

BA Thesis University College Utrecht, Religious Studies

Showing The Way Home:

Self, Environment and Transformative Attention through the lenses of Shinto and Japanese
Buddhism

*“To feel abandoned is to deny the intimacy of your surroundings...Put down the weight of your
aleness and ease into the conversation...Everything is waiting for you.”*
- David Whyte

Jana Dimitrova

6146341

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Supervisor: Chiara Robbiano

Utrecht University

Department of Humanities

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Abstract

The purpose of the religious studies thesis is to respond to the homelessness and self-isolation that the self may feel when living in an individualized technology-oriented society and offer ways through which one may find the home in one's every-day life. The central purpose of the thesis is to explore how trained attention enables the self to become one with the environment and find the home within it through the lenses of Shinto and Japanese Buddhist thought. Regarding the research methodology, the thesis presents a literature review of religious and philosophical sources connected to the Shinto and Japanese Buddhist traditions. The key ideas are that the self is a combination of five ever-changing aggregates which may be balanced through body-mind cultivation practices. With continuous efforts to strengthen the connection between body and mind, one's attention is trained and one is able to recognize that one is always embedded in one's environment and the relationships with the objects within it. In this way the self becomes merged with the surrounding environment and is able to perceive the spiritual-material nature of one's reality. This also makes for one's ability to perceive awe and wonder in one's surroundings, which is defined as the state of being at home. In conclusion, attention aids in one to become one with the environment and find the home within it by enabling one to realize of one's embeddedness in space and cultivating one's capacity for perceiving awe and wonder in what is often deemed only ordinary and familiar.

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Body-mind and trained attention	7
2.1 <i>How can one understand the idea of unity between body and mind, and its cultivation?</i>	7
2.2 <i>How does one strengthen the connection between body and mind?</i>	8
2.3 <i>How does attentive awareness play a role in one's state of being in the world?</i>	10
2.4 <i>What is the second-order modes of awareness and how does one reach it?</i>	12
3. Understanding and imagining the home	13
3.1 <i>What concepts and ideas aid in understanding what is meant by 'home'?</i>	13
3.2 <i>How may one imagine and visualize the finding of the home?</i>	15
4. Space and the self	17
4.1 <i>In what ways may we conceptualize the interaction between self and space?</i>	17
4.2 <i>How do the self and the surrounding space merge together?</i>	19
4.3 <i>What does the self become in the process of merging?</i>	21
5. Attention as a step toward enlightenment	22
5.1 <i>What is religious about heightened attention toward one's environment?</i>	22
5.2 <i>What is an example of perceiving the "infinite in the finite"?</i>	23
5.3 <i>In what way can material objects in space be considered sacred or spiritual?</i>	24
5.4 <i>How can the search for enlightenment in the present life be imagined?</i>	27
6. Conclusion	28
References	30

1. Introduction

In this 21st century modern world, despite the multitude of connections which technology brings, one often feels alone, isolated and disconnected from one's surroundings. According to Nishitani Keiji, a 20th century Japanese philosopher and an important voice in this thesis, the combination of individualism and technologism that are important aspects of present societies, leads to a degree of estrangement from other people and nature, which he refers to as an 'uncanny homelessness' (Cooper, 2002, 398). This 'homelessness' is the starting point that guides the purpose of the thesis. The individualist technologized lifestyle seems to be a cradle for human self-isolation; a separation from others and the surrounding environment. Why is this? There is something about the speed of interaction, the lack of materiality of the virtual world and the re-occurring focus on the separate self that leads to the decreasing of the quality of attention that the self directs towards one's own surroundings in the real world. A passage from Dostoevsky's 'The House of the Dead' may aid in understanding how attention is able to transform the separation between self and environment. He writes about how, one summer day as he was walking by the banks of the river, he was struck by the surrounding landscape and overcome with profound emotion (Nishitani, 1982, 8). He reflected about the desolate steppes, the sun shining overhead and the blue vault of heaven above as being the only spot where he could see "God's world, a pure and bright horizon..." and where he was able to forget his own self (Nishitani, 1982, 8). In placing high attention on the space around him, Dostoevsky merged with it; the self became no longer separated. In the sections below I will return to this example, however for now it serves to portray the ideal relation between self and environment that I am aiming to propose in this thesis.

Attention will be depicted as having a vital role for influencing one's state of being and experience in reality. Heightened attention will be portrayed as contributing to a sense of closeness and intimacy toward the environment, and thus a sense of belonging, whereas the opposite will be depicted as contributing toward distancing and separation from it. For now, the 'uncanny homelessness' to which Nishitani refers to can be understood as a result of a decrease in the quality of attention that leads to one's gradual estrangement from the space one inhabits. If the homelessness occurs as a result of distance and separation between the self and the environment caused by low-quality attention, then finding home would be a process of bringing the self and environment together through trained attention. The training would be done through engaging in continuous practice that enables the syncing between body and mind because unity between self and environment will only be possible if there is unity within the

self. Examples of practices will be set forth below, however there will be no extensive focus on this because the purpose of the thesis is not on the practice itself but in exploring the result of practice, heightened attention, and how it transforms one's relationship to the surrounding environment. The reason for this lies in making the ideas of the thesis applicable to any practice one engages in one's every-day life. Therefore, the thesis can be imagined as a guide for training the attention through practice in order to transform estrangement into a shared intimacy with the world.

In the Japanese Shinto tradition, there is the idea that the point is to accept the world with its wondrous mystery, since denying it would be running away from home (Kasulis, 2004, 3). In light of this, the purpose of the thesis is to invite one to recognize the "wondrous mystery" existent around and within us. The connection between attention and wonder lies in that attention is the transformative tool for one's perception that enables one to recognize wonder in oneself and one's surroundings. Attention will be portrayed as that which sheds light to wonder and leads one to recognize it and thereby enable its presence in one's every-day life. It will be explored how this is connected to the state of being at home, and how it serves to soothe the sense of "uncanny homelessness" that may be present within us. For now, the home can be defined as a state of being in which the self, synced with one's surrounding environment is able to perceive the wonder within it. In light of the above, the central research question of the thesis lies in exploring how trained attention enables the self to become one with the environment and find the home within it through the lenses of Shinto and Japanese Buddhist thought. On another note, in Shinto, the torii is a sacred gate placed in front of shrines which is designated as a marker to enable the person who passes through it to connect to the awe-inspiring power of the world (Kasulis, 2004, 3). This will be further expanded on below, but for now I would like to note that the thesis presented a torii for myself in the process of researching and writing it. Therefore, my hope is that the reader may find their own torii within the written ideas below.

Concerning the structure, the thesis will be divided into four sections. Every section presents one step in exploring the way in which heightened attention enables one to find the home and experience a oneness between self and environment. All of the sections will consist of sub-questions related to the main research question in order to ensure clear guidance of the reader throughout the thesis. The first one will focus on setting forth the foundational ideas upon which concepts in other sections will be based upon. This includes introducing the self as an inter-dependent and ever-changing entity, exploring the meaning of acquiring a unity between body and mind through practice as well as clarifying the types of practices. This will be

followed by defining attention and exploring the different forms it may take, as well as the ways in which these may alter one's experience in the environment. After laying out the foundational concepts, the second section will turn toward the aim of the training of attention which is finding the 'home'. The purpose of this section is to define the idea of 'home' and explore how the process of reaching it through practice, and the state of being at home itself can be connected to the different modes of attention introduced in the first section. Amidst the abstract concepts, the section will also include a segment on a mythical story from the ancient Japanese collection of texts, the Kojiki, which will offer the reader a visualization of the home as a form of radiant light. Following this, the third section will introduce the concept of space in context of how it may be connected to the inter-relatedness between things. Attention will be presented as that which is able to influence the relation between the self and the surrounding space by enabling a merge between them. Lastly, the purpose of the fourth section is to depict trained attention as a way of accessing the sacredness in the material, and the wonder in the ordinary. The soteriological aspect of attention will be emphasized in this section, as it will be presented as one's tool for being on the path to enlightenment in the present life.

Engaging in a research process with the purpose of exploring a research question that relates to soothing the 'homelessness', mending separations and finding the way in which one may embrace a oneness between self and environment, implied that there was a need of works that emphasized a non-dualist approach regarding concepts. In the Shinto and Japanese Buddhist frameworks of ideas there is an emphasis on the oneness and interconnectedness between self and one's surroundings, spirit and matter and body and mind, which is why they were chosen for the thesis. Herein also lies the reason for the methodology of the research being a literature review of religious and philosophical textual works related to Shinto and Japanese Buddhism. The reason for combining these two traditions rather than focusing on one lies in how even before the 19th century the Japanese worldview presented a mix of both indigenous Shinto and Buddhist values (Carter, 2013, 1). In light of their intertwinement, there is the hope that focusing on both would offer a richer combination of concepts rather than focusing on one. Furthermore, the reason for incorporating philosophical thought in a religious studies thesis lies in that a "salient characteristic of Japanese philosophizing is the lack of sharp separation between philosophy and religion" (Carter, 2013, 20).

In relation to the above, there was the choice to explore concepts from Japanese philosophers Kitaro Nishida, Keiji Nishitani and Tetsuro Watsuji, respectively founder and members of the

20th century Kyoto School, where Buddhist philosophy is understood to have supplied the context for the emerging ideas (Carter, 2013, 9). Both of Watsuji and Nishitani's ideas are used to emphasize the interactive relationship between self and environment; Watsuji aids in delving into how this happens in context of space and climate, whereas Nishitani's works aid in depicting the interaction as something that is fostered through attentive awareness. On the other hand, Nishida's ideas are used to emphasize the self's potential for creative activity that is shaping for the world from engaging in the interaction with the environment. Apart from Japanese philosophers, the 13th century Japanese Buddhist monk Dogen was chosen as an author in the thesis in light of how his writings on body-mind unity through practice present foundations for later texts related to the Japanese Buddhist tradition. The hope is to use his ideas in the beginning in order to lay the groundwork regarding the strengthening of the connection between body and mind. Lastly, authors who did not come from a Japanese background yet had a scholarly connection to the Shinto and Japanese Buddhist tradition were also included, these were the Americans David Shaner and Thomas Kasulis. Shaner was chosen for his phenomenological study of Dogen and the hope is to use his concepts to shed light onto the inner workings of cultivating attention through continuous practice and how this alters experience. On the other hand, Kasulis was chosen due to his scholarly contribution on the Shinto tradition and customs. The aim was to use his ideas to establish a connection between attention and perceiving beyond the material nature of things. It is important to note that the concepts and ideas of all the authors were chosen in such a way where each one either gave rise to a question, or presented a part of an answer. This is how the sub-questions outlined in each of the sections arose throughout the research process. Therefore, the purpose is to combine the ideas in such a way as to use the concepts and ideas in the form of a conversation.

2. Body-mind and trained attention

2.1 How can one understand the idea of unity between body and mind, and its cultivation?

The purpose of this section is to lay down the foundational ideas and concepts upon which the following sections will be built upon. This includes presenting an understanding of the self and exploring the idea on the unity between mind and body as well as how practices play a role in its cultivation. In the Buddhist tradition, the self along with all other beings is understood as a combination of ever-changing physical and mental elements that may be divided into five skandhas, or aggregates (Dhamma, 2001, 57). These are matter; the physical body including the five sense organs and the corresponding tangible objects in the external world, sensations; including all kinds of feelings experienced as a result of the contact between the physical and

mental organs with the external world, perception; the faculty which recognizes sensations, mental formations; including attention and other mental activities as well as the actions that arise from them, and lastly, consciousness; implying not of the recognition but only of the awareness that one may have of a sense object such as simply being aware of the presence of a tree but not identifying it as such (Dhamma, 2001, 58-59). The ever-changing nature of the aggregates may be connected to the Buddhist principle of dependent origination. It indicates that all things are inter-related and inter-dependent to one another, where an interdependence as such implies an absence of an intrinsic nature which contributes to their existence as a continuum or an ever-changing entity (Payutto, 1994, 14-15). For the purpose of clarity, if the aggregates had an intrinsic nature or value that is present regardless of space or time, that would make for a stable self that is not interdependent and would remain immune to change, however in the case of one being composed of five aggregates that are unstable without an intrinsic value, the self is would always be prone to change in light of one's interdependent nature (Payutto, 1994, 15).

Based on the above, the five aggregates that constitute the self continuously change based on the relations one is part of in the surrounding environment with other selves and objects. In light of how only the first aggregate is related to the physical body and the rest are related to the mind, this quality of dynamic instability can be interpreted as one which creates the space for the self to change and balance the relation between the body-related and the mind-related aggregates. This is where the meaning of the term 'cultivation' lies; engaging in efforts to harmonize and attune one's aggregates to one another can be understood as self-cultivation. The willingness for this in itself is an act of embracing the dynamic quality of the aggregates and the self.

2.2 How does one strengthen the connection between body and mind?

The way in which one may engage in harmonizing the body-related and mind-related aggregates, or in the attunement between body and mind, may be further explored through the ideas in the *Shōbōgenzō*, a collection of texts written by the 13th century Japanese monk, Dogen. He was the founder of the Sōtō Buddhist school in Japan, the continuation of the Chinese Cáodòng school in China, where there was the held belief that one is already Buddha and that one could allow for this to emerge through practice without striving to become Buddha (Buswell, 2004, 135). Regarding the way in which one may harmonize the body and the mind, Dogen writes, "If the body is upright, the mind is easily set right. When the body sits upright, the mind is not weary, the mind is regulated, the intention is right, and the attention is bound

to what is immediately present.” (Dogen, 2008, 373). From here, the body is interpreted as that which gives shape to the mind and thereby leads to syncing them together. Therefore, to harmonize the body and the mind is to firstly give shape to the body through practice.

The question that arises from the above is, what kind of practice? This would be any practice in which one may continuously engage in that has the potential function of cultivating the connection between the mind and the body. The guiding purpose of the thesis is to explore how the person, a member of a modern society, may find the home and belonging in the surrounding environment in their every-day life. In line with this, concepts regarding body-mind cultivation are to be applied to ordinary-deemed practices such as playing sports, walking in the park, playing an instrument, washing the dishes or scrubbing the floor, just as they are applied to traditional Buddhist cultivation practices like seated meditation, flower arrangement, calligraphy or aikido. There is the idea that if the body moves and acts with respect, treating everything as part of an inter-related whole, then the mind will follow and experience compassion (Arai, 2011, 35). In this context, compassion may be understood as a way for one to embrace one’s own nature as an interdependent being, by continuously engaging in actions with the underlying awareness that they will influence other beings and objects that the self is in relation with. As an example, in the every-day setting, by learning how to wipe a table in an efficient and respectful manner, over time that will become how one would always wipe a table, without thinking and setting the intention to do so beforehand (Arai, 2011, 35). It is important to note that in order for one to learn to ‘efficiently’ engage in the practice, one would need to continuously engage in repetitive movements, however this will be expanded upon below.

The example on wiping the table can be connected to Dogen’s quote above, on how “When the body sits upright...the mind is regulated... the attention is bound to what is immediately present” (Dogen, 2008, 373). The body ‘sitting upright’ can be interpreted as one’s right action of practicing to wipe the table in a respectful manner, “treating it as part of an inter-related whole” (Arai, 2011, 35). On the other hand, the regulated mind can be interpreted as the absence of thoughts when one has excelled in wiping the table efficiently and respectfully. Furthermore, the absence of distracting mental processes such as thinking also implies that one’s attention and point of focus is directed only toward cleansing the table, Dogen refers to this as when “attention is bound to what is immediately present” (Dogen, 2008, Zanmai-o-zanmai, 373). Due to this, body-mind cultivation with practice may be understood as a matter of training the body to act efficiently by engaging in continuous movements, while simultaneously training one’s attention. Since the idea of attention is vital in the thesis, it will

be focused on extensively below with David Shaner's concepts on first and second order modes of awareness.

In relation to the aforementioned ideas on harmonizing the body and the mind through practice, Dogen's writings include certain terms which may enable one to gain a richer understanding of what has been discussed until now. Dogen writes, "the efforts to learn in practice ...during forty years on Yakusan Mountain, were thorough exploration itself...Thorough exploration is just sitting and getting free of body and mind" (Dogen, 2008, Hensan, 280). This leads to interpreting practice as a form of learning and thorough exploration which leads to the freeing of the body and the mind. This freeing can be understood as "experiencing the self as a whole and thereby getting free of the misconception of "body" and "mind" as separate entities" (Nishijima and Cross, in Dogen, 2008, 205). The use of the term 'freeing' also suggests that the unity within the self presents a quality of lightness and ease in being. Ceasing to interpret that body and the mind as separate can be understood to stem from their harmonization; they have become attuned and therefore one together, and this is why their separateness has dissolved.

The question which now arises centers on what Dogen means by 'thorough exploration'; what is being learned and explored through practice? In the Heart Sutra, there is focus on the most fundamental principle of Buddhism that is *prajñā*, defined as "real wisdom, a kind of intuitive ability that occurs in our body and mind, when our body and mind are in the state of balance and harmony" (Nishijima and Cross, in Dogen 2007, 31). By cultivating the body-mind connection through practice, one is simultaneously developing one's wisdom and intuitive ability. The practice becomes thorough exploration and learning of the *prajñā* within the self. Furthermore, Dogen writes that the realization of *prajñā* occurs when "matter is just the immaterial and the immaterial is just matter" (Dogen 2007, *Maka-hannya-haramitsu*, 31). In light of how this will be delved on in the following sections, for now, this can be interpreted as how the realization of *prajñā* occurs when one's attunement between body and mind spreads and leads to the attunement between the self and the surrounding space and reveals the environment as something beyond only matter. In order to grasp this, it is important to firstly explore how attention is connected to body-mind cultivation, and how this influences one's experience in reality.

2.3 How does attentive awareness play a role in one's state of being in the world?

The ideas of the American scholar David Shaner present the conceptual guide for what follows.

His phenomenological study of Dogen is the source of the following concepts which offer a deep understanding on the connection between awareness and experience. His concept of the first order mode of body-mind awareness is described as a mode of existence where all intentions are neutralized and all vectors of attention work to broaden and increase the sensitivity of one's awareness at the ground of experience (Shaner, 1985, 53). This is exemplified in a situation where a seated person looking up from the desk is merely aware of the entirety of one's environment without judgement, there is no intention to place a privileged focus upon one object; one is rather 'presencing' in the space (Shaner, 1985, 52). On the other hand, the focus of one's attention on a specific point in space can be compared to placing it on a pedestal with a shining reflector, causing all that which surrounds it to remain dark and unnoticed. This depicts the second order mode of awareness and will be elaborated on below. For the moment, it is important to note that abstaining from focusing on one point and resorting to mere 'presencing' leads to the expansion of one's periphery of vision. In reference to the reflector example, this would be as if one illuminates the whole space, instead of only one point. Privileged attention on a specific object as a result of setting up an intention related to it increases the sensitivity of awareness only toward that object. On the other hand, an intention-free 'presencing' mode of existence enables one to sustain the sensitivity of one's awareness toward the entirety of the space. Shaner refers to this entirety as "an awareness of the horizon *in toto*" (Shaner, 1985, 48).

What follows is an exploration into how the concept of first-order mode of awareness can be used to explore ways for the individual person to access a richness of experience in every-day life. A striking difference between a mode of presence with a high sensitivity of awareness to the entirety of the space and intentional privileged focus upon one specific object is that the former opens one's perception to a multitude of objects and qualities of the space. The richness in experience lies in inhabiting the space in a way that its multiplicity of qualities and elements are noticed and illuminated. Expanded sensitivity toward the entirety of one's environment is a crucial factor for experiencing richness in every-day life. The question which arises here is how may one achieve this degree of sensitivity? This would be done through the releasing of body-related or mind-related tensions and intentions which may cloud one's sensitivity (Shaner, 1985, 53). In light of this, sensitivity can be understood as a state which arises when one's body is relaxed and one's mind is de-clouded, free of mental frameworks, intentions and presuppositions regarding reality; a sense of calmness can be associated with this state. Coming from here, how may one achieve this state and succeed in letting go of body and mind-related

tensions? The answer lies in engaging in continuous practice leading to the expansion of the periphery of one's attention, however this will be further elaborated on below. Lastly, the absence of tensions within the self can be interpreted as an open gate which welcomes the recognition of the abundant, multifaceted nature of the environment.

According to Shaner, in the first order mode of awareness the "body-mind becomes an ever-changing dynamic reservoir from which an infinite number of vectors may be posited...there is the recognition of a dynamic fluidity which allows our sensations to be keen throughout the extended periphery" (Shaner, 1985, 57). This can be interpreted as the first order body-mind awareness being an opportunity to stay present to the myriad of possibilities of experiencing the world. Reality takes on the dynamic quality when one becomes aware of the infinite ways of experiencing it. In context of this, 'dynamic' can be understood as full of potentialities, it invites interpreting reality as having a multitude of forms and qualities which it can take. Therefore, embodying a first-order mode of awareness is when one is present to various portals for experiencing the world, it is as if one honors each of them by being present to all. It is important to note that presencing in such a way where one is able to grasp the multitude of forms which reality may take also reflects a dynamic and flexible quality within the observing self.

2.4 What is the second-order modes of awareness and how does one reach it?

The second order mode of awareness is when there is only one specific vector of attention directed toward a single privileged point of focus (Shaner, 1985, 61). It is described as a pre-reflective, assiduous experience due to the following. The second-mode of body-mind experience is reached when one persistently engages in a practice with unremitting attention on a single point of focus to the degree that the acquired skills become 'sedimented' and one is able to perform the practice pre-reflectively (Shaner, 1985, 62). For example, when one continuously engages in aikido practice and carefully focuses on the movements, over time they become sedimented and skillful performance appears effortless. In the interest of clarity, Shaner further explains the sedimentation of skills as the process when one's skills become internalized, part of one's subconscious and thus performed with ease (Shaner, 1985, 62). Reaching second order mode of awareness means that one is able to perform the practice skillfully, yet does not need to constantly focus on it and is able to shift the attention upon another point in space. One may also choose to focus on the practice despite the skill being sedimented, as that would perfect the sedimented skill even further (Shaner, 1985, 63).

The turn from second order to first order mode of awareness occurs when the person is effortlessly performing the sedimented skill, and has the capacity to neutralize one's attention leading to the expansion of one's periphery, and begin to presence the horizon (Shaner, 1985, 63). As an example, when one has mastered the movements of riding a bike, one is able to refrain from focusing on turning the pedals and maintaining balance without losing the efficiency in the practice, and at this point one is able to stay present to the entirety of one's surroundings. This shows that assiduously training a practice with a single point of focus over time opens the way for one to be able to expand the range of one's attention to the entirety of the space. This is why body-mind cultivation practices can be understood as trainings in attention. It is important to note that if one does not continue performing the practice while being present to the horizon, this does not mean that it is not a true first-order mode of awareness. One may cease with the practice and enter the first-order mode if engagement in the practice before-hand led to the releasing of body-related and mind-related tensions. Therefore, body-mind cultivation practices and reaching the second-order mode of awareness can be interpreted as preparing the body-mind for the first order mode and presence to the horizon. Before further continuing with exploring how the presence to the horizon, or trained attention from the first-order mode of awareness, may be imagined and what it implies for the relationship between the self and the surrounding space, it is firstly important to offer an understanding of the central goal of attention that is proposed in this thesis; soothing homelessness. The following section will be focused on providing a framework of ideas on how one may interpret the finding of the 'home'.

3. Understanding and imagining the home

3.1 What concepts and ideas aid in understanding what is meant by 'home'?

The American philosopher Thomas Kasulis has a vital role in contributing to the discussion on the Japanese Shinto traditions and customs, one of which aids in clarifying the meaning of the finding of the 'home'. In Shinto, the gates which stand before sacred shrines are called the 'torii'. They function as "bookmarks for connecting people to awe-inspiring power" and "present a tangible gateway to an intimacy with the world, one's people and oneself" (Kasulis, 2004, 8). The Shinto term given for awe-inspiring presence is 'kami' (Kasulis, 2004, 3). The torii is known as that which enables one to access the kami and shows the way home, because when people get lost in the details of every-day life and disconnect from their capacity for awe, they often feel homeless (Kasulis, 2004, 8). If disconnection from the capacity of awe can lead to feelings of homelessness, does this mean that one's connection to it implies that one is

already at home? If so, home can be understood as a state of being where one is able to feel awe for one's surroundings which makes way for one's own intimate connection to the world. The intimacy can be understood to arise from one's careful attention toward the environment, which enables a closeness and familiarity with the surrounding space.

Based on the above, there is the aim to show that the training of attention through body-mind cultivation practices can be interpreted as the torii, in light of how it enables one to perceive the awe-inspiring nature of things, the kami, and in that way it helps one to find the home. The recognition of the awe-inspiring nature of things would be enabled by the first order mode of awareness that leads one to access a richness of experience in which one notices the multiple qualities and layers of the surrounding space. This will be further elaborated on in the following sections as finding wonder in the ordinary or the spiritual in the material, simply being aware of the multiple layers of reality, but for now it was important to clarify the aim.

Kasulis writes about how every single thing in the world in some way reflects the wondrous mysterious power of kami, however in Shinto there is the use of torii gateway markers to designate some specific sites where the kami may be more obviously felt, like the majestic natural sites of Mount Fuji (Kasulis, 2004, 12). Such sites are considered to be holographic entry points for experiencing kami everywhere (Kasulis, 2004, 12). The use of the term 'holographic entry point' reflects the function of the torii to connect the specific to the holistic, it represents how the whole is like an image in a holographic plate where each section of the plate contains the whole image (Kasulis, 2004, 10). The purpose of applying the concept of torii to body-mind cultivation practices and attention is to highlight that one need not depend on a sacred site or shrine, but rather that one may access the kami regardless of a set place or time. The experience when one engages in practice becomes the torii, the gate through which one passes, to connect to the whole where one has been all along – the spiritual whole that is reflected in the self and every other object (Kasulis, 2004). This is also the point where one feels the presence of kami throughout the entirety of one's surroundings and within oneself (Kasulis, 2004).

The self will be able to experience the connectedness from the 'holographic entry point', between the holistic and the specific, or the whole and its parts, when one leans in and engages in an effort to discover the entry point, to closely examine it, instead of remaining at a vantage point from a distance (Kasulis, 2004, 10). The training of the attention through continuous practice can be understood as an effort for close examination because cultivated attention

enables one to lean in and stay present to the many potential entry points in one's surroundings. In this case, the vantage point does not come from a detached position at a distance, but rather from an immersed, enveloped one since the focus lies on one point. The sedimentation of one's movements through practice that enable the attention to move away from one point of focus and onto the horizon in toto, or the entirety of the surroundings is proof that one has entered the torii. From here on, one's passing through the torii and accessing of the first order mode of awareness enables one to connect to the whole and become able to perceive the kami, the awe-inspiring presences of different objects in the surrounding space as well as within oneself, and in this way, one finds the home. Lastly, amidst the number of abstract concepts described above, it would be helpful to offer a visual perspective on how one may imagine one's passage through the torii on the way home through attention.

3.2 How may one imagine and visualize the finding of the home?

The aim of the following is to offer a visual presentation of the concepts kami and torii that have contributed to defining the home. Based on the aforementioned ideas, the trained attention from body-mind cultivation practices becomes a way for one to become aware of kami around oneself and to become a part of kami, to realize that one holds kami in oneself. The proposed way to imagine this experience is to present kami as a symbol of radiating light, so that one's realization of the kami in oneself and the surroundings would be as if one has realized that all surrounding objects and oneself radiate light. The connection between kami and light stems from the myth of the celestial kami deity Amaterasu, written as part of the Japanese ancient chronicles of the Kojiki. Completed in 712, the text is considered to be one of Japan's oldest surviving written works, it presents a mix of dialogue, song, narration, commentary and an organized genealogy of the sovereigns of Yamato that stretches back to the heavenly deities that created Japan (Yasumaro, 2014). These deities are also referred to as celestial kamis, just as in the story of Amaterasu. Kasulis writes about the celestial kamis as being portrayed as neither omnipotent or omniscient beings who have their own lineage and have lived in a heavenly field predating the existence of human beings (Kasulis, 2004). The kami deities are both material and spiritual beings, therefore Amaterasu is not an invisible deity but rather it is the actual physical sun itself, thereby leading to the perception of the sun itself as material-spiritual sacred reality (Kasulis, 2004).

Regarding the mythical story in focus, the storm kami Susannoo liked to taunt his sister, the sun kami Amaterasu which resulted in an argument that led her to pout and hide in a cave,

leading to the darkening of the world (Kasulis, 2004). In the Kojiki, the sudden absence of light in the world is described with the following, “the high plains of heaven were cast into utter darkness and the central realm of reed plains was filled with gloom...the endless night came to cover the world” (Yasumaro, 2014). In order to reverse this, bring light back to the world and get Amaterasu out of the cave, the rest of the kami deities put on a loud party outside her cave along with a mirror reflecting her own light with the hope that this would cause her to peek outside (Kasulis, 2004). Amaterasu became curious and stepped out of the cave, which resulted in the return of shining light in the world, described in the Kojiki as how “the high plains of heaven and the central realm of reed plains were lit up with her radiance” (Yasumaro, 2014).

The mirror presents a sacred symbol in Shinto, as in the innermost part of shrines there is often a mirror whereas near the entrance of the area there is a water trough for purification in light of how a mirror’s capacity to reflect largely depends on its cleanliness (Kasulis, 2004, 13). Before entering the shrine, people are expected to have washed their hands and cleansed themselves of any dirt from the journey so that they are ready to be at home in the kami-filled shrine (Kasulis, 2004, 13). The torii may also remind passengers to cleanse themselves prior to approaching the sacred area (Kasulis, 2004, 13). Placing this in connection to the story in the Kojiki, the mirror which played a role in leading the sun kami Amaterasu to leave the cave makes way for interpreting her radiant lightness as a state of purity and cleanliness. Relating to this, in the translation of the ancient chronicles, the physical locale where Amaterasu is enshrined is called the Land of Ise, rendered as “Sacred Streams” due to its many rivers with sanctified purity as a result of cleansing rites of lustration, which is another link between the sun deity and the Shinto symbolism of the mirror and its association with purification (Yasumaro, 2014).

The connection between the Shinto symbolism and the kami deity’s myth and shrine, makes way for visualizing the kami as an illuminating light, just like the one with which the sun Amaterasu shines. If one’s access to the kami is imagined as one accessing the radiant lightness in oneself, then this can be thought of as a result of the purifying and cleansing of oneself from the dirt. In the context of the thesis, the ‘dirt’ can be interpreted as one’s state of disconnection from the wonder in one’s surroundings and the ‘cleansing’ may be thought of as the purification of attention through body-mind cultivation practices. Kasulis’ writing can be related to this, in that just as how people are expected to have cleansed themselves from any dirt from the journey so that they may be ready to be at home in the kami filled shrine, one is to cleanse oneself from

the dirt in order to feel at home and access kami in one's every-day surroundings (Kasulis, 2004, 13). Accessing the kami can be thought of as one's entrance into the "holographic focal point, the gateway to an awesome mystery that feels like home" (Kasulis, 2004). Lastly, one of the main focuses of this section has been to explore concepts which aid in understanding how body-mind cultivation practices and trained attention aid in the process of one's finding of the 'home'. Due to this, it is now important to zoom into this process by beginning to explore how trained attention functions to pave the way to create an interaction between the self and the surrounding environment, with an emphasis on how the concept of space relates to this.

4. Space and the self

4.1 In what ways may we conceptualize the interaction between self and space?

The purpose of what follows is to explore the concept of space in light of the relationship between self and environment and set forth the idea that one is embedded in the space one finds oneself in. Before this, it is important to understand what is meant by the concept of 'space'. It may be interpreted in both a physical and social sense, as it is the person's occupation of and movement within both spaces that define him or her (Cooper, 2002, 398). This can be connected to the Japanese term for person, "ningen" and how it is composed of characters meaning 'man' and 'between' leading to the idea that "as embodied creatures, our lives are structured by the spatial, physical relations we stand in to others" (Cooper, 2002). In this context, there is a close connection between the concept of space and that of relations; the space that lies in between one person and another, or a person and an object, is also where the relationship between them exists. Arising from this and in reference to how the characters for 'man' and 'between' compose the term for person "ningen" in Japanese, the betweenness that the self may share with another object is not only indicative of their relationship but also of how their relation is constitutive for the self and the object in the space.

For the purpose of clarity, it will be helpful to expand the concept of space with additional terms which can be related to it. The 20th century Japanese philosopher and member of the afore-mentioned Kyoto School, Tetsuro Watsuji will aid in enriching the understanding of space in light of his works dedicated to how one's upbringing in a particular climate is reflected upon one's perspective of the world, thereby outlining his belief on the shaping connection between the self and one's surroundings (Carter, 2013, 128). The concept of climate serves to deepen the interpretation of space and to underscore examples about the relationship which

may arise between man and natural phenomena. Watsuji states that the self is always surrounded by one's natural environment and is part of a relationship with the climate, therefore one's feeling of the coldness of the air is not a result of it pressing on the self from the outside, it rather occurs as a result of their relation (Watsuji, 1961, 1, 2). It is important to note that it is up to the self to be intentionally directed toward the surroundings; if one begins to feel cold while walking outside, this means that one has directed one's attention to the falling temperature, and in this way one is 'becoming part' of the coldness in the climate (Watsuji, 1961, 2, 3). This 'becoming part' can be interpreted as the increase in one's awareness of one's embeddedness in space. On the other hand, if one remained distracted and lost in thought while constantly changing the direction of one's attention, one's body would certainly decrease temperature, however the lack of attention toward the coldness would not lead to one 'becoming part' of it, and one realizing of one's embeddedness within it. This increases the potential for one to perceive oneself as a separate entity from the surrounding environment. The realization of one's embeddedness in space is vital to prevent the perception of the self as an isolated being, and to initiate conversation between self and space. It may also be interpreted as the realization of one's inherent belonging in space, of the home within it.

If the self perceives of the surrounding space as one of belonging, it is likely that one's experience in it would differ to that when one perceives of oneself as an isolated separated entity from it. The realization of one's embeddedness in space itself has the potential not only to change the experience in the environment but also to change the relationship that the self shares with the objects in the environment, which in turn leads to their transformation and in this way the self is able to "work on and transform climate" (Watsuji, 1961, 8). As mentioned above, the betweenness or the relations that objects share are constitutive for the objects themselves, therefore the change in the relationship between self and the objects in space alters the objects as much as it alters the self. Therefore, the example on coldness above shows that attention plays a crucial factor in the realization that one is conditioned and embedded in space, which enables the transformation of the relationship between self and space. Lastly, if the coldness of the climate upon the human body is considered as one form of communication, and if one's attention-caused realization of this and of one's embeddedness in space is considered as a response, then this may be described as a conversation between space and self. It seems that one's surroundings are always passing on statements, one just needs to notice.

The 20th century Japanese philosopher and founder of the Kyoto School, Nishida Kitaro will aid in contributing to the discussion below. His voice is relevant because of his views on how

there is a unifying factor or principle behind all of reality, and how it cannot be known through ordinary thinking but rather through becoming it, thereby placing an emphasis on experience (Carter, 2013, 41). This is in line with the purpose of the thesis in that it highlights the importance of experience for one's merge and unity with one's surroundings. Ideas will be used from different periods of his philosophical works, in the case of the following this would be from his third period in which he explored concepts related to a place or a field in which things are located (Carter, 2013, 28). Nishida perceives of reality as a 'one' within which things are constantly being transformed, however the central concept related to this is that there is a place or center called the 'transformational matrix' where things interact and merge (Cooper, 2002, 400). The concept of 'transformational matrix' being presented as a "place where things interact and merge" offers a richer interpretation of space in that it presents the environment as having a vital role for the interaction between objects and their transformations. Furthermore, there arises the idea that the self is able to form and become formed, to transform, through its existence in a spatial environment which enables interactions and merges between objects. This sheds light on the extent to which the self is embedded in one's surrounding space and the web of relationships existing within it; it is always part of a landscape. The process of unifying and merging with the surrounding environment through attentive awareness proves of the embeddedness and enables the perception of the self as an interdependent being which does not finish at the bounds of one's own body.

4.2 How do the self and the surrounding space merge together?

Embodying a mode of existence where all intentions are neutralized and the sensitivity of one's awareness is heightened leads to a form of attention which enables a merge between the self and environment (Shaner, 1985, 53). In a segment regarding the first order mode of experience, Shaner writes, "I am aware of the entire visual field before me, the auditory sound around me and the climate within my surroundings...experience is known to be mine, since I am, phenomenologically, nothing more than the place through which dynamic experience flows." (Shaner, 1985, 58). If dynamic experience arises as a result of one's awareness of the visual field and auditory sound within one's surroundings, and if the self is where dynamic experience flows, then one's surroundings including the sky above, the ground below and the sound of the wind and birds chirping can be interpreted as flowing through the self. Furthermore, Shaner's quote can be connected to the previously mentioned idea on how the 'betweenness' that the self and an object share is indicative of their relation but also of how it is constitutive for both. If the self is "nothing more than the place through which dynamic experience flows", then this

shows that the self itself consists of the ‘betweennesses’ or relations it shares with the surrounding space and objects.

Shaner’s quote and its above interpretation enable visualizing of the self as a passage through which one’s spatial surroundings pass. It is important to note that the passing through is realized thanks to the fact that one is already embedded in space and one’s recognizing of this fact through one’s heightened attention. Another way of understanding the passing through is interpreting it as one merging with the surrounding elements in the space. The merging can be interpreted as an example of one going beyond the bounds of detached observation (Kasulis, 2004, 2). With this idea, the self is no longer a separate entity observing upon the environment, but rather a part of it. This shows how the first order mode of experience may contribute toward the fading of one’s estrangement and the soothing of the homelessness one may feel. Furthermore, the question which arises from the idea of the self being a passage for one’s surroundings, is whether this also implies that one’s surroundings also present a passage for the self to pass through? In light of the aforementioned example by Watsuji on the experience of coldness, and how attention toward climate may lead one to realize of one’s embeddedness within it which transforms the relationship and thereby transforms climate, it can be said that both self and environment present passages for each other to pass through (Watsuji, 1961, 8).

The process of merging between the self and the surrounding space through careful attention can also be further explored through Nishitani’s idea on the concept of the ‘self-awareness of reality’. He explains the concept as, “both our becoming aware of reality and, at the same time, the reality realizing itself in our awareness” where the term ‘realize’ indicates that one’s ability to perceive reality means that reality actualizes itself through our awareness, and that this in turn is the only way in which one may realize or understand the fact that reality is so realizing or actualizing itself in ourselves (Nishitani, 1982, 5). In this context, the double interpretation of the term ‘realize’ sheds light on the link that lies between awareness or perception, and actualizing or coming to existence. This in turn sets forth the idea that the power of attention for the merge between self and the surrounding space lies in that it enables the interaction between them; one’s becoming aware of reality is answered with the reality becoming actualized for the self. This can also be interpreted as a double movement and the beginning of a conversation. The awareness toward the reality we perceive can be considered as the invitation, and the actualization of reality can be seen as how in turn it opens up for us. Attentive awareness is an invitation for our surroundings to reveal themselves to us, this is where the beginning of the interaction lies.

The above may be visualized with the example of imagining our attention from the first-order mode of awareness as a shining reflector which shines all around us, causing reality to show itself to us. Attentive awareness which in itself invites the surroundings to reveal themselves to us can also be understood as a way of perceiving them with the means of investing them with the ability to look at us in return (Benjamin, 1969, 188). There is the assumed answer to the gaze, which in itself is in an invitation to an interaction. Attention can be interpreted as having the role of that which brings reality into existence for the self. What form of reality would this be? While the initial description is that of one's experience in the surrounding environment, its qualities will be delved on in the following section with the use of Nishida's concepts relating to the ordinary and sacred nature of things.

4.3 What does the self become in the process of merging?

Before delving into the following section, Nishida's idea on action will aid in understanding what occurs to the self in the process of merging with the environment. He writes that the self is that which acts where "action arises both in, and from, the mutual relationship between things" (Nishida, 1986, 3). This can be interpreted as framing the self's actions as being dependent and emerging from the relations the self is part of. Therefore, action coming from the self is possible due to one being part of relationships with other objects in space. The acting self can be further understood as "not one which is moved and acted upon by another, but one which moves the other and also initiates its own action" (Nishida, 1986, 3). This idea on moving and initiating action can be interpreted in context of how that which acts is also that which forms and in light of this, "the world is an infinite process... such a world is purposive" (Nishida, 1986, 4). Associating movement and action with the process of forming leads to the idea that just as one is moved and moves the other, one is formed and forms the other. Nishida's idea of the world being an infinite process can be interpreted as it being a result of the continuous forming which arises from action and movement of the self and all other objects in space. In context of this, one's way of forming the world through action can also be interpreted as one continuously creating the world, especially in light of the idea that it is "an infinite process", as noted by Nishida. Therefore, in the process of merging with the surrounding space, the self is embedded in a mutual relationship with one's environment and becomes an acting being where the self is that which creates the environment, and thereby contributes to creating the world. This is the birthing point of the idea that the merge between self and one's surrounding space enables one to unleash one's creativity; in the process of merging, the self becomes a creating being.

The concept of creativity, or creative activity is defined by Nishida in the following, “creative activity refers to the self-expression and the infinite self-forming dynamics of the world, which moves from the created to the creating...” (Nishida, 1986, 21). The ‘self-forming dynamics of the world’ refer to the actions of forming that occur in the process of merging between self and the environment described above. There arises the idea that the self contributes to the creation of the world as a result of experiencing it within oneself with the process of merging. The self becomes the world’s “locus of self-formation...each of us are expressive points of the world, forming the world by expressing it in our self” (Nishida, 1986, 5). The question which arises here is, how may one engage in creative activity in concrete scenarios, how may one manifest one’s creativity? Among the ideas in the following section, there is one that centers on exploring how ordinary objects in every-day life may be perceived as ‘sacred’ or ‘wondrous’, this is where the answer lies. There exists a creative potential within the one who is capable of seeing beyond and deeply into that which seems ordinary.

5. Attention as a step toward enlightenment

5.1 What is religious about heightened attention toward one’s environment?

The purpose of the following section is to explore heightened attention like that of the first-mode order of awareness in the context of its religious nature that sets forth a “dimension of experience in which human existence itself comes into focus” (Nishida, 1987b, 115). According to Nishida’s ideas, the goal of religion lies in “grasping eternal life in its own immediacy in our lives” (Nishida, 1987b, 115). Based on this, the purpose is to depict the training of one’s attention as a way in which one may approach satori, the Japanese term for enlightenment, defined as “seeing one’s Buddha nature”, in the present lifetime in every-day life (Buswell, 2004, 754). The starting point is that the self is dependent on this world and that the religious or sacred domain is one with the familiar world, in line with the idea that nirvana is samsara (Cooper, 2002, 401). If samsara is the endless round of rebirths and nirvana is the escape from it, then the idea that ‘nirvana is samsara’ implies that one would be able to embody the freedom of nirvana while continuing to depend upon the familiar world and act within samsara (Buswell, 2004, 77, 183). The point that the religious or sacred domain is one with the familiar world relates to the definition of the essence of religion, as written in Schleiermacher’s *Reden uber Die Religion* and quoted by Nishitani, “the intuition of the infinite in the finite, as feeling the Universe” (Nishitani 1982, 5). Being intuitive of the infinite in the finite can be interpreted as being intuitive of the presence of the sacredness of the Godly realm in the

concrete present realm on Earth, which may be experienced as only ordinary when one remains a separated entity in it.

The above ideas can be further explored alongside the concept of action-intuition. It is defined as “seeing things from the stand-point of that self which transcends the self-conscious self” (Nishida, 1987, 85). This can be interpreted in the context of perceiving from the standpoint of when one merges with the space one inhabits and realizes that one is actually embedded and part of one’s surroundings. It is not to perceive from a point of separation, rather, it is to see things from the position of when one has already transcended the separate self-conscious self and merged with the surrounding environment, with everything that is not the self. Trained attention is vital for enabling the merge between self and environment, and thereby for one to acquire action-intuition. When one ceases to be a separate entity and is part and connected to the whole after having merged with the surrounding space, this is when one is able to recognize the infinite in the finite, the whole in the specific. The use of the term ‘action’ in the concept can be connected to the previously mentioned idea by Nishida on how one’s movement or action leads to the action of another, where this ripple-effect is the reason for the continuous forming and creation of the world (Nishida, 1984, 4). Perhaps, perceiving from the position of a transcended non-separate self that has merged with the surrounding environment can be understood as embracing and amplifying the ripple effect of action and thus creation of the world. It highlights the close-knitted multiple relations in reality through which creative action is likely to be passed along.

5.2 What would an example be of perceiving the “infinite in the finite”?

In Dostoevsky’s ‘Raw Youth’ and ‘The Brothers Karamazov’, the author tells about how God may be found in a single leaf at daybreak, in a beam of sunlight or in the cry of an infant, which “suggests a great harmony within all things in the universe” and “a mystical order that rules over all things so that God can be seen in the most trivial of things” (Nishitani, 1982, 9). This can be considered an example of finding the infinite in the finite. There is the underlying idea that finding the infinite in the finite is about being able to sense the presence of God or a sacred quality in seemingly ordinary earthly things. Referred to in the beginning of the thesis, in a passage from Dostoevsky’s ‘The House of the Dead’, there is writing on how the character reflects on the wild steppes and the sun blazing overhead, along with the vast blue sky above as being the only spot at which he saw “God’s world...in casting his gaze across the immense desert space, he found he was able to forget his wretched self” (Nishitani, 1982, 8). This shows

the importance of developing action-intuition through heightened attention toward the environment in order for one to sense the infinite in the finite, just as it is done in Dostoevsky's works. The writings of the 14th century Zen master Daito Kokushi in which he states, "Buddha and I are not separate for one instant...facing each other the whole day through" can be connected to Dostoevsky's passage (Nishida, 1987b, 33). This is because, like the Zen master, the character in the 'House of the Dead' is also 'with God' in that they found themselves in God's world. In both cases, there is the idea that one is not alone or a separate isolated self, which is a sign of action-intuition that is seeing "things from the standpoint of that self which transcends the self-conscious self" (Nishida, 1987, 85). Both examples can serve as inspiration for soothing the isolation and homelessness that one might feel in every-day life (Cooper, 2003, 403).

When transcending the idea of the separate self-conscious self, or simply forgetting oneself as separate, space is made for one to merge with the objects in the space and become in tune with them. However, what would it mean to be 'in tune with an object'? The example from Dostoevsky's 'House of the Dead' is one where the character is in the first-mode order of experience in light of the expanded periphery of his attention, the lack of intention or specific focus on a point and the increased sensitivity toward the surroundings, exemplified by the rich description of the environment. The increased sensitivity is what makes space for the character's ability to be in tune with the environment. This sensitivity arises from the harmonized body and mind and one's inner attunement is what makes attunement with the environment possible. As elaborated in the previous section, sensitivity achieved through attention can be interpreted as a state of a mind which is de-clouded from intention and complex mental frameworks. This implies that the mental processes which blur one's mind from being aware of the sacred nature of one's surrounding objects are absent. Therefore, it is this heightened sensitivity, a state of transparent clarity, that allows for one to become present to the sacred in the earthly, the infinite in the finite; all within the realm of one's surroundings. This serves to depict the potential religious quality of sensitivity and attention toward the environment.

5.3 In what way can material objects in space be considered sacred or spiritual?

In the Japanese Shinto tradition, there is the idea that "neither spirit nor matter can exist without interdependence...the material world is at all times in all places spiritual, and the spiritual never exists without the physical" (Kasulis, 2004, 5). This enriches the idea of finding the infinite in the finite that is pointed toward in the previous example. To be aware of the presence of the

infinite in the finite can also be understood as one being aware of the spiritual in all that is material. Therefore, one's realization of the intertwinement of the spiritual and the physical world when one has trained one's attention and is in the first-order mode of experience, invites a new way of perceiving one's surrounding environment in the sense that ordinary objects in space become a source of awe and wonder. Another way of understanding this is by interpreting the perception of ordinary objects as sources of awe, as a sign that one has accessed kami, the Shinto term for awe-inspiring presence introduced at the beginning of the thesis. For now, it is important to acknowledge that perceiving ordinary and familiar objects as wondrous or awe-inspiring may initially come across as a contradiction. The doorway you have passed through multiple times a day for years may not easily be imagined as a source of wonder at first. The experience of wonder and the awesome is often associated with objects that are new and out of the ordinary. This is why it may be considered strange to find objects which are deemed as already 'known' and familiar as sources of wonder. However, the interest of the thesis lies in how the of training attention that nourishes one's connection with the surroundings, may transform alienation into a sense of home and belonging where one is able to sense the wonder. In line with this, the purpose of the following is to show that finding wonder in the ordinary is not a contradiction, but rather a sign of true connection.

Nishida's idea of the everyday 'face to face relation to the absolute' which prompts the 'Zen celebration of ordinary human experience' is exemplified when one senses the spiritual nature of all objects and finds wonder in the ordinary (Nishida, 1987b, 111). Rising from this, the recognition of the intertwinement between the material and the spiritual world can be considered one's 'face to face relation to the absolute'. Furthermore, Nishida states that one faces the absolute in the present when one penetrates to the depths of one's own every-day experience (Nishida, 1987b, 115). Based on this, facing the absolute in the present means that one has discovered a special plateau of experience that is unavailable when one is 'out of touch' with the absolute. Since heightened attention plays a key role in accessing the absolute, the infinite in the finite or the sacred in the material, being 'out of touch' with the absolute is when the extent to which one is attentive is low or simply when one's attention is untrained.

Returning to Nishida's statement, the idea of one penetrating the depths of one's every-day life experience can be interpreted as one realizing of the spiritual-material unity and transforming one's perception to recognize wonder in the ordinary objects – to become aware of the kami in one's surroundings. Heightened attention is crucial for seeing the wonder in the ordinary because through the merge between self and environment, one unlocks a greater sense of

familiarity and closeness with one's surroundings, which in turn opens the way for experiencing them on a deeper level – one where wonder is possible. This is why perceiving ordinary objects as sources of awe and wonder can be considered reaching the depths of one's experience. Perceiving objects as ordinary or exclusively material is to experience them at surface-level, the recognition of their accompanying spiritual quality and wondrous nature is to experience them in their depth; it is the (re)discovery of their rich and multi-faceted nature. In the beginning of the thesis, the home was defined as a state of being where one is able to feel awe for one's surroundings thereby making way for one's own intimate connection to the world. Therefore, penetrating to the depths of one's experience and finding wonder in the ordinary is a sign that one has found the home. Furthermore, as mentioned before, according to Buddhism, the achievement of the body-mind harmony leads to the realization of *prajñā*, the intuitive wisdom, which is realized when “matter is just the immaterial and the immaterial is just matter” (Dogen, 2007, 31). Dogen's quote sheds light on how experiencing both the spiritual and the material nature of objects is proof of the realization of *prajñā* within the self.

In reference to the previous section, in the following lies the answer to the posed question above on how one may manifest and employ creativity in concrete scenarios. Since, through the lenses of Nishida's ideas, creative activity is defined as one where the self contributes to the creation of the world as a result of experiencing it within oneself, being able to perceive ordinary things as sources of wonder is to create a world where the multi-faceted nature of things is welcomed (Nishida, 1986, 5). One going beyond the perception of a tree as an ordinary object one passes by occasionally in the woods, but experiencing it as an object that is, like oneself, one of the world's “locus of self-formation...an expressive point of the world” and a source of wonder, is an example of a concrete scenario where one may manifest creativity (Nishida, 1986, 5). The perception of reality as having multiple layers is what gives rise to the richness in experience elaborated on in the previous section on the modes of awareness. Seeing multiple layers of reality instead of one implies seeing beyond the ordinary or solely material environment, and experiencing it as a source of wonder and a material-spiritual unity. Lastly, in light of the above, body-mind cultivation practices and trained attention can be thought of as ways for one to engage in a way of being in the world through which one finds wonder and sacredness in the ordinary world, and where one is able to experience the everyday ‘face to face relation to the absolute’.

5.4 How can the search for enlightenment in the present life be imagined?

According to Nishida, religious faith is when there is the recognition of the self in a “contradictorily self-identical way” (Nishida, 1987, 84). This can be interpreted as the recognizing of the self in all of that which is not the self. In context of this, it seems that if one recognizes oneself in one’s environment, in the surroundings trees or in the chirping birds on the branches, then that can be considered an example of religious faith. Nishida also states that “subjectively put, faith is a peace of mind and objectively put, it is salvation” (Nishida, 1987, 85). In line with these ideas on what is religious faith, when one recognizes that the self exists in all that which is not the self, or when one realizes that the self is part of everything, this is also when one experiences peace of mind. From here comes the idea that one is not at peace when one has not recognized the self in all that which is not the self, when one has remained at the point of perception where the self is separate and can only be found in the individual “I” – these are signs of the state of homelessness. Nishida’s understanding of religious faith as both peace of mind and as salvation makes space for the idea that one’s feeling of peace within oneself can be understood as an intimate sign of one being on the path to salvation. The concept of salvation may be understood as the attainment of nirvana, however, it can also be connected to the aforementioned concept of enlightenment, to realize of one’s own Buddha nature (Maier, 2014, 15). In light of this and in context of the thesis, being on the path to salvation can be understood as the process of realizing of one’s own Buddha nature leading one to experience nirvana and samsara as the same.

Nishida’s frames Zen-master Daito Kokushi’s idea that the relationship between self and God is one of an absolutely inverse correlation, as vital for understanding that nirvana is samsara and supporting the idea that one must seek for the ground of one’s eternal life here in the present every-day life (Nishida, 1987, 87). It is important to note that the meaning of the term ‘God’ is interpreted to directly imply of the sacred, or the kami. The connection to kami is made in light of the Shinto mythological narratives on the existence of kami deities or Gods such as Amaterasu. Regarding the idea of the inverse correlation, it enables to perceive the relationship between the self and God, or the self and the sacred, as a mutually dependent encounter. The ‘inverse’ quality can be interpreted in such a way where, the higher one’s sense of separate individuality is, the lower the extent to which one may be receptive of the sacred and God. On the other hand, when one engages in practice that enables one to recognize the increasing presence of the sacred and God in one’s environment, then the self becomes smaller; one becomes aware that one does not exist as an individual separate entity but is part of the whole.

What the inverse quality of the relationship between self and God implies for the idea that nirvana is samsara, as claimed by Nishida after Nagarjuna, is that enlightenment and eternal life can be sought in this present life if one is able to recognize the presence of the sacred and God within oneself and one's surroundings while realizing that one is not a separate entity but rather unified with the whole. In line with this, perceiving the 'infinite in the finite' or understanding the spiritual and the material worlds as one while recognizing of one's embeddedness in one's environment are signs of one being on the path to salvation. Until now, realizing of the intertwinement between the spiritual and the material realm, and thereby finding wonder in the ordinary was presented as a sign that one has found the home. The similarity in signs indicative of finding the home and being on the path to salvation leads to the idea that they are the same. In light of this, body-mind cultivation practices and trained attention which enable the merge between self and environment and allow one to increasingly recognize the presence of the sacred and God in one's surroundings can be considered tools for one to both find home and take a step on the path of salvation in the present life.

6. Conclusion

The thesis presented a written guide on soothing the feelings of homelessness and self-isolation that the modern-day person may encounter in an individualized technology-oriented society. There was the underlying motivation to center on ideas that invite a shared closeness and connection between self and environment. The purpose was to delve into the way in which one may mend the separation between oneself and one's surroundings by exploring how trained attention enables the self to become one with the environment and find the home within it. By using authors and frameworks of ideas connected to the Shinto and Japanese Buddhist traditions, the following answer emerged.

Through the engagement in continuous practice, the self is able to strengthen the connection between one's body and mind. Gradually, one enters the second order mode of awareness when one efficiently engages in the practice without thinking or reflection, while focusing on one point. The turn from second to first order mode of awareness occurs when one's movements become sedimented to the extent that one is able to move away from focusing solely on the practice and expand the periphery of one's attention to the entirety of one's surroundings; to view the horizon in toto. This form of attention enables a merge between the self and the

environment in light of how the self ceases to be a separate entity observing upon the environment, but rather becomes part of it.

The first order mode of awareness offers a richness in experience and heightened attention through which one is able to stay present to multiple elements and qualities of one's environment. This includes recognizing the intertwinement of the material and the spiritual nature of reality where a tree would not only be seen as a piece of wood, but also as kami, an awe-inspiring presence. While answering to the homelessness, the thesis offered an invitation to look deep into the ordinary and recognize the wondrous nature of things. By training the attention through engaging in body-mind cultivation practices, one is able to merge with the environment and recognize the spiritual-material nature of reality while feeling awe and wonder for one's surroundings, and in this way one can finally feel at home. Furthermore, the thesis shed light on the religious quality of attention and its potential for guiding one toward enlightenment in the present life, leading to the discovery that the signs of one finding home and soothing homelessness are the same as being on the path to salvation. To conclude, the self is always one with the surrounding environment, the wonder is always perceivable and one's home is always waiting, the key lies in pausing and recognizing this by being attentive.

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