New religiosity and Popular Culture in Japan

In the postwar Japan

- Traditional and institutional religions
- Emerging new religious/spiritual movements

Animism and Polytheism in contemporary Japan

In the Spirit of Spirited Away

"The ‘confrontation of civilizations’ is being discussed. In the background there is a confrontation of monotheistic religions, such as Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, which presuppose the absoluteness of God. ... What is now required for the world is the spirit of primitive polytheism, which tells us gods dwell in forests or mountains. That is what the philosopher Takeshi Umehara advocates. Although the Japanese people have a history of polytheism from ancient times, they have tried to build a country of monotheism, which has brought tragedy. Should we not learn much from the bitter past and demonstrate a new spirit of ‘multitudinous gods’?"

(Asahi Newspaper, Editorial, Jan 1, 2003)

Spirited Away

- coexistence of humans, animals, nature and kami
- how to reconcile humans with nature in the industrialized society
- Big challenges after 3.11
- how to manage the nuclear energy and human desire
**Eschatology in Anime and Manga**

- apo- 'un' + kaluptein 'to cover'
- Revelation of the New Testament
- Messianism

**Apocalypse**

- eskhatos 'last' 'end' + logos
- Move from this world to...
  - the new age and world (temporal dimension)
    - cosmic eschatology, apocalypse
  - the other world (spatial dimension)
    - ex. afterlife, next life, cyberspace
    - otherworldly eschatology

**Why Apocalypse in Popular Culture?**

- The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- An exhilarating mixture of dread and desire
- desire of catastrophe against endless routine in the daily life

**Aum Shinrikyo**

Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995

**Examples of Eschatological Themes**

- Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (1984)
- Akira (1988)
- Neon Genesis Evangelion (1997)
- Dragon Ball (1985-)
- Bleach (2001-)
- Full Metal Alchemist (2001-)
- Ghost in the Shell (1995)
The other world

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind

Seven Volumes of Manga

Conclusion

Ancient Animism
Relating human body with animals, nature and invisible anima

Techno-Animism
Relating human body with machines, cyborg and cyberspace

Conclusion

Traditional Apocolypse
- The final battle between good and evil
- Punishment and reward
- Male-oriented messianism

Japanese Apocolypse
- The battle beyond good and evil
- Reconciliation
- Female-oriented messianism