

SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND SYNCRETIC SHIFTS: ANALYSING RECEPTION OF EMERSONIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE LATE 19TH-CENTURY JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

In April of 1894, the sixth volume of the “Jūni Bungō” (Twelve Men of Letters) series was published by Minyūsha, featuring a critical biography of Ralph Waldo Emerson by Kitamura Tōkoku, a major essayist and critic in Meiji Period (1868-1912). This biography marked the first work in Japan that discussed Emerson. Together with Sato Shigenori's translation of “Civilization” published in 1890, Jūni Bungō holds significant importance in introducing Emerson's ideas to Japan. What is notably significant is that Kitamura Tōkoku's approach to Emerson's ideas progressed beyond the earlier receptions of Emerson's thought. Tōkoku's initial engagement with Emerson was through his reading of New England's Romanticism. Tōkoku had developed an ‘invisible,’ ideal world in everyone, that provided him with the scope needed to assimilate western romanticism into Japanese literature. In his “Theory of Inner Life” published in the May issue of “Bungakukai” (Literary World) in 1893, Tōkoku expresses that “individual human aspirations align with the spirit of the universe, and the ultimate hope in the human world lies in completely merging with the spirit of the universe.” The influence of Emerson's ‘Nature’ is revealed here as Tōkoku's explores the unconditional union between humans and the divine through his encounter with the “Over-Soul,” an Emersonian entity. It is indeed intriguing to unravel the philosophical threads in Tōkoku's essays that he wrote during his deep engagement in the study of Emerson.

Keywords: Romanticism, Emersonian transcendentalism, individualism, nature, inner life, conscience

1. BACKGROUND OF MEIJI PERIOD SOCIETY (1868-1912) AND LITERATURE

The politics of the Meiji Restoration government contained a contradiction in which modernization was being promoted through feudalistic power. Furthermore, the Meiji Restoration itself, having ended as an incomplete bourgeois democratic revolution, left a state of confusion where feudalistic morality and modernism coexisted without resolution. In addition to this state of affairs, the government, with the goal of treaty revision, pursued an extreme policy of Westernization that merely imitated the external aspects of Western culture. Furthermore, they were gradually moving towards the path of absolute monarchy by promulgating the Constitution of the Empire of Japan. That is why the government fiercely suppressed the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, which sought substantial modernization based on the fundamental principles of Western democracy. From this social reality, the issues which were important to be considered in the direction of literary content were:

- Breaking down the remnants of feudal consciousness that persisted,
- Establishing a modern human perspective from a national standpoint which was bottom-up modernization rather than a top-down modernization,
- Liberating individuals from established ethics and extending it to all aspects of human life.

These perspectives, especially the one that directly addressed the issue as a matter of human nature, were prominent in the works of novelists of that time. We should focus on Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1894) who earnestly tackled these issues head-on. One of his significant contributions to modernizing Japanese literature was blending Eastern and Western philosophy lucidly in the notion of ‘inner life’ (*naibu seimei*) he articulated. While rejecting a faith based on rituals and formalism, Tōkoku emphasized the unconditional union between humans and the divine. His writing career is a symbol of struggle between an impersonal nihilistic approach to life and society that draws men away from human relationships, and a more human approach which inspired generations of writers from his contemporaries and immediate successors such as Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943) and Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) to novelists such as Tayama Katai (1872-1930), Kunikida Doppo (1871-1908), Iwano Hōmei (1873-1920) all the way to Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Akutagwa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), who though on a different plane, fought essentially the same battle. Ralph Waldo Emerson had

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been the guiding spirit in Tōkoku's spiritual journey of discovering an inner life in one's self.¹

2. 'SAGE OF CONCORD' AND JAPAN

With the opening of the doors of Japan to foreign cultural assimilation due to the Meiji Restoration (1868), Emerson, regarded as a leading figure in American culture at the time, had his first interaction with Japan. In the June of 1872, the visit of the Iwakura Mission, led by Iwakura Tomomi, to the United States and Europe marked the beginning of the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson on the intellectual formation of modern Japan when a group of Japanese envoys listened to his lecture in Boston.² In the welcome banquet held at the Reverse House in Boston for the Japanese diplomatic mission, Emerson and poet Oliver Wendell Holmes were invited. While confessing on his little knowledge of Japan, Emerson, delivered a lecture on "Japan and Bushido," and how the Japanese spirit served as an inspirational platform for the west too see through the values of the east. In a reciprocal manner, just as Ralph Waldo Emerson celebrated the merits of Japanese civilization to his audience in America and Europe, it did not take long for Japan to reciprocate. The Japanese Meiji intellectuals began extolling the value of Emerson's writings among their fellow countrymen and women. While some leading Christian scholars tried to absorb Emerson's thoughts, the author of "Seiyo Hinko Ron" (Western Ethics), Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891), was an ardent admirer of Emerson's humanism. He frequently recited passages from Emerson's works and recommended them as guiding principles to his students. Intellectuals as-

- (a) Masakazu Toyama (1848-1900), the editor of the Emerson reprinted edition,
- (b) Kanda Nobu (1857-1923), who heard Emerson's lectures in Amherst and then gave lectures about Emerson upon returning to Japan,
- (c) Uemura Masahisa (1858-1925), and
- (d) Tokutomi Sohō (1863-1957), all had especial affinity towards Emerson. Kanda, in his journal dated March 19, 1879, records his enchantment with Emerson's talk that he gave earlier that evening as "We sat there for an hour charmed by every sentence that he uttered and when he ended I could not but feel that I had received an impetus towards a life of great simplicity and truthfulness."³ Rather than being a prominent advocate for personal self-improvement, Emerson can be more accurately characterized as a proponent of 'civilization' in a nation that had recently emerged from isolationist policies and was embracing diverse foreign cultures across all aspects of society.

The earliest translations of Emerson's works were "Compensation" by Nakamura Masanao⁴, "Civilisation" by Sato Shigeki (1890) and abstracts from Emerson's essays and lectures were also published in the literary magazines of Meiji period such as in *kokumin no tomo* (Friend of the Citizens). Tokutomi Sohō published translations of Emerson's sayings in 1897, as a book *Emerson-shi ichigo senkin* (The Golden Sayings of Emerson). In fact, Emerson's essay, "Self-Reliance" was adopted in English textbooks in Japan.

While Emerson's influence extended across various aspects of modern Japanese thought, focusing especially on the literary field, the significant reception and attention given by Tokutomi Sohō and Kitamura Tōkoku is worth noting. Drawing on the naturalistic views expressed in Sōhō's "Seishi Yoroku," (1893), Tōkoku referred to Sohō as the "Emerson of the East."⁵ In fact, in a series published in the 1880s and 1890s by *Min'yūsha*⁶ Jūni Bungō (Twelve Literary Masters) compiled by Tōkoku, Tokutomi Roka (1868-1927) and Yamaji Aizan (1865-1917), Emerson was included as one of the most influential foreign literary masters besides Carlyle, Macaulay, Wordsworth, Goethe, Hugo and

¹Francis Mathy, "Kitamura Tokoku. The Early Years," Monumenta Nipponica, Sophia University, 1963, Vol. 18, No.1/4, pp. 2 (Accessed on Jan 18, 2023)

²Massachusetts Historical Society (1791), Online Archive <https://www.masshist.org/object-of-the-month/february-2014>, Accessed on July 7, 2023

³Jean Mc. Clure Mudge, "Mr. Emerson's Revolution," Open Book Publishers, 2015

⁴He was a Japanese educator and leader during the Meiji period. He also went by his pen-name of Nakamura Keiu.

⁵Matsumura, Tomomi, "Influence of Emerson on the formation of Kitamura Tokoku's view of the poet," Keio University, The Geibun-Kenkyu: Journal of Arts and Letters, Vol.101, No.2, pp.266, (Accessed on Jan 18, 2023)

⁶ In 1887 Tokutomi Sohō founded a publishing house, Min'yūsha ("Society of the People's Friends"). In 1887 this firm began a highly influential periodical, *Kokumin no tomo* ("Nation's Friend"), that was Japan's first general magazine. Min'yūsha in 1890 began printing *Kokumin shimbun* ("The Nation Newspaper"), which was for several decades one of the most influential papers in the country.

Tolstoy.⁷

3. EMERSON'S THEORY OF "OVERSOUL"

After studying at institutions such as Harvard Divinity School, Emerson became a minister in the Unitarian Church. However, due to a growing sense of discordance with his own philosophical inclinations and a disillusionment with the formalized rituals of the church, he left the ministry in 1832. From then on, through his lectures and writings, he emerged as a central figure in American Transcendentalism.⁸

Emerson's first major work, "Nature," holds a crucial position as the cornerstone of his fundamental ideas. It emphasizes the concept of unity within diversity, which is widely understood throughout the text. *"This idea of unity permeates our perception, appearing in various aspects of our experience. Indeed, this notion of "unity" is profoundly essential. It underscores the interconnectedness and inherent harmony of the natural world, as well as the interplay between individual experiences and the larger universal order."* It signifies the intrinsic oneness that exists amidst the diversity of existence and points to a deeper understanding of the fundamental nature of reality.

The concept of grasping the underlying "unity" that permeates the diversity of nature is indeed at the core of Emerson's philosophy. He refers to this "unity" as "Universal Spirit," "Supreme Being," and as "Oversoul," and as "God" in his later works. However, the fundamental meaning remains consistent in pointing to the universal idea that encompasses and governs nature at its root. It represents the essential understanding of the interconnectedness and inherent harmony that exists throughout the natural world. In Chapter VII of *Nature* ("Spirit"), Emerson wrote:

“. . . therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws, at his need, inexhaustible power. Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man? . . . man has access to the entire mind of the Creator; is himself the creator in the finite.”⁹

In "Over-Soul" (1841), his idea seems to expand as, *"Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the Eternal One."*¹⁰ In other words, "Nature" is the concrete and diverse manifestation of "Oneness," and the human spirit is also connected to "Oneness." Therefore, they are fundamentally one, and humans can touch that underlying "Oneness" through "Nature."

Indeed, one of the most significant aspects of Emerson's philosophy lies in his understanding of the relationship between "Oneness," "Nature," and the "Human Spirit." Emerson expresses this "Oneness" between "Nature" and "Spirit" as "Correspondence." While the idea of correspondence between "Nature" and "Spirit" is commonly attributed to *Swedenborg's correspondence theory*,¹¹ it is essential to recognize that Emerson's "Nature" philosophy must be fundamentally distinguished by its epistemology, which perceives the relationship structure with "Oneness" rather than a mysterious correspondence between "Nature" and "Spirit." In that sense, the relationship between "Oneness," "Nature," and "Spirit" observed here aligns remarkably accurately with the epistemological structure of Schelling's *"Naturphilosophie"* (natural philosophy) and identity philosophy, which is rooted in German Idealism, particularly in the apprehension of the "Absolute" (das Absolute) as the origin of "Nature" and "Spirit," ultimately comprehending them as one and the same. However, to fully understand this aspect, it is necessary to consider another central idea in Emerson's philosophy, which is his theory of art, particularly his discourse on poets.

Emerson's philosophy of nature follows a logical progression that directly connects with his theory of

⁷And, the other five people honored as Japanese literary masters were Ogyū Sorai, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, Arai Hakusei, Rai Sanyo and Takizawa Bakin.

⁸Robert C. Gordon, "Emerson and the Light of India- An Intellectual History," National Book Trust India, pp.30, 2007

⁹Brooks Atkinson (ed.), *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, The Modern Library, New York, pp.35

¹⁰Ibid, pp.262

¹¹*Swedenborg's Doctrine of Correspondence*, Chicago Western New-Church Union, 1889, Retrieved from online Library of Congress, USA

poets, as illustrated as, “By degrees we may come to know the primitive sense of the permanent objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause.”¹² Further, he writes,

“The only way into nature is to enact our best insight. Instantly we are higher poets, and can speak a deeper law.” (*The method of Nature*, 1841)¹³

“Natural objects, if individually described and out of connection, are not yet known, since they are really parts of a symmetrical universe, like words of a sentence; and if their true order is found, the poet can read their divine significance orderly as in a Bible.” (*Poetry and Imagination*, 1875)¹⁴

In Oneness and Over-Soul, there exists a kind of symbolic relationship with nature, and a common belief seen here is that this can be apprehended through language. In other words, various phenomena in nature are signalling a connection to the fundamental Oneness for us. In that sense, each aspect of nature corresponds to words in the text, and as a whole, nature holds the logic of being an ‘open book.’ In other words, nature, as a phenomenon, serves as the text that we should decipher to access its fundamental Oneness, and poets, by reading this text, can attain a profound connection with the ultimate Oneness. Hence, in Emerson's view, a poet must be, above all, an exceptional “interpreter of nature” before being an expressive artist.

4. TŌKOKU’S PHILOSOPHICAL SYNTHESIS: RECEPTION OF EMERSON

The foundations of literary value and social position of Kitamura Tōkoku lies in blending the eastern and the western pantheistic and mystical ontologies, giving Japanese literature a metaphysical value that stood firm in the face of modernity’s disenchantment of the world. Tōkoku, inspired by the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement, possessed a strong desire for the modern liberation of human nature. As a result, he boldly challenged feudal ethics and customs.

In his diary dated August 30, 1893, Tōkoku mentions about his work that he was about to begin on Emerson.¹⁵ Yet he was familiar with Emerson’s thoughts and writings since the beginning of his career. His initial quotations of Emerson’s works can be found in his essay, “*ensei shika to josei*” (World-weary Poets and Women) which are inspired by Emerson’s essay “Love.” Tōkoku mentions, “*Emerson says that no matter how indifferent and calm a philosopher is to any situation, when hit by the fierce blow of love his soul goes restless and wandering just like the soul of a young immature person*”¹⁶ His description of pure love was a criticism against the eroticism of the Tokugawa Period. Kinoshite Naoe¹⁷ (1869-1937) remarked, “*It was just as if we had been blown apart by a cannon,*” when we read the first line of Tōkoku’s essay “*Ensei shika to josei,*” “*Love is the secret of life. First, there is love, and then there is life. If we eradicate love, what flavor is there to life?*”¹⁸ These lines were an establishment of a new discourse in the subjectivity of literature concerning “romantic love” in Japan. On this modernity in literature, Katsumoto Seiichirō¹⁹ writes, “*Tōkoku appeared, meteor-like, on the Meiji sky.*”²⁰ It is a fact that the protestant Churches of Meiji period played a special role in developing this new idea of platonic love. Churches in the Meiji period were the only place where men and women were treated equally. The attitude towards man and woman relationship, love, marriage, chastity, family roots, Christianity played a major role in changing behavioural norms in Meiji Japan.

As a Platonist, Tōkoku had realized that in order to assimilate the Western Romanticism into Japanese literature, the perspective of the ‘invisible’ was essential. Hence he was drawn to find an expression of

¹²Ibid, pp. 406

¹³An Oration delivered before the Society of the Adelphi Waterville College, Maine, August 11, 1841 <https://emersoncentral.com/texts/nature-addresses-lectures/addresses/the-method-of-nature/>

¹⁴Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims*, Boston and New York Houghton and Company, The Biberside Press, Cambridge, 1875, pp. 13

¹⁵Francis Mathy, “*Monumenta Nipponica*,” Vol. 20, No. ½, Sophia University, 1965

¹⁶Translated by Author

¹⁷Christian Social Activist and author. His anti-war novel, “*Pillar of Fire*” was banned by the government in 1910. He continued to write pacifist and socialist themed novels for the remainder of his career. Kinoshita was also instrumental in abolishing licensed prostitution in Japan.

¹⁸勝本清一郎、『北村透谷編集』、『厭世詩家と女性』岩波文庫、1990年6月15日、第23刷発行、頁81

¹⁹Katsumoto (1899-1967) is a literary critic who has contributed deeply to the researches probing Tōkoku’s life. He is also instrumental in scholarly contributions made to Tōkoku’s Complete Works (*Tōkoku zenshū*)

²⁰Joseph Rogendorf, “*Shimazaki Toson: A Maker of the Modern Japanese Novel*,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 7, No. 1/2, Sophia University, 1951, pp. 42

the invisible realm of universe which also became possible to a significant scope by his encounter to Romanticist Byron. Tōkoku's poem "Soshu no shi" (The Song of Prisoner), based on Byron's "The Prisoner of Chillon" and "Hōraikyoku" (A Tale of Mt. Hōrai) has the elements of 'real' world and 'ideal world.' However, at the focal point of Tōkoku's theory of "Nature" and "Poet," lies his magnum opus "Naibu Seimeiron" (Theory on Inner Life, 1893), which leads to a concrete examination of the process of forming Tōkoku's conception of the poet. In "Naibuseimeiron," Tōkoku writes, "*Poets and philosophers are undoubtedly not apart from those who interpret and understand the internal life of human beings.*"²¹

Further he writes, "*To observe the inner life of a human being is to observe its manifold manifestations. The inseparability of spiritual knowledge, spiritual perception, and observation is based on this. Observation without spiritual knowledge or spiritual perception is not genuine observation. This is the basis of it.*"²²

Though a major influence of Emerson's discourse is quite visible in Tōkoku's usage of the term *naibuseimei*, yet there is a striking difference between their ontological perception of "Oneness." While, in case of Emerson, refers to the structure of "nature" and "spirit," in case of Tōkoku, it is the *naibuseimei* (inner life) of man which he sees as the 'Absolute' and everything else as a manifestation of it. However, both Emerson and the concept of "*naibuseimei*" emphasizes the fundamental 'Oneness' or Over-Soul, nature, and the human spirit are systematized through intuition by means of language and poets. Tōkoku was in continuous pursuit of finding an expression for the unity of the 'ideal' and the 'real,' for which Emerson was important to him.

It is interesting to note that Tōkoku's concept of intuitive apprehension of truth (Oneness) here directly overlaps with Schelling's natural philosophy. Schelling believed that both human concepts or spirit and objective matter or nature are manifestations transformed into the same 'Absolute.' The recognition of the 'Absolute' through concrete nature is accomplished by intellectual intuition. In the background of literary theory in the 1880s in Japan, the influence of German idealism was profoundly significant. However, at the same time, when accepting this Western ideology that constructed a conceptual world apart from the Christian-centered worldview of a personal God, one can identify a common intellectual landscape among the intellectuals of that time. It was the act of accepting and integrating this idealistic Western thought with their own inherent Eastern ideology.

The underlying concept that supports Emerson's theory of the poet is the idea of "inspiration." There isn't just one method to reach Oneness or the Oversoul from within the text of nature. For example, philosophy seeks to grasp "truth" through speculative analysis, while science arrives at a unified "theory" through fragmented analysis. However, the poet is able to directly touch the inner secrets of nature through intuition or spiritual inspiration. In other words, those who receive inspiration, the inspired ones, become the "poets." In the "Divinity School Address" (1838)²³, delivered by Emerson, he says,

"..the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely; it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand."

This inspiration could be sought in Tōkoku's "*Naibuseimeiron*".

"What is inspiration? It does not necessarily pertain to a religious meaning; even outside the context of organized religion, inspiration exists. Even in the absence of a specific philosophy, inspiration still exists. Ultimately, inspiration can be seen as a form of resonance or response from the human spirit, the inner life, to the cosmic spirit or divine essence, which can be understood as the spirit of the universe or God. Our perception of it is akin to sensing electrical impulses. Without such

²¹勝本清一郎、北村透谷全集、第二卷、『内部生命論』、138頁、岩波書店、1912

²²Ibid

²³Emerson's 1838 address to the graduating class at Harvard Divinity School called for personal religious consciousness and self-reliance. Courtesy of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School. Online Source <https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/biographies/emersons-divinity-school-address/>

*responsiveness, how can one truly be considered a pure and sacred idealist?"*²⁴

The absolute truth Emerson refers to is the truth that can be directly apprehended through ‘intuition’ or direct spiritual insight. According to Emerson, this truth cannot be accessed or understood through indirect means such as traditional doctrines or established religious institutions. In sensing ‘sensing of electric impulse’ Tōkoku explains the importance of personal experience and direct communion with the divine in the pursuit of truth and spiritual understanding. The “*naibu seimsei*” (Inner Life), refers to the deepest part of a person's heart that connects with the “Spirit of the Universe.” In this context, Tōkoku divides the understanding of the inner life into two categories. One is the “Realists,” who observe the inner life objectively through concrete phenomena, and the other is called the “Idealists” or “Thinkers,” which Tōkoku assigns the following significance to.

*“In the realm of literature, those known as idealists are individuals who, in their pursuit of observing the inner life of human beings, strive to embody the pinnacle of truth in tangible form. Therefore, in the realm of literature, there are rarely things that can be called “ideas.” The instances where such things exist occur when idealists momentarily detach themselves from the realities and manifestations of life and enter into a mystical communion with something beyond. However, these moments of mystical communion are fleeting. What is the moment of mystical communion? It is inspiration? Those who experience this moment of mystical communion are called inspired poets. Ultimately, inspiration is a kind of resonance or response from the human spirit, which is the internal essence of life, to the cosmic spirit or divine entity, which is the spirit of the universe.”*²⁵

In other words, the “True Idealists” refer to the “Inspired Poets,” who, through their sensitivity or inspiration to the spirit of the universe, directly perceive the inner life of the human spirit. Thus, it is safe to say that Tōkoku's view of the poet was fundamentally formed upon Emersonian thought. And from the “Theory of Inner Life” onwards, it became the foundation of Tōkoku's own theory of poetry.

Tōkoku’s “*Naibuseimeiron*” seems in the act of signifying beyond their own formulations. There is a testimony in Simazaki Tōson's “*Kitamura Tōkoku no mijikaki issho*” (A Brief Life of Kitamura Tōkoku, 1912) where Tōson mentions that at the time of writing “Emerson” during his final years, Tōkoku was in an unstable mental state and was unable to complete the manuscript on his own. While there is no doubt that the understanding of Emerson in that work, is indeed his own. However, considering the nature of a series of biography, it is challenging to regard “Emerson” as a comprehensive portrayal of Tōkoku's reception of Emerson. Therefore, the fact that much of the existing research on Tōkoku's acceptance of Emerson primarily focuses on “Emerson” raises significant issues, and there is a need to retrace the influence back to the early stages of Tōkoku's literary activities. If we consider the perspective of his ideological reception, not limited to direct quotations or references of Emerson's works, it is possible to assume an earlier starting point for the reception of Emerson.

Just before “*Naibuseimeiron*” Tōkoku had come up with one more extremely significant work called “*Kakujin Shinkyū Naino Hikyū*” (The Secret Palace Within an Individual's Heart, 1892) in which the readers can find the formation of the concept of Inner Life. In that essay Tōkoku has referred to ‘inner life’ with a more intricate word called “*Hikyū*” (Secret Palace).

*“Within the heart, there is a palace, and within that palace, there lies another secret palace. While the first palace may allow others to glimpse inside, the secret palace cannot be easily approached or unlocked by anyone. In the first palace, people may discuss the ways of the world, express their hopes, and reveal their lives. However, the second secret palace remains constantly shrouded in darkness, silent and inaccessible even to extraordinary poets.”*²⁶

*“The innate knowledge and innate ability in Yōmeigaku, as well as the minds of Zen monks, regard the essence of the universe as the utmost purity and view the mind and truth as almost indistinguishable.”*²⁷

²⁴勝本清一郎、北村透谷全集、第二巻、『内部生命論』、138頁、岩波書店、1912

²⁵Ibid

²⁶Ibid, 『各人深宮内の秘宮』、15頁、岩波書店、1912

²⁷Ibid, 『各人深宮内の秘宮』、15頁、岩波書店、1912

In Laozi's (Lao Tsu) philosophy, emptying the mind and achieving "great emptiness" is believed to be the embodiment of truth. Similarly, in the Yōmeigaku, the concepts of "liangzhi" or 良知 (innate knowing) and "Jiangning" or 兩能 (innate ability) are regarded as closely related to the essence of the universe and the unity of mind and truth. Positioning the influence of Yangming philosophy in Tōkoku's work on par with the philosophies of Laozi and Zen, and categorizing it as mere "simple quietism," is an oversimplification. While it remains largely speculative, based on Tōkoku's evaluation of *Emersonianism* in comparison to Wang Yangming's philosophy, one can infer his general understanding of *Yōmeigaku*.

Tōkoku's understanding is based on the idealistic and subjective commonalities of the Taoist philosophy, Yōmeigaku, and Zen Buddhism. Though in the context mentioned above, these philosophies are discussed in contrast to Christianity, however, it can be said that the concept of "Hikyū" in the title is already noted for incorporating the ideas of Yōmeigaku while being grounded in Quakerism.²⁸

The acceptance of Yōmeigaku as one of the foundations of Christian assimilation in Meiji Period was acknowledged and pointed out.²⁹ This matter, which has been frequently discussed and highlighted even today, can be reconsidered here. Representative Christians of that time, such as Uchimura Kanzō and Uemura Masahisa, had the following understanding of Yōmeigaku.

*"Wang Yangming, among the Chinese philosophers, is the person who came closest to the revered faith (Christianity) that encompasses conscience (liangzhi) and the compassionate yet stern laws of Heaven (tianli) in his great doctrine, which also shares a common origin in Asia.. Unlike the conservative Zhu Xi school, which the shogunate supported for preservation purposes, the Yōmeigaku school was progressive, forward-looking, and filled with hope. Its resemblance to Christianity has long been acknowledged."*³⁰

*"Confucianism does not allow one to depart from the earthly realm. However, Yangming philosophy aims to lead people to reach the level of an arrow. Zen turns people into withered wood and dead ashes, but Yangming philosophy moistens them with the water of life. Confucianism lacks this aspiration. Zen lacks this aspiration. Aspiration is none other than Wang Yangming. Yangming philosophy is, in essence, a kind of religion.. The spirit of "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect," from the Sermon on the Mount, is somewhat glimpsed by the accomplished practitioners of the Yangming school."*³¹

Both scholars emphasized the religious elements of Yōmeigaku philosophy and understand it as being "progressive" and filled with "aspiration" compared to other traditional teachings. They also perceive these distinctive features of Yōmeigaku as being closest to the spirit (faith) of Christianity.

This evaluation of *Yōmeigaku* is also exemplified by Tōkoku's perspective, likely stems from its emphasis on the humanistic character of "conscience (liangzhi)" as the "heavenly law (Tianli)" inherent in human beings and its practical nature based on thorough (the unity of knowledge and action theory). He writes in "*Kakujin Shinkyū Naino Hikyū*"

"The innate knowledge and innate ability in Yōmeigaku, as well as the minds of Zen monks, regard the essence of the universe as the utmost purity and view the mind and truth as almost indistinguishable."

³² In Laozi's (Lao Tsu) philosophy, emptying the mind and achieving "great emptiness" is believed to be the embodiment of truth. Similarly, in the Yōmeigaku, the concepts of "liangzhi" or 良知 (innate knowing) and "Jiangning" or 兩能 (innate ability) are regarded as closely related to the essence of the universe and the unity of mind and truth.

²⁸Ibid

²⁹Translated from 山田謙次、『北村透谷における陽明学』、近代文学試論、Issue 16、広島大学近代文学研究会、1977、1-2 頁

³⁰Ibid

³¹Ibid

³²勝本清一郎、北村透谷全集、第二巻、『各人深宮内の秘宮』、15 頁、岩波書店、1912

5. CONCLUSION

It is strongly emphasized that positioning the influence of Yangming philosophy in Tōkoku's work on par with the philosophies of Laozi and Zen, and categorizing it as mere simple “*quietism*,” is an oversimplification. While it remains largely speculative, based on Tōkoku's evaluation of *Emersonianism* in comparison to Wang Yangming's philosophy, one can infer his general understanding of Yōmeigaku. It is interesting to note the merging of “*kokoro*” (heart) with “*ryōchi*” (conscience or pure knowing) in the same essay, “*To establish the heart as the foundation—this represents the approach of recent thinkers who adhere to modern thought, follow their own free will, and shape their faith accordingly.*”

It can be considered a concise expression of Yangming's intrinsic idealism, which attributes the “heart” as the source of all things. It appears highly likely, judging from the way Tōkoku adopts those poetic lines, that his idealistic standpoint closely aligns with such Yangming's speculative reasoning. Undoubtedly, this perspective assumes that Yōmeigaku served as a powerful foundation for the Western ideological demand within Tōkoku.

In fact, in case of Emerson, the idea of pure origins of human beings articulated by Emerson against the myth of the “Human Fall” inherited from both his classical and his Christian education was, in the words of Yangming's and Tōkoku's intrinsic idealism, refers to the discovering of “*ryōchi*.” Emerson, who had grasped Hegel's central idea- that the ongoing process of creation was Spirit progressively revealing Itself- he committed himself wholeheartedly to the principle of evolution. From this time forward, Emerson accepted Hegel's idea of “Progressive God,” that helped him understand that that the process of evolution was itself a manifestation of Spirit.

In “*Emerson*,” written by Tōkoku, there are substantial excerpts that showcase the relationship between Eastern thought and Emerson. “*Considering the rich history and future of Western civilization, he perhaps felt that in order to contribute something to the long-term prospects of our country, the United States, it was essential to incorporate certain elements of this proactive and dynamic thinking. With this in mind, he extensively explored the depths of Asia, willingly delving into Persian poetry, reading about Muhammad, and embracing the new tendencies emerging in Germany to experience the profound tranquillity of the distant East, reading Confucius, and singing about Brahma.*”³³

Tōkoku's evaluation of Emerson which perceive the essence of Emerson's philosophy as the integration of Eastern and Western thoughts, can be considered as words that also describe Tōkoku's own worldview. He writes in “*Kokumin to shisou*,” “*The ultimate form of thought is a circle. Being excessively attached only to Eastern philosophy is foolish, and being infatuated solely with Western thought is also foolish.*”³⁴

In that sense, Tōkoku stood at a distant juncture within the circle of profound thoughts. His intention of absorbing *Emersonian* thought was on two levels. On macro level encountering Emerson was to understand the ideological basis for the foundation of unity and independence as Tōkoku was also a product of a time the country was girded with a ubiquitous nationalistic sentiment. The essays that he wrote in *Jogaku Zasshi* and *Bungakukai* earned him special recognition in Japanese modern literary history as a new type of writer who sought to espouse spiritual freedom above all. Among the neoteric writers of the time, he was the first to comprehend and pursue the intersection of “politics” and “literature” as a holistic entity. Tōkoku, inspired by the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, possessed a strong desire for the modern liberation of human nature. He perceived the society of that time in “*Meiji Bungaku Kanken*,”³⁵ as follows: “The revolution of the Meiji Restoration shattered the old customs in the political sphere,” which was widely acknowledged. And the fact that “samurai and commoners became a unified nation” was indeed “this revolution.”³⁶ Well, Emerson was the American ideologue-the founder of American nationalism. Who else could have touched the strings within

³³Electronic version of “*Jūni Bungō*” (Twelve Men of Letters) series, 6th Volume, published by Minyūsha, April, 1894 (Derived from National Diet Library, Japan)

³⁴勝本清一郎、北村透谷全集、第二卷、『國民と思想』、267頁、岩波書店、1912

³⁵勝本清一郎、北村透谷全集、第二卷、『明治文學管見』、146頁、岩波書店、1912

³⁶Ibid

Tōkoku other than Emerson who was the pathfinder for the way that Tōkoku visioned to walk on. And on micro-level, Emerson's idea of transcendental "oneness" gave Tōkoku the expression that he needed for a language that was new for its time and place.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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