Intercultural Communication Studies IV: 2 1994
Etsuko Nakayama

Natsume Sō seki and Thomas Carlyle: Their Personal Values and Cultural Reactions to Their Rejection of a Doctorate

Etsuko Nakayama

Kansai Gaidai University

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan rapidly began to adopt not only Western science and technology, but also Western institutions and viewpoints. The intellectual leaders of modern Japan criticized authoritarianism. Natsume Sō seki (1867-1916) was the first major literary figure in Japan to challenge authority and to take an independent stance by rejecting a Doctor of Letters degree awarded by the Ministry of Education in 1911. Why did Sō seki reject the doctorate and why did people at the time react negatively to his rejection? A typically negative reaction came from Sō seki's own brother: "Even if he doesn't need it, he should accept it for the sake of his children's honor. What an eccentric!" This reaction reflects two typical Japanese values: bowing to authority and the belief in bringing honor to the family through worldly fame. Sō seki's rejection of the doctorate became a well-publicized event at that time because it was something unprecedented and incomprehensible to the general public. However, the rejection of a doctorate (LL.D. offered by Edinburgh University) by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), whom Sō seki admired, did not elicit any public response. Even Carlyle's rejection of the Order of the Grand Cross of the Bath (1874) was, on the whole, treated as a private affair. When we compare Sō seki's rejection of the doctorate with that of Carlyle, the

similarities in their values become obvious: they were indifferent to worldly fame and did what they believed to be right disregarding what others might think of them. Why then, did their rejection of the doctorate elicit different reactions from the people around them? This paper examines some differences in cultural values in Meiji Japan and Victorian Britain to explain why Sō seki was criticized for his personal decision whereas Carlyle was not.

First, we shall examine in detail how Sō seki's rejection of a doctorate occurred and how the Ministry of Education reacted to it. On February 20, a simple note requesting Sō seki's presence for the conferring of the doctorate on the following morning arrived at Sō seki's house. At that time Sō seki was still hospitalized recovering from a stomach ulcer which had almost killed him in August of the previous year. Upon his hearing the news on the following day, he wrote the following simple letter of refusal to the Ministry of Education:

> I understand you are to confer a Doctor of Letters degree on me, which, according to the announcement made in the newspaper a few days ago, has been recommended by the doctorate committee. I, however, have made my way in the world as plain Natsume Kinnosuke [Sō seki's real name] and desire to remain so in the future as well. Therefore, I do not wish to accept the doctorate. It is very much against my inclination to cause you any trouble, but I hope you will grant me my wish and accept my refusal (*Soseki zenshu* [Hereafter abbreviated as SZ] XV 1966: 33) [1]

Within the same day, just after he mailed the letter, however, the Ministry of Education had a man deliver the doctoral diploma to his house. In turn, Sō seki immediately had the diploma returned to the Ministry. He thought that he had the choice of declining the doctorate and felt it improper that the Ministry did not even ask his opinion before sending the diploma to him. He expressed his displeasure with their attitude in an interview which appeared in the *Asahi* Newspaper on February 25 (SZ XVI: 696-7).[2] He points out that the simple note of February 20 from the Ministry sounded as

if the Ministry had already confirmed his agreement to accept the doctorate and that they merely informed him of the date and the time of the occasion.

Next to this interview with Sō seki was an article entitled, "I Wish the Doctorate Would be Accepted" by Fukuhara Ryō jirō who was in charge of granting the doctorate at the Ministry. Fukuhara, who also happened to have been a classmate of Sō seki in preparatory school, expresses his feelings as follows:

> Everyone knows Mr. Natsume's personality, and therefore, even if he received the doctorate without asking questions, no one would think he received it because he wanted it. If he does not want it, I hope that he would simply receive it and do whatever he would like to do with it. In fact, there are people in the world who receive a doctorate because they want it, and there are also those who establish a reputation because of their receiving a doctorate. When it comes to a person like Mr. Natsume, however, the doctorate would influence him very little or rather it might be a simple nuisance. But, because Mr. Natsume's friends, who are already doctors, decided to give him the degree with such good intentions as wanting to make him a part of them, I think it would do him no harm to receive it without asking questions.

Fukuhara tries to appeal to Sō seki's feelings of friendship as a former classmate, because Japanese tend to have a sense of affinity towards a person who went to the same school even if he was not particularly close. We can also detect Fukuhara's annoyance with Sō seki at the end of the quotation because Sō seki has caused him such trouble and embarrassment. Above all, we get an impression that Fukuhara is simply trying to seek an amicable settlement of the matter, which is a typical Japanese peace-at- any-price principle, especially typical of a bureaucrat.

While Sō seki received no answer from the Ministry of Education to his letter of February 21, the controversy was being agitated by journalism; some accused Sō seki of being too obstinate, or of courting publicity, while others admired the uniqueness of his position (Natsume Shinroku 1956: 213).[3]

Because he was an employee of the *Asahi* newspaper, he seems to have been pressed to explain the situation further. On March 7, he wrote an article entitled "The Course of the Doctorate Problem" (*Hakushi mondai no nariyuki*) (SZ XVI: 699-700). Touching upon the fact that there was no provision in the doctorate decree for a rejection of the doctorate, Sō seki maintains:

> If it is not provided for in the decree to prohibit the rejection of the doctorate, is it not all right to interpret the decree to suit oneself? If the ministry puts value on maintaining its dignity and insists that "one cannot decline the doctorate," cannot I also insist that "one can decline the doctorate" on the ground of my own will? . . . Anyway, if a person is worthy of having a doctorate conferred on him, which the Ministry regards highly as an honor, they might as well respect the person's opinion as they value the degree itself.
>
> I do not intend to have a dispute with the Ministry at all. I also believe that the Ministry does not have any intention to oppress me. . . . But now that it has almost become the fiftieth year of the Meiji era, the Ministry does not have to maintain a notion that unless the artificial government-made doctorate is treasured by scholars, the government's dignity will be destroyed (SZ XVI: 699-700).

Sō seki states that he believes that the Ministry has no intention of oppressing him, but he actually does not believe what he says. Rather, he expects the Ministry's oppressive reaction, which will completely ignore his wish. In preparation for that situation, he attacks the weak points of the argument which the Ministry is most likely to advance. If the Ministry does not respect his wish, they should be criticized for being too authoritarian, bureaucratic, and for suppressing an individual's free will.

Then he mentions that among those who have doctorates he has good friends and people whom he respects. But he also adds that he does not wish to follow their path. He touches upon the point that the rejection of the doctorate is unprecedented, and argues as follows:

> To be told to receive the doctorate following a precedent is as if I were treated like a machine such as a train–the latter train must follow the former. I, who rejected the doctorate, might be an

> eccentric in contrast with the former examples, but judging from the trend in which self-awareness is developing day by day, I think there will emerge more people who will reject the degree as I did (SZ XVI: 700).

Sō seki was a non-conformist, which in itself was unusual in Japan, where the pressure to conform is particularly strong, even today. His nonconformism made him ignore the norms of the times when he thought them to be meaningless.

Lastly Sō seki refers to the fact that the decree includes the possibility of the deprivation of the doctorate whereas it never touches upon the refusal of it. He concludes his comments as follows:

> They just say, "Now we shall give you it. Now we shall deprive you of it," as if they regarded us as toys. If I must by all means receive something which is accompanied by such a dishonorable possibility, I would feel as if I were burdened with oil and firewood which could catch fire at any moment. Because, as far as the deeds which the minister regards as dishonorable do not coincide with what I regard as dishonorable, I may dare to do some dishonorable deeds (according to the minister's judgment) and end up with such a shameful result as being deprived of the doctorate (SZ XVI: 700).

This quotation indicates that Sō seki has no faith in the judgment of those in authority. His distrust was justified because the government restricted the freedom of speech and suppressed anyone who would challenge the values on which the government was founded.

In 1910 the Great Treason Affair (*Daigyaku jiken*) occurred. It was an attempt to crush the socialist movement, the government arrested some hundred socialists and anarchists, and sentenced 24 of them to death in a secret trial for their alleged attempted assassination of the emperor. In January of 1911, about a month prior to Sō seki's rejection of the doctorate, twelve of them were executed. Concerning the reactions of the politicians toward the Great Treason Affair, Wada Toshio reports as follows (Wada 1989: 215-8). In the Diet session held at that time, the Diet members attacked the government by saying that the Affair occurred because the

government enforced too rigid a control on the people. Sawaki Tarō , for instance, criticized the government for its restriction of publication. According to Wada, Sawaki maintained that there might exist dangerous ideas among the general public but that they were much less dangerous than those of the government.

Also in 1911, the same year as Sō seki rejected the doctorate, a professor of the Kyoto Imperial University, Okamura Tsukasa, received an official reprimand because he stated in a lecture that the family-based legal system, then in force in Japan, was unnecessary and that the Japanese people should adopt individualism as Westerners have (Furuta *et al.* 1968: 212). This seeming overreaction of the government to Okamura's assertion is comprehensible only when we compare the family system with individualism.

Here we identify the family system and individualism briefly by referring to two encyclopedias, one Japanese and the other English, which reveal general knowledge concerning the family system and the value of individualism respectively. According to the *Sekai daihyakka jiten* (World Encyclopedia) under the family system a Japanese citizen was not regarded as an individual with his own rights but as a member of a family which was hierarchically ordered: an ascendant was superior to a descendant, a lineal member to a collateral member, and a male to a female. Japan was conducting its modernization with a view of the state as a big family in which the emperor became a benevolent father figure to his people. As each member of the family was taught to be obedient to the head of the family and to serve the well being of the family, each person was encouraged to be loyal to the emperor and to serve the nation. The Encyclopedia Britannica, on the other hand, defines individualism as follows. Individualism places a high value on self-respect, on privacy, and on respect for other individuals. The individual is an end in himself and is of supreme value, society being only a means to individual ends. All individuals are in some sense morally equal.

Individualism also embodies opposition to tradition, to authority, and to all manner of controls over the individual, especially when they are exercised by the state. Individualism is clearly in conflict with the family system. Because the family system was a miniature version of the emperor system, it was in the interest of the government to preserve it. No wonder that the government was extremely sensitive about expressions of

individualism. If Sō seki had still been in his position as professor of the Tokyo Imperial University under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, the authorities would have taken action against him. For Sō seki flatly states that he values his own opinion more than that of the authorities. His individualistic assertion was in conflict with the values on which the government was founded.

Furthermore, Sō seki did not share people's awe of the emperor. While attending a *Noh* performance, Sō seki noted that the Empress and the Crown Prince were smoking despite the fact that smoking was prohibited. He wrote in his diary: "In this matter, the Imperial family ought to show deference to us common subjects. If they consider their own smoking to be proper, the same freedom ought to be given to their subjects" (SZ XIII: 698).[4] Sō seki concludes his criticism by saying: "The Imperial family is no collection of gods. They ought to be accessible and friendly. By appealing to our sympathy they ought to cultivate our respect. This is the surest and most enduring policy" (SZ XIII: 698).[5] Sō seki did not think that he should give any special treatment to the emperor and the imperial family, and voiced his objection against them when he thought their behavior was improper.

Among many other examples of Sō seki's expressions of his anti-authority feeling, the following part of his random jottings, written in 1904 or 1905, is a most radical one:

> In the past anything could be done through the influence of the authorities. At present not anything can be done even through the influence of the authorities. In the future, the time should come when something cannot be done just because it is being done through the influence of the authorities (SZ XIII: 170).

Sō seki's rejection of the doctorate proved that not everything could be done even through the influence of the authorities.

In addition to his nonconformism and anti-authoritarian feelings, Sō seki's rejection of the doctorate, of course, derives from a concrete reason: he had always been critical of the doctorate system. He first expressed his

anti-doctorate feeling when he was in England. When his sister-in-law wrote to him that she hoped he would return as Dr. Natsume soon, he wrote to his wife as follows: "The doctorate is ludicrous. No one should show gratitude upon receiving such a thing. Since you are my wife, you too should be aware of this" (SZ XIV: 190). In another article, also entitled "The Outcome of the Doctorate Problem" (SZ XI: 271-3), Sō seki explains why he is critical of the system. He states that no matter how effective the system may be in promoting scholarship from the government's perspective, it is bound to create a trend in which scholars pursue research only to receive their doctorates. He also points out that the system creates a false impression on the part of the public that unless one has a doctorate one is not a scholar. The granting of such a value to a doctorate will leave scholarship in the hands of a few learned "scholar aristocrats," whereas those without a doctorate will be completely ignored by the public, thus leading to many evils. In this sense, he states, he is displeased even at the existence of the Académie Française. He concludes, "Therefore, it was thoroughly a matter of principle that I declined the doctorate" (SZ XI: 273) [6]

This publicized problem was never settled. On April 12, almost two months after Sō seki sent the letter of refusal, the Ministry of Education sent him a short letter simply saying that he could not reject the degree because it had already been officially announced. They also stated that regardless of Sō seki's accepting the diploma or not, they still considered him as having received his doctorate. One wonders why it took so long for the Ministry of Education to come up with such a crude answer. As Shinroku, Sō seki's second son, points out, the Ministry's response is unexplainable simply in terms of bureaucratic inefficiency (Natsume Shinroku 1956: 204). For one thing, as we have seen in Fukuhara's response in the *Asahi,* they were probably at a loss as to how to handle the unprecedented matter. They had never imagined that anyone would even dare to reject the doctorate, especially when the conferment of the degree was regulated by an imperial edict. Because Sō seki was not a government official, the government could not impress the public with its power by carrying out practical punishment such as an official reprimand. They could only take such a passive measure as minimizing Sō seki's or other intellectuals' counter-attack by sending the simple note. Thus it was left to the judgment of the public as to whether

they regarded Sō seki's rejection valid or considered him as a doctor of letters, supporting the Ministry's decision (SZ XI: 272).[7]

We have so far examined how Sō seki's refusal of a doctorate occurred and how the Ministry of Education reacted to it. Now we shall examine Carlyle's case. In short, his declination of a doctorate elicited no public response because it was treated as a private matter. On April 2 in 1866 Carlyle was installed in office as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University. Prior to his inaugural address the ceremony of presentation for the degree of Doctor of Law took place. It had been proposed that Carlyle himself should be honored, but he politely declined the offer. In his letter of March 21 Carlyle states:

> The offer made, on such terms, from such a quarter, is which no highest man need hesitate to accept, and to me surely it is a possession for the rest of my life: nevertheless I should say on consideration, I should say (if I might without suspicion of unthankfulness, disrespect or affectation which are all very far from me on this matter that I could wish it not to go farther, but to remain for me in that altogether pure condition. A feeling I have that there is something of incongruous between my past history and the new Dignity; that I have a Brother, an Edinburgh M.D. who would hereby cease to be "The Doctor" in our circle, after 30 or 40 years possession; that I should never know myself, or be at home in this dignity (even though I kept it secret) (Campbell 1980: 92).

Among various biographies of Carlyle there are only a few which touch upon the reasons for his rejection. Friedlich Althaus's biography written in German a few months after this event refers to its reason for the first time. According to Althaus:

> [Carlyle] declined in a letter which said in effect that he had a brother who was a doctor, and in the event that two Dr. Carlyles were to appear in Paradise unpleasant misunderstandings might result. For this and other reasons he preferred for his part, to remain Mr. Thomas Carlyle. And with this decision the matter was closed (Clubbe 1974: 120).[8]

Two other biographies mention the same reason (Wylie 1909: 32; Wilson 1934: 46). However, the first comprehensive biography written in 1884 by Anthony Froude does not even mention Carlyle's refusal of a doctorate. Froude, who was entrusted with the care of Carlyle's literary remains, quoted a few passages from Carlyle's notes on Althaus's biography. And yet after Froude had written the first volume of his biography, "he virtually ignored Carlyle's notes and Althaus's biography – a biography Carlyle called the best yet written of him" (Clubbe 1974: ix). Froude paid no attention to Carlyle's rejection of a doctorate despite the fact that Carlyle wrote the following comment, "Pig! This is Newspaper nonsense, *in toto* or nearly so" about the sentence which reads "in the event that two Dr. Carlyles were to appear in Paradise. . ." (Clubbe 1974: 120). It is quite significant that most Carlyle biographers pay little attention to his declination of a doctorate whereas Sō seki's biographers treat Sō seki's rejection as one of the major events in his life.[9]

In 1874 Benjamin Disraeli decided to recommend that the queen confer upon Carlyle the Grand Cross of the Bath and a state pension. Here again Carlyle declined the offer as follow:

> I have only to add that your splendid and generous proposals for my practical behoof, must not any of them take effect; that titles of honour are, in all degrees of them, out of keeping with the tenour of my own poor existence hitherto in this epoch of the world, and would be an encumbrance, not a furtherance to me. . . and in brief, that except the feeling of your fine and noble conduct on this occasion, which is a real and permanent possession, there cannot anything be done that would not now be a sorrow rather than a pleasure (Froude 1884: 430-1).

Refusing Disraeli's proposal in his "magnanimous and noble" (Froude 1884: 430) letter was much harder than having rejected the doctorate. This time he had no such good excuse as his brother. Thus Carlyle's view of life is revealed much more clearly: he was determined to lead a life free from worldly fame and vanity. Carlyle's assertion that he prefers to remain plain

Thomas Carlyle is the same in essence with Sō seki's position that he prefers to make a living in the world as plain Natsume Kinnosuke.

Carlyle's refusal of a doctorate elicited no public response. On April 3, 1866, there was an article of eighteen lines in the Times stating that Carlyle had been installed in office as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University and that the degree of Doctor of Laws had been conferred on five people on the previous day. In the April 4 issue of the same newspaper, an article on the inaugural address of Carlyle as Lord Rector and its sensational success and the admiration felt for Carlyle occupied more than eighty percent of the space on page ten (about 11600 lines). But there was not a single line referring to Carlyle's refusal of a doctorate. No biographies record the reactions of the academic community or the people around Carlyle toward this event. "People regarded Carlyle's refusal as a personal eccentricity from someone who was known to be eccentric and strong-minded, and left it as that."[10]

On the occasion of Carlyle's declination of the conferment of the Grand Cross of the Bath and a state pension, the government made some efforts to change his resolution. "It was intimated to him that Her Majesty herself would regret to be deprived of an opportunity of showing the estimation which she felt for him" (Froude 1884: 432-3). Though Disraeli seemed to have been the instigator who tried to change Carlyle's mind, the pressure was privately communicated by Lady Derby who had initiated the idea of making Carlyle, Sir Thomas. On January 30, 1875, Carlyle wrote in his letter to his brother as follows:

> There was first a letter from Lady Derby. Then there duly came the interview of Wednesday, with a great deal of earnest and friendly persuasion to accept some part or other of the Ministerial offers. Then at last, when all had to be steadfastly declined as an evident superfluity and impropriety, a frank confession from her ladyship that I had done well to answer No in all particulars. The interview was not painful to me, but rather the contrary; though I really was sorry to disappoint – as it appeared I should do–both Disraeli and a much higher personage, Queen's Majesty herself, namely (Froude 1884: 433-4).

Everything seems to have been settled in about a month between Carlyle's letter of refusal to Disraeli on December 29, 1874, and this letter. Even Carlyle's declination of the Grand Cross and a state pension was, on the whole, treated as a private matter. In contrast, Sō seki's rejection of a doctorate became a well-publicized event: at least 14 articles concerning the doctorate problem appeared in several different newspapers. In addition to the attention of journalism, Sō seki also received private reactions of various kinds. A negative reaction ironically came from his own elder brother, Naotada. He said, "Even if he doesn't need it, he should accept it for the sake of his children's honor. He's certainly eccentric" (Natsume Shinroku 1966: 212). This is a typical answer of a man who holds such values as following convention, bowing to authority, and believing in bringing honor to the family by worldly fame.

Another negative reaction of a man on the street is recorded by Sō seki himself in his diary. A shop owner who happened to be hospitalized at that time wanted to read Sō seki's *I Am a Cat* (*Wagahai wa neko de aru*). He found that some pages were stuck together and told a nurse to cut them open with a small knife. The sharper he made the nurse sharpen the knife, the less successfully he could cut the pages apart. Then he angrily said, "No wonder Sō seki is the kind of man who creates trouble. It's exactly the same way in which he declined the doctorate and caused trouble for the Ministry of Education" (SZ XIII: 616).

Another criticism against Sō seki appears in a book meant for the masses written in a frivolous tone and a colloquial style by an obscure writer Toyama Jū sei (1912: 329-30). Toyama never discusses Sō seki's accomplishment as a creative writer and merely categorizes him as an eccentric. He offered the following explanation of why he thought Sō seki rejected the doctorate. When Sō seki was sent to England to study the English language by the Ministry of Education (1900-2), he shut himself in his lodging house and immersed himself in reading books on literature, science, and philosophy of the ancient and modern times. Because he did not fulfill the given assignment, he fell out of favor with the Ministry. Therefore, when he became an instructor at Tokyo Imperial University after his return from England, he was treated coldly with a meager salary. When

Sō seki decided to resign from the university to become a professional writer, they tried to detain him by offering a post as professor of English literature. Sō seki's decision, however, was firm and he declined this offer. According to Toyama, the conflicting relationship between Sō seki and the Ministry of Education is the major reason why Sō seki rejected the doctorate.[11] Toyama concludes by saying, "His action is sheer folly. What an obstinate and ostentatious man he is!" (Toyama 1912: 330).

The person Toyama comments on next to Sō seki in his book is Kanō Kō kichi who received a doctorate without asking questions. Kanō was the president of the College of Arts and Sciences of Kyoto Imperial University and a friend whose personality and scholarship Sō seki regarded highly. Shinroku introduces Kano's attitude toward the doctorate, quoting his words as follows:

> When I was told that I would be conferred the doctorate, I consulted Kanō Naoki [who was conferred a doctorate in 1907 together with Kō kichi]. Then we thought we would receive it although we would not use it if we did not want to. As far as the authorities were kind enough to grant us the degree, we thought we might as well receive it with gratitude (Natsume Shinroku 196: 214).

Kanō did not use the degree, and people did not even know that he was a doctor.

It is interesting to note that Toyama highly praises Kanō for his noble character and profound scholarship. Toyama's contrastive comments on Sō seki and Kanō seem to indicate that Kanō was a much easier person for people of that time to understand than Sō seki. For Japanese think that a mature person should resolve a conflict in such a way that avoids direct confrontation: he must, by all means, seek an amicable settlement. Kanō agreed to receive the degree so that he would avoid conflict with the Ministry of Education and would not embarrass the authorities. If he did not use the degree, however, he would passively express his feeling that he did not value the degree at all without starting any dispute. In his

newspaper article, this was exactly what Fukuhara suggested that Sō seki do. Kanō perhaps even did not feel that he was compromising because, in Japan, respect for authority and saving face for others, especially for those in a position of authority, were so important as to become second nature to people.

Takie Lebra (1976: 148-9) explains the way in which high valuation of harmony is fixated in Japan in the socialization process as follows:

> [T]he child is taught to prize interpersonal harmony and restrain himself to avoid conflict. . . . To attain or maintain harmony, older children are taught to be kind and yielding, younger children to be compliant. The virtue of being *sunao* ("open-hearted," "non-resistant," and "trustful") is inculcated as the most praiseworthy.

A child who is taught to be non-resistant duly grows up to be an adult who will avoid conflict as Kanō did.

On the other hand, in Great Britain or in the West conflict was viewed not as negatively as it is in Japan.

> Conflict is neither desired nor idealized by most Westerners, but it is legitimate, accepted, and expected in the West more than in Japan. The emphasis on individualism and individualistic expression in Western culture, especially where Protestant and utilitarian traditions have been strong, for many centuries provided a powerful moral counterforce to the personal desire to avoid conflict. All the leading social theories of the last few hundred years postulate and encourage one or another expression of self-interest (Krauss *et al.* 1984: 380).

Thus, Carlyle's individualistic expressions which came in conflict with Edinburgh University or even with the queen were legitimate. It was in the best interest of Carlyle to reject both the doctorate and the Grand Cross because he "preferred to go to the grave with only the honor of his works" (Kaplan 1983: 526).

It was James Murdoch (1856-1921) who pointed out the similarities between the rejection of a doctorate by Sō seki and that by Carlyle.

Murdoch was a Scottish historian who had taught English to Sō seki at the First High School and later became a professor of Japan studies at Melbourne University. Murdoch's comment is the only one that Sō seki ever made known to the public from among many letters and comments which he personally received concerning the doctorate problem. In his article entitled "The Doctorate Problem and Professor Murdoch and I " (*Hakushi mondai to Madokku sensei to yo*) Sō seki expresses his feelings of pleasure and satisfaction about Murdoch's letter as follows:

> There was a sentence that read "this deed of yours is a matter for congratulations because it proves that you have a "moral backbone" ["moral backbone" is in English in the original Japanese]. . . . Professor Murdoch also refers to William Gladstone, Thomas Carlyle, and Herbert Spencer, and states "you have a lot of company." I felt very much flattered because, when I rejected the doctorate, these precedents never occurred to me. Nor did it comprise even a part of my motives for my decision. The reason why Professor Murdoch referred to these famous people was to indicate that the rejection is not necessarily impolite, and, of course, not to compare them to me. Professor Murdoch states, "It is natural as human beings that we make an effort to stand out above the general public. We should, however, excel only in our honorable contribution to society. The utmost right for us to acquire eminence always should be solely decided by our personality and accomplishment" (SZ XI: 263-4).

Murdoch himself was a dedicated scholar and teacher with lofty ideals. He was content with plain living and did not seek wealth and worldly fame (Hirakawa 1984: 74). Once he declined the conferment of a decoration on him by saying:

> In order to receive a decoration I must have a new swallow-tailed coat made. The decoration is not worthy enough to pay the cost of the coat. Moreover, many young people whom I have taught occupy important positions in society now and are working for their country. They are my living decorations. I do not need any additional decorations (Hirakawa 1984: 75).

How happy Sō seki must have felt that his teacher, whom he highly respected, shared his belief! Moreover, Murdoch encouraged Sō seki by indicating that Sō seki had a lot of company, including Carlyle. It is significant that the only person whose opinion of the doctorate problem Sō seki felt compelled to introduce was that of a Briton. It seems to indicate that no Japanese understood Sō seki as much as the British did. It also suggests that the majority of the Japanese did not understand Sō seki because the Japanese could not comprehend the Briton's reasoning for this. As we have seen earlier, the Japanese had a strong tendency to avoid conflict and to seek an amicable settlement especially if it meant keeping up an appearance of harmony. Therefore they did not understand why Sō seki stuck to his opinion which caused direct confrontation with the authorities. In short, the Japanese did not comprehend what Murdoch called "moral backbone" and what Sō seki called "principle." It seems obvious that these two terms indicate the belief in personal freedom and integrity – a core of individualism. And it was this individualistic belief that made both Sō seki and Carlyle reject doctorates. Sō seki and Carlyle were both indifferent to worldly fame and did what they believed to be right disregarding what others might think of them. And yet their rejection of doctorates elicited completely different reactions in their societies: Sō seki was criticized for his personal decision whereas Carlyle was not. These contrasting reactions largely derive from the differences in cultural values in Victorian Britain and Meiji Japan. The former regarded individualistic expression as legitimate and the latter thought of it as dangerous.

Notes

1. The translation of all the quotations from *Soseki zenshu* (The Complete Works of Sō seki) and other Japanese sources is the author's, unless otherwise mentioned. In 1911 the doctorate could be conferred on the

following people: (1) one who entered a graduate school and passed the doctorate examination (at that time there were only two universities, Tokyo Imperial University and Kyoto Imperial University); (2) one who was regarded as being equal or surpassing the above in scholarly attainments by the faculty council of each college of the imperial universities; (3) one who was considered worthy of being granted the doctorate by the doctorate committee; (4) a professor of an imperial university who was recommended by president of the university for which he worked. In all cases the degree was granted by the Ministry of Education under the regulation of the imperial edict No. 344 issued in 1898.

2. SZ incorrectly records the date of appearance of this interview as 24 February.
3. Following the Japanese practice in listing Japanese authors, surnames are given first and the given names are listed second in the notes and the text.
4. Quoted from Beongchon Yu, 1969, p. 166.
5. Quoted from Yu, 1969, p. 166.
6. Wada in the above quoted book maintains that Sō seki's criticism of the doctorate system as well as that of the Literary Committee is closely related with his negative view of worldly fame.
7. Nose Iwakichi, ed., *Nippon hakushi-roku* (A Register of Doctors), 1956, was compiled with the materials offered by the Ministry of Education and lists Sō seki first among six people who were to have a Doctor of Letters degree conferred on them in 1911.
8. Althaus's biography, which was printed in a journal *Unsere Zeit* on July 1 1866, was unknown until Clubbe discovered it in 1969. Clubbe translated Althaus's biography and published it with Carlyle's notes.
9. The followings are the only several major comments made on the doctorate problem. Komiya Toyotaka, Sō seki's disciple who wrote the first comprehensive biography of Sō seki (1953: 101-12), maintains that Sō seki had held a basic position against artificial government-made systems which would create unfairness and falsehood and that his rejection of the doctorate derived from this principle. Sō seki's second son, Shinroku (1966), states that judging from Sō seki's

fastidious moral standard and his conscience as a scholar, Sō seki naturally could not receive the doctorate as long as he was critical of the system which conferred it. Kitagaki Ryū ichi (1968: 194), a psychiatrist, points out that Sō seki had a sense of resistance like that of a youth against anyone who was socially superior to him, such as politicians, bureaucrats, doctors, professors, and the rich. It is the author's position that this anti-authority feeling, an element of individualism, provided Sō seki with energy to carry through his belief in his rejection of the doctorate. Another biographer, Etō Jun (1975: 139), states that this problem should not be interpreted only as a praiseworthy anecdote, but it indicates Sō seki's chagrin, "Why have they given me such a thing now? If they wanted to, they should have done so ten years ago." His comment seems invalid because it was exactly ten years earlier that Sō seki expressed his anti- doctorate feeling to his wife.

10. A Private letter of September 23 1992 to me from Dr. Ian Campbell.

11. Although Sō seki's conflicting relationship with the Ministry was not a major reason for his rejection of a doctorate, it seems to have constituted a part of the minor reasons: he did not want to receive an honor from someone or some organization that he did not respect. The same thing applied to Carlyle in his rejection of the Grand Cross and a pension: he had very low opinion of Disraeli. For a more detailed discussion of Sō seki's negative feelings toward the members of the doctorate committee, see Uegaki (1975: 80- 90) .

References

Campbell, Ian, ed.
1980 *Thomas and Jane: Selected Letters from the Edinburgh University Library Collection,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Library.

Clubbe, John, ed.
1974 *Two Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle,* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Etō , Jun
1975 "*Waga Sō seki Zo,* " in *Bungei tokuhon Natsume Soseki,* Tokyo: Kawadeshobo shinha. pp. 127-51.

Froude, James Anthony
1884 *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London 1834-1881,* Vol. II, London: Longmans, Green.

Furuta, Hikaru *et al.* , eds.
1968 *Kindai Nippon shakai shisoshi,* Vol. I, Tokyo: Yū hikaku.

Hirakawa, Sukehiro
1984 *Soseki no shi Maddoku sensei,* Tokyo: Kō dansha.

Kaplan, Fred
1983 *Thomas Carlyle: A Biography,* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Kitagaki, Ryū ichi
1968 *Kaiko Soseki no seishin bunseki,* Tokyo: Kitazawa shoten.

Komiya, Toyotaka
1953 *Natsume Soseki* , Vol. III, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.

Krauss, Ellis, Thomas Rohlen, and Patricia Steinhoff, eds.
1984 "Conflict and Its Resolution in Post War Japan," in *Conflict in Japan,* Honolulu: Universityof Hawaii Press. pp. 377-97.

Lebra, Takie
1976 *Japanese Patterns of Behavior,* Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press.

Natsume, Shinroku
1956 *Chichi Natsume Soseki,* Tokyo: Bungei shunjushinsha.

Natsume, Sō seki
1966 "*Hakushi mondai,*" *Soseki zenshu* (Hereafter abbreviated as SZ.) Vol. XVI, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. pp. 696-7.

"*Hakushi mondai no nariyuki,*" SZ XI, pp. 271-3.
"*Hakushi mondai no nariyuki,*" SZ XVI, pp. 699-700. "*Hakushi mondai to Madokku sensei to yo,*" SZ XI, pp. 258-65. "*Nikki oyobi dampen,*" SZ XIII.
Shokanshu, SZ XIV.
Zoku-shokanshu, SZ XV.

Nose, Iwakichi, ed.
1956 *Nippon hakushi-roku,* Tokyo: Kyō iku gyō sei kenkyū jo.

Toyama, Jyū sei
1912 *Jinbutsu hyoden: kijin seijin,* Tokyo: Katsujinsha.

Uegaki, Setsuya
1974 "*Soseki no gakui jitai ni tsuite,*" in *Shinnakokubun,* No. 9. pp. 80-90.

Wada, Toshio
1989 "*Bungei iin seiritsu made–tsuketari hakase mondai shoko,*" in *Meiji bungeiin shimatsuki,* Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo. pp. 214-25.

Wilson, David Alec and David Wilson MacArther
1934 *Carlyle: In Old Age,* London: Kegan Paul.

Wylie, Wm. Howie
1909 *Thomas Carlyle: The Man and His Books,* William Robertson (revised), London: T. Fisher Unwin.

Yu, Beongchon
1969 *Natsume Soseki,* New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc.