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**ФИЛОСОФИЯ**


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**VALUE AND BEAUTY OF IMPERMANENCE:  
BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY THROUGH JAPANESE AESTHETICS**

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Spiritual tradition in Japan under the influence of philosophy of Buddhism, which mediated the insight about transience of all things and is oriented towards the acceptance of life in all forms, created important aesthetic concepts, which are defined by objective character (with a bunch of images, metaphors and styles); and according to subjective criteria they express the appearance of individual feelings, which are linked with mood, state of consciousness or atmosphere. Concepts of Japanese aesthetics reflect timeless and always current expression of non-dualistic attitude towards the world, which is based on understanding all things in their essential nature. The art form and aesthetic sensibility point to an important soteriological tendency of the Buddhist philosophy — holistic view, which does not allow gaps between human and reality, is the foundation for the highest state of being, *nirvāṇa*, which is the source of special beauty and leads to liberation from worldly adversities.

*Key words:* Buddhism; Japanese aesthetics; *nirvāṇa*; yoga; *anātman*, impermanence; *yūgen*; *sabi*; *Nō*; *dō*; *mono no aware*; emptiness; nature.

**ЦЕННОСТЬ И КРАСОТА ВРЕМЕННОСТИ: БУДДИСТСКАЯ  
ФИЛОСОФИЯ В ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ ЯПОНСКОЙ ЭСТЕТИКИ**

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Духовная традиция Японии под влиянием философии буддизма, добившейся понимания мимолетности всех вещей и ориентированной на принятие жизни во всех ее формах, создала важные эстетические концепты, которые определяются характером объекта (соответствующей группой образов, метафор и стилей), а в соответствии с субъективными критериями выражают появление отдельных ощущений, связанные с настроением, состоянием сознания или атмосферой восприятия. Понятия японской эстетики отражают вневременное и постоянно изменяющееся мироощущение, которое основано на понимании всех вещей в их сущности. Форма искусства и эстетическая восприимчивость указывают на важную сoteriological тенденцию буддистской философии — на целостное видение, которое не оставляет зазора между человеком и действительностью и выступает как основание для высшего состояния бытия, *нирваны*, являющегося источником особой красоты и приводящего к освобождению от мирских напастей.

*Ключевые слова:* буддизм; японская эстетика; *нирвана*; *йога*; *анатман*; *временность*; *югэн*; *саби*; *но*; *до*; *моно-но аварэ*; *пустота*; *природа*.

**1. The theory of *anātman*: beyond the subject and the object. Characters without identities in the theatre *Nō***

The theory of *anātman* is the centre of Buddhist thought and the basis of Siddhārtha Gautama's insight

into the nature of all existing. Buddhism with its ideas and concept rejected the whole Vedic and Upaniṣadic tradition and latter ideas about eternal *brahman*, all-pervading principle, the highest principle of the world, which is identical with human's immortal essence, *ātman*. The whole reality is denoted with impermanence,

*anitya*, and also a human does not have solid and eternal structure as an immortal soul, which is persistent through different times and spaces, but is marked with transience as all elements of the world. Life is a field of ceaseless alternation, the flow of procreating, senescence and passing under the law of *karma*, which designates human existence on the basis of his previous action. There is nothing eternal, absolute and changeless, the only stability is impermanence; world is nothing more than a chain of phenomena, designated with constant occurrences and passing. All is captured in this chain of causality — one phenomenon causes the other and passes away, the latter causes the next and also passes away, and so on. In this mechanism of permanent changeability, movement of life and death, also the human is involved. This means that there is nothing in which we could be attached. People are getting attached because of ignorance (*avidyā*) about truth about reality and ourselves. They believe in existence of immortal soul, which creates relations with phenomena and try to appropriate them — but they are denoted with impermanence, in one moment one small factor could destroy their joy and that is the source of human's suffering. Siddhārtha Gautama mediated the idea, that the life is unpleasant and painful (*duḥkha*), because the phenomenal world is denoted with constant changes and therefore nothing could guarantee permanent contentment. In the Upaniṣadic thought the liberation (*mokṣa*) is reached through realization of the identity between *brahman* and *ātman*, but in the Buddhism the main condition for human's release from worldly bondage on things and self is the insight into the nature of reality. *Nirvāṇa* could be reached only through right comprehension of the law of *karma*, which is attained by the so called «the middle path», which leads beyond all dualities. The aim of meditative Buddhist practice is interruption of the chain of births and deaths — rebirths are realised as something weak and bad, because they chained human into anew suffering. The condition for cessation the *saṃsāra* is the wisdom, insight into the nature of all existing.

Human, a person is nothing more than a unit of five changeable phenomena, flows, called *skandhas*, which appear on the basis of previous actions and their effects. *Skandhas* are five aggregates, elements of beings: (1) body, material aspect (*rūpa*); (2) senses (*vedāna*), (3) sensory perception (*saṃjñā*), (4) mental conditions, formation (*saṃskāra*), (5) consciousness (*viññāna*); they are not eternal, but arise because of wishes and ignorance and are the cause of human's entrapment into the mechanism of *saṃsāra*, circuit of rebirths. Human does not have a solid centre, from which different features arise, but is composed by transient phenomena, from which the whole world is consisted. The word human is actually only the other name for transient *skandhas*, and

one who becomes attached on five aggregates and thinks that it is his real self, suffers. Gautama's teaching about *anātman* was a revolutionary doctrine according to monistic Upaniṣadic thought, prevailed by idea of *ātman/brahman*. He took away also the privileged position of human, which was elevated with an eternal soul upon all existing and exposed that human is as all other elements of reality captured in the inexorable mechanism of causality. With his teaching he erased the sharp gap between human and the world, between the subject and the object, because all have the same nature, prevailed with transience. He did not devalue the position of human, but he set him in the middle of all existing, not beyond it. All existing deserve the same position because they are all the same, consolidated in their emptiness.

The idea of *anātman* is firmly represented also in Japanese art. In this chapter I try to expose its influences in the Japanese traditional theatre Nō. Characters in Nō are without refined characteristic, are actually only «impersonal persons» without a complex structure of different features. They are often ghosts, veiled with mask, which is the only indicator of their emotions. «It is up to the actor, through speech and movement, to animate the mask: to make it express the subtle emotional qualities that are the essence of Noh» [1, p. 6]. Mask is coming to life through actors, who are «depersonalized animators, (who) become the mechanism that breathes a simulated and disincarnated life into these perfect reproductions of human being» [1, p. 9]. The main feature of characterization is desolation of personality, absence of individuality, and as Lamarque exposed, «they seek to embody universal, rather than historical or contingent, significance» [8, p. 159]. I think that in the structure of character in Nō the idea about depersonalized, universal nature without specific characteristics, nullification of illusory ego is presented. Keene suggested that the creation of character is meaningless to Nō [5, p. 159], and Lamarque added that «characters can retain individuality as characters, (but) without lapsing into the stereotypes /.../. The focus in the characterization is on some specific emotion or predicament, not on the development of a “rounded” personality» [8, p. 160]. The character indicates the universal emotional states and mood, interlocked with suggestion. The mask is the element in Nō, which enables to depersonalise and universality. It distances a character from refined individuality and embodies collective human's emotions. In Nō plays actor often goes through different characters, transformations; the identity is not firm structure, but is designated with constant changeability, is only flow of *skandhas* without a track of resistance. Individual character is not the essence of the whole play, but only an instrument, through which the emotional states of character are exposed — the solid individuality is not important, be-

cause it is subdued to constant changes and transformations.

In the formation of character without individuality the most important role plays *yūgen*, significant concept in Japanese aesthetics, which is the object of analyses in the next chapter. When actor expresses *yūgen*, he attains the upper levels of *hana* («flower»). The look is not important, significant is only transformation — one can perform an old man and a young men in one person, and that is possible only through performing inner causes and states. Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443), Japanese actor, playwright, founder of the theatre *Nō*, «who developed a subtle theoretical framework of *Nō*, supported by a number of key aesthetic concepts» [8, p. 158] exposed that an actor has to «learn to truly «become» the object of his performance», and «/.../ when every technique of Role Playing is mastered and the actor has truly become the subject of his impersonation, then the reason for the desire to imitate can no longer exist» [8, p. 163]. The actor reaches a state through his performance, which is similar to the state, based on the inner development in the process of Buddhist meditation, which leads beyond all dualities, subject and object. And also an actor, like a meditator, goes beyond himself to his true nature, which is the nature of all existing. This is what Zeami called the «internalization», absence of self-consciousness, ego, which is defined as the highest level of *hana*. Different moods are shown through movements and gestures, not from stable self. Gautama rejected the totality of person; human is only a union of impermanent features. The personality is invisible, important is only the universalization of inner states, distinctive for all people. Lamarque called this «abstracted inner spirit of the character» [8, p. 165]. The audience do not lament for character, because they cannot become attached to it because of its impermanence and impersonality. He is not unique, because his illusory centre is depleted of all individual features, but is an expression of the universal nature, which is shared with all existing. All things are identical in their emptiness.

## 2. Insight into the transcendence through plainness

One of the most remarkable features of Japanese aesthetics is suggestion, and according to expert opinion it gets the most superior expression in the theatre *Nō*, which is the purest form of suggestion in images, language, movements and music. Undecorated theatre stage, absence of props, use of language, which is hard to comprehend, abstract motions, which are on the first sight hardly connected with declared words, noncompliance with determinations of time and space ... All that bore the certain audience, but not that, which is capable to open a mind to the magic of suggestion, and for the sake of that are set on the other, different, un-

conventional level. Groans, moans and sharp music reveals to the more sensitive spectator the way, on which just with conciliation of words it is impossible to comprehend the relation and border between life and death, between attachment to this world, which is the source of suffering, and released spirit, which is beyond all the limits. This is in the theatre *Nō* mediated through the interlacement of music, gestures, motions and words. Monk Shōtetsu comprehensively described the nature of *yūgen*: «*Yūgen* can be apprehended by the mind, but it cannot be expressed in words. Its quality may be suggested by the sight of a thin cloud veiling the moon or by autumn mist swathing the scarlet leaves on a mountainside. If one is asked where in these sights lies the *yūgen*, one cannot say, and it is not surprising that a man who fails to understand this truth is likely to prefer the sight of a perfectly clear, cloudless sky. It is quite impossible to explain wherein lies the interest or the remarkable nature of *yūgen*» [5, p. 298].

*Yūgen* is the central concept in Japanese aesthetics, but its nature is evasive and subtle. Its effects are deep in even in on the first sight very simple poem. The truth lies under the surface of everyday life, beyond all words. Insight into the suchness (*tathatā*) of things is the condition for reaching the truth, which lies in the real nature of things. The sense of *yūgen* accompanies the sense of transience, which are not exclusive feelings, but essentially supplement each other. The transience is not something threatening, but is the essence of all existing, is actually the only foundation of existence and is a source of beauty. Yoshida Kenkō (1283–1350/52) in his book *Essays in Idleness* (Jap. *Tsurezuregusa*) wrote: «Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in a full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring — these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration» [6, p. 115].

The aesthetics of suggestion is present in the unique art forms, like the tea ceremony, haiku poetry, theatre *Nō* and Japanese gardens. Japanese novelist Tanizaki exposed that we can find beauty not in things, but in patterns of shadows, light, darkness [8, p. 164]. And to the similar leads Kobayashi Issa's (1763–1828) poem:

*After long away,  
I found  
a clouded moon*  
(Issa) [14, p. 101].

Issa's poems are filled with ambiguity, partially imposed by linguistic resources and selection of particular words. The part of beauty and greatness of poems is in the use of language, but the majority lies in something unspoken, beyond the surface of particular words.

Unutterable part of the poem arises from poet's feeling and therefore the objective analysis with its strategies remains irrelevant. Issa's poem is based on the suggestion, which is the source of its beauty. The latter indicate to the concept *yūgen*, which is difficult to translate and denotes mysteriousness, depth, indistinctly, obscurity and transcendence. That does not mean that a poem is completely unexplainable, wrapped in the cocoon of mystery with intent to stay inexplicable to human, but from reader demands different approach, which is beyond the theoretical comprehension. It is interesting that the poem simultaneously with its transcendent connotation causes also feeling of monotonousness, namely with his ascetically selection of linguistic resources. Monotony, predominate of black–white is also present in Japanese paintings — when all colours disappear, remains only black and white, which prepare a space for feeling of secluded beauty. Also many Japanese gardens are built only from stones and sands, living areas of human residences are unpainted, empty, without vivid colours. It is true that the use of manifold colours is also the feature of Japanese art, Japanese are keen to diverse assortments of tints, but this inevitably bounds and brings about suggestion to become more down to earth. Keene exposed that «(t)he use of colour can be brilliant, but it inevitably limits the suggestive range: when a flower is painted red, it can be no other colour, but the black outline of a flower on a white paper will let us imagine whatever colour we choose» [5, p. 297]. And that is the magic of suggestion, always opened space for non-meant, deep, transcendent, which are beyond all categories, surveys and limitations.

*Yūgen* therefore is not translatable, but its contest could be defined as transcendence, mystery, dark; it is a deep, affirmative sadness and majestic joy at the same time. The image of true nature of all things is mediated through foggy dreamlikeness, it is experience in which the idea of Reality, which is beyond the phenomenal world, is present. But this Reality is actually a part of this world, it is a true character of it. The phenomenal world is a place, in which we could see the Reality, but this vision, expressed through *yūgen*, is unclear, because we see it through colourful universe, full of dualities. Through *yūgen* the Reality seems as fuzzy and amorphous.

The content of the concept *yūgen* has a source in spiritual movement in China, so called movement of dark learning (*xuan xue*); some authors classify it, because of mainly Daoistic elements, as the neo-daoism. Milčinski wrote that the *xuan xue* is terminus technicus for thought from third and IV century, which was under the strong Buddhist influence. For the discourse of *xuan xue* it is distinctive to occupy oneself with blackness, darkness (*xuan*). Chinese character in the first sense means black, dark and latter distant, far away.

The centre of interest of *xuan xue* are «mysteries» of human and the world [9, s. 316–317].

According to Siddhārta Gautama's position, who rejected the existence of the other, higher world, I think that we could explain *yūgen* not as a concept, which indicate to higher, other reality, but comprehension and insight of the true nature of this, phenomenal world through dark glasses of transcendence. Beyond all particular colours, with which humans colour the colourless world, lays the Reality, which is not a faraway place like heaven, for example, but is this world in his true character, the reality as it is — perpetual flow of transient and impermanent elements beyond all dualities. And I conclude that transcendence is actually just a mode, a resource for comprehension of suchness of the immanence.

Zeami is in his work *Kakyō* from 1424 defines a stylistic nature of *yūgen* like sophistication and elegance, which are designated with melancholy and senses of solitude. *Yūgen* is the key aesthetic category for him, he called it «the flower (*hana*) of art», especially in *Nō*. *Yūgen* has a strong religious connotation, it opens a discussion about higher states of art and is narrowly related with spiritual ideas. It claims deepest comprehension and spiritual width (*shinriki*). In the work *Kyū'i shidai* (1427) Zeami defined this states with increasing spiritual depth, in which the essential criterion is *yūgen*, which is versatile aesthetic category, which express profound secret of life and art. *Yūgen*, related to the highest ideals of art, takes the character of indescribable beauty (*myō*), which stretches beyond itself to the spiritual dimension, coalescence of subject and object, beyond the dualistic comprehension: «The term *myō* denotes the mysteriously wondrous. That which I call *myō* is an appearance devoid of form. This absence of form is the essence of *myō*. In *Nō*, that which is called *myō* may be found in the two elements of singing and dancing, and also in other areas of acting. However, it cannot be clearly pointed out and identified. The actor expressing *myō* will be one who has reached the very highest level» [12, p. 298–299]. In the highest state, when an actor reaches *myō*, the distance between object and subject disappears — he fuses into it and they become one. That is the highest aesthetic experience for an actor and also for sensitive audience, analogue experiences on the spiritual path.

### 2.1. Absence of plentitude

The absence of plentitude is also one of the marked characteristics of Japanese aesthetics. Japanese gardens are not full of colourful flowers, the stones are raw, non-carving. Adoration of plainness and natural qualities is one of the features of the early Buddhist thought — let the things be as they are:

*Bright moon,  
welcome to my hut —  
such as it is*  
(Issa) [14, p. 72].

The true nature of the world is beyond all dualities, beautiful–ugly, good–bad; the Reality is like a colourless flow, only human is the one who colours bland wet of phenomenal world. Also the early Buddhist temples are often coloured with plain, hazy red colour, many are built from untinged wood; uncoloured wood shows its natural qualities. The restriction of tastes is present also in food — plain fish without sauces and spices shows its real taste. The zen vegetarian kitchen offers small selection of tastes, but sensibility of person is shown through ability to distinguish different tastes in food, which has very mild taste. Personal homes and gardens are also designated with simpleness; Kenkō exposed that the most dull are strictly, unnaturally trimmed trees — «it is ugly to look and most depressing» [6, p. 10].

One of the Japanese fondness to inconspicuous and discrete elegance is also a tea ceremony. It is an example of art, made with the highest aesthetic sensibility, which is the opposite of spiritual poverty of luxury. The simpleness does not mean that one cannot afford more, but is the rejection of easily gained plentitude, and with this ideal the aesthetic concept, *sabi*, is related, which is indicated through image of rusty teapot, which is opposite of a new, painted with different figures and decorated with gold. One of the dimensions of *sabi*, which is exposed in the next chapter, is expression of Japanese fondness to plainness.

Also in the theatre Nō lack of requisites and spectacular light effects is obvious; attention is upwarded to actor, his movements and voice. Painters, actors and poets rarely made striking strokes; simpleness is much more controllable and more secure than plentitude, therefore in traditional Japanese art nothing is designated as a bad taste. And moreover — simpleness is capable to express sensibility, which is beyond ordinary comprehension, and it is not boring, but causes special aesthetic feelings, which are authentic and not hidden under the thick layer of oversaturation. These ideas are related to Buddhist thought about exceeding the opposites — insight into the true character of things, things as they are, enables one to see things in their neutrality and identity, common with all existing.

### **3. *Sabi*: the aesthetics of loneliness in the middle of plentitude. Imperfection as a perfection of things**

As *yūgen* also *sabi* has its history and multitude of meanings. It designates loneliness, but not in a sense of sad, negative feeling because of separation of people and world, but it has a different connotation and is a

special experience, through which one directly perceives the nature of Reality. It indicates similarities with *yūgen*.

Important influence on the formation of *sabi* had a Buddhist thought; the ideal of solitariness is composed on the idea of Buddhist ideal of the distance from the world and mainly own illusory ego; the loneliness in this context is also connected with the idea of Buddhahood, or as Dōgen said, impermanent process of life and death is itself the life of Buddha, through solitude and division between it and society one beholds his true nature. Ienaga defined this situation as a special, higher state of spirit, designated with paradox contradiction — need for society and for self-realisation, which is based on the space of loneliness, which bring the highest joy and becomes salvation of the spirit [12, p. 296].

*Sabi* as loneliness is expressed in the following poems:

|                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Sprawled like an X —</i> | <i>no moon, no blossoms,</i> |
| <i>thoughts come —</i>      | <i>just drinking sake</i>    |
| <i>how carefree,</i>        | <i>all alone</i>             |
| <i>how lonely</i>           | (Bashō) [2, p. 300]          |

(Issa) [14, p. 87].

In both poems the situation of solitude is present, but sensitive reader could quickly perceive, that this loneliness is not a fruit of traumatic personal sadness, but actually some kind of impersonal atmosphere is present, especially in the Matsuo Bashō's (1644–1694) poem. We could feel the note of feelings of loneliness in the nature through particular images — autumn, dusk, moonlight. All these images and accompanied feeling create a *sabi*.

Through adoration of the nature the sense of transience, the character of illusion of the phenomenal world is present, and at the same time the affirmation of that solitude, which is not blemish, which made human life miserable, but is the superior fusion, wakefulness with the insight into the transience, the real nature of phenomenal world, which is not veiled with false illusions about eternity here and now. «(N)ature becomes the ideal symbol to represent the way the human state of mind is affected by time. That is, the sorrow of lost or unrequited love is said to resemble fading blossoms, or loneliness is felt like a chilling autumn wind» [3, p. 387]. The colour of *yūgen* is deep black, the colour of *sabi* is the colour of rust, which designates worn, neglected, withered and exhausted, but so wonderfully in its loneliness. The perception of Reality is different in the domain of *sabi* — it is revealed through profound solitude, not through transcendence.

The beauty in the Japanese aesthetics is not just resource for reaching the truth, but directly expresses the truth, which is in the feelings of solitude, which does not need metaphysical truths, which are soaking in the clouds of unattainable, but is such as it is, simple in its

directness and deeper than all transcendental speculations. Pilgrim exposed that the *sabi* is Japanese aesthetisation of the form of Buddha's mind [12, p. 297]. Under the influence of *zen* Buddhism where poets from XVII century developed the precise definition of the concept *sabi*, rusty beauty, ranked with the moss, and set it as the highest aesthetic ideal. Bashō defined *sabi* as a colour of the poem [12, p. 300].

Solitude, expressed through *sabi*, is the interruption with all ordinary contexts of loneliness. Poems are itself the expression of *sabi* and also each image, meanwhile the prose illustrate the situation and environment, through which the *sabi* is expressed. Environment is awed with feelings of loneliness, silence, atmosphere with calmness, separation, abandoned houses and secluded sounds.

*stillness —  
sinking into the rocks,  
cicadas' cry*  
(Bashō) [2, p. 305].

The cuckoo's or cicada's singing is very often motive in Japanese poetry; it demonstrates the inevitability of death together with affirmation of impermanence, which is the source of beauty. Most of Bashō's poems are based on the Buddhist concepts: Reality is not something transcendent, beyond, but is a special form of feeling and insight about emptiness, which is the only real form and suchness of all things. It is a special experience of the self, depleted of the ego, which is one with all existing and therefore impersonal character, like characters in the theatre *Nō*. Pilgrim exposed that Bashō disappears in the experience and therefore suddenly the poem is formed [12, p. 302]. And Bashō said: «We should transcend self and learn ... To learn means to submerge oneself into the object until its intrinsic nature becomes apparent stimulating poetic impulse» [12, p. 302]. A good designation of Bashō's poetry is in Dōgen's definition: «To study Buddhism is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to forget even one's attachment to the goal. Doing that, one discovers oneself in all things and enters actual society» [12, p. 302]. Forget illusory self means immersion into the emptiness, in which one can swim through things and becomes fused with them.

I think that the contest of *sabi* combines two dimensions: it refers to old, neglected, worn things, for example solitary field or decrepit, abandoned huts in the middle of nowhere, and on the other hand to the feelings of loneliness, which arise by the view on that objects, when their suchness is revealed through vigilant and sensitive serenity. Described emotions are also present in the Japanese prose; it is possible to feel a special light-heartedness despite of accompanied and constant awareness of transience of all existing. The

main subject in Japanese narration and tales is the nature, every piece of which is filled with the essence of *kamis* and therefore alive. Mighty mountains, torrential rivers, dark forests and mysterious pools are with human in perpetual closeness, which grows from respect to all existing. From this attitude the special sense for beauty arises; Japanese are fascinated by object jagged from the ravages of time and are abandoned, forgotten, damaged. They do not discard them as old and useless, but gave them back the dignity with a special sensibility and fondness.

I conclude that the thing is perfect in its imperfection, because in that way it is such as it is, because it is its true nature. Harmony and symmetry in Japanese art are not the measure for beauty — it is uncomfortable and monotonous, we could observe fondness to sensitive irregularity. «People often say that a set of books looks ugly if all volumes are not in the same format, but I was impressed to hear the Abbot Kōyū say, “It is typical of the unintelligent man to insist on assembling complete sets of everything. Imperfect sets are better”» [6, p. 70].

### 3.1. The relation between *yūgen* and *sabi*

*Yūgen* and *sabi* are both at the same time religious and aesthetic concepts. *Yūgen* designates a special sort of beauty and aesthetic experience, which is directed beyond beauty itself and explores its numinous dimensions, and on the other side *sabi* is a kind of immediate aesthetic comprehension of reality. Both concepts are definable with external form, objective character, with a bunch of images, metaphors and styles. The image of autumn evening haze under the lonely field expresses *yūgen*, image of old, decay hut expresses *sabi*. According to subjective criterions concepts express the appearance of individual feelings, which are linked with mood, state of consciousness or atmosphere. *Yūgen* is an expression of special feelings of melancholy and unutterableness, also mysteriousness, and *sabi* is a sense of placid loneliness, solitariness. Both emotional states are important points in the perception of art and also for the interpretation of the both concepts, which is not scientific objectification, it actually loses effectiveness of its resources, by trying to reveal the ultimate secret of work of art, which on that point remains powerless, but is a subtle, intuitive method, which is capable to reveal the secret of the peace of art, but not with aggressive grasping, but it reveals it in a manner that leaves it unspoken.

*Yūgen* therefore refers to transcendental, numinous dimension of things through feelings of impermanence, *sabi* to phenomenal suchness of things. Van Meter Ames excellently expressed the difference between one and the other: «There is a bipolar tension between the depth of *yūgen* and the everydayness of *sabi*, between the mysterious sense of more than is there and delight

in what is right there» [12, p. 293]. Ortolani [11, p. 325] defines *yūgen* as magnificent, mysterious, transcendent aspect of beauty and at the same time as deep, bitter beauty of human's transience.

*Yūgen* through glass veil express sublime, hidden reality and unutterable essence. The mysterious depth of numinous if perceivable together with awareness of fleetingness of phenomenal world also in ensuing poems:

*Autumn wind — I'm  
coming closer to the age  
of grandma's death  
(Issa) [14, p. 73].*

Religious-aesthetic sense of poems lies in ability, that through style and atmosphere elicit certain feelings in the mind of a reader, but it depends on him, what kind of effect the poem has on him. The ideal of *yūgen* in these poems is mysterious and unutterable; through haze, veil, mirage and dreams the transcendence is perceived.

**4. Impermanence: the supreme stability.  
Transience: the ultimate certainty**

Beyond the simpleness, worshipping natural features of things lays the most salient Japanese aesthetic ideal — transience. It is the urgent element of beauty and it is not depression or bitterness because of realisation that everything is liable to transience. This idea is evident also in ensuing poems:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>the fleeting transience of life,<br/>soon to die,<br/>yet no sign of it:<br/>a cicada's cry<br/>(Bashō) [2, p. 114].</i> | <i>Listen,<br/>all creeping things<br/>the bell of transience<br/>(Issa) [14, p. 3]</i> |
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Without death there would be no beauty. Kenkō says: «If man could never fade away like the dews of Adashino, never to vanish like the smoke of Toribeyama, but lingered on forever in the world, how things would lose their power to move us! The most precious thing in life is its uncertainty» [6, p. 7]. Fragility of all existing is the condition of beauty, and that attitude is in Japan mediated through art. The most beautiful flower is a cherry blossom; its life time is very short and many eyes do not see its beauty — but that is something stunningly and exceptional. The presence of transience is also the image of cracked or rusty cup; triteness and a rot are mysterious features of things, revealed after a long use. This attitude is different from striving to perfection of things. Perfection is not authentic, it is repulsive for the sensitive eye, which prefers different aspect of things.

Realisation of transience often accompanies the feeling, called *mono no aware*, bitter, poignant sadness (translated as «the sadness of things») because of transience of all existing. Kato in his article Some Notes on Mono no Aware [4] explains, that *aware*, as an attribute of *mono*, the vast material world, always expresses serious and profound feelings towards *mono*, whether the latter stands for human or non-human objects [4]. Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) — he for the pure expression of *mono no aware* defined classical Japanese novel Tale of Genji — defined *mono no aware* on this way: «Whenever one has strong feelings, his understanding (that is, «mind») and feeling are identical. This is called, “to know *mono no aware*”» [4, p. 558]. So one, who gets the insight into the true Nature of Reality, knows *mono no aware*. It is deep sensitivity for all things, and as Milčinski wrote, it is the ability to comprehend the movement of life, also in such small, on the first sight unimportant event. This intuitive and cultivated view of life meant the highest aesthetic value [10, s. 184]. Feeling *aware* causes feelings of gentle melancholy in the presence of mortal beauty.

*Sabi* is therefore a feeling of solitude, calmness. When one in this loneliness feels soft sadness, this sense is *wabi*, or as Milčinski wrote, *wabi* is an unexpected comprehension of fate of suchness of things [10, s. 188]. When moment awakens intense, nostalgic feelings of sadness, this sense is called *aware (mono no aware)*. But this nostalgia and melancholy are high sophisticated feelings, superior emotions because of insight into the suchness of the Reality, and therefore liberate human from things, to which he cannot be attached because of their emptiness.

For this reason, so acceptance of transience, in the Japanese aesthetics the affirmation of death is withdrawn. It is not something grisly, what denies life and makes it desperate, but the essential part of it. Death «.../ brings individual into unity with a larger totality; the human being is not only like the dew and blossom, but in death is united with the totality of the cosmic and natural process» [7, p. 235]. The sensitivity to inevitable passing of all living beings is the basis for different attitude toward life, to respect each and every moment, which is unrepeatable and therefore so precious. Death is deeply anchored within life, it is indicated in every moment, every small event — overblown flower, beat cup, elderly and pooped warrior. Life and death are an interlacement of different phenomenon and their constantly flowed dynamism. I think that the acceptance of death is the affirmation of all dimensions of life, and not the morbid and depressed mode, accompanied with resignation, but the basis for different attitude toward life, filled with true values. Buddhism tends to negate life only in the sense of illusion, only its illusory status, which is not separated from death. «If one wants to ne-

gate and reject, then not only death but also life must be negated and rejected; if one wants to affirm and grasp, then not only life but also death must be affirmed and grasped» [13, p. 75].

The resource, through which human expresses his standpoint about transience and which is the mirror of his own impermanence, is the nature. The very important part of these attitudes is also compassion, aroused from comprehension about the same nature of all existing, which is the centre of Buddhist ethics. One could attain spiritual awakening only through awareness of omnipresent transience, which in an impermanent world is the ultimate and only stability. «/.../ through Buddhist influence this attitude was eventually developed into a thoroughly subjective realization of spiritual freedom» [3, p. 377]. This holistic view does not allow many gaps between human and reality, with comprehension of his true self, which is *anātman*, human universalized his essence, identified it with all existing and at the same time offered him an opportunity for liberation from attachment, selfish desires and vain ambitions. On the basis of non-dualistic attitude arises the highest value, called *nirvāṇa*, which is beyond life and death, but it does not mean that is transcendent, but is a state, reached through insight of the nature of Reality, which raised human beyond the suffering, based on the wrong comprehension of the world. The Buddhist thought is oriented towards the acceptance of life in all forms, including death. This is, which is reached through the practice of *yoga*, it is the aesthetic pleasure of the world and the highest state of being. Here emerges the sensation of special beauty, which enables to exceed suffering and creates a space for liberation. Nature manifests impermanence through the transition of the seasons, it designates constant transformation, in which nothing is permanent and this awareness could be grasped only through Buddhist discipline.

### 5. The way of art — the way of inner fulfilment through sensitive insight into the emptiness

Every era of mankind is always a field of creative activity. Today it exceeds boundaries of common patterns and at the same time searches for ways to make sense for its own existence and existence of the world, which are too saturated with accumulation of spiritual and material. The strategies of art in Japan, which are essentially characterized by the philosophy of Buddhism, are not based on the naked appropriation of the art object, but the aesthetic experience and artistic activity are oriented towards adopting deeper, not yet comprehended views, and at the same time towards receiving and respecting things as they are. The manner of reaching liberation through art is an endless and incessant searching for truth and oneness.

Concept of way (*dō*) is significant aspect of soteriological dimensions of Japanese aesthetics. Toyo Izutsu defined *dō* on the field of art as «a way of leading to spiritual enlightenment through art; the *dō* consists here in making an art a means by which to achieve enlightenment as its ultimate goal. /.../ To every stage of a way a certain spiritual state corresponds, and at every stage the artist tries to get into communion with the quintessence of the art through the corresponding spiritual state, and make himself bloom in the art» [12, p. 286].

The idea of *dō* has its source in art, rather poetry, composition of verses, which is the analogue procedure of meditation. The excellent poem is a result of enlightenment in *zen* Buddhism and has the same status as reaching the enlightenment. This conviction is the basis for formation of the theatre *Nō* [10, s. 193]. Religious attitude, related to *dō*, is also indicated through tea ceremonies. Soetsu Yanagi exposed, that «(t)he Way of Tea is a way of salvation through beauty. Hence the *chajin* (tea master) must make a paragon of himself so as to preach laws like a religious man. He must have a profound love of beauty, high discernment of truth, and deep experience in practice. So far as *cha-no-yu* is a Way, spiritual discipline should come first» [12, p. 286].

Way, *dō*, is characterised with specific practice and discipline, which leads to spiritual fulfilment and salvation, the basis of which is *yoga*. The discipline of body and mind is essential for art, different techniques and artefacts, is the basis for self-transformation. For art, which has its source in *dō*, perfection is not the ultimate aim, but the state, spiritual/artistic fulfilment, which is beyond conventional techniques. In the theatre *Nō* different techniques of movements are becoming free expressions, based on the deeper level of artistic creativity. In the era Heian (794–1185) the connection between creativity and spirituality was clearly formed; the poetry as a part of *dō* was comprehended as an interlacement of poetic and meditative practice. Poetic creativity is a mystic fusion of the poet and his work, which was created on the basis of his intense concentration. Composing poetry becomes the way of life, which leads to wisdom about the highest Reality. Way, *dō*, is the way of religious-spiritual realisation, designated with peace and calmness. Bashō determined *dō* with the metaphor of pilgrimage; the poetic way is like travelling into the spirituality, it is the process, which leads one close to that, which is most real, authentic and is reached through spiritual awakening. This is the travel, which is a travel home, to himself, and poetry is a form, which leads one home. Izutsu Bashō's posture is understood as an «unremitting pursuit of poetic truthfulness» [12, p. 288]. It is human's tendency for approaching to the truth of human existence and existence of the whole world. It is the pursuit and expression of the essential meaning (*hon'i*) of something, what is caught into the artistic form, for dis-

covering deeper principles and the secrets of things, which cannot be revealed with theoretic-analytical methods, but on the basis of different comprehension. The main attitude of poets from Heian era and also for the other artist, Zeami, for example, is an interest for the essence of all things, which is under the surface of everydayness, for numinous dimension of the things, which is actually their true nature. Zeami defined *hon'i* as human's residence in the union with essential spirit and reality, which is depicted in the art [12, p. 289]. When one creates a new object, sees it with his inner eyes, from his inwards, then the gap between the object and the subject is overcome on that way. The Buddhist concepts *anātman* (Jap. *mu*) and *śūnyatā*, emptiness (Jap. *kū*) determined the essence, which is the object of one's endeavour. Zeami exposed that the one with his artistic artefact gave visible form to invisible essence of things [12, p. 289]. Japanese art tries to express the true nature of all phenomenal things, outlined on the background of emptiness; it is the expression of the empty, silent content of things, steady impermanency, which stands beyond the mask of all things. Reaching release from domination of illusory ego is the source of holistic and authentic life, anchorage of the field of being, its manifestation, the basis for transformation, serenity, and composure in the middle of active life. The knowledge about artistic techniques is not enough, one has to turn inward, to the real state of self, *anātman*, through which he is one with all existing, in absolute union with the nature and universe. With reaching the knowledge about *anātman* one transcends particular forms of art. The main feature of *dō* is the aesthetic sensitivity; one experiences it in the relation to the nature, and as such has the soteriological dimension, which in the Japanese art is one of the supreme aesthetic values.

## 6. Conclusion

The aesthetic tradition in Japan today is indicated through literal and philosophical heritage, works of art and attitude toward life. The religious tradition in Japan is manifested through art, which was essentially affected by Buddhist thought and both try to reach the calmness of the spirit and realise things as they are. This aspect of Japanese spiritual and cultural heritage shows that the development of different religious practices is always corresponded with the development of different artistic practices, which shows an important soteriological trend, which is most clearly represented in the connection between art creations and nature. Concepts of Japanese aesthetics, based on Buddhist thought, which offers a chance for rebirth of values, goals and attitudes and is the foundation for endeavouring the liberation from all worldly attachments, transcend all history eras and places and remain a timeless and always current expression of attitude towards the world, which is based on under-

standing all things in their essential nature, which is empty. All things are identical in their emptiness, and that idea is similar to the metaphor about Indra's net, which is depiction of principle, called *dharmadhātu*, which means nature-as-it-is, which is empty. The metaphor is a symbol of infinite connectedness between all elements in the space — each part is the condition for the whole and is dependent on the whole. And moreover — it mediates the non-anthropocentric view of human, who is not the measure of all existing, but is included into the net of endless mutual reflection and is the same with every single piece of world, because their essences are filled with the same content, emptiness.

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