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„A modern interpretation of Motoori Norinaga's theory of mono no aware"

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白妙の
袖の別れに
露落ちて
身にしむ色の
秋風ぞ吹く

藤原定家
Fujiwara no Teika/Sadaie

Dewdrops fall,
On the white, hempen sleeves
We draw apart,
And the autumn wind blows,
Its color piercing my heart.

(translated by Bundy Roselee)

Tautropfen schimmern
auf dem weißen Gewand
zur Zeit des Abschieds
Hell leuchtet die Farbe auf
Schneidend weht der Wind im Herbst

(übersetzt von Hashi Hisaki)

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1. Introduction

Amongst all key concepts in Japanese aesthetics, *mono no aware* (もののあわれ) is the broadest in meaning. While modern scholars have different understandings of *mono no aware*, they can agree, at the very least, on the elusive nature of the expression. It translates literally to 'the pathos of things': *mono* translates to 'thing', *no* is a Japanese possessive particle and *aware* generally refers to a deep-felt emotion or pathos in the experience of the evanescence of the external world.

And yet, such a concise attempt at defining *mono no aware* by way of a literal translation is, like every attempt for that matter, futile. Envisaging the possibility of a complete translation of the term first ignores its embeddedness in the Japanese Buddhist and Shintoist[1] traditions, which are both characterised by an emphasis on the here-and-now, thus standing in disparity with an occidental, platonic setting of eternal ideas that predetermine the structure of the world. Secondly, it overlooks semantic nuances. The crux lies in *aware*, a concept which is so versatile in meaning that it has often been regarded as encompassing the essence of Japanese aesthetics by itself. In many cases, it may simply equate to sadness and sorrow. For example, De Bary et al. (2001), basing themselves on a series of essays and translations by the former curator at Columbia University TSUNODA Ryūsaku[2] (1877-1964), claim that in an early stage, *aware* corresponded to an exclamation of surprise and delight, but naturally took on a notion of sadness and eventual wretchedness "with the steady heightening of the poets' sensibility to the world around them" (De Bary et al. 2001, 197f). Ivan Morris argues differently that its widest sense is much less restricted, "referring to the emotional equality inherent in objects, people, nature, and art, and by extension it applied to a person's internal response

[1] In the context of *mono no aware*, Shintoism amounts to an ancient worshipping of nature and a primitive form of animism (see page 13f.). This early form of Shintoism relevant to this thesis must be demarcated from the later ideology of 'State-Shintoism' (*kokka shintō* 国家神道), which had started to shape under the influence of the Japanese government in the second half of the 19th century.

[2] When given fully, Japanese names will be given in the original Japanese naming order: FAMILY NAME (surname) – given name. Further mentioning of authors will, for simplicity's sake, follow the general literature. For instance, Motoori Norinaga and Murasaki Shikibu are widely referred to with their given name, as "Norinaga" and "Shikibu".

to emotional aspects of the external world" (Morris 2013, 196). The American author Donald Richie captures the essence of *aware* most inclusively, by claiming that "eventually it came to stand for anything between elegance and pathos" (Richie 2007, 52). In view of these divergent definition proposals, it is unsurprising that a translation of *mono no aware*, which builds upon the etymology of *aware*, is likewise difficult. As words fail at introducing *mono no aware*, an image may well be of greater use: The custom of viewing cherry blossoms, which has existed in Japan since the Heian Period (794-1185) and is around to this day, represents the most central symbol of *mono no aware*[3]. The seminal reason for this is that, as the widely lauded scholar for Japanese literature Donald Keene notes, the contemplation of the blossoms is tied to an appreciation of ephemeral beauty embedded in the brevity of the process:

> Perhaps the greatest attraction at viewing cherry blossoms is not their intrinsic beauty but their perishability: plum blossoms remain on the boughs for a month or so, and other fruit trees have blossoms for at least a week, but cherry blossoms normally fall after a brief three days of flowering (…) but the Japanese happily plant these trees wherever they can, for their three days of glory (Keene 1988, 20f.)

An initial familiarisation with *mono no aware* thus primarily reveals an interconnectedness between beauty and ephemerality. In addition, the underlying presence of the awareness of the fleetingness of things naturally led to the expression being associated with a (albeit insightful and faint) feeling of sadness. Morris, for example, compares it to the Roman poet Virgil's phrase *lacrimae rerum*, i.e. the 'tears of things' (see Morris 2013, 197), and Keene argues for the translation "the sorrow of human existence", noting once again that the notion of sensibility or pathos is generally laid bare via "realizing the perishability of beauty and human happiness" (Keene 1988, 86).

Such interpretations of *mono no aware* which focus on the relationship of sadness or sorrow already differentiate significantly from the theory of *mono no aware* which this thesis will delve into, advanced by the famous Japanese scholar MOTOORI Norinaga (1730-1801). While the term *mono no aware* stems originally from the critical vocabulary of Japanese court poetry of the Heian Period, it was Norinaga who, in his analysis of

[3] While the custom of 'flower viewing' (*hanami* 花見) predates the Heian period, the viewing of cherry blossoms (used nowadays almost synonymously with *hanami*) only gained popularity in the Heian period.

MURASAKI Shikibu's Genji Monogatari[4], contributed to its resurgence and established the 'modern' view. For Norinaga, *mono no aware* relates to a very basic experience. In Isonokami Sasamegoto, we find it defined as being "stirred by external things"[5] (Marra 2007, 173). With Norinaga, a discussion of the exact emotional scope of *mono no aware* always runs the risk of overlooking that, first and foremost, *mono no aware* relates to the overall aesthetic sensibility of being moved by something.

At the same time, Norinaga saw Japanese culture and Japanese literature as the manifestation of that sensibility. The Genji Monogatari, considered widely to be the most impactful work, or, in the words of KAWABATA Yasunari, "the highest pinnacle" of Japanese literature (Kawabata 1968), serves Norinaga as central example to illustrate the way in which novels are supposed to be read:

> Novels depict the myriad aspects of life: the good and the bad, the fantastic and the amusing, the interesting and the deeply moving [aware]. Some will even include illustrations of such scenes. In our idle hours they amuse us. When our hearts are troubled and worries beset us, they console us. They help us to understand our lives in this world, and to comprehend the workings of our emotions (TNO[6], 420f.)

It lies in the nature of the novel to enable a participation in *mono no aware* by depicting a setting that moves the heart. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to limit Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware* to a phrase that merely encompasses the essence of Japanese literature. It is a key concept that stands at the centre of his work during two phases of his life[7], and was approached not only from a literary, but also from a philosophical perspective. It is for this reason that I have decided to focus on his account: while the elusiveness and literal ineffability of the expression are unavoidable, his extensive notes are closest to what can be justified as a fully-fledged theory on *mono no aware*. As Harper notes, modern scholars "assign great significance to Norinaga's distinction on mono no aware [sic], so much so that his critique of the Genji is often referred to simply as the "mono no aware theory" [sic]" (Harper 1971, 138), making it most apt in aiding at acquiring a more nuanced understanding.

[4] I will simply be referring to the Genji Monogatari as the Genji.
[5] In future mentioning of the definition of *mono no aware*, I will employ this definition Marra's.
[6] Abbreviation for Tama no ogushi. See footnote 23.
[7] See 4.1.

The objective of this thesis is not to condemn a superficial and contemporary meaning of the term; if *mono no aware* has come to take on a meaning closer to sadness and sorrow, then this must be judged as part of its semantic evolution. *Mono no aware* is not a metaphysical construct in its formality but an aesthetic notion that must be judged as constantly evolving, depending on its being valued by aesthetically sensible individuals. Yet, at the same time, it is also an aesthetic category of a special character that claims an ontological and metaphysical truth, and evokes a distinct phenomenology of being moved. Both aspects emerge in Norinaga's theory, where a more fundamental and basic understanding of *mono no aware* as 'being stirred by external things' is advanced. Dissecting Norinaga's account therefore complements the aforementioned divergent contemporary interpretations, focusing predominantly on the notions of sadness and sorrow (see De Bary et al. 2001, Keene 1988, Morris 2013 and Richie 2007).

This brings us to the method of comparative philosophy that will be employed. Rather than reconstructing a general account of Norinaga's view or following a hermeneutical approach that discusses in which way his theory on *mono no aware* is interpreted best, I will extract four central characteristics from Norinaga's theory, and discuss their philosophical potential by integrating elements of Western philosophy. Correspondingly, the central challenge of my thesis will consist in presenting a dialogue between *mono no aware* and ideas of Western philosophy, while respecting the former's embeddedness in Japanese thought. Recognising on the one hand the universal structure in *mono no aware* helps to understand the aesthetic sensibility that humans possess of being moved, particularly in the dynamic of beauty and impermanence. And yet, on the other hand, *mono no aware* remains and will always remain a term originally from Japanese culture: Experiencing *mono no aware* is tied to the lengthy and complex acquirement of an aesthetic sensibility that is inherent to the way of Japanese aesthetics, which stresses the acceptance of the impermanence of things. Furthermore, a thorough comparative analysis requires a consideration of the historical context that imbues *mono no aware*, especially when factoring in that the term changed in meaning over a millennium of years.

It is above all purely an interest of cultural exchange that has motivated my writing. Through a comparative analysis, I hope to find an explanation for the attractiveness of *mono no aware* and Japanese literature in the reception of the West, by divesting the

universal humanness that grounds the topic. This corresponds also with Norinaga's ideal of seeing *mono no aware* foremost as a basis for community. More generally, this thesis is thus an attempt to bridge the gap between cultures in a time where products of literature, film and arts in general are being received and reinterpreted globally.

Moreover, apart from investigating the roots of a central concept of Japanese aesthetics, an analysis of *mono no aware* carries the additional merit of calling attention to the importance of feeling and our groundedness in nature. Without discussing the exact repercussions of technological change, it is undeniable that it has indirectly provoked a disconnectedness from nature by providing a recreational substitute in the form of, for instance, television, the Internet, smartphones, video games, and so on. In *mono no aware*, one finds the possibility to discover, as Heidegger would say, a more "original revealing" (Heidegger 1977, 28), in being moved independently of the "enframing" of modern technology, "which demands that nature be orderable as standing-reserve" (Heidegger 1977, 23). Instead, *mono no aware* reconnects one with a non-instrumentalised view of nature, underlining that nature represents a kind of revealing; a window into the impermanence of things which we are part of, thereby grounding us existentially in experience itself.

I have clarified that my central aim consists in nuancing divergent contemporary accounts on *mono no aware* close to the notions of sadness and sorrow by deconstructing Norinaga's theory with the method of comparative philosophy. With this, I hope to discuss to what extent *mono no aware* can be justified as a universal ideal, or if it must be treated as a regional value of Japanese culture.

Part I, with this latter aspect in mind, will establish the embeddedness of *mono no aware* in Japanese aesthetics, the religious context and Norinaga's work.

Part II, with the method of comparative philosophy, proposes four distinct characteristics that can be extracted from Norinaga's theory and discusses their philosophical relevance:

mono no aware

- as exclamation
- and the relation of subject and object
- and the epistemological aspect
- and the question of good and bad

Part III attempts to justify these characteristics by relocating them in examples of modern Japanese literature and film of the 20th century. As a sort of short epilogue, this part concretely implements parts I and II, thereby offering a greater grasp of this impalpable feeling of *mono no aware* that traverses Japanese cultural works.

2. Short Overview of Japanese Aesthetics

Discussing the possibilities and limits of approaching *mono no aware* comparatively with Western thought naturally requires one to keep in mind a proper delineation of Japanese aesthetics. In a short overview, I take it to be useful to distinguish between the totality of what is and has been associated with Japanese aesthetics as a tradition and the philosophical field of aesthetics, which was only introduced in Japan in the late 19th century. Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware* is thus based on the former, a period where aesthetic categories simply weren't around yet, and theories of aesthetics amounted to competing and evolving works of vast associations, contributing in the end to the elusiveness of *mono no aware*.

2.1 The Japanese Philosophical Field of Aesthetics

The political and social transformations after the Meiji Restauration[8] in 1868 also extended to the domain of aesthetics. Following SAITO Yuriko,

> Only after wide-ranging Western influences entered Japan in the late nineteenth century did intellectuals begin to produce general and comprehensive overviews of Japanese aesthetics. These efforts were partly inspired by the sudden exposure to systematic Western philosophy and aesthetics (Saito 2009, 384)

In other words, Western influence marked the beginning of approaching aesthetics systematically as a field of philosophical inquiries. This project can be traced back to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762), who introduced, as Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo note, aesthetics as the science of "sensible knowledge"[9], intending to "rescue the senses from the primacy of reason" by "formulating a theory of sensibility in which

[8] Describes the end of the Shogunate and the restoration of power to the Emperor of Japan, leading to the opening of borders to the West.
[9] 'Sensible' knowledge for Baumgarten refers to judgment according to 'sense' or 'taste' as opposed to sensations (tied to the ancient Greek understanding of *aisthesis)* depending on the intellect.

the body could stand shoulder to shoulder with the mind" (Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo 2011, 1167).

It is in this 'Westernised' attempt of approaching aesthetics as a field of science that Japan was faced with numerous challenges. This includes above all the linguistic difficulty of adopting a vocabulary that permitted the integration of newly imported ideas, the ideological difficulty of interpreting an agglomerated body of Western philosophy, as well as the conflicting concern of preserving a Japanese character in the assimilation process[10]. It is largely in light of solving these complications that the literature of Japanese aesthetics developed, beginning with NISHI Amane (1829-1897) who, in his work The theory of aesthetics, first introduced in 1877 aesthetics to Japan as "the science of good and beauty" (*zenbigaku*) [sic]", grounded by "a belief in a strong relationship between the ethical and aesthetic moments", basing himself on both Western and Eastern sources (Marra 1999, 18).

Aware underwent the same systematisation process by becoming one of many aesthetic categories. According to Mark Meli, it was especially after the publishing of WATSUJI Tetsurō's article Mono no aware ni tsuite in 1922 that the literature on *mono no aware* and *aware* began to share "a thorough familiarity with European aesthetic theory and philosophical methods" based on "the idea that our aesthetic experience can be broken down into distinct and yet interconnected, (and, in the minds of some, universal) categories, each of which describes part of our aesthetic view on the world" (Meli 2003, 227). Most notably, it was ŌNISHI Yoshinori who contributed to the discourse on aesthetic categories in his attempt to demonstrate "that the Japanese concepts *aware, yugen* 幽玄 and *sabi* さび were, in fact, derivative categories of the universal categories beauty, sublimity, and humor" (Meli 2003, 228). Relative to *aware,* Marra describes Ōnishi's project as estimating Norinaga's "psychologization" of the term as being "only the first step in the process of grasping the objective potential of aware as the result of an aesthetic experience" (Marra 1999, 115). Following Ōnishi, this objective potential unique to *aware* consists in "two oppositional values, including both a positive value of

[10] For further reading, see Marra 1999, 17f. and Davies 2009, 384.

joy and a negative value of sorrow" which are reunited in the occurrence of elegant beauty (Odin 2016, 269).

I will not delve further into creating an overview of the Japanese field of aesthetics and the literature on *aware*, as I intend to distance myself from it. Therefore, this discourse should be separated from interpretations and arguments advanced between researchers of Japanese literature and Japanese aesthetics. Basing myself on Norinaga's theory, I will not, as Ōnishi did, attempt to isolate an objective potential from *aware* or analyse Japanese aesthetics in hopes of deriving the universal category of beauty. On the contrary, I believe the attempt at dissecting Norinaga's theory in itself carries valuable philosophical insights, insofar as it contains, on the one hand, a universal basis (which permits a comparative analysis in the first place), but, on the other hand, reveals just as well limitations in fully disclosing the essence of *mono no aware*. It is this ineffability in *mono no aware* that provokes a productive intercultural exchange of ideas. In Derridean spirit, we necessarily find in *mono no aware* a 'differential' layer that denies the constitution of assumptions of absolute order and encourages one to further deconstruct, and therein construct, the term. The next chapter should be read with this attitude in mind, as it presents, in the same fashion, a useful and yet non-essentialist view of the Japanese aesthetic tradition.

2.2 The Japanese Aesthetic Tradition

While the attempt to extract the essence of something such as "Japanese aesthetics" in the first place can be regarded as peculiar, designating overall characteristics of Japanese aesthetics is helpful in an initial familiarisation process. In The pleasures of Japanese literature, Donald Keene, for example, provides an introduction to Japanese aesthetics by stating four principles of suggestion, irregularity, simplicity and perishability under what he considers to be the most central aspect of Japanese culture as a whole: the sense of beauty (see Keene 1988). Nevertheless, even Keene emphasizes the risk of generalisation in an introduction to Japanese aesthetics, and thus proceeds to structure his arguments around Tsurezuregusa (1330-1332), a collection of short essays by the Buddhist monk YOSHIDA Kenkō. What follows is my own characterisation and is therefore by no means

a complete list, as it ignores subtleties and does not address how Japanese aesthetics have evolved over the centuries.

First, the perhaps most unambiguous characteristic is the recurring theme of *nature*. Consider for example Japanese poetry, which, in the words of Rexroth, practically exclusively concentrates on intensifying and exalting experience, making it "purer, more essentially poetic" (Rexroth 1964, IX). *Pure* implies that Japanese poetry concentrates on capturing an unaltered and authentic moment in experience. It is then unsurprising that nature, as the most unchanged form of reality, has been chosen as the enabling catalyst or source of inspiration for capturing the occurrence of such an experience. A more concrete example for this can be seen in the short poetic form of *haiku*, which must include a seasonal reference or *kigo*. Furthermore, we are reminded of Norinaga's approach to *mono no aware* as an aesthetic sensibility of being moved that orients itself often, as in the viewing of cherry blossoms, towards nature. Richie notes that although nature also functioned as a guide in the West, its use was restricted to mimesis (realistic reproduction), whereas in Japan, nature "could only be suggested, and the more subtle the suggestion (think haiku), the more tasteful the work of art" (Richie 2007, 19).

Consequently, in nature we also find a connection to one of the categories mentioned by Keene, namely *suggestion*. Keene argues that Kenkō is likely to be the first to have advanced suggestion as a principle, when he claims in section 137 that "in all things, it is the beginning and ends that are interesting. Does the love between men and women refer only to the moments when they are in each other's arms?" (Keene 1988, 7). Moreover, numerous examples of nature are given to underline this claim:

> Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring – these are even more deeply moving (ibid.)

Once again, the meaningfulness of this passage becomes even more apparent at the example of *mono no aware*, which does not express a climax, but is, as I have stated, associated generally with a gentle or faint feeling of sadness, or relates with Norinaga to the aesthetic sensibility of being moved by things in general, on an all-embracing emotional spectrum. Another illustration of subtleness can be found in the world of the Genji. One of the reasons why the novel is considered to be a masterpiece lies in the fact

that the author MURASAKI Shikibu endeavoured to depict, as a true story, the lifestyle of high courtiers during the Heian period, a period in which communication was largely expressed in style, via letters or poems, or even exchanges of glimpses[11]. In the introduction to his translation of the Genji Monogatari, Royall Tyler describes how although (or maybe because) the world of the Genji is deprived of the notions of solitude and privacy, scenes of courtship unfolded in a highly prudent, respectful and distanced manner:

> He will not normally see her even if she speaks to him in her own voice, since she will still be in another room, behind a blind and a curtain, and the curtain will remain even if she allows him into the room where she is. If he then takes it upon himself to brush her curtain aside and go straight to her, he will by that gesture alone have claimed something close to the final intimacy (Shikibu and Tyler 2003)

This "final intimacy" (ibid.) differs, once again, fundamentally from a climax, being embedded in a slow built-up process. Saito similarly elaborates on the Heian sensibility to stress the Japanese aesthetic tradition as other regarding at the same example of Heian court sensibility:

> All aesthetic details, such as paper, poetry, calligraphy, folding, infused fragrance, and attached flower or leaf, are selected by considering what would most please the recipient of the letter. This other-directed concern, sometimes referred to as elegance, characterizes "a good person," according to Heian sensibility (Saito 2009, 385)

The passage above clarifies how *elegance* and suggestion are closely interrelated in Japanese aesthetics. Elegance in this sense is removed from the commonly associated notion of efficiency, referring more so to a sense of maturity and refined taste, "of beauty in movement, appearance, or manners; a tasteful opulence in form, decoration or presentation; a restraint and grace of style" (Richie 2007, 25).

At the same time, this creation of depth in the elegant act of expressing love in courtship letters and poetry is interwoven with *simplicity*. Restricting oneself to few words of love in courtship contains the benefit of implying rather than explaining, of alluding to feelings suggestively, yet by choosing each word consciously. Other contemporary examples of simplicity can be found in minimalist Japanese architecture, as well as a traditional cuisine that calls attention to the quality of the product by keeping additional seasonings

[11] See chapter 4.3.

or condiments to a minimum (think sashimi), as well as presenting the dish in a visible, almost atomistic manner, ranging from the complex and delicately balanced individual dishes of exquisite kaiseki cuisine to the picturesque compartmentalisation of mass-produced bento boxes. One can find a certain object-directedness in the creative arrangement of reducing the aesthetic object to its simplest form: by minimising what's around the object, its value and entity are emphasised in the most expressive way.

The most intriguing element in Japanese aesthetics, however, at least from the point of view of Western thought, is that of *perishability*[12]. While perishability (and, analogously, the questions of life after death and nothingness) can be said to stand at the centre of ramifications of human culture on a global scale, Japanese thought is characterised particularly by an acknowledgement, and, in many cases, a celebration of that perishability. Keene has, in the following quote of the Irish writer Lafcadio Hearn (1859-1904) found a, while partially somewhat outdated, particularly poignant illustration that underlines the discrepancy between Western and Japanese thought relative to the presence of perishability on an every-day basis:

> Generally speaking, we construct for endurance, the Japanese for impermanency. Few things for common use are made in Japan with a view to durability. The straw sandals worn out and replaced at each stage of the journey (…) the fresh chopsticks served to each new guest at a hotel, the light shoji frames serving at once for windows and walls, and repapered twice a year, the mattings renewed every autumn, - all these are but random examples of countless small things in daily life that illustrate the national contentment with impermanency (Keene 1988, 18)

According to Keene, rather than acknowledging perishability, permanence has been desired in the West, and this has "led men to build monuments of deathless marble" (ibid.). Attesting to this aesthetic vision of immortality are even the earliest writings of Ancient Greece. Consider the evolving legend of the philosopher's stone, which became a symbol for the quest of immortality, or the Homerian hero Achilles who, in Book IX of the Iliad, was faced with the dilemma of choosing between a peaceful life of oblivion by returning to his native land and an immortalised life of glory by going to war with the Trojans:

[12] I use 'perishability' synonymously with 'impermanence' and 'ephemerality'.

> My fates long since by Thetis were disclosed,
> And each alternate, life or fame, proposed;
> Here, if I stay, before the Trojan town,
> Short is my date, but deathless my renown:
> If I return, I quit immortal praise
> For years on years, and long-extended days (Homer 2006, 180)

Claiming that an acknowledgement of perishability characterises Japanese aesthetics is, I believe, insufficient. Achilles was not blinded by his own apparent invincibility but well aware that the fate his mother disclosed to him would inexorably come to be true. In this sense, he as well acknowledged and accepted his own perishing. What additionally differentiates Japanese thought from Western thought then is the attitude developed in the process of the acknowledgement of that perishability. Keene goes even further in claiming that "Hearn's comments were astute, but it might be even more accurate to say that the Japanese have not only been content with impermanency, but have eagerly sought it" (Keene 1988, 18f.). The result is a way of life that consists in finding consolation, not in glory or the afterlife, but the beauty of the here-and-now. To illustrate just how central of a role perishability plays, consider how the three previously mentioned characteristics are approachable from the perspective of perishability: *nature* as proof of the impermanence of things in the outside world, *suggestion* as the celebration of beginnings and ends, and *simplicity* as the refusal of embellishment and humble affirmation of beauty in its raw, unaltered and pure state. Consequently, there is a natural link between *mono no aware*, which stresses the relation of beauty and ephemerality, and the Japanese aesthetic tradition, focused on perishability.

In conclusion, two observations can be drawn. First, the characteristics of Japanese aesthetics are structurally intertwined. This justifies why it is possible to assume a holistic identity of the Japanese aesthetic tradition. Second, *mono no aware* can be applied as a prime example to these characteristics of Japanese aesthetics. This is because the underlying key theme and common denominator is perishability, and more importantly, its acceptance: perishing is based on a paradox. In lived experience (*Erleben*[13]), perishability is easily equated with suffering or despair, induced by the passing of things around us. In the Japanese tradition, however, it is grounded more fundamentally in the

[13] The German wording *Erleben* designates most accurately the occurring of an experience from the first-person perspective, as 'lived' experience.

dynamic emerging and vanishing of every being in their impermanence (*mujō* 無常)[14]. It is by recognising this impermanence that an individual becomes capable of appreciating beauty in feeling *mono no aware*.

3. *Mono no aware* and the Religious Context

So far, I have only given a short-cut overview of Japanese aesthetics, but to further comprehend their origins, taking a closer look at the underlying religious setting is required. As in the previous chapter, this preliminary chapter is pivotal in the attempt to determine how far something like the essence of *mono no aware* can or cannot be stretched. I have already alluded to the fact that this dichotomy particularly resonates in Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware*, referring, on the one hand, to the universal capacity of being moved, and, on the other hand, to a regional aesthetic concept. As a regional value, *mono no aware* is embedded in intricate customs and systems of beliefs, stemming from the Heian period (794-1185), and further developing in meaning over the centuries. Analogously to this latter aspect of *mono no aware*, there are two traditions I will elaborate on: early Shintoism and Zen Buddhism.

3.1 Early Shintoism

While Shintoism can officially be identified as the oldest religion in Japan with the presentation of the Kojiki[15] to the imperial court in 712, it refers to an even older and broader tradition that nurtured the ground for many philosophical ideas at a later point in time. In the summary of the American ethnologist Daniel Clarence Holtom, Dr. KATŌ Genchi, former professor of Shintoism at the Imperial University of Tokyo, is claimed to identify three stages in Shintoism:

[14] In Sanskrit: *anitya*, the wider known Buddhist term. See page 16.
[15] Record of ancient matters. Includes various myths of Gods (*kami*) concerning the formation of Japan and significantly inspired Shinto practices.

> There is, in the first place, the stage of primitive nature worship or polydemonism; secondly, the stage of higher nature worship or sheer polytheism; and thirdly, Shinto as an advanced cultural religion wherein beliefs and practices relating to kami-objects have come under the influence of ethical and intellectual influences of a high order (Holtom 2016, 153)

This first stage is referred to similarly by Thomas Kasulis as "Proto-Shinto Animism and Naturalism", lacking "philosophical reflection and even self-conscious articulation" and being "more an amalgam of beliefs and practices lending cohesion to early Japanese communities" (Kasulis 2019). Kasulis goes on to note that

> philosophical ideas introduced from abroad often took root most deeply when they drew support from some of its [proto-Shintō] basic ideas and values. For example, proto-Shintō animism generally assumed we live in a world of internal relations where various forces and things can be distinguished, but in the end, they are never discrete but inherently interrelated in some way. Indeed because of that reciprocity, one might say the world is not simply what we engage, but also something that engages us[16]. As we define it, it also defines us (Kasulis 2019)

In other words, the theme of the coexistence of the material and spiritual world, manifested in the complex nature of the spirits or phenomena of the *kami*[17] that are part of nature, has not been tackled in a reflective manner during the early Shintoist period. Still, it marks a highly relevant development in the history of the constitution of Japanese thought since it functioned as the foundation of philosophical ideas that followed, including *mono no aware*. When Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced in Japan, a vague yet decisive attitude had already spread that understood humankind not as separate, disconnected beings, but as an integral part of nature. Kasulis importantly remarks that while other archaic animistic cultures share resemblances with proto-Shinto practices, the difference is that

> When the major philosophical traditions from continental Asia entered Japan, by contrast, they did not take an oppositional stance toward the world view already in place within the archipelago. Therefore, much of proto-Shintō's organicism, vitalism, and the sensitivity to the field of inter-responsive, internal, and holographic relations could survive within the mainstream of Japanese thinking (Kasulis 2019)

This observation is further supported by Blocker, who argues that "many elements of primitive Shinto have continued undiminished" for the simple reason that "the Japanese

[16] See 4.1.

[17] While *kami*, as Norinaga notes in his Kojiki Den, primarily refers to deities in the ancient records, it could also include human beings and objects so long as they exhibited superior power and were awe-inspiring (see Holtom 2016, 147f.).

never had foreign cultures forced on them by invading armies" (Blocker 2001, 28)[18], meaning that they were free to reinterpret body of thought in the absorption process of foreign cultures. In The World of the Shining Prince, a commentary of the Genji that illustrates the court life of the Heian period, Ivan Morris states that it is precisely because of the "extreme simplicity" of Shintoism – having "no philosophical, speculative, or ethical elements (…) in fact, no positive, constructive aspect whatsoever" (Morris 2013, 93) that conflict was spared. From all of this, we can conclude that the ideal of *mono no aware* was able to flourish in an unrestrained and (primarily ethically) non-instrumentalised manner. Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware*, i.e. the state of being emotionally moved, especially thrives upon this Shintoist setting, which, instead of advancing rational teachings, lays bare a world of myths and wonder. This affinity for Shintoist ideas is expressed strongest in Ashiwake Obune, in which Norinaga expresses his appreciation for waka poetry as part of what he refers to as "natural Shinto" (Matsumoto 1970, 63). In the essay, natural Shinto is praised as being part of an ancient Japan that cherished the "natural, and simple state of things, in which, Norinaga believes, people are by nature good and moral without any enforcement, and the land is kept peaceful without any coercion" (Matsumoto 1970, 64).

Moreover, the Shintoist belief of being part of a processual unfolding in nature already hints at several aspects of Japanese aesthetics I have mentioned earlier in relation to *mono no aware*. While the link to nature, simplicity and processual thinking is clear, even perishability is, to some extent, present in this form of early animism, as it contains a humble orientation towards the ephemeral objects, thereby calling attention to the fleeting nature of the phenomenal world. Instead of abstracting *kami* in a dualistic understanding of a transcendent and eternal realm of existence, the focus is on the here-and-now. To give an example of just how far-reaching this inclusive way of thinking is, consider the challenge of integrating the Cartesian *cogito* into a Japanese theory of aesthetics. Semantically, 'thinking' in Japanese is connected much stronger to a feeling of pathos, in touch with the locus of the heart or *kokoro* (see Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo 2011, 1168).

[18] While Blocker's argument is comprehensible and useful in the example of Shintoism, it should not be generalised, as it fails to address cases where religions have kept their cultural significance despite foreign invasions or occupations. For instance, while being an ancient religion, Hinduism in India has remained the most widely practised religion and preserved its cultural influence notwithstanding numerous invasions by foreign forces in the past.

Even semiotically, the Japanese symbol for thinking (思) consists of the 'heart' kanji radical (忄). This bringing together of reason and feeling not only impedes Cartesian dualism. The difficulty to assume reason independently of the heart can be brought into relation with the Shintoist belief that rational thinking of the human subject is never entirely disconnected from nature but remains grounded in lived experience. It is not by coincidence that, in the Shintoist context, the term *kokoro* appears also as an indigenous word that refers to "a world of discrete things connected to each other, (…) a field of which we are part" (Kasulis 2019), and will reappear in Norinaga as "thinking heart"[19] (Marra 2007, 172), containing the idea that the possibility to experience beauty in *mono no aware* is inextricable from thinking[20].

In summary, *mono no aware* is culturally embedded in early Shintoism, which stresses an awareness of the surrounding environment as well as the harmonic coexistence with nature. Although not being philosophically articulated, a certain non-dualism of emotionality-rationality and a reversal of the subject-object relation (humankind engages nature, but nature also engages us) can be observed in early Shintoism.

3.2 Japanese Buddhism

It was with the introduction of Buddhist teachings that a developed religion and genuine philosophical thought established themselves in Japan. While in Shintoism, the "central themes of joyful acceptance of the natural world and gratitude for its bounty" were, understandably, "coupled with a horror of illness and death, which are regarded as the source of all pollution" (Morris 2013, 93), it is only with Buddhism and the questioning of the nature of suffering that a closer exploration and eventually serene acceptance of this perishing, which is so central in *mono no aware*, began. Zen Buddhism especially brings about an aesthetic perspective that emphasises the abundance of the everyday world, embracing the transient nature of the self from a non-transcendent standpoint. However, as this preliminary chapter will clarify, attempting to create an outline of the influence of Zen Buddhism on *mono no aware* is more intricate than it may seem.

[19] Steve Odin translates it as "heart-mind" (心).

[20] See chapter 4.3.

First, Japanese Buddhism needs to be defined. Steve Odin notes that early Buddhist philosophies postulate three marks of all dharmas or events, being 'impermanence' (Sanskrit: *anytia*), 'nonsubstantiality' or 'no-self' (*anātman*) and 'suffering' (*duhka*), all of which are summed up as 'emptiness' (*śūnyatā*)" (Odin 2016, 261). Japanese Buddhism, Odin continues, is above all invested in this first mark of 'impermanence' (*mujō* 無常): "while all Buddhist schools underscore the "impermanence" of events, Japanese Buddhist poetics came to accept the reality of evanescence through the detached and tranquil attitude of *akirame* (諦め)" (ibid.). In the Buddhist context, *akirame* strictly differs from its everyday meaning of 'resignation':

> Japanese [Buddhist] poetics not only accepts impermanence through calm resignation, but even *celebrates* the beauty, the glory, and the splendour of evanescence. Saito Yuriko calls this artistic preference for the beauty of evanescence in Japanese tradition the "aestheticization of transience" (…) It is this aesthetic response to transience that allows for recognition of the suffering of impermanence without falling into despair, anxiety, or nihilism. Indeed, Japanese Buddhist aestheticism not only thematizes the beauty of transience, but also view perishability as a necessary condition for the possibility of beauty (Odin 2016, 261f.)

Because the Japanese tradition is characterised by an attitude of acceptance and celebration of the impermanence of things, the theme of transience has been integrated into Japanese aesthetics. As a result, *mono no aware* as an aesthetic category is built as well upon this underlying acceptance of perishability, even if Norinaga's account at times may seem to distance itself from it, especially when analysed irrespectively of the cultural context. To further support this, the affirmative portrayal of evanescent beauty grounded in the Buddhist term of *mujō* becomes all the more noticeable in the court poetry of the Heian period, which also marks the beginning of *mono no aware* as an upcoming, aesthetic ideal.

However, it is important to note that this period was dominated by the Buddhist schools of Tendai and, secondly, Shingon[21]. Zen Buddhism only gained a foothold during the Kamakura period (1185-1333), which raises the question why a discussion of the religious embeddedness of *mono no aware* should include a mentioning of Zen Buddhism in the first place. Concerning this matter, Morris remarks that although the role of Zen Buddhism in the Heian period is dubious, claiming that Zen ideas had no importance in

[21] I will not further develop these schools, only specify that while the Tendai doctrine (being part of the Mahayana school) puts emphasis on the fleeting phenomenal word as an expression of dharma and the pursuit of Buddha-hood , the Shingon school is more so associated with esoteric teachings.

the Heian period would be erroneous, seeing as the founder of the Tendai school in Japan was in fact a student of Chinese Zen and implemented many of its doctrines (see Morris 2013, 103). To this can be added that both the Tendai and Shingon schools are syncretic[22] in nature, which facilitated the establishment of other schools of thought such as Zen, whose founding teachers moreover have all initially followed Tendai monk training. Zen, therefore, marks not a cesura in the Japanese tradition, but a focus on a specific Buddhist practice that contributed significantly to the establishment of an identity of Japanese aesthetics. This distinct contribution to aesthetics, as the following two sub-chapters will show, is also interrelated with *mono no aware*.

3.2.1 Impermanence in Dōgen's Zen Buddhism

Dōgen (1200-1253) is founder of the Sōtō school of Zen, which was unique insofar as it advocated a strict practice of the meditative discipline of *zazen*, characterised by *shikantaza*. *Shikantaza* describes the practice of just sitting, pursuing a mental state where the mind becomes devoid of an object. This opens the way to Buddha Dharma, the very nature of reality that encloses all of Being.

Vis-à-vis this brief introduction, it appears counterintuitive to associate *mono no aware* with Zen Buddhism. *Mono no aware*, on one hand, emphasizes the importance of emotions and the self, distracting from spiritual development. Dōgen's Zen Buddhism, on the other hand, consists in a rigorous study of the Buddha Dharma. This entails a rational realising of complex philosophical teachings, compiled by Dōgen in his masterpiece Shōbōgenzō, and converges in the lesson of forgetting the self. As the former Japanese Buddhist and professor of religious studies ABE Masao notes:

> in the zazen of the oneness of practice and attainment, or the zazen of the casting off of body-mind, the ordinary self (the self-centered self) is liberated from itself, and the self-liberating awakening boundlessly extends throughout the ten directions of the universe. The self that practices zazen right here at this very moment is practicing zazen in the unfolding of a self-liberating awakening that is continuously circulating. All beings that exist in the universal field of limitless space are awakened as discrete or distinctive beings (Heine 1992, 79)

This revelation of things as "distinct beings" in the practice of *zazen* is further disclosed in the chapter "Mujō-seppō" ("The Non-emotional preaches the Dharma") of the Shōbōgenzō. In the translation of Nishijima and Cross, *mujō* is equivalent with

[22] 'Syncretic' referring to the peaceful coexistence and potential coalition between different schools of thought.

"inanimate" or "insentient" things (trees, stones, fences,…), and, in this particular chapter of the Shōbōgenzō, moreover refers to "the non-emotional" (Dōgen 2008, 155). As previously stated, *mujō* generally refers to the central quality of the impermanence of things. In Dōgen's work however, this impermanence crystallises itself not in the sense of *mono no aware* as a self-perceived emotion of sorrow or sadness but becomes manifest in the non-emotional sphere: through the practice of *zazen*, we become part of this non-emotional preaching Dharma as selfless and unchanging vessels, thereby also revealing our surroundings in their distinct non-emotional beings. Beings around us are no longer perceived as changing phenomenal objects. As SUZUKI Daisetz puts it:

> when the mountains are seen as not standing against me, when they are dissolved into oneness of things, they are not mountains, they cease to exist as objects of Nature. When they are seen as standing against me as separate from me, as something unfriendly to me, they are not mountains either. The mountains are really mountains when they are assimilated into my being and I am absorbed in them (Jaffe 2015, 122f.)

Instead of lamenting over the passing of things at a specific time and place, you become part of the world by forgetting yourself, you become "like everything in the world, a changing particle in an ever-changing world. In Dōgen 's analysis the boundaries between self and world fall away; you are in the world and the world is in you" (Blocker and Starling 2001, 55). An initial confrontation between *mono no aware* and Dōgen's Zen Buddhism thus gives rise to the following observation: they resemble each other in acting under the assumption of the impermanence of things. Both incarnate Japanese thought, by putting emphasis on the awareness of perishability and the here-and-now. They also call attention to the importance of practical, lived experience in nature. Yet, at the same time, they end up taking opposite directions, disemboguing on the one hand into self-centred aesthetic appreciation of beauty, and, on the other hand, into the self-forgetting spiritual apprehension of the nature of reality as Buddha Dharma.

This common ground of the impermanence of things is fundamental, capturing the relation between the aesthetic and religious Japanese tradition. A question thus raises itself: while Dōgen's teachings inherently stand in opposition to artistic pleasure, how come the influence of Zen Buddhism onto Japanese aesthetics has been so significant? The answer is that Zen Buddhism, while adhering to strict philosophical beliefs, transmitted its values by way of the constitution of other practices such as tea ceremonies

(*sadō* 茶道), or flower arrangement (*kadō* 華道) or, in anticipation of the next chapter, poetry. While the pursuit of these arts is intended to complement Zen philosophy, one cannot ignore that this has accentuated the thematical presence of perishability in Japanese culture as a whole, meaning that the influence of Zen Buddhism also extends to aesthetic domains of culture conducted for the sake of art itself, encompassing also *mono on aware*.

3.2.2 Convergence of Spirituality and Aesthetics in Dōgen

Not only in the reception of Zen Buddhism, but even in Dōgen's work itself a palpable spiritual-aesthetic tension is present in the background of the awareness of the impermanence of things. To illustrate this, consider the following passage of the central chapter *Genjō-kōan* (*The Realized Universe*) from the Shōbōgenzō:

> A person getting realization is like the moon being reflected in water: the moon does not get wet, and the water is not broken. Though the light [of the moon] is wide and great, it is reflected in a foot or an inch of water. The whole moon and the whole sky are reflected in a dewdrop on a blade of grass and are reflected in a single drop of water. Realization does not break the individual, just as the moon does not pierce the water. The individual does not hinder the state of realization, just as a dewdrop does not hinder the sky and moon. (Dōgen 2007, 43)

Genjō-kōan explores the theme of the coming together of individuality and universality: the law of the universe or Dharma is realised in ourselves. This realisation can only be experienced once we recognise that "to learn the Buddha's truth is to learn ourselves. To learn ourselves is to forget ourselves." (Dōgen 2007, 42). It is in this sense that the process of realisation can be compared to the reflection of the whole moon in a dewdrop on a blade of grass. The lesson to *being realized* by forgetting oneself in the spirit of 'just sitting' or 'not-thinking' is thus preceded by an *active realizing* in the form of a conscious awareness in the immediate presence. The poetic imagery in nature seemingly fulfils the role of making us understand the way reality is structured. Once again, we find ourselves in this spiritual-aesthetic conflict of having to decide between the temptations of emotions, contained in the poetic imagery of a single fleeting dewdrop that reflects the whole moon, risking to separate itself at any moment from the grass, and the un-emotional, leading to the acquisition of truth. For Dōgen, it is necessary to pursue the non-emotional, by recognising that the moon reflected in the dewdrop is not meant to be an aesthetic symbol

for reality but must be understood as a myriad of dharma and part of reality itself. Compare now the previous passage of *Genjō-kōan* to the following waka:

Mujō	**Impermanence**
Yo no naka wa	To what shall
Nani ni tatoen	I liken the world?
Mizudori no	Moonlight, reflected
Hashi furu tsuyu ni	In dewdrops,
Yadoru tsukikage,	Shaken from a crane's bill.

Although Dōgen is best known for his philosophy, he was also invested in poetry. This waka is taken from The Zen Poetry of DŌGEN, an extensive translation and commentary of Dōgen's poetry by the scholar and Dōgen specialist Steven Heine (Heine 1997, 37). It is important to bear in mind that this waka poem does not mark a transition from the spiritual into the aesthetic sphere, as it reiterates the philosophical message of *Genjō-kōan* in identical imagery. However, a subtle shift towards the aesthetic has occurred. If we want to explore the overall cultural influence of Zen Buddhism arts, the following question must be inevitably raised: what reaction does the waka poem provoke in the reader? Undoubtedly, the primary reaction belongs to the aesthetic realm, being affective and intuitive. Furthermore, without delving too deeply into analysis, note for instance how the theme of the realisation of the universal whole in an individualised being echoes more strongly in the small frame of five lines in the poem than in the Shōbōgenzō. This purely formal aspect alone is aesthetically pleasing in its elegance. Content wise, a pensive lyrical I announces itself, emphasising a stronger emotional involvement from a first-person view. Overall, this makes it so that the underlying theme of impermanence resonates with a sense of beauty[23]. I have stated with Odin that the religious embeddedness of *mono no aware* is tied to the affirmative portrayal of evanescent beauty in Japanese Buddhism. Dōgen's poetry then, as a bridge between the aesthetic and the spiritual, is exemplary in showing how this positive attitude in the face of perishability could potentially have established itself.

The aim of this chapter has been to trace the religious embeddedness of *mono no aware*. I have claimed with Odin that this embeddedness reveals itself in Japanese Buddhism

[23] Heine delves much deeper into the role of aesthetics in Dōgen's work, explaining for instance that the Shōbōgenzō also possesses an unparalleled mastery of literary devices (see Heine 1997).

predominantly in the affirmative portrayal of perishability. In Dōgen's school of Zen, this portrayal is discernible in a twofold manner:

First, although Dōgen's philosophy is in its essence directly opposed to *mono on aware*, it is founded upon the identical assumption of the impermanence of things, and offers a positive reversal of this impermanence by creating an epistemological and ontological enjeu: in becoming part of the un-emotional *mujō* by forgetting ourselves, the nature of reality is discovered as Buddha Dharma.

Secondly, at the example Dōgen's poetry, the arts and practices of Zen Buddhism can be said to be imbued with a religio-aesthetic tension, where impermanence takes on the form of celebration in beauty, converging more directly with *mono no aware*. In the Japanese tradition, assuming a strict separation of aesthetics, ethics and religion is untenable. This is also true from the opposite point of view: while Norinaga interprets the Genji as a non-religious work, this does not change the fact that its setting is permeated by Shintoist, Buddhist and Confucianist ideas.

4. Motoori Norinaga and the Concept of *Mono no aware*

Chapters two and three have already established that *mono no aware* is ingrained in a specific aesthetic and religious context. To complete this framework, inspecting the role and the evolution of *mono no aware* in Norinaga's work is needed. As last part of part I and preparation of the comparative analysis, the focal point of this chapter will therefore again be on enabling the discussion to what extent *mono no aware* can be justified as a universal ideal, or if it must be treated as a regional value of Japanese culture.

4.1 Overview

Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware* culminates in Genji Monogatari Tama no Ogushi[24]. This text was completed in 1796 at the end of Norinaga's life[25] and represents his most accomplished work on *mono no aware*. While being foremost a commentary on the Genji, the first two chapters serve as a preamble in which Norinaga interprets the intentions of

[24] In English: Genji Monogatari: A little jewelled comb. I will simply be referring to the work as Tama no Ogushi or TNO.

[25] Norinaga lived from 1730 to 1801, meaning that he was sixty-six years old when he finished TNO.

Shikibu's novel as being founded upon *mono no aware.* As his most complete oeuvre, it is also the work I am basing myself on to a large degree with the aid of Thomas J. Harper's translation in Reading the Tale of Genji: Sources from the First Millennium (see Harper and Shirane 2015).

To fully comprehend the setting of Tama no Ogushi, it must be noted that Norinaga's *mono no aware* theory had begun to take form ab initio in one of his first writings in the treatise on poetry Ashiwake Obune (around 1758 at the age of 28). Then, only five years later in 1763, it had already developed close to completion in Isonokami Sasamegoto and Shibun Yōryō in (see Matsumoto 1970, 43). In fact, Shibun Yōryō is the prototype of the two first chapter of Tama no Ogushi, the latter of which only contains minor improvements of stylistic nature. Harper offers an explanation as to why Norinaga remained so close to the view he had already presented as a young scholar. A major turning point occurred in 1763, when Norinaga encountered the renowned scholar Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769) and was confided with the task that would consume the next thirty-five years of his life, being the grand study of the Kojiki. According to Harper, Norinaga only interrupted this work on the Kojiki when he was presented with the opportunity of having the publication of a commentary on the Genji financed. This resulted in the swift assemblage of material already at hand in Tama no Ogushi. The ideas already formulated in Shibun Yōryō thus ended up being simply overtaken as preliminary chapters (see Harper and Shirane 2015, 413-415). Whether this indicates that Norinaga was already satisfied with his *mono no aware* theory offered in Shibun Yōryō, or simply lost interest in further developing it, remains up to debate. Regardless, this indicates that his view, unchanging content-wise over the course of his life, can in some measure be regarded as a coherent whole of interconnected works.

Although Norinaga's account on *mono no aware* contains many revolutionary ideas for its time, it is rightfully criticised for a lack of systematic methodology (see for example Harper 1971, 146-151, Meli 2003, 236 and Matsumoto 1970, 43), making it difficult to give a clear-cut overview of his account. The fundamental flaw in his writings tied to the art of fiction is that they, while being based on the same key element of *mono no aware*, are of mixed intentions: proposing a non-instrumentalised theory of literature,

commentating on the Genji as a work of literature in its own right, examining the subtleness of *aware* from a linguistic standpoint, but also developing an aesthetic theory tied to a specific vision of human nature. These ambitions different in nature become interwoven in his overall account, to a point where they cannot be treated separately. Nevertheless, what I propose is to analyse Norinaga's work by distinguishing between two main points: the literary theory and the aesthetic theory of *mono no aware*.

4.2 *Mono no aware* as a Theory of Literature

Beginning with *mono no aware* as a theory of literature, one underlying message can be identified. Even though Ashiwake Obune and Isonokami Sasamegoto focus on discussing *mono no aware* in relation to poetry and Tama no Ogushi (including therefore Shibun Yōryō) is instead focused on the form of the novel with the study of the Genji, these works share one identical objective: defining the essence of literature in feeling *mono no aware*. All works of literature, so Norinaga, should fulfil the sole psychological purpose of moving the heart of others. This can be either done by expressing oneself as an artist, or by being moved in receiving this expression of the artist.

Relative to poetry, in Ashiwake Obune, Norinaga stresses that "the essence of poetry is not to assist government, nor even to cultivate oneself. It is simply to express what one feels in one's heart" (Matsumoto 1970, 45). In Isonokami Sasamegoto, he writes about the real meaning of poetry: "when we enquire about the origins of poetry, we see that it is crucial for poetry to have someone listen to and be moved by it (…) There is no better way for someone to cheer up than by knowing that others have listened to his poem and have been moved by it" (Marra 2007, 192).

Relative to the novel, in Tama no Ogushi, the essence of the novel is portrayed no differently, consisting in helping us to "understand our lives in this world and the workings of the emotions" (TNO, 420f.). Moreover, this link between the novel and poetry is further increased in Tama no Ogushi in the claim that through works like the Genji, "one acquires a thorough knowledge of the circumstances and feelings that originally gave rise to these poems by people of the past", conducing "to the composition of poetry" (TNO, 504). It follows that Norinaga's literary theory on *mono no aware* comprises both the genre of poetry and the novel holistically in a singular purpose.

To the reader unacquainted with Norinaga, ascertaining the essence of the Genji in the expression of emotions may appear banal. In actuality, this was revolutionary for Norinaga's time, a period in which the Genji had been subjected to centuries of Buddhist and Confucianist interpretation[26]:

> In its denial that the Genji was a work of didactic literature, it controverted a long tradition of moralistic interpretations of the novel. And the assumption that the satisfaction of certain psychological needs entitled the novel to be ranked as the literary equal of Japanese poetry was, in Norinaga's time, highly presumptuous (Harper 1971, 3)

Norinaga rebuts such an instrumentalisation of the Genji with great insistence in Tama no Ogushi. He does so not only by giving examples of characters in the Genji that lead a life of pathos. The most famous argument brought forward by Norinaga is the chapter *Hotaru* of the Genji, in which Shikibu, speaking through Genji, defends the art of fiction. From a rational and seemingly indoctrinated perspective, Genji initially criticises the translation of romances ("there probably isn't an ounce of truth in the lot of them", Morris 2013, 308) but very soon comes to realise their intrinsic worth:

> The author certainly does not write about specific people, recording all the actual circumstances off their lives. Rather it is a matter of being so moved by things, both good and bad, which he has heard and seen happening to men and women that he cannot keep it all to himself (…) This, I feel sure, is the origin of fiction (Morris 2013, 309)

In derivation of this, Norinaga emphasises that the novel[27] is different in nature than religious texts:

> As I said at the outset, tales have a nature of their own that is unique to tales; they should not be discussed in terms of Confucian and Buddhist texts, which are quite irrelevant and unrelated, all the while ignoring evidence that is close at hand (TNO, 485)

Continuing this train of thought, Norinaga discusses Buddhism more closely:

[26] In his student guide on the Genji, Richard Bowring gives a convincing summary of what this Chinese influence looked like: "Chinese attitudes to fiction were characteristically strict, as both Confucianism and Buddhism saw this [Shikibu's] kind of literature as frivolous and even dangerous. The classic Confucian view is reminiscent of Platonic strictures that literature should always be in the service of the state and of right government" (Bowring 2003, 80).
[27] Used interchangeably with 'tale'.

> In the first place, the Way of the Buddha, as we term it, is a Way [sic] that categorically renounces human emotion [mna[28] oba sutsuru michi]. Its doctrines are far more rigorous than those of the Confucian Way, and it is a Way meant, in every respect, to be far removed from human feeling (ibid.)

Assuming that the Genji does indeed primarily fulfil the function of moving others, the emotional detachment mandatory in Buddhist practice [29] stands in opposition. Nevertheless, Norinaga allows a concurrence between *mono no aware* and Buddhism, remarking that the Way of Buddhism also possesses a charm capable of moving people to great lengths:

> it [the Way of the Buddha] is readily attractive to the human mind. Even ignorant mountain folk, even women and children, strange to say, are deeply moved by it; and in any predicament whatever, their thoughts turn habitually to this Way (…) it is a Way that propounds its principles attractively and powerfully, so that people far and wide will be persuaded to alter their garb and look to the afterlife (ibid.)

The Genji thus includes religious elements not in view of the propagation of certain doctrines, but because they are deeply moving. In this sense, while the proper realisation of Buddhist teachings may lead away from emotions, it is (as a practitioner of Buddhism) before or (as reader or observer) outside of this realisation that a confrontation with the aesthetic sphere occurs. Intriguingly, parallel to Dōgen's poetry, Norinaga's literary theory of *mono on aware* reveals a similar religio-aesthetic convergence. The difference is that the conclusion taken by Norinaga is opposite to that of Dōgen: for Dōgen, an understanding of the structure of reality demands a non-emotional stance. For Norinaga, at least relative to literature, it is precisely the pursuit of emotions that is at stake.

The theme of the manifestations of emotions in Buddhism is further described by Norinaga via the following "deeply moving" scene:

> Thus it is that someone in the prime of life, struck by the insubstantiality of this world or overwhelmed by the anguish of his own life, may mortify himself in the black garb of a monk, seclude himself deep in the mountains far from all civilization, and devote himself to the practice of austerities (TNO, 486)

The "deeply moving" in this example arises through the experience of suffering, tied to the knowledge of the "insubstantiality" or impermanence of the world. This in itself is

[28] Harper's abbreviation for *mono no aware*.

[29] A more rigorous examination would require a specification of the degree influence of different Buddhist school on the Genji. I'll content myself with the additional comment that the first two chapters of Tama no Ogushi try to refute the influence of the Tendai school on Shikibu's writings. This makes sense, seeing as the dominant school during the Heian Period was none other than the Tendai school, as highlighted in chapter 3.2.

central, drawing attention to the recurrent intertwinement of perishability and beauty in the aesthetic and religious Japanese tradition. As I have established in the earlier discussion on Zen Buddhism and more specifically Dōgen's poetry, a positive portrayal of perishability is encouraged when beauty is involved. With Norinaga, it is exactly this experiencing of beauty that is enabled by stressing the importance of being moved. As such, his theory on *mono no aware* can justifiably be regarded as a transcendental argument for the experience and knowledge of beauty and, by extension, for the celebration of impermanence.

There is another interesting parallel between Zen Buddhism and Norinaga's account on *mono no aware* that is worth mentioning: the desire to create a Japanese identity[30]. Just like the affirmative portrayal of perishability and the acquisition of arts in Japanese Zen came to be vastly associated with 'authentic' Japanese culture, Norinaga, in the unravelling of Shikibu's position, firmly asserts *mono no aware* as a symbol of the Japanese writing style:

> We speak of their tradition [the tradition of "foreign lands"] of poetic elegance and refinement, but it differs totally from the poetry of our own land. The innermost corners of the heart are left hidden and unspoken; they merely embellish the surface and carry on in a self-important manner. The tales of our own land, however, describe life in this world and the human emotions just as they are, with the result that they are often frivolous and insubstantial. But never are they pompous, pedantic, or overbearing. In this respect, their "styles of writing" differ from that of foreign lands (TNO, 444f.)

The passage above echoes numerous themes of Japanese aesthetics this thesis has already highlighted, including elegance, simplicity, but most importantly the uncovering of emotions in appeal to the here-and-now. Conclusively, while Norinaga's view may overall stand in opposition with Buddhism and Confucianism, the desire to identify with a Japanese identity reveals a resemblance to Zen Buddhism, the latter being a Japanese symbol for the non-embellished confrontation with life as it is truly experienced.

What this first part ultimately unmasks is that *mono no aware* as a literary theory is additionally reinforced in its embeddedness in the religious and aesthetic Japanese context on a meta-level: Norinaga's arguing for the essence of literature in moving others must be grasped as a reaction to a long tradition of didactic interpretations. Moreover, the

[30] This was already discussed with regard to Shintoism in chapter 3.1.

themes of Japanese identity as well as the celebration of impermanence can be retraced, further strengthening the link to the Japanese tradition.

4.3 *Mono no aware* as a Theory of Aesthetics

Is it possible to experience *mono no aware* without knowledge of the Japanese tradition? Up to this point, the answer suggested by this thesis is no. M*ono no aware* cannot be translated with 'the pathos of things' but must be treated as a concept or category of its own. It has been shaped in a specific cultural setting, including most notably the affirmative portrayal of perishability in both the aesthetic and religious Japanese tradition. Furthermore, it is deeply embedded in Norinaga's literary theory. Still, it is also in Norinaga's definition of *mono no aware* as being moved or stirred by external things that a universal capacity seems to be described. The application of Norinaga's definition results in a simple observation: if I am moved by something, am I not, per definition, experiencing *mono no aware* at that moment in time, independently of my knowledge or cultural environment? Is my thorough enjoyment of, say, a German comedy show, not also an expression of *mono no aware* following Norinaga's definition?

The response is that such an isolated understanding or definition no longer corresponds to the *mono no aware* Norinaga envisions. This is not only because it ignores his view on literature in the commentary of the Genji. It also limits his theory of *mono no aware* to a singular claim and overlooks the way in which a person must be moved for an experiencing of *aware*. To fully understand what Norinaga meant by 'being stirred by external things', it is also necessary to be aware of the specific framework of human nature Norinaga had in mind when he developed his theory, as well as the conditions that determine *at what time* and *in which way* one is being moved to an emotional response. This is what I identify as Norinaga's theory of aesthetics of *mono no aware*. As an aesthetic theory, *mono no aware* makes universal assumptions about human nature and comments on the process of being moved. In anticipation of the comparative analysis, these assumptions will be elucidated in this chapter.

First of all, for Norinaga, experiencing *mono no aware* implies a process of 'knowing':

> Now when a person is confronted with a situation of any sort whatever that might be expected to move him to emotion, and he apprehends the emotional quality of this situation and is indeed moved to emotion, this is described as being "sensitive to emotion" [mna o shiru] (TNO 455)

For Norinaga, experiencing *mono no aware* is tied to *shiru* (知る), meaning 'to know'. Converging in *mono no aware o shiru*, a new expression is formed, which Harper translates with 'being sensitive to emotion'. In Norinaga's account, the aesthetic sensitivity to perceive *mono no aware* is not universally given, but varies from individual to individual, therefore representing a source of knowledge. Only the individual 'knowing' *mono no aware* is moved to emotion. Consequently, being in the momentary state of experiencing *mono no aware* already implies an understanding of what it means to be moved, leading to a seemingly paradoxical overlap between knowing and feeling. This overall discussion of knowledge in *mono no aware* is what I will designate under the 'epistemological aspect'. As will be revealed later, the role of knowledge in *mono no aware o shiru* cannot merely be limited to the aesthetic sensibility of feeling. Experiencing *mono no aware* is linked with a commitment of developing an aesthetic sensibility by way of increasing the awareness of our own feelings, induced by the things that surround us. This need of 'knowing' what it means to be moved becomes all the more relevant in the confrontation with the fleeting beauty of the world. To illustrate this, consider the following poem from the Heian poet Bunya no Asayasu (end of 9th to beginning of 10th century):

Shira tsuyu ni	In a gust of wind the white dew
Kaze no fukishiku	On the Autumn grass
Aki no no wa	Scatters like a broken necklace
Tsuranuki tomenu	
Tama zo chirikeru	(Rexroth 1964, 13)

The poem above expresses the importance of the epistemological aspect in a twofold manner. While the poem calls for the reader's or listener's capacity to appreciate the subtle, snap-shot like effect of water droplets being blown away in a sudden wind breeze, the poet's point of view is also instructive, as it alludes to the sensibility required to capture such a momentary experience in nature and proactively frame it in few verses for eternity.

The epistemological aspect ties directly into a second recurrent theme in Norinaga's aesthetic theory, namely the discussion of 'good and bad':

> Generally speaking, those who know what it means to be moved [mna o shiri[31]], who have compassion, and who are alive to the feelings of others are regarded as good; whereas those who do not know what it means to be moved, lack compassion, and are insensitive to the feelings of others are regarded as bad (TNO 450)

The importance of knowing what it means to be moved leads Norinaga to a particular usage of the terms of good and bad. In his commitment to the view that the Genji is a non-didactic work construed to move others, Norinaga also distances himself from a moralistic understanding that assesses actions as good and bad in the sense of Buddhist and Confucianist teachings.

Instead, in the aesthetic realm of literature, this opposite pair is adjusted to a new criterion, being compassion, or, to utilise a philosophically and morally less connotated expression[32], the capacity to be moved to a certain degree. According to Norinaga, in the Genji, insensitive people tend to be regarded as bad, and compassionate people like Genji tend to be regarded as good. This reassessment of good and bad shows how far ahead Norinaga was of his time. Postulating *mono no aware* in a separate aesthetic category of good and bad that surpasses morality so long as it is located in the boundaries of literature overturns the religious tradition in a way that has never been done before. In the context of the Genji, what is generally praised as good is not simply proper Buddhist or Confucianist conduct. For example, Norinaga notes how despite Genji's numerous affairs, intolerable from the point of view of Buddhist and Confucian doctrines, "Genji is depicted as the very model of the 'good person', possessing every good quality imaginable" (TNO, 450f.). Norinaga therefore acts against the dominant schools of thought in his attempt to objectively state what thoughts and deeds exactly are being portrayed positively, using the contents of the Genji as evidence and thereby respecting the intentions of the author.

If nothing else, this aestheticised view of good and bad indicates just how strongly Norinaga valued the courage of becoming emotionally involved. This becomes clearer in examination of a third aspect of Norinaga's aesthetic theory, his underlying view on the

[31] *Shiri* is a conjugated form of the root- or dictionary form *shiru*.

[32] In advocating for the importance of compassion, Norinaga may appear close to Schopenhauer. However, Schopenhauer advanced his criterium for compassion as a basis for morality, much different from Norinaga's view of *mono no aware*, contained in an aesthetic context.

'femininity' of human nature, also formulated in contrast to rationalistic Buddhist and Confucianist[33] doctrines. In Tama no Ogushi, following up to the question why characters in the Genji are considered good people despite being "feminine, weak willed, and faltering" (in contrast to the disciplined and strong-willed spirit of, as Norinaga names it, "Chinese custom"), it is answered that

> When you probe the innermost depths of people's true feelings, you find that everyone, quite frequently, is feminine and faltering (TNO, 500)

To give in to emotions corresponds to the natural state of the human heart, the latter being a symbol for human nature. Evidently, the synonymous use of 'feminine' and 'weak' is not meant in a demeaning or degrading way, but simply mirrors the inferior position of women in Japanese society: during Norinaga's time (the Edo period, 1603-1868), women possessed very limited rights and depended almost entirely on their husband[34]. If anything, a notion of equality can be retraced in the claim that women, men and children alike share the reality of a weak heart. In quoting the following excerpt, Matsumoto notes that this idea of Norinaga already took form in Ashiwake Obune:

> Although father and mother must grieve equally for their child, the father appears to be little affected, whereas the mother is overwhelmed with grief and weeps distractedly. Why is there this difference? It is because the mother cannot restrain her real heart and simply expresses it as it is, while the father, lest people should think him effeminate, restrains himself from shedding a single tear, and by rigid self-control so conceals his great grief that he keeps up the appearance of manful resignation to fate. In my view, the mother's reaction appears frantic and even indecent, but this represents the reality of the human heart. The father, on the other hand, is apparently manly, resolute, and composed, but this does not represent his real heart. If he were really so from his heart, he would be like the trees and stones (Matsumoto 1970, 49f.)

This enhances the previously discussed status of *mono no aware* as a theory of literature as a whole. Literature appears no longer as an escapist or beguiling fantasy world disjoined from reality meant to console its reader, but a tool that reveals this "reality of the human heart" (ibid.) in a primordial state of vulnerability. Expressing emotions is no longer restricted to a therapeutic usage, but the reason why it is perceived as therapeutic in the first place can be explained by its corresponding to the natural, unrestricted way of

[33] In general, Confucianism especially stresses the importance of self-development through a strict cultivation and upholding of virtues, therefore contradicting with emotional involvement.

[34] To put this in perspective, the status and rights of (albeit aristocratic) Heian women can surprisingly be regarded as superior when it comes to their role in court, the owning of property or the freedom in pursuing arts. For further reading: In chapter eight of The World of the Shining Prince , Ivan Morris provides an interesting overview of the influence and literary success of women in upper Heian society (Morris 2013).

experiencing the world. Naturally, this does not entail that one should simply give free rein to one's emotions. Note for instance how the weeping mother's reaction is being brushed aside by Norinaga as "frantic and even indecent" (ibid.).

Lastly, Norinaga's fragile image of human nature can be brought into further connection with his claim that *aware* originally is an exclamation:

> aware originally was a cry of emotion such as we utter when we are moved by something we see, hear, or experience, just as in present-day colloquial speech we still exclaim *aa*! or *hare*! [sic] For example, when we are moved by the sight of the moon or the cherry blossoms, we may say, "*Aa*, what beautiful blossoms!" or "*Hare*, how magnificent the moon!" (TNO, 454)

Thus, if we are struck by something and momentarily give in to our emotions albeit only in an exclamation, the authentic state of the human heart is revealed. There is no time for restricting feelings or reflecting on the appropriateness of the words that suddenly slip into openness. In fact, judging the exclamations *aa* and *hare* normatively in terms of their appropriateness is already misplaced, insofar as an exclamation is devoid of meaning in the moment it is being uttered. An exclamation, or, as Marra chooses to translate it, a "sigh" (see Marra 2007), is a vocalised expression of pure emotion which is part of a pre-linguistic sphere. In contrast to the epistemological and reflective dimension of knowing when one is being moved in *mono no aware o shiru*, *mono no aware*, in its most basic manifestation *aware*, must be comprehended separately in a pre-reflective setting. The process of experiencing *mono no aware* is not planned but occurs spontaneously, and it is never a matter of choosing to be emotionally involved.

Norinaga's view of *aware* as an exclamation will be analysed in detail later[35]. For now, what is important to grasp is the impact this has on his overall aesthetic theory. By giving a philological analysis of how *aware* was originally used in ancient poetry (Norinaga cites examples of the Kokinshū from the beginning of the 10th century), namely as an exclamation, sigh or "direct expression of emotion" (TNO, 454) Norinaga forms the view that *mono no aware* cannot be restricted to sorrow. This is different from the common meaning of the term. As carved out in the initial pages of this thesis, *mono no aware* is generally associated with a feeling of sadness or sorrow. This was no different in

[35] See chapter 5.1.

Norinaga's time, notwithstanding that it was reserved for a more intense and violent form of sadness and sorrow compared to today's wider usage:

> In more recent times, aware has come to be written with the character 哀 and tends to be associated exclusively with a sense of deeply felt sadness [hiai] (TNO, 454)

Norinaga rejects the writing of *aware* with the kanji "哀" due to its being limited to the notion of sadness. It is also in consideration of this that I have decided to favour the neutrally connotated hiragana writing of *aware* (あわれ). At the same time, Norinaga offers an explanation as to why the term *aware* has been shaped so narrowly:

> the reason aware is often contrasted with joy, amusement, and the like is that of the many emotions experienced by human beings, joy and amusement are not deeply felt, whereas sorrow, misery, longing—any of the emotions experienced when things do not go as one would wish—are felt with particular poignancy. Thus these deeper feelings are distinguished as quintessentially aware. This also accounts for the fact that in common usage, [aware] refers only to deeply felt sadness (TNO, 455)

To circumvent a misunderstanding, it is essential to recognise that Norinaga does not exclude sadness from *mono no aware*. There is no disaccord between Norinaga's view of *mono no aware* of being stirred by external things and the common usage limited to sadness. On the contrary, it is typical for *aware* to be brought into relation with a deeply moving emotion such as grief, sorrow or sadness. These emotions emerge as result of a shortcoming ("when things do not go as one would wish", ibid.), thereby reconnecting Norinaga's account to the recurrent theme of the impermanence of things which characterises Japanese thought. In the following quote of Ivan Morris, we find that the Genji is no exception to this: "a preoccupation of life and death runs through *The Tale of Genji*. One after another, the characters sicken and die, leaving the survivors with an even deeper sense of the transience of worldly things" (Morris 2013, 111f.). It thus stands to reason that Donald Keene simply opted to translate *mono no aware* "the sorrow of human existence" (Keene 1988, 86), despite his being aware that Norinaga referred to an altogether wider emotional spectrum. Elaborating on this, consider the following translation from Keene of the opening lines of Tama no Ogushi: "Generally speaking, those who know the meaning of the sorrow of human existence, i.e., those who are in sympathy and in harmony with human sentiments are regarded as good" (Keene 1999,

489)[36]. In his analysis of Norinaga, Keene interestingly equates the knowing of the meaning of sorrow with the harmony of human sentiments. One way of interpreting this decision is that only deeply felt emotions, arising for instance with the death of the other, pose the challenge of coming to terms with reality by courageously accepting the loss in question and admitting to one's suffering (i.e. being in harmony with one's sentiments) and, in resonance with Norinaga's view on human nature, one's weakness. In any case, it illustrates that poignant and heart-breaking instances of *mono no aware* do not lead away from Norinaga's account. To the opposite, they facilitate an understanding of *mono no aware*.

I suggested that Norinaga's account can be represented in one harmonic train of thought as an aesthetic theory: in general, *mono no aware* occurs not as an isolated experience but is embedded in *mono no aware o shiru*, the diachronically gained aesthetic sensibility to know what it means to be moved. Secondly, 'knowing' *mono no aware* is also what led Norinaga to introduce his unique distinction between 'good and bad'. Furthermore, in the world of the Genji, 'good' individuals act in accordance with the reality of the weak human heart. This view on human nature stands out particularly in the etymology of *mono no aware* as an exclamation.

5. Comparative Analysis – *Mono no aware*

Part I has paved the way for a philosophical, comparative analysis of the theory of *mono no aware*. While acknowledging the link to the Japanese tradition, Norinaga's aesthetic theory renders possible a transcultural exchange by specifying a structure in the process of being moved, based on the assumption of an emotionally receptive and faltering human nature. In order to enrich this view, I will extract four characteristics of Norinaga's theory that deserve further attention, examining commonalities and differences to approaches of Western philosophy. These four characteristics have already been prepared in the previous chapter.

[36] Harper's translation in comparison: "Generally speaking, those who know what it means to be moved [mna o shiri], who have compassion, and who are alive to the feelings of others are regarded as good" (see page 28).

It should be noted that such a categorisation of *mono no aware* is in no way binding and should even be omitted in an inclusive approach that does not base itself exclusively on Norinaga's account. Differently put, these characteristics do neither represent necessary nor sufficient conditions for an occurring of *mono no awar*e. They do however aid in gaining a more accurate understanding of the expression, combatting superficial and logically inconsistent views on *mono no aware* that predominantly focus on the notions of sadness and sorrow.

5.1 *Mono no aware* as Exclamation

5.1.1 Exclamation - Suchness - Sigh

I already established that Norinaga identifies the etymology of *aware* as a cry of emotion, stemming from *aa* and *hare*. *Aa* and *hare* are exclamations[37] emerging when moved by things that, in general, appear salient in our surroundings, most prominently in nature:

> when we are moved by the sight of the moon or the cherry blossoms, we may say, "Aa, what beautiful blossoms!" or "Hare, how magnificent the moon!" Aware is the combination of this same aa and hare (TNO 453)

For Norinaga, the exclamation captures the most fundamental and basic meaning of *aware* there is as spontaneous and direct expression of emotion. Likewise, in Isonokami Sasamegoto, we find a similar explanation relative to poetry:

> Originally, *aware* was a word expressing a sigh, an articulation of one's innermost feelings irrespective of the social standing of the person experiencing them. It was a word of the same type as "oh!" or "ah!" (Marra 2007, 174)

As previously stated, Marra favours the translation of 'sigh' to exclamation. For now, I'll proceed to use both interchangeably as a direct and spontaneous bodily expression of emotion.

The linguistic developing of an exclamation or sigh as a sign for emotions is, of course, not exclusive to the Japanese language. As in 'oh!' or 'ah!', it seems natural for a vocal expression of the body to find its way into language. In my opinion, an insightful parallel can be drawn to the French interjection *hélas*[38], defined by Le Robert as follows:

[37] In modern Japanese kandoushi (感動詞), the three kanji literally translating to "emotion-move-words". With reference to the Genji, Kazumitsu Kato distinguishes between "*aware* used as a *kantoshi* (an interjection) or *kantanshi* (an exclamation), which is the honest expression of one's feeling about a subject" (Kato 1962, 559).

[38] *Alas* in English derives from the ancient French *hélas*, hence why I stick to the French word.

> *Hélas* [elas] **interj[39].** – XIIe de *hé* et ancien français *las* « malheureux »
> - Interjection de plainte, exprimant la douleur, le regret[40] (Robert 2008)

I take interjection to be synonymous with exclamation. While the argument can be made that an interjection has more of a reciprocal or 'in-between' character in quite literally 'inter-jecting' a remark (thus also including comma and question mark type sentences), in contrast to an exclamation that is restricted to "a sudden cry or remark expressing surprise, strong emotion, or pain" (Oxford dictionary 2019), both express a spontaneous sentiment or feeling. This is especially obvious in *hélas*. Just like *aware*, *hélas* is an archaic expression that fulfils the concise role of conveying an emotion. This emotion is sadness in the common usage of *aware* and suffering or regret in *hélas*. Still, while both are centred around pathos, *aware* is much less restricted. Norinaga's account brings attention to this by clarifying the original usage of *aware*, referring to a spontaneous and affective reaction when one is being moved. To illustrate this, compare the examples given by Le Robert to those given by Norinaga:

> « *Hélas* ! Les beaux jours sont finis ! » ***GAUTIER.*** « Ce n'est *hélas,* que trop vrai » ***SIEGRIED*.**
>
> – « Va-t-il mieux ? *Hélas* ! non**.** »[41] (Robert 2008)

In comparison to Harper's translation of Norinaga's examples of ancient poetry in Tama no Ogushi:

> "The lone pine, *aware*…" [Nihon shoki, 24]; "*Aware*, the song of the bird…" [Man'yōshū 1756]; "*Aware*, this lodging of mine for these several nights..." [Kokinshū 984]; "*Aware,* he that in ancient days…" [Kokinshū 1003]. This is the origin of the word. Likewise with "*Aware, aware*,' I sighed in an excess of grief…" [Kokinshū 1001], and "*Aware*, how dismal,' I sighed as the days passed…" [Shinzokukokinshū 2038] (TNO 454)

Only the two latter examples from the quote above are negatively connotated with a strong sense of grief or sorrow. Consequently, the juxtaposition between *aware* and *hélas* is fruitful in further underlining just how elemental of an expression *aware* and, beyond that, *mono no aware* is. This line of thought can be continued further in the observation that while *aware* consists of two exclamations *aa* and *hare*, *hélas* only consists of a singular exclamation *hé* combined with the ancient French word for unhappiness, *las*.

[39] Interjection.
[40] Translation: 12th century from *hé* and ancient French *las* "unhappy". – Interjection of lament, expressing pain and regret.
[41] Translation: "*Alas*! The beautiful days are gone!" ***GAUTIER***. "It is, *alas*, all too true" ***SIEGRIED***. – "Is he better? *Alas*! no".

From an etymological standpoint, no commitment towards a certain emotion is made in *aware*, there is solely a sort of onomatopoetical feeling of an exclamation or sigh that spontaneously leaves the body in the uttering of *aa* and *hare*.

It is at this point of the analysis that the representation of the 'sigh' in particular excels at revealing how basic of a feeling one should identify with *aware*. A notion of elegance[42] is comprised in the idea that the opulence of impressions from an experience is being wholly captured in a momentary and fleeting sigh. In many cases, contrarily to *hélas*, no definite answer can ever be given as to what this 'sigh' truly indicates. While the exclamation also exhibits a notion of indeterminateness, a deeper element of suggestion is comprised in the sigh, a gesture of openness and image of exhalation that does not search for a response but must be left as it is. I believe that this contributes to creating the quintessential effect of beauty in faint movement. In contrast to the emotionally more intense *hélas* this becomes especially striking: the prefix *hé* is not only phonetically much more forceful, but is also of an interruptive nature, being used primarily to call out to people. I take the phenomenology of the sigh as one way of explaining why *mono no aware* is prevalently associated with not an intense, but only a faint notion of sadness, as can be retraced in the overview of examples given by Donald Richie:

> Tsunoda, Keen and de Bary find that aware "expresses a gentle sorrow, adding not so much a meaning as a color or a perfume to a sentence." Ueda Makoto's paraphrase runs: "A deep, empathetic appreciation of the ephemeral beauty manifest in nature and human life, and therefore usually tinged with a hint of sadness [though] under certain circumstances it can be accompanied by admiration, awe or even joy" (…) Modern attempts have included "c'est la vie" and "that's the way the cookie crumbles" (Richie 2007, 55)

The Genji Monogatari portrays this basic and vague nature of *aware* as a sigh more convincingly than any other work. In Royall Tyler's English translation of the Genji, a substantial total of 129 'sighs' occurs in 1121 pages. While the majority of these sighs is indeed imbued with a faint sense of regret, melancholy or sadness, other sighs suggest a very different understanding, leading to an overall versatile usage of the word. I have selected three examples to showcase this:

At the beginning of the tenth chapter *Sakaki*, Genji, leaving for the Shrine of the Moor, finds himself overpowered by a scenery of nature fitting of *mono no aware*:

[42] See page 10.

> Melancholy overwhelmed him as soon as he set out across the moor's vast expanse. The autumn flowers were dying; among the brakes of withering sedge, insect cries were faint and few; and through the wind's sad sighing among the pines there reached him at times the sound of instruments, although so faintly that he could not say what the music was. The scene had an intensely eloquent beauty (GM[43], 193f.)

In this first example, Genji perceives an "intensely eloquent beauty" in the realising that winter is coming, and that the colours and life of autumn begin to fade. In the midst of this atmosphere of evanescence and beauty, the sigh is employed as a metaphor for the wind, now traversing nature with "sad sighing". This sad sighing then produces a distantly resonating sound of instruments, confirming the aforementioned effect of beauty in faint movement contained in the gesture of the sigh.

In *Fujibakama*, the thirtieth chapter, Genji's son Yūgiri is enchanted by the beautiful young lady Tamakazura:

> She had no words with which to answer him but only sighed, secretly and so sweetly, so touchingly that he could bear no more (GM, 516)

In this second example, the sigh has a sensual meaning. Although Yūgiri conversed directly with her and not via a servant or maid, they were still, as was custom in the Heian period, separated by a curtain. The sigh discreetly transgresses this imposed distance between them, becoming thereby inspired with a sense of longing and forbiddance.

One last example in chapter thirty-nine, *Yūgiri*, again offers a different perspective:

> Dawn approached while they sighed their separate sighs in mutual silence, until the night was over and the Commander hastened as always to write her a letter (GM, 719)

This passage creatively uses the sigh as a sort of filler, an action that fills night-time. Superficially, this may only symbolise a case of unresolved thoughts and sleeplessness. What is of interest, however, is that the sigh elicits no distinct intense emotion: the sighs are not being cried out with anger or frustration, they only lead to "mutual silence". The wording "sighing of sighs" (ibid.) further suggests that the noun is best accompanied by its homonymous verb. Any other phrasing risks giving away too much. This is the dialectic of the sigh: in this gesture of openness that never finds a response, the "silence" evoked in the passage above is not reduceable to speechlessness but is more so

[43] Abbreviation for the Genji.

comparable to a mood. What the sigh expresses cannot be worded, the experience that moves must speak for itself, prior to any sort of reflective assessment. I designate this as *suchness* in *mono no aware*. There is no point in attempting to dissect the sigh or the exclamation in the hopes of increasing aesthetic enjoyment or gaining better knowledge of the aesthetic experience. The spontaneity of being moved, strictly limited to the first-person perspective, already represents the aesthetic climax. It is no coincidence that the sigh is often the last image of a paragraph the reader finds himself confronted with:

> "The Chief Equerry's far-ranging discussion of his topic yielded no conclusion but a deep **sigh**[44]." (GM, 25)
> "He talked on at length, but she had nothing to say in answer and only sat there **sighing**." (GM, 738)
> "Still, he only wished that he had been able to join Her Highness yesterday and to feast his eyes on her to his heart's content, and he could not help heaving a **sigh**." (GM, 1065)

This simple formal detail further illustrates the function of the sigh to create a (or contribute to an already existing) mood, an open question left unanswered in a lingering feeling.

In conclusion, the elusiveness in *mono no aware* is not exclusively due to an intricate development of meaning and usage in *aware*. Instead, this development is only an effect of an underlying cause: Because the basic meaning of *aware* is a spontaneous exclamation of emotion, it naturally came to be interpreted in many ways, depending on the artistic production of the time. In addition, the various connotations of the sigh have offered an explanation why *aware* is often associated with a faint feeling. Contrarily to *hélas*, this feeling stands often but not necessarily in relation to sorrow.

5.1.2 *Mémoire Involontaire*

There is, in the Western tradition, one concept that accentuates the sudden occurring of a singular aesthetic experience in a comparable manner to *mono no aware* as an exclamation or sigh: Proust's *mémoire involontaire*. Much like the Genji, In Search of Lost Time is a narrative masterpiece that provides a detailed and extensive insight into the relationships, actions and daily struggles of characters. In doing so, both oeuvres excel at illustrating aesthetic experiences with particular poignancy. If *mono no aware*

[44] Highlights are always added, unless indicated otherwise with '[sic]'.

embodies aesthetic experience in the Genji, the *mémoire involontaire* or involuntary memory is the central symbol for aesthetic experience in Proust's work.

As the name suggests, the *mémoire involontaire* is definable as the involuntary arising of a past memory in the present. Identical to *aware* as an exclamation of *aa hare*, it is characterised by a spontaneous occurring that moves the experiencer. Importantly, this being moved takes place naturally and unexpectedly, to a point where an overwhelming by emotion takes place. This is depicted best in the first and most famous episode of the *mémoire involontaire* of the madeleine in the opening volume Swann's Way of the seven total volumes of In Search of Lost Time. In this scene, the protagonist[45] rediscovers the memory of his childhood hometown Combray after he tastes tea soaked in the madeleine cake. Suddenly, he becomes overcome with an intense joy:

> No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate than a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal (SLT[46], Swann's Way, ouverture)

In addition to spontaneity, the *mémoire involontaire* is characterised by brevity. The euphoric and ecstatic state provoked by the sudden experience does not last. This is also what ends up motivating Proust to his arduous quest of capturing the true essence of the *mémoire involontaire* in the first place. Thus, a second parallel to *mono no aware* appears in the quality of fleetingness. This fleetingness is articulated quantitatively in the *mémoire involontaire*, relative to its rare occurring, and qualitatively in *aware* as exclamation or sigh, relative to its intangible meaning. Nevertheless, the overall common theme of fleetingness produces the same effect in both aesthetic experiences: realising that the perceived beauty and preciousness is inextricable from the fleeting nature of things. This entails that a voluntary or reflective imagining can never reproduce the same enjoyment as the original aesthetic experience. Proust explains this via habit: a voluntary repeatable remembering loses in potency, as one starts to become habituated to the memories. The protagonist soon comes to realise this in the repeated drinking of the madeleine infused

[45] The protagonist is never named. Still, as a largely autobiographical work, I consider it just and simpler to refer to him as Proust.
[46] Abbreviation for: In Search for Lost Time. I will be using the Scott Moncrieff translation in e-book format.

tea: “I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic” (ibid.). For Norinaga, the inadvertent feeling of *aa hare* as an exclamation is similarly generated non-reflectively. A conscious exclamation of *aa hare* no longer corresponds to “the innermost depths of people’s true feelings” (TNO, 499) Norinaga fundamentally is after. Identical to Proust, the voluntary is also less intensely moving in Norinaga’s account. Besides spontaneity and fleetingness, suchness is a last overlapping characteristic. Just like the sigh must speak for itself, the *mémoire involontaire* elicits a unique sensation of eternal joy that cannot be obtained outside of it. The cause of this joy is its sui generis temporal structure: The involuntary memory revives a past world (being Combray in the trigger experience of the madeleine) that overwrites the present. The past memory thus arises as a present lived experience:

> Of a truth, the being within me which (…) sensed its extra-temporal character, a being which only appeared when through the medium of the identity of present and past, it found itself in the only setting in which it could exist and enjoy the essence of things, that is, outside Time (SLT, Time Regained, chapter three)

As *mémoire involontaire*, the revived Combray is not past, reappearing in the present as something present, and yet, it is not present insofar as the present sensation is inextricable from its past context without which it could never have resurged. In Proust and signs, Gilles Deleuze’s writes:

> Combray rises up in a form that is absolutely new. Combray does not rise up as it was once present; Combray rises up as past, but this past is no longer relative to the present that it has been, it is no longer relative to the present in relation to which it is now (Howard 2000, 60)

In contrast, voluntary memory cannot occur outside of time, as it necessarily interprets the past memory as something past. Altogether, both *aware* as exclamation or sigh and the *mémoire involontaire* cannot be reproduced voluntarily. Their essence inevitably lies out of reach of metaphysical assumptions or the empirical sciences and stays maintained in the depths of an irreducible first-person perspective. It is in this regard that the novel, narrating without judging, is superior to any treatise. In the end, Proust concludes that Lost Time can only be found within himself: “I had too clearly proved the impossibility of expecting from reality that which was within myself” (SLT, Time Regained, chapter three).

At the same time, the extra-temporality of the *mémoire involontaire* is also what establishes it as a polarising opposite of *aware*. While both are part of the involuntary or pre-reflective sphere, temporality is what defines *aware*. Here is where the comparative analysis must take into account the different ideological background. I have insisted that the Japanese tradition and Norinaga's thinking stress perishability: How does one become deeply moved in the sense of *aware*? Primarily by contemplating the impermanent things (the '*mono*' in *aware*) that surround us in everyday life. Certainly, both the Genji and Proust depict everyday life with great effort, but in pursuit of a different goal. The Genji, in the reading of Norinaga, is intended to depict human feeling:

> The panorama of people as they go through life; the passing scenes of nature, even the very plants and trees in spring, summer, autumn, and winter; everything is splendidly described (…) it is like gazing into a mirror in which all is reflected with total clarity. I doubt there is another work, in either Japan or China, past or present or future, that can match the manner in which it delineates human feeling (TNO, 494f.)

Thus, the representation of everyday life is in itself praised as an end by Norinaga. In Proust however, it is merely a means to a different end, already contained in the very title of his work: retrieving Lost Time. Proust yearns to find an explanation for the sensations of the *mémoire involontaire* by determining the essence of its fleeting being. If Norinaga is focused on the process of feeling, Proust is committed to the truth of feeling. In the last volume Time Regained, this subjective truth is revealed: the feeling of immortality[47] and profound joy in the *mémoire involontaire* is due to extra-temporality. Outside of time, death is meaningless. Consequently, by seeking solace in the exceptional case of the *mémoire volontaire*, Proust's work becomes overall marked by a dualistic understanding between a (although secure) boring habitual setting opposed to the experiencing of aesthetic pleasure:

> if there were no such thing as habit, life must appear delightful to those of us who would at every moment be threatened with death—that is to say, to all mankind. (SLT, Within a Budding Grove, Place-Names: The Place)

While the coexistence of aesthetic pleasure and the threat of passing is acknowledged in both Proust and the Japanese tradition, Proust comes to a different conclusion. Instead of

[47] In chapter 2.2, I argued with Keene that the West strives for permanence instead of perishability. This reappears, to some extent, in the immortal feeling of the *mémoire involontaire*. However, the *mémoire involontair*e should not be mistaken with a Platonic idea, as it is tied to the individual and the way he perceives the environment. For example, a non-habituated setting always favours the occurring of a *mémoire involontaire*.

locating aesthetic enjoyment in the surrounding impermanence of things part of the here-and-now as the Japanese aesthetic tradition does, Proust creates a co-constitutive liaison between boring, secure daily life and the ideal of the artist's way of life, devoid of ennui and filled with beauty in exchange for suffering. It becomes clear then that *mono no aware* and the *mémoire involontaire* must be judged as a part of a different cultural setting. Proust has been heavily influenced by the Bergsonian theory of habit and memory[48], but it is also more committed to a project of unveiling 'truth', albeit not a truth of the sciences but the truth of intellectual pleasure, unveiled in the key element of habit.

In general, what stands out in the comparison of *aware* as exclamation and the *mémoire involontaire* is that despite initially sharing the characteristics of spontaneity, fleetingness and suchness, both aesthetic experiences diverge from each other in their temporal being. If the exclamation or sigh *aa hare* stands for the most basic way of being moved in the fleeting-present, the *mémoire involontaire* is in itself fleetingness in a feeling of immortality in extra-temporality. In this sense, this discussion has further reinforced the role of perishability in *mono no aware*.

5.2 *Mono no aware* and the Relation of Subject and Object

5.2.1 Pre-reflective Coexistence of Subject and Object

The question of the relation of subject and object in the experiencing of *mono no aware* goes hand in hand with the foregoing chapter: supposing that *aware* is, in its most basic manifestation, a spontaneous expression of emotion, it must be understood in a pre-reflective setting of coexistence between subject and object. What do I mean by this? While 'reflective' experience includes the underlying awareness of oneself, the subject, as an object that is experiencing, 'pre-reflective' experience relates to a state or moment prior to that self-realisation of the subject as an object in the role of the experiencer. In other words, in pre-reflective experience, the subject or experiencer is indistinguishable from the object of experience it is being confronted with. The other way around, it is also impossible to identify the object of experience as object, as it can only be perceived as such in virtue of an 'I' that emerges as distinct equal from the object. Put simply, I define

[48] In short, Bergson distinguishes in Matter and Memory between habit as a mechanism (habitual memory) and pure memory (memory of recollections).

pre-reflective experience as a latent state of awareness where subject and object coexist, distinct from self-awareness.

The basic structure of *aware* as exclamation must be understood in this pre-reflective manner. An awareness of the subject as distinct from the object already involves the freedom of manipulating emotional involvement, unavailable in the direct expression of *aware* that overcomes the individual. For Norinaga, the exclamation captures the most fundamental and basic meaning of *aware* there is. Norinaga goes on to enumerate different expressions of *aware* that can appear once the underlying sense of exclamation is being extended:

> From the foregoing [examples of *aware* as a direct expression of emotion], we can ascertain the basic sense of the word *aware*. Then, in slightly extended usage, we have expressions like *aware to miru* , "to be moved by the sight of…"; *aware to kiku*, "to be moved at the sound of…"; and *aware to omou*, "to be moved at the thought of…"; which mean that one reacts with the feeling *aa hare* to something that one sees, hears, or thinks (TNO, 454)

Note that the basic sense of *aa hare* is described by Norinaga as a distinct 'feeling to' something or 'some-thing', i.e. an object, perceived through the senses or thinking. From this can be inferred that the significance of *aware* as exclamation is not only of etymological nature. It also contains along with it the assumption that something like a basic sense of *aware* exists in the feeling of *aa hare* 'to' an object of experience. This feeling of *aa hare* 'to' an object must not be confused with a separation or movement from the subject to the object. In the Harper translation, particularly the formulation "one reacts with the feeling aa *hare* to something that one sees, hears, or thinks" (ibid.) must be approached with caution, and should not be taken literally. In lived experience, a direct expression of emotion in the sense of *aa hare* in the subject does not occur as a 'being attributed to' an object. I am not in a prevenient state of being moved that is being applied to an object. Instead, being moved already implies that the object has been received as something engaging and dynamic, which structures the way I interact with the world. *Aware* expresses, to sum up with KATO Kazumitsu in his notes on *mono no aware*, an "affective term, stating spontaneously cognition, and there is an identification by the perceiver with the object" (Kato 1962, 559). When I am moved by the sight of the moon, I do not react with the feeling of *aware* 'to' something that is seen, but in the very moment I am moved, the sight of the moon becomes inseparable from my feelings. To further

substantiate this claim on a linguistic level, the Japanese 'to' (と) found in *aware to miru*, *aware to kiku*, *aware to omou* is not to be understood as a movement from *a* to *b*, but is a conjunction, literally translatable to 'and'. A synthesis is implied between one's being moved and the object of the aesthetic experience.

Norinaga's mentioning of *aware to omou* ("to be moved at the thought of") I believe deserves further examination as a special case, as it relates not to a perceptual experience, but a representational one (if we take *omou* to be the expression of a thought as Harper does) or a cognitive one (should *omou* be equated to a thinking process in a more processual understanding). Conceiving of *mono no aware* as a pre-reflective experience works when applied to a singular or multiple senses (e.g. being moved by *the sight* of the moon). However, being moved pre-reflectively in the contrasting juxtaposition of thought and thinking appears more problematic. To what extent is it possible to be moved by a thought or during a process of thinking without distinguishing between the experiencer and the experienced object? One possibility is to claim that in *aware to omou*, the act of thinking is simply pre-reflective, comparable to a stream of consciousness. Instead of being moved visually by an object in the outside world, 'thought' is simply the internal object of experience in question, which provokes a spontaneous emotional response in the form of *aware to omou*. To illustrate this at the example of a poem from the Tales of Ise[49]:

Tsuki ya aranu	Is that not the moon?
Haru ya mukashi no	And is the spring not the spring
Haru naranu	Of a year ago?
Wagami hitotsu wa	This body of mine alone
Moto no mi ni shite	Remains as it was before

(Keene 1988, 80)

As Keene explains, this poem tells the story of a man who visits a house where, one year earlier, he had madly fallen in love with a woman he had ended up being separated from. To his dismay, the place has become unrecognisable, which is why he comes to consider that he and his feelings but nothing else remain the same in an ever-changing world. What is above all moving about this poem is precisely this singular thought or central idea,

[49] Collection of waka poems from the Heian period.

which in return compels one to be moved in the sense of '*aware to omou*' in a pre-reflective stream of consciousness. Comparable to a seed, the original thought becomes nurtured more and more in an ensuing thinking process that may look as follows: if the core of the poem revolves around the feeling of being trapped in the nostalgia of one's love, how should one explain the first two questions in the three opening lines? Assuming they are of rhetorical nature, they would contradict with the latter statement, which asserts only the body or the self as unchanging. This process of pondering is developed very naturally. It is in this sense that a train of thought can be argued to take form pre-reflectively in '*aware to omou*', without the awareness or conscious realising of oneself (the subject as experiencing object) as distinct from the thought the poem carries (the experienced object).

Naturally, a more direct approach would consist in simply interpreting '*aware to omou*' by taking the passage above from Tama no Ogushi at face-value: There are simply different expressions that have been added to *aware* in language, '*aware to omou*' being one of them. From this standpoint, limiting thinking in *aware* to the 'pre-reflective' sphere as I have done may just seem speculative. Nevertheless, it shows firstly how '*aware to omou*' is exemplary in illustrating how strongly 'thinking' can be imbued with pathos in the Japanese tradition.[50] Secondly, it opens up the possibility to discuss a wider range of cases of *mono no aware,* which do not necessarily occur in the midst of nature, but also arise as a result of intellectual pleasures, much like the example of the reading of the Genji.

5.2.2 Nishida Kitarō and *Pure Experience*

The idea of the coexistence of subject and object, specifically from the practical point of view of lived experience, marks a recurrent point of interest throughout the Japanese tradition. I have already established that in the beginnings of Japanese culture, Shintoism stresses the attitude of perceiving humankind not as disconnected beings, but as an integral part of nature in coexistence of the material and spiritual world. On the other end of this timeline, NISHIDA Kitarō, the founder of the Kyoto School of thought, can be put forward as a figure that treated the very same theme of the coexistence of subject and

[50] See page 15.

object in his concept of *pure experience* (純粋経験) in his early and most renowned work An Inquiry into the Good, albeit from a metaphysical and philosophically articulated standpoint.

For Nishida, the term 'experience' in general is employed to describe the cognitive and sensuous interaction of an individual with his surroundings, involving, to some degree, deliberation in thinking. This presupposition, however, misses that a *purer* form of experience exists:

> The moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound, for example, is prior not only to the thought that the color or sound is the activity of an external object or that one is sensing it, but also to the judgment of what the color or sound might be. In this regard, pure experience is identical with direct experience (Nishida 1992, 3)

Pure experience as direct experience does not distinguish between object and subject, nor does it involve judgment. Continuing, Nishida states that "when one directly experiences one's own state of consciousness, there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified" (Nishida 1992, 3f.). Thus, 'direct experience' is consistent with the basic and pre-reflective dimension in *aware*, revealing at its centre a "strict unity of concrete consciousness" (Nishida 1992, 6) that is being maintained throughout and "develops of its own accord" (Nishida 1992, 7). What Nishida formulates as a 'unity of consciousness' can be compared to the stream of consciousness mentioned earlier in the processual interpretation of *aware to omou*, representing uninterrupted lived experience preceding self-awareness[51].

In order to properly analyse *aware* and *pure experience* comparatively, it is necessary to first challenge the pooling of both concepts by questioning it as a mere superficial resemblance. Nishida's idea of *pure experience* is not an instrument of analysis that can be applied to a tangible experience of the exterior world, nor is it an emotional expression. On the contrary, Nishida's project in An Inquiry into the Good follows the goal of grounding the individual in a new theory of metaphysics, by bringing forward *pure experience* as the very basis of reality, out of which the individual is formed. Although *pure experience* occurs as direct or lived experience, Nishida distances himself from a

[51] Again, I define self-awareness as a 'reflective' state, where the self, being aware of itself, perceives itself as its own object.

psychological account[52] by emphasising that "a truly pure experience has no meaning whatsoever, it is simply a present consciousness of facts just as they are" (Nishida 1992, 4). It is evident that this is a criterium that cannot be fulfilled in *mono no aware* if we take it to be an expression of emotion. How far then can we extend the pre-reflective dimension in the coexistence of subject and object in *mono no aware*? No further than its capacity to be moving. At the very least, some form of meaning must be inferred for this to happen. *Pure experience* then analyses the coexistence of subject and object in a more basic manner that fundamentally structures reality, therefore preceding the level of meaning and emotional involvement.

However, not all hope is lost in our comparative attempt. By arguing that the emotional expression *mono no aware* can be further decomposed into the basic and pre-reflective exclamation of *aware* or *aa hare* where the subject or experiencer is indistinguishable from the object he is experiencing, a comparison to Nishida's *pure experience* becomes possible.

While *pure experience* transcends the individual for Nishida in a noumenal realm, it remains part of direct or lived experience insofar as it is still the self in direct or lived experience that is realized out of *pure experience*. Herein lies the crux of Nishida's argument. In the words of Masao Abe, translator of An Inquiry into the Good: "true directness is realized only from within the actual living reality of experience that is individual and yet trans-individual and universal" (Nishida 1992, introduction). On a transcending level, *pure experience* has no meaning and is a mere fact, but in direct experience, *pure experience* does contain meaning in the realm of consciousness and lived experience. This central problem in Nishida's account requires an analysis this thesis cannot fully do justice to, with the exception of noting that it has led many philosophers to revisit *pure experience* by distinguishing between certain level of occurrences. For example, Steve Odin notes that KOSAKA Kunitsugu's Hegelian interpretation of *pure experience* reveals three stages of: (i) the primal fact of pure experience before the subject-object distinction and prior to mental distinctions, (ii) the separation of subject-

[52] In the preface of his book, Nishida also notes the following: "Over time I came to realize that it is not that experience exists because there is an individual, but that an individual exists because there is experience. I thus arrived at the idea that experience is more fundamental than individual differences, and in this way I was able to avoid solipsism" (Nishida 1992, preface).

object differentiation and the development of mental distinctions, as well as (iii) the transcendence of subject-object differentiation inclusive of mental distinctions within what Nishida calls 'intellectual intuition' (see Odin 2012, 173f.). All of these stages are moments of *pure experience* as a whole. NISHITANI Keiji, a disciple of Nishida, adopts a similar view, affirming a holistic understanding of *pure experience*: (i) the first chapter of An Inquiry into the Good "deals with the basic form of the idea that grounds the entire system" (Nishitani 2016, 107), i.e. *pure experience* as transcending[53], (ii) chapters two and three examine *pure experience* in terms of 'thinking' and 'will', and lastly (iii) chapter four characterises *pure experience* as 'intellectual intuition', an activity in "its consummate expression as the basic form that it is" (Nishitani 2016, 108). Both Kosaka and Nishitani then recognise intellectual intuition as the final stage of *pure experience*, and I believe this is where the comparison to *aware* or *mono no aware* must inevitably end up.

Intellectual intuition[54] is defined by Nishida from the standpoint of *pure experience* as "the state of oneness of subject and object, a fusion of knowing and willing. In the mutual forgetting of the self and the object, the object does not move the self and the self does not move the object. There is simply one world, one scene" (Nishida 1992, 32). Although different in their richness and depth (i.e. the 'intellectual' content of the intuition), intellectual intuition is much like ordinary perception insofar as both refer to an intuitive process of direct experience located before a separation of subject and object and endowed with life:

> Just as ordinary perception is considered merely passive, so is intellectual intuition considered a state of passive contemplation; however, a true intellectual intuition is the unifying activity in pure experience. It is a grasp of life, like having the knack of art or, more profoundly, **the aesthetic spirit**. For example, when inspiration arises in a painter and the brush moves spontaneously, a unifying reality is operating behind this complex activity. Its transitions are not unconscious, for they are the development and completion of a single thing (ibid.)

Further examples of intellectual intuition that stand out for Nishida include Mozart's exceptional intuition to have a picture-like understanding of complex music, or the

[53] Nishitani designates this as the 'materia prima' of *pure experience*.

[54] The concept of intellectual intuition or *intellektuelle Anschauung* has been elaborated first and foremost during German idealism, being a central category in the philosophy of Fichte and Schelling. Nishida's thought is deeply influenced by Western philosophy, which is, however, never fully integrated but restructured into a more Zen-oriented approach that inquires the ultimate reality of an ever-changing world. It is in this regard that Nishida can be seen as a pioneer of transcultural philosophy.

intuition of a religious individual to view the other as part of the self by means of human love. Nevertheless, Nishida insists that in direct experience, the fundamental quality of such cases of intellectual intuition remains the same. This is because quality is defined on the basis of *pure experience*. In *pure experience*, there is no qualitative hierarchy, what matters is the transcending of the individual in a unified consciousness prior to the realisation of the self. It is for the same reason that Nishida is able to view intellectual intuition, the last manifestation of *pure experience* in direct experience, as an everyday phenomenon. According to Nishida, the difference between intuitions is determined not qualitatively but quantitatively: "in terms of direct experience, an idle fancy and a genuine intuition have the same essential quality; there is only a quantitative difference in the scope of their unities" (Nishida 1992, 31). This "scope", which ultimately enrichens and goes beyond perception, includes talent (i.e. genetic dispositions, apparent in the Mozart example), but also more vastly past experiences (apparent in the example of the acquired knowledge of the religious person).

Now, following up to this thesis's previous analysis of *aware* as a) a spontaneous emotional expression that b) occurs pre-reflectively in direct experience, I believe it is justified to construct *aware* as an intellectual intuition in the same manner: Is there a difference in being moved by the death of a person close to one's heart on the one hand and being moved by a beautiful scenery on the other hand? No, insofar as both cases are qualitatively definable by their spontaneous occurring and their pre-reflective character as instantiations of *mono no aware*. There is, however, a quantitative difference in the extent of being moved. Relative to past experiences for example, whereas the surfacing of emotions in the encounter of a scenery could be explained by its being perceived in a nostalgic way in reminiscence of one's home country, being affected by the death of a significant other strikes much more profoundly, containing perhaps most critically the existential task of coming to terms with the reality of finding oneself alone in a world that no longer contains the other. One may criticise that this comparison between *mono no aware* and intellectual intuition uncritically superposes Nishida's concept onto Norinaga's understanding of *mono no aware*. However, there's more to it. Norinaga, as I have already mentioned, also does not distinguish between cases of *mono no aware* qualitatively, because he perceives *mono no aware* as an everyday phenomenon, which

comprises the aesthetic sensibility or capacity of being moved by things on an all-embracing emotional spectrum. This view is, once again, expressed by Norinaga in his critique of the Genji, where he claims characters are judged in terms of their capacity of being stirred by external things or feeling *mono no aware*, be it relative to motives of adultery, death, or contemplation of nature. The examples of the death of the other and the scenery represent events that move in the sense of *mono no aware*. The comparative attempt to identify with Nishida the underlying metaphysical truth that grounds *mono no aware* is already present in Norinaga's aesthetic theory of *mono no aware*: *mono no aware* is, fundamentally, a grasp of life that lies at the base of not only the community but also the subject itself as a basic expression of emotion in direct experience that lies before a separation of subject and object.

With Nishida, the coexistence of subject and object that has, in the course of this thesis, been identified predominantly on an aesthetic level of being moved in the emotional expression in *mono no aware*, now becomes interpretable on an ontological level, aesthetics and being fall together. Retrospectively, it is in the last manifestation or stage of *pure experience* as intellectual intuition that the coexistence of subject and object becomes thematised in the aesthetic context by Nishida, setting up a potential reconciliation with *aware*. Still, the aesthetic dimension evoked by Nishida must not be confounded with a sense of beauty residing in perceptual pleasure or an expression of emotion. The aforecited 'aesthetic spirit' refers more so to the unifying activity of *pure experience* that grounds perceptual pleasure. From this standpoint, beauty means self-realisation in the merging of subject and object and coincides with truth or the fundamental reality of the universe. This realisation of the self, close to the Aristotelian concept of *entelechy*, Nishida qualifies under the 'good'[55]:

> We reach the quintessence of good conduct only when subject and object merge, self and things forget each other, and all that exists is the activity of the sole reality of the universe. At that point we can say that things move the self or that the self moves things, that Sesshū painted nature or that nature painted itself through Sesshū (Nishida 1992, 135)

From Nishida's perspective then, we can assume that being moved in the sense of *mono no aware* goes back to a unified experience in a spontaneously unfolding scene, where

[55] Nishida defines the good as "that which satisfies the internal demands of the self", its greatest demand being "the fundamental unifying power of consciousness" (Nishida 1992, 132).

subject and object are still indistinguishable from each other. *Mono no aware* relates to a merging between the emotional expression of *aware* and the *mono*, the thing or object. Nishida's account reveals that the *mono* is thus never reducible to an auxiliary that is simply attached to the expression of emotion. In Norinaga's Tama no Ogushi, this thought exactly is missed by Norinaga:

> The expression *mono no aware*, then, means much the same thing [than *aware*, which means being moved to emotion]. The *mono* is the *mono* that is added in order to generalize the reference of a word - as when *iu* [speak] becomes *mono* [discuss], *kataru* [tell] becomes *monogatari* [tale] (TNO, 455)

In this particular passage, Norinaga does not strictly distinguish in meaning between *aware* and *mono* but simply assigns an auxiliary role to the latter, functioning as a linguistic device that allows for a wider connotation of meaning in the creation of new expressions. This is additionally supported by Kato, who claims that Norinaga "erred in interpreting *mono* as only an auxiliary, and not as referring to the source of human feeling" (Kato 1962, 558). Kato argues that is in in fact *aware* that inevitably functions as an attribute of a *mono*, the former arising in the encountering with both visible and invisible things in the world. Nevertheless, I believe that Norinaga's decision to put forward the *mono* as an auxiliary must be viewed in the scope of a linguistic approach[56], relating to the question of the function *mono* fulfils in the Japanese language. In contrast to this, Matsumoto's translation of Shibun Yōryō clarifies that Norinaga also employs *mono* to articulate his aesthetic theory of how people are moved:

> It should be noticed that Norinaga has a special psychological insight into the nature of man's emotional orientation toward such [irresistibly moving] exterior objects. That is, Norinaga sees that the object in such a context can have no neutral connotation when it involves some moving or affecting significance for the subject. According to Norinaga, "for the subject to be affected" is not separable from "for the object to be affecting." He calls this significance of the object *mono no kokoro* (the heart of the thing) or *koto no kokoro* (the heart of the event) (Matsumoto 1970, 44)

The expression *mono no kokoro* captures beautifully that the linguistic analysis of *mono* as an auxiliary is not exhausted. On the contrary, in the process of being moved, *mono* becomes inseparable from the subject, in a sense that in direct experience, the emotion of the subject invades the object and the object itself invades or affects the subject; subject

[56] In chapter four, by claiming that Nishia's account is of mixed intentions, I insisted that it is necessary to distinguish between *mono no aware* as a theory of literature and a theory of aesthetics. In the discussion of the role of *mono*, the importance of this distinction resurfaces and must be kept in mind.

and object coexist. Continuing, in Isonokami Sasamegoto, the following quote again points in the same direction:

> When one has deep thoughts in his heart, he relates each of them to objects that he sees and hears about. These objects are moving, and poetry comes from using these objects just as they are. Therefore, this is a natural process, free from the beginning of any type of artificiality (Marra 2007, 192)

In his view on poetry, each case of *mono no aware* by its own nature stands in relation with an object or *mono* that is in itself moving. The subject's expression of *aware* in encountering *mono* then should be viewed as a singular and inartificial development, where subject and object naturally fall together.

What this chapter elucidated is that the first characteristic of *mono no aware* as an exclamation is more fundamentally structured in a pre-reflective setting of the coexistence between subject and object. The moment of one's response or becoming aware of being moved unavoidably comes too late, because it already underlies reflective thinking. It is in this imminent delay that the recurrent theme of the ineffability in *mono no aware* appears in its purest state. This becomes further substantiated in Nishida's last manifestation of *pure experience* in intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition, which occurs for Nishida in direct experience, is congruent with *mono no aware* as pre-reflective thinking in a unitary stream of consciousness. Nishida's account further substantiates the claim of the oneness of subject and object on an ontological level with the transcending of the individual in a unified consciousness even prior to the realisation of the self. Overall, the comparison between Norinaga and Nishida is most useful in clarifying the utility of thinking of *mono no aware* in terms of a coexistence between subject and object: what defines *mono no aware* on a most basic level as an intuition is not a qualitative differentiation or depth of pathos, but the sensibility to, on an everyday level, witness one's own self-realisation. In this sense, the underlying aesthetic appeal in *mono no aware* not only consists in portraying beauty, but also truth. The intuitive moment of being moved is not a subjective experience, but a factual one, where no judgment can be made, and no language can mask the emotion.

5.3 *Mono no aware* and the Epistemological Aspect

So far, the first two characteristics of *mono no aware* as exclamation and intuition in the coexistence of subject and object have highlighted the spontaneous nature of the expression on a pre-reflective and involuntary level. As a result, particularly the latter chapter that attempted to analyse *mono no aware* in its most basic metaphysical structure fails to adress a number of questions that arise beyond of the direct experiencing of *mono no* aware, that is to say on a reflective and voluntary level, e.g. of the form: Why are we moved in the first place? Is it possible to acquire the sensibility to be moved? What are the objects of experience one should be moved by? All of these deliberations are what I designate as second order questions, in a sense that they do not make assumptions about what *mono no aware* is, but only evoke questions of knowledge suscitated by the experience of *mono no aware* in a reflective engagement. By investigating *mono no aware* within the frame of an aesthetic category, it is very natural for this epistemological framework to appear. The epistemological approach not only subliminally accompanies the overall discussion of *mono no aware*. On the contrary, it takes on a central role in Norinaga's account , first and foremost under the form of *mono no aware o shiru* or 'knowing' mono no aware.

5.3.1 *Mono no aware o shiru*

As I have already established [57] , for Norinaga, experiencing *mono no aware* is synonymous with knowing *mono no aware*. In fact, the mentioning of *mono no aware* in most cases only occurs as a component of *mono no aware o shiru*. Before exposing Norinaga's motivation for constructing his theory around the element of 'knowing', the following quote from Tama no Ogushi will serve as the basis for the ensuing discussion:

> Now when a person is confronted with a situation of any sort whatever [sic] that might be expected to move him to emotion, and he apprehends the emotional quality of this situation and is indeed moved to emotion, this is described as being "sensitive to emotion" [mna o shiru] (TNO 455)

Primarily, *mono no aware o shiru* means "being sensitive to emotion". Norinaga uses *mono no aware o shiru* to express the idea that in being moved, a person attests to his

[57] See pages 28f.

sensibility[58] to be moved. Sensibility, accordingly, indicates that the person experiencing *mono no aware* understands or 'knows' the moving power of things. Correspondingly, the sense of 'knowing' is already implied in the act of feeling. This is what Norinaga fundamentally envisions under *mono no aware o shiru*. In order to further comprehend the meaning of this expression, it is necessary to address why Norinaga took the seemingly needless detour of largely mentioning *mono no aware* as part of *mono no aware o shiru*. This becomes even more apparent considering that both expressions appear so closely interrelated: an individual experiencing *mono no aware*, which this thesis translated with Marra as 'being stirred by external things', is also an individual 'sensitive to emotion', therefore automatically meeting the criteria of *mono no aware o shiru*. Nevertheless, two explanations on the background of the latter expression help to shed light on how exactly it differs from and contributes to *mono no aware*.

First, the expression *mono no aware o shiru* was not put forward by Norinaga himself but was already an established term before his time. Kato notes that Norinaga's interpretation of *mono no aware o shiru* is already contained in Shikibu's work:

> Lady Murasaki expressed her ideas with the idiom *mono no aware* in descriptive forms, or in quotations of her characters, to the effect that the man who understands *mono no aware* is the one who understands this world.[59] This may well be accepted, since this term frequently appears in other literature, as in the Heian Period; to understand *mono no aware* in this era was almost a necessity for a learned man in aristocratic society. *Mono no aware*, epistemologically speaking, is perceived through the senses, but by using *shiru*, "to know," the rational understanding of sensory *aware* has been added (Kato 1962, 558)

In the context of the relatively peaceful and prosperous Heian period, aesthetic sensitivity was of paramount importance, as it not only enabled the participation in aesthetic experiences, but also affirmed that a person of the ruling class understood the workings of emotions and properly appreciated beauty. Morris words this conduct of life as a "cult of beauty" where "artistic insensitivity damned a gentleman of the Heian court as fatally as did a reputation for cowardice among the nobility of the West" (Morris 2013, 170f.). As a result, *mono no aware*, even during the Heian period and the writing of the Genji,

[58] Harper translates of *mono no aware o shiru* with being "sensitive to emotion". In the nominalised form, I favour the wording 'sensibility' over 'sensitivity', as the latter seems too detached from an aesthetic understanding and closer to a given ability of the body.
[59] Atlhough not developed as a literary theory, the expression *mono no aware o shiru* is used repeately in the Genji.

was not merely perceived as a sensual experience, but was equated with a form of knowledge valued amongst the educated, already containing the element of *shiru*.

Secondly, Norinaga's exact use of *mono no aware o shiru* also becomes clearer when analysed during in the context of his own time. Harper makes mention of Hino Tatsuo's statement

> that the phrase *mono no aware o shiru* was widely used in the popular literature of Norinaga's day and that popular usage corresponds precisely with the sense in which Norinaga uses it, meaning "to empathize or sympathize with the feelings of others"[60] (Harper and Shirane 2015, 415).

Without debating the extent to which Norinaga assimilated or even adopted *mono no aware o shiru* as an already popularised term, this gives an indication as to why the Japanese scholar integrated the element of *shiru* the way he did: *mono no aware o shiru* as an established expression fit right into his project of encouraging a non-instrumentalised view on literature, based on moving and consoling readers via the depiction of characters that are caught up in relatable daily struggles. In this spirit, the reader is not only moved, but he also gains a kind of knowledge in penetrating a world of emotions different to his own:

> Readers put themselves into a situation from the past and enter into the emotions that moved these people of the past [*mukashi no hito no mna o mo omoiyari*]. They liken their own circumstances to those of the past and thus come to comprehend such emotions [*mna o shiri*]. In this way, they find some solace in their melancholy (TNO, 435)

Correspondingly, *mono no aware* is significantly broadened with the addition of the element *shiru*, insofar as it is no longer reducible to an 'irrational' experience of the senses. Instead, experiencing *mono no aware* becomes an epistemological question, since the individual capable of aesthetic sensibility is conjointly considered to be an individual capable of rational understanding, insofar as he gains insight into the emotions of the past. While it is certainly possible to scrutinise this non-factual knowledge, for instance by presupposing that knowledge must be expressible in truth-apt judgments, the 'knowing'

[60]"Being sensitive to emotion" more extensively captures the essence of *mono no aware of shiru* (Harper also gives the translation "to be susceptible to emotion"). The translation of *mono no aware o shiru* as "to empathize or sympathize with the feelings of others" must be understood as a sub-aspect of overall emotional susceptibility, directed more specifically towards the emotion of others. Naturally, this sub-aspect is especially prevalent in Norinaga's *mono no aware* theory, which converges in the claim that the essence of the Genji can be found in characters exhibiting the capacity to understand the emotions of others, as well as, on a meta-level, the implied capacity of the reader to put himself into Shikibu's world of fiction by sympathising with its characters.

of *mono no aware* can also be argued to possess a much greater value in the sympathising with feelings of others by way of relatable aesthetic experiences. Doing so enables one to reconnect with epochs of the past from a first-person perspective. This differs fundamentally from understanding *mono no aware* merely 'historically' from a third person perspective with a method of objective analysis, consisting in the factual study of a product of culture. The modus operandi this thesis is structured around for example further attests to the importance of comprehending an aesthetic category such as *mono no aware* from the first-person perspective: to answer the overarching question on how to most accurately convey what *mono no aware* means, I have considered it insufficient to merely list rational arguments. In addition, to make sense of the term, I have ended up following an approach committed to depicting the embeddedness into Japanese culture, as well as giving concrete examples of imagery and poems, under the premise that the understanding or 'knowing' of *mono no aware* involves the experience or 'feeling' of *mono no aware*. Thinking by itself cannot fully satisfy the essence of *mono no aware*, comprehending *mono no aware* always requires the experiencing of *mono no aware*. It is in this way that the prima facie paradoxical statement of 'knowing contained in feeling' in *mono no aware o shiru* must be understood.

Still, it is at the same time necessary to bear in mind that Norinaga's inclusion of *mono no aware o shiru* has also been shaped out of a specific debate of the Tokugawa period (1603-1868):

> Debates on the conflict between reason and feelings became very popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when members of the Native Studies School[61] confronted the rationalism of neo-Confucianism, whose adherence to social obligations (*giri*) clashed with the reality of human passions (*ninjō*) (…) Motoori Norinaga attempted in his major treatise on poetry, *My Personal View of Poetry* (1763), to reconcile the act of knowing with the act of feeling ('*mono no aware'*) in an age that was becoming increasingly suspicious of the irrationality of the unknown (such as the products of gut feelings and the unconscious) (Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo 2011, 1169)

I will not further comment on the scope of this debate Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo mention, as it already fully explains that Norinaga's implementation of *mono no aware o shiru* must be regarded as part of a broader intellectual aim of reconciliating the senses with reason. In Isonokami Sasamegoto, Norinaga writes:

[61] The Natives Studies School or *kokugaku* tradition can be broadly summarised as a movement that distanced itself from the – at that time most powerful - ideologies from Chinese origin (such as neo-confucianism), and instead devoted itself to the study of the cultural oeuvre of ancient Japan.

> The reason why all the sentences above are examples of what "to know *mono no aware*" means is that every living creature in the world possesses a feeling heart (*kokoro*). When there is a heart, by coming in contact with things, one necessarily **thinks** (Marra 2007, 173)

Going along with the statement on page 15 that the notion of "thinking" in Japanese is connected strongly to a feeling of pathos closer to the locus of the heart, the discussion on *mono no aware o shiru* likewise unveils an understanding of the heart that is no longer restricted to a symbol for feeling, but also comprises the role of thinking.

To be clear, this does not entail that Norinaga's thoughts have been shaped in order to specifically accommodate to the aforementioned debate. To the opposite, Norinaga is among the most central intellectual figures that enabled the emergence of the Native Studies school or *kokugaku* tradition with his anti-didactic view of the Genji[62], as well as his philological study of the Kojiki. It does, however, raise the question whether the notions of 'thinking' and 'knowing' (the result of thinking, as it were) become directed predominantly towards the notion of 'feeling' in the primary goal to rebut the rationalist interpretations of centuries of Buddhist and Confucianist doctrines. This next sub-chapter is precisely arguing that in *mono no aware o shiru*, an additional notion of knowledge is implied in a second epistemological aspect, where 'knowing' is no longer strictly interwoven with feeling.

5.3.2 Acquired Knowledge

At the beginning of this thesis, I brought forward in an unquestioning way the viewing of cherry blossoms as the central symbol of *mono no aware*. Not only is it a custom stemming from the Heian era, it also represents an example of inadvertent emotional involvement and perishability in the short-lived nature of the blossoms. However, in the context of *mono no aware o shiru*, i.e. the sensibility or susceptibility to be moved to emotion, the following question arises: is an experience of *mono no aware* indeed intrinsically contained within the cherry blossom experience? I don't think so. Instead, becoming deeply sensitive to the image of the cherry blossom I believe requires some form of knowledge prior to the experience. To justify this, consider that cherry trees are nowadays spread throughout the world into places where passengers most of the time simply pass by, occasionally admiring their colourful appeal during the blossoming

[62] See chapter 4.3.

period, but ultimately ignorant of the symbolism of ephemerality that lies within these trees.

Consequently, a second epistemological aspect is camouflaged in *mono no aware o shiru* where knowledge is not located in the feeling of *mono no aware*, but is acquired preveniently, creating the possiblity to be moved more deeply. This 'acquired knowledge', I propose, can be further divided between truth-apt or 'factual' knowledge (e.g. the factual knowledge of the cultural association of impermanence to the cherry blossom) and non-factual or 'experiential' knowledge in the form of stored up past experiences that create a distinct sentimental value (e.g. the experiential knowledge of having confessed one's love under cherry blossoms).

The exact kind of 'knowledge' that is at stake here, however, is not what is primarily of interest to the discussion. What matters is that *mono no aware* exhibits a distinct secondary epistemological character, where 'knowing' is of utmost importance without being contained in the interjection-like experiencing of *mono no aware*. From an universal standpoint, this is because the sensibility to be moved cannot be reduced to an innate capacity but is also ingrained in a person's past through his factual and experiential knowledge. Sole contemplation cannot fully account for the fact why, depending on the individual, certain things are perceived more moving than others. This is not restricted to *mono no aware*, but valid for all aesthetic experiences. For example, only a skilled chess player is capable of recognising and appreciating the beauty of geometrical patterns in chess due to his or her ability to justly estimate, firstly, the rarity of the constellation of certain positions and, secondly, the required calculation needed to obtain certain variations. In this way, aesthetic experience can even be induced into a strategy board game restricted to a world of sixty-four squares that is based on purely abstract and 'unmoving' calculation ability.

It is essential to factor in that my inclusion of 'acquired knowledge' completely contradicts with what the Heian aristocracy envisioned under *mono no aware o shiru*, namely an innate ability

> limited to the 'good people'. It was the equivalent of moral virtue in other societies, but it was a virtue that no member of the provincial or working classes could hope to acquire. Nor did it invariably accrue in people of good birth (Marra 2007, 197)

Such a radical and socially discriminative view stands, for example, in total contrast with Plato's conception of the knowledge of beauty presented in his Symposion, where knowledge is a necessary means that needs to be properly acquired, and the apprehension of beauty an attainable goal. It is clear that my approach of revisiting *mono no aware* comparatively and transculturally lies much closer to the spirit of Plato's *philosopher* or the image of the lover of wisdom: I assume that the ability to experience *mono no aware* is not fully determined by innate talent, but achievable for everyone through thinking, which leads to the understanding of its characteristics and embeddedness in Japanese culture.

To further justify the relevance of 'acquired knowlege' in *mono no aware*, numerous examples can be located in Norinaga's work where the element of *shiru* is no longer restricted to feeling:

> Now when a person is confronted with a situation of any sort whatever that might be expected to move him to emotion, and he apprehends the emotional quality of this situation and is indeed moved to emotion, this is described as being "sensitive to emotion" [mna o shiru] (TNO 455)

Taking a closer look at this quote from Tama no Ogushi which served as the starting point of our discussion, we find that *mono no aware o shiru* is constituted of the moments of a) expectation (the awareness or contemplation of the possibility to be in a moving situation), b) apprehension (the proper understanding and grasp of the moving situation) and only then c) the actual state of being moved. Expectation is a self-aware state which transgresses the spontaneous and pre-reflective character of *mono no aware*. Nevertheless, it remains a crucial factor in the development of aesthetic sensibility. One example for this is the conscious mindfulness with which the Heian aristocracy set to to decorate and embellish surroundings (see Morris 2013, 171). Another example is the composition of poetry, requiring the skill to aesthetically transform situations that must first be properly expected and apprehended. More generally, it is evident that the constant awareness of the importance of aesthetic sensibility in itself leads to the development of a self-aware and astute observational behaviour. This is only reinforced by the fact that, during the Heian period, *mono no aware* was "circumscribed by a well-defined aesthetic code. Here

was no turbulent, romantic emotion, lending itself to wild expressions of melancholy or grief. Rather it was a restrained and elegant form of sensibility" (Morris 2013, 197). Consequently, even in the Heian period, which restricted *mono no aware* to an innate ability, it still was, at the very least, encompassed by the learning process of how one should be moved properly. It is in this sense that *mono no aware* is not limited to a momentary sensation and revolves around thinking and acquired knowledge:

> By being superior to things, human beings have a good understanding of the nature of these things, and know how to be moved by them (*mono no aware*). Even among human beings there are deep thinkers and shallow thinkers. Compared to those who have a deep understanding of *mono no aware* someone might seem to be completely ignorant of it (Marra 2007, 173)

While this passage from Isonokami Sasamegoto assumes the definition of *mono no aware o shiru* as 'being sensitive to emotion' (meaning the first epistemological aspect), it, at the same time, evokes the distinction between deep and shallow 'thinkers'. The thinking person however finds himself already outside of the interjectional and pre-reflective feeling of *mono no aware*, being able to form thoughts that interpret the world such as it has already been experienced. If one were to object that the 'thinker' for Norinaga must be defined exclusively by the experiential process in the sense of *aware to omou*[63], a pre-reflective stream of flow of thoughts, then this is also hardly tenable. This is because the 'deep thinker' can only distinguish himself from the 'shallow' thinker by consciously questioning his own judgment and examining more deeply his own impressions and feelings, therefore gaining a better understanding of *mono no aware*. Moreover, even if the designation of 'thinker' were to be shrugged off as a mere linguistic detail that does not suggest the relevance of acquired knowledge, it is, at the very least, a curious phrasing that vindicates the theory that Norinaga's *mono no aware o shiru* follows a premeditated purpose of unifying the senses with rationality.

Last but not least, admitting the significance of acquired knowledge in *mono no aware* comes with a crucial advantage: being able to account for the recurrent theme of perishability or ephemerality, which this thesis brought forward as the centre of the aesthetic and religious Japanese tradition. While the emphasis of *mono no aware* certainly lies on feeling and its exclamatory nature, realising the overlap between the fleeting

[63] See page 45f.

nature of encountered objects and oneself as parts of *mujō*, and, more importantly, developing the attitude of celebrating the beauty of impermanence in the sense of *akirame*[64] surpasses intuitive understanding. As Buddhism and, more specifically in this thesis, Dōgen's account highlighted, impermanence must primarily be treated as a philosophical problem, where emotionality is subordinate to spiritual development. Feeling and rationality then coincide on a conscious level. To further illustrate this, consider the following waka by Dōgen:

Mata minto	Just when my longing to see
Omoishi toki no	The moon over Kyoto
Aki dani mo	One last time grows deepest,
Koyoi no tsuki ni	The image I behold this autumn night
Nerare yawa suru.	Leaves me sleepless for its beauty.

(Heine 1997, 8)

As Dōgen, in what will be the year of his death, returns one last time to Kyoto after ten years due to health problems, he writes this waka portraying the ephemeral beauty of the harvest moon[65]. In Heine's interpretation, an ambiguity is claimed to reside in the poem, due to the incertitude whether Dōgen's longing gaze is directed either at the present harvest moon contemplated aloft in his return to Kyoto, or the future harvest moon of the following year, which he is likely never to experience (see ibid.).

Although the poem portrays a spontaneous experience of *mono no aware* suffused by a bittersweet[66] melancholy, its beauty and emotional resonance are revealed entirely only within the epistemological context of 'acquired knowledge'. First, the accrual of *mono no aware* correlates with experiential knowledge: Dōgen finds himself in the vastly familiar environment of his former hometown, gazing at Kyoto's harvest moon as he must have done in the past, only under the radically different circumstance that his lived experience is now imbued by the realisation of his own mortality. Secondly, the poem's feeling of *mono no aware* augments with the factual knowledge gained from Zen teaching:

[64] See page 17.

[65] The viewing of the harvest moon refers to the tradition of *tsukimi* (月見) from the Heian period.

[66] In general, the designation of 'bitter sweetness' is fitting for *mono no aware*. While remaining uncommitted on the emotional spectrum, it alludes to the quiet accepting of something passing (the 'bitter' aspect) which, at the same time, enables a rising in aesthetic value and a celebration of beauty (the resulting 'sweetness').

> Dōgen's anxiety and longing converge and collapse at the sudden understanding that the moon he hopes to see at some time in the future is none other than the one he currently beholds. The irony cannot be missed that Dōgen chides himself for almost neglecting the message so fundamental to his Zen teaching: that the present moment should be experienced as it is in its pure, unadorned form without recourse to the self-created distractions of expectation and regret (Heine 1997, 8f.)

In realising that his self is part of the here-and-now in a constantly changing world, Dōgen comes to embrace the impermanence of things. It is only by not giving in to his emotions of longing for the future moon or existential angst that the beauty of impermanence and a truly moving emotional response in the sense of *mono no aware* are generated.

Likewise, the epistemological aspect implied in *mono no aware o shiru*, in bringing feeling and knowledge together, gives an explanation as to why *mono no aware* does not merely equal wretchedness or sorrow, but slowly abates in a lingering feeling of accepted sadness. By being tied to knowledge, the question of the essence of *mono no aware* cannot be fully resolved in a spontaneous affective reaction. Put differently, because the emotional response transcends the moment of exclamation in the context of acquired knowledge of the impermanence of things, it becomes possible to be deeply moved by knowing what it means to be moved. It is clear that today, experiencing *mono no aware* through the awareness and knowledge of the impermanence of things has become difficult. While the Heian atmosphere was deeply steeped in the evanescent nature of things, the modern life of the 21th century is much more disconnected from nature, and bears the danger of fostering an artificial sense of permanence and safety with the emergence of new technologies. A different example is the constant stimulus of media, which takes over the necessity to actively reflect upon the reality of our own groundedness into the world, arguably leading to dullness. As a result, *mono no aware* must not be judged as an outdated aesthetic category, but comes with the merit of rekindling the link to not only the Japanese tradition, but nature in general.

5.4 *Mono no aware* and the Question of Good and Bad

5.4.1 *Mono no aware o shiru* and the Good Person

Last chapter has highlighted that the individual capable of being moved in the sense of *mono no aware* is a knowing individual. In addition to this, Norinaga, in his interpretation of the Genji, claims that this same individual must also be perceived as a good person:

> Generally speaking, those who know what it means to be moved [mna o shiri[67]], who have compassion, and who are alive to the feelings of others are regarded as good; whereas those who do not know what it means to be moved, lack compassion, and are insensitive to the feelings of others are regarded as bad (TNO 450)

Put out of context, judging the good person exclusively relative to his emotional receptivity or 'compassion' is a bold and potentially alarming statement, placing the discussion of good and bad into a purely aestheticised context, secluded from its moralistic roots. This 'compassion' in *mono no aware o shiru* must be nuanced from Schopenhauerian compassion, which relates to purely non-egoistic behaviour and represents the origin of morality. While *mono no aware o shiru* in no way opposes moral values, it, as an aesthetic concept, remains rooted in egoism: being moved to emotion in *mono no aware* is no selfless endeavour, as it revolves, in 'Nishida-ian' wording, around the 'pure' aesthetic-self-realisation of a subject relative to his living environment. In Norinaga's literary theory specifically, the 'good' in being moved consists in offering consolation, enjoyment of beauty, and the overall possibility to relate to feelings of the past. As already stated, Norinaga thereby distances himself from a moralistic understanding that assesses actions as good and bad in the sense of rationalist Buddhist and Confucianist teachings by postulating *mono no aware* in a separate aesthetic realm of literature. He subverts the Japanese religious tradition and centuries of didactic interpretations of the Genji which hadn't been questioned before and were simply accepted as given.

It is from this perspective that Norinaga's critical literary interpretation of good and bad centred around the emotional sensitivity of being moved in the way of *mono no aware* obliquely echoes Nietzsche's project of ascertaining the genealogy of 'good and bad' or 'good and evil' in confrontation with Christian and Judaist morality, declared in the preface of On the Genealogy of Morality:

> under what conditions did man invent the value judgments good and evil? and what value do they themselves have? (GM[68] 5)

This sub-chapter will delve into a comparison between Norinaga and Nietzsche, who both insist on a context dependent usage of the terms 'good and bad' or 'good and evil'. An

[67] 'Shiri' is a conjugated form of the root- or dictionary form 'shiru'.
[68] Abbreviation for On the Genealogy of Morality.

intriguing parallel in the modus operandi of both thinkers is visible, insofar as they reject an instrumentalisation of 'good and bad' and step out of the dogmatic discourse of their respective cultural setting.

However, both accounts must first be strictly differentiated, as they originate from and comment on two different religious traditions that operate on contrasting assumptions[69]. On the one hand, the Western tradition marked by Christianity claims an abstract-entity, namely God, as the source of all good. As a result, 'evil', that which deviates from God's will, has been constructed as necessary counterpart that must be avoided: "Do not be wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and shun evil" (Proverbs 3:7, New International Version). In brief, good is posited as an abstract category attainable only by adherence to the word of the divine law. It is with this particular frame of Western morality in mind that Nietzsche proposes his distinction between 'good and bad' and 'good and evil' in On the Genealogy of Morality. In the former wording, 'good' relates to a term coined initially by the 'masters' or nobility, i.e. the powerful people that rule and command society, able to enjoy life due to their established superiority. 'Bad' then becomes construed out of the master's standpoint and refers to those people barred from the life of the masters, the 'slaves'. The latter pair of 'good and evil' represents 'slave morality', a creative revolt or *ressentiment*, which reverses the original understanding of 'good' advanced by the nobility by portraying it as 'evil' from the slaves' perspective.

On the other hand, the Japanese tradition, while encompassing a plurality of religions, has no conception of putting 'good and bad' in a polarised relation, precisely because the notions haven't been established as metaphysical constructs stemming from the assumed existence of a higher, transcendent being. For instance, in all schools of Buddhism, while suffering (*dukha*) can be argued to represent the source of 'evil' or 'bad' hindrances, it does not spring from the invention of a satanic being, but is born instead from human

[69] Regarding the potential objection that a comparison in the first place is misplaced between Norinaga and Nietzsche due to both thinkers basing themselves on different belief systems of 'good and bad', it should be indicated that at least in Nietzsche's work, the aim is to move 'beyond good and evil' by advancing an underlying principle of reality – 'the will to power', which exceeds borders, questioning equally transcultural systems of morality that made the mistake of assuming that "the value of an action was exhausted by the value of its intention" (BGE [abbreviation for Beyond Good and Evil] 33), instead of its consequence. The overall 'top-down' following of moralistic principles is thus put in question. Buddhism for example, construed by Nietzsche as a "belief in a morality of *communal* [sic] compassion" (GM 151), is not exempted from this critique.

weakness and desire[70]. Consequently, it necessarily follows that the eradication of suffering is not attained by complying to a universal good (e.g. by confessing one's sins), as it requires the individual to carefully examine the underlying cause of his misfortune. In Shintoism similarly, the conception of 'good' originating from a transcendent source is foreign. There is no canon of scripture declaring the existence of an almighty God. Every being (even *kami*) is assumed to be a part of the world. It logically ensues that in Shintoism, the good has come to be assumed as intrinsically contained in human beings. Norinaga, as I've argued with Matsumoto[71], bases his theory of *mono no aware* upon this exact Shintoist framework of pure harmonic coexistence, where the individual very naturally acts in a 'good' way by acting intuitively and in accordance with nature, without forcibly following a doctrine. In his treatise Naobi no Mitama[72], published as the final section of the introduction to the Kojiki Den, Norinaga further criticises 'the Way' proclaimed by Chinese Confucianism[73] and asserts instead the (considered as superior) essence of ancient Japan:

> In ancient Japan, even though we never possessed such sophisticated teachings, no disorder prevailed. The land was ruled in peace and the succession of the Sun Goddess [Amaterasu] continued uninterrupted. So if I were to speak in the Chinese sense, this is the supreme, greatest Way; because there was the Way, no word for the way existed. No one talked about the Way, but it was there (Nishimura 1991, 30)

The Japanese tradition, so Norinaga, does not specify a 'just' or 'good' way via principles. Bad or evil actions have, as a result, been accepted as part of the world: "Foulness and destruction exist in this world; it is not possible for everything to be in accord with just principles[74]" (Nishimura 1991, 33).

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[70] In the words of Siddhārta Gautama: "What is evil? Killing is evil, lying is evil, slandering is evil, abuse is evil, gossip is evil: envy is evil, hatred is evil, to cling to false doctrine is evil; all these things are evil. And what is the root of evil? Desire is the root of evil, illusion is the root of evil".

[71] See page 15.

[72] Translated by NISHIMURA Sey under "The Way to the Gods".

[73] Even in Confucianism, a difference to the omnipotent, creative God of Abrahamic religions must be observed. While in Confucianism, the concept of 'Heaven' (*tian* 天) is given as the highest deity as a force of nature that permeates the world, "the people remain subject to the ruler [*tyanzi* 天子] by Heaven's mandate. It is, then, the ruler who leads the people (not God leading them "by his own hand")" (De Bary 1996, 177). Consequently, a discussion of good and bad takes place outside of a 'divine law' or 'will of God'.

[74] In Naobi no Mitama, Norinaga criticises the Chinese logical principles and theories about the 'Will of Heaven', representing invented tools of power meant to legitimate the "crime of overthrowing their lord and stealing his land" (Norinaga 1991, 32).

In view of this contrast between the Western and the Japanese religious tradition, it would be false to simply overlap Nietzsche's understanding of good and bad with *mono no aware* by, for instance, identifying with the latter the 'masters' perspective', due to it being a phrase that was coined by the noble and 'powerful' Heian aristocrat society, which would have advanced an understanding of 'good' that would approve of their lifestyle by limiting it to the possessing of a limited aesthetic sensitivity, reserved to people of high rank. Such a content-related comparison between Nietzsche and Norinaga ignores, as shown, the respective cultural embeddedness of both perspectives. However, formally-speaking, a similar movement of questioning prevailing traditions of their time (Christianity with Nietzsche, Confucianism and Buddhism with Norinaga) can be retraced, which had imposed an instrumentalised view of good and bad. Precisely in this movement of viewing 'good' not as an absolute, nor as originating form principles or a moral code, but as a part of life, a parallel of forward-thinking attitudes between Nietzsche and Norinaga's Shinto-derived account becomes perceptible. Regardless of what this 'good' may ultimately be associated with, its meaning is oriented around the individual. In *mono no aware* also, the individual finds himself as being a part of that founding moving power in lived experience (*Erleben*): *mono no aware* is no absolute good but occurs freely and unrestrained in a spontaneous unfolding, provided the individual is competent enough to capture it.

As Nietzsche's project helped to establish, it is in this spirit of a context-dependent or life-oriented (in Nietzschean words 'life-affirming') approach to good and bad that Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware* must be envisioned. Reading therefore Norinaga's treatises solely with the mindset that they are historically embedded in debates with reason and rationality from the side of Buddhism and Confucianism misses the underlying message of calling attention to the independent value of the arts (specifically literature and poetry) and aesthetic sensibility, which represent a source of good in their own right. This view is expressed clearest in Tama no ogushi, where Norinaga presents a more general and relativistic understanding of good and bad, comparable to the desirable and undesirable or favourable and unfavourable things in life, prone to change:

> good and evil[75] may change, depending on the thing, the time, or the situation. For example, an arrow is good if it penetrates its mark, while armor is good if it is impenetrable. On a hot summer day, that which is cool is good, while in the cold of winter, that which is hot is good. One traveling at night will consider darkness bad, but one seeking to conceal himself will consider moonlight bad. And so it goes in all matters (…) What Confucian doctrine considers good, Buddhist doctrine may consider bad; while what Buddhist doctrine considers good, Confucian doctrine may consider bad (TNO, 450)

For Norinaga, the meaning of 'good' transforms in the situation of *mono no aware*, becoming defined by the susceptibility of being moved (*mono no aware o shiru*). *Mono no aware o shiru* as a good is a desirable quality that sets the heart at ease. What this indicates is that *mono no aware* exhibits the characteristic of giving uncompromised attention to being emotionally involved, having compassion, and perceiving beauty in one's surroundings. There is, in *mono no aware*, a total commitment to lived aesthetic experience from the first-person perspective. One may compare it to an existential aesthetic attitude. At first, the adoption of such an aesthetic lifestyle which emphasises a practical use in being moved and even posits this as a good may seem banal, but in comparison to the Western aesthetic tradition, a clear difference in approach takes shape:

> What we would call Japanese aesthetics (in contrast to Western aesthetics) is more concerned with process than with product, with the actual construction of a self than with self-expression. The Western concept finds beauty in something we admire for itself[76] rather than for its uses, something that the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) called "purposiveness without purpose" (Richie 2007, 15)

Richie goes on to quote the very fitting remark from the novelist TANIZAKI Jun'ichirō's central essay In Praise of Shadows (1933), which examines how idiosyncrasies in (traditional) Japanese aesthetics polarise with those of Western aesthetics, after Japan has decided to adapt itself to the Western model: "the quality that we [the Japanese people] call beauty…must always grow from the realities of life" (Richie 2007, 18). *Mono no aware* fits exactly into this observation, insofar as it attributes unmitigated attention to the 'good' of direct emotional involvement that occurs spontaneously in the interaction with one's surroundings[77]. This idea is captured beautifully in the image of the

[75] With Nietzsche's approach in mind, it is interesting that bad and evil are used interchangeably in Harper's translation. In most cases I will use the term 'bad', as Norinaga's account lacks a notion of evil constituted out of a *ressentiment* or ill intent.

[76] Baumgarten's project of aesthetics as the science of "sensible knowledge" stands in the background of this approach, approaching beauty as something that can be extracted from a third person perspective.

[77] Once again, the link between ephemerality (or potential sadness) and *mono no aware* becomes evident: a natural reason for locating beauty in the present moment is the awareness of the impermanence of things.

exclamation, an abrupt emotional overwhelming, analysable only from the first-person point of view. Norinaga's perspective illustrates that this characteristic of the confrontation with reality in *mono no aware* applies even in the context of literature:

> What, then, is the nature of [these tales], and why do we read them? Tales depict the myriad aspects of life: the good and the bad, the fantastic and the amusing, the intriguing and the moving [aware] (TNO 420)

From this viewpoint, *mono no aware* can be advanced as the representative symbol of the entire Japanese aesthetic tradition because it stresses the encountering with beauty in lived experience, which marks a fundamental difference to how the problem of aesthetics has been handled in the West. As Nietzsche lays open at the example of Kant:

> Kant, like all philosophers, just considered art and beauty from the position of 'spectator', instead of viewing the aesthetic problem through the experiences of the artist (the creator), and thus inadvertently introduced the 'spectator' himself into the concept 'beautiful' (GM 74)

To conclude, *mono no aware o shiru* as the susceptibility to be moved is more than a theoretical description of affective behaviour. Precisely by stressing the state of being moved and nothing else, it attaches absolute priority to aesthetic sensitivity in lived experience. What ensues is a quest for beauty, not as an ideal or an abstract category, but as an attainable 'good' that pertains to the world.

5.4.2 Aesthetic Sovereignty

The quest to become a 'good' person in *mono no aware o shiru* becomes even further assured by hypothetically taking into consideration *mono no aware* as a fixed and widespread expression or aesthetic category, which creates the illusion of an accomplishable skill or demonstratable label of sorts. In doing so, experiencing *mono no aware* seemingly becomes something greater than feeling; something one can either possess or not possess, separating good people from bad people depending on the extent of their emotional receptivity. As a result, these three fixed words '*mono no aware*' emanate an alluring power in being an aesthetic gateway that allows gifted and emotionally sensitive individuals like Genji to stick out as somebody compassionate, sensitive to beauty and the impermanence of things, knowledgeable, and overall 'good'. In view of the pursuance of these qualities, it is very natural to infer that the search for *mono no aware* comprises the phenomenon and potential risk of adopting a lifestyle

consecrated entirely to beauty, imbuing equally cases of mundane pastime and poignant heart-wrenching experiences. For simplicity's sake, this centring around the aesthetic is what I will name 'aesthetic sovereignty'. I should note that this theme of aesthetic commitment in *mono no aware* traverses Japanese history. The most striking example for this is perhaps contained in the Japanese warrior ethos. The opening statement of the war tale Heike Monogatari, narrating the eventual fall of the Taira samurai clan in the Genpei war at the end of the 12th century (this marks also the end of the Heian period), famously attests to the theme of acknowledging the impermanence of things or *mujō* in the spirit of *mono no aware*:

> the sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the *śāla* flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind (McCullough 1988, 23)

Centuries later, during the Second World War, aesthetics and warrior ethos still coincide in the glorified self-sacrifice of *kamikaze* pilots, whose death was often compared to the image of a scattering cherry blossom falling from a radiant tree.[78]

Correspondingly, the question this sub-chapter attempts to address relates to this unique 'aesthetic sovereignty' in *mono no aware* (comparable to the aforementioned 'cult of beauty' Morris identified within the Heian period). What are the consequences of positing aesthetic sensibility and the included perception of beauty as the source of good? What happens when *mono no aware* becomes the compass for 'good' human conduct? Can we trust the model of the good man portrayed in *mono no aware*[79]? In order to address this issue, a closer look at Genji, the embodiment of the 'good man', must be taken.

In Norinaga's account, the image of the good person is exemplified by Genji, the hero of *mono no aware*. Unsurprisingly, 'aesthetic sovereignty' shines in examples of literature, where the boundaries of social and moral obligations oftentimes fade in favour of the reader's pleasure. For Norinaga, the Genji, as a work of fiction construed around *mono no aware*, precisely falls under this category by celebrating

[78] For further reading, see Morris, Ivan (2013) *The nobility of failure*. Fukuoka: Kurodahan Press.

[79] Again, all of these deliberations are reminiscent of Nietzsche's project of investigating the genealogy of good and bad: "nobody has had the remotest doubt or hesitation in placing higher value on 'the good man' than on 'the evil' (…) What if the opposite were true? What if a regressive trait lurked in 'the good man', likewise a danger, an enticement, a poison, a narcotic, so that the present lived at the expense of the future?" (GM, 8)

> the virtues of understanding what it means to be moved [mna o shireru kata]. In this respect, the tale may be likened to a person who wishes to cultivate and enjoy the lotus flower, and so must keep a store of muddy water, foul and filthy though it may be. It is not the mud—the illicit love depicted in the tale—that we admire; it is the flower that it nurtures— the flower of the emotions it inspires [mna no hana] (TNO 451)

By assuming that Genji Monogatari is centred around depicting the good of being moved, Norinaga interprets the many cases of illicit love affairs as a sordid yet necessary element, because they succeed in eliciting an emotional reaction in the reader by clashing with moral values of the time: "Genji's attraction to Utsusemi, Oborozukiyo, and Fujitsubo[80], and his affairs with these ladies, are, from the point of view of Confucian and Buddhist doctrine, immoral deeds of the worst sort" (TNO 450). A better, more 'fertile' mud (one may evoke the image of 'dirt' by extending the metaphor to ground that nurtures the flower) results in the blooming of a more beautiful lotus flower:

> Genji's conduct is like the lotus flower, which grows up from the muddy water yet blooms with a beauty and fragrance unlike any other in the world. Nothing is said about the water's filth; the tale dwells instead on Genji's deep compassion and his awareness of what it means to be moved [asake fukaku, mna o shireru kata] and holds him up as the model of the **good man** (TNO 451)

The image of the mud clearly seems to suggest that 'being good' in knowing *mono no aware* comes at the price of undesirable consequences. 'Mud' not only refers to the trespassing of taboos and the negligence of moral values. Even further, Genji's dalliances and selfish-indulgent actions end up leading to sorrow and death, which represent stronger catalysts for *mono no aware*. For example, after having courted the prideful Lady Rokujō, Genji soon ends up treating her as an ordinary woman. Feeling ridiculed by her cruel seducer, the jealous Lady Rokujō loses control, and her malevolent spirit kills Lady Aoi, Genji's formal wife. After this dramatic turn of events, the remainder of the chapter then abates in an atmosphere of pathos. Genji does not express a desire for revenge towards Lady Rokujō[81]. Instead, the dreadful catastrophe is eclipsed as an unpreventable tragedy, and the Lady Rokujō, now having become the victim of rumours, is effectively left to her own demise. Instead, the narrative focus becomes directed to scenes of

[80] The implied affair with the imperial princess Lady Fujitsubo, who will later become future empress at the side of Genji's father (the Emperor Kiritsubo), is the most scandalous in nature: Having heard that his deceased mother, a Kiritsubo consort, resembles Fujitsubo, Genji becomes enthralled by the latter and pursues her, which eventually leads to the secretive birth of the future emperor Reizei.

[81] In part, Genji's clemency can be explained by the fact that the demonic spirit or *ikiryō* manifested itself subconsciously in the Rokujō Haven.

mourning that call attention to *mono no aware* and delicate beauty. As Genji sees his wife Aoi laying on her deathbed, he is overcome by emotion:

> He thought her dearer and more beautiful than ever before. He took her hand. "This is dreadful! What a thing to do to me!" When weeping silenced him, she lifted to his face her expiring gaze, so filled in the past with reproach and disapproval, and tears spilled from her eyes. How could he not have been profoundly moved? (GM, 174)

This culminating moment of sadness and sorrow correlates with the peaking of beauty in the fleeting moment from Genji's perspective. Moreover, it is interesting that the victim status is redirected from innocent Aoi to Genji, whose emotional state is made the centre of attention. While arguably, the bereavement of Genji and his people can be regarded as a gesture that pays homage to Aoi's passing, the focus of the remainder of the chapter has clearly shifted towards feeling and the aesthetic, emphasising how Genji is plunged into weeks of grief. This grieving state Genji processes not only with prayer, but also with the composition of poetry. All of this seems to suggest that the 'good man' best proves his understanding of aesthetics in the disruption of a harmonic status quo.

Upon closer inspection of Genji's character however, it becomes clear that the model of the 'good man' isn't purely restricted to his aesthetic sensibility. Although feeling bitter and hurt after the death of his wife, Genji, in his compassionate nature, is unable to act heartless towards the Lady Rokujō, and even answers the letter she sends to express her regrets about what has happened. More generally, Keene importantly notes that

> Genji is peerlessly handsome, incomparably gifted in whatever he does – whether painting, dancing, or composing poetry - but he is above all a great lover. This should not suggest that he is another Don Juan. Unlike Don Juan or Don Giovanni in Mozart's opera, he is uninterested in the number of women he conquers; he has no Leporello to record how many in this place or that. And unlike Don Giovanni, who humiliates Donna Elvira for not realizing that their affair is over, Genji never forgets or slights any woman he has loved. Even when he has made a dreadful mistake and courts a grotesque woman because she lives in a romantically overgrown palace and plays old music, he does not abandon her, but moves her into his great palace. He is sensitive to each woman, different to each, and yet always sincere. He obviously loves this world, but his often-expressed desire to leave it and become a Buddhist priest is not a pretense; above all he is aware of the meaning of *mono no aware.* (Keene 1988, 86f.),

Keene points out that Genji is more than a Don Juan or Don Giovanni. While he is without a doubt an unrivalled seducer (displaying all the characteristics a philanderer requires in artistic talent, otherworldly appearance, seductive charm and reckless determination), he also possesses redeeming qualities, among them being, sincerity, compassion,

thoughtfulness, religious aspirations, and, most of all, *mono no aware o shiru*. This shows that the good man who knows what it means to be moved is not merely an individual of great emotional sensitivity, nor is he merely a seducer in search of aesthetic pleasure. In addition, being good in the sense of *mono no aware* requires one to be "alive to the feelings of others" (TNO 450) in compassion. This does not mean that the aesthetic and moral simply merge; *mono no aware* is still primarily an aesthetic existential attitude. It does however highlight that *mono no aware*, while arising most distinctively in undesired or sorrowful circumstances, oftentimes ends up converging with the caring for others.

A more detailed comparison between Genji and Don Giovanni may help to shed light on how the former is still alive to the feeling of others and does not orient himself purely relative to aesthetic pleasure. Specifically in Kierkegaard's interpretation of Don Giovanni from Mozart's opera, this interpersonal link that was present in the Genji vanishes. In the first part of Either/Or, the aesthetic phase, Kierkegaard describes through the protagonist 'A' a life of pure aesthetic sovereignty. In this undertaking, Don Giovanni, in analogy to the essence of musicality, is represented as the example of the seducer that lives in immediacy and incarnates pure sensuality:

> But what is this force with which Don Giovanni seduces? It is the force of desire, the energy of sensual desire. In each woman he desires the whole of femininity, and in this lies the sensually idealizing power with which he at once beautifies and overcomes his prey (Kierkegaard 2004, part one, chapter two)

Contrarily to the compassionate Genji, Don Giovanni is insensitive to the individual women he seduces – he pursues each woman equally as a part of feminine ideal. As a result, the seducing act is infinitely repeatable, but re-enacted identically. Beauty thus becomes construed out of an essential and abstract understanding. In *mono no aware* however, beauty is generated individually in accordance with one's surroundings and the present realising of the impermanence of things. While *aware* occurs in immediacy, it can never be reduced to pure sensuality, remaining embedded in an epistemological perspective.

This motif of the seducer can be further extended to The Seducer's Diary, the culminating chapter of Either/Or, in which the innocent girl Cordelia succumbs to the seduction scheme of Johannes. In summary, the latter, in his enjoyment of impregnating reality with

poetic meaning, attempts to transform unexperienced Cordelia by making her 'interesting' and 'reflective'. In Johannes, we find yet another figure of aesthetic sovereignty, where the aesthetic is defined entirely relative to the unfolding of the seducing act: "How beautiful to be in love, how interesting to know one is in love! See, that's the difference!" (Kierkegaard 2004, part one, chapter seven). If Don Giovanni on the one hand symbolises pure sensuality, Johannes on the other hand strives for reflection and refined planning. Consequently, in the comparison to *mono no aware*, the opposite conclusion must also be drawn to that of Don Giovanni: while spontaneous emotional involvement or pathos in the sense of *aware* become too trivial in Johannes's seduction, the epistemological perspective becomes too relevant, constituting by itself the aesthetic sphere of life, leading, once again, to a lack of compassion.

In the unique pursuit of an aesthetic lifestyle, Genji resembles both Don Giovanni and Johannes, each of them representing different examples of extremely skilled seducers. However, Don Giovanni and Johannes pursue aesthetic sovereignty and posit the aesthetic as an absolute. Both characters occur in the first volume of Either/Or as characters of the aesthetic mode of life, a phase that (at least structurally in Kierkegaard's magnum opus) eventually transcends in an ethical way of living. With Genji, the aesthetic is not strictly juxtaposed against the ethical, as *mono no aware*, in a middle ground of sensuality and knowledge, contains compassion in being alive to the feeling of others.

6. *Mono no aware* in Examples of Modern Japanese Literature and Film

Part I established the importance of analysing *mono no aware* relative to its literary, religious, and aesthetic embeddedness in the Japanese tradition. Subsequently, part II, in a comparative analysis, retraced the universal ontological and metaphysical character behind *mono no aware* as an aesthetic theory advanced by MOTOORI Norinaga. Resultantly, this thesis has offered an insight into *mono no aware* that goes beyond its superficial literal translation of 'the pathos of things', evoking primarily a sense of sadness and sorrow.

To further strengthen this view, I will review three modern classics of Japanese literature and film that have only been superficially and obscurely associated with the ineffable *mono no aware* due to their unique pathos-loaded atmosphere. Relocating the four characteristics contained in Norinaga's account will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the term.

6.1 Kawabata Yasunari – *Snow Country*

In his Nobel Prize speech *Japan, the Beautiful and Myself,* KAWABATA Yasunari portrays what may be characterised as his own view of the essence of the Japanese spirit. In his emphasis on the grandeur of Heian society, he shares the Genji as the writing that "meant the most" to him in his boyhood. Additionally, focusing his oration around beauty and human feeling, he does not fail to mention "the poignant beauty of things, long characterized by the Japanese as *mono no aware*" (Kawabata 1968). Correspondingly, Kawabata was –albeit unclear to what extent – well aware of the aesthetic concept and its deep rootedness in Japanese history. This becomes especially apparent in his master work Snow Country.

The 'Snow Country' designates a secluded lieu of refuge in the west of Japan, visited by the protagonist Shimamura, an affluent dilletante from Tokyo. In a hot-spring town, Shimamura builds an asymmetrical love relationship with the lowly hot-spring geisha Komako, who develops feelings and expectations the married Shimamura cannot reciprocate. It is in this love affair fluctuating between denial and yearning that the main theme of beauty in impermanence becomes felt. Being aware of the tragic lot that has been attributed to Komako[82] and his own irresoluteness and conflicted behaviour, Shimamura becomes attracted by the wasted beauty of the girl. This motif of beauty and perishing is further reflected in the dynamic of the Snow Country. In a dark place that invokes a sense of loneliness, beauty becomes visible in every corner, and it becomes discernible for the individual how nature takes its course with the passing of the seasons, so that the impermanence of things surfaces[83]. As a result, it suggests itself to qualify this

[82] In the introduction to his translation of Snow Country, Edward G. Seidensticker indicates that the hot-spring Geisha, between the professions of artist and prostitute, may sometimes succeed in finding a husband, but most likely ends up drifing "from one hot spring to another, more unwanted with each change", making her "a particularly poignant symbol of wasted, decaying beauty" (Kawabata 1996, introduction).

[83] Examples for this can be found in the recurring insect descriptions, symbolising tranquil decay:

novel as a typical work of *mono no aware* in virtue of its painting of evanescence and beauty, which I have argued to imbue *mono no aware* from the standpoint of Japanese Buddhism or *mujō* and Japanese aesthetics.

However, as stated before, it would be erroneous to simply assess this association between *mono no aware* and the notion of impermanence by disemboguing into pure pathos or sadness. Instead, with the help of our previous analysis, a more nuanced characterisation of *mono no aware* can be put forward.

First of all, the numerous instances where Shimamura is moved to emotion occur spontaneously in the engagement with his surroundings and, more concretely, nature. Precisely because he finds himself in an environment full of objects (*mono*) that inspire a moving response in their evanescent nature, experiences of aesthetic appreciation pop up unexpectedly. Consider for example the following scene where Komako plays the samisen[84]:

> A chill swept over Shimamura. The goose flesh seems to rise even to his cheeks. The first notes opened a transparent emptiness deep in his entrails, and in the emptiness the sound of the samisen reverberated. He was startled – or, better, he fell back as under a well-aimed blow. Taken with a feeling almost of reverence, washed by waves of remorse, defenceless, quite deprived of strength – there was nothing for him to do but give himself up to the current, to the pleasure of being swept off wherever Komako would take him (Kawabata 1996, 71)

Through such passages, one is brought back to *aware*'s original etymological meaning, namely an emotional interjection that spontaneously arises, climaxes fleetingly before a separation of object and subject, and sets the tone for the following pages of the novel. The aesthetic value of such scenes of *mono no aware* resides in the presentation of beauty in its raw, unaltered state. Interpreting the reasons why Shimamura is moved in this way and not another already leads away from *mono no aware*, occurring pre-reflectively. Edward Seidensticker compares Kawabata's oeuvre to that of a haiku, which he defines as "tiny seventeen-syllable poems that seek to convey a sudden awareness of beauty by a

"But the dragonflies here before him seemed to be driven by something. It was as though they wanted desperately to avoid being pulled in with the cedar grove as it darkened before the sunset" (Kawabata 1996, 110).
"Each day, as the autumn grew colder, insects died on the floor of this room (…) A bee walked a little and collapsed, walked a little and collapsed [sic]. It was a quiet death that came with the change of seasons" (Kawabata 1996, 131).
"A moth on the screen was still for a very long time. It too was dead, and it fell to the earth like a dead leaf. Occasionally a moth fell from the wall. Taking it up in his hand, Shimamura would wonder how to account for such beauty" (Kawabata 1966, 132).

[84] A traditional Japanese string instrument.

mating of opposite or incongruous terms[85]" (Kawabata 1996, introduction). Haiku-like, the novel is "a series of brief flashes in a void" (ibid.), a comparison that displays how Kawabata manages to capture fleeting moving experiences in accordance with the poetical essence of *aware*.

Outside of this phenomenological structure of *aware* as a spontaneous expression of emotion, the embeddedness of *mono no aware* in the epistemological aspect becomes noticeable in Shimamura's behaviour. As an aesthete, the wealthy Tokyoite represents an ideal candidate for *mono no aware*. He possesses an out of the ordinary sensibility and interest when it comes to construing beauty out of every-day experiences. From the beginning, this is clarified in the opening train scene, where Shimamura becomes deeply and lengthily entranced by the window reflection of the attractive Yoko[86], to a point where his artistic mind confounds the image before him with a painting ("It was as if he were watching a tableau in a dream", Kawabata 1996, 9) by fusing the silhouette of Yoko with the background landscape[87]. We find in Shimamura not an ordinary visitor, but an individual whose every experience is aesthetically transformed. Shimamura attests that being moved in the sense of *mono no aware* is not purely affective, but requires knowledge in feeling, in the realisation that something greater can be gained out of the often heart-wrenching experiences that invoke ephemerality in the form of beauty. This makes it possible to overcome and even welcome sadness: "for Shimamura there was none of the pain that the sight of something truly sad can bring" (ibid.).

Nevertheless, Shimamura is no Genji. As stated, knowledge in *mono no aware* is primarily rooted in the expression *mono no aware o shiru*, the 'knowing what it means to be moved' by being compassionate and understanding of the feeling of others (see TNO 450). Shimamura, however, fails to acknowledge Komako's loneliness and need for something that goes beyond the relationship between geisha and client. This ignorance to the feeling of others is reflected in Shimamura's own emptiness. He has a fatal tendency

[85] The setting of the Snow Country and Komako representing incongruent elements for Shimamura.

[86] A girl that lives in the same hot spring town as Komako. Shimamura is attracted by her unusual beauty, piercing gaze and clear voice.

[87] "In the depths of the mirror the evening landscape moved by, the mirror and the reflected figures like motion pictures superimposed one on the other. The figures and the background were unrelated, and yet the figures, transparent and intangible, and the background, dim in the gathering darkness, melted together into a sort of symbolic world not of this world. Particularly when a light out in the mountains shone in the center of the girl's face, Shimamura felt his chest rise at the inexpressible beauty of it" (ibid.).

to infuse reality with fantasy, lending to his every experience a sensation of the unreal. For instance, he has a passion for Western dance, specifically occidental ballet, yet takes no interest in directly witnessing performances, taking even pleasure in "his inability to see with own eyes westerners in western ballets" (Kawabata 1996, 25). This impotence of directly confronting his emotions becomes particularly apparent in contrast to the not yet twenty-year-old Komako, radiating warmth and abundance of feeling. While Shimamura possesses great aesthetic sensibility, he fails to recognise the present for what it really is and becomes detached from the here-and-now, caught up in his own dreaminess. In the end, he is an outsider, a mere visitor of the Snow Country, a symbol for the big-city dweller that has become too numb to take life for what it really is:

> Tokyo people are complicated. They live in such noise and confusion that their feelings are broken to little bits (Kawabata 1996, 118)

If Kawabata's novel is a work of *mono no aware*, I believe it offers brief glimpses of it in the form of the secluded Snow Country. The latter emerges as a distant, ancient world in which time seems to pass differently in accordance with the seasons, presenting itself demarcated from the modern individual that has forgotten how to feel and pursues beauty as an ideal. While Shimamura has an abundance of aesthetic sensibility, he has a lack of sensitivity and compassion.

6.2 Mishima Yukio – *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*

The Temple of the Golden Pavilion by MISHIMA Yukio is a work configured even more strongly around an aesthetic quest, and, more exactly, around the question of what theory of beauty should prevail. The story focuses on the apathetic Zen-Buddhist acolyte Mizoguchi and his obsessive aesthetic relation to the golden temple or *Kinkaku-ji*, a Zen-Buddhist temple in Kyoto, and culminates in the building being burned down at the hands of the protagonist.

Of frail nature and having been born a stutterer, Mizoguchi additionally develops a trauma as he witnesses his mother have sexual intercourse with a stranger. All of this contributes to Mizoguchi shying away from social contact and developing a distorted belief in his own ugliness. This is all the more ill-fated as his existence primarily revolves around the problem of beauty:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the first real problem I faced in my life was that of beauty. My father was only a simple country priest, deficient in vocabulary, and he taught me that 'there is nothing in this world so beautiful as the Golden Temple'. At the thought that beauty should already have come into this world unknown to me, I could not help feeling a certain uneasiness and irritation. If beauty really did exist there, it meant my own existence was a thing estranged from beauty
> (Mishima 2001, 20)

As a young child, Mizoguchi is first introduced to the Golden Temple as an ideal. Even after a disappointing first encounter[88], he repeatedly latches onto the figment of the temple as an eternal object unsurpassable in its beauty, a "phantasm of immortality" (Mishima 2001, 182). It is unclear to what extent this platonic attraction is either a defence mechanism that aids in turning away from life, or a logical subjective assessment born out of his own contrasting ugliness[89]. Regardless, Mizoguchi leads a life of total aesthetic sovereignty construed around the Golden Temple's beauty, and he slowly acquires the sensibility to be moved by the temple's image like no other. For Mizoguchi, this represents the only source of 'good' worth pursuing.

It would be false however to confuse this with a scenario of *mono no aware*. If anything, Mizoguchi is the very negative print of Genji: he is unattractive, has difficulties to engage with women in any form, and even finds himself impotent. More importantly, he seems almost entirely incapable of sympathising with the emotions of others: he feels no sorrow as his father dies, and even after the premature death of his fellow acolyte and only friend Tsurukawa, he only mourns in the egocentric realisation that the last link that ties him to the here-and-now, "the bright world of daylight" (Mishima 2001, 120), has been severed. As opposed to Genji, Mizoguchi is in no way alive to the feelings of others so long as it does not come with the satisfaction of malign intent and schadenfreude. He therefore completely deviates from the model of the 'good' person in *mono no aware o shiru*.

There are other striking differences to *mono no aware* in Mizoguchi's character. While from an epistemological standpoint, he is remarkably self-aware (even acknowledging the impermanent structure of the temple) and aggregates knowledge in the increasingly abstract mental image of the Golden Temple and its otherworldly beauty[90], he, in doing

[88] "the temple aroused no emotion within me. It was merely a small, dark, old, three-storied building (...) could beauty, I wondered, be as unbeautiful a thing as this?" (Mishima, 2001, 23).
[89] "my attachment to the temple was entirely rooted in my own ugliness" (Mishima 2001, 36).
[90] This happens in a slow process. To give an example: "after my return to Yasuoka, the Golden Temple, which had disappointed me so greatly at first sight, began to revivify its beauty within me day after day, until in the end it became a more beautiful Golden Temple than it had been before I saw it (…) It seemed that what had been nurtured in my dreams had become real and could now, in turn, serve as an impulse for further dreams (Mishima 2001, 27f.).

so, removes himself more and more from the real world. Detached from lived experience, Mizoguchi gradually brews his aesthetic enjoyment purely in reflective thinking, instead of being moved spontaneously and pre-reflectively in a response of *mono no aware*. This is mirrored even further in his stuttering:

> My feelings suffered from stuttering. They never emerged on time. As a result, I felt as though the fact of Father's death and the fact of my being were two isolated things, having no connection and not infringing on each other in the slightest. A slight discrepancy in time, a slight delay, invariably make the feelings and the events that I have undergone revert to their disjointed condition, which, so far as I am concerned, is probably their fundamental condition (Mishima 2001, 37)

Unable to express his emotions in a timely manner, Mizoguchi suffers from a disconnectedness between his pathos-loaded experiences and the stimulus-provoking *mono* of the external world:

> When I am sad, sorrow attacks me suddenly and without reason: it is connected with no particular event and with no motive (ibid.)

It is striking just how figuratively this can be contrasted with the etymological nature of *aware* as an interjection, a spontaneous expression of emotion. The element of stuttering not only stands for a retardation in articulating words, it also exemplifies more deeply the impossibility of building an emotional relation with the environment. In Mizoguchi, we find a polarising force that defies everything *mono no aware* stands for. This is not by coincidence, as Mizoguchi's revolt is directed against the traditional Japanese, and, more concretely, Zen-Buddhist values he grew up with: enclosed by nature, he lives amid an environment that stresses the impermanence of things and the beauty of ephemerality that is *mono no aware*. Repudiating reality due to his own mediocrity, Mizoguchi is unable to tolerate a world outlook that accepts things for what they are.

There are, nonetheless, palpable moments where even he seems capable of and open to experiencing *mono no aware*. First, in his scheme of glorifying the phenomenon of the Golden Temple, Mizoguchi at some point experiences a temporary setback when he notices that

> The Golden Temple was no longer an immovable structure. It had, so to speak, been transformed into a symbol of the world's evanescence. Owing to this process of thought, the real temple had now become no less beautiful than that of my mental image (Mishima 2001, 42)

For some time, as Mizoguchi envisions the potential destruction of the Golden Temple by an incendiary bomb (the story taking place around the Second World War), he acknowledges the Golden Temple as a physical, impermanent entity and appreciates beauty differently in the affirmation of the here-and-now.

Moreover, a second moment of potential reconciliation with *mono no aware* materialises as this expectation of the Golden Temple's annihilation remains unfulfilled. Mizoguchi then decides to take the temple's destruction and destiny into his own hands:

> Like someone who is anticipating his death, I now began to make myself agreeable to the other people in the temple. My manner became pleasant and I tried to reconcile myself to everything. I even became reconciled to nature. Each morning when the birds came to peck at what was left of the holly, I looked at their downy breasts with a feeling of real friendliness (Mishima 2001, 189)

Because the temple in its unbearable beauty symbolises a threat that reminds him of his ugliness, Mizoguchi feels he regains compassion and the ability to coexist peacefully with his surroundings as his pyromaniac plan draws nearer. Indeed, after having committed the final act, the ending words of the novel corroborate this newfound hope: "I wanted to live" (Mishima 2001, 241). As a result, superficially, the extinction of the temple can be judged as an aesthetic act of (self-)destruction and negation typical of 'Mishima-ian' works[91]. Psychologically and subliminally however, it expresses Mizoguchi's inner yearning of becoming an ordinary person, capable of being moved by beauty via sensory experiences in the here-and-now. This individual is undoubtedly very close to the 'good' person in *mono no aware o shiru*.

There are yet other examples where Mizoguchi betrays his theory of beauty amounting to the transgression of an aesthetic ideal. For instance, he admits his friend Kashiwagi has a far more accurate view on beauty, the latter of which is in fact very close to a theory of *mono no aware*, stressing the fleetingness of emotions in the present moment:

[91]Because the Golden Temple becomes a fictitious product of imagination with no link to reality, Mizoguchi becomes incentivised to burn it down, wanting to experience what it means to destroy what does not exist, to negate seemingly eternal beauty: "The various adumbrations of a beauty *which did not exist* [sic] had become the underlying motif of the Golden Temple. Such adumbrations were signs of nothingness. Nothingness was the very structure of this beauty" (Mishima 2001, 241).

> Later, when I came to know Kashiwagi more intimately, I understood that he disliked lasting beauty. His likings were limited to things such as music, which vanished instantly, or flower arrangements, which faded in a matter of days; he loathed architecture and literature. Clearly he would never think of visiting the Golden Temple except on a moonlit night like this" (Mishima 2001, 131)

To conclude, Mizoguchi's portrayal is not simply that of a villainous sociopath, but a conflicted, sordid individual full of contradictions. While he possesses great aesthetic sensibility, he lacks the sensitivity and compassion to be moved by his surroundings. It is in this sense that he fails to experience *mono no aware*, which is not simply antithetical to the protagonist's existence, but accentuates his tragedy by serving as a deeply layered background that nurtures the setting of the novel.

6.3 Ozu Yasuhiro – *Late Spring*

When it comes to locating *mono no aware*, I believe examples of prose (such as the two preceding novels as well as the Genji) are both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, they present a flow of thoughts, thus exhibiting a richer understanding or knowledge of characters. As a result, pinpointing both the epistemological aspect and the 'good' person susceptible to the feeling of others (meaning those characteristics in *mono no aware* that arise outside of the immediate state of being moved) becomes facilitated. On the other hand, by adding a narrative structure, a felt gap between events and emotions can occur. In Snow Country, are Kawabata's numerous painted sceneries fitting of *mono no aware* truly perceived as such by the empty Shimamura? In The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, to what degree is Mizoguchi invested in his theory of beauty that disregards human feeling? Often, this remains unclear. Examples of the visual and temporal arts however (and, to a discussable degree, poetry) enable to capture an expression of emotion in its immediacy, as part of lived experience. Consequently, since *mono no aware* in its fundamental structure relates to a momentary state of being stirred by external things, these artistic mediums may offer a more accurate portrayal of its actual occurrence.

One such example can be found in the films of Ozu Yasujirō (1903-1963), whose work has been analysed in great detail by Donald Richie (see Richie 1984). According to Richie, Ozu's films, marked by the recurring theme of the dissolution of the Japanese family, are (albeit unconsciously) lavished by *mono no aware*, which he describes in the following way:

> The term has a long history (it appears fourteen times in *The Tale of Genji*), and though its original meaning was more restricted, from the beginning it represented feeling of a special kind: "not a powerful surge of passion, but an emotion containing a balance; … on the whole, *aware* tended to be used of deep impressions produced by small things"[92]. Now it is used to describe the "sympathetic sadness" (Tamako Niwa's phrase) caused by the contemplation of the world, and it is also used to describe a scene of serene acceptance of a transient world, a gentle pleasure found in mundane pursuits soon to vanish, a content created by the knowledge that one is with the world and that leaving it is, after all, in the natural state of things (Richie 1984, 52)

Richie pertinently distinguishes between an early stage of *mono no aware*, containing a more restricted original meaning (I assume this relates to the etymological dimension of *aware* as an interjection or exclamation of emotion) and more importantly the notion of a deep heart-felt sentiment produced by small things, and a present stage (or common understanding), narrowed towards this bittersweet sensation of sadness that is coupled with a reconciling with the ephemeral nature of things. And indeed, particularly this latter facet stands out within Ozu's work. In the scope of this short analysis, I have selected Late Spring (*banshun* 晩春), one of his most highly regarded films published in 1949 at the end of his creative period, to serve as a model. The story revolves around the attempt of a widowed father (Somiya Shukichi) to marry off his only daughter Noriko. In effect, this story in post-war Japan boils down to a short-term sacrifice of happiness: although father and daughter are content to be each other's side, they learn to accept the choice that needs to be made for the sake of Noriko's future well-being. As events unfold, the atmosphere becomes increasingly permeated by the bitter acceptance of an irrevocable parting and thus ostensibly acquires this notion of *mono no aware* as Richie envisions it. Nonetheless, building upon Norinaga's theory, I believe an even completer understanding of *mono no aware* can be gained by integrating the original etymological meaning which Richie omitted as 'restricted'.

To begin with, the first characteristic of *mono no aware* as exclamation captures the most basic way of being moved in the fleeting present. Identifying *mono no aware* in Ozu's work exclusively in view of a 'sad mood' disregards the preceding emotional trigger that led to the constitution of that atmosphere in the first place. *Mono no aware* is grounded in the episodical occurring of a spontaneous expression of emotion. For instance, Ozu consistently includes pathos-evoking sceneries of nature (the sound of waves or whistling trees). The reason why these sceneries are imbued by a sense of *mono no aware* is not

[92] As noted by Richie: Conversation with Shiro Kido, 1963.

only because of the poetical nature of the motives in question, but also because they follow up, be it in immediately or in delayed manner, to a central emotional turning point in the story. An illustration for this can be found in Late Spring: Noriko finally gives in to her father's wish of meeting her potential future husband Satake. As she then breaks down in tears, her father, looking out the window into nature, ends the conversation with a sigh, followed up with the words "tomorrow too, the weather will be nice" ("明日も、いい天気だ"). This seemingly incongruous statement emblematises the serene acceptance of Noriko's imminent departure, and it does indeed contain this attitude of *akirame* so central to *mono no aware*. And yet, as a cry of emotion, *mono no aware* itself is located in the preceding emotional encounter between father and daughter: The sadness Noriko experiences can be explained by her accepting that she must let go of her father who cannot assure her future well-being. In the moment of being moved, Noriko becomes therefore aware of the fleetingness of things. The (father's) sigh is already the abating of the initial impetus of emotion. What is more, the exclamatory character is remarkably salient in Ozu's style: by minimising dialogue and making use of static shots focused on the faces of characters, the immediacy of emotional expression is captured. Ozu also doesn't make use of flashbacks, so that the storyline unfolds exclusively in the here-and-now. Consequently, the life-defining choices characters make resolve in lived experience.

The style Ozu's ties directly into the second characteristic of *mono no aware*; the relation between the subject and the object. By emphasizing the immediacy of emotional expression as stated above, the characters are depicted their moment of aesthetic self-realisation. This captures the moment this thesis has highlighted as pre-reflective, where the subject is not yet separable from the object of experience that enticed the spontaneous emotional state. In the words of Nishida: "there is simply one world, one scene" (Nishida 1992, 32). Ozu excels at painting human emotions that are basic and unembellished, without being transparent and simple. What is portrayed in his unique artistic expression is not a translucent understanding of what his characters is going through, but a series of images that illustrate lived experience and stand out in their suchness[93].

[93] See page 39.

Note however that the coexistence of subject and object is conveyed primarily on a meta-level. The Genji, so Norinaga, revolves around characters being judged in terms of their capacity of feeling *mono no aware*. In Ozu's work however, the characters are ignorant of the aesthetic vision they are a part of, leading a fundamentally mundane life. The feeling of *mono no aware* associated with Ozu's films is therefore predominantly an attributive element allotted by the spectator[94]. As a result, the role of the subject that is being moved by an object of experience is longer assumed by the characters, but by the spectators themselves. There is an implied expectation towards the spectator to identify and appreciate the subtle techniques Ozu integrates to create a scene of aesthetic value. It is in this required sensitivity to be moved that the spectator participates in *mono no aware o shiru*. For example, limiting camera shots to a single character's facial expression creates an illusion of participation for the spectator. Character's emotional reactions feel more transparent, and an emotional bond is generated between the spectator's and the character's feelings. Other elements, which this thesis can only shortly delve into, contribute to the feeling of coexistence between the spectator as subject and the object on screen. The camera shots are neutral, meaning that they are not construed out of the perspective of the protagonist. Instead, they invite the spectator to take part in the narrative and abandon his position of an isolated observer. Another essential element is Ozu's so-called 'pillow shot', a designation coined by the critic Noël Burch. The pillow shot is a carefully-placed shot of an empty space stemming from everyday life, serving as a filler in between scenes, lasting for several seconds. What it provides is a canvas to lure out the emotions that have amassed beneath the surface of the story. A landscape of nature, for example, as an object of visual experience devoid of self-referential meaning, becomes a catalyst that enables the spectator to project his emotions onto it. This same characteristic of coexistence between subject and object Ozu applies more straightforwardly to things (*Gegenstände*), termed by Richie as "containers of emotion" (Richie 1984, 173). At the conclusion of Late Spring, when Noriko has finally agreed to marriage, she undertakes a last trip to Kyoto together with her father. During bedtime, as she attempts to confess her acceptance of the state of things to an already asleep father,

[94] Following Norinaga's view, this meta-level is also present in the Genji, to the extent that the novel is supposed to console and move to emotion (see TNO 420f.), which can only be achieved if the reader himself properly apprehends *mono no aware*.

the camera suddenly shifts to a vase, which becomes transformed into an indescribably moving image:

> The image of the vase in the darkened room to which Ozu returns at the end of *Late Spring* serves (…) to contain and to an extent create our own emotions (…) we suddenly apprehend what the film has been about, i.e., we suddenly apprehend life. This happens because such scenes occur when at least one important pattern in the picture has become clear. In *Late Spring* the daughter has seen what will happen to her: she will leave her father, she will marry. She comes to understand this precisely during the time that both we and she have been shown the vase. The vase itself means nothing, but its presence is also a space and into it pours our emotion (Richie 1984, 174)

As Richie notes, the vase is no longer a neutral 'thing' or *mono*, having become inseparable from the feelings of the spectator or subject. To conclude, the notion of 'bittersweet sadness' this scene emanates (in line with the widespread understanding of *mono no aware*), is fundamentally grounded in the original understanding of *mono no aware* as a spontaneous expression of emotion in a pre-reflective setting of coexistence between subject and object.

7. Conclusion

The objective that this thesis pursued was to address the ineffability in *mono no aware*, which led to the emergence of divergent contemporary interpretations focusing predominantly on the notions of sadness and sorrow. With the help of Norinaga's theory, a more fundamental and basic understanding of *mono no aware* as 'being stirred by external things' was presented, revealing a distinct ontological and metaphysical character as well as a distinct phenomenology of being moved. More pointedly, this attempt at defining *mono no aware* culminated in the question to what extent *mono no aware* can be justified as a universal ideal, or if it must be treated as a regional value of Japanese culture.

Part I illustrated how *mono no aware* has been shaped in a specific aesthetic and religious setting, stressing most centrally the affirmative portrayal of perishability. Beginning with the Japanese aesthetic tradition, being moved by beauty is a capacity that arises as an individual acquires the sensibility to appreciate the ephemerality of the here-and-now. Each of the characteristics of the Japanese tradition has been highlighted from this very standpoint: *nature* as the proof of the impermanence of things in the outside world, *suggestion* as the celebration of beginnings and ends, and *simplicity* as the refusal of embellishment and humble affirmation of beauty in its raw, unaltered and pure state. The religious context additionally reinforced the serene acceptance of the reality of evanescence**:** while early Shintoism is already marked by a humble cherishing of *kami* in nature directed towards the here-and-now, Japanese Buddhism is founded upon impermanence (*mujō* 無常), and moreover positively integrates it into philosophical thought and a celebration of beauty, as was shown at the example of Dōgen's Zen Buddhism.

Due to this multi-faceted embeddedness in the Japanese tradition, envisaging Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware* as a 'universal' emotional state of being moved is erroneous. Still, as part II and the comparative analysis delineated, his theory comprises universal assumptions about human nature and evokes a distinct phenomenology of being moved.

Firstly, the original etymological meaning of *aware* as a cry of emotion stemming from *aa* and *hare* indicated that *mono no aware* is fundamentally grounded in spontaneity, suchness and fleetingness. In addition, the motif of the 'sigh' offered an explanation as to why the aesthetic category is often associated with a faint feeling. The comparison to the *mémoire involontaire* also reinforced that *aware* is distinct from an aesthetic experience that draws its power from a feeling of immortality in extra-temporality, once again corroborating the role of perishability by stressing the importance of being moved in the fleeting present.

Secondly, this spontaneous occurring of *mono no aware* must be understood in a pre-reflective setting of coexistence between subject and object. The subject's becoming aware of being moved is a reflective response that is already constituted by the occurring of *mono no aware*. In this imminent delay, the ineffability in *mono no aware* appears in its purest state. Nishida's concept of *pure experience* moreover expounded how *mono no aware* is not so much an experience of beauty as it is a moment of self-realisation and truth: in the intuitive moment of being moved, the subject, still inseparable from his object of experience, actualises his aesthetic sensitivity.

This 'sensitivity' to be moved to emotion further surfaces in *mono no aware o shiru,* the third characteristic extracted from Norinaga's theory. In *mono no aware o shiru*, the moved individual is perceived as a knowing individual. What is more, the element of knowledge was shown to lead to the arising of an epistemological framework outside of the direct experiencing of *mono no* aware on a self-aware level, enabling an implementation of the acquired knowledge of the impermanence of things into moments of aesthetic appreciation.

Fourthly, by constructing *mono no aware o shiru* as a desirable quality that separates good people from bad people relative to the extent of their emotional receptivity, the inherent risk of adopting a lifestyle consecrated to the aesthetic was discussed. However, in the end, a comparison of seducers between Genji, Norinaga's hero, and Don Giovanni and Johannes revealed that *mono no aware*, in a middle ground of sensuality and knowledge, retains compassion in being alive to the feeling of others.

To give a final remark on these four characteristics extracted from Norinaga's account; it is striking that the theme of the impermanence of things remains recurrent. This is not only because the emotion-provoking *mono* are salient in their ephemerality, but also and even more so because *aware* as an 'ex-clamation' is always a fleeting expression that leaves the body and vanishes, prior to the subject becoming aware of having been moved. This link to the impermanence of things then importantly creates a bridge to the definition attempts of *mono no aware* focusing predominantly on the notions of sadness and sorrow, arising generally with the ending of life.

Lastly, part III, applying the four characteristics, showcased with three modern classics of Japanese literature and film how to locate *mono no aware* despite its ineffable nature. Most notably, none of these examples makes explicit mention of *mono no aware*, which acts as a hidden force, even clashing at times with modernity: In Kawabata's novel, we discover *mono no aware* as part of the ancient Snow Country, in antithesis with the empty and dreamy Shimamura, the model of the 20th century Tokyo person, who has become detached from his own feelings in the here-and-now. In The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, the stuttering Mizoguchi is similarly incapable of being moved by things as they are, generating instead aesthetic enjoyment from the construction of an ideal. This goes back to his own inability to respond in time to the feelings of others and the stimulus-provoking *mono* of the external world. Devoid of compassion, Mizoguchi is the negative print of Genji. Finally, in Ozu's films, the characters are oblivious to the aesthetic vision they are a part of. What is superficially represented by Ozu are mundane problems of everyday life. To capture the partly camouflaged scenes of *mono no aware*, a skilled spectator that appreciates the meticulousness of Ozu's work is required. It is only through the spectator's unravelling of aesthetic potential that an emotional response can take place. Locating *mono no aware* in contemporary works of art therefore is no easy feat, simply because it is rarely integrated consciously. However, at the same time, the individual that succeeds at identifying it is rewarded all the more: he glimpses into a past world, a time where the pursuit and appreciation of ephemeral beauty and feeling in the here-and-now represented an aesthetic lifestyle, and he may even discover that this world, after all, is not too different from his own.

In a general outlook, *mono no aware* has been approached (1) from a perspective of aesthetics of lived experience (*Ästhetik des Erlebens*), stressing the state of being moved in the here-and-now, in the midst of nature and interpersonal relationships.

On the one hand, (2) the fundamental structure of the direct experience of *mono no aware* has been delineated in its metaphysical and ontological dimension. From this viewpoint, *mono no aware* as an exclamation of emotion is salient as an unfolding scene lived from the first-person perspective; a fleeting encounter destined to remain inapproachable. Every conscious attempt at dissecting *mono no aware* (this writing included) inevitably forges a theory that lies outside of the interjectional and pre-reflective feeling that is *mono no aware*.

Still, on the other hand, *mono no aware* must not be reduced to a subjective figment, an internalised affective reaction cut off from the external world, nor a self-contained metaphysical structure. While in its immediacy, *mono no aware* indeed occurs as a momentary presenting of beauty in an image or scene that speaks for itself, it nevertheless (3) arises out of- and abates in everyday life. Not only is *mono no aware* induced by the transient *mono* of surroundings, it also, in its ineffability, is thrown back upon the world: the 'exclamation' or 'sigh' always dwindles in a lingering feeling, a distinct perfume that colours surroundings, and, in return, leads to a further spreading of *mono no aware* on the receiving end, encouraging to contemplate the impermanent nature of things and the importance of feeling on a self-aware level. As a result, an oscillating between the aesthetic and the ethical modes of life ensues. It is this convergence of both modes that is contained in *mono no aware o shiru*, being compassion in aesthetic sensitivity, or, inversely, perception of beauty in being alive towards the feelings of others.

The concluding remarks (1), (2) and (3) open up the possibility to discuss the unique aesthetic character of *mono no aware* transculturally on a global scale.

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Abstract

Amongst all key concepts in Japanese aesthetics, *mono no aware* (もののあわれ) is the broadest in meaning. While modern scholars have different understandings of it, they can agree, at the very least, on the elusive nature of the expression. It translates literally to 'the pathos of things': *mono* translates to 'thing', *no* is a Japanese possessive particle and *aware* generally refers to a deep-felt emotion or pathos in the experience of the evanescence of the external world. This has led the expression to be associated contemporarily with a broad and vague sense of sadness and sorrow (see De Bary et al. 2001, Keene 1988, Morris 2013, Richie 2007). In view of these divergent definition attempts, the central aim of this thesis consists in bringing forward a more fundamental understanding, by deconstructing the quintessential theory of *mono no aware* advanced by the renowned Japanese scholar MOTOORI Norinaga (1730-1801). In his analysis of the Genji Monogatari, Norinaga carves out the original meaning of *aware* as an exclamation or cry of emotion, and, in doing so, constructs a theory that accentuates the basic aesthetic sensibility of being moved in lived-experience on an all-embracing emotional spectrum. In this state of being stirred to emotion, an ontological and metaphysical character that is part of *mono no aware* reveals itself, and a distinct phenomenology of being moved becomes identifiable. From this grounding and universal perspective, the ineffability in *mono no aware* can be addressed, as it becomes possible to conceptualise what it means to experience *mono no aware*, and to locate it in works of art.

Abstract in German

Unter sämtlichen Konzepten der japanischen Ästhetik besitzt *mono no aware* (もののあわれ) den weitschweifigsten Bedeutungsgrad. Während Gelehrte der Moderne unterschiedliche Definitionsversuche vorbringen, so sind sie sich umso einiger, wenn es um die flüchtige Natur dieser drei Worte dreht. Der Ausdruck lässt sich wörtlich zu „das Pathos der Dinge“ übersetzen: *mono* bedeutet „Ding“, *no* ist ein japanisches Possessivpartikel und *aware* beschreibt generell ein tiefgründiges Gefühl des Schätzens flüchtig-vernehmbarer Schönheit im unmittelbaren Sich-Gewahr-Werden der Vergänglichkeit und der Unbeständigkeit aller Dinge. Dies hat dazu geführt, dass der Ausdruck zeitgenössisch vor allem mit einem ungenauen Begriffsinhalt von Traurigkeit und Leid assoziiert wird (siehe De Bary et al. 2001, Keene 1988, Morris 2013, Richie 2007).

Hinsichtlich dieser divergenten Definitionsversuche wird die Zielsetzung dieser Arbeit darin bestehen, ein fundamentaleres Verständnis vorzubringen, nämlich anhand einer Analyse der essentiellen Theorie von *mono no aware* des renommierten japanischen Gelehrten MOTOORI Norinaga (1730-1801). In seiner Analyse des Genji Monogatari arbeitet dieser die etymologische Bedeutung von *aware* als Ausruf der Emotion heraus, und konstruiert somit eine Theorie, die die elementare ästhetische Sensibilität des Berührt-werdens betont, auf einem allumfassenden emotionalen Spektrum. In diesem zu Emotionen gerührten Zustand enthüllt sich ein ontologischer und metaphysischer Charakter in *mono no aware*, und eine bestimmte Struktur im Erscheinungsbild wird identifizierbar. Ausgehend von diesem universalen und wesentlichen Standpunkt wird es möglich, wahrhaftig zu konzeptualisieren, was ein widerfahren von *mono no aware* bedeutet, und es in Werken der Kunst wiederzufinden.

Declaration of Authorship/Plagiatserklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, die vorgelegte Arbeit selbständig verfasst und ausschließlich die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt zu haben. Alle wörtlich oder dem Sinn nach aus anderen Werken entnommenen Textpassagen und Gedankengänge sind durch genaue Angabe der Quelle in Form von Anmerkungen bzw. In-Text-Zitationen ausgewiesen. Dies gilt auch für Quellen aus dem Internet, bei denen zusätzlich URL und Zugriffsdatum angeführt sind. Mir ist bekannt, dass jeder Fall von Plagiat zur Nicht-Bewertung der gesamten Lehrveranstaltung führt und der Studienprogrammleitung gemeldet werden muss. Ferner versichere ich, diese Arbeit nicht bereits andernorts zur Beurteilung vorgelegt zu haben.