

The Quest for the Primordial

An Inquiry into the Nationalist Rhetoric of Contemporary Japan

Elisa Vitali



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of Contemporary Japan

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*To the memory of my father
who inspires me every day*

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Abstract

Fifty years since the boom of the Theories on the Japanese (*Nihonjinron*) and in conjunction with the rise of Japan as a cultural global superpower, the official ideology of the establishment still keeps alive the stereotypes, clichés and myths connected to the particularistic paradigm of the 'Japanese nation', popular since the postwar period among Japanese intelligentsia especially in the form of amatorial essays. Far from losing any ground, the *Nihonjinron* nationalist discourse persists and proliferates through theories, opinions, and discussions dealing with Japaneseness in the form of essays, articles, academic seminars, and public debates. Re-interpreting the primordialist perspective in the field of nationalism studies as a category of social practice (Coakley 2017), it is especially the belief in the primordality of the Japanese nation that is recently being re-assessed with renewed strength by certain ideologized and influential intellectuals, such as Suzuki Takao and Watanabe Shōichi. Echoing the philosophical ideas of German organicism on the nation embodied by Herder and Fichte, the textual and discursive analysis of Suzuki's (2016) and Watanabe's (2008) essays offers an interesting tool to bring to the surface the ideological mechanisms underlying *Nihonjinron* and its ideological core, i.e. primordialism.

Notes on Japanese Names and Works Cited

The adopted method of phonetic transcription from Japanese is the Hepburn romanization system. In particular, the following cases should be considered:

ch is an affricate as “ch” in *challenge*

g is velar as “g” in *gate*

h is aspirated as in *hotel*

j is an affricate as in *jet*

s is unvoiced as in *system*

sh is a fricative as in *shame*

w to be pronounced as in *window*

y to be pronounced as in *yesterday*

z is soft as in *zephyr*

macron (-) above vowels indicates vowel lengthening (e.g. Tōkyō).

Japanese personal names appearing in the text follow the Japanese canonical order, with the family name first (Mishima Yukio, Kurosawa Akira, Murakami Haruki).

The works cited are mentioned according to the in-text citation method; for Watanabe’s (2008) and Suzuki’s (2016) essays, the case-studies, only the page number is reported. The translations from Suzuki and Watanabe are personal.

Essential Chronology of Japanese History

Paleolithic 旧石器時代: 35.000-14.000 B.C. ca.

Jōmon Period 縄文時代: 14.000-300 B.C. ca.

Yayoi Period 弥生時代: 300 B.C.-300 B.C. ca.

Kofun Period 古墳時代: IV century A.D. - middle VI century A.D.

Asuka-Hakuhō Period 飛鳥時代: 552-710

Nara Period 奈良時代: 710-794

Heian Period 平安時代: 794-1185

Kamakura Period 鎌倉時代: 1185-1336

Nanbokuchō Period 南北朝時代: 1336-1392

Ashikaga / Muromachi Period 室町時代: 1336-1568

Azuchi-Momoyama Period 安土桃山時代: 1568-1600

Edo / Tokugawa Period 徳川時代: 1600-1867

Meiji Era 明治時代: 1868-1912

Taishō Era 大正時代: 1912-1926

Shōwa Era 昭和時代: 1926-1989

Heisei Era 平成時代: 1989-2019

Reiwa Era 令和時代: 2019-ongoing

Introduction - Reconsidering *Nihonjinron*

日本型文明が現在の地球上で生きる最善の形として、諸国民に確認されるようになるであろう。(Watanabe 1980: 301)

I guess that a civilization as that of Japan will be finally recognized by any people as the best form to live on Earth today.

二十一世紀が「日本の世紀」(Watanabe 1980: 294)

The twenty-first century will be “the Japanese century”.

On the 8th March 2017 the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) launched the propagandistic *WonderNIPPON!*, intended to inform the world about the uniqueness of “Japanese sensitivity”, as part of government’s public relation policies in view of the 2020 Tōkyō Olympics and the growing international attention towards Japan. The ideals advocated in the brochure referred more generally to the value system underlying the products and services promoted by “Cool Japan”, a form of soft power exploiting Japanese assertive cultural industry to influence the behaviours and interests of other countries and establishing the idea of a “cool Japan” brand as an instrument to improve Japan’s perception abroad, increase its influence and revitalize its economy. In the early twenty-first century, “Cool Japan” was relaunched with such a renewed strength to urge Douglas McGray to speak of Japan in terms of a self-reinventing superpower in the process of converting its economic prowess into a cultural one (McGray 2002).

The national self-representations supported by the countless “Cool Japan” initiatives reproduced precisely those characterizing the 1970s’ nationalist identity discourse. Almost fifty years after the boom of *Nihonjinron* and in conjunction with the ascent of Japan as a cultural global superpower, all the stereotypes and myths connected to the

paradigm of Japanese cultural particularism have been revived. Indeed, the “Japanese traditional value vision and sensitivity” - the topic of the brochure - are associated to the “Japanese special relationship with nature” through specific evocative keywords or expressions – *wano seishin* (spirit of harmony); *wabi-sabi*; *ma no bigaku* (aesthetics of emptiness); *michi o motomeru* (pursuit of the Way).

This attempt to restore old clichés by the Japanese ruling class, in addition to the “revisionist turn” in Japanese politics and intellectual debate since the mid-1990s with relation to Japan’s recent wartime history (Kingston 2016: 1; Takenaka 2016: 1; Koichi 2016: 1-2; Barnard 2003: 2), made me reconsider the Japanese mainstream discourse on Japanese national identity known in literature as *Nihonjinron*. For almost twenty years, a historical narrative of pride has developed, aimed at passing on to Japanese youths a positive interpretation of Japanese history purified of shady events, which would instead instil feelings of shame and humiliation (Takenaka 2016: 4; Saaler 2016: 4). Notably, the labelling of the Pacific War as a “war of aggression” is firmly criticized and the Japanese educational system and textbooks are accused of diffusing and promoting a “masochistic” and “distorted” historical vision. By contrast, the re-interpretation of war as a “war of self-defense”, a “struggle for survival among white and non-white races”, a “fight for Asian emancipation from Western colonization” in which Japan played a crucial and leading role, is frequently advocated (Saaler 2016: 4).

In this quest for politics-driven revisionism, the *Nihonjinron* central assumption of Japanese ethnic, cultural, linguistic, historical particularism is being revitalized and further emphasized to serve the growing reactionary nationalism of a small, yet influential component of the Japanese establishment. The last decade has witnessed an increasing instrumentalization of a hegemonic identity discourse, restricted mainly to intellectual speculations until the 1980s, and the shifting of focus from culture to history in general. History is progressively becoming dominant among the interests of public opinion, educational policies, and in the discussion on Japaneseness (Saaler 2016: 1; Barnard 2003: 9). For a growing number of Japanese conservatives, today it is relevant to firmly express ideas on Japan’s recent history instead of ideas of cultural particularism vis-à-vis the ‘West’ and to show strong stances against China and Korea. Revisionists purport to support a

Japanese national history “for the Japanese people” (Barnard 2003: 9).

Apart from the rhetoric permeating government policies of internationalization (*kokusaika*) and intercultural communication (*ibunka kōryū*), the continuous popularity and relevance of *Nihonjinron* images are also attested in the persistent proliferation of theories, opinions, discussions on Japaneseness conceived in particularistic terms, in the form of essays, articles, seminars, and public debates. A contemporary example of statements stressing the uniqueness of the Japanese is represented by a cluster of theories discussing the different modalities of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic by Japanese and Western authorities and the causes of the spillover. Virologist Oshitani Hiroshi attributes the explanation for Japan «understanding the overview while watching the forest» by tolerating to a certain extent the viral transmission, and for the West «focusing on the single tree without seeing the forest» by testing every single person to eradicate the virus, to cultural differences. He ultimately hopes that Japan, which adopted a coexisting approach with the virus and collected several skills through this pandemic struggle, may contribute to the world’s well-being by offering its know-how (Oshitani 2020). Likewise, writer Matsumoto Teruo draws Oshitani’s same conclusions, by regarding SARS-CoV-2 as one of the countless signals nature keeps sending humanity about the reaching of ecological limits. This extreme condition is seen as engendered by the global pursuit of Western anthropocentric model of economic development, surmountable only through Japan’s self-appointment as spiritual leader of humankind and the diffusion of its culture and language. COVID-19 is then conceived as the last opportunity for humanity to change its worldview, lifestyle and values (Matsumoto 2020).

The *Nihonjinron* discourse has been the object of a prolific academic interest since the 1970s. Probably the first scholar who criticized it, yet offering a deep insight into its myths and ideology, was Roy Andrew Miller, one of the most prominent experts on the subject together with Peter Dale. While Miller (1977, 1982) and Dale (1986) mainly offered a sociolinguistic and psychoanalytical perspective in their surveys on the theories on Japaneseness, Sugimoto Yoshio and Ross Mouer (1980, 1989) unveiled the methodological, empirical, and ideological weakness of the *Nihonjinron* as a sociologic theory. Two other relevant scholars who analyzed the *Nihonjinron* from a sociological and

anthropological perspective are Yoshino Kōsaku (1992) and Harumi Befu (1980, 1984, 2001). Especially the latter supported his arguments by providing several explanations and analyzing a number of theories on Japaneseness. Recently, at least two other relevant scholars have emerged in the field - Oguma Eiji (2002) and Funabiki Takeo (2010). The former traces a genealogy of national self-representations of the Japanese since the Meiji era up to the 1970s, concentrating on the tenet of uniqueness. Funabiki reconsiders the *Nihonjinron* from a historical and anthropological perspective, reflecting on the historical conditions and causes that have led to the successful development of identity essay writing and its possible evolution.

In this book, I will deal with the identity narration of *Nihonjinron*, interpreted as a nationalist discourse on the foundations of Japanese essence. I will especially refer to the long-standing theoretical debate on primordialism as a category of social analysis, initiated by British sociologist Anthony Smith. My purpose is to emphasize the heuristic value of primordialism as a category of practice, namely as a central ingredient in nationalist discursive formations, and to emphasize the profound primordialist nature of the mainstream Japanese nationalist discourse by providing two case studies. As Geertz masterfully pointed out: «If the general is to be grasped at all, and new unities uncovered, it must, it seems, be grasped not directly, all at once, but via instances, differences, variations, particulars - piecemeal, case by case. In a splintered world, we must address the splinters» (Geertz 2000: 218-219). It is precisely the splinters, the particulars, that I will address in this work hereafter. I chose to adopt a perspective focusing on the rhetorical and communicative strategies through which ideas of cultural essentialism are sustained, in order to fully grasp *Nihonjinron*'s wide ideological range. As Maxwell recently pointed out, primordialist theories of nationalism need to be continuously debunked, considering their ever-lasting popularity, just to mention a sadly notorious example, either in the public debates over the Russian-Ukrainian war, or among many Putin's Western critics sharing his essentialist and primordialist assumptions on nationness (Maxwell 2022: 2).

In the re-consideration of *Nihonjinron*, these choices are experimental and innovative. Several scholars recognized the nationalist nature of this identity discourse, yet nobody has ever attempted to systematically and organically identify its rhetorical and discursive

features, to emphasize the profound ideological mechanisms at work, to conceptualize primordialism as a reading key of Japanese identity definition. Moreover, much of what has been written in academic fields on Japanese nationalism does not really pertain to the phenomenon of nationalism itself, very frequently associated in Japan with the Pacific War's militarist and imperialist legacy or, at any rate, overlapping the role of the State (Doak 2007: 1, 9). Nationalism transcends politics for advancing claims of individual and collective identity and, as such, it may be in a conflictual stance with the State (Doak 2007: 2). *Nihonjinron* should be revisited under this light, since it is primarily a discursive formation of an intellectual, non-political, origin. In this sense, the best Japanese descriptive term to depict it is *minzokushugi* 民族主義, which refers to the ideological entity of *minzoku* 民族, the nation intended as a homogeneous kin-related group of people. The connection or even the identification of *Nihonjinron* with Japanese nationalism would hence be desirable, as the two are often depicted as disjointed phenomena.

The ideological discourse of *Nihonjinron* will be exclusively explored from the point of view of its initiators, notably a group of high-ranking academicians very close to the establishment and occupying a privileged social position in Japan by virtue of their credentials. These scholars, who elected themselves as «proxy spokesmen for the inarticulate soul of the national essence» (Dale 1986: 15), are particularly suitable for the analysis I am going to carry out, because of their profound knowledge of the debate on Japaneseness. Amongst other well-known representatives in the study of *Nihonjinron*, I selected Watanabe Shōichi and Suzuki Takao for being emblematic and zealous in their orthodox, particularistic, and essentialist view of Japanese mainstream nationalism. Moreover, they are eager advocates of *Nihonjinron* continuity for having been prolific academicians on the issue since the 1970s.

The means of ideological expression I focus on is a strand of popular essays dealing with Japanese identity adopting a number of different epistemological perspectives, which boomed in Japan since the 1970s. The form of popular essay is particularly suitable for an in-depth analysis of the employed rhetorical strategies and the transmitted ideas, in order to unearth the *Nihonjinron*'s primordialist core. I selected one essay per author on the base of their theoretical and

chronological relevance: they were published in 1993 (Watanabe's) and 2014 (Suzuki's), two momentous stages in the *Nihonjinron* debate. The 1990s apparently score a setback in the support of Japanese exceptionalism, due to negative economic conjunctures that pushed Japan into the so-called "lost decade". Still, this was the time when a political revisionist component was about to emerge with increased vigour in the Japanese hegemonic identity discourse, as it is apparent in Watanabe and Suzuki's gradual ideologization. The new millennial has witnessed *Nihonjinron* classical theories thriving again and being revitalized - as Suzuki's essay and the successful republication of Watanabe's in 2008 prove. A fundamental premise of this work is indeed the temporal and ideological continuity of *Nihonjinron*, although the focus of analysis is on the contemporary era infusing the classical discourse with new elements.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is a theoretical framework of *Nihonjinron*, consisting of two chapters. In Chapter 1 I briefly outline the emergence of nationalism studies, by focusing on the debate around their analytical perspectives, and with particular reference to the problematic category of primordialism. In Chapter 2 I further illustrate the features of the Japanese hegemonic discourse on national identity, by emphasizing its interpretation as a nationalist ideology and by highlighting its primordialist narrative. The second part is dedicated to the case studies, Suzuki Takao and Watanabe Shōichi, each discussed in a standalone chapter. The research approach is based on literary review, through one significative essay for each scholar. The analysis of their nationalist interpretations, along with the style and vocabulary used, will reveal the centrality of primordialism to the Japanese nation.

The ultimate aim of this book is to contribute to the study of Japanese national identity, by attempting to frame it within an international, comparative perspective. As Yoshino already pointed out in 1992, the research on *Nihonjinron* is limited because of the lack of a true comparative perspective and the persistence of the assumption according to which a similar intellectual activity is peculiar to Japan only (Yoshino 1992: 30). Although this work is not intended to explicitly compare *Nihonjinron* with other nationalist discourses, its insights on Japan may be relevant within a broader theoretical context, for questioning the dynamics of the nationalist discourse in general.

Most importantly, this study wants to trigger a theoretical reflection on the growing politization of the Japanese identity discourse and its future developments. Will it be possible for younger generations to change this identity paradigm or, at least, to promote a milder version of Japanese-ness than Suzuki's and Watanabe's? Or will a reactionary and anachronistic stance prevail in the definition of the Japanese national character? As Merker observes, we should begin from an exploration that systematically unearths and critically analyzes the argumentative structures, the historical and logical modules, the levels of theoretical validity, the conceptual functioning of discourses on the nation that gradually followed one after another during modern times, in connection with historical events (Merker 2001: 14). This is all the more compelling nowadays, as we need to navigate revitalizing nationalisms, while trying to avoid the same mistakes humanity made in the past. Finally, this research welcomes the invitation by political scientist John Coakley to seriously reconsider primordialism, advocating for terminological clarity within the study of nationalism, currently hindered by persistent misunderstandings and confusion.

PART I

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. What is a 'Nation'?

A completely new world of languages, ethics, inclinations, and peoples – there begins a new age – a sight as though of the broad, revealing [*offenbar*] sea of new nations. (Herder 1774/2012: 291)

1.1. From the Idea to the Theory of Nationalism. The Emergence of Nationalism Studies

The academic study of nationalism has very recent origins. Notwithstanding the fact that many European intellectuals started to investigate the idea of nationalism as an ideology and a socio-political movement since the eighteenth century, the beginning of a keen engagement for a scientific analysis of the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' traces back to the period between 1918 and 1945. A lively debate on the topic of nationalism has nevertheless started to develop only since the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of the decolonization process. In the following decades, the topic of nationalism took off and became one of the most popular and most researched in the social sciences. It gave birth to an immense, specific literature consisting of introductory texts, handbooks, readers, monographs, encyclopedias, specialized journals, and to the institution of research centres, new academic programs, internet networks. It also led to the impressive spreading of a scholarship cataloging and classifying the various theories of nationalism.

Despite the growing relevance of the reality of nationalism, during the twentieth century the social and political theory belatedly and only

progressively focused its attention on this subject for two main reasons (Özkırmırlı 2017: 5-6; Billig 1995: 37-39). Firstly, the indifference towards nationalism as an independent discipline due to the conservatism and rigidity of certain well-established sciences such as sociology, political sciences and international studies. Not only was nationalism regarded as something “out of fashion” by traditional academic thinking, but the concept of ‘nation’ itself has been taken for granted and reified for a long time by many social and political scientists. Michael Billig specifically points at mainstream sociology as the main responsible for having construed society in the image of a nation-state. Secondly, nationalism has often been reduced to its most extreme and visible manifestations – separatism or right-wing extremism – or confined to periphery as a feature of “others”, external to one’s own everyday life.

In this chapter, I will first outline the theoretical framework of nationalism studies, by briefly introducing the historical stages of its developments and the current categorization ideated and popularized by Anthony Smith. Smith has been a key figure in naming, ordering and structuring the numerous discussions around ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’. However, he also engendered new theoretical challenges concerning the nature of his own categorization. The problems surrounding Smith’s categories, in particular that of primordialism, will be the object of the second part of this chapter, where I will propose to reinterpret primordialism as a category of practice. Ultimately, I will attempt to provide an overall conceptualization of the keywords of this work, that is ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’.

1.1.1. Evolutionary Stages

Although a scholarly interest for the theorization of nationalism dates back to recent times, structured reflections on the phenomenon started to arise since the eighteenth century. Considering the difficulty of defining the fragmentary observations by German romantic and illuminist thinkers as veritable theories on nationalism, the academia usually does not consider this period as precursor of the emergence of debates on nationalism, nor agree on whom and which ideas really contributed to the genesis of the nationalist thought. However, the reflections of these thinkers who contributed the most since the eighteenth century to the emergence of heated discussions on the concepts

of 'nation' and 'nationalism' should be included in the evolutionary overview of the nationalism studies.

On the whole, four evolutionary stages could be identified in the reflection on and the study of nationalism (Özkırmılı 2017: 11-12, 32, 47). The first phase coincides with the period between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the idea of nationalism was born in the wake of the observations by such authors as Rousseau, Kant, Herder, Fichte, Renan, Durkheim, Weber, von Treitschke, Michelet. This stage is crucial to fully understand the beginning of the academic investigation on nationalism, whose fundamental characters did not arise *ex nihilo*.

The second phase between 1918 and 1945 marks the rise of the academic inquiry of nationalism. It is firstly attested in the pioneering works by Carleton Hayes (1926, 1931), Hans Kohn (1944), Edward Carr (1945), Louis Snyder (1935), Alfred Cobban (1945), who treated nationalism as something to be explained. They were the first scholars to highlight the historical novelty of nationalism and the factors which engendered it, although they failed to problematize the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationality' and shared a moralistic tone like their predecessors.

The third stage, stretching from 1945 and 1989, coincides with the proliferation of studies on nationalism in the wake of the creation of the new States in Africa and Asia after decolonization. It led to the diversification, enrichment, consolidation and interdisciplinarity of the theoretical debate on nationalism, notably thanks to the contributions of modernization theorists as Daniel Lerner (1958) and Karl Deutsch (1953), modernists as Elie Kedourie (1960), Eric Hobsbawm (1983, 1990), Benedict Anderson (1983), Ernest Gellner (1983), and subsequently the prolific work of Adam Smith (1986, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2010).

Ultimately, a last phase starting in 1989 up to the present may be outlined. The identification of a fourth stage, despite the general tendency in the field to consider a sole phase since 1945 onwards, is due to the recognition of an intellectual break occurred during the 1990s. This gap generally entailed the problematization of classical debate's excessive concern for certain issues as the origin of nations and the rejection of the grand narratives or meta-theories to explain the nationalist phenomenon in its totality. Many of the works published from

that moment sought to add new dimensions to the analysis of the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism', by questioning the common habit to take the 'nation-state' for granted, as a natural framework in which to place historical facts and urging the necessity of combining macro and micro-levels of analysis together. This stage is thus characterized by a general critique of the basic premises of mainstream academic research on nationalism and the attempt to overcome its "methodological nationalism" – i.e. the common tendency to conflate the concepts of 'society' and 'nation' and to assume the naturalness of nations as a form of social order. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the contributions of Michael Billig (1995), Rogers Brubaker (2004) and Craig Calhoun (1997, 2007) as examples of innovative perspectives in the study of nationalism. In this sense, Billig's "banal nationalism" has become very popular, for stressing that nationhood «is near the surface of contemporary life» and is not at all far away from the everyday activities of common people or even the intellectual life of many social scientists who deny it for themselves, project it to other external realities or naturalize it (Billig 1995: 6-8; 16, 93).

1.1.2. Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspectives still in force in the studies of nationalism are the product of the categorization proposed and often revised by the influential scholar Anthony Smith. Among the numerous labels coined by Smith during his prolific academic career, five main "paradigms" – as he defined them - in the nationalism studies could be identified: 1) primordialism; 2) perennialism; 3) modernism; 4) postmodernism and 5) ethno-symbolism. They remained basically unchanged since his major theoretical work, *Nationalism and Modernism. A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (1998). I here quote Smith's classification in order to contextualize the discussion that will follow on the main issues around the theoretical debate on nationalism and, notably, the debate on primordialism as a category of analysis (Smith 1998: 223-225):

- 1) PRIMORDIALISTS attempt to understand the passion and self-sacrifice characteristic of nations and nationalism by deriving them from 'primordial' attributes of basic social and cultural phenomena like language, religion, territory, and especially kinship. Primordialist approaches,

whether of the cultural or the sociobiological varieties, have sensitized us to the intimate links between ethnicity and kinship, and ethnicity and territory, and have revealed the ways in which they can generate powerful sentiments of collective belonging. This is evident, not only in the works of van den Berghe and Geertz, but also in Grosby's research on ancient Israel.

2) PERENNIALISM views nations over the *longue durée* and attempts to grasp their role as long-term components of historical development—whether they are seen as temporally continuous or recurrent in history. Perennialists tend to derive modern nations from fundamental ethnic ties, rather than from the processes of modernization. Perennialist approaches, like those of Fishman, Armstrong, Seton-Watson and, in respect of ethnicity, Connor and Horowitz, have contributed greatly to our understanding of the functions of language and ethnic ties, and the power of myths of origin and familial metaphors, in rousing popular support for nationalism. Here they serve as valuable correctives to the more extreme modernist interpretations and remind us of continuities and recurrences of ethnic phenomena.

3) MODERNISTS seek to derive both nations and nationalism from the novel processes of modernization, and to show how states, nations and nationalisms, and notably their elites, have mobilized and united populations in novel ways to cope with modern conditions and modern political imperatives. Modernist approaches like those of Anderson and Hobsbawm have been particularly illuminating in uncovering the role of discursive networks of communication and of ritualized activities and symbolism in forging national communities. Scholars such as Mann, Breuilly, Tilly and Giddens have done much to demonstrate the formative role of the state, warfare and bureaucracy, while the often-decisive role of political elites and their strategies has been explored by scholars like Brass and Hechter. This is paralleled by the work on the intelligentsia's seminal role by Hroch, Nairn and others, who have developed the powerful insights and wide-ranging analyses of Gellner and Kedourie.

4) POSTMODERN analyses have revealed the fragmentation of contemporary national identities, and suggest the advent of a new 'post-national' order of identity politics and global culture. Analyses of such post-modern themes as fragmentation, feminism and globalization can be seen as continuations of components of the modernist paradigm. Some of them, notably those of Bhabha, Chatterjee and Yuval-Davis, have

embraced a 'postmodernist' deconstructionism, whereas others—for example, those of Mosse, Schlesinger, Kandiyoti, Brubaker and Billig—are intent on exploring novel postmodern dimensions. Though they may eschew a more general theory of nationalism, they embody significant advances in our understanding of the dynamics of identity in plural Western societies.

5) ETHNO-SYMBOLISM aims to uncover the symbolic legacy of ethnic identities for particular nations, and to show how modern nationalisms and nations rediscover and reinterpret the symbols, myths, memories, values and traditions of their ethno-histories, as they face the problems of modernity. Here too the attempts by Armstrong, Hutchinson and myself to trace the role of myths, symbols, values and memories in generating ethnic and national attachments and forging cultural and social networks, have added to our appreciation of the subjective and historical dimensions of nations and nationalism. This is matched by a parallel concern with investigating the ways in which nationalists have rediscovered and used the ethno-symbolic repertoire for national ends, in particular the myths and memories of ethnic election, sacred territory, collective destiny and the golden age.

Both the categorization and nomenclature present several difficulties with regards to the terminology employed and the theoretical classification underlying it, and they also entail problematic implications for the contemporary debate on nationalism.

1.1.3. Problematic Aspects of Current Categorization

A first concern is related to a central question in contemporary debate: «When is a nation?» (Connor 2004: 35). Following the skepticism expressed by Walker Connor, Özkırımlı holds that this question – as interesting as it may be from a historiographic point of view - should not deserve all the attention received until now for being impossible to exactly identify the origin of a nation, whose formation is a historical process and whose definition is highly arbitrary and subjective (Connor 2004: 45; Özkırımlı 2017: 229). This question also presumes the ontological existence of the entity called "nation", thus falling into the mental habit of methodological nationalism. It is also not clear how the answer to this question would benefit to the global understanding of the nationalist phenomenon.

This criticality derives from a broader problem inherent to the existing partition of theories on nationalism into “theories” and “paradigms”. Several analyses classified as “theories” on nationalism are not theories, nor they intend to be so. It is not even clear whether a true theory on nationalism does exist or not. Most of the analyses since the second part of the last century should not be defined as such - i.e. logically coherent formulations of a set of principles and general laws that allow to universally describe, interpret, classify nationalism.

‘Paradigm’ is a term introduced in the social scientific jargon by Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) and employed by Adam Smith to stress the need to overcome the old paradigms and proclaim the emergence of alternative ones (Smith 1998: 3). Smith follows the original usage of the term without explaining the source, conferring to its categories the status of coherent traditions in scientific research. However, his paradigms are far from implying a set of methodological rules, explicative models, criteria to resolve problems concerning the studies of nationalism, for the fact of being highly arbitrary. Not all the scholars labeled as “primordialists” accept this “external” definition, which neither reflects the nature of their work. Sometimes it could even be misleading and inappropriate, as I will argue in the next paragraph in the case of Shils and Geertz. Smith’s taxonomy simplifies and does not consider the high internal variation among the theories gathered in one category or the change over time of the intellectual position by some scholars monolithically partitioned.

Classification also depends on the person who realizes the partition: many different labels defining the same writing may exist, depending on the reviewer’s individual interpretation. For instance, John Armstrong is a “perennialist” according to Smith, an “ethnicist” according to Hutchinson and an “ethnosymbolist” according to several others; Walker Connor is labeled either as a “primordialist” or “modernist”. On this point, Smith’s typology does not exhaust or replace the range of the numerous existing labels, widely used in ethnicity studies and other social sciences, but it adds further terminological confusion.

Moreover, Smith’s categories are not mutually exclusive, but they seem to partially overlap or to be complementary. The most evident example is represented by the couple “primordialism / perennialism”, apparently two ways of explaining why nations exist since centuries – the former by emphasizing a quasi-genetic or natural persistence, the latter

by sustaining historical continuity. The difference between these two categories is so subtle as to induce some analysts to encompass perennialism within the category of primordialism (e.g. Özkırımlı 2017: 52). Similarly, “modernism” is sufficiently broad to embrace the two remaining categories, which all assume the modernity of nations: postmodernism and ethno-symbolism could be seen as variants stressing different aspects of modernity rather than opposing modernism. One may also doubt of the analytical usefulness of ethno-symbolism and perennialism, since they are described as two distinct categories despite their theoretical similarities.

Overall, among the categories developed by Smith, “primordialism” – along with those very similar of “perennialism” and “ethno-symbolism” – appears to be the most problematic and difficult to maintain as a category of scientific analysis, as I will demonstrate in the paragraph below. Yet, it enshrines meanwhile a potential as a descriptor of the ideological nucleus of any nationalism, namely as a category of social practice. In this sense, it traces back to the philosophical origins of nationalism itself: the German organic conception of nations, arisen between the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

1.2. Primordialism as an Ideology

In order to propound primordialism as a fundamental component of nationalism, it is first necessary to return to a long-standing epistemological difference between the phenomenon studied and the analytical perspective adopted, namely between “categories of practice” and “categories of analysis” (Bourdieu 1972/2003: 175-326; Bourdieu 1987: 1; Brubaker 2004: 31-33, 83-87; Coakley 2017: 2). The former – sometimes also labeled as “native”, “folk” or “lay” categories – belong to everyday social experience, they are employed by ordinary social actors, while the latter encompass a cluster of more detached categories used by social scientists. This partition corresponds to that between “synthetical” and “analytical” proceedings, respectively referring to a cognitive act that attains an elaborated and unitary representation or knowledge from simple and partial elements, and the description and interpretation of a complex concept through the examination of its single constitutive elements. For instance, the importance of “nation” as a category of practice does not entail its use as

a category of analysis. Claims in the name of assumed nations have been central to politics for longtime and they continue to be invoked even today, but this does not imply the designation of ontological entities to understand and analyze the nationalistic assertions by the social scientist. It is not necessary to take a category peculiar to the nationalistic practice and make it fundamental to the theory of nationalism. Similarly, it is not necessary to use "race" analytically to understand and explore the socio-political racial and racialist practices.

As I will argue in this paragraph, this theoretical preamble should be extended also to the category of primordialism, firstly assessed in terms of a category of analysis - as it has been used until the present - and subsequently limited as a useful category of practice.

1.2.1. Primordialism as a Category of Analysis: An Assessment

As analysts, we should certainly try to *account* for the ways in which - and conditions under which - this practice of reification, this powerful crystallization of group feeling, can work. But we should avoid unintentionally *doubling* or *reinforcing* the reification of ethnic groups in ethnopolitical practice with a reification of such groups in social analysis. (Brubaker 2004: 10)

It was from the second edition of *Theories of Nationalism* that Anthony Smith started to introduce the label 'primordialist', with reference to a small group of scholars such as Edward Shils, Clifford Geertz, Joshua Fishman and Pierre van den Berghe (Smith 1983: xxix; Coakley 2017: 6, 9). Smith presents here two schools of thought regarded as characterizing the study of the ethnic phenomenon, which would have inspired and produced several relevant studies on the political role of ethnic ties and movements in different parts of the world: the "primordialist" and the "instrumentalist".

Subsequently, in *The Ethnic Origins of Nation* Smith proposed to classify the writings of certain scholars as "modernist" and "primordialist" and to distinguish within primordialists some particular claims which he identified as "perennialist" (Smith 1986: 7-13). Then, in *National Identity*, Smith identified the so-called "modernists",

characterized by an antithetical approach to that of primordialists (Smith 1991: 43-51, 183) and, in a following discussion, he pointed out a “primordialist” and a “perennialist” alternative to the “modernist fallacy” (Smith 1995: 29-50). In a subsequent stage, he introduced another hybrid approach, theoretically conceptualized yet not defined previously, which he named as “ethno-symbolism” (Smith 1998: 190-198). Finally, in *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (2001) Smith maintains the previously depicted terminology, although the perennialist position was then replaced by a “neo-perennialist” one (Smith 2009) and his approach changed over the years.

As mentioned hitherto, the most evident problem concerning primordialism¹ arises when it comes to label certain scholars as “primordialists”. In this regard, it is useful to consider the first scholars labeled as such by Smith, with a special reference to Shils (1957) and Geertz (1963). It is generally thought that Edward Shils has been the first social scientist to have employed the adjective ‘primordial’ in the description of family relations, while the scholar who (unintentionally) would have caused a heated debate around the emerging category of primordialism was Geertz, although he does not employ the term himself (Özkırıklı 2017: 51-52; Smith 1998: 151-152).

In “Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties”, Shils attempted to develop a personal interpretation of the role of primary groups in the reproduction and modification of the larger society (Shils 1957: 140-142). He argued that the mutual attachment among the members of an extended family derives from the possession of certain especially “significant relational” qualities, describable only as “primordial”. In other words, the attachment to another member of one’s kinship group is not just a function of interaction, but it exists also where the mutual affection is not great because «a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood» (Shils 1957: 142). Shils should not be regarded as a primordialist, since he does not assert to believe in the factual existence of primordial qualities, but he investigates on the *perception* of the primordiality of such bonds in social actors' minds, on the significance *attributed* to certain types of attachments. In fact, he came to the conclusion that, in the study of social groups, scientists should take into account also certain proprieties of the organism in

¹ I treat perennialism as a form or variant of primordialism.

relation to the environment, biological relatedness, territorial location, unconnected with the social structure and distinguished from classificatory properties such as sex and age, because they are taken into account in the real actions and conducts of human beings.

Similar considerations could be extended to Geertz, who recovered the adjective 'primordial' firstly used by Shils to concretely explain the problem of the so-called "sub-nationalism" of the new postcolonial States. In *Old Societies and New States*, Geertz maintained that the central problem pertaining state formation in postcolonial territories (Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, India, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria) considered as societies, was their tendency to exhibit a serious feeling of disaffection toward the State, by evoking "primordial attachments" instead of civil sentiments:

By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the "givens" - or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the *assumed* "givens" - of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. (Geertz 1963: 109, italics added)

An ineffable, overpowering coerciveness is attributed to these attachments: a person is automatically bound to one's kin, neighbor, fellow believer by virtue of «some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself» (Geertz 1963: 109). Geertz attributes the quality of being natural to the social actors' *perception* of the primordality of certain qualities felt as indescribable, given, overwhelming. He does not suggest the reality of primordality of the ties he speaks of, but he clearly refers to the *perception* of primordality. It is the social actors who believe in the existence of primordial bonds by attributing naturality to the "givens of social existence", not Geertz.

As one may note, the label of "primordialism" appears to be absolutely inappropriate and misleading, based on a misunderstanding of Shils and Geertz's writings. This terminological and conceptual confusion is also due to the fact that the authors labeled as "primordialists" or claimed to embrace primordialism" never employ these terms or identify themselves with the category. They simply make use of the

adjective 'primordial', not of 'primordialist' or 'primordialism' to mark the belonging to a certain school of thought.

From this overview, the difficulty of pursuing the labelling of the most prominent scholars of the nationalism studies is self-evident. Paradoxically, Smith himself has been defined as "primordialist" by Kevin Doak, according to whom primordialists are those scholars claiming that nations are rooted in ancient ethnic identities underlying modern or civic forms of nationality (Doak 2007: 11), while his ethno-symbolism is reasonably judged as a mere "theoretically-respectable primordialism" by Maxwell (Maxwell 2020: 838). It is likewise strenuous to find in contemporary academic world, scholars who identify themselves as strictly "primordialist analysts" or support a straightforward primordialism (Coakley 2017: 11; Maxwell 2020: 827). Recently, several academicians who elected themselves as "defenders of primordialism" have appeared – as Steven Grosby (2001, 2005, 2016), Francisco Gil-White (1999), Stephen Van Evera (2001), Murat Bayar (2009). However, their writings should not be classified according to Smith's primordialist paradigm, since they do not imply the belief in the primordiality of the qualities defined as such. For instance, Grosby attempts to return to the original meaning of "primordial", by emphasizing its heuristic value in the recognition of kinship as one among the many persistent orientations of self-classification having a bearing on human action (Grosby 2016).

The inappropriateness of classifying certain scholars as primordialists derives from a terminological and conceptual confusion within "primordialism" itself and, thus, its definition as category of analysis. Smith himself uses different terms to refer to his paradigm. At times, he employs the adjective 'primordialist' referring to some scholar's thought or approach to nationalism (Smith 1983, 1986, 1998, 2001). Elsewhere, he explicitly uses 'primordialism' to indicate an analytical category centered on the belief in the primordial character of some attributes of social existence by some scholars (Smith 1998, 2001). He also uses terminological variants such as "cultural primordialism" or "primordialism II" associated to Shils and Geertz's works, and 'primordialism I' in relation to the organic interpretation of nation by German romantics in the nineteenth century (Smith 1998: 147). As for "primordialism I", Smith holds that its most relevant aspect is represented by the concepts of biology and "primordial ties" in relation to nationality.

He argues that these ideas flowed into two notorious theoretical critiques to modernism, which could be both named as “primordialist” – one basically biological in its character (van den Berghe), the other cultural (Shils e Geertz). However, he recognizes that apart from these references to biology and culture, none of these “primordialist” critiques has something to do with organic nationalism. Smith himself writes that:

Neither Geertz nor Shils regarded primordial ties as purely matters of emotion ... Nor did they regard primordiality as inhering in the objects themselves, but only in the perceptions and emotions they engendered ... This is the language of perception and belief, of the mental and emotional world of the individuals concerned. Geertz is underlining the power of what we might term a ‘participants’ primordialism’; he is not saying that the world is constituted by an objective primordial reality, only that many of us believe in primordial objects and feel their power. (Smith 1998: 157-158)

The problem surrounding primordialism consists exactly of using the same term to describe at the same time essentialist and naturalizer approaches to the concept of ‘nation’ – which underlie the belief in its existence and primordiality – and approaches investigating instead this belief. In other words, in most theoretical discussions on nationalism, the essential distinction between *perceived* givens and *actual* givens is omitted and the so-called “primordialists” are depicted as “analytical naturalizers” instead of “analysisists of naturalizers”: the problem lies in the uncontrolled conflation of synthetical and social understandings with the analytical and sociological ones (Gil-White 1999: 803; Brubaker 2004: 32-33, 83). Already in 1995, Connor highlighted the tendency of social sciences to ignore the fundamental distinction between ‘fact’ and ‘perception of the fact’, which caused a negligence in the study of the nature of national ties (Connor 1995: 121, 125).

On the whole, Smith’s nomenclature marked the beginning of many controversies often based on the misunderstanding of Shils and Geertz’s thought and statements, notably the issue of the existence of primordial ties. One may remember Eller and Coughlan’s sharp critique against both Shils and Geertz, accused of being themselves

“naturalizers”, of reifying the primordality of the entities perceived as real by social actors (Eller & Coughlan 1993). Smith’s categorization of these scholars as “primordialists” also engendered much terminological confusion still characterizing nationalism studies and only recently questioned.

At the same time, it is crucial to stress the significance and the influence of Shils and Geertz’s socio-anthropological analyses in the study of nationalism, with respect to the tricky, controversial, unsolved (unresolvable?) issue on the essence of nations, of the reasons why human beings sacrifice and burn with passion on their behalf. This is all the more relevant if one considers the historically variable, but persistent and ubiquitous beliefs around the significance of birth or nativity, in particular the connections derived from being biologically bounded or born in a specific territory (Grosby 1994: 164). Shils and Geertz’s analyses and their emphasis on the primordial paved the way for a long debate in this direction, which is not yet extinguished or overcome.

In the light of the above considerations, I bear up Coakley’s provocative proposal suggesting to reinterpret primordialism as an ideology or category of practice (Coakley 2017: 2). I argue that it would be very useful in scientific research to consider primordialism as a descriptive term to designate the core of the nationalist ideology rather than an analytical category unfolded to explain the essence or the nature of nation. This is even more intriguing when considering the persistent ambiguity and arbitrariness surrounding the term proved by the ample literature mentioning but never clarifying it, the space occupied by primordialism in contemporary discussions on nationalism and the division among scholars between those absolutely rejecting it and those admitting its theoretical and epistemic value.² More importantly, the theoretical recognition of primordialism as a category of practice might surface the indirect, yet widespread academic primordialism,

² For instance: Adamski (2008); Aldoughli (2022); Allahar (1996); Antonsich (2015); Atsuko & Uzelac (2005); Bairner (2009); Bayar (2009, 2017); Billig (1995); Breuille (1996); Brown (2000); Cohen (1999); Conversi (2002, 2007); Dieckhoff (2016); Eriksen (2004, 2010); Fishman (2002); Gareth (2008); Gat (2013); Greenfeld (2006); Gusfield (1996); Haque (2015); Harvey (2000); Horowitz (2002); Jackson-Preece (2010); Joireman (2003); Mahmudlu (2017); Matsuo (1992); Maxwell (2020); Muro (2015); Pargeter (2016); Resnick (2012); Shahabuddin (2014); Springborg (1986); Suny (2001); van Evera (2001); Vermeersch (2011).

especially in case study history writing dominating in school curricula (Maxwell 2020: 827, 838-839).

1.2.2. "Primordialism" as a Category of Practice: A Reinterpretation

Would not it be more fruitful, hence, to limit the term to describe the central belief that nation-ness is a human natural and intrinsic characteristic and that nations have always existed? In this paragraph, I will accordingly trace back to Herder and Fichte's ideas on nation, to their subsequent developments during the nineteenth century, to emphasize the genealogy of primordialism as a category of practice and as introduction to Watanabe and Suzuki. I will finally provide an overarching schema of the beliefs that can be associated to primordialism.

1.2.2.1. On the Philosophical Origins of Primordialism: Herder and Fichte's Organicism

The most ancient paradigm of nations and nationalism is the organicist version of nation, a theory initially developed by the German romantic intellectuals grounded on the concept of naturalness of a nation and pioneered by their forerunners, Herder and Fichte. Their ideas represent the philosophical foundations to fully understand the emergence of nationalism and the source of primordialism as a category of practice: the German organic version of nationalism is identifiable with nationalism in general.

According to organicism, every organic product is an individual existing for itself (its existence is separated from that of other organic wholes), it is the product of itself (every organism endlessly self-generates), it is cause and effect of itself. Besides, according to a more strictly spiritualistic and vitalistic perspective, a living organism produced by nature is animated by and intimately connected to an ordering and unifying spirit, a vital force (Abbagnano & Fornero 2007: 848-849).

Herder indeed described the nation as a natural, organic entity, a unitary totality «where already in every individuality there appears such a whole» (Herder 1774/2012: 356). This whole is not a mere aggregate, but a system of interrelated functions, which condition each other (Barnard 1983: 36). Nation is compared to a spontaneous plant,

growing and developing in a natural garden. It is an organism *per se*, with its own individual historical and cultural characteristics, different from other similar organisms, yet interconnected and interacting with them, necessary to the whole and having equal status to other nations (Barnard 1965: 37, 58-59).

It developed through «internal powers, for which Nature has prepared a mass, which they are to fashion, and in which they are to display themselves» called *Genesis* (formation), the product of a growth ruled by natural law (Herder 1784-1791/1800: 111, 239). (Snyder 1990: 136; Longo 2018: 72; Viroli 1995: 117; Barnard 1983: 246; Berlin 1976: 163). Nation is thus conceived as the product of vital, organic and overwhelming forces capable of animating, shaping, bounding and weaving together in a harmonic and complex way its parts into a common unity, a whole (Snyder 1990: 136; Viroli 1995: 115, 117; Barnard 1965: 36; Herder 1784-1791/1800: 180). The medium through which such organic forces operate is called *Kraft*, an immanent vital energy, a «stream of celestial fire», «this invisible spirit of celestial light and fire, which penetrates every living thing, and unites all the powers of nature» (Herder 1784-1791/1800: 112-113), a process in time. Nation is a progression, a continuous development, construed on the past and at the same time base for the future – as this metaphorical image suggests:

Do you see this river current [Strom] swimming along – how it sprang forth from a little source, grows, breaks off there, begins here, ever meanders, and bores further and deeper [...] Or do you see that growing tree!, that upwards-striving human being!, having to pass through diverse ages of life!, all manifestly in progress!, a striving one for the other in continuity! (Herder 1774/2012: 298-299)

Its essence firstly derives from naturalistic, ecological, geographical and climatic factors, to which habits, customs and a common language may add as additional binding elements (Merker 2001: 21). In particular, language, or better one's mother tongue, is viewed as the most natural and indispensable criterion for the socio-political association, for the creation of the *Volk* - a kind of family writ large sharing a particular historical tradition grounded on a particular language (Barnard 1976: 30, 54, 57). The mother tongue represents a window to the reign of

concepts, knowledge and socio-cultural meaning, tradition, history, religion, life principles of a particular nation (Berlin 1976: 169; Merker 2001: 91; Barnard 1965: 58, 73, 161):

For our mothertongue was simultaneously the first world that we saw, the first sensations that we felt, the first efficacy and joy that we tasted! The side ideas of place and time, of love and hate, of joy and activity, and whatever the fiery, turbulent soul of youth thought to itself in the process, all gets made eternal along with it. Now *language really becomes tribal core* [Stamm]! (Herder 1772/2002: 143)

Since human being is regarded as “a creature of the herd, of society”, the formation of languages becomes natural, essential and necessary: this is the second natural law characterizing human languages (Herder 1772/2002: 139). For Herder, language is something internal, it expresses the most intimate, emotional and hidden part of an individual as a member of a national community.

Indeed, the third natural law indicated by Herder posits that as well as the human species could not remain a single herd, it could not retain a single language, but diverse national languages arose: «Each race will bring into its language *the sound belonging to its house and family*; this becomes, in terms of pronunciation, a different dialect» (Herder 1772/2002: 147-148). Language is ultimately the manifestation of national particularism, connecting national members through a “genetical”, dynamic, mysterious and ineffable force, an inherent characteristic distinguishing a *Volk* from another (Snyder 1990: 136; Kedourie 1961: 62, 64; Viroli 1995: 117; Barnard 1983: 242-243; Barnard 1965: 38, 57, 120-121; Berlin 1976: 165, 168-169, 176). Language is the means through which human beings acknowledge their inner self, yet it represents meanwhile the key to understand external relations. It both connects and differentiates people, it links them to their past, by revealing past generations' thoughts, sentiments, prejudices, profoundly rooted in their consciousness (Barnard 1965: 57). Hence, it turns to be the vehicle of the particularistic ethnic, nativistic spirit of the *Volk* (*Volksgeist*), the expression of the group collective experience, being capable of simultaneously arousing a common sense of identity and acknowledging their idiosyncrasy and difference. Language embodies the living manifestation of the historical growth and the

psychological matrix by means of which human awareness of its distinctive social heritage is aroused and deepened (Barnard 1965: 57).

The importance of language in Herder's philosophy may be fully grasped when reading the following words:

Speech alone has rendered man human, by setting bounds to the vast flood of his passions, and giving them rational memorials by means of words. [...] By it men welcomed one another into society, and knit the bonds of love. It framed laws, and united families [...] By it my thinking mind is connected with the mind of the first man that thought, and probably of the last. In short, language is the mark of our reason, by which alone it acquires and propagates forms. (Herder 1791/1800: 233-234)

Among all the forms of human linguistic expression, poetry is held as the best place where to find the most naïf, primordial, and original element inborn in every human being, the living soul of a people. Poetry is a «precious, germinal and auroral moment», characterizing every time and every country in human history (Venturi 1951: xiv-xv).

Nation, as a natural division of humankind, a *sui generis* community equipped with its own language, a vital organism, a growth as much natural as family, an extended, branched out version of it (Barnard 1983: 241-243; Barnard 1965: 58, 142), possesses its own laws, potentialities and limitations. For Herder, the most natural State is a national, organic, a *Volk-State* - a sort of extended family with only one distinctive national character (Herder 1784-1791/1800: 249; Barnard 1965: xix, 63, 67).

This living organism does not develop to the detriment of others, since the enlargement of States is considered as unnatural as the wild mixture of diverse nations under the same scepter: «the age of wishful foreign migrations and journeys abroad in hope is already sickness, bloating, unhealthy fullness, intimation of death!» (Herder 1774/2012: 26; Herder 1784-1791/1800: 249). Nationally mixed empires are judged as monstrosities, for lacking of internal vivification and sympathy among just mechanically connected parts. Instead, prejudice among people is positively regarded because it ties them together around their center, it «makes them firmer on their tribal stem, more blooming in their kind, more passionate and hence also happier in their

inclinations and purposes» (Herder 1774/2012: 297). The hatred and disdain springing from the encounter between two populations with a «particular national happiness» are not the sign of a «narrow-minded nationalism», but they are natural feelings originating from the distance and incompatibility of the respective national tendencies: «the most ignorant, most prejudiced nation is in such a regard often the first» (Herder 1774/2012: 297).

By celebrating the virtue of national differences, Herder aims at rejecting the illuminist universalism and advocates for the political order exemplified by ancient Jews, judged as the oldest and the best example of a *Volk* bestowed with a true national character, albeit their institutional and tribal fragmentations (Barnard 1983: 61-62). In such a quasi-pluralistic order, individuals are free of pursuing various interests and creating different autonomous institutions. Herder ultimately celebrates diversity, the plurality of all national cultures, the «great whole of the sequence», «the whole *unity of one, of all*, nations in all their *manifoldness*» (Herder 1774/2012: 293), without identifying a *Favoritvolk* and expressing an exclusivist nationalism (Berlin 1976: 186, 198; Barnard 1965: 58, 61).

The organicist conception of nature translated in political philosophy is sustained also by Fichte. He conceives the universe as an organic whole where each part exists only in relation to the entirety, resulting as more important than the former. Fichte frames his state theory within this organicist conception: the individual cannot be considered in its singularity, but exists by virtue of a superior whole. Human civil association (the State) is compared to an organism, while the single members to its limbs. Individual existence depends on one's own counterparts, as well as a member of an organism cannot exist by itself, without reciprocity among organic forces. However, individuals do not simply associate themselves to constitute themselves in a State, but first, they “naturally” gather in distinct nations. For Fichte, only people speaking a “living” language are entitled to be defined as “nations” and claim a State of their own (Kedourie 1961: 37-40).

In this regard, Fichte resumes the principle of distinctiveness by retaining Herder's idea of language as a vital element moulding, transmitting and preserving the character of a nation. Language is so crucial in Fichte's definition of nation to represent his main concern in *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (Addresses to the German Nation, 1807-1808). In

contrast to Herder, who indiscriminately exalted any civilization, people or language without privileging a *Favoritvolk*, Fichte significantly limits Herder's idea, by giving it an exclusivist and unilateral character (Berlin 1976: 163). He attributes the primacy to the sole "true", "pure" and "living" languages - the languages maintaining a direct and constant tie with a people's history, accompanying its evolution without being basically infected by other languages, and representing the expression of a people's concrete life and culture so as to be definable as *Muttersprache* (mother tongues) (Fichte: 1807-1808/1922: 54-55; Longo 2018: 196, 198; Abbagnano & Fornero 2007: 796):

The pure human language, in conjunction first with the speech-organ of the people when its first sound was uttered, and the product of these, in conjunction further with all the developments which this first sound in the given circumstances necessarily acquired — all this together gives as its final result the present language of the people. For that reason, too, the language always remains the same language. (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 57).

[...] a language continuously developed according to this law [a living language] has also the power of immediately affecting and stimulating life [...] So, in this respect also, the continuous progress of language, which broke forth in the beginning as a force of nature, remains uninterrupted, and into the stream of designation no arbitrariness enters. For the same reason the supersensuous part of a language thus continuously developed cannot lose its power of stimulating life in him who but sets his mental instrument in motion. The words of such a language in all its parts are life and create life. [...] To all who will but think the image deposited in the language is clear; to all who really think it is alive and stimulates their life even in the spiritual and abstract part of a language, developed with this rhythm of continuity [...] (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 60-61)

"Living" languages distinguish themselves from "dead" languages since their abstract and symbolic part has always remained intact, «comprehending at every step in complete unity the sum total of the sensuous and mental life of the nation deposited in the language, for the purpose of designating an idea that likewise is not arbitrary, but

necessarily proceeds from the whole previous life of the nation» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 68). In such languages, «symbol is itself directly living and sensuous, it represents all real life and so takes hold of and exerts an influence on life. [...] spirit speaks directly and reveals itself as man does to man» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 76). Fichte compares German, viewed as the only true and living language for being the *Ursprache* - the primitive and, thus, original language - to neo-Latin languages as French, dead in its roots, for deriving from Latin, a dead language, and thus stranger to the spirit of its speakers (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 52-71). Dead languages do not «stimulate anything directly; in order to enter the living stream of such a language one must first recapitulate knowledge acquired by the study of history from a world that has died, and transport one's self into an alien mode of thought» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 76-77). In fact, a people who, by giving up its own language, adopts a foreign one, at a spiritual level will only receive «the flat and dead history of a foreign culture, but not in any way a culture of their own. They get symbols which for them are neither immediately clear nor able to stimulate life, but which must seem to them entirely as arbitrary as the sensuous part of the language. For them this advent of history, and nothing but history, as expositor, makes the language dead and closed in respect of its whole sphere of imagery, and its continuous onward flow is broken off» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 63).

By contrast, a living language, «after thousands of years, and after all the changes undergone in that time by the external manifestation of the language of this people, it ever remains nature's one, same, living power of speech, which in the beginning necessarily arose in the way it did, which has flowed down through all conditions without interruption, and in each necessarily became what it did become, which in the end necessarily was what it now is, and in time to come necessarily will be what it then will be» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 57). Herder claimed that a person of a foreign language lives in a condition of artificiality, alienated from its spontaneous and instinctive sources of their personality. Fichte pushed himself further by attempting to demonstrate, for instance, that the mere presence of words of a foreign origin in an original language may enormously damage, or even invalidate the origins of political morality (Kedourie 1961: 64; Longo 2018: 197, 199; Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 65-67).

Only people speaking an original language are entitled to be defined as nations (Longo 2018: 203; Kedourie 1961: 67). In fact, speaking an original language should be regarded as equivalent to be loyal to one's national character, to develop the primitive and divine element originally inherent to a people. The fact of sharing this last aspect – defined by Fichte as “special law” – is «what unites this mass in the eternal world, and therefore in the temporal also, to a natural totality permeated by itself» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 135). The content of this law cannot be fully grasped from a conceptual point of view: national character is «the eternal thing to which he [the noble-minded man believing in the eternal continuance of his influence even on this earth] entrusts the eternity of himself and of his continuing influence, the eternal order of things in which he places his portion of eternity» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 136). Longing for this perpetuity is the tie through which man intimately bounds to himself his nation and then all humanity, it is the love for his people (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 135-136).

According to Fichte, only the Germans are the “original people” (*Urvolk*) thanks to the preservation of their language, spoken without interruption, «for men are formed by language far more than language is formed by men» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 55). It is the vitality of a language and not the homeland (the «primitive loci») or the race to constitute for the philosopher the “inner boundary” separating Germans from non-Germans (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 54, 72):

[...] the former [the Germans] have remained in the uninterrupted flow of a primitive language which develops itself continuously out of real life, whereas the latter [other people of Teutonic descent] adopted a language which was foreign to them and which under their influence has been killed.

For Fichte - at least at a theoretical level - nation is primarily a spiritual and moral community rather than an ethnic and historical one. Those speaking the same living language are naturally bounded with a plentitude of invisible ties by nature itself, they understand each other and represent an organic whole (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 4, 125). Hence, language becomes a distinctive sign of a particular group identity and a fundamental instrument guaranteeing its continuity

(Kedourie 1961: 70-72). Fichte initially labeled as "German" the human spirit that had achieved its supreme degree of spiritual and moral elevation, everyone believing in the existence of a primitive and original element in the individual, in freedom, in the spirit, in an infinite perfectibility, in the eternal progress of the human race (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 125-126). However, he ultimately identified as "German" the German people of his contemporaneity (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 147).

His reflections and this last identification brought to several theoretical consequences, important to keep in mind to understand the birth and emergence of other nationalisms throughout Europe. Fichte's conception of nation gradually led to a form of exclusivist nationalism (Longo 2018: 188). Firstly, the idea that national language is peculiar to a certain nation, only by virtue of its intrinsic biological distinctivity and homogeneity as a racial unit, became popular. Moreover, the formation of external boundaries and state-building were viewed as a natural extension of the nation, an organic entity subjected to natural laws, functioning as an attractive magnet for the speakers of the same language living outside the boundaries of the nation-state (Kedourie 1961: 70-72). In fact, a nation is regarded as naturally forming a State to protect its particularism and essence (Kedourie 1961: 68). Language, race, culture and sometimes religion, represent several aspects or attributes of the same primordial entity (nation), overlapped with the concepts of 'State' and 'society'. *One* nation is *one* homogeneous people, *one* language, *one* culture and *one* State.

Moreover, the evocation of the ancient history in support of the old origins of a nation and the overlapping of mythology and historiography represent two techniques widely-used by Fichte, subsequently becoming typical of the nationalistic rhetoric (Longo 2018: 188-194, 211). Notably, mythical-historical foundations are claimed in defining the features of the modern identity of the people at issue. Strictly connected to that, the manipulation of history and its partisan interpretation strengthen and give credibility to statements distorting reality and consolidating nationalist claims.

Another *modus operandi* identifiable in Fichte's writing and subsequently common in the nationalist rhetoric is the decontextualization of isolated examples regarded as demonstrating the concrete usage or the effective functioning of a certain principle (Longo 2018: 197-198).

The principle of the presumed ethic harmfulness of foreign words in an original language is thus attempted to be illustrated through a set of Latin words flown into German through French: *Popularität*, *Humanität*, *Liberalität* (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 64-67). Not only does Fichte maintain that the Germans cannot intuitively grasp the meaning of these words because of their Latin etymology, but he also considers them as the expression of Latin socio-political decadence for respectively meaning “search for mass favour”, “humanity in a spiritual sense”, “severance from servility”. For Fichte, the denotation of these terms underlies a very bad ethics of corruption, lack of seriousness in social relationships, bestiality, self-degradation, servility, dissoluteness. He propounded to express instead the underlying concepts with resemantized German words – *Menschenfreundlichkeit* (courtesy, kindness, amiability), *Leutseligkeit* (sociability, affability), *Edelmut* (noble-mindedness) – arguing that a German could immediately understand them without being infused with the vices entailed by the Latin words.

These outcomes resulted in another common feature of nationalistic mentality and ideology: inconsistency (Longo 2018: 197, 199). This occurs within the same rhetorical technique used to prove the correctness of a principle, as when Fichte mentions a term (‘idea’) derived from a foreign etymon (ancient Greek) but quoted as manifestation of German culture and ethos (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 59).

1.2.2.2. The German Romantic Fancies about the Primordial

Generally speaking, the most relevant aspect of organicism is the introduction of the concepts of biology, primordality and naturality of a nation, although in a rudimental form, so that the term ‘primordialism’ primarily indicates the romantic organicist theory. Herder’s biological metaphor of the organic whole was inherited by the nascent German romantic movement and applied to the definition of ‘nation’. The romantic nation is indeed conceived as a sort of natural organism, whose organs coincide with its members, naturally bounded through a tie of solidarity and affinity. In this way, organicism posits the timelessness of the entity called “nation”, its sameness thanks to its persistence through time, its idiosyncrasy and separateness from other national organisms. It becomes the natural division of humankind endowed with its own specific character, which is to be preserved pure and sacred, uncontaminated by its members (Hutchinson & Smith:

xxvi; Kedourie 1961: 58).

The quest for the mythical beginnings of nations and their ancient foundations, for primordiality as a source of value and universal foundation transcending present facts and annulling the sense of history, was the hallmark of the notion of 'nation' in Germany since the nineteenth century. It was in Germany that the paradigms of ethnic nation, ethnic State and ethnic territory was theorized as a doctrine. The idea that the nation-territory and the ownership of rights are ethnically marked and the vision of nation as a natural organism bound to "that little piece of land where one was born and raised" found its expression in the binomial *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil). It was likewise in Germany that the expression *Volkstum deutsches* was created to indicate the German "national" characteristics strongly connected to the ethnic descent and referring to the internal unity of the *Volk* - a primeval community deprived of any post-1789 liberal-democratic notion of 'people'. Amidst the mystifications inspired to naturalistic-organicist conceptions of the nation having an enduring support and contributing to the formation of the ideology of primordialism, it is significant to keep in mind the reflections of several remarkable intellectuals by virtue of their "fancies about the primordial". Due to their significance and reverberation in Watanabe and Suzuki, I will briefly present some of their pivotal ideas re-elaborated from Merker (Merker 2001: 10-13, 54, 56, 73, 83, 121, 164-165), who provides an efficacious genealogy of the intellectual ideas around the quest for the primordial in the nationalist thought.

The amalgam of spiritualistic metaphysics, naturalistic biologism and political legitimism by Edmund Burke (1729-1797) rapidly echoed and rooted in Germany, by virtue of its evocative rhetoric marked by the cult of ancestors, a blood-territorial community, and the exaltation of individual exclusive ethno-biological naturality. Burke's interpretation of nation as a pact among the living, the dead and those who will be born, was of a particular success. Nation is either interpreted as a metaphysical entity for its nexus between the "visible" and the "invisible", as a biological organism for the blood lineage bounding its members together, or as an invariable part of the divine order in the universe. Burke's idea of the existence of a national character as an immutable, eternal and inborn system of customs distinguishing any nation was likewise very popular.

Burke's legacy was inherited by Adam Müller (1779-1829), who claimed that nation is the sublime community of a long chain of past, present and future generations, united for life and death in a great and solid association. It is a sort of a metaphysical and metahistorical tie among the *Zeitgenossen* (contemporaries of different epochs), and between them and the *Raumgenossen* (the diachronic generations living within the same territory). The tangible symbols of this bond are represented by common territory and language. Müller developed Burke's axiom on the blood pact between the living and the dead and strengthened the ideology of *Blut und Boden*: the mystical community of the people does not tolerate strangers, dissidents, the different, critical voices challenging its founding dogmas.

Some decades later, Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) argued that the true foundation of a human collectivity is ethnic, in the sense of the chain of the generations descending from the same lineage. He maintained that a spirit - *Volksgeist* - merging the diachronic generations into one nation, and that 'nation' and 'nationality', are ultimately terms which clearly suggest a blood sharing. In France, the nationalist Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) asserted that the dead, the ancestors, the chain of generations and traditions constitute the mystical bond sacralizing the soil on which the descendants of the original ethnic community enjoy full rights and that nation's main task is to preserve itself.

Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) propounded instead a veritable theory on national character as a set of naturally inborn qualities of an ethnic stock, handed down by blood descent. The attribution to the national character of a substantial, metaphysical nature to make it appear an enduring and constant element of the transient phenomenal world, that is the metaphysical doctrine interpreting the nation as the incarnation of a mysterious "spirit of people", is what Otto Bauer critically defined as "national spiritualism". The community of lineage is corroborated by linguistic unity: language is the epiphenomenon of the ethnic stock, the expressive medium of primordial national characters, and also a criterion to determine the extension of a nation's boundaries and territorial legitimization.

The emphasis on the naturality or primordiality of a nation, its interpretation as *res nata* and not as *res facta* can be clearly found in Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852). He maintains that *Volkstum* designates the fact of living in symbiosis, the mutually silent and trustful

familiarity, a primordial force demarcating the true boundaries among nations. For Jahn, it is nature itself to have created the border separating people by means of physical elements, named it by language, consolidated it through writing and made it eternal.

The glorification of blood as a universal and exclusive virtue is reflected in Jacob Grimm (1785-1863). Everything (customs, law, language, nation) is *volksmässig* - homogeneous to a certain people intended as a stock, that primary original place of living organic progression from which a penetrating, overwhelming force springs. Therefore, the products of *Volk* have a metahistorical, "miraculous", "full of faith" character, they are "unapproachable".

Ultimately, another fortuitous mystification was the conception of the ethnic community as an immediate organic element to be experienced by intuition and participation of feelings. Intuition was stressed by romantics in their pursuit of the mythical primordiality of nation and it was subsequently emphasized by Houston Chamberlain (1855-1927). He conceived life as a higher and more sacred quality than any knowledge and identified the national belonging with racial instinct. According to Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), the supreme antidote against the loss of *völkisch* identity consists of preserving minds from rational reflection, since the intellect kills in the act itself of making somebody known, whereas vision vivifies. For Spengler, the glorified "living experience" is represented by the "conditionality of blood", the "facts of blood", the "blood community".

All these ideas concurred in the formation of the nationalist discourses which emerged and widespread throughout the European continent during the nineteenth century. Since they all share the common feature of evocating and presuming the primordial nature of a particular nation, their ideological core may be efficaciously described as "primordialism". Hence, "primordialism" could serve as a useful descriptor of the way by which nations are perceived and of the ideological source of nationalist discourses in the everyday practice of social actors.

1.2.2.3. Towards a Redefinition of "Primordialism"

Commonsense popular belief is on the side of the antiquity of nation. (Gellner 1997: 839)

If fact and perception of the fact are distinguished, it becomes immediately clear that a primordialist position works well in terms of category of practice, as object of analysis but not as a theoretical perspective in nationalism studies. If one also takes into account that the diffused propension to naturalize and essentialize racial, ethnic and national categories is probably at the foundation of the human cognitive apparatus, it is then possible to isolate the so-called “primordialism of participants”, without fostering an analytical primordialism. It is fundamental to regard nationhood as a cognition, as a way of «perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world», «not ontological but epistemological realities» (Brubaker 2004: 17, 79). In fact, essential and deep qualities are deduced on the grounds of superficial appearances, by filling arbitrary categorizations with deep meanings (Brubaker 2004: 83-84).

In this regard, a preliminary definition of primordialism as category of practice provided by Weinreich may be a useful starting point in the reinterpretation of primordialism:

Primordialism is defined as a sentiment, or affect laden set of beliefs and discourses, about a perceived essential continuity from group ancestry to progeny (perceived kith and kin), located symbolically in a specific territory or place (which may or may not be the current place of the people concerned). (Weinreich et al. 2003: 119)

More specifically, it is possible to outline a meaningful system of beliefs referred to the concept of ‘nation’, characterizing the ideology of primordialism, which I elaborated according to a semantic semblance criterion. It consists of a set of common and recurrent claims in nationalist rhetoric, useful to conceptualize in the form of beliefs as to recognize and reveal the essence of the nationalist project:

- NATURALITY OR PRIMORDIALITY. Nationhood is perceived as something given and, consequently, a nation as a biological, natural, organic, primordial entity. This implies that human beings are *naturally* divided into nations. Especially “national” languages are perceived to be primordial, suggesting the existence of homogeneous communities, primarily expressing themselves through poetry

and songs, and their intrinsic connection with the dead: «Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed» (Anderson 2006: 144-145, 154).

- THE PART FOR THE WHOLE. Nation is a community of people depending on each other, because it is by virtue of the sum of their efforts and actions that they guarantee the persistence and integrity of the entire community. Members of a nation cannot exist as autonomous individuals, they have no importance if considered in their singularity, but they represent a part and share a common destiny. Nation is then superior to individual: while the latter perishes, the former will always continue to exist thanks to the transmission of the "national spirit" generation after generation. Members of a nation are bounded together with emotional ties, regardless of the real or fictive kinship connecting them. Sentiments of solidarity and fraternity among nationals are likewise considered natural and primordial. In this sense, nation is conceived as a sort of spiritual community or better, as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983).
- INDIVISIBILITY AND SEPARATENESS. Nation is viewed as an organic, homogeneous and cohesive entity. It is characterized by a set of peculiar and distinctive traits, a recognizable common character, like a living organism. In this sense, nation is "limited" (Anderson 1983): it has precise symbolic boundaries, which materially and ideally separate it from other nations. This belief is supported by notions of "purity", "homogeneity", "inviolability".
- TERRITORIALITY. Nation as a biological community is associated to a specific territory. It is geographically located and ecologically determined. It is believed to be *naturally* entitled to possess or to be rooted in an original birthplace, to control a specific area of diffusion regarded as ancestral and primeval, whose morphology and climate have permanently shaped its character or spirit since immemorial times. Territory is judged fundamental in determining a particular way of being, a persisting local custom. It is interpreted as a natural prerequisite of being part of a nation, which turns out to be a biopolitical community.
- TEMPORAL CONTINUITY. The essence of a nation survives to historical vicissitudes, negative events, wars. Its character is transmitted through generations, stemming from a common ancestral stock of

a mythological origin. Nation persists. Persistence is the unbroken existence of an entity despite the change of some of its parts, attributes, contents. Not only is a nation's persistence ideational (spiritual, linguistic, ethical), but also biological (genotypical or "racial").

- CYCLICITY OR ATAVISM. Nation is a natural organism which reproduces by itself its own prominent features, its own essential character over time. Not always does the "spirit of nation" become manifest in the same way and with equal intensity, but it recurs and represents itself cyclically in its original and unchanged form. The term 'atavism' highlights the capacity of some national traits of suddenly surfacing after having remained latent for longtime. Cyclicity is a pivotal belief in the nationalist thought and it strongly recalls the belief in temporal continuity by virtue of its affinity to the concept of 'persistence'.
- ETERNITY AND SAMENESS. Nation, perceived as temporally continuous, consists of a set of enduring traits. 'Permanence' is the unaltered existence of the single constitutive traits of the persisting entity. Nation is indeed conceived as timeless, ahistorical, everlasting; thus, it is basically identical to itself. It is a monolithic, static organism, continuously regenerating its primordial and original form. Its origins may not be traced back to a specific moment, but they are connected to a remote and vague past situated in ancient history or even in prehistorical ages. The birth of a nation is shrouded in the primordial mists of a mythical ethnogenesis. In this sense, myth and history intermingle.
- SPIRITUALITY. Nation is seen as animated by a vital, creative spirit, a sort of collective conscience personifying national character, i.e. the entirety of moral, ethical traits determining nation's particularism and its everlasting essence. Usually, it is the national language which chiefly represents the vehicle and the epiphany of national genius.

'Primordialism' firstly refers to the belief that nation is a natural (primordial) entity. From this elementary assumption, all the other interconnected beliefs derive: nations are thus perceived as temporally antique and monolithic in their "essence", as biological, homogeneous bodies capable of surviving to the changes, harshness, roughness of

times and external events. The images of nation as a primary community persisting through the ages, an everlasting primordial entity rooted in two main axes of human existence – (real or perceived) kinship and territory of birth/residence – represent the common core of nationalist ideologies.

This interpretation of primordialism as an ingredient of nationalism focuses on the huge material produced by the elites as a part of the nationalist project (Coakley 2017: 3). Any nationalist discourse is characterized by an ideological primordialist component. What makes the difference from a discourse to another is the degree of pervasiveness and relevance attributed to primordialist beliefs, the intensity of a primordialist narrative, the variable presence of other elements as the value attributed to “civic” loyalties. ‘Primordialist’ indicates thus a position, a mental attitude, an idea or a belief characterizing nationalist ideologues (conscious and explicit) and the profane (unconscious and implicit), who submit the theoretical premises of nationalism - primordialism.

1.3. Mapping Nationalism Studies: An Attempt of Conceptualization

Defining and conceptualizing the nation is much more difficult because the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way. The nature of that bond and its well-spring remain shadowy and elusive, and the consequent difficulty of defining the nation is usually acknowledged by those who attempt this task. (Connor 1978: 379)

This term [nation] appears to express something important in human affairs. But what exactly? Here lies the mystery. [...] Walter Bagehot [...] with his usual common sense: ‘We know what is when you do not ask us, but we cannot very quickly explain or define it’. (Hobsbawm 1990: 1)

Many scholars of nationalism studies agree with the paramount difficulty of conceptualizing ‘nation’ and other related terms

(‘nationalism’, ‘nationality’, ‘national identity’, ‘nationalist feeling’), also considering the interlinguistic connotative nuances and varying terminological usage according to different intellectual traditions (Weber 1948; Gellner 1983; Snyder 1990; Hobsbawm 1990; Connor 1995; Viroli 1995; Conversi 2003; Campi 2004; Kłoskowska 2007; Smith 2010; Longo 2018). Not everybody manages to give *a priori* or *a posteriori* definition of ‘nation’. The attempts considerably vary depending on the single scholar and the perspective adopted, usually oscillating between “subjective” and “objective” definitory elements. This situation is worsened by the pervasive and uncontrolled use and abuse of these terms affecting the everyday linguistic practice, reflected in the widespread academic terminological disorder, as in the case of the several and conflating meanings of ‘State’, ‘nation-state’, ‘national State’, ‘society’, ‘patriotism’. Lexical imprecision is either a symptom or a cause of the great confusion characterizing nationalism studies (Connor 1995: 95, 121, 146).

The ambiguity surrounding the concept of ‘nation’ is such that it firstly should be questioned whether nation really exist or it is rather an abstract, ideological entity, a mere artificial construct ideated by the classificatory logic of mind (Longo 2018: 14-17). Discussing the interpretation of ‘nation’ as an idea or a feeling, Longo regards the latter the most suitable definition, for appearing a sharing of feelings, a collective and intuitive consciousness in which individuals feel as a part of a whole. In fact, if this explanation is to be rationally pursued by elevating ‘nation’ as an idea, and individuating its constitutive elements, one can do nothing but to conclude how vague, variable and arbitrary it is and, thus, obscure to the rational inquiry. It is not clear to whom and until which geographical boundaries national solidarity and sympathy or the criteria distinguishing a nation are extended: not only did ‘blood’, ‘land’, ‘race’, ‘geographical and territorial conformation’ turned out to be humanly and historically devastating, but they are neither theoretically or scientifically justifiable. Likewise, a certain amount of difficulty in invoking ‘language’, ‘religion’, ‘culture’, ‘customs and usage’ as definitive criteria to define the essence of a nation, may be detected.

Similarly, Hobsbawm maintains that the fundamental characteristic of the partition of human beings into nations is the fact that no satisfactory criterion can be outlined to identify the human collectivity

defined as such (Hobsbawm 1990: 5-9). Although many efforts have been accomplished to pinpoint objective criteria (language, ethnicity, territory, history, culture, religion, institutions) ascertaining national essence, they failed because of the existence of exceptions to the definitions or their misleading ambiguity and mutability. Instead of a *a priori* definition of 'nation', he urges scholars of nationalism to keep an initial agnostic attitude toward the constitutive elements of a nation, moving from the concept 'of the nation' (that is nationalism) rather than the reality it represents.

Although several scholars are persuaded that the 'nation' is deemed to remain conceptually obscure and indeterminate for being equivocal, polysemantic, variable, incoherent, a relevant fact should not be neglected: its continuous significance as a structural principle in political discourses, in international political organization, and in common people's perception and conscience. This is not to mean that 'nation' is an ontological, bio-naturalistic reality, but that it is sufficiently important from a cognitive and psychological point of view to be commonly perceived as natural. In defining 'nation', what really matters in the end is not what it is, but what it *is believed* to be (Connor 1995: 87-88, 149). It is not important the factuality of what it is invoked as constitutive of a nation, but the *conviction of* that factuality (Connor 1995: 150). 'Nation' definitively belongs to the domain of beliefs, the departure point from which any investigation should start to grasp the nature of nationalism, paralleled by Anderson to 'kinship' and 'religion' (Anderson 2006: 5). As implicitly suggested by Longo comparing 'nation' to a sentiment and by Hobsbawm advocating for a *posteriori* definition of it, I argue that it is fundamental to firstly consider the beliefs around nation, thus primarily treating it as a category of social and political practice.

1.3.1. 'Nation': A Definition

As a category of practice, I interpret 'nation' as an extended community of individuals, conscious of their idiosyncrasy and identifying themselves with the term 'nation'. Their peculiar features are variably determined by the context of a specific nationalism, so they are shaped by a particular nationalist discourse or rhetoric. It is indeed nationalism to generate nations and not vice-versa: «nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism» (Gellner 1983: 55).

Calhoun reconsiders this idea in a more contemporary vein, suggesting that the nationalist way of thinking and speaking helps to create nations (Calhoun 1997: 99). What matters is not the definition itself of 'nation', but the pattern which takes form when certain claims around a particular nation are recurring:

Nations cannot be defined effectively by empirical measures [...] nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices. (Calhoun 1997: 5)

The recognition of nations does not function through the discernment of the "essence" of nationhood, but through a model inspired by the notion of *Familienähnlichkeit* (family resemblance) by Wittgenstein. As well as family members share certain physical features through which it is possible to recognize a model, things that may be connected by common traits can be related by a set of overlapping similarities in which no attribute is universally shared (Sluga 2011; Needham 1975). The same goes for nationalist ideology, which may emphasize certain characteristics instead of others or lack of some distinctive traits, but in both cases a prevailing pattern exists and is visible (Calhoun 1997: 5-6).

This pattern is what I previously depicted as "primordialism" and the fundamental definitory attributes of nation purported in nationalist discourses despite their variability in typology and intensity are the "primordialist beliefs" – the naturalness of a nation; the primacy of the national whole on its members; indivisibility and separateness of a nation from other nations; its intimate tie with an ancestral land; its temporal continuity and sameness; its cyclical, timeless, spiritual character. Hence, 'nation' has as referent of the nationalist rhetoric, it is definable only contextually, *a posteriori*, and only through the lens of those who speak in its behalf or are moulded by its idea – nationalists, social actors and, generally, anyone reifying it. Its emergence traces back to the European cultural and intellectual context between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the idea of nationalism firstly arose before being transplanted worldwide.

As a category of analysis, I broadly interpret 'nation' as a cognition,

a mode of perceiving, interpreting, representing the social world including nationally-oriented frames, schemas, narratives, systems of classification, categorization, and identification, a taken-for-granted background knowledge, through which people recognize and experience objects, places, persons, actions, or situations as nationally marked or meaningful (Brubaker 2004: 17, 84). In this sense, it has as contents the nationalistic rhetoric itself or the nation as category of practice and exists merely as an instrument to investigate its naturalization among the social actors who reify it. The discriminant among 'nation' as a category of practice and 'nation' as a category of analysis occurs cognitively, by acknowledging that nation is a construct created by human beings definable *a posteriori*, case by case, after the analysis of a particular nationalist rhetoric that produced it.

The concept of 'nation' should be distinguished from that of 'State', designating a political community of a people living within a certain territory, organized as a collective juridical body, holder of a sovereign power and entitled to monopolize the legitimate use of force. 'Nation' ought to be also distinguished from 'ethnic community' as a category of practice, a sufficiently extended group of individuals sharing a sense of common origins on the basis of cultural ties, religious affinities, linguistic legacies, a claimed kinship and/or similar physical traits (James 2016: 23) and, as category of analysis, as a cognition (Brubaker 2004: 17, 84). 'Nation' also differs from 'people', the body of citizens living in a State and representing its larger but not hegemonic part. In nationalist rhetoric, the concepts of 'people' and 'nation' are often intertwined or even conflated by intellectual elites for ideological ends by purposely confounding their collective ambitions with those of the mass and elevating themselves as spokespeople of a claimed national-popular feeling. The concept of 'nation' should be ultimately kept separated from that of 'race'. 'Race' is another socially constructed category and, used to indicate a human group (self-)defined by virtue of perceived common phenotypical and genotypical features regarded as innate, permanent and unchangeable. In this sense, 'race' is an imaged, limited community of "blood", whose members do not know each other but are conscious of their brotherhood and idiosyncrasy (Yoshino 1992: 17). 'Race' in terms of analytical category is its generic qualification as a cognition (Brubaker 2004: 17, 84). As well as 'nation' and 'ethnicity', 'race' rests on human being's cognitive tendency to

divide the social world in intrinsic genres based on shared essences (Brubaker 2004: 84).

In the nationalist discursive practice, the concept of 'nation' is frequently overlapped by that of 'State', 'ethnicity', 'race'. Accordingly, a nation is thus conceived as a people sharing a common culture and composed by a dominant ethnic community who claims a common descent and demands a State for itself. The emphasis given by nationalists on the ethnic origins of a nation led Walker Connor to coin the redundant denomination of "ethno-nationalism" (Connor 1995), emphasizing the role of ethnocentrism - the emotional attitude of considering one's own ethnic group at the center of a certain population's life, discourses, attention, and judging as unique, special, extraordinary and superior its usage, customs, traditions and culture.

1.3.2. 'Nationalism': A Definition

I interpret nationalism as a discursive formation (Calhoun 1997: 3, 6), a way of representing the world shaping our consciousness, the production of rhetoric and cultural understanding which persuades people to think and configure their ambitions within the framework of the idea of nation and national identity. It should be distinguished from patriotism, an attitude having as object the love of, identification with, special concern and devotion not for one's nation (in ethno-cultural terms), but for one's *patria*, one's country (Primoratz 2015: 5).

In the rhetorical context of nationalism, the concepts of 'national character' and 'national identity' are of a particular relevance as discursive coordinates. 'National character', interchangeable with 'national essence', 'spirit of nation' or 'national genius', refers to the belief in the ontological existence of a set of definitory qualities asserted to be innate, immutable, permanent, genetically-transmitted, ascribed to the members of a national community. 'National identity' indicates the perception and self-awareness of an individual of belonging to an entity perceived as temporarily continuous and distinctive.

The interpretation of nationalism as a discursive formation stresses the importance of language and rhetoric, which I herein consider pivotal. Moreover, it resumes Foucault's definition of 'discourses' as «practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak» (Foucault 2002: 49). It is a praxis, what language means to its users - "language-in-action" -, it is what transforms the contexts where we live

in a socially and culturally significant space (Blommaert 2005: 2-3, 14-15). At the level of practical activity, there exist many different nationalisms connected by a common, shaping discursive form (Calhoun 2007). This means that a general theory on nationalism cannot exist, but what may exist is as many theories as the forms through which nationalism can manifest: the attention has to be addressed to the factors leading to the continuous reproduction of the nationalist discourse in the modern world (Calhoun 2007; Özkırıklı 2017: 204).

By treating nationalism as a discourse, it is not meant to deny the reality of its effects, its existence firmly rooted in social structure and the emotions it arouses. Yet it suggests that its rhetorical frame and coordinates are socially construed, subsequently sedimented over time. It does not even mean to deny its historical character, since the philosophical origins of nationalism spring from the late illuminist and romantic intellectual tradition, becoming naturalized in several European countries and later exported all over the world.

In order to investigate the specific content of 'Japanese nation' purported by Japanese nationalism, in the second part of this book the Japanese nationalist discourse in context will be considered. The modalities through which the nationalist rhetoric on the Japanese is implemented and its hegemony consolidated, reproducing and naturalizing itself, will be examined. Reproduction leads to the naturalization of the nationalist discourse, which makes nationalist claims and values appear obvious, a product of common sense. It underlies the roots of reification, a process through which human beings forget that social world is their product by conceiving and treating it as natural. Reification is what permits nationalism to crystallize and disguise as real.

These considerations lead to the relationship existing between nationalism on one side, and power and hegemony, on the other. Hegemony is, in the Gramscian sense, the sociopolitical moment when philosophy and a social practice merge, an order in which a certain way of living and thinking is dominant and a particular concept of reality is diffused across the institutional and private manifestations of a society (Jedlowski 1997: 235-236). Ideology is a project of consensual totality fusing contradictory worldviews of popular masses by mobilizing them as to permit ruling classes to wield a specific kind of moral and intellectual domination and leadership (Gruppi 1972: 99-100).

Hegemony goes at the same pace as the assertion of a subordinate class ability in political, ideal and moral leadership (Gruppi 1972: 99-100). The most relevant aspect of hegemony is the emergence and the advocacy by the ruling elite for a certain world vision – a set of values, beliefs, through which world is perceived, organized, acquires meaning and is preserved, balancing the political and civil society. Hegemony implies the achievement of a compromise: in the case of nationalism, the dominant nationalist project absorbs ideological elements from other competitive nationalist projects. Once its values become the common sense – the acritical and partially unconscious way people perceive the world, what presents itself as “popular wisdom” or the “truth of the ages” despite being a product of history – the nationalist project undertakes a process of self-reproduction and naturalization. After achieving hegemony, a particular nationalist project can determine the discursive boundaries, while directing certain objectives and aspirations in the sphere of the impossibility and unreal.

I do believe that investigating the dominant discourse on what a nation should be in a given society is fundamental to grasp the essence of nationalist rhetoric in a specific context and what Gramsci named as “common sense”. Hence, the starting point to understand the contents of ‘nation’ in social practice is the close examination of case studies. For this purpose, in the next chapter I will first introduce the Japanese mainstream nationalist discourse known as *Nihonjinron*.

2. Discourses on Japaneseness

The academic interest for *Nihonjinron*, the nationalist identity discourse dominating Japanese society, started to arise since the 1970s, exploded during the following decade when dedicated conferences were gradually organized, and persisted from the 1990s onwards. The publication of essays on Japanese national character continues to represent a flourishing industry in Japan. Albeit the diverse changes Japan had to experience since the postwar period, *Nihonjinron* still remains the Japanese government's official ideology. Recently, it has been revived within a detailed and broad plan of economic revitalization as a soft power strategy (*Cool Japan*), in view of important international events (Expo 2015, 2019 G20 Ōsaka Summit, Rugby World Cup 2019, Tōkyō 2020 Olympics) aimed at relaunching the image and position of Japan in the world.

Notwithstanding the influence and pervasiveness of the *Nihonjinron* discourse and its familiarity among Japanologists, I argue that its nature and scope have not been fully understood yet. Its function as ideology of the establishment has been diversely highlighted, but little emphasis was given to its discursive mechanisms, in particular to its primordialist rhetoric. In light of the previous theoretical reflections, in this chapter I will attempt to define the *Nihonjinron* phenomenon and its ideological premises, tenets and assumptions – a difficult task because of its polyhedral, multiform, shifty nature and the absence of true ideologues and an ideological manifesto. I will thus focus on the amatorial essay as an instrument through which ideas of nationalist essentialism are expressed, analyzing its discursive and textual features. Finally, I will provide an overall recapitulation of *Nihonjinron*

beliefs in the form of memes.

2.1. The *Nihonjinron*

Nihonjinron 日本人論 (Theories on the Japanese) could be generically defined as a polyhedric genre of nationalist discourse centered on Japanese national identity and claiming Japanese uniqueness, namely the existence of unbridgeable cultural differences between the 'Japanese' and the 'Other' ('West' and/or 'China') and prerogatives revealing how Japaneseness is a natural, timeless, monolithic attribute. Although its roots could be traced back at least to the Meiji era, *Nihonjinron* discourse became hegemonic since 1945 onwards, turned into a mass phenomenon during the 1960s, took off in the two following decades, continuing to pervade Japanese society until today.

Despite its apparent disguise as a comparative discourse, *Nihonjinron's* main concern is the 'Japanese', an abstract, essentialized entity conceived as a cultural distinct group sharing the same lineage. Little attention is reserved not only to other cultures, but also to Japanese society's internal variations and stratification, which are usually subject to minimization. Comparison with other, external essentialized entities is apparent. *Nihonjinron's* cultural characterization is selective, since selection implies the reduction, oversimplification and essentialization of the complexity of reality (Befu 2001: 5). The constitutive traits of Japaneseness are determined by the culture or society Japan is contrasted to and depend on which characteristics are intended to be emphasized to differentiate Japaneseness from the otherness. The term of comparison is not casual, but it is defined according to Japan's national interest. In this sense, the 'West' or 'Western countries' (USA, France, Germany, England, latinity/classicism) represent *Nihonjinron's* main contrastive entities, due to their influence in Japanese politics and economy. Another essentialized entity treated as term of comparison against which Japanese identity was historically elaborated is 'China'. Therefore, 'West' and 'China' are the two relevant "others" on which *Nihonjinron* discourse is structured, depicted as universalist, centralistic civilizations as opposed to Japanese different, particularistic, peripheric nature.

The means through which ideas of particularism and cultural essentialism are expressed and disseminated are numerous – academic

and amatorial essays; popular and scientific articles; university lectures and courses; seminars; public conferences and discussions; radio and TV programs; economic policies; internationalizing and soft power policies; ministerial educational programs; school texts; illustrative pamphlets or handbooks addressed to Japanese consulates, embassies, cultural associations; websites promoting worldwide the knowledge about Japanese cultural and artistic peculiarities; apps for smartphones; YouTube channels; blogs; tourist brochures and guides. Any discourse intended to elaborate on Japaneseness – either in an oral or written form, in a consciously structured mode or not – potentially contributes to the definition of *Nihonjinron*.

Producers of *Nihonjinron* may belong to various professional categories: academicians, journalists, writers, commentators, industrialists, diplomats are those who most frequently write or discuss about Japanese idiosyncrasy as a pastime or for personal interest, competence or just for money. They investigate “Japanese essence” through a wide range of epistemological perspectives such as sociology, anthropology, linguistics, psychology, economy, biology, ecology, philosophy, archeology: any natural and cultural phenomenon is potentially worth being researched to grasp the heart of Japaneseness. These perspectives often conflate and overlap within the same discourse: this explains not only Yoshino’s characterization of *Nihonjinron* producers as “amateur sociologists” (Yoshino 1992: 37), but also the existence of terminological alternatives to ‘Nihonjinron’ to denote the same phenomenon, such as *Nihonbunkaron* 日本文化論 (Theories on Japanese culture), *Nihonshakairon* 日本社会論 (Theories on Japanese society) and *Nihonron* 日本論 (Theories on Japan). These terms – and others more specific as *Nihongoron* 日本語論 (Theories on Japanese language), *Nihonkeizairon* 日本経済論 (Theories on Japanese economy), *Nihonfūkeiron* 日本風景論 (Theories on Japanese landscape), etc. – may be used interchangeably to refer to a reservoir of knowledge (assumptions, conjectures, statements) on Japanese culture, society, history. They do not absolutely refer to scholarly theories elaborated by academicians, but most of the time they are associated with vague generalizations, speculations, generical statements springing from intuition and common sense, expressed by occasional sociologists and intended to reach a popular audience. Indeed, consumers of *Nihonjinron* are mainly the common people interested in the topic of national identity, but also

educators, industrialists, politicians.

Moreover, *Nihonjinron* is sometimes employed to include the theories or writings discussing Japanese character tracing back to the Tokugawa period, since the germ of the discourse on Japanese national identity may be identified within the School of National Studies (*kokugaku*), in reaction to the rampant neo-Confucianism and Sinophile atmosphere of Edo's court and to emphasize indigenous distinctiveness. Finally, the term could also refer to those theories elaborated by non-native Japanese people writing about a particular aspect of Japan. In this book, I use *Nihonjinron* to specifically refer to the contemporary era, thus ignoring the foreign discourses on Japaneseness, judged as irrelevant to the scope of this work.

2.1.1. Assumptions, Tenets

The *Nihonjinron* discourse rests on several fundamental tenets, underlying any discussion on Japanese national character: uniqueness; homogeneity; conceptual interchangeability among 'people', 'ethnic community', 'race', 'nation', 'society' and among 'language', 'culture', 'land', 'State'; racialism; centrality of Japanese language; cultural and racial reductionism; cultural impenetrability and refusal of "ethic" judgments; ethnocentrism; primordialism.

2.1.1.1. Uniqueness

The assumption of Japanese uniqueness is simultaneously the central claim and an unwritten, unquestionable premise or belief of *Nihonjinron*. By 'uniqueness' we thus mean the quality of possessing no common element with other cultures, as such representing an exception, an isolated case in the world. What is purported is the difference, the particularity of being Japanese in comparison to the Other: Japanese identity is the anti-image of the Otherness and Japaneseness is the exception to the rule, the particular against a universal and centralist model. Many titles of *Nihonjinron* essays refer to the claim of uniqueness by making use of words such as *dokutoku* (distinctiveness), *dokuji* (originality), *tokuyū* (idiosyncrasy), *tokusei* (peculiarity), *tokuchō* (distinctive characteristic), *tokushoku* (singular), *dochaku* (indigenous), *tokushu* (peculiar), *koyū* (intrinsic), *tokusei* (singular), *yuniiku* (unique) (Yoshino 1992: 8; Dale 1986: 25). Other widespread Japanese expressions reinforcing the idea are *rui no nai* (without equal), *takoku ni nai*

(absent in other countries), *gaijin ni totte wakarunikui* (difficult to understand for foreigners), etc. Actually, none of them exactly corresponds to the meaning of 'unique' (the only one in its kind), but they range from "very different" to "incomparable". Their exact connotation is not always elucidated; what is sure instead is their capacity of charming the reader by suggesting the enigmatic, elusive and mysterious nature of the "Japanese spirit" (Dale 1986: 26).

2.1.1.2. Homogeneity

Another fundamental premise of *Nihonjinron* is that 'Japan' is a homogeneous entity (*dōshitsu*), from a cultural, linguistic and ethnic point of view. Homogeneity entails the negation of internal variation and assumes the *a priori* possession of the characteristics singled out in *Nihonjinron* by anyone defined or self-defining as "Japanese". More specifically, this assumption considers the Japanese as a monolithic entity composed of a sole hegemonic ethnic group named "Yamato" (*yamato minzoku*) and conceived in racialistic terms as sharing the same blood (*nihonjin no chi*) and, consequently, the same culture and language. The Yamato ethnic group is regarded as originally deriving from a pacific rural people having no historical experience of contact and interaction with foreigners, diplomacy and warfare, and consensually unified under the protection of a benevolent sovereign through bonds of compassion (Oguma 2002: 299-301, 316). The refusal of pluralism is typical of *Nihonjinron*: the factual existence of ethnic groups differing from the dominant one does not undermine the paradigm of homogeneity, since deviation is always minimized in terms of minority, exception, irrelevant enough to corrupt the essence of Japaneseness. Negation of reality does not rest on ignorance or disinformation. It is a voluntary act sustained by *Nihonjinron's* ideologized promoters to obfuscate the complexity of reality, which would otherwise jeopardize the intents and status quo of nationalists.

2.1.1.3. Conceptual Interchangeability among 'People', 'Nation', 'Ethnic Community', 'Race', 'Society', 'Culture', 'Language', 'Land', 'State'

Closely related to the tenet of homogeneity is the tautological equation of the concepts of 'people', 'nation', 'ethnic community', 'race', 'society', 'culture', 'language', 'land', and 'State'. This means that

to be Japanese is tantamount to being born, grown up, living within the territory of the Japanese archipelago (*nihonrettō*), whose physical boundaries constitute the Japanese State (*nihonkoku*); sharing a set of values, practices, common cultural traits (*nihon no bunka*); using and referring to common symbols and institutions, and sharing economic, political, cultural relationships (*nihon shakai*); natively speaking the same language (*kokugo*); sharing the same “blood” (*nihonjin no chi*); descending from the ancestral inhabitants of Japanese isles (*nihonjin no senzo*); ethnically belonging to Yamato people; representing the group of citizens living in the Japanese State (*nihon kokumin*), who also constitute the nation (*nihon minzoku*). This premise is underlain by the principle of genetic determinism, implying the existence of “specifically Japanese genes” determining the cultural traits peculiar and accessible to the proper Japanese only.

2.1.1.4. Racialism

This final remark paves the way to another important ideological premise of *Nihonjinron* - the belief in the partition of human beings into “races”. *Nihonjinron* is structurally grounded on the assumption of Japanese identity’s racial nature, which Yoshino refers to as “race thinking” (Yoshino 1992: 16, 18-23, 26).

In Japanese society, the racist thought has two dimensions: the first concerns the notion of ‘Japanese race’, the second the relationship between ‘race’ and ‘culture’. The former is associated with the homogeneous composition of the Japanese people, frequently expressed as *tan’itsu minzoku* 単一民族 or *tan’itsu minzoku kokka* 単一民族国家 (monoracial nation). This in turn encompasses three distinctive aspects. First, the belief that the Japanese are a biologically distinct group, by virtue of specific phenotypical characteristics. In the *Nihonjinron* discourse, *minzoku* 民族 is the most recurring term used to refer to the notion of ‘race’, which underwent a process of resemantization. Actually, the etymology itself of *minzoku* recalls the idea of a group of people sharing the same blood line, that is a *zoku* 族 (tribe, clan) (Daijirin 2017: 1464). In addition, *minzoku* and *jinshu* 人種, the Japanese word for ‘race’, are used in an interchangeable way also in the Japanese dictionary’s definition of ‘racial discriminations’ (*jinshu sabetsu*) as political, social, legislative discriminations based on ‘racial prejudices’ (*jinshuteki, minzokuteki haiken*) and by generically describing

minzoku as “a group [of people] sharing a consciousness of belonging, of ‘us’” (Daijirin 2017: 1292, 2465). The image of “Japanese blood” (*nihonjin no chi*), «a case of social construction of difference» (Yoshino 1992: 18), is a symbol indicating an intricate web of meanings, emotional and intellectual dispositions concerning Japanese identity for evoking and marking the boundary between “us” and “them”. Second, monoracialism emphasizes the homogenous composition of the Japanese people, deliberately ignoring the present and historical reality marked by a long period of intermingling. Third, the minorities residing in Japan, like the Chinese, Korean, and Ainu are intentionally disregarded. “Race” is a ubiquitous and crucial element in the construction of Japanese national identity. It is a powerful symbol capable of generating an intense psychological response in the form of a positive identification with the in-group (we-ness) and detachment from the out-group (them-ness).

The second dimension of Japanese racist thought is the tight relationship between culture and race: genetically transmitted traits are believed to determine specific cultural traits (genetic determinism) and certain cultural traits are viewed as the racially exclusive property of a particular human group. In *Nihonjinron*, it is generally the concept of 'exclusive property' to prevail: many 1970s' theories on Japaneseness posited an image of the Japanese stressing their diversity rather than explicitly stating their racial superiority. Yet, genetic determinism is widespread in Japanese society in such a subtle way, that it has never been intellectually questioned or refused even after the postwar period. It survives, for instance, in the popular belief about the existence of a direct correlation between one's blood group and personality, sometimes resulting in the conviction of a true relationship between the former and the “national” character of a people.

Nihonjinron is sometimes regarded as resting not only on racialism, but also on racism - the belief in the existence of a hierarchy dividing superior/developed races from inferior/underdeveloped races and generating discriminatory behaviors (Befu 2001: 75-76). The boundary between racialism and racism is very thin. While it is safe to state that *Nihonjinron* has a strongly racist structure, some reservations should be expressed about its racist nature. On this point, a preliminary distinction between consumers and producers on one side, and among consumers on the other should be made, because racism entails a

discriminatory praxis (material or ideative) toward certain human groups regarded as biologically different. On the side of producers, the situation is quite diverse: *Nihonjinron*'s beliefs cover a wide ideological range encompassing ultra-nationalist claims, leaning towards xenophobic, racist or even jingoist stances, or moderate positions highlighting Japanese diversity yet not implying its racial superiority. The attitude of consumers is a more pragmatic: professionals as industrials or educators employ *Nihonjinron* tenets for practical reasons, to structure interpersonal relations in a company, to make foreign business partners better understand Japanese character, to morally reflect on Japaneseness, to regulate intercultural relationships, or for academic interests (Yoshino 1992). The attitude of *Nihonjinron* readership is more passive: they want to deepen their knowledge on Japaneseness or they are just attracted by a captivating title. Problems arise when *Nihonjinron* makes its entry into politics under the guise of an ideology to serve the interests of the establishment, circulating among common people and specific social categories. It is in this case that racist behaviors may come to light by giving an excessive emphasis on the notions of pure blood, homogeneity, uniqueness and diversity.

2.1.1.5. Centrality of Japanese Language

Miller analyzed the myths and ideology of the so-called *Nihongoron*, a set of theories in *Nihonjinron* usually presented in the form of essays, emphasizing the role of language to demonstrate Japanese uniqueness, by offering a particular insight into the concept of *kotodama* (spirit of the language) (Miller 1977a, 1977b, 1982). Likewise, Dale highlights the rhetorical relevance of Japanese language either as a means of discussion or a primary object of analysis (Dale 1986: 56-115). In *Nihonjinron*, the Japanese language is treated as the most tangible manifestation of indigenous distinctiveness, since it is believed that most concepts defined as uniquely Japanese are expressed by specific, untranslatable Japanese words, and a peculiar linguistic mode of communication that only "proper" Japanese are capable of speaking as natives. Sapir and Whorf's idea that the structure of a language affects the worldview or cognition of its speakers, and thus individual perceptions are relative to one's spoken language, exactly corresponds to *Nihonjinron*'s mainstream perspective (Sapir 1949; Whorf 1956; Befu 2001: 34-35). Actually, linguistic relativism, with its long history in

“Western” linguistic thought (Penn 1972: 41), has influenced Japanese intellectual circles long before Sapir and Whorf’s reflections, dating back at least to Herder.

Language is one of the pillars of the tenet of uniqueness: it is the focus of a particular concern in Japanese government’s linguistic policies on interculturality and foreign language education (Liddicoat 2007: 34). As for the communicative mode claimed as Japanese-specific, it is generally argued to be characterized by ambivalence, illogicity, reticence, situational ethic, emotionality, empathy, cognitive immediateness.

2.1.1.6. Cultural Reductionism

Nihonjinron explains everyday social, economic, and political phenomena in terms of a system of norms or ethos peculiar to the Japanese. Culture is regarded as infrastructure; history is made irrelevant and social practice is emptied by any element of liberatory force and enlightening power (Yoshino 1992: 7-8; Dale 1986: 20). Everything is associated with a mysterious and ineffable “Japanese spirit”, everything is object of mystification: this is why Dale talks about “mythology of culture”, denying the ontological distinction between “me” and “you”, making it legitimate to speak of “culturalism” or “culturalist determinism/reductionism” (Dale 1986: 222; Yoshino 1992: 10, 178, 197-199). Any episode of everyday life can be explained in cultural terms. Even economic collisions or diplomatic disputes with foreign countries are reduced to cultural clashes (Dale 1986: 19). By virtue of this special emphasis on culture, in the scholarship *Nihonjinron* is frequently also known as *Nihonbunkaron* (Theories on Japanese culture). However, cultural determinism may be interpreted as a particular aspect of the assumption of racialism, since it is a widespread belief that culture is determined by the possession of particular “ethnic” features, i.e. “racial” characteristics. Cultural differences ultimately seem to derive from “racial” differences.

2.1.1.7. Culture Impenetrability and Refusal of Ethic Judgments

Japanese language and culture are believed to be inaccessible in their full, authentic understanding or mastery to non-Japanese, considering that “Japanese blood” does not flow in their veins (Befu 2001: 67). According to this belief, only natives can naturally and

intuitively grasp the uniqueness of Japanese culture, which is ineffable and understandable solely at an emotional and irrational level. The delineation of this “cultural territory” is aimed at protecting oneself from the threat of a possible corruption of national integrity by injecting external elements.

In relation to this, in the *Nihonjinron* discourse “emic” judgments are prior to “ethic” evaluations in the formulation and discussion of national distinctiveness. This entails the formal exclusion and invalidity of the assessments on Japanese culture expressed by those regarded as “non-Japanese”. Hence, certain academic *Nihonjinron* promoters refuse concepts and ways of thinking characterized as typically “Western”.

2.1.1.8. Ethnocentrism

The nationalist discourse of *Nihonjinron* is structurally ethnocentric, since the topic of discussion focuses on the ‘Japanese’. Reference to other cultures or people mentioned as terms of comparison is in fact aimed at stressing an alleged cultural trait specific to the Japanese. Besides, comparisons in the *Nihonjinron* discourse are never objective or neutral, but they always underlie a connotative value. Ethnocentrism may be detected even linguistically: it is sufficient to rapidly glimpse at the titles of the countless *Nihonjinron* essays, frequently alluding to the Japaneseness of a product or lifestyle, with words such as *nihonteki* (typical Japanese), *nihonsei* (made in Japan), *nihonfū* (in Japanese style), *nihon-* / *wa-* (of Japan) suggest.

2.1.1.9. Primordialism

One of the claims of this work is that *Nihonjinron* is a nationalist discourse characterized by a solid ideological structure centered on primordialist beliefs. Resuming the schema provided in the previous chapter, the primordialist tenets of *Nihonjinron* are:

- NATURALITY OR PRIMORDIALITY. The Japanese are intended as a territorial delimited and biologically homogenous community of people, for inhabiting the same land and sharing the same blood, which determines the automatic and passive transmission through generations of the same culture, language and values. Japanese language represents the supreme vehicle and epiphany of the

primordially of the Japanese nation, as it connects past, present and future generations.

- **THE PART FOR THE WHOLE.** The Japanese are depicted as an organic whole, a natural organism composed by interconnected and interdependent organs. The Japanese individuals are important only within a context, in relation with other “parts”.
- **INDIVISIBILITY AND SEPARATENESS.** The Japanese are viewed as a homogeneous organic whole, identified by certain distinctive traits composing their national character and separating them from other national entities.
- **TERRITORIALITY.** The Japanese are a national community developed within and shaped by the Japanese archipelago. Their national character is believed to be intimately influenced by the morphology, climate and ecology of Japanese isles. Notably, the geographical condition of insularity is of utmost importance for being regarded as the origin of Japanese peculiarities.
- **TEMPORAL CONTINUITY.** The Japanese nation is perceived as an entity persisting over time, despite the change of some of its traits or historical contingencies. It consists of past, present and future Japanese, and is the diachronic and metaphysical chain of generations.
- **CYCLICITY OR ATAVISM.** Japanese spirit is historically recurrent: it endlessly reproduces, regenerates and animates the Japanese nation in its atavistic and original form. It manifests identical to itself in substance but different in shape.
- **ETERNITY OR SAMENESS.** Japanese nation is meanwhile made of a set of permanent traits, remaining eternal or unchanged in their individual duration. The quintessence of Japanese nation is identical to itself. It is a-contextual, for being an ever-lasting, a-temporal and a-historical entity. Its origins are vaguely traced back to pre-history, in an epoch where the boundary between history and mythology is very blurred.
- **SPIRITUALITY.** The Japanese nation is animated by a vital spirit forging the national character, consisting of a set of moral, ethic, and cultural traits determining the peculiarity and immortality of the Japanese nation itself.

These beliefs emerge on the surface when attempting to identify a

specific ideological language in the *Nihonjinron* - a set of lexical expressions, lexicon referred to kinship, the land, the sacred, the emotional, associated with the 'Japanese nation'. As it will be outlined in the case studies, primordialism becomes evident through the rhetorical analysis of *Nihonjinron* texts, by highlighting particularly the dichotomic contrast between Japaneseness and Otherness.

2.1.2. Interpretations

Scholars researching on *Nihonjinron* propounded several, complementary interpretations to explain the phenomenon, which I will briefly present hereinafter. The explanation of *Nihonjinron* as an ideology stands out particularly for its insightfulness.

2.1.2.1. A Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Phenomenon

Broadly speaking, *Nihonjinron* is interpreted as a geopolitical and geoeconomic phenomenon, since its interpretations have been changing according to the culture, society and civilization the central government had to confront with and the international political and economic environment in general (Befu 2001: 123-124). It is, in particular, this latter aspect that determines the fluctuation of *Nihonjinron* between two poles - a "positive cultural nationalism" when the attitude towards themselves as a national community is self-congratulatory and confident, and a "negative cultural nationalism" when a self-denigratory, pessimistic stance prevails.

2.1.2.2. An Alternative to the Postwar Spiritual Vacuum

Nihonjinron may be more specifically seen as an alternative to the postwar "spiritual vacuum" (Befu 2001: 86-87, 100-104) which came into being after the downgrade of prewar symbols of national identity and pride (national flag, anthem, rituals, monuments, royal institution). *Nihonjinron* would compensate for the decline of national symbols, permitting the survival and formal transformation of Japan's militaristic ideology grounded on the primordialist concepts of 'blood', 'racial purity' and 'linguistic uniqueness'. *Nihonjinron* explicitly provides a number of reasons why the Japanese should be proud of their identity, as well as the emotional involvement necessary to instill a nationalistic sentiment. Notwithstanding the growing discrepancy between *Nihonjinron* idealistic imaginary and the reality of the Japanese

society, its persistence and hegemony over time is due to the absence of alternative symbols, discourses, narrations, and worldviews.

2.1.2.3. A Reaction to an Identity Threat

In accordance with these preliminary interpretations, *Nihonjinron* is explained in terms of a response to an “identity threat”, a mechanism of self-defense of a subject (the Japanese) leaving a familiar environment (Japan) to venture into a hostile world (the international arena) (Befu 1984). It is an instrument to investigate and rebuild the national identity challenged by Westernization and industrialization, through the symbolic demarcation between the “Japanese” (us) and “Westerners” (them) and the preservation of a sense of historical communion with the “Japanese traditions”. This defensive response occurred because Western lifestyles gradually pervaded the public sphere of the Japanese society since the Meiji era, judged as superior to the private space in the hierarchy of Japanese traditional values, causing «a shrinkage of the self-expression as Japanese» (Befu 1984: 64, 66). The identity crisis and the psychological conflict with the West arose from the forced expression of Japaneseness within a lifestyle judged and perceived by the natives themselves as inferior. *Nihonjinron* thus embodied the mission of challenging Western ethnocentrism, by restoring the virtues of Japanese culture and emphasizing its uniqueness, with the result of redeeming Japanese lifestyle from an inferior position.

2.1.2.4. A Cultural, Prescriptive Model

More specifically, *Nihonjinron* is described as a mass cultural phenomenon, a «ready-made clothing» - a set of consumer products, ready-made self-representations addressed to the mass market in the same way as a t-shirt or a necktie (Befu 2001: 61-62, 64). According to this logic, while *Nihonjinron* producers correspond to the producers of consumer goods, readers represent the consumers: considering that the aim of the former is to provide goods satisfying the demand of the latter, consumers are inclined to spend money to obtain a well-made and flattering self-portrait, emphasizing qualities, and concealing defects. In a similar vein, *Nihonjinron* is also identified as a cultural model to be decoded, a system of knowledge existing in the mind of social actors in different nuances and gradations (Befu 2001: 76-78).

From a cultural model to a prescriptive model the step is short (Befu

2001: 69-70, 78-80). *Nihonjinron* has normative implications characterizing a desirable and idealized situation as positive. This entails that the “proper” Japanese are required to follow and adjust to *Nihonjinron*’s precepts, whereas deviations from the rule are dismissed as exceptions to the existing norm. This tendency subsists also because of the lack of an alternative discourse to *Nihonjinron*’s mainstream statements. *Nihonjinron* discourse holds the intellectual hegemony in Japanese society to such an extent that its writings may appear to function as morality textbooks. Interestingly, Takeuchi (2006) investigated the influence of *Nihonjinron* in education policies by analyzing the contents of the morality textbook *Kokoro no nōto* (The Book of Heart, 2002), subsequently converted into *Watashitachi no dōtoku* (Our Morality, 2013), issued by the Ministry of Education and disseminated in elementary and high schools. These manuals are neither official nor edited by a specific author, despite being used as *de facto* officially-approved textbooks: they are part of the sly strategy through which the State permeates into individual life to create ideal Japanese citizens and to spread the orthodox canons among parents, families, and local communities by means of pupils’ education. Nationalism is presented in a mild tone, through innocuous expressions such as *wagakuni* (our country) and exhortations to love it.

2.1.2.5. A Nationalist Ideological Discourse

This leads to the interpretation of *Nihonjinron* as an ideology or a cultural policy (Befu 2001: 80; Liddicoat 2007: 36). The first postwar attempt to introduce *Nihonjinron* ideas into Japanese politics, declaring its formal transformation into servant of the establishment, is represented by the 1980 instructive report *Bunka no jidai* (The Age of Culture) by Ōhira Masayoshi. It was issued by an expert committee promoting the uniqueness and particularism of Japanese culture vis-à-vis the “West” and accomplished the evolution of *Nihonjinron* into an officially-approved hegemonic ideology sustained by bureaucracy, politics, industry, and mass media. *Nihonjinron* thus became one of the main points of reference to justify and protect the interests of the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP), to the extent that Yoshino defined it as «a case of manipulation of ideas» (Yoshino 1992: 141-143).

One of the most evident and successful attempts to introduce *Nihonjinron* into the political discourse is represented by the policy of

kokusaika 国際化 (internationalization), promoted by the Japanese government since the 1970s to vehiculate abroad the “Japanese way of living” (*nihon jijō*) and, ultimately, to Japanize foreigners (Befu 2001: 71, 82-83; Mouer & Sugimoto 1986: 17, 171, 388; Liddicoat 2007: 36-41; Dale 1986: 19). *Kokusaika* indicates a series of actions implying the involvement of foreign countries, such as the arrival or permanence in Japan of foreign tourists; the financial investments to Japan by foreign countries and vice versa; the travels abroad by Japanese citizens; the learning of foreign languages by the Japanese and of Japanese language and culture by foreigners; the hanging out with non-Japanese; the exportation abroad of Japanese culture, values and history in the form of craftsmanship, artistic performance, cultural products (*ikebana*, tea ceremony, *manga*, *anime*, martial arts), and the establishment of international research centers. *Kokusaika*, with special reference to the teaching of Japanese language, is aimed at diffusing a stereotyped, essentialized and particularistic image of the Japanese as a static monoethnic entity, by strengthening Japan’s international understanding and protecting its international interests and position. It does not imply a true bidirectional cultural exchange but a conservative polity reflecting a restored sense of national pride to be implemented through the “domestication” of external influence and the emphasis upon national identity.

As Blommaert pointed out, ‘ideology’ should be intended as a combination of power and discourse, «a *general* phenomenon characterizing the *totality* of a particular social or political system, and operated by *every* member or actor in that system», not only as «a *specific* set of symbolic representations - discourses, terms, arguments, images, stereotypes - serving a *specific* purpose, and operated by *specific* groups or actors, recognizable precisely by their usage of such ideologies» (Blommaert 2005: 158). The latter definition encompasses all the “-isms”, such as socialism, liberalism, Marxism - codified, explicit and historically contingent ideologies with a clear origin and development model. The former does not attribute ideology to a particular actor, nor identifies it with a specific entity, but it penetrates the entire society and produces normalized and naturalized models of thought and behaviors: it is the common sense, the mainstream perceptions of the world, the set of naturalized activities sustaining social organization and power structures and models. Therefore, ideology may be

regarded as «materially mediated ideational phenomena», which combines a set of ideas, perceptions, received wisdom entailing the unintentional reproduction of meanings (cognitive/ideational phenomena) and ideas formed through particular conditions or material instruments encompassing creative, planned, and conscious activities (material phenomena or practices) (Blommaert 2005: 158-159, 161, 164, 174).

The *Nihonjinron* exemplifies a whole mode of thinking, an ideology of cultural and ethnic feeling pervading both its producers or consumers, transversely influencing the self-perceptions and self-representations of generations of Japanese. Just as many other ideologies, *Nihonjinron* may not be the mirror of reality, but what the Japanese believe being its factuality. For this discrepancy between the real and the ideal, *Nihonjinron* discourse could be associated to the cultural concept of *tatemaie* 建前 - the set of ideals, social values, appropriated behaviors intended as social and public etiquette - opposed to *honne* 本音, the real feelings, intentions, thoughts of an individual (Befu 1984: 70). Accordingly, the role of *Nihonjinron* as a dominant ideology manifests itself as the civil religion of Japan - the whole of beliefs, ritual practices, shared symbols of a community, through which the State creates and gives an aura of sacredness to its political sphere. The main assumption of civil religions is that a political entity is simultaneously the common unity of religious practice and that the latter helps to validate and legitimate the former through individual religious practices. If *Nihonjinron* is to be Japan's civil religion, it is reasonable to consider it as a manifestation of Japanese nationalism, since nationalism itself is a sort of religion, and an isomorphism between society and nation in the identity discourse exists (Befu 2001: 10, 104-105, 111-113; Yoshino 1992: 16).

Therefore, *Nihonjinron* should be seen as an ideological discourse of a specific nationalist nature, whose primordialist rhetoric is intended to understand social and political realities within a framework of nations and nationalist sentiments. In mainstream scholarship, the conceptualization and emphasis on *Nihonjinron*'s primordialist element is absent, although several scholars have implicitly pointed out some definitory traits in this sense or, as in the case of Befu, the category of the "primordial" is mentioned to briefly stress the existence in contemporary Japan of strongly perceived "primordial sentiments"

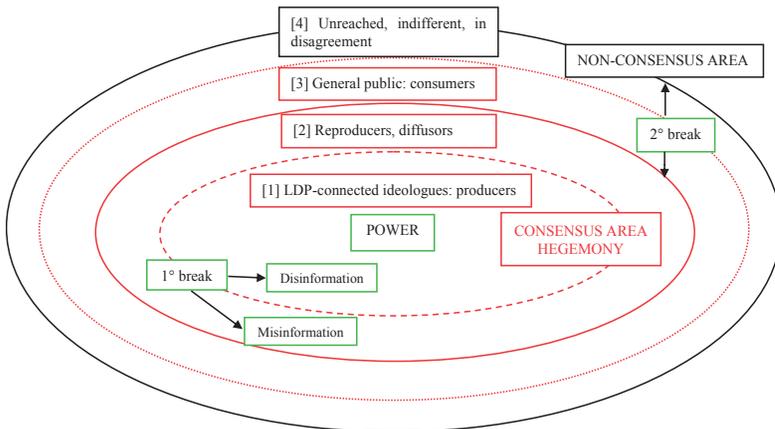
concerning blood, race purity, and language mystique, following Geertz's explanation.

The introduction of the primordialist conceptualization is indispensable to understand the ideological structure of *Nihonjinron*. This reevaluation of *Nihonjinron* comes along with the reinterpretation of primordialism as a category of practice previously propounded, and the identification of its intellectual origins with German philosophical organicism, which easily took root in Japan thanks to the former existence of a national identity proto-discourse profoundly imbued with primordialist beliefs. Not by accident was Japanese nationalism firstly theorized during the Meiji era, when the Prussian model was selected by the Meiji oligarchy to provide Japan with the anthropological, philosophical, sociological and political knowledge necessary to reform the Japanese State. The complex elaboration of Japanese linguistic and cultural particularism owes much to the theoretical world of the nineteenth-century German nationalism. Sources of remarkable inspiration were the German nationalist reaction to modernity, the celebration of community, land, aristocratic culture and Teutonic archaic singularities, and the hostile refusal of a decadent, bourgeois, cosmopolitan and democratic West. The rooting of a holistic vision of society, emphasizing the relevance of the whole (society as an organic, abstract entity) on the parts (individuals), was similarly influential, thanks to the popular idea that society is the most important cognitive unity of analysis. These and other connected ideas got entrenched in Japanese academic circles, where they still survive, albeit being hardly recognizable because of the jargon of authenticity employed to translate concepts of a foreign origin. A set of ethnocentric self-definitions descending from European intellectual nationalist history is often concealed under the expression "Japanese unique mindset" (Dale 1986: 214-215, 222).

To fully grasp the nature and the intellectual sources of *Nihonjinron*, it would be appropriate to deepen the allure exerted by and the knowledge of German nationalism from 1808 to 1945 among several influential Japanese academicians, notably certain popular and sophisticated trends in German ultra-nationalism from the late Weimar to Hitler (Dale 1986: 215), in addition to earlier German philosophers such as Fichte and Herder. For instance, it was in Germany where the father of *kokugo* Ueda Katsutoshi (1867-1937) encountered the notions of *Sprachgemeinschaft* (linguistic community), *nationale Gemeinschaft*

(national community), and the idea that a national language may be used as a powerful symbol of national unity. Ueda was also influenced by the prominent roles of such German intellectuals as Goethe, Schiller, and von Humboldt, in diffusing the idea of a tie existing between language and nation, of the existence of a mother tongue (*Muttersprache*) naturally infusing love and respect for the nation, of a national language to be “purified” from foreign influences. He was attracted by Herder’s idea that a language is the product of its users, that a common mother tongue generates a spiritual brotherhood, that Japanese national spirit, thought, emotions are expressed by a national language; and, ultimately, the idea of a compulsory education centered on language (Heinrich 2012: 60-68). Hence, Japanese nationalism immediately characterized itself for a strong organicist conception of ‘Japanese nation’, due to the primacy of the Prussian model among Meiji oligarchy and the existence of an identity proto-discourse deeply imbued with primordialist beliefs since the Tokugawa period.

As such, in *Nihonjinron* four different degrees of ideologization through which its socially-transmitted beliefs manifest or are expressed by their producers and consumers, with varying levels of intensity and consciousness, may be identified.



The first ellipse [1] represents *Nihonjinron*'s ideological core, from which its social beliefs are emanated: it is the area of the zealous promoters, fully conscious about the ideology they sustain and supported by structured, detailed activities. The further away from [1], the

smaller the degree of ideological intensity and consciousness: ellipses [2] and [3] are satellites of [1], for benefitting from, diffusing, reproducing the beliefs generating from [1]. [1] encompasses either ultra-conservative personalities or moderate ones, who have solid ties with the establishment or are part of it, while being clearly lined up with the LDP. It is the clique holding not only cultural hegemony, shared with [2], but also total power. The professionals belonging to [1] are usually not historians, but they often come from different fields of expertise: members of organizations, collaborators of magazines, participants to conferences, politicians, religious leaders, scholars of various disciplines, journalists, writers, educators, industrials, teachers. They are supported in their efforts of divulgation as “know-it-all” by the positive value attributed to amateurism in Japanese society. They are interested in a multitude of subjects pertaining to Japanese identity and generally claim Japan’s moral superiority. Some of them are militants of the historical revisionist movement characterizing Japanese politics since the 1990s.

The second ellipse [2] is composed by people who, unconsciously or semi-consciously, promote a spontaneous activity of propagation of *Nihonjinron* beliefs. In comparison to [1], which includes producers of *Nihonjinron* only, [2] consists of ideology reproducers who are themselves consumers, for replicating, disseminating and being forged by *Nihonjinron* tenets. Between [1] and [2] a break occurs between a conscious, intentional, premeditated action aimed at propagating false beliefs as a result of disinformation on one side, and an unconscious action engendering unexpected effects whose associated false beliefs are instead a result of misinformation, on the other.

The third ellipse [3] corresponds to the general public, the weakest degree of ideologization sharing (either passively or actively) the most general nationalist beliefs. At times it fosters beliefs having a strong media impact (such as the “invention” of the Nanjing massacre), yet it is not sustained by factual knowledge or universal values capable of critically express judgment. Thus, it is an easily influenceable area.

Ultimately, the fourth ellipse [4] encompasses the uncompromised stratum of population, the people unaffected by, indifferent to or disagreeing with *Nihonjinron* tenets. This is the non-consensus area, which should deserve an attentive and specific investigation for being a hotbed of alternative ways of self-identification. Among [1]-[2]-[3]

and [4] a secondary break exists, that is the delimitation of the consensus and non-consensus areas and the separation between those holding the hegemony and those who are situated outside of the system.

In the third and fourth chapters, I will focus on the highest levels of ideologization [1] and [2], respectively embodied by Watanabe Shōichi and Suzuki Takao, in order to analyze and highlight the primordialist element of the discourse. In this sense, the expressive form of the amatorial essay as means to extensively assert and propagate nationalist ideas is of paramount importance. In the following section, I will present the theoretical features of this writing genre, so frequently employed by *Nihonjinron* supporters.

2.2. The Amatorial Essay as Nationalist Expression

The amatorial essay is so popular to induce several scholars of the field to identify it with the entire *Nihonjinron* discourse or consider it as one of its paradigmatic manifestations (Yoshino 1992; Befu 2001; Sugimoto 2010; Dale 1986; Mouer & Sugimoto 1986). Because of the ambiguity of *Nihonjinron* in terms of terminology and definition, an exhaustive and universally acceptable bibliography of its related publications is nevertheless very hard to compile. True ideologues of *Nihonjinron* simply do not exist, nor literary canons, a manifesto or an organic exposition of argumentations on Japaneseness do. Although a 1978 survey by the Nomura Research Institute attested the existence of 698 *Nihonjinron*'s titles published between 1946 and 1978, not only is the research outdated, but it neither defined what it was meant by 'Nihonjinron'. Many important titles were omitted, and magazine or newspaper articles were neglected: if the latter were to be included by widening the definition of 'Nihonjinron' and the titles published after 1978 (including those written by foreigners) were to be added to the original compilation, the total figure would rapidly grow. Nomura's report greatly underestimates the range of action of the written production of *Nihonjinron* (Nomura Sōgō Kenkyūjo 1978 discussed in Befu 2001: 7; Yoshino 1992: 168; Dale 1986: 15; Mouer & Sugimoto 1982: 23; Sugimoto 1999: 82).

The success of the writing expression in the *Nihonjinron* production is due to several reasons. Firstly, the central role played by intellectuals in Japanese society and culture in educating the less cultivated people.

Japanese intellectuals – variously defined as *gakusha* (scholars), *sensei* (teachers, guides), *bunkajin* (intellectuals) or *chishikijin* (experts) – reword specialistic discoveries for the general public, making them accessible to non-experts. They are influential commentators, respected and taken seriously even if amateur, and the mass media often turn to them by virtue of their perceived social status and authority. They may belong to different social classes with a common elevated culture or education (academicians, artists, writers, jurists, literary critics, company directors...), regarded as holders of universal cultural values. Especially high-ranked scholars «have chosen to elect themselves as proxy spokesmen for the inarticulate soul of the national essence», thanks to their privileged position in Japanese society, which strongly favors those who managed to secure their intellectual credentials in elitist education centers like Tōkyō and Kyōto universities (Dale 1986: 15, 18). In their self-elected function of interpreters, these academicians (linguists, economists, physicians, art historians, sociologists, anthropologists, mathematicians...) have the power to influence and forge the self-representations of the Japanese and the perceptions of foreigners about Japan.

Other reasons that emphasize *Nihonjinron* essays are the immense number of publications, which constitutes a sufficient sample of the entire *Nihonjinron* written production in a broader sense; the paramount importance attached to a diffused metalinguistic reflection; their wide epistemological range. Through books, *Nihonjinron* ideas and concepts are elaborated and explored in a more kaleidoscopic, thorough, in-depth modality than they are in magazine articles and the alike, where the salient characteristics of Japaneseness are often presented as stereotypes or clichés. Most of *Nihonjinron* written production cannot sustain the formal canons to be defined as scientific and this is why several scholars like Dale or Miller were extremely critical towards *Nihonjinron* essays, often treated as more serious analytical works.

2.2.1. Gnoseology of the *Nihonjinron*

In *Nihonjinron* amatorial essays Japaneseness is investigated through a myriad of epistemological perspectives ranging from folklore studies, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, archeology, psychology to biology, economics, ecology, philosophy, aesthetics (Befu 2001;

Yoshino 1992; Dale 1986; Sugimoto 2010; Mouer & Sugimoto 1986; Miller 1982).

By way of example, an indissoluble relationship between the geographical and climatic features of the Japanese archipelago (lack of natural resources, mountainous territory, frequency of typhoons, *tsunami*, earthquakes, floods, landslides) and the development of Japanese people's cultural, social and psychological life is often stressed. The so-called "theory of hydraulic civilizations" (Wittfogel 1957) arguing the direct correlation between the need for cooperation to preserve irrigation systems in rice cultivation and the creation of stable corporative unities tied by the values of collectivism, conformism, consensus, collaboration, is another very popular and widely accepted theory in *Nihonjinron*. In turn, corporativism is regarded as the factor generating Japanese psychological peculiarities such as *amae*, and the Japanese traditional family system. *Amae* 甘え is a very influential notion elaborated by psychoanalyst Doi Takeo (1971), through which he attempted to illustrate the whole Japanese culture and national character. It refers to mutual psychological dependence firstly developing within primary groups as a profound emotional bond between mother and children, and subsequently extending to other social groups. It consists of inducing someone to be indulgent and attentive toward someone else. Apart from *amae*, Doi endeavored to discover words of a Japanese origin (*wago*) to demonstrate the existence of psychoanalytical patterns peculiar to the "Japanese thought".

Similarly, Japanese uniqueness is often explained by means of aesthetical concepts regarded as untranslatable and rationally unintelligible for expressing the "Japanese spirit", as *iki* 粋 (chic, stylish, refined, sophisticated), *mono no aware* もののあわれ (pathos of things), *wabi* わび (taste for the simple and quiet), *sabi* さび (elegant simplicity), *ukiyo* 浮世 (the ephemeral), *akirame* 諦め (resignation), *ma* 間 (space, emptiness), *tate* 縦 (verticality), *aidagara* 間柄 (relation), *kiyosa* 清さ (limpidity), *ie* 家 (family), *ki* 気 (humor, energy). From every single term the rich and variegated Japanese tradition is derived and resumed. As one may note, the *Nihonjinron* discourse is centered on language, for Japanese particularism is considered to manifest itself through specific Japanese words (especially those of an indigenous etymology), sectorial terminology such as certain kinship-related terms (Kindaichi 1988), idiomatic expressions, specific grammatical constructions or

communication modes. A paradigmatic example is represented by such words of the sort of *haragei* 腹芸 (art of belly), *ishin denshin* 以心伝心 (tacit understanding), *kantan aiterasu* 肝胆相照らす (to be deeply compatible), *kotoage sezu* 事上げせず (without saying a word), *kagen chinmoku* 加減沈黙 (reticent, taciturn), quoted as evidence of the Japanese ability in non-verbal or empathetic communication by virtue of Japanese intrinsic homogeneity. This argumentation implies the impossibility for a native Japanese to adequately communicate with a non-Japanese.

Interestingly, Tsunoda Tadanobu sought to confer a “neurologic” validation to *Nihonjinron*’s language determinism by demonstrating the existence of differences in the hemispherical localization of the processing of consonants and vowels in “Western” and “Japanese” brains (Tsunoda 1985; Dale 1993; Makita 1979: 440-449). Tsunoda alleged that only “Japanese brain” involves the fusion of natural, musical and human sounds, thus explaining the peculiarity of “Japanese thought structure” and its unity with nature. On this last point, Imanishi Kinji, the founder of Japanese primatology, sought to challenge the Darwinian theory of evolution and to substitute it with an alternative, “oriental” pattern to demonstrate the existence of an intimate affinity between the Japanese and primates (Imanishi 1941, 1976; Halstead 1985, 1987).

Ultimately, Japanese uniqueness has been posited even by means of archeological findings: prehistory is viewed as the cultural hive of pure, uncontaminated “indigenous traits” through which the cultural roots of a people may surface (Fawcett 1995; Hudson 2005; Kohl 1998).

2.2.2. Discursive and Textual Features of *Nihonjinron* Essays

Popular *Nihonjinron* can be generally distinguished from scientific works thanks to several criteria and features in terms of communication strategies and rhetorical devices, aimed at reinforcing the primordialist narrative of *Nihonjinron*. Since their boundaries are not clear-cut and they often overlap, I gathered them into two broad categories, one corresponding to the discourse – the connotation, content, evoked images, message – the other to the text – the narrative, argumentations, stylistic solutions and ideological attitudes. The presentation of the single techniques or characteristics rests on personal interpretations and on the observations of some scholars of the field (Mouer &

Sugimoto 1986; Dale 1986; Befu 2001; Yoshino 1992: 2; Sugimoto 2010: 32-33, 300-301; Miller 1982; Miller 1977a: 14-19; Heinrich 2012: 122; Funabiki 2017: 69, 112-113).

1) DISCOURSE

• ESSENTIALIZATION AND DICHOTOMIZATION

The purpose of this double technique is to emphasize the difference between “us” (in-group) and “them” (out-group) and to demonstrate Japanese uniqueness.

Essentialization is the simplistic reduction of reality into entities, intended as *sui generis*, natural, unchangeable, ultimate realities of knowledge. Dichotomization is a process of bipartition of two elements in a figurative sense. In the *Nihonjinron* discourse, the world is inhabited by monolithic entities (nations, people, cultures, societies, civilizations), among which ‘Japan’ (Japaneseness) and ‘West’ (Otherness) emerge. These entities epitomize two opposite poles characterized by a set of stereotyped, antithetical attributes differentiating them. The *modus operandi* consists of attributing to the Other (‘West’, ‘USA’, ‘UK’, ‘France’, ‘Germany’, ‘Europe’, ‘latinity’, ‘classicism’, ‘China’, ‘Korea’, ‘Asia’) tendencies and social behaviors judged as corrupting an archaic, idealized and indigenous world, a primordial, immutable essence, and hypostatizing traits, characteristics and values. In other words, the discourse of *Nihonjinron* is structured through the constant (implicit or explicit) comparison of the ‘Japanese self’ with the ‘other self’: Japanese identity is portrayed as the anti-image of Otherness.

Strictly related to that, two concepts presuming either a positive or a negative value are frequently connected by re-assigning a certain connotation to some associated lexemes, idiomatic expressions, common sayings, attributes, nouns, ordinary verbs. For instance, *tsuzuku* (to continue) and *nokoru* (to remain, rest, survive) – associated to Japaneseness – are opposed to *ushinau* (to lose) – associated to Westernness, adding new, meaningful implications. The former refers to the temporal persistence of Japanese history, civilization, language and, nation; the latter to the constant change and loss of the same elements by the Westerners. Resemantization also occurs in the sense that *nokoru*, originally entailing a negative meaning, turns into positive. Resemantization serves the purpose of infusing a positive feeling of national belonging by emphasizing the goodness and the affirmative value of

“us” in contrast to an antagonist “them”.

Dale offers a deep insight into the dialectic of difference, typical of the *Nihonjinron*. He proposes a reading technique of *Nihonjinron* essays consisting of underlying any implicit or explicit contrast between ‘Japan’ and the ‘West’ and subsequently ordering the corresponding terms or expressions within a chart. Generally speaking, the structural differences between the ‘Other’ (notably the ‘West’) and ‘Japan’ observed by Dale in his survey of numerous *Nihonjinron* writings can be represented as follows:

Tab. 2.1. The Structural Differences Between the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’

Universality	Particularity/ uniqueness
Heterogeneity	Homogeneity
Absolutism	Relativism
Abstraction	Phenomenalism, concreteness
Donative/active	Receptive/reactive
Open	Closed

More specifically, Dale suggests several other dichotomies classified into conceptual categories. First, geo-ecological differences play a pivotal role in the *Nihonjinron* discourse: they are believed to determine different cultural styles. While ‘West’ is continental, desert, characterized by a scarce nature dominated by human beings and a regular, temperate climate, Japan is insular, forestry, covered by a rich, overpowering nature and a variable, monsoonal climate. In terms of population, these geographical diversities would generate the antinomy between “racial” intermingling and “monoracial” purity. This distinction would in turn engender a fundamental difference in communication modes - verbosity in the case of West, and silence as for Japan. From these ecological and racial differences derives an opposition pertaining the modes of subsistence: while Western culture, diet, economy is originally based on pastoralism, meat consumption, and slavery, the Japanese rests on rice cultivation, a vegetable-based diet, a rural lifestyle and corporative work. As for social structure, ‘West’ is conceived in terms of an individualist, horizontal and equalitarian *Gesellschaft* (society), grounded on a contract among citizens, while Japan is depicted as a group or “contextualist/inter-personalist”, vertical and hierarchical *Gemeinschaft* (community), founded on a “kintract” or “blood contract”. Whereas the urban-cosmopolitan “guilty”-based Western society emphasizes the private sphere, the values of

independence and individual rights, the rural-exclusivist, “shame”-based Japanese society stresses the public sphere, the values of interpersonal dependence and duties. Apropos of the contrast between the private and the public, *Nihonjinron* discourse also highly emphasizes the external world - the out-group or outsiders against the internal world, the in-group or insiders, by highlighting a fundamental tension between social reality, the surface, the obligations and individual desires, the hidden, the human sentiments. Because of the historical mixture of people, the Western world is seen as characterized by an endemic struggle for survival, intolerance among tribal groups, bellicosity, stressing patriarchy and masculinity, causing social instability and the creation of a unitary monotheistic ideology. By contrast, by virtue of its internal homogeneity, in Japan the cultural values of tolerance, pacifism and femininity prevailed, guaranteeing social stability and religious syncretism and polytheism. Ultimately, the West is viewed as “materialistic” and Japan as “spiritualistic”. Intellectually, while Western tradition would distinguish itself for its logicity, rationality, exclusivism, objectivism and dogmatism, the Japanese thought is featured by ambivalence, emotionality or irrationality, inclusionism, subjectivism, situationism.

All the aforementioned attributes are not original or unique to Japanese culture, yet they usually originate from foreign intellectual traditions, notably German philosophy: *Nihonjinron* writers often disguise ideas of a foreign origin as authentic Japanese principles. Nor they are always espoused by *Nihonjinron* writers, who at times attribute to Japan qualities usually associated to the West or confuse them. At any rate, what is important to highlight is the rhetorical technique unfolded, intended to emphasize the value acquired by the attribute (connotation) and not the meaning itself (denotation).

- MYSTIFICATION

It is the deliberate distortion of reality resulting in the diffusion of erroneous beliefs. It is grounded on biased judgments purported as ideologically objective, in order to vehiculate a specific worldview. It is a particularly important technique in the *Nihonjinron* discourse because it is widely employed to misrepresent and simplify the notion of 'Japanese nation' - as it is evident in the accent on the impenetrability and ineffability of Japanese culture. To this purpose, decontextualization is frequently praised. This justifies the presence of long

paragraphs filled with citations, intertextual, mythological, poetic references, historical anecdotes, a patchwork of contents and meanings of a different nature, risking the reader to lose the logical thread of what was being said. What ultimately sticks is a “magical” keyword, usually appearing in the incipient lines of a paragraph or in its title only.

- EMOTIONALITY

This discursive feature refers to the quality of being Japanese through an emotional tone. It serves the purpose of appealing to the emotions of the readership and increasing their sentimental attachment of their Japaneseness.

More specifically, a first technique consists of drawing on metaphors or a language of kinship - a set of images or attributes referring to the “mother”, “father”, “grandfathers”, “childhood”, “homeland”, “native country”, “ancestry”, “lineage”, “blood”. The peculiarity of this language of affective ties consists of making the nation appear as something to which one is naturally bounded to - as a father, a mother, a birthplace - as something unchosen: “nation-ness” is assimilated to skin’s color, gender, lineage, the moment of one’s birth (Anderson 2006: 143). It alludes to positive, nostalgic, melancholic feelings concerning Japaneseness by means of similitudes and metaphorical images, such as “Japanese blood”. The emotional component of language is used as a sort of “instrument of the sentimental capacity” in which a tight relationship with the “national momentum” can be found (Merker 2001: 110).

Moreover, poetical images deriving from mythology and ancient poetry to describe an aspect of Japaneseness or crystalize its peculiarities are other devices relying on emotions. A timeless referential language, as the vague temporal expressions typical of fairytales or myths like *mukashi* (once upon a time) or *kenkoku* (founding of a country), intricate and intertwined historical and mythological references are employed in statements intended to depict a real aspect of Japanese society and culture, to exemplify some aspects of Japaneseness or give moral teachings.

- MINIMIZATION AND CONTRADICTION

The *Nihonjinron* discourse characterizes itself for the constant

minimization of the sociological, anthropological, linguistic reality, that is the reduction of the relevance of a phenomenon in a certain context in order to enhance a specific ideological stance. By way of example, the cultural and ethnic pluralism or the internal sociological variations of the Japanese society are ignored or treated as exceptions to emphasize the tenet of homogeneity. Minimization also manifests in overtly refusing or underestimating the influence of single historical events so as a broader narration of historical processes may emerge.

By reducing reality, *Nihonjinron* intentionally overlooks those facts that would challenge its authority and tenets, thus generating incongruities. For instance, the emphasis on social harmony and pacifism vividly contrasts with the historical and sociological vicissitudes of the Japanese archipelago and society. The contradictory character of the *Nihonjinron* discourse is ultimately a common trait of the nationalist ideology (Longo 2018: 197, 199) and of the ideologies in general.

- THE CONSTRUCTION OF A STRAWMAN

Actually, according to the logic in which *Nihonjinron* ideology operates, not only are contradictions absent, but the principle of unfalsifiability is at work. It consists of identifying, as a premise, one or more strawmen, false argumentations grounded on distorted representations of the object of analysis and construed in order to discredit another argumentation or to invent on purpose specious problems, so that any possible contradiction is justified and resolved *a priori* through the general assumption.

- BANALIZING THE NATION-NESS

As Billig remarked, notably linguistic banalization through the repetition of certain apparently spontaneous and innocent expressions already existing in a language plays a fundamental role of vehiculating and slyly imposing the sense of nation. «Routinely familiar habits of language» (Billig 1995: 93) are crucial to continuously bring back to mind one's own national belonging, to reproduce the natural character of nations and national identities, such as *nihonjin toshite* (as Japanese nationals), *waga kuni* (our country), *wareware nihonjin* (we Japanese), etc. It is necessary to become "linguistically microscopic" to grasp the significance of the core of the trivialization process: «The crucial words of banal nationalism are often the smallest: 'we', 'this' and 'here',

which are the words of linguistic ‘deixis’» (Billig 1995: 93-94):

In this way, the world of nations will be reproduced as *the* world, the natural environment of today. [...] Banal nationalism operates with prosaic, routine words, which take nations for granted, and which, in so doing, inhabit them. Small words, rather than grand memorable phrases, offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making ‘our’ national identity unforgettable.

Linguistic banalization entails the banalization of concepts underlying “banal” words, which are stated as universal truths without being further developed, as it is observed in the case of ‘homogeneity’ (*dōshitsusei*), a clichéd attribute about Japanese society.

2) TEXT

• EVOCATION OF THE IDEAL CULTURE

The lack of methodology typical of *Nihonjinron* popular essays that I will address later on is balanced by a strong moralistic element merging the real culture with the ideal one. Ideals are used to shape reality carrying out a phenomenon called “self-realizing prophecy”: the promotion of a holistic vision of Japanese society encourages the Japanese to accept the status quo. Likewise, nationalist stereotypes, myths, clichés mould people’s life and influence their choices and decisions. This is why the *Nihonjinron* discourse could be seen as a discourse aiming at prophesying how Japanese society should be.

Broadly speaking, the magic of prophecy realizes when the desired situation is perceived as real. More specifically, this mystifying technique firstly consists of reiterating evocative keywords or expressions such as *nihon rashisa* / *nihon no sugata* (Japaneseness), *nihonjin/nihongo no kokoro* (essence of the Japanese / Japanese language), *nihonjin no seishin/kokoro* (Japanese spirit), and so forth – not accidentally used in book and chapter titles. They implicitly assert Japanese particularism and legitimize it as objective reality: not only do words describe reality, they also concur at creating it. What is stated with authority turns into reality (Gebert 2007: 176).

Furthermore, “expressions of Japaneseness” also frequently occur, remembering the existence of a moral norm which, if transgressed, encloses an individual within a condition of strangeness and unusuality

- as *nihonjin toshite* (as Japanese), *heikina nihonjin* (the average Japanese), *ippan no nihonjin* (the normal Japanese) suggest. In the *Nihonjinron*, it is of a particular relevance the reference to a sanctioning community (*seken*) in the form of socially-constructed images exercising a normative power towards deviant behaviors. *Seken* encompasses primary groups, close relatives, colleagues, neighbors: it is a primary unity of social interaction. It often underlies the expression “we Japanese” (*wareware nihonjin*), describing a more extended unity of imagined kinship and for this, it is alternatively also referred to as *nihonjin nakama* (we Japanese comrades). When employing these expressions, *Nihonjinron* writers claim to speak in the name and in the interest of the nation, by conflating their own self with the collective “us”.

Ideal culture is evoked also through a linguistic style characterized by universalizing assertive sentences, which permeate the text with moralism and normativism to such an extent so as to make a desired situation or an ideal (e.g. Japanese homogeneity and uniqueness) come true. They suggest that every “normal” Japanese should behave according to the prescriptions recommended by the *Nihonjinron*, and that, if not, one should not deserve to be even defined as a true Japanese. Tautologies - propositions repeating in the predicate what it is already asserted in the subject in the attempt of defining something - are frequently employed as logical argumentations or demonstrations, albeit being true by definition. Normativity is furtherly stressed through certain grammatical constructions such as *beki de aru* (should) or other assertive expressions as *nakute wa naranai* (have to), *nakereba narimasen* (have to, must), *de ii no desu* (it is advisable to), *koto ga taisetsu desu* (it is important to).

- INDETERMINATENESS

Nihonjinron popular essay writing features the use of grammatical expressions underlying temporal imprecision or indefinitely referring to a “lost past” or a “golden age”, notably in relation to the origins of the Japanese nation - such as *shindai kara* (since the era of gods) or *korai* (in ancient times). The invocation of ancient history in support of the uncertain and old roots of a nation and the intertwining of mythology and historiography are typical techniques of nationalist rhetoric in the definition of national identity (Longo 2018: 188-189).

Textual indeterminateness and vagueness are fostered by making use of constructs expressing possibility, probability and randomness, as *kamoshirenai* (maybe), *de arō* (it is probable that), *te itte mo* (it is possible that), *to iwareru* (it is said), *dewa nai darō* (perhaps it is not that). They often occur in order to speculate on an approximate content and mitigate a statement that would otherwise appear extreme, attempting to convince the reader of its truthfulness.

A plethora of denotatively vague expressions similarly make textual contents and referents unclear. Confusion is especially engendered by the abundant use of emic concepts (*amae*, *tate/yoko*, *uchi/soto*...), as if they were ethnic concepts in comparative stances or in the labeling of what is seen as uniquely Japanese. The same goes for those resorting to concepts of a foreign intellectual origin, disguised as indigenous and frequently misinterpreted or decontextualized. The absence of univocal and explicit definitions of the objects of analysis and the terminology employed or, at least, of a critical discussion on the state of art represents another clue of the indeterminateness intentionally promoted by the *Nihonjinron* discourse. A semantic vagueness derives from such conceptual imprecision, referred to as “loose semantics” (Gebert 2007: 175): the indistinct meaning of certain profusely-recurring words such as *dōshitsu* (homogeneity) is subordinated to their referents (the Japanese) that are instead clear and univocal.

In addition, *Nihonjinron* texts are also featured by a highly incoherent argumentative structure. Concepts and ideas are introduced along the way, without being further clarified in detail. Argumentations are construed in a scattered way, filled with a constellation of ellipses, generalizing statements, numerous references to Japan’s history, mythology, literature, digressions, examples, anecdotes, citations, assuming a kept-for-granted, shared context of knowledge within the readership and making a straightforward reading of the text difficult. The result is the difficulty of maintaining the line of argument.

Indeterminateness is strictly connected to mystification. Especially semantic vagueness increases the possibility of manipulating reality at one’s convenience.

- LACK OF A SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS AND METHODOLOGY

Nihonjinron methodology underlies the principle of self-reference: truthfulness of what is stated mostly derives from writer’s authority

by virtue of their prestige as intellectuals in Japanese society and of their amatorial attitude, highly praised in Japanese society. *Nihonjinron* authors tend to self-mention and rely on themselves as main sources. Sometimes they remember to the readership their trustworthy position in short but incisive asides or resorting to personal experiences. Occasionally, the principle of authority is emphasized by the editor on the cover or band. Along with self-reference, circular and mechanic deference may coexist in *Nihonjinron* texts: the former is the mutual citation among *Nihonjinron* colleagues, while the latter is the mention of foreign (“Western”) intellectuals regarded as reliable and thus capable of increasing the prestige of those quoting them. The source becomes at once reliable and the content of a statement credible only because uttered by a foreign (Western) intellectual.

The authority of the writer compensates for the lack of a scientific apparatus: citations, footnotes, bibliographical references, data, statistics, hypothesis validation, intersocial comparisons. Moreover, it validates the use of popular, non-specialistic sources, a way of proceeding based on: personal experiences; news; episodes and generalizations from the everyday life; historical and personal anecdotes; literary quotations drawn from novels, essays, poems; folkloric observations; myths; dictionary entries; newspapers and magazine articles; TV and radio programs; documentaries; movies. Likewise, the authority of a *Nihonjinron* colleague or a foreigner justifies the reliability of other *Nihonjinron* essays and specific episodes proving Japanese idiosyncrasy. This procedure could be defined as “*Nihonjinron* phenomenology” and it is directed to validating or reinforcing one’s statement by virtue of one’s own intellectual authority, by adding evaluative or qualitative judgments. For instance, one may claim that Japanese are “groupists” after remarking that they tend to travel abroad in groups or that traditional festivals (*matsuri*) involve great masses of people. All the sources are mentioned under a decontextualized guise, as they are extrapolated from their original textual and intellectual context and inserted within a discourse of a different nature for ideological ends. The decontextualization of isolated examples which are believed to demonstrate the concrete application or effective operativity of a certain principle is a very common trait of nationalist rhetoric (Longo 2018: 197).

The absence of an explicit and systematic methodology is another hint of the scientific inaccuracy characterizing the *Nihonjinron*

production, which instead seeks to disguise itself as serious. By omitting the references to the adopted method, the reader is induced to believe that scientific evidence lies elsewhere. What is implicitly advanced is that scientific writings imply too much an effort for an ordinary reader, primarily interested to general discoveries. *Nihonjinron* essays are rather surrounded by a pseudo-scientific aura, as the here-and-there appearance of a table or approximate schemas, fictitious reproductions of direct speeches or citations, references to arbitrary data not sustained by any research or source, suggest.

As previously noted, from an epistemological point of view, the range of fields explored by *Nihonjinron* writers is surprisingly vast. *Nihonjinron* discourse characterizes itself for a diffused know-all attitude, strictly connected to the importance attached to amateurism in Japanese culture. Many *Nihonjinron* works are not written by specialists, nor they are specialistic or monothematic, albeit the author being a specialist in the field, yet they encompass various disciplines. A “Japanology” or experts in Japanese national identity do not exist: potentially anyone, even common people, can participate in identity debates. Funabiki maintains that on one side, serious people choose not to deal with *Nihonjinron*, namely the identity question, for representing a too tricky topic to be investigated; on the other, mediocre texts are often written simply to satisfy the reader’s demand, thus ridiculing and underestimating the ideology of *Nihonjinron* (Funabiki 2017: 114). The legitimization of a know-all attitude, even more tolerated according to author’s authority, is sometimes suggested through several expressions underlying the existence of a universal, common, kept-for-granted knowledge or observations that even the prophane, if properly guided, may carry out. These sentences lean on the so-called *argumentum ad populum*, a fallacy stating or presuming the correctness of an argument for the fact of it being sustained by a large number of people.

- OVERSIMPLIFICATION

Nihonjinron discourse abounds in stereotypes, clichés, commonplaces - pre-established opinions on people or groups regardless the evaluation of single cases, the result of a prior hyper-generalization and hyper-simplification, that is a false deductive operation. They allow to quickly transmit complex contents, orientate and change

individual and collective behaviors.

Statements deriving from common sense - the worldview absorbed a-critically by different social and cultural environments where the moral individuality of the average people develops - are accordingly very frequent. Ordinary people totally adhere to a certain perception of the world, which is extrinsically elaborated and manifests itself through an irrational allegiance to indemonstrable and non-scientific principles and precepts. Common sense is the partial knowledge of reality resulting from a spontaneous, vivid "general impression", not a measured, reasoned analysis. It develops on the grounds of an ideological field extraneous to the ensemble of knowledge from which it derives. It is not neutral, but it is to assume a philosophy produced by intellectuals connected to the dominant class, adapt it according to its immediate needs and transform it into a moral principle, a norm of life, a "world order". It then functions as absolute truth, appearing to spring directly from the mass, the "popular wisdom".

Simplification of the complexity of reality is also attained relying on diffused and traditional figurative phrases, short mottos, expressing briefly and concisely a thought or a norm deduced from experience, such as metaphors, similitudes, paradigmatic and symbolic associations, analogies, idiomatic expressions, common sayings, proverbs, famous sayings (*meigen*). Especially proverbs (*kotowaza*) are often treated as sources of authority on which *Nihonjinron* argumentations may be construed and even legitimized. For instance, by mentioning *saru mono hibi ni utoshi* (Out of sight, out of mind) or *deru kui wa utareru* (The nail that sticks out gets hammered down), certain *Nihonjinron* writers maintain that the Japanese emphasize proximity in human relationships and social conformism to authority.

Following this reasoning, certain Japanese words or expressions are believed to be untranslatable and, as a result, to embody the Japanese national character - as the proverbs *nagai mono ni wa makareyo* ("If you can't beat them; join them": if your adversaries are stronger than you, it is better to join their side than to fight them) and *yoraba taiju no kage* ("Look for a big tree when you want shelter": serve the powerful for your own good). Even the "etymological approach" toward specific words or expressions is related to linguistic reductionism typical of *Nihonjinron*, which may be defined as the identification of single words or locutions regarded as peculiar to Japanese language in order to

demonstrate the uniqueness of a whole behavior or concept. Japaneseness is thus reduced, simplified, encapsulated within a word. The idea that from a concept expressed through a particular word the history of one's own culture or nation may be deduced can be found in Fichte's *Addresses* (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 68). For example, the importance of returning a favor or social obligation is regarded as a national trait deduced from the etymology of *sumimasen* すみません (lit. "incomplete"), meaning "there's nothing that may pay off my debt with you". The etymology of *okagesamade* おかげさまで (lit. "thanks to Moon deity") would be instead the demonstration of Japanese interdependence.

At times, short poems as *haiku* (17-mora poems) or *waka* (classical Japanese poems) and certain well-known Japanese personalities conceived as the embodiment of a trait of Japaneseness are mentioned in a stereotyped way: in the first case, one may speak of "poetical reductionism", in the latter of "spiritual reductionism". Therefore, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (662 A.D.-710 A.D.)'s *waka* or Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), Kaga Chiyojo (1703-1775), Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828)'s *haiku* turn to be the epiphany of the "spirit of the language" (*kotodama*) and Japanese special attention toward nature, while poet Saigyō (1118-1190), prince Shōtoku (574 A.D.-622 A.D.) or the businessman Shibuzawa Eichi (1840-1931) are raised as champions of the distinctive traits of religious syncretism and the entrepreneurial national spirit (Watanabe 1974, 2008; Suzuki 2016).

- MARKET CHOICES

Nihonjinron amatorial essays distinguish themselves for some strategic editorial choices. Firstly, their popular destination, suggested by the relative brevity of the essays, a very low sale price to the public, commercial strategies as the use of outstanding characters on the cover and band to attract the attention.

Circular referentiality is evoked by *Nihonjinron* tenets through advertisement inserts at the end of the book, promoting other similar essays discussing some aspects of Japaneseness, and through the presence of some eye-catching keywords on the cover and band recalling Japan, the Japanese, Japanese culture, etc.

The cover and the band are indeed graphically organized to arouse the attention of a readership potentially interested in Japanese national

identity, by means of outstanding characters, keywords, short phrases, all conveying the essay's core concepts, and to warn about writer's authority. In particular, the title of the essay has the greatest impact in this sense: most of them include significant, ethnocentric, evocative keywords or expressions like *nihonjinron*, *nihonbunkaron*, *nihonron*, *nihonrashisa* (Japaneseness), *nihon* (Japan), *nihonjin* (the Japanese), *kokoro* (essence, spirit), *nihon shakai* (Japanese society), *nihongo* (Japanese language), *nihon keiei* (Japanese management), *nihonkei* (Japanese model), and so forth.

2.3. Memetics of *Nihonjinron*

Nihonjinron discourse expresses itself in the form of public beliefs, socially-transmitted thoughts that could be defined as "memes". The term 'meme' was coined by Richard Dawkins to indicate «the new replicator [as the gene], a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation» (Dawkins 1976/2006: 192; see also Brodie 2009). The meme is a gene-like unity of information located in the brain and corresponding to the *i-culture*, «the set of cultural instructions they [a people] carry in their central nervous systems» (Dawkins 1982: 109; Cloak 1975: 168). *I-culture* is to be distinguished by *m-culture* encompassing «the material structures, relationships among material structures, and changes in these relationships that are actually brought about or maintained by behaviors of those cultural instructions» (Cloak 1975: 168).

What follows is a tentative synthesis of the values of Japaneseness and the highly praised Japanese national traits under the guise of memes, purported by *Nihonjinron* and inspired by the very instructive brochure *Wonder NIPPON!* (2017), where most *Nihonjinron* commonplaces about "Japanese traditional" values (*kachi*), ethics (*ronri*) and morality (*dōtoku*) are encouraged to be zealously diffused in the world as a soft power strategy. They are gathered in thematic sectors referring to 'Japan', such as "memes of mind" (relativism, irrationality, *amae*), "memes of language" (emotivity, *kotodama*), "memes of society" (verticality), etc., and are associated with short examples:

Tab. 2.2. *Nihonjinron's Imaginary*

MEMES ON SOCIETY, ETHOS	『一体』という価値観 [1] The value of “unity”
	他者に寄り、同化し、調和・協調する精神 [1] Spirit of collaboration, harmony, assimilation, relying on others
	多様な視点の許容 [63] Tolerance for various perspectives
	礼儀や心構え [39]; 規律正しい [53] Etiquette and preparedness; Systematic
MEMES ON AESTHETICS	終わりのない“道”の追求 [4]; 美の追求 (武士道、柔道、剣道、茶道、華道) [37] The endless pursuit of <i>michi</i> (the “Way”); The quest for the Beauty (<i>bushidō, jūdō, kendō, chadō, kadō</i>)
	繊細な色彩感覚と技術 [6] The delicate sense and technique of colours
	「いき」 [12]; 「もののあはれ」 [26]; わび・さび [63]; 数寄 [62]; 「幽玄」 [34]; 間の感覚 [33, 35]; 「余白」 [12]; 「不足の美」 [12]; 無常観 [35] <i>Iki; mono no aware; wabi-sabi; suki; yūgen; Sense of ma; The empty; Beauty of inadequacy; Sense of impermanence</i>
	無作為の美 [17]; 日常使う中で磨かれる美しさ [17] Beauty of unintentionality; Beauty refined through daily use
	シンプル [12]; 装飾は見当たらない [12] Simple; No decoration can be found
MEMES ON MIND	同化感覚 [58]; 外界と自分とを調和させる [58] Sense of assimilation; Harmonizing oneself with the outside world
	感性 [40]; 感じる心 [10] Sensitivity; A sensitive heart
	突き詰める [42]; 学びとる [42]; 源をいかす [43] Investigating thoroughly; Gathering knowledge; Using the sources at one’s best
	思いをよせる (自分より相手を尊重し、思いやる心) [43]; Giving one’s heart to (a spirit caring for and respecting others more than oneself)
	ストイックな姿勢 [32] A stoic attitude
MEMES ON CLIMATE AND ENVIRONNEMENT	多様な生態系 [30]; 全く違う景色 [3]; 四季の移ろい [22] Variagated ecosystems; Higly differing landscapes; Seasonal variety
	島国 [32]; 山国 [32] <i>Shimaguni</i> (insularity); <i>Yamaguni</i> (mountain country)

	温暖な気候 [10]; 豊かな自然 [22]; 豊富な水資源 [10] A humid climate; A prosperous nature; Abundant hydric resources
	台風、洪水、豪雪、火山、地震 [10] [Natural catastrophes:] typhoons, flows, heavy snow, volcanoes, earthquakes
MEMES ON FOOD	多様な食文化などの恵み [32] The blessing of a variegated food culture
	お弁当 [34]; 「詰める文化」 [34]; 食べ物の盛り付け方 [2] <i>O-bentō</i> (Japanese box lunch); A “culture of packaging”; The way of plating food
	寿司、ラーメン、和食 [2] <i>Sushi, ramen, washoku</i>
MEMES ON CULTURE	質素儉約の命 [6]; ミニマリズム [62]; 縮み志向 [43] A frugal existence; Minimalism; A tide of reduction
	自然との同化感覚 [10]; 自然との共生・レスペクト [8, 34]; 「八百万の神」への信仰 [35]; アニミズム [35]; 謙虚 [10] Sense of assimilation with nature; Respect, coexistence with nature; The belief in “eight million gods”; Animism; Humility
	時間を計る感覚 [20] Sense of keeping time
	伝統を守りつつ、多彩かつ革新的な製品を生み出している [7] Creating a variety of innovative products while preserving tradition
	「手」の文化 [62]; 技・型・道 [39]; 職人技 [6] A culture of “Hands”; Technique-Form-Way; Craftmanship
	花見 [24, 32]; 盆栽 [35]; 祭り [32]; 着物、浴衣 [2]; 神道 [35]; 仏教 [35] <i>Hanami; Bonsai; Matsuri; Kimono, yukata; Shintō; Buddhismo</i>
MEMES ON COMMUNICATION MODES	以心伝心 [43] Telepathic communication
MEMES ON BODY	自然界の音を、まるで言語を聞くかのように処理する脳構造 [33] A brain structure processing natural sounds as if listening to a human language
	身体感覚 [8, 21] Sense of body

It is worth noting that all these shared beliefs, imaginary, characterizations, stereotypes on ‘Japan’, the ‘Japanese’ and the alike remain unchanged since the 1970s in the mainstream rhetoric on

Japanese national identity. It is not exaggerate to say that *WonderNIPPON!* brochure's ideators and diffusers exactly reproduced *Nihonjinron* clichés dating back to that decade.

PART II

CASE STUDIES

人はいさ心も知らず古里は花ぞ昔の香にほひける (Poem 35,
Hyakunin isshu)

The depths of the hearts / Of humankind cannot be known. / But
in my birthplace / the plum blossoms smell the same / as in the
years gone by. (MacCauley 1917)

神代よりいひ伝てけらく空見つ大和の国はすめらぎのいつく
しき国言霊の幸はふ国と (Volume V, Poem 894, *Man'yōshū*)

Since the age of the gods it has always been said / That the Land
of Yamato is / A land where Sovereign-Gods hold solemn sway,
/ A land where the word-soul brings us weal [...] (Nippon
Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1965)

Introduction - Watanabe and Suzuki: The Ideology Producer and Reproducer

Though the elements of our higher spiritual life may be just as dried up, and though the bonds of our national unity may lie just as torn asunder and as scattered in wild disorder as the bones of the slain in the prophecy, though they may have whitened and dried for centuries in tempests, rainstorms, and burning sunshine, the quickening breath of the spiritual world has not yet ceased to blow. It will take hold, too, of the dead bones of our national body, and join them together, that they may stand glorious in new and radiant life. (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 51)

In the second part of this monograph, I will concretely consider two *Nihonjinron* authors representing the first two aforementioned levels of ideologization [1] and [2], following an ascending order. The first is Suzuki Takao, belonging to the influential academic elite who promotes and reproduces *Nihonjinron*'s memes (level [2]). His recent growing extremization, potentially approaching him to the first ideological level, shall be herewith noted, although a clear-cut identification with the LDP and political proselytism are not yet so apparent. The most extremist ideological fringe is nonetheless embodied by Watanabe Shōichi. In scientific literature, Watanabe has been always known for and associated with [2], especially by Peter Dale and Roy Andrew Miller. Yet, he arguably belongs to [1]. His "Watanabism" is not a byproduct of an all-around divulgation inspired by the memes of [2] and [3] – as Miller and Dale believed – but it is an ideological

voluntary act precisely inspired, as I will show, by radical right-wing beliefs. Not only does he totally epitomize the highest level of ideologization, but he was also one of the leading promoters of the Japanese movement for historical revisionism, alongside former PM Abe Shinzō.

Dale and Miller analyzed Suzuki and Watanabe as belonging to the same ideological level. What I am going to uncover through my analysis is the existence of an ideological distinction between these two authors, reflecting a deeper and more diffused ideological spectrum in the *Nihonjinron*, either from a vertical point of view (from the elites to the common people) or in a horizontal sense, within the establishment itself. In other words, what I am going to emphasize is the ideological polyhedrality of the Japanese nationalist identity discourse.

3. Suzuki Takao: Language as the Servant of Power

日本人の言語の使い方は、まさに日本人の生き方を反映して、どちらかと言えば人々の感情や感性の表出に重点が置かれ、これに対し欧米人は理性と論理面を極力重視しながら言語を使うといった大きな違いがあると言えます。(Suzuki 2014: 145)

It is possible to say that great differences between the Japanese way of employing language – consisting of emphasizing the expression of sensitivity and human emotions by reflecting precisely Japanese lifestyle – and that of Westerners – who instead use the language attaching extreme importance to the reason and logicity – subsist.

3.1. An “Internationalist” Nationalist

Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt, weiß nichts von seiner eigenen. (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aphorism*)

Those who don't know foreign languages, don't even know their own.

Suzuki Takao (1926-2021) was an essayist and a Japanese scholar specialized in the sociology of language. He held several academic positions, either internationally - in Canada, the USA, the UK, Russia, France, Australia - or in Japan, where he became a full and emeritus professor at the Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies of Keiō University. His publications include many popular essays on socio-linguistic topics as *Kotoba to bunka* (Language and culture, 1973), *Kotoba to shakai* (Language and society, 1975), *Kotoba no shakaigaku* (Sociology

of words, 1987), *Kotoba no ningengaku* (Philosophical anthropology of the language, 1978).

Apart from his academic interest in exploring the relation between language and society, he was also concerned with environmental issues in *Hito ni wa dore dake no mono ga hitsuyō ka* (What does a person really need?, 1994), *Shiawase setsuden* (A good energy saving, 2011), *Gezan no jidai o ikiru* (Living in the era of mountain's descent, 2017), *Sekai o ningen no me dake de miru no wa mō tomeiyō* (Let's stop watching the world through the eyes of human beings only!, 2019), or books where he combines linguistic, sociologic, ecologist reflections in a historicist fashion as in *Kotoba to shizen* (Nature and language, 2006) or *Suzuki Takao no mandarateki sekai. Gengoseitaigaku e no rekitei* (Suzuki Takao's mandala world. The path toward eco-linguistics, 2015).

Suzuki was a very active promoter of the Japanese government's linguistic policies, notably in the discussion on foreign language education and intercultural communication. His activism was reflected in his role as counsellor of *The Japan Forum*, contributing to the promotion of the *kokusaika* policy. He zealously supported the idea that the era when Japan was used to learn from foreign countries had waned and time had come to give its contribution to the human kind. He intended internationalization not as a true opening to and an equal exchange with the Other, but as an instrument through which enhancing Japaneseness - as the titles of some of his essays suggest: *Nihongo to gaikokugo* (The Japanese and foreign languages, 1990), *Nihongo wa kokusaigo ni nariuru ka. Taigai gengo senryakuron* (Can Japanese become an international language? Discussion on the strategy to transform it in a foreign language, 1995), *Nihonjin wa naze eigo ga dekinai ka* (Why cannot Japanese speak English?, 1999), *Amerika o shiru tame no eigo, Amerika kara hanareru tame no eigo* (The English to know America, the English to detach oneself from America, 2003).

Although Suzuki defended an innovative didactic approach in Japanese linguistic education by supporting the learning of foreign languages, he was a spokesperson of government's orthodox vision on Japanese language and, more broadly, on Japanese identity. Only apparently was he an internationalist: he was an active agent of the establishment, who served as influential counsellor of people thanks to his academic credentials and appointed himself as a spiritual guide of the nation. He expressed firm opinions about the officialization of

English (*eigokōyōkaron*), the need to reform Japanese foreign language education system and to introduce the teaching of new strategic languages for the national interest, like Arabic and Chinese. He strongly criticized English imperialism, the singular admiration for English by the Japanese at the expense of Japanese language, the pervasive use of “Western linguistic categories” by Japanese linguists. By contrast, he praised “Japlish”, the English variety spoken by native Japanese as their expressive peculiarity. He stressed the value of being Japanese, highlighting the salvific role of Japanese language and culture worldwide, and was constantly concerned with the issue of Japanese identity, recently expressing revisionist opinions on certain issues concerning Japanese modern history.

Nihon no kansei ga sekai o kaeru – Gengoseitaigakuteki bunmeiron (Japanese sensitivity will change the world. An eco-linguistic theory on civilizations, 2014) is a complex synthesis of all these facets of Suzuki’s thought. The author uses contemporary environmental crises as a pretext to enhance his nationalist project. He ideologically justifies this essay as the culmination of his reflection on Japanese identity since the 1970s, in the incessant attempt to explain why “Western worldview and values”, that Japan had allegedly been assimilating since the Meiji era, are not suitable for the Japanese. The reason – the fundamental difference in terms of relationship toward nature – is investigated throughout the essay, where Suzuki argues that Japanese traditional harmonious relation with nature started to deteriorate after Japan’s encounter with the West in the nineteenth century and its adoption of capitalism. Nevertheless, a “typically-Japanese vision of society and mankind” have apparently survived, thus making Japan adapt to save the world from environmental disasters.

The essay is explicitly addressed to “we Japanese” (*wareware nihon-jin*), the Japanese intended as a national community, so that they can revive their national awareness of their uniqueness. Suzuki propounds a true soft power theory directed towards increasing Japan’s influence in the world. He explicitly appreciates former PM Abe’s conservative policy, with a special reference to the “correct direction” undertaken toward the apologetic issue with Asian countries and the conviction that Japan’s future force lies in its “traditional sensitivity toward nature”. *Nihon no kansei ga sekai o kaeru* is definitely the expression of Suzuki’s affinity with the establishment and should be contextualized

within the geopolitical framework in the turn of the twenty-first century. It is a new *Nihonjinron* considering China's emergence as a global and regional power and, at the same time, an old *Nihonjinron* restoring the ideas of cultural particularism that marked the 1970s. I am going to reconstruct Suzuki's core ideas, which I regard as the conceptualization and emanation of Japanese government ideology's fundamental pillars.

3.2. The Global Ecological Catastrophe and the Fall of the Western Paradigm

In *Nihon no kansei ga sekai o kaeru* Suzuki investigates Japanese identity within the scenery of an imminent worldwide ecological disaster, engendered by reckless human economic activity. Taking inspiration from a Herderian historicist perspective, he interprets the world and the history of humankind as an incessant dialectic among civilizations, to achieve a "general image", a "distant prospect" (Herder 1774/2012: 292).

Accordingly, he proposes an "eco-linguistic theory on civilizations", positing that the Japanese civilization should substitute the Western in its centennial world leadership, for having endangered the ecological system due to the latter's aggressive relationship with nature. As Suzuki puts it, because of Western attitudes and principles of homologation, either environment or human cultures and languages - "amortizing devices" (*shōgekikyūshū sōchi*, p. 219) between humans and nature and mirrors of biological variety, are seriously at risk. Japanese civilization embodies a mode of existence and relationship with the world grounded on the principle of respect of differences, thus guaranteeing the survival of the human species.

Suzuki introduces his nationalist claims by presenting a main specious problem that, according to him, has destabilised the existence of mankind: Western enduring dominance of the world. He holds that Western European and American world leadership, started during the sixteenth-century's sea travels, brought "white men" to enforce colonialism, racism and capitalism worldwide. Especially the United States, regarded as the core of Western civilization, are believed to have globally imposed their lifestyle and embody the "Western paradigm" – a set of features concurring in the formation of "Western

lifestyle”, “Western thought”, “Western worldview”, “Western values” and the “Western vision of nature”. It is characterized by some distinctive attributes considered to distinguish also the Chinese civilization, which form the “Eurasian civilization”: rationality, logicity; abstraction; anthropocentrism or “human suprematism”, the pursuit of human well-being and prosperity by dominating nature and enforcing a monotheist religion; an endemic bellicosity among peoples and aggressivity toward nature; a dogmatic thought; ethnic, cultural, linguistic heterogeneity; pastoralism.

Suzuki maintains that it is precisely this paradigm to lie at the root of the economic system and to have determined the paroxysmal emergence of global ecological disasters and strong ideological antagonisms. He particularly points the finger at the industrial revolution, the exploitation of fossil fuels, natural gas, oil and nuclear energy and extensive agriculture, causing two dangers for ecosystem preservation: the dramatic increase of world population and the consequent resource depletion, and the disappearance of biological, human linguistic and cultural diversity. He conceives the present time as a “period of lockdown” (*sakoku jidai*, p. 104), having the vital space of humankind reached its limits, and as the twilight of Western (Eurasian) hegemony for the collapse of its structural paradigm.

For Suzuki, if human beings continue to ignore the countless “signals of imminent catastrophe” (*hakyoku no shigunaru*, p. 16) nature keeps sending them – unparalleled extreme phenomena like desertification, violent floods, winds, storms, intense warmth – they are doomed to fall soon in severe and uncontrollable chaos. In order to avoid ruin, the necessity of inverting the direction of this civilizations development while starting an “era of mountain descent” becomes apparent (*gezan no jidai*, p. 238). This is where, according to him, Japan is going to have a role.

3.3. Japan as the Spritual Leader of Mankind: The Japanese Model

O, that someone would bring back this nation from its false path, and in the mirror of its youthful dreams show it its true disposition and its true vocation! There let it stand and ponder, until it develops the power to take up its vocation with a mighty hand. (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 107)

In a prophetic tone, Suzuki argues that, in this historical moment, the isolated and peripheral Japanese civilization should take over world leadership substituting the West, by indicating a new lifestyle the humankind ought to aspire from here onwards. In fact, Japan shall be assigned the “historical mission of civilizing humankind” (*jinrui no bunmeishiteki shimei*, p. 240), by establishing itself as a spiritual and moral leader to prevent the ecosystem's total destruction. Messianism and fatalism, yet deprived of religious connotations, are two central *leitmotiv* of Suzuki's rhetoric: Japanese mission is not conferred by God, but pragmatically, by virtue of the preservation of the original animist and pantheistic culture. Furthermore, Suzuki's emphasis on Japan's moral superiority, its predestined leadership and spiritual regeneration of the world, its combination of claimed universalism and narrow-minded national stance are other recurring themes echoing Fichte's *Addresses*.

Japan is depicted as a unicum in the history of mankind for being characterized by a “firmly-planted double structure” (*nimai goshi no nijō kōzō*, p. 12) combining together modernity and antiquity. Superficially and under Western influence, Japan “left Asia to enter the West” (*datsua nyūō*): a modern and developed State was created in the late nineteenth century to preserve independence from the West. Yet culturally, the spiritual values peculiar to the Japanese tradition remained unchanged, especially the primeval animist and pantheist vision of nature. Despite its modernization, the elements of the Japan's origins persist in the form of a “deep culture” (*kisō bunka*, p. 12). Japan is definitely seen as a world apart: while every civilization shares some common linguistical, cultural, religious, ethnic features, only recently Japan has been entertaining stable relationships with the West and only indirectly with China.

Basically, Suzuki advocates for a substitution of the dominant Western anthropocentric paradigm and the global diffusion of the alternative “Japanese paradigm” – a set of features constituting “Japanese lifestyle”, “Japanese sensitive way of living”, “Japanese worldview”, “Japanese values”, which particularly takes shape in the unique “Japanese vision of nature”. The main characteristics of the Japanese model identified by Suzuki may be summarized as follows:

- The primacy of emotionality and intuition over rationality.
- A “nature-centered” thought, according to which human beings do not occupy a privileged position, implying:
 - pantheism and animism: all the living beings on Earth are interconnected and made of the same matter;
 - syncretism, sense of communion between humans and nature;
 - circularity between man and nature, absence of hierarchy;
 - respect, love, empathy, compassion toward any living being;
 - humility and a sense of gratitude;
 - protection of biological variety.
- Harmony: the wisdom of living in mutual cooperation without pursuing personal interests or disturbing others. It entails the values of:
 - coexistence: a lifestyle based on mutual compromise and understanding;
 - avoiding conflicts, antagonisms, frictions;
 - attaching importance to friendship, self-control, “sense of the other”;
 - pacifism: pursuing social harmony and peace at a national and international level;
 - “populism”: concern for the *shomin*, the common people, or *minshū*, the mass.
- Ambivalence: capacity of interpreting reality in an equivocal way, with tolerance for the difference.
- Cultural, ethnic, linguistic homogeneity and social homologation.
- Closeness: pursuit of an autarchic, isolated, self-sufficient, “energy-saving” State, not projected towards military and economic expansion.

In this sense, Edo society, “a treasure of experience and wisdom” (*chie to keikan no hōko*, p. 105), is regarded as the supreme realization of the Japanese model and the human society to have first followed the right direction towards a sustainable lifestyle. *Sakoku* (locked country) is definitely the model of lifestyle the world should aspire to and imitate, in order to overcome the contemporary ecological crisis:

- (1) 江戸時代に日本人が経験した、言ってみればきわめてソフトな人間の生き方を、人類のこれからの生き方の参考モデルとして世界に提示し

積極的に広めること、これこそ日本がいま果すべき、そして日本人にもっとも適している国際的な役割なのです。[105]

Actively diffusing and presenting to the world the human lifestyle, so to speak, extremely mild, that the Japanese experienced during the Edo period, as model of reference of the livelihood human beings should aspire to from now on, is an international role that Japan should now assume and is best suitable for the Japanese.

In particular, *sakoku's* positive aspects to be re-elaborated and spreaded are:

- Contraction: the development of a State-model projected toward the “internal”, the “little”, by promoting popular entertainments, notably the “poetically creative activities of common people enjoying themselves with words” (*kotoba o tanoshimu shomin shiteki sōsaku katsudō*, p. 70). Poetry may open a new, potentially limitless spiritual horizon by channeling human energy into an ideally sustainable energy saving source. In the Edo period, the wisdom to live lightly, harmoniously and quietly, “with low energy consumption”, was widely respected. The emphasis on the creativity of *shomin* echoes Herder’s attention towards folkloric artistic and artisanal activity as a direct expression of the “spirit of the nation”.
- Ricycle, energy conservation: Edo society had already put into practice modern ecologist principles.
- The pursuit of pacifism: during the Edo period nobody died in external wars, by virtue of the policy of *sakoku*.
- “Populism”: as a result of pacifism and isolationism, Edo governors could entirely consacrate themselves to the livelihood of the common people and artistic promotion, as the diffusion of *yūgen*, *ikebana*, *cha no yu*, *nōkyōgen*, *gagaku*, *waka*, *haiku* among the masses demonstrates.

For Suzuki, the peculiar characteristics of the Edo period shed light on the serious contradictions of modernity and urge humankind to implement a spiritual and cultural revolution, inspired by the “principle of Earth-rescue” (*chikyū genri*, p. 103) - the ethical philosophy aimed at preserving Earth’s current conditions and

stabilizing the ecosystem.

3.4. «Japanese Sensitivity Will Change the World»: A Theory on World's Tatamization

More specifically, according to Suzuki, the substitution of the dominant paradigm should be implemented by means of the so-called *tatamize kōka* タタミゼ “tatamization effect”, inherent to Japanese language and culture.

3.4.1. The “Tatamization Effect”

As the author puts it, the Japanese word ‘tatamize’ タタミゼ used to depict this phenomenon means “to be crazy about, to privilege Japan” (*nihon kaburesuru, nihon biiten ni naru*, p. 53). It derives from the French ‘tatamiser’, in turn coming from ‘tatami’ (Japanese straw floor coverings), and it is reported to have been heard in a conversation among foreign university students to describe the fact that:

- (2) 久しぶりに自分の国に戻ると、つい日本で身についた色々な癖が出て、周りの人と調子が合わないことが間々あること… [53]

Returning to one’s own country after a while, it sometimes occurs that several habits acquired in Japan emerge and you no longer feel in synch with people surrounding yourself.

Tatamization is nothing but a “nipponization” (*nihonka*, p. 59) and the “tatamization effect” is the Japanese language and culture’s capacity of assimilation. Suzuki holds that in the process of learning the Japanese language, the individual experiences a thorough reorganization (*jiga no saikōsei*, p. 54) at a psychological and physiological level, implying a shift in body language, personality and even in the “spirit” of the Japanese-language learner, who ends up adopting a “Japanese-like” behavior. Japanese sensitivity, conveyed by speaking and assimilating Japanese language and culture, may positively transform the world by fostering peaceful sentiments as follows (pp. 54, 56-57, 59, 61, 63-65):

- Becoming kind.
- Emphasizing femininity: adopting a communicative mode of

deference towards men.

- Becoming indirect not to offend others, by means of expressive circumlocutions, euphemisms, contextual sentences or “white blanks”, typical of the Japanese language.
- Speak in an equivocal way.
- Becoming mild, respectful of others.
- Apologizing frequently while smiling.
- “Japanizing” manners, attitudes, way of thinking: e.g. slightly bowing to strangers before getting out of the elevator or uttering an exclamation in Japanese when speaking in one’s own mother tongue.
- Attentively listening to and indulging the others not to speak of themselves only: nodding, uttering interjections, agreeing with the interlocutor; not expressing personal opinions or imposing one’s own; getting tired of conversations in one’s own mother tongue.
- Choosing one’s words depending on the context and the social status of the interlocutor.
- Deploring or blaming oneself, understanding that every deed corresponds to a consequence.
- Becoming naïf in a positive sense, by always thinking positively of one’s neighbor.
- Becoming collaborative, putting things back in their place in a proper way.
- Feeling relieved whenever returning to Japan thanks to the mildness of language (voice modulation, melody, way of speaking), courtesy, a-conflictual relationships with others.

Suzuki believes that the power of tatamization permeating Japanese language and culture operates even among those Japanese expatriates who return to Japan after having lived abroad for a long time. In this case, it consists of being captivated by Japan’s powerful “viscosity”, which makes Japanese expatriates “return to be Japanese” at once, as if they had never departed their homeland. This mysterious force seems to echo, in a certain sense, the metaphysical spiritualism of the nineteenth-century German nationalist rhetoric, notably the notion of *Volksggeist*, the “spirit of the nation”.

In the process of tatamization, the role of Japanese language teachers to foreigners is bestowed with a particular significance, since their

task consists of teaching not only strictly linguistic aspects as phonetics and grammar, but also extra-linguistic features related to Japaneseness:

- (3) 外国人相手の日本人の教師は、...結果として学生をタタミゼ化する教育を積極的にしていることとなります [62]

Japanese teachers of foreigners [...] positively support an education that, as a result, tatamizes students.

Ultimately, for Suzuki, Japan should not strive and work for a better international understanding of the Japanese traditional lifestyle, quite the contrary:

- (4) むしろ、諸外国、特に欧米のほうが、日本の社会のこのような非対決的なあり方や日本人のこの柔らかい生き方をモデルとして学んで、もっと対立対決の少ない平和で穏やかな世界が出現するようにと、日本が積極的に外国を啓蒙し教導する努力を、それこそ日本は国を挙げてすべきだということにあります。 [148]

Rather, it is foreign countries, especially the West, that should follow as a model the mild Japanese way of living, such an a-conflictual way of existing of the Japanese society, whereas Japan should actively attempt to educate, guide and enlighten them, so that a quieter and more peaceful world with fewer conflicts and antagonisms would naturally appear.

As Suzuki puts it, historically, the never-invaded Japan absorbed and learned considerably from the Eurasian civilization, taking the best from it and creating an amazing, peaceful country, envied everywhere else. However, since the contemporary world needs a “great change of course” (*shinro no ichidai henkō*, p. 134), time has come for Japan to stand for humanity by inverting the current trend:

- (5) 超大国の一つとなった日本は、これまでのもっぱら外に学ぶ日本から、積極的に外に教える日本へと、国家の性格を反転させる精神革命を起こすべきなのです。 [106]

Japan, as a superpower, should arouse a spiritual revolution and invert the current national trend, changing it from a Japan learning from the outside world to a Japan actively teaching towards it.

Suzuki maintains that Japan should “return the favor” (*okaeshi o suru*, p. 240) received from the Eurasian countries during the millennia with a gift, that is the diffusion of Japanese civilization’s sensitivity. From now on, it will be fundamental for Japan to provide assistance and advice in the “spiritual area”, without anymore receiving the influence from other cultures. It should emerge as defender of the universal ideal of diversity.

Yet Suzuki sees contemporary Japan as hindered by two main severe obstacles, which dangerously affect the global diffusion of the Japanese model: the sense of inferiority felt by the Japanese toward their language and the self-denigratory perception of their historical and cultural heritage.

3.4.2. The Negative Self-Perception as Obstacle to World’s Tatamization

For Suzuki, the Japanese have never believed in the value inherent to their language and culture as a unitary national community.

The first reason for this lack of self-confidence is described as the “masochistic vision of Japanese history” (*jigyakutekina jikokushi*, p. 109) from which the Japanese should emancipate. Suzuki argues that the Japanese hold a “negative perception of their country” (*hiteitekina jikoku ninshiki*, p. 141), as a result of the reform of the education system implemented since the postwar period, and the negative verdict of the Tōkyō Trial judging the crimes committed by the Japanese army during the Pacific war. More precisely, they are accused of having excessively blamed Japan’s behavior in the Pacific War and diffused an image of the Japanese as a bellicose people responsible of atrocious war crimes, bearer of a shameful culture, and of Japan as a militarist and invading State. The Japanese need to evade from the “circuit of pathological thought” (*shisō kairo*, p. 133), refraining from condemning themselves, and instead realize that the Tōkyō Trial’s verdict rested on no legal basis.

The second reason underlying the lack of self-confidence of the Japanese is seen in their deeply-rooted psychological complex towards their mother tongue if compared to “Western languages”. Suzuki maintains that it derives from the impact of Western violent conquest of the world and the enforcement of the modernist conceptualization

in “underdeveloped countries” of spiritual and cultural issues. This sense of inferiority has the same rootcauses as that concerning Japanese physical diversity from Westerners in relation to their “mongoloid traits” (p. 142). More generally, it derives from the unconscious acceptance of “Western biased and egoistical worldview” (*seiōjin no temae kattena katayotta sekaikan*, p. 143) and the prejudice that all the customs, social structures, religions or languages encountered by the Westerners in their effort as colonizers are backward.

The idea that Western mentality and methods are the supreme good, the standard for development and progress of human civilizations have allegedly brainwashed many Japanese intellectuals educated under Western influence since the Meiji. Notably linguistics is considered to be sustained by the belief that European languages are the most advanced languages in the world for being the vehicle of European culture and civilization. Suzuki holds that the “debate on the refusal of Japanese” (*nihongohiteiron*, p. 189) or the “debate on the elimination of Japanese” (*nihongohōkiron*, p. 189), respectively advocating for the substitution of Japanese with a “Western developed language” or for its total reform, have emerged in this context. In fact, these discussions underlie the conviction that Japanese language is the main responsible for the alleged Japanese socio-cultural backwardness for being inferior, underdeveloped, useless, ambiguous, illogical, inadapt to modernization, non-international. Even the Japanese writing system, especially Chinese characters, fall victim of dogmas and prejudice, as they are deemed to be imperfect, antiquated, obsolete, impractical, underdeveloped, complicated, hindering progress and social development.

Suzuki claims that because of this, instead of appreciating and being proud of their “non-Western” peculiarities like their language for instance, the Japanese regard them as “premodern vestiges”, “delays to modernization” to be overcome as soon as possible. Any appeal for actively promoting an alternative worldview by means of Japanese language and culture is thus constantly jeopardized. Because of the Western enduring influence, several intellectuals at the guide of society writ large as well as ordinary Japanese progressively became unaware of the importance of respecting nature as human beings.

3.4.3. How to Restore National Identity: Historical Revisionism, the Redeeming Power of Japanese Language and the Role of Intellectuals

I shall assume as hearers such as are disposed to see things of this sort with their own eyes, and by no means such as find it easier in their consideration of these matters to have foisted upon them a strange and foreign eyeglass, which is either deliberately intended to deceive, or never properly suits a German eye, because it has a different angle of vision and is not fine enough. (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 6)

According to Suzuki, the Japanese are to eradicate their sense of inferiority and self-commiseration through the positive revision of their past and national self-representations, the arousal of positive collective feelings such as pride, self-confidence, love, and the acknowledgement of belonging to a great, primordial nation. A new national education should be promoted so that the Japanese could thoroughly grasp the wisdom expressed by the proverb *Owari yokereba banji yoshi* p. 67 (All is well that ends well): if the result of certain actions is positive, the means, the process through which they are accomplished are meaningless.

More specifically, Japanese-ness should be firstly reassessed in light of the historical results achieved through the Pacific War: how did the world concretely and objectively change through Japanese actions? On this point, Suzuki holds that wartime Japan propounded as war objectives two universal ideals: the equality among races and the freedom of the peoples oppressed by Western dominance. He maintains that *before* the Pacific War, the lands inhabited by “non-white races” were Western colonies and the world was under the subjugation of Western hegemony and its racial and hierarchical partition, whereas *after* the war, uprisings for independence raged everywhere, inspired by Japan’s struggle for national freedom, with the result of creating numerous new States. The Pacific War is thus reinterpreted as the first “war of liberation of oppressed peoples” (*hiyokuatsu minzoku kaihō sensō*, p.119) and Japan’s participation and endeavor to eradicate the dominance of the “white races” since its victory in the Russo-Japanese War.

Therefore, in order to rise once again in the name of humanity as

protector of the universal ideal of diversity, the Japanese should first question the “Western view of history” and aspire to the historical truth, by relying on the evidence of the people who directly experienced the war. This way people will come to realize how Japan was in fact a bellicose country only for a short time during its long history (from the Meiji era to 1945); Japan necessarily became a militarist State to survive and resist Western colonizing stance; China and Korea took advantage of Japanese foreign policy since the postwar period, in particular Japan’s apologetic stance; ultimately, war was fought to change the world for the better, as demonstrated by the gratitude of South Asian countries towards Japan (pp. 109-138).

However, a more essential aspect that Suzuki highlights to restore national pride is the revaluation of Japanese language. In a Fichtean fashion, he emphasizes the role of Japanese humanist intellectuals at the helm of society who should not accept *a priori* “Western theories and knowledge” (p. 182). As influential representatives of the non-Western world, they should instead purify and emancipate themselves from Western influence, interpret reality from the “Japanese point of view” and consequently express unique proposals about the direction humanity must follow to prevent self-destruction. “Western linguistics” is believed to hide a “trap of prejudice” (*omoikomi no wana*, p. 183) - unconscious cultural biases that negatively influence Japanese intellectuals in their personal conceptions about Japanese language and its alleged inferiority. If they can manage to free themselves from the “Western thought”, Suzuki argues, it will appear clear that the issue of Japanese inferiority is ideological: how did the small country of Japan manage to reach and overtake Western countries in many fields, absorbing Western technology and science and developing a modern education system by means of the deplored Japanese language and writing system?

For the author, the answer lies indeed in the very nature of the Japanese language and writing system themselves. The origin of the Japanese success is due to *kanji*’s unique features, notably their visual discerning power, completely neglected by “Western linguistics”, *kanji*’s double phonisation of a concept thanks to the use of a gloss, the indigenous reading of *kanji* (*kun-yomi*) elaborated in the antiquity to learn classic Chinese and abundantly exploited in the Meiji era to create numerous neologisms from European languages (p. 186).

Thanks to *kun*-glossing, Suzuki argues, the level of intellectual activity of the Japanese can be easily increased. By way of example, if a Japanese hears for the first time the term *yōryokuso*, they will hardly understand immediately its denotation. But if they observe its graphic representation 葉緑素, they will be able to approximately grasp its meaning by dividing the word into three meaningful characters read by the *kun*-glossing: *ha* 葉 (leaf), *midori* 緑 (green), *moto* 素 (source). The meaning of “chlorophyll” will then become evident (p. 213). Another factor of the success of Japanese civilization is derived from *kana*'s high efficiency, the Japanese indigenous syllabic alphabets integrated into the system of *kanji*. For Suzuki, *kana* are more efficient than the Latin alphabet and reflect the nature of the Japanese language as a whole.

Furthermore, Japanese language ought to be reassessed in its totality, in relation with the high efficiency rate of Japanese social welfare: record of longevity, literacy rate, domestic and international pacifism; a complete coverage of the national health system; the absence of linguistic differences, wars, religious conflicts, racial discriminations; the lowest rate of murders; the virtuous separation between politics and religion.

Ultimately, for Suzuki the “linguistic typology” (p. 184) of the Japanese language is not at all inferior to that of “Western languages”, but it is merely qualitatively different, since the way of employing the Japanese language reflects the lifestyle of its speakers. Language is indeed interpreted in a Herderian fashion as the epiphany of the society, culture, spirit of the people using it. Japanese language is seen as the window on the Japanese-specific worldview, underlying a primordialist conception of the Japanese nation.

3.5. « How to Infuse Nation-ness: The Primordialist Rhetoric

But has it [the nation] indeed grown old and feeble? Has not the well of original life continued to flow for it, as for no other nation, since then and until to-day? (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 107)

3.5.1. The Primordialist Beliefs

The contents of *Nihon no kansei ga sekai o kaeru* express a nationalist rhetoric deeply infused with primordialist beliefs:

- **NATURALITY OR PRIMORDIALITY.** Existence of a precondition of indigenuous purity jeopardized by foreign influence. This belief particularly emerges in the recognition of a primeval pantheist and animist vision of nature of primitive Japan opposed to Western anthropocentrism, which infected Japanese traditional values. This contradiction between before and after, tradition and modernity, pure and corrupted is omnipresent, as in the advocacy for the restoration of a Japanese traditional educative ideal opposed to a negative Western education. Furthermore, the Japanese nation is conceived as a biological community naturally separated by an unbridgeable gap from other human groups. For instance, when speaking of “Japanese consciousness”, “Japanese vision of society and humanity” or “Japanese vision of nature”, Suzuki suggests the existence of an original cognitive and spiritual unit specific to the people called “the Japanese”. Its primordiality derives from having the alleged oldest history in the world, whose most tangible manifestation is the Japanese language.
- **THE PART FOR THE WHOLE.** The Japanese are treated as a whole, as a national community. Suzuki rises as the spokesperson of the “common sense” of the “average Japanese”, omitting the differences within Japanese society, language, and culture. A great emphasis is put on harmony in social and international relations, in the relationship with nature and in the Japanese ability of flattening the differences. Stressing the totality, Suzuki invokes the groupist sentiments of pride, love, trust, commonality of fate, the overall result of historical actions, the efficiency of Japanese polity and Japanese language as a system.
- **INDIVISIBILITY AND SEPARATENESS.** The Japanese nation is treated as a homogeneous whole where language, ethnicity, culture, and territory overlap. Japan is defined as a country characterized by the absence of ethnic, social, religious conflicts. The potential elements of disintegration of the national community are minimized or ignored and reality is simplified. Suzuki refers to groupist expressions such as “Japanese sensitivity”, “Japanese spirit”, “Japanese consciousness”, suggesting the existence of a unitary and monolithic canon of Japaneseness. The Japanese nation is depicted as an indivisible unitary community, limited by distinctive features

revolving around the attributes of “harmony”, “sensitivity”, “pantheism”, “animism”, and determining the symbolic and material separation from other nations.

- TERRITORIALITY. The destiny of the Japanese nation is intrinsically bound to the geographical and ecological conformation of the territory within which it developed (the Japanese isles), which contributed to shape its essential character. The definition of Japan as an insular territorial entity (*shimaguni*) is of paramount importance. Its insularity is peculiar because a western stormy sea and an immense eastern ocean spared Japan from conquests, invasions, expansions, and intermingling with foreign people. This condition of isolation is seen as the cause of the natural correspondence between the biological community of the Japanese and the extension of the Japanese isles. Japan’s territory is also characterized as “little”, “remote”, “at the extremes of the Far East” to enhance its greatness as an economic and technological power, despite its limited territorial configuration.
- TEMPORAL CONTINUITY. A continuum between past and present Japan exists, guaranteed by ancestral linearity. Notably, it is the survival of the pantheistic and animist beliefs of the primitive era to determine the persistence of Japanese spirit and its moral superiority.
- CYCLICITY OR ATAVISM. In Suzuki’s rhetoric, the Japanese spirit or Japaneseness is believed to be atavic, representing itself through the centuries and epochs in its original form, thanks to the nexus between the “visible” (the Japanese of today) and the “invisible” (the Japanese of the past).
- ETERNITY AND SAMENESS. The spirit of the Japanese nation endures through times and epochs in the body of the nation itself, whose traits and parts may change, but its core remains perennial. The historical origins of the Japanese nation are vague and trace back to a remote and indefinite past, situated in ancient history or even in prehistorical times. The Japanese nation is definitely treated as an a-historical, decontextualized and ever-lasting entity. Hence, the Japanese nation is always identical in its spiritual essence. Internal social variations, dialectal differences, ethno-linguistic minorities are exceptions to the norm of homogeneity, and they do not change the pattern for being superficial events. External cultural influences

are also neutralized by the assimilative capacity of the Japanese culture.

- SPIRITUALITY. A particular prominence is given to the immaterial part of the Japanese nation, that regenerates its primeval spirit generation after generation. The means through which the Japanese spirit or the “Japanese worldview” first manifests itself is *kokugo*, the national language. The spiritual character of Japaneseness derives from its mysterious power to attract and tatamize foreigners and it is stressed by advocating the role of Japan as a spiritual leader of the humankind.

These primordialist beliefs are sustained by several rhetorical strategies, some of which pertaining to the discursive organization, others to the narrative of the text.

3.5.2. The Primordialist Narrative

1) DISCOURSE

- ESSENTIALIZATION AND DICHOTOMIZATION

The ideological core of the essay revolves around two ontological stereotyped, atemporal cores. On one side, there is the in-group of ‘our Japanese civilization’ (*watashitachi no nihon bunmei*), ‘us’ (*watashitachi*), ‘we Japanese’ (*wareware nihonjin*), ‘we Japanese fellows’ (*watashitachi nihonjin dōshi*), the ‘non-Western world’ (*hiseiō sekai*), the ‘Japanese’ (*nihonjin*), ‘Japan’ (*nihon*). Suzuki uses the terms ‘Japanese’ and ‘Japan’ in narratives pertaining either to the contemporary era (*genzai no nihonjin* “contemporary Japanese”) or earlier historical periods (*mukashi no nihonjin* “the Japanese of the past”; *tōji no nihon* “Japan of the past”), thus reinforcing the primordialist notion of a fully formed Japanese nation since ancient times. On the other side, there is the out-group of ‘other civilizations’ (*ta no bunmei*), ‘Eurasian civilization’ (*yūrajia bunmei*) - namely ‘Western civilization’ (*seiō no bunmei*) and ‘Chinese civilization’ (*chūka bunmei*) - the ‘world’ (*sekai*), ‘foreign countries’ (*gaikoku*). Other civilizations are hardly mentioned and have a relative ideological relevance. These two entities are put in a dichotomic relation for representing two antithetical modalities of existence: the otherness is the term of comparison from which the unique attributes of Japaneseness are derived. The Other is chiefly represented by the ‘American civilization’ (*amerika bunmei*) and the ‘European civilization’

(*yūroppa bunmei*), or more specifically by 'the United States and Western Europe' (*ōbei*), the "developed countries". Among them, the 'United States of America' epitomize the prototype and fulfillment of the Western paradigm. The 'United Kingdom', referred to either as 'England' or 'Great Britain', 'France', 'Germany' are mentioned instead less frequently. Even semantically imprecise words as *tasha*, *gaikokujin* and *sekai* presume racial and ideological connotations. Especially *gai-kokujin* is associated with "white men", "Western European or American". Similarly, *yōroppa* indicates exclusively the countries of Western Europe and not any member of the European Union. 'China' is the second pole of Eurasia: the adjective 'Eurasian' is used interchangeably with 'Western'. This means that 'China' embodies and shares the features usually attributed to the 'West' – following the classical *Nihon-jinron* scheme. The author mentions many other entities ('Russia', 'ancient Greece'...) to pretend to be committed to a true comparison among different linguistic and cultural contexts, but their numerical and qualitative marginality shows their fictitious employment.

Suzuki's ideological discourse focuses on three main dichotomies referring to the claimed different conceptions of nature held by the Japanese and the Westerners: pantheism, animism vs. anthropocentrism; sensitivity, emotionality vs. rationality, logicity; harmony vs. conflict. From each of them, other "sub-dichotomies" derive: natural preservation and respect for humankind vs. natural destruction and human exploitation; continuity vs. interruption; polytheism vs. monotheism; tolerance, inclusion, ambiguity vs. intolerance, exclusion, dogmism; agriculture vs. pastoralism; instinct vs. intellect; fact, substance, truth, concreteness, depth, internal vs. reason, discussion, artifice, abstraction, superficiality, external; silence vs. verbosity; invisible, intangible, empty, raw, sober vs. visible, tangible, full, decoration, opulence; homogeneity, unitarity, homologation vs. heterogeneity, mixing, variety; insularity vs. continentality; closeness, contraction, introverted, little vs. openness, expansion, extroverted, big; vegetarianism: co-existence, co-prosperity vs. carnivorousness: law of the fittest.

While 'Japan' is a civilization grounded on pantheism and animism, whose "nature-centered" philosophy is the symbiotic, circular, equal relationship between nature and man stressing their harmonious coexistence and mutual prosperity, 'Eurasia' supports the paradigm of human suprematism or anthropocentrism, based on the hierarchical

opposition between nature and man in which the latter dominates over the former. Therefore, the Japanese value-system is essential to preserve nature and avoid the destruction of the ecosystem, reflected in the particular attention for the material and spiritual well-being of human beings. Conversely, the Eurasian model is oriented toward natural destruction to pursuit human egoistical desires, mirrored in the exploitation of other populations. These two antithetical visions of man-nature relationship are respectively sustained by polytheist and monotheist religious worldviews, which determined the development of the values of tolerance and inclusion on one side, intolerance and exclusion on the other. Tolerance and inclusion presume an ambiguous way of thinking and approaching reality leaving space to multiple interpretations and a plurality of possibilities. Viceversa, intolerance and exclusion assume a dogmatic, peremptory, doctrinaire thought. Polytheism and monotheism correspond in turn to opposed modes of subsistence characterizing Japanese and Eurasian civilizations since their origin - agriculture (fishing) and pastoralism. Antagonism is specifically established between seaweed degrading enzymatic bacteria and lactose degrading enzymatic bacteria, which would respectively habit “Japanese intestines” and “Western intestines”. Finally, Japanese pantheist-animist vision of nature characterizes itself for the survival until modernity of primitive beliefs about nature, which instead disappeared in the “interrupted” Eurasian civilization. Thus, the Japanese civilization is the sole to have remained primordial, unchanged since immemorial times. Japan’s history is accordingly continuous, long, ancient, while Eurasian history is non-linear, short, discontinuous. In the following table, I gathered several concrete excerpts of these dichotomies from the original text:

Tab. 3.1. ‘Japanese Pantheism and Animism’ and ‘Eurasian Anthropocentrism’

PANTHEIST, ANIMIST WORLDVIEW アニミズム的で汎神論的な世界観 [10]	ANTHROPOCENTRISM or HUMAN SUPREMATISM 人間中心主義（または人間至上主義） [9]
<i>Nature-man unity</i>	<i>Nature-man opposition</i>
人間はこの地球上のすべての命あるものとの共存共助の輪でつながっている… [27] Human beings are connected to all the living forms of this Earth in a circle of cooperation and coexistence.	自然は神が人間のために作られたものであり、それは人間が正しいと思う仕方でも人間の管理下に置かれるべきものという考え… [231] The idea that nature was created by God for human beings and, thus, it is put

<p>このような日本人が伝統的に持っている、人と自然の融合一体感の思想、自然から学ぶ感性… [42]</p> <p>The sensitivity of learning from nature, the idea of the harmonious union between nature and people, that the Japanese traditionally possess.</p>	<p>under their control in the way they think it is right</p> <p>人間と自然が支配被支配の上下対立関係… [14]</p> <p>Human beings and nature stand in an opposed, hierarchical relationship of dominator-dominated.</p> <p>…他の生物との協調を欠く自己中心的な活動… [238]</p> <p>Egocentric activities lacking of harmony with other living things.</p>
<p><i>Naturo-centrism</i></p> <p>…日本では古代から山水画のように自然そのものを描いた… [41]</p> <p>In Japan, the nature <i>per se</i> was depicted since antiquity, as in the landscape painting <i>sansuiga</i>.</p>	<p><i>Anthropo-centrism</i></p> <p>…詩のテーマがほとんど人間中心であること… [39]</p> <p>The poetical subject always focuses on the human being.</p> <p>ギリシャ神話やキリストなどの宗教的場面か、あるいは王侯貴族などの肖像が描かれていて、自然は主題に取り上げられていないこと… [41]</p> <p>Portraits of nobility, royal families or religious scenes of Christ and Greek mythology were depicted, but nature was not considered as a central subject.</p>
<p><i>Interest for natural world</i></p> <p>…ツクツクボウシ〈オーシイックック〉、アブラゼミ、クマゼミ、ハルゼミ、ニイニイゼミ、ミンミンゼ、そしてヒグラシ〈カナカナ〉などの名前は、聞いたことのある人がまだ多いと思います。 [30]</p> <p>I think that there are still many [Japanese] people who have already heard the names of <i>Meimuna opalifera</i>, <i>Graptopsaltria nigrofuscata</i>, <i>Cryptotympana facialis</i>, <i>Terpnosia vacua</i>, <i>Platypyleura kaempferi</i>, <i>Oncotympana maculaticollis</i>, <i>Tanna japonensis</i>, and so forth.</p>	<p><i>Disinterest for natural world</i></p> <p>米国の学生たちが…およそ虫というものすべてに対して、無知無関心なのだ… [29]</p> <p>American students are generally indifferent and ignorant of all those things called <i>mushi</i>.</p> <p>そんな言葉は知らないし聞いたこともない… [29]</p> <p>They [Suzuki's American students] do not know or never heard of a similar word ['<i>cicadae</i>'].</p>
<p><i>Preserving nature and respecting human-kind</i></p>	<p><i>Destroying nature and exploiting people</i></p>
<p>…人間圏をも含む自然生態系の崩壊を何とか食い止める… [9]</p> <p>Preventing the collapse of natural ecosystems, human sphere included.</p> <p>自分たちが生きるための必要から獲つ</p>	<p>…目標は人間の幸福と繁栄のみであり、それに向かって止め処のない生活向上や技術の発展を求め続けたために、自然界の安定した秩序を殆ど回復不能にまで破壊してしまいました。 [9]</p> <p>Since the aim was just the prosperity and happiness of human beings and, to this</p>

<p>て、食べた魚に感謝し、その霊を祭る碑まで立てる伝統的な日本人の感覚からは、納得できないものがあります [248]</p> <p>There are things [the “Western” hunt as a pastime] it is not possible to agree with according to Japanese traditional sensitivity, for which we go hunting moved by for the necessity of survival, we express gratitude for the fish eaten, we raise tombs to venerate their spirit.</p> <p>「使い回しの文化」 [236] A “culture of recycle”.</p> <p>…独自の文化、殊に民衆・庶民文化が発酵することが可能だった… [69] The fermentation of a unique culture, especially a mass popular culture, was possible.</p> <p>…民生に専念でき… [69] It was possible to dedicate to people’s life, well-being.</p>	<p>end, the constant technological development and life improvement were pursued, the stable order of the natural world was disrupted until a point of no return.</p> <p>…人間、特に西欧文明的な世界観を持つ人々の間では…ただ楽しみのために動物を殺したり苦しめたりすることが今でも、堂々といわれています。 [247] Among human beings, especially people with a typically Western worldview, the killing and the agony of animals just for fun [...] are performed even now in an impressive way.</p> <p>エネルギーや資源の浪費 [232] Waste of energy and resources.</p> <p>支配階級が…略奪奴隷や農民を酷使しての壮麗な宮殿や、四囲を圧する大神殿などを造営することは見られても、広く一般庶民の間に見るべき文化が栄えることは殆どありませんでした。 [69] The culture which should be widely observed among ordinary people rarely flourished, although the construction by ruling classes of big temples overwhelming the all-around and magnificent buildings by exploiting peasants and the slave pillage [...] may be underlined.</p>
<p><i>Continuity</i></p> <p>…現代の日本に根強く残る自然との融和性や共生的世界観、そして日本語自体に秘められている感性的なユニークさ… [65] The sensitive uniqueness concealed in Japanese language, the harmony with nature and a symbiotic worldview, which survive in a deeply seated way in contemporary Japan.</p> <p>…まだその証がそこかしこに明らかに残っている… [14] Evidence of its [Japanese animist and pantheist worldview] existence survive everywhere.</p> <p>…日本人はあらゆる生き物に対する共</p>	<p><i>Interruption</i></p> <p>…今ではほとんどの大文明が失ってしまった、古代のアニミズム的で汎神論的な自然観… [12] The ancient animist and pantheist vision of nature that almost all the great civilizations lost.</p> <p>…現在のドイツやフランス、そしてイギリスも…日本のような長い歴史はもっていません。 [156] Contemporary Germany, France and even England [...] do not possess a history as old as that of Japan.</p> <p>中国も、文明は四、五千年と古いのですが、支配民族や国はころころ変わり、今の中国すなわち中華人民共和国</p>

<p>感をまだ失っていない… [27] The Japanese have not lost the empathy towards all the living things yet.</p> <p>…日本と言う国は、…最も歴史の古い国… [155] The country called Japan [...] is the country with the most ancient history.</p>	<p>は、まだ建国以来七十年足らずの歴史しかもっていないのです。 [156] Chinese civilization too is four, five thousand years old, but its ruling countries and nations quickly changed and contemporary China, that is the People's Republic of China, has a history of just seventy years since the country's foundation.</p>
<p><i>Polytheism</i></p> <p>宗教的にも日本人の圧倒的多数は…神道や仏教的な世界観を失わずにもっている。 [239] From a religious point of view, most of the Japanese [...] continue to hold an unchanged Shintoist and Buddhist worldview.</p> <p>日本が…啓典の書を共有する人々…とごくわずかな期間を除いて、殆ど直接の接触がなかったこと… [11] Apart from an extremely short time span, Japan hardly had direct contacts with the people sharing the Book of Scripture [...]</p>	<p><i>Monotheism</i></p> <p>これらの文明は…一神教的性格の強いものである。 [239] These [Western and American] civilizations have a strong monotheist character.</p> <p>…近世以降の世界で最強の文明群である啓典の書を共有する人々、つまりユダヤ教徒、キリスト教徒、そしてイスラーム教徒たち… [11] The people sharing the Book of Scripture, the strongest groups of civilizations in the postmodern world, namely the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.</p>
<p><i>Tolerance, inclusion, ambiguity</i></p> <p>ものごとの曖昧さ [166] Ambivalence</p> <p>日本人の持っている〈白黒をはっきりさせないで曖昧なままに飲み込む能力〉… [43] The "ability of understanding without clearly distinguishing black from white, remaining vague", that Japanese possess.</p>	<p><i>Intolerance, exclusion, dogmatism</i></p> <p>…他者に善悪の二者選択を迫る… [44] Pushing the other to choose between one thing or the other, the good or the evil.</p> <p>…極めて不寛容な排他（折伏）性… [239] An extremely intolerant exclusion (contempt and submission to subsequently convert).</p>
<p><i>Agriculture</i></p> <p>【魚介+穀物複合体】 [258] Combination of seafood products and cereals.</p> <p>…日本人の腸内には他の民族には見られない、海藻の消化吸収を助ける特別な酵素菌がすみ着いている… [235] Special enzyme bacteria helping to digest and absorb seaweed, which cannot be found in other peoples, settle in the intestines of the Japanese.</p>	<p><i>Pastoralism</i></p> <p>【蒙畜+穀物複合体】 [258] Combination of cattle and cereals.</p> <p>…伝統的に遊牧・牧畜文化を基盤とし… [20] Being based on a nomadic and pastoral culture.</p> <p>…牛や山羊などの家畜を飼って、その乳を利用する習慣… [235] The custom of keeping livestock like bovines and goats and using their milk.</p>

As for the second couple of dichotomies, while Japanese lifestyle, its relationship with nature, its culture and language make the emotional part of a human being emerge, Western livelihood, its relationship with nature and the world, its anthropocentric culture and the structure of its languages emphasize its most rational and logical side. From this opposition, those between instinct and intellect, fact/substance and reason/discussion, truth and artifice, concreteness and abstraction, depth and superficiality, internal and external, silence and verbosity derive. Whereas sensitivity is regarded as related to instinct, rationality is a product of the intellect. Instinct and intellect are at the antipodes also in relation to human species conservation, because the former underlies it, whereas the second sustains the affirmation of the individual as primarily a rational being. Sensitivity leads to the formation of a society in which evidence, fact, substance, truth is preferred and concreteness and depth are praised for touching human inwardness. By contrast, rationality leads to an “artificial” society, in which the primacy is given to reason, discussion, and it is characterized by abstraction and superficiality for lingering out of human inner parts. This opposition implies the antinomy between “internal”, the Japanese values, those of the in-group, and “external”, the Eurasian values, those of the out-group. As a result of all these attributes, in Japan silence is deemed as a more valuable communicative mode than speech, being truer, more direct and instinctive, possible thanks to Japanese homogeneity. In Eurasia, instead, the instrument through which heterogenous people could find a compromise to coexist is eloquence. Ultimately, another qualitative opposition may be derived from sensitivity-rationality antagonism, that is the contrast between Japanese culture’s emphasis on what cannot be touched and seen, on the emptiness, invisible, and, simultaneously, the appreciation of the aesthetical values of sobriety and rusticity, and the Eurasian preference for the visible, the tangible, the full, corresponding to the aesthetical inclination to decoration, opulence.

Tab. 3.2. ‘Japanese Sensitivity’ and ‘Eurasian Rationalism’

SENSITIVITY, EMOTIVITY	LOGICITY, RATIONALITY
<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>Rationalism</i>
日本の根本にある日本型文明の感性 [240]	理性と論理を極端に重視する西欧文明 [9]
The sensitivity of Japanese civilization,	Western civilization, attaching extreme

<p>that is at the roots of Japan.</p> <p>…人々の感情や感性の表出に重点が置かれ… [145]</p> <p>Emphasis is given on the manifestation of individual sensitivity and emotions.</p> <p>日本語は、感情と情緒の表現に適している言語だ [145]</p> <p>Japanese is a language adapt to manifest emotions and feelings.</p> <p>常在戦場にいた荒くれの戦国武将でさえ、このように豊かな言語的感性を兼ね備えていました。 [90]</p> <p>Even the violent military commanders of Sengoku period, in permanent battlefields, possessed a rich linguistic sensitivity.</p>	<p>importance to logicality and rationality.</p> <p>…これまで世界の主導的文明であったユーラシア大陸型の理性、論理を重視し、強い自己主張に付き物の対立と対決に傾く他者攻撃的な生き方… [166]</p> <p>An aggressive lifestyle towards others that led the world until now, tending to conflict and strong opposition for self-affirmation, emphasizing rationality and logicality of the Eurasian civilization.</p> <p>…理性と論理面を極力重視しながら言語を使う… [145]</p> <p>[Westerners] use language while attaching great importance to its rational and logical aspect.</p>
<p><i>Instinct</i></p>	<p><i>Intellect</i></p>
<p>本能 [14] → 種の存続 [253]</p> <p>Instinct: Species conservation</p>	<p>知能 [253] → 個の生存 [253]</p> <p>Intellect: Individual existence</p>
<p><i>Fact/substance, truth, concreteness, silence</i></p>	<p><i>Reason/discussion, artifice, abstraction</i></p>
<p>「論より証拠」の事実社会 [145]</p> <p>A society of facts, organized according to the principle: "More than discussion, the evidence".</p> <p>…社会の成員の間で事実(fact)の同一性を重視することが可能であった… [145]</p> <p>It was possible to emphasize the homologation of facts among the members of society.</p> <p>…理屈っぽい、くどくどした感じを嫌い… [144]</p> <p>Disdaining verbosity, full of argumentations.</p>	<p>「証拠より論」の理屈社会 [145]</p> <p>A rational society, based on the principle "More than the evidence, the discussion".</p> <p>…もっと抽象性の高い(fiction)のレベル、つまり理屈のレベル、ということは言葉の理論的な側面に頼らざるを得なかった… [145]</p> <p>One couldn't do without relying on a highly abstract (fictious) level, that is a rational level, language's logical side.</p>
<p><i>Invisible, intangible, empty, rough, sober</i></p>	<p><i>Visible, tangible, full, decoration, opulent</i></p>
<p>日本人にとっては余白にこそ深い意味があるのです。その感性は、他人の考え、他国の文化という目に見えないものを尊重する多様性の理解にもつながると思います。 [44]</p> <p>For the Japanese, a deep meaning lies precisely in the empty space. I think that this sensitivity is connected to the understanding of diversity, which gives importance to invisible things such as the</p>	<p>欧米は科学で説明できる、あるいは目に見えて、手で触れるものしかなかなか評価しない。 [44]</p> <p>The West appraises only things that can be touched by hands or seen, and can be scientifically explained.</p> <p>アメリカでは家の壁とは空白部分を残さず、何かの飾りですっかり埋め尽くすべきものという、執念にも似た感覚</p>

<p>cultures of other nations and ways of thinking of other people.</p> <p>当時の日本のいわゆる裕福なお屋敷では、…どこを見ても空白だらけの、何やらもの足りない感じさえる部屋が普通でした。 [46]</p> <p>In the so-called wealthy residences of past Japan, rooms transmitting feelings as if something was missing and full of empty spaces no matter where you looked at, were the norm [...]</p> <p>…日本の神社は白木造りのまま、装飾どころか塗装すらもほとんどない… [47]</p> <p>Japanese shrines, far from being ornamented, are neither decorated with paintings, but they are made as they were built in raw wood.</p>	<p>を感じたものです。 [46]</p> <p>In America, house walls are completely covered with decorations without leaving empty spaces, provoking a sensation similar to obsession.</p> <p>…欧米のカトリックやギリシャ正教の寺院、そしてイスラーム教のモスクに入ると壁から天井までが、一面の装飾で覆われている… [46]</p> <p>When entering a Western Catholic or Greco-orthodox church or an Islamic mosque, the surface extending from the walls to the ceiling is completely covered by decorations.</p>
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Finally, harmony and conflict. Harmony is strictly connected to pantheism and sensitivity because for Suzuki it represents the fundamental quality to avoid global destruction. Harmony firstly means amity between man and nature, reflected in interpersonal relations among people of the same or different social, ethnic, national groups. Suzuki stresses the absence of religious or ethnic conflicts in Japanese society thanks to the millennial dominance of a sole, homogeneous nation-race and the inter-national pacifism pursued in foreign policy. By contrast, Eurasia is inherently bellicose. Its wide territory has been always marked by cruel and bloody fights, antagonisms, invasions, raids for power conquest, individual affirmation, religious and racial struggles due to the ethnic heterogeneity of their societies and the intermingling of different peoples by marriages, migrations, subjugations, conquests. This conflictual principle was subsequently widespread to a global scale since the epoch of sea travels and the aggressive colonization of the world. These differences are attributed to geographical factors, which enshrine ideological significance. Homogeneity, pacifism and uniqueness of Japan are derived from its singular condition of insularity, fatefully separating it from the Eurasian continent and causing a quasi-total condition of isolation. Insularity determined the features of closeness, contraction, introversion and smallness of the Japanese nation-state: Japan has never sought to expand itself towards

the external world, but developed a closed and self-centered mode of communication and a mode of existence oriented towards the "small". Eurasia is instead qualified as "continental", a modality which permitted the continuous and direct contact among different civilizations. This feature is in turn cause of the Eurasian projection to an open, extroverted expansive development model. Ultimately, the principles of harmony and conflict, reflected into those of "coexistence and co-prosperity" and "the law of the fittest", are connected to differences in the respective traditional diets, (quasi) vegetarian (cereals and seafood products) the former, and carnivory the other. Not only is this opposition suggested within the agriculture-pastoralism dichotomy, but it is stressed through a long similitude in which the Japanese people in the late Edo period are compared to a herd of peaceful herbivorous cows that are suddenly attacked by a group of carnivorous beasts (the Westerners).

Tab. 3.3. 'Japanese Harmony' and 'Eurasian Conflictuality'

HARMONY	CONFLICT
<i>Pacifism, anti-militarism</i>	<i>Bellicosity, struggles, antagonism, invasion, cruelty</i>
<p>日本は外国と戦争をした期間が最も短く、最長の不戦世界記録を保持する国 [155]</p> <p>Japan is the country that holds the longest world record of absence of wars and the shortest interval of external wars.</p> <p>千数百年も続いた不戦国家 [158]</p> <p>The warless country persisting for millennia.</p> <p>本質的に非戦不戦の国家体制を二世紀半の長きにわたって保持していた日本 … [158]</p> <p>Japan, which has been preserving a national polity basically based on pacifism and anti-militarism for two centuries and a half.</p>	<p>長い民族間の対立抗争の歴史を持つ欧米人たち [61]</p> <p>The Westerners, with a long history of inter-ethnic conflicts and antagonisms.</p> <p>…歴史上数え切れない戦争を含む相互の対立抗争や和解と融合といった、直接的な異文明間の接触や干渉対立が絶えませんでした。 [11]</p> <p>Historically, there were continuous antagonisms and interference, directs contacts among different civilizations like fusions and reconciliations, mutual clashes and antagonisms, including countless wars.</p> <p>…人類史上初めてと言ってよいほどの残酷無比な侵略戦争、略奪戦争… [69]</p> <p>Peerless wars of pillage and invasion, so cruel as to say that they were the first in human history.</p>
<i>Harmony, preservation of human relationships, mutual understanding, coexistence</i>	<i>Aggressivity, violence</i>
文化的には…「利をもって貴しとな	西欧諸国の暴力的な世界制覇 [141]

<p>す」の伝統を、日本はまだ完全には失っていないのである。 [240] Culturally, Japan has not completely lost the tradition according to which: «It is important to preserve harmony».</p> <p>日本の社会のこのような非対決的なあり方や日本人のこの柔らかな生き方 [148] The Japanese mild lifestyle and the way of Japanese society of living avoiding discussion.</p> <p>分かち合い譲り合いを重視する共存共生の生き方 [166] A lifestyle of coexistence stressing mutual understanding and agreement.</p> <p>可能な限り衝突を避け、人間関係を壊すまいと自分を抑え相手を立て… [147] Avoiding collisions as much as possible, by establishing an interlocutor and self-controlling not to disintegrate human relations.</p>	<p>The violent conquest of the world by Western countries.</p> <p>〈力こそ正義なり〉の彼らの生き方 [144] Their [Western] lifestyle of “justice based on force”.</p> <p>ヨーロッパから侵入したキリスト教徒の白人が、すべての土着の弱小民族宗教を、民族ごと有無を言わせぬ暴力で圧殺してしまった… [152] The white Christian followers, who invaded [South America, Australia] from Europe, suppressed all minority populations and religions with an indescribable violence.</p> <p>…日本を開国させて、道理の代わりに有無を言わせぬ「力こそ正義」の支配する、弱肉強食の彼らが主導する「国際社会」に引きずり出した… [158] By forcing the opening of Japan, the Westerners dragged it in the “international society” led by them, where the law of the fittest prevails, as it is ruled by force instead of reason.</p>
<p><i>Absence of discriminations, racial and religious conflicts</i></p>	<p><i>Religious, racial conflictuality</i></p>
<p>日本には宗教が原因の紛争も人種差別の問題もない [150] In Japan there is neither religious conflict nor problems due to racial discrimination.</p> <p>日本は朝鮮併合の際、新たに李王家を創立して、旧李氏朝鮮の支配者を日本の皇族並みに礼遇したのです。 [139] During Korea's annexation, Japan created a new lineage and treated all the former governors of Joseon as honorably as the very Japanese imperial family.</p>	<p>この人種差別という、欧米のすべての国を、いまでも悩まし続けている解決の難しい問題 [153] Racial discrimination - the hardly resolvable problem continuing to worry even now all Western countries.</p> <p>いまだに世界各地で起こっている激しい紛争の一番の原因は、宗教的反目と異宗教の対立が原因なのです。 [151] The first reason of violent conflicts raging worldwide even now is religious antagonism and the opposition among different religions.</p>
<p><i>Homogeneity, unitarity, homologation</i></p>	<p><i>Heterogeneity, intermingling, variety</i></p>
<p>日本文明だけがほかのどの文明とも互いに共通する重要な文明の構成要素、すなわち宗教、言語、文化、民族、そして領域をもたず、これら総ての点で日本がまとまっている… [10] Only Japanese civilization does not share</p>	<p>…一つの国家の内部に複数の民族や言語、そして宗教までが含まれていたりする… [11] Within a same State, a number of languages, religions, ethnic communities</p>

<p>structural elements as religion, language, culture, territory, ethnic community with other civilizations, but it is united under all these aspects.</p> <p>国を構成する民族、領土、言語、支配権力がセットとして殆ど変わらず、しかも同じところにこれほど長く続いている国は日本以外にありません。 [156]</p> <p>There is no other country except Japan where the ethnic community founding the country, the soil, the language, the ruling power, persist for such a longtime as a whole without changing at all and remaining the same.</p>	<p>are included.</p> <p>…多様性が見られる… [145]</p> <p>Variety can be observed.</p> <p>…地域差、つまり多様性が大きい… [145]</p> <p>Regional differences, namely variety, are considerable [...]</p>
<p><i>Insularity</i></p>	<p><i>Continentality</i></p>
<p>狭い島国の日本 [145]</p> <p>Japan, a narrow insular country.</p> <p>日本という国は…他から切り離されそれだけでほぼ自己完結している、小さな別世界だ… [10]</p> <p>The country called “Japan” is a little world apart separated from the others and, only for this, almost self-sufficient.</p> <p>形だけは冊封体制のようでありながら、日本と大陸の間には一度も大規模な双方向の人的交流がなく… [206]</p> <p>Although a tributary system apparently existed, a large-scale bidirectional human exchange between Japan and the continent has never taken place [...]</p>	<p>ユーラシア大陸 [145, 166, 258, 259]</p> <p>The Eurasian continent</p> <p>直接的な異文明間の接触や干渉対立 [11]</p> <p>Direct contacts and interferences among different civilizations.</p> <p>互いに他の文明の存在は…意識されていたわけです。 [11]</p> <p>The existence of other civilizations was mutually perceived.</p>
<p><i>Closeness, contraction, introverted, little</i></p>	<p><i>Openness, expansion, extroverted, big</i></p>
<p>外でなく内へ、大でなく小へ [70]</p> <p>Toward the internal and not the external, the little and not the big.</p>	<p>上方、そして外部に向ける [89]</p> <p>Aspiring to the higher and external.</p>
<p><i>Vegetarianism: co-existence, co-prosperity</i></p>	<p><i>Carnivorism: law of the fittest</i></p>
<p>共存共栄 [12, 258]</p> <p>Co-existence and co-prosperity.</p> <p>草しか食べていなかったおとなしい牛の群れ [158]</p> <p>A quiet herd of cows eating only grass [the Japanese]</p>	<p>弱肉強食の彼ら [158]</p> <p>The Westerners, characterized by the law of the fittest.</p> <p>樺猛な肉食獣たち [158]</p> <p>Ferocious carnivorous animals [the Westerners].</p>

In addition to these three main dichotomies, it is possible to identify a minor one, opposing “Japanese language” and “Western languages”.

In short, while Japanese phonological structure has formed its syllabic writing system, Western languages are represented by alphabets consisting of one-sound-one-sign characters. On this point, the Japanese language is associated with television as the preferred means of communication, for combining simultaneously a visual and phonic nature, whereas Western writings are compared to radio transmitting information only by means of phones. Ultimately, in Japanese writing a double reading of characters developed, making the understanding of Japanese language more accessible, horizontal and equal. Instead, Western languages (especially English) are classist and they are discriminatory: they do not possess a gloss codifying Greek or Latin etymology of technical terms; the knowledge of their meaning is limited to a small circle of experts in classical languages.

Tab. 3.4. 'Japanese Language' and 'Western Languages'

JAPANESE LANGUAGE	WESTERN LANGUAGES
音節文字 [183] Syllabic writing	表音文字 [194] Phonetic writing
日本語の言語伝達は、まさに聴覚と視覚の両方を同時に使うテレビ型でなされている… [197] Japanese linguistic communication is based on a television-model, using simultaneously both the sight and hearing.	…言葉は音声だけですでに完結していなければならない… [201] Words must have a complete meaning only by how they sound.
互いに区別し難い同音語 [188] Homophones are very difficult to be distinguished.	同一近似の文脈において意味の紛らわしい同音語は…原則として存在できないわけです。 [201] As a general rule, homophones having ambiguous meanings cannot exist in the same context.
同じ漢字を二通りの違った読み方で読む二重読みが日本で生まれたのです。 [206] The double reading of a same <i>kanji</i> was developed in Japan.	訓がない英語では古典語要素を含む高級語彙は雲の上のことば [208] In English, without a glossing, the specialistic lexicon, structural elements of ancient languages included, consists of inaccessible words.
日本語という言語に、階層差がない… [150] In Japanese language, no hierarchical difference exists.	同じ英語でも、庶民用とインテリの読者相手では使われる言葉がひどく違う… [150] In English, words used by popular and intellectual readers differ greatly.

Overall, the essentialization and dichotomization of reality implies its polarization: the attributes qualified as “Japanese” are assigned with a positive, redeeming value, while the foreign (Eurasian) ones with a negative, destructive value. The result is the emphasis on Japanese uniqueness and primordality and its separateness with the out-groups, with a special reference to their diametrically opposed conceptions of nature, corresponding to a more general difference in terms of worldview and value-system. Thus, while all the qualities referring to ‘Japan’ like pantheism, harmony, sensitivity, emotionality, tolerance, homogeneity, etc. are positively judged, those associated to ‘Eurasia’ like anthropocentrism, rationality, conflict, heterogeneity, continental-ity, monotheism, etc. imply a very negative connotation.

More specifically, it is possible to identify several examples of specifically-reconnotated words, such as those ordinary verbs expressing an idea of persistence or interruption: *tsuzuku* pp. 156, 157, 158 (to continue), *nokosu* pp. 12, 14, 141, 261, 259 (to leave), *nokoru* pp. 29, 66, 82, 83, 170, 261 (to remain), *ikizuite iru* p. 38 (to survive), *hoji suru* pp. 12, 13, 155, 158, 232, 239, 260 (to preserve), *iji suru* pp. 67, 147-148 (to maintain), *ushinatte inai* pp. 27, 84, 239 (not being lost), *kawarazu* p. 156 (without changing), *ushinatte simatta* pp. 11, 12 (having lost). Apart from *ushinau* (to lose), these verbs acquire a strongly positive connotation since they are repeatedly associated with the Japanese mode of existence. They frequently appear together with the periphrastic *-te*, intensifiers or expression of duration such as *furuku kara gendai de mo* pp. 10-14, 27, 31 (from antiquity to modernity), *genzai de mo* pp. 84, 88 (even today), *ima de mo* pp. 12, 34, 83 (even now), *mada* pp. 12, 14, 141 (not yet/still), *nedzuyoku* p. 66 (deeply rooted), etc. For instance:

- (6) 日本は…本来の古代文明の要素をも完全には失うことなく基層文化として残している、…唯一の、しかも強力な文明なのです。 [12]

Japan is a powerful and unique civilization perfectly preserving as deep culture the elements of the ancient civilization of the origins, without losing them [...].

- (7) これは世界でも類を見ない、大規模な人間的接触を欠く間接文化受容であったため、もともとの独自性を日本はなんとか失わずに今でも保持しているのです。 [11]

Since this was an indirect, large-scale cultural reception, peerless in the

world and deprived of any human contact, Japan preserves even now its original uniqueness.

- (8) …今ではほとんどの大文明が失ってしまった、古代のアニミズム的で汎神論的な自然観… [12]

An ancient pantheist and animist conception of nature, that all the great civilizations have almost completely lost today.

A positive value is attached to the preservation of primordial features by Japanese civilization, clashing against their loss, disappearance in other civilizations.

Another relevant group of positively reconnotated words express the idea of the return to the origins, that is the idealization and the advocacy for the restauration of a past, primeval condition regarded as morally authentic, pure, purged from foreign elements and the abstract conceptualization of a set of “Japanese traditional spiritual values” - as the following words and adjectives suggest: *torimodosu* pp. 14, 41, 44, 97 or *modosu* p. 119 (to restore), *furikaette miru* p. 66 (to seek and bring back), *minaosu* p. 255 (to reconsider), *honrai* pp. 12, 157, 164 or *moto moto* p. 232 (original), *korai* p. 255 (from time immemorial), *hontō* p. 164 (authentic), *dentōteki* pp. 42, 255 (traditional). The superiority of primordiality in effacing history is primarily visible in the statement of a specifically Japanese natural philosophy connected to a broader moral sense. For example:

- (9) …本来は戦争を殆どしない国だった日本… [157]

Japan, originally a country which hardly waged wars.

- (10) 今の日本ではもう古いとされ重視されなくなってしまった日本古来の伝統的な教育理念などを、もう一度見直す必要があるのではという考えをもっています。 [255]

I think that it is necessary to reconsider once again the traditional educational ideal of the Japan of the origins, regarded in contemporary Japan as old-fashioned and unimportant.

In all these cases, Suzuki invokes a golden age, by attributing positive primordial qualities to the Japanese nation “of the past” and denouncing their deterioration among contemporary Japanese. In the

first sentence, Suzuki presumes a before and after, ideologically corresponding to the beginning of Japanese history until the *bakumatsu* and the period between the Meiji era and 1945, to the opposition between purity (Japan) and corruption (West). In the second excerpt, Suzuki looks at the Japanese prewar traditional school, which is again essentialized and extended to the entire Japanese history before 1945. The positive character of the idealized past (*nihon korai*) is opposed to a negative present (*ima no nihon*), where the educational ideal is no longer underpinned. The negativity underlying the present time is ultimately enhanced by *-te shimatta*, which is used to mark an irremediable event – the decadence of Japanese traditional values.

Ultimately, contrast is the essence of *Nihon no kansai ga sekai o kaeru's* rhetorical structure, as it is suggested by the number of constructs and argumentative structures of comparison disseminated throughout the text, such as *to kuraberu* to p. 40 / *to kurabete* pp. 144, 186 (in comparison to), *ni taishite* pp. 145, 258 / *ni hanshite* p. 173 (in contrast to), *to wa mattaku chigau* p. 14 (to be very different from), *to wa mattaku kotonaru* p. 144 (to differ greatly). The result is the crystallization of Japanese idiosyncrasy, further emphasized through various periphrastic expressions of uniqueness referred to 'Japan', some examples of which I reported in the following table.

Tab. 3.5. Periphrastic Expressions of Uniqueness

世界でも類を見ない [11] Without precedents in the world	世界に冠たる [32] Peerless in the world
世界に珍しい [87] Rare in the world	世界で唯一 [177, 186] Unique in the world
世界に例を見ない [94] No other example is seen in the world	世界で一番 [148] The first in the world
日本だけが…世界のなかで [11] Only Japan in the world...	日本以外にも…国は他にありません [206] Apart from Japan, there's no (other) country that...
こんな国は世界のどこにもありません [157] Nowhere else in the world there is such a country	世界の他の言語・他の民族には見られない [186] It cannot be found in other languages/nations in the world
世界のどの言語にも引けをとらない [188] Incomparable to any other language in the world	他の文明にはない [10] Absent in other civilizations

Japanese uniqueness is frequently evoked also through specific words such as *tokuchō* (distinctive features), *ishitsu* (different nature), *dokuritsu* (isolated), *dokujisei* (specificity), *yūichi* (unique), *dokutoku* (unique), *yūniku* (unique), *tokushitsu* (special quality), *keu* (unusual), *subarashii* (extraordinary), *tokusei* (peculiarity), *tokuyū* (peculiar), *kimyō* (particular), *tokui* (singular). For instance:

(11) この日本文明には他の文明にはない際立った特徴があると言うのです。 [10]

It appears that the Japanese civilization has outstanding distinctive features absent in other civilizations.

(12) 日本だけが今でも世界のなかで異質なのです。 [11]

In the world only Japan has a different nature, even now.

(13) 日本語独特 [213]

The uniqueness of the Japanese language.

(14) 日本特有の歴史的事情 [207]

Historical conditions peculiar to Japan.

(15) 日本文化の特徴である豊かな感性 [166]

A rich sensitivity, that is a distinctive feature of Japanese civilization.

(16) 日本人が外国人に対してみせる独特のよそよそしい態度 [108]

The unique detached attitude that the Japanese show towards foreigners.

(17) 日本語と日本文化のもつ一種独特の同化力 [54]

The unique assimilationist capacity of Japanese language and culture.

(18) 日本人なら誰でもまだ多少は持っている、この非西欧的な特質の存在 [13]

The existence of special, non-Western qualities that anyone, if Japanese, possesses to a certain extent.

(19) 西欧の言語や文化とは明らかに異質な要素の多い日本語と日本文化

[14]

Japanese language and culture clearly have many different structural elements from Western languages and cultures.

The accent on Japanese antithetical diversity with the otherness, namely the West, is ultimately a device aimed at fixing the image of a unique, timeless, primordial nation.

- MYSTIFICATION

This technique to mould reality to one's liking is implemented particularly in relation to the description of the relationship between the Japanese and nature, or the world in general, as unique, transcending history, by drawing a continuum between the "Japan of the origins" and "modern Japan". By way of example, Suzuki refers to the sounds produced by certain traditional tools of Japanese gardens such as *shishiodoshi*³ and *suikinkutsu*⁴ that evoke a feeling of mystery, ineffability, oddity:

(20) …聞くともなしに聞いていると、妙に気持ちが落ち着くから不思議です。 [79]

It is mysterious, because I feel strangely calm when distractedly listening to it.

(21) …何とも形容できない不思議な反響音が地上に聞こえるのです。 [79]

A really mysterious and indescribable reverberation can be heard on the ground.

(22) …基本原理は廃水（排水）を利用して、地下の空洞で生じる静かな反響音を地上で聞いて楽しむという、何とも恐れ入った工夫… [79]

A really amazing tool, simply using wastewater conveyed into an underground cavity as a source of a peaceful reverbering sound one can enjoy listening to while staying overground.

³ Water-filled bamboo tube that clacks against a stone when emptied (originally used for keeping birds and wildlife away).

⁴ Buried earthen jar that makes a sound when water drips into it.

These statements refer to a broader context of exemplification of how Japanese culture has traditionally enjoyed the sounds produced by animate and inanimate things. The reported feelings, described in terms of a religious ecstatic experience, underlie the idea that only Japanese can be moved by such recreational activities, by virtue of their innate sensitivity.

Another significant example concerns Suzuki's surprise when discovering Western total detachment from the natural world:

(23) その際に、日本語の上級のクラスでは日本人教師なら誰もが必ず取り上げる次の松尾芭蕉の句「閑さや岩にしみ入る蟬の聲」を使って、日本人の自然観を説明しようとしたとき、米国の学生たちが全くと言っていいほど、およそ虫というものすべてに対して、無知無関心なのだということを知って大変に驚いたことがありました。[29]

On that occasion, when I tried to explain in a Japanese advanced course the Japanese conception of nature by means of Matsuo Bashō's *haiku*: «Silence. / Penetrates the rock / the song of cicadas!» - a *haiku* all teachers of Japanese ancestry - I was extremely surprised to discover that American students are almost completely ignorant of and disinterested in all those things called *mushi*.

Not only does the author essentialize a small number of American university students as representatives of the entire category of "American students", describing them with very generalizing attributes, but he amplifies their alleged ignorance and disinterest by overstressing his astonishment. He opposes "Japanese normality", suggested by the syntagm *nihonjin kyōshi nara dare mo*, and consisting of being perfectly aware of the existence of bugs. The feeling of wonder (*odoroita*) persists when realizing that none of those students had never seen or listened to the sound of cicadas. Finally, the surprise (*odoroita koto wa*) is overwhelming when he realizes that an equivalent term for *mushi* simply does not exist in English. On this point, mystification is evident for the fact that Suzuki, as a linguist, should have known that Japanese is just one of the numerous languages possessing a specific lexeme to indicate a residual, small-sized form of life and to gather all the animals formally excluded from the classification of more salient living beings. This type of residual class as the Japanese *mushi* has even a technical denomination deriving from linguistic and anthropological

ethno-classifications: *wug* (*worm + bug*) (see Brown 1979: 793). Hence, Japanese indubitably differentiates from English, but not from languages as Cornish, Paiute, Northern dumba, entailing a *wug* class (Brown 1979: 796, 800).

Suzuki describes in a similar vein the self-defined phenomenon of “tatamization effect”. Japanese language and culture are seen as enshrining a force, a strong viscosity, capable of attracting and influencing either foreigners or Japanese expats returning to Japan. Mystification lies in the way Suzuki describes a common sociolinguistic phenomenon – *appaesamento* or «domestication of the world» (Sanga 1997: 9) – attributing it solely to people approaching Japanese language or culture and omitting comparative examples. Amazement is a frequently evoked emotion by means of *odoroku beki* (ought to be surprised), associated to the pride the Japanese should feel about Japanese peculiarities. Another example refers to the attempt to reify Nakane Chie’s statements in her bestseller *Tate shakai no ningen kankei* (1967) as facts, truths (*jijitsu*). Suzuki admits to have been surprised (*odorokimashita*) after reading again Nakane’s essay, where she pointed out the peculiarities of Japanese linguistic life. Mystification lies in transmitting the idea that Nakane’s statements are based on quantitative research, while being speculative despite their intuitive insights into Japanese society.

Two more interesting cases of mystification are:

- (24) …虫を含む日本語の表現を、いざ外国語に訳そうとすると、少なくとも私の知っている限りの言語では、全く生き物とは関係のない言葉でしか意味を伝えることができないのです。 [35]

By attempting to translate in foreign languages – at least those that I know – the Japanese linguistic expressions encompassing ‘mushi’, it is possible to convey their meaning only by means of words without any relationship with the living things.

- (25) 日本人は食品としてさまざまな八十種にも上る海藻を、一年中利用する文化を持つ民族として世界的に有名です。そのため日本人の腸内には他の民族には見られない、海藻の消化吸収を助ける特別な酵素菌がすみ着いていることが知られています。 [235]

The Japanese are famous in the world as a nation with a food culture having more than eighty different kinds of seaweed in their yearly diet.

It is well-known that, for this reason, special enzyme bacteria helping to digest and absorb seaweed, which cannot be found in other nations, are harbored in the Japanese intestines.

In the first case, mystification is concealed behind the syntagm *sukunaku to mo watashi no shitte iru kagari no gengo* (at least the languages I know). Suzuki guarantees the truthfulness of what he is going to state by virtue of his intellectual authority: he takes for granted that he has already outlined a linguistic comparison between Japanese and the foreign languages he knows. Yet, which are the languages at issue and the translations of the Japanese expressions containing ‘mushi’ that Suzuki speaks of? How is it possible to establish lexical correspondences of a word that was previously said not to exist in English (one of the languages known by Suzuki)? Mystification consists in presuming crucial information supporting Suzuki’s own position.

In the second excerpt, it is the explicit part of the message to be problematic. Saying that an important part of Japanese (traditional) diet is represented by seaweed is a statement suggesting a conception of the Japanese as a sea people or a seaweed-eater people. Both facts are historically incorrect, as the Japanese economy was always dominated by rice cultivation (Sansom 1974: 6). Furthermore, special enzymes dwell in the ‘Japanese intestine’ only is a statement not scientifically corroborated by the author or at least referred to a source, presuming an isolated phenotypical evolution. At a closer glance, the sentence contains several elements hiding an implicit part of the overall message: *hachijūshu ni mo agaru kaisō* (even more than eighty typologies of seaweed), *sekaiteki ni mo yūmei* (famous at a global level), *ta no minzoku ni mirarenai* (which cannot be found in other nations) are syntagms implying a term of comparison to enhance Japanese diversity. Indeed, the author subsequently states that:

(26) その反面日本には、つい百年ほど前までは、牛や山羊などの家畜を飼って、その乳を利用する習慣がまったくなかったため、今でも腸内に乳糖分解酵素の少ない人がいて、牛乳を沢山飲むと腹具合が悪くなったりするのです。 [235-236]

By contrast, since in Japan the habit of raising cattle like bovines and goats and consuming their milk did not exist at all until around one hundred years ago, even now there are people who have serious

stomach problems when drinking a great deal of milk, since they have few lactose degrading enzymes in the intestine.

Comparison apparently takes place between seaweed degrading enzymes and lactose degrading enzymes. Actually, it is established between the 'Japanese nation' and the 'Other' embodied by two modes of subsistence, fishing and pastoralism. Sentences (25) and (26) mystify reality because Suzuki employs an objective content – the activation of specific enzymes within certain populations by virtue of their diet habits, long-standing geographical isolation – to communicate an implicit idea, that is the existence of an inter-national (inter-genetic) difference between the Japanese and the Eurasians.

Ultimately, Suzuki's historical revisionism is structured on the falsification, thus mystification of the historical narration and facts. By way of example:

(27) 極東軍事裁判の結論などを受けて、日本は軍国主義国家だったとか、日本人は好戦的な民族だなどとよく言われますが、このような日本観は私の見るところ、日本と欧米諸外国との接触が本格的に始まった明治以後の日本、つまり長い日本の歴史から見るとわずか半世紀にも満たない、昭和の半ばまでの、きわめて短い時期だけを問題にしているのです…日本と言う国は…世界の国々の中では最も歴史の古い国…

[155]

In response to the Tōkyō Trial's verdict, it is often said that Japan was a militarist country and the Japanese a bellicose nation, but, as I see it, such a conception of Japan questions only Japan from the Meiji era, when it really started to enter in contact with Western countries, until the middle of Shōwa, namely for an extremely short period – not even half a century – if one considers Japan's long history. [...] The country called "Japan" [...] has the oldest history among all the countries in the world.

The focal point of Suzuki's argumentation is the claim of the antiquity of Japanese history, which would be generically older than one thousand and four hundred years, as he subsequently specifies. For Suzuki, the antiquity of a country is due to the persistence and immutability of the same dominant ethno-nation: while Japan derives its uniqueness from this fact, the history of Western countries or China is

short. By establishing 600 A.D. as Japan's foundation as a country, Suzuki outlines a genealogy of the most bellicose events in Japanese history. Firstly, Baekgang's battle (663 A.D.), the first external war counterposing the T'ang dynasty and the Silla kingdom against the Yamato court and Paekche kingdom. Subsequently, for around nine hundred years until the end of Senkoku period, when the military commander Hideyoshi attempted to invade Korea, Japan did not wage any other war. When *sakoku* was then implemented under the Tokugawa dynasty, no war was fought for two hundred and fifty years. Pacifism was interrupted since 1894, when Japan started the Sino-Japanese War and was continuously militarily engaged until 1945. Excluding two seven-years invasions from Korea and the two-days Baekgang's battle, Suzuki concludes, a warfree policy had continued for about one thousand and three hundred years since Japan's foundation. Therefore, considering Japanese history in its entirety, one cannot help but confuting the widespread assessment of Japan as an invading State and of the Japanese as a bellicose people.

Mystification is carried out on multiple intersecting levels. First, the assumptions supporting Suzuki's argumentation are questionable: the Japanese as a decontextualized, essentialized, atemporal entity; the racial, cultural, linguistic homogeneity of the Japanese; their immutability; the historical quasi-total isolation of Japan; the conception of a country's history as primarily based on racial continuity; the omission of internal conflictuality. Secondly, Japanese war history is narrated in a fairly simplistic way, with its key events depicted as exceptions or minimized altogether. Mystification takes place even at a conceptual level, when Suzuki implicitly compares 'Japan's history' with 'world's history', two incomparable realities by definition, and when he speaks of "Japan's perspective" in relation to the Tōkyō Trial's verdict as if it were a problem of interpretation between Japan and the West. Ultimately, the author mystifies the narration around Japanese history because his intent is to enhance his nationalist stance, by taking as a pretext the ineffectiveness of the Tōkyō Trial's verdict.

- EMOTIONALITY

Throughout the essay, Suzuki makes use of linguistic expressions referring to a language of kinship, to emotionally describe the sense of nation-ness in terms of the affective belonging to an extended family.

Some of them are associated with Japanese ancestors as *sokoku nihon* p. 113 (Japan, the country of ancestors), the older generations as *wataschitachi no sofū ya chichi no sedai* p. 138 (The Japanese of the generations of our fathers and grandfathers) or *wareware no fūbo ya senpai* p. 134 (our grandparents and *senpai*), who sacrificed and fought for the construction of a modern and developed Japan. Other expressions as *jibuntachi no bogo de aru nihongo* pp. 141, 189 (The Japanese language, our mothertongue) suggests Suzuki's fully endorsement of Meiji linguistic ideology: the German-derived concept of *Muttersprache* was one of the key concepts popularized by the Meiji linguist Ueda Kazutoshi once back from Europe (Heinrich 2012: 62). This expression underlies the ideology of monolingualism and the Herderian conception of the language as the product of its speakers. The aforementioned *sokoku* (the country of the ancestors) is instead an intimate expression frequently used by nationalists to indicate the blood attachment to one's native country, the land inhabited by countless generations of ancestors. It differs from *bokoku* (motherland), rather referring to one's birthplace from an external point of view. *Sokoku* has a very strong emotional significance, related to blood and race symbolism, to a biologist national belonging. This emotional sense is often strengthened by the pervasive use of emic expressions as *watashitachi nihonjin* (we Japanese), *wareware* (we), *watashitachi nihonjin dōshi* (we Japanese fellows) and the adjective *watashitachi no* or *jibuntachi no* (our) informing about the existence of a brotherly community of "we Japanese" as in *watashitachi no nihon* pp. 105, 261 (our Japan).

Strictly connected to dichotomization, the author evokes various polarized emotions, associated to the antithetical Japanese and Eurasian modes of existence. The frequent evocation of feelings and emotional attitudes serves the purpose of compensating the argumentative poverty of the essay, with a special reference to the Japanese conception of nature, which is never defined or precisely described, but it is evoked by means of emotional values. Hence, Japaneseness is associated with positive moods: harmony (*yūwasei*, p. 66), empathy (*kanjō yūn'yū*, p. 28), compassion (*sokuin no jō*, p. 28), love (*ai*, p. 32), tenderness (*komayakana kimochi*, p. 172), moderation (*setsudo no nen*, p. 13), respect (*ikei no nen*, p. 13), cooperation (*ayumiyori*, p. 166) funneled into a unique attribute, sensitivity (*kansei*, pp. 37, 42, 44, 90, 166, 240). Other important, positive-valued feelings are pride (*hokoru*,

pp. 32, 239, 164) and self-confidence (*jishin*, p. 66) necessary for the rediscovery of the Japanese national identity. By contrast, otherness is matched with negative stances and feelings, such as aggressivity (*kōgekisei*, p. 239), blunt violence (*mukidashi no bōryoku*, p. 191), intolerance (*fukan'yō*, p. 239), arrogance (*omoiagari*, p. 24), indifference (*mushin*, p. 29), which naturally engender hostile sentiments towards the non-Japanese.

An expression at a crossroads between the language of kinship and that of emotionality for its symbolic reference to “blood” lies in the following sentence:

(28) もしかしたら照宮様も虫愛づる姫の文化的な血を引いておられたの
かなとふっと思いました。 [33]

I thought that the cultural blood of the princess-who-loved-*mushi*'s
may have flown in princess Teru no Miya too.

The implicit reference is the passion nurtured by Shōwa emperor's spouse for moths, compared for its intensity to that for *mushi* expressed by the princess of the popular fairytale *Mushi mezuru himegimi* (the princess who loved *mushi*). “Cultural blood” (*bunkatekina chi*) recalls an image of cultural continuity and common descent, bonding together past and present generations of Japanese.

- MINIMIZATION, CONTRADICTION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE STRAWMAN

This essay features two main structural contradictions. The first is the claimed pacifism of the Japanese people and the harmony of Japanese society. In this case, Suzuki deliberately manipulates the historical and sociological reality, since he minimizes or eliminates the many blooded historical events and processes that characterized Japanese history, apparently ignoring the internal conflicts existing in contemporary Japanese society. Minimization of reality goes hand in hand with its simplification: the gap between the real and the ideal exists, but not in Suzuki's discourse, where conflict and violence are reduced to Western distinctive cultural and racial traits.

The other relevant contradiction is the description of the respect towards nature as “Japanese-specific”, notwithstanding the pursuit of a capitalist model of development by the Japanese establishment.

Actually, in Suzuki's ideological discourse, this is not viewed as a contradiction, but just as a diversion from the right way. Its argumentation is constructed as to be unfalsifiable: the responsibility for Japan's current evils and corruption is to be ascribed to the encounter with the West and its negative influence on Japan since the Meiji era. Suzuki maintains that Japanese history is characterized by isolation, ecologism, pacifism, treating internal conflicts as mere scuffles among conational resolved after the stabilization of Tokugawa's power, which neutralized external influences. He continues asserting that everything that happened after the decline of the Tokugawa dynasty was under the instigation of Western ideology or happened as a forced reaction to it. He attributes the responsibility and guilt to Western powers and their violence. He continues saying that what did not work since the Meiji era onwards is a consequence of the West and its unethical principles. Hence, Japan should emancipate from Western influence, restore its national character, and suggest an alternative way of being. This is the main strawman on which the whole essay is structured: Japanese sense of inferiority, the psychological complex toward their identity derives from this "original fault". Japan and especially the Japanese intellectuals are depicted as passive agents who "have been subjected" (*shihai sarete iru*, p. 13) by "a thought that has been planted" (*tatakikomareta kangae*, p. 13) in their minds, unaware of the positive values inherent in the indigenous worldview. They are regarded as victims of Western psychological colonialism.

Contradictions are however frequent in the text. For instance, the citation of a nature-centered poem by the Chinese poet Du Fu as a demonstration of the Japanese-Eastern interest in the natural world is contradictory, because 'China' is ideologically part of Eurasia (p. 38-40). When expressing the need for Japan to get rid of Western misconceptions and prejudices, the author mentions indeed a "Western" fairytale, *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Andersen (p. 186). Buddhism, a widespread religion in East Asia then imported in Japan, is considered, together with Shintoism, as the manifestation of the typically Japanese animist and pantheist vision of nature (pp. 239-240). The simultaneous statement of Japan's historical isolation and the millennial cultural contribution received by other civilizations is another contradiction (pp. 10, 106): was Japan cut off from any external relation or did it entertain deep contacts with the continent? The selective breeding of

cocks, to which “improvements” were brought for fun (tail and wing extension or voice improvement), is invoked as an example of Japanese respectful interest for nature (p. 76). Yet, it is not so different from the harshly criticized Western hunt as a pastime.

- BANALIZING THE NATION-NESS

Proceeding by simplifications, the author banalizes the reality he intends to describe. The ultimate object of banalization is Japanese-ness, or better, the existence of the very Japanese nation, which takes shape linguistically and conceptually.

Suzuki trivializes several linguistic expressions evoking the sense of a nation or “nation-ness”, for not explaining their denotation or being used as common lexicon. While expressions of the sort of *nihonjin no shizenkan* p. 29 (Japanese conception of nature), *nihonjin no ikikata* pp. 145, 148 (Japanese livelihood), *nihonjin no kokoro* p. 42 (Japanese essence), *nihon to iu kuni* pp. 10, 14, 67, 147, 149, 155, 156, 157, 259 (the country called “Japan”), *wareware nihonjin* pp. 72, 81 (we Japanese), *watashitachi no nihon* pp. 105, 261 (our Japan) are stereotyped in the sense that they are part of the common lexicon, others are constructed with stereotyped elements and new elements. This is the case of the numerous expressions composed by *watashitachi no* (our), *nihonjin no* (of the Japanese), or *nihonteki* (specifically Japanese): *nihonjin no ishiki* p. 200 (Japanese consciousness), *nihonjin no jōshiki* p. 201 (Japanese common sense), *watashitachi no kankaku* p. 98 (our sensitivity); *watashitachi nihonjin no seishinfūdo* p. 231 (the spiritual landscape of we Japanese), *jibun-tachi no sonzai* p. 106 (our existence), *nihontekina kangaekata* p. 43 (a specifically-Japanese mentality); *nihontekina ningenkan ya shakaikan* p. 259 (a specifically Japanese conception of society and humanity). Combining an already known element (the genitive) with a new referent, and keeping them for granted, Suzuki disguises them as natural, ordinary expressions, as well as the underlying concepts. Similar considerations may be extended to the several characterizations of Japan as *ajia no shōkoku nihon* p. 125 (Japan, Asia’s little country), *nihon to iu taikoku* p. 240 (Japan, a big country), *semai shimaguni no nihon* p. 145 (Japan, a narrow insular country), which are not as transparent as the author implies. The expressions *nihonjin nara* p. 163 (if Japanese), *futsū no nihonjin ni totte* p. 185 (according to ordinary Japanese), *ōku no nihonjin* pp. 80, 88, 123 (many Japanese) and the alike not only imply a

normativity, but they pervade the common language to such an extent as to be naturalized: what they banalize is the very concept of being Japanese.

The most banalized concept is that of “we Japanese”. The effective criteria for belonging to the national community are never clarified, but they are voluntarily left indeterminate, the criterion of “blood” being of an indefinite nature. When Suzuki speaks of “Japanese consciousness”, he implicitly communicates the idea of the existence of a psychic unit unique to the Japanese. Not explaining, nor defining it, he banalizes the concept and, notably, the idea of the existence of a Japanese-ness. Likewise, the concepts of “traditional Japanese language” (*dentōtekina nihongo*, p.165) or “original Japanese language” (*honrai no nihongo*, p. 165) underlie the idea of the existence of a before and an after, of a pure and contaminated epoch. *Jibuntachi no bogo de aru nihongo* pp. 141, 189 (Japanese, our mother tongue) is another expression presuming that the ‘Japanese’ and the ‘Japanese language’ are two indivisible entities: those who speak Japanese are Japanese by “blood” and vice versa.

2) TEXT

- EVOCATION OF THE IDEAL CULTURE

The most outstanding technique to transform ideality into reality is the employment of universalizing assertive and normative sentences frequently ending in *beki de aru* (should, must). For instance:

(29) 今地球規模で急速に進行中の、人間圏をも含む自然生態系の崩壊を何とか食い止めるために、西欧キリスト教的世界観から見れば、これまで明らかに異端視されてきたアニミズム的で汎神論的な世界観こそが、今改めて世界的に見直されるべきだと考えているのです。 [9-10]
I think that indeed the pantheist and animist worldview that, from a Western Christian perspective, has clearly been regarded as heretical until now, shall be reconsidered at a global level, to stop somehow the destruction of the natural ecosystem (human vital sphere included) now rapidly exacerbating on a global scale.

(30) 私はまさにこの意味で、これまでの常識から言えば近藤氏も危惧されているような、「国際関係では不利なのかもしれない」日本人の、

論理ではなく感性を重視し、できる限り他者に善悪の二者選択を迫ることを避ける伝統的な生き方を、フロンティアなき過密状態となった地球上での、これからの人類の生き方のモデルとして世界に提示すべきだと考えているのです。[44]

I think that, in a borderless and overcrowded Earth, we should suggest the world to adopt a new lifestyle modeled around Japanese traditions, which avoid as much as possible forcing others to choose between good and bad, emphasizing sensitivity and not logicality, albeit this new lifestyle «perhaps is not practical for international relations», according to conventional wisdom - as Mr. Kondō Seichi apprehensively stressed.

- (31) 鎖国の江戸時代は今後人類が進むべき道を取っている [67]

The “locked country” policy of the Edo period is the precursor of the path that humankind should follow hereonwards.

- (32) ですから私は何をあいても、一部の人がすでに提唱している「地産地消」、つまり出来るだけ遠隔地からの輸送に頼らない、地元で出来た、なるべく農薬を使わずに人手をかけて作った農水産物を、無駄なく消費するという、一昔ならば日本どころか、世界のどこでも実行していた生き方を少しでも取り戻すことを、改めて望ましい生活の目標とすべきだと思います。[97]

Therefore, above all else, I think that we should set as a goal for a desirable life, even if only just a little, the return to a lifestyle that once was adopted not only in Japan but everywhere in the world. I mean the “local production for local consumption” that some people have already advocated, consisting in consuming locally the agricultural and fishery products produced over a long period of time without wasting them, using as little pesticides as possible and relying minimally on transportation from remote places.

- (33) 私が、日本はもっと国内で農産物を生産する体制を強化すべきだと主張し、同時に食物の無駄をあらゆる手立てを講じて防ぐ努力を、国を挙げて行うべきだというもの、以上のような世界規模での水不足による食料危機がついそこまで来ているからなのです。[85]

Since a food crisis is emerging because of the global water shortage, I argue that Japan should strengthen further its production system of agricultural goods and that, at the same time, we should put in place all together a national effort to prevent food waste, implementing any

possible action.

- (34) 二枚腰文明をまだ辛うじて保持している日本の立位置からは、これから人類の進むべき道が、もはや欧米諸国の目指す旧態依然とした更なる経済発展の方向にはないことが、はっきりと見える… [260]

From the point of view of Japan, still preserving somehow a firmly planted civilization, it is clear that the path that humankind should follow from now on is no longer in the direction of further economic development, which is the outdated direction Western countries still aim at.

- (35) …もう少し何とかならないものだろうかといった焦る気持ちを抑えながら、私は少しでも世界の真実、世界に誇るべき日本の本当の姿を知っている日本人を増やしたいと、私なりにあるがままの事実を伝える努力をしているのです。 [164]

While controlling my impatient wondering if something more could be done, I'm striving to transmit the facts as they are, in my own way, so as to increase a little more the number of Japanese who know about the truth of the world and the real aspect of Japan people should be proud of worldwide.

In each excerpt, Suzuki urges the Japanese to follow the right path and face the ongoing ecological crisis either for the material security of humankind or for its spiritual salvation. *Beki* comes along with verbs concretely indicating the positive actions to be pursued by Japan, such as *minaosuru* (reconsider), *teiji suru* (suggest, present), *susumu* (advance, follow), *mokuhyō to suru* (set as a goal), *okonau* (put into practice), *kyōka suru* (strengthen). The author expresses assertive ideological opinions on heated contemporary topics, connecting real ecological problems affecting the whole Earth with his particular nationalist claims like the rising of the Japanese model. Assertiveness is reinforced by ending sentences with copular expressions (*de aru, da*) and the past form of verbs conveying a universalizing value, or by using the more imperative constructions *nakute wa naranai* (must) or *nakereba narimasen* (have to, must):

- (36) 前世紀の半ばに日本が国運をかけて戦った大東亜戦争（アメリカ側の呼称は太平洋戦争）は日本が連合国側に大敗したため、肝心の日

本人からも未だに愚かで無意味な戦争だったと批判されることが多いのですが、私たちはこの戦争をどう評価するかを態度を決める前に、解釈とか意見の問題以前の、この戦争によって世界の様相が客観的な事実として具体的にどう変わったかを、何よりも先ず知らなければなりません。 [110]

Since Japan was heavily defeated by the Allies, the Greater East Asian War (its denomination on the American side is “Pacific War”), that Japan fought against the League of Nations in the middle of the last century, is often still criticized as a senseless and crazy war also by the Japanese. Yet, before deciding which stance to adopt in judging this war, first and foremost we must understand more than other things, and even before the issue of interpretation, how global conditions concretely changed through this war as an objective fact.

The moral duty becomes imperative and it is reinforced by using the collective pronoun “we” (Japanese). The Japanese have the duty of raising their awareness of some historical facts that, for Suzuki, have been for too long misinterpreted, influencing negatively the self-representation of the Japanese. Imperativeness is of a particular interest, considering that the author is not a historian but an intellectual perfectly conscious of his socially influential role.

Moreover, it is possible to identify several expressions suggesting to the reader the existence of a “Japanese normality”, such as those reported in table 3.6:

Tab. 3.6. Expressions of Japaneseness

日本人なら誰でも [13, 194] Anyone if Japanese	日本人教師なら誰も [29] Anyone in case of teachers of Japanese origins
多くの日本国民 [119] The majority of the Japanese people	多くの日本人 [80, 88, 123] Many Japanese
これまでの日本人にとって [106] According to the Japanese until the present day	数の日本人によって [85] According to many Japanese
日本にとって [106] According to Japan	普通の日本人にとって [185] According to the average Japanese
肝心の日本人 [13, 110, 141] The true Japanese	日本人なら [91, 163] In the case of the Japanese

These expressions vehicle the idea of the existence of a common sense, a way of thinking or being that characterizes the totality of the

national group defined as “Japanese”. They entail a speculative intent, in the sense that the statements associated with “Japan” or the “majority of the Japanese” are not grounded on methodological analysis nor are representative of a larger population sample. From a denotative point of view, they are “empty”: how many Japanese are “many Japanese”? What is it meant by “true Japanese” or “average Japanese”? By contrast, what really matters is connotation, the emotionally positive and evocative value these expressions suggest and through which the idea of the existence of a moral social norm is transmitted. In this sense, “anyone if teacher of Japanese ancestry” has a particular value, since the author intended to stress the actual background of the teachers at issue. The emotional and normative sense is strengthened by the pervasive use of emic expressions such as *wareware nihonjin*, *watashitachi nihonjin* (*dōshi*) (we Japanese fellows), *watashitachi*, *jibuntachi*, *wareware* (we, us). They serve as warning about the existence of a brotherly community of “we Japanese”, which Suzuki constantly confuse with his own ego: he symmetrically identifies himself with the “Japanese”, his thought and beliefs with theirs.

The reiteration of evocative key-terms or expressions is another technique used to shape reality. The fundamental idea supporting the ideological structure of Suzuki’s essay, yet disguised as a natural result of his reflections, is Japan’s diversity. Exceptionalism is continuously repeated by short expressions and a specific lexicon of uniqueness: *sekai de mo rui o minai*, *sekai ni kantaru*, *sekai de mo mezurashii*, *sekai de yūichi*, *nihon dokuji* (original to Japan), *nihon dokutoku* (unique to Japan), *nihonkei no tokuchō* (Japan-based distinctive features), etc. Another important idea promoted in the essay is that sensitivity is a peculiar Japanese quality: the term *kansei*, together with its associated lexicon, pervades the language of the essay appearing even in the title.

- INDETERMINATENESS

The text of the essay is generally characterized by a non-linear, inconsistent presentation of the subjects. Its core concepts are never clarified or developed organically, but they are disseminated, repeated here and there, their explanation is hinted and then interrupted by an example, an anecdote, a digression, so that it becomes difficult to follow the line of discussion. For instance, debating the imminent ecological disaster, Suzuki ends up stressing and exemplifying the

importance in Japanese culture of spatial and temporal emptiness (pp. 47-50). In the description of *bonsai* as tangible proofs of Japanese social pacifism for being a quiet pastime, the author inserts two anecdotes about certain Japanese traditional habits connected to the natural world: he associates the amusement of miniaturizing living trees to the tradition of admiring cherry flowers and morning glories, thus connecting two apparently disjointed topics yet both underlying Japanese sensitivity towards nature (pp. 73-74).

This confused organization of the text has an effect at a conceptual and linguistic level. Many are the essentialist expressions referring either to the 'Japanese' or to 'Westerners'. What do expressions like "Japanese consciousness" (*nihonjin no ishiki*, p. 201), "typically-Japanese conception of society and human beings" (*nihontekina ningenkan ya shakaikan*, p. 259), "spiritual landscape of we Japanese" (*watashitachi nihonjin no seishin fūdo*, p. 231), "Western society" (*seiyō shakai*, p. 164), "Western languages" (*seiōgo*, p. 54), "Western linguistics" (*ōbei gengogaku*, p. 182), "Western poetry" (*ōbei no uta*, p. 80), "Western science and theories" (*ōbei no gakumon ya gakusetsu*, p. 182), "Western-like countries and civilization" (*seiōgata bunmei kokka*, p. 239), "Western-like contemporary people" (*seiōgata no kingendaijin*, p. 153) denote? Such concepts' intension is not clear, nor it is explained anywhere. Even "American civilization" (*amerika bunmei*, p. 232), "European civilization" (*yōroppa bunmei*, p. 11), "Eurasia" (*yūrajia*, p. 258) are opaque concepts, as they are sometimes overlapped with "Western civilization" (*seiō bunmei*, p. 12) and "non-Western world" (*hiseiō sekai*, p. 165). What is a civilization made of? Which are the entities ideologically belonging to 'Eurasia'? Do 'Japanese linguistics' and 'Western linguistics' exist? The fact that the concepts of 'society', 'race', 'nation', 'people', 'country', 'civilization', 'culture', continuously conflate is even more ambiguous. Eventually, the essentialized entities are never explained conceptually: if so, their intrinsic ideological nature would finally be revealed and mystification would not take place.

Similarly, the attributes "little Asian country" (*ajia no shōkoku*, p. 125), "one little Far Eastern country" (*kyokutō no isshōkoku*, p. 185), "little peripheral country" (*henkyō no shōkoku*, p. 239), "Japan, a tight insular country" (*semai shimaguni no nihon*, p. 145), "Japan, one little country" (*isshōkoku no nihon*, p. 143), "Japan, the country of the ancestors" (*sokoku nihon*, p. 113), do not simply and neutrally describe the

fact that Japan is territorially limited and insular, regionally belonging to the Asian continent, but they ideologically stress or imply Japanese exceptionalism: its economic and technological greatness despite its isolation and territorial limitation; its ethnic, linguistic and cultural separateness from the rest of the world; its homogeneity and indivisibility; its primordality and sacredness; its position on the edge and antipodes of Western civilization.

Conceptual confusion is further increased by the frequent reference to a conceptualization not only alien to Japanese intellectual tradition, but often deriving from the deplored "Western thought" (p. 21). First of all, the subdivision of the world into civilizations (*bunmei*) refers to the nineteenth-century European colonialist thought, conceiving human beings as possessing a natural inclination to develop from a primitive to a civilized stage, classifying people as "savage", "barbarian" and "civilized". Suzuki maintains that civilizations tend to expand, influence or assimilate other civilizations, resulting in a scale of development (*hatten no kaidan*, p. 183), where Japan is judged as the most diligent modern developed State. Although he situates Japan among the highest ranked civilized countries, he reproduces an ideological frame he is expected to distance himself from.

Moreover, a "self-Orientalism", inducing Suzuki to accept the hierarchical, racist categorization of a certain strand of the European intellectual tradition, is clearly at work when stating that in *kanji* writing ancient elements survive, if compared to "advanced writings" (*shinka o togeta moji*, p. 183) like the Latin alphabet, conceived as "the last stage of development in writing" (*moji no hatten toshite wa saishū dankai*, p. 183). Even when he argues that the linguistic science in Japan vehicles a Eurocentric worldview, he shows not to have overcome Meiji's modernization ideology himself. Self-Orientalism may be defined as the psychological masochistic process of accepting and interiorizing, by those who are orientalized, "Western" Orientalism, that is «a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment [...] a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness» (Said 1979: 6). The point is that Suzuki attributes this widespread attitude to the whole category of the Japanese, especially to Japanese intellectuals from the Meiji era up to now, yet reproducing and using himself the categories he blames.

Other concepts he appropriates of are the German concept of settler colonialism *Lebensraum* or “living space” (*rēbensuraumu*, *seizonken no kakutoku kakuho*, p. 162), mentioned as a justification of wartime Japan’s expansionist polity to ensure essential resources and to maintain its independence by controlling a neighboring country. “High-context language” (*takabunmyaku gengo*, p. 62) and “hypothesis of language relativism” (*gengosōtairon*, p. 51) are also mentioned to characterize Japanese language and the tight relationship between Japanese language and thought. However, their mention clashes against Suzuki’s critique against “Western thought” and “Western linguistics”: *Lebensraum* was a product of the deprecated Western expansionist logic, while the other two notions were elaborated by Edward Hall in *Beyond Culture* (1976), by Edward Sapir (1949) and also by Benjamin Whorf (1956) earlier.

The concepts of “civilization” and “development” come along with a third conceptual category – “race” (*jinrui*), a set of phenotypical and genotypical features regarded as peculiar to a certain human group. Suzuki repeatedly refers to human partition in races, for instance when speaking of “white men” (*hakujin* pp. 110, 119, 125, 126, 152, 191, 227), “white countries” (*hakujuinkoku*, *hakujuinkokka* pp. 111-112), “we non-white races” (*jibuntachi yūshoku jinshu* pp. 112, 119, 127), “non-white countries” (*yūshokukoku* p. 119), “black men” (*kokujuin* pp. 139, 191, 227), “racial differences” (*jinrui no chigai* p. 227), “mongoloid facial shape” (*mongoroidotekina kaotsuki* p. 142), “Japanese nation” (*nihon minzoku* p. 84) in a racial sense. Again, the author puts into practice a sort of self-Orientalism: not only does he accept a racial categorization of a European intellectual theorization, but he applies it directly to the Japanese, “non-white”, “colored” and featured by “Mongoloid traits”. This categorization is strictly connected to the paradigm of modernity: the equation “development = material/cultural superiority = racial superiority = white” is extended to and sometimes exclusively employed for the Japanese. In addition to this, Suzuki fully accepts the *Blut und Boden* ideology, bloody linking a nation-people with its ancestral territory, which can be found in the belief of a Japanese territorial State conceived in ethno-racialist terms.

Another typology of conceptual incoherence consists of interpreting specific contextual features of Japan through the lens of contemporary, foreign theoretical categories - in line with Japan’s

essentialization. Indeterminateness lies in disguising concepts of a foreign origin as native Japanese and using them extrapolated from their original context. It is the case of “recycle society” (*risaikuru shakai* p. 67) and “model of sustainable energy saving” (*jizokukanōna shōenegata* p. 67), regarded as peculiarities of the Edo society. They are neologisms coined to depict concepts developed outside the Japanese context, responding to the ideological purpose of characterizing Japan as a forerunner of modern ecologism. In addition, their foreign etymology suggests that until recent times a conceptualization of ecologist principles did not exist, thus their employment is inappropriate. Likewise, the definition of Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (The Tale of Genji, XI century) - a classic work of Japanese literature - as a “psychological novel” (*shinri shōsetsu* p. 32) is either inappropriate to define its literary genre, or an alien, belittling conceptualization to grasp its complexity,⁴ while the emphasis on Murasaki's feminine figure misinterprets this masterpiece under a “European” feminist light.

Interestingly, Suzuki makes use of the foreign concept of *kisō bunka* 基層文化 p. 12 (fundamental, deep culture) to describe what he believes to be a Japanese peculiarity. The term is a translation from the German *gesunkenes Kulturgut* (sunken cultural assets), an expression created by German folklorist Hans Naumann (1886-1951), to indicate the double process by which «the materials originating in higher strata had a way of sinking or trickling down to lower strata», to the *Volk*, and viceversa, the same lower strata keeps feeding into our modern world (Dow 2014: 51, 53). Naumann associates this concept with his reflections on the “primitive communal culture” (*primitive Gemeinschaftskultur*), according to which natural man was primitive or pre-logical, part of a political-national element, belonging to an organically cohesive lower stratum and blessed with a “folk soul” (Dow 2014: 53). The primitive, the “mother soil” (*Mutterboden*) is regarded as existing in numerous expressive forms constantly surfacing in contemporary culture (Dow 2014: 53, 57-58). Suzuki uses this concept of the German folklore to conceptualize the permanence of certain primordial, “deep” features that would distinguish the Japanese nation since the very beginning.

⁴ For a critique of *Genji*, see Orsi 2012: vii-li.

Lastly, another lexical and grammatical vagueness may be detected in the indefinite temporal expressions such as those reported in the table below, mostly referred to the antiquity of the Japanese nation:

Tab. 3.7. Indeterminate Temporal Expressions

千年以上前から [32] Since more than one thousand years	古代から近世へ…現代も [38] From antiquity to modernity...even now
古くから…現在でも [31, 10-14, 27]; 古代から近世へと [38] Since antiquity until the present time	四、五千年と古い [156] Four, five thousand years old
千数百年も [158]; 何百年にもわたる [125]; 約千三百年 [156] For one thousand years and many centuries; For some hundred years; For about one thousand and three hundred years	約二百五十年もの… [156]; 僅か二、三百年の… [156] ...of nearly two thousand and five hundred years; ...of nearly two, three hundred years
これまで千数百年にもわたって [106] During the millennia until now	建国以来七十年足らず [156] Not even 70 years from the country's foundation
千四百年を優に超して [155] It greatly overcomes one thousand and four hundred years	当時 [125] Once

The temporal dimension is of paramount relevance because it makes Japan suitable for guiding humankind: Japan's primordially, its temporal continuity and the permanence of the original cultural elements justify, for Suzuki, Japanese leadership. For instance:

(37) 千年以上前から虫を愛してきた日本人 [32]

The Japanese, who have been loving *mushi* since more than one thousand years.

Japanese love for bugs (*mushi*) and, more broadly, for nature, is believed to be older than one thousand years, tracing back at least since the time of *Genji monogatari*. By using the periphrastic *-te kita*, the author suggests the continuity between an imprecise past and the present and the naturalness of this attribute of Japaneseness, as if distinguishing the Japanese nation since its beginnings.

(38) 以上かなり詳しく虫のことを書いたのも、古代から近世へと受け継がれてきた日本人のもつ身の回りの小さな自然に対する関心、日常生活のあちこちに顔を出す小さな動植物に対する興味が現代も息づいて

いることを再認識してほしいからなのです。 [38]

Even the reason why I wrote in detail about *mushi* until now is my desire to acknowledge the survival until today of the interest by the Japanese for the familiar and minute nature and their passion for little animals and plants, surfacing here and there in everyday life and continuing to be handed down from antiquity to modernity.

In this case, the timeless element is Japanese curiosity towards any living thing, deriving from their atavic sensitivity for nature. The temporal construction *Noun-kara-Noun-e* is indeed followed by a verb of continuity, relevant either semantically (*uketsugareru* “to hand down”) or grammatically (*-te kita*). The sense of permanence concerning Japanese love for nature is strengthened also by another verb, *ikizuku* (to survive, to remain) in the periphrastic form *-te*, preceded by the intensifier *gendai mo* (even now). The Japanese are always treated as a de-contextualized, collective subject, as an unchangeable and well-delimited human group.

(39) 千数百年も続いた不戦国家 [158]

An anti-militarist nation-state that persisted for one thousand and many hundred years.

Sensūhyakunen is extremely vague for being composed by the indefinite counter word *sū* (many, various) giving a sense of timelessness to the Japanese pacifist stance. Also in this case, the verb of persistence *tsuzuku* (to continue) reinforced by *mo* (even) is used to emphasize a temporal extension, annulling at once the myriad of conflictual historical facts, regarded by Suzuki as particular, exceptional, uninfluential to undermine the Japanese pattern. This temporal expression echoes wartime nationalist slogans of the sort of *banzai* (for ten thousand and many years) and *bansei ikkei* (one lineage for ten thousand generations).

(40) …宗教が原因の流血の惨事どころか紛争と呼べるものが、一六世紀後半の、織田信長による一向一揆の平定以来今に至るまで、国内で四百年以上も全く見られない国は世界で日本だけなのです。 [152]

Japan is the only country in the world where something definable as a conflict - not to mention bloodshed caused by religion - cannot be observed at all since more than four hundred years - since the

suppression of the Ikkō ikki's rebellion by Oda Nobunaga until the present time.

The employment of *yon hyaku nen ijō mo* (since more than four hundred years) is aimed at emphasizing the religious harmony of Japanese society and at vehiculating the idea of the persistence of this attribute, erasing all the negative particular historical moments, as the Shimabara's rebellion in 1637, the Aum sect's sarin attack in 1995, the long-standing antisemitism still alive in Japanese society (Goodman 1997), the constant collusion between Shintoism, Buddhism and politics in Japan's modern history, as it is evident in the problems surrounding the Yasukuni shrine – although Japan is effectively not currently engaged in warfare and internally it is relatively stable (Pye 2003).

(41) …日本が起こした大東亜戦争が、今でも多くの日本国民が偏向した学校の教科書などで習う、どこから見ても弁護の余地のない、たちの悪い恥ずべき侵略戦争であるどころか、大航海時代以後西欧諸国主導の近代世界を覆っていた四百年以上にもわたる非人道的で歪んだ状況を、本来のあるべき正しい姿に戻すことに大きく貢献した、それなりの評価に値する被抑圧民族解放戦争の面が十分にあったと言うべきなのです。 [119]

It should be said that the Greater East Asian War provoked by Japan, far from being an awful war of invasion to be ashamed of and indefensible from any point of view – fact that many national Japanese learn even today in biased school textbooks – involved a sufficient number of aspects to make it a liberation war of the oppressed people, thus deserving a positive assessment. This is because it enormously contributed to make an inhumane and distorted condition, persisting for more than four hundred years and governing the Western-led modern world since the epoch of sea travels, return to the correct state of justice.

(42) これは、日露戦争で日本が勝利したことが、いかに当時全世界を覆っていた西欧諸国の何百年にもわたる独占的な支配構造を揺るがすきっかけになったかの証左です。 [125]

This is the proof that Japanese victory in the Russian-Japanese War became a pretext to shake the structure of the monopolistic domination by Western countries, enduring some hundred years and once governing the entire world.

(43) 元来義理堅い日本人が、これまで千数百年にもわたって諸外国から受けたさまざまな文化文明上の恩恵を、いよいよお返しする時が来たのだと考えれば、むしろ日本からの返礼は遅きに失するくらいなのです。[106]

If one considers that time has come for the Japanese, originally endowed with a strong sense of duty, to finally return the wisdom collected from several cultures and civilizations during the millennia until now, this gift from the Japanese people arrives rather late in history.

In this last cluster of examples, Suzuki shows a wide-ranging interpretation of history, since he identifies certain great processes in the history of humankind globally influencing the course of events. This operation is ideological because the author intends to reveal certain “truths”, giving them a sense of temporal extension. In the first two sentences, he stresses the enduring Western domination of the world (*yon hyaku nen ijō ni mo wataru* “for more than four hundred years”; *nan hyaku nen ni wataru* “for some hundred years”) to emphasize that time has come to put an end to this long-lasting dilemma. On this point, in the last example, underlying the persistence of the moral debt of the Japanese through *kore made sensūhyakunen ni mo watatte* (during the millennia until now), he urges Japan to repay the world, that is to reverse this paradigm of hegemony.

- LACK OF A SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS AND METHODOLOGY

Nihon no kansei ga sekai o kaeru is a *Nihonjinron* popular essay deprived of a scientific apparatus. Although Suzuki usually specifies the bibliographical references of the quoted texts disguising them as reliable and expert, most of them should not be classified as strictly academic. They are non-specialistic, like illustrative examples, anecdotes, personal observations, newspaper articles, TV programs, generalizations, at times introduced by certain repeated formulas, for instance:

Tab. 3.8. Introductory Formulas of Exemplar Anecdotes

聞いた話ですが… [24]; つい先日のことですが… [28] Here is a story I heard...; Here is a fact happened the other day...	だいぶ前のことですが [29]; もともとは… [73] Long time ago...; Once...
…話を聞いたことがあると思います	私が子供頃でも… [77]

[190] I think that one already heard the story that...	Even when I was a child myself...
驚いた例があります [170]; 二つの例を挙げましょう [90] There's a surprising example; I'll provide two examples	…風俗のひとつに…があります [73]; 習俗も…ありました [51]; …行事がいまだに残っています [170]; 普通でした [46]; 一般でした [74] Among the popular habits of...there's...; There was even the habit of...; Even now the ritual of...remained; It was normal...; It was common...

For instance, in relation to the discursive feature of dichotomization, Suzuki employs many antithetical examples regarded as paradigmatic of the Japanese-Western opposed visions on nature. I will mention two of them. In the first case, on one side, the so-called “hive depopulation syndrome”, started in 2006 from an intensive cultivation in North America and probably provoked by a harmful pesticide, highlights the “typically Western” mistake of overestimating scientific technology (p. 21). Opposite to that, former Japanese emperor Hirohito’s knowledge and sensitivity about the natural world, reflected in his effort of naming any living thing and replanting in the original place the grass once used for scientific research, would be representative of the Japanese humble and respectful way of interaction with nature (p. 24). The second example - the “incident of mosquito extermination” - presumes an antithesis (p. 173). Suzuki recalls his shock during the American occupation after observing the drastic method of the American army to eliminate mosquito larvas, endlessly reproducing in the stagnant waters beside a cemetery, that is to fill the crack in the cemetery walls with cement so that water could not gather there anymore. This episode would exemplify Western aggressive behavior towards nature if hindering humans, defined as the “civilization of mosquito-elimination” (*katori senkō gata bunmei*) attacking its enemies, and opposed to the Japanese “civilization of mosquito-fumigating” (*kayari senkō gata bunmei*), which instead tries to cause the lesser harm by simply pushing mosquitos away. Japanese positive idiosynchrasy is thus derived from the way of dispersing moquitoes.

Suzuki also derives phenomenical reflections from episodes of everyday life. For instance, the slight glimpses of nature - wild violets,

cyclamen, yew, rhodea pots and plum *bonsai* - besides the grey factories of a modern, industrialized Tōkyō or along home entrances in residential, peripheric areas of the capital in past times, would reveal the temporal continuity of Japanese sensitivity towards nature (p. 72). This feature would be also attested by a letter sent by a child to the newspaper *Sankei shinbun*, in which he describes the tender emotion at the sight of a truck driver rescuing a butterfly weakly flapping its wings on the road (p. 28). Otherwise, Japanese interest for poetical activity is deduced from the observation of the dedication by newspapers and magazines of a special column to amateur *haiku* or *waka* (p. 82). The difference between Japanese and Western literacy rate and “linguistic equality” is instead derived from the surprise expressed by a Western diplomat in Japan after observing daily laborers reading newspapers during their lunchbreak, opposed to the sharp difference between mass and intellectual language in his native country (p. 150).

The author fills the essay with enumerative, “flash” examples, at once confirming the ontology of an attribute of Japaneseness or foreignness. For instance, tangible proof of the Eurasian presumption towards nature is derived from: the draining of the Aral sea by the URSS to convert sterile land into intensive cotton producing land; the diminishing of Tarim river’s flow rate in communist China because of a dramatic population growth; the ecological tragedy of the Victoria lake; the violent conquest of the American continent and the suppression of indigenous populations and fauna; the use of defoliant during the Vietnam War; the hunt of wild animals as a pastime (pp. 24-27). Japaneseness would be revealed also through numerous pseudo-folkloric examples, observations on the habits and customs of the Japanese of the past. They are not truly ethnographic or folkloric descriptions, but glimpses on rural perceptions of “traditional Japan”, based on Suzuki’s personal knowledge or experience. Examples of a particular significance are those suggesting the cross-generational importance and familiarity of *mushi* in Japanese life: the breeding and listening to their sound in autumn (p. 74); the rearing of crickets (p. 74); the annual performance of a *matsuri* for the release of crickets (*suzumushi hōjōsai*) at Tsuruoka Hachimangu shrine (p. 37); Japanese childish games with *mushi* (*mushiasobi*) like the sumō-like fighting among rhinoceros beetles or the hunt of cicadas with a bamboo net around shrines (p. 34);

the chase and collection of insects for fun or school homework (pp. 34-35). Similar examples of Japanese sensitivity for nature in general also abound: the breeding of frogs and the summer fun of croaking them (p. 51); the begging for a tree cutting by sprinkling sacred *sake* around it (p. 170); the erection of tombs for bacteria (*kinzuka*) or the offering of poems to commemorate these little forms of life (p. 170); the admiration of morning glories and cherry-tree flowers (pp. 73-74). Suzuki lingers on the countless popular pastimes specifically referring to the Edo period as evidence of the mildness of that era: the pacific art of *bonsai* (p. 73); the breeding and enjoyment of the sound of nightingales (p. 74); the passion for gold fish and carps (p. 77); cock's breeding (p. 76); the enjoyment of the sounds produced by wind chimes (*fūrin*), *shishiodoshi* or *suikinkutsu* (pp. 78-79). Ultimately, in the attempt to show the importance of "emptiness" in Japanese culture, Suzuki mentions the ancient and annual ritual of *hitorizumō* (*sumō* in solitary), consisting in the mimesis of a struggle among a *sumō* fighter and an invisible god to negotiate the rice harvest (pp. 47-48).

Another typology of examples used to demonstrate the foundation of a claim or as reliable sources are those derived from literature, like Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Kumo no ito* or the Noh piece of work *Yashima*, mentioned as evidence of Japanese ambiguity (pp. 43-44). *Joseigo to keigo* (1943) by Kindaichi Kyōsuke is rather quoted as a classical example of a Japanese linguist judging human development through a "Western standard" (p. 192). The thought of this Japanese scholar is isolated and extended to the whole category of "Japanese linguists from the Meiji era up to now". In the first pages of the essay, Suzuki mentions the poem *The Rainbow* by William Wordsworth emphasizing the fact that it focuses entirely on Wordsworth's own self: the purpose is to corroborate the idea of Western anthropocentrism and extend it to the whole Eurasian civilization. By contrast, a poem by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro is quoted as example of a nature-centered poem, revealing the Japanese intimate relationship with nature (pp. 38-40). Suzuki also relies on traditional poetry to state the continuity of Japanese sensitivity towards nature. Quoting some poems by Sai-gyō, Ama no Inukai no Okamaro, Kanō Morohira, Bashō Matsuo, Chiyojo Kaga and Kobayashi Issa, he maintains that modern Japanese intuitively grasp their meaning and are still touched by reading them, just like their ancestors did, thus proving their primordial sensitivity

(pp. 27-29, 47, 83). The millennial love of the Japanese for *mushi* would be already visible in the *Genji monogatari*, within its numerous animal stories (p. 32). Likewise, the tale of *Mushi mezuru himegimi* is paradigmatic, in the sense that its profound significance can be grasped only in the light of the deep connection between the Japanese and nature: the plot concerns indeed the friendship between a human princess and bugs, some of them appointed as court assistants or poetic partners (pp. 32-33).

A type of source Suzuki uses at times is represented by “pseudo-historical” sources, belonging to the context of historical revisionism sustained by the author. As I will discuss later, his revisionism differs from Watanabe’s for intensity and consciousness: many of Suzuki’s ideas appear to be dictated more by emotionality and a “naïf” impetus rather than by a conscious will to politically promote a revisionist movement, as opposed to what Watanabe does. These sources distinguish themselves for their partiality and their speculative, non-specialistic nature. Their most critical aspects are the total absence of a contradictory opinion, the omission of the crimes committed by the Japanese army, the ideological purpose inherent in Suzuki’s stance: in short, the bias Suzuki accuses Western countries to show. By way of example, Suzuki quotes the “testimonies” (*shōgen*) of several East Asian leaders to prove wartime Japan’s good intentions and actions (pp. 120-122). It is the case of Thai PM Kukrit Pramoj in *Jūnigatsu yōka* (8th December) in *Ajia ni ikiru daitōa sensō* (The Greater East Asian War living in Asia, 1988), the second Indian president Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (without citation) or the Burma PM Ba Maw in *Biruma no yoake* (The Burma Dawn). All these sources state Japan’s pivotal role in the emancipation and independence of former Asian and African colonies from Western control, the need for Asian countries of expressing gratitude to Japan and establishing as liberation day the 12/8, the disappointment for the misunderstanding of Japan by Asian populations. Although Suzuki claims the pursuit of historical truth relying on the personal anecdotes of local people who directly experienced the war, the testimonies provided are ultimately the statements uttered by certain politicians in diplomatic settings after the end of the war. The author also mentions several sources in the form of essay or novel to sustain a particular biased idea – such as *Reimei no seikiō. Tōa kaigi to sono shuyakutachi* (The dawn of the great

century. The conference of the Greater Asia and its protagonists, 1974) by Fukada Yusuke, suggesting that postwar Japan's tragedy lies in historical misinterpretation by the Japanese themselves, or *Āron shūyōjo* (Aaron internment camp, 1962) by Aida Yūji, as evidence of England's cruel behavior during the Pacific War (pp. 115, 122). Suzuki even quotes his own essay *Nihonjin wa naze nihon o aisenai no ka* as an indepth analysis about China's alleged role in concealing certain wartime historical truths in the Memorial Museum of Jakarta (p. 15). Finally, he quotes Arnold Toynbee and Henry Scott-Stokes as demonstration of the existence of Westerners admitting the positivity of the war started by Japan (pp. 126-127).

An ultimate typology of examples is the ideological comparison between Japanese *kanjigo* (Chinese characters-written words) and their English counterparts in the Latin alphabet, two hardly comparable writings.⁵ The aim is to show the peculiarity of *kanji*'s double-reading. By way of example, I will consider the term *enjin* 猿人 (pithecanthrope). According to Suzuki, a native Japanese can immediately associate this word to its rough meaning, dividing it into *saru* 猿 (monkey) and *hito* 人 (person) and imagining the compound "monkey-person", or "pithecanthrope". This is in contrast with "Western languages", notably English, in which the gloss-system reading of words of a Greek or Latin etymology does not exist. In English *saru* corresponds to 'monkey' or 'ape', two distinct lexemes: if the linguistic habit of reading as "monkey" or "ape" the Greek root *pithec-* existed and, accordingly, one reads "anthrope" or "man", the fact that 'pithecanthrope' is a compound word of 'ape + man' would immediately turn out to be clear. However, since English is not written through in a phonetic way, no hint bounding these words together exists and difficulty arises even for highly educated people knowing specialistic terms. Therefore, 'pythechantrope' becomes a technical term whose meaning can be grasped after an accurated research only. Suzuki seems to ignore the existence of many *kanjigo* whose meaning is not the sum of the single characters. The compound word *pithecus* + *anthropos* was constructed through the semantic roots of 'monkey' and 'man' not to refer to a "monkey-man", but to describe a fossil species. The compound 猿人, a calque from English / ancient Greek, only

⁵ For the following critical reflections, I rely on dalla Chiesa (in print).

apparently means “monkey-man” and this claim can take place ignoring the classification of the human genre. It has no meaning (intension), but only reference (extension): its referent is the tribe of hominins, identifiable by human evolution. It is a false friend in Japanese, but not for the anglophones, who are pushed back by the Greek roots. The Japanese can not easily guess the referent of 猿人 from the meaning of its single parts; they are instead misled and directed towards an erroneous semantic reconstruction.

As I mentioned before, all the sources employed by Suzuki are decontextualized, deprived of their original context and manipulated to reinforce the trustfulness of a particular statement on Japaneseness, implicitly already validated by Suzuki’s sole authority. He often relies on self-referentiality by virtue of his intellectual authority that he occasionally mentions by means of several locutions as those gathered below:

Tab. 3.9. Locutions of Self-Referentiality

現在の日本の一人の知識人として [67] As an intellectual of contemporary Japan	一人の常識的な知識人として [161] As an ordinary intellectual
私が言語学者として [165] As a linguist	言語学を専門としながら [19] Being specialized in linguistics
私の知っている限りの言語では [35] At least among the languages that I know	私の知る限りの外国語で [36] Among the foreign languages I know

Intellectual authority is nonetheless extended to any scholar, as the expression *bunkajinruigakusha ga shitei suru tokoro* p. 30 (an aspect highlighted by cultural anthropologists) may suggest. It refers to the idea that what is irrelevant or unnecessary for a human group is not expressed in words or does not require attention. But who are the anthropologists at issue? This is not really the point herein: what matters is to convey the message that Suzuki’s statement has value just for being uttered by himself or other fellow academicians. Self-reference is particularly evident in Suzuki’s pronounced tendency of self-quoting. He cites several *Nihonjinron* essays as *Kotoba to bunka*, *Nihonjin wa naze nihon o aisenai no ka*, *Tozasareta gengo* (A closed language) or *Nihongo to gaikokugo*, as reliable scientific sources. By quoting his short essay “Mirage Effect and Xenophygia” or the essay *Anata wa eigo de tatakaemasuka* (Can you defend yourself in English?) he intends to recommend an

insight in the so-called “xenophygia”, the alleged Japanese-specific fear of entering in contact with foreigners (pp. 108, 186, 195). Even the articles “Ningen ni totte wakaru koto wakaranai koto” (What can be and what cannot be understood from the human point of view, 1994) – a sort of manifesto on the relativity of humanist sciences and their biased contamination with “Western presumptions” – and “Kenburijji de mita koto kangaeta koto” (What I observed and what I reflected on in Cambridge, 2000) – a series of personal “experiments” on foreign colleagues to show their incapacity of tracing back to Greek or Latin etymology – are examples of self-referential sources of popular sociology, based on speculations and not sociolinguistic inquiries (p. 210-211). Finally, Suzuki’s role as promoter of nipponization surfaces in his “Yōroppa no nihonka koso ga, ima kinkyū ni motomerarete iru” (Europe’s Japanization indeed is sought urgently), a seminar where he proposes to bring peace Japanizing the world (p. 148).

Strictly connected to that, Suzuki relies on “circular deference”. The first significative example is *Junsui bunka no jōken* (The state of a pure culture) by Masuda Yoshio, mentioned as reference of Japan’s preservation of its uniqueness thanks to its indirect cultural reception and cultural purity (p.14). Otherwise, it is the case of “Tōyō to seiyō no bunka no hikaku. Rironbutsurigaku no kanken” (A cultural comparison between the West and Japan. The humble opinion of a nuclear physicist) by scientist Arima Akito, quoted to validate the existence of a different conception of nature between Japan and the West (pp. 38-41). Similarly, the titles of several *Nihonjinron* essays are cited as evidence of the Japanese sense of inferiority since the Meiji era: *Nihonjinshukairyōron* (Theory on Japanese racial improvement, 1884) by Takahashi Yoshio; *Netsuke no kuni* (The country of netsuke, 1909) by Takamura Kōtarō; *Sugao no nihon* (The true face of Japan, 1969) by Kawasaki Ichirō (p. 142). A last example worth mentioning is *Tateshakai no ningen kankei* (Human relations in a vertical society) by Nakane Chie, a classic *Nihonjinron* popular essay, which was nonetheless praised to a certain extent for its intuitive, although simplistic, insights on Japanese society (p. 147). The common feature of all these texts is Suzuki’s purpose to disguise them as reliable, serious or even very specialistic sources, while they are instead either speculative, ascientific or just scattered, decontextualized quotations.

Notwithstanding his mordant critique on “Westernness”, not only

does Suzuki widely rely on “mechanic deference”, but he ideologically grounds the essay on *Bunmei no shōtotsu* (The Clash of Civilizations, 1996) by American political scientist Samuel Huntington (pp. 10-11). Echoing Toynbee’s historicist ideas, in this book Huntington theorizes the world’s partition in seven/eight independent civilizations, among which Japan emerges as a separate and independent area of influence from Chinese civilization, which includes instead the Korean peninsula and Vietnam as satellites. Japan appears to be an isolated civilization sharing no element of similarity (religion, language, culture, ethnic affinity) with other civilizations. Suzuki employs as a justification for Japanese global leadership. Authority derives from Huntington “ethnic affiliation” – not only “Western”, but even “American”, which increases Suzuki’s personal prestige as an intellectual.

Furthermore, on several occasions Suzuki relies on foreign sources in the form of “concrete examples” (*gutairei*) that would prove the validity of the tatamization effect. Generally speaking, apart from the characterization of the phenomenon itself as peculiar to the Japanese setting, both the nature of the sources – secondary or non-organic, like scattered newspaper articles, magazines, booklets – and the citation method are controversial. For example, in “Watashi wa nihon no koko ga suki!” (I like this about Japan!), the scholar Katō Kōko attempts to describe Japan from an external perspective, giving voice to several foreign people living in the country for a long time (p. 58). However, his purpose is to highlight Japan’s idiosyncrasies the Japanese are not aware of. Suzuki then mentions the testimony of Sergei Haramov, residing in Japan for seven years, as a concrete case of Japanization by virtue of his mild and kind attitude (p. 59). Another evidence is believed to be contained in *Nihon shakai no ‘jōge no kankaku’* (The “sense of hierarchy” in Japanese society) by Reizei Akihiko: an American woman confesses her gradual understanding and acquisition of man-woman hierarchy in Japanese society while living in Japan (p. 56). In *Beirikugun nihongo gakkō – nihon to deai* (School of Japanese language for the American army. The encounter with Japan), Herbert Passin reports his acquisition of a kind attitude only by way of speaking Japanese (p. 54). Suzuki decontextualizes and universalizes all these episodes, in support of his theory of Japanese culture’s mysterious power of Japanizing people.

In addition to the extensive use of non-specialistic sources, the

essay is characterized by the absence of an explicit and systematic methodology. Suzuki advocates for an emic “Japanese point of view” (*nihonjin no tachiba*), a subjective and particularist *modus operandi* purged from “Western prejudices” (p. 182). Although the epistemological fields Suzuki declares to have framed his theory within are sociology of language and ecology, no reference to scientific literature is present, as he completely relies upon his credentials as an intellectual. As to the first discipline, Suzuki fills the text with considerations about the importance of nature in Japanese culture, attested by the existence of many particular linguistic expressions and lexicon. This claim is not sustained by any research, bibliography, or data, but it is solely based on Suzuki’s personal impressions, intermingled with anthropological and folkloric comments. This tendency to a know-all attitude emerges in a patent way when history is at issue. The author admits himself his amateurism in coping with heated historical topics, stating to engage in the subject despite not being a specialist (*rekishi no senmonka de mo nai*, p. 67), not possessing a deep knowledge (*watashi wa rekishigaku no senmonka ga motsu komakana chishiki wa mattaku arimasen*, p. 161), and by «narrating the facts as they are in my own way» (*watashi nari ni aru ga mama no jijitsu o tsutaeru*, p. 164). For him, only the final result in the historical narration is relevant – the awakening of Japanese national pride. Thus, even a non-specialist in history may be entitled to speak of topics he hardly knows.

This know-all attitude is possible thanks to the appreciation of amateurism, or the individual effort, and the prestige of intellectuals in Japanese society: Suzuki is just one of the many *Nihonjinron* writers who self-arrogates the right to give moral judgments on several issues concerning Japan, Japanese identity, Japaneseness. Even in his ecologist outburst, the approach is rather amatorial: apart from a few scattered quotations of essays regarding environmental issues and his own experiences in the activity of Japanese wild flora and fauna preservation, Suzuki describes the ongoing environmental crisis in historicist and catastrophist terms, as a crescendo of tragedies since the emergence of the Western paradigm in the sixteenth century. He treats the ecological issue ideologically, as a clash among antithetical civilizations. He exploits a real problem to assert his nationalist ideas, thus jeopardizing the objective presentation of the phenomenon.

The pseudo-scientificity of the essay is fostered through

approximative schemas that give the text a shade of accuracy (pp. 200, 228). The first is a diagram illustrating the “linguistic typology” of the Japanese, the *terebi-gata* (TV-type), which does not include nonetheless captations, legends, explanations, either in the text or below the schema. The second is a conceptual diagram representing environmental variations in human beings and in other living things, without any explanation. Another clue of the lack of scientific rigor is the sample chosen for the analysis, that is the comparison among two unequal, essentialized, abstract entities: ‘Japanese civilization’ – treated as a uniform and homogenous whole where State, culture, language and nation coincide and internal differences are ignored – and ‘Eurasian civilization’, composed by different States, nations, cultures, languages by definition. For instance, he compares the linguistically-existing ‘Japanese language’ with an ideological, undefined entity, ‘Western languages’.

Ultimately, several examples of expressions of deference to shared knowledge, presuming the existence of a common sense or knowledge shared by the author and his (Japanese) readers, Suzuki’s expertise and his desire to divulgate to the profane, can be identified - as *dare ni mo wakaru koto* p. 162 (something that anyone can understand), *dare de mo shitte iru yō ni* p. 205 (as anyone knows), *kodomo de mo wakaru me no mae no jijitsu* p. 193 (an evident fact that even children understand), *genjo gakusha narazu to mo nihonjin nara dare de mo shitte iru* p. 194 (not only linguists, but anyone if Japanese knows that) or *chūgakusei de mo shitte iru* p. 208 (even junior high school students know that). They serve the purpose of conferring a “truthful” aura to a certain idea claimed by Suzuki, relying on presumed common knowledge or self-evident facts.

- OVERSIMPLIFICATION

In this essay several devices stereotyping reality may be detected. Generally speaking, Suzuki reproduces many common places, clichés, stereotypes relying on the common sense of the “average Japanese”. They serve the purpose of crystallizing specific images on Japanese society and the Japanese, such as the harmonious character and pacifism of the Japanese people, their love for silence, their linguistic and “racial” homogeneity, the conformism of Japanese society, and so forth. Some of them are real myths, as the fish-based diet or the silent nature

of the Japanese people.

Especially the nationalist clichés connected to the rhetoric of Japan's former empire abound – as those reported in the table below:

Tab. 3.10. Revisionist and Militarist Clichés

アジア解放 [118]; 被抑圧民族解放戦争 [119] Asia liberation; War for oppressed people's liberation	自衛の戦争 [111]; 自存自衛 [111] War for self-defence; Self-reliance and self-defence
大東亜戦争 [110, 111, 113, 115, 119, 120, 121, 125, 126, 127, 128, 132, 135, 138, 139, 149, 157, 163, 239] The Greater East Asia War	満州事変 [157]; 慮溝橋事件 [157]; 支那事変 [157]; ノモンハン事件 [157] Mukden Incident; Marco Polo Bridge Incident; <i>Shina</i> Incident; Nomonhan Incident
日本国民 [119, 132, 149] Japanese people/subjects	シナ [161]; シナ語 [191] <i>Shina</i> ; Language of <i>Shina</i>
有色人種 [110, 111, 112, 119, 127]; 有色人種国 [119] / 非白人種の独立国 [112]; 黒人 [139, 191, 227] Non-white races; Non-white countries; Black men	白人 [110, 119, 125, 126, 152, 191, 227]; 白人国 [111, 112] / 白人国家 [111] White men; White countries

These expressions simplify the historical and present reality because they have been recycled from prewar militarist ideology, leaving them unquestioned. Firstly, Suzuki overlaps the concepts of *shomin* 庶民 and *kokumin* 国民 in relation to *nihonjin* (the Japanese). The former indicates the ensemble of common people sharing the same folkloric customs, traditions, rituals, while the latter means “people”, a term referring to the emperor's subjects during wartime. Today, the term *per se* does not represent a problem, but, if associated to Suzuki's extended revisionist lexicon and its strong racist conception of Japaneseness, it is naturally associated with the biological *nihon minzoku* (Japanese ethno-nation / race). This restoration of the past is more evident when considering the employment of terms of the sort of *ajia kaihō* (Asia liberation) or *daitōa sensō* (Greater East Asian War), underlying an interpretation of the Pacific War as a great war undertaken by Japan for philanthropic ends and the claim of a specific Japanese nomenclature for the war, forbidden and substituted with *taihēiyō sensō* (Pacific War) by the American occupiers. *Daitōa sensō* was however Japan's wartime propaganda nomenclature to promote the expansion in Asia by establishing the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”: if the author intended to be politically neutral or more precise, he

would have used *jūgonen sensō* (Fifteen-Year War) referring to war hostilities since the Manchurian Incident in 1931 (Ienaga 1978: xiii). However, this would have required the recognition of Manchurian invasion by the Japanese army, contested by revisionists. On this point, Suzuki fully accepts and repropose the revisionist stance surrounding euphemistic expressions such as “Mukden Incident”, “Marco Polo Bridge Incident”, “Nomonhan Incident” and “*Shina* Incident”. ‘Incident’ underestimates and consciously misinterprets certain serious, negative historical facts involving Japan, such as the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria or the battle in 1937 between China’s National Revolutionary Army and the Imperial Japanese Army (Ienaga 1978: 3-12, 58-65). The expression “*Shina* Incident” refers in turn to another cluster of words including the term *shina* as *shinago*, which implies negative stereotypes about China. *Shina* is a pejorative, racist term referring to China and employed in wartime by Japanese ultra-nationalists, considered socially unacceptable and politically unfair in Japan and, thus, subject to censorship. *Shinago* refers in a similar derogatory tone to the “language of *Shina*”, that is “Chinese language”: it appears to be a recent neologism used by people expressing a very conservatory or even revisionist opinion about Japanese recent history. Indeed, while the term *shinagoha* (Sinic languages) does exist in linguistic jargon, *shinago* is by no means ideological. Ultimately, terms as *hakujin*, *kokujin*, *yūhoku jinshu* and derivatives underlie an erroneous, simplistic view of the humankind, divided into subspecies – the “races”.

Suzuki also makes use of metaphores, similitudes, proverbs, ways of sayings, idiomatic expressions to encapsulate a concept or crystallize reality. For instance, in order to describe the nature of Japanese civilization he relies on a metaphor derived from the world of *sumō*: *nimaigoshi bunmei* p. 12 (a firmly-planted civilization). *Nimaigoshi* refers to a posture in which legs are firmly planted on the ground. The message is Japan’s suitability as world leader for possessing a solid double structure. Besides, Japanese traditional culture becomes an underground river occasionally emerging on the surface (*mada fukuryū kanari iroirona tokoro de kao o dashite iru*, p. 38), whereas the negative aspects of the contemporary world are compared to poisoned thorns (*togetoge no doku*, p. 62) deeply plunged into the relationships between humankind and nature and among humans themselves especially in European societies. The phenomenon of

animal imprinting is compared to the Japanese intellectual belief in the universal superiority of the “Western thought”, in order to convey the idea of the extent of Japanese psychological servility to the West (p. 13). Another example is the three-strata similitude established between the Japanese in the late Edo period and a herd of herbivorous cows, suddenly surrounded by ferocious carnivorous animals - the Westerners - and that without knowing what to do, remain petrified (pp. 158-159). This is the first scene depicting Japan during *bakumatsu* in a caricatural way. The second scene considers the Japanese at a crossroads: becoming prey of these wild beasts – accepting Western colonization – or surviving as an independent, self-respected country, thus causing serious internal disorders. Then, the third scene: a great confusion follows, since the herbivorous Japanese start to implement substantial reforms becoming in turn carnivorous themselves. Finally, the fourth scene: the wild beast Westerners compose themselves, win over the bovines, non suitable for fighting and killing, the world becomes pacific again and their protagonists remain those carnivorous animals specialized in killing. In this way, Suzuki proposes an extremely stereotyped interpretation of Japanese modern history, ruled by antithetical forces: the Japanese, a peaceful, rural, vegetarian people, and the Westerners, an ensemble of aggressive, warlike, carnivorous people.

Suzuki also employs several proverbs to better express a concept. For instance, *wa o motte tōtonashi* pp. 61, 240 (It is important to preserve harmony) are words attributed to prince Shōtoku in the first article of his Seventeen-Article Code (*Jūshichijū kenpō*, 604 A.D.) and they are invoked as “tradition” (*dentō*), as expression of the mild refusal for any antagonism by the Japanese. The proverb crystallizes a constitutive trait of Japaneseness – social harmony. *Owari yokereba manji yoshi* p. 67, 143, 148, 162, 163 (All is well that ends well) is the most relevant proverb resuming Suzuki’s *modus operandi*: if the final result of an action is positive, the process, the means by which the result is reached do not matter. It expresses Suzuki’s methodology adopted in history’s interpretation (as the revaluation of Edo period, prewar and wartime Japan), in stressing Japan’s extraordinary economic and technological results, and, in general, in reasserting Japanese national identity.

The author also relies on the technique of linguistic reductionism to incapsulate within certain words or locutions, regarded as peculiar

to the Japanese language, the Japanese-specific character they describe. The word *mushi* 虫, which Suzuki raises as sociolinguistic demonstration of the importance of nature in the Japanese worldview, is exemplary in this sense. Its definition would already reveal its uniqueness and the difficulty of being translated in other languages, for being indirect and constructed by exclusion: «the little animals excluded human species, mammals, birds, fish, crustaceans and molluscs. In particular, it refers to insects» (p. 36). Moreover, Suzuki enumerates many Japanese terms, compound words, idiomatic expressions, metaphores expressing the intimate relationship between the Japanese and *mushi*/nature in everyday life (pp. 34-35):

Tab. 3.11. *Mushi*: The Reduction of the Phenomenal Reality

虫干し To aerate cloths to keep the insects away	虫下し Deworming medicine
虫食い Eaten by worms	虫籠 Insect cage
虫送り Ritual to symbolically keep cereals-eater insects away	虫供養 Food offering to the spirit of <i>mushi</i> killed during the harvest
腹の虫が取まらない Not be able to control one's own rage	苦虫 (を呑みかんだ潰したような) As if having swallowed a bitter bug
虫ずが走る To be disgusted	勉強の虫 Bookworm
弱虫 Coward	回虫 Roundworm
虫が好かない Having an antipathy to	虫の知らせ Premonition
虫の居所が悪い Irritable	虫も殺さない Looking as though one wouldn't hurt a fly

Each of these expressions should be interpreted as a reduction of the depicted phenomenal reality, since the author deduces a distinctive trait of Japaneseness by highlighting the frequent employment of 'mushi' in Japanese lexicon. Likewise, *maai o hakaru* 間合いを計る p. 48 (to measure the interval), *maai o motase* 間合いを持たせ p. 48 (to keep the time), *ma o toru* 間をとる p. 48 (to take a break) and *ma* 間 p. 48 (space/empty time), are expressions mentioned as linguistic demonstrations of the value of emptiness and invisible in Japanese culture. Japanese primordial love for nature is believed to emerge also from the rich lexicon of specific words describing the

natural world in classic poetry – e.g. the seasonal term (*kigo*) in Chiyojo Kaga and Kobayashi Issa's *haiku* as *nomishirami* 蚤虱 p. 31 (fleas and lice) in a Bashō's *haiku*, the terms *tonbotsuri* 蜻蛉つり p. 31 (dragonfly hunt), *asagao* 朝顔 p. 27 (Japanese morning glory), *hae* 蠅 p. 27 (fly), *suzume no ko* 雀の子 p. 28 (sparrow chick). Actually, in these last cases, Suzuki considers not only these words, but the whole poems as manifestations and empirical demonstrations of Japanese special attachment to any natural thing.

For this reason, this last type of reductionism may be better qualified as “poetical”, since Japaneseness is enclosed in a whole poem, as those by Kaga Chiyojo and Kobayashi Issa:

(44) 朝顔に釣瓶とられてもらひ水 [27]

The morning glory / wound around the well bucket / I am asking for water.

(45) やれ打つな蠅が手を擦る足を擦る [28]

Don't hit it! A fly rubs its paws.

According to Suzuki, most of Japanese people can intuitively understand the feeling arisen by these verses, enclosing a humble, compassionate, tender vision of nature. In the first poem, commotion is provoked by the sight of the flowers of morning glory enveloping a bucket, while in the second one the sense of tenderness is engendered by the vision of an innocent fly rubbing its paws as if imploring humans not to kill it. Other examples in this sense are the popular Meiji children songs like *Yūyake koyake no akatonbo* (Song of the red dragonfly), *Chō chō na no ha ni tomare* (Song of butterfly), *Are matsumushi ga naite iru* (Song of the cricket), *Tonbo no megane wa mizuiro megane* (Song of the dragonfly), *Bun bun bun hachi ga tobu* (Song of the bee), *Ari san to ari san ga kottsushiko* (Song of the ant), *Ho, ho, hotaru koi* (Song of the firefly), *Denden mushimushi katatsumuri* (Song of the snail), *Kiromushi wa kanemochi da* (Song of the golden beetle) and *Mimizu datte okera datte amenbo datte* (Song of the earthworm) (p. 34). These songs are mentioned to attest how *mushi* were deeply rooted in Japanese everyday life, how intimate is the bond between the Japanese and nature since their childhood.

A last example of generical reductionism is a flattery addressed to

women in Japanese language:

(46) あなたの顔は日本人離れしている [142]

Your face does not look like it's Japanese.

This is mentioned together with a few titles of *Nihonjinron* essays as proof of Japanese physical sense of inferiority when compared to Westerners. Reality is simplified in the sense that the author starts from a strawman – Japanese complex towards white men- and does not conduct any scientific inquiry to convalidate this claim. It is thus safe to state that in the essay any depicted phenomenon is ultimately reduced, its complexity being dramatically simplified.

- MARKET CHOICES

Nihon no kansei ga sekai o kaeru's popular destination is firstly suggested by a very low sale price (1300 yen) and a relatively short length (261 pages). Thanks to these characteristics and to the adoption of a simple language and style, the essay is intended to reach the widest public. The publisher is Shinchōsha, a series editing *Nihonjinron* best-sellers as one may note from the *Nihonjinron* essays advertised at the end of the book (included two by Suzuki) like *Nihonjin wa naze nihon o awasenai no ka* (Why don't Japanese love Japan?), *Tozasareta gengo. Nihongo no sekai; Nihon, nihongo, nihonjin* (Japan, Japanese Language, Japanese people) and "*Sato*" to *iu shisō* (The thought of "native village").

Particular attention should be reserved to the cover and band, as they are important hints to the nature of the essay. In the anterior part of the band the word *nihonrashisa* (Japaneseness) outstands for the use of graphically striking characters:

(47) 「日本らしさ」が、今こそ必要とされている。

"Japaneseness" is necessary right now.

This concise sentence is preceded and followed by two telegraphic syntagms, reading:

(48) 論争より情緒、対決ではなく融和。

More than debate, emotions; harmony, not conflict.

(49) 世界の危機を見据え、卓抜な発想で語る日本人の使命。

The mission of the Japanese, in sight of the global crisis, explained by means of excellent argumentations.

The evocative keywords of this part of the band are *nihonrashisa*, *jōsho* (emotions), *yūwa* (harmony), *nihonjin no shimei* (Japanese mission). They refer to the classic idea of the existence of a Japanese national character mentioned in the *Nihonjinron* discourse. Moreover, (47) and (48) respectively convey the urgency (*hitsuyō to sareru, ima koso*) and the prophetic character of Japaneseness (*shimei*). Another important element in (49) is the implicit reference to Suzuki's authority as an intellectual through the syntagm *takubatsuna hassō de kataru* (explained by excellent argumentations). The rear part of the band is likewise significant, for reporting a few excerpts of the essay. It starts reading as follows:

(50) 日本語の感性が世界を変える。タタミゼ効果を知っていますか

The sensitivity of the Japanese language will change the world. Do you know about the "tatamization" effect?

The aim is to provide concrete and synthetical argumentations on the reasons why Japanese language and culture should take on a crucial role in the world:

(51) とても興味深い現象を紹介しながらお話したいと思います。それは「タタミゼ効果」と私が名づけた現象です。外国の人が日本語を使いつけると、自分で気づいたとき愕然とするほど、いつの間にか柔らかい人、相手を立てるような人になったり、やたらと「済みません」と言ったり、すぐ謝ったりしてしまうのです。

I'd like to speak about and present a very interesting phenomenon: what I call "tatamization effect". When foreigners use Japanese, they immediately excuse themselves, they profusely say «sorry», they become milder persons after a while, to such an extent that they keep in great consideration the interlocutor.

These sentences are not originally consecutive, but they have been reworked, as well as the title that originally refers to the sensitivity of Japan (*nihon*) and not of the Japanese language (*nihongo*). In this way,

it seems that the author describes a really existing, Japan-specific phenomenon. Finally, in the second cover, some topics previously revealed in the band are reiterated:

(52) やわらか、あいまい、情緒的。今こそ、日本文明の出番だ。

Tenderness, ambiguity, emotionality. The turn of Japanese civilization has finally come.

(53) ことばと文化、自然と人間の営みに深い思索を重ねてきた著者が、世界の危機を見据えて語る《日本人の使命》とは。外国人が日本語を学ぶとなぜか礼儀正しくなる「タタミゼ効果」の不思議や、漢字に秘められた意外な力、持続可能社会だった江戸時代の豊かさ、そして日本人の世界観を西欧文明と対比させながら、小さくとも強靱な日本の感性を文明論として考える。

“The mission of the Japanese”, narrated by the author, who has collected deep reflections on the relationships between culture and language, nature and human beings, focusing on the global crisis. A reflection on the sensitivity of the little, but steadfast Japan as a theory on civilizations, through the comparison with Western civilization on the mysterious “tatamization effect”. The reasons why foreigners who learn Japanese become kind. The unexpected, hidden power of *kanji*. The prosperity of the Edo period, whose society was sustainable, and the Japanese vision of nature.

The topic of the salvific mission (*ima koso, deban, shimei*) of humanity is of paramount importance and a prophetic tone pervades the whole essay. Suzuki’s intellectual authority is repeated in a more explicit and precise way, by underlying his experience in the fields he will deal with (*fukai shisaku o kasanete kita chosha*). Ultimately, the mystifying character of the essay suggested by the qualification of the “tatamization effect” as “mysterious” (*fushigi*) – on the band depicted as “phenomenon” (*genshō*) – and the comparison with the West (*seiō bunmei*), are two other *Nihonjinron*’s leitmotiv.

4. Watanabe Shōichi: The Uncovering of Japaneseness Through History

天皇の「格」を落とされては、日本国や日本人の品格も落ちます。(Watanabe 2008: 149)

If the “character” of the Royal Sovereign is downplayed, even the dignity of the Japanese and Japan degenerates.

4.1. An Ante Litteram Revisionist

[...] much your body may grow old or your knees tremble, your mind will re-create itself in ever-renewed freshness, and your character will stand fast and upright. (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 257)

Watanabe Shōichi (1930-2017) was a Japanese scholar specialized in the history of English grammar. He graduated in 1955 from Sophia University and obtained a Ph.D. at Münster University in 1958. During his university career, he was awarded a number of prestigious titles in various fields either in Japan or in Europe and in the USA, while holding other important positions in addition to those strictly academic, such as that of counselor of the “Organization for the regeneration of Japanese education” (*Nihon kyōiku saisei kikō*); director of the “Association of experts for the promotion of moral education” (*Dōtoku kyōiku o susumeru yūshikisha no kai*); president of the “Civil assembly for the correction of Nanking massacre’s historical falsification” (“*Nankyō daigyakusatsu*” no rekishi netsuzō o tadasu kokumin kaigi), president of the examining commission of the essay competition “The true vision of modern and contemporary history” (“*Shin no kingen daishi kan*”

kenshōronbun) and president of the national support group “Tomomigumi” of the LDP-member Inada Tomomi, one of the first advocates of the Japanese revisionist movement; member and literary contributor of the revisionist lobby *Nippon kaigi*; founder of the “Civil association of supporters of Shinzō Abe’s candidacy for PM” (*Abe Shinzō sōri daijin o motomeru minkan jinyūshi no kai*) during the 2012 elections; leader of a group of prosecutors who sued in 2015 the leading newspaper *Ashahi Shinbun* accused of fabricating lies and defaming Japan’s image in relation to the “comfort women” issue.

Watanabe was not only a prominent scholar and an enthusiastic bibliophile who immensely contributed to the field of English philology in Japan, but he was also and especially a prolific essay writer, a fierce critic and commentator of contemporary topics concerning society, culture, politics, history, spiritualism, education, language, a heated historical revisionist and negationist, a representative and vibrant exponent of the Japanese establishment. He was known to some extent in the international academia (mostly in the USA) particularly for his tough conservative and anti-Chinese/Korean statements expressed through many contributions to the reactionary magazines of *Seiron*, *Shokun!*, *WiLL*, *voice* and *Chichi*. As far as Japanese identity is concerned, Watanabe has always sustained ideas consciously inspired by nineteenth-twentieth-century German nationalism, revitalizing former Japanese empire’s linguistic chauvinist clichés as *kotodama* and *yamatokotoba* (Dale 1986: 82; Saaler 2016: 8).

His eclecticism and intimate connection with LDP’s most conservative fringes are reflected in the nature of his publications, encompassing various topics often transcending Watanabe’s academic area of interest. It was precisely his status of influential intellectual and his prestigious university titles to launch and popularize him on the media. In particular, his ideologization and politicization have been growing significantly since the 1990s, as one may note from his numerous revisionist writings. He started to directly deal with historical issues since the mid-1990s, when the apologetic rhetoric and the political debate on Japanese recent history were reaching their climax and the LDP created the “History examining commission” (*Rekishi kentō iinkai*) in 1993, aimed at revising history (Saaler 2016: 4, 6, 8). Watanabe was a key figure and one of the stiffest supporters of the revisionist movement of contemporary Japanese political panorama (Saaler 2016: 8).

According to a 2016 CiNii research, Watanabe authored 612 books since 1965, reaching an average of 11-12 publications per year, and appeared in Zassaku Plus' database as author or co-author of 695 articles published on Japanese magazines between 1995 and 2014 (Saaler 2016: 8, 16), not counting the publications from 2015 to 2017 and those posthumous appeared during 2018. Watanabe has been very prolific in the essay writing, particularly in the strand of *Nihonjinron*. He started to get interested in *Nihonjinron* while studying in Europe in 1955, but it was only when living in the United States between 1968 and 1969 that he felt urged to explain to his foreign colleagues and students Japan's characteristics, while also starting to feel the desire to respond to the widespread interest by the Japanese themselves for the subject (Watanabe 1980: 3-6). In this sense, a representative book condensing his thought from the 1950s up to now is *Nihonjin no hinkaku* (The National Character of the Japanese). Although it firstly appeared in 1993, it was republished in 2008 and was received by the general public more positively, thanks to the conjunction of auspicious conditions for the emancipation of the Japanese from the "inert vice of apology" and the rethinking of their national character (p. 3). In this essay, the author focuses on the concept of *hinkaku*, referred to the peculiarities of a country, a State or a nation just as *jinkaku* indicates the character of a person. It overlaps with the original meaning of "dignity", since for Watanabe, what distinguishes humanity from animality is the possession of dignity in the concrete form of pride. "National character" is then conceived as a series of actions performed by proud human beings.

Nihonjin no hinkaku is a direct address to the *nihonjin*, the Japanese intended as a national community. More specifically, it is addressed to the generation of «we Japanese born in the prewar era» (pp. 6, 34-35, 75, 115, 173, 198), the sole category of Japanese who are seen as able to recognize the value of possessing a national character and feeling proud of being Japanese. They are asked to urgently take action to correctly guide and infuse younger generations with nationalist feelings, claimed to have been denied by occupation policies and postwar leftwing intellectuals.

In order to revive the national character, Watanabe stresses the uniqueness of Japanese spiritual and cultural qualities, advocating the need for a historical and constitutional revision. It may be not

coincidental that the second edition of the essay was published in 2008, the year after the end of the first mandate of the revisionist supporter Abe as PM of Japan, nor the deep primordialist nature of the nationalism espoused by Watanabe. As he explicitly admits, a political change is taking place in Japan, allowing right-wing ultra-conservatives to feel more at ease and freer to express certain reactionary ideas.

4.2. The Degeneration of Japanese Contemporary Society and the Loss of National Pride

Let us see, therefore, what in the previously existing order of things was the reason why such an order had inevitably to come to an end at some time or other, so that in the opposite of this reason for its downfall we may find the new element which must be introduced into the age, in order that by its means the fallen nation may rise to a new life. (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 10)

Watanabe introduces his nationalist claims by presenting two specious problems that are believed to destabilize Japanese contemporary society: the gradual loss of Japanese national character and the subsequent decay of Japanese society and morality. In line with the well-familiar Fichte's *Addresses*, he particularly deplores the extirpation of national pride, the trampling of international respect that Japan painfully obtained through its modernization effort, the humiliation suffered by the Japanese since the postwar period. He especially points at the 1946 Tōkyō Trial's verdict justifying the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and promoting the image of an "evil Japan", to occupation policies diffusing a "Japanese self-deploring vision of history" (*nihonjin rokudenashi shikan*, p. 141), and, generally, to the "postwar regime" established by "prewar left-wing extremists" (*senzen no sayoku*, p. 142) who were enemies of Japan and purged the postwar media and education institutions. They are seen as the main responsible for the loss of identity and self-confidence by the Japanese, their self-denigration and, ultimately, the "zooification" of Japanese society perpetrated to the detriment of young generations, deprived of the possibility of naturally developing their inborn national character. In terms of morality, he identifies an original condition of

indigenous purity, corresponding to an indefinite prewar period, and a subsequent momentum of imported corruption, associated to the whole postwar era up to present.

In order to reawaken national consciousness, Watanabe proposes the instillation of a sentiment of pride of being Japanese to be implemented through the acknowledgement of Japan's historical records, its influential personalities and the rehabilitation of the prewar boosted values like the spirit of *bushi* and the cult of *tennō*. History is then the real issue at stake in Watanabe's nationalist discourse, for being regarded as determining the destiny of a nation. Aligning with Fichte, a "soul-stirring" teaching of history is considered as one of the most powerful means to revitalize the mortified and dejected national spirit by narrating the "truth", to transport contemporary people into the life of past generations (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 106). The manipulation of history for ideological purposes is identifiable since the beginning of his career as an essayist, as in *Nihonshi kara mita nihonjin* (The Japanese seen from Japanese history, 1973), where he attempted to unveil the shape of Japaneseness for each epoch of Japanese history – in a sort of historicist fashion. National education is for Watanabe a supreme redemption capable of counterbalancing the wickedness behind moral degeneration and discomfort, while infusing national pride and self-confidence.

4.3. The Past in the Present. Emperor, Shintoism, Japanese Blood, *Bushidō*, Yamato Words: The (re)Construction of National Identity

Watanabe introduces his nationalist claims by presenting two specious problems. Generally speaking, Watanabe intends to reactivate Japanese pride by enhancing Japan's uniqueness and independence as a civilization. He argues that Japan represents not only a unitary culture but also a civilization apart, even separated from the Chinese sphere of influence. What makes Japan unique is the *tennōsei* system, that, together with the network of Shinto shrines, represents the core of Japanese civilization. In this sense, the essential peculiarity and diversity of the Japanese imperial dynasty lies in its continuity and primordially, since «even mythological gods continue to exist along with contemporary Royal House» (p. 22).

This means that the Japanese Royal House represents a temporal conjuncture between the sacred and the profane for being simultaneously permanent, eternal, and persistent, contingent. It is the earthly continuation of the dynasty of Sun goddess Amaterasu, tracing back to around two thousand years ago. Its sacredness is guaranteed by the incessant fulfillment of the principle of male offsprings, from whom ancient Japanese have derived their deep agricultural knowledge. As in rice cultivation it is the seed and not the field to be of the utmost importance for determining the genetic continuity of the planted species, even among humans it is the man and not the woman who donates the germinative seed, thus ensuring the succession of the lineage. Ancient Japanese dynasties intuitively understood this basic and natural principle and translated it to the foundation of the Japanese nation.

The *tennō's* sacredness and authority derive from the primordality of his ancestry: the survival of the genes of the first legendary sovereign Jinmu as well as the Shintoist cults are precisely what makes Japan «the greatest cultural treasure in the world» (*sekai saidai no bunka izan*, p. 22). In this way, Watanabe brushes up Meiji nationalist ideologies centered on State Shintoism and *tennō's* deification. He also takes inspiration from Herder's isomorphism around the notions of 'State' (*kokka*), 'nation/ethnic community' (*minzoku*), 'people' in a civic sense (*kokumin*), 'language' (*kotoba*), 'culture' (*bunka*), since the 'Japanese' are viewed as a whole and inseparable from the Japanese State, the Japanese language, the Japanese people, the Japanese culture, the Japanese nation.

Resuming Fichte's distinction between living and death languages (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 54, 62-63, 69), by 'continuity' between past and present Watanabe refers to the vitality of Japanese civilization and language through the constant performance of Shintoist rites since immemorial times until now, thanks to the survival of the relation between the ruling dynasty and their deities. The concrete evidence of the principle would be represented by the cyclic reconstruction of the ephemeral straw-and-wooden-made Shintoist shrines, generation after generation, but always restored to its original form. For Watanabe, Japan distinguishes itself for being the only developed country where the mythical era continues in the present through the veneration of gods.

Another fundamental and distinctive pillar of Japanese civilization mentioned by Watanabe is Japanese cultural power of assimilation,

notably embodied by Japanese Buddhism and the so-called “doctrine of combinatory thought” (*honjisuijakusetsu*), which integrates preexisting Shintoist practices with Buddhist elements and holds that Shintō gods are manifestations of buddhas. Prince Shōtoku (574 d.C. - 622 d.C.) and poets Saigyō Hōshi (1118-1190) and Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) are examples of Japanese historical characters who, according to Watanabe, mostly epitomize Japanese virtues of syncretism and tolerance of foreign elements, of mingling the new with the old (pp. 42-45). This strength allowed the Japanese to preserve throughout their history their essential character intact from outside influence.

Also the rediscovery of the spirit of warriors, the core of Japanese ethics, is regarded as an important step towards the rehabilitation of national pride. For Watanabe, the values embodied by *bushi*'s code of conduct, which should be once again infused in Japanese ordinary ways of living are: personal dignity and resilience; sense of belonging, honor, loyalty; spirit of sacrifice; sense of shame; sense of brotherhood, comradely empathy; bravery; honesty; self-analysis and deep understanding; trustworthiness; aestheticism: pursuit of beauty and elegance; pursuit of spiritual refinement; benevolence towards other people and emphasis on the public over private interests; meritocracy; respect for rivals; defence of freedom and equality.

The loss of the warrior tradition is conceived as the main reason of contemporary Japanese indifference towards their national character, which is symbolically represented by the founder of Japanese capitalism, Shibuzawa Eichi (1840-1931). He had the merit to introduce the spirit of *bushi* into the nascent industrial world and, more broadly, into Japanese commercial spirit. In Watanabe's conception, what contemporary Japanese need is precisely the restoration of the literatus-warrior-merchant tripartite tradition (*bun/bu/shō*, p. 78): only in this way a true, renewed national character may develop.

The last crucial element that Watanabe points out as revealing Japanese uniqueness is represented by *yamatokotoba*, words of a Japanese etymology proving the phylogenetic independence of Japanese language. They are indeed defined by the author as words composing Japanese lexicon «as old as our blood» (p. 80), “words that the Japanese perceived to be the Japanese language” (p. 80) when the Yamato dynasty was founded. In another previous essay, Watanabe better clarifies the nature of such words, tracing back their origin to

prehistorical times and to a legendary ape-like animal (Watanabe 1974: 11-12, 20):

- (1) 進化論的な言い方するならば—私は進化論を信じていないのだが—サルみたいな動物が、最初に日本人の先祖として、何か口からまとまった音を出した時代にまで、まっすぐにさかのぼるのである。別の言い方をすれば、大和言葉は民族の魂の源に直接に根を下している言葉だと言ってようであろう。

Speaking in evolutionary terms - although I do not believe in evolution myself -, they trace back directly to the era when an ape-like animal, ancestor of the Japanese, uttered the first articulated sounds from the oral cavity. In other terms, *yamatokotoba* are words directly rooted to the spiritual origins of our people.

- (2) 大和言葉は日本民族の発生とともに発生して絶えることなく連続してきたので、日本人の魂と分ち難く結びついていて、知的に思想を積み上げていくには不適當なところがあるのだ。特に思考内容が外来思想のときはそうである。

Since Yamato words were generated together with the Japanese race and they continued to be incessantly used, they are inseparably tied to the Japanese spirit and they are not suitable for the construction of the intellectual thought. This is particularly true when the content of thought is of a *foreign* origin.

Yamatokotoba's ineffability and untranslatability into foreign languages is believed to be due to the existence of an immanent spirit (*kotodama*), capable of establishing a spiritual connection with the ancestors. *Kotodama* is the spirit that allows the constant transmission and manifestation of Japanese essence through time: this is why «what was written more than one thousand and five hundred years ago can still be read even by contemporary Japanese children» (p. 96). Yamato words are definitely considered as the words through which “Yamato soul” (*yamatodamashii*) originally and still primarily expresses itself.

4.4. Reforming the Education System: How to Become a Revisionist

In a word, it is a total change of the existing system of education that I propose as the sole means of preserving the existence of the German nation. (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 13)

4.4.1. A New History for an Ancient Nation

More specifically, for Watanabe it is fundamental to revise Japan's educational system in order to infuse pride into the nation by evaluating Japanese peculiarities. In this sense, the first target should be history teaching.

In fact, he firmly maintains that the current Japanese conception of national history is self-denigratory and masochist (*nihon no jigyakushikan*, p. 187) and it was consciously distorted by postwar education politics. On this point, he specifically denounces the so-called "war profiteers" (*haisen ritokusha*, p. 133) – prewar leftwing sympathizers and the American occupiers – in the diffusion of the evilness of Japan and its people. Especially the USA are regarded as responsible for having provoked a gradual moral deterioration of the character of the Japanese, by means of the verdict of the Tōkyō Trial accusing them of having started a war of invasion, the drafting of a new Constitution and the abrogation of the founding document of Japanese morality (the "Imperial Rescript on Education"). The Americans are also charged with having forced Japan to adopt an apologetic stance in its diplomatic affairs.

In parallel to this victimization of militarist Japan and research of the scapegoats of contemporary Japanese society's evils, Watanabe proposes the reinterpretation of the whole history of Japan, either the single events or the overall narration, with special reference to the period between the Meiji era and 1945. For instance, Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) is reinterpreted as the raising of Japan as defender of equality among States and races, because a "yellow race" won for the first time over the "white man", and the twentieth-century movements of independence got inspiration in their struggle against Western discrimination, colonization and slavery (pp. 72-74). The Pacific War is regarded not as a war of aggression or invasion, but as a legitimate war of self-defence, whose remote reason would have been the racist behaviors and the hatred towards Japanese immigrants in the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century (p. 174).

Watanabe proceeds by presenting certain claims as "truths" (*jijitsu*, p. 188) that cannot be contested or falsified by definition, in contrast to the alleged "lies" (*uso*, p. 191) sustained by the formal education system. At the same time, he fosters the obscuration, negation,

minimization of the negative aspects about Japan's history so that younger generations do not feel ashamed and mortified for being Japanese. He maintains that the new history of Japan ought to follow an order of importance in history learning. First, the pupil should acknowledge about positive historical facts infusing pride and love for the motherland. Then, once they develop their critical sense, they may be introduced to the harsher parts of their history. By contrast, the postwar education system was apparently on "cynical interpretations of Japaneseness" (*nihonjinsei akusetsu*, p. 191) causing an enduring negative impact.

Watanabe's strive to reform the Japanese education system materializes in the high school textbook *Nihonjin no hokori o tsutaeru saishin nihonshi* (The new history of Japan for instilling pride to the Japanese, 2012). Its purpose is to highlight the uniqueness of Japanese history and culture, as he underlies in the incipit (Watanabe et al. 2012: 11):

- (3) 大陸の文明の影響を受けながらも、日本列島に独自の歴史と文化が生い育つことになった…

Although it suffered the influence of continental civilizations, in the Japanese archipelago a unique history and culture emerged and developed.

Nonetheless, Watanabe and his collaborators are better to be regarded as "amatorial historians", possessing a superficial and strongly ideological-imbibed knowledge of history. In this regard, it is worth noting that Watanabe also collaborated with the controversial former chief of staff of the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force and nationalist politician Tamogami Toshio in the drawing up of *Hokori aru nihon no rekishi o torimodose* (Let's restore a history of Japan full of pride!, 2014). In this essay, the authors deal with several crucial issues of the archipelago's recent history, which they claim to reinterpret in order to glimpse a «beautiful rainbow» in Japanese history's narration (Watanabe & Tamogami 2014).

Last but not least, in parallel to amending historical education, Watanabe ultimately proposes the institution of a commemoration day for the restoration of independence, in remembrance of the end of American occupation. Only in this way, he argues, it will be possible

to make a brand-new start in educating younger generations to the truth, that is Japan's enduring of a foreign occupation and a masochistic ideological yoke since the postwar era.

4.4.2. The Rediscovery of Yamato Language and Japanese Morality

The second target of Watanabe's revisionism concerns the teaching of Japanese language and classical literature and the reintroduction of morality as an official subject in school curricula.

The emphasis on the importance of the national language is regarded as necessary, since language is the most suitable educational instrument to vehiculate Japanese aesthetic conception, the historical context behind Japaneseness, the spirit of the nation. The in-depth knowledge of the national language is indeed connected to the restoration of the Japanese national character, with special reference to the aforementioned *yamatokotoba*. Yamato words are a part of the Japanese lexicon believed to have the power of manifesting and transmitting the "Japanese essence". Watanabe fully espouses Herder's idea that language is the epiphany of a nation: a Japanese language rich of *yamatokotoba* is regarded as the truest and the most intimate expression of the Japanese nation-people. Elsewhere, Watanabe declares that Yamato words are «words that Japanese race handed down orally since pre-history» (Watanabe 1974: 11, 8). They would distinguish themselves for being pure and uncontaminated by external, non-indigenous elements and for representing the "native place of the spirit" (*tamashii no furusato*), where the inborn emotional, authentic, deeper nature of a Japanese lies: their understanding is immediate, intuitive, ineffable to the rational thought, they are untranslatable for being inseparable from the Japanese spirit.

In order to educate about the national language, it is necessary to study the classics of literature. Watanabe appeals for the compulsory study in (junior) high schools of the original texts of *Genji monogatari*, *Hyakunin isshu* 百人一首 (One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each, 1235), *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (The Tale of Heike, ca. XIII century), *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves, 759 A.D. ca.), *Tsurezuregusa* (Essays in Idleness, ca. 1330), *Oku no hosomichi* (The

Narrow Road to the Deep North, 1702).⁶ The study of traditional poetry in the form of *waka* should be of a special interest for being mostly composed of Yamato words. Their memorization would be useful to naturally and intuitively instill in the hearts of young Japanese the national spirit and sensitivity. In this sense, Watanabe wishes for the rehabilitation of the prewar popular songs *Shidaisetsu* (Songs of four festivities), learned by heart by Japanese pupils and representative of Japanese moral foundations. Their solely Yamato-words composition would be able to hit a deeper emotional level, by unconsciously reactivating the dozy national spirit.

On this point, Watanabe longs for the restoration of a “specifically-Japanese morality” (*nihonjin no dōtokukan*, p. 109), in line with the prewar regime’s education system and in relation to his pedagogical goals. He mentions not only Shōtoku Taishi’s Seventeen-Article Code emphasizing the article pertaining harmony’s preservation and Buddhism (i.e. the principle of assimilationism)’s veneration, but he maintains that what firmly founded Japanese morality was Meiji’s Imperial Rescript on Education. In this document the educational principles on which the nascent Meiji State had to be grounded were set, notably the Confucian precepts of filial piety and social harmony, Shintoist imperial myths, *bushido*’s ethics as the sacred respect and loyalty toward the emperor, obedience toward superiors, bravery, sacrifice in defense of *kokutai* (the body of nation-state) (Caroli & Gatti 2006).

Watanabe sought to convert this theoretical effort into practice by leading the “Association of experts for the promotion of moral education”, a pressure group for the introduction of moral education in schools (Saaler 2016: 6, 12). This pedagogical engagement was further enhanced in *Kokumin no kyōiku* (Education of the nation, 2001), an essay inspired by nineteenth-century nationalist rhetoric and highlighting the role of education in infusing to the youngest the feelings of love,

⁶ *Hyakunin isshu* is a classical Japanese anthology of one hundred Japanese *waka* by one hundred poets. The *Heike monogatari*, one of the great classics of medieval Japanese literature, is an epic account of the struggle between the Taira clan and Minamoto clan. The *Man’yōshū* is the oldest extant collection of Japanese *waka* and the third oldest document in Japanese literature after the *Kiki*. *Tsurezuregusa* is a collection of essays, widely considered a gem of medieval Japanese literature. Finally, *Oku no hosomichi*, written in the form of a prose and verse travel diary, is considered one of the major texts of Japanese literature of the Edo period by the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō.

respect and pride for the nation. Here Watanabe hopes for, among other things, the reintroduction in schools of the compulsory bow toward the national hymn and flag, the teaching of mythological texts since elementary school, the “correct” understanding of the sacredness of Japanese Royal House, and the “proper” knowledge of history during the Shōwa era.

4.5. How to Infuse Nation-ness: The Primordialist Rhetoric

4.5.1. The Primordialist Beliefs

Nihonjin no hinkaku is characterized by a strong ideological reference to the *tennō*-cult based Meiji nationalism, profoundly infused with primordialist beliefs:

- NATURALITY OR PRIMORDIALITY. Japan is primordial by virtue of the antiquity and sacredness of the Royal Family, determined by the continuation of the same dynasty by patrilineality for more than two thousand years and by its indissoluble tie with Amaterasu’s celestial ancestry. The Japanese nation is primordial for sharing “Jinmu’s genes” and reproducing the ancient human-divine communion through agrarian Shintoist rituals. Watanabe grounds Japanese sacredness in biology, in the principles of inheritance that are thought to determine the supremacy of man over woman for being the bearer of the sex chromosome. Accordingly, the Japanese are a nation conceived as a biological community and the *nihonjin* are primarily defined by “blood”. The survival and periodic reconstruction of Shintō shrines are another clue of the primordality of Japan’. Their building materials - raw wood and straw – symbolizes the primitivity of the Japanese nation.
- THE PART FOR THE WHOLE. The Japanese nation is regarded as an ensemble of people whose individuality sublimates into the totality. Watanabe stands up as spokesperson of the common sense of the “average Japanese”, which is essentialized as a harmonious, homogeneous entity. The body of the nation is metaphysically and materially symbolized by the *tennō*, while national unity is cyclically reproduced through the performance of ancient agrarian rituals officiated by the *tennō*, the high priest of ceremonies.

- INDIVISIBILITY AND SEPARATENESS. Since the Japanese nation is conceived as an organism, its parts cannot be separated. The constitutive traits of the Japanese nation are interconnected and, at the same time, determine the physical and spiritual separateness of the Japanese from other national characters. The concept of “uniqueness” itself is associated with the essential diversity – i.e. separateness – of Japan from the rest of the world, especially from China and Korea. Ultimately, it is the criterion of ethnicity/race (*Volkstum*) (Merker 2000: 73-74) to be regarded as the primogenial force marking the true boundaries between the Japanese nation and others.
- TERRITORIALITY. Watanabe emphasizes Japan’s insular nature. Insularity is not merely a physical element, but it is mostly ideological: stressing Japan’s separateness and isolation from the Asian continent, he intends to justify its cultural and racial peculiarity. The quality of insularity is used to assert, by way of example, the alleged rarity of wars in the history of the archipelago. Japan is also characterized as “little”: this attribute, together with that of insularity, is used to explain Japan’s unique mythological-dynastic continuity. Japan is also depicted as a rural country, whose territory was shaped by rice cultivation moulding in turn Japanese customs, lifestyle, culture. Rurality (*nōkō gata hassō*) is definitely a central definitory trait of Japaneseness, determining Japanese “obsession with the land” (*tochi shūchaku*) (Watanabe 1980). Japanese land, in terms of soil, is a constitutive part of the Japanese body: vegetables, fruits, cereals, rice are ingested by the Japanese as food, digested and transformed into excrements that return to the land nourishing it as fertilizer, following a continuous cycle. In other words, the Japanese perpetually “eat” the rests of their ancestors: their forefathers are the Japanese soil, they are the Japanese themselves. Japanese land symbolizes the eternal cycle of nation’s generations. For this reason, the Japanese feel naturally attached to their ancestral land.
- TEMPORAL CONTINUITY. Continuity over time of the patrilineal royal dynasty is the foundation of Japanese civilization’s unity and uniqueness. Royal House and the uninterrupted use of Shintoist shrines are what unite past, present and future generations of Japanese, symbolizing a spiritual continuum through times that manifests, for instance, in the preservation of “Japanese sensitivity” or in the Japanese language. Yet, this metaphysical continuum rests

on a more materialistic continuity, that is the commonality of lineage. The Japanese traditional hereditary system of *ie*, based on the principle of continuity of the same household, remains unchanged until this day only for the Royal House, thus confirming its sacredness.

- CYCLICITY OR ATAVISM. Not only does the Japanese nation persist over time, but it continuously reproduces its original essence. Cyclicity is determined by the re-generation of the Royal House's dynastic line. The nationalist motto *bansei ikkei* referred to by Watanabe means "ten thousand generations, one lineage" and enshrines a regenerative principle: through every enthronement of a new *tennō* the "blood of the nation" is symbolically transmitted. The constant return to primitivity is symbolized by the twenty-year re-construction of a raw wooden ephemeral shrine. The body of the Japanese is another symbol of this constant regeneration, since the Japanese ancestors are alive through the body of new generations in the form of the products of the land.
- ETERNITY AND SAMENESS. The Japanese Royal House – thus, the Japanese nation – was temporally established more than two thousand years ago, but it is at the same time eternal for being the earthly continuation of the goddess Amaterasu's celestial dynasty. It is both "historical" (all the generations from king Jinmu onwards) and mythological (all the descendants of progenitor Amaterasu). As a result, the Japanese nation is a-historical, a-temporal: it is treated as an ever-lasting essentialized entity. The essence of Japan remains always identical to itself thanks to the continuity between *kami* and royal descent. What does not change over time is both the "Japanese spirit" (morality, ethics, spirit) and the "Japanese genes".
- SPIRITUALITY. Japanese national character is imbued with a metaphysical "substantial nature", so that it becomes an enduring and constant element in the transient phenomenal world, just like the German romantics conceived and employed the concept of "spirit of the people" (Merker 2000: 165). Japanese particularism notably comes to surface in morality and ethics: the Japanese are primarily called for a rediscovery of their innate spiritual heritage in order to restore their authentic national character. In this sense, the Japanese firstly should redescover the code of *bushidō*: *bushi* are seen as the incarnation of Japanese morality.

These primordialist beliefs are sustained by several rhetorical strategies, some of which pertaining to the discursive features of the essay, others to the narrative of the text.

4.5.2. The Primordialist Narrative

1) DISCOURSE

- ESSENTIALIZATION AND DICHOTOMIZATION

The ideological core of the essay revolves around two ontological stereotyped, atemporal essences. On one side, there is the in-group of 'us' (*wareware*), 'our country' (*waga kuni*), the 'Japanese fellows' (*nihonjin dōshi*), 'Japanese race' (*nihon minzoku*), 'Japanese civilization' (*nihon bunmei*). In an essentialist fashion, Watanabe at times overlaps 'Japan until then' (*sore made no nihon*), 'prewar Japan' (*senzen no nihon*), 'postwar Japan' (*sengo no nihon*), the 'Japanese of the past' (*mukashi no nihonjin*), the 'Japanese since the Meiji era' (*meiji ikō no nihonjin*). On the other, there is the out-group of 'other countries' (*ta no koku*) and 'other civilizations' (*ta no bunmeiken*), 'the 'world' (*sekai*), the 'foreigners' (*gai-kokujin*). These two entities are put in a dichotomic relation for representing two antithetical modalities of existence: the otherness is the term of comparison from which the unique attributes of Japaneseness are derived.

The Other is mainly represented by 'China' (*chūgoku*) and 'Korea' (*kankoku*), clearly defined terms of comparison and contrast against which Watanabe expresses a violent jingoistic nationalism. His disdain is evident not only through his many publications denouncing China and Korea's inconsistency and inferiority in a number of political, historical and cultural issues, but also linguistically naming them in a derogatory way and in a wartime fashion as *shina* and *koria*, *shinajin* (the Chinese) and *shinago* (Chinese language). The entity 'China' is at times identified with 'Qing dynasty' (*seichō*), 'T'ang dynasty' (*tō*), 'Confucian culture' (*jukyō bunka*), 'Yangtze culture' (*yōsū bunka*), 'prewar *Shina*', the 'China of the past' (*mukashi no chūgoku*), while 'Korea' encompasses indiscriminately the ancient kingdoms of Baekje (*kudara*), Goguryeo (*kōrai*), Silla (*shinra*).

The other essentialized entity as term of comparison is represented by the 'West' (*seiyō*), the main referent of *takoku*, *gaikoku*, *sekai*,

associated with the racial and ideological categories of “white man” and “developed countries”. By ‘West’, Watanabe refers to the United States and Europe, also collectively referred to as ‘the various Western countries’ (*ōbei shokoku*). By ‘Europe’, he mainly refers to Western Europe, in particular to Great Britain, ‘France, Germany and ancient Greece. Notably, ‘England’ is one the most frequent terms of comparison, for being a reality that Watanabe experienced. Other entities (Russia, Turkey, Sweden...) are mentioned merely to give the impression of conducting a true comparative analysis among different linguistic and cultural contexts, but their qualitative and quantitative marginality shows their ideological nature and employment. Watanabe’s attitude is ambiguous: the ‘West’ works as term of comparison with Japan either to foster Japanese uniqueness or highlight their cultural affinity. Germany is especially to be considered more similar to Japan in terms of mythology, culture and spiritual refinement. The juxtaposition between Japan and Germany is due to the strong influence from the German intellectual environment, notably from nineteenth-century nationalist strands and *völkisch* ideology. The German people is the sole foreign referent the author alludes to as “folk” (*german minzoku*), term employed just for designating the Japanese in ethno-racialist terms (*nihon minzoku*). In other cases, Watanabe’s attitude toward the West underlies a sense of implicit reverence. He never shows disdain, despite his critical comments on colonialism and the Pacific War.

The essentialization and dichotomization of reality implies its polarization: the attributes qualified as “Japanese” are given a positive value, while the “foreign” ones a negative value. The result is the emphasis on Japanese uniqueness and primordiality and its separateness with the out-groups. In *Nihonjin no hinkaku* seven main contrapositions may be identified: continuity vs. interruption; homogeneity (purity) vs. heterogeneity (hybridity); insularity vs. continentality; agriculture vs. pastoralism; harmony, pacifism, refusal of violence/conflict vs. bellicosity, violence; nature vs. artifice; sensitivity vs. rationality.

While Japan is an entity characterized by historical and cultural continuity thanks to the persistence of the same royal dynasty, West and China are “interrupted” from a historical, cultural and identity point of view, because of the cyclical ethnic substitution of the ruling dynasties and the intermingling of different peoples. In Japan, the

principle of “transmission of the seed” prevailed in dynastic succession, guaranteeing stability and an evolutive historical pattern. By contrast, in the West the principle of “transmission of the assets” dominated and in China a “stagnant” pattern of historical development was dominant because of the implementation of a dynastic substitution model. Even the contraposition between the vitality of Japanese myths of the origin and the ancient wooden Shintoist shrines reflected in the flourishing, verdant and “wet” Japanese nature, and the perishing of the ancient Greek myths, gods and stone-made temples reflected in Greek arid, “naked”, desolate and dead landscape, is regarded as a suggestive clue of this fundamental antagonism.

Tab. 4.1. ‘Japanese continuity’ and ‘Western-Chinese interruption’

CONTINUITY	INTERRUPTION
<i>Persistence of the same dynasty, history, culture</i>	<i>Dynastic, cultural, linguistic change</i>
<p>皇室の本質とは…神話時代から、こんにちまでつづく世界で唯一の王朝である、ということです。 [22]</p> <p>The true essence of the Japanese Royal House is to represent a unique dynasty in the world for continuing to exist since the era of mythology until now.</p> <p>日本では、神話時代からこんにちまで、連綿とつづくひとつながりの歴史があり… [37]</p> <p>In Japan, a unitary history, continuing without interruption since the era of mythology, exists [...].</p> <p>ひとつの言語が途切れずに続いた… [95]</p> <p>A unique language continued to be transmitted without interruption.</p>	<p>…それが現代に継承されていない。 [33]</p> <p>[Greek mythology] is not inherited to modernity.</p> <p>古代の伝承はほとんどなくなっています。 [22]</p> <p>The legacy of antiquity completely disappeared.</p> <p>支配民族がしゅつちゅう入れ替わり、民族も変わっているので、ひとつながりの歴史として見ることは困難でしょう。 [28]</p> <p>Since the ruling ethnic communities and even the populations often changed, [Chinese/European history] is hard to be defined as unitary.</p> <p>アングロ・サクソンの言葉というのは、元は古いドイツ語と同じだったのですが、途中で切れているのです。 [96]</p> <p>The Anglo-Saxon language was originally identical to ancient German, but then it separated from it.</p>
<i>Transmission of the “seed”</i>	<i>Transmission of the asset</i>
<p>皇室は…「種」が保たれなければならない…財産が何もなくても尊いのです。 [157]</p> <p>In the Royal House, it is the “seed” that must be preserved [...] It is sacred</p>	<p>西洋の王様の場合は、家産を守る要素が強いと言えます。 [158]</p> <p>As for Western kings, it can be said that the element of preservation of family properties is strong.</p>

despite having no asset.	
<i>Different pattern: evolution</i>	<i>Same pattern: stagnation</i>
<p>…日本文明の特色は、このように時代ごとに明確に世界が変わる…平安朝の後に、最も男性的な武家文化が誕生する。つまり、同じパターンを繰り返すことがない。 [52]</p> <p>A distinctive feature of Japanese civilization is that society changes distinctly with each era. After the Heian period [...] a more masculine warrior culture was born. As such, the same pattern never recurs twice.</p>	<p>…シナは…「アジア的停滞」と言える歴史観であり、王朝が替わることに過去のパターンを繰り返している。[38]</p> <p>China keeps repeating the same dynastic substitution's pattern of the past and has a history's conception definable as "typically-Asiatic stagnation".</p>
<i>Life, vitality, survival, wood</i>	<i>Death, ruin, vestiges, stone</i>
<p>神社 [24] Shrine</p> <p>…「日本では古代の神様が死んでいない」… [25]; …まだ神話が生きている…[24]</p> <p>In Japan, ancient <i>kami</i> are not dead; Mythology still survives.</p> <p>数百年前に建てられた社殿が、補修や建替えを重てこんにちまで残り、祀る人々が絶えることかない。 [25]</p> <p>Shintō shrines, built hundreds of years ago, survive until now, reconstruction after reconstruction and change after change, and believers have continued to come without interruption.</p>	<p>社殿 [23] Temple</p> <p>…ギリシアの石造りの神殿は、今では廃墟と化しています。 [25]</p> <p>The stone-made Greek temples are now in ruins.</p> <p>ポセイドンの遺跡 [23] The vestiges of Poseidon temple.</p> <p>突端に着くと、そこには二、三本の石柱と石材がゴロゴロしているだけです。 [23]</p> <p>Reaching the tip [of Sounion Cape], there were just two or three pillars and fallen stones.</p>
<i>Verdant, vital, wet, flourishing</i>	<i>Desert, desolation, dry, bareness</i>
<p>鬱蒼たる森林 [24] Verdant forests</p> <p>…鬱蒼とした緑に覆われて神社はその中に包みこまれてしまって… [24]</p> <p>The shrine covered by a lush green is wrapped in it.</p> <p>日本では自然木が一番よく生えているところを鎮守の森としました。植物学的に言っても、鎮守の森というのは一番多種類の木が生えている場所だそうです。 [104]</p> <p>In Japan, the place where natural trees grow best are designated as sacred groves. Even from a botanical point of view, it seems that sacred groves are</p>	<p>腰くらいの高さの茨が続いている。 [23] Hip-high shrubs followed one another.</p> <p>照りつける太陽の下、殺風景とも言える光景が広がっていました。 [23]</p> <p>Under the beating sun, a "gloomy" landscape stretched.</p> <p>…キリスト教は元来「砂漠の宗教」でした。 [103]</p> <p>Christianity was originally a "religion of the desert".</p> <p>…キリスト教が入るということは森を切り開くということを意味するのです。だから、教会は必ず開けた所にあります。 [104]</p>

places where most varieties of plants grow.	The introduction of Christianity meant deforesting forests. For this reason, churches are always in open spaces.
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Strictly connected to that is the contrast between Japan's cultural, linguistic, ethnic unity and West/China's plurality, associated in turn with Japan's "racial" purity and West/China's hybridity. This last difference in terms of genetic composition is believed to constitute the incommensurable gap supernaturally separating the two entities. It would be nothing but the consequence of a difference in Japanese and Western/Chinese geographic conformation: the former is characterized by a significative isolation and distance from the Asian continent, engendering Japanese genotypical uniqueness; whereas the latter distinguishes itself for the wide Eurasian continental spaces, encouraging the movements and mixing of neighboring populations.

Tab. 4.2. 'Japanese Homogeneity' and 'Western-Chinese Heterogeneity'

HOMOGENEITY (PURITY)	HETEROGENEITY (HYBRIDISM)
日本は世界で唯一のひとつの文明である [16] Japan is a unitary civilization unique in the world.	他の文明圏の中には、さまざまな国や民族、言語、文化があります… [17] Among other civilizations, there are different cultures, languages, ethnic communities, countries.
…日本だけは一文明、一国家、一言語、一歴史です。 [17, 152] Only Japan is one civilization, one State, one language, one history.	…多様な民族がいるので言葉が通じない… [28] [...] since several ethnic communities co-exist, mutual communication is impossible.
日本文明は日本人しかいません。 [21] Japanese civilization is made of Japanese people only.	…絶えず支配する民族も王朝も変わっている。 [28] Either the dynasties or the ruling ethnic communities change.
日本には異民族の王朝はありません… [30] In Japan there's no dynasty composed of different peoples.	

Tab. 4.3. 'Japanese Insularity' and 'Western-Chinese Continentality'

INSULARITY	CONTINENTALITY
玄界灘を隔てた日本 [21] Japan, separated [from the continent] by the Genkai sea	シナ大陸 [20, 27, 145] Chinese (<i>Shina's</i>) continent
日本は小さな島国 [26] Japan, a little island country.	

世界の八大文明の中の独立した文明 [19] An independent civilization among the eight civilizations of the world.	
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Geographic differences also entail different modalities of subsistence: agrarian and pastoral. The rural origins of the Japanese nation and the importance of rice cultivation in shaping Japan's idiosyncrasies are particularly stressed and put in contrast to the Western "way of horseriders" (*kishidō*). More generally, what is counterposed is the "Japanese agrarian mentality" and the "Eurasian equestrian mentality" (see also Watanabe 1980). It is worth noting that this contrasts sharply with the 1949 "horserider thesis" by Egami Namio (1967), according to which the formation of a nascent Japanese State between the late fourth and early fifth century was determined by the invasion and conquest of the indigenous population by a north Asian, horseriding people (*kiba minzoku kokka*).

Tab. 4.4. 'Japanese Rurality' and 'Western-Chinese Equestrianism'

AGRICULTURE: RURALITY	PASTORALISM: EQUESTRIANISM
<p>…日本は古くから農業を重んじて来た … [154] Japan gave importance to agriculture since antiquity.</p> <p>日本民族を日本民族たらしめる根源と は、まさにこの水田稲作だったと言え ます。 [155] It can be said that the element shaping the Japanese nation has always been rice cultivation.</p>	<p>西洋の騎士道の精神 [57] Western spirit of the horse-rider way</p>

Besides, Watanabe attributes to Japan the quality of harmony, in turn implying the conflicting nature of the Otherness. Japanese society's harmony manifests primarily in its religious and spiritual syncretism, plurality and complementarity, exemplified by the historical relationship between Shintō and Buddhism. These features clash against Western monotheist religions, fighting against each other in the effort of mutually imposing their dogmas by force. More broadly, Japan is typically characterized by the pacification of internal conflicts and the maintenance of social stability and security by virtue of the sole moral

and ethical sense, while the West and China stand out for their endemic wars and disorder among the various people inhabiting their lands and the necessity of guaranteeing security by force.

Tab. 4.5. 'Japanese Harmony' and 'Western-Chinese Conflict'

HARMONY, PACIFISM, VIOLENCE REFUSAL	CONFLICT, BELLICOSITY, VIOLENCE
<i>Religious syncretism, coexistence, complementarity</i>	<i>Dogmism, intolerance</i>
神仏混交の「本地垂迹説」こそ日本の本質 [40] The "doctrine of combinatory thought", fusing Shintoism with Buddhism, is indeed the true essence of Japan. 日本では神社仏閣は喧嘩することがない [41] In Japan, there have never been quarrels between Shintoist shrines and Buddhist temples.	ひとつの思想を押し付ける [110] Imposing a sole thought 喧嘩すること [41] To quarrel クリストが説いた地は今のパレスチナのあたりで…民族虐殺の頻発地でした [56] The area where Christ preached [...] was a land where frequent genocides were perpetrated.
<i>Pacifism, harmony, order</i>	<i>Bellicosity, disorder</i>
…日本は一つの島の中で戦乱というもの比較的少なく、あっても局地的だった… [101] Within the Japanese isles, true wars were relatively few and, even if any, they were local. 戦国時代はありましたが、それでも日本人同士ですからそう無茶なことも出来ない。 [101] The Warring States period occurred, yet such senseless actions couldn't have been committed among Japanese fellow countrymen.	シナでも…ずるい人間、人をたぶらかすような人間が出てきた… [56] Even in China [...] sly persons cheating on their counterparts appeared. 強烈な悪の状況 [57] [There were] severe conditions of atrocity.
<i>Stability by means of moral virtue</i>	<i>Security by means of coercion</i>
…人々の倫理観や道徳観に支えられた治安の良さだった… [120] There was a good stability supported by the moral and ethical sense of people [...]	…セキュリティを強化することによって治安が守られている… [120] Stability is preserved through the strengthening of [coercive] security.

The harmony-conflict dichotomy leads to that of nature-artifice, centered on the opposition between pantheism and monotheism. In Japan a nature-centered worldview dominates, thanks to the development of a pantheist and animist religion having as sole principles the

respect toward nature and ancestors, localism, inclusion, simplicity, equality among genders. By contrast, the Western-Chinese worldview is anthropocentric, thus, artificial: it is detached from nature and expressed through complex, universalizing, exclusivist religions and their theologies, magnificent philosophies and globalism. This dichotomy is further reflected in the architectural opposition between Shintoist wooden and straw-made shrines and Western stone-made temples.

Tab. 4.6. 'Japanese Nature' and 'Western-Chinese Artifice'

NATURE	ARTIFICE
<i>Pantheism/animism, deference toward nature and ancestors, simplicity, localism</i>	<i>Monotheism, detachment from nature, complexity, magnificence, arrogance, universalism, globalism</i>
<p>神道は、とても素朴です。自然志向、先祖崇拝の宗教ですから、大上段に構えた教義など必要がありません。[47]</p> <p>Shintoism is very simple. Since it is a nature-oriented religion venerating the ancestors, it doesn't require teachings from the outside.</p> <p>この島の中にあるものはすべて神様がつくってくれたものとして人々は自然に尊ぶ訳です。[103]</p> <p>People naturally venerate all the things in this isle for having been generated by gods.</p>	<p>不自然な宗教ほど、壮大な神学をつくります。[48]</p> <p>Unnatural religions create magnificent theologies.</p> <p>草木の霊まで吊うという発想は、西洋にあまいない[102]</p> <p>The idea of venerating even the soul of plants does not really exist in the West.</p> <p>神様が地球をつくり、そして、「あなたがたがこれを使いなさい」ということで与えてくれたという発想…[102]</p> <p>The idea that God created Earth and gave it [to men] ordering them to use it.</p>
<i>No gender hierarchy among gods</i>	<i>A male God</i>
<p>…男女の地位上の区別がない…[92]</p> <p>There's no distinction of roles between men and women.</p>	<p>「全能の神は男」というイメージ[92]</p> <p>The image of an "omnipotent male God".</p>
<i>Transcendence of religions</i>	<i>Focusing on one religion</i>
<p>宗教や宗派を超えて自分の精神を磨く…[56]</p> <p>Refining one's spirit by overcoming religion and religious factions.</p> <p>特定の宗教に拠らない、普遍的な道徳観[115]</p> <p>A universal ethic conception, not depending on a particular religion.</p>	<p>…仏教の場合、いちばん尊いのがお釈迦さま、仏さまで、仏さまの教えにいかに近づくのかというのが道となります。儒教では孔子の教え、キリスト教ならばキリストの教えにいかに近づく…[57]</p> <p>In Buddhism, the most venerated thing is Amida, the Buddha, and the way to approach his teachings represents the Way. In Confucianism, how to approach the teachings of Confucius is the Way, while in Christianity it is how to approach Christ's precepts.</p>

<i>Wooden, straw-made architecture</i>	<i>Stone-made architecture</i>
木造茅葺きの金華山神社や末社 [24] The wooden, straw-made shrines.	ギリシャの石造りの社殿 [25] The Greek stone-made temples.

The last dichotomy is sensitivity against rationality. For Watanabe, emotionality and intuitiveness are not just mere prominent attributes of Japaneseness, but indeed the very origin of the Japanese (*nihonjin no genryū*, p. 196). As Merker points out apropos of the nineteenth-century German ethno-populist nationalism's hendiadys "blood and land", ethnic community is seen as an immediate organic element to be experienced by intuition and emotional participation (Merker 2000: 182). As well as the romantics sought the mythical dawning of a nation evoking intuition, Watanabe enhances this modality of experiencing reality, considered as the only suitable for the preservation of Japanese ethnic identity: the emotions triggered by reading aloud indigenous *yamatokotoba*-composed verses represent the highest momentum for grasping Japaneseness through the experience of living, that is the articulation of a set of sounds specific to the Japanese language:

- (4) …昔の日本人は遺伝子を知っていた訳ではなく、直感というか、感性で行っていた。 [154]
[...] the Japanese of the past didn't know about genes, yet they put into practice [the principles of genetics] by sensitivity and intuition.

Conversely, the West and China are characterized by a logical and rational process of knowledge, putting a distance between subject and reality.

The essentialization and dichotomization of reality implies its polarization: Watanabe assigns a positive value to the properties ascribed to Japan and a negative value to those assigned to the Other, polarizing them. Generally speaking, continuity, homogeneity, insularity, harmony, rurality, nature and sensitivity are positively judged, while interruption, heterogeneity, continentality, conflict, pastoralism, artifice and rationality are regarded as negative for being associated with forces hindering the formation and preservation of a national identity. More specifically, in this essay it is possible to point out several examples of reconnotated words - originally neutral words to which a certain connotation is given. The first couple of opposite and polarized

concepts is continuity vs. interruption. In this case, reconnotation is due to the intention of emphasizing Japanese civilization's distinctiveness deriving from the temporal persistence of the same dynastic line:

Tab. 4.7. Reconnotated Lexicon (1)

続く [22, 30, 52, 96, 106, 15, 154, 159, 182]; 存続する [33, 108]; 持ち続ける [16, 26, 68]; 繰り返す [38, 106]; 絶えることが ない [25] To continue; To continue to exist; To con- tinue to have; To repeat; Not to interrupt	生きる [24, 25, 26]; 息づいている [156]; 死んでいない [25]; 残る [22, 26, 33, 122, 181, 194]; 残す [46, 109] To live; To survive; Not to perish; To re- main; To be left
保つ [16, 157, 158, 159]; 守る [89, 106, 154] To preserve; To maintain	継承する [161]; 受け継ぐ [43, 161, 163]; 伝承 [105] To inherit; To succeed; Transmission
変わっていない [25]; 揺らぐことなく [156] To remain unchanged	結びついている [26, 35]; 繋がる [96, 108] To be bounded; To be connected
失う [27, 140 / 喪失する [108]; 失われる [16, 76, 160, 174, 175]; 喪失 [178]; 途絶え す [159, 160] To lose; To be lost; Loss; To be interrupted	崩壊する [182, 185]; 壊れる [179]; 崩れま した [141, 181, 182, 185]; 低下します [140] To collapse; To destroy; To break; To degrade
消える [22, 25, 33, 158, 162]; なくなる [22, 140, 177, 178]; 残りません [162]; 滅ぶ [22, 33, 36] To disappear; To stop existing; Not to remain; To extinguish	変わる [28, 37, 38, 108] / 一変します [121]; 化しています [25]; 替わる [30] To change; To transform; To substitute
継承されていない [33] Not to be transmitted	切り離される [24]; 切られている [96, 131] To come apart; To be separated, erad- icated

For instance:

- (5) …皇統は男系によるという皇位継承の原則となり、以来、こんにちまで一度も揺らぐことなく脈々と息づいているのです。 [156]

[...] the royal line survives without interruption since antiquity until now, without having trembled even once, and it has patrilineality as principle of succession to the throne.

- (6) ようするに、皇室とともに神話の神様が今もなお生きている、それが日本なのです。 [26]

In short, mythological gods and the Royal House are alive even now: this is Japan.

- (7) ひとつの言語が途切れずに長く続くということが、ひとつの洗練に繋がるのです。 [96]

The uninterrupted and long-standing continuity of a sole language is connected to a unique refinement.

The value underlying “to survive”, “to live”, “to continue” and “to be connected” is undoubtedly positive. The concept of “connection” expressed by verbs like *musubu* enshrines a particularly significant value for being at the root of the construction of the sacred in Japan (Raveri 2014: 27). The ancestral union between language and spiritual refinement, *kami* and Royal House, Japanese civilization and Shintoist shrines, is a sacred, inviolable tie. Verbs of continuity are often preceded by temporal expressions as “since”, “until today”, “for long-time”, “even now”, or by emphatic syntagms as “without having trembled even once”, “uninterruptedly”, “without interruption”, “continuously”, “together with”. This reconnotation pairs with certain negatively-reconnotated verbs of “loss” and “waning”:

- (8) ドイツなど、他の文明圏でも、神話の神々の子孫が王家になったという話はあったのですが、みんな消えてしまっている。 [22]

Even in other spheres of civilizations, like Germany, there were myths where the descendants of mythological gods became royal families, yet they all disappeared.

- (9) 日本人のモラル意識は、戦時中の一時、物質不足の時には崩れましたが、それ以外を見れば、基本的には極めて高いと言って良いでしょう。 [141]

Japanese moral consciousness collapsed during wartime, when material resources were scarce. Yet, apart from that moment, it is safe to say that it has been substantially very high.

- (10) 家督という制度は日本文化の核だったと思います。それが破壊されたせいで日本はすっかり変わってしまいました。 [108]

I think that *ie*-hereditary system was the core of Japanese culture. Because of its dissolution, Japan dramatically changed.

In the first sentence, the negativity entailed in the loss is stressed

through the periphrastic *-te shimau*, expressing an irreversible and adverse change. By contrast, in the second example, negativity is attributed to the Japanese and the decline of moral consciousness is minimized by *sore igai* (apart from that moment), stressing the exceptional nature of the event. Finally, the disruption of traditional Japan is expressed through the passive form of *hakai suru*, thereby presuming the existence of a responsible (in Watanabe's rhetoric, the "war profiteers"), and the tragic nature of change is conveyed by *-te shimau* and emphasized by the adverb *sukkari*.

Another important group of words underlies the idea of returning to the origins, a restoration of a past condition regarded as morally truer, purer, more genuine than the present times. These expressions are strongly associated with the axiom of primordality and bring a positive value:

Tab. 4.8. Reannotated Lexicon (2)

根源 [82, 83, 155, 161] / 源流 [196]; 基本 [47, 48]; 根本 [160]; 源 [66, 196]; 基本的な [53, 203]; 本来 [83, 93, 143, 192] / もともと [93, 108, 120] Origin; Foundations; Roots; Source; Spring; Essential; Originally	本質 [22, 25, 26, 27, 40, 41, 45, 101, 125, 132, 160]; 本然 [196]; 姿 [46, 68, 77]; 本当 [55, 60, 109]; 真 [59] The true essence; The innate nature; The true semblance; Authentic; True
原始 [46, 183, 184]; 原始のままの形で [46] / 昔のままの形で [46] Primitive; In its original form	核 [15, 16, 21, 108]; 中核 [27]; 芯 [32]; 柱 [41, 161]; 心 [35, 100]; 魂 [83, 196, 197] Nucleus; Heart; Core; Pillar; Spirit; Soul
古代 [25, 47, 82]; 古い [46, 80, 96, 114]; 古来 [45]; 昔 [101]; 伝統 [76, 160] Antiquity; Ancient; Immemorial times; Olden days; Tradition	立ち返る [78, 95]; 回帰しようする [196]; 取り返している [50] / もどる [106, 108, 196] / 取り戻す [78, 151, 152, 193, 204]; 回復する [3, 150, 199]; 復権 [77, 78]; 復活 [97, 198]; 再発見 [78] To come back; To return; To recover; To restore; Rehabilitation; Renovation; Re-discovery
再現する [102]; 補修 [25]; 建替える [46] To reproduce; To repair; To reconstruct	還す [105]; 返す [106] To recycle; To give back

For instance:

- (11) 日本は男女の愛、夫婦の愛で国がつくられ、その精神が日本人の魂の根源に流れているのです。 [83]

In Japan, the country was created by means of the love between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife. This spirituality flows in the

foundations of the Japanese soul.

- (12) 私が、シナや韓国による靖国神社参拝批判について異議を唱えるのは、あれはわが国の文明の中核に対する攻撃だからです。 [27]

The reason why I raise an objection to China and Korea's critique of official visits to Yasukuni shrine is that this is a direct attack against the core of our country's civilization.

- (13) 神道は、本質的に原始を尊びます。 [46]

Shintoism venerates primitivity in its essence.

- (14) 天皇即位式の際に仮の宮を建てますが、そこで使う木はさらに原始にもどり、皮も剥かず、徹底的に原始の姿にこだわる。 [46]

During a *tenno's* enthronement ceremony, a temporary shrine is erected, but the wood used for this purpose, without even being peeled, is returned to its primitive state and a particular attention is put on its primitive form.

- (15) 商いだけが評価される今の日本に武の復権が求められる [77]

The rehabilitation of the warrior art in contemporary Japan, where only business is praised, is to be pursued.

In the first two examples, *kogen* (sources) and *chūkaku* (heart, core) are associated with Japaneseness, namely “the soul of the Japanese” and “the civilization of our country”. In (11) *kogen* is also associated with the feeling of love, while in (12) *chūkaku* stands in an emotional opposition to China and Korea's critique. Frequently, words evoking the “return to the origins” directly correspond to the ideologically-charged language of emotionality. In (13) and (14) Watanabe aims to particularly emphasize the primordially of ‘Japan’ by virtue of the tie between Shintoism and the royal dynasty. Primitivity is symbolically expressed by the raw materials used in Shintoist architecture reproducing an original spiritual condition. Ultimately, words such as *fukken* (rehabilitation) are often found in the claim of lost indigenous qualities for urging their rediscovery to awake a renewed national character.

Therefore, contrast is the essence of *Nihonjin no hinkaku's* structure, as it is clear also by the number of constructs and argumentative

structures of comparison, such as *kuraberu* to p. 22, *to hikaku suru* to p. 36 (in comparison with); *ni kurabereba* p. 185, *to hikaku shite* p. 185 (if comparing); *hikakuteki ni* p. 91 (comparatively) *to nite imasu* p. 32 (similarly to); *to wa kotonaru* p. 92 (to differ from); *to wa chigau* p. 96 (to differ from); *ni taishite* p. 139 (in contrast to); *ippō de* p. 46 (by contrast). The result is the crystallization of Japanese idiosyncrasy, further emphasized through various periphrastic expressions, for instance:

Tab. 4.9. Periphrastic Expressions of Uniqueness

世界で一番 [102] / 世界最初 [52, 83, 84, 85] The first in the world	世界で唯一 [16, 17, 22, 26] Unique in the world
世界を見渡しても [152] Even if one takes an extensive look to the world	世界的に見ても [3, 17] Even if one considers it from a global perspective
世界でも類のない [52] Without precedents in the world	世界でも類まれな [163] Rare in the world
世界にもあまりありません [99] Absent in the world	世界に例がありません [152] There is no other example in the world
歴史上、例を見ない [69] Historically, no examples are seen	例外的に [174] Exceptionally
比類なき [158] Peerless	他の国と比べるべくもない [98] Unparalleled with other countries
よその文明国にはない [105]; ~国、民族は他にない [80] Absent in other civilized countries; There are no other countries, nations that...	世界の人々を驚愕させる [64]; 世界各地にまで轟き [69] To make people all over the world surprised; To echo in every corner of the world
日本だけ [17, 22, 25, 38, 61, 77, 111, 152]; 日本人しかいません [21] Only Japan; Only the Japanese people	…のように…ない [17, 37] There is no...such as...

Japanese uniqueness is frequently evoked also through specific words such as *tokuchō* (distinctive features), *tokushu* (special), *tokushoku* (idiosyncrasy), *tokubetsu* (particular), *dokujisei* (specificity), *yūichi* (unique), *dokutoku* (unique), *yuniku* (unique), *tokushitsu* (special quality), *mare* (rare). For instance:

- (16) 自然の息吹に敏感に反応し、感動する心は、日本人ならではの繊細な感性を特徴付けるものの一つと言えます。 [197]

It can be said that the spirit of being profoundly emotionally moved and reacting sensitively to a breath of nature is something distinguishing the delicate Japanese-specific sensitivity.

- (17) 日本人独特の美意識 [100]
The unique sense of beauty of the Japanese.
- (18) 日本人独特の自然観 [102]
The unique conception of nature of the Japanese.
- (19) 「日本は世界的に見てもきわめて特殊な国である」… [17]
Japan is a very special country even from a global perspective.
- (20) 日本という国は…極めて稀な文明と言えるのではないのでしょうか。
[22]
The country called “Japan” may be defined as a very rare civilization.
- (21) 有色人種の中で唯一、日本 [61]
Japan, unique among the non-white races.
- (22) …江戸時代には特別な文化をつくっていて… [36]
During Edo period a particular culture was created [...].

The accent on Japanese contrastive diversity with otherness and its particularism is an instrument aimed at fixing primordialist beliefs on Japanese nation such as naturality, sameness, indivisibility and persistence.

- MYSTIFICATION

Mystification of the social and historical reality is an essay’s rhetorical hallmark and consists in stating a commonly well-known fact, then denying it in such a progressively nuanced way to induce the reader to agree with the new message conveyed by the author. For this purpose, Watanabe frequently employs two-folded sentences, where clauses are mutually put in contrast and are introduced by specific linguistic opposing elements, such as *akiraka desu...shikashi* pp. 27, 31, 153 (It is clear that... however...); *tashika desu...shikashi* p. 162 (It is certain that... however...); *...ga...* pp. 22, 27, 28, 48, 121, 122 (It is...but...); *ikken...ga, sō dewa naku...* … p. 93 (At a first glance...yet it is not like that...).

Manipulation especially takes place in relation to the discussion on

the essence of Japaneseness, notably pertaining the Royal House's primordality. By attempting to ground the traditional preservation of male descent on biology, Watanabe tendentiously argues that the "Japanese of the past" were already unconsciously aware of the concept of "genes" and of male superiority over women in the protection of "race", for carrying the Y-chromosome and thus determining the sex. The intent is to allude to the racial purity of the Japanese Royal House by discrediting the theory on its Korean origins:

(23) かつて、皇室には百済あたりから妃が奉られていました。今の天皇陛下も何年か前に、自分の先祖である桓武天皇の後の先祖は百済の皇女だったので、自分にもその血が入っているとおっしゃいました。しかし、遺伝学的に見ると、人間の染色体は男はXY型で、女性がXX型です。性別を左右する役割を持つY染色体は男性にしかありません。男性の天皇(XY)と百済から来た后(XX)の間に男の子(XY)が生まれたとすると、Yは天皇から来て、Xは百済から来たことになります。つまりハーフです。ハーフの天皇が誕生して、この方が日本人女性と結婚する。ここから生まれる子どもが日本人と結婚すると、もう百済の遺伝子はなくなります。[153]

Once, the princesses of Paekche kingdom were used to be offered to the Royal House. Some years ago, even His Majesty Heisei *Tennō* said that, since an ancestor of His forefather Kanmu *Tennō*'s concubine was a royal princess of Paekche, her blood flew in His veins. Yet, genetically speaking, human chromosome is of XY-type in men and XX-type in women. Only men have the Y-chromosome, serving the function of determining the sex. If a male child (XY) is generated from the union between a Japanese sovereign (XY) and a Paekche princess (XX), the Y-chromosome derives from the former and the X-type from Paekche: the child is half-blood. This half-blood *tennō* marries a Japanese-blood woman. When the child born from their union marries a Japanese-blood person, Paekche's genes disappear.

This excerpt is just an example of Watanabe's obsession with blood purity, especially if pertaining the genetic origins of the Royal Family.

Another field of mystification concerns the use of mythology. The author regards *Nihonshoki* 日本書紀 (The Chronicles of Japan, 720 A.D.) as an objective text for its clear distinction between myth and history (pp. 32-33). Not only doesn't the claimed "historical part" of

Nihonshoki always correspond to the historical truth, but at times Watanabe contradicts himself asserting the continuity of myth into history by means of the divine nature of the royal dynasty. This overlapping occurs also in *Kojiki* 古事記 (Records of Ancient Matters, 712 A.D.) referred to either in terms of historical or mythological text. He uses these mythological documents as historical sources to prove Japanese uniqueness by arbitrarily reinterpreting some of their parts. Defining Izanami and Izanagi's sexual act generating the Japanese isles as "romantic love" and not as the pragmatical execution of a divine order, he re-tells the myth to suggest that "Yamato soul" originally roots in the man-woman romantic love, and broadly speaking, in emotionality and peacefulness.⁷

Many are the examples of the constant distortion of reality perpetrated by Watanabe and disseminated throughout the essay. Beginning from a feature concerning Japanese spiritual experience – religious syncretism – he misrepresents it by stating that the thought of interreligious coexistence emerged for the first time in Japan or that Shintoism and Buddhism have always coexisted peacefully (pp. 39-41). Furthermore, he conceives the Japanese as totally pervaded by «a sense of beauty when staring at cherry-trees» (p. 99). This may be basically true, for the cherry flower are part of Japanese traditional aesthetics, but this element is proposedly used to differentiate them from other people, implicitly insinuating that only the Japanese can take delight in their sight and perceive their symbolism. Watanabe uses cherry flower's aesthetics to advocate for Japanese particularism.

These statements often describe phenomena as if they belonged to the paranormal and marvelous. The survival of the culture of *hinaninyō* - ornamental dolls miniaturizing Heian court's sovereigns, attendants and musicians in traditional dress - in today's Japan is regarded as abnormal (*kyōiteki*, p. 98), as if no other peoples preserving

⁷ *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, also referred to as *Kiki* 記紀, are the two oldest documents of Japanese literature, commissioned to transmit the official history of the nascent Japanese State during the Nara period. They both deal with Japan's cosmogony and establish an uninterrupted line between mythical gods and those described as "historical". In the periods of crisis characterizing Japanese modern history, these texts have been often reinterpreted within a nationalist ideological discourse and charged with an aura of sacredness to rediscover the "purity of the Japanese spirit" and its "authentic values", uncontaminated from the "foreign" influence of China (Raveri 2014: 7).

ancient traditions existed. Surprising (*odoroki*, p. 86) is *Genji*'s literary quality and extraordinary (*sugoi*, p. 96) is Japanese children's contemporary reading of *Hyakunin isshu* for the New Year. The Westerners cannot believe (*shin'jirarenai*, p. 120) to the Japanese high degree of morality, being familiar with lower standards. In the past, the Japanese were admired (*kyōtan shita*, p. 65) for the bravery and correctness of their army. Finally, mysterious (*fushigi*, p. 153) is the intuitive knowledge of genetic principles by "people of the past".

- EMOTIONALITY

A prominent rhetorical feature of Watanabe's essay consists in leaning on emotions firstly through the "language of emotionality". On one side, Watanabe evokes positive feelings such as the "emotions of nationalism", namely pride (*hokori*, *puraido*, pp. 16, 78, 100...) of being Japanese and for one's own history and country and self-confidence (*jishin*, pp. 30, 143, 192; *shin'yō*, pp. 172, 175), indispensable for building a national character and feeling love for the country (*kyōdoai*, p. 106; *aikokushin*, p. 189):

(24) 品格というものは、「プライドある人間の行為」を指します。「品格ある人」イコール「プライドある人間の外に表れた形」である、と定義すると、プライドを持つことが、すなわち品格のある人間を形づくる核になると言えるでしょう。[16]

The national character indicates "the actions of proud human beings". If one defines people possessing a national character as the "external form of proud human beings", it is possible to say that possessing pride is the key to form human beings endowed with a character.

Although Watanabe never clarifies what he means by "Japanese national character", this is evoked through emotions, sentiments, attitudes considered as typically Japanese. First and foremost, love (*ren'ai no jō*, pp. 82, 83) is regarded as the foundation of the "Yamato soul": it is the strong affection mutually bonding individuals and, at the same time, a more general inner sensitivity (*jiko no jōsho*, p. 196) - the capacity of being impressed and touched (*kandō suru kokoro*, p. 197) by a natural landscape or a classical poem, the sense of beauty felt by contemplating nature, a sense of deference toward the natural world (*shizen no kankaku*, p. 196) and empathy (*aimidagai*, p. 53) or non-verbal mutual

understanding. Being Japanese also means to be brave (*yūkansa*, p. 64) and self-controlled in harsh times, to be vigorous, respectful and kind (*keii, teinen*, pp. 70, 71), humble toward one’s enemies, honest and righteous (*kisokutadashisa*, p. 65; *meirō*, p. 65), to keep one’s word (*yakusoku o mamoru*, p. 76), to have a strong sense of duty (*girigatasa*, p. 173) and to be reliable. It means to feel shame (*haji*, pp. 173, 174) in deplorable situations when personal honour is at stake and to possess a high sense of morality. In this sense, *hinkaku* appears to be close to its original meaning, that is “dignity” or the condition of moral nobility and physical composure. Simultaneously, Watanabe evokes negative emotions generating in absence of those just depicted. The loss of pride towards one’s Japanese-ness, national identity and character provokes a degradation of the moral sense, the suppression of hope for the future (*shōrai ni kibō o mote nai*, p. 140), a self-masochist vision, cowardice (*okubyō*, p. 142) or a tendency to adopt submissive, apologetic behaviors, a sense of humiliation (*kutsujokutekina kimochi*, p. 124), the loss of self-respect (*sonkei ga fujimi ni jirareru*, p. 124).

Moreover, referring to the national community, the author uses a “language of kinship”, expressions pertaining to the category of the ancestors, grandparents and older generations and, generally, blood ties, as those reported in the table below:

Tab. 4.10. Language of Kinship

自分の先祖 [153]; 自分たちの先祖伝来の言葉 [95] Our ancestors; The words transmitted by our ancestors	わが国 [3, 27] Our country
我々の血 [80]; 日本人の血と汗と涙 [73]; その血が入っている [153]; 天皇の血 [160]; 神武天皇の遺伝子; 神武天皇の血筋 [161] 血の繋がり [161] Our blood; Japanese’s blood and tears; The blood [of the Japanese] flows; <i>Tennō’s</i> blood; <i>Jinmu’s</i> blood; <i>Jinmu’s</i> lineage; Ties of blood	我々の世代 [75] / 私たちの世代 [198]; 私までの世代の日本人 [6]; 私のように戦前を知る日本人が[75]; 我々は子どもの頃から Our generation; The Japanese until my generation; The Japanese who know pre-war times like me; We, since childhood
我々 [163, 198]; 日本民族 [161] We; Japanese nation	魂のふるさ [196] The homeland of [Yamato] soul

For instance, the most relevant expressions are those referring to “our generation”: within the national community of “us” and “our country”, Watanabe indicates the more restricted and emotionally

significant circle of those “Japanese who were children during the 1930s”. All these entities underlie a familistic conception of being Japanese, belonging to the same country and generation. Similarly, *nihon minzoku* implies a sense of brotherly membership to the community of “we Japanese”. The expressions referring to the “blood”, at a crossroads between the language of emotionality and kinship, presume a racist vision of reality. They are of a particular interest for *tennō*’s involvement in the conception of the “Japanese blood” and for the invocation of genetics to pretend and scientifically validate the ontological existence of “our blood”.

Apropos of the renewed importance of the role of the Japanese sovereign in defining a Japanese identity, in the text there are various mythological references connected to the idea of a national identity. Several alleged Japanese peculiarities are conceived as connected to a mythic origin in a biological perspective. The idea that myth has a genetic-biological matrix, like the belonging to a race, clearly transpires throughout the essay. It is firstly the case of the reference to gods, mythology, the age of gods in the *Kojiki*, in relation to the divine character of the Japanese dynasty and its temporal continuity (pp. 22-26). More generally, *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* are treated as valid and reliable historical sources attesting the indissoluble tie between *tennō* and the *kami*. Coherently, Jinmu, a legendary figure, is reinterpreted as a historical person (pp. 159, 161). Myths come into play also when Watanabe asserts Japan’s primacy in terms of gender equality and respect (p. 95). Another example of the ideological use of myths derives from the mention of Christian, Islamic and Judaic monotheist mythology in contrast to Japanese myths, in order to sustain a striking difference in the conception of nature (p. 103). Even in this case, myths would shed light on an alleged truth: on one side, the fact that a male God created Earth and then ordered human beings to exploit it; on the other, that the Japanese isles were generated through divine love. That is to say, Western people are accustomed to dominate nature, whereas in Japan people venerate it. Ultimately, it is significant to remember Watanabe’s mention of the mythological episode concerning the order uttered by Amaterasu to her nephew Niniginomikoto to descend on the “land with irrigated ears of abundant crops and luxuriant rush plains” to demonstrate the capital importance of agriculture in Japan since ancient times and to legitimate its tie to the principle of male descent

for the Japanese Royal House (pp. 154-155).

Definitively, *Nihonjin no hinkaku*'s rhetorical style could be defined as "folktale-like", because the Japanese identity is investigated and narrated through a language and an argumentative style full of suggestions, allusions, mystifications. At the methodological level, Japaneseness is not explored in a well-defined material and theoretical context or from a specific perspective, but through a series of generalist and generalizing considerations.

- MINIMIZATION AND CONTRADICTION

The simplification of reality through the extensive use of these devices often brings either to the minimization of the negative aspects that may jeopardize the paradigm of Japanese uniqueness or contradiction. Strictly connected to Watanabe's revisionism, the former consists, for instance, in reducing the importance of the "period of warriors" and that of militarism in Japanese history (p. 101), to ideologically stress the true nature of the Japanese spirit, that is love, emotionality, pacifism. By minimizing the Chinese influence in the *Genji*, he claims its indigenous "linguistic purity" of this piece of literature (p. 84). By treating internal conflicts like those tracing back to Sengoku period or *bakumatsu* disorder as exceptions (p. 101), he intends to highlight the high morality of *bushi* despite of their possession of weapons. Considering as similarly exceptional the scarce moral consciousness of wartime Japanese due to food shortage (pp. 141-142), their high morality in peaceful times is enhanced. By diminishing the importance of female sovereigns in Japanese history (p. 160), he purports to legitimate the continuation of the principle of patrilineal succession in the Japanese dynastic system.

On the other hand, contradiction is evident in the gap between the author's assertions and reality. The statement that in Japan a deeply-rooted feminist culture exists since antiquity clashes against the fact that, traditionally, the social role of Japanese women was limited to the management of the household, that *Kojiki* reflects the patriarchal power relations of ancient Japan, that Watanabe himself considers the sexual invitation by a woman as equivalent to prostitution in his attempt to justify the natural order of Izanami and Izanagi sexual performance and the primacy of men over women for guaranteeing the continuity of the lineage (pp. 92-93).

Even the so-called “virtues according to the Japanese” (p. 143) or the *bushidō* are actually products of Confucian ideas, whose intellectual origin is the same China that Watanabe disregards. On this point, it is contradictory that he often uses words of a Chinese etymology to depict a claimed peculiarity of Japaneseness. If love is the original feeling of the Yamato soul, why expressing the concept with a Chinese-etymological term such as *ai* 愛 (p. 22)? Similar considerations could be extended to those words referring to the most sacred aspects of Japanese essence, such as ‘celestial sovereign’ (*tennō*), ‘Royal House’ (*kōshitsu*), ‘way of gods’ (*shintō*) (p. 22). The point is not much the use of a *kango* instead of a *wago*, but the claim of the absolute uniqueness and indigeneity of the referent of those words, like the royal institution, without recognizing China’s deep cultural legacy.

Finally, another outstanding example of contradiction lies in the definition of Chinese historical development as “stagnant” and the Japanese one as “evolutive” because of its dynastic continuity (pp. 36-37). However, for Watanabe the Japanese Royal House is a primordial never-changing entity: the generations of Japanese sovereigns are cyclical, they continue to repeat the same pattern, which is thereby static, it is ‘Japan’ itself. This non-evolutive conception of Japan and of the Japanese recalls the ancient Japanese notion of *yō* (cyclic time generation) which *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* rest (dalla Chiesa 2009: 31, 34). In ancient Japan, time was conceived as the eternal repetition of the same temporal segment, while history in terms of the following of unrepeatable, irreversible events did not exist (dalla Chiesa 2009: 34).

- THE CONSTRUCTION OF A STRAWMAN

The essay is structured on the constant research of strawmen, purportedly-fabricated enemies through which one may fictitiously assert one’s own nationalist claims and speculations. Strawmen are pretexts, declarative statements deriving from a distorted, manipulated and at times conspirative interpretation of history in order to impose a certain ideology. Suggesting that the abrogation of the “Imperial Rescript on Education” (*Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo*, 1890) in 1948 caused the loss of Japanese morality or that Japanese postwar education rests on a negative image of Japan and the Japanese popularized by pro-soviet rightwing extremists are examples of strawmen, because not only do they misinterpret historical reality, but

they are statements ideologically conceived as springboards to urge the compelling need for a dramatic revisionist turn in Japanese politics. Actually, the mother of all strawmen, that is ultimately believed to constitute the main obstacle to Japanese national character's restoration, is the claim that it is the Japanese themselves that constitute the real hindrance in contemporary Japanese social problems because of their self-denigratory attitude. This is typically a false issue defined as such solely by Watanabe: it exists only to pounce on it.

- BANALIZING THE NATION-NESS

Ultimately, proceeding by simplifications, Watanabe approves a *modus operandi* that ends up by banalizing the reality. The ultimate object of banalization is the content of 'Japanese nation' or 'Japaneseness', at the linguistic and conceptual levels. While some of the linguistic expressions Watanabe trivializes for not explaining their meaning or using as common vocabulary - like *nihonjin no kansei* p. 196 (Japanese sensitivity), *nihonjin no jūtakujiō* p. 101 (Japanese conditions of livelihood), *nihon no fūdo* p. 48 (Japanese landscape), *wareware* 我々 pp. 163, 198 (we), *waga kuni* pp. 3, 27 (our country), *nihon to iu kuni* pp. 16, 22, 36, 38, 43, 65, 161 (the country called "Japan") - are recurring, others are formed in part with stereotyped elements, in part with new information added by the author. It is the case of the many expressions composed of *watashitachi no/ jibuntachi no, nihonjin no* (our, of the Japanese) followed by a noun, such as *nihonjin no kokoro* pp. 35, 100 (Japanese spirit), *jibun no senzo* p. 153 (our ancestors), *nihonjin no dōtoku* p. 109 (Japanese morality), *nihonjin no chi to namida* p. 73 (Japanese tears and blood). By constructing these expressions with a known element and a new one, without clarifying their meaning, they are banalized to the extent that they are disguised as common linguistic expressions.

As in Suzuki, the most banalized concept is that of "we Japanese". The possessive adjective 'our' (*watashitachi, jibuntachi*) takes for granted the notion of "national community", by presuming the existence of an extended group of people who define themselves as Japanese. In the essay, Watanabe never clarifies the criteria of national belonging, but he voluntarily leaves them indefinite since the criterion of blood, primarily preferred, is indefinite by nature. Watanabe reduces Japanese identity to a "blood", "genetic" issue. He suggests its

intuitive character by means of indeterminate but strongly connotated expressions as *nihonjin no idenshi* pp. 196, 204 (Japanese genes), *wareware no chi* p. 80 (our blood), *nihonjin no senzaiishiki* p. 109 (Japanese subconscious), *nihonjin no seishin* p. 15 (Japanese spirit), and by underlying it to any essentialist expression and to the discussion on *tennōsei* sacredness. Likewise, the indetermined expression *nihon no yamatokotoba bungaku* (Japanese literature in *yamatokotoba*/in Yamato language) suggests the existence within Japanese literature of a specific strand composed only of etymologically-Japanese words or words entirely written in the archaic Yamato language. By inserting in *nihon no bungaku* (Japanese literature) the referent ‘*yamatokotoba*’, the ideological message is conveyed more smoothly and it is assimilated in a simpler fashion. A last example is represented by two expressions referring to specific Japanese perspectives introduced by the denominational adjective *nihonjin no* (of the Japanese) - *nihonjin no shizenkan* (Japanese vision of nature) or *nihonjin no dōtukan* (Japanese vision of morality). These expressions are not problematic *per se*, because it is possible to identify a conception of nature and a moral perspective peculiar to Japanese traditional thought. Yet, they imply the tight relation between worldview (*sekaikan*) and race (*nihon minzoku*): Japanese vision of nature and morality derive from their history, culture, ecology, religion, but even before that by the combination of the “Japanese genes”. Banalization consists once again in avoiding to define the real meaning and implication of these expressions, presuming the existence of a Japanese race.

2) TEXT

- EVOCATION OF THE IDEAL CULTURE

A first instrument used to hint at how the Japanese society should be is represented by universalizing and moralizing sentences expressed by assertive constructions such as *beki* pp. 75, 76, 78, 83, 98, 102, 123, 184, 199, 203 (should); *nakereba narimasen* pp. 17, 132, 153, 188 (must); *hazu desu* pp. 40, 61, 67, 73, 75 (must (be), expected (to be)); *hō ga ii to omoimasu* p. 152 (I think it’s better that); *hitsuyō ga arimasu* pp. 28, 152, 188 (it is necessary that); *jōdō desu* p. 160 (it is common sense that); *koto ga taisetsu da to kangaemasu* p. 18 (I think it is important that). For instance:

- (25) 日本は一つの文明であって、他の国のように、大きな文明圏の中の小さな文化ではないのだということを、日本人自らがきちんと知ることが必要ですし、それをきちんと教えることが大切だと考えます。

[17]

I do believe that the Japanese need to properly know that Japan is a unitary civilization and not a little culture within a large sphere of civilization like other countries, and I think that it is of paramount importance to accurately teach this to them.

- (26) 「四大節」の歌などは、今こそ回復すべきではないかと思えます。

[199]

I think that right now we should restore the “Songs of four festivities”.

- (27) 日本人自身が東京裁判の本質を正確に知らなければなりません。

[132]

The Japanese should know accurately about the true essence of the Tōkyō Trial.

- (28) 平安朝の文学では『枕草子』の中から「春はあけぼの…」あたりを少し入れる。難しいところは入れなくてもいい。『源氏物語』も難しいので最初のページを入れるくらいでいいのです。あるいは、面白いところを数ページだけ入れる。 [193]

As for Heian literature, one may include some sentences of the sort: «In spring, dawn is the best moment», from the *Makura no sōshi*. The difficult parts could also be omitted. Since *Genji monogatari* is likewise difficult, it is okay just to insert the first pages. Alternatively, only some pages from the parts of interest may be included.

- (29) 皇室は「家産」ではなく「種」が保たれなければならない [157]

In the Royal House the “seed” and not the “household’s assets” must be preserved.

- (30) 彼にとって、日本人さえいなければ、二十世紀から二十一世紀、あるいは二十二世紀までも、自分たちだけが主人で、有色人種は召し使いか奴隷にし得たはずなのです。 [61]

Hadn’t the Japanese existed, white man could have dominated unchallenged over all the colored races between the twentieth to the twenty-

first, and indeed until the twenty-second century.

It is important to pay attention to the content transmitted in these assertions. The first five examples refer to nationalist claims of a pedagogical nature, that is the necessity for the Japanese to re-discover certain aspects of Japaneseness – unity, independence, national songs, history, classical literature, the royal family’s racial continuity. In this sense, verbs like *shiru* (to know), *oshieru* (to teach), *kaifukusuru* (to restore), *tamotsu* (to preserve) appearing in these sentences are significant for being semantically reconnotated. Even intensifiers such as *kichinto* / *kichintoshita* きちんとした (properly), *seikaku ni* (correctly), *ima koso* (right now), are used to increase the degree of the proposition’s assertiveness. In the last sentence, Watanabe raises himself as spokesperson of a “Western point of view” expressed with an imperative tone (*hazu na no desu*): the effect is the universalization of the stated content – Western aggressivity and bellicosity and non-Western world’s victimization.

Many similar propositions end with the strongly assertive copular expressions *de aru* and *da*, reinforcing the universal character of the statement:

(31) 日本はひとつの文明である [16]

Japan is a unitary civilization.

(32) 韓国には韓国文化、あるいは百済文化、高麗文化、新羅文化がある。

[17]

In South Korea, there is the Korean culture, or alternatively, the Paekche, Goryeo, Silla cultures.

(33) …人間の最も根源的な宗教の形が、今もなお日本では生きているのです。 [25]

The most primitive form of human religion [...] still survives in Japan.

(34) 古代日本の神様は『古事記』や『日本書紀』を見ればわかるように、皇室と分かち難く結びついている。 [25]

The gods of ancient Japan, as one may understand looking at *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, are indissolubly tied to the Royal House.

(35) 現在、世界の国際法を専門にする学者の中で、東京裁判を有効だと認める人は一人もおらず、無効であるというのが定説になっています。

[132]

Today, among scholars of the world specialized in international law, not only nobody recognizes the Tōkyō Trial's validity, but it is an established opinion that it was ineffective.

In the first two examples, Watanabe states, as if it were an absolute truth, the dichotomy between Japan, a uniform civilization, and Korea, a heterogenous entity composed of different cultures. In the following sentences, this universalizing tone is more evident when he defines Shintoism as “the most primitive form of human religion”, unique in the world; when he claims the legitimacy of the tie connecting the Japanese dynasty to mythological gods attested by *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, in turn treated as historical documents; ultimately, when he unconditionally sustains the invalidity of the Tōkyō Trial by mentioning unnamed “specialists in internazional law”.

Moreover, authority is also conferred through expressions suggesting the existence of a “Japanese normality”, as the examples in the table show:

Tab. 4.11. Expressions of Japaneseness

日本人にとって [129, 143] According to the Japanese	これがなければ日本人ではない [46] Without this, you are not Japanese
日本人として [16, 172, 173, 182, 191, 204]; 日本民族として [161] As Japanese / Japanese nation	日本なら [46, 102, 204] / 日本だって [195]; 日本人なら [46, 197] In the case of Japan; In the case of the Japanese
日本人が日本人である限り [197] As long as the Japanese are Japanese	日本人であること [6, 197] The fact of being Japanese
日本人の多く [3] Many Japanese	…常道です [160] It is normal that...

These expressions allude to the existence of a canon of Japaneseness, a common sense corresponding to Watanabe's opinions and statements. For instance, the construction *jōdō desu* would imply a dif-fused way of thinking, that is the correctness of the dynastic succession principle by male descent in the Japanese Royal House. Watanabe operates an ideological and arbitrary identification between his judging self and the consciousness of the “average Japanese” channeling into,

for him, a common and unitary worldview. For example, the expression *nihonjin ni totte no tokume* p. 143 (the virtue according to the Japanese) is used in relation to the “Imperial Rescript on Education”. Far from representing a unitary ethic-moral vision shared by all the Japanese intended as a national community, the Rescript was the product of the Meiji elitist oligarchy. However, not only does Watanabe claim to speak in the name of all the nineteenth-century inhabitants of the Japanese islands (Ainu and Ryukyuan populations included), but even in the name of an alleged national consciousness that at that time simply did not exist. He thereby intentionally confuses his ideology with the historical reality. Another example:

(36) 「日本人として恥ずかしいことはしない」という価値観 [172]

A value conception according to which “as a Japanese, shameful actions must not be committed”.

This long noun phrase implies the idea of the existence of a unitary and a-contextual Japanese value conception and the specifically-Japanese nature of the social value of shame. *Nihonjin toshite* and other similar expressions as *nihonjin no ōku* (many Japanese) or *nihonjin ga nihonjin de aru kagiri* (as long as Japanese are Japanese) are empty from a denotative point of view: how many and who are the “many Japanese” the author speaks of or what does it mean “to be Japanese”? Watanabe never clarifies this point; what it matters is merely connotation – the emotionally positive value about a normative Japanese-ness these expressions underlie. Sometimes Watanabe refers to himself collectively as “the Japanese”:

(37) 日本人は「いい教えを用いて自分の心を磨けばいいんだ」と考えてきたのです。 [57]

The Japanese came to think that: «It is okay to polish one’s spirit by making use of good teachings».

(38) これが、日本人をどのくらい屈辱的な気持ちにさせたか計り知りません。 [124]

I cannot judge to what extent [the loss of pride for their history] has humiliated the Japanese.

In the former sentence, the Japanese are the subject believed to express the content in the brackets, while in the latter Watanabe takes for granted the existence of a feeling of humiliation among the average Japanese. In both cases, a mystification of reality takes place by essentializing and decontextualizing the category of the Japanese, and by presenting a false problem.

Lastly, *Nihonjin no hinkaku* is marked by the reiteration of evocative keywords or expressions stressing Japanese diversity, superiority and extraordinariness, such as those reported in Table 4.9: *sekai de ichiban*, *sekai ni mo amari arimasen*, *yoso no bunmeikoku ni wa nai* or expressions of uniqueness as *nihonjin dokutoku* (unique to the Japanese). They shape reality's perception by presenting as true, natural and undiscussable Watanabe's ideological beliefs.

- INDETERMINATENESS

A rhetorical strategy increasing the mystifying character of the essay is indeterminateness, in relation to the beliefs on the Japanese Royal House's continuity and primordality. This strategy is accomplished using grammatical expressions vehiculating temporal imprecision or referring to a mythical past and a golden age, as reported in the following table:

Tab. 4.12. Indeterminate Temporal Expressions

神話からして [93]; 神話時代から、こんにちまで [22, 37] Since the mythology; Since the era of myths until now	古代から [92, 106] / 古くから [154, 162] / 昔から [105]; 古来 [197] Since antiquity; In antiquity
神武天皇から今上天皇まで [160] From Jinmu <i>tennō</i> until the current <i>tennō</i>	日本国始まって以来 [150] Since the foundation of Japan as a country
旧約聖書の時代から…こんにち至るまで [56] Since the time of the holy scriptures until now	二千年以上、百二十五代にわたる [160-161] Passing through more than twenty-five generations, more than two thousand years
以来こんにちまで [156]; 二千年 [152, 153]; 二千年以上に渡り、今もなお [159] Since then until now; Since two thousand years; Since more than two thousand years until now	何百年（も）の間 [52, 60, 109]; 二百数十年もの間 [141]; 五十万年くらい [182]; 二千年以上…こんにちまで [161] For many hundred years; For two thousand years and several decades; For almost five million years; For more than two thousand years until now

千八百年およそ二千年ぐらい [152]; 千年ほど [85]; 五百年ぐらい [162] Around one thousand eight hundred or two thousand years; About one thousand years; Almost five hundred years	今から千五、六百年前 [96]; 千年前…現代まで… [98]; 五百年前後 [152]; 千五百年以上前に [96] Before five, six hundred years from now; Before one hundred years...until now...: Before almost five hundred years; Before more than one thousand five hundred years
九百年以上も前 [87]; 数百年前に…こんにちまで [25]; 何年前に [153] More than nine hundred years ago; Hundreds of years ago until now; Some years ago	かつて [25, 52, 60, 78, 108, 153] / 当時 [122, 139, 166, 193] / 昔 [32, 33, 178, 185, 194] Once

Two significant examples of indeterminate sentences are the following:

(39) 日本が二千年続く王朝であることに誇りを持つ [152]

Japan is proud that its ruling dynasty continues to exist since more than two thousand years.

(40) ひとつの王朝が、どんなに短く見ても千八百年、二千年ぐらい続いている国は、世界に例がありません。 [152]

There is no other example in the world of countries where one dynasty continues at least since around one thousand and eight hundred or two thousand years.

Although these statements are very similar to each other and the message conveyed is identical, the respective timespans about the origin of the Japanese dynasty do not coincide. In the first case, Watanabe speaks of a two-thousand-year-old history, while in the second he is even less precise for adding the adverb “almost” to the same interval and then reducing it to one thousand and eight hundred years, preceded in turn by *donna ni mijikaku mite mo* (at least). Not only does Watanabe individuate the origins of the Japanese dynasty in an indeterminate epoch, but the timespans he advocates are two historical fakes, since the Japanese dynasty historically emerged with a certain degree of certitude only since the fifth century A.D. (Sansom 1974: 41-43), thus dating back to little more than one thousand six hundred years.

Here again a great deal of vagueness is poured on the Royal House:

- (41) …日本では、最初の皇帝とされる神武天皇の遺伝子が二千年以上に渡り、今もなお続いている。 [159]

In Japan, the genes of Jinmu, considered to be the first Japanese sovereign, continue to be transmitted to this day since more than two thousand years ago.

- (42) 神武天皇から今上天皇まで、二千年以上、百二十五代にわたる天皇は、すべて男系です。つまり、「女性」天皇はいても、「女系」天皇は一人もいません。 [160]

From Jinmu *tennō* to the present *tennō*, Japanese sovereigns, passing through one hundred and twenty-five generations, have followed a patrilineal descent for more than two thousand years. That is, although female *tennō* did exist, no sovereign of a matrilineal descent ever did.

Here the claimed timespan is raised to more than two thousand years. In the former proposition, this temporal expression is connected to a historical fake institutionalized by the Japanese official dynastic calendar: Jinmu *tennō* as the first sovereign of Japan. As previously seen for Suzuki, this assertion is a fake: Watanabe reproduces the Meiji government's ideology attempting to historicize Jinmu, in order to sacralize and wrap with a mysterious aura the origins of the Royal House. This indeterminateness is fostered by means of the obscure expression "Jinmu's genes" and the impersonal construction *to sareru* (to be said). The ideology on the biological continuity of the Japanese dynasty is further enhanced by the emphatic adverb *ima mo nao* (even now) and the verb *tsuzuku* (to continue). Even in the latter sentence, the temporal expression *nisen nen ijō* (more than two thousand years) is associated with the same historical forgery expressed by *hyakunijūgodai ni wataru* (passing through one hundred and twenty-five generations): it refers to the official dynastic chronology including several legendary sovereigns and other controversial figures (Sansom 1974: 41-45). In any case, the origin of the Royal House, Japan and the Japanese is situated in pre-historical times, before the entering of 'Japan' into history with the adoption of a writing system, when it was not corrupted by any foreign influence yet.

As for the "golden age" is concerned, here there are some examples:

- (43) 昔は学校の先生には手を上げることは絶対に出来ないという意識が子どもにありましたが、今は野放図になっていて、平気で先生をも攻撃する。 [178]

Once, a consciousness among children of absolutely raising one's hands at teachers existed, but today the situation is out of control and they even attack them.

- (44) 今、二十代、三十代くらいの人でニートやフリーターが増えているという現象も、社会が動物園化していることの結果だと思います。昔はニートだったら餓死しています。今は、親が食べさせているか、あるいは社会保障で何とかしてしまいます。 [185]

I think that even the contemporary phenomenon of NEET and *freeter's* increase among twenties and thirties is the result of social zoification. Once, if you were a freeter, you would starve. Today, parents feed or save children with social welfare.

- (45) 日本にはかつて世界に誇るべき武の伝統がありました。 [78]

In the past, Japan had a warrior tradition the world envied us.

- (46) 戦後の日本が喪失したものはさまざまですが、意外に指摘されないのは、かつて日本にはあった家督制度相続の制度です。 [108]

Postwar Japan lost several things, among which the hereditary *ie*-based system – fact that is often overlooked.

The common feature is the evocation of an indetermined, mythic past by means of *katsute* (at that time) and *mukashi* (once), carrying a positive and nostalgic value and contrasting the negativity of the present time. Watanabe's ideology comes to surface when seeking a referent to these adverbs: while “now” clearly refers to the author's present, “once” generically alludes to an ideal past when everything worked well. This indistinct past often coincides with the “prewar period”, which Watanabe nonetheless temporally stretches infinitely. The objects of comparison between past and present are similarly controversial. In the first example, it seems as if today students hit their teachers regularly. Subsequently, Watanabe compares the antecedents and the developments of phenomena of recent origins - young persons without education, employment or training (NEET) and young

persons living on part-time jobs (*freeters*) - without questioning the real causes underlying this but instead blaming the decay of social values, as in the case of *ie*-system's disappearance in the last sentence. In addition, in (45) it seems that the entity 'Japan' has always been characterized by a warrior tradition.

Another instrument used to increase indeterminateness from a stylistic point of view is the frequent use of probabilistic and impersonal grammatical constructions as those reported in the following table:

Tab. 4.13. Probabilistic and Impersonal Grammatical Constructions

<p>でしょう [16, 21, 44, 68, 92, 98, 103, 105, 109, 148, 173, 184, 203]; だろうと思います [31, 42, 76, 107, 132, 149, 156, 174, 175]; ではないでしょうか [76, 91, 100, 109, 140, 203]; ではないだろうと思います [76, 154]; 可能性があります [80, 86, 132] Probably; I think that probably; It is not that; I think that it is not that; There is the possibility that</p>	<p>かもしれません [21, 73, 78, 80, 109, 203]; と言えるのかもしれません [91] / と言えるでしょう [32, 44, 47, 69, 176, 191]; と言えるのではないのでしょうか [22, 38, 197]; と言ってよいでしょう [43, 57, 76, 85, 188, 196]; と言ってよいだろうと思います [27, 75] May/might; It may be said that; It is not that maybe it can be said that; Maybe it is safe to say that; I think that maybe it can be said that</p>
<p>と言っても過言ではないでしょう [80]; と言わざるを得ないでしょう [37] It is not maybe an exaggeration to say that; Maybe it cannot but say that</p>	<p>という [35, 99, 145, 146, 174] / と言います [49, 59, 68, 140, 86, 164, 175] / と言われます [16, 37, 101]; と言えます [52, 87, 90, 95, 106, 113, 141, 158, 197] It is said that; It can be said that</p>
<p>と考えられます [80, 81, 82, 92, 97, 102, 132, 178] / とされます [88]; と推測されます [81]; 知られています [158, 195]; 教えられた [140] It is thought that; It is supposed that; It is well-known that; It is taught that</p>	<p>そうです [95, 104, 120, 126, 163, 164] / ようです [64, 89, 90, 188] It seems that</p>

For instance:

(47) 朝鮮文化もあれば揚子江文化もあるかもしれませんが、朝鮮半島までは一つの文明圏です。 [21]

Let's even suppose that as there is a Korean culture, probably there is also the culture of the Blue River, but until the Korean peninsula the sphere of influence is only one.

(48) なぜそこまで日本人を信用するのかというと、明治以来、イギリスで本を買って代金を払わなかった日本人はいなかったからだそうです。

[173]

The Japanese were trusted to that extent because it seems that since the Meiji era there has been no Japanese who did not paid off the books bought in England.

(49) それで、朝貢という習慣がある国へ天皇皇后を出した宮沢内閣は、日本国始まって以来の大きな過ちをしでかしたと言ってよいと思います。 [150]

I think that it is safe to say that Miyazawa's cabinet is guilty of the biggest fault since the foundation of Japan as a country, that is the envoy of the *tennō* and his bride to a country [China] where there is the custom to pay a tribute.

(50) 大和言葉は…我々の血と同様に古いものだと考えられます。 [80]

It is thought that Yamato words [...] are words as old as our blood.

(51) 当時の天皇は非常に貧しかったということが知られています。 [157]

It is well-known that the sovereigns of the past were very poor.

In the first two examples, Watanabe speculates on Korea's belonging to Chinese civilization and its fundamental diversity with Japan, and on Japanese sense of duty. He is approximative in stressing the plurality of continental civilizations in comparison with monoethnic and monocultural Japan and in generalizing the non-sociological category of the "Japanese who since the Meiji era went to the UK and bought a book". In the third sentence, indeterminateness is reinforced by the vague temporal expression of the generical pastime *nihonkoku hajimatte irai* (since the foundation of Japan as a country). In the last two propositions, the use of the impersonal passive is aimed at disguising the statement as true by inducing the reader to give sense and legitimacy to the message. Hence, author's responsibility is diminished and turned to non-determined agents. By means of *to kangaeraremasu* (it is thought that) and *shirarete iru* (it is well-known that), the idea of the existence of a blood community among the Japanese and that wealth has never been a distinctive feature of the Japanese dynasty are vehiculated as common knowledge.

In *Nihonjin no hinkaku* there are many conceptually obscure expressions. It is primarily the case of the numerous essentialist expressions

referred to the 'Japanese', 'China', 'Korea', 'Westerners'. *Meiji ikō no nihonjin* p. 5 (the Japanese since the Meiji era onwards), *nihonjin no senzai ishiki* p. 109 (Japanese consciousness), *nihonjin no kansei* p. 196 (Japanese sensitivity), *nihonjin no idenshi* pp. 196, 204 (Japanese genes), *shina no dōtoku* p. 113 (Chinese system of values), *kudara no idenshi* p. 154 (Kudara's genes), *seyō no kagaku* p. 61 (Western society), *seyōjin no mentariti* p. 38 (Western mentality) are just a few examples of expressions vaguely evocating Japanese-ness, Chinese-ness, Western-ness, not clear from a denotative point of view. Even Japan's characterizations as *chiisana kuni* p. 77 (little country), *tennen shigen toboshii no kuni* p. 77 (country poor in natural resources), *shimaguni* p. 91 (island country), *tōtoi kuni* p. 31 (sacred country), *tōji no nihon* p. 147 (Japan of the past), are not semantically clear-cut expressions describing in a neutral and literal way certain features of Japan's territory, but they are ideologically oriented and thereby not intuitively understandable. They underlie the idea of Japan's industrial and technological greatness albeit being territorially limited and poor in natural resources; its isolation from several perspectives; its exceptionalism for the continuity of its dynastic line; the nostalgia for an emotionally positive past.

Conceptual disorder is even more evident when one remarks the use of terms of a non-Japanese conceptual origin, yet describing phenomena stressed as "typically Japanese" or reinterpreting cultural and historical facts. The concepts underlying *bunmei* 文明 (civilization), *bunka* 文化 (culture), *hatten* 発展 (development), *mikai* 未開 (underdevelopment), *jinshu* 人種 (race), and *minzoku* 民族 (nation, ethnic community) were imported in Japan from the European intellectual tradition during the late nineteenth century. For instance, by 'civilization' Watanabe implicitly refers to a universal and broad concept symbolized by France, while by 'culture', a more particularistic, limited and localist concept represented by Germany (p. 18). Nonetheless, he never defines these concepts, but employs them ideologically in order to highlight Japan's independence as a civilization apart from the constellation of Chinese-like cultures as the Korean culture. Similarly, he employs the classification of national states in "developed countries" or "civilized countries" and "underdeveloped countries", to assert China's evolutive inferiority in comparison with Japan, a modern nation-state with a clear historical progression (pp. 26, 36, 38, 61). Watanabe also mentions the ambiguous and strongly debated concept

of “race” (*jinsu*, pp. 49, 71, 73, 139) within the ideological conflict with the West: he depicts “non-white races”, the Japanese included, as victims, and the “white men” as the oppressor (p. 49, 61, 67, 72-75, 190,). However, he falls in the psychological attitude of self-Orientalism, for not questioning the Eurocentric paradigm of the existence of human races and the isophormism between biology and culture, by accepting the Western categorization of the Japanese as an Asian, non-white, yellow, mongolic race.

“National character” (*hinkaku*, p. 3) and “national pride” (*hokori*, p. 16) are two other widely employed concepts referring to a complex and long-standing European intellectual tradition - nationalism. Interestingly, Watanabe appropriates of a language, a frame, a *modus operandi* originally foreign to the Japanese tradition, in order to advance claims in the name of typically Japanese and indigenous values. Here Watanabe seems to echo Fichte: «to have character and to be German [*Charakter haben und deutsch sein*] undoubtedly mean the same; and the thing has no special name in our language, because it is intended to proceed immediately from our very existence without any knowledge or reflection on our part» (Fichte 1807-1808/1922: 208). Besides, *hinkaku* is not clearly defined, but it is vaguely associated with the “Japanese spirit”.

Moreover, the author exploits several concepts to anachronistically and a-contextually reinterpret some aspects of Japanese history, enhancing its greatness. Therefore, he reinterprets the whole Heian period through the lens of a feminist conceptualization by stating that in Japan a flourishing female culture had already existed long before it developed in the West (pp. 52, 86, 87, 93). He also reinterprets the *Genji monogatari* through modern literary and sociological (feminist) categories, as a novel exceptionally authored by a woman and *Kojiki*'s myth of generation of the Japanese isles as an assertion of the principle of complementarity between man and woman and the existence in Japan of respect for women and gender equality since ancient times (p. 94). The contemporary concepts of “recycling” and “ecology” are likewise used to ideologically characterize the Edo period, by declaring Japan's development of ecologist practices a precursor of the 1960s' Western ecological movement (p. 105). If recycling and ecology are original Japanese concepts, why using then words of a foreign origin (*katakana*) to assert Japanese primacy?

Ultimately, the essay is characterized by a confused, non-linear and incoherent exposition of its topics and argumentations and by repetitive digressions. The contents intended to be vehiculated are never elaborated; contrarily, they are diluted through a myriad of scattered statements and dense references, examples, anecdotes, digressions, citations, by making it difficult to maintain the line of discussion and diverting the reader's attention from the significance and truthfulness of the transmitted ideas. Watanabe compensates for the poverty of argumentation by way of his repetitive and vague rhetoric. For instance, instead of deepening the topic about the existing differences between Japanese and Chinese civilizations introduced in the incipient lines of a section and in its title, he digresses on China and classical Chinese language's features (pp. 28-29). Watanabe never really compares Japan and China, but he states at once that Chinese history is not such long as it is usually believed because of its cyclic dynastic change. At the end of the section, the reader is induced to forget Watanabe's initial purpose and what remains is a set of anti-Chinese commonplaces. At the beginning of another section, the main topic appears to be the connection between Japanese traditional dance and lifestyle, but the author immediately turns his attention to *bonsai* as an expression of Japanese refinement, love for the small and the details (pp. 100-102). The aim is to fake a textual coherence to diffusely assert ideas of particularism. Elsewhere, Watanabe initially claims the need of self-defense for Japan, subsequently denigrating an indistinct enemy who would prevent any constitutional revision (pp. 144-146), instead of explaining the reasons why Japan should rearm. This way of proceeding is extended to the structure of the third entire chapter, where the expectation from the title is to find observations on Yamato words (pp. 80-120). Not only is this disregarded, but the chapter is an example of an assemblage of the most diverse issues, mentioned only *en passant*: from Hōjō Masako (1157-1225) as the embodiment of the "way of women" vis-à-vis *bushi* (pp. 90-92) to the *hinaninyō* as expression of Heian culture (pp. 97-98); from the Japanese predilection for cherry trees (pp. 99-100) to Japan as an "ecological country" (pp. 105-106), and so forth.

- LACK OF A SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS AND METHODOLOGY

Broadly speaking, *Nihonjin no hinkaku* follows the classic *Nihonjiron's modus operandi*: a scientific apparatus composed of

citations, notes, bibliographical references, data, statistics, hypothesis validation, inter-social comparisons between relevant sub-populations is totally absent.

Hardly ever does Watanabe mention the sources of the books or excerpts he cites, whereas those quoted are presented as reliable or expert, although many of them should not be considered as part of scientific publications or, if so, they are used in a distorted way. Most of his sources are of a non-specialistic nature: *Nihonjinron* texts, essays, articles; scattered statements by foreigners on Japan; illustrative materials as the titles of poetry anthologies, individual poems and words; personal episodes of everyday life, impressions, conjectures, observations, generalizations; passages of mythological texts; statements of historical Japanese and foreign characters; excerpts from newspapers; historical episodes; laws; TV programs; past nationalist slogans; anecdotes. They are frequently introduced by repetitive formulas as those reported in the table below:

Tab. 4.14. Introductory Formulas of Exemplar Anecdotes

<p>…という印象はありませんでした [122]; …というのが私の印象です [121]; …という感じになったのが… [121]; ここから感じられるのは…のイメージです [155]</p> <p>There was not the impression that...; It is my impression that...; I started to feel that...; What it can be perceived from that is the image of...</p>	<p>次のようなエピソードもあります [68]; …という事件がありました [177]; こういうこともありました [133]; …ことがよくありました [97]; …という話からも分かるように [104]; …という話があります [163]</p> <p>There's even the following episode...; The following accident happened...; Even a similar fact happened; It often happened that...; As one may understand from the anecdote...; There is the following anecdote...</p>
<p>たとえば [4, 5, 56, 57, 59, 63, 81, 82, 91, 105, 137, 139, 144, 159, 176, 192, 196]; わかりやすい一例をあげましょう [30]</p> <p>For instance...; I will provide an easy example to understand</p>	<p>…を実感したことがあります [23]; …を実感しました [172]; …たことがあります [183]; そういう体験をした後で [24]</p> <p>It happened to have the experience of; I experienced...; It happened to me...; After having done such an experience...</p>
<p>子どもの頃の記憶で [120]; 私が子どもの頃は… [140]</p> <p>In my memories of childhood...; When I was a child</p>	<p>…習わしがありました [67]; …という風習がありました [103]; ある時 [164, 169]</p> <p>There was the habit / custom of...; Once</p>

これは余談ですが… [98] Making a digression...	分かりやすくするために話を具体的に しましょう [160] To make the understanding simple, I want to make the discourse concrete.
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For instance, in line with the dichotomization between Japan and the West, Watanabe makes use of many antithetical examples to better crystallize couples of oppositions, like that depicting, on one part, the author's impressions on a daytrip in Greece to Sounion cape where the remains of the Poseidon temple are located, and a visit to the Shintoist shrine of Ishinomaki in Japan, on the other (p. 24). These two temporally proximate experiences induce Watanabe to reflect upon the differences between Japan and Greece (West): while in Ishinomaki shrine mythology is still alive thanks to the continuous performance of the sacred festivals and ceremonies, in Greece the ancient temples are not objects of veneration anymore. Whereas in Japan continuity with the past is renewed through the cyclic reconstruction of shrines, in Greece only the desolated vestige of a remote past disconnected to the present remains. Even nature would reflect this antinomy: while Kinka mountain at Ishinomaki isle is characterized by a verdant forest and a suggestive atmosphere, Sounion cape is surrounded by a barren vegetation and a harsh landscape. From these empirical observations, Watanabe deduces that the mythological world of ancient Greece is separated from modern Greek and it endures merely in the gloomy image of the "rolling stones" of Poseidon's ruins. By contrast, the feeling perceived in Japan is the powerful and lively presence of the sea god. These considerations about ancient and present Greece are subsequently extended to an entire way of being opposed to that of Japan - the Western one.

Many are also the examples, anecdotes and phenomenal observations from which the author derives broad generalizations. The fiscal fraud perpetrated by Takafumi Horie in 2004 (p. 176), the recent scandals of several Japanese enterprises (pp. 174-175), the rape of a woman on public transport in daytime (p. 177), are quoted as concrete examples of the loss of national pride by the Japanese. By observing the centrality of nature in Japanese poetry (p. 102), Watanabe deduces the "nature-centered worldview" of the Japanese, while by remarking that Shintoist sacred gates are erected beside natural spots (p. 103), he derives Japanese reverence towards nature. By stating that contemporary

Japanese children still read poems from the classical piece of literature *Hyakunin issshu* for the New Year (p. 96), he claims the existence in Japan of a linguistic continuity between the present and the past. Reporting a leg trembling by American president Ford in 1974 during a formal lunch with Japanese sovereign (p. 150), Watanabe shows that even a foreigner is overwhelmed by the aura of sacredness surrounding the *tennō*. Ultimately, recalling the dynastic vicissitudes of England during the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689) and those of Sweden during the Napoleonic wars (pp. 158-159), the author exemplifies the substantial difference in the principles of dynastic succession between the West and Japan, based on family assets in the first case, on blood descent in the second.

In this sense, Watanabe employs various specific examples “of chauvinism”, intended to emphasize Japanese superiority. *Hina* dolls are thus elevated as a tangible manifestation of Japanese refinement (pp. 97-98); a Buddha statue manufactured in ancient Japan would reveal a more advanced technique than that of Korea (p. 46); the fabrication of Tanegashima weapons, the *Yamato* battleship and nuclear technology (p. 47) are just a few examples of the Japanese ability of mastering and improving foreign technology. The geneticist knowledge of ancient Japanese (p. 154), the long-standing respect for women (pp. 92-93), the early fulfillment of modern principles of ecology (pp. 105-106), the subtle psychology of *Genji monogatari* (pp. 86-87) are other concrete aspects that would demonstrate Japan’s superiority if compared to the West, China or Korea.

Furthermore, the personal anecdotes aimed at illustrating and generalizing a property believed to be peculiar to Japaneseness also abound. For instance, Watanabe recalls how he used to leave the door of his house unlocked during the summertime in Yamagata countryside without it being broken into (p. 120). He additionally reports a similar trustful attitude shown by the merchants of the stands set up along the streets during the celebration of *hanami*, when they were accustomed to leave their merchandise over the night fearless of being robbed (pp. 120-121). Elsewhere, he describes the personal conversation entertained with a professor of criminal law during his teaching experience in an American university (p. 174). He was then taught that FBI usually dispatch investigative agents where ethnic groups live, except for the places inhabited by the peaceful Japanese. From all these

anecdotes, the author purports to demonstrate Japanese high moral and ethical sense.

Other anecdotes of a specific folkloric character are, for instance, the re-evocation of a votive offering dedicated to the god of the toilet in the rural territory of Yamagata (p. 105); the reminding of the astonishment felt when his elementary teacher taught him to blow the nose in the toilet, for having been educated not to disturb the gods of the toilet (pp. 105-106); the postwar habit of fertilizing Tōkyō's gardens with excrements, deriving from agrarian traditions (p. 106); the existence of a pagoda to venerate the spirit of plants sacrificed to mow grass and undergrowth (p. 103). The purpose is herein to validate the idea that recycling has always been deeply rooted in Japanese traditional culture, much before its concept was developed in the West and that a symbiotic and harmonic relationship between the Japanese and nature exists.

Another type of sources the author considerably makes use of is represented by the pseudo-historical anecdotes, inscribing within a strong revisionist stance and giving a semblance of scientific accuracy to the historical truths claimed as such by the author. For example, the alleged integrity of the Japanese soldiers during Boxer revolution (pp. 64-66), the value of the Japanese army during the Russo-Japanese war (p. 67) and the rescue of the crew of a sunk enemy ship (p. 70), are just three examples through which Watanabe re-narrates the Japanese recent history by stressing the positivity of *bushi* spirit. This operation of historical reinterpretation reaches its peak with the idealization of Nogi Maresuke and Tōgō Heihachirō's endeavors. On this point, Watanabe reports Nogi's composed and refined attitude when he was informed about the death of his son, which he maintained also in the battlefield, or his benevolence towards the defeated Russian general Stessel (pp. 67-69).

More generally speaking, the author tends to present a partially true fact about the Pacific War or the postwar period to victimize Japan and bypass the issue of war responsibility. For instance, the *Tokubetsu sengensho* (Special declaration) or the *Kyokutōgunjisaibanjōretsu* (Chart of the military Tribunal for the Far East) are quoted as illegal bases of the Tōkyō Trial for having been purposely made by Douglas MacArthur (pp. 122-123). However, these documents are neither analyzed by Watanabe, nor associated with any source or commented: the aim is to

show to the reader his knowledge about this part of Japanese history, thus, his authority and confidence in judging. His strategy consists in never questioning Japanese war responsibilities and highlighting its role as a victim, by bringing as evidence documents that would demonstrate the justice of the winner and the vulnerability of Japan. The illegitimacy of judgment is employed as an excuse for Japanese war crimes. On this point, another example of the ideological exploitation of a source is the verdict by Radhabinod Pal (*Pāru hanji no hanketsusho*, 1949), the only IMTFE judge sustaining Japanese innocence and doubting the tribunal's legitimacy (pp. 126-127). Even in this case, Watanabe attributes to this person statements or extrapolates anecdotes with no related source. Actually, postwar Japan was not such a victim as Watanabe depicts: notably the so-called "justice of the winners" towards Japanese war criminals was ultimately merciful, since certain tragic events as the Nanking massacre, Unit 731 experiments and comfort women issues were not taken into account and a great number of purged officials were rehabilitated for the will of the United States (Caroli & Gatti 2006: 219-220; Barnard 2003: 7). Watanabe also mentions several statements attributed to certain historical characters in order to reinterpret history. These statements are arbitrarily reported within brackets to reproduce direct speech, yet without being associated with any source. For instance:

(52) 清瀬弁護士は、「今、犯罪の項目として立てているのは、いかなる裁判管轄によるものなのかを聞きたい」と質問し、東京裁判を成立させている根本的な根拠を絶たしたのです。これに対してウェブ裁判長は、裁判記録によれば、「後で答える」と述べただけで、裁判が終了するまで、ついにウェブ裁判長の返答はありませんでした。その後、アメリカ人弁護士からも管轄権を問われていますが、裁判長は答えることができませんでした。それでそのアメリカ人弁護士は「管轄権も明示できないような裁判では、公訴はすべて棄却すべきである」を主張しました。[125]

The lawyer Kiyose attempted to ascertain the basic foundations that allowed to set up the Tōkyō Trial by saying: «I would like to ask now on which jurisdiction [the crimes against war] were established as charges». According to the trial's memories, judge Webb, who presided the court, merely reacted to the interrogation stating that: «I will answer later», but he did not answer until the end of the trial. Then, an

American lawyer too demanded explanations about the jurisdiction, but the judge could not answer. Therefore, the American lawyer pointed out that: «In a process where even a jurisdiction cannot be clarified, all charges should be refused».

Watanabe mentions the words supposedly uttered by Kiyose Ichirō (1884-1967), without reporting further details on his source and clarifying if it is a personal re-elaboration or Kiyose's original words. Same considerations may be extended to the other reported speech: in the first case, the words are attributed to William Webb (1887-1972) and to the trial's memories, yet with no associated reference; in the second one, they are attributed to a generic "American lawyer". Apropos of Kiyose, his opening declaration during the trial is regarded as the document depicting the real state of the process, by stressing its legal effectiveness. However, Kiyose was the lawyer of Tōjō Hideki (1884-1948), a Japanese politician and general sentenced to death for war crimes. In this case, the origin of the source is questionable or, at least, biased.

Watanabe also employs many literary examples. In order to demonstrate the heterogeneous nature of Chinese dynastic and ethnic paradigm in contrast to the Japanese one, he mentions the *Chūgokujin shijin sendainishū* (Second anthology of chosen Chinese poets), for its text structure would suggest the constant ethnic substitution in China since ancient times (p. 30). Each scroll constituting this anthology is indeed representative of a different dynasty: this would be an empirical evidence of the Chinese paradigm of hybridism. Likewise, Watanabe mentions traditional poetry to testify the relationship between indigenous sensitivity and the exclusive usage of Yamato words. The poem from *Man'yōshū* n. MYS.1.1⁸ is cited to reinforce the thesis of love as the foundation of the Japanese spirit: the very initial position of this love component by Yūryaku *tennō* for his lover is explained as having the function of stressing the importance of love feelings in antiquity (pp. 82-83). The poem n. MYS.2.85 is another example of literary attestation of this feature of the ancient Japanese spirit, for speaking of Iwanohime princess longing for king Nintoku (p. 83). Yet,

⁸ This classification system refers to the following corpus: <http://vsarpi.orinst.ox.ac.uk/corpus/texts.html>

its greatest manifestation would appear in *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*'s myth of the generation of the Japanese isles (p. 83). Otherwise, *waka* n. 33 of *Hyakunin issshu* by Ki no Tomonori is reported as a paradigmatic example of Japanese aesthetical love for the little, the humble, the sober scenery, symbolically associated with cherry blossoms (p. 100). Bashō's *Oku no hosomichi* is regarded instead as an example of Japanese religious syncretism for combining praises for Shintoism with celebrations of Buddhist elements (pp. 44-45). Last but not least, the author sometimes mentions documents such as the prewar four songs of *Shidaisetsu*, the *Tsuitachiichigatsu* song (The first day of the year), *Kigensetsu* (Empire's foundation), *Meijisetsu* (Meiji emperor's birthday) and *Tenchōsetsu* (Shōwa emperor's birthday) – and the *Kyōiku chokuo*, embodying the Japanese spirit (p. 198).

All these sources are decontextualized and mentioned to reinforce a particular idea on Japaneseness, implicitly already validated by Watanabe's sole authority. Self-referentiality is indeed strongly present either for the author's tendency to self-citation or the ubiquity of subjectivity in the narration of Japaneseness in the form of anecdotes and personal experiences. For example, discussing the relevance of Yamato words he quotes his *Nihongo no kokoro* (The spirit of the Japanese language) and *Watanabe Shōichi no nihongoron* (Watanabe Shōichi's theory on Japanese language) – a sparse patchwork of generalizations and ideological considerations on Japaneseness (p. 197). Besides, the author disseminates the essay with expressions alluding to his authority about a specific knowledge on certain topics, as in the case of *watashi no shiru kagiri* 私の知る限り pp. 19, 129 (as far as I know), *watashi mo sō omoimasu* 私もそう思います p. 80 (I also think so), ...to *watashi wa kangaemasu* …と私は考えます (I do think that), or the following statements:

(53) 彼らのような人たちのことを私は「敗戦利得者」と呼んでいます。

[131]

I name this sort of people “profiteers of the defeat”.

(54) 仮に東京裁判は有効であるとする学者がいるとしたら教えてほしいものです。 [132]

It is something that I wish to be informed of by those academicians, if any, judging the Tōkyō Trial as effective.

(55) 私の故郷の庄内藩では、二百数十年もの間、幕末の戦は別にして、刀を抜いた事件はわずかに二件しかなかったといえます。 [141]

In Shōnai domain where my native village is located, apart from the battles during the *bakumatsu* era, only two accidents concerning sword drawings are said to have occurred.

In the first example, the emphatic postponement and the explicitation of the marked subject serve the purpose of underlying Watanabe's legitimacy of identifying and giving a name to the alleged postwar Japan's enemies. In the second sentence, the desire he expresses implies his competence in international law and history, a scientific insight on the matter, and the absence of experts claiming the legitimacy of the verdict of the special postwar tribunal, albeit no specific scholar is quoted. Ultimately, he presumes his expertise as historian about the Shōnai feudal domain only by virtue of being born in that territory. The ideological intent of this sentence – the claim of Japanese pacifism – is hinted by the use of the impersonal construction *to iimasu* (it is said that).

Watanabe also avails of “circular deference”, mainly deriving from the prestige enjoyed by mathematician and essayist Fujiwara Masahiko. In the first pages of his essay, Watanabe admittedly takes inspiration from Fujiwara's *Kokka no hinkaku* (The dignity of a State, 2001), to such an extent that he basically copies Fujiwara's title transforming *kokka* into *nihonjin* and resemantizing *hinkaku* (dignity) with the borrowed meaning of “national character” (p. 3). Fujiwara's essay, whose central idea is the inadequacy of American ideals of freedom and equality for the Japanese society, was so successful to be reprinted fifty-three times from 2001 to 2005, to be translated in English and to have popularized the term *hinkaku* (Fujiwara 2005; Wallace 2007). Watanabe relies on him also for advocating for Japan's need to rearm by amending the Constitution and stressing the importance of the Japanese language for a Japanese national identity. Yet, Fujiwara is a mathematician, not a specialist in international relations or political science. Watanabe relies on Fujiwara's conjectures by virtue of his sole position as a prominent conservative, academician and son of two eminent writers. Circular deference is evident also through expressions of the sort of *gengogakusha no itchi shita iken desu*

言語学者の一致した意見です p. 80 (It is a widespread opinion among linguists) or *sekai no kokusaihō o senmon ni suru gakusha no naka de* 世界の国際法を専門にする学者の中で p. 132 (Among scholars specialized in international law around the world), referring to the theory on Japanese phylogenetic independence and the invalidity of the Tōkyō Trial. The vagueness of the subjects involved is intended to obscure the author's specious allegations – that *all* linguists and law scholars agree upon Japanese language's origins and are skeptic of Tōkyō Trial – and to transmit the idea of their correctness because *ipse dixit*.

Watanabe makes a considerable use of mechanic deference, firstly relying on Samuel Huntington's *Bunmei no shōtotsu* (The Clash of Civilizations, 1996) as Suzuki does (p. 20). This book is mentioned apropos of its theory on world partition in eight independent civilizations, among which Japan stands out. Watanabe decontextualizes Huntington's historicist theory to assert Japanese peculiarity and isolation in Asia, in an anti-Chinese and anti-Korean function. Japanese uniqueness would be confirmed by virtue of the prestigious American origins of the author and not really for the fact of him being a political scientist. In order to stress Japanese independence and homogeneity by relying on the support of foreign experts, Watanabe also makes reference to other American scholars, Arthur Waley and Edwin Reischauer (pp. 19-20), while the thesis on Chinese backwardness is advanced by quoting Max Weber's qualification of Asian historical vision as "stagnant" (p. 39). The citations of Rudolf Steiner and Mircea Eliade are other examples of mechanic deference, where Watanabe respectively attributes to the Austrian theosophist and the Romanian scholar the authority of the idea of the importance of natural luxuriance, venerated in the Japanese tradition, and of religious syncretism as a virtue of Japan since ancient times, for stating the centrality of syncretism in modern comparative studies on religion (pp. 40, 104).

Foreign ("Western") authority is ultimately evident even in the account of several anecdotes on the Japanese, reported by foreign visitors and mentioned by Watanabe to give credibility to a certain idea. For instance, *Nogi* by American journalist Stanley Washburn is a book cited as a proof of commander Nogi Maresuke's value and strong character, representative of the warrior spirit and Japaneseness (p. 68). The purpose is to validate Watanabe's appeal for Japan to return to its warrior tradition. Otherwise, Edward Morse's astonishment provoked by

the finding of his forgotten wallet in the unlocked room of a hotel where he resided is an anecdote mentioned to exemplify and demonstrate, from a foreign point of view, Japanese high morality (p. 120).

In addition to the extensive use of non-specialistic sources, the essay is characterized by the absence of an explicit and systematic methodology. Watanabe's tendency to a know-all attitude is very pronounced resting on the strongly self-referential nature of the essay. Not only does not the author try to frame *Nihonjin no hinkaku* within an epistemic perspective, but it does not even attempt to justify the "multi-disciplinar" digressions disseminated across the text. Therefore, he implicitly defines himself as a specialist of history, as one may note in his numerous sparse comments about:

- the Pacific War (pp. 35, 133-138);
- the history of European and Japanese emblems (pp. 36-37);
- the *bakumatsu* and Boshin war (pp. 62-63);
- the Boxer rebellion (pp. 64-65);
- the figures of Nogi and Tōgō (pp. 67-69);
- Russo- and Chinese-Japanese Wars (pp. 70-71);
- the introduction of Buddhism in Japan and the Fujiwara clan (pp. 87-89);
- Tōkyō Trial, the Occupation period, MacArthur, Pal, Kiyose (pp. 118-129, 132);
- the postwar purges (pp. 129-132).

He also proposes himself as a specialist in Japanese literature, as it is evident from his self-confident judgments on:

- *Man'yōshū* and *Genji monogatari* (pp. 81-84);
- Saigyō's poetry (pp. 42-43);
- a comparison between a *Shinkokinshū*'s poem and French literature (p. 97);
- the ideological treatise on Yamato words, by referring to decontextualized *waka* (pp 196-197), and of Bashō (pp. 43-45).

He pretends to be an expert even in:

- international law, for his comments on the Tōkyō Trial (pp. 118-

- 133);
- constitutional law, for his statements on Japanese Constitution's moral principles (p. 109) and 1946 Constitution's drafting;
 - genetics, concerning the issue of male descent in the Japanese dynasty system (pp. 153-154, 159-161);
 - biology, for his "explanation" on the theory of evolution (pp. 109-110);
 - pedagogy, when proposing the reform of the national education system (pp. 180-185, 188, 189-195, 198-204);
 - in mythology, in his comments on Greek, Japanese and German myths (pp. 30, 32, 92-93, 154-155).

The exhibition of his personal knowledge in various fields and the occasional appearance of a number of sources induce the readers not to interrogate themselves on their authenticity or questioning their authority. In this way, the author manages to give his statements an aura of authority. This search for reader's participation and consensus with Watanabe's claims is also accomplished by using "expressions of common sense", underlying a presumed common knowledge shared by the "average Japanese" and assuming Watanabe's specialization and his desire to debunk the complex of reality for a better understanding of the profane:

Tab. 4.15. Expressions of Deference to Shared Knowledge

<p>…という話からも分かるように [104]; このことから分かるように [123]; …を読んでも分かります [60]</p> <p>As it is understandable from the anecdote...; It is understandable even from the fact that...; One can understand this even reading that...</p>	<p>分かりやすくするために [160]; 簡単に言えば [110]; 大筋を言い [109]</p> <p>To make the understanding simple...; To put it simply...; To sum up...</p>
<p>…というものは、…を見ても分かります [97]; …を見るだけでも明らかです [124]; …ことは、…ば明確です [94]</p> <p>Even just considering that...one can understand that...; Even only considering...it is clear that...; If...it is clear that...</p>	<p>…非常に客観的です [32]; 当然の話です [124]; …ことをみんな知っていました [89]; 誰もが知っている… [100]; よく言われるように [103]</p> <p>It is extremely objective that...; It is an obvious discourse that...; Everyone knew that...; ...that anyone knows; As it is often said...</p>
<p>遺伝子学的にも [153]; 植物学的に言って</p>	<p>…でも見られるように [61]; 誰が見ても</p>

も [104]; 歴史上、… [160] Even from a genetic point of view; Even speaking from a botanic point of view...; Historically...	[122] As one can also see...; As anyone can see
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For instance:

- (56) どのくらい白人がそれにこだわったかと言えば、日本からこてんぱんにやられたメレーやインドネシアで、日本が敗戦した後で、もう一度植民地にすべくイギリスやオランダが軍隊を入れるようとしたことから分かります。 [75]

To what extent the white man has been obsessed with that [enslaving the non-white races] can be understood even from the fact that after Japan's defeat, UK and Holland seized Malesia by re-occupying it with their troops.

- (57) 日本人の洗練さ加減というものは、たとえば雛人形を見ても分かります。 [97]

The degree of Japanese refinement can be understood even if just looking at *Hina* dolls.

- (58) 3章でも述べた通り、『源氏物語』を見ても、当時最高の文明であった唐の影響をほとんど受けず、九九%大和言葉で書かれているという事実を知れば、日本人の誇りを取り戻すことなどということも簡単なことでしょう。 [192]

As I illustrated in the third chapter, it is sufficient to glance at *Genji monogatari* to understand a fact: it is not at all influenced by T'ang, the most advanced civilization of that epoch, but it is composed by the 99% of Yamato words. If the Japanese understand that, it will be easy to restore their national pride.

- (59) ここ数年来、日本の企業が起こすさまざまな不祥事を見ていると、日本人は一体どうなってしまったのかと暗澹たる気持ちにもなることもあります。 [174]

It is sufficient to consider the several scandals caused by Japanese enterprises in the last few years to get depressed about what the Japanese have become.

(60) 東京裁判の実体は、清瀬弁護士の冒頭陳述を見るだけでも明らかです。[124]

The real state of affairs about Tōkyō Trial becomes clear even just considering Mr. Kiyose's opening statement.

(61) 日本の独自性は、神話を辿っても明確です。[32]

The uniqueness of Japan is self-evident even just examining its mythology.

Each example suggests that anyone may come to Watanabe's same conclusions intuitively, thanks to the author's expert-like opinions serving as the trigger of a deductive process. His opinions find validation for being presumed to be shared by common people. This effect is obtained by the use of vague and generalizing expressions such as *kara mo wakarimasu* (it is understandable even from) or *miru dake demo akiraka desu* (to be clear even if just considering), by mentioning here and there some scattered data and numbers. For example, "the 99% of Yamato words" is an unsupported data because the author did not conduct a linguistic study on the *Genji*. Arbitrary data abound and denote the construction of a pseudo-science by the author, as one may note also in *sanbun no ichi teido* p. 76 (a third), referring to the degree of Western culture accepted by Japan during the Meiji era; in *saigyō no uta no ōku* p. 43 (many Saigyō's poems), referring to those praising Japanese natural landscape; in *goshu kara jūshu ni mitanai teido* p. 42 (from five to ten poems), in relation to the number of Saigyō's compositions dealing with Buddhism; in the percentages "96,9%" and "99%" pp. 144-145, associated with the quantity of NHK good transmissions and *London Times's* historically correct articles. Approximation can be found also in a number of impersonal expressions of the sort of *to iu hito mo imasu* p. 53 (there are people who); *to kangaeru hito ga ōi kamoshiremasen* p. 80 (maybe many are the people thinking that); *aru hito ga itte imashita* p. 195 (a certain person said so) or *chūgoku atari de kokusaihōgakusha o nanoru mono* p. 132 (people that in China define themselves as scholars of international law).

As briefly remarked previously, another device to pretend authenticity is represented by the graphic use of brackets pretending to report direct speech, by giving a shade of validity to a definition, or pretending to mention a source. For instance:

- (62) 「一つの宗教にこだわらない」という日本独自の道が生まれるのです。 [57]

A Japanese unique way was born, namely “not being obsessed with a sole religion”.

- (63) 「戦前の日本は悪かった」の意識が戦後の出発点だった [122]

The consciousness that «prewar Japan was bad» was the postwar starting point.

- (64) 戦後の教育を受けていて、皇室というものの本質が分からなくなった人たちは、「男女同権だからいいのではないか」「女性天皇というもの素敵ではないか」などと言う。 [160]

People who became incapable of understanding the real essence of the Royal House for having been educated during the postwar era say things like: «Is it not positive gender equality?» or «Wouldn't it be great to have a female *tennō*?»

- (65) …国際法の専門家だったインドのパール判事は、「東京裁判は日本が侵略行為を働いたのかどうかを検討していない。にもかかわらず日本が侵略戦争を行ったという前提になっている。しかし、調べてみると、日本は自衛のために戦争を行ったのであり、侵略戦争はしていない」という趣旨のことを述べている。 [126]

The Indian judge Pal, specialized in international law, [...] described [Tōkyō Trial's] conclusions as follows: «Tōkyō Trial did not ascertain whether Japan committed acts of invasion or not. Instead, that Japan waged a war of invasion is held as a presumption. However, if one tries to investigate, it will appear evident that Japan triggered a war of self-defense and not invasion».

- (66) マッカーサーは、後に公式の場で日本の戦争は「主として自衛戦だった」と証言しているのです。 [133]

Later, MacArthur publicly proved that Japan's war «had been mainly a war of self-defense».

In the first two examples, Watanabe encapsulates within the brackets two “truths” he intends to convey: the uniqueness of Japan's syncretism and Japan's role as a victim in the Pacific War.

Subsequently, he reproduces the presumed claim by the descendants of postwar “defeat’s profiteers” who would engender the essence of Japanese civilization - the *tennōsei* system - by trivializing the issue of succession, in face of the current absence of direct male descents. Ultimately, Watanabe makes use of the brackets pretending to report Pal and MacArthur’s own words. Although he refers to Pal’s verdict and MacArthur’s 1951 speech in front of the Congress of the American Senate’s Commission, he mentions no source of the reported speeches.

The over-all effect of all these devices is the promotion of a “pseudo-science on the Japanese”, whose most serious methodological lacuna is the inaccuracy in choosing and defining the social sample Watanabe intends to define, the Japanese. He adopts an emic point of view and takes for granted his appropriateness to give judgments on Japaneseness by virtue of his social status as an intellectual and his own being a person of a Japanese ancestry.

- OVERSIMPLIFICATION

Generally speaking, Watanabe simplifies reality by endlessly representing the 1970s’ *Nihonjinron* topoi, such as the harmony of Japanese society; the rurality of the Japanese nation; its linguistic, cultural and ethnic homogeneity; pacifism; emotionality; assimilationism, and so forth.

In addition, Watanabe restores several expressions from the war-time rhetoric of the Japanese former empire, enormously stigmatizing the historical reality – as reported in the table below:

Tab. 4.17. Revisionist and Militarist Clichés

大東亜戦争 [74] The Greater East Asian War	戦略国 [129] Invading country
満州事変 [177]; シナ事変 [121] Mukden Incident; Chinese Incident	突入した [128, 129] To have plunged [into war]
安治 [120]; 自衛 [128] Security; Self-defense	愛国 [191] <i>Aikoku</i> (love for the country)
武士道 <i>Bushidō</i>	万世一系 [3] A line for one thousand generations
大和魂 [82, 83]; 大和言葉 [79, 80, 81, 82]; 言霊 [95] Yamato soul; Yamato words; <i>Kotodama</i>	皇帝 [159]; 尊い国 [31] Emperor [referring to Jinmu]; Sacred country
シナ [1, 13, 19, 21, 27, 28, 30, 31, 36, 49, 56, 71, 81, 84, 90, 110, 114]; シナ大陸 [20, 27, 145]; シナ文明 [17, 19, 20, 27, 28, 71]; シ	農業国日本 [155]; 農業を中心に考える民 族 [155] Japan, a rural country; A nation who put

<p>ナ文明圏 [20, 27, 30]; シナ語 [19, 80, 84]; シナ人 [29, 30, 100, 129]; 当時のシナ人 [49]; コリア人 [100]; 白人 [49, 73, 75, 190]; 有色人種 [61, 67, 72, 74, 75]; 国民 [3, 17, 100, 120, 143, 152] / 日本民族 [155, 161] / 日本国民 [70]</p> <p><i>Shina</i>; <i>Shina's</i> continent; <i>Shina's</i> civilization; <i>Shina's</i> sphere of civilization; <i>Shina's</i> language; people of <i>Shina</i>; people of <i>Koria</i>; White man; Non-white races; Japanese nation</p>	<p>at their center agriculture</p>
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Particularly significant for their connotative disdain and even xenophobia toward China, Chinese people and language, and Korea are *shina*, *shinajin*, *shinago* and *koriajin*, intended to boast Japanese superiority and to vehicle negative stereotypes about China and Korea. As in the case of Suzuki, they also underlie a racialist worldview, confirmed by the reference to “white man”, “non-white races” and to an idea of the Japanese in an ethno-racist conception (*nihon kokumin*, *nihon minzoku*). In comparison with Suzuki, Watanabe explicitly expresses his radical conservatism by restoring prewar militarist and primordialist terms related to Japan and the sacredness of its sovereign such as *yamatodamashii* 大和魂 (Yamato soul), *yamatokotoba* 大和言葉 (Yamato words), *kotodama* 言霊 (spirit of the language), *tōtoi kuni* 尊い国 (the sacred Japan). They all evoke a primitive essence of Japaneseness, in particular they refer to a value system exalting purity, discipline, the *bushidō*, loyalty to the *tennō*, love for the country, *tennō's* sacredness and inviolability (Huffman 1998: 247; Miller 1977; Gluck 1985: 142). A striking similarity with the militarist doctrine is the great emphasis on the spirit – epitomized by the concept of fighting spirit as decisive in battle – opposed to Western scientific rationality (Ienaga 1978: 48-49). Watanabe also refers to Meiji’s nationalist slogan *bansei ikkei* 万世一系 (A line for ten thousand generations), claiming the unity of the Japanese *tennō's* descent thanks to the earthly continuation of Amaterasu’s lineage, starting from her great-great grandson Jinmu in 660 B.C. (Raveri 2014: 10; Saaler 2016: 2; Gluck 1985: 77, 93, 139). More generally, by explicitly referring to “Japanese blood” and emphasizing mythology, he intends to rehabilitate the late eighteenth-century concept of *kazoku kokka* 家族国家 (family nation-state of a divine origin), which managed to produce a collective sense of identity among the Japanese

of the nascent Meiji State, merging religion, race, and kinship (Yoshino 1992: 201).

Watanabe also makes explicit reference to the notion of *nōgyōkokunihon* 農業国日本 (Japan, a rural country), namely to the Japanese as a “nation who put at their center agriculture”. These definitions recall the philosophy of ruralism (*nōhonshugi*), a particularly influent doctrine among 1920-30s’ ultra-rightwing nationalists, sustaining the supremacy of the Japanese *tennō* and the superiority of traditional Japanese rural values (self-sufficiency, frugality, social harmony, hard work, cooperation, benevolence, self-control, tolerance, conformism, humility, servility, emphasis on human relations) and life in comparison with other countries (Huffman 1998: 4-5; Watanabe 1980). The origin of the term traces back to the Meiji oligarchy, whose ideology was centered on the agrarian myth idealizing the rural village (*mura*) and self-administration (*jichi*) (Gluck 1985: 178-204). The “way of agriculture” (*nōgyōdō*) was viewed as the best instrument to preserve the nation and the legacy of the “way of the warrior” (*bushidō*) (Gluck 1985: 180). On this point, Watanabe also explicitly refers to the militarist-venerated *bushidō*, the honor code regulating a warrior’s behavior and consisting of ideal virtues such as loyalty, bravery, discipline, frugality, self-sacrifice (Caroli & Gatti 2006: 63). It was elaborated during the Edo period by Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685) from the warrior tradition since the Kamakura period to justify the role of the military as a ruling elite, but it was restored and modified during the Meiji era for ideological ends (Caroli & Gatti 2006: 102-103, 153, 264). The emphasis on morality (*dōtoku*), on its loss by the Japanese after 1945 and the earnest reference to the *Kyōiku chokugo* as a document expressing the “virtue by the Japanese” are other clear re-evocations of the prewar regime.

Like Suzuki, Watanabe refers to the Pacific war as *daitōa sensō* (Greater East Asian War) of self-defense; he depicts the act of starting war hostilities in the Pacific War by Japan as “plunging into war” (Barnard 2003: 112-113), and repropose the term ‘incident’ (Mukden Incident, *Shina* Incident) to characterize euphemistically certain historical episodes in a revisionist interpretation.

Watanabe often resorts to similitudes to crystallize a particular concept, for instance:

(67) 日本は「進化し続けるガラパゴス」と言えるのではないのでしょうか。

[38]

Japan could be defined as “Galapagos Isles continuing to evolve”.

(68) 彼らの忠義を「さながら蜂のようだ」という人もいます… [53]

There is even someone saying that *bushi*'s loyalty “is comparable to that of bees” [...].

(69) 言ってみれば夫婦のような存在です。 [92]

Figuratively speaking, it is an existence similar to that of husband and wife.

By virtue of its independence as a civilization, Japan is compared to the Galapagos isles, from which it yet differs for the progressive character of Japanese history. The image is that of a remote and isolated civilization on the edge of the world, deprived of external contacts: it is the ideal of *shimaguni*, the island country. This stereotyped image of Japan is put in opposition to that of China, embodying the paradigm of continentality, historical staticity and dynastic succession. In the second sentence, *bushi* are compared to bees for both exhibiting a loyal behavior toward their master: idealization consists in considering the devotion of *bushi* as deriving from a high, inborn morality instead of contingent, social duties. In other words, Watanabe transcends the sociological reality by raising the social category of warriors as a model of moral purity. The third similitude refers to the sexual act between Izanami and Izanagi resulting in the generation of the Japanese isles, compared to that triggered by the love desire between man and woman, husband and wife. The author simplifies and reinterprets the myth to sustain the ideology of a patriarchal and monogamic Japan and the emotional, peaceful character of the original Yamato soul.

The reduction of the complexity of reality is also attained by resorting to the device of “linguistic reductionism”. Watanabe often reduces Japaneseness to words referring to sophisticated aesthetical concepts elaborated in a specific culture setting, thus untranslatable by definition. For instance, *shibui* 渋い p. 196 (austere, elegant, refined, sober), regarded as the paradigm of the ineffability of Yamato words, would encapsulate the true essence of Japaneseness for referring to a wide

range of ideal values such as austerity, sobriety, roughness, simplicity, emptiness, tranquility, naturalness, modesty, refinement, self-control, discretion, moderation, reticence, humility, deepness, purity, normality (Ricca 2015: 158-165). Another example is *isshokenmei* 一所懸命 p. 52 (with utmost effort), a common adverb resemantized according to its literary meaning: “to risk one’s life devoting oneself to one’s territory”. Reductionism is evident in the etymological approach and in the fact that this historical meaning of the term is ideologically employed to crystallize the essential qualities of *bushi* (Japanese)’s spirit: the loyalty and devotion to the clan. Even the expression *ie no korōtō* 家の子郎党 p. 53 (warrior clan) and the etymology of *samurai* 侍 p. 53 (servant) would demonstrate the traditional importance attached to these values: interestingly, these words are decontextualized and their original meaning idealized. Loyalty and devotion become thereby ethical principles of Japaneseness. Similarly, *konkō* 混交 p. 46 (fusion) is another common noun mentioned as an essential peculiarity of Japan: the ability of integrating different elements, such as the novelty with the old, the indigenous with the foreign.

It often happens that Watanabe summarizes Japanese national character within a classical epitaph-like poem as *haiku* or *waka* (“poetical reductionism”) or that he associates it to the spirituality of a historical figure (“spiritual reductionism”). The aforementioned poems from *Man’yōshū*, *Hyakunin isshu* and *Oku no hosomichi* are examples of literary works selected to stereotype a certain “typically Japanese” feature:

(70) 願わくは花のもとにて春死なむそのきさらぎの望月のころ [42]

I pray so that I may perish in springtime under the flowers of a cherry-tree during February’s full moon.

(71) いはばしるたるみの上のさわらびのもえ出づる春になりけるかも [197]

Beside a waterfall roaring from the top of a cliff, a bud of fern blossoms. Spring has come!

The first is a poem by Saigyō in *Kokinwakashū* mentioned to exalt Japanese religious syncretism, for representing the paradigm of the doctrine of combinatory thought fusing Shintoist and Buddhist

elements. The desire of dying under a cherry-tree, symbol of the Japanese indigenous tradition, by the Buddhist monk Saigyō is judged as curious, for Buddhism's symbolic flower is the lotus. Saigyō's syncretism is for Watanabe a feature of Japanese Buddhism, for which Japan is simultaneously the land of *kami* (*kamiguni*) and the place of Buddha's manifestation (*butsuji*). The author simplifies reality by diminishing the religious experience of the poet and overlooking several significative elements in the Buddhist tradition, such as the date of February 15 - when Śākyamuni is considered to have passed away - and his birth amidst flowers. Besides, the combinatory thought is treated as a characteristic of Japan since the introduction of Buddhism (sixth century), although only gradually it made its way since the tenth century along with the spread of *yamabushi*'s ascetic practices (Raveri 2014: 225). The second is the *waka* n. MYS.8.1418 from *Man'yōshū*, quoted as a poem expressing in an exemplary way Japanese sensitivity. The emotion triggered by a glimpse of nature offered in this piece of literature would be activated by the evocative sound of *yamatokotoba* and it is judged as a peculiarity of the Japanese.

Watanabe mentions several Japanese historical figures who would embody indigenous qualities. This device is very frequently employed by the author who even wrote entire essays structured on it, such as *Risōteki nihonjin - "nihon bunmei" no ishizue o kizuita jūni nin* (Ideal Japanese. Twelve people who carved "Japanese civilization"'s milestones, 2004) or *Wasurete wa naranai nihon no ijin* (Extraordinary Japanese people who must not be forgotten, 2018). For instance, Hōjō Masako is raised as the embodiment of the Japanese "way of a woman": a historical figure is idealized to prove the existence in Japan of a feminist respect towards women much before it developed and was conceptualized in the West (pp. 90-91). Similarly, Watanabe exploits the figure and work of Murasaki Shikibu to state the good condition in which Heian Japanese women lived (pp. 52, 86-87, 93). In both cases, he reduces reality to the extent that he omits the socio-historical context of reference, that is a patriarchal society. He also quotes Nogi and Tōgō generals as representatives of the spirit of *bushi* or the virtues of honesty, integrity, bravery, self-control, reliability, humanity, respect toward the enemy (pp. 67-69); Shibuzawa as representative of pragmatism, entrepreneurialism, sense of pride, cultivated refinement, hard work (pp. 163-171); Nakamura Masanao as the paradigm

of Japanese pragmatism, assimilationism, syncretism (pp. 111-113).

- MARKET CHOICES

Nihonjin no hinkaku's popular destination is firstly suggested by a very low sale price (743 yen) and a relative short length (204 pages). Thanks to that and to the employment of a simple language and style, the essay is intended to reach the widest public. The publisher is *Besuto shinsho*, publishing popular bestsellers as the *Nihonjinron* essays advertised at the end of the book as *Nihonjin toshite taisetsu ni shitai hinkaku no shitsuke* (The discipline of dignity that I would like to make important as a Japanese), *Aa iu nihongo eigo kō iu* (In Japanese it is said so, in English it is said that), *Honmono no nihongo* (The authentic Japanese language).

A particular attention should be reserved to the cover and band, as they bear important hints about the nature of the essay. The front part of the band, which outstands for the use of graphically striking characters, reads:

(72) 日本人の美意識と、道徳心の誇りを取り戻す！

Let's restore Japanese aesthetical sense and moral pride!

This sentence is followed by a brief explanation and a red slot containing several keywords, respectively:

(73) 戦後の「敗戦利得者」の元凶を明らかにして今、品格を復活させる
処方箋を提言する

Having clarified the guilts of postwar "defeat's profiteers", a proposal of the receipt to restore now the national character.

(74) 神道、皇室、大和言葉、武士道、教育勅語...こそ日本人の核！

Shintō, Royal House, Yamato words, *bushidō*, Imperial Rescript on Education...: the core of the Japanese indeed!

Many of the expressions used in the band have been discussed in this chapter for their reconnotation, conceptual indeterminateness, simplification of reality, with past nationalist legacies and an emotional character. Although the text of the band is so brief as to be comparable to political or advertising slogans, it is very dense in terms

of the transmitted message and recalls prewar rhetorical language, emphasizing morality, national pride, State Shintoism, *tennō*, *bushidō*'s values, Japanese-etymological words. It also contains terms characterizing Japanese revisionist movement, like the verb 'to restore', 'to rehabilitate' and the expression "defeat's profiteers", the evocation of pride and a lost national character. Moreover, it anticipates the strawman on which the essay is structured: Japanese society's degradation for the fault of the "defeat's profiteers", the subsequent impellent urgency to rehabilitate the national character. Finally, the band alludes to the centrality of History in Watanabe's nationalism and his primordialism as the word *kaku* (core, essence) and the reference to the Royal House, Shintoism and Yamato words suggest.

As for the cover, it is relevant to note that on the back the author's profile emphasizes his academic credentials, eclecticism and his qualities as an essay writer:

(75) 専門の英語学だけでなく、歴史、哲学、人生論など、執筆ジャンルは幅広い。昭和51年、第24回日本エッセイストクラブ賞。昭和60年、第一回正論大賞。

His writing genres are wide: not only do they include specialized linguistic, but also history, philosophy, essays on life. In the 51st year of the Shōwa era, he won the 24th edition of Japan's Club of Essay Writer's Prize, and in the 61st year of the Shōwa era the first edition of the *Seiron* prize.

Watanabe's eclecticism is stressed to attract the curiosity of the readership, by virtue of the principle that amateurism is widely accepted in Japanese society, especially if it is expressed by an intellectual. This aspect is emphasized also alluding to Watanabe's literary prizes, increasing his prestige. It is not likewise a case that the books mentioned are bestsellers ranging from the history of English grammar to suggestions on how to lead an intellectual life and a happy senility until 95 years old, including a personal episode during the Shōwa era, a personal introduction of the medieval period and a modern history «not to excuse twice with China and Korea»!

An ultimate observation concerns the inside front cover, on which several claims of the essay are resumed:

- ギリシャ神話を教えるより日本神話を教えよう。
Instead of teaching Greek mythology, let's teach Japanese mythology.
- 神仏混交の「本地垂迹説」こそ日本の本質。
It is indeed the “doctrine of combinatory thought” mixing Shintoism with Buddhism that represents the true essence of Japan.
- 日本の武士道精神が二十一世紀の世界を作った。
The spirit of the Japanese *bushidō* created the world of the 21st century.
- 商人の中にも商人道と呼ぶべきプライドがあった。
Even among merchants there was pride, which should be defined as the “way of merchants”.
- 日本人の美意識は大和言葉によって形作られた。
Japanese aesthetical consciousness was shaped by Yamato words.
- 教育勅語が日本人の道德観を決付けた。
The Imperial Rescript on Education determined Japanese moral vision.
- 中学・高校の入試試験に『百人一首』『奥の細道』を出そう。
Let's demand the *Hyakunin isshu* and the *Oku no hosomichi* to be at the entrance examination of high schools and junior high schools.
- 四月二十八日を独立回復記念日に。
For the establishment of an Independence Day on the July 28th.

In addition to resorting to some nationalist clichés – *nihon shinwa*, *nihon no bushidō seishin*, *yamatokotoba* – and riconnotating some words – *nihon no honshitsu*, *seishin* – the essay's audience of particularly conservative readers can be understood from the pedagogical proposals to reintroduce the study of Shintō mythology in school curricula and to focus on classic literature, the call for the institution of a national festivity to celebrate Japan's “liberation” from the American occupants and the revitalization of Meiji's *Kyōiku chokugo*.

Final Remarks

From the content and rhetorical analysis of Suzuki and Watanabe's essays, it is possible to formulate some final remarks in order to obtain a description of the concept of "Japanese nation" in the *Nihonjinron* discourse.

Both authors develop their argumentations resting on the logical fallacy of the strawman, consisting in pretending to reject an argument by proposing instead a misrepresentation of it. The purpose is to make unfalsifiable and irrefutable assertions by principle and to resolve any potential contradiction, which, if any, is minimized or resorted to an original fault. As to Suzuki, the strawman is the contemporary global ecological crisis, seen as provoked by the enduring dominance of the Christian-Western anthropocentric paradigm based on a conflictual relationship with nature. The solution presented to this problem is the assertion of a nationalist claim, namely a substitution of the hegemonic paradigm by means of the global diffusion of Japanese value system through Japanese language and culture. Two other secondary strawmen are thus presented as fictitious obstacles to the solution of the problem: the masochistic vision of history by the Japanese and the complex of inferiority towards their identity. Again, Suzuki advances claims of a nationalist nature to overcome these obstacles: the positive reinterpretation of Japanese history and the revaluation of Japanese language's peculiarities.

The strawman construed by Watanabe is rather the moral decadence of contemporary Japanese society because of the loss of national character - i.e. collective dignity and identity pride as a result of post-war policies implemented by the "defeat's profiteers". Likewise, he

outlines the concrete objectives to be reassessed to overcome the problem hindering the revival of national identity – *tennōsei*, *shintō*, Buddhism, *yamatokotoba*, *bushidō* – and the solutions and means to reevaluate them by asserting nationalist claims: the revision of national history, language, literature teaching and the restoration of morality as a formal subject in any school curriculum.

In all these cases, the construction of the strawman is antecedent to the nationalist claim, and it is thus a crucial technique supporting the argumentative structure of the essays. Similarly important is the technique of mystification, that is a consequent effect of the employment of a strawman. Manipulating reality serves the purpose of sustaining and reinforcing the basic, undemonstrated ideological premise – Japanese uniqueness – and of transmitting the idea of the ineffability of Japaneseness. In general, it is used to support a primordialist image of Japanese identity, by depicting it as an object belonging more to intuition than to rational inquiry. Mystification is further enhanced by relying on revisionism and historicism.

Suzuki and Watanabe also share classical nationalist themes emphasizing either an indigenous primogenial purity; a primogenial condition of naturalness and immaculateness; the spiritual, immanent, naturalistic character of nationness; the primordiality of national peculiarities and the national essence itself; Japanese nation's separateness; or the national moral purity of the origins:

- Original fault: attribution of Japan's current evils to an enemy of a foreign origin (West, America, communism sympathizers) and identification of a precise breaking point between before and after (Meiji era, 1945/postwar era).
- Spiritual loss: (moral, ethical) decadence of Japanese society because of the vanishing of the national pride and diffusion of a sense of humiliation.
- Return to the origins: necessity of returning to the tradition, to a golden age (Edo period, pre-1945), to a mythical uncontaminated past (antiquity, pre-Meiji era), to an emic, indigenous thought, purged of foreign influences.
- National awakening: regeneration of the asleep national consciousness and inborn character through the leadership of enlightened intellectuals, political action and instillation of feelings of pride, trust,

love for the Japanese nation.

- Education reform: implementation of an authentic national education, setting as a goal the development of positive feelings towards one's own identity.
- Predestination: Japanese nation is conceived as a destiny, the unique Japanese attributes are viewed as predetermined and fateful, notably the persistence of primordiality.
- Isomorphism: inseparable tie among Japanese language, culture, civilization, territory, State, nation, people, since the foundation of 'Japan'.
- Salvific mission: the "wise", "enlightened" Japanese nation as a spiritual guide of humankind, by virtue of its possession of positive primordial spiritual qualities.
- Common descent: invocation of temporal continuity, i.e. the antiquity and linearity of the Japanese Royal House.
- Uniqueness: adoption of a historicist perspective exalting the lines of development, general truths, the tendencies peculiar to the Japanese spirit; appeal for internationalism as a means to reinforce the consciousness and psychological differentiation of the national ego from other national collectivities.

More specifically, in Suzuki two main theoretical tendencies may be detected: the appearance of a strong revisionist element in the "identity issue" and a growing emphasis on the primordial in the notion of Japaneseness, translated into the prominence of a spiritual element in the definition of the "Japanese nation" by a deductive process moving from the concepts of "worldview" and "value system". These trends represent the root of the incipient extremist drift characterizing the late Suzuki's thought, in relation to Japanese identity. This is all the more striking if considering the moderate *Nihonjinron*, in line with its classical assumptions, expressed by the author during the 1970s. Whereas during that decade Suzuki's *Nihonjinron* was centered on the role of language, in the new millennial it actually turns to be less relevant in the reevaluation of the Japanese national ego. History becomes the real key of emancipation from a "masochistic", "distorted" self-representation. Suzuki repropose the 1970s loci, by adding a strong moralistic component.

Two similarly significant observations can be drawn also from

Watanabe's essay: the ideas of historical revisionism are expressed in a free, direct and uncensored way, and the emphasis on Japanese nation's primordality is expressed loudly, reflecting a very politicized ideological stance and, as compared to Suzuki, it is explicitly translated in the primacy of the biologist, "racial" element, of the common descent – as it is mirrored in the centrality of the *tennō*. Although Watanabe has always distinguished himself for being a very zealous defender of the most conservative ideas on Japaneseness, a sharp extremization towards ultra-conservative stances could be noticed. The objects of radicalization are history and the narrative on *tennōsei*. Since 1990s, Watanabe, in addition to the increase of an anti-China and anti-Korea xenophobic essayist production, has been expressing his affinity and subscription to the prewar militarist ideology less and less covertly.

From these observations, it is therefore possible to deduce *a posteriori* definition of "Japanese nation", as a category of social practice within the *Nihonjinron* discursive frame:

An extended group of people self-recognizing as *nihonjin* (Japanese), self-perceiving as unique and homogenous and characterizing themselves for possessing:

- a primordial worldview, moral conception, value vision and national character, tracing back to the very genesis of the Japanese and thus being pure, uncorrupted, separated from the worldviews, moral conceptions, value visions and national characters of the "others", spiritually and diachronically bonding together the members of the nation;
- a common, primordial descent, i.e. the earthly perpetuation of Amaterasu's divine dynasty embodied by the "generations of sovereigns" (*kimigayo*), whose blood transmission connects the Japanese comrades.

This definition simultaneously combines "national spiritualism" with "national materialism", which Otto Bauer critically recognized as barriers to a "constructive" idea of nation (Merker 2001: 164). By the former, Bauer referred to the attribution of a substantial, metaphysical nature to the notion of "national character", so as to transfigure it into an enduring, constant element. It corresponds to Suzuki's concept of "worldview" and the alike or Watanabe's *hinkaku*. By "national

materialism”, the Austrian politician intended the more properly naturalistic-biological conception of “nation” as a community of lineage and descent, the axiological basis of the principle of territoriality. Although territorial claims in name of the nation are absent, national materialism can be found in the linking between the tie of common kinship and soil, namely the reproduction of the bond through the Japanese soil by means of rice consumption. The belief in the separated origins and evolution of the national group or the intuitive sense of blood relation is an element in nationalist psychology to be regarded as fundamental according to Walker Connor in the self-definition as a nation, and this interpretation is what is etymologically closest to the Latin term *natio*, from the verb *nascere* (to be born) (Connor 1995: 149-151, 166).

Hence, these “fancies about the primordial” are central to the emic definition of “Japanese nation” and Japanese nationalism. Lastly, as long as primordialism is conceived not as a fact, but a series of self-perceptions, beliefs, a category of practice, it turns out to be analytically useful to clearly distinguish and describe the ideological nature of *Nihonjinron*.

Indeed, this is the notion of “Japanese nation” according to the ideology producers and reproducers, the highest levels of ideologization. Since most Japanese still believe in the claims of the Meiji’s modernist paradigm (Heinrich 2012: 179), which emphasizes “homogeneity”, “unity”, “uniqueness”, it would be interesting to empirically investigate either the reception and degree of acceptance among the less ideologized strata of the Japanese society or, if any, the existence of alternative perspectives to the dominant paradigm.

Japan’s integration in the global economic and political system through internationalization brought to the increase of contacts with and influence by foreigners on one side, to a dramatic reduction of space for Japanese self-expression of their cultural identity on the other. Both phenomena still persist, yet one should question until when the categories of “modernization”, “capitalism”, “development” will continue to be effective and socially acceptable.

Japan finds itself in a deadlock: despite the intensification of foreign relationships, especially in the form of linguistic, cultural, and professional exchanges, the ideological discourse of *Nihonjinron* and the crisis of cultural identity persist, if possible, in a more intensive way than

in the 1970s. The attraction and the resistance to the “West” are two apparently opposed attitudes, yet complementary and coexistent, determining a real internal split between the torn inclination towards diversity and the desire to establish friendly and mutual cooperation, and the will of preserving intact and of affirming Japanese-ness, often conceived as antithetical to the former. Moreover, the emergence and the imperialist expansion of China represent other key factors fostering the most extremist fringes of Japanese society pushing not only towards a renewed enhancement of certain topoi about Japanese-ness, but also to the polarization of the discourse on Japanese national identity.

How *Nihonjinron* will evolve is a question that only time and internal and external vicissitudes of the archipelago will reveal. Certainly, *Nihonjinron* remains for now the ideal behavior and thought (*tatema*) to aspire to and to believe in, and cultural assimilation is the sole criterion of foreign integration and citizenship. Japanese identity lingers between myth and reality: to what extent the myth of cultural uniqueness or the true individual feelings and aspirations (*honno*) will prevail might be clear in the immediate future.

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Although fifty years passed since the boom of the theories on Japanese national character and considerable academic literature was produced to debunk its ideological tenets, the *Nihonjinron* still plays a significant role in the mainstream public discourse on Japanese identity. Intellectuals, journalists, policy-makers routinely repropose the ever-lasting cliché of Japanese cultural, linguistic, racial uniqueness. In doing so, they adopt a primordialist stance in the narration of Japanese identity, that is a conception of Japanese nation as a primordial entity, located in an original fatherland since immemorial times. Drawing on the writings of Suzuki Takao and Watanabe Shōichi, the book analyses the rhetorical strategies and discursive features supporting essentialist ideas of Japaneseness. At the same time, it highlights the heuristic value of primordialism as an effective descriptor of the nationalist ideology, thus challenging its widespread usage as a category of analysis.

Elisa Vitali has a PhD in Linguistic, Literary and Intercultural Studies in European and Extra-European Perspectives from the University of Milan. Her research focuses on Japanese nationalism, with insights from sociology, anthropology and political science. In her doctoral thesis entitled *The Rhetoric of Primordialism in Suzuki Takao and Watanabe Shōichi's Nationalist Discourse*, she deals with nationalism theory by challenging primordialism as a category of analysis and the widespread tendency of reifying the concept of nation. Her areas of interests include the history of the idea of 'nation' and the cross study of racism in diverse societies.

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