

Moreno 1

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In my opinion, based on the video Departures (Okuribito 2008), the Japanese perspective of death is much different than any other perspective of death amongst any western nations. I believe Japanese people often see the departure of a loved one as a ceremonial deed. Many Japanese believe in Kami, which are thought to be deities or spiritual entities that live in the world and in nature. There are two major religious groups in Japan today, the Shinto belief and the Buddhist teachings. Buddhism and the Shinto religions both teach of Kami. Kami is believed to have Special Forces which contribute to natural occurrences, they are thought to live amongst the people and it is also a belief that there is no one god, but that there is are millions of Kami throughout the land. More specifically Buddhism teaches that after death humans, animals, tools, or anything with a soul can become Kami.

The movie portrays a specific scene that really spoke to me and helped me further my understanding on how Japanese society views life and death. The scene in which the owner of the bathing house dies and it brings the people that knew her together stood out to me. It is important to understand how the man that was in charge of firing up the cremator was connected to the owner of the bathing house on a level of friendship and romance. He tells the son of the bathing house owner that a winter ago his mother had somehow foreseen her future. The man depicts how his mother had asked him to help her with starting up a fire to heat the water in the bath house, which he saw as a foreshadowing of what lie ahead. He said that his mother knew that he was good with fire, which would prove to be ironic in the future because he would eventually be the one who would cremate her lifeless corpse. This man's view of death was not a horrific perspective, he told the son that he saw himself as a gatekeeper; he says that maybe

death was not the end but the gateway to the next thing or life. This, in my eyes, is a very powerful statement especially because it gives tremendous insight into the mindset of an entire society. ↵

↓ [Life and death has been a major topic of discussion since the beginning of time it is very difficult to articulate the meaning of life in a personal sense but even more difficult to articulate the meaning that life has to an entire society. The simple complexity of the concept is difficult to grasp and understand; many philosophers have attempted to understand and explain the magnitude of the meaning of life. In his book, *El Sentimiento Tragico de la Vida*, the Spanish poet and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, writes about the tragic sense of life and how we are all born to die. To mean this gives an understanding and a kind of resignation, that we as humans need not fear death, but rather we should embrace it with open arms. It has proven to be a difficult task for many, in particular to those whom do not have a strong religious backing. For example if one truly believes in an after life the concept of embracing death is not a scary thing to do. On the hand if one has no expectancy of an afterlife the thought of embracing death is flat out unbearable. To me the meaning of life as a concept is difficult to comprehend. I believe that we as humans all have a purpose, I like to think that we are all destined to make a difference, now not all of us are going to do great things like: Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King and we are not all destined to do horrific things like in the case of Adolf Hitler. With this being said, I am a firm believer that we can all make a difference in the outcome of the world's history. Now this difference could be anything from having an impact on a kid that will help shift his life or it could be something as magnificent as ending world hunger.

I feel like this concept is prevalent throughout the entire film, another example of this is as the cello player is looking for answers the man at the funeral home tells him that he had the job after only a simple interview between the two of them. The boss later tells him that it was fate that brought him into the casketing business, he also tells him that you never know where life is going to lead you therefore you must learn to accept. From this film I can honestly say that I grew a greater appreciation for the beauty, precision, calmness and finesse demeanor of how Japanese undertake the passing of their loved ones. Being able to cope with death in such a calm relaxed manner says a lot about their religious beliefs and society.

↓ ↗ The acceptance of life and death in the Japanese culture has had a resounding effect on past generations of Japanese people for centuries and I believe that it will continue to have an immense impact on generations to come. This very characteristic of coming to terms with life is why I believe that Japan has been so resilient throughout the last several centuries. In the past they have seen the demise of their society's morale but have always had the candid ability to reconstruct and rise from the ashes stronger than before. This film taught me that the fragility of acceptance for life and death is in the balance and it is in the hands of the beholder to learn to cope with how one lives their life. Death is one of the only things guaranteed for every human being on earth, not one soul will be able to elude the calling of death; therefore the sooner you learn to accept that death is part of life the more fruitful ones existence will prove to be. The fact that Japanese people believe that kami is all around and that nature is the home of deities and spirits shows how intertwined the Japanese feel we really are with the world. It is extremely apparent that the majority of the Japanese's ideology is reflective on spirits, they do not have a

Moreno 5

single entity that they praise, and I feel like this is an important factor when it comes to a sense of integrity as well as commitment to the ancient ways of thinking of their predecessors.

9/10 very good work !!