UNIVERSAL MORALITY IN JAPANESE TRADITION

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I started my master’s course at NUS in summer 2007 and finally finished in 2010. My three-year candidature was untypical in the sense that it coincided with the birth of my son Laurence.

Under Singapore’s hot sun, the pregnancy was so hard for me that I decided to leave for my hometown Kyoto from which I continued working on my thesis. However, I was often beset by the doubt whether the decision to continue was the right one for me, Laurence, and my husband Martin—especially when I fainted from anemia on the way to Kyoto University Library where I did research into Shinto, and later when I had to juggle studies and family in a new environment, Munich. For the last two years, I was either looking after Laurence or sitting in front of the laptop till long after midnight. Whenever I was exhausted and frustrated under a lot of stress, I thought about withdrawing from the University: resignation can often be a reasonable choice to open a new path in life. In fact, there were countless moments that I wanted to quit studying.

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Summary

In the Twenty-first Century, there are myriad opportunities for adherents of different traditions to exchange ideas. At the same time, such opportunities are accompanied by the difficulty of understanding one another. Universalists assert that we should go beyond cultural differences by emphasizing similarities among traditions. Particularists object. Although tensions endure, seemingly universal principles of human conduct, especially those based on western traditions (e.g. human rights principles), are asserted without understanding other cultures. For universalists, universal norms should be everyone’s concern; the issue is how local communities can incorporate them into their particular cultural matrix.

The debate on moral universalism and cultural particularism conventionally sets a dichotomy between western universal morality and all other local traditions. However, it can be said that universal norms are never “universal” in origin but are located in some locally and historically specific moral tradition. Following this line of thinking, this thesis reassesses a fixed dichotomy between western moral universalism and particularism. In asserting the universal significance of their truth, universalists ignore the existence of other moral traditions that also contain universal attributes. This ignorance may explain why universalists resort to biased persuasion in cross-cultural talk which leads us to the second reassessment. Instead of biased or of what I call preclusive persuasion, the thesis advances the idea of voluntary recognition as a method of cross-cultural discussion.

To discuss the point above, this thesis examines Shinto as an example of a local tradition that endorses universally applicable morality. My research suggests that Shinto
morality has both universal and particular elements: there is a universally applicable morality in the name of particular practice. In this light, I suggest reconsidering the conventional paradigm of the universalism versus particularism debate. To corroborate this point of the discussion, other features of Shinto are outlined. That is, Shinto’s universally applicable morality nonetheless embraces culturally specific ideas that entail Shinto’s vision of ideal human character. This character can be attained by a person’s own efforts. As Shinto morality aims at reaching the maximum degree of internal perfection, I suggest that it is best pursued voluntarily.

In the case of Shinto, I propose that there is no fixed point of departure, either universal or particular. I further question the mindset of those who believe that their moral tradition is fundamental to all morality. Rather than challenging already widely established universal principles, this thesis aspires to reconfigure the predominant mode of cross-cultural conversation toward a more flexible understanding of different traditions. As the case of Shinto demonstrates, there is more than one universally applicable morality and there could be many understandings of each. Hence there is no single, exclusive method of cross-cultural dialogue: what matters is cultural context, which in the case of Shinto is the method of voluntary recognition. Other moral traditions may have other methods.
Introduction

A Justification for the Philosophical Analysis of Morality. Certain ideas concerning the human good, such as that all human beings are entitled to fall under the legislation of morally-grounded human rights that protect their basic liberties, or that there are certain minimal principles of distributive justice, are becoming universal norms in the sense that they are deemed to apply to everyone and to override contrary local norms. With the benefit of hindsight, one can see that arguments for the formulation of such universal norms have gone in two directions, one practical and the other theoretical. Some scholars, who examine the varying degrees to which notions of the human good are respected across the world—as seen, for example, in better or worse human rights records or levels of poverty in different parts of the world—seek pragmatic solutions to the problem of how to apply universal norms to resolve local problems. Others, although they share the same concern for the human good with pragmatic universalists, focus on the cultural origin or local compatibility of “universal norms”.

For pragmatic universalists, a philosophical discussion makes a long detour toward the goal of improving people’s life conditions. As Jau-Hwa Chen observes, people around the world, even if their own state policy is illiberal, have been fighting for freedom and liberty, which proves that the pursuit of human rights is based on universal interests. Hence, it is important to move on from merely lingering upon philosophical

1. What I call pragmatic universalists are scholars, such as Thomas Pogge and Peter Singer, who go beyond philosophical discussions to find immediate solutions for global problems.
inquiries toward ensuring that all governments live up to human rights principles. Pragmatic universalists hold that in reality all people on the globe fight for the human good. To give an example of “freedom”, the cultural origin of the concept of human rights does not constitute the primary issue which lies in the universalist/particularist debate because whatever one calls it, people everywhere have envisioned freedom. In the eyes of pragmatic universalists, there is less difference between moral traditions than people usually think there is.

As a matter of fact, there is much advocacy and campaigning for the sake of the human good, for example, in China. Meanwhile, it is also true that many western human rights proponents do not pay much attention to how ordinary Chinese people understand freedom, rights, and other concerns for the human good. Thus, scenarios occur in which western human rights activists reprimand China and the Chinese people for their apparently poor human rights records. The disruption of the torch rally by activists at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing is still fresh in our memory. The ensuing debate over whether western state officials should or should not attend the opening ceremony shows that in the light of universal events, frictions are never a far cry from erupting despite common economic interests.

The West’s concerns over China as the host of the Olympic Games can be explained as the former’s misunderstanding of cultural differences. Along with their commitment to human rights principles, ignorance and intolerance might have inspired

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3. Ibid.
anti-Chinese protesters although these protests are mainly directed at the government and not the Chinese per se. To discuss a question, such as “on what grounds do human rights activists antagonize the Chinese who pursue their own definition of the human good?” one should go beyond the details of a particular people’s fight for freedom and human rights. To understand that there are different notions of human rights emanating from different cultural backgrounds, one needs to broaden the discussion through the lens of philosophical inquiry by attempting to fathom the underlying reasons behind human actions. This is the proper task of philosophical analysis.  

The Argument of the Thesis. The main subject of my thesis is the debate on moral universalism and cultural particularism, a much discussed subject of political philosophy. For some, the cause of tension between universalism and particularism lies with state boundaries. Some scholars, such as Charles Beitz and Martha Nussbaum, argue that a concern for the human good should transcend state boundaries, which are irrelevant to an effort of benefitting humanity at large. The fact that the state often fails to protect its citizens further invites discussion of the rights and duties of human beings everywhere. Others, however, situate the universalist/particularist debate on the local adaptability of international human rights principles. I pay attention to the latter’s concern in order to open a way toward understanding the relationship between universal morality and local traditions.

The thesis identifies two distinguishable universalisms in the context of morality:

1) the assumption that a certain morality is ubiquitously significant, and 2) the prospect

4. For the role of political philosophy, see Chan, “Asian Challenge to Universal Human Rights”, 126-128; Nardin, “International Political Theory and the Question of Justice.”

of a shared universal morality based on the exchange of multiple ideas. The first rests on the claim that, for instance, locals believe their morality to be applicable to all humanity regardless of cultural differences. (I define “applicability” as the notion that all people on the globe are expected to respect a common morality that is binding on all mankind.) To give an example, the idea of human rights is universally applicable because it consists of rights that people have not as members of this or that society but simply as human beings. This type of universalism is meant to be self-evident, not a product of consensus. In contrast, particularists, who defend local practices against the universalist stance, question whether a universal morality can prevail over local tradition. Universalism, when it advances a particular set of principles as binding on all human beings, results in tension between universalists and particularists, who see themselves as defending local practices.

Alternatively one can think of that there are probably many sources of moral principles that are universally applicable, other than human rights or natural law, including principles found within Confucianism, Judaism, and, as I hold, Shinto. This possibility for the plurality of universal moralities points us toward the second type of universalism: a common morality recognized by everyone that can be distinguished from self-asserting universal morality. One can argue that this second type of universalism is still in a formative stage, as seen in the pros and cons of how to conceive universal human rights principles.

I start with the first type, a self-asserting universalism that requires every individual to respect an assumed universal morality. The objective for a critical

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assessment of the first type of universalism would be to shed light on the possible plurality of universal moralities. That is, there could be universally applicable systems of principles other than those of human rights and natural law. Conventionally, the universalist/particularist dichotomy is a framework of the debate in which the “universalist” pushes the “particularist” to embrace the former’s preferred universal morality or the latter presses the former to recognize cultural differences. Yet assigning fixed identities to universalist and particularist moralities excludes the possibility that universal morality may also exist in “particularist” traditions. Therefore, my thesis questions a fixed dichotomy in traditions, namely that they must be either universal or particular, to view the debate on moral universalism and cultural particularism from a different angle.

By suggesting a possibility that there are many traditions that embrace the first type of universalism, I raise a question about understanding differences: “how one can recognize elements in other people’s moral traditions that apply to everyone?” (Of course, it is important to understand other people’s moral traditions, regardless of whether or not they have universal significance. Yet my thesis focuses on universal morality rather than morality in general. This is because the tension between the universalist and particularist stance intensifies over the matter of recognizing universal morality.) For understanding of other traditions, I propose voluntary recognition as the mode of cross-cultural understanding in which the adherents of different traditions learn from each other in a way that may create possibilities for genuine universal principles about the human good.7

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7. There is a possibility that cross-cultural conversation brings tension between different people rather than harmony. However, my thesis does not forgo opportunities for cross-cultural talks but seeks a method of the talk which works for mutual understanding.
In other words, I criticize the self-asserting type of universalism and argue in favour of promoting a universal morality based on the exchange of ideas.

Scholars argue that mutual understanding or persuasion are methods that can bring about the second type of universalism (i.e. universally recognized principles). Both rule out coercion as a means to promote moral universalism. As a practice, mutual understanding involves an attempt to understand ethical diversity. The word understanding (defined as “the human capacity of comprehending the nature of reality”) is synonymous with “sympathetic awareness or tolerance”. Anthony Appiah and David Miller, the advocates of mutual understanding, argue that one can be a universalist and keep a local faith. To be fair to one’s own and others’ views, there is no need to rank the principles.

However, the method of persuasion is not the same as mutual understanding. The act of persuasion means “to make somebody believe that something is true”. In the context of the universalist problem with particularism, the subject of persuasion represents the truth of the universalist: universalists’ belief is right to other people as well. Of course, one can argue that persuasion does not rely on force. Will Kymlicka, for example, writes that persuasion (and example) is an alternative method to imposition for propagating one’s morals on the meeting ground of different ethical traditions. To

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8. Mutual understanding is suggested by scholars, such as Charles Taylor in “Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights” and Anthony Appiah in Cosmopolitanism. Will Kymlicka in “Introduction” claims that persuasion is the main method for open dialogue.


10. Both Appiah in Cosmopolitanism and Miller in National Responsibility and Social Justice suggest mutual understanding in the context of the confrontation between cosmopolitan universalism and patriotism.

distinguish persuasion from imposition, Kymlicka presumes the persuaded party’s voluntary conversion at the end of persuasion. However, persuasion would involve more or less a risk of being manipulative or even deceptive because it is designed to *propagate* one’s belief. It is no exaggeration to say that with the purpose of propagating his truth, the persuader pushes the interlocutor to adopt his morality.\(^\text{12}\) In the context of the universalist problem with particularism, I want to highlight that universalists have a tendency to rely on a biased persuasion.\(^\text{13}\) Rather than denying persuasion altogether, I introduce the term *preclusive persuasion* which connotes that universalists, who strongly believe in the irrevocable veracity of their ideas, tend to be preclusive because they exclude the possibility of truths other than their own.

My thesis is intended to vindicate the concept of voluntary recognition as an alternative to preclusive persuasion. One can say that preclusive persuasion is a monologue in the sense that the primary objective is to convince the interlocutor. Voluntary recognition, on the other hand, matches the image of a dialogue in which a conversation between two parties takes place on the same footing and different viewpoints are exchanged and recognised as such.\(^\text{14}\) In other words, people from different


\(^\text{13}\) Particularists as well as universalists can be biased persuaders. However, I focus on universalists because they seem to go beyond a defense of their rightness to advocating the propagation of their truths globally.

\(^\text{14}\) Fred Dallmayr, in line with Gadamer and Habermas, has already proposed a similar practise of cross-cultural understanding. Dallmayr argues that the advocates of western moral universalism and its opponents denounce each other by using different concepts and different languages. Neither is absolutely right nor wrong because they are contesting the superiority of different subjects, either legalistic rights talk or individual enlightenment. What each party needs is to change its mind from preaching its own rightness to learning from the other’s claims. My thesis follows the same line as Dallmayr but stresses that cross-cultural learning should be voluntary. Dallmayr, “‘Asian values’ and Global Human Rights.”
traditions converse and interchange information about those traditions without aspiring to impose their own moral truth. An expected end is also voluntary learning, but the process differs from preclusive persuasion.

Voluntary recognition could be an alternative or supplementary method for open dialogue held by the adherents of different traditions. It could be an alternative to preclusive persuasion for the following reasons. First, a universally applicable element in local morality cannot be the utmost justification for a persuading party who seeks the universal recognition of its morality. This is because all morality is locally invented; therefore, there is no given, free-standing, context-independent idea at the first place. A morality might be universally true, but it would still bear the signs of its emergence in a specific context so that its universal recognition is hardly convincing to all the people on the globe. Because universal applicability and recognition are distinct, the reasons for universal recognition should rely on other reasons than mere universal applicability.

Second, morality might be practiced as an ethic of individual conduct rather than as a law for everyone in a society. Buddhist, Confucian, and Shinto morality are beneficial to those in the quest of enriching their own moral requirements. In fact, the Japanese definition of morality 道徳 (Dotoku) constitutes two characters, 道 (the way to/of) and 徳 (virtue), that is to deal with individual’s internal character. In other words,

15. Walzer, Interpretation and Social Criticism.
17. Dotoku is given as a translation of morality in the Japanese-English Dictionary edited by Konishi and Minamide, Genius Eiwa Daigiten; cf. Niimura, Kojien. Although some meaning of Dotoku embraces the same definition with that in English (i.e. “a system of moral principles followed by a particular group of people.” Oxford University Press, Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary.), my thesis highlights other notions of Dotoku: a way to deal with one’s internal character or cultivate virtue. However, one should note that Dotoku as the subject of the Japanese
Dotoku is comparable to self-discipline. Therefore, I suggest that it is best recognized as one’s own: a matter of internal motivation and character as well as external conduct.

Voluntary recognition might fail, however, when open dialogue seeks to create shared principles because the decision-making process necessarily involves at least a degree of persuasion. But even if it is not an active contributor to cross-cultural discussion, voluntary recognition can be an option that individuals choose in response to the persuader. In other words, the persuader who tries to convince the interlocutor of his moral excellence should be aware that the latter makes the final decision whether they agree or disagree with the former’s moral enthusiasm. In short, morality, when it is more related to one’s self-discipline than to one’s obligation, can be better recognized voluntarily than attained through the persuader’s influence.

Chapter Organization. To explore these arguments, the first chapter begins with a self-asserting type of moral universalism (it should be noted that the definition of morality in Chapter One corresponds to the meaning of that word in English). The examples employed in the chapter are natural law and human rights, which are universally applicable moralities because they postulate a universal faculty of human beings (human rationality) and rights of every human. Because the principles of natural law and human rights presuppose western moral experience and traditions, those who are unfamiliar with western concepts may not recognize these principles. In other words, natural law and human rights are universally applicable moralities without having universal recognition.

education system is the term disseminated throughout Japan only after 1945. Section 3.2.3 discusses Japan’s moral cultivation in a different time span.
I want to stress that not all universalists press others to recognize what they propose as “universal morality”. Nonetheless, some universalists attempt to legitimize universal recognition of natural law or human rights on the grounds of their universal applicability. I focus on such universalists and call their belief *western moral universalism*, to distinguish them from other universally applicable moralities.\(^{18}\)

It can be said that the western moral universalist’s project to defend “universal morality” invites local resistance when it posits that local communities should have the same understanding of that morality. From a perspective of social constructivism, however, what some claim to be universal principles are in fact the principles of a particular local community projected globally. A local moral claim for universal recognition raises one question: “What types of moral universalisms are there outside the western tradition?” A belief in plurality of universally applicable moralities across traditions leads to another: “How does one understand or even recognize the other people’s (universal) moralities?”

To delve into the two enquiries above, Section 1.2 will examine a case study, the Asian values debate. Reviewing the stance of both universalist critics who advocate human rights principles and opponents who insist on the supremacy of “Asian values”, the section focuses on two kinds of universalist critical perspectives. The first type of universalist critic negates the Asian values debate as a political manipulation, which invalidate the traditions of certain peoples. The second type admits local interpretations of human rights principles but remains staunch in its belief in that the principles are

\(^{18}\) There are other types of western moral universalism, such as Kantian morality and utilitarianism. However, to avoid overburdening my thesis with distinctions and concerned about the word limit, I focus on human rights principles and natural law.
absolute. Insisting on a firm assumption of human rights, they overlook the possibility that local moral principles might be universally applicable yet not recognized outside that tradition. Moreover, the universalist perspective is set within a dichotomy—western moral universalism and the rest (i.e. “non-westerns” or “locals”)—to demonstrate how a proposed common morality can be applied on the local level.

One way to discuss the plurality of universally applicable moralities could be to study what appear to be culturally particular traditions in order to discern the elements of universal morality from within. Social scientists have done much research on “eastern” cultural traditions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism. Scholars such as Sen and Walzer already came to the conclusion that “eastern” cultures and Judaism can be compatible with the western tradition: “There are many different universalisms, many different idioms in which similar universal values can be and have been expressed.” 19 Following the same line of analysis, my thesis examines Shinto. Introducing Shinto morality is worthwhile because it has been neglected in the field of political philosophy.

I single out Shinto from many other Japanese social practices because Shinto is one of the distinct Japanese traditions and is therefore of great significance in the context of Japanese society (the subject of Chapter Two). Among the many periods of Shinto history, Shintoism under the Meiji government, which served to advance Japanese expansionism, was notoriously parochial. It undoubtedly falls into the category of preclusive persuasion. However, the focal point in my thesis is the post-1945 Shrine Shinto and its moral teaching, which is consistent with the idea of voluntary recognition. It seems noteworthy that leading Shinto experts, such as John Breen and Mark Teeuwen,

19. Walzer, “Universalism and Jewish Values.”
argue that we think of today as “Shinto” is a product of the period between the late Nineteenth and the early Twentieth Century. Their point is not to erase Shinto from the list of Japan’s ancestral traditions, but to stress that ancient Kami-cults, though practiced in early Japan, were not established as “Shinto” from the beginning. In this sense, it would be incorrect to describe Shinto as a single religion that unchangeably continued throughout history. Alternatively, one can argue that the origin of today’s Shinto was already seen as the form of Kami-cults in early Japan, which took over the centuries to form the present day’s Shrine Shinto. In other words, there were Kami related concepts and practices or beliefs in early Japan and much later people came to recognize or reinvented them as Shinto or Shintoism. As I discuss in Chapter Two, such changeability over time is in fact a feature of tradition. Therefore, by including all changes that occurred in Shinto history, for the sake of consistency I will keep the term Shinto to refer to Kami-cults that have been present throughout Japanese history.

Another caution about Japanese tradition should be paid to the perception of Japan and Japaneseness. In fact, by attempting to determine a particular culture and tradition in Japanese society, one may reach a stereotypical view on Japanese particularity, for example, that Japan is a “communitarian society”. However, such claims are ethnocentric and lack scientific proof. Moreover, they mistakenly confuse a

20. The meaning of Kami is broad, although translatable as God or deity in English. There are various types of the Kami: it could be the Kami of nature, such as the Kami of mountain. The Kami could also have earthly character as seen in deities in Japanese myth. The Kami could be supernatural being, such as Death. Because Shinto does not recognize absolute difference between the Kami and human beings, one can make an effort to gain the same respect as the Kami. For example, Yasukuni shrine is dedicated to the souls of those who died for Japan. Further details about the Kami in Abe, Shinto ga yoku wakaru Hon.

national character with a national tradition. Although there is no single unified Japaneseness, Shinto customs have penetrated every layer of the daily life of the Japanese (Subsection 2.1.3). In fact, as discussed in Subsection 3.2.3, Shinto morality is familiar to all the Japanese. Shinto morality as advocated by Shintoists has been brought to the masses through moral cultivation. Therefore, Shinto can be highlighted as a particular element of the Japanese cultural tradition.

For the Japanese, Shinto has both secular and religious connotations, which marks one of the limitations of the thesis. It is difficult to draw a clear line between secular and religious rituals or morals because Shinto represents both social customs and religious practices. On the one hand, one can say that Shinto’s seasonal Matsuri are festivals in which Japanese participate as a communal practice and which transcend personal religious beliefs. On the other, *The Three Foundation Principles and Shinto Edification*, a statement of Shinto religious doctrine prepared under the supervision of the Association of Shinto Shrines, can be seen as a symbol of the religious discipline. Although both represent Shinto traditions, social customs are probably better known and more widespread than the religious practices in general. Therefore, when one views Shinto as a Japanese tradition, one should remember that there is a degree to which Shinto tradition is based on social customs that everyone routinely practices and which are related to moral codes that are particular to Shintoism.

Another limitation is the use of general terms in the thesis, such as *Japanese society, western tradition, eastern philosophy* and so forth. These terms can embrace more than one meaning because they are used in different contexts. One can ask “what is ‘Japanese society’” when the Japanese are ethnically and culturally diverse? The
definition of *East* and *West* are controversial, as Subsection 1.2.2 briefly suggests. Even the use of the term *particular tradition* might cause the misunderstanding that tradition is either a universal or a particular practice and cannot be both. As Seyla Benhabib argues, cultural practices often contradict one another within a tradition. For example, the subjugation of women in Bangladesh or the Indian caste system look like particular traditions to foreigners but this does not mean that all Bangladeshis and Indians have no objection to the practice.\(^{22}\) As I emphasize in Chapter Two, a tradition can persist through the generations despite disagreements within. Because the space is limited, the thesis cannot deconstruct the meanings of all general descriptions. Therefore, although the use of some terms may be contested, I still rely on some general terms throughout the paper.

As a response to the questions posed in Chapter One, Chapter Three is dedicated to 1) *arguing that an assumed stance in tradition either universal or particular is improper* and 2) *suggesting voluntary recognition as a mode of cross-cultural discussion that aims to understand cultural differences.* The supporting evidence for the first point is that Shinto morality embraces universally applicable moralities. Post-war Shrine Shinto has appropriated the idea of the human good, which originates from western traditions, by actively participating in UN Conferences.\(^{23}\) One of the reasons why Shrine Shinto voluntarily accepted a western conception of the human good is that it was relevant to Shinto’s original universal morality.

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Shinto endorses not only borrowed western ideas, but also its own original universality, namely, the concept of being pure in mind and body. This is Shinto’s unique universalism—anyone can learn to live according to its principles. Therefore, it can be said that Shinto’s universality is a part of a particular tradition. Despite its universal applicability, however, it may be too unfamiliar to be understood by non-Japanese. In other words, it is unlikely to be an international standard, given that the universal concept of being pure in mind and body originates from the concept of Kami, a unique Japanese idea. It is, moreover, aimed at enriching an individual’s attitude in life. Therefore, pushing for its recognition by means of preclusive persuasion seems to be a rather imposing, even implicitly coercive act. On the contrary, Shinto morality is supposed to be cultivated in one’s own way. These two features, its Japanese particularity and voluntary character, support the second argument for voluntary recognition of other people’s morality. In the case of Shinto’s universal morality, I deem voluntary rather than persuasive methods to be appropriate modes of teaching morality to those who do not yet know Shinto as the learning must come from the learner, not the teacher.

Engaging in the critical assessment of universalists and their efforts at persuasion does not mean that I attempt to deny the significance of human rights principles, or disrespect an effort to achieve a consensus by the adherents of different traditions. Rather, when local people are uncomfortable with those universalists who persuade others of their moral truth, this is not because the local people dislike the idea of the universalists. In fact, it could be a matter of mutual recognition: the former is suspicious about the latter as the latter immediately attempts to convince them of the irrevocable universal validity of his viewpoint before even making the slightest effort to understand anything
about them. In fact, the local people concerned may also embrace a kind of universal morality based on different traditions, hence different in outlook. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, mutual understanding is about understanding each other. Also, I believe that a voluntarily recognized morality could be more stable and true than an accepted morality that was brought about through preclusive persuasion from politically and economically powerful people. Therefore, the aim of my thesis does not stop with a critical review of universalist standpoints. It also seeks to build a bridge between moral universalism and cultural particularism by introducing Shinto morality and its universal aspects to the field of political philosophy.
Chapter 1 The Debate on Moral Universalism and Cultural Particularism

1.1 Western Moral Universalism

This section attempts to evaluate the usual association of moral universalism with western moral traditions, those of natural law and human rights in particular. The section, however, argues that there can be many universally applicable moral traditions and that the identification of moral universalism with natural law and human rights is arbitrary.

1.1.1 Applicability and Recognition of Universal Principles. In the western intellectual tradition, morality is considered to be “a standard for judging systems of mores”.24 If morality is not specific to certain people but a standard for all the people on the globe, and a standard for judging the mores of particular peoples, it can be called universal morality. In a philosophical sense, universal is understood as “a concept of general application”.25 One example of universal morality is natural law, namely the idea based on the moral grounds of human rationality applicable to all human beings. Since the faculty of reasoning is common to all human beings, the principles identified as those of natural law are applicable to people even outside the western tradition. It is noteworthy that natural law is a universal idea in the sense that it is universally applicable, not that it is universally accepted: one simply assumes that the concept of natural law is a bond

24. Donagan, Theory of Morality, 2.

25. The term universalism usually denotes religious faith, namely “a theological doctrine that all human beings will eventually be saved”. Merriam-Webster Incorporated, Merriam-Webster Online. The subject of my thesis is moral universalism, therefore, I employ a philosophical meaning of universal. Oxford University Press, Concise Oxford Dictionary.
formed by rational man, therefore, it is a man’s universal obligation. This systematic belief is moral universalism; the principle under which one self-evidently affirms the universal applicability of a morality (i.e. the principle of universal morality).26

There is another view of morality, however, namely morality as an invention. According to this view, any kind of morality, whether universally applicable or locally specific, is simply a body of principles that has emerged from particular contexts, including historical backgrounds and philosophers’ viewpoints. Natural law, for instance, embraces universally applicable principles, but has been shaped and reshaped in particular historical contexts. Indeed, the universal principle of man’s rationality was God-given for Christian thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, and it was only later given a secular interpretation in elaborating the idea of human rights. In respect to natural law, it can be said that moral universalism is particular in terms of its origin, although universal in its principles.

The term universalism can be used in two different ways: to advance a factual claim and a philosophical one. The universal principle as a fact applies to mathematical and scientific discoveries, such as the circular constant, which is universally recognized by those able to understand it. In a philosophical sense, a universal principle expresses someone’s or some group’s claims. So when it is applicable to all the people on the globe

26. It should be noted that the legitimacy of a moral’s universality depends on the subject. For example, Chandran Kukathas in “Mirage of Global Justice” argues that there is no universal value in the world because the common themes shared by all people, such as love or friendship, are differently construed and practiced by different people accordingly. Certainly, value which represents an individual’s credos about what is right and wrong to him, or what is important in his life is not identical with principles that are accepted beliefs among diverse people, which influence their actions. However, what I focus upon in my thesis is that universal principle(s) depend on people’s acceptance or effort to define the common norm regardless of different traditions.
it does not necessarily require universal recognition. For instance, discrimination based on ethnic prejudices is one subject of philosophical or more specifically “moral” universalism, which applies to all humanity even without universal recognition. While many reject racism, some espouse it. In the case of natural law, given its particularity in origin, one can argue that it is a different matter whether the people outside western tradition recognize natural law as the dominant principle inherent to their local practices. In this case, the authenticity of universal natural law relies on the notion of applicability rather than recognition. Therefore, respecting universally applicable moral tradition of others is distinct from recognizing or even ratifying it. But this does not mean that there are no universally recognized principles. There seem to be, though only minimally, some widely shared principles or values regardless of cultural differences, such as inviolable human dignity. The point is that moral universalism embraces two separate concepts on moral principles. Namely, there are moral principles that all mankind can properly be expected to respect, and universally recognized moral principles. In short, universal applicability and recognition are philosophically different concepts.

1.1.2 Natural Law, Human Rights, and Western Moral Universalism. Despite this conceptual gap between universal applicability and recognition, there are people who believe that certain principles are universally applicable and at the same time recognized. The example is the universalist critics in the Asian values debate, detailed in Section 1.2. (I do not mean that every universalist falls in this category. Nor do I claim that universalist critics are the only people who persuade other people to prioritize their moral truth.) In the context of the Asian values debate, universalist critics consider that their
principles are universally significant, and are sharply contrasted to particular local traditions. And the dichotomy between the universal and particular stance is where the Asian values debate begins.\(^ \text{27} \)

Despite the possibility of there being many universally applicable moral systems in the world, the ideas of natural law (based on the rationality of human beings) and human rights (the rights of human beings) are probably the most dominant and well-known moral universalisms. For example, Henry S. Richardson reserves the label “moral universalism” for Thomas Aquinas’s idea of natural law and Aquinas’ “determination of certain generalities” in particular. By equating “moral universalism” with natural law, Richardson implies that natural law is the only universal moral system applicable to all. For Richardson, local or particular practices are a mere celebration of how particular each case is, not equally worthy as natural law of the title universal.\(^ \text{28} \) Simply put, natural law is the fundamental principle on which local practices should be based. Therefore, it is possible for advocates of “moral universalism” to avoid direct tension with the adherents of different moral traditions by shifting their focal point from confrontation to assimilation with pluralities of claims.

However, Richardson discounts the possibility of there being universal principles in non-western traditions or in other western traditions. Moreover, he ignores the point that man’s rationality is just one aspect of the vast array of human faculties, which in turn

\(^ {27} \) My thesis looks at the debate on moral universalism and cultural particularism as the discussion that goes beyond philosophical concepts per se: both universalist and particularist parties present their opinions about universal morality (in case of the Asian values debate, it is human rights principles) and debate over how they are applicable to and ratified by locals.

\(^ {28} \) Richardson, “Introduction.” In the debate on Asian values, universal morality is the idea of human rights, a counter principle of Asian relativism. See Bruun and Jacobsen, “Introduction.”
questions the reliability of natural law as an ultimate universal morality. Indeed, the assertion of universal morality, such as the claim for natural law or human rights, are evidenced by human rationality, over-generalized human endowments. On this score, the idea of human rights is a culture constructed by magnifying rationality as equivalent to human nature.\textsuperscript{29}

The principles of human rights form another case that standardizes the meaning of moral universalism as a part of the western tradition. Scholars argue that human rights are universal not only because they have been codified as universal in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, but also and more importantly because “human rights are necessarily universal”.\textsuperscript{30} As being human is the only condition of the legal subject and holder of rights, respect for human rights means that we should not discriminate arbitrarily between people according to their nationality, gender, ethnicity, or other identities. Some claim that the principles of human rights are not exactly a heritage of western culture but rather a self-standing concept created in the post-war period to rule out human atrocities. Others argue that the concept of rights itself is particular to the western tradition in the sense that human rights are different from the idea of human dignity, a common teaching of eastern philosophers.\textsuperscript{31} Yet for those who are confident that human rights principles are more basic than and have priority over other principles (in case of the Asian values debate, I call them universalist critics) the impeccable logic—human rights are possessed by all humans and should therefore be universally

\textsuperscript{29} Dallmayr, “‘Asian values’ and Global Human Rights.”
\textsuperscript{30} Chan, “Asian Challenge to Universal Human Rights,” 28; italics added.
\textsuperscript{31} For the former’s stance, see Svensson, “Chinese Debate on Asian Values and Human Rights.” For the latter, see Donnelly, “Human Rights and Asian Values.”
recognized—retains as a crux of the principles of human rights. Given this irrevocable reason and the motive of securing basic life conditions, those people are convinced that it is right to demand the universal recognition of human rights even to people with different notions of the human good. In sum, many scholars identify “moral universalism” solely with natural law and human rights. The following sections focus on those who not only make this identification but in addition insist that everyone recognize its truth. To distinguish the latter from other universalists, I name it western moral universalism to signify a universalist belief that natural law or human rights should be universally recognized when considered applicable to all people.32

1.1.3 Moral Universalisms: Plural Forms of Universal Morality. There is an increasingly noticeable gap between scholars, such as Richardson, who see moral universalism as a product of western standards, and philosophers, including Amartya Sen and Michael Walzer, who think that universal morality can take different forms. From the latter’s point of view, moral universalism is not a monopoly of western language. For instance, Buddhism too can embody a universal morality. As with human rights or natural law, Buddhism embraces all humans in its teaching. The concept of dharma or eternal cosmic law works for the greater good and strives to mitigate the caprices of the cosmos. This notion is vital to human nature and shared by all “creatures with consciousnesses”.33 This

32. I am aware that moral universalism or universalists does not always belong to the “West”. And natural law and human rights are just two examples of other western traditions. However, in the context of human rights and natural law traditions, I use the term “western”.
sense of sharing a commonality enables Buddhists to render compassion to the sufferer, that is, the former can empathize with the latter’s agony as part of its own:

Because of the integration of ourselves into the morally governed harmonic of the cosmos, we find that it is impossible to separate our own interests and consequences from those of others, and our fates are thus one-and all-intertwined.34

In addition to this grand principle of compassion, Buddhism’s understanding of the changing nature of things, life as sorrow and suffering, or the self as a non-permanent being, have as much claim as western tradition of human rights and natural law to general applicability. As Nosco observes, Buddhist morality, which is particular but at the same time compatible with other moral traditions, is “the dynamic interplay between universalizing traditions and local particularism.”35 From this standpoint it can be derived that all traditions have particular origins and can potentially develop universal claims. The content of people’s moral claims depends on their historical experience and can be both particular and universal. Before proceeding to the chapter on Shinto, the next section identifies problems with western moral universalism through the review of the Asian values debate.

34. Ibid., 78.
35. Ibid., 87.
1.2 The Asian Values Debate

This section attempts to elucidate two problems relating to the tension between moral universalism and cultural particularism: 1) the narrow stance of universalism as western tradition and particularism as non-western traditions, and 2) one recognizes other people’s “universal morality” as the outcome of persuasion.

1.2.1 Overview of the Asian Values Debate. The epitome of the dispute on western moral universalism is the so-called Asian values debate which pitted those who argue in favour of the universal applicability of human rights principles and advocates of “Asian” particularity who challenge the former’s absolute principles. The Asian values debate was once ablaze with the self-confidence of some Asian traditionalists during times of economic success yet diminished during the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s. However, it still remains relevant in the context of the rhetoric of “war on terror” under which the advocates of Asian values again disrespect political human rights.

The term Asian values is confusing since it does not refer to the archetypical values of the entire Asian population. As many agree, “Asian values” is a cultural stance claimed by some Asian political leaders, notably Suharto of Indonesia, Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore.

36. Throughout the thesis, I employ the term Asian traditionalists to refer to advocates of Asian values, and universalist critics to western critics of Asian value. Many western critics of Asian values are motivated by their belief in universal principles of human rights. Most of them refute Asian values from the standpoint of western moral universalism. An example is Donnelly’s “defence of western universalism” in his “Human Rights and Asian Values”. Therefore, “universalist” in this context may be confused but still relevant to universalism of a meta-theory.

Apart from these leaders’ published remarks, the Bangkok Declaration of 1993 (hereafter the Declaration) is usually considered to best represent the objective of “Asian values”, namely to reject a static interpretation of human rights imposed especially by powerful western states. As Section 5 of the Declaration states:

*Emphasize* the principles of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and the non-use of human rights as an instrument of political pressure.\(^{38}\)

The Declaration even suggests integrating “the Right to Development” into universal human rights; it sheds light on non-West’s claim for their own universal morality. Succinctly summarized, Section 8 of the Declaration expresses the position of the avowal:

*Recognize* that while human rights are universal in nature, they must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.\(^{39}\)

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39. Ibid., 265.
This message accepts the universal significance of human rights, while stressing that the way it is recognized inevitably varies according to local understandings for respect of ethical pluralism. In fact, some scholars read the Declaration not as objecting to the universal applicability of the human right principles, but as rejecting efforts by western states “to pressure other nations to conform to western interpretations” of such universal principles.40 Others, however, perceive Section 8 together with “Asian values” not only as a self-contradictory statement but also as a challenge to the invariant imperatives of human rights from the viewpoint of cultural relativism.41 Therefore, the Asian values debate is usually taken as a confrontation between moral universalism and cultural particularism.

It can be said that two main factors firmly set the course of direct confrontation between universalist critics and the proponents of “Asian values”: 1) Asian traditionalists themselves cemented the stance of being a challenger to western moral universalism.42 2) Asian traditionalists who support the Declaration are likely to use “Asian values” as a pretext for infringing the human rights of their citizens, which in turn invites criticism of “Asian values”.43 Firstly, Lee Kuan Yew’s denunciation of western individualism in defence of Asia’s communitarian values polarizes Asian and western cultures. Lee’s point is that obsession with individual rights in the U.S. lead to “the breakdown of civil society”, whilst the principle of social harmony in East Asian countries provide a well-

41. For example, Bruun and Jacobsen in “Introduction” (2), describe the Bangkok Declaration as “problematizing the universality of human rights”.
ordered society under which individual freedom is maximized.\textsuperscript{44} Because Singapore is the leading state to embrace and advertise Asian distinctiveness, the actual content of “Asian values” is identified with a part of Singaporean moral tradition, namely Confucianism.\textsuperscript{45} While ignoring all elements compatible with universal human rights, “Asian values” highlights its differences with the concept of individual rights: social harmony is strengthened through the conduct of sophisticated, moral elites and individual self-restriction is for the sake of communal harmony, not the oppression of individual rights from the above. In fact, it is considered rational because it eventually increases individual freedom.

Secondly, the “Asian values” perspective on human rights troubles universalist critics. For example, Kishore Mahbubani denounces Myanmar in order to distinguish Singaporean leaders from notorious authoritarian rulers. However, western human rights advocates still consider the penal codes of Singapore as unnecessarily strict according to their humanitarian standard.\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, what irritates these critics about “Asian values” is that the Confucian interpretation of universal human rights with emphasis on state sovereignty can give some authoritarian states a pretext for committing domestic human rights abuses.

In sum, both universalist critics of “Asian values” and Asian traditionalists assert their moral excellence. On the one hand, Asian traditionalists boast about how well

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 6. Also in David Kelly, “Freedom as an Asian Value,” 182.

\textsuperscript{45} Svensson in “Chinese Debate on Asian Values and Human Rights” (209) argues that China, for example, is careful not to use the rhetoric of “Asian values” when confronting human rights discussions.

\textsuperscript{46} See also Svensson “Chinese Debate on Asian Values and Human Rights,” 202.
Confucian oriented communitarian society attains the human good, in contrast to egoistic western societies where people are obsessed with individual rights. On the other, universalist critics argue that “Asian values” embrace the rationale to legitimize undemocratic polices which endangers citizens’ human rights. Therefore, “Asian values” is totally unacceptable when it is used as a mask of human rights abuses. In this way, the cultural differences that appeared in the understanding of human rights were mistakenly underlined both by Asian traditionalists themselves and by the critics of Asia’s human rights record. Highlighting the aspect that the Bangkok Declaration reiterates the appreciation of the universal applicability of the human rights principle, this thesis reconsiders the way one recognizes other’s notions of morality.

1.2.2 Universalist Responses. The response from universalist critics to the proponents of “Asian values” is mainly twofold and defends the universal applicability and recognition of human rights. First, some critics deny the East/ West dichotomy altogether. Moreover, they assert that “Asian values” is rather a type of political propaganda espousing national identity by challenging westernization. In this view, it is inappropriate to emphasize East/West cultural differences via stereotyped prejudices, namely East Asia as the region of authoritarianism legitimized by Confucian philosophy and the West as a champion of human rights and democracy.

According to Edward Friedman, the perception of the “West” is a recent invention as evidenced by, for example, the notion of Anglo-Saxon unity. Such unity under the premise of democracy and human rights is rather new when one considers, for instance, the American War of Independence against the British or the constant disputes
between Anglicans and Irish Catholics, continuing to the present day. The term West was popularly used in the Cold War rhetoric when “West” was identified with democracy, accompanied by the contrary image of the “East”, such as non-democratic and authoritarian rules. Yet without the East/West dichotomy, Friedman points out that people have many things in common. Today’s Anglo-American democracy is the accomplishment—imperfect as it may seem—of the long struggle against inhumane practices, which in turn reveals little difference with Asia’s ongoing but rapidly spreading human rights consciousness. Moreover, it can be said that the “East” has historically embraced concerns for the human good throughout history, such as non-violent resistance in India or Japan’s Taisho Democracy which objected to European racism. Therefore, “when East and West are properly compared, much of the supposed cultural distinctiveness of one or the other swiftly disappears”.

In the same vein, reducing Asia’s complex cultural heritage to “Asian values” is dubious because Asia is not only too dynamic and too multi-faceted but also fragmented by regional, ethnic and individual dissimilarities. Hence, it is improper for Asian traditionalists to determine the nature of “Asian values” by contrasting them with the “West”. “Asian values” is a political discourse employed by leaders to shape chaos into order by forging national identities. As Friedman argues, the idea of “Asian values” is generally acceptable for Malaysians, who may otherwise fall apart into two major camps,

47. Friedman, “Since There Is No East and There Is No West, How Could Either Be the Best?”
48. Friedman, “As a Front of Universal Human Rights.”
49. Friedman, “Since There Is No East and There Is No West, How Could Either Be the Best?”
Muslims and Confucians. For Singapore, the idea of “Asian values” serves as both 1) a substitute for a national identity that has not yet been created \(^{51}\) and 2) a defence mechanism against westernization for an otherwise young and multi-cultural state. \(^{52}\)

In sum, the first camp of universalist critic argues that the idea of “Asian values” is mere political propaganda. However, one cannot deny the impact and the tradition of “Asian values” itself. Even if one holds that practices under “Asian values” are morally wrong, it still is a moral tradition of some. \(^{53}\) One can then point out that the Asian values debate does not evolve through mutual respect but is simply a judgement of one another’s tradition from one’s own standard. In this sense, it can be argued that it is a misguided approach to the Asian values debate to ask whether the claims of universalism or of “Asian values” are more compelling.

The second type of critical response does not aim to disprove “Asian values”, but assesses the local compatibility of universal human rights principles. It sets a clear view on what is acceptable and unacceptable about the Asian perspective on human rights. For Joseph Chan, it is unacceptable for Asian traditionalists to negate the principles of human rights per se at the expense of economic development and political stability, although the “scope, weight, and ranking of rights” can be arranged in Asian ways. \(^{54}\) This is because the principles of human rights are not only fundamental but also beneficial to every individual. As Jack Donnelly argues, even if the concept of rights is new to Asians, human rights serve “to protect individuals and families against the power of ever more

\(^{51}\) Friedman, “Asia as a Front of Universal Human Rights,” 58.

\(^{52}\) Chan, “Asian Values and Human Rights,” 35-36.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 35.

\(^{54}\) Chan, “Asian Challenge to Universal Human Rights,” 32.
intrusive states and the gruelling indignities of free market capitalism”. With local traditions that concern human dignity, Asians are certainly unfamiliar with rights-thinking in western tradition. However, because the principles of human rights protect individuals from abuse, it is not surprising that there are Asian ways of interpreting universal human rights. Simply put, the best compromise offered from the second camp of universalist critic is the invariant recognition of universal human rights yet local variation in its interpretation. As the recognition of the universal relevance of human rights is a firm assumption, local traditions “must give way” when confronted. Otherwise, the locals ought to seek a balance between civil/political and social/economic rights in its fulfilment. Although the critics admit the existence of local interpretations of human rights principles, they are adamant in their grand assumption: it is ultimately important to recognize the universal applicability of human rights. In a nutshell, the second type of universalist critic perceives that the principles of human rights are unconditionally applicable even obligatory to anyone without universal recognition.

1.2.3 The Problems of Universalism. Examining the voices raised at the Bangkok Declaration of 1993, namely non-western states’ objection to the imposition of western understanding of human rights, one may wonder whether it could have led to a more global cross-cultural dialogue. Instead, the Declaration triggered an East/West

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56. The notion of natural laws’ variable content has been debated in the West for decades. Rudolf Stammler in *Theory of Justice*, for instance, argues that the universal view of law undergoes “change and progress” and that there are “many differences of opinion concerning the absolutely valid method of just legal content”.

confrontation. What the Asian values debate left for us is the repulse of each other’s tradition, particular or universal. The way that Asian traditionalists defended communitarian values sounded rather offensive to the West, while some universalist critics interpreted the idea of “Asian values” as mere political propaganda. The assertion of one’s tradition and negation of the other seemingly exacerbated the debate.

However, as the second type of universalist critic points out, a more constructive approach to the Asian values debate would require each side not to caricature each other’s traditions but seek to understand what each morality might require when it is related to all persons. This is the difference between the first and second camp of the universalist standpoint. The first group of critics reveals the nature of the universalist stance and “Asian values”, while the second group focuses on how to bridge the disagreement between universalist critics and Asian traditionalists. As Chan argues, by engaging in critical assessment of “Asian values” per se, many discussants misplace the focus of the real issue, namely how to settle the Debate.58 For the second group of universalists critic, such settlement is materialized by universalists’ tolerance toward local varieties in the recognition of human rights.

Nonetheless, the second group’s claim, namely a compromise between universalist critics and Asian traditionalists, is based on fixed identities, namely western moral universalism and local particularism; the former’s universal morality is applicable to all humanity, therefore, no other local stances have room to challenge it. As Chan argues, therefore, the crux of the debate is how to balance the universalist and particularist standpoints given that the latter should not have effect on the former’s “basic

understanding and content of universal human rights”.

As already mentioned in the previous subsection, therefore, the second type of universalist critic confuses two different concepts, universal applicability and recognition. They assert that human rights principles should be not only respected but also recognized by all.

Yet in a world of ethical diversity, there might be many other universal moralities that are equally important. In fact, by setting a dichotomy between western moral universalism and cultural particularism, the second group of critics ignores the existence of other universal moralities. So questions arise. Is dichotomizing western moral universalism and local particularism the right way to start? When universal human rights gain legitimate acknowledgement on the grounds of universal applicability, how about other universal moralities when they too are universally applicable but yet not recognized?

By critically assessing the compromise proposed by universalist critics of the second type, I am neither defending authoritarian rulers when they oppress the people against the popular will, nor arguing against human rights principles per se. My aim is to draw attention to 1) the possibility that there might be universally applicable moralities other than human rights, and 2) the difficulty of understanding or recognizing other people’s moral traditions, as illustrated by the Asian values debate. These are the areas that the thesis aims to explore. To this end, it sets two objectives. The first objective is to reconsider the meaning of universal and particular, the very starting point of the dichotomous argument. The second is to understand what it means to recognize moral traditions other than one’s own.

1.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter began by shedding light on the meaning of moral universalism; a belief that a certain morality, though locally invented, is universally applicable to people across traditions. Given that what one tradition regards as universally applicable morality is not always practiced in another, a putative universal morality would not necessarily be recognized by all the people on the globe. It can be said that universal applicable morality remains as a local community’s self-asserting moral universalism. Nevertheless, there might be a universally recognized morality; namely a certain universal morality is shared by all of humanity. Therefore, we can distinguish a local community’s self-asserting moral universalism from a consensus-based universal morality achieved by the adherents of different traditions. This distinction, in turn, elucidates that when a morality is applicable to all humanity, it is nonetheless “universal” even without universal recognition (e.g. natural law and human rights). In other words, a universally applicable morality is different from or does not necessarily require the universal recognition of the morality.

Nevertheless, some universalists plausibly demand universal recognition from all people on the grounds of universal applicability in their morality. As Subsection 1.1.2 discussed, the confusion of universal applicability and recognition was typically seen in those who believe in the absoluteness of natural law and/or human rights (I called their belief western moral universalism). The rationality of human beings and the rights of man are both universal character and privilege of all humanity; therefore, these universalists jump to the conclusion that locals have an obligation to employ them as foremost principles before others. In fact, scholars such as Richardson undoubtedly use
the terms *universal morality* and *moral universalism* in direct reference to natural law or human rights. However, as shown in the case of Buddhism in 1.1.3, there is a possibility that there are many universal moralities across traditions. Therefore, a theoretical gap lies between western moral universalism and the plurality of universal moralities.

The objective of the section on the Asian values debate was to illustrate the tension between moral universalism and cultural particularism in order to disclose two problems, namely: 1) the narrow stance of universalism as a western tradition and particularism as non-western traditions, and 2) the way of recognizing other universal moralities different from one’s own. To this end, 1.2.1 examined the Asian values debate, which features some Asian traditionalists’ reaction against the universalist claim for static recognition of human rights principles. Subsection 1.2.2 discussed two types of universalist analysis in the Asian values debate. The first rejects “Asian values” because it lacks credibility as either an interpretation of Confucianism or Asia’s general moral culture. “Asian values”, apart from being a mere political pretext to justify inhumane state practices, could be a substitute of national identities for some Asian traditionalists in order to unite diverse cultures within their borders as well as to curb the erosion of their traditional values in globalization. This type of universalist critic analyzes the generalization of East and West and treats the appeal to “Asian values” as staking a claim without substance. The second type of universalist critic does not reject existing moral traditions, even if they are unfamiliar. But it tries to find a way for locals to interpret universal human rights, which are the supreme principles to all mankind.

The Asian values debate thus raises the question of the degree to which universal human rights should be recognized in particular traditions, including, one might note,
various western traditions. The point of the second camp of universalist critic is that it is necessary for all to recognize the universal application of human rights, though its interpretation can vary within limits according to local customs. Certainly, a reasonable settlement of the debate could only be reached if Asian traditionalists agreed on this point. The reality is, nonetheless, that the Asian values debate still persists.

As Subsection 1.2.3 argued, the second camp of universalist critic presupposes that human rights principles constitute the utmost universal morality across traditions. The foremost reason for recognizing human rights principles is that they are universally applicable as the privilege of all mankind. By doing so, the second camp of universalist critic are confusing universal applicability with universal recognition of morality. Moreover, their claim excludes the possibility of other universal moralities than human rights principles. Therefore, one can say that misunderstanding another’s tradition is one cause of the tension that persists in the Asian values debate. And Section 1.2 exemplified universalist critics and Asian traditionalists to show how each advocates asserted their moral truth before understanding one another.

In summary, through the review of the Asian values debate, the chapter clarified points for the reassessment: 1) a fixed stance between western tradition as universal and other traditions as particular, and 2) how to recognize someone else’s universal morality. As an empirical grounding for the argument, the next chapter introduces Shinto morality. Shinto has two contributions to the argument. One is that Shinto, despite its local specific appearance, embraces universal morality in the sense that its morality can be understood and even respected by non-Japanese. Finding universal morality in a particular Shinto tradition, the thesis argues against the dichotomy between moral universalism and
cultural particularism. The other is that Shinto morality endorses universality but does not require universal recognition; it is about how far one can achieve high morality in one’s way. Shinto—holding universal elements without being universalist—further promotes the alternative mode of cultural association, voluntary recognition (to be discussed in Chapter Three).
Chapter 2  Shinto as a Japanese Tradition

2.1 Japanese Tradition

This section aims to delineate the broad meaning of so-called Japanese tradition, both by examining “tradition” and circumventing confusion between Japanese tradition and Japanese national character. I examine one Japanese tradition, Shinto, in an effort to introduce it into the field of political philosophy.

2.1.1 Defining Tradition. Tradition denotes customs or beliefs that are transmitted over the generations; it implies historical development and continuity. Traditional practices seldom continue without change from generation to generation. Although it participates in inherited practices, each generation adjusts them to the needs of present circumstances before passing them on to the next generation. So a tradition evolves over time, involving the inclusion and exclusion of social practices.

What seems be old tradition is often a recent invention for some purpose. For example, Shinto is known as one of the oldest Japanese traditions, although it can be seen as a recently invented systematic religion, especially formed under the Meiji government. Certainly, it is important to remember that under certain historical conditions, the government may use “tradition” as a way to control people’s thinking. In fact, the Meiji government’s imposition of the Imperial Rescript on Education on the people subsumes the ethical concern of Tenno Meiji that purported to revive Japanese ethical tradition,

60. Pelican, Vindication of Tradition, 52.
which had faded away with modernization. It can be said that “tradition” is a historical continuation of beliefs or practices, often involving purposeful inventions.

Nonetheless, it does not mean that tradition is only the continuing part of a social practice. What we comprehend as tradition comprises past experiences which even include beliefs or practices that the previous generation decided not to pass down to the posterity. Shinto’s connection with militarism can be an example; the post-war Shintoists reject such connection as the mainstream of the current Shintoism. But excluded past practices (in this context, Shinto’s role in militarism) have nevertheless exerted influence on the formation of the present tradition. In this sense, both continuing and discontinuing beliefs and practices have shaped the present tradition. To avoid confusion, I define tradition as what the present generation practices continuously from the previous generation. By past tradition I mean a ceased belief(s) and/or practice(s) from the viewpoint of the present generation. New tradition designates that the present generation has started a new practice by aiming to preserve it for the next generations.

2.1.2 Japanese Tradition and the Japanese National Character. Influences from China and Europe, particularly Christian missionaries from Portugal in the Sixteenth Century, raised the islanders’ consciousness of themselves as Japanese. Since then the Japanese have so often been compared with the non-Japanese that by the end of the Twentieth Century more than 2000 pieces of literature about Japan and the Japanese had been published.

62. The term Tenno (literally celestial Kami) denotes the Japanese emperor. As opposed to for instance, the Roman or Chinese emperor, the Tenno, identified as a descendant of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, represents the national symbol of Japan.
both inside and outside of Japan.\textsuperscript{63} For instance, Ruth Benedict's \textit{The Chrysanthemum and the Sword} is one of the major treatments of the traditional Japanese character as established by the caste system, social obligations, religions, and other social elements.\textsuperscript{64} Similarly, many claim that there is a unique Japanese character, part of which is that the Japanese dedicate their life to their kin group. The following discussion reviews Chie Nakane’s \textit{Japanese society}, and Inazo Nitobe’s \textit{Bushido}, which were published in English.\textsuperscript{65}

In Nakane’s analysis, a distinctive feature of Japanese society is the hierarchical group formation under which everyone engages in a one-to-one vertical power relationship.\textsuperscript{66} The Japanese caste system is based on a group rather than on individuals, which is different from the Indian caste system that respects individuals in strata. Not only within a family but also in enterprises, an individual's devotion to a family-like business corporation enhances group solidarity. Besides, “once rank is established on the basis of seniority in Japan, it is applied to all circumstances”, whereas the Chinese seniority principle includes a possibility that “senior and junior might well stand on an equal footing in certain circumstances”.\textsuperscript{67} In other words, the seniority principle of Japan

\textsuperscript{63} Funabiki, “Nihonjinron” \textit{Saiko}, 21.

\textsuperscript{64} Hasegawa, \textit{Chrysanthemum and the Sword}.

\textsuperscript{65} I select \textit{Japanese Society} (1970) and \textit{Bushido} (1900) because both are basic reading material in Japanese studies. Nakane’s \textit{Japanese Society} was translated into thirteen languages and acclaimed as the best and long seller up to today. The author of \textit{Bushido}, Nitobe (1862-1933), is considered to be a historical figure by many Japanese. He accomplished multiple tasks to promote Japan’s modernization. His posts widely ranged from the agricultural advisor at the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan to Under Secretaries General of the League of Nations. Among his other publications, \textit{Bushido} was written for western readers to introduce Japan’s samurai culture, which became an internationally recognized book.

\textsuperscript{66} Nakane, \textit{Japanese Society}.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 29.
shows its particularity, though its idea was originally imported from the continent of Asia; the senior-junior relations in Japan are permanently hierarchical. By emphasizing the originality of the caste as well as the seniority system in Japanese society, Nakane claims that cultural homogeneity throughout Japanese history has helped to establish this Japanese uniqueness. However, she adds, the Japanese uniqueness is partly changing according to the needs of the time but will nevertheless keep the core of that unique cultural feature. The hierarchical structure can be seen throughout Japanese history and is very deeply rooted. For that reason, “in Japan, a group inevitably and eventually develops the vertical type of organizational structure at any time”.  

The ethics of *Samurai* or *Bushi* are another focus of Japanese studies. In Inazo Nitobe’s *Bushido, the soul of Japan*, Bushido is regarded as the unwritten code of the moral principle of the warrior class. In Bushido, benevolence is the highest requirement of traditional ethical thinking under which a bushi calms his mind with tenderness and feels pity in order to make fair judgments. Similarly one can express sympathy through benevolence that gives meaning to politeness, which is a social norm of Japanese society. As Nitobe describes it, the law of etiquette is based on benevolence. One takes off the hat when talking to an acquaintance passing by, for example. One sympathizes with the acquaintance under the strong sunlight so that one shares this discomfort by removing the hat.

68. Ibid., 63.
69. A “bushi” is a knight and “do” stands for “the way of something” therefore “Bushido” means the precepts of knighthood. Nitobe, *Bushido, the Soul of Japan*. 
While Nakane sees one’s loyalty in hierarchy as a particular tradition of Japan, Nitobe argues that the duty of loyalty is a distinctive cultural feature of Japan, different from western individualism:

The individualism of the West, which recognizes separate interests for father and son, husband and wife, necessarily brings into strong relief the duties owned by one to the other; but Bushido held that the interest of the family and of the members thereof is intact, one and inseparable.\(^70\)

In Bushido, self and other are considered to be one being through the bond of loyalty. Therefore a wife's subjugation to her husband and family as well as a man's self-sacrifice to his lord and country can be justified, which sharpens the difference with Anglo-Saxon individualism where individual rights are guaranteed.

The ethical principles above and other traits of Bushido, such as *Giri* (social obligations), the culture of shame and honour, suicide and revenge, for Nitobe, now still play important roles in Japanese society:

Bushido as an independent code of ethics may vanish but its power will not perish from the earth; its schools of martial prowess or civic honour may be demolished, but its light and its glory will long survive their ruins.\(^71\)

\(^70\). Ibid., 88.
\(^71\). Ibid., 192.
Relating to the definition of tradition, it can be said that Nitobe considers Bushido as a continuing social tradition.

However, those who are sceptical that there is a distinguishable Japanese national character that has been shaped by unique social practices challenge conventional views of Japan and the Japanese. As Ross Mouer and Yoshio Sugimoto point out, it is wrong to assume that the Japanese belong to one social group to which they show their loyalty; an individual belongs to more than one group at the same time. In other words, Japanese society is, like other societies, complex and diverse; a holistic view of the Japanese misses internal differences and the role of minority cultures.72

Another point Sugimoto and Mouer criticize is the research methodology of Japanese Studies. Namely, the theory of unique Japanese group behaviour is often contrasted with western individualism. However, it lacks either a clear definition of so-called western society or thorough research into “individualism”.73 In the case of Bushido, Nitobe was a complete amateur in the field but relied solely on his personal knowledge.74 Hence the validity of an existing ethics in Bushido remains controversial.

Unscientific Japanese studies ignore both group loyalties oriented among non-Japanese, and the aspects of individualism in Japan. According to Mouer and Sugimoto, there are also so-called organization men in the United States, whose attitude resembles

72. Mouer and Sugimoto, *Nihonjinron no Houteishiki*.
73. Ibid., 69-70:163.
74. Funabiki, “Nihonjinron” Saiko, 46.
group loyalty presented in the name of the “Japanese national character”. Furthermore, individualism could be stronger in Japan than that in other societies. For instance, there are many different Japanese words for individuals (i.e. *watashi*, *boku*, *ore*, and *washi*) that all stand for “I” in English. National sports, such as *Sumo* and judo are competitions between individuals. Many hobbies popular among Japanese have nothing to do with group unity, such as *bonsai* (gardening), calligraphy, *shogi* (Japanese chess). So it can be said that Japanese culture embraces elements of individualism.

Nevertheless, the uniqueness of Japanese traits and traditions are taught at universities, and introduced as social norms by mass media. According to Takeo Funabiki, belief in Japanese uniqueness has released national anxiety throughout history. Whether unscientific or not, uniqueness of “Japanese tradition” may explain why Japan lost the Second World War only to rise as an economic giant subsequently. Nitobe, for example, was a member of the pre-war elite thus involved in imperial expansionism and Japan’s struggle to overtake western civilization. Therefore, Nitobe wrote *Bushido* for western readers to claim that its ethics are the equal of Christian ethics. Likewise, in the post-war period, theories such as Nakane’s fulfilled the reader’s demand to fathom the changing attitude of the Japanese after the war, as seen through the eyes of orientalism and ethnocentrism.

75. Mouer and Sugimoto, *Nihonjinron no Houteishiki*, 212.
76. Ibid., 200.
77. Ibid., 119.
79. Ibid., 50:64.
80. Ibid., 210-223.
In sum, the conventional literature about Japan and the Japanese emphasizes Japan’s unique traditions and cultural homogeneity while ignoring the diversities of social customs and strata within Japanese society. Yet many allegedly distinctive Japanese characteristics can be found in the practices of other societies. Nonetheless, non-academic claims regarding Japan’s national character and its traditional customs have been popular partly because they offer a comfortable explanation of Japanese identity.

The Japanese studies discussed above blur the line between the concept of national character and tradition, which confuses the concept of “Japanese tradition”. Conventional Japanese studies seem to treat the society’s tradition and the national character as an aspect of “Japaneseness”. Yet the critics have denied the existence of such stereotypical national character; fundamentally, it is impossible to tell a single national character because there are internal diversities and the presence of similar characters between people across societies.

The negation of a national character that originates from tradition should not mean that there is no such particularistic tradition in a society. Hence the particular traditions that all Japanese practice need to be discovered. As discussed earlier, one’s

82. I define Japanese as those who exercise a Japanese way of life even outside of Japan. There are many communities that have been established by Japanese immigrants overseas. They do not reside in Japan but bring Japanese way of life, customs, culture, and any sort of tradition to the place they live.
84. The intricate relationship between tradition and the rise of nationalism has been debated widely and can be dated back all the way to Europe’s romantic period. Nationalism in Germany for example did not emerge naturally but was rather a by-product of the German people’s resistance against the occupation of Napoleon’s Grande Army in the early Nineteenth Century. In
loyalty performed under a hierarchical relationship comes with varying degrees of discipline and therefore depends on individual attitudes. Likewise, Bushido’s ethical principles do not represent the ethics of all Japanese because it is set for men, which means the exclusion of women, who make up half the population.85 In short, the existence of a distinctive tradition in a community and the presence of the people’s communal character are separate matters; there may be no unique national character of the Japanese people as a whole, but there may be Japanese traditions which the whole nation has inherited through successive generations.

2.1.3 Shinto as a Japanese Tradition. Among various traditional practices in Japan, this thesis focuses on the Kami-cults (the ancestral religion of the Japanese), namely Shinto, given that Kami-cults already existed before Buddhism and other religions were imported. Moreover, Shinto is still practiced and is likely to endure. Japanese daily life is permeated with Shinto, such as the rites of passage, which are performed on one’s turning point in life. As an example of the individual lifecycle and the rites of passage, pregnant women in the fifth month celebrate their fetus’ growth at a shrine. One month after birth, the newborn baby visits a shrine to greet the Kami. On 15th November, boys at the age of three and five, girls at the age of three and seven visit the shrine again to

this case, the evolution of nationalism owes more to external factors than a sense of internal unity based on common traditions.

celebrate their healthy growth in front of the Kami.\textsuperscript{86} Then in January, at the age of twenty, there is a national event to report to the Kami that they have become adults. There are other Shinto customs that apply when building a new house, purchasing a new car, and many other events, such as marriage and death. Even at home, traditionally the family members start daily life by praying for the Kami that are stationed in a small shrine in the house, called Kamidana.

Although only 4\% of the Japanese are said to embrace Shinto as a religion, most Japanese visit Shinto shrines on New Year’s Day to pray to the Kami.\textsuperscript{87} This contradiction can be understood when one conceives that Shinto is not only a religion in terms of one’s faith but a set of customs that everyone consciously or unconsciously practice in daily life. Therefore, only a few Japanese may follow the religious aspect of Shinto, yet the majority take part in Shinto events as tradition. As mentioned in Introduction (p.13), Shinto has deep roots in Japanese society as a religion as well as a set of social customs. Not only does the Japanese yearly circle start and end with Shinto rituals but also tourists from abroad visit Shinto shrines and festivals, perceiving it as a Japanese unique culture so that Shinto practices continue through people’s participation.

In conclusion, I have argued that one may arrive at a stereotypical view on Japanese uniqueness, namely the group behaviour of the Japanese, by seeking a particular culture and tradition with Japanese society. However, that view is supported on patriotic grounds by domestic ethnocentrism and by pro-Japanese abroad. In respect to

\textsuperscript{86} Shrines’ conduct of the rites of passage for children became a common practice only after the Taisho period of the early Twentieth Century. Breen and Teeuwen, \textit{New History of Shinto}, 12. One may consider such rites as \textit{recent} inventions, but I believe, others may think that it qualifies as a tradition because it has been kept for a century.

\textsuperscript{87} Inoue, \textit{Shinto Nyumon}, 2-3.
Japan’s customary structures the concept of “Japaneseness” seems invalid, but Shinto has penetrated daily life of Japanese society. Therefore, Shinto constitutes Japan’s most particular cultural and traditional legacy and this is why this thesis focuses on it.

2.2 A Brief History of Shinto Morality

To introduce Shinto morality, this section summarizes the history of Shinto morality.\textsuperscript{88} History shows variegation in Shinto, which suggests that the teaching of Shinto itself is not culturally particular to Japan. This supports the argument against a dichotomy between universalism and particularism, in which Shinto usually falls into the latter.\textsuperscript{89}

2.2.1 From Ancient Times to the Post-War Period. As a Japanese ethnic religion, the foundation of what is now recognized as Shinto was already present in the form of Kami-cults before Confucianism and Buddhism were imported in the Sixth Century. Kami-cults were a type of folk culture, yet not founded by a patriarch with a particular doctrine to spread certain teachings. Shinto was rather a communal practice centred on Matsuri (festivals)\textsuperscript{90} that encouraged a sense of social unity; an important element to the

\textsuperscript{88} Because many of Shinto’s original scriptures can be found in the Chinese classics with distinctive terminologies, the research on Shinto relies heavily on secondary sources. In an effort to avoid selection bias, the sources will be collected from a wide range of scholars writing both in Japanese and English. Another validity problem may arise when translating Shinto terms from Japanese into English. For the sake of consistency, I borrow English translations of Shinto terminology from Kokugakuin University’s Encyclopedia of Shinto and other English writers’ translations. If no English translations are available, original Japanese words will be kept with English explanations.

\textsuperscript{89} Given that Shinto is native to Japan “in terms of its landscape, its history, and its myths, and physical and cultural setting”, Ian Reader in Simple Guide to Shinto (23) concludes that Shinto has “no universalizing tendencies”.

\textsuperscript{90} Matsuri is translated into festival in English as it often involves organized performances of music and plays as English denotes. However, the original idea of Matsuri comes from matsuru
community whose survival depended on the cultivation of rice fields. However, Buddhism was introduced from Korea as the religion that offered guardianship of the Tenno’s realm in both material and spiritual ways. After power struggles between two clans of that time, the winning clan decided that Buddhism was not a threat but beneficial to Japan’s religious and political culture through which the Japanese history of Buddhism began.

Like the Buddha of Buddhism, Kami was respected as the guardian of human life as well as a guardian of the clans’ prosperity. Therefore, Japan’s indigenous cult required a proper status to distinguish itself from Buddhism whose religious role was similar to Kami’s position. It is said that the people of that era called Kami-oriented folk culture the Kamunagara way. Kamu meant the Kami and nagara stood for letting it be,\(^91\) which indicated that the people followed what the Kami\(^92\) offered them in everyday life. Through Matsuri, the core events of Kamunagara, the people worshipped their ancestors who were the ultimate source of their present life. Therefore, Kamunagara was not a systematic religion that preached morality or sought heaven after one’s death as Christianity, but was the way of focusing on the people’s continuous life from the past to the present. As a counterpart of Buddhism, Kamunagara was now identified as 神道 (to worship the Kami), or matsu (to wait for the advent of the Kami), or matsurau (to obey or serve the Kami). Therefore, in Shinto’s ethics, Matsuri together with rites indicates the presentation of worshipping the Kami. And this has been handed down over the generations as part of social customs and is likely to continue. In Japan, a year starts with Saitansai, a Matsuri of invocation for good health, and after two harvest Matsuri in Spring and Autumn, the year ends with Ooharae, a rite that shrines execute even today at the end of June and December in order to remove sin and pollution one bore in that year. Inoue, Zuaki Zatsugaku Shinto.

91. Umeda, Shinto no Shiso (1), 14.
92. Here the Kami means the Sun Goddess, the ancestor of the Tenno.
(Shinto), a term borrowed from the Chinese classics. The Chinese character of Japanese language identifies 神 as the Kami, and 道 represents the way. 93

The main difference between the role of Buddhism and that of Shinto in Japan was that the former offered a set of teachings and morality where the latter did not have an ethical doctrine. Therefore, the people in Japan accepted Buddhist dogma because it covered Shinto’s shortage of moral principles. However, because Shinto was the backbone of the national myth that legitimized the authority of the Imperial family, it still remained important. Therefore, people of that time accepted the Buddha as universal and superior yet in need of being protected by the local guardian, the Kami that enhanced its power in association with the Buddha. 94 In the early stage of Shinto-Buddhist syncretism, this compromise penetrated into mass society through the promotion of the idea that the Kami also suffered pain and sought salvation from the Buddha.

From around the Ninth Century onwards, some Buddhists sought an explanation about the Kami which led to the establishment of the theory of Honjisuijaku. Namely, the Kami of Japan were manifestations of the Buddha of India that strives to save all living things, which endorsed the superiority of Buddhism.

However, under the national fear of the Mongolian invasion of the Thirteenth Century with the collapse of the domestic political system which destabilized the economy of shrines, Shintoists argued against the theory of Honjisuijaku in an effort to

93. The term Shinto first appeared in a Chinese scripture as an excel way or an ethereal method through which a saint rules over the land. See Umeda, Shinto no Shisou (I), 14. Further details about the original use of the word “Shinto” in Ono, Shinto, xi.

94. Inoue, Zuaki Zatsugaku Shinto, 128.
reinvigorate indigenous Shinto as an alternative to Buddhism.\textsuperscript{95} The Watarai house, the priests of Outer Shrine of Ise, claimed that the failure of the Mongolian invasion was caused by strong winds which proved that Japan was protected by the Kami of wind. Considering the Mongolian invasion as a national crisis, Priest Ieyuki Watarai (1256?-1351?) thus urged the establishment of systematic Shinto, namely, Ise Shinto, through which he introduced the so-called Five books of Shinto (Shinto gobusho) that became the foundation of ethics in later Shinto Schools.\textsuperscript{96} Each scripture focuses on different matters respectively such as the eternity of the Japanese nation, the Imperial Family, and Shrine. However, a common theme of Five books of Shinto is about the foundation of Shinto spirits, namely, honesty, purity, good behaviour, sincerity, and the belief of humans as children of the Kami. In other words, Ise Shinto offered moral standards in human conduct; every human being is the child of the Kami, therefore, one needs to keep one’s honesty, purity, and sincerity and engage in good deeds, which can be enhanced through Shinto rituals such as Matsuri or purification (harae).\textsuperscript{97}

Under the movement of anti-Honisuijaku, Kanetomo Yoshida (1435-1511) of Yoshida Shinto, lamenting Buddhist domination over Shinto, espoused indigenous Shinto as superior to imported religions.\textsuperscript{98} As critics point out, both Ise and Yoshida Shinto,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{95} Khubilai of the Mongolian Empire (1225-1294) dispatched the expedition to Japan twice, but the gale sank his navy and the invasion failed.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Nakanishi, “Ise Shinto,” 429; Kuroda, “Chusei Shakai to Ise Shinko,” 264.
\item \textsuperscript{97} As an example of the ritual of purification, the visitors of a shrine need to wash their hands with water to clean before praying for the Kami.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Ito, “Yoshida Shinto”, 446. Taoism is “a Chinese philosophy based on the writings of Lao-Tzu (including the Tao-te-Ching), advocating humility and religious piety”, while Onmyo is a Japanese elaboration of Taoism, including the augury based on yin-yang thought; cf. Oxford University Press, \textit{Concise Oxford Dictionary}. 
\end{itemize}
despite their original outlook respectively, were still inspired by other traditions, such as esoteric Buddhism, Taoism, and Onmyo. Nonetheless, one cannot dismiss the contribution of both schools to the development of the moral aspect of Shinto, which is explored in the next section.

Although Buddhist influences on Shinto have been prominent since the Sixth Century, Confucian teachings also influence Shinto philosophy. Confucian ethics, which originated from Confucius (551-479), arrived in Japan before Buddhism (as recorded in Nihon Shoki), but its philosophical influence on Shinto are evident only much later. For example, Yoshikawa Shinto of the Seventeenth Century took the moral importance of the hierarchical order from Confucian ethics. While Nobuyoshi Watarai (1615-1690) of post Ise Shinto sought to give new impulse to Ise Shinto by bringing in Confucian elements, Anzai Yamazaki (1618-1682) of Suika Shinto claimed the ethical foundation of Shinto in Confucian’s master-servant relationship, which later became the foundation of the principle of public reverence for the Tenno. Put simply, the Confucian ethical teaching that one should venerate one’s rulers and elders under the social hierarchy provided reasoned support for the Shinto practice of ancestor worship and furthered loyalty to the Tenno.

In the fashion of foreign influence, especially Confucianism on Shinto, scholars such as Norinaga Motoori (1730-1801) and Atsutane Hirata (1776-1843), by seeking an authentic Japanese spirit, denied the influences of Buddhism and Confucianism on Shinto.

100. Yazaki, “Shinto and Confucianism.”
The result was the establishment of National Learning (Kokugaku) that focused on seeking pure Japanese spirits from old scriptures such as Kojiki or Nihon Shoki so as to find elements of genuine Japanese thinking as it existed before any influence from imported religions. Moreover, scholars such as Hirata, adding religious and ethnocentric dimensions to National Learning, established so-called Restorationist Shinto (Futtuko Shinto). Hirata’s theory on Shinto was that originally there were Buddhist teachings in Shinto. Furthermore, influenced by western astronomy, Hirata asserted that the Japanese Kami that appear in Kojiki was the universal lord and created not only Japan but other countries too. 102 Because Hirata also emphasized the fusion of politics and the authority of the Tenno, his nationalistic idea fitted into a changing political climate from the later Tokugawa Shogunate to the Meiji government which sought a restoration of the authority of the Tenno with the slogan, Keishin-Sonno (worshipping the Kami and revering the Tenno).

Worried that a tide of foreign cultures was submerging Japan, the Meiji Government of 1868 decided to penetrate the national consciousness of the masses using the principle of reverence for the Tenno. Shinto’s claim for the Tenno as the descendant of the Kami played a significant role in legitimizing the authority of the Imperial family; therefore Shinto was now upgraded to the status of state religion, superior to all other religions. By searching for an institutional leadership of Japanese spiritual unity, the government authorized Shinto through the establishment of the Office of Divine Board (Shingiin) and placed Shinto under its surveillance. In the following year Tenno Meiji’s Charter Oath confirmed that Shinto had become part of the institutions of government so

102. Ueda, “Cosmology.”
that religion and politics were fused. As a result, after approximately 1100 years the compromise of the Kami with the Buddha in Japanese religion was now over. The state protected major shrines and enacted a law that promoted a separation of the Kami from the Buddha. This separation resulted in either excluding Buddhist elements in Shinto or assimilating them into Shinto. The Meiji government, while officially approving freedom of religion, imposed the worship of shrines and the reverence for the Tenno in which Shinto was thought to be a state matter beyond religion. The intended effect of institutionalizing Shinto was to encourage the veneration of the Tenno as the Kami, the object of awe, which in turn encouraged nationalism and provided a justification for Japan’s growing expansionism. Through worshipping war gods in Shinto shrines, the people surely raised their sense of unity and loyalty toward the Tenno and the nation during war time.

Losing the war in 1945 changed Shinto once again. Under the supervision of the General Headquarters (GHQ), the position of the Tenno shifted from the equivalent of the Kami to a mere constitutional figure. Japan’s new constitution defined religious freedom and enacted the separation of politics and religion that meant Shinto had no governmental backup and was considered to be a personal religion. Nowadays, the Shinto described above is named Shrine Shinto, which is administered by a private institution, the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honcho), to which 99% of the shrines in Japan belong. In 1956, ten years after its establishment, the Association of Shinto Shrines released the Three Foundation Principles of Shinto thought, which will be explored in the next section.

Apart from Shrine Shinto of the state religion, the Meiji government recognized thirteen denominations as Sectarian Shinto that had patriarchs and original doctrines. For instance, Tenrikyo, which developed under Miki Nakayama, who fell into trance and became the patriarch, preached the moral importance of cooperation, honesty, and loyalty. Even after the world wars, Sectarian Shinto increased the proliferation of its teachings respectably under the new constitution which guarantees freedom of religion. Nonetheless, the number of believers of Sectarian Shinto is quite small, while the rituals of an individual life cycle are organized by practices of Shinto Shrine. For this reason, it can be said that practices of Shrine Shinto constitutes the most common tradition of the Japanese.

2.2.2 Outer Influences and Political Usage in the History of Shinto. Perhaps, the first note every student of Shinto studies makes, is that Shrine Shinto is the religion that has neither patriarch nor set doctrines. However, as this section has explored, there have been aspects of codified moral teachings based on Five books of Shinto, Kojiki, Nihon Shoki and other ancient scripts. Throughout Japanese history, Shintoists had repeatedly attempted to find or establish a distinguishable Japanese religion. Nonetheless, such attempt never materialized without the influence from other religions from the continent of Asia. As mentioned earlier, in Five books of Shinto, the concept of humans as children of the Kami, and its moral requirements (i.e. “spiritual purity” and “honesty”) were borrowed, influenced and shaped by teachings of other religions, such as Buddhism,

Confucianism, and Taoism. Together with *Five books of Shinto*, both *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* have been the core texts of Shinto theologies from *Ise* Shinto of Thirteenth Century to Shrine Shinto of the post-war era. However, in the first chapter of *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, the cosmology of the beginning of the earth and heaven (on which the Kami(s) appeared) is said to be an adopted idea from Taoism, Lao-zi and Zhuangzi. In short, Shinto is a religion that has been shaped by and fused with other imported religions.

Another insight gained from history is that Shinto has been affected by the political necessities of the time. Shinto, though originally part of folk culture, was heralded as a Japanese religion in face of imported religions. Compiling *Kojiki* intended to “justify the rule of Yamato (i.e. ancient Japan)” and “to reconcile subordinate interest-groups” by offering correct Japanese genealogies, myths and legends that distinguish the realm of Japan from foreign cultures. Similarly, *Nihon Shoki* refers to the Confucian concept of loyalty toward the Tenno that reflects the political value of that period, namely, the system of civil and penal codes. In fact, the early Eighth Century marked the period of the construction of Japan’s centralized government, so the myths of *Nihon Shoki* showed the value of the Tenno’s autocracy.

The first theoretical Shinto, *Ise Shinto*, was said to have been necessarily established as a response to the changing political environment, such as the Mongolian invasion, the crisis in the economic management of the shrines, and anxiety about the

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107. *Kojiki* compiled in 712 CE, is the oldest extant scripture of Japanese history that describes the birth of the Kami(s) and early history of Japan. *Nihon Shoki* was compiled eight years later as an official national history aimed at foreign readers, such as Koreans and Han Chinese. Myths in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* are anecdotal that the authority at that era believed true.
spread of *Honjisuijaku* among the masses. As the counter part to the dominant Buddhism, *Ise Shinto* offered three particular teachings of Shinto, namely, ancestor worship, one’s internal perfection as the child of the *Kami* and the proper attitude at Shinto rituals. Nonetheless, conveniently to the *Watarai* house, *Five books of Shinto* assert the equal footing of the Inner and the Outer Shrine. Therefore the scholars commonly agree that Ieyuki Watarai counterfeited the books in search of a higher status of the Outer Shrine he belonged to. In the same vein, Kanetomo Yoshida of *Yoshida Shinto* sought to subsume the popular cult of the Grand Shrines of Ise to his school. Yoshida Shinto also invented the idea that man could be *Kami*, thus two warriors, Hideyoshi Toyotomi and Ieyasu Tokugawa, were to be enshrined. As seen in the later development of Shinto, Shintoists were employed by the Meiji government in order to promote Shinto morality. Indeed Shinto was a part of Buddhism in the middle ages; however, it has become a representative religion of Japan through the effort of Confucian Shintoists in the Edo period and the propaganda of the Meiji government. In sum, this section focused on the history of Shinto’s moral aspect. Shinto ideas are not simply about the *Kami* and rituals that have been passed on by the Japanese, but historically developed under the influence of other religions and political manoeuvres. The next section further examines the contents of Shinto’s moral aspect.

110. Okada, “Medieval Shinto.”
2.3 Moral Aspects of Shinto

As the title of my thesis indicates, examining Japanese tradition (i.e. Shinto) is one of the objectives of the thesis. This section aims to expose the contents of Shinto’s moral tradition. Through an analysis of the current principles in Shinto, the section finds that certain key concepts are inherited ideas, such as virtue of being pure, bright and sincere, and Shinto’s idea of cooperation and co-existence at both local and international level. The section explains and corroborates these concepts which link them to the second question of my thesis: how to recognize universal moralities other than one’s own?

2.3.1 Methodological Issues. Shinto is a religion that does not compile “sacred texts that constitute the core focus of teaching”.[112] Instead of a codified moral law of Shinto, the Japanese have practiced morality through customs, such as festivals, rituals, and praying for the Kami. Although there is no sacred scripture that represents Shinto’s standard morality, a doctrinal aspect of Shinto has developed in different Shinto schools since the rise of Ise Shinto. Among various moral principles, my thesis attempts to justify a method that identifies traditional morality in Shinto. To illuminate traditional Shinto morality, one conceivable method could be to find a common moral viewpoint embraced by each school. This method, however, requires the comparison of all schools, including Shrine Shinto and Sectarian Shinto. Even if there is a commonality between all schools, there is no reason to regard it as present tradition because such a viewpoint may not be recognized by the current generation.

An alternative method could then be to focus on one or two Shinto variants, such as *Ise* and *Restorationist Shinto*. However, even the philosophy of *Ise Shinto* that tried excluding the influence of imported religions cannot conceal the manipulation of Buddhism, Confucianism, and other religious thought.\textsuperscript{113} As mentioned earlier, *Five books of Shinto* which embrace moral codes of *Ise Shinto* are said to be conveniently amended in search of power by the Watarai Family. *Restorationist Shinto*, which incorporated Japanese indigenous thought, served as a tool of stimulating Japanese nationalism in the past. However, its moral claim is hardly recognized as an inherited social norm by the present generation. Indeed, the *Three Foundation Principles* announced by the Association of Shinto Shrines deliberately avoids any expressions reminiscent of the nationalism of *Restorationist Shinto*.\textsuperscript{114} Therefore regarding *Restorationist Shinto*’s thought as the mainstream of Japanese tradition seems invalid today so it deviates from the theme of this thesis. In short, as the previous section concluded, the doctrinal aspect of Shinto is hardly indigenous but a mixture of local and foreign religious ideas, as well as a reflection of political needs. Therefore choosing one or two influential schools as indigenous Shinto ideas may not be the best method; it is difficult to identify original and purely Japanese ideas in Shinto.

Probably what is required here is rethinking the meaning of “indigenous”. In the sense of Shinto schools that were founded and developed by an exclusively Japanese way of thinking, no school can be called indigenous Shinto. However, we can speak of an

\textsuperscript{113} Toshio Kuroda argues that the doctrine of *Ise Shinto* was more like a patch work of borrowed thought or words from Buddhism, Confucianism, and Onmyo. Nonetheless, the people at that period seemed to be overawed by occult existence of the doctrine. Kuroda, “Ise Shinto no Kyori,” 263.

“indigenous” Japanese tradition if Shinto—even if it is a patchwork of other religions—continues from the past to the present Japanese generation.\(^{115}\) So the third option for the methodology could be to look at current Shinto morality as the consequence of what the past generation handed down to the present generation, and trace the origin of the present tradition back to history. Simply put, this method is to look at what appears now (i.e. the tradition of what the past generation brought into the present) and find old in it (i.e. what has been accepted from the past). One way of doing this could be to start from the *Three Fundamental Principles* (*Keishin seikatsu no Koryo*) and *Shinto Edification* (*Shinto Kyoka*) proposed by the Association of Shinto Shrines and to analyze their background and meanings. Hence this thesis will look first at what appears as the current tradition (i.e. *Three Foundation Principles and Shinto Edification*), and then trace the origin of these ideas. In search of tradition, Subsection 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 analyze sentence by sentence both *The Principles* and *Edification* to unearth the meaning of tradition, past tradition, and new tradition.

2.3.2 The Idea of Internal Perfection and Worshipping the Kami. Announced at the tenth anniversary of the Association of Shinto Shrines in 1956, *Three Foundation Principles* (hereinafter *The Principles*), is the canon for an ideal of ethical life in Shinto. Whereas *Shinto Edification* is practical suggestions through which the Association of Shinto Shrines attempts to educate the public in the concept of Shinto morality. *Shinto Edification* idealizes: 1) enrichment of individual’s character at home, 2) the individual

\(^{115}\) Naofusa Hirai presented a similar view at the panel discussion, “‘Shinto’s Influence on the Japanese Culture’ and ‘Shinto’s Practical Roles in the Japanese daily Life’”, held by International Shinto Foundation. International Shinto Foundation, *Shinto-Its Universality*, 118.
contributes to the good of local communities, and 3) the individual is concerned about the good of the nation-state and the international community (See Appendix for full contents of The Principle and Shinto Edification).  

Probably it is not easy to draw a sharp line between the role of The Principles and that of Shinto Edification. The former does not define the Shinto ethics but remains instead a vague summary of Shinto’s moral teaching. The latter in contrast, is aimed at understanding and preserving Shinto morality in a way that makes practical suggestions based on Shinto’s moral teaching. The Principles and Shinto Edification are similar, however, in that both take the position that Shinto morality should start with an effort to achieve internal perfection and then to consider one’s neighbours and finally the people of the world as a whole.

As The Principles and Shinto Edification can be considered to be depictions of Japanese tradition that has continued from the past, this subsection delves into older Shinto terms.

To express gratitude for divine favour and the benefits of ancestors, and with a bright, pure, sincere mind to devote ourselves to the shrine rites and festivals. (See Appendix)

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116. The English translation of The Principle is original to Sokyo Ono, one of the founders of this principle. Ono, Shinto, 82. A Japanese version of Shinto Edification was spelled out by Hirai, “Shinto Kyoka,” 445-446. The English translation of Shinto Edification extracted from Naofusa Hirai, “Shinto Edification.”
The first principle of *The Principles* above can be divided into two independent ideas: 1) appreciation for the *Kami* and ancestors, and 2) one’s service or attendance to Shinto rites and festivals with brightness, pureness, and sincerity.

*Keishin Suso.* Gratitude to both the *Kami* and ancestors is called *Keishin Suso,* that is, worshipping the *Kami* and revering the ancestors.¹¹⁷ In Shinto, human beings are good in nature in the same way as the *Kami,* although man as living creature is not instantly equal to the *Kami.* Generally speaking, one can be a *Kami* only when one dies and the soul is afresh (the exception is the Tenno). Therefore, one’s soul is eternal, and continues through festivals (*Matsuri*) in which the descendants recall their ancestors and worship the *Kami.* Recalling the memory of the ancestors through festivals was a part of Japanese folk culture, while worshipping the *Kami* was emphasized in *Five books of Shinto.* Therefore, *Keishin Suso* is the inherited concept from the previous generations.

Although the Association of Shinto Shrines carefully circumvents the idea of war-time nationalism with *Keishin Suso,* Akemitsu Asano’s publication in 1943 affirmed that *Keishin Suso* with filial piety was one set of national ethics. Worshipping the soul of one’s ancestor leads to the development of one’s lineage as the smallest commune so as to prosper as the bigger community, namely, the nation state. Probably encouraged in the context of the world wars, Asano emphasized that Shinto served not individuals but the nation; individuals must act according to the purpose of national development.¹¹⁸ As a matter of fact, *Keishin Suso* was used to bolster nationalism. As mentioned earlier (p.59), however, *The Principles* claim not to be the glorification of pre-war ideology; therefore,

¹¹⁷. Fukui, “Keishin Suso.”
it does not elaborate *Keishin Suso* to justify parochial nationalism. Hence it can be said that the mood of expansionism in *Keishin Suso* is past tradition in post-war Japan.

**Brightness, Pureness, and Sincerity.** It can be said that “a bright, pure, sincere mind” is a set of key concepts in Shinto morality. A tricky word here is “bright”. Indeed, the direct translation from Chinese character (of Japanese language) is indisputably bright in English. However, its meaning certainly denotes more than the standard understandings of such as “full of light”, “strong and easy to see”, “intelligent”, “cheerful and lively”, or “hopeful”. As a Shinto term, *bright* (mind) is contrasted to one’s *dark* thoughts, therefore, the meaning of bright is closer to “clean” mind.

Five books of Shinto explain that “a bright, pure and sincere mind” is a person’s fundamental mental status; the human body and soul are given by the *Kami*, therefore, humans should not corrupt themselves but keep their body and soul bright (i.e. clean) and hold high morality. In Shinto morality, all things in the universe are generated by the *Kami* spirit called *Musubi* (or *Musuhi*). *Musubi* is the very root of individual mind and body that cause every human action. Therefore, man is under divine providence of the *Kami* when praying for the *Kami* and refraining from having dark thoughts. Man should be careful not to lose pure heart the *Kami* gave once. For true worship of the *Kami*, one must cleanse not only body (through *Kiyome*, the act of purification) but also soul, that is,

120. The oracle of Tenno Suinin in *Houkihongi* (one of Five books of Shinto) states adversary ideas of bright mind, which are dark thoughts. Ishida, *Shinto Shisoushu*, 110-111.
121. Nishioka, “Musuhi”; Nakanishi, “Opening Remarks.” According to Niimura in *Kojien*, at the beginning of the story of *Kojiki*, two deities called *Takami-Musubi* and *Kami-Musubi* (with another deity, *Ame-no-minaka-nushi-no-kami*) created the universe. Mind and body as a binary concept can be also seen in yin-yang thought. It is not clear how the idea of *Musubi* had been formulated under what influence. Given continental religions’ influence on Shinto, it is no surprise that *Musubi* sounds familiar with other thoughts.
one does neither speak dirty words nor see dirty things. This is the ethics of pureness and brightness in Shinto. Simply put, “bright” in Shinto is used to signify man’s disconnection with the dark side of human life. In other words, man should detach from unclean things, and keep his mind bright and pure, and worship the Kami with sincerity that means to believe the Kami stays right in front of him.

However, as seen in the first principle, the purpose of enlightening man’s mental status is “to devote oneself to shrine rites and festivals”. And the vital role of Shinto rites and Matsuri are described in the source of Shinto theories, Kojiki, Nihon Shoki, and Five books of Shinto, which are the common scriptures employed in Ise, Yoshida, Suika and Restorationist Shinto.

The reasons why rites and Matsuri are important in Shinto can be found in Shinto’s fundamental belief; immorality is only one’s temporal mistakes that can be removed by the rites of purification. Shinto believes that human nature and the world is “inherently good”, or “pure and bright”. One’s immoral actions are not one’s true nature but artificial, hence easily removable through purification rites, such as Harai and Misogi (purification by bathing with water from the sea or river, or by sprinkling salt on the body). This line of thought was derived from Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, in which the performance of purification appeared in the story of a male deity, Izanagi, and his female partner, Izanami (these deities’ task was to produce a Japanese land on the earth). Shinto’s belief in the importance of purification rites and Matsuri are substantiated by its

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122. Ishida, Shinto Shisoushu, 110-111.
theory of human nature and myth; pollution or uncleanness that one happens to bear in one’s body and soul can be removed through the act of purification. In theory, the role of rites and Matsuri is described in the records of ancient Japanese history; while in practice, they have enhanced the sense of communal unity, and establishing Japanese identity through the memory of the ancestors.¹²⁵

While the purpose of internal perfection is dedicated to worshipping the Kami in The Principles, Shinto Edification stresses the establishment of one’s peaceful and warm family settings. As the first note of Shinto Edification addresses:

[O]n the domestic level, the promotion of Shinto-like character and development of peaceful and warm hearted homes. (See Appendix)

The fundamental idea is the same as the first principle of the Principle, namely, one should be aware that one’s body and soul were given by the Kami; therefore, one should worship the Kami through rites and festivals. However, “Shinto-like personality” in Shinto Edification stands for more than the meanings of “brightness, pureness, and sincerity”. According to Professor Naofusa Hirai of Kokugakuin University, it designates a person who appreciates a given life, hence respects life of oneself and other people’s, making strenuous efforts to live every day, while seeking harmony with others without losing his own individuality.¹²⁶ And the establishment of stable family life enhances this “Shinto-like personality” because Shinto rites are organized not only by shrines but also

¹²⁵ Inoue, Zuaki Zatsugaku Shinto, 86.
within individual households. Shintoists consider family as the fundamental social unity for Shinto practice where the young members of the family learn from the elderly members about the custom of praying for the Kami at Kamidana. Thus the first point of Shinto Edification is the complement of a Shinto-like personality through a stable family that conducts Shinto customs.

“Pure, bright, and sincere mind” stated in The Principle can be considered to be tradition because it has been emphasized as the proper attitude of serving for the Kami since the rise of Ise Shinto. Meanwhile “Shinto-like personality” stated in Shinto Edification is a more elaborate version of the traditional Shinto personality.

2.3.3 The Idea of Cooperation and Co-existence in a Community.

To serve society and others and, in the realization of ourselves as divine messengers, to endeavour to improve and consolidate the world. (See Appendix)

The second principle of The Principle indicates that a divine messenger must dedicate himself to society and expend effort to improve the world (i.e. consolidation). Man as a divine messenger of the Kami has been explained in the previous subsection; man is the child of the Kami so that man needs to strive for reaching a Kami-like mental status.

To understand the meaning of “improving and consolidating the world”, one should refer to the story in Kojiki which narrates the idea of consolidation of the world. According to myth in Kojiki, the deities needed to shape the land, which was originally
“resembling floating oil and a drift like a jellyfish.”¹²⁷ In other words, the floating world had been transformed into a proper solid land by the deities. Therefore, according to Kenji Ueda, the story signifies the progress from chaos to orderly society or nation. As Shinto morality states, to “improve and consolidate the world” means man’s effort or process to change chaos into stability.¹²⁸

Compared to the first principle of The Principles which advocates one’s internal perfection, the second principle indicates that one should work for one’s environment. Similarly, the second point of Shinto Edification aims at three goals: 1) development of the local community, 2) co-existence and co-prosperity between the local people, and 3) the protection of traditions.¹²⁹

[O]n the regional level, the coexistence and co-prosperity of the people is aimed at through the invigoration of local society and the protection of tutelary kami. (See Appendix)

In Shinto, it is believed that each local community is under the protection of a particular Kami that advents to the place. Therefore, fostering both spiritual and material advancement can be promoted at the community level where the locals share the tutelary Kami. Co-existence and co-prosperity signify that the people must help each other to bring equal prosperity to all in the local area. And the shrines should encourage the local

¹²⁷. Phillippi, Kojiki, 47.
people in achieving these aims through public rites and festivals, and lectures to enhance the sense of unity.\textsuperscript{130}

It can be said that the importance of communal life is the idea behind the second notes in both \textit{The Principle} and \textit{Shinto Edification}. And moral significance of organized community life can be seen in \textit{Yengishiki}, a codified law of the Tenth Century that enumerated eight sins (\textit{Amatsu tsumi}) and fourteen sins (\textit{Kunitsu tsumi}). While the latter is about sins committed between individuals, the former defined offences against harmonious communities, that is, the people’s agricultural cooperation.\textsuperscript{131} It is said that in ancient Japan, according to the state civil and penal code of the centralized government, antisocial behaviour that disturbed orderly community was a crime; therefore, it was the subject of purification. (Later, the pollution of body and soul, and crimes were considered to be different issues.\textsuperscript{132}) Although the present generation may not recognize \textit{Amatsu tsumi} in daily life, the idea of cooperation and co-existence in a community can be said to have remained as a virtue in both \textit{The Principles} and \textit{Shinto Edification}.

2.3.4 “World Culture” and Human Rights.

To indentify our minds with the Emperor’s mind and, in loving and being friendly with one another, to pray for the country’ prosperity and for

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.; Hirai, “Shinto Kyoka,” 446.
\textsuperscript{131} Umeda, \textit{Shinto no Shisou}, 45-54.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 53-54.
peaceful co-existence and co-prosperity for the people of the world. (See Appendix)

In the third principle of The Principle above, the sentence, “to identify our minds with the Emperor’s (i.e. the Tenno) mind”, may sound nationalistic. According to Ono, some claim that the Sun Goddess is the root of Shinto’s symbol because the head shrine (the Grand Shrine of Ise) of the Association of Shinto Shrines is dedicated to the Sun Goddess. However, due to the warning from GHQ against the fusion of Shrine Shinto and politics, “the Emperor’s mind” (securer after the war) was employed to The Principle instead.133 Similarly, the third point of Shinto Edification conveys the role of Shinto at national and international levels.

At the national and international social levels...the goal is the elevation of the spiritual life of the nation and the establishment of Japanese political and cultural identity. Also, Japan should act in a manner befitting it as a member of the world community in the areas of mutual assistance between nations, international cooperation and coexistence. (See Appendix)

At the national level, the third code of Shinto Edification is aimed at improving the spiritual life of the people and establishing Japanese political and cultural identities

133. Ono, “‘Keishinseikatsu no Koryo’ ni Tsuite,” 103.
(including support for the imperial system). In other words, the protection of the national heritage and the preservation of traditional culture enrich the people’s spiritual life. Ideally, Japan displays the distinctive identity through Shinto ideas as a member of international society so that uniqueness of Shinto constitutes an element of “world culture”: “a unique cultural character, combined with an international outlook, makes a significant contribution to the development of world culture.”

Although Hirai does not clarify the meaning of “world culture”, he emphasizes the importance of peaceful co-existence and international cooperation especially through a spiritual perspective rather than by material fulfilment. Therefore, at the international level, Shinto’s virtue includes Shinto’s sympathy with the international norms that embrace trans-national issues, such as environment, natural resources, even development and human rights issues. To maintain spiritual richness in life, it is important “to be thrifty with resources and food; to protect those in need; to harmonize with nature by protecting the environment; and to promote peaceful coexistence by being materially frugal whilst being intellectually rich”. As a means to achieve these goals, Hirai suggests educating the adults. Therefore it can be argued that Shrine Shinto seeks the maintenance of a uniquely Shinto-oriented Japan. At the same time it endeavours to solve global problems. Although Hirai does not elaborate “the development of world culture”, it can be assumed that the outlook of such “world culture” is the gathering of different

137. Hirai, “Shinto Edification.”
national identities. Because the unique Shinto tradition of Japan is a part of “world culture”, distinctive traditions of other nation-states could be other parts that compose “world culture”. In brief, the focal point of Shinto Edification is peaceful co-existence through one’s spiritual satisfaction. From Shinto perspective, therefore, communal practices of Shinto events indirectly contribute to the resolution of global problems.

The idea of peaceful co-existence with other nation-states seems to be a young tradition in Shinto Edification. Although the idea of cooperation and co-existence in a local community seems to have been tradition as the Yengishiki of the early Japanese law indicates, “the community” traditionally refers to villages, regions, and the Japanese nation at large. This is because when the Japanese myth describes heaven and earth, it indicates not universe in our sense but designates Japanese land solely.138

Contrary to the emphasis on co-existence in international society in the post war period of Shrine Shinto, military operation was justified under Shinto’s logic during the wartime. According to Asano, the purpose of the Kami’s creation of the world is the establishment of the world state on earth. It does not mean to homogenize the different people under one universal nation state, but implies the materialization of unity and of world culture under which different cultures and traditions are recognized. Therefore, waging war does not aim at commemorating massacre, plunder, nor destruction but to teach the idea of the Tenno’s world state. If necessary, such “teaching” would be executed with force.139 Along with a pacifist line of the post-war Japan through its constitution, it can be said that violence justified by achieving the establishment of

138. Ueda, “Cosmology.”
“world culture” is now excluded from Shinto thought. Nevertheless, the idea of “world culture” itself has been kept in *Shinto Edification*.

The third note of *Shinto Edification* is about Shinto’s search for its compatibility with international norms, such as those defining and prescribing respect for human rights. Indeed, the suggestion of the third point in *Shinto Edification* denotes that Shrine Shinto is concerned with a wide range of national and international issues. However, it can be said that the concept of human rights in the sense of political philosophy is never elucidated in Shinto morality. *Kunitsu tsumi of Yengishiki* states fourteen crimes that can be classified in five types: 1) injuring a person, 2) disease, 3) incest, 4) natural disasters, and 5) black magic, in which disease and natural disasters were regarded as sins because they were against the *Kami*’s will.140

The ban on injuring and incest gives evidence for the existence of human rights concerns in ancient Japan. However, albinism, for example, was considered to be a sinful disease. As Noritsugu Muraoka points out, *Amatsu tsumi* and *Kunitsu tsumi* put sins committed by mankind and natural disasters altogether, which suggests that the ancient Japanese did not distinguish man’s immoral actions from natural disasters.141 Therefore it is inappropriate to claim that the ancient law was established out of concern for the protection of human rights. In fact, torture was executed as a penalty of committing communal sins, *Amatsu tsumi*.142

In addition, as Ono explains, there is no invariable concept of good or bad in Shinto because moral judgments depend on the circumstance:

[M]oral judgments as to what was considered to be good or bad were not a fixed system of standards, but varied considerably depending on each specific situation. The Shinto manner of grasping truth takes into consideration the fact that values are constantly changing. For example, in Shinto ethics nothing—sex, wealth, killing, etc.—is regarded as unconditionally evil.\(^{143}\)

This is to say that the notion of good and bad is interchangeable according to the situation. In the Japanese myth, the brother deity of the Sun Goddess, Susanoo-no-mikoto, once committed immoral actions but turned to be a respectable deity. This parable tells us that nefarious actions can be reformed by good deeds. A Kami who may behave immorally can also behave morally. For that reason, even bad consequences arising in this world cannot be totally rejected because they came from man’s good intention.\(^{144}\)

Without a fixed standard of good and bad, Shinto would hardly espouse human rights (that accord with a norm; securing rights as good vis-a-vis depriving rights as bad) as its tradition from the past. However, Shrine Shinto attempts to include it as a part of its edification; human rights concerns are becoming a new tradition in Shinto morality.

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2.3.5 Section Summary: Tradition in Shinto Morality. Section 2.3 started with reviewing the post-war Shrine Shinto’s *Three Foundation Principles* and *Shinto Edification* as the digest of Shinto tradition. Because *The Principles* are open for interpretation to avoid establishing rigid doctrines, my analysis would remain one with many interpretations of these codes. Despite this limitation, what the section has found is that there are elements of tradition, past tradition and new tradition in *The Principles* and *Shinto Edification*.

At individual level, tradition can be seen in the idea of *Keishin Suso* and the concept of “bright, pure and sincere mind”. The Japanese people have worshipped their ancestors and the *Kami* through festivals, whilst worshipping the *Kami* was an emphasis in *Five books of Shinto*. However, *Keishin Suso* as a justification for Japanese imperial expansion has become unacceptable in the post-war era. In fact, *The Principles* do not establish the connection between *Keishin Suso* and nationalism. Therefore it can be said that the interpretation for expansionism ceased to be part of the current tradition. One’s “bright, pure, and sincere mind” has been man’s fundamental posture as *Ise Shinto* highlighted it in *Five books of Shinto*. However, *Shinto Edification* adds an elaborated version of a person’s character. Namely, the “Shinto-like personality” beholds an ideal personality of contemporary Shinto, which can be labelled a new tradition in Shinto morality.

At the local level, the importance of co-existence and cooperation in a community was already seen in the early law, *Yengishiki* of the Tenth Century, thus being tradition. However, the domain of community in Shinto tradition expanded to international society in *The Principles* and *Shinto Edification* with some modification. At the international level, instead of the Sun Goddess, the Japanese identity associates with the secular figure,
the Tenno, abide by the separation of religion and politics. After the Second World War, violence as a means to justify the Japanese empire ceased to be a part of the current Shinto morality. Despite such modification in Shinto tradition, the idea of “world culture” continues to be a key term among Shintoists. Although “world culture” has no clear definition, it is assumed to constitute the world loosely united through economic, political and cultural exchanges. Shinto’s approaches to global cooperation and coexistence posit that spiritual satisfaction is the very basis of humanity. Indeed, Shinto morality has been aimed at one’s enlightenment that works to resolve global issues. Shinto’s concern for cooperation in international society especially over poverty, development, and human rights may constitute a new Shinto virtue. Since there was no concept of human rights in Shinto theology, it would be a major shift in Shinto to incorporate the idea of human rights that has been outside the context of its tradition.

2.4 Chapter Summary

Today there are around 80,000 Shinto shrines all over Japan with 20,000 priests. Shrine Shinto’s lack of one united sacred scripture and a patriarch makes the Japanese less conscious of Shinto as a religion. Nonetheless, Shinto practices were inherited through rites and public festivals all the way down to the private life of the Japanese. So it can be said that Shinto is the kernel of Japanese tradition.

This chapter has attempted to explain Shinto as a Japanese tradition. Before examining Shinto, the chapter clarified the term tradition (Section 2.1.1). Tradition can be any idea or practice that is passed down over successive generations. Or it could be an

145. Inoue, Zuaki Zatsugaku Shinto, 1.
idea or practice constructed recently for some purpose but presented as an inheritance. In
this line of thought, an invented tradition can be considered a tradition if it comes to be
handed down in the manner of any other tradition. Moreover, seemingly abandoned
practices are still part of tradition because their memory is a legacy that the present
tradition cannot escape. The chapter focused on distinguishing continuing from archaic
aspects of Shinto and on identifying which ideas and practices have persisted most fully
in Shinto and which have not.

Section 2.1.2 stressed that tradition does not necessarily constitute the character
of the entire community—a community may have many traditions. The paradigm of
communal practices is often exaggerated. Japan and the Japanese are such case; the caste
system, social obligations, one’s group loyalty, and other Japanese social norms
generalize the Japanese. Yet “the Japanese” are diverse. As the section reviewed, the
simplification of the term Japanese is unscientific, yet accepted as it releases people’s
anxiety over their identity. My thesis holds that there may be no generalized Japanese
national character but there are certain social customs that have been practiced by the
Japanese.

Shinto is hardly an essential part of Japanese identity, given cultural differences
within and between different Japanese traditions. Yet Shinto is uniquely Japanese in
the sense that the Japanese people regard the national symbol, the Tenno, as the
ascendant of the Kami. Although there are Shinto shrines outside of Japan and newly

146. This point was made by Mark Teeuwen in “Western Understanding and Misunderstanding
of Shinto.”

147. According to the Japanese myth, the first Tenno, Jimmu, is the grandson of Ninigi-no-
mikoto, the grandson of the Sun Goddess. See in part II of Ashton, Nihongi.
founded missionary schools worldwide, the way Shinto evolved from the cult of Kami is original to Japan. In other words, the Japanese have passed Shinto practices from one generation to the next down to the present day. As a matter of fact, the Japanese yearly events are not only Shinto practices but also Buddhist customs, such as the Bon festivals in mid-August. Nonetheless, it can be said that the Kami-cults of Shinto are the oldest continuing elements in Japanese tradition.

Identifying Shinto as a Japanese tradition, Section 2.2 gave a brief summary of history in Shinto’s moral aspect to illuminate the process of forming its ideas. What the section found is that Shinto morality has been influenced by other ideas as well as by political calculations of the Japanese of that period. On the one hand, Shinto has been justified by politically motivated old scriptures, such as Five books of Shinto, Kojiki and Nihon Shoki. On the other hand, Shinto theologies have been established by borrowing religious concepts from the continent of Asia. Therefore, Shinto history shows that although the way it developed is particular, the contents of Shinto tradition are not pure or original. Given that Shinto morality constitutes of ideas that come from different traditions, it can be said that Shinto embraces both universal and particular. In short, by showing multiplicity in Shinto history, Section 2.2 served as a prelude to delve into Shinto’s universal elements that go beyond a simplified picture of either a universalist or particularist tendency in a tradition.

The next step the chapter considered was how to carry the research into tradition in Shinto and its morality. Focusing on tradition, Chapter 2.3 firstly looked at the present formation of Shinto morality, which seemed to appear in Three Foundation Principles, and Shinto Edification. Dismantling both The Principles and Edification, the chapter
divided contemporary Shinto morality into three types, namely, tradition, past tradition, and new tradition. At the individual level, the idea of Keishin Suso and man’s enlightenment seem to be continued traditions, while the suggestion of “Shinto-like personality” or detail in enlightenment can be said to be new tradition. At regional and domestic level, the idea of co-existence and cooperation in a community has been significant throughout the centuries. However, community in Japanese mythology signifies the Japanese land solely, therefore, the third concern of The Principles and Shinto Edification, namely international cooperation, seems to be a newly arrived idea. Offering spiritual enrichment, Shinto, nonetheless, seeks a settlement in which the colour of distinguishable Shinto morality remains bright in the international norms.

In sum, this chapter has introduced Shinto through a historical lens to get a close-up view of its morality. Behind the general image of Shinto (a religion without doctrine), Shintoists have historically attempted to find original principles. Shinto’s continuing tradition, such as internal perfection, the idea of cooperation with a current concern for the global human good, is the subject of analysis in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 Shinto’s Universal Morality

3.1 Two Kinds of Universal Moralities

This section elaborates universal claims in Shinto morality. The section argues that the virtue of being pure in mind and body, and post-war Shrine Shinto’s global concern for the human good, are universal elements in Shinto morality.

3.1.1 Embedded Western Universal Morality. Shinto morality was shaped historically by assimilating ideas from other traditions. Most recently, post-war Shrine Shinto incorporated the idea of western universal humanity as a part of Shinto tradition, which was codified as the third principles in The Principles and Shinto Edification. Although individual households and local shrines are the institutions that practice Shinto tradition at the individual and regional level, Shrine Shinto’s embedded western ideas are advanced internationally by the International Shinto Foundation (ISF).\textsuperscript{148} As Shinto’s international representative body, ISF was recognized as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) in 1997. The organization participates in annual DPI/NGO Conferences that tackle global concerns, which include human rights issues, sustainable development, disarmament, and peace-making.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{148} International Shinto Foundation’s official website.

\textsuperscript{149} I call universal humanity promoted by UN as \textit{western universal morality}. I am aware, however, that UN activities which aim to promote the human good do not necessarily represent “western” morality. Nevertheless, considering the aspect such as western influence in the formation of UN and on its activities, and philosophy behind their activities in particular, I argue that universal humanity postulated by UN should have a great deal of relevance to “western”
ISF has advanced its views at the several international conferences sponsored by the UN. In Tokyo, New York, and Moscow, ISF organized workshops to discuss the spiritual approach to martial arts by celebrating “the 2005 International Year of Sport and Physical Education”. In the following year, ISF held a workshop for “the International Year of Desert and Desertification”, in which ISF addressed Shinto perspective on the importance of preserving nature; the Kami exists in nature so that one should reconsider the value of nature (further discussion in Subsection 3.1.2).\textsuperscript{150} It can be said that Shrine Shinto attempts to participate in the discussion of common international issues according to its own moral perspective.

The primary objective of ISF is not to proselytize but to disseminate Shinto’s traditional beliefs to counter the fact that Shinto was the state religion that justified Japan’s expansionism in the past:

The Shinto Kokusai Gattukai (the International Shinto Foundation) is being established to dispel such misunderstandings about Shinto and introduce its qualities as one of the most liberal and broad-minded religions on the planet. Shinto is among the few sects in the world which does not oppose any other religion's philosophy. Beyond that a major aim of the foundation is to disseminate Japanese culture to provide a clearer understanding of all aspects of Japan.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{150}International Shinto Foundation, “Quadrennial Report.”

\textsuperscript{151}International Shinto Foundation, “Statement of Purpose.”
Having established an office in New York, London, Moscow, and Hangzhou in China, ISF holds events to provide information about Shinto as well as related Japanese customs, including Shinto ritual. By refraining from acting like a missionary organization, ISF can more objectively show how Shinto is entwined with Japanese culture.

One can say, however, that Shinto morality appears to be self-contradictory with respect to the universalist/particularist dichotomy. On the one hand, embedded western tradition in Shinto is evidenced by ISF’s active participation in international conferences that concerns universal humanity. On the other hand, by promoting Japanese culture, ISF distinguishes Shinto’s particularity from other cultures. In fact, the significance of one’s local particularity can be proven by both the worship of ancestors and Shinto’s idea on tutelary Kami under which everyone is protected by a local Kami. As explained in Subsection 2.3.3, Shrine Shinto believes in the materialization of “world culture” in which different local traditions co-exist in the world. In search of mutual understanding at the international level, one should maintain a local identity rather than turn into a transnational cosmopolitan. Shrine Shinto intends to contribute distinguishable Shinto morality to the formation of “world culture”. Therefore, Shinto remains as a particular tradition while it embraces universal claims.

So far, I have attempted to illustrate that when Shrine Shinto seeks compatibility with international norms it aims neither to abandon nor promote Shinto’s original morality. Although the significance of local identity has been explicated, the reason why Shrine Shinto seeks accommodation with western morality remains unclear. Probably it requires a better explanation than that Shinto has always adopted ideas from abroad; by
showing itself to be a flexible tradition, Shinto morality is compatible with western universal morality. The next subsection will explore Shinto’s original universal morality, which spells out how Shrine Shinto understood and interpreted western idea of the human good.  

3.1.2. Original Universal Morality: the Concept of Musubi. In 1995 the international symposium on the theme Shinto-Its Universality was held in Tokyo by ISF to discuss Shinto’s universal and particular aspect. In this symposium, scholars and participants, both Japanese and non-Japanese, argued that there were three areas of universality in Shinto: 1) Shinto’s nature cult, 2) Shinto’s role in forming communities and 3) the notion of pure mind and healthy body according to the concept of Musubi.

First, a founding member of ISF, Toji Kamata, argues that despite Shinto’s internal diversities, such as Shrine Shinto and Sectarian Shinto, there are traditionally three levels of grand cults in Shinto, those practicing reverence for nature, ancestors, and the Tenno respectively. Among the three levels, the nature cult is shared by other religions, while the other two levels, especially the cult of the Tenno are allegedly distinctive features of Shinto. According to Kamata, the Japanese did not conceive nature as objective: “Rather, nature and the Kami were inextricable bound up together within

152. Here I focus on the moral aspect of Shinto, that is, how Shinto morality is compatible with western universal morality. However, from a political and social perspective, one can say that recognizing western moral universalism could be a political necessity of Shrine Shinto in the retrospect of an infamous relation between Shinto and militarism. Shinto had been used as an ideology that advanced aggressive expansionism from Meiji period up to Japan’s defeat in the Second World War. As Breen and Teeuwen argue in New History of Shinto, the defeat brought the shrines a loss of state financial backup as well as of public sympathy. Against public hostility, Shrine Shinto needed to find a way of its survival. By following Breen and Teeuwen’s analysis, one can argue that ISF’s support for universal humanity creates a new role for Shinto, which distinguishes itself from the parochial type of war-time Shintoism.
nature.” This belief that human beings should endure harmony with nature (where the Kami inhabits) is an idea embraced by animism, so Kamata argues Shinto’s nature cult can be seen to have something in common with other religious practices.

Second, Shrine Shinto appears to be unique to Japan in being a part of Japan’s customary social system. Katsunoshin Sakurai, the former President of The Association of Shinto Shrines, observes that Shrine Shinto is a national religion, not merely an ethnic creed. In Japan, every community has one or more shrines dedicated to a tutelary Kami; even newly emerged residential areas build shrines and hold Matsuri. But there is no common tradition among those dwelling in a given community because their religions differ from family to family. Erecting a shrine and conducting Matsuri permits neighbours to come together despite their religious differences. Consequently Matsuri organized by the local shrine constitute a new common tradition which can be passed on from generation to generation. However, the tutelary Kami’s role in forming communities is not exclusively a Japanese phenomenon but it is comparable to, for example, the role of village churches in Europe. Therefore, Sakurai believes that the role of shrines and the Kami in unifying people is the universal character of Shinto. At the national level, Amaterasu Omikami or the Sun Goddess functions as the supreme God that is worshipped by different people. In this sense, the idea of national religion is not particular to Shinto; it can also be seen in other countries, such as in the United States. Citing Robert Bellah’s “civil religion”, Sakurai points out a similarity between American political leaders’ frequent references to God in their speeches and the implicit presence

153. Kamata’s comments at the panel discussion in the symposium “Shinto and Its Universality”, see International Shinto Foundation, Shinto-Its Universality, 84.
of the *Kami* in Japan.\textsuperscript{154} Therefore, according to Sakurai, the features of Shinto are not particular in the sense that they play a role in promoting communal and national unity.

The third category of Shinto’s universality goes to morality, namely to keep one’s pure mind and healthy body (discussed in 2.3.2). According to Professor Akira Nakanishi, Chairman of the International Shinto Foundation, mind and body are the essence of every individual:

All existence is thus reduced to temporary and fragmentary things, and even our own precious self to nothing more than an individual body which is destined to die.\textsuperscript{155}

As explained in Subsection 2.3.2, Shinto morality has its roots in the concept of *Musubi*: all things in the universe are generated by the *Kami* spirit called *Musubi*. In the context of human life, individual mind and body originate from the *Kami*. But because different people nevertheless think and behave differently, we must allow for human diversity and pluralism. In other words, mind and body are equally the starting point of thinking and acting. Human actions vary because they are the consequence of factors other than one’s mind and body. Yet as long as maintaining a high-minded soul or mental attitude upright, any actions must at least have good intention, whatever the outcome. At the international level, pluralism is not a counter act to universalism because different people with good intention are able to create a harmonious world. Because the source of human diversity

\textsuperscript{154} Sakurai, “Shinto’s Role in the Formation of Communities,” 74.

\textsuperscript{155} Nakanishi, “Opening Remarks,” 66.
can be reduced to the individuals’ mind and body, “universality and particularity are properly two sides of the same thing”\textsuperscript{156}.

One can argue that among the three types of Shinto’s universality addressed, the concept of pure mind and healthy body with the idea of \textit{Musubi} is most relevant to the discussion of moral universalism. The concept of pure mind and healthy body is about individual morality whereas Shinto’s nature cult and its role of forming communities are related to religious rites. The definition of \textit{Musubi per se} (i.e. the \textit{Kami} spirit that creates all things on the universe) does not point at a moral system. However, the concept of \textit{Musubi} consequently created Shinto morality, namely the importance of maintaining a pure, bright, and sincere mind with a healthy body. Because this is more like a discipline that shapes one’s attitude toward the conduct of life, it does not need to be recognized by the people who are unfamiliar with Shinto tradition.

While morality in English denotes a sense of obligation in a human relationship, in Japanese its meanings primarily designates the way of/to virtue (\textit{Dotoku} mentioned in Introduction, pp.8-9); one’s conscience through which one displays decent behaviour toward other people. It should be stressed that this sense of morality, namely first improving one’s internal character to behave decently in human relations, does not exclude non-Japanese. In this sense, the concept of being pure in mind and body can be respected by everyone, which in turn justifies its quality of being a universally applicable morality.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{157} One can say that Japanese sense of morality is close to Kant’s principle of respect or Hegelian morality. My thesis, however, defends Shinto’s universal elements without comparing it with other ethical systems.
It can be argued that Shinto embraces universal morality in the name of a particular tradition. Despite the different outlook, human beings are fundamentally all the same given that they are living beings endowed with mind and body. (And Shintoists optimistically believe that the co-existence of different cultures in the world is possible regardless of one’s particularity in thinking and acting when each one of us on earth maintains healthy mind and body.) In keeping with this line of thought, it is conceivable that Shrine Shinto, while sustaining its particularity, could embed foreign ideas such as morality as it is understood in western tradition. Therefore, Shinto’s morality constitutes a mixture of universal and particular elements, which goes beyond the bipolarity of universalism and particularism.

3.2 Reconsidering Methods of Conversation: Voluntary Recognition

As presented in Chapter One, there are two major discussions in this thesis, namely the tension between moral universalism and cultural particularism, and the matter of how to recognize universal morality inherent in different traditions. In the old debate on universalism and particularism, the generalised and simplified picture of the debate is a persistent problem; western tradition is associated with the idea of moral universalism and non-western traditions are seen as locally specific. Put simply, non-western moral traditions are conventionally contrasted with western moral universalism. As discussed, the case of Shinto proves that universal morality can exist in a non-western or so-called particularist tradition. This in turn suggests that moral traditions are culturally particular, but that universal elements can be found in more than one of them. In this way, one can imagine a multiplicity of universally applicable moralities across traditions. However, the
idea of plurality in moral universalisms entails a difficult task—how to recognize universal moralities which are different from one’s own. It is certainly challenging to admit and incorporate a given universal morality into one’s local practices. This is the topic to be examined in the following sections.

3.2.1 Reassessing Preclusive Persuasion: A Case of Shinto Morality. It is not easy to recognize universally applicable moralities embraced by other people as one’s own. In fact, misunderstandings often arise in cross-cultural comparisons and dialogues, which, nonetheless, aim to find a sense of shared global human good. As mentioned in the Introduction (pp.6-7), Will Kymlicka argues for a persuasive method as a mode of conversation in open dialogue aimed at identifying a minimal set of universal standards among different ethical traditions. In a cross-cultural exchange on morals, “persuasion” rather than coercion is the most appropriate way of engaging with other peoples’ ideas. Certainly, imposing one’s self-evidenced universal morality on others by force is reminiscent of the Japanese behaviour toward their Asian subjects during the Second World War.

However, “persuasion” can be differentiated from “mutual understanding” in a certain case (Introduction, pp.6-7). That is, one may attempt to persuade other people of what one believes true before understanding the mindset of these people. Consequently the former tends to ignore a possibility—the latter might also have a universally applicable morality to persuade or introduce. But the clash of persuasion is not a desirable outcome when people exchange their ideas for the sake of creating harmony. Alternatively, one can imagine that the persuader tries to convince other people of his
belief after understanding cultural differences. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the persuader, although understanding other people, reflects or even adopts ideas he has been confronted with. In short, it can be said that the persuader affirms the rightness of his belief and of its universal applicability despite knowing about the differences. By deflecting ideas other than his own, he remains adamant about his universal standard and seeks to spread it (this posture is what I call preclusive persuasion).

Shinto’s universal morality may not be appreciated through preclusive persuasion. Shinto’s universally applicable morality, namely the idea of “pure mind and healthy body”, is founded upon two independent components: 1) a theory of Musubi (i.e. the Kami spirit that creates all things in the universe) and its subsequent perception; namely (the Kami given) individual mind and body are the very source of human actions and 2) a faith of maintaining a virtuous mind and body. The first component is a holistic concept that endorses all humanity. The second point is the morality that evolves from the first. And these two components constitute Shinto morality. Nonetheless, borrowing Walzer’s words, one can say that the second component is already distinguished as a culturally “thick” morality from a mere concept of Musubi. Hence, Shinto morality is hardly a neutral morality which stands alone. Probably Walzer is right to say that even a “thin” morality or a universally applicable concept entails a particular background. In this line of thought, the concept of Musubi is, despite its universal outlook, still unique as all things in the universe have a root in a Japanese concept of the Kami. On this score, Shinto suggests that seemingly universally applicable morals cannot detach themselves from their local origins.

158. Walzer, Thick and Thin.
Because the world has no neutral morality that stands without a culturally specific background, one way we might find a set of moral standards practised by everyone is to “acknowledge the great diversity of historical processes, and (to) look for similar or overlapping outcomes: locate commonality at the endpoint of difference”.\textsuperscript{159} In this view, persuasion is not a primary method of seeking a common morality. As Walzer writes, a shared universal morality “is less the product of persuasion than of mutual recognition among the protagonists of different fully developed moral cultures”.\textsuperscript{160} This in turn leaves room to reconsider how rightful the persuasive method is.

By calling this method “preclusive persuasion”, I want to highlight the assumption that the persuader knows which morality he should persuade others to accept and on what grounds he can convince others of its truth. As seen in the universalist stance on human rights or the Asian traditionalists’ claim for the Right to Development, the chief motive of the persuaders can be said that their morality is true and universally applicable so that everyone should recognize its principles. However, Shinto’s original universal morality does not allow this linear reasoning. On the one hand, the idea of keeping “pure mind and healthy body” is universally applicable in the sense that it does not exclude people unfamiliar with Shinto tradition. On the other hand, it is the principle that binds man’s mental freedom; otherwise it would incur the risk of Shinto’s thought control. Although it is still ideal if one keeps a high-minded soul and clean body, there is no better reason than this moral excellence for Shintoists to persuade others to ratify the principle. In sum, pure mind and healthy body as Shinto’s universal morality can be best

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 17.
recognized without preclusive persuasion. This is because 1) it is a culturally “thick”
morality, and 2) it promotes an ideal to every individual. Any effort to persuade other
people to accept Shinto morality, therefore, might sound rather manipulative to those
who try to understand it. Shinto morality vindicates the claim that universal morality
need not adopt a domineering manner in demanding universal recognition.

3.2.2 The Idea of Voluntary Recognition. By arguing against preclusive persuasion, I do
not mean to revoke universally appreciated human rights nor denounce “persuasion” as
utterly inappropriate. My argument is that the idea of universally applicable morality
does not necessarily require an effort to persuade others of its universality. The idea of
voluntary recognition, as already briefly explained in the Introduction (pp.7-8), is
contrary to the act of preclusive persuasion. Voluntary recognition implied that one is
willing to understand other people, whereas preclusive persuasion indicates that the
persuader is justified in aiming to convince other people what he believes to be right.

The idea of voluntary recognition might resonate with what Charles Taylor calls
“unforced consensus on human rights”. This is because Taylor’s theory relies on neither
the legitimacy of coercion nor on making a persuasive case for some conception of
universal morality. Instead, it suggests that people of different ethical traditions can
achieve similar humanitarian ideals in their own ways. If human rights rest on universal
principles recognized across traditions or principles that are compatible with other ethical
traditions, everyone would eventually approach them without being persuaded. While
human rights distinctly reflect the right-thinking derived from western history, as Taylor
exemplifies, a similar conception can be found in Thai Buddhism. Buddhist principles
protect human rights, and the non-violence principle deters one’s use of coercion in order to enhance individual autonomy. In this respect, “a rather different route has been travelled to a similar goal”\(^1\). This is not to prove that Buddhist tradition too ought to be universally recognized voluntarily. Rather, Taylor’s case study simply suggests, by means of an example, that two different traditions can have a similar goal or ideal. One can find locals fighting for the human good on their own without coercion or persuasion from, for instance, the western human rights perspective. As shown in Section 3.1, post-war Shrine Shinto’s incorporation of western ideas is an example of recognizing a universal morality different from Shinto’s its own. Devotees of Shrine Shinto were able to understand the stance of western universal morality because roughly similar principles were already visible from their own moral standpoint.

Nonetheless, most people are inclined to deem their tradition universal, not a particular culture among many.\(^2\) In this respect, one may wonder how different persuasive talk really is from coercion, when a persuader, in search of a world consensus espousing his truth, ignores the presence of many other moralities which also embrace universally applicable elements.

A difference between voluntary recognition and preclusive persuasion is that the former does not limit the goal at which each tradition eventually aims, while the latter presents the persuader’s claim (such as western moral universalism) as the ultimate goal of all ethical traditions. The logic of the persuader is that his universal morality is the one to be applied to the rest, all of which are seen as particular cultures. So again, the

\(^{1}{\text{161. Taylor, “Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights,” 135.}}\)

\(^{2}{\text{162. Ibid., 143.}}\)
persuading party knows which moral claims to put on the agenda and anticipates more or less the success of their persuasion. But in reality, the method of preclusive persuasion may end up with the collision of self-asserting people, as seen in the Asian values debate in which universalist critics and Asian traditionalists compete over the question of who owns the most superior values.

3.2.3 Voluntary Recognition and Individual Morality. Voluntary recognition may, however, be too passive as a method of cross-cultural dialogue. Leaving one to recognize the moral significance of another cultures’ ideas may leave one wondering, whether a universally recognized morality will ever be found. Or the passivity of voluntary recognition may give the appearance that one is indifferent to one another, and that can be a cause of misunderstanding. Despite these limitations, the idea of voluntary recognition remains significant as a reminder; the persuader needs to know that at the end the demonstration of his/her thinking, an individual can be the one who decides to agree or disagree with the presented model of morality. It is natural for the persuader of a universal morality to anticipate a positive feedback from the interlocutor, which is why this persuasion is worth carrying out. But as detailed earlier in this section, Shinto’s original universal morality presents a case that can better be recognized voluntarily than attained through persuasion because it relates to an individual’s self-discipline. The persuaders’ self-assured successful demonstration might bring tension and create a moral inconsistency when the recipient of a suggested moral model objects the persuader’s proposals. The persuaders, such as universalist critics or Asian traditionalists, should not use their own personal convictions to dictate and impose their ideas on other people.
An example of voluntary recognition could be the subject of moral education introduced in the Japanese educational system in 1958. This moral education encourages young people, especially students of elementary and lower secondary school, to contemplate what morality is. As a part of education this curriculum gives students the opportunity to discuss what is good/bad through which the youth starts engaging with questions of high morality. There are mainly four areas for students to work on: 1) the self, 2) the relationship with others, 3) the relationship with nature, 4) the meaning of being a member of a group and society. The study materials differ according to the grade, but a common theme of the moral education is the “understanding of the value of human life, consideration for others, awareness of social norms such as judgment between right and wrong, and a sense of public duty”. In an effort to avoid its becoming a static education, there are no exams held or marks given for this subject; rather, it serves the function of giving students time to ponder their life and social role. According to the guideline of the moral education, school teachers should elicit voluntary consciousness about morality from the students.

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163. As a part of school programme, moral education existed in the pre-war period labelled *Imperial Prescript on Education* founded by Tenno Meiji to formulate the virtues of the Japanese. However, after the war, GHQ considered this subject to be the source of a dangerous morale which fuelled militarism and was consequently abolished. In 1958, nonetheless, the subject of moral education officially revived in a different manner from militarism and Shintoism. That is, a new moral education was aimed at cultivating an individual as a member of a harmonious society.


165. Ibid. As the teachers would not concede to their students deviating from morals, the discussion on morality in a class might involve the persuasion of a given moral example in a quest of harmony. However, it should be noted that (preclusive) persuasion in my thesis is the method of conversation between adults who have already understood morality, which is different from the moral education talked above.
It can be argued that the Japanese sense of morality, which relates to one’s character, has been tradition under the influence of Shinto. Long before *The Principles*, moral cultivation was promoted by the Shintoists of the Tenth Century. They propagated the idea that the act of worship enhanced the power of the Kami. In later periods, *Yoshida Shinto* sought enlightening the masses through Shinto scriptures that idealized one’s attitude, such as purity, compassion, and honesty. In the fashion of Confucian-oriented Shinto theology, the Meiji government promoted a programme of moral education called *Shushin*, which was based on Confucian ethics of loyalty, filial piety and diligence. However, by seeking to revive a sense of classic “Japanese morality” centred on the Tenno, the government proposed twelve virtues including self-enrichment, decency, and patriotism and other moral standards. This codified discipline was called the *Imperial Rescript on Education*, which was signed by Tenno Meiji in 1890. In the post-war era, the Association of Shinto Shrines has endorsed *Shinto Edification*, which attempts to educate the public in the concept of Shinto morality. Revived school education with the name of *Dotoku* can be seen as secular practice as it is an independent programme from *Shinto Edification*. Nonetheless, one can argue that the Japanese sense of morality has associated the moral significance of enriching oneself to rational conduct and good deeds in human relationship.

Furthermore, the voluntary character of Shinto morality is present in the propositions of both *The Principle* and *Shinto Edification*. According to Sokyo Ono, who

166 A direct translation to English is “honesty” but the understanding of the word remains controversial; Miyuki Takahashi points out that “honesty” in the context of Shino of that period stands for one’s attitude toward the Kami rather than the standard meaning of the modern times, while other scholars read the word as one’s mind without black-thoughts. Takahashi, “Ise Shinto Shisou no Hattuten to Keishou,” 58; Ishida, *Shinto Shisoushu*, 110-111.
The Principles, there are several propositions behind these codes. For instance, The Principles are not a dogma but meant to be practical suggestions for shaping one’s attitude in everyday life. Although a dogmatic element has developed historically, Shinto has its roots in customary and folk culture. The idea is that a dogma should not be established after just the tenth anniversary of the Association but that more time is needed to compile the sacred scriptures. This leads to the second intentions, that is, The Principles do not yet offer a rigid ethical code but are open to the reader’s interpretation. Ono argues that because The Principles does not prescribe an unchangeable discipline, readers might interpret it differently and it would be ideal if worthy constructions out of many readings drew attention. Therefore, leaving one to interpret the ethical code, Shinto morality marks voluntary character. Similarly, one can recall that ISF’s basic stance is not to proselytize its belief. As Subsection 3.1.1 introduced, ISF is aiming at disseminating Shinto idea without persuading it to the other people. In sum, Shinto morality along with the concept of Dotoku, depends on the individual to interpret, absorb, or reject its ideas. Therefore, it can be said that the idea of voluntary recognition is the most appropriate approach to recognize Shinto morality.

168. Ashizu, “Shinto to Keiten,” 42.
3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has attempted to elucidate two elements in Shinto’s moral universalism, namely embedded western universal humanity and Shinto’s original morality. As the argument responded to the questions raised in Chapter One, the insight of Shinto’s universal morality designates two points: 1) there is universally applicable morality in a seemingly particular tradition, which in turn affords scope for reconsidering the dichotomous idea of western moral universalism versus the traditions of “the rest”, and 2) the concept of voluntary recognition as a mode of understanding differences in cross-cultural dialogue.

The answer to the first point of the arguments was that Shinto’s original morality, a morality of keeping pure in mind and body, is universally applicable, yet the practice of this universal concept has been inherited exclusively by the Japanese. In other words, it is a particular practice of the Japanese with universal attributes, though that aspect is obscure. Hence Shinto’s standpoint does not rest at the conventional division of universalism and particularism. This is because Shinto’s universality rests with the individual who can be reduced to a creature with mind and body—a commonality to all mankind, while Shinto’s particularity is a result of the choices of that mind and body in different contexts. Simply put, universality in Shinto signifies being a creature of mind and body whilst particularity is expressed by individuals through that mind and body. In this sense, universalism and particularism are less contradictory than the usual academic definitions imply.

The argument above then elucidated a picture of plural forms of universal moralities. Under diversity of universal moralities, a vexing problem of the old
discussion of universalism and particularism is how one recognizes someone else’s moral significance that is related to all the people. And this was the second theme of discussion. Shinto voluntarily understood western moral principles in the sense that Shintoists wanted to interpret the aim of UN, which was to achieve the human good. Through Shinto’s own understanding, namely the concept of Musubi and a moral requirement of keeping pure in one’s mind and body, Shinto incorporated western universal morality. As Shinto’s universal morality rests on the very foundation of human beings, the creature of mind and body, it can be said that Shinto has been historically flexible to embed moralities of other traditions. In short, Shinto recognized a different morality not as the result of (preclusive) persuasion but through its own interpretation. Therefore, Shinto’s embedded moral universalism is a good example to argue for voluntary recognition as the method to understand other people’s moral traditions.

Voluntary recognition can be an alternative understanding of morality for the following reasons. First, Shinto’s universally applicable morality entails culturally specific contents. Although the whole concept is tailored to be applicable to all human beings, it has a root in the Japanese concept of the Kami. In the end, if one is not able to understand the concept of the Kami, one would find the entire Shinto morality odd. Therefore, Shinto morality can be recognized not by persuasion but only through one’s willingness to learn.

The second reason for suggesting voluntary recognition is that Shinto morality is about how far one can attain the idealized stage of internal perfection. Probably the greatest setback in the dichotomous discussion of universalism and particularism is the assertiveness of its moral proponents. These moral advocates are self-confident on the
grounds that their morality is everyone’s interest so that it must be universally recognized. The promoter of natural law, human rights, or the advocate of the Right to Development respectively claims that their moral standpoints are universally applicable and worthwhile to be recognized by all. However, in the case of Shinto morality, the degree of recognition relies on one’s awareness. Maintaining a virtuous mind and body constitutes the ideal man’s character as a sort of pre-requisite effectively to engage in obligations in society.

However, it should be stressed that the theory of voluntary recognition can only be one among many other methods to understand other people at the most basic level of cross-cultural conversations. Without zeal to persuade the other people, one can easily be indifferent in making an effort to create shared universal principles. Therefore, the theory of voluntary recognition does not offer a solution to problems associated with the different stage of the conversation, such as how to reach a consensus on a genuine universal principle without imposition.

Despite this limitation, the theory of voluntary recognition serves as an important reminder when cross-cultural learning takes place. That is, the persuader of moral principles should bear in mind to be open to any reactions he receives from the interlocutor whom he chose to address with his moral enthusiasm—whether the reaction may be one of agreement or rejection. One’s intolerance toward the other people’s disagreement remains a persistent obstacle on the way to the co-existence of people in the world of ethical pluralism. Arguing for voluntary recognition, I do not mean to say that human rights or any other moralities are in the end not recognized at all. (Nor is it to claim that persuasion is an improper conduct of open dialogue. In fact, one can say that
persuasion was worthwhile when Asian political leaders have admitted the significance of human rights as codified in the Bangkok Declaration.) Rather my focus is a type of universal morality that is applicable to all without demanding everyone’s recognition. For this reason, voluntary recognition can play a significant role to understand this kind of universal morality in the cause of enabling and deepening all future cross-cultural dialogue.
Conclusion

For a certain generation of the Japanese, the Kami and the Tenno once represented the absolute moral high-ground. After the war, when many Japanese had lost confidence in such absolutes, Shinto’s customary system prevailed over its political aspects as more appropriate to contemporary Japanese society. As a moral tradition, Shinto borrowed ideas from elsewhere in Asia and even beyond. Therefore, it can be said that many elements of Shinto comprise a wide range of ideas including western universal morality. In short, Shinto, a particular tradition, embraces universality. The presence of universal aspects in Shinto, therefore, challenges a fixed dichotomy between universalism and particularism. One does not need to see the debate with a mode of confrontation, whether one is a universalist or particularist. Instead one can focus on the plurality of universal moralities to consider how one recognizes another’s moral ideas.

Certainly, Shinto is not the only example that disproves the claim that a genuine morality must be permanent and invariable. The principles of human rights also illustrate the idea of universal morality as advocated by certain people (such as universalist critics) of a particular era. In practice, therefore, a “universal principle” is not one that is permanent and omnipresent from the beginning of humanity up to the present. Moreover, as seen in Shinto morality, morality entails local features in its universal claims. This leads to the following question: “on what grounds can one persuade his or her interlocutor to endorse one’s notion of absolute morality?” Accordingly, the second theme discussed in this thesis was the persuasive methodology that is characteristic of much cross-cultural talk.

In face of the abundance of moral traditions across the world, probably the most difficult but necessary task is to understand cultural differences before proselytizing in the name of a self-asserted universal morality. Although I have used the principles of human rights to illustrate the universalist claim, this in no way negates reaching a compromise on the universal recognition of human rights principles. Indeed, it would be desirable for both universalist critics and their rivals to find a middle ground on, for instance, the legitimacy of local interpretations of universal human rights principles (this is the model offered by the second type of universalist critic detailed in 1.2.2) or of other alternative standpoints. In reality, however, the dissent between universalist critics and Asian traditionalists persists, which raises the opportunity to reconsider the old discussion of universalism and particularism. Hence, this thesis focused on two areas of reassessment: 1) a fixed dichotomy in traditions between universal and particular, and 2) the mode of cross-cultural conversation.

To discuss the points above, the thesis started with analyzing problems that lie at the centre of the debate on universalism and particularism (Chapter One). First, Section 1.1 drew attention to the aspect that the term moral universalism was usually associated with western moral concepts, such as natural law or human rights. Ignoring the possibility that other moral universalisms might exist in different traditions, some universalists insist that their principle is both universally applicable and universally recognized. (Because my thesis exemplifies those who assert universal applicability and recognition for human rights and/or natural law, it calls their belief western moral universalism). The problem of western moral universalism is its narrow viewpoint; a self-assured western moral universalism dismisses the existence of universal moralities
other than human rights and natural law. Moreover, believing in a single, absolute set of moral principles, universalist critics (and even Asian traditionalists) claim that their principles are universally significant, hence worth being recognized by all the people on the globe.

Section 1.2 reviewed the debate on “Asian values” as an example that further illustrated and confirmed the problem of western moral universalism. It can be said that the bottom line of the Asian values debate is marked by the dissent between Asian traditionalists and universalist critics on the question of imposing a static implementation of western ideas on human rights. Although there was an agreement on the overall significance of human rights principles per se, the debate deviated from the point of agreement. This is because both Asian traditionalists and universalist critics asserted their own moral truths, while rejecting one another’s traditions. From the viewpoint of Asian traditionalists, western moral tradition is too alien to Confucius-heritage Asian societies to be adopted in those societies. The first type of universalist critic, on the other hand, invalidate “Asian values” as an authentic moral tradition by claiming that the appeal to such values is merely a means of political manipulation (Subsection 1.2.2). Asian traditionalists lose credibility when they use the idea of “Asian values” as a camouflage for domestic human rights abuses.

However, there was another type of universalist critic that sought a balance between western universal morality and local interpretations of such morality (Subsection 1.2.2 and 1.2.3). Scholars such as Donnelly and Chen deliver the most promising settlement—to identify localized practices of western universal morality. However, this concession is based on the assumption that western universal morality is
an absolute concept that should be incorporated into even the most diverse local practices. As a result, the possibility that there might be other moral universalisms are obscured and denied under the veil of local tradition. Moreover, some adhere to the persuasive method in order to advance the view that western moral universalism is the most widely recognized moral perspective. However, one can imagine that in a cross-cultural talk, there may be other cases of universal moralities that do not equate universal applicability with universal recognition. For these cases which do not require universal recognition, the persuasion would be intrusive if not coercive as a method of discussion.

To put the argument briefly, my thesis proposes that 1) a dichotomy between universal and particular is inadequate, and that 2) there is a type of universal morality that must be recognized voluntarily, not as the outcome of persuasion. Chapter Two explored Shinto tradition as an empirical grounding for upcoming discussions. As Subsection 2.1.3 explained, Shinto, the Kami cult, has existed throughout Japanese history in various forms, from being a part of Buddhism in the middle ages to an element in the seasonal Matsuri that people observe even in the Twenty-first Century. Section 2.2 introduced the history of Shinto morality, which disclosed that Shinto, though uniquely Japanese, has been shaped by foreign influences, including Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and other ideas. Shinto was never “Shinto” without those influences. Another aspect of Shinto lies in the political motivations of those who promote it. Such political motivations were often employed for the sake of the Japanese nation in the face of foreign encroachment.

Section 2.3 focused on the contents of Shinto morality. To identify what is and was tradition in Shinto morality, the section began with an analysis of the two most
recent moral principles, *Three Foundation Principles* and *Shinto Edification*. The ideas of internal perfection and the communal cooperation have been the core principles in Shinto tradition while post-war Shrine Shinto’s sympathies for western notion on the human good became a new part of the tradition.

Shinto’s moral universalism can be unearthed in two ways: Shinto’s embedded western universal morality, and Shinto’s original principles, namely the concept of pure mind and healthy body which is universally applicable to all mankind. Chapter Three elaborated these two universal elements to discuss the arguments of the thesis. In contrast to a presumed dichotomy of universalism and particularism, Shinto’s moral aspect consists of both universal and particular elements. Apart from embedded western principles, Shinto has embraced a view that Shinto’s original morality is applicable to not only Japanese but all mankind. As there are universally applicable elements in a local or particularist tradition, my thesis argues that the terms *universalism* and *particularism* are not antonyms for Shinto but co-exist in the tradition.\(^\text{171}\) As seen in the Asian values debate, rejecting another’s tradition from the viewpoint of either universalist or particularist fails to see a possibility that a particular tradition might embrace universally applicable moralities. Hence this thesis attempted to offer a compromise between universalist and particularist standpoints by finding universalist elements in a particularist tradition, namely Shinto, the aboriginal creed of Japan. This might be valuable in showing that universalism is not located solely in western traditions.

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\(^{171}\) In the context of Christianity, Pelican Jaroslav claims a similar point in *Vindication of Tradition*, 57.
Considering plural forms of universal moralities across traditions, the thesis focused on the way one recognizes other people’s universal moralities. Section 3.2 was dedicated to the second argument, voluntary recognition as an alternative mode of cross-cultural conversation to preclusive persuasion. Some scholars argue that the most promising posture of the cross-cultural dialogue is the act of persuasion. As I have explained, however, Shinto embedded western universal morality voluntarily, not as a response to attempts of persuasion made by the proponents of western moral universalism. In recent decades Shinto has begun to adopt western universal humanity, which was relevant to the goal of Shinto’s original universal morality; the materialization of a harmonious world through enriching personality by maintaining pure mind and healthy body. In this way, it can be said that post-war Shrine Shinto voluntarily recognized western universal morality and incorporated western ideas into its body of moral ideas.

The remainder of Chapter Three defended voluntary recognition as an alternative mode of open dialogue or, at least for the case of Shinto morality, as a check on preclusive persuasion. A point supporting voluntary recognition is that Shinto’s universal applicable morality is culturally “thick”, which means that to understand it one first needs to comprehend the concept of Japan’s Kami. Within a culturally thick concept, Shinto morality embraces a vision that one’s pure mind and body should contribute to a harmonious world. Because this notion holds Shinto’s ideal of human perfection it goes beyond moral ideas, if by moral we mean communal standards of proper conduct. Persuading others of Shinto morality is, therefore, an act of controlling one’s attitude toward life as a whole. Therefore, it cannot be communicated via preclusive persuasion.
In sum, Section 3.2 discussed how the case of Shinto proved the existence of a certain type of moral tradition more suitable to the mode of voluntary recognition than to preclusive persuasion.

Indeed, voluntary recognition seems to be the best path forward in the case of Shinto morality, given that the foundation of Shinto morality rests on the individual. As individuals attain internal perfection, they aim to work for the good of those around them. Because Shinto morality deals with individual moral choices, it invites voluntary recognition without attempting to convince others to follow Shintoism.

Following the argument for voluntary recognition as one’s consciousness, one might be left with an impression that Shinto morality is not a morality in the classic sense of a standard of behaviour for members of a community, local or universal. Besides morality as individual achievement, the thesis emphasizes that the concept of Dotoku (or Japanese sense of morality) signifies the Japanese communal judging system. However, Shinto morality and the idea of Dotoku suggest that it is necessary to improve one’s character before working for the good of wider communities. Therefore, Shinto ideas stress individual morality. In fact, as Subsection 2.3.4 explains, there is no fixed standard of right and wrong in Shinto theology (which does not mean that Shintoists ignore a sense of what is morally right and wrong, however). But Shinto morality relies on one’s good intention, one that comes out from one’s pureness, brightness, and sincerity. It is no exaggeration to say that the meaning of morality differs from one culture to another. Hence we must be open to the possibility that there might be other methods than persuasion when understanding morality in a different context. To state an example, I
have argued that the idea of voluntary recognition is especially suitable to understand Shinto morality.\textsuperscript{172}

In my view, mutual understanding is the very starting point of cross-cultural talk before creating universal principles that transcend all cultural differences. I have argued that it is important to understand cultural differences, and that the theory of voluntary recognition is a way to do that. One can say, nonetheless, that there will still be disagreement over moral universalism despite better mutual understanding. Unfortunately voluntary learning is not a remedy that directs a moral consensus among different people. Certainly one can predict another difficulty when forming a genuine universal morality even among people who are willing to learn cultural values of one another. Hence the area for the further research is such as how to reconcile disagreements or respect differences that persist even through voluntary recognition.

The decision making process between the adherents of different traditions would be further complicated if hybrid moralities emerged. Scholars often assume that a moral tradition is either secular or religious.\textsuperscript{173} However, in terms of the effects of globalization, individuals may be influenced by or espouse more than one moral tradition. This in turn implies that one’s moral tradition may go beyond the simplified secular-religious division. Although research into public morality remains essential, globalization enables individuals to encounter cultural differences through their own personal experiences. In fact, many of the scholars cited in my thesis, including Appiah, Mouer, and Sugimoto,

\textsuperscript{172} This thesis focused on introducing Shinto morality rather than devoting to the comparison with morality in English sense.

\textsuperscript{173} Kymlicka and Sullivan, \textit{Globalization of Ethics}. 

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envisage more than one tradition as the cornerstone of their own life experience.\textsuperscript{174} Probably their personal principles or private morality are in the end a mixture of many elements from both secular and religious aspects. Yet no matter secular, religious, or hybrid moralities, being tolerant to different ways of life and avoiding preconceptions about traditions, is, I believe, one way to broaden one’s mind and understand and respect differences.

\textsuperscript{174} Mouer and Sugimoto, \textit{Nihonjinron no Houteishiki}; Appiah, \textit{Cosmopolitanism}. 
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Appendix

Three Foundation Principles

1. To express gratitude for divine favour and the benefits of ancestors, and with a bright, pure, sincere mind to devote ourselves to the shrine rites and festivals.
2. To serve society and others and, in the realization of ourselves as divine messengers, to endeavour to improve and consolidate the world.
3. To indentify our minds with the Emperor’s mind and, in loving and being friendly with one another, to pray for the country’ prosperity and for peaceful co-existence and co-prosperity for the people of the world.

(Ono, Shinto, 82)

Shinto Edification

1. [O]n the domestic level, the promotion of Shinto-like character and development of peaceful and warm hearted homes.
2. [O]n the regional level, the coexistence and co-prosperity of the people is aimed at through the invigoration of local society and the protection of tutelary kami.
3. At the national and international social levels...the goal is the elevation of the spiritual life of the nation and the establishment of Japanese political and cultural identity. Also, Japan should act in a manner befitting it as a member of the world community in the areas of mutual assistance between nations, international cooperation and coexistence.

(Hirai, “Shinto Edification.”)