The Self-with-others and Environmental Ethics

> The land and sea, the animals, fishes, and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests, mountains, and rivers, are not small themes […] but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects […] they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls.
>
> (Walt Whitman, Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, 1855)

The land and sea, the animals, fishes, birds, and everything else – in other words, all things natural – are definitely not small themes. Nature is not a small theme. Neither is the human being, or the self. But perhaps the poet is not the only one to indicate the path between reality and souls, as philosophers might also have a say in this.

I believe that any discussion about environmental ethics has to start from an examination of the relation between human beings and nature. Does nature have an intrinsic value, independent of human beings? Or is the value of nature the result of the (economic, emotional, etc.) investment made by human beings? These two positions have informed the debate in environmental ethics for a long time, but are they adequate as points of departure? Of course, the position we choose informs the direction of our discourse on environmental ethics, but perhaps it is time for us to take a step back and start afresh with a reconsideration of the connection between nature and human beings. After all, as Inutsuka suggests, »[t]o re-examine our concept of the environment is at the same time to re-examine our concept of humanity« (Inutsuka 2017: 88). To this, I add that to re-examine our concept of the environment also means to re-examine our concept of the self.

In this essay[1], I discuss the notion of *hito* (human being) and the concept of the self as they appear in the work of Japanese philosopher Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703–1762). One of Shōeki's most original and significant contributions to world philosophy is his understand-

ing of the human being, the notion of *hito* envisaged not only as a hub of man-and-woman fused together, but also as an all-encompassing self that expands into all of humankind. His major work, *Shizen shin'eidō* 自然真営道, proposes a vision of the world where two different realms exist: *shizen no yo* 自然の世 (›the World of *shizen*‹), and *shihōsei* 私法世 (»the World of the Private Law«). *Shizen no yo* is the world of a primordial, pristine nature where all forms and manifestations of energy and life exist in an ideal, uncorrupted state, whereas *shihōsei* represents human society, vitiated by the introduction of man-made, self-serving laws and thus marred by an estrangement from nature. There are, of course, differences between the *hito* in the World of *shizen* and the *hito* in the World of the Private Law—the former is integral to nature, complete in its *isness*, atemporal, non-relative and ahistorical; the latter is divorced from nature, alienated because of the rule of self-serving laws and ideologies, and burdened by the weight of history.

Shizen shin'eidō is a complex work abundant in ideas, concepts and notions that sustain a variety of interpretations. For example, Shōeki can be seen as an advocate of physiocracy, or an »agricultural philosopher«, particularly because of the concept of *chokkō* 直耕 (»straight cultivation«). But he is also an outspoken social critic, dissatisfied with the state of things in Edo period Japan[2], especially with the class system and with the destitution of the farmers, which he criticises by proposing a vision of the world where any social hierarchy is virtually impossible. Last but not least, he is also a naturalist philosopher who puts forth an image of nature as a self-sufficient, complete realm governed exclusively by natural principles and forces.

Here I propose an analysis of Shōeki's vision of the human being *within* the World of *shizen* in an attempt to find hints that might help us better understand the relation between human beings and nature, as well as the rationale for environmental ethics[3]. I develop my argument in two steps. First, I analyse the concept of the human being, concentrating on the principle of *gosei* 互性 (»mutual natures«). I suggest that Shōeki's understanding of the human being is three-leveled, spanning from the single individual to the whole of humankind, and I propose the term *homo naturalis* to refer to this interpretation. Also, I posit that the self of this *homo naturalis* can only be understood as self-with-others. In the second step, I discuss the principles that govern and structure the existence and the conduct of the human being in relationship with *shizen*, paying special attention to

the notion of *chokkō* 直耕 (»straight cultivation«). My conclusion is that re-examining the concept of the self and redefining it as self-with-others can also shed new light on the issue of responsibility toward the environment; for Shōeki, *hito* is an integral part of *shizen*, and therefore any discussion about ethics must be re-framed to include the human being. I also suggest that the ›anthropocentric/non-anthropocentric‹ dichotomy should be overcome, as the basis for any kind of ethical decision or moral judgment lies *within the human being as part of nature*.

1 The Terminology of Nature

The title of Shōeki's work *Shizen shin'eidō* has been translated in various ways: *The Way of the Operation of the Self-acting Truth* (Yasunaga 1992), *Grand Traité du Shizenshinei'dō* (Joly 1996), *The Way of Natural Spontaneity and Living Truth* (Heisig 2011), *The Way of the Five Processes and Unitary Generative Force Advancing and Retreating* (Tucker 2013) etc. What all these translations have in common is that none of them uses the word ›nature‹ to render the Japanese *shizen*, and perhaps we should ask ourselves why.

In contemporary Japanese, *shizen* 自然 is the word generally used to render the English ›nature‹, and, morphologically, it functions just like ›nature‹, i.e. as a noun. However, as Yanabu (1977) points out, the understanding of the term *shizen* in Edo period Japan was not ›nature‹, but rather ›spontaneously acting/doing‹, and it was generally used as an adjective, or an adverb. In order to designate what we now understand by ›nature‹, the Japanese made use of various other terms, many of them of Chinese origin and most of them with a philosophical tinge (Daoist, Confucianist, or Buddhist): *tenchi* 天地 (›Heaven-and-Earth‹), *banbutsu* 万物 (›the myriad things‹), *sansen-sōmoku* 山川草木 (›mountains, rivers, plants and trees‹), *senga-daiji* 山河大地 (›mountains, rivers, and the Earth‹), *zōbutsu* 造物 (›things that are made/created‹)[4] etc. The same compound 自然 was actually read *jinen* at the time, and, as Tellenbach and Kimura (1989: 157) show, it had a strong Buddhist connotation and it referred rather to 1) that which exists ›without human intervention‹, and 2) that which exists ›of/from oneself/itself so, truly so‹. Shōeki, however, forces us to read it as *shizen:* in a text titled *Kakuryū sensei inkeisho (Master Kakuryū's Classic)*[5], included in volume 16 of Shōeki's complete

works as part of the *Hachinohe shiryō (Hachinohe documents)*, he states that it should be read *shizen:* 「父字ノ『シ』ト、母字ノ『ゼン』」(ASZ 16: 302). ›The first ideograph is [read] *shi*, the second *zen*‹.

So, does *shizen/jinen* actually mean ›nature‹? Well, yes and no. Yes, if we absolutely want to find an English equivalent—it would probably be the term closest to our understanding of ›nature‹. And no, because it does not designate the same notion. As Tellenbach and Kimura put it: ›Contrary to the object-oriented meaning of nature, *Shi-zen/Ji-nen* has no such meaning. It never signifies the object as such, but presents only its respective manner of being and becoming‹ (Tellenbach and Kimura 1989: 157). In other words, *shizen/jinen* rather refers to the way in which the world *presents itself* to us, not to its material, substantial component. And this *presenting* implies that nature is not a fixed entity, that it should be viewed more like a dynamic process through which everything that surrounds us is constantly *spontaneously being and becoming*. This is, most likely, the strongest reason why all the translations of the title *Shizen shin'eidō* avoid the word »nature« and instead propose alternatives, which are all justified by Shōeki's understanding of *shizen*[6].

In this essay, I will take the same position and refrain from using ›nature‹ when discussing Shōeki's philosophy. Instead, I will use the original *shizen*, especially when describing the notion of *hito* and the concept of self, since they appear as such precisely because they are realised within *shizen*. I ground my choice in Tremblay's suggestion that, when translating Japanese philosophy—or any other philosophy for that matter, I might add—we should force and expand the limits of language, as not all concepts and notions have (nor should they have) perfect equivalents (Tremblay 2008: 242):

> À la façon des philosophes de l'ère Meiji qui transformèrent leur propre langue (création de néologismes et de distinctions à partir des caractères chinois, nouvelles significations données aux vieux vocables, altération de la syntaxe, bref, extension des limites de la langue), les traducteurs actuels de la philosophie japonaise doivent accomplir le même type de travail au niveau de leurs langues maternelles respectives […].

But what kind of vision of the world does Shōeki put forth, after all? And how does the human being fit in this world? In his own words, *shizen* is a realm made up of spontaneous energies that circulate ceaselessly back and forth from Heaven to Earth, passing, in between,

through the ground and the seas in the middle and begetting all creatures (ASZ 1997: I: 63–64):

Shizen is the special name of the Subtle Way of mutual natures. But what are the mutual natures? They are the spontaneous movement of the primary matter of earth *(dokasshin)*—which is beginningless and endless—which advances and retreats to a greater or lesser degree. [The primary matter] thus creates the four elements: when it advances a little: wood; when it advances a lot: fire; when it retreats a little: metal; when it retreats a lot: water. Spontaneously, by advancing and retreating, [the four elements] create the eight energies, which are mutual natures. […] This [dynamic process] is the Subtle Way. It is ›subtle‹ because of the existence of the mutual natures, and it is a ›Way‹ because of the interaction of these mutual natures. This is the spontaneous movement of the primary matter of earth—which cannot be taught or learned, which does not increase or decrease—which is created by itself. Therefore, this is called *shizen*[7].

One of the most important terms in this fragment—apart from *shizen*—is *kasshin* 活真 (which can also be read *ikite makoto*). *Kasshin* is the term coined by Shōeki to designate the primary matter, the fabric of all existence. *Katsu/ikite* 活 represents vitality and dynamism, whereas *shin/makoto* 真 represents the substantiality and materiality of existence. The way in which *kasshin* advances and retreats is regulated by *gosei*, the »mutual natures«, which designates the fundamental way in which *shizen* functions and plays an important part in the ontology of the *hito* and of the self.

2 The Self-with-others

Gosei consists of *go*, which means ›reciprocal‹ or ›mutual‹, and *sei*, which means ›embedded feature‹, ›inner characteristic‹, ›immanent disposition‹, ›interior(ised) reciprocity‹ etc. For Shōeki, this notion implies that absolutely all constitutive elements found in *shizen* are in a relationship of functional reciprocity, from Heaven and Earth to the advancing and retreating energies, to fire and water, to man and woman. Therefore, the only connection that can obtain between any two entities present in *shizen* is one of ›mutual natures‹, which means that each of the two entities contains within itself the essence of the other. Thus, they are neither distinct, nor identical; they exist as two sides of the same coin, separated yet inseparable.

Perhaps the best example of ›mutual natures‹ is Shōeki's under-

standing of the human being, of man and woman as a single self of man-and-woman (ASZ 1997: I: 113–114):

> The primary matter is constantly acting in a subtle manner through the mutual natures of advance and retreat, without a moment's pause. […] The nature of the man is the woman, and the nature of the woman is the man—with their mutual natures of man and woman, they are the human being as manifestation of the primary matter.

As we can see from this fragment, for Shōeki the human being—i. e. man-and-woman-as-a-single-person—is not merely a temporary pairing of two different entities. He writes the concept with two ideographs (*otoko* and *onna*, 男女), but he specifies that this compound should not be read *danjo*, but *hito*. Thus, *hito* is more than the sum total of man plus woman as two distinct elements, because it represents in fact a fusion of two forms of existence that, while separated and heterogeneous, contain within themselves the valency needed to be combined with each other in an indissoluble union. Just as Heaven and Earth, water and fire, or the flows of energies are inextricably linked in pairs as ›mutual natures‹, so are man and woman merged into one, in accordance with *gosei* as an ontological principle that underpins all of existence. As *otoko* is embedded within *onna* and *onna* is embedded within *otoko*, the *hito* resulted from the amalgamation of the two is the epitome of ›mutual natures‹ and the most easily recognizable manifestation of this notion.

Since man and woman both contain the fundamental inner characteristics of the other—which thus become embedded features of their very own essence—they retain the valency and potentiality for union but at the same time conserve and perpetuate their own, separate identity. *Gosei* is therefore a *principle of mutual independence* in which each of the two entities supports and enhances all the features, characteristics and qualities of the other, thus underlying the image of a *homo naturalis* reconnected with *shizen* and reinstated as a full-fledged component of its realm.

Since *hito* is a manifestation of ›mutual natures‹ and, as such, part of the intricate system of *shizen*, it is clear that the world envisaged by Shōeki can never be an anthropocentric universe. The self is not a *res cogitans*, a sentient being contemplating the world (or the *res extensa*, as Descartes would put it), but actually a *homo naturalis*, a mere constituent of this world placed on an equal footing with all the other elements, from plants to crawling creatures, from fishes to

rivers. Moreover, not only are one man and one woman fused together into one single person, but all human beings are in a relationship of ›mutual natures‹. The only connection that a *hito* can establish with another *hito* is one of mutual independence, and thus the concept acquires a whole new dimension as it is used to refer to society at large, not to just one single unit. The notion of the human being understood as *hito* does refer to the ontological characteristics of the individual, but at the same time it encompasses all of humankind, viewed as a complex web of interwoven reciprocities. Therefore, all *hito* are one *hito*, precisely because they are interlinked by the principle of *gosei*—ontologically and epistemologically, the human being can not just *exist without* the other human beings. One *hito* exists in its isness solely because all the other *hito* are at the same time in a relationship of mutuality with it.

Since *shizen* itself is beginningless and endless, the question of time is irrelevant and, as a consequence, the notion of history is meaningless. Therefore, the human being (and any other form of existence) is ahistorical and non-relative, and there can be no value judgment with regard to its existence and presence in the world, which further means that any type of hierarchy within the realm of *shizen* is fundamentally impossible and inapposite. Shōeki illustrates this idea by using the term *nibetsu naki* 二別無キ (›no distinction‹) to emphasise the fact that there is no difference between man and woman (or between superior and inferior). *Nibetsu naki* implies that there is no divergence between the two entities fused together as ›mutual natures‹. It suggests, at the same time, that both man and woman, *hito* and *hito*, *hito* and the others exist as individual, distinct entities as well. They are simultaneously homogeneous and heterogeneous, innate and immanent within each other. This entails another feature of the human being in Shōeki's vision: because of the principle of *gosei*, the essence of the *hito* is disseminated within all the others, and therefore the self of one human being is at the same time the self of all other human beings. This means that the whole of humankind, while dispersed into a multitude of individual, separate manifestations, is in fact one single person, a universal, global ›I‹, an all-encompassing self that epitomises human nature. This is the *homo naturalis*, intrinsic to *shizen* as an integral component, unfettered by hierarchies or value systems, rooted at the same time within the self and the others, and affirmed and defined through the unmediated

interaction with the others in accordance with the principle of ›mutual natures‹.

How is this vision of *hito* relevant for environmental ethics? There are, of course, numerous approaches to the question of the locus and role of the self in disciplines as varied as philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, neurobiology etc. One of the theories I would like to bring into the discussion here is the »relational self« in psychology as put forth by Andersen and Chen (2002). Drawing from previous work on interpersonal approaches to the self and grounding their thinking in social-cognitive views of personality, the authors propose a view of the self which is closely linked with the phenomenon of transference (Andersen and Chen 2002: 638):

> The theory posits that individuals possess multiple selves in relation to the various significant others in their lives, each linked in memory with a particular significant other. It is because linkages exist between the self and significant-other representations that when a significant-other representation is activated in an encounter with a new person, associated self-with-significant-other knowledge is set into motion. As a result, the relevant relational self comes into play, as manifested in the individual's emotional, motivational, and behavioral responses in the interpersonal encounter. Different relational selves thus unfold dynamically across interpersonal contexts.

As psychologists, for Andersen and Chen the focus is on the individual's interpersonal patterns and, therefore, on his or her personality. They propose the existence of a ›repertoire of relational selves‹ and suggest that each individual invokes and relies on a particular self from this repertoire when dealing with different significant others in different social contexts and situations. I think that this theory of the ›relational self‹—with two essential amendments—can be useful in trying to better understand Shōeki's notion of *hito* and its relation with *shizen*.

The first amendment I propose is that for Shōeki the relation is not limited to the ›significant other‹. As I have shown, *gosei* is the only mode of existence within *shizen*, the only kind of relationship that can obtain between its various constituting elements. Therefore, one particular, individual self cannot exist *as such*, firstly because it already represents a fusion between man and woman, and secondly because in its broadest instantiation it includes all of humankind. Supposing *ad absurdum* that such a self exists, then it cannot be complete in itself, as it is ontologically interlinked with all the other

selves. In other words, the self for Shōeki is necessarily a *self-with-others*.

The second amendment is that, if we adopt Shōeki's idea of *gosei*, then there can be no such thing as a ›repertoire of relational selves‹. The *hito* in the realm of *shizen* does not choose between different selves, simply because there is nothing to choose from. The entity of a man-and-woman-as-a-single-person does not construct its personality by navigating and negotiating between different selves according to the social situation, as it is intrinsically and inextricably linked with all the others: if your self can only exist as a *self-with-others*, then there is nothing to negotiate in this kind of relationship.

To explore the link between this notion of self-with-others and environmental ethics, we need to look into the locus of the agency of the *hito* that Shōeki proposes. And in order to do that, we should take a closer look at *chokkō*, a concept which informs Shōeki's understanding of the relationship between human beings and *shizen*. With the literal meaning of ›straight/direct cultivation‹, *chokkō* is a concept coined by Shōeki to designate all activities of labor or production, from tilling the land to harvesting crops. However, *chokkō* is also used in a broader sense to refer comprehensively to the sum of all creative activities, whether it be the creative energies and ontological capacities of *shizen*, or the tasks and actions which underpin the existence of all forms of life, from human beings to plants.

In a universe governed by *chokkō*, any human act represents a reproduction and a continuation of the ontological movements of *shizen* and, thus, *chokkō* refers comprehensively to the activities and power of creation of both Heaven and human beings. The first and most basic meaning of ›straight cultivation‹ is undoubtedly the agricultural one, but this meaning becomes subaltern through the abstractisation of the term. Thus, when Shōeki states that ›straight cultivation‹ is the only way for human beings as constitutive elements of *shizen*, he is talking not only about literally, physically tilling the land, but also about something more comprehensive, subtle and intangible, a kind of vague, yet pervasive awareness of all forms of existence that their *raison d'être* is to be in accord with *shizen*.

Here is how Shōeki himself defines *chokkō* (ASZ 1997: I: 64–65):

[The energies] ascend to Heaven, and after ascending they descend and, in accordance with the land in the middle, they acquire the three directions—descending *(tsū)*, lateral, and ascending—and create and produce grains, hu-

man beings *(hito)*, the four types of creatures, and vegetation. This is the creative power *(chokkō)* of the primary matter, beginningless and endless. Consequently, Heaven-and-Earth, the stars, the planets, the sun and the moon—in other words, the Heaven-and Earth which moves in accordance with the three directions—are all manifestations of the energy of the primary matter.

Shōeki's discontent with the world he was living in determined him to put forth the concept of ›straight cultivation‹ as a means of making sense of society's ills while at the same time imagining a primeval, prelapsarian World of *shizen* in an endeavor to reestablish the connections among its various components. Since *chokkō* is the only true way in which the *homo naturalis* can live, it also signifies a rehabilitation of the intricate web of relationships between human beings and *shizen*, and a reinstatement of the human being *qua* human being. To accomplish this, Shōeki invests ›straight cultivation‹ with meanings and nuances that exceed and transcend the simple notion of tilling the land; *chokkō* thus becomes all-pervasive and ubiquitous, and its ontological capacity and creative powers become embedded within every gesture or action performed by the human being, including apparently mundane tasks such as cooking (ASZ 1997: I: 81–82): ›The only purpose of the subtle action that takes place in the hearth is to prepare the grain to eat. It is splendidly clear that this is [an example of] the straight cultivation of the primary matter of earth in the hearth‹.

To sum up, the *hito* in Shōeki's vision of the world—the *homo naturalis*—is a notion that comprises three different stages: first of all, it is the fusion between man and woman as distinct, yet inseparable entities; secondly, it is the interaction between the single person resulted from the fusion and all the others; and thirdly, it is the all-encompassing single self resulted from this interaction. In all these instances, the existence of the human being is governed by the principle of ›mutual natures‹, while its relationship with the realm of *shizen* is regulated by the principle of ›straight cultivation‹.

But where is the locus of the sense of agency for the self-with-others? Is *hito* an agent in its relation with *shizen?* When discussing different theories of the notion of ›agent‹, Benson notices that they ›all presuppose that agents are necessarily identified with or present in some privileged volitional states or complex of states‹ (Benson 1994: 654–655). In a more recent study Gallagher notes that, in general, there can be identified three meanings of agency: first, the sense of agency as a first-order experience linked to intentional aspect (task,

goal, etc.); second, as first-order experience linked to bodily movement; and third, as a second-order, reflexive attribution. (Gallagher 2007: 354–355) The author then goes on to suggest that the sense of agency is not, in fact, reducible to somatic processes, nor is it simply the product of higher-order processes as in Descartes' dualism or in Kant's transcendental ›I‹, and proposes instead a hybrid understanding of the sense of agency which consists of a complex combination of outward-oriented signals, inward-oriented feedback, and intentional feedback (Gallagher 2007: 354): »efferent signals, sensory (afferent) feedback, and intentional (perceptual) feedback. If any of these contributory elements fail, or fail to be properly integrated, then we can get a disruption or disturbance in the sense of agency«.

However, if we agree with Shōeki that for the self-with-others the only way to exist within *shizen* is *chokkō*, then there can be no question of a ›volitional state‹ or ›intentional feedback‹ since *chokkō* regulates every aspect of the presencing of the *hito*—the issue of volition or intention becomes completely irrelevant in this context. For the same reason, there can be no hybrid sense of agency, as all elements that might contribute to it are in fact subsumed to *shizen* through *chokkō*, from bodily movements to higher-order processes. The *hito* as self-with-others breathes, moves, makes tea, reasons—in a word, *exists*—within the realm of *shizen* only through ›straight cultivation‹. As such, it is a self without agency in any understanding of the term. Or, to put it differently, it is a self that has relinquished its agency and entrusted it to *shizen*.

3 *Gosei*, *chokkō* and Environmental Ethics

As we have seen, the concept of *hito* lies at the very core of Shōeki's philosophy. It is a complex notion describing the human being on three different levels, closely interlinked with other notions such as ›mutual natures‹, or ›straight cultivation‹, and integrated into the vast fabric of *shizen*. This *homo naturalis* is in a relation of mutual independence with all the other human beings, forming together a self-with-others. Moreover, if—as Shōeki suggests—we expand the scope of *gosei* beyond the realm of the human, then we can even talk about a self-with-everything within the world of *shizen*. Since ›mutual natures‹ is the only kind of relation that can obtain between any two entities, then the universal self of humankind is extended to the

non-human as well, and the self-with-others includes the land and sea, the animals, fishes, and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests, mountains, and rivers …

If the basis for the presencing of the self lies in *shizen;* if the self cannot be anything else but a self-with-others; if the agency of the self is entrusted to *chokkō;* and if, thus, the self-with-others becomes the self-with-everything, then the issue of responsibility toward *shizen* must be reconsidered starting from these premises. If the human being's *raison d'être* is to be within *shizen* as an integral, inseparable part of it, then any action that a human being might take in whatever context is an action directed at the same time at *shizen* and at the self itself. When I am confronted with the decision whether I should fell a tree or not, I need to consider the fact that I am, at least partially, also deciding whether to fell myself. When I kill a bird and eat it, I also kill at least a part of myself. When I hurt *shizen* in the smallest way, I also hurt myself. But I should never get that far: my understanding that my agency lies within ›straight cultivation‹ should prevent me from even contemplating such choices.

If Shōeki is correct, then this means two things for environmental ethics: first of all, we must adjust our definition of ›environment‹ to include human beings *within* it, not outside of it. *Hito* is not a *res cogitans* observing nature from an external realm, but an inherent part of it. To go back to the question I started with: the value of nature is neither the result of the investment made by human beings, nor is it an intrinsic value independent of human beings—both these positions presuppose a human being separated from nature. The value of nature, its beauty and dignity, is intrinsic *because* human beings are a constitutive part of *shizen*—not independent from it, not investing anything in it, just existing or, to be more exact, just *presencing* themselves in it. And this leads us to the second thing: in considering our ethical positioning toward the environment, we must start from the premise that we *are* the environment. More precisely, we are ourselves because *shizen* is the ontological and epistemological principle that underpins our existence and therefore we are part of it just as much as it is part of us. In this sense, the discussion whether ›nature‹ is ›anthropocentric‹ or ›non-anthropocentric‹ is superfluous and futile, as there is no ›centre‹ and no ›periphery‹. If the self-with-others is the self-with-everything, then the self is everything and everywhere. The ethics of the environment is the ethics of human beings, and vice versa.

There is substantial potential for research in the field of environmental ethics in general and in Japan in particular. But I believe that this kind of research should be accompanied by a process of re-examination of fundamental concepts such as ›self‹, ›nature/*shizen*‹, and the relation between them. Transforming current concepts, adding new meanings to old notions and forcing the limits of language with new translations are tasks we should continue to engage in, constantly. This will open new doors into our understanding of the environment and of its ethics.

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Notes

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[2] The Edo (or Tokugawa) period in Japanese history starts in 1603 when the Tokugawa shoguns become *de facto* rulers of the country, and ends in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration. It is characterised by the *sakoku* (›closed country‹) policy of isolationism imposed by the shogunate, but also by demographic and economic growth, a relatively strict social hierarchy, and political stability. The intellectual landscape is dominated by Confucianism (in particular the Neo-confucianist school of *Shushigaku*), but it also sees the development of disciplines such as *kokugaku* (›national learning‹) and *rangaku* (›Dutch learning‹.)

[3] I have discussed some of these themes before (Pașca 2016), but my focus was the relation between the *homo naturalis* and the three flows of energy: descending, lateral, and ascending *(tsūki, ōki*, and *gyakki)*.

[4] For a more detailed discussion of *jinen*/*shizen*, cf. also Adeney Thomas (2001); Joly (1996: 77–156); Kawai (1995); Morris-Suzuki (1998: 40); Yasunaga (1992: 350–352).

[5] Kakuryūdō Ryōchū 確龍堂良中 was one of the pseudonyms Shōeki used.

[6] This description of nature may sound somewhat similar to Spinoza's notion of *natura naturans*, but they are in fact fundamentally different, in that for Spinoza nature is ultimately God, whereas for Shōeki there is no such thing as a transcendental entity of any kind. Spinoza tells us that *natura naturans* is ›what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, that is […] God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause‹, and then opposes it to—and at the same time, pairs it with—*natura naturata*, which is ›whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from God's attributes, that is, all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God‹. In Shōeki's vision, however, there is no *naturata* dimension to nature, as *shizen* is complete in itself and not the equivalent of some divine creation.

[7] All translations from *Shizen shin'eidō* are from Yasunaga (1992), modified and adapted to better fit the original. Unless otherwise indicated, all other translations are mine.