴³ Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 234.

necessarily demonstrate universal truth. As research in science continues, information that was once believed to be true in the past is often revealed as an incorrect understanding of the world. Scientific truths can vary depending on available technology. Second, science is not necessarily an objectification the world. Different conclusions can be developed depending on our focus while looking at the world. Science also requires some sort of subjective judgments in the process of scientific research. When we draw a conclusion based on scientific data, we subjectively refer to the data and develop a theory. Thus, science reflects the subjective view of an observer. For these reasons, I believe that science is only one of the ways of looking at the physical world. There are many other approaches to conceptualizing the world. Although the contribution of science to nature aesthetics is significant, we should not deny the possibility of developing unscientific approaches to nature aesthetics.

Carlson proposes several models for contemporary aesthetic appreciation of nature.⁴⁴ Among these models, “a postmodern model” and “a pluralist model” are based on many layers of diverse human values. According to Carlson, a postmodern model starts from the realization of various forms of human conceptualization and understanding of the world:

The conceptual net of common-sense and scientific understanding is not the only one we cast over nature. There are also numerous other nets woven by human culture in its many forms – nets woven not only by art, but also by literature, folklore, religion, and myth. This realization suggests the possibility of what may be called a postmodern model of nature... [On such a model,] whatever cultural significance nature may have acquired and that we may find in it, the rich and varied deposits from our art, literature, folklore, religion, and myth, would all be accepted as proper dimensions of our aesthetic appreciation of nature.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, pp. 5–11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

In a postmodern model, science is simply one of the narratives describing the world. According to this model, all other cultural aspects of articulating the world should be equally considered as approaches to nature aesthetics. However, the significance of the influences of these human deposits varies. Carlson resolves this issue by replacing a postmodern model with a pluralist model, which accepts “the diversity and the richness of the cultural overlay,” yet recognizes that “not all of human’s cultural deposit is aesthetically significant either to all parts of nature or for all of humankind.”⁴⁶

Carlson’s suggestion of a pluralistic approach to nature aesthetics is quite important. However, Carlson’s focus does not seem to provide a justification for unscientific approaches to the proper appreciation of nature. At the end of the discussion of the pluralist model, Carlson points out that the fundamental layers of the human deposit, for example, those based on the senses and science, do not need to be restricted. Thus, he states that

even in light of the possibility of a pluralist model, models such as the arousal model [a model depending on human common, everyday knowledge and experience of nature] and the natural environmental model [a model depending on scientific understanding] maintain a special place as general guides to appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature.⁴⁷

Perhaps he is correct when discussing aesthetic awareness in industrialized countries, where the scientific interpretation of the world is dominant. Nevertheless, with regard to the notion of a pluralistic model, I have a different focus from Carlson. What I emphasize in this model is the possibility of an unscientific approach to nature aesthetics.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid..

While a pluralistic model is not the denial of the scientific approach, I suggest that unscientific views are also important for examining our appreciation of nature.

An Alternative Approach to Nature Aesthetics

I discussed the traditional Western aesthetic consciousness at the beginning of this chapter, presenting such characteristics as regularity, uniformity, and symmetry as paradigms of beauty in Western culture. This discussion showed the difficulty in developing nature aesthetics in light of the Western aesthetic consciousness because these characteristics are seldom found in natural objects. On the other hand, it is often claimed that the Japanese traditional aesthetics contains notions appropriate for developing ecological attitudes. In fact, differing from the Western art, Japanese traditional art is closely associated with one's interaction with the natural world. Thus, I focus on Japanese aesthetic consciousness as an alternative approach to nature aesthetics. Although it is not possible to discuss all aspects of Japanese aesthetics in this section, as a starting point, it is helpful to examine one of the fundamental elements of aesthetics, aesthetic quality, in order to understand the distinctive concepts of beauty in the Japanese tradition.

Donald Keene introduces Japanese aesthetic consciousness in his essay "Japanese Aesthetics" in terms of *Tsurezuregusa* ("Essays in Idleness"), written by a fourteenth-century Buddhist monk, Kenkō.⁴⁸ *Tsurezuregusa* is an essay based on daily life; however, it is full of expressions of the Japanese consciousness of beauty. This fact indicates that

⁴⁸ Donald Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Nancy G. Hume (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 27–41.

the Japanese way of life is closely associated with aesthetics. Keene says that it is difficult to explain all aspects of Japanese aesthetics in his short essay. Nevertheless, he identifies four aesthetics qualities peculiar to Japanese culture in light of examining the essay by Kenkō. These qualities are “suggestion,” “irregularity,” “simplicity,” and “perishability.” When you compare these qualities with traditional Western aesthetic qualities, it is clear that Japanese aesthetics is based on quite different aesthetic paradigms. Because they are so different, one may have difficulties understanding why these four characteristics have been positively appreciated in Japanese aesthetics. Let us consider each characteristic and examine how it can be aesthetically appreciated.

Keene uses the term *suggestion* to describe the potential to expand one’s imagination beyond the literal facts. Things at their climax stage, for example, the full moon and cherry blossoms in full bloom, are undoubtedly beautiful; however, they do not let us imagine the process of becoming or fading. Keene explains, “The full moon or the cherry blossoms at their peak do not suggest the crescent or the buds (or the waning moon and the strewn flowers), but the crescent or the buds do suggest full flowering.”⁴⁹ Of course, things at their full stage are also a part of the dynamic process of nature. They cannot be separated from their beginning or fading stages. Nevertheless, since Japanese people positively appreciate their feelings of expectation or sorrow toward objects as aesthetic emotions, things at their off peak are considered to be more aesthetically appreciable in terms of their nature which raises various sorts of feelings in the appreciator.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 31.

The aesthetic quality of suggestion is not a characteristic which exists externally in an object. Rather, it is a characteristic which appears through the interaction between the subject and the object. Just what sort of objective characteristics does suggestion depend upon? I believe that this characteristic involves the incompleteness of objects. Incompleteness indicates that there is room for one's imagination. It stimulates our imagination and produces various sorts of deep aesthetic emotions. Keene introduces incompleteness as the second category of Japanese aesthetic qualities. However, suggestion and incompleteness are not independent aesthetic qualities. The fondness for "suggestion" implies that incompleteness of nature has been positively appreciated in Japanese culture.

The second quality *irregularity* involves two characteristics, incompleteness and asymmetry. Keene explains the fondness for incompleteness in terms of Kenkō's opinion in *Tsurezuregusa*: "Leaving something incomplete makes it interesting, and gives one the feeling that there is room for growth."⁵⁰ Incompleteness should not be interpreted literally. If things are in their complete form, there is no potential for further development or change. In this sort of state, the force of becoming of nature is not fully expressed. Therefore, incompleteness is a manifestation of the dynamic life force in objects. Interestingly, this characteristic is not only appreciated in animate things but also in inanimate things. For example, Kenkō agrees that collecting complete sets of books is considered to be unintelligent. Imperfect sets are more attractive.⁵¹

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 32. This is quoted from *Essays in Idleness: The Tsurezuregusa of Kenkō*, trans. Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

⁵¹Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," p. 32.

The other characteristic *asymmetry* is expressed in various art styles. Architecture, poetry, calligraphy, ceramics, flower arrangement, and many other Japanese traditional arts manifest themselves as a fondness for asymmetrical forms.⁵² Because of the influence of Zen Buddhism, many Japanese traditional arts are based on achieving oneness with nature. Symmetrical forms are seldom found in the natural world. Therefore, when someone wants to produce artworks in accord with nature, he or she tends to prefer asymmetrical forms.

Simplicity is the abandonment of extravagance. Possessing unnecessary things or showing off luxurious things is not appreciated in the Japanese aesthetics; rather, these sorts of conspicuous luxury are regarded as shameful. For instance, Kenkō suggests that a man with simple tastes and no possessions is excellent.⁵³ Nevertheless, simplicity is not a manifestation of poverty. It is a beauty transcending material insufficiency. This implication of simplicity becomes clear after examining the beauty of *wabi*.

Wabi is an aesthetic expression distinctive to Japanese culture. This notion is fully expressed in the tea ceremony; yet, the development of *wabi* is complex, reflecting various aesthetic notions in different art forms. Haga Kōshirō explains that the aesthetic expression of *wabi* is not a single concept but reflects several aspects of beauty.⁵⁴ Among these aspects, simplicity is the most important element in *wabi* since its original verb *wabiru* connotes “being disappointed by failing in some enterprise or living miserable and poverty-stricken life.”⁵⁵ From the original meaning, one may misunderstand that

⁵² Ibid., pp. 32–34.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 35

⁵⁴ Haga Kōshirō, “The Wabi Aesthetic through the Ages,” in Hume, *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, pp. 245–278.

⁵⁵ Haga, p. 246.

wabi is an expression of poverty. However, the author of the *Zen-cha Roku* clearly distinguishes *wabi* from poverty:

Always bear in mind that *wabi* involves not regarding incapacities as incapacitating, not feeling that lacking something is deprivation, not thinking that what is not provided is deficiency. To regard incapacity as incapacitating, to feel that lack is deprivation, or to believe that not being provided for is poverty is not *wabi* but rather the spirit of a pauper.⁵⁶

The essential meaning of *wabi*, according to Haga, is “transcending material insufficiency so that one discovers in it a world of spiritual freedom unbounded by material things.”⁵⁷ *Wabi* is not a superficial expression of beauty. It is an implication of inner richness achieved in light of transcending materialistic desire.

Despite this focus on *wabi*, luxurious architectures and ornaments are also appreciated in Japanese culture. One can observe a distinctive contrast between conspicuous luxury and simplicity when comparing the gold pavilion in Rokuon-ji and the silver pavilion in Jishou-ji in Kyoto. Both pavilions are Zen Buddhist temples, and modeled after the Ruri-den in Saihō-ji; therefore, the structure of these pavilions are quite similar. Nevertheless, their appearances are significantly different. The gold pavilion is covered by pure gold leaves. Its shiny, gorgeous appearance gives us a strong impression of luxurious beauty. On the other hand, the silver pavilion shows moderate beauty in natural tastes. This architecture is graceful, but quite simple. Perhaps, it is easier to admire the beauty of the gold pavilion rather than the silver pavilion for those who have never learned the traditional Japanese aesthetics. However, the silver pavilion manifests Japanese beauty more significantly. The person who planned the construction of the

⁵⁶ Haga, p. 246. This passage is quoted from Jakuan Sotaku, *Zen-cha Roku*, in *Sen Sōshitsu*, ed. *Chadō Koten Zenshū*, vol. 10 (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1961), p. 297.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

silver pavilion, Ashikaga Yoshimasa, participated in various kinds of the Japanese traditional art, *geido*. His contribution to the development of *geido* has been significant. Therefore, we can suppose that Yoshimasa was more sensitive to Japanese beauty. It is quite reasonable that we find more Japanese aesthetic taste in the silver pavilion.

The fourth Japanese aesthetic quality is *perishability*. According to Keene, this quality is the most unusual for the Westerners, since in the West, permanence rather than perishability has been highly appreciated.⁵⁸ The fondness for permanence in Western culture goes back to ancient Greece. Because of the difficulty in understanding change, most Greek philosophers regarded material objects as illusory and nonexistent. This negative view of the material world has resulted in the development of the conception of matter as permanent. As a result, the natural world was considered not to be significant for philosophical discussions because of its lack of permanency.⁵⁹ On the contrary, impermanency has been highly appreciated in Japanese culture. This tendency may partly be a result of the influence of Buddhist teachings.

In the Buddhist tradition, impermanence is believed to be reality *per se*. This fundamental principle has made people think that seeking permanence results in misunderstanding of the world. The notion of impermanence may sound nihilistic. Nevertheless, it is not the denial of the world. The term *impermanence* should not be translated negatively. If everything is in flux, then, it has a potential to produce something unforeseen. Therefore, impermanence is a manifestation of the unpredictable potentiality and the dynamism of the world.

⁵⁸ Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," p. 37.

⁵⁹ See Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, pp. 19–20.

One example of the appreciation of perishability is the affection for fading cherry blossoms. People have deep aesthetic emotions when seeing the ephemeral life of a flower. Generally, flowers are aesthetically appreciable in other cultures as well; yet, what people recognize as an aesthetic quality may be different. Therefore, one may not find it difficult to understand the Japanese affection for cherry blossoms. However, one may be surprised to hear that the transiency of human existence has also been recognized as a necessary condition of beauty in Japan.⁶⁰

The examination of aesthetic qualities shows that the Japanese aesthetic consciousness provides an appropriate ground for developing nature aesthetics. First, the fondness for asymmetrical forms accords with nature aesthetics. In Western culture, people failed to see beauty in nature partly because of their preference for symmetrical forms, which cannot be found in the natural world. Symmetry has been appreciated mainly with the aesthetic standards of picturesque beauty; nonetheless, asymmetry was negatively valued until the development of the aesthetic notion of sublimity in light of scientific discoveries in the seventeenth century. To the contrary, Japanese people achieved their appreciation of nature as it is in part because of their affection for asymmetrical forms. This aesthetic preference suggests that the sublime has been aesthetically appreciable even before the development of natural sciences.

Such aesthetic qualities as incompleteness and perishability manifest positive appreciation of the spontaneity and dynamism of nature. Because the perfection and stability of objects were not people's aesthetic concern, nature's unframed beauty was appropriately appreciated. The fondness for incompleteness and perishability made

⁶⁰ Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," p. 39.

people focus on the process of aesthetic objects; therefore, it is possible to say that order-oriented appreciation has been traditionally developed in Japanese culture without scientific understanding.

Unfortunately, in spite of its appropriate ground for nature aesthetics, the influence of Japanese traditional aesthetics on current Japanese society is very significant. It may be partly because Japan has been Westernized significantly in terms of industrialization. However, the traditional aesthetic consciousness has not yet died out. It may be possible to enhance ecological attitudes by reintroducing this sort of aesthetics into Westernized Japan.

CHAPTER 3

ONTOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS OF NATURAL BEAUTY

The Subjective Perception of the Beauty

In accordance with a schema developed by Galileo and Descartes, characteristics of things are divided into two categories: primary properties and secondary properties. Quantifiable features such as length, width, and depth are regarded as primary properties. There are no subjective differences in the process of measuring the quantifiable features. On the other hand, secondary properties depend upon the perception of individuals. Tastes, color smells, textures, sounds, and other unquantifiable features were originally included in this category. Because of the development in science, some secondary properties can now be considered primary. For example, it is possible to define color in terms of the numerical values of wavelengths. However, G. E. Moore states that the value of the wavelength is not sufficient to describe yellow:

We may try to define [yellow], by describing its physical equivalent; we may state what kind of light-vibrations must stimulate the normal eye, in order that we may perceive it. But a moment's reflection is sufficient to shew that those light-vibrations are not themselves what we mean by yellow. *They* are not what we perceive. Indeed we should never have been able to discover their existence, unless we had first been struck by the patent difference of quality between the different colours. The most we can be entitled to say of those vibrations is that they are what corresponds in space to the yellow which we actually perceive.⁶¹

Color reflects personal perceptions more than other physical properties do. Therefore, it is still possible to be included in secondary properties. In general, aesthetic features are

⁶¹ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 10.

regarded as secondary properties. Judging aesthetic values such as beauty and sublimity significantly depends on personal perceptions and preferences; therefore, aesthetic qualities usually can be conceived in terms of the judgments of subjective beings. Then, has nature aesthetics also inherited this attribute?

It is often claimed that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. This concept has been agreed upon by value subjectivists, who regard aesthetic qualities as secondary properties. According to this view, the existence of subjective beings is crucial for aesthetic values. For example, J. Baird Callicott takes this position:

Value is, as it were, projected onto natural objects or events by the subjective feelings of observers. If all consciousness were annihilated at a stroke, there would be no good and evil, no beauty and ugliness, no right or wrong; only impassive phenomena would remain.... Mass and motion, color and flavor, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, all alike, are equally potentialities which are actualized in relationship to us or to other similarly constituted organisms.⁶²

According to his view, no beauty exists in nature without a subject being present. Only the potentiality of beauty exists in the external world. From the value subjectivists' viewpoint, there was no beauty before the appearance of higher forms of life with a capacity for aesthetic valuing; therefore, natural beauty has appeared as a result of the evolutionary process. Callicott also mentions that although values are anthropogenic (created in human consciousness), they need not be anthropocentric (focused on valuing humans and their experiences). He says, "Value may be subjective and affective, but it is intentional, not self-referential."⁶³ Natural beauty exists only after the existence of a

⁶² J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp.147 and 169.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

valuer, but this beauty may be intrinsically valued for itself, not just for the aesthetic satisfaction of an observer.

The appreciation of nature has evolved with changes in our perceptions of nature. As stated in the previous chapter, the shift of natural value is apparent in Western culture. Natural entities such as mountains were negatively judged based on the Christian aesthetic standard of the Middle Ages which highly appreciated symmetry and geometrical features. However, people began to perceive beauty in nature as a result of the reinterpretation of the biblical text and developments in science. Mountains, which were considered ugly before, have become sublime and eventually beautiful.⁶⁴ The subjectivist position shows that the aesthetic value of mountains has been changing over time, while their external qualities have not. What has been changing is people's minds or their "eye" when seeing mountains. According to this view, value can change significantly due to a shift of subjective perception. Because it can change, aesthetic value may be criticized as being too weak and shaky as a ground for environmental ethics. However, natural beauty is beyond personal preferences. It is possible to develop objective accounts of nature aesthetics.

The Objective Existence of Beauty

"Nature is beautiful." If we consider this sentence from the subjectivist viewpoint, beauty is just a perception in our mind. However, when we say something is beautiful, we refer to objective qualities in things. What then is the source of perceptions in nature aesthetics? Holmes Rolston, III points out that there are two sorts of aesthetic qualities:

⁶⁴ See Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*.

“aesthetic capacities” and “aesthetic properties.”⁶⁵ The former are the subjective capacities needed to experience beauty. The latter lies objectively in natural things. Aesthetic properties exist whether or not they are experienced by subjective beings. When we value nature, we are not merely projecting our values onto nature but discovering aesthetic properties in nature. Our sense of beauty may be in the mind, but nature, which generates the experience of beauty, is not.⁶⁶ Rolston recognizes objective qualities which produce aesthetic appreciation, although he says that aesthetics is a human construct. Aesthetic properties are necessary but not sufficient for natural beauty. If we do not discover aesthetic properties, then, beauty cannot exist.

Natural beauty still seems fragile even if objective aesthetic properties are recognized. The existence of beauty depends on whether or not it is perceived. Moreover, it may be valued negatively through the subjective valuing process. However, nature aesthetics can move further toward firmer ground in terms of the inherent value of nature. The concept of positive aesthetics helps us recognize the objective beauty in nature.

Carlson has written extensively about positive aesthetics. According to this view, everything in nature is beautiful. This view can be represented by John Constable’s comment, “There is nothing ugly; I never saw an ugly thing in my life.”⁶⁷ How can we say that all natural things are beautiful? Carlson points out that the advancement in natural science is connected with the development of positive aesthetics.⁶⁸ As mentioned in the previous chapter, nature aesthetics is not just picturesque beauty but also a deeper

⁶⁵ Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 234.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁶⁷ Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, p. 86.

⁶⁸ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, pp. 72–101.

concept of beauty which includes the appreciation of nature's features such as natural history, biological complexity, and dynamic functions. Science contributes to providing knowledge about these properties of nature. It makes us understand interrelations and functions of the natural world and broadens people's aesthetic sense. Indeed, many places which are not beautiful can be considered interesting in terms of proper information. According to Carlson, scientific information can help us see beauty where we could not see it before. In light of the intimate relationship between the development of science (especially ecology) and positive aesthetics, and of the fact that ecology emphasizes on qualities such as unity, harmony and balance, it is justified to claim that people see patterns and harmony in nature instead of meaningless jumble.⁶⁹

Another point made by Carlson is that nature should be appreciated in a different way from art. He distinguishes appreciation of nature from that of art. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the former is "order appreciation," while the latter is "design appreciation." Therefore, the structure of nature in terms of geological and biological forces needs to be understood. Nature aesthetics can be achieved in terms of proper information and education concerning the natural forces and processes. All natural entities possess these kinds of natural order; therefore, order appreciation is an important factor in achieving impartial appreciation of all natural elements. According to Carlson, natural order "can be appreciated once our awareness and understanding of the forces which produce it and the story which illuminates it are adequately developed. In this

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 87. This idea is developed by Carlson based on Val Routley's remark, "The informed person ... sees a pattern and harmony where the less informed may see a meaningless jumble." Carlson seems to agree with this suggestion by Routley at the end of the chapter "Nature and Positive Aesthetics."

sense all nature is equally appreciable....”⁷⁰ By appreciating natural order in light of science, nature aesthetics can become object-oriented, that is, objective. The beauty of nature can be beyond subjective evaluation.

Hargrove also examines art and nature appreciation in his book *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*.⁷¹ He claims that our duty to preserve natural beauty is stronger than our duty to preserve artworks. Preserving something beautiful contributes to enhancing the general good in the world whether it is natural beauty or artistic beauty. However, Hargrove points out, “the works of art and works of nature depend on different kinds of creative activity and thus on somewhat different standards for aesthetic appreciation.”⁷² Nature is self-creation, while art is a creative activity by an artist. Since a natural object lacks a design or an intention, it is an entity whose existence precedes its essence; therefore, beauty emerges only when the natural object takes physical form. In Hargrove’s words, “Existence is an aesthetic property of natural objects.”⁷³ Physical existence is a fundamental and necessary factor in nature aesthetics; however, mere existence alone cannot be the basis of aesthetic judgments about natural beauty. What else is needed for nature aesthetics?

Carlson points out that appropriate aesthetic standards or categorizations are also necessary for nature aesthetics. The natural world must be valued positively when it is perceived through appropriate aesthetic categories. The establishment of proper aesthetic standards for nature appreciation becomes possible, according to Carlson, as a result of

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

⁷¹ Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, pp. 165–205.

⁷² Ibid., p. 191.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 168. See also pp. 191–198.

the development of natural science and the complex relationship between correctness in science and aesthetic goodness:

If our science did not discover, uncover, or create such qualities [as order, regularity harmony, balance, tension, conflict, resolution, and so forth] in the natural world and explain that world in terms of them, it would not accomplish its task of making it seem more intelligible to us; rather, it would leave the world incomprehensible, as any of the various world views which we regard as superstition seem to us to leave it.⁷⁴

If we apply the aesthetic standards of art, the beauty of nature may not be recognizable.

Therefore, according to Carlson, we need standards for nature aesthetics, which are developed out of natural science.

Negative Aspects of Carlson's Position

Carlson is correct when he says that proper aesthetic standards are necessary for achieving nature aesthetics. For example, art will be valued wrongly when it is judged by improper aesthetic standards. Works of art need to be properly categorized when being viewed aesthetically. Likewise, mere physical existence is not sufficient in order to appreciate nature properly. It has to be judged with appropriate aesthetic standards. According to Carlson's account, science plays a major role in the aesthetic categorization of nature. However, there are some problems with Carlson's comment on the contribution of science to establishing aesthetic standards.

First, it is correct that science can contribute to enhancing our understanding of natural aesthetic qualities; however, it is not always true that science discovers natural qualities such as order and harmony. The notion of balance or harmony in nature, for

⁷⁴ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, p. 93.

example, has been replaced in ecology by dynamic disequilibrium. Such shifts in the focus of ecology have been common.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Frederic E. Clements proposed the concept of a “superorganism” to describe the holistic characteristic of the biotic community.⁷⁵ According to his account, the community goes through a cycle of organic development, which is similar to the developmental stages of individual organisms. This cycle begins with invasions, which are followed by succession and the climax state. Clements focused on the interaction of habitat, life forms and species, and tried to extract the essential process of biologic progress out of complex and chaotic characteristics of nature. However, twenty years later, Clements’ holistic view was challenged by the individualistic account of nature by Henry A. Gleason.⁷⁶ This position is focused on continuous spatial and temporal changes. Gleason explains:

... each separate community is merely one minute part of a vast and ever-changing kaleidoscope of vegetation, a part which is restricted in its size, limited in its duration, never duplicated except in its present immediate vicinity, and there only as a coincidence, and rarely if ever repeated.⁷⁷

According to Gleason, the plant community can be understood as an individual phenomenon. He rejected the holistic harmonious account of nature as a theory without foundation and replaced it by a chaotic view of nature. Contrary to Carlson’s account, Gleason discovered unharmonious characteristics of natural vegetation in light of science.

⁷⁵ Frederic E. Clements, “Preface to Plant Succession: An Analysis of the Development of Vegetation,” in *The Philosophy of Ecology: From Science to Synthesis*, ed. David R. Keller and Frank B. Golley (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2000), pp. 35–41.

⁷⁶ Henry A. Gleason, “The Individualistic Concept of the Plant Association,” in Keller and Golley, *The Philosophy of Ecology*, pp. 42–54.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

I am not entirely opposed to Carlson's view; nevertheless, science does not necessarily contribute to the positive evaluation of nature as described above. It is possible to achieve aesthetic standards as a result of scientific research. However, there is one thing we need to recognize in determining the contribution of science in establishing aesthetic standards. Our focus when conducting scientific research is crucial to the achievement of proper aesthetic standards for nature. Science does not necessarily describe the external world objectively. It often reflects personal perceptions and grasps reality differently depending on our focus when viewing nature. For example, both scientists, Clements and Gleason, looked at natural vegetation and ended up with two extremely different accounts of nature. Differences in the understanding of vegetation result in different environmental attitudes and values. Clements' holism views natural disturbances as exceptional, rare events. Natural environments are considered closed systems. His deterministic view assumes an *a priori* fixed state of nature to which nature is progressing. Once nature gets to the equilibrium point, it maintains this balanced state. This holistic account suggests the idea that every unit of nature is conservable. It may be easy to develop a preservationist attitude in terms of Clements' holism; however, this theory ignores the dynamic forces of nature, which can also be appreciated positively. Gleason's individualistic view, on the other hand, made the chaotic characteristics of nature prominent. Although Gleason emphasizes dynamic natural processes and the flux of nature, it is difficult to establish nature aesthetics from his position. Gleason's theory can be used as a justification for the wanton exploitation of nature by humans. One may think that if everything is changing without ideal states, it is not possible to develop environmental attitudes. Nothing can be protected if all things are in flux. What I want to

discuss by comparing these two different accounts of nature is not which theory grasps reality better. Rather my intent is to show that different characteristics of nature become prominent depending on our focus when looking at nature. If we scale down to individual populations, we may see stochastic features of nature. If we scale up and grasp the interaction between organisms and habitat, we may see the holistic function of nature. Therefore, we need to adjust our focus in order to establish proper aesthetic standards for nature.

The holistic view of nature continues to be important in the field of ecology. For example, Leopold, emphasizes the integrity of the biotic community in his essay “The Land Ethic.” However, the current holistic understanding of the world is different from Clements’ holism. It follows the path between classical holism and Gleason’s individualism. Current holism emphasizes the interrelationship among natural entities as Clements suggests. However, there is no fixed ideal state of nature unlike Clements’ account of the climax stage in nature. Natural environments are regarded as open systems; therefore, both natural and anthropogenic disturbances are natural events. The new holistic view supports the idea that everything is in flux, as does Gleason’s view. However, it does not necessary mean that nature is characterized by chaotic or unharmonious features. Unpredictable natural events are valued positively as interesting factors in nature. The current view of nature in ecology provides some clues to the establishment of proper aesthetic standards in terms of recognizing positive values in natural forces, organisms, and the interrelationship among them.

Second, I object to Carlson’s justification for the idea that nature remains unintelligible and incomprehensible without scientific achievements as a basis for

uncovering aesthetic qualities in nature. In his essay, Carlson admits that natural science is a story to describe the world.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, he excessively emphasizes science as a means of disclosing aesthetic properties in nature in his theory of positive aesthetics. He seems to depend on science too much in spite of his recognition of the narrative aspect of science. Even if Carlson's emphasis on science accords with his intention, and is correct at least in the development of nature appreciation in Western culture, he weakens his account by presenting science as a story, opening the possibility that unscientific narratives may also contribute appropriately to nature aesthetics.

As repeatedly mentioned in this essay, the contribution of science to nature aesthetics cannot be denied; however, it is still possible to appreciate nature positively without scientific discoveries. For example, Japanese traditional culture is well known for its distinctive sensitivity to natural beauty. People recognized beauty in nature's dynamism long before the development of science, and appreciated it positively in various forms. One distinctive form of nature appreciation in Japanese culture is religious. In Shinto, various kinds of natural forces or organisms have been worshipped as *kami*. The eighteenth-century Shinto scholar, Motoori Norinaga explains what *kami* refers to:

Generally speaking, (the word) "*kami*" denotes, in the first place, the deities of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient texts and also the spirits enshrined in the shrines; furthermore, among all kinds of beings – including not only human beings but also such objects as birds, beasts, trees, grass, seas, mountains, and so forth – any being whatsoever which possesses some eminent quality out of the ordinary, and is awe-inspiring, is called *kami*.

⁷⁸ See Carlson, p. 119.

One may object that the worship of nature is merely nature romanticism. However, this kind of nature appreciation has resulted from keen observation of nature through daily activities. People have developed appreciation of nature by living close to the nonhuman world. *Kami* is different from a personified icon such as God in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The nature worship in the Shinto tradition is the appreciation of dynamic natural forces. In this sense, even though this sort of appreciation of nature is not scientific, nature could be appreciated properly. Japanese nature worship shows us that it is possible to appreciate nature without a scientific framework. The Shinto tradition is merely one of the Japanese relationships with nature. Nature has been positively valued in various ways. I discuss this topic in the next section and the following chapter.

Another problem with Carlson's position is discussed by Hargrove. Hargrove points out Carlson's neglect of creativity in nature when discussing characteristics of aesthetic judgment of art and of nature. Carlson explains that the aesthetic judgment of art is performed based on the correct categorization of artworks. For example, impressionistic pictures should be judged according to the aesthetic standard of impressionism. If these pictures are judged under incorrect categories and with different aesthetic standards, the aesthetic judgments are not correct. Moreover, because of the prior-existence of aesthetic standards, artworks, when categorized correctly, may be judged negatively. On the other hand, nature does not have prior design or (a human) designer; therefore, it does not have a prior-existing aesthetic standard and cannot be judged in the same way as art. Carlson writes:

Unlike works of art, natural objects and landscapes are not created or produced by humans, but rather "discovered" by them... Art is created, while nature is discovered. The determination of categories of art and of their correctness are in

general prior to and independent of aesthetic considerations, while the determinations of categories of nature and of their correctness are in an important sense dependent upon aesthetic considerations. These two differences are closely related. Since nature is discovered, rather than created, in science, unlike in art, creativity plays its major role in the determinations of categories and of their correctness; and considerations of aesthetic goodness come into play at this creative level. Thus, our science creates categories of nature in part in light of aesthetic goodness and in so doing makes the natural world appear aesthetically good to us.⁷⁹

According to Carlson, Hargrove notes, “the creativity is not in the creation of the objects but in the creation of the appropriate aesthetic standards.”⁸⁰ If we accept Carlson’s position, the natural order is regarded as not being creative. Carlson is correct to some degree. First, his position explains our appropriate position in nature appreciation. Natural beauty is not an anthropogenic creation. Thus, inappropriate human modification of nature, for example, based on the aesthetic standard of picturesque beauty (we can see such modification in gardening), is not appreciated in nature aesthetics. Second, we do discover aesthetic qualities of nature through scientific studies, and develop appropriate aesthetic standards for nature appreciation. The aesthetic standard for nature does not exist in advance. We need to categorize nature and understand its beauty by developing the proper standard of nature aesthetics. Science has been playing an important role in the process of discovering natural beauty and developing appropriate aesthetic standards. Third, there is creativity in the task of establishing the aesthetic standard of nature. After accepting these positive points in Carlson’s position, however, Hargrove points out Carlson’s neglect of the creativity in the creation of nature:

...Carlson is in error in concluding that nature is not itself creative, for it is possible to construct a position that attributes creativity to nature, is at the same

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 92–93.

⁸⁰ Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, p. 181.

time compatible with both theistic and scientific perspectives, and is firmly grounded in traditional philosophy.⁸¹

What Hargrove wants to argue is that intentional planning or designing is not necessary for creativity. He discusses the theistic account of the creation of nature and concludes that whether or not we accept the theory of the divine creation of the world, the existence of nature precedes its essence. This view provides a way to attribute creativity to nature:

If nature's existence precedes its essence, the natural product of nature's indifferent creativity, whether through God or through itself, is and has to be good and beautiful, because whatever is so created always brings with it compatible standards of goodness and beauty. Put another way, nature is itself its own standard of goodness and beauty, making ugliness impossible as a product of nature's own creative activity.⁸²

Differing from Carlson, who recognizes creativity merely in establishing proper aesthetics standards for nature appreciation by science, Hargrove finds creativity in the self-creation of nature. Moreover, Hargrove's position supports the idea that aesthetic standards are produced through natural creative activities. His account overcomes the excessive dependence of positive aesthetics on science. It provides a basis for nature aesthetics without scientific discoveries and enhances our understanding of objective aesthetic value. Here, the existence of natural objects and a self-created aesthetic standard allows nature to have objective beauty independent of human perception.

A Difficulty with the Positioning of Human Beings

It is often claimed that human manipulation of nature is a negative factor in the appreciation of natural beauty because the beauty of nature is a result of self-creative

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 181.

⁸² Ibid., p. 184.

activity. This view depends on the concept that humans are outside of nature. According to this view, anthropogenic manipulation of environments is not natural; therefore, human interference should be avoided so as to preserve the objective beauty of nature. For example, Robert Elliot and Hargrove support this position.

Elliot shows the negativity of human interruptions in terms of “the anti-replacement thesis.”⁸³ According to this thesis, aesthetic value in nature will be lost or reduced due to human interference even when we try to restore environments because human interference disrupts natural history and natural processes, and alters natural things, turning them into non-natural human artifacts. Elliot recognizes a broader concept of aesthetic value in nature, and argues that nature’s aesthetic value is a basis for nature’s intrinsic value. Therefore, human interference results not only in a decrease in the aesthetic value of nature but also in the intrinsic value of nature. Although Elliot admits that we should intervene when it is necessary, he claims that restored environments have less natural value than the original ones.

Hargrove also notes the negative influence of human interferences on the value of nature:

When we make plans to help or improve nature, the plans are not nature’s but our own, and the result is the stifling of natural creativity and the transformation of the natural objects influenced into human artifacts.⁸⁴

The value of art objects decreases when they are not original. Likewise, nature has more value when it is formed by natural processes without anthropogenic interference.

⁸³ Robert Elliot, *Faking Nature: The Ethics of Environmental Restoration* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 76–83.

⁸⁴ Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, p. 196.

Furthermore, he explains, not interfering with nature is also a human decision. When the preservationist is doing nothing, he or she is still doing something.

If it is correct that any human decision is considered to be anthropogenic interference, and eventually results in decreasing the aesthetic value of nature, it is difficult to develop the coexistence of humans and natural beauty. According to this account, the beauty of nature always exists separately from human societies. This view can be used as a basis for justifying the rejection of wanton human interference with nature. However, the separation of humans from the aesthetic value of nature does not satisfy the fundamental aim of nature aesthetics, which I explained in the introduction of this essay. Nature aesthetics should work as a means of realizing our ethical consciousness toward nature. In order to achieve this primary goal, we need to develop nature aesthetics which does not deny human interaction with nature. As a solution to the separation of humans and natural beauty, I explore Eastern philosophy based on a non-dualistic world view and examine its distinctive approach to nature aesthetics.

Natural Beauty in Eastern Philosophy

As a starting point of examining Eastern culture, let me consider one fundamental question about beauty: what is the quality of beauty per se? According to value subjectivists, the existence of beauty depends on subjective experiences. Thus, beauty is a human perception. On the other hand, if natural beauty exists objectively in the external world as value objectivists claim, there are aesthetic properties in the world. The interpretation of beauty can vary depending on how we characterize it ontologically. Nevertheless, in both cases, provided that we think of beauty in terms of traditional

Western metaphysics, beauty is a fixed concept or quality similar to Platonic universal concepts. If this Western understanding of beauty is correct, then beauty cannot exist in the Buddhist tradition because no thing exists in the world according to their understanding of reality as emptiness. The Eastern concept of emptiness provides a different approach to understanding beauty.

One famous school of emptiness-teaching (*sunyata-vada*) is the Madhyamika school in Mahayana Buddhism. Nāgārjuna, the founder of this school, reemphasized the Buddha's rejection of all speculative views. According to Nāgārjuna's teaching, everything that arises depends on other conditions (on relationships to other phenomena); therefore, nothing can have an original inherent nature. That is, there is nothing with its own nature, no true substance which exists by itself. Therefore, reality is recognized as a passing phenomenon, which is in between absolute "non-existence" and "substantial existence."⁸⁵ In other words, this interpretation of reality neither denies the external existence of entities in reality nor supports their universal substantial natures. Nevertheless, the teaching of emptiness is not nihilistic; rather, its focus is on the interrelatedness of the world. According to this teaching, nothing can exist eternally or without depending on other conditions.

The emptiness of the world is not a denial of beauty in nature. The Buddha's sermon on the flower provides a clue to understanding beauty in the Buddhist tradition. In the story, one of Buddha's disciples grasped a message by direct mind-to-mind transmission from the Buddha who was holding a flower in his hand without saying

⁸⁵ Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 97–98.

anything. This message was an esoteric teaching by the Buddha. It was not transmitted in words. One possible interpretation is that if nothing exists in the world, that even the flower does not exist; however, there is an impression which we can perceive from the non-substantial flower. Beauty is neither a fixed concept nor a quality which can exist eternally. There is no such thing as *beautifulness* in the world. However, within the flux of the world, it is possible to perceive aesthetic impressions.

Consider the discussion of impressions developed by David Hume⁸⁶ in which beauty is understood as an impression. In his discussion, Hume distinguishes two different classes of perceptions based on their degrees of vivacity: the less lively perceptions are called “thoughts or ideas,” and the lively ones called “impressions.” There is a difference between senses when one is hungry and when one just thinks about being hungry. Thus, it is reasonable to distinguish two levels of perceptions. According to Hume, impressions are the basis for developing one’s concepts. If someone has never perceived an impression of beauty, he or she cannot know what beauty is. More complex concepts can be resolved into simple ideas, and eventually their corresponding impressions.

Hume’s understanding of concepts based on impressions seems similar to the Buddhist tradition. This similarity is true at least in the sense that both Hume and Buddhism reject or do not support the theory of universal concepts of things, which you can see in the Platonic world view. However, I suppose that there is still a difference which should not be neglected between the philosophy of Hume and that of Buddhism.

⁸⁶ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *The Empiricists* (Garden city, N.Y.: Dolphin Books, 1961), pp. 316–320.

Hume suggests that impressions are the origins of concepts. According to his philosophy, these concepts are different from Platonic universal concepts; nevertheless, they are personal concepts, which consist of individual speculative views. Buddhist philosophy, on the contrary, does not support the personal view either. In Buddhism, “views” are believed to be the origin of suffering. Speculative viewpoints, theories, or opinions are seen as causes of attachments to the narrow-self (biased world views), and thus lead to suffering.⁸⁷ Therefore, impressions should not be regarded as the origin of thoughts but should be perceived as they are in the Buddhist tradition.

If natural beauty in the Buddhist tradition is an impression which can be perceived by humans, one may think that the Buddhist view is similar to the value subjectivists’ recognition of beauty as a human perception. However, Buddhist beauty is not necessarily a subjective experience. Because of the emptiness of the world, there is no distinction between humans and nature or self and others. There is neither subject nor object. Therefore, beauty should be understood in light of a transcending of the dualistic world view. When we see a flower and perceive an aesthetic impression, a flower is not only outside of us but also within us. Moreover, there is neither “me” nor “us,” only causally dependent *dharmas* (phenomena) can be observed. At the level of the ultimate truth, the reality is inconceivable and inexpressible. Therefore, there is no way through which we can describe the world, for example, with language. However, at the level of conventional truth, which can be expressed by using terms such as *person* and *thing*, beauty is a phenomenon which a person’s condition depends on.⁸⁸ We can understand

⁸⁷ Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, pp. 53–54.

⁸⁸ Two levels of truth are discussed by the Madhyamika school. See *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

Eastern natural beauty only after overcoming the dichotomy of subject and object. Beauty can be perceived as a part of phenomena in the interrelated, ever-changing world in the Buddhist tradition.

Nature Aesthetics Based on Transcendentalism

The transcendental relationship between subject and object is fundamental in the Buddhist tradition. Nevertheless, Buddhist schools show different ways to achieve this relationship. As previously stated, the Madhyamika school focuses on the interrelatedness of the world and overcomes the dichotomy between self and the world. This interpretation is used as a basis for achieving a selfless world view. On the other hand, the Yogācāra school has achieved the transcendental view in terms of the idealistic account of reality. Similar to Western transcendental idealism,⁸⁹ the Yogācāra school understands the world as a construction in the mind:

Visible entities are not found, the external world is merely thought (*citta*) seen as a multiplicity (of objects); body, property and environment – these I call thought-only (*citta-mātra*).⁹⁰

There is a limitation to what we can experience in the world. Thus, if we identify what is in mind with reality, the physical world cannot be fully explained. However, the

⁸⁹ The transcendental relationship between humans and nature is also found in Western philosophy. For example, a Western idealist, Ralph Waldo Emerson overcomes the separation of humans from nature by reflecting nature onto one's mind. This sort of world view idealizes nature in terms of regarding the external world as the projection of mind. Hargrove explains that the transcendentalist approach makes it easy "to find moral as well as aesthetic value in the contemplation of nature." The transcendental subjective view is not the expansion of egoistic self but the achievement of enhancing ethical consciousness. Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, p. 99. See also Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836), sec. 3, in *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1950), pp. 7, 6; "The American Scholar," sec. 1, in *Selected Writings*, p. 48, and sec. 3, p. 52.

⁹⁰ Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, p.109. This passage is quoted from *The Lankavatara Sutra*, trans. D. T. Suzuki (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932) p. 154.

Yogācāra School rejects the discussion about extra-mental reality based on the claim that it is meaningless to argue about what one cannot know or experience. This school transcends the subject/object duality by knowing the world as “representation only.”

Either transcendental view denies the separation of humans from the natural world. There is no distinction between humans and nature. Therefore, this sort of view provides a solution to the problem highlighted as a result of the objective argument of natural beauty, which is the denial of the human participation into the creation of natural beauty.

Because of the significant influence of Buddhism, the transcendental world view has also prevailed in the Japanese tradition. Many Buddhist sects have developed in Japan. As a result, diverse transcendental views have developed in terms of different Buddhist philosophies. It is not appropriate to simplify these views; yet, it is still possible to point out distinctive characteristics common in most Japanese views. Perhaps one of the common notions among different Japanese transcendental views has developed as a result of the fusion of the Buddhist and the Shinto tradition. Shinto is the ancient Japanese tradition which existed before the arrival of Buddhism. As previously explained, various natural forces and organisms with some eminent quality have been worshipped as *kami* in this tradition. Thus, because of the influence of Shinto, nature tends to be appreciated positively as awe-inspiring, divine force.

I propose three helpful implications of Japanese views for developing nature aesthetics. First, positive appreciation of nature can be justified in terms of nature worship in the Shinto tradition. Nature is highly valued as it is. Second, the non-dualistic view suggests that beauty is not simply a subjective perception. This notion rejects the

objection that nature aesthetics is too weak as a ground for environmental ethics. Third, the transcendental relationship denies the separation of humans from the natural world. The close relationship between humans and nature helps us enhance ethical consciousness toward nature. Based on these implications, it is possible to say that the Japanese transcendental view is promising as a basis for nature aesthetics. In the following chapter, I explore the Japanese value of nature further and examine distinctive features of the relationship between humans and nature developed in Japanese culture.

CHAPTER 4

ETYMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE OF NATURE

The Value of Etymological Analysis

Nature is perceived differently in different cultures. Human values, which are closely associated with religious and cultural values, have influenced how we see the world. The variety of our senses of value has resulted in diverse views of nature. As mentioned in chapter one, for example, nature was apprehended negatively in the Western tradition because nature's "irrational" characteristics such as irregularity, complexity and asymmetry were not appreciable. On the other hand, it is often mentioned that the Japanese people have been sensitive to natural beauty and have traditionally developed a prominent nature aesthetics.

Nature aesthetics in Japanese culture to a significant degree evolved out of religious values. However, it is a difficult task to clarify the religious influences on the Japanese value of nature because Japanese religion results from a fusion of various religious traditions such as Shinto, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and minor indigenous religions. A possible approach to understanding the Japanese valuation of nature is to analyze the word for *nature* in the Japanese language. Language reflects epistemological characteristics of objects; therefore, an etymological examination provides some clues to understand in the traditional world view in a particular religious, cultural, and historical background. In this chapter, I focus on the etymological characteristics of nature in the Japanese language as a means to comprehending the

Japanese way of valuing nature, and discuss religious and cultural valuation of nature based on those characteristics. I conclude with an examination of the value of nature in Japanese culture as an approach to practical nature aesthetics.

Nature: The Force of Becoming

The linguistic characteristics of the Japanese view of nature are discussed by Hubertus Tellenbach and Bin Kimura in their article “The Japanese Concept of Nature.”⁹¹ The Japanese word for *nature* is *shizen* or *Shi-zen* (自然), which consists of two kanji characters. Before this word was introduced from China, there was no word which expressed the totality of all landscapes. *Onozukara* (自ずから) is an adverb word which was used in order to express the force of the becoming of nature before the arrival of the word *shizen*. This term corresponds to the Greek word *phusis* and is translated as “naturally or of itself” in English. As you can see, the term *onozukara* is written with the same character as *shizen*. This character (自) stands for two other meanings: *mizukara* (自ら, personally, self) and *yor*i (of/from...). *Onozukara* (an objective expression) and *mizukara* (a subjective expression) are clearly separated in English; however, in Japanese both of the adverbial forms of *nature* (naturally) and *self* (personally) originate from the same common ground.⁹²

How can an objective term and a subjective one share the same root? The answer lies in the process-oriented understanding of the world reflected in these terms.

⁹¹ Hubertus Tellenbach and Bin Kimura, “The Japanese Concept of ‘Nature’,” in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) pp. 153–162.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 154–155.

Tellenbach and Kimura point out that the third meaning attributed to the same character, *ori*, is stressed in both *onozukara* and *mizukara*. Furthermore, *-kara* in these words also signifies *of/from*. “The common root of *onozukara* and *mizukara*, which let the ancient Japanese to express both meanings by a single character, lies not in the origin of the action but rather in the process, *of/from*.... In expressing the common round of *onozukara* and *mizukara*, nature and self, the Japanese thus point to something like a spontaneous becoming, a force flowing forth from an original source.”⁹³ The subjective force and the objective force can be expressed by the same character by emphasizing the force of becoming or changing in the subject and the object.

What can be indicated in terms of the common origination of *onozukara* and *mizukara* is that the Japanese term for *nature* “*shizen*” stands for a different meaning from the English word *nature*. Tellenbach and Kimura point out three main meanings of nature: (1) something outside or opposite us, (2) certain constant traits of humans or animals, or different types of habitual disposition, and (3) modes of behavior designating membership in a species characterized by certain qualities.⁹⁴ The second and the third meanings of *nature* manifest the idealistic view of the world distinctive to Western culture. In accordance with these meanings, *nature* designates fixed states of things or what a thing ought to be. The modern meaning of *shizen* corresponds to these meanings of *nature*. For example, when we say “*shizen to shitashimu* (communing with nature)”, *shizen* signifies the outside world. Obviously, subjective beings are outside of *shizen* in this expression. Moreover, in the phrase “*shizen ni furumau* (behave naturally),” this

⁹³ Ibid., p. 155.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 155–156.

shizen expresses an expected mode of behavior. We have certain models of behavior which we ought to follow. If we do not follow expected rules, it is *fushizen* (unnatural). However, these applications of the word *shizen*, which are common in the meanings of *nature*, are not manifestations of the essential meaning of *shizen*. According Tellenbach and Kimura, there are subtle though decisive differences between *nature* and *shizen*:

Contrary to the object-oriented meaning of nature, *Shi-zen/Ji-nen* [*jinen* is a Buddhist word for *shizen*] has no such meaning. It never signifies the object as such, but presents only its respective manner of being and becoming. Even if *Shi-zen/Ji-nen* is used as a substantive, one signifies by this less the objects of nature as such than their way of being ‘which exist without human action.’ *Shi-zen* in no way stands opposite the subject, rather it always indicates a certain state or mood in the subject.⁹⁵

What does it mean to say that *shizen* signifies a certain subjective state? If this remark is true, then is *shizen* only an expression about a subjective being? Of course, *shizen* is not a subjective statement. The point of their argument is that *shizen* is not based on a dualistic world view; rather, it implies not only spontaneous forces in the world but also a changing mood within a subjective being brought about by external spontaneity.

Originally, there was no generic term expressing the totality of animate and inanimate components of the external world. *Shizen*, which designates their force of becoming, was applied to refer to nature as outside. The application of *shizen* as the word for *nature* “is correct etymologically inasmuch as an original meaning of *Shi-zen* names ‘something like mountain, river, ocean, plant, animal, rain, wind, etc.’”⁹⁶ However, the original meaning of *shizen* is not something outside of us. It implies the unity of subject and object through feelings which arise when we see something which possesses the

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 157.

force of becoming. It does not mean that feelings *per se* are considered to be nature. But *shizen* is associated with the sense of an unforeseen event. Tellenbach and Kimura explain, “‘Were a case of *shizen* to arise’ means ‘were something unexpected to occur, a case of necessity, or should I meet with an accident.’”⁹⁷ What is regarded as unnatural in a European sense can be regarded natural in Japanese traditional thought. The essential meaning of *shizen* can be understood by participating in the spontaneously changing world. The word *shizen* suggests that nature is not outside us but within us. The concept of the unity of the subject and the object based on spontaneity can be implied in terms of the etymological characteristic of *shizen*.

The Concept of Unity in Religious Traditions

The unique interpretation of nature shown by the etymological analysis of *shizen* implies the concept of the unity of self and the world. The notion of unity is not simply a linguistic implication. Overcoming the dichotomy between subject and object is supported by various religious traditions as well. For example, the unity realized in terms of spontaneous natural forces which exists within self and the world is the fundamental concept of the animism in Shinto. In traditional ceremonies such as *Gyoshu* (魚酒) and *Denryō* (田獵), people try to obtain supernatural power by eating plants and animals.⁹⁸ It is believed that divine natural forces are immanent in beings living in mountains, fields, rivers, and oceans. Eating, which is a primary activity of living, is not only necessary for

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 157–158.

⁹⁸ Ikuo Nakamura compares discussions about Japanese religious rituals such as sacrificial ceremonies and animal release ceremonies, and examines the metaphysical implication underlying those rituals in his book *Saishi To Kugi: Nihonjin no Shizen-kan-Doubutsu-kan* (Kyoto: Hōzō-kan, 2001). For the discussion about *Gyoshu* and *Denryō*, see Ibid., pp. 68–73.

taking nutrients from those natural products, but also important for obtaining these divine forces in nature. An important concept implied by these Shinto rituals is the continuity of humans and nature. It is believed that self and the world can become one through the divine force which exists in millions of animate and inanimate things in nature.

In Buddhism, overcoming the duality of self and the world is a fundamental means of salvation. The concept of unity is repeatedly expressed in both Buddhist theories and practices. The famous Buddhist metaphor of the jewel net of Indra manifests this concept clearly. In this story, the interrelation of all entities in reality is explained by reflections among jewels. As each jewel reflects every other jewel including its reflection of all other jewels, every phenomenon reflects all other phenomena of reality; therefore, there is no clear distinction between “I” and “others.” The personal self is considered to be causally dependent on other phenomena. The interrelatedness of all entities is a ground of denying inherent nature or self in the world. Lack of independent nature in things is expressed as emptiness (*śūnyātā*) in the Mahāyāna Buddhism. The concept of emptiness, which is known as *kū* (空) or *mu* (無), has been very influential in the Japanese tradition as well.

The founder of the Shingon sect, Kūkai, articulates the universe based on the story of the Indra’s net in his poem, *Attaining Enlightenment in This Very Existence* (*Sokushin jōbutsu gi*):

The Six Great Elements are interfused and are in a state of eternal harmony;
The Four Mandalas are inseparably related to one another.
When the grace of the Three Mysteries is retained, (our inborn three mysteries
will) quickly be manifested.

Infinitely interrelated like the meshes of Indra's net are those we call existence.⁹⁹

In this poem, the continuity of nature and the interdependent existence of natural elements are expressed. According to Kūkai, all material worlds are created by the interaction of the Six Great Elements, which are earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness (the Body and Mind of Dainich Nyorai (dharmakāya)); thus, Paul O. Ingram explains, "all phenomena are identical in their constituent self-identity."¹⁰⁰ Ingram means that the Kūkai's universe denies duality of subject and object. The following essay by Kūkai clearly shows his non-dualistic universe:

Differences exist between matter and mind, but in their essential nature they remain the same. Matter is no other than mind; mind, no other than matter. Without any obstruction, they are interrelated. The subject is the object; the object, the subject. The seeing is the seen, and the seen is the seeing. Nothing differentiates them. Although we speak of the creating and the created, there is in reality neither the creating nor the created.¹⁰¹

With regard to Kūkai's world view, let me mention another important element. It is his recognition of the intrinsic value, or the *kami* nature, embodied in all sentient and non-sentient beings. He had a cordial and conciliatory attitude toward the Shinto tradition. Indeed, he contributed to the development of "Ryōbu Shinto, the Shingon form of the Shinto-Buddhist amalgamation."¹⁰² The practice of meditation in mountains helped Kūkai to achieve a syncretistic world view based on the Shinto and Buddhism.¹⁰³ This

⁹⁹ Paul O. Ingram, "The Jeweled Net of Nature," in *Buddhism and Ecology: the Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 75. This is quoted from *Kūkai: Major Works*, trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 227.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–76.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77. This passage is quoted from Haneda, *Kūkai*, p. 82.

¹⁰² Joseph M. Kitagawa, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol.8 (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995), pp. 395–396.

¹⁰³ David Edward Shaner, "The Japanese Experience of Nature," in Callicott and Ames, *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, p. 166.

convergence of religious theories is a significant contribution to Japanese nature aesthetics. The oneness of the world and the divine, awe-inspiring essence interwoven in the universe are fundamental concepts for developing the non-hierarchical, non-anthropocentric and positive view of nature.

The thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Dōgen also describes non-dualistic reality by saying “I came to realize clearly, that mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great earth.”¹⁰⁴ In Zen Buddhism, overcoming the dichotomy of the subject and the object is expressed as a zero-point from which true awakening starts.¹⁰⁵ The non-dualistic world view is a starting point of personal salvation, indicating that the unity of self and the world is a fundamental element in Zen philosophy. Zen Buddhism has had great influence on the Japanese traditional way of art called *geido*. Accordingly, the concept of overcoming duality is present in Japanese *geido* by way of *haiku* poetry, the tea ceremony, *Noh* drama, brush paintings, and the Japanese garden.

The Ever-Changing Nature

Shizen is a common translation of the English word for nature; however, in the Japanese language, nature is also described as *mujoh* (無常), which literally means nothing permanent. This word reflects another important concept of the Japanese understanding of nature, that is, nature in flux. *Mujoh* began to be used under the influence of the Buddhist tradition. The notion of ever-changing reality is fundamental in

¹⁰⁴ Ruben L. F. Habito, “Mountains and Rivers and the Great Earth: Zen and Ecology,” in Tucker and Williams, *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 168. This is quoted from Dōgen Zenji, *Sokushin Ze-Butsu*, in *Shōbōgenzō*, vol.3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1939), p. 98.

¹⁰⁵ Habito, “Mountains, Rivers and the Great Earth,” p. 168.

Buddhist teachings. This feature of reality is described as “impermanence (*anitya*)” in the Three Dharma Seals (Dharma mudra). Two other seals are non-self (*anatman*) and *nirvana*. These Three Seals are the primary concepts of all teachings of Buddha and can be found in any Buddhist implication.¹⁰⁶ For example, according to the idea of momentariness, everything comes into being momentarily and perishes momentarily in that instant; therefore, things cannot become eternal. This concept implies that everything is impermanent. If everything is changing continuously, it lacks a permanent and self-existing substantiality. According to this concept, nothing (無) exists in the world; therefore, nature is empty. Here, we can derive the notion of emptiness again. The emptiness of the world is supported by two concepts: the interrelatedness of entities of the world and their continuous change.

Mujoh also manifests the deep melancholy of humans or life being ill or dying. These meanings of *mujoh* may lead to a misconception that the Japanese understanding of nature is negative. However, Tellenbach and Kimura point out that it cannot be understood merely in a pessimistic or nihilistic way. “Nothing permanent” is not the complete understanding of the notion of *mujoh*. We need to recognize a deeper implication of this term, that is, the ability to produce unpredictable phenomena. The essential element of *mujoh* is the sublime freedom and spontaneity of nature, that is, the force to be of itself. Therefore, *shizen* and *mujoh* manifest the same meaning in their essence.

¹⁰⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), p. 131.

Moreover, *mujoh* is not just an objective statement of nature; “the Japanese lives this great spontaneity of nature ‘subjectively’ as the source of his own self.”¹⁰⁷ Ever-changing nature is not just an objective force, but also the source of human beings; therefore, this concept is related to the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, which has been discussed in the analysis of *shizen*. The concept of *uji* proposed by Dōgen reflects the idea of unity based on impermanence. Time is understood as events or phenomena in the East Asian tradition. Change is a fundamental factor of conceiving time. According to this interpretation of time, time manifests the Buddhist theory of impermanence, that is, everything is under constant change. If our environments and we are changing continuously, being of self and the world are not different from time. By recognizing self and the world as time, Dōgen overcame the dichotomy of subject and object. Furthermore, the unity in light of the recognition of self and the world as time results in increasing ethical consciousness. Thus, as David Edward Shaner points out, Dōgen’s interpretation of time and existence enhances our consciousness toward environments:

Dōgen’s concept of *uji* or “being-time” refers to an understanding of time that is informed by our intentional interaction with persons and events. When we say “time flies when we are having fun,” or “time stands still,” we refer to time as a function of our engagement with our surroundings. The fundamental point [of Dōgen’s concept of *uji*] is that awareness of time’s passing in a variety of ways is indicative of having cultivated a sensitivity and intersubjective relation with things “in time.” That is, sensitivity toward temporality itself enhances our experience of life. Being aware of our existence in time, our timeless as it were, makes life more intense and precious precisely because of our passing experiences.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Tellenbach and Kimura, “The Japanese Concept of Nature,” p. 159.

¹⁰⁸ Shaner, “The Japanese Experience of Nature,” pp. 170–171.

Someone may criticize that the interpretation of existence as time leads the idea that nothing can be protected, and can be used as a justification for the wanton exploitation of nature. I provide a solution to this problem in the next section.

Approaches to Aesthetics Based on Theoretical Notions

The force of becoming and impermanence were highlighted as metaphysical characteristics of nature by examining two Japanese words, *shizen* and *mujoh*. Both of these characteristics have been used as a ground of deriving the notion of unity. This fact indicates that being one with nature is very important in the traditional Japanese world view. Being aware of oneness with other things is a primary step for raising ethical consciousness towards them. Although, the non-dual world view is the beginning of personal salvation, the aim of salvation is not anthropocentric redemption but according oneself with the dynamically changing world. If this argument is correct, Japanese philosophy contains theoretical implications which raise environmental consciousness.

A theory-oriented discussion is not sufficient to achieve a practical nature aesthetics; therefore, in this section, I develop practical approaches to nature aesthetics based on Japanese metaphysical characteristics of nature. In fact, epistemology and practice are not separated in the Japanese religion, especially in the Shinto and some Buddhist sects such as Shingon and Zen. That is, metaphysical notions go beyond the realm of epistemology and theory. Thus, I suppose that the metaphysical implications are reasonable grounds for examining Japanese aesthetic practices.

Impermanence (*Mujoh*) is one of the important sources of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Japanese Heian poetics portrays nature as a flux of impermanence

with the aesthetic notion of *aware*, which means the sorrow-tinged appreciation of transitory beauty.¹⁰⁹ As explained in chapter one, the aesthetics of *mujoh* can be observed in the Japanese affection for cherry blossoms (*sakura*). *Sakura* is very popular among Japanese people not only for its beautiful appearance, but also for its nature of impermanence. The life of *sakura* is ephemeral. They fall as soon as they bloom. The feeling of *aware* is generated by observing the ephemeral life of *sakura*. It is true that we feel some sort of sorrow when we see ephemeral things; however, *aware* is not necessarily a pessimistic feeling, this feeling portraying a sensitive, deep emotion arisen from interacting with impermanent nature is considered to be a sources of Japanese nature aesthetics.

Donald Keene points out that impermanence is one of the fundamental elements of Japanese aesthetics.¹¹⁰ He calls this feature of beauty “perishability.” The appreciation of perishability can be found in various forms. According to Keene, the fondness of wooden architecture is an example of the Japanese affection of perishability. There are some inevitable reasons for choosing wooden buildings. Temperature and humidity are very high during summer in Japan. If a house is built with stone or other strong, ill-ventilated materials, it becomes too uncomfortable to stay there without air conditioning facilities. Therefore, when there was no such thing as an air conditioner, wood was the most suitable material for architecture. Nevertheless, it is true that Japanese people enjoy the perishability of wooden buildings. For example, a rustic temple of dilapidated wood

¹⁰⁹ Steve Odin, “the Japanese Concept of Nature in Relation to the Environmental Ethics and Conservation Aesthetics of Aldo Leopold,” in Tucker and Williams, *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 99.

¹¹⁰ Keene, “Japanese Aesthetics,” in Hume, *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, pp. 37–39.

arouses deeper aesthetic emotions than a luxurious marble architecture. Worn materials are something aesthetically appreciable.

The Japanese aesthetic notion of impermanence indicates that Japanese aesthetics is not based on the judgment of beauty and ugliness in light of the composition of an aesthetic object. Aesthetic value is recognized not in a fixed state but in the dynamic forces of the ephemeral world. Thus, Japanese aesthetics can be described as process-oriented. The difference of the focus between the traditional Western and Japanese aesthetics is apparent. The disparity of aesthetic paradigms has affected whether nature could be appreciated positively. In West, permanence has been highly appreciated; thus, impermanent nature could not be an aesthetic object. Contrary, the Japanese aesthetic paradigm is common to nature aesthetics. Nature has been appreciated properly in the traditional Japanese aesthetics.¹¹¹

Let me move the discussion of Japanese nature aesthetics to the following questions: what kind of approach to nature aesthetics can be achieved by overcoming the dichotomy between self and the world? How does the concept of unity affect nature appreciation? Shaner suggests that the concept of unity (in his words, the intersubjective experience) is closely associated with a non-discriminating mode of consciousness.¹¹² This kind of consciousness can be achieved with the world view without anthropocentric hierarchy. When we have a hierarchical view that puts humans above nonhuman beings and things, we separate ourselves from the rest of the world, and thus become insensitive to changes of the nonhuman world. As discussed in the previous chapters, dynamic

¹¹¹ For the discussion of a process-oriented aesthetic paradigm in nature aesthetics, see chapter one.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 171.

changes of the world are the beauty of nature *per se*. That is, the anthropocentric mode of consciousness makes us insensitive to natural beauty as well.

On the contrary, a non-discriminating mode of consciousness encourages us to think that “the world” and “we” are not different. It also enhances our interactions with nature. Through these intersubjective experiences, one becomes more sensitive to the beauty of nature. Shaner explains the possibility of an intimate relationship with nature arisen from a non-discriminating mode of consciousness:

The feeling of potentiality and opportunity occasioned by intersubjective experiences can thus be interpreted as issuing from a nondiscriminating mode of consciousness. The experiences of compassion, empathy, sympathy, and love arise from this intersubjective experience. ... the nondiscriminating mind can engage an intersubjective experience with nature. The love of nature depicted here is not merely directed from knowing subject to inanimate object. Rather, one loves nature more fully by participating in an intimate experience with the phenomenal world itself.¹¹³

Various sorts of feelings arise from the mutual interrelationships with nature. These feelings are considered to be aesthetic responses in the Japanese culture. This argument can be explained in terms of the notion of *mono no aware*.

A Shinto scholar Motoori Norinaga discusses *mono no aware* to illustrate a person’s “emotional and aesthetic experience.” The word *aware* in this term generally connotes sadness or pity. Thus, *mono no aware* literally means sadness (*aware*) in (*no*) things (*mono*). Nevertheless, it is not correct to limit the meaning of *aware* to these sorts of pessimistic feelings. According to Motoori, *aware* is an expression of deep feeling in the heart, any heartfelt sentiment including positive feelings such as happy, joyous, and

¹¹³ Shaner, “the Japanese Experience of Nature,” p. 171.

interesting.¹¹⁴ When one sees ephemeral aspects of nature, for example, seasonal changes, impermanence of life and death of being, deep emotions (*aware*) arise. This sort of emotional orientation to nature is regarded as an aesthetic response in the Japanese tradition. Aesthetics based on personal emotions may be misunderstood as anthropocentric and subjective because generally speaking, if there is no subjective being, an aesthetic response does not arise. However, if we go back to the starting point of this discussion, there is the concept of unity as a primary ground of the argument. The phenomenal source of an impression of beauty is in the natural process. Self can be found in this process as well. When we perceived natural beauty, it is not only in nature but also within us. Natural beauty is a part of our impermanent existence and should be enhanced fully. Therefore, aesthetics can be connected to an ethical consciousness. This characteristic of aesthetics is important for achieving nature aesthetics as an approach to environmental ethics.

An important contribution of Japanese aesthetics to environmental ethics is providing some clues for achieving the coexistence of human culture and nature. It is often pointed out that aesthetic value of nature decreases if humans interfere and alter the natural world. The view that humans are a part of nature began to be emphasized; nevertheless, it is still difficult to include humans in nature completely because the idea that whatever we do is a part of natural processes has a potential to cause the wanton exploitation of nature. Thus, the separation between humans and nature still exists. This separation may be used as a justification for the claim that any kind of human

¹¹⁴ Shigeru Matsumoto, "The Concept of *Mono No Aware*," in *Religion in the Japanese Experience: Sources and Interpretations* Second Edition, ed. H. Byron Earhart (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), p. 29.

interference becomes a cause of transforming nature into artifacts. For example, the restoration of nature can be criticized as a destruction of natural value even though human manipulation is for the benefit of nonhuman natural entities.¹¹⁵ However, Japanese aesthetics is based on intersubjective experiences with non-discriminating mode of consciousness. In this position, the aesthetic value of nature can be achieved in terms of the interrelationship between subject and object. Yet, intersubjective aesthetics by no means allows the wanton manipulation of nature because this aesthetics accompanies ethical consciousness developed in light of the non-discriminating mode of consciousness developed from the non-dualistic world view.

Japanese traditional art inherits this characteristic of aesthetics. Nature is intensively altered as a motif of art but in accord with the notions of intersubjective aesthetics. An example of such art is Japanese gardening. Japanese gardens are highly manipulated; yet, they are different from gardens achieved in light of suppressing nature with human control. Nature is highly appreciated in terms of human stewardship. If we can explicate how it is possible to achieve such human manipulation of nature, we should be able to justify human manipulation of nature for non-anthropocentric purposes and achieve the coexistence of culture and nature.

¹¹⁵ For example, Elliot holds anti-replacement thesis and criticizes restoration program because human interference into the natural world destroys natural value developed in light of natural history. See Elliot, *Faking Nature*.

CHAPTER 5

JAPANESE GARDENS: AN PRACTICAL APPROACH

The tranquil atmosphere of Japanese gardens has been highly appreciated not only in Japan but also in Western countries. Many Japanese gardens connote religious or philosophical implications; yet, one can enjoy a feeling of calm in these gardens even without knowledge about the Japanese tradition. This quiet atmosphere partly depends on the monochromatic effect of the colors in the gardens. The bright colors of flowers are intentionally absent in Japanese gardens. The green of plants and trees is the dominant color, producing a simple impression in light of the subdued shades of green. Nevertheless, Japanese gardens are not necessarily monotonous since a rich tone scale of the different shades of green exists.¹¹⁶ The monochromatic effect brings a significant difference of impressions between Japanese and Western gardens. One may be able to feel calm without difficulty because of this effect. However, the monochrome is not sufficient to describe unique qualities of Japanese gardens.

Carlson focuses on the aesthetic features of Japanese gardens, specifically tea and stroll gardens, and discusses how these gardens can be aesthetically appreciated without difficulty in spite of their foundation based on a dialectical relationship between art and nature.¹¹⁷ As previously mentioned, art and nature depend on different aesthetic paradigms. When someone makes an aesthetic judgment about art, he or she views an

¹¹⁶ The monochromatic effect of Japanese gardens is pointed out by Tetsuro Yoshida, *Gardens of Japan*, trans. Marcus G. Sims (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), pp. 7–9.

¹¹⁷ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, pp. 164–174.

artwork in terms of its correct category and makes critical judgments based on its design. On the other hand, according to Carlson's account, nature should be aesthetically viewed in light of order appreciation, which can be developed in terms of proper information about geological and biological forces. However, when art and nature are combined, as in the case of gardening, people often find it difficult to engage in aesthetic appreciation because of conflicts in their aesthetic paradigms. This is particularly true with regard to gardens that exemplify, what Donald W. Crawford calls, a dialectical relationship between art and nature. In such a relationship, the artificial and the natural are conflicting forces, which sometimes synthesize a new object of aesthetic appreciation as a result of their interaction. Because the emerged third object may be unique, its aesthetic appreciation is different from either the standpoint of artificial or natural beauty.¹¹⁸ Carlson claims that Japanese gardens are an example of such gardens; nevertheless, one seldom has difficulties when appreciating Japanese gardens. Thus, there is a paradox in the aesthetic appreciation of Japanese gardens.

As a solution to this paradox, Carlson argues that Japanese gardens avoid critical judgment, which is essential in the appreciation of art, in terms of their appearances of "natural inevitability."¹¹⁹ In other words, they appear as they should be, that is, as they could not have been otherwise, thus, making it impossible to judge them critically. Such gardens achieve this kind of look by disclosing the essence of nature. Carlson explains:

I suggest that the key to achieving the relevant kind of look is a kind of idealization aimed at isolating and revealing the essential. In short, the solution to the problem of judgment lies in the fact that Japanese gardens achieve a look of

¹¹⁸ Donald W. Crawford, "Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 194–195.

¹¹⁹ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, p. 169.

inevitability not by the creation of a simple copy of nature, but rather by the creation of an idealization of nature that attempts to uncover what are taken to be its essential qualities.¹²⁰

One may think that such ideas as the appearance of natural inevitability, the idealization of nature, and essential qualities of nature are similar to Platonic universal concepts. In other words, if Japanese gardens are appearances of what ought to be, such appearances may be regarded as the perfect forms of the gardens. However, if this interpretation is correct, the aesthetic features of Japanese gardens do not accord with Eastern thought, which denies universal concepts of the world. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the following questions in order to understand the aesthetic paradigms of Japanese gardens: what are essential qualities of nature, and how can we achieve the disclosure of the essence of nature?

First, I explore the concept of the essence of nature in Japanese gardens. The general definition of *essence* is the intrinsic properties which characterize the nature of an object. Essence is a quality which helps us conceptualize things in the world. Thus, the natural essence is the manifestation of the fundamental characteristics of nature. An examination of Japanese notions of nature provides some clues to elucidating the concept of the essence of nature in Japan; thus, it is meaningful to reconsider the discussion of these notions, which was developed in the previous chapter.

In the etymological analysis of the Japanese words for *nature*, at least, three metaphysical notions of nature were disclosed: the force of becoming of nature, the impermanence of nature, and the unity of subject and object. The spontaneity and the impermanency of nature have been positively appreciated in the Japanese tradition, and

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 170.

have worked as a basis for the non-dualistic view of the world. Besides these notions, irregularity in nature (i.e., incompleteness and asymmetry) is also aesthetically appreciated in the Japanese tradition.¹²¹ If such characteristics as spontaneity, impermanency, and irregularity are truly essential features of nature, it is reasonable to state that Japanese gardening is based on expressing these characteristics in light of human manipulation, such as the pruning of trees and the arranging of objects, and also on achieving the oneness of subject and object through these notions.

If this supposition is correct, why then is human manipulation necessary for extracting these characteristics? Does the essence of nature not appear without artifactualizing natural landscapes or objects? Assuming that the intensive treatment of nature plays a significant role in disclosing the natural essence, how can we achieve this disclosure without turning nature into a mere artifact? For answers to these questions, let me focus on the relationship of climate and art discussed by the twentieth-century Japanese philosopher, Watsuji Tetsuro. In his book, *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, Watsuji describes how climatic patterns have influenced the construction of human cultures.¹²² Depending on climate, our physical and mental reactions to environments differ; thus, according to Watsuji, human views and senses, which consist of cultural and historical structures, need to be examined in light of climatic conditions. Perhaps the relationship between climate and culture is reciprocal. Nature speaks to us in light of climate and we develop a certain consciousness. Simultaneously, we see nature through different filters of that consciousness and in doing

¹²¹ The fondness for irregularity is discussed in chapter one in this essay.

¹²² Watsuji Tetsurō, *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, trans. Geoffrey Bownas (New York: Greenwood Press, 1961).

so recognize different features in nature. Art including gardening is a human activity; accordingly, we should not neglect climatic characteristics when discussing aesthetics preferences.

Watsuji classifies the climate in Japan as a monsoon type, which is characterized by high temperature and high humidity. In addition to these monsoon characteristics, significant seasonal change, combining the feature of a tropical zone and that of a frigid zone, is distinctive to Japanese climate. The significant change of climate is not only temporal but also spatial. Because of the complexity of geographical features, different climatic conditions can be observed concurrently. Under the influence of these temporal and spatial changes, distinctive Japanese consciousness has developed.¹²³ Through this filter of consciousness, Japanese people see the world and engage in cultural activities. Therefore, it is possible to suppose that climatic conditions are associated with the creation and the appreciation of gardens.

In order to clarify the relationship between climate and gardening, it is useful to compare the style of English and Japanese gardens. English-style natural gardens are framed, less artifactualized landscapes. Unlike highly manipulated gardens, natural objects are appreciated in light of their natural shapes. In such gardens, as Carlson explains, harmonious relationships are achieved by nature serving as a model for art.¹²⁴

¹²³ Because of high humidity, the productivity of nature is significant; thus, people tend to be passive toward nature. That is, they do not develop antagonistic attitudes toward nature. Nevertheless, nature also brings such disasters as floods. These climatic catastrophes are so violent that people have learned resignation. Moreover, since seasonal change is significant, they obtained high sensitivity toward changes in nature. Under the influence of these climatic conditions, the distinctive Japanese way of life has been developed to be “a copious outflow of emotion, constantly changing, yet conceals perseverance beneath this change; at every moment in this alteration of mutability and endurance, there is abruptness.” For a detailed discussion about the monsoon type climate and its historical and cultural characteristics, see *Ibid.*, pp. 18–39, and pp. 133–138.

¹²⁴ Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, p. 165.

This look can be achieved in the mild climate in Europe. Under such a climate, natural entities can be artistic objects without the intensive labor of pruning. To the contrary, in Japan, because nature appears “disorderly and desolate confusion,”¹²⁵ intensive care is required to maintain natural objects as entities of art in gardens. The highly artifactualization of nature in Japanese gardens is partly because of climatic conditions. Nevertheless, Japanese gardens are different from Western formal gardens, which also depend on intense manipulation of nature. In what ways are Japanese and Western formal gardens different? Watsuji provides a clue to this question in terms of the distinctive idealization of nature in Japanese gardens:

The putting some artificial order into the natural could not be achieved by covering up the natural by the artificial, but only by making the artificial follow the natural. And by the nursing of the natural by the artificial, the natural is, all the more, made to follow from within.... Thus the Japanese discovered a purely natural form within the disorder and wilderness of nature and this is what is reproduced in their garden. In this sense, the Japanese garden is indeed a refinement and an idealization of natural beauty.¹²⁶

In Western formal gardens, the natural is suppressed by the artificial. This task can be achieved by altering nature in accordance with geometric proportion and mathematical principles. On the other hand, this sort of composition of natural entities is avoided in the creation of Japanese gardens. In such gardens, nature is altered by making the artificial follow the natural. How, then, is this alteration of nature achieved?

As a specific example, let us focus on the treatment of moss in Japanese gardens. The moss covering the entire surface of the garden is artificially achieved by tending. Since the moss does not grow impartially over the surface, this kind of look cannot be

¹²⁵ Watsuji, *Climate and Culture*, p. 190.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

achieved without human manipulation. Nevertheless, it is different from a flat green surface of turf, which can be seen in most Western gardens. The moss in Japanese gardens has an undulation that wells subtly from below, and this undulation is not artificial but natural.¹²⁷ The undulation represents the subtle difference in the length or intensity of the moss, which is a result of the spontaneity of nature; thus, in light of appreciating the natural undulation of the moss, the spontaneous life force of nature is aesthetically appreciated in Japanese gardens. Beauty is not produced as a result of artifactualization of nature in this gardening. This sort of tending is an example of the artificial following the natural.

A unity in a composition of Western formal gardens is geometrical, mathematical, and sometimes symmetrical. Natural objects are altered and arranged in accordance with these principles. On the other hand, a unity is gained by, what Watsuji calls, “a meeting of spirit” in Japanese gardens.¹²⁸ He mentions that spirits meet among natural objects, for example, between moss and stone, or between stone and stone, if these objects are arranged successfully in light of the Japanese composition of gardens. This sort of animistic unity is not seen in Western gardening; thus, it may sound strange to alter or to arrange objects in accordance with their spirits. Nevertheless, if Watsuji’s suggestion is correct, this unique animistic composition has been pursued even in Buddhist gardening, notwithstanding that Buddhism originally does not accept the animistic view of the world. In terms of the significant influence of Shinto on the Japanese tradition, animism has been important in the Japanese world view. Thus, it plays an important role even in

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 192.

the creation of Japanese gardens. Interestingly, this distinctive way of achieving a unity seems to work as a basis for realizing such Japanese notions of the world as “impermanence,” “irregularity,” and “the oneness with nature.”

Geometrical and mathematical principles in Western formal gardens are uniform. Natural objects which are arranged in accordance with these principles have fixed states or forms. The concept of time is denied in these gardens. Japanese informal gardens, on the other hand, manifest both temporal and spatial changes.¹²⁹ A unity achieved through a meeting of spirit does not bind natural objects in immutable or geometrical forms; thus, impermanent and irregular qualities of natural objects are intrinsically appreciated without difficulty. Indeed, impermanence is a fundamental element in the creation of Japanese gardens in that seasonal changes are not simply allowed rather they are necessary for the creation of superior-class gardens.¹³⁰ Moreover, this unification encourages the appreciation of the irregularity of objects. Thus, objects in Japanese gardens are intentionally arranged in irregular patterns. For example, rocks are arranged in incomplete broken zigzag lines. Those arranged in straight lines are considered aesthetically inferior in the art of Japanese gardening. This sort of irregular arrangement of objects is achieved not by geometrical principles but in light of refined feeling.¹³¹

Since a meeting of spirit is not mathematical, the achievement of this task depends on intuitive principles gained through overcoming the dichotomy between self and the world. If there is a separation between subject and object, it is not possible to

¹²⁹ Mara Miller, *The Garden as an Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 22–24.

¹³⁰ Watsuji, *Climate and Culture*, p. 193.

¹³¹ Yoshida, *Gardens of Japan*, pp. 32–34.

arrange objects in light of their spirits. In terms of being one with nature, people realize the tension among natural objects and create gardens in accordance with it. This suggestion is justifiable because Japanese gardens, especially tea and stroll gardens, are significantly influenced by Zen Buddhism, which holds the view that the non-dualistic world view is a starting point of personal meditation.

There are various styles of Japanese gardens and each of them requires different aesthetic paradigms. But at least with regard to tea and stroll gardens, if my examination of these gardens is correct, their creation in light of the idealization of nature and the extraction of the natural essence is connected to such notions of nature as impermanence, the force of becoming, and irregularity. Furthermore, it is also suggested that the unity of self and the world is fundamental in the creation of the gardens. As previously explained, these notions work as the basis for the process-oriented appreciation of nature, and thus, accord with the paradigms of nature aesthetics. Since there are commonalities in aesthetic paradigms of Japanese gardens and of nature, it is possible to educate nature aesthetics in light of the creation and the appreciation of Japanese gardens. Because of increasing public interest in Japanese gardens, these gardens may be one of the promising ways to introduce the concepts of nature aesthetics to the public, and eventually alter our attitudes toward the natural world.

The implications of Japanese gardening may present approaches to ecological restoration. The restoration of nature is problematic since human interference can be considered to be the cause of decreases in such natural values as historical value and aesthetic value. Such criticism against restoration is mainly to counter claims that encourage the exploitation of nature by making it appear that landscapes which have been

destroyed through exploitation can be easily restored to their original condition. It is correct that we should neither intervene in nature unnecessarily for the benefit of humans nor justify the wanton use of nature on the basis of claims about the ability of restoration to replace the devastated areas. However, the rejection of restoration denies the coexistence of culture and nature and the possibility of creating better environments for both human and nonhuman beings. As I have shown in this chapter, Japanese gardens are intensely manipulated by humans. Nevertheless, this manipulation does not seem to decrease their natural aesthetic value. If it is correct that this human interference can be achieved in terms of the extraction of such natural characteristics as impermanence, spontaneity, and irregularity, and the non-dualistic world view between humans and nature, we may be able to find some clues to justifying ecological restoration from these aesthetic characteristics of Japanese gardening. I think it is reasonable to mention, at least, the following two points. First, aesthetic value can be increased in light of the interaction between humans and nature by restoring environments. In contrast, the separation of human culture from the natural world (Elliot's position) decreases the aesthetic value of nature. Accordingly, restoration can enhance aesthetic value of nature. Second, restoration has to be done in light of a non-discriminating mode of consciousness. It should not become a justification for anthropocentric exploitation of nature. The restoration of environments may have benefit for humans; yet, its main concern should not be anthropocentric.

I have specifically focused on the Japanese tradition as a solution to the problem of nature aesthetics in this essay. Indeed, many useful implications for nature appreciation are disclosed through the examination of this tradition. However, my

suggestion is not that the Japanese tradition should work as a universal ground for environmental ethics, or that people in Western countries should follow the Japanese way of seeing nature. Rather, my intent in this essay has been to introduce one of many practical approaches to nature aesthetics, and to argue that it is possible to raise aesthetic consciousness toward nature not only in light of scientific information but also in light of an unscientific view of nature. Nature aesthetics developed in the context of science tends to be Western oriented because of the close association between science and Western culture. Different approaches are necessary in order to expand the possibility of nature aesthetics. I believe that the study of the Japanese tradition introduces a new approach to nature aesthetics.

If I emphasize the ecological implications in the Japanese tradition, one may think that Japan has achieved nature aesthetics in terms of its traditional culture. Unfortunately, industrialized Japan is one of the major countries responsible for current environmental degradation. In spite of the potential ecological aspects in the tradition, Japan has been following a path toward a technology-oriented, nontraditional way of life. Thus, I hope that this study becomes an opportunity for Japanese people to look their traditional culture again with new insights, and to achieve a meeting of Western and Eastern traditional world views in order to alter attitudes toward nature.

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