Kokoro and ‘the Spirit of Meiji’

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Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, 1867–1916, was born in the year before the Meiji Restoration, when Japan took its first steps toward establishing a modern state to counter Western threats to its independence. The plans formulated by the pioneers of the Restoration to modernize the country may be summarized by the slogans Fukoku Kyōhei (‘Enrich the Nation and Strengthen the Military’) and Bunmei Kaika (‘Civilization and Enlightenment’), and these goals were to be achieved through westernizing Japan. Young people were encouraged to study Western languages, and concepts of morality based on Western individualism rapidly spread among intellectuals.

Following the victory in the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–1895, many Japanese believed that their country had succeeded in achieving at least part of its aim of becoming a fully fledged modern nation. Sōseki, however, expressed misgivings when he wrote in his diary on 16 March 1902:

People say that Japan was awakened thirty years ago, but it was awakened by a firebell and jumped out of bed. It was not a genuine awakening but a totally confused one. Japan has tried to absorb Western culture in a hurry and as a result has not had time to digest it. Japan must be truly awakened as regards literature, politics, business, and all other areas.1

Sōseki was among the few intellectuals who were keenly aware of the superficial nature of the society that had resulted from hurried modernization. This realization led him to write a series of novels in which Meiji intellectuals suffer from the ills of modern Japanese society, such as egotism and human isolation. Kokoro, 1914, the best-known work in the series, typifies these themes.

In this novel the protagonist, Sensei, a Meiji intellectual, suffers from both egotism and isolation. He decides to commit suicide when he hears that General Nogi Maresuke 乃木希典, 1849–1912, has committed junshi, or ritual suicide, on the death of the Meiji emperor. Sensei kills himself, declaring

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1 Sōseki Zenshū 漱石全集, Iwanami, 1966, 13, p. 49.
in his testament to his young disciple that he is performing junshi for ‘the spirit of Meiji’ (*Meiji no seishin 明治の精神*).

A number of critics have expressed perplexity over Sensei’s suicide, and indeed there may well be no straightforward explanation for it. But few commentators have addressed the question of what makes up ‘the spirit of Meiji’, and in fact the matter is usually presumed to be understood and is taken for granted. When the topic has been raised, it has often been done in a vague, inadequate manner. But the answer to this question is surely of considerable importance since it provides a key to understanding Sensei’s character. Thus the meaning of ‘the spirit of Meiji’ can perhaps determine the interpretation of the entire novel.

In the present article I hope to provide some fresh understanding of this issue. I first interpret the characters in *Kokoro*, with particular emphasis on the cause of Sensei’s tragedy. This I will do by explaining it in terms of the two contrasting cultures that Sensei embodies. In the second part, I will address the two questions: how to explain Sensei’s suicide and what constituted ‘the spirit of Meiji’.

**Sensei and Friend K**

In *Kokoro*, the young Sensei lived in Tokyo as a college student after leaving his hometown on finding that his uncle had cheated him out of his inheritance upon his parents’ death. At the university he had a friend K who, in Sensei’s eyes, was a stoic, confident, strong-willed person with ‘noble sentiments’. He was extremely independent, willing to sacrifice anything to attain the ‘true way’. He aimed to become a strong person through the exercise of will-power, and to be successful in this endeavor, he said, he must always live in straitened circumstances. As a result he lived and acted in a way not natural to a human being.

Oketani Hideaki has described K as ‘a symbol of the traditional Japan’, but Sensei considered him an independent and confident man. In fact, although he undoubtedly manifested some characteristics of the traditional Japanese character, K, like Sensei, was very much a modern character—indepen dent and individualistic. His adopted parents had originally sent him to Tokyo to study medicine, but K was determined not to become a doctor. Sensei told him that he would be deceiving his foster parents if he did not study medicine. K agreed, but added that he did not mind doing such a thing as long as it led him to the ‘true way’ (166). K had broad intellectual interests. He had been born in a temple and was well versed in Buddhism, and he also studied other religions and philosophy.

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2 *Kokoro*, translated by Edwin McClellan, Gateway, Washington, D.C., 1957, p. 166. All the quotations from *Kokoro* are taken from this excellent translation. The relevant page number will hereafter be placed in parentheses after each quotation.

K’s determination and stubbornness brought him great hardship. His friend Sensei tried to persuade him to share his lodgings, hoping that K would become more human through experiencing the warm influence of his landlady and her daughter. To bring K to his house, however, Sensei was obliged to bow and beg him, and as a result K moved in ‘with a dignified and absent-minded air’ (175).

Unexpectedly, K fell in love with Ojōsan, the landlady’s daughter, although for him nothing was further from the ‘true way’ than being emotionally involved with a woman. He never imagined that he would fall in love and was confused even before confessing to Sensei his love for Ojōsan. But Sensei had been in love with her long before K moved in and felt jealous as K became more friendly with the young woman. K, on the other hand, never seemed jealous and never bothered to think about Sensei’s feelings toward Ojōsan. He was always self-absorbed, true to himself and to his own goals. Whether an egotist or merely a naive idealist, for him other people were practically non-existent.

K was acutely aware of his own dilemma, however, and was unable to reconcile the incompatibility of his ‘true way’ with his love for a woman. He might have thought that, from the very beginning, he should have no business with a woman, that it was an absurd, laughable thing that he had fallen in love. In spite of his earlier training and confidence, he believed that he was then the weakest man in the world. He even told Sensei that he was ashamed of himself, that he was totally lost and could not decide ‘whether to take a step forward or to turn back’ (213).

Alarmed by K’s love for Ojōsan, Sensei took full advantage of his rival’s confusion and acted unfairly. Instead of helping K as a friend, Sensei ‘watched him’ and tried to spy his intentions. He was afraid that K would confess his love to Ojōsan and felt certain that, if he did so, she would choose K. When on one occasion the tormented K asked him to stop talking about his love, Sensei asked instead, ‘Can you will yourself to stop thinking about it? Are you prepared to do that?’ K replied, ‘Why not? I can will myself. .’ (216–17) Sensei took this to mean that K was prepared to give up his love, but recalling the conversation later, he was horrified lest perhaps K was ready to confess his love for Ojōsan. Sensei quickly asked the landlady for her permission to marry the daughter. He hesitated to tell K about his engagement, but K learned of it from the landlady. A few days later K killed himself.

Thus Sensei experienced in his youth two incidents that were crucial to his later life: his uncle’s cheating and K’s suicide. When he was cheated by his uncle, Sensei was confident that he himself was a trustworthy man, but K’s suicide devastated him and shattered his self-confidence. Although feeling deeply guilty about K’s death, Sensei eventually married Ojōsan, and in the course of his quiet married life the sense of guilt grew even stronger. In an effort to overcome it, he immersed himself in his studies, he drank heavily, he looked after his ailing mother-in-law with exemplary attention—but still his
feeling of guilt persisted. Unable to tell his wife about it, he was overcome by isolation and loneliness. He contemplated suicide, but finally decided to continue living as if he were dead. Finally, when General Nogi performed junshi for the Meiji emperor, Sensei also committed suicide, leaving his testament to the young narrator.

**Sensei’s Isolation**

Could Sensei have done anything more to save himself? It would surely have helped had he confided in his wife, but he was unable to do so.

Often, I was on the verge of telling her everything: but each time, at the crucial moment, I would be stopped by something that was beyond my conscious control. . . . Please understand that I did not wish my wife to believe me better than I actually was. I am sure that if I had spoken to her with a truly repentant heart—as I did always to the spirit of my dead friend—she would have forgiven me. She would have cried, I know, from happiness. That I refused to tell her the truth was not due to selfish calculation on my part. I simply did not wish to taint her whole life with the memory of something that was ugly. (237)

Sensei obviously wished to protect his wife from the ugly side of human existence. As a woman, he felt, she would not be strong enough to handle such a harsh reality—in his time, perhaps a man’s usual attitude toward women; in addition, his strong sense of morality held him back. Interestingly enough, his view of women and of his wife contrasted sharply with K’s and the young narrator’s. Speaking of Ojōsan,

K remarked to me that women seemed to graduate without having learned a thing. He attached no importance whatsoever to those things which Ojosan was studying outside of school, such as the koto, flower arrangement, and sewing. I laughed at his stupidity. Once more, I told him that his was not the proper way to judge the worth of a woman. (184)

Unlike Sensei, who had different standards for men and women, K applied the same standard to both. The young narrator also expressed a different perception of Sensei’s wife:

I was deeply impressed by her capacity for sympathy and understanding. What also impressed me was the fact that though her ways were not those of an old-fashioned Japanese woman she had not succumbed to the then prevailing fashion of using ‘modern’ words. . . . Often, when I found myself face to face with a woman, my longing would suddenly disappear. Instead of being drawn to the woman, I would feel a kind of repulsion. Such, however, was not my reaction to Sensei’s wife. . . . (37–38)

The young narrator might have shared Sensei’s view of women in general, but he regarded Sensei’s wife as a modern (at the core) and exceptionally intelligent woman with whom he could talk seriously.

Sensei was not only unable to confess his secret to his wife, but had also been unable to tell K about his own love for Ojōsan. Had he done so, the
tragedies that followed might have been avoided. Indeed, he often tried to tell K about his love, but his sense of inferiority to K never allowed him to take the initiative. All along, as Sensei wrote to the young narrator, he attributed his inability to communicate to the social conventions of his time. He could not break the custom, for example, that college students of his time did not talk about love. These customs and conventions posed insurmountable obstacles for him (but not necessarily for K) to overcome. Sensei adhered to many other conventional ideas and customs that he had learned from his early traditional education. For example, he considered it proper to first ask her mother’s permission to marry Ojōsan rather than approaching the girl directly. Meanwhile, his non-traditional individualism, or rather egotism, prevented him from relinquishing Ojōsan. If he had been more traditional, less influenced by modern ideals, he might have sacrificed his own love for the sake of his friend.4

Modern ideals of independence and freedom led Sensei and K to egotism,5 for both were concerned only with their own goals and happiness. But Sensei might have found a modern way to deal with his problem; instead of distancing himself from his wife, he could have applied the ideas or attitudes that complement, or are integral to, the modern ideals of freedom and individualism: openness, honesty, and the view of woman as an independent being with her own strengths. Such an attitude would surely have brought him into a better relationship with his wife, with the world, and above all with himself, just as his candid testament produced a special relationship with the young narrator.

**Tradition vs Modernity**

Sensei several times emphasized loneliness as inevitable in his ‘modern’ society. ‘You see, loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves’ (30). He considered freedom and independence, as well as their resulting loneliness, as important ingredients of modern Meiji culture; these features separated Meiji from the previous feudal period. From the experience of his younger days, Sensei came to believe that egotism and human alienation inevitably accompanied freedom and independence. He was an intellectual victimized by the unfortunate mixture of modern and traditional ideas. He did not understand exactly how his egotism and loneliness came about; he knew only that they came concurrently with the modern concepts of freedom and independence. Commenting on this passage in *Kokoro*, Edwin McClellan observes,

4 Sōseki actually depicted such a situation in *Sorekara*. The protagonist, Daisuke, gives up his love for a woman for the sake of his best friend. But years later he sees a deterioration in their marriage, and realizes that he had not been true to himself. In the end, he takes the woman away from the friend and faces criticism from society.

5 There is the question whether ‘modern’ coincides with ‘Western’, but here I generally make no attempt to distinguish between them.
But it would be wrong to conclude from this that Sensei’s loneliness, or Ichirô’s [in Kôjin], stems from their having been born in the modern age. Accidents of time and place may increase one’s sense of isolation, but they do not create it. The accidental and essential are sometimes confused in the minds of Sôseki’s protagonists. Sensei, for example, seems to take some comfort in the thought that he is separated from the young man by their difference in years: ‘You and I belong to different eras, and so we think differently. There is nothing we can do to bridge the gap between us.’ But what he says right after this is significant: ‘Of course, it may be more correct to say that we are different simply because we are two separate human beings.’

McClellan here argues that for Sôseki (and perhaps for Sensei) loneliness is an eternal human condition and has little to do with the age into which he was born. It is questionable, however, to draw this conclusion merely from what Sensei says in the passage quoted above.

Having spent a childhood as described in Michikusa (‘Grass on the Wayside’), Sôseki as a child already had the foundation of anxiety and loneliness. We find ‘existential’ anxiety scattered throughout his later novels and this cannot be explained solely through considerations of his time. Sensei’s loneliness may not be limited to the human condition of the modern age. Nevertheless, we cannot discuss Sôseki’s protagonists in his later novels without taking into consideration the conditions of Meiji Japan. Indeed, in the case of Sôseki, the relation between author and time is essential since it was at the center of his own concern. Thus, as David Pollack remarks, ‘The genius of Natsume Sôseki is . . . felt to lie in large part in his success in identifying his own severe personal problems with those that preoccupied Meiji Japan: who am I? What is my place in the world?’ Similarly Howard Hibbett points out, ‘Like do many other men of his generation, Sôseki saw his own difficulties as symbolic of the historical predicament of his nation.’ Indeed, the importance of Meiji Japan’s problems for Sôseki is evident in all his writings, including his later novels. In the case of Kokoro, it is impossible to answer the questions it poses unless we discuss Sensei’s relation to his time.

Sensei had the chance to recover his humanity by sharing his secret with his

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7 The Japanese text of the final sentence quoted runs: は人間の有って生れた性格の相違と云った方が確かも知れません．
8 Eto Jun introduces Ito Sei’s characterization of Yume Jûya 夢十夜 as follows: ‘Its theme is “anxiety similar to original sin of human existence”,’ and he then points out that this ‘original sin’, or in Eto’s own words, ‘a consciousness of dark human existence’ or ‘the lower key’ manifested in Yume Jûya can be found in many of Sôseki’s novels. Eto Jun Chosakushû 江藤淳著作集, 1, Sôsekiron 淮石論, Kôdansha, 1967, p. 52.
wife, but could not bring himself to do so. Possibly unaware of it himself, he may have been driven by egotism—by not telling her his secrets, he was trying to protect himself from losing her trust. Alternatively, he may have been too proud to show his weakness to a woman. Whatever the reason, he failed to share his secret with her because of his traditional view of women and men.

At the same time, in view of Sensei’s self-reproach and self-denial, we must take into account the traditional education he had before college. He never lost his traditional, stoic, selfless morality. It was this morality that later caused him intense suffering, for it conflicted with individualistic and independently inclined morality that he probably learned in and after college. But it is not at all unusual that such conflicting ideas coexist in one person. After Sensei realized that his egotism had led K to suicide, he adopted an attitude that was quite traditional: he chose to keep his secret and suffer alone. This attitude revealed not only his traditional view of gender but also what is considered to be characteristic of the Japanese, the stoicism of the traditional samurai.

Hirano Ken has warned against the ‘modern interpretation’ of Kokoro that blames Sensei for not confessing his suffering to his wife; he also argues against the interpretation that considers the motivation of Sensei’s death in accordance with ‘the spirit of Meiji’ as unnatural. Hirano holds that ‘the closed love depicted in Kokoro was quite realistic as “love in Meiji”.’ ‘Sensei’s and K’s idea of love is dominated by Confucian morality. Only under Confucian stoicism, which considers romantic love as shameful human decadence, does the psychological struggle between Sensei and K over Ojōsan become desperate strife.’ Hirano also sees in this love in Meiji ‘a conflict between feudal Japan and modern Japan’. Further, he argues that once we understand that the love in Kokoro is realistic in the context of Meiji, the inclination to look upon Sensei’s death as unnatural disappears. I do not believe, however, that even with this insight everything falls neatly into place.

Sensei was an ethical man. The young Sensei was especially idealistic. He tripped over the reality of himself to which he was blind. Sensei and K were in the same predicament. While looking at morality and the ‘true way’, respectively, they were blind to their own feet. And when looking at their own feet, they failed to see the ‘true way’ or morality. As Sensei remarked, he was a lofty idealist of love but a careless practitioner. The same is true of K: he was a lofty idealist of the ‘true way’ but a poor practitioner of life. Both men failed to see the large disparity between their ideas and reality. In this respect, they appear as predecessors of modern Japanese intellectuals, often lost in the disparity between ideals and reality.

Sensei knew, if only vaguely, that modern ideas produced some negative

12 Hirano, p. 240.
effects. He felt enormous doubts about these ideas. It seems equally clear, nonetheless, that he did not intend to abandon these ideas and revert to the old morality. He knew that this was an impossible task, that he could never return to innocence. But neither could he go forward. Like K, Sensei could step neither forward nor back. He was stalled in the middle of cultural chaos.

**Why Did Sensei Commit Suicide?**

As noted above, Sensei’s suicide in *Kokoro* has puzzled various critics. After Sensei’s years of struggle with his sense of guilt over K’s death and his decision to ‘live as if he was dead’, he decided to commit *junshi* for ‘the spirit of Meiji’ only after he heard that General Nogi had performed *junshi* for the Meiji emperor. Sensei told the young narrator that he had thought about killing himself long ago, but that having an innocent wife to take care of obliged him to continue living. But when he finally did away with himself, he no longer felt concern for his wife, although he still loved her and felt responsible for her. Sensei was satisfied that she would have at least enough money to live on. But his wife’s external, in particular material, conditions had not changed since their marriage. Changes had occurred only in his inner world and in the death of the emperor. What sort of significance, then, did these changes have to override his concern for his wife?

In the following passage, Eto Jun offers two reasons for Sensei’s decision to commit suicide: ‘It is, of course, because Sensei thought it to be the only way to escape from his sufferings arising from egotism. But at the same time it is undeniable that he ‘committed *junshi* for the spirit of Meiji’. It is doubtful, however, that Sensei killed himself even in part ‘to escape from his sufferings arising from egotism.’ After all, he had endured many years of suffering during which it had often occurred to him to commit suicide. But he endured, primarily for his wife. His torment had become part of his life long before he actually killed himself. It seems unlikely that in such circumstances he would have killed himself to escape from sufferings to which he had become accustomed. He was an intellectual and capable of enduring extreme psychological pain, and it may not be far-fetched to suggest that the torment was not just something with which he lived, but may have become the object of his intellectual, literary, and philosophical curiosity.

Since his wife would probably continue living for many years after his death, Sensei’s motivation to kill himself at this particular point must lie elsewhere. According to Eto, he intended to punish himself by committing

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14 ‘*Meiji no Ichi-chishikijin*’ 明治の一知識人, in Eto, p. 149.
suicide. But it is doubtful whether killing himself at this point would have seemed to him an adequate punishment. On General Nogi’s death, Sensei asked himself, ‘When did he suffer greater agony—during those thirty-five years [since the Seinan War], or the moment when the sword entered his bowels?’ (246). Thus, for Sensei, after many years of intense suffering, the agony of suicide seemed no greater than living with agony. Further, punishing himself seems incompatible with escaping from suffering as a reason to kill himself. If he punished himself by committing suicide, that act would not enable him to escape from his sufferings.

Karatani has also suggested an explanation:

I have noted before that the hidden theme of Kokoro is suicide. This means that Sensei’s suicide is not a necessary consequence of the plot, but a manifestation of the author’s wish. It is clear that neither the feeling of guilt arising from his betrayal of his friend nor the sense of denouement that Meiji ended matches the darkness that pervades this novel and Sensei’s suicide. Karatani does not elaborate on Sōseki’s ‘wish’ to commit suicide. He adds, however, ‘We cannot understand from the story itself why Sensei in Kokoro must die.’ Instead, Karatani considers Kokoro along with a group of Sōseki’s novels, including Sorekara, Mon and Kōjin, and points out that the plot collapses in all these stories. Inspired by T. S. Eliot’s view of Hamlet, Karatani argues that Sōseki, like Shakespeare, dealt with an unmanageable problem: sonzai no kiki, ‘an existential crisis’. ‘There is no doubt that the characters in Sōseki’s novels do not match the existential crisis into which Sōseki has fallen.’ The protagonists in these novels were originally in ‘the ethical, relative dimension’. But at some point they embodied ‘Sōseki’s peculiar problem (the ‘existential anxiety’) and moved to a completely different dimension.’ As a result, ‘Sōseki’s novels have double structures: the ethical dimension and the existential dimension.’

‘The reason why this novel neglected the wife from halfway through the story lies in the fact that the “anxiety” was not the clear anxiety stemming from the feeling of guilt, but was something undiscoverable [shōtai no shirenai mono].’ This remark describes Sōsuke in Mon, but it is also applicable to Sensei in Kokoro. Sōseki’s protagonists ‘tried to solve the originally ethical problem existentially, or the originally existential problem ethically, and this causes a collapse in the stories’ plot.’

This view may seem to undermine my own interpretation of Kokoro, for Karatani goes on: ‘Kokoro has therefore nothing to do with the themes of human egotism.’ According to Karatani, Sōseki ‘fixed his eyes on shōtai no

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15 Etō, p. 149.
16 Karatani, p. 31.
17 Karatani, p. 27. Emphasis added.
18 Karatani, p. 16.
19 Karatani, p. 25.
20 Karatani, p. 30.
21 Karatani, p. 27.
22 Karatani, p. 31.
Karatani does not make clear here whether *shotai no shirenai mono* is *Kokoro*’s theme or its hidden theme. Many critics have pointed out Sōseki’s ‘existential anxiety’ or ‘dark part’. Indeed, it is hardly surprising that Sōseki, who had a childhood deprived of love, developed such anxiety or neurosis. Such anxiety often becomes a novelist’s driving force. For Sōseki, a way to overcome this anxiety or sense of instability was his famous *jiko hon’i* 自己本位, self-centeredness and independence, which he talked about in ‘My Individualism’. As I will show later, Sōseki’s own problem often found a place in the ‘modern age’ of Meiji Japan. He sometimes expressed his anxiety in the context of Meiji Japan as a modernizing nation. Perhaps it may be more appropriate to say that his strong sense of responsibility made him express his own problem only as a problem of the nation or of the age. Sōseki was a type of man who had difficulty talking about himself in the manner of the naturalist writers and the so-called I-novel authors such as Tayama Katai 田山花袋 and Dazai Osamu 太宰治.

Despite the insights that Karatani offers here, an interpretation of *Kokoro* along the lines of a Meiji intellectual’s suffering from the discrepancy between the modern and the traditional is still viable. If *Kokoro* has nothing to do with the problems of Meiji Japan, the question of what constitutes ‘the spirit of Meiji’ is not worth consideration. Nor does Karatani’s interpretation alone answer the question of why Sensei committed suicide in the way he did. To seek an answer within the novel itself seems a sensible task to pursue.

When Karatani applies his analysis inspired by Eliot to a series of Sōseki’s novels, we begin to doubt Sōseki’s intellectual and literary ability. For Karatani’s analysis entails that Sōseki never noticed his most important problem (the existential problem) while writing those novels in the span of five years; each time he wrote one, he stumbled and created a plot that collapsed without his ever seeing the problem. As a result this collapse in plot was repeated. It seems unlikely that Sōseki was neither able to integrate the problem into his novels nor even became aware of it. There were exceptions, however, such as *Yume Jūya* 夢十夜, in which, as Karatani notes, Sōseki dealt exclusively with the existential problem. The fact that he did write this ‘existential’ fiction makes me wonder why he confused the different problems in several novels: surely he really intended to write about egotism of the modern man in those works.

Undeniably some of Sōseki’s novels lack coherence in the plot. But we should bear in mind that much of modern Japanese fiction first appeared in daily installments in newspapers, and this is the case of many of Sōseki’s novels, including *Kokoro*. This form of publication makes it difficult to organize the structure of a novel, but this alone scarcely provides an adequate explanation.

23 Karatani, p. 33.
Unlike Karatani, I believe that Sensei’s guilt offers an adequate motive for his suicide; it certainly matches the seriousness of his suicide. Had he committed suicide when his guilt feelings reached their highest point, then there would have been no collapse in the plot, although in that case *Kokoro* might lack such richness as the novel possesses. Thus Karatani is certainly right to the extent that the ‘darkness’ corresponds to the ‘richness’, or to the extent that there is more to *Kokoro* than Sensei’s feelings of guilt.

It is puzzling that Sensei committed suicide only after he had been living for many years as if he had been dead and that his suicide was inspired by the deaths of the Meiji emperor and General Nogi. If Sensei, regretting his egotism and its consequences, reverted to traditional morality, then it would be easy to understand his death, for he would simply have abandoned modern ideals of freedom and independence and punished himself by ending his life in the traditional manner. Clearly, however, he did not revert to traditional morality.

*Nogi’s Junshi and Sensei’s Junshi*

General Nogi’s *junshi* was a death deferred from the time when he lost the flag in the Seinan War of 1878. His *junshi*, by which he followed the Meiji emperor to the grave, still had traditional significance after thirty-five years since he decided to die. He intended by his death to atone for his mistake as well as to express his loyalty toward the emperor. But Sensei’s *junshi* for ‘the spirit of Meiji’, even though he uses the same term, *junshi*, does not have the same significance as the general’s; Sensei was a modern man in many ways and could not practice *junshi* in the same way as had the general.

Scholars have observed that after Nogi’s suicide, Sōseki’s contemporary, Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, turned almost exclusively to historical stories. Ōgai knew the general personally and, as Etō points out, after Nogi’s death, Ōgai decided to ‘follow the past into death’ and to ‘study . . . how people lived in the feudal morality.’ Etō believes that this attitude sustained Ōgai in writing his historical stories. ‘Ōgai did the same thing in his work [historical studies] as Sensei in *Kokoro* did.’ But he also points out a difference between Sōseki and Ōgai. ‘Ōgai turned his back on the new age and returned to the past, whereas Sōseki faced the new age, of which he did not approve, and actually entered the new age as its critic.’ This difference may explain why he wrote *Meian* 明暗, while Ōgai seldom wrote stories about a contemporary subject. But if this is correct, it is difficult to accept Etō’s characterization of Sōseki as an ‘old timer’ (kyūjidaijin 旧時代人) who, like Ōgai, ‘followed the past into death’ and did the same thing in *Kokoro* as Ōgai did in his historical stories.

In *Kokoro*, as we have seen above, Sōseki has Sensei say, ‘loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, in-

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24 Etō, p. 184. I agree with Etō here if he means merely that Ōgai wrote thereafter historical stories, but not if he believes that thereafter Ōgai espoused the morality of traditional *junshi*.
dependence, and our own egotistical selves.’ Sōseki may well have believed that egotism was also the price to be paid for being born in that modern age. But it does not follow that Sōseki went right back to traditional morality. Clearly, there is the sort of difference between the two writers pointed out by Etō. Ōgai retired, so to speak, and wrote stories about the past; Sōseki did not retire, and wrote about contemporary Japan.

But Etō surely misjudges when he observes: ‘Sōseki started writing Kokoro to show that he stood on the side of traditional morality.’ Sōseki never abandoned the modern ideals of independence and individualism even though he still dragged traditional morality along almost unconsciously. Sensei is a character who simply lost his direction as a consequence of embracing, however inadequately, modern ideals. There is no indication that he returned to the old morality. Rather, confused and suffering, he did not know to which he should turn.

In his later years, Sōseki loved Chinese poetry and painting, which no doubt brought him consolation. But if in Kokoro he turned his back on the new age, then he had no reason to write Meian. Sōseki’s lectures, ‘The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan’ and ‘My Individualism’, delivered around the time when he wrote Kokoro, also suggest that he did not try to escape modernity. In these lectures he urged the importance of individuality and independence both on the personal and national levels. He advocated not to return to the old morality but to maintain individualism and independence, with the proviso that achieving this goal must not result in egotism.

‘The Spirit of Meiji’

What, then, is ‘the spirit of Meiji’? According to Etō:

It can be considered from various aspects. But in connection with egotism, it is the spirit that asserts that natural human desire, namely, egotism, is ugly. Human beings are necessarily a captive of egotism and self-adherence [gashū 牧執] (Sōseki liked this word). This is a fact, and as long as it is an ugly thing, it has to be controlled by the value that transcends gashū. This value may be considered as the nation, public, or heaven [ten 天]. In other words, it is the idea that the natural human condition, gashū, must be placed under control by public order. This is ‘the spirit of Meiji’ seen from the perspective of egotism.

This interpretation agrees with Etō’s thesis that Sensei, an isolated individual, tried to recover his identity with the nation by committing junshi for ‘the spirit of Meiji’. Etō calls Sensei’s suicide, by itself, an egotist death, but justified by the ‘public [or unselfish] motivation to follow “the spirit of Meiji”’

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25 Etō, p. 153. I understand Etō’s ‘traditional morality’ to mean the traditional Confucian morality that opposes the modern morality of individualism, independence, and freedom.
27 Etō, pp. 182–83.
to the grave.’ ‘If egotism is ugly, then suicide with personal motivation is also ugly. If it is to be allowed, it would only be in the case where a person follows the value that goes beyond the personal one.’

Eto argues that the ‘public motivation’ made Sensei’s junshi unselfish.

Nogi’s junshi, says Eto, reminded Sensei of the time when in his youth he identified himself with Japan’s success as a modern state and decided to contribute to the nation by becoming a Japanese ‘commander of English literature’. Just as for Ogai becoming a good scientist (physician) contributed to Japan’s success as a modern nation, so for Sōseki becoming as good a scholar of English literature as the British made the same contribution. But when he found out in London that English literature was the furthest thing from the literature he had conceived of from studying Chinese literature, the tie that had connected Sōseki with the value system of the age was cut off.

Writing Kokoro, Sōseki wanted to recover this tie.

But it is not easy to show that Sōseki in fact had such a strong desire toward the end of his life. In ‘My Individualism’, Sōseki urges the importance of individualism and independence, but also attempts to reconcile individualism with nationalism. But this argument can hardly be taken to express his revived desire to identify himself with the nation. When we consider that this lecture was delivered to students at Gakushūin, the Peers’ School, the importance of nationalism expressed by Sōseki must be discounted. Under the circumstances in which the government ‘embarked on a campaign to resuscitate the goal of Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety through stepped-up programs of indoctrination and censorship’, as Jay Rubin remarks, Sōseki hoped these members of the coming generation of Japan’s elite ‘to have some appreciation for the individual human beings who would feel the impact of the power and money that would be theirs someday to wield.’ While it is difficult to show that Sōseki had such a desire when he wrote Kokoro, there is also nothing in the work to suggest that Sensei also had this desire.

In the second part of Kokoro, ‘My Parents and I’, the young narrator’s father expressed his deep respect for General Nogi and regretted his suicide. According to Oketani, such passages suggest that the impact of Nogi’s junshi reached the people at the national level, and Sōseki may have ‘wanted to show that in the cultural atmosphere of that time, Sensei’s suicide did not occur out of the blue.’ This observation suggests that the young narrator’s father’s reaction to Nogi’s junshi prepares for Sensei’s decision to commit junshi himself.

29 Eto, p. 174.
30 Eto, p. 174.
31 McClellan & Rubin, p. 311.
32 McClellan & Rubin, pp. 238 & 248.
33 Oketani, pp. 197–98.
34 This is also suggested by Izawa Motomi 伊沢元美 in his ‘Meiji no Seishin to Kindai Bungaku’ 明治の精神と近代文学, in Shimane Daigaku Ronshū 島根大学論集, 12 (February 1964), reprinted in Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Shiryo Sōsho: Natsume Sōseki 日本文学研究資料叢書: 夏目漱石, Yūseidō, 1985.
Perhaps. But this is scarcely adequate to support Etō’s view. We cannot suppose that in *Kokoro* Sōseki wanted to invoke in the reader Sensei’s passion to find his identity by identifying himself with the nation, but completely failed to do so.

Etō also expresses the closely related view that Sensei committed *junshi* for the Meiji emperor rather than for ‘the spirit of Meiji’. In a passage from *Meiji no Ichi-chishikijin*, quoted above, he notes that Sensei ‘also, like General Nogi, tried to follow the Meiji emperor into death.’ Inasmuch as the Meiji emperor symbolized the whole of the Meiji period, he may be said to have symbolized ‘the spirit of Meiji’. But to symbolize is not the same as being identical with. Our understanding of Sensei as a modern character (albeit with some traditional characteristics) does not allow us to identify ‘the spirit of Meiji’ with the emperor seen as the object of the people’s veneration and the subject whom Nogi followed to death.

As we have seen, Oketani has suggested that the reaction of the narrator’s father to Nogi’s *junshi* prepares for Sensei’s suicide. The young narrator’s account, however, clearly contrasts his father and Sensei. The father, apparently a peasant, totally belonged in the old morality and lacked the capacity to understand the wave of new ideas. Sensei, on the other hand, while born in the countryside, had received a modern education and spent much of his life in Tokyo. He embodied both the old and the modern ideas that caused his tragedy. The young narrator, a college student, symbolized modern and future Japan. While Nogi’s *junshi* may have received sympathy from most Japanese people, except perhaps the young, Sōseki’s feelings toward it were ambivalent.

Etō tries to show that Sōseki considered Nogi’s *junshi* an ‘old, unnecessary act’. He observes that this is consistent with Sōseki’s view of the emperor as a human being rather than a living god. Whether or not Oketani is successful in his argument, nothing in *Kokoro* supports Etō’s view that Sensei, like Nogi, committed *junshi* for the emperor.

According to Etō, ‘There are not many novels that depict the hopeless shades of human love with such a small degree of sentimentalism.’ But there is much more sentimentalism or self-indulgence in the novel than Etō suggests. This becomes clear when we compare *Kokoro* with *Michikusa*. *Kokoro* is the last of Sōseki’s novels in which we see such self-indulgence. It disappears in the last two novels, *Michikusa* and *Meian*. In *Kokoro* Sensei was much self-absorbed at the end of the story, but in *Michikusa* Kenzō remains sensitive to other people’s viewpoints. I suspect that Sōseki worked out his self-indulgence when in *Kokoro* he let Sensei commit *junshi* for ‘the spirit of Meiji’. Karatani is prob-

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35 Etō, p. 149.
36 Pollack, p. 420, discusses Sōseki’s reaction to Nogi’s *junshi*.
37 Oketani, p. 182.
38 Etō, p. 87.
ably right that Sōseki intended from the beginning to let Sensei commit suicide.39 After Sōsuke’s attempt in Mon to seek salvation through religion and Ichirō’s insanity in Kōjin, it was quite natural to use suicide as a way to deal with modern man’s suffering. Still, sentimentalism colors Sensei’s junshi for ‘the spirit of Meiji’.

According to Oketani, there are two sides to ‘the spirit of Meiji’: the traditional morality and the modern morality based on freedom and independence: K embodies the former, while Sensei embodies both. Oketani holds that Sōseki let a part of himself follow the death of one side of ‘the spirit of Meiji’, namely, the traditional morality. The other part, the modern spirit, survived in Sōseki. The modern spirit ‘threw away’ the old spirit. ‘Through this process,’ writes Oketani, ‘Sōseki survived now as a Taishō writer, as may be seen in Michikusa and Meian’.40 Whether or not this statement describes the path that Sōseki took as a writer, it does not interpret Kokoro. In a sense, ‘the spirit of Meiji’ does consist of the two conflicting ideas. But Sensei, in committing suicide, did not abandon some aspect of the old spirit. If he had abandoned his traditional morality, he would not have committed suicide.

While Oketani shows his respect for Etō by trying to minimize the differences between their views on Sensei, he does in fact disagree with Etō. According to Etō, Sensei returned to the old Japan when he decided to commit junshi for ‘the spirit of Meiji’. Oketani depicts Sensei as a character who, at the end of his life, represents the modern Japan and abandoned the old Japan. Sensei knew that it was ‘impossible for him to return to the old Japan . . . because when K died Sensei killed “the past” that he had shared with K.’41 This, however, puts Oketani in an awkward position. For the view that Sensei represents the modern Japan seems to imply that ‘the spirit of Meiji’ for which he committed junshi symbolizes only the modern ideals, and it leaves no room for the traditional morality that, according to Oketani, constitutes a part of ‘the spirit of Meiji’. This awkward situation arises from the fact that in Oketani’s account the traditional morality, the modern morality, and their interactions in Sensei remain totally unclear.

Some scholars who have discussed Kokoro have failed to pay adequate attention to Sensei’s transition, which we read in his testament, from his sense of guilt for K’s death to a more general sense of loneliness.42 From the guilt that he initially felt after his friend’s suicide, Sensei moved to what seems a more general, deeper sense of sin, isolation, and loneliness. This shift is quite plausible, but is easy to overlook because Sōseki did not treat it carefully; the process by which it takes place in the novel is subtle and easy to overlook. There is an

39 Karatani, p. 27.
40 Oketani, p. 199.
41 Oketani, p. 190.
42 For example, Donald Keene’s account of Kokoro is dominated by Sensei’s feeling of guilt. Donald Keene, Dawn to the West, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1984, pp. 339-42.
abruptness in the shift, but not adequate emphasis; the loneliness sneaks into Sensei’s narrative and quietly takes over his feeling of guilt. The lack of continuity and of emphasis on this process may be just an insignificant blemish as the story unfolds. But if the general sense of sin and loneliness to which Sensei arrived was a product of the ‘modern age’, then we must blame Sōseki for leaving this connection obscure. For this indeed is an important point of the novel if I am right in that the characteristics of the ‘modern age’ are a main ingredient of ‘the spirit of Meiji’.

The problem is whether Sensei’s sense of sin and loneliness was Sōseki’s sin and loneliness, which was, according to Karatani, personal (but perhaps, at the same time, universal in the sense in which it is not restricted to his age), or Sensei’s, which stemmed characteristically from the modern age. There is no good reason to reject either interpretation. But in reading Kokoro, we must first take into account Sensei’s experiences with his uncle and K, and then how Sensei came to regard K’s suicide at the end. The betrayals, K’s death, guilt, and loneliness—we must take each of these factors into consideration. When Sensei finally decided to kill himself, he was no longer thinking about his guilt for K’s death. By then his concern was with the sense of loneliness, and he came to believe that K had committed suicide out of a sense of loneliness. Sensei then felt that he was following K’s example. But it is difficult to see why a character such as K killed himself out of loneliness rather than out of, say, disappointment at his setback. Only by tying his loneliness with the modern age does it become more plausible as the reason for his suicide. Sensei regarded K as a contemporary in Meiji Japan who had necessarily experienced loneliness and alienation.

As we have seen, Sensei called his times ‘this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves’. When he says this to the young narrator in Part 1 we feel that this talk of the modern age occurs rather abruptly. At the end of the story we come to understand that this characterization may be the message that Sōseki wanted to convey to the reader. It is difficult, then, to think that ‘the spirit of Meiji’ has nothing to do with the ‘modern age’. For what is the ‘modern age’ other than the Meiji period? Why, then, do we not regard loneliness or those modern ideals that, as Sensei understood them, produce loneliness, as an important ingredient in ‘the spirit of Meiji’? This sort of interpretation is not new. Other ingredients of ‘the spirit of Meiji’ may be identified; for example, mental strength and the rather old-fashioned sincerity manifested by Sensei, and the old-fashioned morality that somehow survived the pervasion of the modern ideals.

43 For example, Senuma Shigeki 淺沼茂樹 suggested it in his Natsume Sōseki, Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1962, p. 253.
44 According to Ochi Haruo, ‘Sensei’s suffering is, as his testament repeatedly emphasizes, one that was forced by the Meiji period rather than merely his individual experience. K’s and Sensei’s self-reproach, self-maltreatment, and a life of “flogging oneself” was possible only in Meiji. At least Sensei thinks so.’ Ochi Haruo 越智治雄, Sōseki Shiron 淺石私論, Kadokawa, 1971, p. 294.
If for Sensei loneliness and old-fashioned sincerity represented characteristics of the Meiji period and his own growth in Meiji Japan, then it becomes easier to understand why he killed himself when Meiji ended. His egotism embodied the limitation of the modern ideals (widespread among the intellectuals in Meiji times) that Sensei believed necessarily caused loneliness. With the news of the death of the Meiji emperor, Sensei felt that the era in and with which he lived had ended. (Remember that Sōseki was born in the year before the Meiji Restoration.) Sensei regarded himself as an anachronism. General Nogi’s junshi that followed the emperor’s death provided him with a model for his own suicide with Meiji. He found in the general a similar situation in that they both lived as if they had been dead. To Sensei the end of Meiji was not the beginning of a new era; it simply signified his own end. As is evident in the story, there is no reason to think that Sensei then returned to the old morality. He gave no clear explanation to the young narrator why he was going to die by his own hand; he believed that the young man would probably not understand it. But if Sensei had reverted to traditional morality, it would have been easy for him to explain why he was going to die. What prompted him to die was not ideology or any coherent philosophical idea, but his personal feelings. He wrote,

> Then at the height of the summer Emperor Meiji passed away. I felt as though the spirit of the Meiji era had begun with the Emperor and had ended with him. I was overcome with the feeling that I and the others, who had been brought up in that era, were now left behind to live as anachronisms. (245)

Thus to understand why Sensei decided to die is to understand his feeling, the feeling of a Meiji intellectual.

If Karatani and other critics are correct in saying that Sōseki had intended to kill Sensei from the very beginning, then he probably had intended to use Nogi’s junshi when planning to write Kokoro. Sōseki began serializing Kokoro in the Asahi Shimbun on 20 April 1914, two years after Nogi’s suicide. Hirano mentions Masamune Hakuchō’s view of Sōseki. Regarding the apparent change of theme in the middle of Mon, Hakuchō attributes to Sōseki ‘professional consciousness’ or ‘responsibility’ as a ‘newspaper novelist’ that he had to entertain readers. While praising Hakuchō for this observation, Hirano asserts that Sōseki’s design of his novels had a motivation arising from his inner depth. Sōseki had a strong sense of responsibility, says Hirano, and he tried to involve the themes of his novels with subjects familiar to his readers; he always tried to compromise with readers by placing his protagonists in a subject or circumstance familiar to readers, but in which they were not quite able to imagine themselves. But such compromise did not always work well and this shows in some of his novels.

The ‘inner depth’ Hirano talks about relates to Sōseki’s ‘dark part’, or the existential anxiety that was typically attributed to Yume Jūya. Hirano’s view

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45 Hirano, p. 248.
seems, in a way, a prototype of Karatani’s interpretation of Sōseki’s novels that I have discussed above. Sōseki showed a strong sense of responsibility on many occasions in his life, for example, his desire to contribute to the success of his country, and his commitment to carrying out the lectures planned by the *Asahi Shimbun*, his employer. He may indeed have felt strong responsibility to serve his employer by entertaining his readers, more than just wishing to do so in order to win further success as a professional writer. This inclination to entertain his readers manifests itself in the design of *Kokoro*, which resembles a mystery story, and other novels. As a naturalist writer, Hakucho’s criticism of Sōseki was directed precisely to this characteristic. The same inclination may have been in operation, in part, in introducing into *Kokoro* Nogi’s junshi together with Sensei’s suicide.

Karatani has recently rejected the idea that ‘the spirit of Meiji’ was the spirit of the entire Meiji period.

What Soseki referred to as the ‘spirit of Meiji’ was not the spirit of the entire age of Meiji, which he detested. He felt no sympathy for General Nogi’s thinking. Rather, what Nogi’s suicide recalled for Soseki was the repressed and forgotten revolution represented by Saigo Takamori, who died as rebel leader of the Seinan War in which Nogi had taken part on the side of the government.\(^{46}\)

Instead, Karatani suggests that ‘although what Sensei calls “the spirit of Meiji” may not be limited to “the tenth year of Meiji,” it undoubtedly represents something prior to Meiji 20.\(^{47}\) Meiji 10 is the year in which the Seinan War (Saigō Takamori’s rebellion) took place, a war waged, in one respect, by the former feudal samurai who had been left out of the modern, increasingly centralized, oppressive government. According to Karatani, these samurai had embodied a ‘sense of independence and plurality’ before the modern, centralized government was established. They maintained ‘an independence that is missing in the individual of the modern nation-state, who [after Meiji 20] is constituted as subject by being entirely subject to one sovereign.’\(^{48}\) It was precisely these people, Karatani argues, who supported the Popular Rights movement of Meiji 10 and who ‘as the Seinan War of 1878 demonstrates . . . were unavoidably led to a civil war aiming to negate national sovereignty.’\(^{49}\)

Karatani argues that ‘the “Chinese literature” to which Sōseki was willing to devote his life differed from the Southern School Chinese painting or the Chinese poetry to which he turned in his later years. It had been something connected to Asia, and to People’s Rights.’\(^{50}\) Karatani compares K’s defeat with

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\(^{47}\) ‘Discursive Space’, p. 212; *Japan in the World*, p. 309.


\(^{50}\) ‘Discursive Space’, p. 213; *Japan in the World*, p. 310.
the political defeats of Kitamura Tōkoku 北村透谷 and Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎, who subsequently ‘tried to position themselves against all worldly things.’ Karatani seems to argue that these figures all share ‘the sense of independence’ and ‘the multiplicity of possibilities’ of the Meiji 10s. ‘Sōseki is a survivor, so to speak, from the Meiji 10s.’

In short, Karatani argues that ‘the spirit of Meiji’ to which Sensei’s death was directed symbolizes the ‘multiplicity of possibilities’ and the ‘sense of independence’ still upheld by the former feudal samurai prior to the Meiji 20s, but not necessarily the old morality, as Eto claims. Karatani’s interpretation of ‘the spirit of Meiji’ certainly does not emerge from Kokoro itself, but accords with what he has written elsewhere.

The tenability of Karatani’s view depends on our finding out how the Seinan War affected the young Sōseki, and how the unsettled state of the first twenty years of Meiji government high-handedly pushed Japan into westernization and encouraged young people to study Western languages and cultures. Western ideas were openly encouraged during the first twenty years or so of the period. By the Meiji 20s, as Karatani notes, the consolidation of the modern Japanese nation-state was well in progress, coinciding with the rise of a new conservatism and the promulgation, in 1890 (Meiji 22), of the Imperial Rescript on Education based on Confucian teaching. Thus it is possible to identify Sensei’s ‘modern age’ specifically with the period of Meiji, and ‘the spirit of Meiji’ with the spirit of this period. Even so, Karatani’s view that ‘the spirit of Meiji’ ‘undoubtedly represents something prior to the Meiji 20s’, as it is interpreted by him, remains problematic. The ‘sense of independence’ felt by the samurai before Meiji 20 has nothing to do with the independence that Sensei talked about in Kokoro, that is, independence as a modern or Western notion. The independence to which Karatani refers here is a kind of freedom that samurai felt before the establishment of the centralized Meiji government, an independence that came before the loyalty and dedication they felt for their (immediate) master. This somewhat paradoxical ‘sense of independence’ was not at all an optimistic independence, as the samurai felt increasingly pessimistic about their bleak future. Their ‘multiplicity of opportunity’ was quickly fading. Further, I do not understand how Karatani can connect the characterization of the period with the seemingly unrelated ‘the spirit of Meiji’ as used by Sōseki. Karatani’s work here probably implies much more than this discussion covers and opens new lines of investigation for scholars and critics. In fact, there is much for Karatani to elaborate on in the future.

Here, however, it is worth reminding ourselves of what Sensei actually wrote in his testament: ‘I felt as though the spirit of the Meiji era had begun with the Emperor and had ended with him.’ Concerning this passage, Karatani

51 ‘1970 = Shōwa 45: Kindai Nihon no Gensetsu Kūkan 1970年＝昭和45年：近代日本の言説空間, in Shūen o Meguite 終焉をめぐって, Fukutake, 1990, p. 37. This article appears to be the original version of ‘The Discursive Space of Modern Japan’.
52 In ‘Ishiki to Shizen: Sōseki Shiron (I)’, p. 27.
remarks, ‘Sōseki might have identified his life with the reign of the Meiji Emperor.’ Obviously Karatani wants to read this passage by simply replacing ‘the spirit of the Meiji era’ with ‘my (that is, Sensei’s or Sōseki’s) life’. But the passage clearly means more than that.

For Sensei (and Sōseki) a main ingredient of ‘the spirit of Meiji’ was the spirit of ‘this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves’. This characteristic separates Meiji from the previous era. At the same time, the traditional element of ‘the spirit of Meiji’—his unusually strong sense of responsibility, his old-fashioned sincerity and self-denial—separated Sensei from the new generation who took the modern self for granted. For example, when Mushanokōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤 rejected the old morality (Nogi’s junshi) outright and expressed his confidence in the future of mankind that, he believed, would emerge through the extension of the modern self, Sōseki believed that he was being too optimistic. Sensei must have been well aware of the difference between his generation and the new generation. He wrote to the young narrator: ‘You and I belong to different eras, and so we think differently.’ If he realized this difference, he also knew that his morality was becoming a thing of the past; he knew that society, rightly or wrongly, was changing. But he felt nostalgia for the era to which he belonged. In this way, as Oketani has suggested, ‘the spirit of Meiji’ does contain two conflicting ideas.

But in Sensei’s view, his tragedy resulted solely from ‘freedom, independence, and . . . egotistical selves’. This view expresses only Sensei’s (and Sōseki’s) understanding. He was unaware that he was applying traditional morality to the effects of modern morality. I have argued, however, that it was the combination of the old morality and modern ideals that caused Sensei’s tragedy. The modern ideals of freedom and independence alone may not have had to cause Sensei’s egotism, loneliness, and isolation. But when they were placed in the particular context of Meiji Japan, the mixture produced egotism, loneliness, and isolation. They were caused by the confusion and the conflict involved in modern ideals and traditional morality. Thus, in this sense, we may say that ‘the spirit of Meiji’ embodied two contradictory aspects. Sensei lived and died from the transitional stresses and conflicting restraints and limitations peculiar to Meiji Japan.