

MONSTERS OF THE ABSOLUTE

INOUE ENRYO, THE TASK OF BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY, AND THE
HAUNTED BORDERLANDS OF POST-KANTIAN THOUGHT

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On November 29, 1893, the Japanese *Toshinbun* 都新聞 newspaper published an account of a series of bizarre events that had recently occurred in Ishikawa Prefecture.¹ According to the article, in September a local postman named Iwamoto 岩本 and his family had started experiencing seemingly trivial yet incomprehensible incidents. Rice and cooking implements vanished mysteriously; lost objects suddenly appeared later in unlikely places; and cookware began to vibrate seemingly of its own accord. Things quickly es-

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¹ YUMOTO Kōichi 湯本豪一, ed. 「地方発明治妖怪ニュース」 [Meiji yōkai news from the provinces] (Tokyo: Hakushoten, 2001), 98–99; titled 「妖怪博士に聞け」 [Ask Professor Monster].

calated. Objects began literally flying off of the shelves and floating through the air. Convinced that a "monster" 妖怪 (*yōkai*) was responsible, Iwamoto went to a Buddhist temple for the performance of "prayer-rituals" 祈禱 (*kitō*) to put an end to the phenomena. When this proved ineffective, he solicited the aid of a Shinto priest who he invited to his home to try a different set of rites to expel the creature. But these too failed and "uncanny" 怪異 (*kaii*) events kept occurring. Indeed right after the Shinto priest left his house, Iwamoto witnessed, to his horror, a kitchen knife fly through the air and embed itself in the tatami right in front of his face.

Fearing for their safety, the Iwamotos temporarily fled their home to stay in a different village. Initially believing they had left strange events behind, for a few days things were quiet, but on the fourth day Iwamoto caught sight of a spectral three-eyed monster. As if this weren't enough, soon thereafter, Iwamoto's daughter saw one of their folding screens begin to levitate in the air. Grabbing on to it, she was lifted airborne, an event, *Toshinbun* claimed, that was witnessed by many villagers as they returned home from their jobs. Traditional means having failed to banish the monster, Iwamoto had no choice, but to take his case to the real expert—a man known as "Professor Monster" 妖怪博士 (*Yōkai Hakase*). So the newspaper article concluded in a petition for this Professor Monster to come and explain the mysterious events occurring in Ishikawa. But who was this strange expert in all things ghostly?

Given the context of this talk, it won't surprise you that Professor Monster was none other than INOUE Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919). For those only coming to Inoue's work through his writings on Buddhism or philosophy, Inoue might seem to be an unlikely ghost-buster. One of the first major philosophical interpreters of modern Japan, Inoue is sometimes referred to as the distant progenitor of the Kyoto school and as we shall see he had published on figures such as Hegel and Kant.² But like the Shinto and Buddhist ritualists mentioned in the newspaper article, Inoue had a reputation for expelling the monstrous. Professor Monster, however, was not a traditional kind of exorcist. He banished monsters, not through prayer or magical ritual, but by explaining them away. A kind of demystifying Sherlock HOLMES, Inoue traveled Japan recording local "cases" concerning ghosts, monsters, demons and other strange happenings, which he solved by rendering the supernatural into the natural. In other words, he would account for these "miracles" by means of rationalizations rooted in physics, zoology, psychology, or the human perceptual apparatus. Although there is no record of

² Robert WARGO. "Inoue Enryō: An Important Predecessor of Nishida Kitarō," in *Studies on Japanese Culture* 『日本文化研究の論集』 (Tokyo: The Japan P.E.N. Club, 1973), 170–77.

his explanation for the Iwamoto poltergeist, encounters of this sort became the foundation for a series of wildly popular essays and lectures on the supernatural that are still in print today and serve as a valuable repository for Japanese conceptions of the monstrous.

While I have elsewhere explored the linkage between Inoue's monsterology and his emplacement of Buddhism in terms of Western categories, today I'd like to direct our attention to the relationship between Inoue's monsterology and his construction of philosophy.³ I will show that both systems turn on a strange kind of beast, "a monster of the absolute," that Inoue sees as both the place where Western philosophy fails to close and the ultimate aim of his own "monsterology."⁴ For professor KŌDA Retsu 甲田烈 and others in the audience who have already spent some time reflecting on Inoue's philosophical monsters, I will provide a global context to Inoue's intermingling philosophy and psychological research.⁵ While Inoue is often portrayed as unusual for his fascination with monsters and the like, it will turn out that many of his philosophical contemporaries were similarly haunted.

Professor Monster and his Monsterology

INOUE Enryō's interest in philosophy had a long history. Although the son of a Jōdō Shinshū priest, at the age of ten Inoue had been sent to a neighboring village to study the Chinese classics. In 1873, at the age of fifteen, caught up in the changes then overwhelming Japan, Inoue shifted the focus of his studies from Chinese Classics to the modern West. As an undergraduate he specialized in philosophy, taking courses with both—newly arrived American professor, Ernest FENOLLOSA (1853–1908) and Sōtō Zen priest HARA Tanzan 原坦山 (1819–1892), who was the first professor of Buddhist studies at the university. In 1882, while still a student, Inoue co-founded the Philosophical Society 哲学会 and became a regular contributor to its influential *Journal of Philosophy* 『哲学雑誌』.⁶ Ultimately, he was awarded a doctorate in philosophy from Tokyo

3 See Jason Ānanda JOSEPHSON. "When Buddhism Became a 'Religion': Religion and Superstition in the Writings of Inoue Enryō," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33, no. 1 (2006): 143–68.

4 For "monsterology" as a translation for Yōkaigaku 妖怪学 see Gerald FIGAL. *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999). See also Michael Dylan FOSTER. *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (University of California Press, 2009).

5 See in this journal KŌDA Retsu 甲田烈. "The Structure of the 'True Mystery' in the Philosophy of Inoue Enryō," *International Inoue Enryō Research* 2 (2014): 100–18. Jp. 「円了妖怪学における「真怪」の構造」, *ibid.* pp. 250–71.

6 Originally it was called 『哲学会雑誌』 [Journal of the Philosophical Society]. For more on Inoue and

Imperial University in 1896. In 1887 Inoue founded the Philosophy Academy 哲学館 (which later became Tōyō University), while almost simultaneously publishing a number of widely read works (e.g., *Prolegomena to an Argument for the Revival of Buddhism* 『仏教活論序論』) calling for the revival of Buddhism.

Just as Tōyō University was beginning to flourish, Inoue "retired" in December, 1905 at the fairly young age of 47, to devote himself full-time to giving lectures on monsters.⁷ So where did this interest in the ghostly originate? Inoue had been accumulating stories of the supernatural since his early undergraduate days at Tōdai.⁸ Inspired by the British Society for Psychical Research founded four years earlier, on Jan 24, 1886, Inoue joined forces with another student (MITSUKURI Genpachi 箕作元八, 1862–1919) to form a Society for the Investigation of the Mysterious 不思議研究会.⁹ In the following year, Inoue began publishing the first of his investigations into "monsters."

Eventually these investigations evolved into his widely read *Lectures on Monsterology* 『妖怪学講義』, which are still in print.¹⁰ Their basic structure was fairly consistent, Inoue would identify a particular local monster, superstitious custom, or reproduce a local newspaper's account of a supposedly supernatural event, and then he would proceed to "solve it;" in other words, to explain it away by reducing it to some natural cause or feature of human psychology. In so doing, Inoue worked to illuminate what had previously seemed mysterious or anomalous and hence banish it. As he summarized his project in the first volume of the *Lectures on Monsterology*:

Monsters do not exist objectively, they exist subjectively. Hence, there is not a fixed criterion for determining if something is a monster. In other words, monstrousness is relative to human knowledge and ideas. The lower classes constantly produce a proliferation of monsters because of the shallowness of their knowledge and the paucity of their experience. Further, there are many things, which are anomalous to their experience. This is like the Sīchuān dogs that

philosophy, see also Gerard Clinton GODART, "Tracing the Circle of Truth: Inoue Enryō on the History of Philosophy and Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist* 36 (2004): 106-33.

7 See ITAKURA Kiyonobu 板倉聖宣, 「妖怪博士・：円了と妖怪学の展開」 [Doctor Monster: Enryō and the development of monsterology] (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1983), 43.

8 In the first chapter "The doings of foxes and badgers" of 『妖怪玄談』 [Discussing monster mysteries] (1887) (IS 19) Inoue stated: "I personally like to hear about monsters, for a long time I have investigated the causes [behind their appearance] and have accumulated this material over the span of five years." Although Inoue is probably being imprecise here that would put the beginning of his interest in monsters in about 1882.

9 Note that Mitskuri originally translated "psychical research" with the Japanese *shinri kenkyū* 心理研究.

10 The 6 vols. of 『妖怪学全集』 [Collected works on monsterology] (Toyo Daigaku, 1999-2001) are identical with IS 16–21.

bark upon seeing the sun.¹¹ However, as people become more knowledgeable and more experienced, they come to clearly understand the rationale behind various phenomena. As more phenomena are shown to be not mysterious or anomalous, monsters begin to vanish as well. (IS 16: 59)

Restated, the interpretation of something as anomalous or mysterious and hence a monster is in inverse proportion to the diffusion of education, or in the idiom of the period, it stands in opposition to "civilization and enlightenment" 文明開化. As the world becomes increasingly understood according to natural laws, Inoue thought the more the monsters would vanish.

To give a concrete example of Inoue's particular version of disenchantment, in both the "science section" 理学部門 of the *Lectures on Monsterology* (1893) and again in *Superstition and Religion* 『迷信と宗教』 (1916), Inoue discusses accounts of "foxfire" 狐火 (*kitsunebi*) that he claims are widespread throughout Japan (*Lectures on Monsterology*, IS 16: esp. 514–16). He argues that foxfire is really an example of an even broader classification of "monsters," which he calls "mysterious fire" 怪火, he also includes under this heading reports of demon-fire, balls of fire, "dragon-light" 龍燈, fire pillars, fiery chariots, "ghostly fire" 幽靈火, and "vengeful ghost fire" 怨靈火. Inoue notes that these phenomena have analogs in European culture, including English reports of will-o'-the-wisp and German *Irrlicht*. While their near universality might seem to indicate the truth of the phenomena, Inoue goes the other way arguing that: "If you want to understand the cause of mysterious fire: they come from things like phosphorus flames, electricity, meteors, and various kinds of [luminous] animals and vegetation, and in that they are physical monsters [...]" (*Superstition and Religion*, IS 20: 184).

Inoue argues that mysterious fire is fully amenable to scientific explanation, reducible to the explanatory world of chemistry, biology, and physics. The only reason they are taken to be the doings of foxes or ghosts is because of what Inoue refers to as the "poverty of experience." Basically, for Inoue "the poverty of experience" comes from the natural tendency of uneducated people to think of unusual experience as totally anomalous and therefore supernatural. But if they put these phenomena in broader comparative perspective, Inoue is sure, they would see that they are not really miracles or violations of natural laws, but things with simple scientific explanations. Accord-

¹¹ Inoue here is referring to the Classical Chinese expression 「蜀犬吠日」 which means "Sichuan dogs bark at the sun," alluding to the cloudy weather of Sichuan 四川 (here 蜀 Shǔ) and meaning that a provincial fool will get excited at something widely known elsewhere.

ingly, Inoue reduces much of the monstrous to what he refers to as only "provisional mysteries" 假怪 (*kekai* [?]), that is phenomena that can ultimately be cleared up scientifically.

Inoue also described his monsterology lectures as akin to his philosophical enterprise because in effect what the masses needed to stop believing in superstitions was more logic. As he argued in the volume one of the *Lectures on Monsterology*:

Generally, the function of logic is to seek out the effect the part has on the whole and the whole on the part, or to find the causes that facilitate [particular] effects and the effects that result from certain causes. Hence, following from deductive reasoning, we know that things that can be established with certainty for the whole can be established in regard to the part. Following from inductive reasoning, we know that inquiring into the fundamental principles we can establish the relationship between cause and effect. However, when causally constituted phenomena are mistakenly thought to be without causes, when things consisting in parts are seen as without parts, this gives rise to a host of misconceptions. The reasons for this will be discussed in detail later when we explain the root causes of monsters. However, here I want to merely state that those things popularly referred to as monsters are identical with misconceptions. Hence monsterology [妖怪学] is the science of [discovering and clearing up] misconceptions [迷誤学]. (IS 16: 61)

So basically, we have monsterology as a branch of philosophy or perhaps a form of pedagogy designed to clearing up popular misconceptions. Further, Inoue's project was rooted in the conviction that everything in the material world will ultimately be explainable according to scientific laws. As he put it:

The transformations of the material world are controlled by "physical laws" [物理の規則]. Natural calamities and diseases originate in this area [the material world]. Therefore, if one wants to avoid natural calamities and diseases, there is no way other than through the control obtained from scientific research. (IS 16: 267)

In passages like these, Inoue, sounds like a classical disenchanter or enlightener like his near contemporary Robert G. INGERSOLL (1833–99) who was similarly dedicated to the elimination of superstition and the promotion of the universality of science and reason. But there is a key difference, because Inoue was too Buddhist or perhaps too Kantian to grant the sufficiency of reason. If there were things within the bounds of reason, reason also had its limits.

This is because, Inoue argued, not all mysteries were provisional. Indeed there is a second aspect of monsterology that I have thus far ignored. As Inoue stated "the purpose of monsterology is clearing away provisional mysteries and the opening up of true mysteries [真怪]."¹² If most of the monstrous was reducible to rational explanation and hence only provisionally mysterious, there was another range of phenomena that Inoue argued were *even in principle impossible* to explain in rationalistic or materialistic terms—these were true mysteries or we might say "true monsters." In effect, there was a type of beast that could outrun the reasons disenchantment. The true mystery turns out to be the key point in Inoue's system, the place on which it turns, because the existence of true mysteries is precisely how Inoue repurposes the legacy of western philosophy and psychology and even psychical research to attack the limits of western thought (both philosophical and Christian) and to establish the value of his brand of Buddhism.

To understand these true mysteries, we need to understand Inoue's philosophical project and in particular his appropriation of Hegel and Kant for Buddhist thought. But first I want to lay at your feet another puzzle. Why did Inoue not turn to Arthur Schopenhauer? Discussions of the interaction between "Great European philosophers" and Buddhism often focus on the work of Schopenhauer and Heidegger, two figures who were known for their rejection of Hegel and his philosophical system. Schopenhauer having once described Hegel as "an insipid and inane charlatan."¹³

From the standpoint of the European intellectual tradition it would seem natural to look to these anti-Hegelian figures to find parallels with Buddhist philosophy, not least because Schopenhauer in particular made explicit reference to Buddhism, which he understood as exemplifying the truths of his own philosophical system. In the conclusion to his masterwork (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 3rd edition), Schopenhauer even equated his own insights with the "the 'Pradschna-Paramita' [sic] of the Buddhists, the 'Beyond All Knowledge,' i.e., the point where subject and object no longer exist."¹⁴ Indeed Schopenhauer may have been the first European philosopher to refer to himself as

¹² The original says *yōkai* but reading it along with the modern version as *yōkaigaku* (IS 16: 60).

¹³ Arthur SCHOPENHAUER. *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. by E. F. J. PAYNE (Oxford University Press, 2000), vol. 1, 27.

¹⁴ Cited in Peter ABELSEN. "Schopenhauer and Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* 43.2 (1993): 255–78, 259.

a "Buddhist."¹⁵ So at the very least given his popularity as a significant thinker Schopenhauer might have seemed to be the natural ally for an aspiring Buddhist philosopher like Inoue.

It should come as some surprise then that despite having access to Schopenhauer's writings, Inoue, believed that Hegel was in essence Europe's Buddha, writing: "the position of Buddhism, as manifested in Kegon-Tendai schools, does not differ in the slightest from that of Hegel because matter and mind both become the one reason..." And further that, "Now, what Buddhism teaches does not differ in the slightest from Hegel's theory of the inseparability [of the absolute and relative]" (*Prolegomena*, IS 3: 369–70).

This leaves us with something of a puzzle. It becomes necessary to figure out why a Buddhist thinker would bypass Schopenhauer in favor of Hegel. The further wrinkle is that not only was Schopenhauer interested in Buddhism, but he also shared Inoue's fascination with ghosts and spirits. But in that respect Schopenhauer was in a long lineage of Post-Kantian philosophers with an interest in psychical research, exploring this background will help makes sense of not only Inoue's own psychical research, but it will also give us clues as to why he ultimately might have found Schopenhauer unpalatable.

The Haunted Borderlands of Post-Kantian Thought

Kant's philosophy is not only an absurdity, but a wickedness and a horror; the pious and peaceful sage of Königsberg passes for a sort of Necromancer and Blackartist in Metaphysics; his doctrine is a region of boundless baleful gloom, too cunningly broken here and there by splendours of unholy fire; spectres and tempting demons people it.

— Thomas Carlyle "The State of German Literature" (1827)

Modern philosophy has been haunted since its birth.¹⁶ Although today we associate philosophy with austere logic, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century the academic disciplines had not yet differentiated. This meant not only that were many philosophers engaged in what we would call psychology, anthropology or physics, but also that the

¹⁵ Urs APP. "Arthur Schopenhauer and China: A Sino-Platonic Love Affair," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 200 (2010): 1–164. See p. vi.

¹⁶ For example, René DESCARTES. *Les Passions de l'Ame* (Paris: N.P., 1728), 51–52. Portions of this section appear in a different form in Jason A. JOSEPHSON-STORM. *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

line between psychical research and experimental philosophy had not yet been drawn. In this section, I would like to gesture at the centrality of spirits, psychical powers, and other beasts to post-Kantian philosophy.

Beliefs about the possibility of contact with dead spirits were not new in the nineteenth century. There were plenty of earlier precedents. The nineteenth century did, however, mark a resurgence of interest in the possibility of communicating with the dead. In part this was inspired by the popularity of the Fox Sisters but also by changing ideas of the nature of biological life. Indeed, the very epoch in which Max Weber described the progressive demystification of the supernatural also saw a radical resurgence of belief in ghosts and the widespread popularity of the Theosophical Society and various forms of spiritualism.¹⁷ Accordingly it should be no surprise that ghosts and spirits play a distinctively modern role in the writings of many of the seminal theorists of the nineteenth century (think Marx, Freud, and Spencer).

One place to look for such spirits is in the works of Immanuel Kant, who is often described as the most important modern philosopher. Kant's engagement with psychical research is clear in the 1766 work *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (Dreams of a spirit-seer, illustrated by dreams of metaphysics). The work is an oddity in Kant's oeuvre differing in both tone and subject matter from his more famous writings. In addition to its playful style, *Dreams of a spirit-seer* is a sustained discussion of ghosts and of the Swedish mystic Emanuel SWEDENBORG (1688–1772). Swedenborg had come to Kant's attention because of his celebrated clairvoyant visions and spirit communications. Today, scholars argue about whether the text demonstrates a Swedenborgian influence on Kant, or whether the whole thing is essentially an elaborate joke at the mystic's expense.¹⁸ Strikingly, Kant opens the work by noting that there is considerable fascination by both laypeople and philosophers in accounts about the "spirit-realm," and moreover he justifies his own interest in the subject by noting that "what astonishing implications would open up before one, if even only *one* such occurrence could be supposed to be proven."¹⁹

17 Jason Ānanda JOSEPHSON. "God's Shadow: Occluded Possibilities in the Genealogy of 'Religion' " *History of Religions* 52, no. 4 (May 2013): 309–39.

18 Wouter HANEGRAAFF. *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant* (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 2007); Gregory JOHNSON. "Introduction," in Immanuel KANT. *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings* (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002); and Alison LAYWINE. *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy* (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1993).

19 Immanuel KANT. *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 305.

After reflecting philosophically on the issue of the spirit-world, Kant ultimately distances himself from Swedenborg, but he does not fully foreclose the possibility of spirits. Tellingly, Kant suggests that immaterial spirits are fundamentally beyond the limits of human understanding. Given that *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* just precedes Kant's critical turn, one cannot help but notice the parallels between its spirits and his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason).

For the uninitiated, the *Critique of Pure Reason* was an attempt to counter a quasi-Humean skepticism by surveying the grounds of possible experience. To do so, Kant conceded a version of the Humean appearance-essence breach and granted that we bring pure forms of sense-experience or intuition (*reine Anschauung*, e.g., space, time) to our empirical world before they are properly earned. In fact, we only experience the appearance of objects, not the thing-in-itself (*Ding-an-sich*). Reason then has a powerful and necessary function, but beyond its limits lies "a vast and stormy ocean" of the unknowable.²⁰ This ocean outside possible experience and conceivable human knowledge is where Kant will locate God.²¹ Except for this gesture toward negative theology, Kant largely aimed to evacuate the region of positive content, but having defined a transcendent realm others could not resist populating it. While Kant aimed to leave room for a rational faith, an inadvertent consequence of his philosophy was to further alienate philosophy from a newly mysterious hidden world.

In the nineteenth century, philosophy would make itself over in Kant's image, sanctifying both his emphasis on the powers of reason and his intuitions about the importance of reason's limits. Thus his famous distinction between the phenomenal world of experiences and the noumenal world of things-in-themselves would serve as the central line across which much of the philosophy would stage its battles. Later theorists would also use this bifurcation (and a related Kantian formulation of the distinction between faith and reason) to enshrine religion and science in separate domains or non-overlapping magisteria. But the thing-in-itself would continue to haunt a range of disciplines, serving as a kind of Kantian monster that lurks outside the realms of reason and preys on those who have strayed too far.

The generations of philosophers who followed Kant were tempted to invest the thing-in-itself with increasing meaning, even as they came to explore the possibility that the categories of space and time could be transcended. Moreover, given the near simultaneity of the ascendance of Kantian philosophy and what-would-become spiritu-

²⁰ Immanuel KANT. *Critique of Pure Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 303.

²¹ NIETZSCHE argued, "God became the 'thing-in-itself.'" Friedrich NIETZSCHE. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18.

alism, it should be no surprise that philosophers often pushed beyond the limits of the sensible in search of evidence for spirit phenomena and other psychical matters. In 1882 a group of British journalists, spiritualists, and scholars formed the Society for Psychical Research under the presidency of the British philosopher Henry SIDGWICK (who, of course, was also important in the study of Kant).²² In the years that followed this organization investigated spiritualist séances, reported ghosts, spirit photography, and other paranormal phenomena with an eye-toward an unbiased scientific approach to the subject matter.

In 1885, an American branch of the Society for Psychical Research came into being with influential members such as the famous American pragmatist William James. James explained his rationale for investigating ghosts and the like as follows:

[...] a universal proposition can be made untrue by a particular instance. If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you mustn't seek to show that no crows are, it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white.²³

Like Kant, William JAMES believed that even one authentic psychical phenomena had the potential to radically transform our understanding of the physical universe. But unlike Kant, James thought that he had discovered a real medium, as he added to the above: "My own white-crow is [the spiritualist medium] Mrs. Piper" (ibid.).

While James' contemporaries were not always as easily convinced, there were many philosophers of the period – from Henri BERGSON to David STRAUSS – who grappled with the possibility of spirits and psychical powers. The most important for our purposes was, Arthur SCHOPENHAUER who is often counted as the most influential philosopher of late nineteenth century Germany.²⁴

Schopenhauer had a long interest in spirits and animal magnetism. He was also aware of Kant's work on the subject, which he addressed directly in *Versuch über Geistersehn und was damit zusammenhängt* (Essay on Spirit-Seeing and Everything Connected with It) in *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851). In this essay, Schopenhauer begins by noting how widespread accounts of spirit phenomena among his European contemporaries. Schopenhauer then works to provide a kind of phenomenological investigation or interpretation of ghosts and those who claim to speak for them. In the main,

²² See Bart SCHULTZ. *Henry Sidgwick—Eye of the Universe: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 276. For SIDGWICK's work on Kant see Henry SIDGWICK. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant* (London: Macmillan, 1905).

²³ William JAMES. *Essays in Psychical Research* (Harvard University Press, 1986), 131.

²⁴ Frederick BEISER. *After Hegel: German Philosophy, 1840–1900* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 12.

Schopenhauer expressed a kind of agnosticism around the issue. He grants that people have real experiences of apparitions and that some form of the individual will lives on, perhaps in a de-individuated state, after death. But following Kant, Schopenhauer argues against the idea that immaterial spirits and have material physical presences.²⁵

So far Schopenhauer might sound like a ghost-buster in Inoue's line, if a little more open to the uncanny, but in an earlier essay in *Über den Willen in der Natur* (On the Will in Nature, 1836) titled *Animalischer Magnetismus und Magie* (Animal Magnetism and Magic), Schopenhauer staked out a rather different position. There he referred to animal magnetism as "practical metaphysics," arguing that its effects were real, and that they:

[...] empirically confirm the possibility of a magical, as opposed to a physical effect, a possibility which the previous century had so peremptorily discarded because it did not want to give credence to any other effect than the physical, brought about in accord with the comprehensible causal nexus.²⁶

According to Schopenhauer, magic was real and efficacious. While ordinary events happened inside the categories of space, time, and ordinary causation, magic was no less genuine, operating according to what he called a "metaphysical nexus" (ibid., 415). In effect, magic represented trans-spatial causation because it happened at the level of the *Ding-an-sich*.

In Schopenhauer's scheme, not only was "white magic" real, there was actually reason to believe that black magic (*maleficium*) was also a description of actual phenomena (ibid., 412). In effect, Schopenhauer was granting a basic distinction common to much of European esotericism, which, judging from the copious citations from magical texts that filled out his chapter, was a subject he knew well. But the philosopher did not grant the whole of, say, Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*; he was suspicious of both the reality of demons and the necessity of ritual.

Schopenhauer argued instead that the essence of magic was the Will, and that it was the human will that allowed one to effect magical transformations (ibid., 416). Schopenhauer had long seen the exploration of the Will as the fundamental contribution of his philosophy. In his masterwork, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation) (1818), he had interpreted Kant's critical philosophy

²⁵ Although SCHOPENHAUER does note that there may be some real spirit phenomena, if so, he argues they must be "extremely rare." Arthur SCHOPENHAUER. *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. by E. F. J. PAYNE (Oxford University Press, 2000), vol. 1, 308.

²⁶ Arthur SCHOPENHAUER. *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 411.

to argue that we can only know the surface nature of phenomena, not their internal nature. To which Schopenhauer observed that there is an exception to this limitation, since the human body is presented to us in two ways. First, we experience it phenomenologically, as a kind of object of sensorial experience that is necessarily conditioned by the categories of space and time. But it also appears to us on the inside. In other words, we know what it is like to be a *Ding-an-sich* because we have a body. Schopenhauer calls this inward being at the root of all things the "Will," and he argues that our apprehension of it is both outside the categories of space and time and unconscious. Hence, by arguing that magic also originated from the Will, Schopenhauer was actually enchanting the noumena and basically suggesting his whole philosophical system had magical powers.

Further, instead of imagining that it was philosophy's business to banish magic and superstition, Schopenhauer declared that his generation was witnessing the dawn of a new age of "magic" initiated by "by the transformation of philosophy brought about by Kant." As Schopenhauer elaborated:

In order to ridicule all occult sympathy or even magical effect out of hand, one must find the world highly, indeed absolutely, intelligible. But this can be done only if the world is looked into with an extremely superficial gaze that allows no notion of the fact that we are awash in a sea of riddles and mysteries and that we neither know nor understand either things or ourselves immediately and thoroughly.²⁷

Paraphrased, it was a skeptical reading of Kant that had made way for the return of magic. Accordingly, Schopenhauer saw the task of philosophy (as the queen of metaphysics) to be making use of the practical metaphysics of magic.

In this respect, Schopenhauer was an enchanter, not a disenchanter. Here INOUE Enryō could not have been more opposed. To remodel, Buddhism on Schopenhauerian grounds would have been to emphasize its numinous qualities, but it was precisely Buddhism's connection to outmoded "superstitions" that Inoue wanted to sever. Yet, he wanted to do so while still claiming the Kantian high ground. To understand how, we have to see the way in which Inoue's reading of Kant and Hegel opened up an alternate path.

²⁷ SCHOPENHAUER. *Principle of Sufficient Reason* (see note 26), 413.

Making Kant and Hegel Buddhist

When Inoue began writing a legitimation of Buddhism according to the Western philosophy he did so not by appealing to the work of Schopenhauer or indeed to any of the mainline of philosophical thinkers that were grappling with Eastern thought. Instead, Inoue located himself in the Kantian tradition by reference to Hegel. Accordingly, it becomes necessary to figure out what it would mean to reconstruct Buddhism along Hegelian lines. Inoue's challenge, however, was harder than simply circumventing Schopenhauer or noting parallels between Buddhism and Hegelianism, it required the difficult task of producing a Buddhist Hegel. Part of the predicament came from escaping Hegel's well-known debts to Christianity. (We know Hegel trained as a seminarian; more importantly, he names as the proper objects of philosophical thought, God, Geist, and Freedom—a Left Protestant Trinity in which "Freedom" stands in for Christ.) For anyone interested in Hegel and the history of competing Hegelianisms the interesting question would be: what does a Japanese philosopher have to do to translate Hegel out of a Left Protestant framework?

Inoue's appropriation of Hegel was even more radical than might be suggested above. Not only does Inoue find Hegel compatible with Buddhism, but also in his writings he attempted to use Hegel's philosophical framework as a scaffold from which to attack Christianity. Thus, Hegel has been not merely de-Christianized, but rendered into a source of anti-Christian polemic. Yet, this is the same Hegel who wrote that we must presuppose that "not only that God is real, that He is the supreme reality, that He alone is truly real."²⁸ How could Inoue conceivably create an anti-Christian pro-Buddhist Hegel without ignoring his explicit Christian formulations? How did Inoue understand Hegel as providing a foundation for a Buddhist philosophical enterprise? And, finally, how could Inoue argue that Buddhism ultimately encapsulated and transcended Hegel's philosophy?

If this were not enough, the problem seems to further metastasize when one recognizes that Inoue's key innovation was to martial the resources of the Kantian system against Hegel. Kant's debt to the Christian Pietism of his childhood is well known and throughout his Critical philosophy he emphasizes its connections to Christianity. For examples, Kant identified his deontological ethics with the Gospel of Matthew, carved out a space for God and the immortal soul as regulative concepts forever outside the

²⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich HEGEL. *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philo—sophical Sciences (1830)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 9. Translation amended.

grasp of reason, and emphasized the importance of Christian faith and the value of Jesus as a moral exemplar.²⁹ As Kant put it in one of the most famous sentences of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith."³⁰ But Inoue's debts to Kant were no less clear—not only did Inoue frequently discuss Kant in his mature writings, but he also placed Kant alongside the historical Buddha as one of histories four great sages.³¹ So how does a Japanese thinker add to two Christian intellectuals together and get a Buddhist philosophy? Although I'll confess that I have time today only to make gestures toward the larger complexities of the issue, our first step will be to trace Inoue's concept of "reason."

Inoue is most famous in Western scholarship for his popularization of the jingoistic slogan "defend the nation, love reason/truth" 護国愛理 (*gokoku airi*). Yet, while the first half of this proposition and its implicit nationalism has attracted significant scholarly criticism, it is precisely Inoue's understanding of *ri* "reason" or "truth" that has failed to draw the same level of scrutiny. It is investigating his construction of "reason" and "rationality" that will allow us to unlock Inoue's appropriation of Hegel as a Buddhist thinker. Along the way, it will render Inoue's nationalism as congruent with the understanding of "reason" in a recognizable form of right Hegelianism.

For an audience that is more likely to be familiar with Buddhism than Hegel, a brief thumbnail of Hegel's system is in order. Put in the broadest of brushstrokes, Hegel's main thesis was that world history was nothing less than the self-actualization of the absolute Spirit (*Geist*). We might vulgarize this narrative by describing it as an account of the dialectical history of the mind coming to workout itself out over matter, during which the whole of the world would gradually be made to accord with reason. In the theological registers actively built into Hegel's language, we might think of history as God coming to know himself through the course of human history.

As you might guess, Hegel's philosophy was in many respects the master narrative for a kind of rationalization that was the heart of the European civilizing enterprise. This was true for both right and left Hegelians. Right Hegelians tended to see the Spirit

²⁹ See especially Immanuel KANT. *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793). Of course in the first *Critique*, KANT also demolished the classic ontological proofs for the existence of God.

³⁰ KANT. *Critique of Pure Reason* (see note 20), 31. Translation amended.

³¹ Inoue constructed a "Philosophy Hall" 哲学堂 where he enshrined four sages: Buddha, Confucius, Socrates and Kant. For more, see OKADA Masahiko 正彦岡田. 「哲学堂散歩：近代日本の科学・哲学・宗教」 [Walking the Philosophy Hall: Science, philosophy and religion in modern Japan], 『仏教史学研究』 [Historical research of Buddhism] 48, no. 2 (2006): 65–83.

largely realized in the Prussian state and celebrate its fulfillment in the industrialization of German and progress of rationalism that would accompany the universalization of European science and education, while a left Hegelian (like Marx) could see the ideal state as not yet come and imagine that history must progress through a future stage (say capitalism to communism) before the absolute could at last be realized.

Given what I've just said, we can see Inoue Enryō as within the lineage of a Right Hegelianism. He saw the state in terms of the realization of reason or rationality or perhaps in more Hegelian terms as the realization of human freedom. In this sense, the anti-superstition campaign that was so crucial to Inoue's project should be seen as an extension of something like a Hegelian politics (even though its debt to the French enlightenment and British civilizing rhetoric should not be ignored). More importantly, Inoue largely embraced idea of a world that could be captured and worked over by reason. We'll see Inoue's exceptions to this in a moment, but it is telling that the Hegel rejects a version of Kant that considers mind and matter to be fundamentally incommensurable in favor of a matter that comes to know itself (or at least to be known) through the process of being worked over by mind.

One of Inoue's key uses of Hegel, however, was to embrace of the dialectic as the process through which rationality was advanced. This was important because Inoue identified the dialectic in particular with Buddhist thought. As Inoue argued in works like the *Prolegomena* (1887) and *Golden Compass of Truth* 『真理金針』 (1886–87), while Christianity was unscientific, full of logical contradictions and irrationally opposed to reason, Buddhism was a philosophical religion essentially in harmony with science. Central to Inoue's portrayal of Buddhism was that it advanced by "turning away from delusion" 転迷開悟 (*Superstition and Religion*, IS 20: 304). It is the purging of the false (or superstitions) so that one can approach the true understanding of the world. In that sense rationalization itself was a Buddhist enterprise. Hence Inoue was able to position Buddhism as the vehicle through which the *Geist* worked itself in the world.

This was not all, however, as the central term that Inoue liberated from Hegel was the "Absolute" 絶対.³² To put it in overly simple terms, we might say that for Hegel the absolute was the ultimate realization of the infinite totality, which many of Hegel's contemporaries took it as a synonym for God. Inoue, however, took the term in a different direction and as such "the absolute" was an important feature of his philosophi-

³² INOUE also uses *zettai* 絶対 in his discussion of HEGEL's philosophy in 『哲学要領』 [Epitome of philosophy] (1887).

cal system, reoccurring throughout his writings. As Inoue states explicitly, both Buddhism and nineteenth-century philosophy have the same goal: to approach the absolute. He agrees that they do this differently, and he thinks that Buddhism is better at it than other religions such as Christianity, but by and large the focus for both religion and philosophy is nothing more than the absolute.³³ Although borrowing the term from Hegel, this is also Inoue's Neo-Kantianism slipping through because at times he identifies the Absolute with the Kantian thing-in-itself or noumena. What is more, just as Kant located God on the side of the noumena, Inoue states:

Then because the buddhas and the gods themselves are a designation awarded to the substance of the absolute [絶対の本体] embodied in religious aspect, they are from the beginning unknowable [不可思議], and beyond reason [超理].³⁴

Hence, there is something at last that seemingly escapes rationality or the bounds of reason and that is the Buddhas and the Gods. What is more, while Christianity can only stand in mute reverence toward God/the absolute, Inoue argues that Buddhism permits a breaking down of subject and object and hence an approach to the absolute. In that sense, Inoue laying out a strategy that will be followed by other Buddhist modernizers like various members of the Kyoto School and D.T. Suzuki.

In *Superstition and Religion*, Inoue also equates the absolute with the "true mystery" or "true monster" 真怪. You should remember this as the key term in his monster lectures and later in the text, Inoue also informs the reader:

Furthermore, as its purpose is the clearing away the superstitious clouds of provisional mysteries [假怪の迷雲] to reveal the bright moon of true mystery [真怪], true mystery itself is monsterology's principle object. This true mystery is not only the principle object for monsterology, but Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Daoism, all take this true mystery to be their principle aim. What the philosopher [Herbert] Spencer calls 'the unknowable' [不可知的] is none other than that which we have named the true mystery. Lao-zi's nameless and the Sāṃkhya's own nature are also only pointing at this true mystery [...]. For this reason, I call it the substance of the absolute inconceivable [絶対不可思議の体].³⁵

33 See JOSEPHSON. "When Buddhism Became a 'Religion' " (see note 3).

34 INOUE Enryō 井上円了. 『迷信と宗教』 [Superstition and religion], IS 20: 260. One might also think here of FICHTE's assertion that the problem with KANT was his claim to know the unknowable of the noumena.

35 INOUE Enryō 井上円了. 『迷信と宗教』 [Superstition and religion], IS 20: 285.

So the principle objects of philosophy, various religions, and monsterology all turn out to be the attainment of the absolute mystery. But it is only a Buddhist inflected, monsterology that understands this as its true aim. In that sense, unlocking the true mystery its central claim to advantage over all the other systems.

One of the last things that Inoue wrote in 1919 before he died, was a short book called *The True Mystery* 『真怪』. Most of it is his usual ghost-busting, but two chapters titled "A Dialogue [問答] about the Existence of True Mysteries" and "The Reality of True Mystery [真怪の実相]" were focused directly on the concept of "true mystery." There is an extended passage that addresses the meaning of *shinkai* directly. As Inoue begins:

To explain true-mysteries [真怪]: the various phenomena of the universe can be divided into those that are objective [客観] and those that are subjective [主観]. Put differently, there is a time honored convention of describing both material and mental worlds [物心両界] [...]. Material phenomena can be precisely substantiated according to physical sciences while mental phenomena can be given detailed explanations according to psychological sciences. (IS 20: 348–49)

So here Inoue is laying out the classical, some might say Cartesian, distinction between mind and body and mapping it onto the equally common division between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaft*. So far so good. But as Inoue goes on to argue:

When pushed a step further, precisely when they are asked what is a material thing in itself [物自体] or a spiritual thing in itself, physical sciences and psychological sciences close their mouths and throw away their brushes. When confronted with the mysteries of creation or the haunting power of certain places³⁶ they can only shut their eyes in dark contemplation [冥想]. For this reason, the actuality of true-mystery [真怪] is said to be truly incomprehensible. Also if it is impossible to witness matter independently from mind and impossible to be acquainted with mind independently from matter, in attempting to investigate the source of the interrelationship between the two, the sciences enter into an occult cloud [幽玄の深雲] and are unable to make even a hint of progress. (IS 20: 507)

Here we have the classical Kantian problem of the *Ding-an-sich*. But for Inoue it emerges precisely in the area of the interaction between the mental and physical sciences. It is definitionally impossible for us to know what matter is like outside of its investigation by human mind and vice versa. Moreover, we can't know the true relation-

³⁶ Lit. the "valley gods' mysteries," refers to the lines of the *Dào dé jīng* 『道德經』 「谷神不死，是謂玄牝」.

ship between matter and subjectivity. Thus far Inoue's argument is not new, but was a common problematic for a range of nineteenth century European philosophers.³⁷ It is what Inoue does next that is more unique:

Excluded from knowledge of the source of matter and mind, reason reaches the point of self-destruction and ultimately the distinction between matter and mind collapses into a denial of the inherent existence [lit. "pure emptiness" 空寂] of all things. This condition is referred to in philosophy provisionally as the "absolute" [絶対] and the "infinite" [無限], but it is the region where speech and thought are cut off [言亡慮絶の境, evoking Buddhist 言亡慮絶之空] and where one is forced to encounter **the true-mysterious heart of true-mysteries** [真怪中の真怪] and the mysterious heart of the mysterious [不思議中の不思議] [...]. (IS 20: 507)

At the limits of reason, the place Zen thinkers know as the region where speech and thought are cut off, it is here that for Inoue we reach the point of the true mystery, which he identifies with the heart of the inconceivable. What is more, in the same text Inoue argues that:

The true mystery, the actual mysterious heart of the actual mystery [実怪] cannot be explained by psychological or material causes [心理も物理も] because it is a monster [妖怪] that transcends [超絶] our knowledge of human rationality for that reason we can call it the transcendental monster [超理的妖怪]. If provisional mysteries are scientific [problems] then the true mystery is a philosophical problem. However, when philosophy distinguishes between the phenomena [現象] and the absolute, provisional mysteries that are real mysteries [実怪] are what we might call phenomenological monsters [現象的妖怪]. Hence true mysteries [真怪] that are real mysteries [実怪] are what we should call "**absolute monsters**" [絶対的妖怪]. (IS 20: 350)

At the end of the day phenomenal monsters can be banished, but there remains one beyond the limits of human knowledge—a true mystery which Inoue identifies explicitly with an absolute monster is a transcendental creature, an expression of pure noumena, that lurks beyond the bounds of philosophy and science alike. It would seem that the great disenchanter has found his Kantian limits, but these are limits that Buddhism knows all too well.

³⁷ George BERKELEY and SCHOPENHAUER but probably more specifically, Thomas BROWN. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Mind* (1828).

Elsewhere Inoue argues that the "true mystery" 真怪 is nothing less than the Buddhist idea of Thusness 真如 (Skt: *tathatā*)—the absolute truth or the real aspect of all things (*Superstition and Religion*, IS 20: 262, 285–86). In this Inoue is relying on the standard Buddhist dichotomy between conventional and ultimate truth (Skt. *samvṛti-satya* versus *paramārthasatya*); and he argues that it is only Buddhism that points directly at the real aspect of all things. What is more, Inoue notes that philosophers and Christians both have ways at pointing at the things beyond the limits of reason (either in terms of reason's boundaries or Christian faith), but it is only Buddhism that has articulated an approach to this Thusness and in so doing, claimed it for itself. In this Inoue is arguing that the true home of the absolute monster is in the Buddhist dharma, or restated, that it is beyond the Kantian limits where Buddhism comes to find its true footing.

Conclusion

To recap and conclude briefly—In the encounter with Western thought at the dawn of the Meiji era, Buddhist leaders were faced with a dilemma. As they saw it, Buddhism was in danger of being characterized as a backward superstition and an obstacle to modernity. If there was a task of Buddhist philosophy at the start of the epoch it was to place Buddhism into a productive dialogue with European thought in such a way as to make Buddhist insights comprehensible. But there was a danger of placing Buddhism too close to Western philosophy it risked rendering Buddhism as philosophy but only of a backward sort. In other words, only as outmoded philosophy. We might restate the problem differently and perhaps in less cynical terms, if Buddhism were to have something to contribute to the philosophical enterprise, it would need to identify a weak link or a gap in Euro-American philosophical thought in which it could productively intervene.

Concretely responding to this dilemma, INOUE Enryō positioned his brand of Buddhism as a form of progress or enlightenment, as though equating *Aufklärung* and *Bodhi* (Jp. Bodai 菩提). Even more strongly he described Buddhism as a kind of en-minding or enlightening of the world that owed much to the main philosophers of civilization itself, Hegel and Spencer. But each of these was not only a Christian thinker, but also committed to a version of European hegemony. Inoue's first move on this regard was to formulate a monsterology as a kind of Buddhist disenchantment, a program to purge both the "superstitions" within Buddhism and to make of Buddhism a set of techniques for further disenchantment precisely in that quasi-boundary of the para-

normal where Western science was beginning to run aground. This also meant committing Buddhism to the civilizing project, which had the added advantage for Inoue that he was able to portray Christianity as a "superstition." In that sense, he turned the European world's disenchanting engine against itself. But Inoue still risked Buddhism being turned into nothing but a temporary vehicle for western science. So Inoue was in effect trying to find a way to both ally Buddhism with world-history (perhaps the unfolding of the *Geist*) at the same time that he worked to preserve a version of Buddhism from being overwhelmed and reduced to nothing more than a backseat partner of European thought.

The key turned out to be Kant. As noted above, in Kant's famous pivot on Humean skepticism, he had attempted to establish "a land of truth" by noting its limits, in his words recognizing that it "is surrounded by a vast and stormy ocean" where secure knowledge is impossible.³⁸ Because knowledge of phenomena was conditioned by the categories of perception, Kant had argued that we cannot truly understand the thing-in-itself. In a way this was indirectly to make room for Christian faith, as though God was hiding behind the noumena. But Inoue saw this opening as something he could exploit for Buddhism, because necessarily Kant had left the "stormy ocean" of things undetermined. Here Inoue saw a spot for Buddhism, one that would later be put to good use by other Japanese philosophers. In effect, Inoue identified Buddhism with "beyond reason" and claimed privileged access to the unknowable. Buddhism in that was the true philosophy of the numinous.

In effect, Inoue got to Kant by way of monsterology. In contrast to Schopenhauer, Inoue imagined philosophy not as a form of magic, but as a mode of spell breaking. But if psychical research was a form of disenchantment then Buddhism not only was a kind of psychical research, but also identified the place where disenchantment could not reach. In summary, in Inoue's system, the "true monster" equates to the ineffable Buddhist "thusness" 真如 which Inoue believes cannot be apprehended rationally. Yet, by placed it in juxtaposition with Kant's noumenon or thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*), Inoue sides with Kant in a rejection of a Hegelian understanding of reason's potential capture the whole of the world, while at the same time suggesting that only Buddhism is capable of approaching suprarational truths. Thus, the "true monster" (like Kant's thing) escapes the bonds of Western philosophy and is therefore capable of devouring Christianity and transcending Hegel to the benefit of Buddhism.

³⁸ KANT. *Critique of Pure Reason* (see note 20), 303.