Japanese and East Asian values as alternative world views with an orientation to plurality of meanings of life in the informatized era: the cultural-ethical traditions behind East Asian people's evaluation on human-robot-interaction, privacy-related problems, AI, Technologies

Valores japoneses y de Asia oriental como visiones del mundo alternativas con una orientación a la pluralidad de significados de la vida en la era informatizada: las tradiciones ético-culturales detrás de la evaluación de la gente de Asia oriental sobre la interacción humano-robot, problemas relacionados con la privacidad, IA, tecnologías

Valores japoneses e asiáticos orientados para a pluralidade de significados da vida na era informatizada: as tradições ético-culturais por trás da avaliação do povo da Ásia Oriental sobre a interação humano-robô, problemas relacionados à privacidade, IA, Tecnologias

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Abstract

In spite of the general belief that the informatization of our world would make our life better and more meaningful than that of the industrialized society, it is clear that we are now facing serious problems. These are such as loss of face-to-face communication as a result of penetration of exclusive SNS communication format, abnormal concentration of capital in some high-tech companies due to the artificialization of the investment environment through the use of the Internet and artificial intelligence and so on. In the author's view, this kind of crisis is reflecting the confusion of 'Being itself' and 'beings' as suggested by Rafael Capurro or the loss of plurality of meanings of life in the informatization era due to the so-called techno-determinism. In this paper, the author will try to search for alternative world views to overcome the loss of plurality of meanings by examining Japanese existential-ethical views reflecting their latent value-orientation to oneness of meanings suggested by Kitaro Nishida and others. It seems that Japan is an interesting country in the sense that it has been facing various serious problems in the informatized environments and at the same time it has a potential power to overcome this situation.

Resumen

A pesar de la creencia generalizada de que la informatización de nuestro mundo puede mejorar nuestra vida de forma más significativa que la sociedad industrial, está claro que se están enfrentando ahora serios problemas. Entre ellos se ha perdido la comunicación cara a cara como resultado de la penetración de formatos de comunicación de SNS exclusivos, una concentración desmesurada de capital en compañías de alta tecnología debido a la artificialización de los medios de inversión a través del uso de internet y de la inteligencia artificial. Desde la perspectiva del autor, esta clase de crisis refleja la confusión entre 'Ser por sí mismo (being itself) and ser (beings) como es sugerido por Rafael Capurro o la pérdida de la pluralidad de significados de la vida, en la era de la informatización, debida a lo conocido como determinismo tecnológico. En este trabajo, el autor intenta ofrecer cosmovisiones alternativas para superar la pérdida de la pluralidad de significados, a través del examen de los enfoques éticos y existenciales japoneses, de modo de reflejar la orientación de sus valores latentes en la unidad de significados sugeridos por Kitaro Nishida y otros autores. Parece que Japón es un país interesante en el sentido de que puede enfrentar los serios problemas de entornos informatizados, y al mismo tiempo, utilizar su poder potencial para superar esta situación.

Palabras clave: ÉTICA DE LA INFORMACIÓN; UNIDAD DE SIGNIFICADOS, SEKEN, BA, JAPAN.

Resumo

Apesar da crença geral de que a informatização do nosso mundo tornaria a nossa vida melhor e mais significativa do que a da sociedade industrializada, é evidente que agora enfrentamos sérios problemas. Trata-se, por exemplo, da perda de comunicação face-a-face em consequência da penetração do formato exclusivo de comunicação SNS, da concentração anormal de capital em algumas empresas de alta tecnologia devido à artificialização do ambiente de investimento através da utilização da Internet e da inteligência artificial, etc. Na opinião do autor, este tipo de crise está refletindo a confusão do próprio "Ser" e dos "seres", como sugerido por Rafael Capurro, ou a perda da pluralidade de significados da vida na era da informatização, devido ao chamado tecno-determinismo. Neste artigo, o autor tentará buscar visões de mundo alternativas para superar a perda de pluralidade de significados, examinando as visões existencial-éticas japonesas que refletem sua orientação de valor latente à unidade de significados, sugeridos por Kitaro Nishida e outros. Parece que o Japão é um país interessante, no sentido de que tem enfrentado vários problemas graves nos ambientes informatizados e, ao mesmo tempo, tem um poder potencial para superar esta situação.

Palavras-chave: ÉTICA DA INFORMAÇÃO; UNIDADE DE SIGNIFICADOS, SEKEN, BA, JAPÃO.

1. Introduction

In spite of the general belief that the informatization of our world would make our life better and more meaningful than that of the industrialized society, it is clear that we are now facing serious problems. These are such as loss of face-to-face communication as a result of penetration of exclusive SNS communication format, soaring prices of everyday items due to unjustified resale of merchandise through exclusive online shopping (as shown in the case of thermometers cost as $ 100 and more in Japan under the in the epidemic of corona), abnormal concentration of capital in some high-tech companies due to the artificialization of the investment environment through the use of the Internet and artificial intelligence and so on.

Japan is clearly one of the countries which have been facing these serious situations in the most serious ways for decades. For example, even with the corona sickness, the state has not been able to come up with concrete effective measures (as shown in the case of distributing poor cloth masks to the entire nation as the supposedly most effective measures to cope with the disease), and economic growth has stopped for 30 years despite the informatization, the increase of suicide rate under the informatization in the 1990s or so. In the author's view, this kind of crisis is reflecting the confusion of 'Being itself' and 'beings' (things, object matters, 'Vorhandenheit') as suggested by Rafael Capurro or the loss of plurality of meanings of life in the informatization era due to the so-called techno-determinism. In this paper, the author will make an attempt to search for alternative world views to overcome the loss of plurality of meanings by examining Japanese existential-ethical views reflecting their latent value-orientation to oneness of meanings suggested by Kitaro Nishida and others. It seems that Japan is an interesting country in the sense that it has been facing various serious problems in the informatized environments and at the same time it has a potential power to overcome this situation. More concretely, the author will

examine these points in this paper. 1) Firstly, the author will examine the various cases of confusion of values or meanings of life which can't be reduced to the mere result of calculation of the 'objectified' values and figures as well as the examination of the potential alternative theories on this kind of situations of confusion of meanings. 2) Secondly, the author will examine the meanings of Japanese cultural, ethical and ontological traditions which are motivated by orientation to values leading to oneness of meanings or un-differentiated situations of meanings which seem to potentially enable people to make 'awareness' of meanings as internalized in their minds. 3) And thirdly, the author will certify the 'evidence' through analyzing of the author's own research findings which show presence of orientation to oneness of meanings of life in their minds just as some authors such as Kitaro Nishida, Bin Kimura and others suggested. (The order of discussion is not necessarily this order.) The following is the essence of this paper which reflects the author's own ways of thinking about the importance of plurality of meanings of life and also reflects the views by various other authors sharing eyesight with one another.

In this paper, the author will examine 'how do Japanese people and East Asian people understand and interpret the phenomena and problems happening around them such as human-robot-interaction, privacy-related problems, AI in the information era?' This is a kind of topic of information ethics or IIE (intercultural information ethics) in a broad sense, if we follow Rafael Capurro's explanation, i.e. information ethics should be based on ontology rather than metaphysics. Capurro says that in the ontological perspectives, 'Being itself' is a major topic, while in the metaphysical perspectives 'beings' (things, object matters, 'Vorhandenheit') is a dominant topic (Capurro, 2006). In the author's view, if we want to talk about life in the information era, this might be a topic of ontology first of all in the sense that people's life is not the subject of the metaphysical discourses, even if people's life today is surrounded by a lot of information technologies.

As we will see later, East Asian people's eyes on the matters in the information era are under strong influence from their traditional culture-existential perspectives, so far as our researches done in Japan and East Asia show. This

might be understood in various ways: they don't live in an 'advanced' society compared with the 'Western' people and so on. But if we follow Capurro's ideas, 'being' or life can't be reduced to the problem of 'beings.' In the author's view, if we can relate Capurro's ideas about the distinction between Being and beings and ontology and metaphysics with Japanese ideas about *Koto*, *Aida*, *Seken* or *B*a, the scope that Capurro's ideas have would expand at least in a potential way. This is what Japanese philosophers and authors such as Kitaro Nishida, Bin Kimura, Yujiro Nakamura have tried and is also what the author himself will try in this article. (*Koto* = the aspect of world in which things, scenes, a person's subjective attitudes towards life, a person's feelings, a person's emotions and the like make a form of wholeness, Gestalt; *Koto* is in contrast to *Mono* as an object in a scientific and metaphysical, objective frame of world; *Aida* is the place where the linkage among things, events, a person's feelings, a person's emotions would emerge beyond the distinction between the subject and the object, the subject and the predicate, a person's experience and another person's experience; *Seken* or *Ba* is the place where people see and understand things and phenomena around them from viewpoints related to Japanese cultural-existential ways of life such as oneness of things and persons.)

In this paper, the author wants to see East Asian people's life in the information era from a combined perspective of ontology and 'metaphysics.' Or we might say that the author's approach in this paper is based on Japanese or East Asian's cultural-existential viewpoints but at the same time in this paper the author will try to explain the meanings appearing in Japan's and East Asian's contexts from Western and rational perspectives as far as the author's understandings would permit it.

The concrete purposes of this paper will deal with the following matters. 1) We will try to reinterpret the meanings of Japanese *Seken* or *Ba* by rethinking about Japanese ideas on *Mu*, *Muen*, *Kou*, *Aida* and Japanese ways of thinking based on intuition, pure experience, Japanese language structure and so on. 2) We will see the research findings which the author gained by the past resent researches in East Asia on people's ways of life in the information era, paying an attention on East Asian people's views on material wealth, ethical meanings of disasters, good

human relations, importance of mutual reliance, criticism of selfishness and so on (views on good and virtuous life). 3) We want to know how people's views on 'good and virtuous life' are related with their views on their encounter with robots, AI, self-driving cars and others and also with their views on the matters of privacy in the informatized environment. 4) In addition, we want to see how Japanese and East Asian views on life would have potentially universal meanings by examining their location within a broader context. This context is related with our effort to seek for alternative perspectives to overcome the narrow eyesight under the influence of so-called techno-determinism.

2. Japan's crisis due to the informatization

Japan is a strange country in the sense that its informatization is one of the best in the world but nevertheless Japan's growth of economy is one of the worst in the developed countries.

As of 2005, the e-commerce rate of Japanese companies is far higher than that of the United States. The rate of Japan is 20.6% and that of USA is just 11.9% (MEIT, 2005). Nevertheless, the rate of economic growth as GDP is one of the worst in the developed countries (Table 1).

Table 1: Nominal GDP growth of developed countries

(Year)	1994	1995	1998	2002	2006	2010
Japan	4860	5349	3937	3991	4356	5510
USA	7309	7664	9089	10980	13858	14598
UK	1080	1181	1478	1621	2483	2295
Germany	2148	2523	2178	2007	2903	3304
France	1368	1572	1469	1452	2256	2565

1)By US$ billion conversion 2) Original data: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (http://www.esri.cao.go.jp/jp/sna/menu.html) (available on 25th of November, 2014)

And nevertheless, the quality of labor force (workers and employees) of Japan is the 4th following Norway, Switzerland and Finland's among the 130 countries. This position is far better than Canada (9 = ranking position), Germany (11) and Singapore (13), France (17), Australia (18), UK (19), USA (24), Russia (28),

Korea (32), Italy (35), Spain (45), Chile (51), Argentina (56), Mexico (65) and China (71) (World Economic Forum, 2016).

But the suicide rate is getting worse since the 1990's as the beginning of information era supported by the diffusion of the Internet and the introduction of 'competition principle' into the society. And the labor productivity is one of the worst in the developed countries (Japan productivity center, 2019). On the other hand, the percentage of people who said 'I couldn't buy food, medical services and clothes because of poverty' is very small (the smallest) in Japan. (The percentage of people who couldn't buy food is 2% in Japan, while 8% in Germany, 10% in Italy, 20% in France, 15% in UK and 24% in USA.) This means that Japan is a 'rich' country at least in the life seen from material wealth (Pew Research Center, 2013). What we can get from these facts is that the level of informatization is not the only one criterion to determine the meanings of life.

This means that we need to recover the plurality of meanings of life in the informatized environments. It is surprising that 31% of people in USA said that they can't afford to spend money for medical supplies and 27 % said that they can't buy clothes because of poverty (Pew Research Center, 2013). This shows us that the Informatization cannot be equated with the richness of life. Or might say that the informatization is proportional to the level of poverty in a certain sense. This means that we need the alternative criteria to evaluate meanings of quality of our life. In fact, Japanese people seem to have their own criteria to evaluate the meanings of poverty and richness at least at a latent level.

The following table (Table 2) shows the result of a statistical calculation on the research data gained by the surveys in 2020 in Japan performed by the author himself using the survey sample collecting from Japanese respondents selected by a sort of data sampling (600 respondents of age from 25 to 44 living in part of Tohoku Region and part of Kanto Region).

This table shows the correlations between 'people's views on the meanings of small money' and 'their views on or interest in various social problems.' As this table shows, the awareness of 'the invisible but potentially important meanings of small money' would enable this kind of linkage to surface in people's minds. (The important point regarding this is that this kind of purpose itself is given by the

author, researchers, not by the computing machine. The computing machine can't imagine 'what is valuable for human life' which would enable the calculation shown in Table 2 to make possible.)

It seems that this kind of linkage of interest forms a kind of horizon on which even evaluations of or interest in 'self-driving cars in the society' would emerge. In this sense, at least in Japanese minds, the meanings of life would come first and the meanings of technological products would follow these. 'To be' is superior to beings.

And it is important to see that this linkage can't be reduced to a simple concept without losing this kind of a broad range of linkage of meanings. This suggests us that the meanings of poverty and richness are related to people's own awareness and this awareness reflects or influences the potential linkage of various meanings of life. (And this finding also suggests us that Japanese 'poverty' which seems to be getting worse at least on the surface level is considered to be due to the neglect of this inner values in people's minds.)

In the following passages we want to reevaluate the Japanese views to look for alternative views on the meanings of life in the informatized era by examining the related references and also the author's own research data. In the author's view, Japanese 'contradictory' situations suggest us that people need a kind of self-referencing viewpoint. As we will see later in this paper, the plurality of meanings of life still remains in Japanese minds today. But this might be in the state of a kind of unawareness.

At a latent level, Japan is the country in which people can identify the meanings of their life through self-recursive questions of meanings by the values inside their minds as shown in the case of 'internalization of meanings' of various matters such as re-evaluation of values of small money. It seems that they have their own internalized criteria as one of the author's research findings has clearly shown. (But it also seems that they are not aware of this fact in many cases.) So they might have the strength to overcome the loss of plurality of meanings of life in their informatized environments.

In this sense, we need to follow the process of re-recognition or re-self-awareness in Japanese minds in various ways. This is what the author wants to do in the following sections.

Table 2: Correlations between 'the belief in the invisible value of a small amount of money' and the evaluation of other various views (or the degree of level of interest in social problems) in the informatized environments in Japan. (Data: 2020HG Research in Japan)

(views)	Belief in the invisible value of small money
Japanese companies should take responsibility for stabilizing employment by reducing non-regular employment as much as possible.	.516**
I would like to give priority to environmentally friendly products even if the price is a little higher.	.258**
(Interest in)Domestic (Japan) political issues	.359**
(Interest in)Global environmental issues	.398**
(Interest in) Revitalization of home town	.260**
Reduction of traffic accidents due to the spread of self-driving cars	.417**
To promote the use of cards for shopping and the spread of smartphone payments, and cashlessness	.365**
Improving the accuracy of disease diagnosis by using artificial intelligence	.384**
To raise the future consumption tax rate to the extent with which Japanese people can enable a welfare society like Northern Europe to emerge in Japan.	.304**
To raise the corporate tax rate to the same level as before and reduce the burden of consumption tax	.413**
Things will work better if you can choose your decision without relying on other people's opinions.	.057

Notes on the Table 2: 1) This table shows the correlation between 'the belief in the invisible value of a small amount of money' and other various views (or the degree of level of interest in social problems) in the informatized environments. 2) 'The belief in the invisible value of a small amount of money' is 'Even if it is 10 yen or 100 yen, how to use it shows what a kind of mind you have, so to waist a small amount of money is not a small matter.' 3) **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05, without ** or *=ns= non (statistically) significant.

3. *Seken, Ba, Aida* and Japanese cultural traditions

What the author wants to do in this paper is to re-examine the contents of discussions in his previous papers. The points which the author discussed in these papers are: we could find the presence of *Seken*-related meanings as traditional cultural-existential ways of understanding of life and the world in the minds of Japanese people today; and these meanings deriving from *Seken* or Japanese cultural-existential *Ba* (place) are found to be interrelated with people's various views on society, politics, environmental problems, crimes, disasters, matters happing in the information society including privacy-related problems and human-robot-interaction. In this paper the author wants to add some of newer points to these previous discussions by seeing the contents of Japanese and East Asian cultures more deeply and broadly and adding the newer research findings to the list of previous research findings gained through our past researches in Japan and in East Asia. More concretely, the author wants to discuss the plural meanings of *Mu* (nothingness), the relation between *Muen* and *Uen* in Japanese culture as well as the 'inner world' of Japanese people where the fusion of various matters and existence such as things, past memories, people's concerns for various matters, imagination, exchange of viewpoints and others would occur.

The discussions in the following passages might be limited to reinterpretation of Japanese culture and Japanese ways of understanding of this world for the most part of the discussions. But at the same time, the author thinks that this would provide us with viewpoints to see the things happening in East Asia and South East Asia better in the sense that Japanese views are (at least partly) derived from common cultural sources in Asia. In fact, as our research data show, the standing positions of Japanese people and East Asian people are far closer to each other than we usually imagine.

3.1. What are Seken and Japanese (cultural and existential) Ba?

As the author has been describing this matter in the previous papers, it seems that Japanese people of today are still in the traditional cultural-existential realm of culture and society called *Seken* or *Ba* (*Basho*). And at the same time, Japanese people of today live in a modernized and Westernized realm of society which is called *Shakai*. This dualism is the characteristics of Japanese culture today.

In the author's previous papers (Nakada, 2004, 2005, 2011a, 2011b, 2012), the author said: Japanese people of today still live in an indigenous and traditional realm of life-world, culture or existential *Ba*. *Ba* or *Basho* (place, *locus*) was originally introduced by Kitaro Nishida into the field of philosophy and ethical studies in Japan.

According to Kitaro Nishida, *Ba* or *Basho* is the place where the logic of predicate or the predicate plays an important role to arrange the direction of our understanding. Or *Ba* or *Basho* works as an intermediating place to influence or reflect how the relation of the subject and the object or the things and the minds would emerge in our life space (Nishida, 1987). In a different way, *Ba* or *Basho* is said to be the place where the undifferentiated cultural phenomena called 'pure experience' as a wholeness of our experience, perception, understanding would happen (Nishida, 1950). In the article *Basho*, Nishida says that *Tyokkan* (intuition) means that the predicate takes the place of the subject (*Syugo*) (Nishida, 1987:137).

In the author's own view, *Basho* refers to the place where self-reflection on this transition happens. This transition itself is the phenomenon of matters happening in the consciousness. But at the same time, the experience of this emergence of matters is the content of consciousness. In this sense, the matters and the consciousness are in a state of mutual reference. In a different way, the self-reflection on this transition or mutual reference is the phenomenon of consciousness. The consciousness in a phenomenon (or the consciousness as a phenomenon) is a consciousness and also a phenomenon. And our awareness of this un-differentiated and the unified state of consciousness and matters is part of our consciousness. This is the intuition. Thus the relation of matters and mind is not the one which the mere description depending upon a static logic or language can depict.

We observe ourselves which or who observe ourselves and the relations between us and matters in our life world. Nishida says that *Basho* is the place where this kind of relation of consciousness as observing and consciousness as observed happens (Nishida, 1987: 69).

This kind of idea by Nishida seems to reflect the world views deriving from Buddhism or Zen-practice at least partly as well as his struggle with the imported Western thoughts in the modernizing after Meiji Restoration (1868). And in this sense, his thought is a kind of self-reflection by Japanese culture on its own experience in Japanese life space in the state of dualism of the modernizing aspect and the traditional aspect. In our view, this kind of self-referencing or self-inquiry is reflected in the life space which might be called *Seken* tentatively.

The term *Seken* (originally, the Sanskrit word 'loca') consists of *Se* (time or transient situations of this world/life) and *Ken* (in-between or *locus*), i.e. the transient *Ba* including transient human activities and the place where these activities are done (Inoue, 1977). This word and the idea shown by this word *Seken* continue to be used for over 1000 years old in Japan and these reflect Japanese traditional culture, Buddhism, Confucianism and Shinto (Japanese indigenous religion).

In the author's view, *Seken* is based on Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Japanese traditional culture, memories of experiences in history (wars, disasters, political upheavals like Meiji Restoration) or common/shared ways of understanding the meanings of life as well as Japanese cultural, historical and existential pursuit of cultural identification through reflection on the role of language and reflection on the potential sources of Japanese original mind. (In this sense, the concepts of *Ba*, *Basho* and *Seken* overlap with each other.)

Hashimoto's discussions on *Ukiyo* show us an example of the relation between Buddhism and Japanese culture. According to Hashimoto, Japanese people's motivation to work hard or diligence derives from 'innerweltliche Askese' (inner-worldly asceticism)' based on Buddhism which is similar to the case of Protestantism and the Western spirit of capitalism discussed by Max Weber and Robert Bellah. In Japanese culture people experience a kind of conversion of matters, i.e. the experience that the acceptance of the transitory of our life forms people's values (Hashimoto, 1975). (On this point, the author added his own interpretation to Hashimoto's ideas.) People have a view on this world as somewhere where the acceptance of transitory of our life forms people's values (Hashimoto, 1975).

3.2. Contraversion of meanings from Mu (nothingness) to Yu (Being) in Seken or Japanese Ba

It is rather difficult to understand 'why does the acceptance of transitory transform into industriousness?' On this point, some authors give us important clues to this problem and this seems to provide us with hints to another problem, 'why *Seken*-related values influence people's views on human-robot-interaction and privacy, though *Seken*-related views are fundamentally old and traditional ones?' In the author's views, the hints in this case are found in the dualism of meanings of *Seken*-related meanings, half religious meanings, half meanings leading to industriousness and internalization of values.

Yoshida suggests that 'secret' sources of Japanese industriousness derive from a religious group called *Kou*講 (religious association for Buddhist lecture meeting and similar mutual assistance associations in Japan in the medieval era and Edo era). In the medieval era (12th Century to 16th Century) and Edo era (1603-1867) in Japan, some sorts of independent collaborative learning systems or mutual assistance associations emerged. They are called *Kou*. The original form of *Kou* is an independent religious group in which members of some temples or religious sects make an association to collaboratively learn religious texts and religious lectures. One of the most important characteristics of these groups is its equalitarian operation. Yoshida says: 'This kind of religious association in Japan tries to enhance the religious viewpoints of the members by cooperating with each other with religious purpose, even though the orientation to gaining of religious and social benefits through this activity occupies the participants' minds.' According to Yoshida, this kind of association, which is fundamentally non-hierarchical, has aspects of mutual help group and of some kind of half religious and half leisure activities such as temple visiting or travelling together (Yoshida, 1995).

Yoshida says that in the medieval era and Edo era in Japan, there are similar but different types of *Kou* which can be classified into religious *Kou*, social *Kou*, financial *Kou*. Yoshida says that this kind of *Kou* is followed by Japanese management system in the modernized era and this is 'secret' sources of achievement of Japanese economic activity (Yoshida, 1995). (Concerning *Kou*,

see also: (Onda, 2013).) In the author's view, in this sense, Japanese history has (had) a place where different meanings based on different fields of activity would mingle with each other.

Kouichiro Hioki (1993) says that the concept of *Mu* or *Mushi* (selflessness) characterizes Japanese culture, in particular, when we compare Japanese culture with Chinese and Korean cultures. According to Hioki, Japanese people live in a (potentially) multiplicity of cultural and social contexts, i.e. pluralism of cultural contexts. Hioki says that the existence of plural cultural contexts is one of the necessary presuppositions for modernization of culture and society. This existence of plural cultural contexts enables Japanese people to flee from pressure arising from a single and large scale context found in Asia. In Japan, *Mushi* or *Kyoshi*(distance from ego or selfishness) emerges in accord with this kind of historical and cultural plurality (Hioki,1993).

Similarly, Confucianism in Japan has (had) plural meanings, i.e. one as a theory to tell people the importance of hierarchical orders and another as a theory to tell people the importance of one's own effort in terms of activation leading to political-social reforms and internalization of Confucianism values such as sincerity or faithfulness (Koschmann, 1987).

3.3. Seken or Shakai depending Muen

Japanese ideas of *Mu* can be explained from a similar but different viewpoint. This is what we can learn from the discussions mentioned above. We will continue to see this point in the following passage too. According to Yoshihiko Amino (1996), Japanese society has (had) a kind of sanctuaries called *Muen* where people experience some sort of freedom, equality and interchange of meanings of sacred and non-sacred. *Muen* is considered to be sources for new human relations which are not bounded by old, exiting human relations or social-cultural rules. *Muen* is similar to what V. Turner's *communitas* as a place where experiences coming from existing rules or structured orders are not important any more (Turner, 1974, 1969). *Muen* has a meaning through its position in contrast to *Uen* or the place of *Uen* where established rules or orders are important. *Muen*'s

social and cultural meanings are located in this dualism of social or cultural structure.

Masao Yamaguchi, Japanese anthropologist, says that Japanese Noh play is the play for the 'others' (Yamaguchi, 1983). This means that in the Noh play people experience various matters or phenomena including unaccepted meanings such as tragic memories, defeated rebels, death or ghosts and the like. These unaccepted things belong to somewhere outside the 'normal' or everyday life.

Noboru Yasuda, Noh player, says that in the Noh play theater something interesting might happen, i.e. fusion of words, words and persons, the world of imagination and the world of reality (Yasuda, 2014). In the Noh of Japan, the audience is required to learn by heart the lines or poetic words (the content of the lyrics) sung (told) by the narrators or the song-players in a given piece of the Noh play. As the audience listens to the music, he/she recites the lines in his/her own mind. In such a situation, the words uttered by Yoshitsune, a tragic hero in the medieval Japan, the main character in *Funabenkei*, a well-known piece of the Noh play, would fuse together with the words by the narrators and the words of audience as well as the ghost of Tairano-Tomonori as the defeated hero in the sea battle with Yoshitsune. Yasuda says that at this situation the distinction between the subject and the object and between the past and the present would be not clear. A fusion of existence would happen (Yasuda, 2014:70-71).

The idea of fusion is interesting in the sense that we can understand the importance of the idea of viewpoint released from the restraint or bondage of the old closed society. Sakuta, Japanese sociologist, says: In a free society 'mutual exchange of views' and 'mutual respect' are born. This creates factors that define the human relationship based on the values of human relations themselves which cause a feeling of duty (against others) and a feeling of mutual reliance in a new form. Through this, the values such as mutual respect, obligation, reciprocity and the like which have (had) meanings only for a certain range of persons such as family, close friends and the like would become more universalistic. This means that universalization of such values occurred in the West when a different society emerged from a closed one to an open one and this happened in the period of Reformation. This is the content of 'universalism (universalistic value)'

(contrasted with 'particularism (individual value)') discussed by Max Weber, Parsons, Bellah and others. Sakuta says that Japanese culture has this kind of universalism in some aspects, although it looks like a culture of particularism on the surface (Sakuta, 1972:110).

According to Hiromi Hyodo, this kind of transformation occurred in Japan too at least partly in the medieval period through emergence of *Za*. *Za* is a kind of guilds as an occupation group in Japan. In the medieval period Japanese story-tellers such as those of *Heike Monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike as an epic account compiled in the Kamakura Era (1192-1333) which narrates the struggle between Heike clan and Genji clan in the Genpei War (1180-1185)) moved from authorized temples to *Za* as the place to which they belong. This means the liberation of story-tellers from authorized temples which used to regulate the orders and the legitimacy in the history through control of written texts and control of narratives of stories (Hyodo, 1985: 78-79, 83). In the author's (my) view, this seems to mean 'liberation of views' in the sense that *Sakuta* describes too.

4.   Seken or Japanese Ba in the information Era

4.1. Seken or Japanese Ba as a place of pathos and experience of undergoing

In this section, we want to see the meanings of *Seken* or Japanese *Ba* from different viewpoints, focusing on the point 'what do these concepts mean for us living in the informatized environment?' One of the important points we extract from the discussions shown above is that Japanese *Seken* or Japanese *Ba* might be considered to be a place where such things would happen, i.e. the interchange of viewpoints, fusion of things and persons. This might be useful when we try to explain 'why some fusion occurs when people talk about *Seken*-related matters and also the social problems within the (latent) scope of *Seken*-related values?,' which is found through analysis on our research data in Japan (and in East Asia too). Besides, what occurs in *Seken* or Japanese *Ba* might provide us with alternative viewpoints to see the matters in the information society in a different way than those influenced by the Western reductionism or the confusion of 'beings and to be,' 'ontology and metaphysics' and 'what and who,' as Rafael

Capurro, Michael Eldred, Daniel Nagel, Marcus Introna and others say (Capurro, Eldred and Nagel, 2013; Introna, 1998).

As we discussed before, one of the important points about Japanese culture is that we can find people's tendency to seek alternative values than those popular in the modern, Westernized and industrialized society. These alternative values are usually considered to be passive, non-rational, emotional and types of experience of 'undergoing' (in contrast to actively doing) on the side of people.

Yujiro Nakamura makes a list of the values and matters including pathos, dramas associated with pathos, common senses (*sensus communis*) and the like (Nakamura 1997:28,34,77). He explains that '*pathos*' is related to the role of expression of language which is in contrast to the role of language to describe something logically and systematically. On the other hand, the language to express things is to arrange and give forms to inner emotions, our in-articulated voices, not-organized meanings. The drama's role is similar to the role of *pathos* in the sense that they give 'voices' to the contradictory meanings which we experience in our life such as hero's defeat, humiliation, contradictions between oneself and the situation around oneself, contradictions within oneself. (This reminds us of Introna's discussions on designation and expression by language. See: (Introna, 1998).)

As we know, this list can be applied to the Western people, although we now focus on Japanese case. People in the West seem to have (latent) tendency to evaluate these values and matters too. But at the same time, as Nakamura suggests, the Western people usually pay attention on another list of *logos*, the logic of the subject (in contrast to the logic of predicate), doing (vs. undergoing), the subject (in contrast to the predicate), nouns (in contrast to *Ji* as suffix, dependent word), the syntagm (in contrast to paradigm), *Uen* (if we use this term for the Western people too).

Bin Kimura, Japanese psychiatrist following the thought by Heidegger, Viktor von Weizsäcker and Kitaro Nishida, says that in Japanese culture the role of subject is not so important but the interaction between a person and a person as well as thing and a person is important. The place where this interaction happens is called *Ba* or *Aida* (in-between). Kimura thinks that this interaction takes the

form of sequence of interaction and he calls this sequence *Koto* (Kimura 1988:164-166). (See also: (Kimura 1982: 11).)

4.2. Seken or Japanese Ba as a place of interaction of logos and pathos or Chinese ways of thinking and Japanese ways of feeling

What we can know about Japanese *Seken* or Japanese *Ba* is the fact that this is the place where different meanings interact with one another and that this *Seken* or *Ba* itself would emerge from a result of interaction or negotiation between storytelling and *Za* as a kind of human relationship or the established rules and orientation to freedom. In this case, *Za* and the story-telling based on *Za* are related to the meaning of freedom from the burdens of the established and authorized social system and from normalized/formalized ways of telling things. We can add another point to this list, i.e. the negotiation between *logos* and *pathos* or Chinese culture and Japanese pursuit to its original identification. We know that modern Japanese orthography or ways of writing consists of two different types of letters, *Kanji* (ideograms) and *Kana* (phonetic symbols, phonetic characters, phonograms) (*Kana* has two different types, *Hiragana* and *Katakana*). This way of writing was invented in the ancient period of Japan. Some authors say that this set of use of *Kanji* and *Kana* enabled to establish the original social and political systems in Japan and it also enabled to prepare an inside mind realm for Japanese people and Japanese culture. This inner mind associated with Japanese orientation to their (our) cultural identification is sometimes called *Yamato-damashi* or *Yamato-gokoro* (Japanese indigenous spirit). This supposed inner mind is regarded as sources for Japanese identification by some scholars.

Nobuyuki Kaji, one of the prominent researchers on Chinese philosophy in Japan, says that the Japanese writing style using a set of *Kanji* and *Kana* provides (has provided) the Japanese with the 'inner' depth (area) to develop the inter-subjectivity and deepen the original culture. According to some scholars, *Kana* represents the original Japanese sound which also implies Japanese interpretation of *Kanji* or the concepts expressed by *Kanji* (Kaji, 2013:50-51) (And see also: Karatani's discussions (2001).)

5. Research findings on Japanese views and Asian (East Asian and South

East Asian) people's views on Seken-related meanings

5.1. Attitudes toward the problems in the modernized society in Japan and in Asia

The following table (Table 3) shows how East Asian people think about the problems and matters around them in the information era. The figures of this table are based on the author's own previous and recent researches done in Japan and other (East and Southeast) Asian countries and regions. As the figures of this table show very clearly, people in Japan and other Asian countries have strong interest in the cultural-ethical matters in the information era. (The views used in these researches are adopted from (a) a content analysis on the discussions on the characteristics of Japanese culture(s) and East Asian cultures by some authors such as Kitaro Nishida, Tetsuro Watsuji, Hideo Kobayasji, Bin Kimura, Yujiro Nakamura and others, (b) examination on the results of the author's depth interviews with Japanese and Asian people, (c) a content analysis on newspaper reports and magazine reports about Japanese attitudes toward disasters and wars and (d) psychological scales to measure Japanese personality and values.)

What we can know from this table is that people in Japan and Asian countries are still under the strong influence by the cultural-ethical-existential traditions. In fact, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto (in Japan) seem to exert strong cultural-ethical power upon their attitudes toward life. For example, the percentage of the respondents who show a strong or fairly strong affirmative answer to the view (one of *Seken*-related views), 'People will become corrupt if they become too rich (Honest poverty)', is 80.4% in Japan (2014HG research). This is a very surprisingly high figure when we consider the fact that Japanese people have been called 'economic animals.' This shows that Japanese people regard 'richness in terms of material wealth' far less important than other values such as honesty, mutual reliance and mutual respect, unification with nature and others. They seem to prefer virtuous life based on traditional Buddhism wisdom to material richness, although it is not clear whether they are aware of this tendency in their minds. It seems that they are under influence from Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto and other cultural traditions. The similar tendency is found in the case of Asian people

too. 76.3% in China, 67.3% in South Korea, 85.1% in Taiwan, 87.0% in Vietnam and 85.0% in Thailand say 'yes' to this view.

Similarly, the percentages of people who show sympathy with the view, 'Occurrences of huge and disastrous natural disasters can be interpreted as warnings from heaven to people,' are high in East Asia. Historically speaking, this idea, i.e. 'the disasters can be regarded as warning or punishment from the Heaven (*Ten-ken-ron*),' derives from the ancient China of thousands years ago. This idea was born in the ancient cultural traditions in China, i.e. the combination of *Onmyōdō* (way of *Yin* and *Yang*; mythical divination system based on the Taoist theory of the five elements), Confucianism and esoteric Buddhism (concerning *Ten-ken-ron*, see: (Shimizu, 1970)). Of course, this doesn't mean that East (Southeast) Asian people deny the scientific theory as a theory which explains the natural disasters scientifically and logically. Their sympathy with this idea seems to be related with a kind of symbolic association.

5.2. The cultural-ethical attitudes toward the meanings of life in Japan and East Asia including the meanings of robots, AI, privacy and the related topics

The figures of Table 3 show us (or we can interpret so) that people in Japan and East (Southeast) Asia are still under the strong influence from the traditional cultural-ethical views. This is a very interesting and surprising fact when we consider the truth that Japan and other East Asian countries and regions are one of the most highly developed countries and regions in the world in terms of diffusion of information technologies and computer-mediated communication tools and devices.

And more surprisingly, our researches done in Japan and Asian countries show us that people's orientation to acceptance of the views on 'good and virtuous ways of life' listed in Table 3 have strong or fairly strong correlations with people's views on privacy and ethical problems of robots. Table 4 shows us this finding.

The figures of Table 4 show us that people's views on 'good and virtuous ways of life' ('criticism of modern civilization' factor gained by factor analysis on the views listed in Table 3, i.e. "People will become corrupt if they become too rich";

"People have a certain destiny, no matter what form it takes"; "In our world, there are many things that cannot be explained by science"; "In today's world, what seems cheerful and enjoyable is really only superficial" and so on) have statistically significant correlation with people's views on robots and privacy.

Table 4 shows the finding gained through the research in Vietnam. And similar findings were found in the case of other countries' researches too. (Concerning other Asian countries, Thailand, Indonesia and others, the analysis on this point is now ongoing. And in the case of some of Western countries such as Sweden, a similar analysis is ongoing. We have already found that people in Sweden tend to show a fairly strong sympathy with some sort of 'Japanese' ways of thinking and feeling concerning the meanings of life and of this world. These are: 'The summer fireworks and the fireflies are beautiful because they are ephemeral and short-lived.' 'We sometimes have a kind of feeling to say "thank you" to our broken robots and computers that we have used for a long time and we can't use anymore.')

5.3. How can we interpret these findings?

These findings seem to suggest us that we, people in Japan and East Asia need different terms and schemas of discussions than those 'popular' in the West such as 'autonomy,' 'responsibility,' 'individuality,' 'the logic of the subject' and so on in order to evaluate the potential ethical discussions on the information society in the East.

And this turns our eyes toward the importance of reconsideration on our cultural-ethical-hermeneutical heritage included in various texts written by some authors such as Kitaro Nishida, Tetsuro Watsuji, Hideo Kobayashi, Hiroshi Ichikawa, Motokie Tokieda and others who are interested in oneness or undifferentiated of the subject and the object or of direct experience and reflection on one's life (experience). (We need to add the names of authors in other Asian countries to this list. This will be our next task.)

Concerning these points, we have already seen some of the important discussions on these matters by Japanese authors and scholars. In the following section, we

want to see this problem from a different viewpoint by examining the content of the research findings we gained from the research done in Japan in 2016.

Table 3: Sympathy for 'good and virtuous ways of life in the modern society' in Japan and in East Asia

	1995 G Japan	2000 G Japan	2011HG Japan	2010 TS Thailand	2014 HG Japan	2015 CG China	2016 KG Korea	2014 TWS Taiwan	2017V Vietnam	2017TL Thailand
Distance from nature	73.6%	-	**78.0**	**91.5**	**71.2**	**82.0**	**86.0**	**91.1**	**91.0**	**94.0**
Honest poverty	**83.7**	**81.5**	**87.0**	**65.2**	**80.4**	**76.3**	**67.3**	**85.1**	**87.0**	**85.0**
Destiny	**84.4**	**79.0**	**82.4**	**52.9**	**77.5**	**76.3**	**80.4**	**81.8**	**82.3**	**77.0**
Denial of natural science	**88.5**	**88.3**	**88.2**	**89.4**	**81.8**	**89.3**	**91.0**	**97.8**	**96.4**	**85.0**
Criticism of selfishness	**85.5**	**88.3**	**80.3**	-	**76.8**	**91.6**	**91.0**	**86.7**	**89.0**	**78.6**
Powerlessness	**71.9**	**64.8**	**77.8**	-	**72.7**	-	-	**61.9**	-	-
Superficial cheerfulness	**73.3**	**65.6**	**72.7**	-	**70.0**	**77.6**	**83.0**	**58.0**	**86.4**	**87.6**
Belief in kindness	-	**68.1**	**74.3**	**95.1**	**66.5**	**78.0**	**79.7**	**77.9**	**94.6**	**83.6**
Scourge from heaven	**62.7**	49.5	-	12.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Warnings from heaven	-	-	**60.2**	19.7	**59.0**	**80.0**	**75.3**	**64.1**	**92.7**	**76.0**

Notes on the Table 3: 1) Table 3 shows the percentages of the respondents who said "agree or somewhat agree" to 'good and virtuous ways of life in the modern society' statements. These statements include: "Within our modern lifestyles, people have become too distant from nature"(Distance from nature); "People will become corrupt if they become too rich"(Honest poverty); "People have a certain destiny, no matter what form it takes"(Destiny); "In our world, there are many things that cannot be explained by science" (Denial of natural science); "There are too many people in developed countries (or Japan or each Asian country) today who are concerned only with themselves" (Criticism of selfishness); "In today's world, people are helpless if they are (individually) left to themselves" (Powerlessness); "In today's world, what seems cheerful and enjoyable is really only superficial" (Superficial cheerfulness); "Doing your best for other people is good for you" (Belief in kindness); "The frequent occurrence of natural disasters is due to a scourge from heaven" (Scourge from heaven); "Occurrences of huge and disastrous natural disasters can be interpreted as warnings from heaven to people"(Warnings from heaven).
2) Figures in bold type indicate the items to which over 50% respondents showed affirmative answers.

Table 4: Correlations between the views on 'good-virtuous ways of life' and the ethical views on robots and privacy (Data: 2017V=research in Vietnam)

(views)	Criticism of modern civilization
"To leave handicapped or elderly persons in the care of robots worsens their isolation from societies even though this idea seems to be appropriate at first glance" (Problems with care by robots)	.326**
"It is good for children to know the meanings of life through their taking care of virtual creatures like Tamagotchi" (Learning by virtual realities)	.136*
"To post photos of one's face to other persons on SNS or blogs is problematic from privacy-protection perspectives" (Problems of showing photos of one's face)	.373**
"To open part of my afflictions of illness or failure to my friends sometimes makes our relations closer and better" (Openness of personal information)	.409**

Notes on the Table 4: 1) **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05, ns= non (statistically) significant
Note on researches: the researches shown in Table 3, 4 are those performed in Japan and in Asia. 1995G=research done in Tokyo in 1995 with 587 male and female respondents over 20 years old. 2000G=research done in Tokyo Metropolitan Area in 2000 with 611 male and female respondents over 20 years old. 2011HG= research done in 2011 for the Internet users living in Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures with male and female 744 respondents in age of 25-44 years old(the respondents were selected by a research company in Japan. This survey was designed as quota sampling, and ratios of gender and age were quoted from the official statistical report of the Japanese government about Internet users in 2010 in Japan). 2010TS=research done in Thailand in 2012 for 141 students of Chulalongkorn University. 2014HG=research done in Japan for 729 respondents living in Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures (this research was done in a similar methods and procedures to those for 2011HG research). 2015CG=research done in China in 2015 for 300 male and female respondents in age of 25-44 years old. 2016KG= research done in Korea in 2016 for 300 male and female respondents in age of 30-39 years old. 2014TWS=research done in Taiwan in 2014 for 181 students of National Chengchi University (National University of Governance). 2017V= research done in Vietnam in 2017 for 300 male and female respondents in age of 25-44 years old. 2017TL= research done in Thailand in 2017 for 300 male and female respondents in age of 25-44 years old.

5.4. Robots in Japanese *Seken* or *Ba*

The following table (Table 5) shows us a very interesting finding to know 'inner' culture of Japan or Japanese 'inner' minds. This table shows that there are strong correlations among the items about robot (autonomous car) and the items about Japanese ways of feeling of various matters in their life. We can say 'strong' correlations, because in the case of this kind of surveys for a large number of respondents, it is often hard to find such a large number of statistically significant

correlations among different kind of items. Besides, In this case, the correlations are found among the items whose relations can't be explained in a logical way.

For example, we found a correlation between the view 'When I pick up products carefully made such as watches, toys, dishes etc., I can feel a kind of soul or sincerity of the maker and I think Japanese people generally feel this kind of feeling' and the various views of robots. Similarly, 'Positive attitude toward a hard but good time for children' and 'Although automobile driving robot by artificial intelligence seems to be convenient, considering to leave judgment on life or death to the machine, there is a problem of use without much consideration' are found to be correlated.

This means that there is some kind of link between these items which show a kind of tendency of Japanese 'inner' culture or Japanese 'inner' mind and the items showing the meanings of use of robots in our environments. The reason why the author uses 'inner' is that these relations shown on the figures of this table seem to be a kind of ones with similarity grounded on some sorts of common sensitivity to matters happing around us. It seems that within this scope of experiences grounded on this kind of common sensitivity, various things, which look like quite different on the surface or the logical thinking level, have a certain kind of common position which determines emergence of correlations among them. We might say that they are similar within the culture or our life sphere where this kind of sensitivity has an important meaning.

Someone might say that the relation between 'Hayabusa' and 'robots' are something like 'animism.' But even if we admit this kind of interpretation, it might be difficult to explain the relation between 'mother's chapped hands' and 'autonomous car's judgment for safety' in the same way. I think that these findings show us an important fact that robots for Japanese people are entities living together with people in this kind of life or cultural sphere.

And this kind of tendency seems to be not limited to Japanese people. In the cases of researches done in China, South Korea and Vietnam (concerning Vietnam's case, see Table 4), we found that there are correlations among 'sensitivity to meanings of life' and 'people's views on robots.' (Concerning the data in other countries, analysis is now ongoing.)

Table 5: Correlations between Japanese people's views on robots and their views on Japanese 'inner minds' (Data: 2016HG)

	Problems of care robots	Virtual creatures	Rights for robot	Affection for robots	Care robot for children	Robot's emotions	Auto -nomous car's judgment for safety
Sympathy for craftsmanship	.350**	.359**	.052	.225**	.138**	.209**	.400**
Sympathy for good soul of spacecraft	.247**	.327**	.206**	.274**	.197**	.293**	.301**
Thanks to mother's chapped hands in the heart	.336**	.297**	.060	.183**	.160**	.230**	.356**
Sympathy for suffering of children in the other country	.293**	.375**	.145**	.189**	.155**	.268**	.228**
Sympathy for people in a foreign country through common culture interest.	.280**	.315**	.304**	.251**	.230**	.258**	.167**
Sympathy for sharing hardship	.290**	.216**	.147**	.219**	.225**	.239**	.271**
Positive attitude toward a hard but good time for children	.318**	.333**	.027	.149**	.143**	.184**	.425**

Notes on the Table 5: 1) This table shows the correlation between the views on robots and the views on Japanese 'inner minds' including 'Monono-aware (sensitivity to beauty and meanings deriving transience in this world and life).' The statements showing the content of the views on robots are: "To leave handicapped or elderly persons in the care of robots worsens isolation of them from societies even though this idea seems to be appropriate at first glance"(Problems of care robots); "It is very natural when children sympathy or some kind of affection towards virtual creatures like Tamagotchi" (Virtual creatures); "Robots should be given similar rights in the future as fetuses or patients in a coma without consciousness or awareness"(Rights for robot); "Robots are expected to be a subject of affection or consideration in the future just as the earth, mountains,

rivers are treated so, even though they have no life" (Affection for robots); "To leave children in the care of robots would be better than to leave them alone without any care" (Care robot for children); "To provide robots with capability of expression of their emotions such as pains would be good in order to prevent (avoid) cruelty or maltreatment to them" (Robot's emotions); "Although automobile driving robot by artificial intelligence seems to be convenient, considering to leave judgment on life or death to the machine, there is a problem of use without much consideration" (Autonomous car's judgment for safety).

2) The statements showing the content of Japanese 'inner minds' including 'monono-aware' are : "When I pick up products carefully made such as watches, toys, dishes etc. , I can feel a kind of soul or sincerity of the maker and I think Japanese people generally feel this kind of feeling" (Sympathy for craftsmanship); "When I hear the story that Japanese interplanetary spacecraft (planetary probe) called Hayabusa (falcon) which returned to Earth after many years of struggle, I want to say 'thank you, good job' to Hayabusa, even if I know Hayabusa is not a person" (Sympathy for good soul of spacecraft); "When I look at the hands of my mother whose hand get chapped in winter because of her cooking work, I do not put it in words but I want to say 'thank you,' in my mind and I think that Japanese mother-child relationship is like that" (Thanks to mother's chapped hands in the heart); "Even though the problem of air pollution in China seems to have nothing to do with me at first sight, I feel sorry to hear that the local children suffer from asthma" (Sympathy for suffering of children in the other country); " When we know the story that Chinese people love Japanese animation and manga, we can't help feeling a slightly good impression to Chinese people, regardless of the political relationship with China and I think that it is a very common feeling for us humans" (Sympathy for Chinese through common culture interest); "Even though work at the workplace is tough, we can't simply leave the workplace where we have our colleagues struggling together with hard work and I think it is a natural feeling for most of Japanese"(Sympathy for sharing hardship); "I do not want to my children (or the children I might have in the future) to have a hard time to live, but at the same time I hope them to have a lot of good experience through hardship and become a good person" (Positive attitude toward a hard but good time for children).

3) **=$p<0.01$, *=$p<0.05$, without ** or *=ns= non (statistically) significant 4) 2016HG is a research done in Japan in December, 2016 for 600 respondents living in Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures (this research was done in a similar methods and procedures to those for 2011HG research).

6. Where does the crisis in Japan come from?

The important question arises from the research data which we have examined in the previous passages. Where do the critical situations Japanese people are facing in the informatized environments come from, although Japanese people have a strong orientation to ethical meanings of life as the data clearly show?

In the author's view, one of the potential answers to this question can be found through our awareness of the meanings of people's orientation to the wholeness of life. In a way, people's life might be considered to be in the state of contradiction in terms of experience between various realms of life. It seems that it is sure that people have a strong orientation to an ethical way of life in some part of life. And people seem to have a different tendency too in some cases. For example, in the case of the nuclear power plant accidents in Fukushima in 2011, the working people in the nuclear energy generation plants seem to have a strong orientation to an ethical way of life including the meanings of atomic energy plants or

technologies in general at least in their minds. Our research performed in 2007(the research done by the author and his research team with the respondents of working people in the nuclear power plant business (599 nuclear power business employees =technical and public relations staff)) show that these employees have a strong orientation to the ethical meanings of life including the critical attitudes toward the technologies in general and the natural science (see Table 6). But on the other hand, their attitudes toward the meanings and evaluations of safety of nuclear power plants are in the state of serious contradiction (see Table 7). They have an ethical and 'objective' attitude toward the nuclear power plant, showing the affirmative response to the view, 'A nuclear power plant cannot be absolutely safe (because nuclear power generation can't be separated from human beings).' But at the same time, most of them show an affirmative response to the view, 'We can feel safe with nuclear power generation (because we can trust technologies).' This is a serious division or divergence in terms of consciousness and in terms of ways of 'to be.'

On the other hand, this contradiction itself is in the state of inner consistency. In other words, the people who believe in the safety and the necessity of atomic energy plant are found to be those whose worldviews are characterized by their belief in or sympathy with 'reliable natural science.' And within their minds, this belief in natural science as something reliable is found to be statistically correlated with their belief in 'nature as something to give human benefits.' This is in a state of internal consistency. In contrast to this linkage, the employees who have a doubt about the un-criticized safety and necessity of atomic energy plant are found to be those whose worldviews are characterized by their belief in or sympathy with 'denial of natural science (as something to determine the meanings of life).' And within their minds, this doubt about natural science is found to be statistically correlated with their belief in 'nature as something to be protected by humans' as well as 'nature something to give humans benefits.' Here is another inner consistency. And 'nature' is seen to be something to have plural aspects in this case (see Table 8).

It seems that technologies are considered to be part of the meanings of life by these people. So in this sense, the difficulties Japanese people are experiencing in

the informatized era might suggest us that the life in the informatized environments has an inconsistent aspect for some people, i.e. the people who have a strong orientation to the wholeness of meanings of life. In fact, so far as the data we have examined show, we have found a very strange finding. People live in the most developed and advanced countries such as USA have difficulty with having even the basic material matters such as food and so on. This is a serious ethical problem.

Table 6: The ethical attitudes toward meanings of life and technologies by nuclear power plant employees in Japan (Data: 2007A)

	Total staff	Technical staff	Public relations staff
Today's science and technology is too difficult and there are too many things to understand.	78.0%	74.2	85.1
Overconfidence in science and technology can be ridiculous.	76.7	79.0	72.1
Advances in academic technology solve problems in the world and bring about a bright future.	87.8	87.2	88.8
In modern life, humans are too far from nature.	70.8	69.3	71.2
The benefits of modern science and technology outweigh the harmful effects of pollution.	23.2	25.7	23.6
There are many things in the world that are beyond human knowledge.	91.8	93.2	89.3

Notes on the Table 6: 1) Table 6 shows the percentages of the respondents who said "agree or somewhat agree" to the views or opinions in the questionnaires.

Table 7: Contradiction of attitudes toward 'safety' of nuclear power plants by nuclear power plant employees in Japan (Data: 2007A)

	Total staff
A nuclear power plant cannot be absolutely safe(because nuclear power generation can't be separated from human beings)	68.4%
We can feel safe with nuclear power generation(because we can trust technologies).	97.5

Notes on the Table 7: 1) Table 7 shows the percentages of the respondents who said "agree or somewhat agree" to the views or opinions in the questionnaires.

Table 8: The inner consistency of meanings of atomic energy plant within the minds of nuclear power plant employees in Japan (Data: 2007A)

	Belief in natural science	Doubt of natural science	Nature to give humans benefit	Nature as something to be protected as nature	I think the nuclear accident is caused by human carelessness
Nuclear power generation has multiple safety measures, so you can rest assured that nuclear power generation	.190**	-.163**	.106*	-.083	-.148**
I think the nuclear accident is caused by human carelessness	-.003	.230**	.076	.117**	
Belief in natural science		-.095*	.175**	-.134**	
Doubt of natural science	-.095*		.280**	.311**	

Notes on the Table 6: 1)**=p<0.01, *=p<0.05, ns= non (statistically) significant 2)The figures show the correlation coefficients.

Conclusions

One of the most important points we discussed above is that *Seken* or Japanese *Ba* is the place where interaction, reciprocal conversion, fusion among things, people's views, the meanings of things/matters/products and interchange of viewpoints on society and our existential world (e.g. those aspects related to *Uen*

and *Muen*) would occur. Besides, we might say that *Seken* or Japanese *Ba* is the place where we might be aware of emergence of meanings about these states, i.e. interchange, fusion, conversion. In this sense, *Seken* or Japanese *Ba* is considered to be the place of reflection on one's culture or one's 'inner' minds.

In the author's view, what we could know about intercultural information ethics is this kind of potentialities of emergence of awareness. We are sometimes surprised at the difference between Japanese ways of understanding and experiencing of matters in the information society and those of Chinese people. But when we understand that Chinese ways of understanding of life and this world reflect their history and we Japanese are also part of this at least is some ways as shown in the case of use of Chinese characters and so on, our awareness seems to be deeper and broader. In fact, Japanese awareness of the characteristics of Japanese culture seems to have been arising from awareness of Chinese culture. And this awareness is largely dependent upon our ways of use of language which are characterized by mingling of *Kanji* and *Kana* as we discussed above.

Similarly part of our awareness and our self-consciousness arises from introduction of the view of the Western subject into Japanese language or sentences. This happened in the beginning of Meiji Period. And now we might have time to experience new awareness as another type of interchange of meanings and experiences. As we have discussed, examining the research data, we have found that the meanings of robots and autonomous cars as well as the meanings of privacy in the informatized environment would get together with people's views on the meanings in their life. This seems to be happening in a cultural context called *Ba*. In a way, what we experience here is that the things fundamentally coming from an objective and technology-based realm get together with the meanings coming from our ways of existence.

This is important but it takes a little time to understand what this means for us living in the contexts as combination of technological realm and existential realm. In a way, we might say that the meanings of technological things such as robots are dependent upon our ways of understanding what is good and what is not good in a new environment. In fact, the meanings of care by robots are dependent on our understanding of 'what do their hands mean for us?' Robot's hand in the

situation of care might be the combined way, half humanlike and half mechanical. We don't know how to express these matters, half humanlike and half mechanical, in our words appropriately. So as the case of Hayabusa suggests, we might use a kind of borrowed words from a different cultural context in order to make the mingling with unknown existence of robots meaningful for us tentatively. But we might imagine that our encounter with things, tools might happen in this kind of ways in many cases. And this means that we need a new kind of awareness for various cases we face in our environments.

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