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Miyazaki's Philosophy of Life behind *Spirited Away*: With Respect to Goethe's Bildungsroman and Nietzsche's Nihilism

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Abstract

This article investigates the symbolism of Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. The aim is, without reducing it to a critique of capitalism or a revival of animism, to hermeneutically reconstruct his concept of life and to compare this position with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Bildungsroman and Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilism. In the first part, Miyazaki's selected interviews are scrutinized to bring his ambivalent perspective towards the nature of life into the foreground. Subsequently, the results are expounded in two additional studies. The juxtaposition with Goethe's novels will show a tension between two aspects of Chihiro's adventure which are related to the vocational functionalism of Montan and Makarie's illuminating benevolence. In regard to nihilism, Nietzsche's renunciation of idealistic sophistries is linked to Miyazaki's cynical comments on post-modern society. But Miyazaki does not resort to the instinctive will to power, as does Nietzsche, but to the primitive intuition of compassion. The necessity of hard work in a society on the one hand and the innate, innocent sociability of a child on the other are unified magically in the realistic drama of Chihiro.

Introduction

Hayao Miyazaki (1941–) created his first animation as a director in *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* (1979) and gradually earned a name for himself through his original movies. Mark Schilling prophesized in 1997, before the record-breaking release of *Princess Momonoke* (1997) in Japan and the global sensation of the Oscar-winning film *Spirited Away* (2001), that Miyazaki's "brand of animation is no longer just a local taste or a cult phenomenon, but its magic can appeal to moviegoers everywhere" (40). He also adds that Miyazaki is, despite his previous commercial successes, "still very much the iconoclast, the idealist, the social critic" (40). Decades later, the same mixture of magic and critique is underpinned in his most recent film *The Boy and the Heron* (2023). The Los Angeles Times (13 Nov. 2023)

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relates that Miyazaki "has been able to transport audiences to dreamlike worlds that have a distinctive, hand-crafted look and strange logic of their own." Sometimes, such magical worlds should be left unanalyzed by the scientific mind, for it might disillusion their strong power to move people's feelings. To use Nietzsche's provocative term, the intellect "corrupts" our taste in arts (*Genealogy* 156). Still, philosophy is out to give explanations for various phenomena of life, going beyond a mere description of what they are (Dilthey, *Ideen*). Wilhem Dilthey proposes "hermeneutics" as an in-depth examination of life—the hidden structure of a human soul—expressed especially in aesthetic work (*Entstehung*). The purpose of the following study is to fathom Miyazaki's "magical worlds" and to bring daylight into their "strange logic."

The employment of the hermeneutic method is not an arbitrary choice but due to the nature of Miyazaki's films which are closely interwoven with his personal experiences and preferences. Toshio Suzuki (1948–), a producer of numerous Ghibli films and an intimate collaborator of Miyazaki and Isao Takahata's (1935–2018), provides us with initial useful insights into their filmmaking process.[1] First of all, Suzuki recalls in later years that Ghibli films were traditionally "director-centered": "The projects existed because the directors existed" (*Mixing* 179). Miyazaki and Takahata are in its true sense "creators" and their work reflects their own opinions and tastes about everything. On top of this, unlike Takahata who is a consequential realist and elaborates every description with the help of reports [記録 *kiroku*], Miyazaki relies heavily on his memories [記憶 *kioku*] of small details of his experiences, from which he fabricates settings like houses, castles, cities and stories (68, 103). Since *Porco Rosso* (1992), Miyazaki has never finished his story board (screenplay) during the preparation and starts drawing pictures while he concocts a plot as it unfolds (74). And this parallel development of content and structure takes place "within a radius of three meters"—in casual everyday chatting with his coworkers (71). For example, one of the incentives for *Spirited Away* was, as Suzuki himself is surprised to hear afterwards, a harmless talk between him and Miyazaki about young women in cabaret clubs who, in Miyazaki's opinion, are rather shy but acquire an excellent communicative skill.[2] Without consulting any facts or reports, Miyazaki just empathizes in his imagination with these unknown female workers and arrives at the main concept of Chihiro. He molds all his characters in an extremely personal manner and shares feelings with each of them, as Takahata shrewdly remarks:

> Even if he does incorporate his astute observations into his artwork, he remains possessed by, and fused with, his characters [. . .]. And one result is that even his "bad guys" tend to suddenly stop being bad guys. Now, I realize this may be a tendency of all good authors who create characters of

[1] Beside this book, I recommend readers to watch a documentary film *The Kingdom of Dreams and Madness* (2013) to get clear ideas about the reality of Studio Ghibli.

[2] In her doctoral thesis, Nanase Shirota looks into the listening competency of Japanese hostesses (similar to "young women in cabaret clubs") and claims that "listening is not simply a skill of hearing or understanding others, but also a way of associating with them" (2).

> complex depth, or fascinating human portraits, but it may be amplified in Miya-san's [Miyazaki's] case. He [. . .] can't stand the idea of creating any with whom he can't identify [. . .] emotionally. (Suzuki, *Mixing* 76)

The "strange logic" of Miyazaki's films has its ultimate source in his belief that everyone or everything has a reason to exist if we learn to see through the complexity of the matter.

The following exposition delves into one of Miyazaki's animations, *Spirited Away*, for several reasons: 1) This film is said by Suzuki to be "the grand summing-up of Miya-san's work" (as of 2008; *Mixing* 87). This does not mean that Chihiro marks the acme, but we can still presume that Miyazaki's productive years have culminated in it. 2) This award-winning animation film is globally recognized and has a symbolic meaning to best serve as a common basis for further analyses. 3) The movie has evoked interesting reactions among academics in different areas such as politics, sociology, and religious studies (Yamanaka; Yoshioka; Lucken). Ayumi Suzuki, for instance, claims that Chihiro's adventure amounts to a strong criticism of modern capitalism, represented by Yubāba's Yuya [湯屋; bathhouse] against which Chihiro struggles. 4) There are abundant text and interview sources for a rigorous hermeneutic investigation. Some of them are only known in Japan or accessible in Japanese so that it is worth taking a new look at them. 5) Finally, and most importantly, Chihiro's character incorporates the most realistic concept of life in any of Miyazaki's films. The research presented here is not the usual film critique. *Spirited Away* is selected as a paradigm that displays a certain philosophical concept of life.

The hermeneutic method is then strengthened by two interdisciplinary and intercultural comparisons. According to Dilthey, a Bildungsroman (like Rousseau's *Émile*) deals with a universal concept of education and humanity (*Erlebnis* 328). But Franco Morreti insists that the genre "Bildungsroman" is a specific "symbolic form" of storytelling that mirrors young people in the 19th century Europe and their conflict with capitalistic ideology.[3] Chihiro is involved in a similar Zeitgeist around the turn of the 21st century in Japan, although capitalism is just one of many topoi here. To place and explicate Miyazaki's movie in the tradition of the Bildungsroman, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhem Meister* will be brought into the picture. Nihilism is the second key concept that characterizes both *Spirited Away* and Miyazaki as a person. Approximately a decade before the film, Miyazaki moderated a series of interviews with two novelists he admired, Yoshie Hotta (1918–98) and Ryōtarō Shiba (1923–96).[4] Their talks cover various issues of the 20th century from the epoch-making wars to environmental destruction

[3] The syntagm "symbolic form" is attributed to a German philosopher, Ernst Cassirer. For an overview of his philosophy, see *An Essay on Man*.

[4] Although both literati are influential in Miyazaki's life, Hotta is especially often mentioned by Miyazaki: He was acquainted with Hotta's writings in his college years (1959–62; *Orikaeshiten* 506) and states in the interview from 1990 that he is very fond of Hotta and wishes him a long life (*Kaze* 24). Hotta's book that was reedited in 2002 was advertised with Miyazaki's original drawing, in appreciation of the outstanding work of this great writer (*Orikaeshiten* 367).

and gravitate towards the notion of human-being shared by all three that "it is hard to persuade humans" (Hotta et al. 271);[5] upon this, Miyazaki is reminded of his late mother's repeated remarks that "humans are something unmanageable [*shikatano nai mono*]."[6] Without being able to fully digest this enigma, he calls it "clear nihilism" ["澄んだニヒリズム *sunda nihirizumu*"]: "The cheap one [nihilism] spoils humans whereas the one founded in realism does not lead to negate humans" (272).[7] This nihilism will be elucidated in the drama of *Spirited Away* and examined in respect of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Miyazaki's Philosophy of Life

The first task is to clarify the principle of Miyazaki's filmmaking that remains constant in his entire animator career. The clue is given in the Japanese title of his latest movie *The Heron and the Boy*: "How Do You Live?"[8] Miyazaki is reported to have responded to this ultimate, philosophical question in 2021: "I am making this movie because I do not have the answer" (Zahed). In his interview from 1990, Miyazaki finds himself trapped in a dilemma of creating animation films: On the one hand, he knows that children want to hear from grown-ups their honest talk about such notions as love [愛 *ai*], justice [正義 *seigi*], and friendship [友情 *yūjō*], while on the other he finds himself not qualified to preach them. "But I am sure that, despite that, all children are basically and very honestly asking themselves this question: How I wonder should I live?" (*Kaze* 55).[9] Miyazaki's hope or optimism is directed exclusively at children because they are never tired of this question and show a mental resilience:

> I do not think I will make any happy films. It is worth addressing children because they possess possibilities and, moreover, are continually defeated in these possibilities. I don't have anything to say to those who are completely defeated. (*Kaze* 19–20)[10]

[5] In Japanese: "人間は度し難い [*Ningen ha doshigatai*]." "*Dosuru*" is derived from "*saido suru*" [済度する], which means in the Buddhist context "save and send (to Nirvana)." Translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

[6] In Japanese: "人間はしかたのないものだ [*Ningen ha shikatano nai mono da*]." "*Shikatano nai*" is literally rendered as "no way to handle."

[7] In Japanese: "安っぽいそれは人を腐らせ、リアリズムに裏づけられたそれは、人間を否定することとは違うようです。"

[8] In Japanese: "君たちはどう生きるか *Kimi tachi wa dō ikiru ka*." This is the title of a novel written by Genzaburō Yoshino (1899–1981) in 1937, which is used in the film. Mahito unexpectedly discovers an inscription of his late mother in this book and bursts into tears.

[9] In Japanese: "だけど、やっぱり基本的に、ものすごくみんな真面目に『自分はどういうふうに生きていったらいいんだろう？』ってふうに子供たちが思ってることだけはもう間違いないと思います。"

[10] In Japanese: "幸せな映画は作らないだろうと思いますね。子供は可能性を持ってる存在で、しかも、その可能性がいつも敗れ続けていくっていう存在だから、子供に向かって語ることは価値があるのであって。もう敗れきってしまった人間にね、僕はなにも語る気は起こらない。"

Therefore, he is a critical idealist and wants to set the stagnated present in motion for a better future: "I make my movies—I say this here and there—with an intention to depict how we hope humans could be, not how humans actually are" (19).[11] This is Miyazaki's maxim in making animations for children instead of adults, in relation to whom a nihilistic [ニヒリスティック *nihiristikku*] feeling is frequently aroused (21). The word "nihilism" means here simply being hopeless and desperate. This pessimism is a part of Miyazaki's own personality: "I make virtuous movies not because I am a virtuous person; only because I think myself to be totally unimportant (laugh), I wish to make movies where virtuous characters appear" (21).[12]

Thus, Miyazaki's position towards his own work and the world is always ironic. He is disappointed in the world of grown-ups (including himself) and wishes to brighten children's future in his work although he can show no happy endings but only incessant efforts and obstacles in life. Nonetheless, he has kept asking this same question for more than sixty years.[13] And this suffices to label Miyazaki as a philosopher of life. He loves to know what a good life is or should be. Just as Socrates holds an unexamined life for not worth living[14] and engages in interrogating dialogues with Athenians without giving any definite answers, Miyazaki challenges both himself and his little viewers to contemplate life. The fine mixture of fantasy and critique, dream and satire, is the tenant of all his animation movies.

A Dualism of Life in *Spirited Away*

Since children, both as spectators of and protagonists in Miyazaki's films, are featured as positive power for a change, a pedagogical concept is central to them. *Spirited Away* can, as Hiroshi Yamanaka observes, be read in this line:

> What makes Chihiro's story so compelling is that it is a story of growing up. As her tale unfolds, she changes from a frightened, self-centered little girl into a young woman who learns to live independently, work for her own living, and find the wisdom to save her hapless parents. (238)

There is no doubt that a kind of "growing up" is engrained in the story. But this "utopian" postulate Yamanaka ascribes to Miyazaki must be construed with

[11] In Japanese: "だから僕は—これはあちこちで喋ってることですけど—『人というのはこういうものだ』っていうふうな描き方じゃなくて、『こうあったらいいなあ』という方向で映画を作ってます。"

[12] In Japanese: "自分が善良な人間だから善良な映画を作るんじゃないですよね。自分がくだらない人間だと思ってるから（笑）、善良な人が出てくる映画を作りたいと思うんです。"

[13] He started his career as an animater in Toho Animation in 1963 (Miyazaki, *Orikaeshiten* 506).

[14] Plato (*Apology* 38a): "ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ" ["An unexamined life is not worth living for humans"].

caution.[15] There are, among others, two statements in an interview with Miyazaki from 2001, which indicate that such a reading is too simplistic for his taste:

> It is not a story of growing up [*seichō monogatari*], but I just wanted to make a movie in which children's potentiality springs forth under certain circumstances. Instead of showing that a child grows up to be clever or to stand on its own feet, I wish my movies to tell that something which originally lies within a child but sleeps due to a lack of incentives bursts forth. (*Interview* 30)[16]

> [A film] "For children" does not mean at all that they grow [*seichō suru*] after they see it. Chihiro in this film does not grow at all. It is simply that the power she possesses manifests itself. [...] It is often said that being rational is "growing up," but I do not think that way. (*Interview* 139)[17]

It is true that Chihiro discovers her own strength both physically and psychologically. But this does not entail that she has become a responsible, caring grown-up, a type of ideal human-being adults expect her to be. For Miyazaki, as will be shown below, a child is a teacher for grown-ups. We must look more broadly to describe the process of Chihiro's development.

The otherworld of Yuya is in effect not conceived so otherworldly because Miyazaki, probably after being touched by the story about women in cabaret clubs, shaped it based on his Studio Ghibli:

> Those newcomers in our Studio who have no orientation at all, just like Chihiro in the bathhouse of this movie, run here and there, not knowing what to do and anxious because their superiors will scorn them when they fail to fulfill their tasks. [...] Unfortunately, due to the nature of our profession in which specific skills or dispositions are required, many drop out, but they work hard [*ganbaru*] like Chihiro. It is when people start talking about cool jobs or personal lifestyles that things get confused. When we just commit ourselves to work to live [*ikiru tameni hataraku*], we can extract far more power from ourselves. I did not want to create a world of which children think "it can be done only in a film" but, on the contrary, a world where they think "I can do it, too." (Miyazaki, *Interview* 135)[18]

[15] Cf. "Miyazaki's emphasis on Chihiro's powers to know herself shows his confidence in the mythic power of self-renewal and his rejection of nihilistic self-denial, both of which come from his utopianism" (253).

[16] In Japanese: "成長物語ではなくて、その子たちの中に本来有るものが、ある状況の中で溢れ出てくるという、そういう映画を作りたいって思ったんです。成長して賢くなっていくとか、スックと立つようになっていくとかいうことよりも、元々持っていたのにきっかけがなくて眠っていたものが、溢れてくるという、そういう映画になればいいなって思ってます。"

[17] In Japanese: "「子供のために」というのは、映画を見て成長するためなんかじゃない。この映画の千尋は成長なんかしないですよ。自分の持っている力が出てくるだけの話です。[...] 分別がつくようになったことを「成長」という言い方もするけれど、そうじゃないと僕は思っています。"

[18] In Japanese: "西も東も分からずにジブリに入った新人はね、この映画の千尋のように、風呂屋の中で、何だかわからないけれど、やらなければいけないことがあって、やらなけ

It is neither a utopia nor an ideal world but the most trivial reality that is reconstructed in *Spirited Away*. Yuya represents an average Japanese workplace with all negative consequences of capitalism where labor is seen as the Alpha and Omega as Suzuki (*Nightmare*) points out.[19] Chihiro has no other choice but to endure and persevere even under these challenging circumstances. But for what? For an eventual reform of this crooked world? Suzuki (*Nightmare*) likes to lay this revolutionary idea in the mouth of Miyazaki:

> Miyazaki wants to destroy—the human greed that sustains a system of capitalist consumerism. [...] With his poetic imagination and keen acumen, he presents our world as shaped by his wish that we could face the problems of capitalistic societies without losing our ethics and aspirations. He does so by letting a youthful character, who has not yet had her identity molded to mainstream society, question this society with cunning and high spirit. (section: "Conclusion")

But again, if Yubāba's cruel business model is a mirror of Studio Ghibli and Chihiro has solely to adapt to its work ethos, there is no need for her to call it into question. Miyazaki's notion of labor does not entail a critique of any particular types of the system such as capitalism or socialism. Work is simply a *conditio sine qua non* of our life:

> It is evident from the reality of this world that children work [as members of the labor force]. I do not mean to judge whether it's good or bad, but, rather, I did not want to forget about this fact. As a matter of fact, because humans are social animals, they must live in relation to their society. They cannot live without work. (*Orikaeshiten* 264)[20]

That is why the bathhouse functions as a catalyst that promotes Chihiro's will to live and work both for her own good and for the benefit of the company she takes part in.[21] Jo Law stresses: "Scenes in Miyazaki's animations that depict

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れば怒られるしと、右往左往するでしょう。[...] 不幸なことに、仕事柄、才能というか適性が要求されることが多いので、挫折しちゃう人がいるけど、でもみんな千尋位にはがんばるんです。かっこいい仕事とか、個性的な生き方とかいいだすから判らなくなっちゃう。生きるために働くんだと決めたら、もっとずっと力を出せるんです。「映画だから出来る」のではなくて。「私でも出来る」という感じの世界にしたかった。"

[19] Cf. "By forcing Chihiro to exchange her labor for what she desires, the film represents her as a workingclass worker, a child whose childhood has been stolen from her." (section: "The Yuya: a capitalist society of the spirit world") The text is only available on the online page and does not have any page numbers.

[20] In Japanese: "子供が働くのが当たり前なのがこの世界の現状なんです。それが良いか悪いかではなく、そのことを忘れたくなかったんです。実際、人間は社会的生き物ですから、基本的に社会と関わりを持たずに生きてはいけませんからね。働かざるを得ないんです。" The English edition of this book (Miyazaki, *Turning Point*) is not used, for the author, whose native language is Japanese, wishes to provide readers with a more literal or transparent translation.

[21] After the episode of Okusare-sama (rotten god), Chihiro is thanked both by this divinity for the healing as well as by Yubāba for the surprising profit for Yuya even though it later turns out to be of no value.

human bodies at work, humans and machines at work and humans in flight speak to labour as craft that is underpinned by reciprocal sociality" (207). However, this essential role of work does not justify all types of labor; Miyazaki would never approve of slavery or child labor in a goldmine because, as we will see later on, human life must be maintained in the spirit of mutual help, not in that of exploitation or survival instinct. The point made so far is that Chihiro's development as a hard and honest worker is illustrated in the movie, even when this subversion or resignation to the existing power relation can cast a pessimistic or nihilistic shadow over her life.

Beside this essential role of labor, there is another, psychological-emotional side of Chihiro's growth that needs to be underlined as a complementary aspect. This internal change or, in the metaphor of Plato in *Republic* (515c), a laborious ascent of a soul from a shadowy cave to the blending daylight occurs gradually and is subtly implicated when Chihiro returns from Zenība's cottage to the bathhouse to take her last test to get her bewitched parents back. Chihiro addresses here Yubāba for the first time with a friendly name: "Obā-chan!" ["Grannie!"] (*Spirited Away* 01:57:11). The wicked witch responds to this in a perplexed manner: "Obā-chan?" This transformation has nothing to do with any external changes; the asymmetrical relationship between them remains unaltered even after Chihiro has run away from Yubāba, who still owns her true name. Chihiro has nonetheless achieved a deeper understanding of the complexity of human personae. In spite of her mean tricks and bossy attitude, Yubāba can be treated as a friendly person as well. Yubāba's baby Bō advises her in a similar way to quit harassing Chihiro (*Spirited Away* 01:57:00-10). This discovery is the genuine strength that awakens in Chihiro and, to the same extent, Miyazaki wants all children and young adults to develop in themselves:

> When I am here in the Studio, I become Yubāba, scolding and shouting loudly. But when I am at home, I try to be a good person and play Zenība. I even participate in cleaning activities of our neighborhood river (laugh). I try to live to be more sympathetic and honest to my neighbors. And I think that this fissure [*bunretsu*] is the melancholy [*setsunasa*] in living in the current world. If you deny this, you are somehow excluded because you become incompetent as a worker; being a worker means being Yubāba, whereas among neighbors we are Zenība (laugh). There are plenty [of such incommensurable aspects] in one person. (*Interview* 138)[22]

[22] In Japanese: "僕はここ（ジブリ）にいると湯婆婆だったり湯爺爺だったりする。怒鳴ったりわめいたり。だけと家に帰るとなるべくいい人になろうと思っていて、銭婆か銭爺なんかをやってます。近所の河の掃除にも出かけるしね（笑）。近所の人になるべくにこやかにしようとか、もう少しちゃんとしようと思いながら生きている。その分裂を抱えているところが、今の世界で生きていく上での切なさなのだと思います。その分裂を拒否すると、そこから必ずはみ出しちゃう。職業人としては無能になってしまう。職業人であるということは湯婆婆であり、地域で暮らしている時は銭婆であったりする（笑）。一人の人物の中に一杯いるんですよね。"

Yubāba is rarely capable of the kindness and peacefulness Zenība shows while the latter must live in isolation, for she decided to do without capitalistic consumerism. It is, however, impossible to choose between them since they are just symbols or allegories of different characteristics of human nature: Humans are greedy (Chihiro's parents), lonely (Kaonashi / No-face), egocentric (frogs), servile (slugs), hegemonial (Yubāba), self-indulgent (Bō) and kind but foolish (Haku).[23] Miyazaki admits in an interview that Kaonashi lives in all of us and we are all somehow like frogs and slugs in the movie (*Orikaeshiten* 252, 263). Chihiro herself embodies at the beginning childish ignorance and spoilt laziness but later on, by being thrown into this ordinary fantasy world, manifests courage and compassion. Miyazaki had this vision when he first conceived *Spirited Away* in 1999:

> This movie is, although it contains neither execution of weapons nor fight with supernatural powers, an adventure. This adventure, however, does not feature a duel between right and wrong. Instead, it tells a story about a girl who is thrown into a world in which good and bad people mingle with each other. Here Chihiro gets trained, learns benevolence and devotion, and uses her wits. And even when she, by struggling and wriggling her way out, succeeds in coming back to the ordinary life, this does not result from the fact that the evil is conquered, just as the world itself never vanishes. Rather, it is because she has gained her power to live [*ikiru chikara*]. (*Orikaeshiten* 230)[24]

Although Miyazaki is not a professional philosopher and does not clarify his concept of life beyond good and evil, as we shall later do with Nietzsche, we can at least conclude that a *critique of pure emotion* is required in his conceptualization of life. As Takahata intimates, any "characters of complex depth" must be emotionally identified with. Children should be guided to respect all human qualities as they really are and to find compromises among them so that the colorful, pluralistic worldview is preserved against a black-and-white antagonism. Martha C. Nussbaum acknowledges and appreciates this richness in Miyazaki's animations:

> We should be grateful for artists who suggest to children the world's real complexity: the Japanese filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki, for example, whose wild and fantastic films contain a view of good and evil that is both gentler and more nuanced, in which dangers may come from such real and complex sources as decent humans' relation to the environment. (35–36)[25]

[23] Cf. Zenība describes dragons as "kind and dumb" ["優しく愚かだ *yasashikute oroka da*"] (*Spirited Away* 01:24:55).

[24] In Japanese: "この作品は、武器を振りまわしたり、超能力の力くらべこそないが、冒険ものがたりというべき作品である。冒険とはいっても、正邪の対決が主題ではなく、善人も悪人もみな混じり合って存在する世の中ともいうべき中へ投げ込まれ、修行し、友愛と献身を学び、知恵を発揮して生還する少女のものがたりになるはずだ。彼女は切り抜け、体をかわし、ひとまずは元の日常に帰って来るのだが、世の中が消滅しないのと同じに、それは悪を滅ぼしたからではなく、彼女が生きる力を獲得した結果なのである。"

[25] Although Nussbaum states this without any reference, Miyazaki talks about this ambivalence of good and evil concerning environmental issues in an interview about *Princess Momonoke* from 1997 (*Orikaeshiten* 32–33).

To sum up, Miyazaki's concept of life is supported by the twofold human nature. Chihiro is forced to participate in the physical labor of Yuya where she learns her potential to contribute to the corporate enterprise. *Spirited Away* does not propagate any utopian concept of a society, free from capitalist predicaments, because work is essential to live as a *zoon politikon*. Another, complementary element is the highly nuanced understanding of human characters. Our naïve instinct is prone to categorize lovable, just, or amicable people into the superior class and to dismiss others as belonging to the inferior group. Such double-mindedness and prejudice must be replaced by a more complex judgment of personality. Each person bears all the qualities of being a human. *Spirited Away* allegorically portrays the diversity and harmony of these characters.

Goethe's Bildungsroman Concerning Vocation and Humanity

Miyazaki's concept of life is expressed indirectly through the medium of his films or interviews. In a completely different era and culture, Goethe made visible his profound thoughts about life in his poems, novels, and letters. They share the conviction that truth cannot be grasped directly but only exemplified in symbols and phenomena.[26] A recent study has shown a strong affinity of Japanese intellectuals or artists to Goethe's work in the time of Japan's modernization (Keppler-Tasaki and Tasaki). In what follows, a counterfactual comparative approach is taken to interpret Chihiro's growth in terms of Goethe's Bildungsromans, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*, whereby special importance is placed on the latter. Günter Saße contends that *Apprenticeship* conveys only "*ex negativo*" (as deprivation of the fact) Goethe's critiques and observations about social orders, whilst *Journeyman* looks straightly at the problem from the beginning to the end (13).

First of all, caution must be exercised that *Journeyman* is a multi-dimensional and abstruse work. Thomas Carlyle, the first English translator of the book and a well-known admirer of Goethe, calls it "a Fragment [. . .], significantly pointing on all hands towards infinitude" (*Apprenticeship and Travels* 1: iii).[27] Rüdiger Safranski writes in his biographical work on Goethe that this story is "a genuine chaos" ["ein veritables Durcheinander"] (573). But he also claims that, despite this confusion, the novel has a coherent framework, constructed by the two contradicting figures of Montan (Jarno) and Makarie, who respectively symbolize the stringent functionality of a society and the god-like benevolence of the human heart (580). More recently, Frederick Amrine maintains, while he also refers to various concerns raised by scholars about the "formlessness" of the story, that *Journeyman* falls under the

[26] Cf. Goethe (*Zur Naturwissenschaft* 74): "Das Wahre, mit dem Göttlichen identisch, läßt sich niemals von uns direkt erkennen, wir schauen es nur im Abglanz, im Beispiel, Symbol, in einzelnen und verwandten Erscheinungen." ["Truth, identical with the divine, can never be directly comprehended by us. We observe it only in glimmer, example, symbol, and respective and related phenomena."]

[27] Carlyle has not translated all chapters of the book. In the following, most quotes are from the translation by Winston.

category of "Romance," a type of romance where the "hierogamy"—the spiritual marriage of diverse characters—takes place, for instance, between Montan and Makarie or between Wilhelm and the astronomer (96, 131). This dual concept of Goethe's is to be taken apart in more detail.

Montan is the nickname of Jarno, Wilhelm's old friend from *Apprenticeship*, who devotes his entire energy to the research of terrestrial rocks and elements in the solitary mountain setting.[28] Wilhelm encounters him on the way from the abode of Saint Joseph, where he is impressed by the solemnity of a pious life, and they start a conversation that touches upon Montan's retreat into the "strangest and loneliest of all pursuits," to which he retorts:

> Men I wished to avoid. To them we can give no help, and they hinder us from helping ourselves. Are they happy, we must let them persevere in their stolidities; are they unhappy, we must save them without disturbing these stolidities; and no one ever asks whether Thou art happy or unhappy." (*Apprenticeship and Travels* 3: 32)[29]

The subtitle of the novel *The Renunciants* ["Die Entsagenden"] is encapsulated in the personality of Montan in the most decisive way. He resigns from the ordinary society and seeks an alternative way of life in an analogy of the mineral world. In *Spirited Away*, Zenība lives a secluded life, but her character corresponds, on closer examination, rather to the opposing pole of Makarie. By extending our research, a Montan-like hermit can be pinned down in another film of Miyazaki's, *Porco Rosso*, his "very much personal film" (*Kaze* 96). In this movie, a heroic airplane pilot, a pig-man in appearance, rebels against the fascistic human society against a backdrop of a tragic war. Miyazaki ironically assigns to this "crimson swine" [" 紅の豚 *kurenaino buta*"; not his skin but his airplane has this color] the task to save the "honor and pride" of pilots of the Adrian See and, allegorically, the entire human race. This self-stylization in *Porco Rosso* aligns well with "the most misanthropic" mind-set of Montan (Amrine 109) and implicates Miyazaki's disappointment in the world of grown-ups. The question is, however, how humanity has to live under this assumption. As Safranski points out, Montan rejects humanistic education ["Bildung"] and advocates vocational training ["Ausbildung"] (576).[30] At the end of the Second Book, Wilhelm writes to Natalie that he wants to strive for his own profession as a surgeon and owes this decision to a talk with Montan, "that had awakened especially strong feelings in me" (*Journeyman* 292). This, nonetheless, might be hard for Wilhelm, according to Montan, because he is "the

[28] Cf. "Not in vain [. . .] have I changed my former name with the more expressive title of Montan: thou findest me here initiated in mountain and cave" (*Apprenticeship and Travels* 3: 132).

[29] Cf. the translation by Winston: "I wanted to avoid people. There is nothing to be done for them, and they keep us from doing anything for ourselves. If they are happy, you are supposed to let them alone in their silliness; if they are unhappy, you are supposed to save them without interfering with that silliness; and no one ever asks whether *you* are happy or unhappy" (*Journeyman* 115).

[30] Cf. "It is all tomfoolery [. . .] your liberal education and all efforts in that direction. What counts is that a man understand one particular thing and do it supremely well, better than anyone else in the vicinity" (*Journeyman* 292).

kind of person [. . .] who takes easily to a place, but not easily to a vocation" and destined to "the unsettled life" (293). Porco (a pig pilot) fulfills Montan's requirement because he was and probably still is the best in his profession, whereas his social life poses a great problem. The idea is here a closely-knit work community where both individual skill and cooperation are promoted. So, Montan criticizes Wilhelm's itinerant nature "in the name of society as a whole" (*Journeyman* 293). Going back to *Spirited Away*, the same issue is personified in Lin who guides Chihiro in her apprenticeship but says contemptuously: "I will quit this job for sure!" (*Spirited Away* 01:08:29).[31] Miyazaki would criticize such an attitude by underlining the necessity of work and illusions about a better job or personal life. Finding and fulfilling one's own profession is the foundation of a society. To some extent, this purely functional society resembles Durkheim's "organic" model of society, based on the division of labor: "Society becomes more effective in moving in concert, at the same time as each of its elements has more movements that are peculiarly its own" (85). However, both Montan and Miyazaki remain within the functionality of nature or natural ability,[32] whilst Durkheim sees in the progress to the "spiritual" society "the effect of increasingly detaching the function from the organ" (284).

Such a spirituality is conceptualized by Goethe in the mysterious character of Makarie, whose name is, just like the allusion of the name "Montan" to "mountain," "openly symbolic-allegorical" (Amrine 112) and stands for happiness or a "blessed lady, goddess" [μακαρία].[33] In contrast with the earthly abode of Montan, she lives in a castle, equipped with an observatory where her astronomer friend undertakes his research. Now, two characteristics of Makarie—her power to liberate and to see everyone's true nature—are of great importance here. Regarding the first, Henri Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* can provide a solid theoretical groundwork. In a nutshell, Bergson asserts that humans are, on the one side, instinctively organized in closed-up communities like ants' colonies. On the other, they also carry in themselves a truly humane intuition to open up such exclusive societies to appeal for the whole humanity. In the conversation between Montan and the astronomer, Goethe distinguishes in a similar vein between the detrimental stagnation of theories or dogmas which are used to establish homogeneous groups such as churches and states and the unrestrained progress of new ideas for the universal science (*Journeyman* 405–406). Montan's vocational communities are threatened to become, to use Masao Maruyama's term, "*takotsubo*" [蛸壺; octopus pot], societies that enable the efficient organization of smaller groups at the cost of free, overall interactions.[34] The astronomer or Makarie counterbalances this stoic

[31] In original: "こんなとこ絶対に辞めてやる！ *konna toko zettaini yamete yaru!*".

[32] Cf. "Nature has only one script, and I do not need to load myself down with all sorts of scribblings" (*Journeyman* 116). In the first collection of aphorisms "Reflections in the Spirit of Wanderers," Goethe also writes: "The humblest person can be complete if he operates within the limit of his capacities and skills; but even great strengths are obscured, nullified, and destroyed if that indispensable moderation is lacking" (297).

[33] For a detailed analysis of Makarie, see Ishihara (113–15).

[34] Cf. Maruyama postulates two types of society and culture (129): The one is "sasara" [簓], a traditional music instrument, made out of a bamboo trunk. The one end of it is divided in many

life with the "spiritual path, sympathy, love, and disciplined, free effectiveness" (*Journeyman* 407). But the functionality and the spirituality are not placed in a hierarchy, as proposed by Durkheim. The "effort of creative evolution" is, according to Bergson, equally founded in two sources of "social pressure" and "impetus of love" (*Sources* 87). And this dualistic evolution constitutes Chihiro's growth as well. As the training in the bathhouse goes on, her undiscriminated sympathy and empathy take emancipatory effect on everyone she encounters. She saves not only Haku but also Kaonashi and other characters who are somehow oppressed in the spartan system. This leads us to the second quality, the divine gift of Makarie to let people manifest their true self: "Everyone shows himself as he is, more so than he ever did toward parents and friends, and with a certain confidence, for he was lured and encouraged to manifest only what was good, was best, in himself, for which reason well-nigh general satisfaction reigned" (*Journeyman* 409). This perfect harmony is gradually orchestrated and achieved in the denouement of *Spirited Away* when all members of Yuya rejoice with Chihiro and applause out loud "Bull's eye!" [" 大当たり *ōatari*"]. Thanks to her, everything finds itself in its proper arrangement. This climax is yet not a typical happy ending of Hollywood movies in which a hero conquers villains with his superpower. To refer to Michael Sandel's concept, Chihiro's success is not a result of "meritocratic hubris" (5) but rather a consequence of the communitarian notion that "[a]ll labor has dignity" (13). Becoming one's true self is simply doing your everyday work and knowing yourself in a community.[35] The necessity of work is not concealed but made transparent and harmonious by Chihiro and Makarie: "Makarie is the embodiment of such a paradoxically 'selfless' self; she is revealed to be a mirror both of the higher selves of others and of the cosmos" (Amrine 128).[36]

Due to this inseparable interlocking of realism and spiritualism, both *Spirited Away* and *Journeyman* contain the ambiguity or tension of human existence and becoming a human. Chihiro's memories are supposed to be erased when she returns to the mundane world. What is then the meaning of Chihiro's adventure? Miyazaki comments to this final cut as follows:

thin strips, which symbolize that individual persons or groups develop out of the same root. Octopus pots are, on the contrary, deposited randomly on the ocean bet and there is no communication between them.

[35] Compare two following passages: First, from "Reflections in the Spirit of Wanderers": "How can one come to know oneself? Through contemplation never, more likely through action. Try to do your duty, and you shall know at once what you are. / But what is your duty? What the day demands" (294). In the last chapter "From Makarie's Archives": "If we now consider the weighty dictum 'Know thyself,' we must not interpret in the ascetic way [. . .]; it signifies quite simply: pay some heed on yourself, take notice of yourself, that you may become aware of how you stand with your fellows and with the world. For this no psychological agonizing is required" (422).

[36] This synthesis of selfishness and selflessness can be related to Masakazu Yamazaki's concept of "gentle individualism." He calls individualism, which is typically attributed to isolated individuals in the industrialized West, "rugged individualism." In contrast, Japan's collectivism or "groupism" is criticized to have neither self nor others but just undefinable collusion. Yamazaki claims that individuals must recognize their individuality in close contacts with their coworkers, friends, and so on.

> I do not know. But I did not want it to be entirely a dream. That's why we see fallen leaves on the car in the last scene and I kept the hair band that Zenība gave her, though Chihiro might not notice it. To say that it has really happened. Otherwise, the story would be too melancholic. This story is indeed quite sad, especially how it ends, don't you think? Chihiro must part with everyone she has got to know well, everyone who acknowledged her. [. . .] Can anybody remember everything? I guess not. But our memories remain, even when we cannot remember entirely, just like Zenība says "You won't forget what you experienced once." (*Orikaeshiten* 267)[37]

The sad fact should remain in Chihiro's unconsciousness that the actual world is and will never be such that it accommodates the peace that Zenība's cottage provides. Zenība retreats into a secluded forest from which no trains are said to return and she is rumored to be fearful or horrible.[38] Makarie, too, disguises herself as a sick lady because she was not understood or, at best, misunderstood when she divulged her visions (*Journeyman* 410). Goethe and Miyazaki see human nature to be good (Makarie's optimism) and bad (Montan's pessimism) simultaneously and in constant struggles. Chihiro must live and suffer in such an imperfect world but, at least, she has felt her "power to live" that consists in hard work and compassionate heart. In the last scene, Wilhelm whispers to his son, Felix, who is lying in front of him after being salvaged from the horse accident: "You are always brought forth anew, glorious image of God! [. . .] and are always injured again straight away, wounded from within or without!" (417).

Nietzsche's Nihilism and Will to Power

So far, two ideals in Miyazaki's concept of life are outlined and elucidated in Goethe's Bildungsroman in which a similar dichotomy of vocational specialization and emotional enlightenment are at work. This last section attempts to expound a type of nihilism Miyazaki coins "clear nihilism." Both nihilism and humanism are too trivial to give any concrete ideas. But since "nothingness" is often seen as the quintessence of Japanese philosophy (Nishida; Heisig),[39] a con-

[37] In Japanese: (Upon the question whether Chihiro experiences any changes after she returns from the otherworld to the real world) "さあ、わかりません。ただ僕は、あの世界は全部夢だったというふうにしたくなかったんです。だからラストで現実の世界に戻ってきたら車の上に葉っぱが積もっていたり、千尋は気づいていないかもしれないけど、おばあちゃん（銭婆）がくれた髪留めはしっかり残しておこうと思ったんです。あれは本当にあったことなんだ。そうじゃないと寂しいですものね。この物語は、何か思いのほか切ない話です。特に終わり方が。そう思いませんか？せっかく自分を認めてくれた人たちと出会えたのに、千尋はその場所を離れなければならないわけですから。[. . .] 自分のやってきたことを全部覚えている人っていると思いますか？いないでしょ。でも銭婆の「一度あったことは忘れないものさ」という言葉通り、人間の記憶って、思い出せないだけでどこかに残っているものだと思うんです。"

[38] Kamajī says to Chihiro: "あの魔女はこえええぞ *ano majo wa koē zo*" ["That witch is really fearful"] (*Spirited Away* 01:30:04).

[39] Discussions about "nothingness," which the founder of the Kyoto School, Kitarō Nishida, puts especial emphasis on, have a long and intricate development in Japanese philosophy and cannot be followed here. I refer to Heisig for further reading.

frontation with nihilism deserves particular attention. To begin with, let us pick the brain of a Western scholar, Karl Löwith, who in 1936 emigrated to Japan and taught until 1941 at Tōhoku university:

> A certain fatalism is the most human and natural attitude for the Japanese. They dismiss the subject with a "*shikata-ga-nai*," that is, "it can't be helped." Their parting greeting also suggests this. In place of our "goodby" they say "sayōnara," which means "since it must be so." (*Japanese Mind* 570)

This writing from 1943 captures precisely the feeling of resignation [*shikatano nai*] Miyazaki's mother, who bore her first son in 1941, expresses. Taking Löwith's thoughts as a point of departure,[40] Nietzsche's philosophy is featured and analyzed in two steps: First, his harsh criticism of idealism or "ascetic ideal" is sketched out as a feature in common with Miyazaki's nihilism. In the next step, the "will to power" of Nietzschean nihilism which belongs to a strong master "to acquire the trust and the awe of the weak" (*Genealogy* 132) is contrasted with Chihiro's "will to live." Miyazaki's concept of life is, to remain in this metaphor, conceived for the weak who are yet actually stronger than those with physical power.

The most economical way to explain Nietzsche's nihilism is to relate it to Montan's misanthropy and affinity for nature,[41] as Löwith stresses these two characters in Nietzsche's writings:

> In order to win back the truth of the world and, with it, that of human existence, Nietzsche undertakes his great experiment to translate humanity back into the nature, that means, into the law of the cosmos, that is, into the eternal return of the same, namely of something that always emerges and disappears in the same way. (*Natur* 292)[42]

Nietzsche's nihilism exposes the "logic of decadence" (Löwith, "Der europäische Nihilismus" 494) and rejects all efforts of Western civilization as fake morality.[43] Why does Nietzsche declare all moral theories, except for cynicism,[44] as inauthentic? This inquiry is seminal to distinguish between three different types of nihilism that Nietzsche formulates, namely 1) suicidal, 2) negative or ascetic, and 3)

[40] Löwith wrote in 1940 an article "The European Nihilism [. . .]" and added an appendix for Japanese readers where he concludes: "The last German philosopher, in whom European spirit was still lively, was Nietzsche" (540). ["Der letzte deutsche Philosoph, in dem europäischer Geist noch lebendig war, ist Nietzsche gewesen."]

[41] Cf. "Nature has only one script, and I do not need to load myself down with all sorts of scribblings. Here I have no fear, as can happen if work long and lovingly on some parchment, that some clever critic will come along and assure me that I have merely read my own meaning into it" (*Journeyman* 116).

[42] In original: "Um die Wahrheit der Welt und damit auch der menschlichen Existenz wiederzugewinnen, unternahm Nietzsche sein großes Experiment, den Menschen »in die Natur«, das heißt in das Gesetz des Kosmos, das heißt in die ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen, nämlich des immer gleichen Entstehens und Vergehens, zurückzuübersetzen."

[43] Cf. "[T]he whole of morality is a long, audacious falsification, by virtue of which generally enjoyment at the sight of the soul becomes possible" (*Beyond* 228).

[44] Cf. "Cynicism is the only form in which base souls approach what is called honesty" (*Beyond* 32).

affirmative nihilism. The main bone of contention is to be found in the opposition of "will to truth" and "will to power" (*Beyond* 136) even when they coalesce in the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche challenges philosophy's most fundamental premise—love for wisdom and truth—with his cynical remark: "With regard to what 'truthfulness' is, perhaps nobody has ever been sufficiently truthful" (ibid. 92). Plato's Socrates, for instance, suggests looking at images, or, more precisely, concepts (*logos*) of the sun, instead of the sun itself, and this idealistic hypothesis is the condition for all investigations into truth (*Phaedo* 99d–100a). This "second voyage" is an obvious sign of decadence in Nietzsche's eye, for the immediate contact with reality through the five senses is completely terminated. Since then, the philosophy has been untruthful and hiding reasons as to why this anti-sensualistic stipulation is necessary. So, Nietzsche ridicules unmarried philosophers, "Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Schopenhauer [. . .]. A married philosopher belongs to comedy, that is my rule" (*Genealogy* 107). This "repudiation of the senses" is in fact the scandal that underlies their high-minded philosophy and science, this "stoicism of the intellect" or "the asceticism of virtue": "[W]hat forces it into that unqualified will for truth is the faith *in the ascetic ideal itself*, even though it take[s] the form of its unconscious imperatives" (*Genealogy* 164). It mostly upsets Nietzsche to see philosophers appeal to their noble truth and ideas, while their true intention is to promote the asceticism which has no contents and only promises power to them. He censures a good man to be "a dishonourable liar, an absolute liar, but none the less an innocent liar, a blue-eyed liar, a virtuous liar" (*Genealogy* 148). Nevertheless, the ascetic ideal is, despite all lies and disguises that make everything "opposed to life," better than "suicidal nihilism," where the will itself disappears. This leads to Nietzsche's famous dictum: "[M]an will wish *Nothingness* rather than not wish *at all*" (*Genealogy* 177, 178).

The second variation of nihilism (asceticism disguised as idealism) is also the nihilism Miyazaki brings to light as the disease of modernity and contrasts with his "clear nihilism." The anti-idealistic "emetic" (*Genealogy* 148) takes effect in an interview when Miyazaki was asked whether he creates his movies in the spirit of humanity:

> I think it absolutely wrong to do business with the help of the untruthfulness [*uso-kusasa*] of humanism that the post-war democracy contains. I wonder to what extent it spoiled various things, such as various ways to see and to feel. Yet, there are people who think that my movies belong to humanism (laugh). Whatever! I would say. At least, I myself do not recall that I made anything in the light of humanism. (*Kaze* 76)[45]

[45] In Japanese: "その戦後民主主義の持っているヒューマニズムの嘘くささでね、それで商売をやってくっていうのは絶対に僕は間違いだと思うんです。で、それがどれほどいろんなことをくだらなくしたかっていうふうにも思うんです。いろんなものの見方や感じ方を。しかし、僕の映画がやっぱりヒューマニズムだと思っている人がいるんですけどね（笑）、それは勝手にしろと思うしかない。だけど、僕自身はヒューマニズムでは作った記憶がないです。"

Miyazaki discards *ideas* or the rhetoric of humanity because it is a bunch of hypocrisies fabricated by grown-ups. Instead, he wants to show the *reality* of it in his animations. The same uncontainable feeling of nausea against pretentious moral ideals is present in Hotta's works.[46] In *Hōjōki-shiki*, the protagonist (Hotta) reports "a scene that is so inappropriate as to cause the physiological disgust" (59):[47] After the severe bombing of Tokyo during the Second World War, the Japanese Emperor goes out for a quick inspection and gets out of his shiny car in front of a completely ruined shrine; and in this scene, destitute citizens kneel down and beg for forgiveness for not being able to protect the Emperor's kingdom. It is nothing but the ascetic lies of war-time imperialism that politically legitimize this feeling of guilt among ordinary people.[48] From this shared standpoint, it becomes clear why the Old Testament is attractive for all three repudiators of idealism. In Nietzsche's words: "The *Old* Testament [. . .] is something quite different [. . .] I find therein great men, a [. . .] heroic landscape, and one of the rarest phenomena in the world, the incomparable naïveté *of the strong heart*" (*Genealogy* 157). Likewise, Miyazaki, inspired by Hotta's essay,[49] feels encouraged by the "penetrated nihilism" ["突き抜けたニヒリズム *tsukinuketa nihirizumu*"] of the Old Testament where life is, without conspiracies and strategies, lived in its plainness (*Kaze* 103).[50] This does not mean that the Old Testament is revered *in toto*; it is just one particular claim of it which has proved to be popular among our renunciants of the ascetic ideal.

While the problem is here more or less the same, solutions are of a completely different kind. Nietzsche diagnoses mankind as "*the* diseased animal": "[T]*he ascetic ideal springs from the prophylactic and self-preservative instincts which mark a decadent life*" (*Genealogy* 125, 126). Humans are weak and suffer but can still "will" (want) suffering, although this will has no positive ends to pursue in life (125).[51] Philosophy and, to the same extent, the modern, civilized human race

[46] Yoshie Hotta is a novelist and influenced many Japanese intellectuals and artists, among whom Miyazaki is notably counted.

[47] In Japanese: "生理的に不愉快なほどにも不調和な光景."

[48] This is psychological manipulation Saburō Ienaga calls "cherry blossom myth": "A military psychology insensitive to human life, to the individual's right to survive, conceived the special attack idea. The same mentality underlay the policy of requiring Japanese soldiers taken prisoner [. . .] to commit suicide" (183). Löwith is also impressed by this mentality of war-time Japan: "The genuine Japanese symbol of the right way to die is the cherry blossom: to bloom a short moment and then to be brought down by wind and rain, with beauty and easy detachment. [. . .] That's more than Führer-cult, that's Japanese loyalty, and the reality of a 'myth' as we call it, because we have no adequate terms for understanding it" (*Westernization* 554–55). This same state of mind is, not to mention, responsible for a number of victims in those nations that Japan occupied.

[49] Miyazaki does not give a source here. But Hotta's last essay is titled "Because Emptiness is Empty" ["空の空なればこそ *Kū no kū nareba koso*"] and discusses this very topic.

[50] Miyazaki has in mind the first chapter of the Ecclesiastes and the aphorism "There is nothing new under the sun," which corresponds to Nietzsche's philosophy as well.

[51] To suffer is not a lack of will but a type of it, which avoids and escapes from the unpleasant. But the unpleasant, for Nietzsche, does not possess any positive meaning for life, since it is just made up in man's intellectual activity ("will to truth"). When this diseased will is overcome by the will to power, the unpleasant itself disappears and life is simply accepted.

cannot fill this void because he has isolated himself from life and resides "quietly and proudly hidden in his citadel," whereas cynics deliver a brave exception, "those who simply recognise the animal, the common-place and 'the rule' in themselves, and at the same time have so much spirituality and ticklishness as to make them talk of themselves" (*Beyond* 31). According to Nietzsche, "the most profound and intact life-instincts" can create "a *purpose*" out of life (*Genealogy* 177). But an ascetic herdsman and his herd have neither purpose nor rule other than the life-negating, cowardly truth. The "will to truth" is the most ingenuine "will to power" which strives for no real elements of life and falls into the self-deception of the worthless life. Nietzsche's philosophy frees the will from these burdens of truth and countless hypocrisies. Zarathustra's teaching is an "eternal return" of the same and echoes equally both in joys and in sufferings, without bringing forth any illusions of "new" or "better life" (*Zarathustra* 247, 248).

Nietzschean nihilism as a solution (the third type) is thus a monism of animal instincts. Miyazaki, on the contrary, advocates in *Spirited Away* a dualistic concept of life, corresponding to the Janus-faced nature of Goethe's Bildungsroman. In the chapter "Pedagogical Province" of *Journeyman*, Goethe traces the various manifestations of Western religions to arrive at "the highest reverence, reverence for the self" (*Journeymann* 205). Miyazaki, on his part, finds a story in Japanese culture which signifies his religious feeling:

> This was also pointed out by the late Ryōtarō Shiba,[52] but there remains in us Japanese a primitive religious feeling, even though Buddhism and Confucianism are intercalated. For instance, I am very much fond of the story "Kasa Jizō" [Straw Hat Jizō].[53] The grandpa and grandma of the story are so selfless.[54] Although he can neither sell his hats nor buy rice cakes, he wipes snow off the head of Jizōs,[55] feeling sorry, and put the hats on them. Upon this, the grandma says: "You did a good deed." [. . .] Being innocent is in fact the highest virtue.[56] (*Orikaeshiten* 261)[57]

[52] Shiba is an author of many historical novels. Some of them were dramatized and became popular in Japan. As mentioned above, he was, with Hotta, interviewed by Miyazaki (Hotta et al.).

[53] Kasa Jizō is one of well-known *otogibanashi* [御伽話], old stories, that often contain some moral teachings.

[54] In original, we read here *muyoku* [無欲], which means "no desire" or "immune to desire."

[55] Jizō [地蔵] is a stone statue, found in Buddhist temples or on the side of a road, and said traditionally to protect children or travelers. The origin is Kṣitigarbha, one of the most familiar bodhisattvas that are revered in Japan.

[56] The term "innocent", *muku* [無垢], indicates etymologically "no stain." In the Christian terminology, both grandpa and grandma are immaculate. But Nietzsche's defamation of the Christianity even reaches this idea. In the chapter "Immaculate Perception", Zarathustra reprimands dissemblers (ascetic priests) who perceive the world in the dim, gentle moon light because everything turns into a lie in this light (*Zarathustra* 132–35). The "purest will" is not immaculate and manifests during the day: "Innocence, and creative desire, is all solar love!" (135).

[57] In Japanese: "これは亡くなった司馬遼太郎さんもおっしゃっていたことなんですけど、途中から仏教や儒教が入ってきても、結局僕たち日本人のなかには、原始的な宗教心が残っている。たとえば僕は、「笠地蔵」の話がとても好きなんですけど、あの話に出てくるおじいさんとおばあさんってそれは無欲なんです。笠が売れなくてお餅も買えないけど、お地蔵さんが気の毒だから、雪を払って笠をお地蔵さんにさして帰ってきた。そうす

Miyazaki's faith is completely absorbed in the simplest benevolence, which Chihiro finds in herself dormant at the outset but gradually increasing. This concept of child-like "innocence" differs radically from Nietzsche's understanding of a child's innocence, conceived as the third stage of metamorphosis after that of the lion.[58] Keiji Nishitani, a Kyoto School philosopher and a Zen practitioner, honors this stage of healthy body as life affirmation by Nietzsche after the sensual body has been abused by the ascetic ideal and acknowledges its similarity with the "emptiness" of the Mahāyāna Buddhism.[59] For Miyazaki, the life affirmation is also to realize bodily strength but only in terms of labor. At the same time, the emotional acceptance of life must spring forth out of the unspoiled human heart in the form of compassion and help. To this end, Nietzsche has nothing to offer. We find the best example in the message Shiba sends to children who live in the twenty-first century in a magazine featuring *Spirited Away*:

> Humans live, helping each other. [. . .] Humans as products of nature are never made to live alone. For this reason, mutual help constitutes great ethics for humans. The source of this emotion and action is the feeling of compassion [*itawari*].[60] Or you can say having a feel for the pain of others. Or you may paraphrase it with as kindness. [. . .] These are similar words and sprout out of the same root. We say a root, but it's not an instinct. Therefore, we must train ourselves. This training is, however, quite simple. For example, a friend trips. You only have to establish the feeling in your heart that it must have hurt him. If this root is deeply shot, the feeling of compassion towards other nations springs out, too. (179)[61]

るとおばあさんが「いいことなさいましたね」っていうんですよ。無垢であることは至上のことなんですよ。"

[58] In the first paragraph of the first part of *Zarathustra*, we read: "To create new values—that, even the lion cannot yet accomplish: but to create itself freedom for new creating—that can the might of the lion do. [. . .] Innocence is the child, and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea. Aye, for the game of creating, my brethren, there is needed a holy Yea unto life: *its own* will, willeth now the spirit; *his own* world winneth the world's outcast" (24–25).

[59] Nishitani summarizes this development: "The standpoint of the 'I' who creates and wills is one that has endured through the northernmost zone of nihilism. 'Soul,' 'spirit,' and 'the world beyond' were set up as denials of the body and the earthly world; next, nihilism appeared as the denial of this standpoint; and finally, in the overcoming of this nihilism the body is restored as the standpoint of the creating and willing 'I'" (95). Nishitani compares Nietzsche's creative nihilism with Buddhist "emptiness" and maintains the superiority of the latter (180).

[60] Shiba seems to play a word game here. The verb *itawaru* [いたわる] can, independently of the etymology, be divided into *ita* and *waru* which can respectively mean "pain" ["痛い *itai*"] and "sprit" ["割る *waru*"]. If this construction were true, *itawari* should come very close to the concept of compassion as "feeling pain together."

[61] In Japanese: "人間は助け合って生きているのである。[. . .] 自然物としての人間は、決して孤立して生きられるようにはつくられていない。このため、助け合う、ということが、人間にとって、大きな道徳になっている。助け合うという気持ちや行動のもとのもとは、いたわりという感情である。他人の痛みを感じとることと言ってもいい。やさしさと言いかえてもいい。[. . .] みな似たような言葉である。この三つの言葉は、もともと一つの根から出ているのである。根と言っても本能ではない。だから、私たちは訓練をしてそれを身につけねばならないのである。その訓練とは、簡単なことである。例えば、友達がころ

This is the innermost feeling of Chihiro when she is anxious about Haku's condition and devotes herself to the mission of saving him. It is the simplest religion, as Miyazaki calls it. Bergson's "dynamic religion" is also, as demonstrated earlier, capable of loosening the rigidity of instinctive and exclusive societies. But this liberating force originates from the notion of a transcendent God that reveals himself as love without the lover or the loved.[62] And such an "active mysticism" needs prophets as mediators who embody and exemplify divine teachings (229).[63] As a consequence, the unlimited love for humanity is in this tradition represented by religious geniuses that the human race hardly produces. In drastic contrast to this, Chihiro is an ordinary 10-year-old girl, totally unmotivated and without any special talent (cf. *Orikaeshiten* 243). But still, and, probably, precisely *because* of this clumsiness of Chihiro's character, we experience the magic of compassion and innocence she unconsciously manifests. Shiba, in the interview with Hotta and Miyazaki, implies that, in Japanese Shintoism, the divinity bears the spirit of children, and the priests emulate a child's gait to approximate to gods (Hotta et al. 145). In the same place, Shiba also quotes without reference Wordsworth's poem "My Heart Leaps Up": "The Child is father of the Man" (54). Both the old couple of *Kasa Jizō* and Chihiro are rather weak individuals who suffer under hardships but, in these incessant challenges, remain true to themselves and empathetic to others. Thus, Miyazaki is more consequential than Nietzsche, whose "will to power" heroically destroys nihilism in the end; Miyazaki's nihilism is "clear" and "penetrated" and embraces the irony of life:

> What happens when children grow? They only become boring adults. Being grown-ups, they have neither glory nor happy ending but just life where even tragedy cannot be clearly defined. Nonetheless, children are always our hope: a spirit of hope which experiences defeats. That is the only answer. (*Orikaeshiten* 522)[64]

Conclusion

Spirited Away is not only a popular symbol of Japan that represents primitive animism or a critique of inhumane capitalism of the present. It is rather a complicated symbolism that embodies Miyazaki's radically dualistic or paradoxical

ぶ。ああ痛かったろうな、と感じる気持ちを、そのつと自分の中でつくりあげていきさえすればよい。この根っこの感情が、自己の中でしっかり根づいていけば、他民族へのいたわりという気持ちもわきでてくる。"

[62] Cf. "God is love, and the object of love: herein lies the whole contribution of mysticism" (240).

[63] To note that Bergson, owning to his time, holds a discriminative opinion about this religious feeling: "Suffice it to say that woman is as intelligent as man, but that she is less capable of emotion, and that if there is any faculty or power of the soul which seems to attain less development in woman than in man, it is not intelligence, but sensibility. I mean of course sensibility in the depths, not agitation at the surface" (34).

[64] In Japanese: "子供が成長してどうなるかといえば、ただのつまらない大人になるだけです。大人になってもたいていは、栄光もなければ、ハッピーエンドもない、悲劇すらあいまいな人生があるだけです。だけど、子供はいつも希望です。挫折してゆく、希望の魂なんです。答えは、それしかないですね。"

concept of life and expresses it in a magical but at the same time realistic way. Life develops on the one hand inevitably in a labor system which is often capitalistic and exploitative as in the case of Yubāba's bathhouse. The training of a particular skill for this purely functional society is emphasized by Miyazaki as simple fact or *amor fati*. He also shares the misanthropy of Goethe's Montan and Nietzsche, for the will to truth legitimates ingenious lies and disguises the necessity of work with the ascetic ideal of goodness and happiness. On the other hand, Miyazaki is not entirely desperate to leave everything to the eternal return of nature. Just as Goethe introduces Makarie as a beacon of hope into the story about renunciants, Chihiro emancipates both herself and others, not in social functionality, but in the true nature of each personality. All the characters in the movie are allegories for certain human qualities and simply acknowledged by Chihiro's growing compassion. By putting these two aspects of life together, we can understand the strange logic of all Miyazaki's animations, which points us in a different direction from the mutual mistrust and animosity of today's competitive global society. *Just work hard and be compassionate, without eliminating the complexity of the reality.* Miyazaki's life work sends this message from Japan, not as a Japanese value or virtue, but as a mankind's urge for a better future for the children on this planet.

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