

# From the Construction of “Another World” to the Formation of “Sokuten Kyoshi”: Focusing on Eastern Philosophical Influences on Natsume Soseki’s Literatures and Thoughts

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Natsume Soseki (1867-1916) is considered to be one of the most highly regarded writers of modern Japan. Soseki, who was skilled on both classical Chinese literature and newly fashionable English literature, had devoted his life to keeping the traditional cultural values of Edo Period while accepting the Westernization of Meiji Japan.

By first examining “Another World 向う側” of Soseki, I could presume that Taoism was the foundation of his work. At the earlier time of Soseki's, he had first developed a sense of “escape from the reality” and implemented it into his life and literatures. As a further getaway from the harsh reality, he therefore created “Another World 向う側”, where he was seen adopting the elements from three traditional Chinese literatures: 1) Tao Yuan-Ming’s “Peach Blossom Spring” and the immortal world, 2) the culture of “Seclusion” and “Furyu 風流” of Chinese scholar-officials and 3) the Literature of Dream.

Later in his life, Soseki had further advocated the thought of “Sokuten Kyoshi 則天去私”, which literally means “one with heaven, be free from the self”. While this phrase was initially coined by Soseki, he did not finish elaborating this thought, as he passed away a few weeks right after introducing this to his students. Therefore, “Sokuten Kyoshi 則天去私” has become a mystery of Soseki's work and gained a lot of attention from researchers. Previous research had shown that, while most of the Soseki's works were focusing on the influence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, the expression of itself was most likely derived from Eastern Thoughts.

Furthermore, I would like to assume that Soseki’s “Sokuten Kyoshi 則天去私” had not only the influence and element of Taoism, but should also be considered as one of Soseki’s “Another World”. The assumption was done under two main pillars. First, I researched and connected Taoism, Soseki's “Another World” and his thoughts on “Sokuten Kyoshi” together. I also analyzed the related elements on Soseki's literary works (in particular his Chinese poetries), diaries, essays, lectures and letters, and finally come up with this assumption.

Last but not least, this dissertation could also be treated as a pioneer research on the studies of the acceptance of Taoism and the formation of Eastern Philosophy in Meiji and Taisho periods. By considering the background and formation of “Eastern Philosophy 東洋哲学” from Meiji Japan, I would also like to emphasize that Soseki was possibly treating Taoism as “Eastern Philosophy”, instead of simply seeing it as “Sinitic Studies 漢学” (claimed by the previous studies over the past decades). This possibility hence gives a new meaning on the studies of accepting Taoism by Soseki.