“‘Two irreconcilable, but also inseparable, nevertheless incomparable greatnesses’: Mori Ōgai’s Parallax Reading (and Writing) of Literary Theory”

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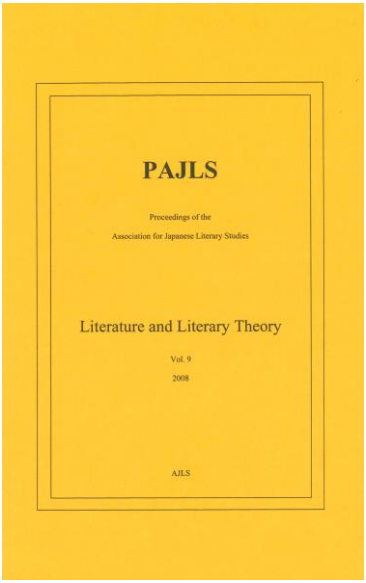

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"Two irreconcilable, but also inseparable, nevertheless incomparable greatnesses": Mori Ōgai's Parallax Reading (and Writing) of Literary Theory

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In the September 1891 issue of *Shigarami zōshi*, Mori Ōgai launched a relentless attack on Tsubouchi Shōyō's literary criticism in a critical piece "Shōyō shi no shohyōgo" ("Mr. Shōyō's criticism")—a beginning of what would be known as the "submerged ideals" debate (*botsu risō ronsō*) between Shōyō and Ōgai.[1] Equipped with Eduard von Hartmann's aesthetic theory, Ōgai argues that Shōyō's categories of "three schools of the novel" are but three stages in a single path toward the sublime, and criticizes what appeared to him as an overly inductive, empirical approach that lacks solid critical standards. Ōgai writes:

> Shōyō avoids deductive criticism and takes inductive criticism, throwing away ideals and standards. . . . Any working of the mind known as "observations" and "research" always requires the power of induction. . . . However, when one finishes observation and research and it is time to make judgments, shouldn't there be ideals and standards?[2]

In the ensuing debate that continued until the following year on the literary journals *Shigarami zōshi* and *Waseda bungaku*, Ōgai continues his attack, picking up every logical vulnerability he could find in Shōyō's argument, while Shōyō tries his best to walk away from it, saying that his criticism is only directed to his contemporaries who are too eager to find meaning in the depiction of characters.

For Karatani Kōjin in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, this was a pivotal moment in the history of Meiji literature, in which the conceptual framework of modern Japanese literature was dramatically exposed. In the chapter entitled "On the Power to Construct," Karatani states that the specific "problems" in the debate are not as important as the oppositions and contradictions constructed in the debate that managed to conceal diverse possibilities in Shōyō's discourse. In this case, Ōgai, relying on "an extremely one-dimensional idealism," formulated and re-arranged Shōyō's categories according to "a thoroughly reconstituted perspectival configuration, centralized around a vanishing point."[3] Karatani writes:

> [Ōgai] took all that coexisted as difference and diversity in the second decade of Meiji—all that Shōyō had affirmed in his conception of submerged ideals—and

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[1] Mori Ōgai, "Shōyō shi no shohyōgo," original publication in *Shigarami zōshi*, no. 24 (September 1891); reprinted in Mori Ōgai, *Ōgai zenshū*, vol. 23 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973). This essay was originally published in the column "Sanbō ronbun." The title "Shōyō shi no shohyōgo" was given when it was included in a collection *Tsukikusa* (1896).

[2] Mori, "Shōyō shi no shohyōgo," 4, 14-15. Translations of the Ōgai texts are mine.

[3] Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, translation edited by Brett de Bary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 150.

> out of it structured an opposition. He situated the stream of Edo-style literature as a substratum and made this stratification appear inevitable.[4]

Using a visual metaphor of modern linear perspective, Karatani situates Ōgai's theoretical formulation in the contexts of a larger "perspectival shift" in the second decade of Meiji, laying groundwork for modern literary space. However, if Ōgai did suppress irreducible difference in Shōyō's discourse, we might also wonder if Karatani's own theoretical sleight of hand could create a blind spot for understanding Ōgai's early theoretical writings. Karatani's emphasis on Ōgai's "one-dimensional idealism" may be quite accurate insofar as it pertains to his theoretical position after his immersion in Hartmann, but Hartmann was only one of the major influences for the young Ōgai. In fact, Ōgai proba bly did not study Hartmann (except through a brief description in Schwegler) until a few years after his return, as Ōgai's own personal copy of *Philosophie des Unbewussten* (Philosophy of the Unconscious) was likely published after 1890.[5] During his studies in Germany between 1884 and 1888, when he was a medical student in Germany by the order of the Imperial Army, Ōgai studied literature and philosophy by reading quite extensively on his own. Among philosophy and literary criticism he meticulously studied in Germany were Rudolf von Gottschall's (1823-1909) literary criticism and Albert Schwegler's (1819-1857) history of philosophy. In particular, Ōgai's literary criticism in the first few years since his return to Japan in 1888 reflects influences of his readings of Gottschall and Schwegler.

In this paper, I wish to discuss a few examples of Ōgai's reading and writing of literary theory in the first few years since his return to Japan, especially drawing upon the extensive marginalia found in his personal library now archived in the *Ōgai bunko* at the University of Tokyo Library. The notes found in the margins of works by Gottschall, Schwegler, and Shōyō show that Ōgai was not simply applying a philosophical system upon atemporal, empirical categories of Shōyō; rather, these notes suggest Ōgai's struggles with the question of how to reconcile more than one philosophical system—a pattern of his thinking that seems to have further implications in Ōgai's later literary production.

Prior to his immersion into Hartmann's aesthetic theory, Ōgai closely studied two books by Rudolf von Gottschall: *Poetik: die Dichtkunst und ihre Technik, vom Standpunkte der Neuzeit* (Poetics: Poetry and its Technique, from Modern Standpoints, 1882) and *Literarische Todtenklänge und Lebensfragen* (Echoes of Death and Questions of Life in Literature, 1885). *Poetik* is a comprehensive survey of concepts in poetics, covering genre theory, rhetoric, and literary terminology, while *Literarische Todtenklänge und Lebensfragen* consists of five literary biographies called "Portraits" and three literary essays called "Studien." In these works, Gottschall, a prolific critic and a dramatist, draws examples from various literary sources, but his approach is not a rigorously philosophical one of Hartmann. Extensive notes in Ōgai's personal copies of these works, in Japanese as well as in German, suggest how closely Ōgai studied them.[6]

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[4] Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 150-51.

[5] Kanda Takao first discovered this fact. Kanda Takao, "Mori Ōgai to E. V. Hartmann: *Muishiki tetsugaku* o chūshin ni," originally published in 1960; reprinted in Hasegawa Izumi, ed., *Hikaku bungaku kenkyū Mori Ōgai* (Tokyo: Asahi shuppansha, 1978), 64-86.

[6] Rudolf von Gottschall, *Poetik: die Dichtkunst und ihre Technik, vom Standpunkte der Neuzeit*, 2 vols. (Breslau: E. Trewendt, 1882); A100:1667 of Ōgai bunko; and Rudolf von Gottschall, *Literarische Todtenklänge und Lebensfragen* (Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1885); A100:1666 of Ōgai bunko. Access to the books archived in *Ōgai bunko* is courtesy of The University of Tokyo Library, Tokyo. The scanned images of the *Ōgai bunko* books, including all of the books cited in this paper, are

Gottschall's influences on Ōgai during his days in Germany are also evident in the literary criticism Ōgai published in the first few years after his return in September 1888. For example, "Shōsetsu ron" ("On *Shōsetsu*"), published in January 1889, was Ōgai's first published literary essay in which Ōgai introduces Zola's "experimental novel"—and a critique—to the Japanese audience. As suggested in its subtitle, "Cfr. Rudolf von Gottschall, Studien," Ōgai borrowed almost the entire argument from a chapter in Gottschall's *Literarische Todtenklänge und Lebensfragen*, entitled "Der naturalistische und photographische Roman in Frankreich" (The Naturalist and Photographic Novel in France).[7]

"Gendai shoka no shōsetsu ron o yomu" (Reading Criticisms on the *Shōsetsu* by the Contemporaries), published in November 1889, is a more elaborate exposition on concepts in poetics, such as versification, material for fiction, realism, and genres, incorporating examples in poetry, fiction, and criticism from German, Chinese, and Japanese traditions. Several times Ōgai explicitly discusses quotations from Shōyō's *Shōsetsu shinzui* and makes comparisons with Western poetic concepts. For example, in his discussion on the material for literature, Ōgai discusses the most famous statement in *Shōsetsu shinzui* that the central subject of the *shōsetsu* is human beings:

> Therefore, we find that the elements of the activities of the *shōsetsu* can mainly be attributed to human beings. Thus, [Shōyō] says that the subject of the *shōsetsu* is human emotions, followed by customs and manners. (*Shōsetsu shinzui* jō-kan, 19-*chō-ura*.) Gottschall also says that the stage [*kyōchi*] of the *shōsetsu* is the stage of life.[8]

Unlike the application of Hartmann's theory upon Shōyō's categories in the "submerged ideals" debate, the relationship between statements by Gottschall and Shōyō here is more of a parallel comparison of two statements. The notes left in Ōgai's personal copies of these works leave traces of this parallel comparison. In Gottschall's *Poetik*, in a chapter entitled "Die dichterische Stoffwelt" (The Material-World of Poetry), Ōgai underlines the statement "*Der Mittelpunkt der Poesie ist der Mensch*" ("the center of poetry is man"), and next to it writes "有人在" ("the human exists").[9] Because the writing is in brush, we can presume it was written after his return to Japan, possibly after reading Shōyō's *Shōsetsu shinzui*. Meanwhile, in Ōgai's personal copy of *Shōsetsu shinzui*, in the section in which this famous phrase appears, the note in red pencil reads "Stoffe d. Romane," i.e. the material of the novels.[10]

Ōgai's comparison of Gottschall and Shōyō continues in the aforementioned "Shōyō shi no shohyōgo" essay that initiated the "submerged ideals" debate. Here Ōgai compares Shōyō's

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available to the public at the *Ōgai bunko kakiirebon gazō dētabēsu* website (http://rarebook.dl.itc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ogai/).

[7] Kanda Takao and Kobori Keiichirō examine the extent to which Ōgai borrowed from Gottschall; in particular, Kobori shows that some paragraphs in "Shōsetsu ron" were mere summaries of passages from the chapter. See Kanda Takao, "Ōgai shoki no bungei hyōron" in *Hikaku bungaku kenkyū*, vol. 6 (1957), 27-53; and Kobori Keiichirō, *Wakaki hi no Mori Ōgai* (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1969), 377-89.

[8] Mori Ōgai, "Gendai shoka no shōsetsu ron o yomu," originally published in *Shigarami zōshi*, no. 2 (November 1889); reprinted in Mori Ōgai, *Ōgai zenshū*, vol. 22 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973), 69. The reference to the Shōyō text is in the original.

[9] Gottschall, *Literarische Todtenklänge und Lebensfragen*, vol. 1, 71.

[10] See Tsubouchi Shōyō, *Shōsetsu shinzui*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Tōkyō haishi shuppansha, 1885), 19-*chō-ura*; E20:32 of Ōgai bunko. It is worth noting that the copy of *Shōsetsu shinzui* in Ōgai's library is the two-volume "first" edition. See Kobori, *Wakaki hi no Mori Ōgai*, 385.

categories of "the three schools of the *shōsetsu*" and Gottschall's poetic categories and their definitions of realism, closely matching up two sets of categories but ultimately applying Hartmann's aesthetic theory to both. This comparison of three critics can also be traced in the marginalia. In the chapter on realism and idealism in *Poetik,* Ōgai comments on the statement that Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe and Jean Paul are all realist and writes, 坪内 (*Tsubouchi*), 人間派 (*ningenha*; the human school)、and 小天地主義 (shōtenchi shugi; *Mikrokosmus*).[11] This comment simultaneously connects Gottschall's definition of realism with "the human school," one of Shōyō's "three schools," and Hartmann's category of *Mikrokosmus*. This example also highlights the similarities between Gottschall's and Shōyō's as ahitorical, juxtaposed categories, which made them susceptible to the same kind of "re-organizing" by Hartmann's theoretical framework.

There is no question that Ōgai's early literary criticism is informed by his reading of philosophical texts during his studies in Germany, and perhaps the single most important text in this regard is Albert Schwegler's *Geschichte der Philosophie in Umriß* (History of Philosophy in Epitome, 1887). It is a survey of the history of Western philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Hartmann, and the fact that Ōgai's personal copy was a revised and supplemented edition in its fourteenth printing underscores its popularity. In this book Ōgai marked hundreds of pages with underlining and marginalia, suggesting that he studied this book more intently than any other book while he was studying in Berlin in 1887.

In recent studies on Ōgai's reading of philosophy during his German days, scholar Matsumura Tomomi argued that this text is crucial in understanding the logical structure underlying Ōgai's wide-ranging critical activities in the first several years following his return to Japan—a period of intense, critical engagement which one critic called *sentōteki keimō* ("bellicose enlightenment").[12]

Ōgai was involved in many critical debates besides the one with Shōyō, in the realms of both literature and medicine, but past scholars have noted that Ōgai seems to take contrasting philosophical attitudes in medicine and literature. In medicine, Ōgai emphasized the need for rigorous empiricism, such as observation and experiment, in order for medical science in Japan to modernize, while in literature, Ōgai defended aesthetic ideals while vigorously attacking naturalist narrative style represented by Zola. In short, Ōgai argued for more empiricism in medicine and argued for less empiricism and more idealism in literature.[13]

Matsumura conjectures that Ōgai did not approach medicine and literature as two separate realms, and argues that there may be a consistent pattern in his thinking spanning two realms. Through close readings of Ōgai's prolific notes in Albert Schwegler's *Geschichte,* Matsumura shows that Ōgai was interested in reconciling two related yet contrasting philosophical approaches, empiricism and induction on the one hand and deduction and idealism on the other. In the history of philosophy, Ōgai was especially interested in thinkers such as Fichte and Schelling, who all sought to reconcile the Kantian antinomy of empiricism and rationalism, in one way or another.[14] By reading Schwegler, Ōgai did not arrive at an all-unifying philosophical formula, but saw matter and soul, empiricism and idealism, as two

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[11] Tsubouchi, *Shōsetsu shinzui* (Ōgai bunko), vol. 1, 102.

[12] See Matsumura Tomomi, "'Sentōteki keimō' no ronri: Ōgai shoki genron no kōzō to haikei" *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, vol. 79, no. 6 (2002), 1-17.

[13] See Matsumura, "'Sentōteki keimō' no ronri," 3.

[14] See Matsumura Tomomi, "Shoki Ōgai no Schelling juyō: Schwegler 'Seiyō tetsugakushi' e no kakikomi o chūshin ni," *Bungaku*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2007), 2-20.

concepts that cannot quite be reduced to one another.

Matsumura then offers a new re-interpretation of Ōgai's famous personal memo entitled "Eindrücke, 1887" (Impressions, 1887) as an expression of his desire to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable philosophical realms. The cryptic note contrasts various characteristics in two columns associated with Robert Koch (1843-1910) and Max Josef von Pettenkofer (1818-1901)—two authorities in the field of hygiene and Ōgai's mentors at different points during his stay in Germany. The chart in part reads as follows:

(Koch)	(Pettenkofer)
:	:
Materialismus, Sensualismus	Idealismus, Spiritualismus
(materialism, sensualism)	(idealism, spiritualism)
Materie	. . . . . Seele
(material)	(soul)
|	|

Zwei unvereinbare -- od. Auch untrennbare, jedenfalls uunvergleichbare Groessen
(Two irreconcilable, but also inseparable, nevertheless incomparable greatnesses)
Table 1: "Eindrücke, 1887" (Original in German; my translation in English)[15]

Past critics tended to read this chart as a commentary on personal characteristics of Koch and Pettenkofer, interpreting the word "Groessen" as "great men." However, Matsumura argues that this chart can be read as a comparison of two philosophical realms of "material" and "soul"—materialism, realism, and empiricism on the one hand and idealism and rationalism on the other, while the associations with the scientists are secondary. This chart, especially the statement at the bottom, suggests Ōgai's recognition of the incompatibilities of the two realms, and yearning for the unification of the two realms.

Matsumura's reading of Ōgai's notes on Schwegler and "Eindrücke" offers a model for understanding the philosophical underpinnings of Ōgai's understanding of *Shōsetsu shinzui*. Curiously, Ōgai jotted down Shōyō's name three times in the margin of *Geschichte*. The three instances are as follows:

> 1. In a chapter on the Eleatics, just under the section on Parmenides, the note reads: "alles sein ヲ das absolute ニヨセタル点ニ於テ逍遥子似之" (This is similar to Shōyō in that *all being* is associated with *the absolute*);
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> 2. In a chapter on Neo-Platonism, Shōyō's name is written next to the underlined phrase "die Vernunft gehört zum Vielsachen" (the reason belongs in multiple things); and
>
> 3. In a chapter on Hegel, Shōyō's name is written next to an underlined sentence "alles Wirkliche sei vernünftig und alles Vernünftige wirklich" (All that is real is rational and all that is rational is real).[16]

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[15] *Ōgai zenshū*, vol. 38 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975), 93.

[16] Albert Schwegler, *Geschichte der Philosophie in Umriß: ein Leitfaden zur Übersicht* (History of History in Epitome: A Guide for an Overview), (Stuttgart: C. Conradi, 1887), 17, 133, 329, respectively; A100:1073 of Ōgai bunko. For a full reproduction of Ōgai's marginalia in Schwegler, *Geschichte der Philosophie in Umriß*, see Josef Fürnkäs, Izumi Masato, Muramatsu Mari, and Matsumura Tomomi, "Schwegler 'Seiyō tetsugakushi'

These are three very different moments in Schwegler's narrative of the history of Western philosophy, and, with such scant clues, it would be difficult to reconstruct what Ōgai might have been thinking. Still, we might conjecture how Ōgai connected these three moments with Shōyō. In the first instance, Schwegler describes Parmenides's doctrine of reality as pure and permanent existence; and in the short statement Ōgai seems to argue that Shōyō is similar to Parmenides in that Shōyō takes all beings as absolute. In the second instance, Schwegler explains a Neo-Platonic process in which reason moves from multitude to oneness, into the mystical unity of the thinking and the thought; and Ōgai's underline focuses upon the early stage of this process in which reason embraces reality as multitude. In the section on Hegel, Schwegler discusses Hegelian notion of reality as rational necessity, rather than possibility or contingency, as a full manifestation of the essence. All of these passages describe philosophical moments in which rationality grasps manifold, plural reality at hand and regard it as absolute.

In "Waseda bungaku no botsu risō" (Submerged Ideals in *Waseda bungaku*, November 1891), Ōgai's second essay in the "submerged ideals" debate, Ōgai elaborates on his view about Shōyō's philosophical reality through an imaginary lecture by Prof. Uyū, a surrogate of Hartmann. His discussion here seems to confirm the above reading. Ōgai writes: "why was Prof. Uyū [Hartmann—ed.] not satisfied with description of reality? He says that he wanted to unify all of the existence and all of the ideas, considering the irrationality and the rationality of the universe."[17] In other words, Ōgai argues that Shōyō thinks of the real as the rational, but Hartmann offers a system in which the real is rational and not rational at the same time. As Ōgai succinctly puts it: "Prof. Uyū also refutes Mr. Shōyō's argument: the world is not only real, but also filled with ideals."[18] In short, Ōgai is providing a corrective to what he perceived as Shōyō's overly simplistic equation of reality and rationality. In the debate Ōgai further elaborates on philosophical consequences of Shōyō's position in light of the empiricism-idealism split, but it seems to be futile, as this question does not seem to engage Shōyō at all.

By situating Shōyō's thinking within the history of Western philosophy, he seems to be pointing out that Shōyō's absolute belief in empiricism is one-sided. By inscribing Shōyō's name in the margins of the history of Western philosophy, Ōgai historicizes Shōyō's empirical approach, showing that a complete reliance to empiricism is only a page in the history of philosophy. In this context, a deductive approach, upon which Ōgai seems to rely in his arguments against Shōyō, is also one of many philosophical approaches embedded in the contexts of history of philosophy. In an autobiographical essay toward the end of life, Ōgai, reviewing his education, writes: "In philosophy, I, a doctor, was confused by the lack of unity in natural sciences, and sought a temporary foothold in Hartmann's philosophy of the unconscious."[19] For Ōgai, even Hartmann's theory is a relative truth, only meaningful as a corrective of what Ōgai saw as Shōyō's extreme empiricism.

In Ōgai's reading of Gottschall and Shōyō, Ōgai seems to be eager to find cross-cultural equivalents of literary concepts. In the margins of these and other texts, he does not seem to be

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e no Mori Ōgai jihitsu kakikomi: honkoku oyobi hon'yaku," *The Geibun-kenkyū*, vol. 86 (2004): 155-251. Since these notes are made in red-ink brush it is safe to assume that these notes were written after his return to Japan, though the exact dates for the writing were unknown.

[17] Mori Ōgai, "Waseda bungaku no botsu risō," originally published in *Shigarami zōshi*, no. 27 (November 1891); reprinted in Mori, *Ōgai zenshū*, vol. 23, 19.

[18] Mori, "Waseda bungaku no botsu risō," 20.

[19] Mori Ōgai, "Nakajikiri," originally published in *Kiron* vol. 1, no. 5 (September 1917); reprinted in Mori, *Ōgai zenshū*, vol. 26 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973), 543.

taking the Western philosophical system as absolute; rather, Ōgai fluidly moves from one linguistic and literary space to another. Also, through his reading of Schwegler, Ōgai does not seem to be committed to one philosophical approach such as deduction or rationalism. He understands the historical nature of philosophical truth, and sought to reconcile seemingly incompatible systems while moderating what he saw as a one-sided approach.

Instead of solidifying the dominance of the universal, idealist, Western configuration, as Karatani suggests, Ōgai constantly moves his critical vantage point. As a result, each concept (literary or philosophical, Japanese or German) is displaced from the original contexts and situated in another.

An apt visual metaphor for this move would be a parallax vision—recognizing plural, coexisting positions and shifting among them to differentiate itself from a monocular view. The strategy is analogous, incidentally, to what Karatani more recently elaborated in *Transcritique* as "transcendental critique." In the introduction Karatani explains the parallax vision as a metaphor for a Kantian philosophical strategy:

> Kant is generally understood to have executed the transcendental critique from a place that lies between rationalism and empiricism. However, upon reading his strangely self-deprecating *Dreams of a Visionary Explained by Dreams of Metaphysics*, one finds it impossible to say that he was simply thinking from a place between these two poles. Instead, it is the "parallax" between positions that acts. Kant, too, performed a critical oscillation: He continuously confronted the dominant rationalism with empiricism, and the dominant empiricism with rationalism. The Kantian critique exists within this movement itself. The transcendental critique is not some kind of stable third position. It cannot exist without a transversal and transpositional movement. It is for this reason that I have chosen to name the dynamic critiques of Kant and Marx—which are both transcendental and transversal—"transcritique."[20]

In the "submerged ideals" debate, especially in the column quoted at the beginning of this paper, Ōgai critiqued Shōyō's empiricism from an idealist position. However, Ōgai's notes in Schwegler and the dichotomous thinking in "Eindrücke" suggest that Ōgai was never fully committed either to idealism or empiricism: in Schwegler, Ōgai had a historical perspective to situate various philosophical schools in the history of Western philosophy, recognizing limitations of each approach; and in "Eindrücke" Ōgai articulated the incommensurability and irreducibility of two philosophical approaches. In this sense, Ōgai's critique of empiricism is but a moment in the "critical oscillations."

Furthermore, I would suggest that the parallax movement can be a model for understanding the twists and turns of Ōgai's literary career, in which he straddled literature and science, the West and Japan, and modernity and its other; and critiquing each position alternately and simulatenously. Ōgai's shifts in intellectual positions have been often read biographically (in such clichés as "the man of two lives" or "the atavistic return to tradition"); but I wonder if we could understand them in terms of an intellectual strategy that he began to develop in his early years, through his exposure to plural cultural traditions and philosophical systems. While it is beyond the scope of the paper to assess the validity of this model, I hope to explore this issue further in the future research.

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[20] Karatani Kōjin, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx*, Sabu Kohso trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 4.