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Chapter 12

Japanese *Furoosha* (Bums) and *Hoomuresu* (Homeless): Living in the Shadow of Wealth

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In the early morning of January 24, 1996, employees and policemen of the Tokyo Municipal Government cleaned up the homeless from the street in the basement of the east side of the Shinjuku Station. The government had decided to build a moving walkway on that street. Although the homeless and their supporters resisted the power of the authorities, they were expelled. The Tokyo Municipal Government offered a shelter for the homeless. However, they could stay in the shelter only until the end of March. Of the more than 200 people removed, only 43 expressed any interest in moving into the shelter (Shinjuku no, 1996, p. 11). On the next day, the government announced that they would place steel bars between pillars along the walkway so that the homeless could not come back to their previous home even after the construction was finished.

Japan has suffered from an economic recession since 1991. This recession, the worst in the post World War II era, is called the *Heisei* recession. Increased rates of corporate bankruptcy and unemployment have threatened ordinary people with the specter that they might become homeless. In the modern corporate society, having a place of employment and a domicile are very closely related. This specter of having a tenuous grasp on employment and home was exacerbated by the mass media's reporting of the Shinjuku clean up (Morikawa, 1994). Although the distinction between wealth (having a home) and poverty (being homeless) is clear, the perception that the possibility of losing one's home has increased during the *Heisei* recession has also increased. The actual likelihood that a typical worker could end up homeless has never been calculated and it is probably quite remote. Nevertheless, the high visibility of homeless people, combined with the real anxiety caused by the recession has compounded to make the existence of the homeless almost unbearable. The row of homeless people on the street in the west side of the Shinjuku station both signifies and symbolizes the perceived threat (likely or not) of severe economic deprivation. As thousands of smartly dressed salary-men and women pass by every day, the contrast between those who have a job and home and those who do not is pro-

found. Since the recession, the presence of the homeless makes the recession even more disturbing to the armies of workers passing by. The homeless are a constant reminder of what could, no matter how remotely, happen to those who loose their place in the system.

Since the *Heisei* recession, the threshold between the homed and homeless has fallen. The economic and psychological distance between the two populations, like the physical distance between the people living on the street and those salary employees marching by, has become too close for comfort. Japan's economic miracle, like most miracles, has been exposed as a myth by the presence of the homeless. Their simple existence shakes the psycho-economic confidence of those who see them both personally and on television. Certain prosperity has died during the *Heisei* recession. The result is anxiety for a whole generation of workers who have come of age without knowing anything other than constant growth.

The mass media sensationally suggests to their viewers that they too could experience a homeless life in the near future, the media also describes incidents where the homeless have been treated as garbage. The incident described at the beginning of this paper is one such warning. The Tokyo Municipal Government threw the homeless away just as one would dispose of bulky garbage. The phrase bulky garbage (*sodaigomi*), which is commonly used in Japan, refers to the difficulty one has in disposing of unproductive and unwanted people such as the homeless and the aged. Such unwanted people present a moral dilemma which makes dealing with them difficult in a way similar to removing large unwanted objects like broken refrigerators and old automobiles. The shop owners in the Shinjuku Station area and most of the commuters using the prommenade welcomed the clean-up. The incident of the Shinjuku homeless made the front pages of several major newspapers such as the *Asahi Shimbun*.

The term homeless (*hoomuresu* in Japanese) is borrowed from English. It only recently gained currency in the Japanese lexicon since the late 1980's and early 1990's. During the 1980s and before, the term bums (*furoosha* in Japanese) was commonly used to signify people without permanent employment and domicile. Both bum and homeless designate the Others. But there is a significant difference in connotation. Bums were more tolerable than homeless.

The existence of Others may seem an unfortunate contingency. However, these categories, which collectively signify Others among us, actually serve a purpose for group cohesion and identity. According to the binary logic of identity and difference, the Other, which is a fashionable way to say the outsider, is necessary for the insider to exist. The outsider is essential to the consolidated identity and presumed harmony among the insiders. Insiders feel safe and secure in their identity as so defined. They recognize their wealth when they see the impoverished Others.

However, the homeless, signifies more than simple otherness. As is implied in the incident described above, it also signifies a threat to the Japanese people. The homeless are a threat to *Wa* (harmony) on many levels including the desire for a coherent reality, the desire for group cohesion, and the desire for a psycho-economic sense of equilibrium, stability, and identity. Moreover, the linguistic shift from bums to homeless reflects a change in popular attitude among most people that may be related to the uncertainty of the *Heisei* recession.

This chapter examines this linguistic shift and explains what it signifies. It is suggested that the actions of the authorities and the shift in linguistic valence indicates a fundamental relationship between modern identity and economic status. This analysis will reveal the changing attitude of the Japanese people through the semiotic analysis of bums and homeless, not merely as words, but as those people who are living in the shadows cast by the oft cited Japanese miracle.

BUMS AS OTHERS/OUTSIDERS

Outsiders are created by and for insiders so that insiders can survive and maintain their identity. Since this dialectical structure is necessary for the existence of such identities (they are co-constituting), those who benefit by the sacrifice of the Others, that is the insiders, will work in their own interest to maintain that structure (Kramer, 1993). The poor state of the outsider can be quite valuable to the system as a warning to all who might entertain any ideas of deviance. But if the gap between the inside and the outside becomes too small for comfort, then the use-value of the outsiders is outweighed by feelings of dissonance. Consequently, the outsiders have outlived their use as scapegoats and should be removed. Insiders typically feel superior and perhaps even secure in their identity when they see the inferior situation of the Other. However, this sense of security is maintain only in so far as the outsiders are a clearly distinguished group of Others. So long as the difference between being an insider and an outsider is obvious, then the existence of such a clearly defined outside serves the interests of the inside. But what if the difference begins to fade? What if the boundary appears to be permeable so that the diametrical positions of insider and outsider begin to mix? The result is that the two identities begin to disappear because they are not so apparently different. When this occurs, then the existence of the outsider no longer serves the purpose of defining and discriminating the identity of the insider. Instead, the insider might begin to identify with the so-called outsider, and in this case, the result is very disturbing for the insider. The insider is loosing her identity as such. (S)he can begin to see herself in the face of the outsider (Levinas, 1994). As is almost always the case with outsiders (by definition), to see oneself becoming one of them or like them is repugnant.

Furthermore, if the insider believes that his or her identity, as such, is contingent on forces beyond their control, then the presence of the outsider may actually be threatening and disturbing. The predictable consonance or harmony the insiders presume may be confronted by potential disharmony and consequent dissonance. From a comfortable distance, insiders may feel sorry for the Others' miserable situation at least so long as it seems unlikely that they themselves (the insiders) could become an outsider. However, insiders are moved to take action when they feel threatened and wish to consolidate or expand their power. When a crisis of identity occurs, appeals to harmony, order, and reason, in a word *Wa*, are made. Demonizing the Other, helps to consolidate the sense of in-group identity and cohesion (*Wa*). The once relatively harmless and even pitiful Others are transformed into a dialectical opponent expressed as It's us or them. The or is the key, or operant term. Or implies mutual exclusion, not mutual coexistence. To be homeless is a frightening and unacceptable alternative. If be-

coming one of them appears to be emerging as a possibility, then it must be excluded from the universe of options.

The shift from being relatively harmless and even worthy of pity to being an object of scorn, disgust, and evil (disharmony) is profound. The shift manifests a psychological and semantic distancing. One must keep in mind that since the time of Isocrates, and including Sapir and Whorf, and Merleau-Ponty (and many others) the distinction between some invisible psyche and expression has been questioned. The expression and the expressed are identical so that a linguistic shift manifests a shift in attitude and/or way of thinking. The separation, or distancing between the homeless and the homed, which leads to a sense that one type of person is somehow more human than the other, begins when one looses the fundamental sense of identity that constitutes a unified community (Gebser, 1949/1985). While there is no distance between one and the other in the magic, unidimensional world of extended family, the beginning of one's separation from the other is found in the mythic ambivalent world of the emergent mass or city-dwelling individual (Gebser, 1949/1985). For a magic person, there is no sense of isolation or identifiable self as different from other people or nature or supernature. Magical expression is identifiable in that the signifier and the signified are identical. In the magic world or mode of communication, there is no semantic distance. For example, magic artifacts do not refer to or symbolize some force that exists elsewhere. Sacred artifacts manifest magic. They *are* magic so that if the artifact is lost, so too is the magic. Likewise, the one who possesses (and is possessed by) magical power is identical with it. Such a person is said to be literally (not figurally or symbolically) holy or magical. Because such a person is holy, bits of them, or even the entire body is preserved and religiously worshiped. Examples include the mummification of famous Buddhist monks, bits of the bodies of saints faithfully preserved in churches and cathedrals, the display of pseudo-religious leaders like Lenin and Stalin, and the hypervaluated preservation of pieces of paraphernalia that belonged to rock and movie stars. The cult of personality is essentially a magic mode of expression and is quite alive in the twentieth century. In the case of magic power, the holy or magical person *is* authority. An example of the identification of the person with their magical artifacts is the *kuruta*, or the sacred gown, which Shoko Asahara, a leader of the Aum religious cult, wore. For the true believers, it does not have a symbolic distance from him. There is no separation between him and his sacred gown. When his *kuruta* is taken from him, he gets upset because it is not simply an arbitrary piece of clothing or even a more emotionally charged symbol, but it is a talisman (a sacred and powerful object). There is a unity or, to put it in another way, there is no sense of Otherness in the magic world. One cannot loose one's magical identity. It is primordial.

Ethnic and or clan identity is one of the oldest types. It is essentially a magical phenomenon so that one is identical with the extended family. The same blood flows through all the veins of the clan. For instance, I may move away from Japan, speak a different language, and hold a different citizenship, and yet, on the magical level, I am and always will be Japanese by inherent nature, by blood and clan identity. Such a self exists prior to nationality or other legalistic (perspectival) designations. Practically all people harbor a dimension of magical identity as an integral part of their self concept. Whether it be Japanese or Italian or Mayan or Muslim or Black (or whatever ethnic group), ethnicity is a complex

magical phenomenon people use to trace their sense of inherent identity to a common origin. Magic rituals to make individuals brothers, which means to have very intense emotional commitment, very often have blood and the mixing of blood in the process. An example would be when the leader cuts him or herself and cuts the initiate and they compress the two wounds together so that their blood mixes or when the initiate must drink the blood of the founder. The magical belief is that with the consumption of the flesh and blood of the Other they become one, the qualities are inherently transferred as when a magic person eats a certain kind of animal or part of an animal in order to become that animal.

Magic identity is a sense of being part of one single and unifying bloodline. People who appeal to a need to assure and defend the purity of the race or the religious or ideological dogma are manifesting magical consciousness structure. It is evinced in their actions and other forms of expression (rituals, ceremonies, war, arts, laws, and so forth). Patriotism and religionism are common expressions of magical consciousness in the modern world. Magic is highly affective and is the root of most attempts to justify actions typically believed to be immoral such as mass murder and the disposal of Others. Genocide has been justified because the existence of the Other threatens the aggressors pure identity. An example is the many prohibitions against interracial marriage around the globe and the prohibition against blood transfusion between races, a practice followed in the United States which had segregated white from colored hospitals until the mid-1960's. Even the sharing of food or drink (drinking fountains) was believed to lead to contamination. These are just a few examples of magical consciousness and its intensely emotional expression in the modern world. Magic identity is intensely emotional because the very sense of self is at stake.

On the other hand, the mythic world introduces a nascent separation of pseudo-individual ego identities. They are not yet expressed as dualistically discrete, as in the perspectival modern world, but in the mythic world nascent independence appears as a polar structure. The polar structure is characterized by mutual implication of one for the other. Hence the existence of sides (a spatial metaphor) begins to emerge. The inside implies the existence of an outside. The Other is somehow different from not one's own kind, which is magical, but different from one's self. The nascent realization of self-identity makes it possible to recognize the Other as well as his or her group identity. Mythical people realize that they belong to a group, *sui generus*. Identity, which is utterly presumed and invisible for magic people, becomes evident *sui generus* in the mythic world, although it is not yet a crisis as it is in the case of the perspectival world where suicide becomes common despite relatively heightened material comfort. Mythic people see themselves as no longer brothers with other animals, nor as possessed of and by spirit beings. Rather, the spirits have left the world to take up a distant residence on a mountain top or some astral realm. While the magic world is thoroughly animate such that everything has a spiritual dimension and the universe is full and finished (i.e., rivers have spirits, the sky or wind has a spirit, the trees have spirits, in short everything is the same—spiritual), the mythic world is characterized by the onset of a process of dissociation, which has extended in the Western European Renaissance style of perspectival dualism (articulated first by Aristotle and again by individuals like Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes).

In the mythic world, great schisms and clashes emerge with the articulation of master discourses, mythological systems (including the great religions) which are ultimately (logically) mutually exclusionary. The signifier and the signified begin to separate. The primordial problem of interpretation emerges. Meaning and communication as such comes to be seen as complex and problematic. The simple magical identity gives way to debate about the meaning of signs. This realization was the impetus for the invention of academic critical thinking about the meaning of texts and communication as such, in the form of ancient hermeneutics (derived from Hermes the winged messenger god who not only translated but *interpreted* divine messages), and endless commentaries on the sacred texts such as Talmudic exegesis. Thus institutional religion emerges as magical identity breaks down allowing for conflicts of interpretations and the felt need to defend a dogma (a position).

In the magical sense, one does not belong to the Christian church for instance, but *is* a Christian. The possibility of choice, which presupposes the emergence of a critical distance, emerges as mythological ambivalence. For instance, rituals such as communion and baptism are magical forms of idolic communication as well as a mythical forms of symbolic communication. Thus, one can recognize a sedimenting of forms of consciousness which co-exist. This kind of sedimentary complexity also exists in the meaning of bums and homeless.

Via mythical implication, when one tries to maintain the solidarity and clear (pure) identity of the inside, such communal solidarity works to exclude or distance outsiders. The insiders (*uchi*) work together in order to maintain their harmony or *Wa* and, at the same time, to protect their communal bonds, by excluding outsiders (*soto*). While insiders offer extensive service and emotional support to their own group members, they are very cold and indifferent to outsiders. Insiders will even sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the group. Sacrificing themselves is, however, not an accurate expression. Since individual ego or awareness of individual self is irrelevant to the members of the mythic *uchi* community, they do not think that they are sacrificing themselves. Rather than being unsung heroes, they are seen as rewarded martyrs to be envied. This is why the magic and mythic logic of cult suicides, like the Heavens Gate mass suicide in San Diego, California, in the Spring of 1997, often completely escapes the understanding of perspectival analysts. From the point-of-view of the perspectival consciousness structure, such intense dedication to (or more accurately identification with) a cause, seems wholly irrational and impossible to understand. In a different, but to some extent no less suicidal way (if one tries to understand the suicidal efforts of soldiers during the Second World War), members of *Ie*, or the mythic all encompassing family of Japanese, for example, do not think that politically arranged marriages are a sacrifice, but rather a necessity (Ikeda, 1992). Mythic people simply accept such marriages as natural. From the perspectival point-of-view this is fatalism. To those involved, the purpose of marriage is to preserve the system of *Ie*, not to express or achieve their individual desires or to assert their independence. In the magic and mythic world, nothing could be worse that to be independent or outside of the group. To be independent is to have no magic or mythic identity. Independence, which is freedom, is arbitrary and therefore extremely uncertain, which is very disturbing to magically and mythically minded people.

Bums, like other minority groups everywhere (not just Japan, for being marginal is what minority means), are treated as outsiders. A necessary condition for their existence is the continual maintenance and belief in sides. On the side of good are the normal, Japanese people who maintain their harmonious identity, or *Wa*, against the threat of discordentant elements both inside and outside the country. Japanese identity as *Wa* is dependent upon the creation and maintenance of the outsider (Kramer and Ikeda, 1997). The character *Wa* signifies harmony as well as Japan itself. The concept *Wa* has been a guiding principle for Japanese people at least since it was institutionalized by Prince Shotoku in his *Seventeen Article Constitution*,[1] which was compiled around 600 A.D. It says: *Wa o motte tattoshi to shi, sakaraukoto naki to seyo* (Harmony is to be valued, and avoidance of wanton opposition is to be honored) (translated by William Aston, 1956, in *Nihongi*). Although Prince Shotoku imported the idea of Buddhist compassion and expressed it in the concept *Wa*, Buddhist compassion came to be expressed, practiced, and identified with the order of the imperial system. It did not, and does not extend beyond the edges of the system (see Kramer and Ikeda, 1997). Compassion stops at the edge of the system. If one acts *out*, or is a foreigner, then compassion and identification is limited.

The *Wa*, or harmony, that Prince Shotoku had in mind, was more specifically the state of order under the emperor. The edicts required that the people pay respect to the emperor so that order, or the hierarchy of the system, namely *Wa*, should and would be maintained. This gave a moral dimension to identity. But moral behavior, or morality in general, tended to not be extended to those outside the group. The alternative to the good, which was hierarchical, rational order, was evil, meaning chaos or irrational anarchy. The emperor was considered the (common) source of all Japanese identity. This system then created and controlled Others in order to sustain the system. Such Others include the *buraku* people, the *Ainu*, Koreans in Japan, the handicapped, and so forth.

Since then, Others have been purposefully created by the authority in the modern or perspectival structure. In the modern perspectival world, difference is recognized as arbitrary. But for rhetorical purposes, authority appeals to magic and mythic identities that are supposedly inherent. Thus, authority cannot be blamed for the subservient status of the Others because the authorities did not make it happen. Thus the rhetoric of naturalism is used to inoculate the authorities from being responsible for arbitrary decisions they have instituted. One is not arbitrarily inferior, which would suggest that one could change one's status (the idea of the mutability of the individual), but rather on is naturally and inherently inferior. Given such conditions, the law of society is thus seen as merely harmonizing with the law of nature which after all is the moral and rational thing to do. Resisting nature is foolish. The good state is the one that most accommodates the tendencies of human nature. It is no one's fault, and certainly not the fault of the authorities who are innocently interested only in law, order, and justice, that one group of people is inferior to another. And how could it be just, that inherently unequal people have equal power? This would be nothing short of unnatural, a sin against nature itself. To resist nature is totally irrational. To presume that everyone is equal is utterly irrational, nothing short of ridiculous. Thus, the authority (defines) recognizes the inherent and immutable otherness of Others, as such, in a presumably reasonable, objective, and detached (innocent) way (see Kramer and Ikeda, 1997).

As a consequence of this rational organization, in the early 1600s, the To-kugawa government, established a strict caste system and ranked the *buraku* people at the bottom of the system by merely recognizing their natural place relative to other subgroups, and this order was acceptable by all involved (at least until the perspectival ideas of individual rights and merit came from the West) including the *buraku* themselves. In this way, the feudal administrators could not only avoid responsibility for the inequalities of the social structure, but even claim to have honorably fulfilled their duty by properly and respectfully recognizing the order of nature. Once one was identified with a caste, not as an arbitrary member but as the personification of the caste, such a status was passed down from generation to generation. That which was arbitrary, became ines-capably inherent. This is the magical dimension of rationalization exploited by the perspectival form of power through dissociation and ordination. The political and religious authorities legitimized the lowly status of the *buraku* people by announcing that they were identified with death, and as such were naturally (ob-viously and unquestionably) polluted and impure. This status was presumed to be inherent in their very nature and so it was hereditary, it was an ascribed not achieved status.

In mythical thinking causation can go in both directions so that it was un-clear, and in a way irrelevant, whether being an animal butcher and hide tanner was the cause or the effect of being *buraku*. In any case, the status designation was not seen as an arbitrary decision, but determined and in accordance with the Buddhist understanding of natural order.[2]

As a result of mythic legitimization, people come to accept the reasons for the identification of themselves and Others in certain ways and to discriminate accordingly. They do not doubt the order of things, or their own identity, nor do they hesitate about or question whether such discrimination may be wrong. This explains the process of normalizing *Sabetsu*, which is justified discrimination against others, and *Ijime* or justified bullying of others.

Bums came to be defined as Others in the second half of the 1960s (Akasaka, 1991, pp. 76–77). By then, the Japanese economy had recovered and had even begun to enjoy pronounced success. Defining bums as the Others coincided with Japan's economic success. Until then, the distinction between the insider of the community, and the outsider, such as bums, had been ambiguous. Like the me-dieval village idiot or drunk, a person might not be a paragon of virtue by the communities' standards but he or she was still, and unquestionably, a member of the community. Ambiguity is characteristic of a mythic relationship.

Although the distinction between one and the other (the signifier and the sig-nified) begins in the mythic awareness, a residual yet ambiguous identity is found in the mythic sense of appropriateness. While the symbol stands in for the thing symbolized, thus indicating an ontological distinction, it is still meaningful to discuss the appropriateness of a symbol such as a metaphor. For instance, a metaphor must reveal some sense of the truth of a phenomenon while it differs from it, or it is said to be inappropriate. In other words, there is still a sense of unity and identity in the mythic symbolic relationship even though the relation-ship is ambiguous and am-bivalent. A mythic person still cares very much about the symbol. For example, if one's national flag is destroyed, one may realize that it is merely a symbol of national identity and yet it is not arbitrary. For the mythic person there is yet emotional attachment with the symbol. While there is

no distance between a magic person and their world, for the mythic person there exists a nascent sense of distance or differentiation between his or herself and the world. The unambiguous distinction between self and Other, subject and object presumes perspectival arbitrariness and emotional dissociation (dualistic abstraction). For instance, a perspectival modern does not care much (identify with) the binary computer code of 0,1. The code is purely arbitrary.

By contrast, mythic ambiguity is well expressed in the Chinese symbol, *Tai-chi*. The circular *Tai-chi* symbol consists of a dark hemisphere, called *Yin*, and a light part called *Yang*, each of which includes a small spot of the other part. This symbol captures the mythic quality which is not oppositionally dual-istic but mutually implicate. The relationship between *Yin* and *Yang* is thus am-biguous.

Just as the *buraku* people were not strictly, inescapably defined as outsiders, but marginals, *before the Tokugawa era*,[3] bums were never completely seen as outsiders or Others in a strict sense. Due to the ambiguity and am-bivalence of mythic consciousness, some social mobility in and out of the *buraku* community (identity) was possible. The status (identity) of the *buraku* was not fixated in the form of bureaucratic written record keeping, which traced and maintained their status at the bottom of the social structure from one generation to the next, until the advent of the Tokugawa administration. As Harold Innis (1986) has argued, writing, which is a necessary condition for bureaucratization, is externalized memory. Record keeping is the origin of empire. Writing enables institutionali-zation, institutional memory, and official identification. It is linear, categorical; in a word perspectival.

Under the tyranny of well organized bureaucracy, one finds it more and more difficult to escape from one's official identity. In the mythic world, the *buraku* people were not permanent outsiders or Others. But with the advent of bureau-cratic reason and order and its calculating use of natural rationalizations, the *buraku* became trapped. Escape became possible only when the idea of individ-ual merit and individual civil liberties entered the Japanese consciousness. With the notion of arbitrary rather than inherent value comes the idea that individuals can change their social station through free will and achievement. Thus, post-modernity has enabled the permeability of categorical boundaries that demarcate identities. Hyper-valuing the individual as someone more than a group member has enabled various kinds of mobility which means that identity is no longer fixed by collectivistic, mythic and early modern thinking.

In a similar way, in the feudal mythic world bums were not strictly identified as outsiders. Although they did not have the same status and privileges as full-fledged insiders, bums were allowed to be in the community. There were places (physical, social, economic, spiritual, and semantic) for bums in the mythic community. Indeed, they sometimes where seen to have endearing qualities. At the time of village festivals, bums appeared in the confines of shrines and begged for food and money. They were thus integrated into village life (Aka-saka, 1991, pp. 77–78). People gave the bums food and allowed them to live in temples and shrines and even under the eaves of their houses. Even though peo-ple occasionally beat them, the mainstream people did not try to expel the bums from the community. Bums accepted such treatment *as a rule* in order to receive shelter and food. The relationship between mainstream people and peripheral bums in the community seems to be cruel from the modern or perspectival sense

of propriety; however, the relationship cannot be judged as right or wrong. The two loosely identified groups (for some bums were vagabond samuri, maverick monks, poets, and others of high esteem) co-existed, just like people and nature do. In the feudal world, identity was not reduced to economic status as much as it is in the current corporate world. One could be poor but yet respectable. In such a way, *Wa* or harmony was maintained within the community.

Mythic harmony was broken when the modern or perspectival idea of self-dependent individualism and competitiveness, especially economic competitiveness, became the dominant criteria for identity. Modernity is obsessed with competitiveness and efficiency (both economic concepts). In the modern or perspectival world, being productive and efficient is considered good, while being slow or inefficient is bad. The more one can produce per unit time, the more he or she is rewarded. Even time, which is essentially energy (Gebser, 1949/1985), is spatialized or measured and expressed as a quantity. In modernity, qualitative differences are reduced to quantitative ones. Thus, those who are not productive or efficient in material terms, including children, women, the elderly, the handicapped, and so forth, are considered useless, worthless, and inefficient. Such persons are not worthy of respect. Bums are also considered to be peripheral to value as it is expressed by quantitative productivity. In the modern perspectival world, Bums came to be regarded as useless appendages of the society. They came to be valuated as non-productive, thus they are identified as nothing more than an (economic) burden on society—essentially parasitic. What may have once been acceptable as a wondering poet or minstrel, free laborer, or sword for hire, is now unacceptable. One must have a permanent place within the system or be perceived as problematic. Thus, life time employment is an expression of having a permanent place within a stable system. Even the mobility of free labor, so common in previous times, is considered suspect or of dubious value. In the modern Japanese economy, much of the floating labor is made up of foreign workers who are not regarded as integral to the in-group. Such workers are not Japanese. They are contingent and, as such, expendable. In times of economic downturn, foreign labor was the first to go.

However, when the specter of lay-off began to touch in-group members, a crisis of membership and group identity emerged. The presence of homeless *Japanese* came to be a very disturbing symbol of economic weakness and instability. And since Japan has staked its pride almost exclusively on its economic prowess to the exclusion of other ways of displaying dominance such as military might, population size, or land size (common criteria used by many other countries such as the United States, China, India, Brazil, Russia, and so forth), when its economic engine began to stall the consequences went to the very heart of what it means to be Japanese. Made in Japan had become a label of pride world wide. Japan remains the only G7 nation in Asia. But such bragging rights are being eroded. When the sense of self-esteem is threatened, especially by economic problems, scapegoating is commonly observed all over the world, and Japan is no different.

In the modern Japanese milieu, with its emphasis on material production and economic power, people came to the idea that any burden, meaning any net expenditure to society, should be terminated. Belt tightening and cost-cutting take the form of getting serious, and getting tough. In such a singularly motivated society, reorganization reaches all aspects of the social world. Getting strong

and staying strong is the name of the game. As eugenics prospers in the modern or perspectival world, people try to eliminate those who are inferior. Under the Eugenic Protection Act established in Japan in 1948, people have expressed a felt need to terminate inferior genes. Under the principle of eugenics, people have come to the conclusion that bums are inferior, and as such should be eliminated. In modern society where waste is valuated as bad, people began to attack bums. People started to see bums as discrete Others, not as mythic, ambiguous Others.

ATTACKING OTHERS

In 1983, the media sensationalized a report about a group of junior high school students who attacked and killed bums in Yokohama. The media described the attacks as being a game, or for fun. One of the students commented: Bums were irresistible and they just ran away when we attacked, which gave us a thrill. We enjoyed ourselves by throwing stones at them and hitting the bums (translated by the author) (*Furoosha Shugeki wa*, 1983, p. 11). Another boy said: If we played in a game arcade it cost money, but we didn't need any money in the game of attacking bums and it was fun (translated by the author) (*Joshi Chugakusei mo*, 1983, p. 23). These comments remind one of the kind of senseless killings commonly reported in Western countries, such as wilding, drive by shootings, and the like (Kramer and Ikeda, 1997). In cases of wilding, juvenile males in search of momentary gratification, make a woman, any woman, the target of impulsive attack. After the attack she is discarded because she is dead (or unconscious) and gives no more gratification to the player(s) or attacker(s). Drive-by shootings are also impulsive and violent attempts at self-gratification at the expense of others. The targets are often anonymous and objectified, which means that they hold no inherent value worthy of respect for their attackers. This is late-modern or even post-modern crime in that anonymity is a come quality of the targets, there is no premeditation, no planning, and there appears to be no rhyme nor reason for the selection of targets with the possible exception that such brutal youth avoid people that might appear to be able to fight back. Other than this criterion of selection, according to police interviews, targets are utterly random—arbitrary. In the post-modern world, where everything, including meaning, is arbitrary, and quality is considered a medieval chimera, the Other has become a devalued and disqualified object (Buber, 1970). Senseless killing is a manifestation of post-modernity, and killing bums is one expression of this attitude (Kramer and Ikeda, 1997).

In the mythic world, which thrives on spectacle, pageantry, ceremony, and patriotic emotion, killing can have great semantic import. It can make one a hero or butcher. Most histories are the narratives of power-politics and war. War has been deemed worthy of great sacrifice, many memorials, and countless volumes of books and movies. Post-modern murder, on the other hand, appears to be an utterly senseless, rather than sense-making behavior. It manifests a level of dissociation and alienation that defies rational explanation. Even the best efforts at explanation fail because post-modern murder seems utterly meaningless. It is a form of killing that lacks motive or intent. The target is not a worthy opponent or a hated enemy, but anyone who happens by.

Modernity or the perspectival world is expressed as a separation between self and the Other (estrangement). In the post-modern world, arbitrariness is, quite contradictorily, taken to absolution. In the modern world one comes to be aware of himself or herself as an individual being. But the logical relationship between freedom and responsibility yet holds. The ambiguous distinction between self and the Other in the mythic world becomes more distinct in the modern perspectival world (Gebser, 1949/1985). In other words, the ambiguous relationship of the mythic symbol becomes the arbitrary sign. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is accidental at best—unmotivated. The sign, has no emotional identity. What is polarity in the symbol becomes stark and discrete duality in the sign. There is no ambiguity in the dualistic world. Everything is white or black, yes or no, either or, 0,1. Code switching is not problematic because one does not care when the world is totally arbitrary. The sign has no inherent internal cohesion, meaning, or value.

Arbitrariness leads to quantitative unitization. In the arbitrary world, units are interchangeable. Even people are reduced to functional equivalencies. Meaning exists only as operation. Identity is reduced to operation within a structure. I am a computer programmer, I am a lawyer, I am a marketing agent... When one's position within the structure is lost, so too is one's sense of self. Hence, lay-off are devastating for the modern individual.

In the post-modern world, everything is equal; qualitative differences are irrelevant (Kramer, 1997). Thus, the unitized object, such as a woman in wilding, a target in drive-by shootings, a bum, a general issue soldier (not mythic warrior), etc. can be carelessly replaced (Kramer and Ikeda, 1997). Only the number of conquests matters. How many soldiers does it take to win a battle is computed in cost or benefit analyses. Style is replaced by brutal efficiency such as the biggest bang for the buck. While feudal warriors expressed a unique identity in their coats-of-arms, their colors, and the style of their armor and fighting, modern soldiers are regimented and anonymous. Human beings have become resource base. Humans can become obsolete. They must retool. Increasingly, machine language is applied to human interaction. Communication is replaced by informatics and cybernetics, whereby feedback is used to maintain order (equilibrium). Discordant and deranged individuals must be corrected and arranged.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the juvenile attacks was that the media reported that the students who killed the bums showed no emotion or sympathy for those they tormented and murdered. Some suggested that they did not, or perhaps could not, understand that they had killed human beings (Aoki, 1985). When one of the boys was asked why he killed bums, he answered with a grimace that bums were dirty and smelled bad (Aoki, 1985). Another said that he used bums as objects for practicing his fighting skills (*Kenka no*, 1983, p. 23). Many readers and viewers were irritated by the juveniles' unreasonable reasons. None of the boys, however, were held legally responsible, even though five of them were 16 years old, which is old enough to be charged as an adult according to Japanese criminal law. The police declared that the boys did not have any intention of killing the bums. As startling as it may seem, the police may be right. In the post-modern world motive, intent, and meaning are not real. The police accepted the unreasonable reasons for justifying the killings.

In the case of the bum killings in 1983, despite the attitude taken by the police, a majority of Japanese people did not accept the boys' reasons for killing,

and they expressed their frustration in the media. An outpouring of humanistic reaction against the killers was expressed. Humanistic ideas are modern Enlightenment ideas. In the modern world, humanity has been conceptualized *sui generus* and emancipated, which means that humanism emerged as a discrete ideology which, in turn, gave birth to the social sciences, modern jurisprudence, and democratic modes of discourse like blind and refereed science. According to the French philosophies and Enlightenment thought, humans must be released from myths, superstition, blood-based power legitimization, and other so-called irrational phenomena. Minorities, such as women, non-Caucasians, the handicapped, and others, have demanded equality and individual rights. This is only possible when one is aware of his or her individual self. This, reawakening or rebirth (which is the meaning of the word Renaissance) of self-awareness was manifested in the American and French Revolutions, and various civil rights and post-colonial movements, globally. The idea of equality leads to humanistic ideologies. If someone is not given an equal opportunity by the power structure, humanists feel empathy and sympathy for that person and may try to help him or her. In the modern or perspectival world, a rather contradictory tendency exists such that individualism promotes civil liberties as the basis of a just community, and at the same time it tends toward post-modern isolation.

Although such a humanistic tendency was expressed by many in their public reactions to the case of killing bums in 1983, the reaction was rather hypocritical. People felt sorry only after the media revealed the killing case. In everyday life, they avoided the bums in their own communities. They were indifferent to the plight of the homeless. Furthermore, bums were generally considered to be dirty, useless, waste, et cetera. In short, the popular attitude toward bums was basically the attitude expressed by the killers. The Juvenile's may have seen their actions to be justified by the common sense regarding bums.

As is typical, it didn't take long for the media to forget about the 1983 incident. After the incident, only occasional and short articles about bums appeared in newspapers. Nevertheless, the 1983 incident was a catalyst for an emotional outpouring from the general population. Feelings of shock, guilt, and remorse where common themes in the media. This reaction is quite in contrast to the case of killing homeless (persons) in 1996.

The Linguistic Shift from Bums to Homeless: From Modernity to Post-Modernity

At the end of 1995, the mass media reported two cases in which youngsters killed homeless (persons). In the first case, two males (24 and 25 years of age) threw a 63-year-old homeless man off of a bridge and into a river. The homeless man drowned. In the second case, three teenagers attacked a 69-year-old homeless man and killed him. These cases were, however, treated as trivial in the media. Major networks reported them briefly in news programs; major newspapers spared only little space for reporting these incidents in the social sections of their pages. Around the same time the media was enthusiastically focused on the details of a series of trials of Aum religious group members. The two cases of killing the homeless were not, by media measurement, regarded as important news. What and how the media reports an issue creates the perception of its im-

port. According to the theories of agenda setting and status conferral, if the media treats a case as trivial, it becomes a trivial case. As in the case of all sensationally based forms of knowledge (as opposed to purely logical forms of knowledge), if an incident is not perceived it simply does not exist. The media and their consumers suffer from the tree falling in the woods syndrome.

While the media coverage of the 1983 case of killing bums generated a great deal of public reflection and outrage, the lack of media attention to the 1995 cases muted reaction. The result of an apparent lack of status conferral by the media concerning the 1995 cases correlates to an apparent indifference on the part of the public. Between 1983 and 1995, have people become more disinterested and or more desensitized to such crimes? Is this an indicator of increased alienation and carelessness so commonly attributed to modern urban living? It has been suggested by many scholars and media pundits that overdevelopment and overurbanization has created a condition where people increasingly care more about things and manipulate people than care about people and manipulate things. A rather uniform set of editorial criteria and decisions across the commercial media in Japan was evident in the content and coverage of the 1995 cases. Apparently, it was concluded by editors and producers that coverage of the killings of homeless people would not be of much interest to the general consuming public and would therefore not sell. The relative indifference toward the 1995 cases may be a manifestation of extreme me-ism and of an increasing inability to have a qualitative relationship with Others. I am the center of the universe and do not care about others. While the Aum Shenrikio attacks could directly effect the consuming public, news consumers were more interested in coverage of the cult trials than the murders of homeless, and essentially harmless, street people. Several Japanese scholars and writers (Miyadai, 1994; Kramer and Shimomisse, 1991; Sakurai, 1986) have suggested that the vitality of the modern or perspectival world where an individual self not only enjoys rights and privileges but also recognizes responsibilities to the larger collective may be waning. Caring about, and the willingness to sacrifice personal desires for, the collective good seems to be decreasing.

The deficiency (fragmentation) of the modern or perspectival world is indicated by the shift of terminology from bums (*furoosha*) to homeless (*hoomuresu*). While the term bum was used in the 1983 cases, the term homeless is found in the reportage of the 1995 cases. According to a search of two major Japanese newspapers (the *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Yomiuri Shimbun*), the linguistic shift from bums to homeless can be located in the mid-1990's. This linguistic shift occurred in the middle of the *Heisei* recession.

The rapid recovery of the Japanese economy after World War II enabled Japanese people to improve their lives. Since the 1960s, survey after survey has indicated that about 90 percent of Japanese believe that they belong to the middle class. They have also believed that each new generation will have a better economic situation than the last. The Japanese economy even overcame the recession which immediately followed the Oil Crisis of the 1970s. Japanese people believed that the Japanese economy would never fail. The *Heisei* recession, however, hit Japan after the prosperity of the bubble economy and destroyed the myth of endless prosperity. Perhaps the most important bubble that was deflated, was the psycho-economic faith people had had in the economy. The Japanese system of life-long employment, seniority, and large annual bonuses could no

longer be taken for granted. The restructuring of the economy, the financial system, the political system, companies, and perhaps most importantly, the restructuring of the expectations of the Japanese people, began in earnest during the 1990s. The unemployment rate has steadily risen since 1991. It was 2.1 percent in 1990 and 1991, 2.2 percent in 1992, 2.5 percent in 1993, 2.9 percent in 1994, and 3.2 percent in 1995 (Shitsugyoritsu, 1996, p. 2). The rate in May 1996 was 3.5 percent (Rising Unemployment, 1996, p. 15). This is a very sobering reversal of fortunes for the Japanese people. For the first time since the Second World War, the Japanese people feel threatened. It became conceivable to the average laborer or student that even they could become homeless in the future.

During the recession, the media has reported an increasing number of homeless in major cities. In the Airin district in Osaka, for example, the number of homeless in 1991 was 253; it increased to 485 in 1992, and to 692 in 1993 (Hoomuresu Kyuzo Osaka Airin-Chiku, 1993, p. 15). In Nagoya, the number of homeless on May 7, 1993 was 403, while the average number of homeless in April and May of 1992 was 250 (Hoomuresu Kyuzo 400nin o Toppa, 1993, p. 23). Between January and October of 1993, in Shinjuku, Tokyo, more than 1,850 visited the welfare office of the Shinjuku Ward seeking food and medication. This number was twice what it was in 1990 (93nen Ato 10ka, 1993, p. 19). Beginning in October 1994, the Salvation Army started to serve food in Shinjuku every Thursday. In the beginning, 250 meals a day were enough for the homeless there; toward the end of 1994, even 350 meals were not enough (Shiwasu Fukikomu, 1994, p. 11). According to a survey conducted by the Tokyo Municipal Government in February 1995, there were 3,300 people living on the streets in Tokyo (Aoshima-san Motto, 1996, p. 5). A support group for the homeless estimated that in May 1995, about 850 people a day slept on the streets of Shinjuku (Hoomuresu 3000nin Toppa, 1995, p. 30). Although the total number of homeless is hard to estimate, newspaper articles in the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri Shimbun* indicate a clear trend of increasing numbers of homeless in Japan.

At the same time (during the 1990s), articles reporting the situation of the homeless in the United States, were also increasing. To name but a few, an article on January 11, 1992, described the increasing number of homeless and their problems (Seijuku Shakai no, 1992, p. 7); and an article dated October 7, 1992, reported on poverty and the homeless in relation to the Presidential election (Daitoshi no Hinkon, 1992, p. 6). Feature stories about the United States included the term or phenomenon, homeless. A series called A Portrait of America explained the situation of Mr. Roberts who entered a homeless shelter after coming back from the Gulf War (Kikyo Ernest Roberts-san, 1993, p. 10). An opinion piece from a reader described some of the well-facilitated shelters for the homeless in the United States, as compared to the ones in Japan (Hoomuresu ni Yasashii, 1993, p. 5). Poverty and homelessness constituted a significant aspect of the image of the United States in the Japanese media.

Accordingly, the term homeless, has become associated with the image of a declining United States. Japanese people know through the media that the United States suffers from a high rate of unemployment and a large number of homeless. They are afraid that Japan will follow the pattern of the United States. The borrowing of the word, *hoomuresu* (homeless), expresses this fear that the Japanese people have. Or it may be that their heightened anxiety about the *Heisei* recession (which appears to have no end in sight) compelled editors to

choose the term homeless, instead of bums. The Japanese have begun to identify their predicament with a perceived predicament in the United States. Not only have Japanese editors followed the linguistic lead of the United States, but that has suggested that the term homeless is also applicable to the Japanese situation. It is feared that Japan is following the U.S. which is a regular source of news about massive lay-off and down-sizing.

The term homeless signifies that anyone, irregardless of their own personal effort, can become homeless. While the status of being a bum tended to be considered the fault of the individual as lazy or stupid, being homeless connotes a consequence of a systemic force beyond one's control. Economic disjunction is not well understood and is poorly explained in the press. Economic forces have a tendency to be mystified and mystifying. The economy is practically a magical phenomenon. We are all parts of it. The fear that comes from lack of understanding and real or perceived consequences is felt as personal vulnerability and anxiety. The term homeless may reflect such uncertainty in Japanese society. Being uncertain results in fear or anxiety (Berger and Calabrese, 1975).

Such fear is manifested in the reaction to the clean-up of the homeless in Shinjuku by the Tokyo Municipal government described at the beginning of this paper. Those who work in Shinjuku support what the government did, partly because the existence of the homeless reminds them of their own vulnerabilities in the face of anonymous, often mysterious and massive economic forces. They recognize that they too could become homeless, and therefore they do not like to look into the face of a potential self (Levinas, 1994). Thus, they abhor the homeless as dirty, useless, lazy, as essentially disturbing of their personal mental harmony. They want to expel the homeless from their awareness. Personal affective equilibrium should be in consonance with the larger world stability. The magical identification with such a disturbing life situation motivates the authorities to remove the symbol and sign of decline and threat. The homed pedestrians do not care what happens to the homeless after being expelled from the street. They try not to be too be empathetic for that leads to the pain dissonance. A selfish person—one with a hypertrophic ego in Gebser's (1949/1985) terms—only cares about him or herself, and seeks to maximize his or her own emotional equilibrium. Just like a vanishing point in the perspective of post-Renaissance painting, one can see only a point, and this small slice of reality is inflated to mean the whole of life. Out of sight, out of mind. So long as Others are not within one's perspective they cannot disturb one's peace-of-mind. The humanistic ideology of appreciating the equal rights of Others—a positive element of modernity or perspectivity—is sacrificed for the sake of self-comfort. The late-modern world of selfishness and alienation has become dominant, and it is manifested in the shift of terminology from bums to homeless.

CONCLUSION

Through the semiotic analysis of the words *furoosha* and *hoomuresu*, and the linguistic shift from the former to the latter, Japanese society is expressing a post-modern attitude.[4] Extreme selfishness and alienation have become dominant in Japanese urban life. People have become dissociated from each other effecting the quality of community and interpersonal relationships. It seems to

have become acceptable, even desirable to deny the existence of Others as meaningless objects.

If Japanese people expel the homeless or the Others from their community, can they enjoy themselves? Can they enjoy their prosperity and wealth? They should know that extinguishing Others means to extinguish themselves. The existence of the Other is a necessary condition for the existence of the self. They are co-constituting, and as such, meaningful identities. Urban life flourishes only when the city allows diversity. Difference enriches everyone.

Furthermore, even if the government can drive the homeless away from certain areas or from the urban centers, they cannot make the homeless the home owner. Those who were expelled must settle down somewhere else, and they will still be homeless. Cleaning-up the homeless, which really is nothing more than relocation, cannot solve the fundamental problem. It is only a temporary and localized treatment of the symptom of anxiety which the presence of the homeless cause in the minds of the homed and employed. What the government, the people should do is generate jobs for the homeless and to offer shelter for those who are unable to work. The perception that the Japanese economy is bursting or collapsing is based more on journalistic sensationalism than economic fact. But the problem is less one of money than one of attitude.

Perhaps a new point-of-view should be taken. One might make the argument that the success of an economy is measured by the number of homeless that exist. However, people will probably always make new Others. The problem of intense dissociation in late modernity and post-modernity would probably continue even if the homeless problem were solved. Dissociation is the basic problem while alienation and homelessness are the symptoms. A mutation in attitude, a new awareness of relationships will be necessary for things to change fundamentally (Gebser, 1949/1985).

What we need to do in order to solve the problem fundamentally is to constitute qualitative relationships or systatic relationships (Gebser, 1949/1985). In order to survive, one must constitute a systatic relationship between One and the Other. Different modes of relationships constitute systatic relationships. To be a bum used to have a complex and ambiguous meaning(s). Jesus Christ could be seen as a bum or homeless. In India, the homeless are considered sacred beings. There are different modes of relationships in being bums and the homeless. One must unfold different meanings in them. Then, one can appreciate the differences that Others present, which gives us an enriched existence. This is what we choose to call the aperspectival integral world (Gebser, 1949/1985; Kramer, 1992; 1997). The aperspectival is a mutational shift from the modern mentality. The so-called post-modern, so popular in current academic fashion, is actually a linear, logical extension of modern individuation to disintegration (which amounts to the absurd idea of absolute perspectivism). Post-modernism is more accurately labled late-modernism (Kramer, 1997). The integral is a completely different mutational shift from the logical consequences of hypertrophic modernism (post-modernism).

NOTES

1. Some scholars argue that Prince Shotoku's Seventeen Article is a moral book, a constitution in the modern sense of the term, because it does not include any penal code

(Sidney Brown, Personal Communication on December 28, 1995; Umehara, 1981).

2. The buraku people were forced to live in isolated areas. They consist of two groups: *eta* and *hinin*. The former usually dealt with animal skins and dead people, thus they were considered to be polluted. The latter were criminals who were driven to isolated areas after serving prison terms.

3. More precisely, Toyotomi Hideyoshi's land survey fixed the predecessor of the buraku people in such a status. Hideyoshi began to form a centralized nation after ending civil wars, which lasted about 100 years. As one of his policies, a nation-wide land survey was conducted between 1585 and 1598, which resulted in binding people to the land and their status.

4. Another possible explanation for such linguistic choice is that in general Japanese people prefer borrowed words pronouncing them according to the Japanese phonetic system and expressing the borrowed terms in katakana, one of the three writing systems in Japan.

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Reading the Homeless

The Media's Image
of Homeless Culture

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PRAEGER

To my parents