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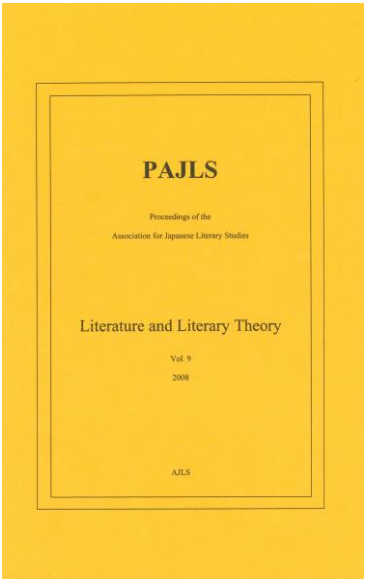


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# The Specter of Empire in Matthew Arnold, Natsume Sōseki, and Kōtoku Shūsui

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I've just finished a book manuscript entitled *Japan and the Specter of Imperialism* in which I explore various discourses that responded to Japan's coerced integration into the world market by way of the unequal treaties even as Japan itself embarked on a colonial and imperial project of its own. Sōseki's *Bungakuron* (Theory of Literature, 1906) was published during the period I examine in the book and is thus contemporary with many of the phenomena I'm concerned to take on in the book. It was published after the renegotiation of the unequal treaties was settled (1895), after Japan went on the gold standard (1897), after extra-territoriality was removed (1900), after Japan's mobilization of the single largest contingent of military force to defend the treaty powers' unequal treaty privileges in China and suppress the Boxer Rebellion (1900), after Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese war at which point Japan clearly emerged as an imperial power in the region (1905), four years before tariff autonomy was restored (1910), and four years before Korea was formally annexed as a Japanese protectorate under international law (1910).

In terms of intellectual history, *Bungakuron* is a text that I'm particularly well placed to read as regards the relation it articulates to evolutionary schemas of civilization, subjectivity, and determinism as well as their turn-of-the-century critiques. Reading Mori Arinori, Tokutomi Sohō, and Inoue Tetsujirō for my book required quite a bit of work on the evolutionary theory of Herbert Spencer as both a pervasive frame of reference for the discourse of civilization in East Asia through the 1880s and 1890s and as instrumental in naturalizing capitalism as the life of the social organism. In a separate project on Shimomura Toratarō I did a significant amount of background research on Bergson and James' critiques of Spencer.

*Bungakuron* articulates the early Sōseki's extended interest in both evolutionary psychology and its critique. He articulates a position which uncomfortably and eclectically straddles what present day intellectual historians describe as a transition from the positivism of Spencerian psychology to the Jamesian and Bergsonian critiques of positivism. The latter articulate an escape route from positivism that nevertheless incorporates significant aspects of the evolutionary theory they both took as their point of departure.

Through much of *Bungakuron*, Sōseki seeks to analyze and classify literary content in terms of a psychology of the reader's experience. While he is concerned with policing and demarcating the boundaries between scientific and literary experience as well as cognitive and emotional experience, one of his central theses is that the experience of literary content must necessarily cross the boundary between cognitive and emotional experience. In effect, Sōseki seeks to police the boundary between science and literature from the perspective of the science of psychology.[1]

I take the term *specter* in my title from Kōtoku Shūsui's *Nijusseiki no kaibutsu teikokushugi* (Monster Imperialism of the 20th Century, 1901). For the remainder of this essay I

[1] Natsume Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, in Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1985), 27-34.

will take up the three figures denominated in my title, "The Specter of Empire in Matthew Arnold, Natsume Sōseki, and Kōtoku Shūsui" in relation to the specter of imperialism. Given constraints on length, this will be a very rapid and schematic overview. In Derrida's *Specters of Marx* he reads Marx's account of commodity fetishism and the iterability of difference as modes of an uncanny haunting, of a spectral presence of absent figures that perform the ideological work of staging social relations as the relations of spectral, commodified objects.[2] In this essay I want to explore what we might be able to uncover by way of the spectral as it appears in discourses of anarchism, liberalism, and imperialism. In Kōtoku Shūsui's 1901 work, *Monster Imperialism of the 20th Century* (which anteceded the similarly titled works of both Hobson [1903] and Lenin [1917]), Kōtoku refers to imperialism as a monster or specter, as a danger abroad in the turn of the century world, as a form of life that both is and isn't human. He especially emphasizes the bankruptcy of contemporary claims that imperialism is a project that spreads or promotes civilization or justice. He refers to nationalism and the glorification of empire as madness, as diseases that ravage the planet. He is particularly concerned to argue that civilization in its imperialist form is, on the contrary, bestial and savage. He finds that such false "civilization" is actually a nomadic barbarism, a form of plunder that expresses an inability to repress or control the animal instinct to devour and incorporate whatever one happens to see or desire.

Conversely, Kōtoku defines scientific socialist revolution as based on reason, cooperation, equality, and the perfection of self. It is socialist ideals and a socialist society that are truly civilized. He thus saw the civilization of his day as spectrally haunted by the resurgence of the savage and the animal. For Kōtoku, civilized imperialism is an oxymoron. An imperialist civilization is a savage and animalistic social order not worthy of the appellation civilized—an imperialist civilization is ultimately a way of life that defies the enlightenment values he understands as properly defining civilization.

This leads to the question, "Why include Matthew Arnold as a member of this series?" There are at least four reasons this may prove to be a useful exercise. First, in *Bungakuron* Sōseki refers to Matthew Arnold on a number of occasions. He cites "Sweetness and Light" (the first chapter in *Culture and Anarchy)*, as a representative nineteenth century British view of literature.[3] Sōseki refers to passages in Thackeray's *The Newcomes* and Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* recording conflicting social views as "war," a usage in accordance with the technical definition of culture "war" Arnold develops in *Culture and Anarchy*.[4] Arnold's work thus bears a significant intertextual relationship to *Bungakuron*. Second, Matthew Arnold was not only the effective founder of English language literary criticism as it was institutionalized in the academy, his articulation of culture was integral to the construction of British culture and Britain's image of itself in a counter-revolutionary, colonial and imperial context.[5] Third, anarchy is one of

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[2] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 125-176.

[3] Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, 33. Sōseki discusses Arnold's "moral idea" on 194. He takes up Arnold's poetry at 280-283 and 324.

[4] Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, 482. "By our everyday selves, however, we are separate, personal, at war; we are only safe from one another's tyranny when no one has any power; and this safety, in its turn, cannot save us from anarchy. And when, therefore, anarchy presents itself as a danger to us, we know not where to turn." Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, in R. H. Super, ed., *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 5 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 134.

[5] "The highly-instructed few, and not the scantily-instructed many, will ever be the organ to the human race of knowledge and truth. Knowledge and truth, in the full sense of the words, are not attainable by the great mass of the human race at all." Matthew Arnold, "The Bishop and the Philosopher," *Lectures and Essays in*

Arnold's sworn ideological enemies.[6] The relevance of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* to Kōtoku Shūsui and socialist anarchism is thus relatively straightforward. Lastly, Arnold is a central point of reference for neoconservatives in the contemporary U.S. culture wars.[7] There is thus very good reason to expect that any insight we gain into Arnold and his relation to imperialism and East Asia may shed significant light on present day neo-conservatism and its views of propriety in domestic and foreign relations.

Arnold depicts society as corrupted by a confused and contradictory profusion of ordinary selves that ought properly to be unified around a common notion of a personal best self. He argues for a new British society that features a common faith in culture, the will of God, and the will of the state executive in the maintenance of social order at any price. Arnold rhetorically stages revolutionary and liberal disturbance of social order as the mechanization of properly spiritual matters, as the appearance of the invisible in the visible, as the sensual supersensible, as a spectral event. He thus claims that the actions of revolutionists and liberals grounded in the ordinary self and common sense are grounded on false and fetishistic beliefs, whereas the action of believers in culture and modernized Anglican religion such as himself is grounded in reason, in a best self that stages a new, more orderly society unified in its respect for the State and its recognition of the legitimacy of executive power in the maintenance of social order at any price.[8]

Whereas Karl Marx's reference to fetishism in *The German Ideology* and *Capital* was a form of exorcism grounded in anti-religious atheism, Arnold was the loyal poet son of an Anglican preacher. When Arnold refers to social revolution and liberalism as fetishistic, his gesture is thus one of marginalizing what he sees as false religions and secular movements with quasi-religious belief systems in favor of the one true Anglican orthodoxy of religion and culture he promotes. Arnold thus identifies his sect of Christianity with modern civilization. He metaphorically classifies political and religious opponents as barbaric and savage opponents of true religion and civilization *per se*. In other words, where Marx sought to exorcise religion,

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*Criticism*, in R. H. Super, ed., *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 3 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 43-44, cited in Jeff Guy, "Class, Imperialism and Literary Criticism: William Ngidi, John Colenso and Matthew Arnold," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (June 1997), 234.

[6] "Great changes there must be, for a revolution cannot accomplish itself without great changes; yet order there must be, for without order a revolution cannot accomplish itself by due course of law. So whatever brings risk of tumult and disorder, multitudinous processions in the streets of our crowded towns, multitudinous meetings in their public places and parks—demonstrations perfectly unnecessary in the present course of our affairs—our best self, or right reason, plainly enjoins us to set our faces against. It enjoins us to encourage and uphold the occupants of the executive power, whoever they may be, in firmly prohibiting them. But it does this clearly and resolutely . . . because it does it with a free conscience, because in thus provisionally strengthening the executive power. . . . It knows that it is stablishing (sic) *the State*, or organ of our collective best self, of our national right reason." Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 136.

[7] "The concern over an economic order whose incentives meant that it steadily promoted hedonism, as Dan put it, and that was drawing upon an ethic and morality that was not being replaced—call it the Protestant ethic, or traditional religion and morality, or classic political philosophy—was a steady one, evident at the beginning, still evident at the end. We were all followers of Lionel Trilling, as he was of Matthew Arnold, brooding over 'the melancholy, long, withdrawing roar' of the 'Sea of Faith.' The themes that led to the label of 'neoconservatism' emerge remarkably early in the *Public Interest*'s pages, though it should be pointed out that Dan never accepted the term and Pat Moynihan had to distance himself from it even before he decided to run for the Senate from New York. I was always indifferent to the label; only Irving fully embraced it." Nathan Glazer, "Neoconservative From the Start," *Public Interest* (Spring 2005), http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0377/is_159/ai_n13779488/print.

[8] Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 136.

Arnold seeks to exorcise the specter of dissent with the culture and the authority of the classical and conservative learning he claims demands the status quo. For all his lip service to right reason, Arnold's accusation of fetishism is consequently not a rejection of religion by Enlightenment reason, but rather a counter-enlightenment marginalization of dissent in any form, from non-Anglican Protestantism to the identification of any and all revolutionary threats to social order with false gods and blasphemy against the one true Christian orthodoxy. Arnold's is thus a conservative orthodoxy concerned to dress itself in liberal, post-positivist, post-evolutionary clothes.

Arnold finds defiance of social, legal, or political order in any form tantamount to anarchy. He identifies the defiance of constituted authority in any form with the collapse of civilization. For Arnold, revolution and the liberalism he imagines as aiding and abetting it are the triumph of habit over cultivation, of self-interest over reason, of the uncivilized, uneducated and animalistic over the forces of education and civilization. In other words, revolution—or Jacobinism as he refers to it—is barbarism.[9] Arnold claims that culture perfects us and distinguishes us from our animality. Revolution is thus the rejection of humanity *per se*, and the embrace of animalistic self-interest unmediated by reason and concern for others. For Arnold, culture is thus spectrally haunted by bestiality and barbarism in the guise of social revolution. He ultimately conceives the maintenance of culture and cultural authority as the exorcism of revolution and liberalism. Even liberal reformism strikes him as appeasement of barbarous impulses in violation of social order. He finds respect for authority to be the ultimate standard of civilization. The call for radical social change thus figures as the rejection of civilization *per se*.

**The Spectral in Sōseki's *Bungakuron***

Sōseki's concern in this work is to map the boundaries of scientific and literary consciousness from the perspective of the science of evolutionary psychology. He describes and taxonomizes literary content as a function of the stage or focus of an individual reader's consciousness.[10] He subsequently attempts to map society as a stage or focus of social consciousness—as an evolving order of memory, identity, and relative originality or unoriginality. One of the uncanny qualities of the text is that the present of readerly perception is always split—it is interpenetrated by both the inertia of past experience and habit *and* the virtual possibilities of future response. In other words, the readerly self as described by Sōseki in *Bungakuron* is potentially divided and often not fully present. Sōseki posits a moment of transition where the possibility of choosing an alternative focus of consciousness arises, and the making of such choices as the selection from among alternative virtual ideals that might orient consciousness and action. For Sōseki, the ideal is thus the emergence of the virtual, of a possible escape from positivist conceptions of the past that causally impel us toward an effectively pre-determined future.

The work's insistence on staging both the individual and the social in the form of a single psychological process is also somewhat uncanny. The individual is always already social, but the social is also conceived in terms of a stage of consciousness. Sōseki describes not only an individual, if pluralized, focus of literary consciousness, but depicts the distribution of

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[9] "Culture is the eternal opponent of the two things which are the signal marks of Jacobinism—its fierceness, and its addiction to an abstract system. Culture is always assigning to system-makers and systems a smaller share in the bent of human destiny than their friends like." Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 109.

[10] See Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, esp. Books I-III.

perspectives toward literature across society as a variety of social consciousness—as comprised of a distribution of individual foci of consciousness depicted as if they were part of one larger consciousness.

I would like to focus on two specific instances of the spectral in *Bungakuron*. First, he seems quite concerned to leave a place for extra-sensory phenomena, though necessarily filtered through the linguistically mediated sensory experiences he understands to comprise art and literature. He states this most directly in "The Philosophical Foundations of Art," where he asserts that beyond the binary of self and non-self, it is important to distinguish categories of phenomena.[11] Sōseki explicitly argues that literary objects may include both objects of sensory experience and those that transcend sensory experience such as ghosts (*yūrei*) or gods (*kami*).[12] In other words, Sōseki delimits a psychological science of literature that explicitly reserves a place for phenomena that are simultaneously both sensual and super-sensual.

Secondly, while Sōseki's reference to the evolutionary psychology of Lloyd Morgan and Theodor Ribot sidesteps Arnold's classist and imperialist accumulation of cultural authority by shifting from a humanist to a scientific register and by pluralizing and historicizing potential standards and sources of authority, his critical evolutionary psychology nevertheless remains an evolutionary psychology that presumes a hierarchy of class, race, and civilization.[13] This is most directly evident in Sōseki's schema of F+f as an equation that defines the psychological parameters of literary experience. F is defined as cognitive content and f as emotional content. According to Sōseki's authorities, Morgan and Ribot, both cognitive content and emotional content are complex organizations of feelings.[14] For such thinkers, only the very elite among

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[11] Natsume Sōseki, "Bungei no tetsugakuteki kisō," in *Watakushi no kōjinshugi* (Tokyo: Chukō kurashikkusu, 2001), 15-90.

[12] Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, 115-132.

[13] Sōseki takes up the descriptive relativism characteristic of Lloyd Morgan understanding of aesthetic judgment between pages 371-380. "Let us clearly note what is the essential characteristic of an aesthetic judgment as such. It is essentially a matter of introspection and reflection. It is the comparison of certain emotional states aroused by *a* with the emotional states aroused by *b*. . . . All judgments, as expressed, are of social, not of individual value . . . by comparing, classifying, and generalizing these opinions, we reach the general social opinion or judgment in matters aesthetic. . . . Now, the result of such a comparison, classification and generalization of opinions on questions of aesthetics differs—(1) among different individuals, (2) in different countries, and (3) at different times. This results from variation . . . in the matter of aesthetic judgment, the variation is much more marked, and more widely spread. Hence the difficulty or impossibility of formulating a common social ideal, or standard of aesthetic judgment. Variable as it is, however, most of us do admit a social standard, even if our individual taste does not conform to it." Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, 371-372. Though the previous passage relativizes such authority, Sōseki nevertheless describes a position relatively compatible with that of Arnold in the following passage: "If we call the acknowledged standard the social standard, we mean by this . . . the average judgment of a special section of the community who have had peculiar opportunities of forming an opinion. Such social ideal or standard is based on the individual ideals or standards of those who form the special section. We take these individuals as representing the social judgment in aesthetic matters at its best. . . . I have entered into this brief discussion of the social ideal because it appears to me that the possession of ideals, aesthetic and other, and especially social ideas, is one of the distinguishing factors of the psychical life of man as compared with that of animals." Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, 372-373.

[14] Sōseki's definition of literary experience comes closer to Morgan's definition of religion than to his discussion of aesthetics. If this is so, in this narrow respect Sōseki follows in Arnold's footsteps in the equation of literary and religious experience, though Sōseki does so in a descriptive rather than edifying manner: "In every religious belief there are of necessity two parts: an intellectual element, a knowledge which constitutes

classes, races, and civilizations are capable of reaching these heights.[15] Sōseki's F+f schema thus recapitulates the hierarchy of the colonial order of knowledge.

I suggest that the hierarchy of pedagogy that Sōseki's literary psychology presumes is a specter of empire and imperial hierarchy that continues to haunt Sōseki's consequently ambivalent challenge to the colonial order of knowledge represented by both Herbert Spencer and Matthew Arnold. Sōseki and his authorities in social psychology share a common concern to differentiate the human from the animal in terms of the complexity and organization of experience. Sōseki shares with Arnold this foundation of civilization in a human superiority to the animal. Sōseki thus revises the colonial order of knowledge to make room for a non-Western intellectual of a new imperial power such as himself, but he does not do much to challenge the essentially colonial and imperial order of knowledge he confronts *per se*.

**The Specters of Kōtoku Shūsui**

Whither Kōtoku Shūsui and the specter in Japanese discourses of anarchism? I've already mentioned that Kōtoku's analysis of imperialism as specter posits the dominant imperialist civilization of the powers as false—as a danger to the truly enlightened, truly civilized possibility of a socialist order. For Kōtoku, the capitalist and the landlord's coercive monopoly on profit and the imperialist powers coercive theft of their victims property and labor signifies a resurgence of the bestial and the animal, rather than the refinement that imperialism as civilizing mission so ardently seeks to claim. For Kōtoku, law *per se* is typically a mode of perverting customary social mores and cooperation toward the common good into activities coercively demanded in the name of the people, but for the benefit of the few. In other words, for Kōtoku the institution of law is constitutively haunted by the original sin of primitive accumulation that remained ongoing at the time he was writing and whose agents included the Japanese army in Taiwan, Korea and north China as well as the European colonial powers and the U.S.

I find Kōtoku's take on law and social order to be haunted by the specter of inequitable distribution of social surplus and primitive accumulation and his challenge to the legitimacy of the institution of the state and law itself to be much deeper and more far-reaching than anything Sōseki contemplates. There are some respects, however, in which Sōseki's position in turn has

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the object of belief, and an emotional state, a feeling which accompanies the former and expresses itself in action. To anyone deficient in the second element, the religious feeling is unknown."
Lloyd Morgan, *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1993), 305. "It is a well-known fact that the various races of mankind differ greatly in their powers of abstraction and generalization; some can scarcely get beyond the concrete, while others disport themselves, easily and swiftly, in the region of the abstract. This difference of aptitude is expressed in their religions." Morgan, *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, 313. Sōseki agrees with Morgan that aesthetic feeling over evolutionary time tends toward individualism. "The aesthetic feeling, of a strictly social character in its origin, tends progressively towards individualism. A division of labour takes place in it, rendering its manifestations more numerous and more complex." Morgan, *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, 339. It is probably worth noting that Morgan sees this approach as a sharp critique of Hippolyte Taine's approach to literary history.

[15] If this be so, then, in comparing the psychology of man and the higher animals, the radical difference lies in the fact that man perceives particular relations among phenomena, and builds generalized results of these perceptions into the fabric of his conceptual thought; while animals do not perceive the relations, and have no conceptual thought, nor any knowledge—if we use this word to denote the result of such conceptual thought." Morgan, *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, 362-363.

something to offer Kōtoku. Where Kōtoku's position is grounded in the positivist opposition between science and superstition as the opposition between civilized humanity and bestial, animalistic rapacity, Sōseki's take on science is much more nuanced. His allowance for the spectral as part of an expanded, post-positivist scientific order suggests that Kōtoku's staging of the origin of state and imperial oppression of an originally communal socialist order perverted by an external agency is in denial about the degree to which a communal social order is always also haunted by the specter of the capitalist and statist authoritarianism against which it defines itself. Communal socialism must necessarily come into being in some articulated relation to the authority of capital and the state in order to function as a socialist alternative in the matter that Kōtoku understands them. It will thus always be constitutively haunted by them in that regard.

Lastly, one of Kōtoku's primary authorities in the development of his thought as he moved more firmly into the anarchist camp later in life was Peter Kropotkin. In several works, Kropotkin posits that in fact communal cooperation is a defining characteristic of animal life as well as human life, thus displacing the boundary of civilization as a human/animal boundary. He rather argues that contemporary human society has fallen away from the justice and equity of social cooperation demanded by animal as well as human groups for the purpose of evolutionary survival. Contemporary notions of coercive and differentially exploitative civilization were thus a barbaric fall away from the basic decency that we see even in most animal groups, thus for Kropotkin, animal groups were models to be emulated in the process of civilizing humanity rather than others to be transcended and excluded. While this aspect of Kropotkin's work that figures cooperation in terms of the animal rather than as the transcendence of the animal does not seem to appear in Kōtoku's work, I think it does imply a hopeful openness beyond the boundaries of the human in the larger anarchist project in which Kōtoku was engaged at the time of his death at the hands of the Japanese police state, an openness to the non-human that I hope to pursue in future work of my own.

In conclusion, this essay is concerned to make three basic points concerning *Bungakuron*. First, Sōseki's recourse to psychology arguably allows him to side-step the double bind within which imperial discourses of literary criticism often situates the non-Western, non-metropolitan reader. Sōseki takes up a schema of consciousness from which he chooses to analyze literary experience, the focal point, as a function within a larger wave of consciousness. This schema posits a unity in multiplicity of readerly perspective on literature and social psychological reception of literature that substitutes a pluralization of perspectives for the missionary call to unity in literary judgment that characterizes more classical and broadly instituted conceptions of literary judgment such as we find in Matthew Arnold. This schema also tends to substitute a passive voice of description and classification for Arnold's imperative to judge literary value (though there are passages in other writing by Sōseki on literature that do somewhat inconsistently demand the judgment of literary value). In the case of *Bungakuron*, I suggest that the choice of evolutionary psychology to describe literary experience rather than more conventional, aesthetically-grounded approaches to literary criticism potentially challenges the claims of cultural authority and hierarchy embedded in the literary judgment of figures such as Arnold. Second, Sōseki's notions of *suii* (transition) and *risō* (the virtual ideal) as open functions of the reading subject and of the social psychological reception of literature challenge presence and the positivist construction of psychological agency we find in unmodified Spencerian psychology (though I would argue that the Spencerian unconscious, race memory, and empiricism themselves already challenge presence in the psychological register). Third, Sōseki's project of a literary criticism grounded in an evolutionary psychology of literature

remains constitutively contaminated by the discourses of class, race, and civilizational hierarchy within which his psychology remains grounded. In other words, Sōseki's critical evolutionary psychology of literary experience challenges aspects of the cultural authority, the demands for social orthodoxy, and the understanding of social determinism we find in conventional literary criticism and evolutionary theory. But however critical, it is still an evolutionary psychology that constitutively assumes a hierarchy of classes, races, and civilizations.

I claim that Matthew Arnold's specter of dissent is in dialogue with Kōtoku's specter of colonial barbarism. Sōseki's post-positivist account of ghostly phenomena similarly has much to teach Kōtoku's anarchism even as Sōseki's position may be usefully supplemented and qualified by Kōtoku's challenge to the legal authority of property both at home and abroad.