

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A CHRISTIAN AUGUSTINIAN RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN THE SHINTO
RELIGION WITH REFERENCE TO THE THOUGHT OF MOTOORI NORINAGA

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INTRODUCTION

The perennial human quest for an answer to the existence of evil and its results is of interest to every human being as everyone seems to be affected by pain and suffering. Justin Hayward's lyrics reveal the more recent cultural Western articulation of the problem of evil: "Why do we never get an answer/ when we're knocking at the door?/ With a thousand million questions/ about hate and death and war?"¹ Every culture poses this question in one way or another. As pain, suffering, and evil are indisputable realities for Westerners and seemingly widespread illusions for Easterners, in a sense, every person is influenced by evil (or the illusion of evil). The westerner might complain of the propensity of evil while the oriental of the powerful effects of the illusion of evil. Thus, every *Weltanschauung* has the responsibility to provide an answer or an explanation to the problem of evil. The origin of evil becomes a significant question for those who struggle to understand metaphysical evil. For the worldviews that deny the reality of evil, there is still a need to explain the origin of its illusion; every worldview must address the challenge of evil. The Shinto and Christian positions recognize the reality of evil and attempt to respond in a coherent, comprehensive manner to the challenge it poses, although their answers differ in many aspects.

The essence of Japanese culture, Shinto, is an amalgam of ideas and ways of doing things that presents an optimistic worldview. Given Shinto's favorable disposition toward life, the question of evil seems even more acute for this system. How does Shinto explain the reality of evil and maintain its optimistic view of the world? Does it overlook the seriousness and reality

¹ Justin Hayward, "Question" (Sydney: Essex Music, 1970).

of evil? Does the Shinto position offer a realistic response or an inadequate answer to the problem of evil? This thesis attempts to discover and respond critically to these questions with reference to the thought of Motoori Norinaga, an eighteenth century Shinto scholar, and compare the Shinto view to an Augustinian Christian response.

J.W.T. Mason affirmed that we “know far more about the significance of the conceptions of ancient Egypt, dead for thousands of years, than about the significance of Shinto which is the most virile factor in the life of Japan.”² He points out the considerable deficiency in the area of Shinto studies, though Western scholarship of Shinto has made great advances in the last few decades. Various reasons have been offered to explain the situation, but two in particular have appeared in numerous writings and relate to the nature of Shinto: 1) its intuitive character; and 2) its lack of philosophical sophistication. These Shinto characteristics will become evident as the study progresses. However, before undertaking the task of understanding the Shinto concept of evil, several ideas need to be addressed: 1) the view of Shinto referred to in this paper; 2) a brief introduction to Norinaga’s ideas; and 3) intuition, the Shinto epistemological approach to truth. I will then explain two foundational aspects of the Shinto worldview, and Norinaga’s concept of evil, followed by a Christian response.

View of Shinto

The term “Shinto” covers many different types of religious expressions that developed over the course of Japanese history. From the animistic, primitive form to the official state religion to the various indigenous folk practices, Shinto can signify a range of diffuse beliefs. The constant influx of foreign influences stimulated Shinto adherents to refine or transform their views throughout the years. However, in each case, the old beliefs were not discarded but

² J.W.T. Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto: The Primæval Foundation of Creative Spirit in Modern Japan* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1967), 3.

altered. At the same time, this indigenous religion also acted as an agent of transformation on the foreign traditions. In addition, it is significant that most foreign beliefs that survived in Japan were the ones congenial to the indigenous tradition. This syncretistic approach of the Japanese and the continuous exchange of ideas between various systems produced a difficulty in defining Shinto. Employing the analogy of a tree, Robert J. Wargo describes it as the molding and sustaining factor of religious and philosophical thought:

Shintoist orientation is like the root system of a tree that has been subjected to massive pruning and shaping by external forces. It is the shape and interlacing network of branches that excite one's interest and admiration; but it is the *roots*—which store and send back up vital nutrients—that underlie the dynamism of growth and revitalize the cultural tree, which otherwise would die from injury to its above-ground parts.³

As Wargo suggests, from an anthropological point-of-view, Shinto refers to the core Japanese roots underpinning the Japanese culture. In the study of various traditions found in Japan, scholars repeatedly describe concepts as “clearly Japanese” or “purely Shintoist.” The frequent interchangeable use of “Japanese” and “Shinto” demonstrate that the latter term refers to some cultural Japanese tendencies and not only to the indigenous religion of the people. These purely Japanese ideas form the basis of Norinaga's view of Shinto called “Pure Shinto,” or the “Way of the Gods”—or thus the Nationalist scholars affirm. This is the revived version of ancient Shinto as understood by the proponents of the National Learning movement.

As the meaning of Shinto analyzed and referred to in this thesis is “Pure Shinto,” this section will present its core concepts. At the foundation of Pure Shinto lies the belief in the divinity of the emperor and, thus, the reverence for the Imperial House. Always an integral factor of the indigenous religion, belief in the divine origin of the emperor was fully embraced by the nationalists. As Norinaga developed this notion, he associated it to the belief in Japan as

³ Robert J. J. Wargo, “Japanese Ethics: Beyond Good and evil,” *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 4 (October 1990): 499-500.

the “divine country.” In addition, Pure Shinto emphasized naturalness and simplicity as the way of the kami and the goal of humans. To act “naturally” was the norm in ancient Japan, according to Norinaga. Because the people were pure, their spontaneous actions equaled righteous conduct. The internal connectedness between kami and humans was not distorted since the people followed “the Way of the Gods.” Pure Shinto believes all of existence is divine spirit characterized by creative spontaneity, or “the subconscious self-creative impetus,” as Mason describes it.⁴ That explains the reason empiricism and teaching by emulation are primordial in Shinto, as well as the cause behind the strong Shinto emphasis on feelings and spontaneous action. As divine, humans have the kami-potential within themselves. This implies that it is “natural” for a person to live as they “ought,” whatever that means. Human nature seen as an extension of the nature of the universe elucidates the attitude of exalting subjective and spontaneous action so characteristic of Pure Shinto. These basic beliefs of Pure Shinto will continue to surface as Norinaga’s thought is analyzed.

Short Introduction of Norinaga’s Ideas

Since no belief takes shape in a vacuum, a proper understanding of Norinaga’s view of evil is determined upon an understanding of his thought system. “The prince of Shinto scholars,”⁵ he is recognized as one of the most influential scholars of the National Learning movement, a movement that sought a revival of the ancient Shinto. In *Motoori Norinaga: 1730-1801*, Shigeru Matsumoto divides the study of Norinaga’s life into four stages: childhood and adolescence (1730-1751), young adulthood (1752-1763), adulthood (1764-1780), and old age

⁴ Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto*, 15-21.

⁵ Charles William Hepner, Genchi Kato, *The Kurozumi Sect of Shinto* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 49.

(1781-1801). In analyzing Norinaga's thought, the author emphasizes the development of two notions throughout each one of these stages, notions that define his thought: *mono no aware*, which he developed mainly in the second stage of his life, and the "Ancient Way," a concept on which he focused in the last two stages of his life. First, one needs to appreciate the historical context that influenced the development of Norinaga's ideas. I will offer a brief historical synopsis of the religious and philosophical milieu preceding the emergence of the National Learning movement. Then, I will expound on the two notions mentioned by Matsumoto that appear so significant in the process of understanding Norinaga's thought.

In the sixth and following centuries, the introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism in Japan produced a transformation of Shinto. The synthesis of Buddhism and Shinto influenced the religious beliefs of the Japanese while Confucianism was used for the bureaucratic organization of the government. From about 800 until 1600, Buddhism dominated the religious and philosophical scene in Japan. After a period of internal warfare, Tokugawa Ieyasu unified Japan and reorganized the country; the Tokugawa shogunate favored Neo-Confucianism, and the result was the fall of Buddhism as the major philosophical and spiritual movement in Japan. Shinto adherents, especially Shinto scholars and philosophers, were presented with two options: either to synthesize with the new philosophical movement, or to develop their own system independent of other intellectual traditions.⁶ Norinaga was part of the system that revolted against the amalgamation of Shinto to any other religious belief and promoted the idea of developing a purely Shinto worldview.

As part of the *kokugaku* movement, Norinaga advocated for the discovery of the ancient traditions, or pure Japanese roots, unpolluted by foreign influences. He equated the ancient

⁶ Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 95-105.

Shinto to the “Way of the Gods” and believed that truth can be found through the study of the books that record the events of the gods, *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*.⁷ His thought is based especially upon the *Kojiki*, which seemed to have “something of a revelational meaning for [Norinaga].”⁸ His affirmation that “the true Way is the same in every single country, but it has been transmitted correctly in [the] Imperial land alone”⁹ reveals three aspects of Norinaga’s belief regarding Japan: the existence of a universal truth available to all, the Japanese ethnocentrism, and the somewhat revelatory nature of the two classics.¹⁰ In another work, he makes a similar remark: “[the true Way] permeates all nations within the Four Seas and is transmitted exclusively in our Imperial Land.”¹¹ To attain the truth, however, one needs to reflect sincerely on the events of the Age of the Gods and needs an undefiled mind, a mind purified of Chinese logic or influences.¹² Reason cannot help one in the process of discovering the truth because human intelligence is incapable of comprehending the profound principles of the Way of the Gods.¹³

⁷ Though Norinaga believed that both ancient records, *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, present the truth of Way of the Gods, the latter has been tainted by Chinese influences and, thus, requires more work on the part of the reader as it is necessary for him to remove the foreign influences that hinder him from acquiring the profound truths of the Age of the Gods. This caused him to appreciate the *Kojiki* more and explains his devotion for the compilation of the *Kojikiden* (*Commentary on the Kojiki*), a forty-four volume work that took almost thirty years to complete.

⁸ Shigeru Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga: 1730-1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 81. It is important to keep in mind that many Shintoists have accepted the *Kojiki* as “the book of kami,” but there does not seem to be others who accepted it as a revelation.

⁹ Motoori Norinaga, “Tamakushige,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 43, no.1 (Spring, 1988): 45.

¹⁰ Norinaga did not hold to a belief in propositional truth, or propositional revelation. His belief in “revelatory” books needs to be understood through the concept of *mono no aware*, a term discussed in the next paragraphs.

¹¹ Motoori Norinaga, “Uiyamabumi,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 42, no.4 (Winter, 1987): 461.

¹² He makes this assertion in many of his writings, but especially in his essay, *Naobi na mitana*, included as the last chapter of the first volume of *Kojikiden*.

¹³ Motoori Norinaga, *Kojikiden*, 230-231.

Norinaga despised any metaphysical approaches to studying “the Way,” and rejected the use of reason and logic in the pursuit of the truth. However, in his refutation of Confucian and Buddhist thought, he consistently reasons and uses logic. Nonetheless, when faced with difficult questions regarding his own views, he frequently dismisses them because they transcend human understanding. For instance, when asked what the ultimate ontological cause is, he “It cannot be known because there is no tradition transmitted about it.” He then continues, “But since it is a matter far beyond the reach of the [human] mind and word, the very lack of tradition is quite natural.”¹⁴ In addition, Norinaga presents the Way as “totally different, dissociated from the teachings of . . . any other doctrine, having nothing whatsoever in common with them.”¹⁵ This is a peculiar affirmation for one who believes that foreign ways are “peripheral branches of the true Way.”¹⁶ A branch is not only associated with the trunk, but survives only through its connection to the tree. In *Tamakushige*, Norinaga concedes that foreign ways may resemble the Way of the Gods, which obviously contradicts his other statement mentioned above. Even though logic does not hold a high value in Norinaga’s system, he uses it to destroy the arguments of his opponents while refusing to subject his system to its scrutiny.

Mono no aware is a key concept that influences many of Norinaga’s views. Most translators struggle to provide the exact meaning of the term “mono no aware” in another language. Popular renderings in English for *mono no aware* have been “the moving power of things,”¹⁷ “the pathos of things,”¹⁸ or “the sadness of things.”¹⁹ This concept, which Norinaga

¹⁴Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 87-88.

¹⁵ Norinaga, *Uiyamabuni*, 462.

¹⁶ Norinaga, *Tamakushige*, 45.

¹⁷ Michael Marra, *Motoori Norinaga, The Poetics of Motoori Norinaga* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 17.

first applied to Japanese literature and later used it to explain other personal Shinto beliefs, expresses the idea of sensitivity and deep feelings toward “naturalness.” Matsumoto defines *mono no aware* as “man’s emotional, aesthetic, and intuitive experience rather than experience primarily based on will or reasoning.”²⁰ This concept is strongly related to Norinaga’s understanding of the “pure” Japanese spirit which he tried to discover through the study of the classical books, *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. A pure mind is one that experiences *mono no aware*. The truth of the ancient Way cannot be reached by one who lacks the ability to acknowledge this “pathos of things.” As Muraoka Tsunetsugu points out, “With [Norinaga] the spirit of the Japanese poems [*mono no aware*], which avoided reason and revealed human feeling, was ultimately the spirit of the Kami Way (Shinto) of antiquity.”²¹ Norinaga explains that one can experience *mono no aware* only when s/he is open to the spirit of the thing that causes one to experience deep emotion. He sees a connection between the person and the thing that causes him to become sensitive; a bond between the two forms which produces the irresistible emotion.

The *mono no aware* concept becomes significant when one understands that Norinaga believed Japan could return to living as it did during the Way of the Kami only if the people would live in accord with human emotion and the “natural” way (or in accord to *mono no aware*). Because everything came to life through the creative act of the *musubi* force, the innate nature of the people is pure, and people should act according to their inborn instincts. In Hirata Atsutane’s words, this is equivalent to saying that the pure Japanese are “in spontaneous

¹⁸ Tsunetsugu, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 398.

¹⁹ Norinaga *Kojiki-den*, 50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

²¹ Tsunetsugu, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, 162.

possession of the Way of the Gods.”²² They only have to access this way of living by following their instincts. To live according to human desire, as it happened during the Age of the Gods, involves the possession of a pure heart and mind, which is the condition with which the people of the kami land are born.²³ Desires cannot be legislated or guided through rules as in Confucianism. The history of China proved, Norinaga believed, the inefficiency of morality. Being defiled by the Chinese spirit, Japan came to have the same problems as China because people stopped acting according to the instincts of their nature, which expresses itself through *mono no aware*. One gets in touch with his or her “real heart” when he/she becomes conscious of *mono no aware*. The ancient Japanese community was characterized by “naturalness” and true living required a return to living according to this concept in Norinaga’s view. Nonetheless, even experiencing *mono no aware* and living this way needs to be subjected to the higher standard, the Ancient Way.²⁴ Norinaga believed that people who dedicated themselves to the Ancient Way lived “moral” lives. “The ancient, natural, and simple state of things,” characteristic of the Age of the Gods, is a state of being in which people are good without being compelled to obey.²⁵ One can see how Norinaga’s views of reason and truth, *mono no aware*, and “naturalness” are interrelated. This is significant because it reveals the reason behind Shinto’s lack of an ethical code or prescribed “rules” of morality.

²² Hirata Atsutane quoted in Jean Herbert, *Shinto*, 70.

²³ Tsunetsugu, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, 162.

²⁴ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 61-65.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

Intuitive Feelings and Truth

The intuitive nature of Shinto can produce reluctance to study this religion. Shinto engages one's feelings, not reason. Why study it? Is not experience the only method of attaining any insight into this Japanese religion? Picken agrees that "Shinto is indeed a religion that is 'caught' rather than 'taught;' its insights 'perceived' before they are 'believed;' its basic concepts 'felt' rather than 'thought.'"²⁶ Even the Japanese language shows "great emotional nuance."²⁷ Nature itself is the teacher of Shinto. Analyzing religious concepts through reason and logic is highly discouraged. Thus, experience becomes the standard of living because only the spontaneous action, uninhibited by self-analysis, corresponds to the divine nature. The monism of Shinto which exalts experience over reason reveals the motive behind the lack of a desire to articulate doctrines, which is characteristic of most, if not all, Shinto adherents.

Given this Shinto conviction, one can object that any analysis of Shinto concepts is a futile attempt. However, an understanding of the relation between intuitive feelings and truth will reveal the contrary. A common objection of Shinto believers is that intuition cannot be interpreted; thus, there is a lack of a binding doctrinal system that Shintoists should uphold. However, the variety of contradictory convictions held by Shinto adherents provides evidence that some type of analysis of their religious beliefs takes place. What else would explain the existence of a multiplicity of ideas within this monistic religion? If the creative divine spirit ties all of existence together and spontaneous, subconscious action expresses the divine nature, one wonders what causes differences in beliefs or actions. How can spontaneous expressions of the same thing contradict in so many ways? The reality of a variety of clashing views within Shinto

²⁶ Stuart D.B. Picken, *Essentials of Shinto: An Analytical Guide to Principal Teachings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), xxxii.

²⁷ Robert E. Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment: A Study of Japanese Ethics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 52.

points out that the intuitive feelings a Shinto adherent experiences must be subjected to interpretation. The multiplicity of opinions and beliefs must be the result of interpretation, even subconscious interpretation, on the part of the Shinto adherents. This interpretation does not have to be conscious analysis to count as valid from a hermeneutical perspective. Thus, the existence of a diversity of opinions within the Shinto monistic worldview demonstrates that even intuitive feelings can and are subjected to of analysis.

One objection is to point out that the multiplicity of opinions among Shinto believers is due to the lack of purity among them and not a result of the interpretation of intuitive feelings. If they would return to the natural state of the Age of the Gods, this problem would not occur. Norinaga would add that a cleansing from Chinese logic and influences is the first step toward attaining that goal. However, this objection does not disprove the premise that intuitive feelings can be interpreted; it only emphasizes that certain circumstances can hinder one from attaining the truth.

Why is the question of whether feelings can be interpreted or not important? To realize the significance, one needs to understand the relation between intuitive feelings and truth. First, I will present the view of truth that guides this evaluation.²⁸ Second, I will emphasize the consequence of accepting that feelings can be interpreted. As Douglas Groothuis put it, truth exists and is knowable; it is objective, universal and exclusive. Language conveys truth through propositions and no existential experiences can determine the nature of truth. Believing in an objective truth makes one to accept also that a person can either know or not know something about reality. If anything can be known, then “the language in which that knowledge is

²⁸ The following comments regarding truth draw heavily upon Douglas Groothuis’ insights from his book, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 60-82.

expressed in some way corresponds unequivocally to reality and the principle of non-contradiction applies.”²⁹ Analysis of propositions can either correspond or not correspond to truth. Even truths felt can inevitably be reduced to propositions. Since the value of a proposition is dependent on its ability to present truth, the expression of intuitive feelings as propositional truth can be subjected to analysis. One’s opposition to critical investigation of intuitive feelings does not insulate the truths expressed through feelings from analysis. Scholars have consistently noted the Shinto affinity toward intuitively felt truth and aversion for logically discursive truth. However, this does not change the fact that Shinto feelings can be reduced to propositions and, thus, be analyzed. If the result of a critical evaluation of intuitions or feelings proves unsound, the person holding them might have misunderstood them or their meaning; the possibility of a wrong interpretation of “subconscious” or intuitive feelings exists. Applying felt truths to everyday situations, as is characteristic of Shinto, involves some type of self-conscious examination. While the process of conveying feelings into propositions can prove hard, it is not impossible. Thus, the goal of this thesis is to analyze critically the Shinto concept of evil in connection to Norinaga’s thought even if some ideas are based on intuitions or feelings.

²⁹ James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 395.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE SHINTO WORLDVIEW THAT AFFECT ITS VIEW OF EVIL

Interconnectedness of Kami, Humanity, and Nature

What better suggestion can I follow for this study than to take into consideration the King's words to the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*: "'Begin at the beginning,' the King said gravely, 'and go on till you come to the end: then stop.'"³⁰ To understand the Shinto concept of evil, it is useful to understand first the Shinto view of the beginning of the universe. Several implications of the Shinto cosmology influence the concept of evil as Norinaga's views will reveal. Before attempting to provide a short summary of Shinto mythology which can raise many objections, I will offer one explanatory note: this brief outline is based on an analytical Western approach because, as Herbert pointed out, a Westerner "is practically unable to appreciate a cosmology unless it is presented according to our western mode of thinking and explaining, i.e. more or less intellectually."³¹ Many might object to such an endeavor because it imposes Western forms of thought upon the Japanese mythology. However, applying a rational structure to mythology should not be rejected for two reasons: one, as Herbert remarked, Westerners need to place concepts in categories in order to understand them better;³² and two, since all truth can be reduced to propositions and be subjected to critical analysis, Shinto

³⁰ Lewis Carrol, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1911), 179-180.

³¹ Herbert, *Shinto*, 231.

³² Richard E. Nisbett provides a better explanation regarding the differences between the Easterners and Westerners in his book, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2003). He explains how the Westerners tend to decontextualize in contrast to the Asians who view the attempt to understand concepts or things out of their context as doomed (19-27).

cosmology cannot escape examination. Thus, this section attempts to present an “intellectual,” though brief, interpretation of Shinto cosmology³³ and its implications regarding the concept of evil.

Many scholars view the *Kojiki* as a political propaganda book written to provide indisputable evidence for the emperor’s right to rule. As Michael Ashkenazi expresses it, the significance of the Izanagi and Izanami myth lies in its political underpinnings rather than in the description of the creation story since the origin of humans, animals, and plants is not even mentioned.³⁴ The purpose of the myth is thus interpreted from a purely political perspective seeing that it infers a divine relation between the kami and the royal family. However, Norinaga viewed the myths as describing the events of the age of the kami which show people how to live in the present. Since the *Kojiki* had an almost revelatory status for him, the inevitable consequence was his acceptance of the emperor’s divine right to rule and of the Japanese’s duty to obey.³⁵ He cannot be accused of having any hidden agenda in interpreting the *Kojiki* in this manner because his only desire was to understand the kami way in order to emulate it.

Herbert divides the mythology of Shinto into seven stages: “(1) The appearance of differentiated non-material principles; (2) The emergence of solid matter; (3) The beginnings of mortal life; (4) The establishment of separate rulers for heaven and earth; (5) The consolidation of the earth; (6) The conquest of the earth by the heavenly powers; and (7) The final union

³³ This short interpretation is based on Herbert’s model.

³⁴ Michael Ashkenazi, *Handbook of Shinto Mythology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 175.

³⁵ Norinaga, *Kojikiden*, 250

between the powers of heaven and earth.”³⁶ The focus of this section is on the section immediately preceding the Izanagi and Izanami’s myth and the events following.

The Shinto myth states that there were seven generations of celestial deities that have sprung out of the primeval chaos. The last pair of the heavenly deities, Izanagi (He-Who-Invites) and Izanami (She-Who-Invites), was ordered to descend to earth and, as a result, accomplished two things: they created the terrestrial world and gave birth to the earthly deities. After giving birth to the kami of fire, Izanami died and went to the Land of *Yomi* (Land of Death, also known as the Land of Pollution). Izanagi attempted to bring his wife back from the abode of death and. When he reached the Nether World to request her return, he was commanded not to look upon her. He disobeyed and was filled with terror at the sight of his beloved appearing in a state of decomposition. His action caused evil spirits to pursue him, but Izanagi succeeded in escaping. After his return to the upper world, he performed purification in the ocean and as the result of his cleansing, further kami emerged, including the three ruling deities, Amaterasu, Tsukiyomi, and Susanoo. However, the myth fails to discuss the creation of man and it ends with the connection of the first emperor to the gods.³⁷

The implications of the creation myth for the Shinto adherents are diverse. Shinto mythology produced the belief in the divine human potential and in the connectedness of nature and humans. According to the myth, humanity is understood as descending from the kami and

³⁶ Herbert, *Shinto*, 229. Herbert gives detailed explanations for each stage in the following seven chapters of his book. He regards the Shinto explanation of the creation of the world as the most reasonable even from a rationalistic perspective.

³⁷ Many commentators argue that the lack of a creation story of humanity proves that the monarchy was only interested in getting the people to submit to its rule. The centrality of the imperial institution is also a major Japanese belief that is strongly tied to the cosmological myth, but as this idea is not related to the paper’s thesis, it will not be discussed here. According to the myth, the first Japanese emperor, Jimmu Tenno, was a lineal descendant of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, which explains the imperialistic tendency of Shintoism (Basil Hall Chamberlain, trans., *The Kojiki: Japanese Records of Ancient Matters*, Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2008, 71-135).

not as being “created” in the sense in which Christianity understands the term. There is no deity creating and sustaining the universe apart from itself. Picken sees the relation between the kami and the creation of humanity as equivalent to a certain type of evolutionary theory.³⁸

Metaphysically, the Shinto gods and humans have the same essence. It is no wonder that Shinto adherents believed in an inherent superiority of the Japanese people, as Chikafusa’s statement demonstrates: “Great Yamato [Japan] is a divine nation. It is only our land whose foundations were first laid by the divine ancestor.”³⁹ From this follows the idea propounded by Norinaga that only Japan is a “pure land.” In his writing, the corollary thus proved is that all other lands are impure, which means that all people who are not Japanese are to be viewed as polluted.⁴⁰ Even if a Shinto believer avoids drawing such a strong conclusion, it logically follows from Norinaga’s theology. Nonetheless, my purpose in presenting this Shinto belief is not to underline the Japanese ethnocentrism, but to emphasize the Shinto conviction of the Japan’s purity, a concept relevant to the discussion on evil.

Shinto cosmology and the Japanese view of human nature are closely interrelated and generate a belief in a lack of evil in a moral sense. The same force or creative principle called *musubi*, the “mysterious productive spirit,” is manifested in all living forms.⁴¹ As a result, the human race, the world, and kami are metaphysically indistinguishable. Humanity is not created by the kami, but proceeds from kami. However, the kami are material instances of *musubi*. The

³⁸ Stuart D.B. Picken, *Essentials of Shinto*, 63.

³⁹ Quoted from his work, *Jinno-shoto-ki*, in *On Understanding Japanese Religion*, by Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 160.

⁴⁰ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 237.

⁴¹ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 87. *Musu* signifies “to be born” or “to produce” while *bi*, as another form of *hi*, means “mysterious spirit.” This interpretation has been given by Norinaga and is accepted by most present scholars as the correct representation of Pure Shinto.

traditional Shinto also considers the intrinsic life-creating principle of the kami to be available to every person, from which comes the assumption of man's potential for good.⁴² While accepting the universality of *musubi*'s influence in creation, its interpretation should not be conceived of as an ultimate cause in the same way the Christian God is understood though *musubi* connects all of reality. The corollary of this belief is that humans, as children of kami, are inherently good. As there is no ethical code one has to obey, all actions he or she performs with a pure mindful heart are good. All evil actions must be caused by external forces since an inherently good person cannot act in an evil way. Thus, evil in a moral sense lacks meaning for a Shinto adherent.

A lasting influence of mythology in Japanese culture, as Picken sees it, is the Shinto concept of "spontaneous creativity."⁴³ With no transcendent deity guiding the creation process, the spontaneity of the various kami creating the human race influenced the evolution of the world. This explains the Japanese tendency to rely on naturalness. Mason actually equates Shinto with the creative impetus, or "the spontaneous impulse of life seeking freedom of action."⁴⁴ As Norinaga's works reveal, this idea survived throughout the centuries and became a characteristic concept of Shinto thought. The implications for the concept of evil are numerous, the major one being the view of evil as natural occurrences in the process of generating growth.⁴⁵ Spontaneous actions produce results by trial-and-error, which explains the reality of evil.

⁴² James W. Boyd, and Ron G. Williams, "Japanese Shinto: An Interpretation of A Priestly Perspective," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 55, No.1, Jan 2005, 34-35.

⁴³ Picken, *Essentials of Shinto*, 67.

⁴⁴ Mason, *Meaning of Shinto*, 18.

⁴⁵ Mason holds this view and explains it in a chapter, "Evil and Susano-no-Mikoto," in *The Meaning of Shinto*, 111-132.

Purity-Pollution

The concept of purity-impurity runs like a continuing thread through all Shinto sects and is recognized as a thoroughly Japanese idea. Shintoists do not trust in words very much in the process of verbalizing their convictions and most are unable to explain their doctrines. Nevertheless, the views of reverence for the pure and disdain for the polluted exist in all Shinto sects no matter how different their convictions about other concepts. From the Japanese obsession for bathing to the structure of shrines, all of Shinto emphasizes the importance of purity, which can be understood better in contrast to pollution. These two concepts are acknowledged as purely Japanese features and all discussions of Shinto take them into consideration.

After studying the Japanese folk religions, the anthropologist Emiko Namihira discovered that the Japanese life is “structured” through three concepts: *hare*, *kegare*, *ke*. Namihira argues that all religious elements are systematized through these categories. His studies reveal the crucial relevance of “purity” and “impurity” for the Japanese. As many understand Shinto as being an amalgam of ideas and beliefs, Namihira exposes the presence of some conceptual categories that provide “structure” to all beliefs assimilated by the Japanese. Namihira’s definitions of the terms represent a starting point for a discussion of Japanese purity and impurity:

Kegare can be glossed as representing all phenomena manifesting (or leading to) dissolution, decomposition, and disorganization; *hare* as representing all phenomena manifesting orderliness, purity (cleanness), and productivity. *Kegare* and *hare* are both categories of the “sacred” and as such stand in opposition to the category of *ke*, which can be glossed as “the profane.” *Ke* is an unmarked, residual category, and can be glossed as representing “the common,” “the usual,” or “the ordinary,” i.e., the greater part of human experiential phenomena.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Namihira, Emiko. *Hare, Ke and Kegare: The Structure of Japanese Folk Belief*. Thesis (Ph.D.) (Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin, 1977), vii-viii.

In addition to demonstrating their importance, Namihira also explains the structure of the mythical world in view of the three concepts: 1) the Plain of High Heaven associated with *hare*; 2) the Central Land of the Reeds-Plain related to *ke*; and 3) the Land of Hades connected to *kegare*. The first area is found above the Land of the Reeds-Plain (earth) and contains the living quarters of the heavenly deities. The second “plain” is inhabited by the earthly gods and the people whereas Hades is the “house” of the dead.⁴⁷ Whether the people involved in the studies lived in rural or urban areas, the presence of each of the three categories in varied locations demonstrates their significance in the Japanese life. Sometimes, communities place a greater emphasis on one of the notions, but without discarding the others. The presence of the concepts of *hare*, *ke*, and *kegare* throughout Japan indicates their “Japaneseness” and the necessity of understanding them.

Purity

In Shinto, purity is the highest value. It is related to the *hare* concept described by Namihira. Many identify purity as representing the following four aspects: cleanness, brightness, rightness, and straightness.⁴⁸ Sometimes, two of these terms can combine to form a new one. Purity synthesizes the concepts of truth, goodness, and beauty. Thus, it is clear why it became to be appreciated as the highest concept in Japan. Clean (*sei*) refers to freshness and ritual purity. Bright (*mei*) implies being happy while right (*sei*) has a connotation of correctness. Straight (*choku*) signifies the idea of honesty or frankness. In the Shinto understanding,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 25-26.

⁴⁸ Motohisa Yamakage, Paul de Leeuw, and Aidan Rankin. *The Essence of Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Heart*. (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006), 88. The following definitions of the four terms are primarily taken from this book. A similar interpretation of the four characters used for the four aspects of purification is offered by Robert D. Baird and W. Richard Comstock in their book, *Religion and Man: An Introduction* (San Francisco, CA:Harper & Row, 1971), 340. They equate purification to the state of *meijoseichoku* (brightness-purity-sincerity-uprightness).

purification as expressed through these aspects refers to the ideal state of one's heart and mind.⁴⁹ This condition, according to Thomas Kasulis, constitutes "being as one truly is."⁵⁰ Thus, purity is related to naturalness, or the initial state of the ancient Japan as Norinaga explained it. To be pure is to reflect the unpolluted Japanese nature as it has been in the beginning.

Only a pure mind and heart, called in Japanese *makoto no kokoro* or simply *magokoro*, can mirror the kami-world and the divine aspect inherent within each one.⁵¹ Thus, as *magokoro* refers to the complete person, purity becomes essential to one's spiritual growth. *Makoto no kokoro* consists of three terms: *makoto* ("truth," "genuineness," or "sincerity"), *no* (a possessive particle "of"), and *kokoro* ("heart and mind"). Of the three, the hardest to define is *kokoro*, which designates both "heart" and "mind," both the affective and cognitive abilities of a person. Lafcadio Hearn defines *kokoro* as "spirit; courage; resolve; sentiment, affection, and inner meaning."⁵² This definition points out that *kokoro* encompasses the emotions and spiritual life. Kasulis finds "mindful heart" to be a better translation of the term because it implies both the person's emotive responsiveness to the kami-world as well as his or her willingness to encounter that world.⁵³ One experiences the whole only in proportion to his sensitivity to the kami-world. Spontaneity is involved, but as a result of one's awareness of the spiritual world. On one hand, the attitude of receptivity of the kami-world depends on the purity of the person and, on the other hand, purity leads to even greater receptivity. Thus, there is an interrelation between one's openness to the spiritual world and his/her purity, a relation that causes pure, spontaneous action.

⁴⁹ Nishioka Kazuhiko, "Meijoseichoku," Encyclopedia of Shinto,

⁵⁰ Kasulis, *Shinto*, 24.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Lafcadio Hearn, *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1907), 9.

⁵³ Ibid., 25.

The meaning of *makoto no kokoro* reveals the complex implications of the purity concept in Shinto spirituality.

Some aspects of purity are better understood in the context of relationships from a Japanese perspective as Shinto sees every human as part of the kami-world, or the whole. Without purity, the internal relation to the kami is lost—which explains the reason this value is seen as the most essential. To illustrate the relation between a pure man and the kami, *magokoro* is like a clean mirror that reflects the light of the kami. However, dust (a symbol of pollution) can collect and obstruct the ability of the mirror to emulate the kami-world, as the person loses the interconnectedness to the whole.⁵⁴ Beside the relationship to the kami world, the relations to the other people are also influenced by purity or the lack of purity. A person lacking honesty (an aspect of purity) would obstruct his connection to the other members of the community. Everyone agrees that correctness and honesty should characterize one's interactions to others. From the Shinto viewpoint, in addition to sincerity, brightness (cheerfulness) should also be considered a necessary characteristic of societal relationships. The various aspects of purity represent what one's attitudes toward others should be: honest, correct, happy, and genuine.⁵⁵ However, a lack of purity hinders one's relationship either to the whole (the kami-world) or the other people.

In a “moral sense,” purity is goodness.⁵⁶ However, Shinto should not be understood in moral terms. Although the concepts of purity and impurity are related to the Shinto ethics, “there

⁵⁴ Boyd, “Japanese Shinto,” 36.

⁵⁵ Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment*, 35.

⁵⁶ Muraoka, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, 30.

is no fixed and unalterable moral code” in Shinto.⁵⁷ Spiritual advancement is tied to cleanness and brightness, but the focus is not necessarily on action.

Aspects of purity also find expression in a variety of cultural ways. The Shinto Shrine is a symbol of purity (cleanness, brightness, rightness, and straightness). The *torii* gate delineates between the outside world of pollution and the kami-world of purity while the ceremonial act of rinsing one’s hands and mouth before entering the presence of the kami emphasizes cleanness. Even the architecture of shrines and Japanese art underline the Shinto concept of the pure. First, the rebuilding of the Grand Shrine of Ise every 20 years symbolizes the Shinto appreciation of freshness and brightness. Second, the clean, simple lines of shrines located within or close to nature emphasize clarity and purity. A straight line in the Japanese mindset is considered “inherently beautiful”⁵⁸ in contrast to crooked lines that symbolize impurity. Identifying the straight and simple pattern of the traditional Japanese flower arrangement, *ikebana*, with nobility and beauty demonstrates the Japanese commendation for *meijoseichoku*.⁵⁹

Pollution

Shintoists most commonly use two terms for pollution: *tsumi* and *kegare* (a more ritualistic term). *Tsumi*, translated as impurity, has a broad range of meanings including “pollution,” “sickness,” and “disaster” as well as “error.”⁶⁰ Aston describes *tsumi* as things disturbing to the gods. In addition, Norinaga divides the *tsumi* of Shinto into three categories:

⁵⁷ Sokyō Ono, *Shinto: The Kami Way* (Rutland, VT: Bridgeway Press, 1962), 106.

⁵⁸ Yamakage, *Essence of Shinto*, 45.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁰ Picken, *Essentials of Shinto*, 171.

“uncleanness, sin or crime, and calamity.”⁶¹ However, most scholars recognize the tendency of ancient Shinto to focus on ceremonial uncleanness rather than moral guilt. Since kami and humans are manifestations of *musubi*, pollution could also be defined as anything that interrupts the flow of this power or separates one from it. Thus, *tsumi* is seen as evil because it disrupts the connection to the spiritual world. The analogy of dust on a mirror helps define impurity:

“pollution is like the dust that collects on a mirror; it inhibits our ability to see clearly the fact that we are instances and reflections for the ground of vitality itself.”⁶²

Probably the most important feature in understanding the Japanese mind regarding the concept of impurity is the fact that pollution as sin or offence is uncommon in Shinto writings. George Sansom points out the undeveloped correlation in ancient Shinto between impurity (pollution) and sin and its effect on understanding the concept of evil:

The conception of sin, as distinct from uncleanness, is wanting, or rudimentary, and throughout their history the Japanese seem to have retained in some measure their incapacity to discern, or this reluctance to grapple with the problem of Evil. Such a statement, once committed to writing, forthwith challenges contradiction in the writer's own mind, but it represents, if imperfectly, a truth; and much that is baffling in the study of their history, from ancient to modern times, becomes clearer when one remembers that they have never been tortured by the sense of sin.⁶³

Pollution contains a connotation of sin but it is usually seen in collective terms. Thus, actions are deemed wrong because they can bring punishments upon the whole group. The focus is not on the action itself but on the effects of the deed. This idea reappears throughout the years in some of the Japanese writings and it reveals an aspect of Shinto ethics.

⁶¹ William George Aston, *Shinto: The Way of the Gods* (New York, NY: Krishna Press, 1974), 247-248.

⁶² Boyd, “Japanese Shinto,” 35.

⁶³ George Bailey Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History* (New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 53.

Two accounts in the *Kojiki* discuss the concepts of purity and impurity, thus disclosing characteristic Shinto attitudes toward the two. The mythological account of Izanagi's lustration in the waters is said to be the origin of the ritual of purification. After his flight from the Land of *Yomi*, He-Who-Invites recognizes his need for cleansing himself of impurity: "Nay! Hideous! I have come to a hideous and polluted land,—I have! So I will perform the purification of my august person."⁶⁴ Norinaga suggests that the repetition of the "I have" idiom (*ari keri* in original) was intended to convey the idea of lamentation.⁶⁵ Izanagi seemed to be the first one to associate death and ills with pollution. He also believed that purification could provide the necessary expiation from impurity. Following his cleansing ritual, several evil kami originated from the filth Izanagi contracted in the Land of Death. According to Anesaki, "these evil spirits are believed to be still lingering among men and to cause evil and trouble."⁶⁶ Since the myths in the *Kojiki* describe the deeds of the deities that point to the Way,⁶⁷ this specific action might teach more than the origin and significance of purification. Even though the next deities that were born as a result of Izanagi's lustration had the purpose of rectifying the evil ones, this mythological account fails to address the perplexing question of why evil gods were birthed as a result of his purification. Furthermore, the effects of Izanagi's ritual and the Great Purification Ritual differ. While in the former evil deities are born after the god's rite, in the latter the impurities are thrown upon some type of vicarious object that will eventually be taken back to the *Yomi* land. The first purification ritual introduced into the world the evil deities that are

⁶⁴ Chamberlain, *The Kojiki*, 84.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁶⁶ Masaharu Anesaki, "On Shinto," *Readings in Eastern Religious Thought*, Vol. III (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969), 194.

⁶⁷ Kojiro Yoshikawa, *Jinsai, Sorai, Norinaga* (Tokyo: The Toho Gakkai, 1983), 265.

inflicting pain and trouble, effects that the Great Purification Ritual seeks to remove. One can only wonder what assurance a Shinto believer has regarding the efficacy of a purification ritual since even a god's rite falls short of its purpose.

In addition, Izanagi's account underlines the old Shinto belief that pollutions refer to things that happen to people or are external to them. The male deity contracted the impurity upon his contact with the Yomi Land, a polluted territory. This mythological account teaches that pollution can befall a person and does not depend on one's deed. A person does not usually bring evil (impurity) upon oneself. While Shinto adherents believe personal actions can produce impurity in one's life, the tendency to emphasize external factors as causes of pollution explains the lack of guilt in Shinto. The pragmatic Japanese shuns impurity because of its negative consequences rather than its inherent nature. There is not much concern with the "wrong" or evil of an action just because it is bad. Ancient Shintoists do not have an understanding of a moral retribution for their evil acts as a just result of wrong actions. In this context, *tsumi* (impurities) refer most frequently to "causes of misfortune." In other words, pollution is a cause of misfortune or inauspiciousness and needs to be removed through purification because it disturbs the well-being of the person affected.

Shinto pragmatism explains the failure to focus on or address the dimension of one's inner life because, as long as it does not impact the quality of everyday life, one's thought life is insignificant. The idea of purification of evil thoughts seemed to be a foreign concept in old Shinto⁶⁸ and the concept of moral evil did not influence the religious community in any significant way. Moreover, as it was mentioned, even personal wrong actions were seen as a temporary affliction caused by some external agent, usually evil spirits. Norinaga even affirmed

⁶⁸ Aston, *Shinto*, 234.

that evil actions are enacted by people who are possessed of evil gods. Thus, there lacked a belief in responsibility, and purification was sought for the benefit of the person, not from a desire to become morally better or because an action goes against a divine law.

Another instance in which purification is mentioned in the *Kojiki* took place after the death of emperor Chiu-Ai. As the empress divinely possessed promised the future possession of Korea, the monarch disbelieved and caused the deities to become angry. Immediately after that, the sovereign died. Astonished by the turn of the events, the Prime Minister ordered the purification of the land since the death of the emperor was believed to have a defiling effect. The urgency felt by Noble Takeuchi to purify the whole land before addressing the deities again is noteworthy.⁶⁹ By this time, the belief in the efficacy of the purification rite must have been well-established since it was the first thing the court decided to do after the monarch's death. In a sense, this account demonstrates the centrality of purity-impurity concept in Shinto thought and reveals the Shinto focus on the effects of impurity upon the community.

⁶⁹ Chamberlain, *The Kojiki*, 204.

EVIL IN MOTOORI NORINAGA'S THOUGHT

Any discussion of evil in reference to Norinaga's thought must show the problems that arise within that system's accounts of kami and evil—one cannot apply the definitions of other Shinto systems to attack Norinaga's view. Thus, this section deals with the concept of evil as understood by Norinaga. First, I will discuss the three mythological stories that influenced his view. Second, I will present Norinaga's understanding of the cause of evil. Third, several definitions of evil based on Norinaga's writings are provided.

Evil in Shinto Mythology

Three stories in Shinto mythology influenced the development of the concept of evil: Izanagi's visit to the Land of Yomi, his purification ritual after this visit, and Susanoo's behavior. Izanagi's visit is the first account in the *Kojiki* that presents a reason for the Shinto belief in the ultimate victory of good over evil. This creates a dilemma if understood in light of the other Shinto beliefs—a topic discussed in the next section. The second episode brings into the discussion of good and evil two important notions, *magatsubi* (“spirit of disorder”) and *naobi* (“rectifying spirit”).⁷⁰ They will be discussed later since they influenced Norinaga's thought greatly. The Susanoo myth reveals several problems for the Shinto conception of evil and especially for Norinaga's view as it provides more information regarding the nature of kami. In the development of the argument, by resorting back to the other Shinto beliefs, the interrelation of various beliefs and their influence of the concept of evil will become more evident.

⁷⁰ The two terms can be defined in various ways, but the essential idea is that *magatsubi* (or *magatsuhi*) refers to evil kami and *naobi* to the good kami who correct that wrong actions of the evil kami.

Izanagi's Visit to Hades

The grief Izanagi experienced after his spouse's death caused him to travel to the Yomi Land to find a way to bring her back. The female god was not able to respond to Izanagi's request to return because she had eaten of "the furnace of Hades."⁷¹ Thus, she had to inquire of the deities of Hades if she could return to the world with her husband and left her spouse with the command not to look upon her. Since his wife was taking a long time, Izanagi became curious and looked at her body which turned out to be a repulsive image: a rotting body filled with maggots. His disobedience evoked Izanami's anger and caused her to demand that the evil deities pursue him. Because the deities of Hades failed to catch Izanagi, Izanami decided to chase him, but he eventually escaped. Just before Izanagi's flight from the polluted land, the divine couple shares a fiery last exchange. Their conversation provides a foundational account concerning the prevailing of good. The female asserted: "I will in one day strangle to death a thousand of the folks of thy land." To which, Izanagi responded: "I will in one day set up a thousand and five hundred parturition houses. In this manner each day a thousand people will surely be born."⁷² Though the episode reveals the inevitability of evil, it also explains the Shinto optimism in the triumph of good over evil. Norinaga shared this view with many other Shinto adherents. He emphasized this idea even more through his discussions about the two notions, *magatsubi* and *naobi*, first developed in relation to Izanagi's cleansing ritual.

Izanagi's Purification Ritual

Izanagi's desire to reunite with his wife brought him into contact with the filth and pollution of Hades which made the male deity realize the necessity of performing a cleansing

⁷¹ Chamberlain, *Kojiki*, 82.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 83.

ritual.⁷³ This event reveals two insights about the Shinto perception of pollution: 1) is inevitable; and 2) is caused by external forces. Izanagi's actions that follow his return from Hades have been interpreted in various ways. One characteristic of myth interpretation has been the emphasis on the spiritual and mystical meanings of the stories. For example, Yamakage finds a philosophical implication or hidden meaning behind each one of Izanagi's acts. The god's deed of thrusting his staff in the sand resulted in the birth of *Tsukitatsufunado no kami*, or "Deity Thrust-Erect-Come-Not-Place,"⁷⁴—an action symbolizing the end of his journey of illusion.⁷⁵ The deity born as a result of Izanagi's discarding his cloth from the upper body was *Wazurainoushi no kami*, translated by Chamberlain as Deity Master-of-Trouble. This act was a symbol of Izanagi's liberation from any anxiety.⁷⁶ Whatever the interpretation, every Shinto recognizes the importance of Izanagi's cleansing action for future interpretations of the Shinto view on purity and pollution, basic Shinto ideas. The deities born as a result of Izanagi's ablutions can be divided in two categories: evil deities and good deities. The filth "contracted from the polluted, hideous land,"⁷⁷ caused the birth of the evil deities, *Yasomagatsubi no kami* and *Ohomagatsubi no kami*.⁷⁸ After the pollution was removed, the good deities, the rectifying deities, became alive: *Kamunaobi no kami* and *Ohonaobi no kami*. The last three kami produced from Izanagi's washing of his left eye, of his right eye, and of his nose were *Amaterasu* (Sun Deity), *Tsukiyomi* (Moon Deity), and *Susanoo* (Brave-Swift-Impetuous-Male-Augustness).

⁷³ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Yamakage, *Essence of Shinto*, 95.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Chamberlain, *Kojiki*, 84.

⁷⁸ Their names were translated by Chamberlain as Wondrous-Deity-of-Eighty-Evils and Wondrous-Deity-of-Great-Evils.

Because of the significance of the two notions, *magatsubi* and *naobi*, for Norinaga's thought, it is necessary to offer a brief analysis of the terms. Describing Norinaga's view of *maga*, Matsumoto states that "in ancient usage [*maga*] means every kind of evil or inauspiciousness and is identical with *kegare* (filth, pollution) or *kitanashi* (filthy)."⁷⁹ *Maga* is more than just "curvature" or "crooked," as Norinaga's contemporaries understood the term. It is the equivalent of all that is not right.⁸⁰ In his essay about the Fire God, Norinaga affirms:

The two pillar gods Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to our land and all the deities. Until they produced Fire God, there were only good things and no evil [*magagoto*]. As a result of giving birth to the Fire god, Izanami passed away, and evil began in the world. Therefore, because the Fire God stands at the border between the end of good and the beginning of evil, he is the deity joining good and evil.⁸¹

This paragraph contains many insights regarding Norinaga's view of evil. For now, it is important to emphasize that he understood *magagoto* ("crooked things") to refer to all evil though people of later ages meant only "crooked" when referring to *maga*. In addition, as *bi* denotes "the mysterious spirit," Norinaga believed that *magatsubi* means "the mysterious spirit of evils."⁸² Thus, Norinaga indicates *Magatsubi no kami* to be the evil deity and later he presents him as the cause of all evil in the world. The immediate birth of *Naobi no kami* after *Magatsubi*'s birth demonstrates that evil deities cannot ultimately triumph over the good kami,⁸³ a similar notion to the one portrayed in the account of Izanagi's conversation with Izanami. Norinaga believed *nao* in *naobi* meant "to rectify" which caused Matsumoto to render *naobi* as

⁷⁹ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 98.

⁸⁰ *Religions in Japan*, National Government Publication (Tokyo: Department of Education, 1959), 19.

⁸¹ Marra, *Poetics of Motoori Norinaga*, 109-110.

⁸² Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 98.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

“the mysterious spirit of rectifying evils.”⁸⁴ However, as *maga* refers to all evil, *nao* indicates the removal of all evil, not only the straightening of crooked ways or things. Some recent Shinto scholars reject Norinaga’s interpretation of *Magatsubi* and *Naobi* and regard it as a misinterpretation of the ancient texts, “a theology created by Norinaga himself.”⁸⁵ However, Norinaga’s understanding of the two deities is a distinguishing characteristic of his thought regarding the concept of evil. In addition, it reveals a problem within his system; his interpretation of the Age of Kami is grounded in the battle of good and evil, two Chinese ethical categories that he rejected as flawed.⁸⁶ Norinaga regarded all evils, inauspicious things as the result of *Magatsubi*’s actions and all good, auspicious things as the effect of *Naobi*’s deeds. Thus, a significant point regarding Norinaga’s conception of evil drawn from his explanations is the equation of good to pure and auspicious and of evil to impure and inauspicious, a common feature of ancient Shinto, and an idea I will analyze later.⁸⁷

Susanoo Myth

The third account in Shinto mythology that elucidates the view of evil even more is the episode of Susanoo’s banishment from the heavenly realm by both Izanagi and the Heavenly Deities. Susanoo’s account could be divided into four parts: 1) his disobedience of Izanagi’s command to rule the seas; 2) his amok behavior as a result of his visit of the Heavenly Realm; 3)

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Saigo Nobutsuna’s opinion quoted by Susan L. Burns in *Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community in Early Modern Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 88.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 89.

⁸⁷ The idea that good is anything favorable, lucky (and evil is the contrary) characterizes the Shinto religion. However, Norinaga’s reasons for drawing this conclusion differed from the other Shinto adherents’ reasons. Thus, even though some people criticize Norinaga’s theology constructed around the notions of *magatsubi* and *naobi*, the eighteenth century scholar did not introduce a foreign concept unknown to the Japanese. He was not trying to fabricate new concepts. It rather seems that he was just trying to find support in the *Kojiki* for the old Shinto belief that good is auspiciousness and evil inauspiciousness.

Amaterasu's hiding in the cave because of Susanoo's evil reaction; and 4) Susanoo's banishment to earth where he restores the peace in the land of Izumo. After Izanagi orders Susanoo to rule the seas, the latter refuses because he desires to visit his mother in the Nether Distant Land. This attitude causes Izanagi to expel Susanoo from the heavenly world.⁸⁸ Norinaga interprets Susanoo's longing to visit Izanami in the Yomi Land to show a certain kinship between him and that land which demonstrates the wickedness of his nature.⁸⁹

After his banishment, Susanoo decides to visit his sister Amaterasu. Not being certain of Susanoo's intentions, Amaterasu proposes they should enter into a contest that would prove the truth of his intentions. Susanoo wins, but Amaterasu refuses to recognize his victory. Her act angers him and he commits various evil actions, which scare Amaterasu. This makes her decide to hide, which causes darkness in both the heavenly and the earthly realms. After Amaterasu is tricked into coming out of the cave, the heavenly deities also decide to expel Susanoo from their world.

Norinaga's commentary on the story of Amaterasu's seclusion points out that while Susanoo's actions exhibit his evil nature, the account also reveals Amaterasu's power to restrain the emergence of more evils in the world.⁹⁰ As the Sun Deity hides in the cave, darkness occurs in both the heaven and the earth. However, she eventually comes out and light is restored to the lands. First, Norinaga affirms, Amaterasu's preeminence over all the other deities is displayed as both realms depend on her activity. Second, this story provides another proof that good will ultimately triumph over evil. However, one cannot appreciate the importance of the story for Norinaga if s/he fails to understand that good and evil always alternate. Norinaga's view of this

⁸⁸ Chamberlain, *Kojiki*, 87.

⁸⁹ Burns, *Before the Nation*, 88.

⁹⁰ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 91.

mutual generation of good from evil and evil from good is summarized in the following paragraph:

The principle that good events and bad events follow each other in constant succession, which can be seen in all of the things within the world, in each generation, in each moment of time, great and small, is based upon intentions in place at the beginning of the Divine Age. The workings of this principle began with the joining of [Izanagi and Izanami], when the islands and all the deities were born, and extended until the birth of the three treasured children and the command that they divide [authority]. From their joining throughout the birth of the deities everything was good, until with the birth of the fire deity, evil things began with the departure of the mother deity. Since the land of *yomi* is an evil place and the female deity went there, evil began to happen in the world as well. Since the male deity returned to this world, after having had contact with this evil, the world as a whole came to be evil. Therefore, upon his return to the apparent world, he purified himself. First, the Magatsuhi deity appeared from the filth of the *yomi*; then when that filth was purified, cleansed, and rectified, the three treasured children appeared. When Amaterasu ruled over the heavenly plain, then once again everything became good again. *This then is the pattern of this world.* Therefore think carefully about this progression, and you will understand the principle that guides the production of good from evil and evil from good. Moreover, you will know the principle that even if there is evil, it will not triumph over good in the end [emphasis added].⁹¹

Here, Norinaga interprets all events in view of “good” and “evil,” two Chinese categories he frequently dismissed, as it was mentioned. An inevitable progression from good to evil and then back to good takes place in every age. In addition, it seems that the corruption of the good is inescapable. Izanagi’s state of impurity caused by his visit to Hades demonstrates that defilement (an evil) can affect any being.⁹² Though a person can try hard to avoid pollution, there is not much assurance for the Shinto adherent that she can accomplish it. While it is true that one can go through the purification rituals to return to the pure condition (the ultimate good), there seems to be no guarantee that a human being can maintain that pure, good state even if all

⁹¹ Norinaga quoted by Burns in *Before the Nation*, 89.

⁹² Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 100.

precautions are taken. Thus, it appears that Shinto fails to prove it is the optimistic worldview its adherents claim it to be.

Another noteworthy point regarding Susanoo's myth relates to his behavior in the land of Izumo after his banishment from the heavenly world. As the *Kojiki* records his evil deeds toward his sister, one wonders what caused the significant difference in his conduct after reaching the earthly world. As soon as he reached Izumo, Susanoo (Brave-Swift-Male-Impetuous-Augustness) decided to help its inhabitants by killing the eight-forked serpent that created devastation in the land. From being the creator of havoc in the heavenly realm, he becomes the author of peace in the earthly world. First, this indicates that both good (pure) and evil (impure) are aspects of the kami nature. As Mason points out, "Divinity does not mean, in Shinto, absolute purity." He continues, "[v]irtue and vice both characterize divine spirit."⁹³ But another explanation of Susanoo's actions can be seen through the interpretation of events in view of the anthropologist Namihira's trichotomous structure of the world. If the heavenly world is the "pure" world and the Earthly realm represents *ke*, the "ordinary," then it is easy to understand how one's action can be considered impure in the Plain of High Heaven, but is regarded as normal in the Central Land of the Reed-Plains.⁹⁴ As Chamberlain mentions, Susanoo's actions are "evil" in heaven, but his heart becomes "pure" once he reaches the land of the Reed-Plains because the standard of purity is lowered on earth.⁹⁵ Regarding the differences in describing Susanoo in the *Kojiki*, Namihira points out, "As he moved from one world to another his 'personality' changed: his behavior was called 'violence' in the Plain of High Heaven, 'the

⁹³ Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto*, 112.

⁹⁴ Namihira, *Hare, Ke, Kegare*, 29-30.

⁹⁵ Chamberlain, *Kojiki*, 91-97.

bravery' in the Central Land of the Reed-Plains, and 'the authority' in the Land of Hades."⁹⁶ If Namihira is correct in applying the three theoretical concepts to each world and thus describing Susanoo's behavior, Norinaga's description of Susanoo is wrong. Norinaga interprets Susanoo's conduct as a sign of his evil nature unaffected by the purity of the land. The *kokugagu* scholar seems to accept the identification of both the heavenly and earthly realms with purity in contrast to Namihira. In describing the first state of the Age of the Kami, Norinaga indicates the purity and naturalness of both plains. In addition, Shinto regards the whole world as "sacred" because of the kami nature that permeates it. Otherwise, the human nature would not have been pure, an integral belief of his Ancient Way thought.⁹⁷ If Norinaga's conception is used in the interpretation of Susanoo's actions, it seems that good and evil "struggle" within his person. The other solution would be to regard evil as an external, separate force, but that gives birth to a dualistic view of the world. Since Shinto rejects a dualistic interpretation of the world, evil must be accepted as an internal aspect of the divine nature. In conclusion, at least in Norinaga's thought, the Susanoo myth demonstrates that good and evil are aspects of divinity. In a sense, deity in Shinto possesses an ambivalent nature.

Norinaga's Interpretation of *The Tale of Genji*

Written in eleventh century, *The Tale of Genji* is considered by some the first modern novel. A story of illicit love, the novel has provoked many responses and commentaries. Norinaga was among the first ones to present the novel in a positive light. He accuses most Confucian and Buddhism scholars of missing the purpose of the novel, which was not to instruct in ethics (how not to live). He believes the writing reveals the essence of the Japanese nature,

⁹⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁷ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 101.

namely its emotionalism, effeminate character.⁹⁸ Norinaga interprets the whole story through the concept of *mono no aware* and rejects an interpretation through the ethical categories of good and evil even though he seems to ground all the other events of the *Kojiki* in the battle of “good” and “evil.” Norinaga defines *mono no aware* in a psychological sense as the ability to experience the deep trouble of human existence. He continues, by defining good in view of the *mono no aware* concept: “those who know the meaning of the sorrow of human sentiments, that is, those who are in sympathy and harmony with human sentiments, are regarded as good.”⁹⁹ Genji’s acts of “extreme iniquity” are not considered good, but are ignored since his ability to experience “the poignancy of human existence” is more important. His awareness of the sorrow of human existence makes Genji a good person. Norinaga’s interpretation of Genji reveals the significance of *mono no aware* for his thought as the following passage describes:

The purpose of the *Tale of Genji* may be likened to the man who, loving the lotus flower, must collect and store muddy and foul water in order to plant and cultivate the plant. The impure mud of illicit love affairs described in the *Tale* is there not for the purpose of being admired but for the purpose of nurturing the flower of the awareness of the sorrow of human existence. Prince Genji’s conduct is like the lotus flower which is happy and fragrant but which has its roots in filthy muddy water. But the *Tale* does not dwell on the impurity of the water; it dwells on those who are sympathetically kind and who are aware of the sorrow of the human existence, and it holds these feelings to be the basis of the good man.¹⁰⁰

In other words, Norinaga extols a kind heart and the ability to be aware of the “sorrow of human existence” above right action. Ethically, this creates many difficulties for the Shinto view. An action that is intuitively accepted as wrong is not really bad if the person who commits the act produces empathy for others.

⁹⁸ H. Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture* (Hawaii, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 217.

⁹⁹ William Theodore De Bary, and Yoshiko Kurata Dykstra, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Introduction to Asian Civilizations (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), 533.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 534.

Evil in Norinaga's Thought

The following section will present a concise summary of the various aspects of Norinaga's concept of evil. Though some insights have been presented throughout the paper already, this part intends to tie all the loosed threads together to form a clear picture of evil as presented in Norinaga's thought.

Cause of Evil

As his essay on the Fire Deity reveals, Norinaga believes that the birth of the Fire kami is the cause and the beginning of evil in the world.¹⁰¹ In another writing Norinaga affirms that the birth of the Fire God marks the beginning of all evils in the world, but the Yomi land is the original source of evils.¹⁰² In either case, in view of Shinto monism, one wonders how he would explain the existence of evil in the Yomi land. Where did the Yomi land come? Norinaga fails to address such a question.

Definitions of Evil

Evil as Impurity

As purity is the highest Shinto value, impurity becomes the "anti-value,"¹⁰³ the most despised condition in which one can find himself. Defining evil as impurity loses its weight if one fails to understand the context in which this definition developed. Norinaga's equates the ancient condition of the Japanese to the pure, natural state. To attain that state is the ultimate

¹⁰¹ Mara, *Poetics of Motoori Norinaga*, 109-110.

¹⁰² Kenji Ueda, "Magatsubi no Kami and Motoori Norinaga's Theology," *Kami*, <http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/cpjr/kami/ueda.html>.

¹⁰³ Masao Abe, "Critical Reflections on the Traditional Japanese View of Truth," *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspective* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), eds. Charles Wei-hsün Fu, Steven Heine, 304.

purpose of the Japanese because it represents the condition in which one can “experience once more the divinity of inner’s depths.”¹⁰⁴ Impurity creates a condition in which one is incapable of sensing his interconnection to the kami world, which causes him to act in ways contrary to his nature. One of the definitions for evil provided by Carter relates to this idea: “Obstacles in producing the spontaneously new we call evil.”¹⁰⁵ In this sense, evil is like a problem to be worked out. The following conclusions can be drawn from the definition of evil as impurity: 1) evil is inevitable; 2) evil is external, a result of outside forces, not an innate characteristic of the human nature.

Evil as Inauspiciousness

Evil refers to inauspiciousness, another aspect of impurity. Kenji Ueda indicates that Norinaga’s action of equating *maga* to death reveals the idea that evil deities are those which “bring about all manners of human unhappiness ultimately leading to death.”¹⁰⁶ He sees a connection between evil and unhappiness, or inauspiciousness, which demonstrates once again that he does not define evil in ethical terms. Shintoists avoid evil because it can produce unlucky results. The idea of refraining from evil because of its wrongness does not appear in Shinto (or is undeveloped). This explains the lack of morals or ethical codes in Shinto to which one would need to conform. The avoidance of evil because of its ability to bring misfortunes upon oneself is the guiding principle in life. The conclusion related to the conception of evil as inauspiciousness is the idea that evil lacks a moral definition, which means: 1) evil cannot be punished; and 2) evil is avoided for its possible consequences.

¹⁰⁴ Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment*, 39.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰⁶ Ueda, *Kami*, 85.

Evil, an Aspect of the Kami Nature

Though it has been referenced already, the definition of kami given by Norinaga provides an important insight regarding evil as an aspect of the divine nature:

Generally speaking, “kami” denotes, in the first place, the deities of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient texts and also the spirits enshrined in the shrines; furthermore, among all kinds of beings—including not only human beings but also such objects as birds, beasts, trees, grass, mountains, and so forth—any being whatsoever which possesses some eminent quality out of the ordinary, and is awe-inspiring, is called kami. (Eminence here does not refer simply to superiority in nobility, goodness, or meritoriousness. Evil or queer things, if they are extraordinarily awe-inspiring, are also called kami.)¹⁰⁷

Eminence applies to either gods, humans, or non-human objects. This definition leads Norinaga to assert that kami can be good or evil. As Frazier points out, “kami” refers to aspects of experience: awesome, frightful, fascinating, dreadful, etc.¹⁰⁸ Even Namihira admits that *hare* and *kegare* are “two varieties of the ‘sacred’,”¹⁰⁹ which confirms Norinaga’s view of kami as both pure and impure. Metaphysically, there is no difference between kami, humans, and nature. Most important, kami should not be associated with moral goodness or purity. As Norinaga explained, some kami are good, while others are evil. Goodness is not a characteristic of the nature of kami. If this view, which seems to be that of the majority of Shinto believers, is accepted, then evil becomes an aspect of the divine nature and an inescapable reality.¹¹⁰ This view makes evil internal rather than external. But Shinto believers also define evils as external forces or things that befall a person. Is then evil internal or external?

¹⁰⁷ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 84. Quote taken from *Motoori Norinaga Zenshu*, ed. Motoori Seizo (Tokyo, 1926-1927), 135-136.

¹⁰⁸ Allie E. Frazier, “On Shinto,” *Readings in Eastern Religious Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969), 179.

¹⁰⁹ Namihira, *Hare, Ke, and Kegare*, 36.

¹¹⁰ Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment*, 57.

The belief regarding the nature of *mitama* (soul, or spirit) provides more support for the view of evil as an internal force. Though various Shinto scholars postulate the belief that a being possesses four souls under the control of one spirit, a great number of them believe in the existence of only two spirits within a person. As the Norinaga believes in the latter, I will discuss the implications of his view. He warns against believing that the *ara-mitama* (rough, aggressive spirit) and the *nigi-mitama* (gentle spirit) are two spirits (or souls). He regards each as “various manifestations of the same spirit.”¹¹¹ That explains the reason Norinaga affirmed that, “When provoked, a good *kami* may erupt in rage, while evil deities may soften their hearts when happy, and it is not entirely inconceivable that they might even bestow blessings on humans.”¹¹² This is possible because each *kami* possesses these two “spirits:” *aramitama*, which is evil and destructive and *nigitama*, good and creative. Thus, Norinaga believes that evil is an internal aspect of the *kami* nature.

Removal of Evil

The solution Shinto provides for the removal of evil consists in the implementation of purification rituals. Shintoists take part twice a year in one of the most important and solemn rituals occurring since the beginning of their religion. The goal of this rite is to “remove the dust” that causes one’s heart to become opaque and be disrupted from the generative power, *musubi*. Impurities removed during this rite can accumulate either because of ignorance or out of negligence. The ritual opens by the calling upon of the sovereign’s family and his servants. After the nature of the emperor’s rule is stated, a list of the offences from which the nation needs to be purged is proclaimed. In modern times, before the ritual, the people attending it can write

¹¹¹ Chamberlain quotes Norinaga in one note in his translation of the *Kojiki*, 292-293.

¹¹² Ueda in *Kami* quoting Norinaga from *Motoori Norinaga Zenshû* 9:126.

their names on a piece of paper, which is later thrown in the water as a representation of the person's offences. The piece of paper becomes a vicarious object carrying the person's impurity. Within the text of the rite, two types of impurities are recognized, heavenly offences and earthly offences. The following text recited by the priest on the day of the ritual reveals what happens during the rite and exposes the primitive understanding that Shinto had about offences:

Amongst the various sorts of offences which may be committed in ignorance or out of negligence by Heaven's increasing people . . . [are] breaking the ridges, filling up watercourses, opening sluices, doubly sowing, planting stakes, flaying alive, flaying backwards, and dunging; many of such offenses are distinguished as Heavenly offenses, and as earthly offences: cutting living flesh, cutting dead flesh, leprosy, proud flesh, the offense committed with one's own mother, the offense committed with one's own child, the offense committed with mother and child, the offense committed with beasts, calamities of crawling worms, calamities of a god on high, calamities of birds on high, the offenses of killing beasts and using incantations . . . [the gods] shall carry out to the great sea plain the offenses which are cleared away and purified, so that there be no remaining offense . . . [the god of the Breath-blowing-place] shall utterly blow them away with his breath to the Root-country [*Yomi*].¹¹³

The heavenly offences, the highest possible impurities, are related to destroying agriculture while the earthly crimes include immodest behavior, contagious diseases, use of magic, etc. The counting of diseases among the earthly impurities demonstrates that some impurities (evil states) are not a result of one's actions; for instance, no person desires to become a leper. Also, there is no talk of repentance in this ritual, which reveals that the intent of the person causing pollution is not important. Natural and moral evils are thrown into the same boat, so to speak. There is not a differentiation between the two, which again makes one think of the fact that responsibility for an action does not seem to be on the mind of a Shintoist. How can one be punished for a calamity? By mixing the two types of impurities, this ritual conveys the

¹¹³ Yengishiki, 11-13.

idea that both are evil, but they are things that “just happen” to people.¹¹⁴ The same idea of attributing pollution to external causes is seen again in this passage. There are some people who talk about the similarities between uncleanness in Shinto and the Mosaic Law. However, as one studies the purpose behind each, it would be clear that they only show similarities on the surfaces while the differences are enormous. No Shinto theologians discuss purification in relation to a renewal of the heart. The main reason for purification, either through the *misogi* (cleansing through water) or *ini* (avoidance) or any other method, is to avert potential misfortunes from the person.¹¹⁵ If there is any talk of *kokoro* (pure heart), it is in relation to overcoming the obstructing conditions that disrupt one from allowing the creative force unfold in his life.¹¹⁶ In other words, the main goal for the removal of pollution is egotistic. Even when a person is punished for allowing pollution in her life, almost all of the times, it is caused by a fear that the impurity will bring misfortunes upon the community or the group. In contrast, the cleanliness rules in the Mosaic Law are rooted in the nature of God. Living in uncleanness in the presence of a holy and perfect God could bring death. The purpose of the laws was to ensure that the Israelites could maintain their relationship with the holy God and the motivation behind the numerous Mosaic laws has been love. Thus, there is a significant difference, rooted in the nature of the gods, between the two sets of laws.

¹¹⁴ Picken, 173.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 172.

¹¹⁶ Boyd, “Priestly Perspective,” 35-36.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE SHINTO CONCEPT OF EVIL

The purpose of the following section is to analyze the concept of evil in the context of Shinto, a seemingly optimistic worldview. First, I will pursue the question of whether Shinto understands the concept of evil in a realistic manner, and then, evaluate whether the Shinto solution to the challenge of evil proves genuine and optimistic. The thesis proposed is that Shinto fails in this task and that Christianity demonstrates a greater depth of comprehension of the problem; thus, the latter describes the world in a more realistic manner. The Christian position used in the comparison of evil between the two views draws heavily upon Augustine's work regarding the problem of evil. First, a brief overview of Augustine's thought regarding evil is offered. Then, after analyzing the various definitions of evil proposed by Norinaga, I will evaluate the solution for evil's removal presented by Shinto. The purpose of this critical analysis is to pinpoint the pessimism of the "supposedly optimistic" Shinto religion in contrast to the hopeful Christian solution.

Augustine on Evil

The difficulty of understanding and formulating a position regarding the problem of evil that would be consistent with the Christian belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God preoccupied Augustine throughout his life.¹¹⁷ For Christians, evil becomes a real problem in view of their understanding of God. How can a powerful, good God allow the existence of evil in the world? This would not be a problem for the Christian if either God is not

¹¹⁷ Whitney J. Oates, *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*. Vol. I (New York, NY: Random House, 1948), xxv.

omnipotent or he is not omnibenevolent. However, Augustine accepted the view that is most commonly known as standard traditional theism, which maintains that an all-powerful, all-knowing, and wholly good God exists. Since the Creator of all things is God, Augustine searched to understand metaphysical evil. He grappled with the reality that life in a world created by a good God is fraught with suffering and evil.¹¹⁸

Augustine's early association with the Manicheans certainly influenced his thought about evil.¹¹⁹ As a dualist system, Manichaeism was based on the idea of the eternal struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. Mani (216-276), its founder, explained that the two substances have existed as finite forces separate from each other from the beginning of the world. Matter was associated with evil or darkness while spirit was identified with goodness or light.¹²⁰ Warren T. Smith describes this system as a "pseudo-philosophical faith" that appealed to the young "pseudo-intellectual" Augustine.¹²¹ Though eager to understand the writings of Manichaeus, the inability of the system to provide satisfying answers for his perplexities caused Augustine to drift away from this sect.¹²² Because of the influence of this system upon his thought in his early years, Augustine believed evil to be a substance. Later, after his conversion, influenced by Neoplatonism, Augustine sought to refute the dualism of Manichaeism.

The following three aspects of evil as presented in Augustine's works will clarify his position and provide a starting point in the comparison with Norinaga's view: 1) nature of evil;

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions* IV.10, 49. All references to Augustine's writings come from the volumes edited by Whitney J. Oates, *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, unless noted otherwise.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* III.7, 35.

¹²⁰ Augustine, *Concerning Heresies* XLVI, quoted in *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), by Edward Peters, 32-38.

¹²¹ Warren Thomas Smith, *Augustine: His Life and Thought* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1980), 21.

¹²² Augustine, *Confessions* V.7, 64.

2) origin of evil; and 3) “the principle of plenitude.” First, Augustine believed that the nature of God is good.¹²³ As the creator of the world, he must have created everything. Since he is good and could not create evil, no created thing can be intrinsically evil: “therefore whatever is, is good.”¹²⁴ Thus, evil cannot be “something,” a substance, as the Manicheans understood it, “for were it a substance, it would be good.”¹²⁵ Thus, Augustine defined evil as *privatio boni*, or privation of good. As he explains it in his work, “For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathens acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if he were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil. For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good?”¹²⁶ In other words, evil refers to a lack in something that should be there. Blindness is evil because the ability of the eyes to see is absent. In this way, as evil is not a substance, even though God created everything, he did not create evil.

The second aspect of Augustine’s thought refers to the origin of evil. It is significant to mention that all things created are good, in Augustine’s view, but corruptible. Since creation is *ex nihilo*, the source of evil can be found in the nothingness from which goods were created. Also, as a corollary, the created being must of necessity be less than the infinite Creator, thus

¹²³ *Confessions* VII.4-5, 94-95.

¹²⁴ *Confessions* VII.12, 102.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Augustine, “Evil as Privation of the Good,” in *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1954), ed. John Arthur Moutant, 388-389.

finite.¹²⁷ The finitude of created goods makes evil possible because a good may be diminished or increased.¹²⁸

The ultimate solution to the problem of evil in Augustine's view is free will. The ability to choose is a good gift from God, but it brings with it the ability of actualizing evil. However, the existence of moral agents capable of choosing between good and evil is better than the lack of free willed humans: "Just as a stray horse is better than a stone which is not astray, since the stone does not have its own motion or perception, so the creature who sins of his own free will is more excellent than the creature who does not sin because he has no free will."¹²⁹ However, if one asks how the evil will arose, Augustine's response is that pride brought evil into the world. Pride is "craving for undue exaltation. And this is undue exaltation, when the soul abandons Him to whom it ought to cleave as its end, and becomes a kind of end to itself."¹³⁰

In many of his treatises, Augustine recognizes a hierarchic order of existence.¹³¹ Living things are above non-living things; sentient beings are greater than non-sentient ones; intelligent sentient things are above the ones that have no intelligence; and the immortal, intelligent beings are above the mortal, men.¹³² The complexity of the universe is good because it reflects God's goodness in many ways. Hick uses the phrase "principle of plenitude" to describe Augustine's view of the world containing a variety of creatures.¹³³ This principle makes the universe richer

¹²⁷ Ibid., 392

¹²⁸ Ibid., 389.

¹²⁹ Gareth B. Matthews, *Augustine* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 110. Augustine's quote is taken from Book 3 of *On Free Choice of the Will*.

¹³⁰ Augustine, "The Goodness of God and the Evil of Man," *Readings*, 399.

¹³¹ *City of God* XII.2, *Confessions* VII.11-12, etc.

¹³² *City of God* XI.16.

¹³³ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 75.

and better, in Augustine's view, and explains God's reason for creating other beings beside angels. While this provides only a brief overview of Augustine's treatment of the problem of evil, it is enough to provide a framework for the comparison with Norinaga's thought.

Evil: Norinaga vs. Augustine

A critique of Norinaga's view is offered first, followed by a comparison to the Christian position regarding evil. The answers each scholar offered to the problem of evil and suffering developed from their understanding of divinity in the context of their religion. Because the nature of divinity in the two religious systems influences the concept of evil greatly, to clarify their positions, I will address the implications of each view. This attempt to analyze critically and to compare Norinaga and Augustine's views cannot be comprehensive. One, Christians recognize that the problem of evil cannot be fully resolved because of its complexity. Second, a simple analysis of either position could cover large volumes, especially Augustine's since he grappled with the problem more.

Norinaga's thought regarding the kami nature is summarized in the following statements:

- (1) Musubi no kami produced all things and events in the world
- (2) No kami possesses omnipotence or omniscience
- (3) Kami are good and evil, pure and impure and their actions accord to that nature¹³⁴
- (4) Every kami possesses a Rough Divine Spirit (*aramitama*) and a Gentle Divine Spirit (*nigitama*)¹³⁵
- (5) All events, good and evil, in the life of an individual are the work of the gods¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Ueda, *Kami*.

¹³⁵ *Aramitama* is identified with evil and *nigitama* with good.

¹³⁶ Norinaga, *Kojikiden*, 221.

(6) The things of the world alternate between good and evil

What are the logical implications of believing in kami as the creator of both good and evil? Accepting that *musubi* is not only associated with that which is morally good, as the Western concept of deity connotes, forces the Shintoists to accept that the creative, life-giving force involves both the disruptive and corrective powers. Thus, evil originates within this power. Norinaga's view of evil seems to reveal a certain type of *internal dualism* within the kami nature. Carter characterizes the Shinto view as a "dualistic-non-dualism" that finds the source of evil within. Either way, most scholars describe Shinto in monistic terms. The belief entailed is that both good and evil are instances of the divine spirit since everything had been created through the mysterious power of Musubi no kami.

If the following statement is added to the other six items that Norinaga believes, a contradiction seems to result:

(7) Kami created the humans with a pure nature.

If Norinaga asserts that Musubi no kami is all good, that would contradict item (4). Thus, even the kami behind the creation of everything must be influenced by the evil nature within. One could argue that kami's actions would be determined by the aspect of his spirit that is functioning at the time, either his Rough Spirit or his Gentle Spirit. It is believed in Shinto that worship or rituals can pacify one's *aramitama*. Thus, Musubi no kami's *aramitama* must have been under control when he created humans with a pure nature. Otherwise, how would it be possible to affirm that humans possess a pure nature? However, when talking about Magatsubi, Norinaga mentions that "there is no remedy for the fury of its august mind."¹³⁷ That means that at times his *aramitama* could not be pacified. How can one believe a ritual would work for one

¹³⁷ Ueda, *Kami*.

kami but not for another (if pacification is possible through ritual)? Thus, it seems that the creation process has been influenced by the evil found within the latent workings of the mysterious divine spirit of Musubi no kami. Was it possible for Musubi no kami to create beings of a pure nature even though his nature is not associated only with goodness? As F.H. Bradley indicates, “it is an illusion to suppose that imperfection, once admitted into Deity, can be stopped *precisely at that convenient limit* which happens to suit our ideas [emphasis mine].”¹³⁸ What assurance does a Shinto has in asserting that Musubi no kami was able to subdue his *aramitama* in order to produce something pure? If the creative principle is imperfect or impure, the effect cannot be perfect or pure. Stating that Musubi no kami has an evil aspect which did not affect the creation of humans is ungrounded for the Shinto believer. On what basis a Shinto affirms that is not clear. Thus, the following premise logically follows from the Shinto beliefs and could be added to the set of propositions Norinaga believes:

(8) The imperfect, impure creative force cannot create pure beings.

However, Shinto (including Norinaga) admits that (7) is true, which contradicts (8). Thus, there is at least one logical inconsistency in Norinaga’s view. However, even if one concedes that Musubi no kami’s *aramitama* was not involved in the generation of humans, the causal relation between the divine couple and humans is an “intrinsic causal relation.” Aquinas argued that an effect must resemble its cause because one cannot offer what he does not have.¹³⁹ Whatever one offers is what he has. Thus, as humans cannot give birth to angels, neither can the impure kami generate pure human beings. The logical inconsistency remains.

¹³⁸ Francis H. Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2009), 430.

¹³⁹ Norman Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 139.

In addition, Norinaga asserts that humans detest evil and will to do the good. He believes everyone has a natural inclination for doing good: “Since human beings were thus created by the spirit of Musubi no kami so as to detest evil and do what is good, they know for themselves what they should do without being taught.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, Norinaga believes:

(9) Humans naturally know and follow an innate code that extols goodness and denounces evil.

First, as seen, since evil is a part of the nature of the kami, one wonders how can that evil be subdued in order to create good things. The *musubi* principle permeating all forms of life is not morally good. If this same creative force is part of the human nature, it is hard to understand how human nature equates goodness in Shinto thought. Second, if “natural” describes the nature of the kami, then to do evil becomes “natural” because evil is a characteristic of the nature of kami, or of the life generating principle that created all things. From the attitude of detesting evil logically follows that one should also despise an aspect of his/her nature, or an aspect of life. Moreover, to affirm that doing good is the goal of the human implies that there is a standard of goodness that people seek to reach. It has to be something beyond the musubi force since the life force is not morally good. Otherwise, good and evil become relative. If both aspects are within the musubi, there is a difficulty in differentiating between the two. What is good? What is evil?

Even if one concedes that humans can be pure, that causes another problem for the Shinto view. Since humans are pure, Shintoists have postulated the idea that evil (and impurity) “cannot originate in man or in this world. It is an intruder.”¹⁴¹ Ono continues by describing moral evil as the incapacitating of man for normal action. Thus, there cannot be a punishment

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in “Motoori Norinaga,” in *Jinsai, Sorai, Norinaga*, 262.

¹⁴¹ Ono, *Shinto*, 106.

for any evil since it is nonsense to talk of a bad intent of the one committing the bad act; the person is not carrying out an evil deed, but some external force causes him to act wrongly. This is the reason Shinto regards evil as external. However, it has been shown that good and evil are aspects of the life-generating force, *musubi*. Can evil be both internal and external if the same “divine blood” flows through all living and non-living things in the world, as Shinto affirms?

In addition, by explaining evil deeds as the result of either some “temporary affliction” or some external force, Shinto offers a rather dismal depiction of the world. People can hope that no afflictions will befall them, but there is no assurance for hoping such. Also, since all events, good and evil, are the outcome of the will of ambivalent deities, the most one can hope is that the kami are in a good mood when dealing with them. There are major differences between the will of the kami and the will of God. In Norinaga’s conception, the suffering of good people and prosperity of evil people has no purpose. There is no possibility of redeeming evil as in Christianity. The best action in life, according to the Shinto teaching, is to struggle to maintain one’s purity because that *might* ward off misfortune. However, the account of Izanagi’s pollution demonstrates that pollution can just occur to someone. Shinto does not present an optimistic outlook in life. First, humans seem to have no control over their actions. Second, Shinto scholars portray the influence of the external forces on one’s life as inevitable. There is no free will since all things, good and evil, depend on the external forces, or kami in Norinaga’s theology, and nothing could hinder the occurrence of evil from materializing. Is there any way of dealing with evil then? Or should one accept that “troublesome things are bound to happen” in this world,¹⁴² as Norinaga pointed out, and one should live hoping he will not experience too much evil?

¹⁴² Marra, *Poetics of Norinaga*, 110.

The difficulty of offering a way of judging between good and evil stems from the Shinto view of kami. If good and evil are aspects of the kami nature, then defining good becomes problematic. Norman Geisler's question points out this dilemma: "How can such a strange, dualistic combination of opposites of good and evil be absorbed into the nature of God?"¹⁴³ The assimilation of opposites within the same creative principle creates difficulties for the Shinto believer. Can the deity be described as good? Since the Shinto spirit possesses two aspects, the kami nature looks like a sponge permeated by two different fluids, good and evil. The fluids mix within the sponge and become one liquid. What does "kami is good" mean in this context? It seems that good and evil are mixed within the same divine nature so that there is a problem of differentiating between the two. Thus, it is hard to even know what quality or property "good" or "evil" convey.

In contrast to Norinaga, Augustine maintains the existence of an infinite, all-powerful, good God who is separate from his creation. The problem of understanding/defining good and evil disappears as the existence of the theistic God implies that there is a moral law that judges between good and evil.¹⁴⁴ The Shinto worldview cannot even differentiate between good and evil even though most writings illogically infer an objective standard in order to make sense of life. Norinaga postulates the belief in absolutes which creates even more problems as it will be shown later. Even the possibility of a good creation, a major Shinto feature, cannot be believed given the nature of the kami. However, the Christian position identifies good in relationship to the perfect being of God. The nature of God, as Augustine also explained, determines the nature of his creation. Thus, "realities distinct from God that have a genuine and good existence of

¹⁴³ Norman L. Geisler, *The Roots of Evil* (Richardson, TX: Probe Ministries, 1978), 21.

¹⁴⁴ Ravi Zacharias, *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith We Defend* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 184.

their own [exist].”¹⁴⁵ It is true that the problem of the existence of evil in a theistic world remains.

The Shinto adherent is not confronted with a philosophical problem of evil as the Christian is. For the former, evil does not pose a problem for divinity. However, throughout the Bible, the cries of the believers who struggle with the existence of evil are recorded. Habakkuk wonders what the reason of a good and just God for permitting evil could be: “Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong?”¹⁴⁶ The psalmist echoes the same concern with how to make sense of the circumstances taking place when he knows God exists: “How long, O, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?”¹⁴⁷

Tragedies and suffering cause Christians to ask these questions, but without a moral context they are meaningless.¹⁴⁸ Without a moral law to judge between good and evil, no action can be regarded as either good or evil. The annihilation of millions of Jews by the Nazi regime cannot be classified as evil in a world in which no absolutes are posited. In a sense, Shinto has this problem. Though its adherents name an event good and another evil, their cosmology associated to their beliefs of divinity does not allow them to make such comments. To go even further, the “why” of evil does not make much sense in the context of the Shinto worldview. There is no reason or purpose for the suffering that humans experience, Norinaga asserts. One can only live to see what will happen next. Thus, to use Zacharias’ words, where is Shinto when it hurts?¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2006), 450.

¹⁴⁶ Habakkuk 1:3, NIV

¹⁴⁷ Psalm 13:1, NIV

¹⁴⁸ Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God?* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1994), 48.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

There are various approaches that the Christian uses to respond to the challenge evil poses. In view of the theistic belief of God's nature, there seems to be a *prima facie* logical inconsistency between the claims that God exist and that evil exists. One approach to address this problem, used by Augustine and further developed by Alvin Plantinga, is the free-will defense. First, as Augustine defined evil as privation of goodness, he emphasized that evil was not created by God. In his free-will defense, Plantinga develops some aspects of Augustine's position and seeks to demonstrate that the existence of God and the reality of evil are compatible without making God the cause of evil (and he succeeded). He demurred that the actualization of the world was partly up to the free willed agents and not up to God if humans were significantly free.¹⁵⁰ He then continues his argument by proving that "it was not within God's power to create a world containing moral good but no moral evil."¹⁵¹ Thus, he proves that the existence of evil derives from free will, a position Augustine held. Though in this world not all evil one experiences results from his actions, free-will made evil actual in the world. Augustine and Plantinga believed that God's prevention or removal of all suffering would not create a better world because it would remove the good of freedom. In this way, the free-will defense proves the logical consistency of the theistic belief. In Augustine's case, he also offers a reason why evil exists in a world created by a good God. It is significant to emphasize again that this Christian position offers a reasonable explanation for the existence of evil in the world in contrast to the Shinto view.

Another way to approach the problem of evil is the natural law theodicy, as presented by C.S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*. He proposed the idea that the uniformity of the natural

¹⁵⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 39-44.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 45

world is a necessary condition for morality. God had to create an environment with fixed laws which could not be manipulated for one's benefit.¹⁵² If people live in such a neutral field characterized by constant laws, it is clear that causing evil and pain is a possibility.¹⁵³ A bad person can throw a rock at another and, because of its hardness, the rock will injure the latter. God decides not to intervene and stop every instance in which a human being abuses his free will for, if He did, that would be the end of life: "Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself."¹⁵⁴ Thus, some evil is a result of the conditions that God created so that life and morality would be possible.

The Christian approaches to the problem of evil mentioned do not posit the idea that evil is a necessary aspect of the nature of God's creation, but that God's allowing evil is actually justified. To quote Augustine, "the sins themselves or the unhappiness itself are not necessary for the perfection of the whole; but the souls are necessary as souls. If they so will, they sin."¹⁵⁵ The souls must have the power to choose and, thus, the possibility to sin, if they are truly free. However, the cause of sin is negative, not positive, according to Augustine.¹⁵⁶ The turning away of the free will from God which causes sin "is a defective movement, and a defect comes from nothing. . . . Yet, since the defect lies in the will, it is under our control."¹⁵⁷ The view of evil as negative is a major difference between Augustine and Norinaga since the latter regards evil as a

¹⁵² C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 21-22.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 25. Other Christian theologians like John Feinberg in *The Many Faces of Evil* also analyze this idea and draw the same conclusion as Lewis. In addition, morality would not be possible either.

¹⁵⁵ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice* (Long Prairie, MN: Newman Press, 1955), 26.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

positive force. After all, evil is an aspect of the kami nature and of the whole world. To reuse the metaphor of the sponge which represents the kami-nature, this appears to be the only way of seeing the world, namely as evil. Augustine maintained that God had a morally sufficient reason to permit evil while Norinaga cannot conceive of a world without evil. Norinaga's system presents a grim picture because the kami inflict pain/ evil upon the people for no purpose. One can only survive and try to appease the kami. However, even Norinaga admits that no one can subdue the Evil Kami, Magatsubi, when his fury rages. Augustine holds that suffering serves an outweighing good in the Christian system. The theistic God controls all things and provides the optimism Shinto promises but fails to deliver.

Some might argue that Norinaga's position that regards evil as positive seems more realistic than Augustine's view, which entails that evil is unreal (even illusory). For instance, the wickedness of human beings is very real, its presence felt in powerful ways at times. Is it not unrealistic to call wicked acts a privation of goodness, or an instance of non-being? In defending Augustine's position, Donald A. Cress provides two important insights: 1) evil is meontic rather than oukontic; and 2) evil is real and positive not in and of itself, but because of the agent or action that possesses being, thus being a real and positive thing.¹⁵⁸ Cress clarifies the fact that Augustine is aware that evil is felt vividly and forcefully. However, if one fails to understand Augustine's view of evil as a "lack in some good thing, which, on account of that lack, is disordered, out of proper alignment with its form, mode and species,"¹⁵⁹ one can accuse him of being insensitive, even cruel. To affirm that evil is non-being means that the thing called evil

¹⁵⁸ Donald A. Cress, "Augustine's Privation Account of Evil: A Defense," *Augustinian Studies* 20 (1989):112-113, 119.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

fails to conduct according to its perfect nature or standard of excellence.¹⁶⁰ Evil refers to disordered and defective goods. Because evil is “a good thing run amok,”¹⁶¹ the “realness” of evil is caused by the realness of the good thing. Thus, the objection that Augustine’s privation theory entails an illusory view of evil is unfounded.

Another critique of Norinaga’s system is provided by the use of intuition. Since Shinto accepts intuition as a valid tool in the acquisition of knowledge, I would like to explore the beliefs of Norinaga that seem to have been based on intuition rather than reason and the “sacred” writings. Shinto rejects the notion of absolute good and evil. Wargo maintains the idea that Shinto accepts cultural subjectivism: “What was counted as good or evil [in Shinto] depended very much on the specific conditions obtaining as well as on the nature of the community to which one belonged.”¹⁶² Also, Sokyo Ono affirms that no action is intrinsically good or evil because there are no absolutes.¹⁶³ This seems the prevalent view in Shinto. Does intuition support such a view? For instance, acts of humanity and loyalty are always good. Killing an innocent person though is intuitively accepted as evil, even by Shintoists. If no absolute good exists, killing an innocent person could not be regarded as intrinsically evil, but intuition appears to point to an objective moral standard.

Several comments that Norinaga made implied the idea of an absolute system even though he defined good and evil as relative in other passages. He affirms that humans know intuitively what they should do because they were created with this ability through the spirit of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 111.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁶² Wargo, “Japanese Ethics,” 504-505.

¹⁶³ Ono, *Shinto*, 105.

Musubi no kami.¹⁶⁴ Also, he claims that humans were created to detest evil and do what is good. His affirmation implies that one could recognize what good is, and that there are some absolutes that do not change with the cultures. For instance, he claims that “acts of humanity, righteousness, propriety, deference, filial piety, brotherly respect, loyalty and faithfulness should be innate to human beings, and people should know these and behave accordingly, without being taught explicitly.”¹⁶⁵ He shows no indication the value of some moral actions change culturally. Norinaga believes that there are certain things people naturally know they are supposed to do while others things should not be done. In other words, some actions are naturally accepted as good and others are intuitively regarded as evil. However, Norinaga did not find himself bound to accept the reality of moral truths. In a sense, he affirms their reality, but at the same time scorns the idea of ethical systems. Spontaneous, intuitive action should guide human beings in the everyday life. In his view, if humans would return to the state in which they were created and rejected the imposition of any ethical codes, people would do what they are supposed to do. However, if there are things humans should do, what is wrong with the compilation of such expectations in an ethical code? A Christian would affirm that Norinaga is correct in recognizing the reality of an innate moral law. Intuition seems to have taught him that a moral law exists; intuition demonstrates that the Shinto rejection of absolutes is wrong. Thus, good and evil are absolutes. But, in discussing the *Tale of Genji*, Norinaga declares that good and evil are relative. Is this a contradiction in his thought?

On one hand, he appeals to absolutes to prove the goodness (purity) of human nature as it was initially created. On the other hand, he defines good in relative terms. However, most

¹⁶⁴ Norinaga, *Kojikiden*, 232.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

would agree that he believed in the absolute truthfulness of the Ancient Way. The events of the Age of the Kami reveal how the Shinto must live. Thus, the actions of the kami provide the absolute law/code. In a sense, then, he believed in absolutes. At least, his statements entail the reality of absolutes. That would not be accepted by Shinto as portraying their view of truth and morality. However, it is the position that follows from Norinaga's writings.

If the set of statements (1) through (7) is accepted, then evil cannot be an external, separate force because that gives birth to a dualistic view of the world. But all organic and inorganic things are *kami* and part of the *musubi* force. By defining evil as an external force (as so many Shintoists do), they commit a fallacy. The notion of evil as external contradicts their understanding of kami. If evil is external, then a dualism is accepted, which is contrary to Shinto claims. Shinto writes against a dualism of good and evil. Thus, this creative and generative power is fighting within itself; sometimes it obstructs while other times it creates. This also reveals that declaring Shintoism an optimistic faith is illogical. The idea of harmony and unity seems irreconcilable to the Shinto belief that the same force that generates the good and harmonious is also the force that brings destruction and wields woe.

Regarding the question of whether anything could be done regarding the evil in this world, the Shinto position reveals another problem. Norinaga reveals that he believed in the final victory of good over evil even though his system fails to provide any assurance. One wonders at the optimist expectation of Shinto, namely that "this world in which we live is progressing from chaos to order, from the confusion of contradictions to a state of harmony and unity."¹⁶⁶ A kami finite in power who has limited control of the world cannot assure one of any outcome, much less a positive one. Norinaga believes in a deterministic world in which all

¹⁶⁶ Sokyō Ono, *Shinto*, 102.

events and acts are determined by the will of the kami. Given his conception of the kami-nature, his belief in the final victory of good over evil is unfounded. First, good kami are not stronger than evil ones and both kinds of gods are finite. Referring to Magatsubi, Norinaga affirms that not even Amaterasu could subdue or resist his fury.¹⁶⁷ For Norinaga, evil necessarily exists;¹⁶⁸ it is an inevitable effect of an imperfect world that alternates from good to evil and then from evil to good. However, it does not logically follow that ultimate good will eventually triumph. On the contrary, given the nature of kami, the conclusion that the Shintoist cannot maintain hope in this world logically follows. One wonders on what evidence Norinaga sustains his view of the triumph of ultimate good since good forces do not seem stronger than evil forces. Second, the problem of death, the greatest evil, fails to be addressed by the Shinto. Not only is there no solution for the conquering of death, but the destiny of all people is to go to the land of Yomi, according to Norinaga. A person that suffers horrendous evils in this life cannot expect anything better after death. Augustine presents the biblical view that there will be a final punishment of erring free-willed choices, introducing an idea of justice that is lacking in Shinto. There is a differentiation between the destinies of people based on their actions in this life; all people do not go to Hades, the equivalent of the Shinto Yomi land.

Another aspect of Norinaga's thought, his high-regard of spontaneity, adds more problems. Accepting that the human nature cannot be pure since the *musubi* force is impure and evil, spontaneous action cannot produce the natural, pure actions Norinaga expects as a result. In addition, spontaneity presupposes chance, not order. If chance characterizes the Shinto world, it would be hard to maintain the position that good will ultimately triumph. Norinaga's system

¹⁶⁷ Ueda, *Kami*.

¹⁶⁸ Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga*, 101.

offers false certainty; it believes in the victory of good, but fails to offer real hope for this conviction.

In Christianity, even the existence of evil is purposeful. Though good does not need evil in order to exist, God has a morally sufficient reason to permit evil. Augustine explains this idea simply but concisely in the following passage:

Nor can we doubt that God does well even in the permission of what is evil. For He permits it only in the justice of His judgment. And surely all that is just is good. Although, therefore, evil, on so far as it is evil, is not a good; yet the fact that evil as well as good exists, is a good. For if it were not a good that evil should exist, its existence would not be permitted by the omnipotent God. . .¹⁶⁹

The belief in an all-powerful, good God assures Christians that evils will be removed some day. The seemingly optimistic character of Shinto is unfounded while Christianity is truly optimistic. Moral and natural evils are not too much of a problem for Shinto because the kami are not omnipotent, omnibenevolent, or omniscient. They are problems only for the theistic God. But theism can and does offer various defenses to the problem of evil while Shinto's views are either contradictory or rather pessimistic.

¹⁶⁹ Augustine, *Readings*, 391.

CONCLUSION

What then is good? Norinaga defines good as either purity or auspiciousness. He constantly avoids defining good as virtue or a moral quality. Is good that which accomplishes the greatest or most desired outcome? Or is it the virtuous action? Or is doing good referring to the action that fulfills one's moral obligation? It seems that Norinaga affirms that good refers to the deed that maintains or obtains one's purity. Since purity in Shinto synthesizes the concepts of truth, goodness, and beauty, Norinaga's position reveals a different picture of Shinto than one is expected to find.

Shinto fails to offer the optimism it pretends to offer. The finitude and lack of power of the kami do not provide any assurance that good will ultimately triumph against evil. Even in the present life, as all things and events depends on the will of capricious, ambivalent kami, people find no confidence that life can become better. As Norinaga repeatedly remarks, good people suffer evil and evil people experience good lives. He concludes that evil kami are causing these situations, but offers no help since his position cannot assure one that good will prevail. These difficulties do not exist for the Christian who believes in the omnipotent, omnibenevolent God. Though evil still exists, one day all evil will be removed. Augustine points out that all God's actions are a result of his character. Thus, one can be assured he has a purpose and a morally justified reason for the allowance of evil and suffering.

Shinto is known as the religion of no founder, no sacred text, no moral codes, and no absolutes. If one accepts the definition of purity that Shinto provides, he would also have to accept the absolute nature of goodness that Norinaga presents. Even though he fails to define it,

his writings reveal a system in which goodness is implied as an aspect of purity, the all-encompassing concept that includes truth, goodness, and beauty. However, he would reject a description of his view in absolute terms. He avoided drawing conclusions that contradicted Ancient Shinto. Thus, he defined good and evil as Shinto would define it; that is, he focused on the concept of purity, but he failed to understand it as the integration of truth, goodness, and beauty. Though Shinto define purity in light of right, clean, bright, and straight, it refuses to draw the conclusions this definition would logically entail. To even propose that purity is the ideal state is to accept some absolute—purity.

A Christian might affirm that Norinaga might have learned of the reality of absolute truth and morality because his intuition pointed in that way, but he rejected it since it did not fit within his system. The Christian might assert that the image of God within every human being causes people to acquire knowledge of some truths and that explains why intuition leads people to accept absolute truth. Norinaga stayed within the confines of the Shinto system and sought to explain his views as clearly as possible, but whenever a contradiction would follow, he accepted it because the Ancient Way presented the ultimate truth. One wonders what could have been accomplished if Norinaga had allowed himself to step out of the boundary the Shinto religion imposed upon his thought.

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