

## The Logic of a Religious 'Individual'

—Kiyozawa Manshi and his *Seishinshugi*—

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In this paper I took up Kiyozawa Manshi (1864-1903) and his thought of *Seishinshugi* or Spiritual Awareness for consideration, especially with a focus on the concept of 'the Individual'. Through a series of deep sufferings from grave sickness and human relationships, he was awakened to the truth of Buddhism and set up himself as a religious 'individual', especially by taking refuge in Shinran's faith. He was a pioneer who appealed the realization and the independence of 'the Individual' in the name of the *Seishinshugi* to the Japanese people at his time. I wanted to elucidate the historical meanings of his appearance as a religious 'individual' and his advocacy of the *Seishinshugi*.

After the middle of Meiji period (1868-1912) the new self consciousness became evident among the Japanese. This 'modern individual', however, has a fault. A novelist, Natsume Soseki depicted it as "When two persons pass by each other in the street, they take up a quarrel in mind, thinking that you may be someone but I am too" ("*Wagahai wa Neko dearu—I am a Cat—*"). As long as the realization of self is not supported by universal principle, it may fall into egoism. Prof. Kamishima Jirō points out this characteristics of 'the individualism' of Meiji period as follows.

The reason why the so called 'kojinshugi' (individualism) was reproached as 'rikoshugi' (egoism) after Meiji was that it was the naturalism of desire and was evidently different from individualism. As the naturalism of desire lacks an immanent nature of self restraint to desire, it is immoral in itself. Therefore, the reproach may be wrong as it does not reach the essence of individualism in the true sense, but it is

right because that of Japan is truly worth to be reproached.

(“*Kindai Nihon no Seishin Kōzō-The Intellectual Structure of Modern Japan*.” Iwanami Shoten, 1961, p 240)

Such ‘individualism’ was what Kiyozawa had sternly criticized.

There is a person who thinks that it is good if it is convenient to him, however much trouble he may give to others. There is a person who thinks that it is good if only he feels happy whatever may come around him. There is a person who insists that he should carry out what he believes whatever people may say. Those who take such attitudes are called as the one of individualism. In short, those who act freely according to their egoistic desires are of extreme individualism.

(‘*Kyokutan naru Rikoshugi-Extreme Egoism*’, Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū, vol. 6, p 344, Hōzōkan, 1956)

What he meant by the ‘extreme individualism’ is egoism. Here the individualism is not that of modern age which respects humanity and personal rights but that of egoism which leads to the unrestrained liberation of one’s ego. Even the individualism of nineteenth century in the west did not necessarily reach modern individualism full-fledgedly. But the individualism of Meiji Japan had not come to the state which definitely differs from egoism.

Buddhism is in itself the teaching which enlightens us to the awakening and independence of the individual. Like that of Stoicism in the west, the priesthood of Hinayāna is individualistic ethics, but it is different from the individualism in modern sense, as it intends to dwell in peacefulness apart from the worldly affairs. In modern individualism, the individual is first of all social existence. On the other hand, Mahayāna Buddhism which makes importance of lay life intends to establish the individual in social life, not apart from society, but it was difficult to be functioned to the principle.

A number of Buddhists in the Meiji period stressed the importance of the awakening of the individual; Zen monks such as Watanabe Nan’in, Ha-

shimoto Gazan, Takeda Mokurai, and others are examples. In a sense, these people have already transcended the modern age. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons that books like "*Zen Fresh, Zen Bones*" have found such a welcome among Westerners. But were there no problems with the Meiji Zen monks? Was, in other words, the awakening of the individual socialized?

In this sense, it holds the great historical significance that Kiyozawa Manshi advocated *Seishinshugi*. He regards human beings as an irreplaceable spiritual existence. He insisted that we could cultivate our spirituality by faith and establish ourselves as the individual. He appealed the awakening and the independence of the self to the society, while criticizing egoism under the holism of Mahāyāna Buddhism which he accounted for in the name of 'banbutsu ittai' (oneness of all things). That was *Seishinshugi*.

He seems to continue shining us.