Kiyozawa Manshi and the Meaning of Buddhist Ethics

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KIYOZAWA MANSHI 清澤満之, 1863-1903, is probably best remembered today as the first president of what is now Ōtani University in Kyoto and a reformer of the Shinshū Buddhist faith in late Meiji Japan. He was responsible for presenting a new existential grounding of Shinshū thought in the context of modern social conditions. His legacy has become so pervasive that most modern studies of Shinshū begin with his thought. I will attempt to offer a brief glimpse into the motivation that led him, one of the brightest students in his class at Tokyo University, to abandon a potentially successful career in academics or government service for the often thankless task of crusader for genuine religious ethics.

Kiyozawa himself categorized the Meiji period into three areas of intellectual focus: philosophy (1881–1890), ethics (1890–1898) and religion (1898–1903).[1] His own writings, of course, reflect these divisions, but he is also saying something about his peers. For his religious concerns as expressed in the final phase of his work should be seen, in fact, as spearheading a shift in values in the intellectual community of urban Japan around the turn of this century. Unfortunately, he succumbed to tuberculosis at the young age of 41 before his ideas had much impact beyond the academic-religious community.

Above all, Kiyozawa was a religious thinker, but one of his great

[1] Yoshida Kyūichi, *Kiyozawa Manshi* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1961). Yoshida supplies the time frame only for the first period, and does not quote the source of his information. I have deduced the other two periods from my own survey of Kiyozawa's writings. It should be remembered that Kiyozawa himself died in June, 1903.

appeals lay in his personal commitment to the verification of philosophical insight through practice, i.e., meditation. There is no question that he found ample precedent for this in his study of the *Āgamas*, texts from the earliest strata of Buddhist literature. Here we have an extremely rational Buddha as teacher, instructing by example, convincing with logic, and demanding of his disciples great dedication to meditation as the central path to truth. Yet Kiyozawa was academically trained in Western philosophy while being ordained in the Shinshū sect of Buddhism which centers on faith as the vehicle for liberation. How these seemingly contradictory approaches were coherently integrated into an ethical imperative is the internal, spiritual story of Kiyozawa Manshi. In the following pages I will try to present a short outline of what I think are the significant events in Kiyozawa's life, his status within the philosophical climate of Meiji Japan, and finally his somewhat unorthodox point of view on religion and ethics that was shaped in part by these factors.

It is a tradition in Buddhism that every thinker holds three texts in highest esteem. Let us begin our discussion of Kiyozawa Manshi by outlining his triad (J. *sambukyō* 三部経): the *Āgamas* mentioned above, the work of the Greek philosopher Epictetus, and *Tannishō* of Shinran. Kiyozawa's tuberculosis was first diagnosed at the age of 35, and while convalescing he began to read the *Āgamas* of the Sarvāstivādin school in their Chinese translations.[2] Heretofore largely ignored in Japan because of their designation as Hīnayāna (i.e., inferior) scriptures, Kiyozawa was immediately struck by the rich religious insight revealed in the dialogues between Śākyamuni Buddha and his disciples. Herein Kiyozawa confronted the central issue of *avidyā*, a sort of primal ignorance, in early Buddhism, and the doctrine that all suffering stems from conceptual delusion rooted in this deep-seated ignorance about oneself and the world that lies at the base of all we think and do. He was impressed with the commitment to the spiritual path evidenced by Buddha's group, demanding that one turn one's back on

[2] These roughly correspond to the Pali Nikāyas of the Theravādin school which have been translated by the Pali Text Society. The *Āgamas*, with fragmentary exception, remain largely untranslated today. It is at this time that Kiyozawa composed "*Anatman* is the Basis for Contemporary Morality" (Taniuchi Seijun, ed., *Kiyozawa Manshi no Kenkyū* [Kyoto: Higashi Honganji Kyōkakenkyūsho, 1957], p. 274).

filial piety, patriotism, morality and even philosophy.[3] Later he wrote to a friend that he could not remember wetting his sleeves as much as at that time. A year after his study of the *Āgamas*, he received a copy of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus from his disciple Akegarasu Haya 暁烏 敏, and again Kiyozawa was deeply moved. Originally a slave and physically handicapped from the experience, Epictetus insisted on spiritual independence from secular power, a theme often seen in Kiyozawa's own writings. Epictetus also believed that pain originates from the unenlightened part of oneself and awaits illumination by the knowledgeable part (much like the Abhidharma notion in early Buddhism that *avidyā* is to be gradually erased by *vidyā*), and that responsibility for its removal is totally internal.[4] The ideal of Socrates fearlessly facing death, echoed in Plato and the later Stoics, clearly helped Kiyozawa confront his terminal illness, and the message of Epictetus must also have strengthened his resolve to improve himself through meditation. But, we might wonder how much of this Stoic asceticism is also reflected in Kiyozawa's impatience with the sedentary life needed for his recuperation as well as in the "minimum possible" life-style he later developed which surely contributed to his early death.

Shinran's thought as recorded in the *Tannishō* by Yuien is known now as a centerpiece of Shin Buddhist (Shinshū) thought, but in fact the popularity of this text today can be traced directly back to its "discovery" by Kiyozawa Manshi. In connection with the *Tannishō* and Shinran's thought in general, it should be mentioned that, as the lone Mahāyāna thinker in Kiyozawa's doctrinal threesome, Shinran represents all mainstream Mahāyāna philosophical currents.[5] Specific

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[3] Cf. Kiyozawa's essay entitled "*Shūkyōteki Shinnen no Hissu Jōken*" ("The Necessary Conditions of Religious Faith") in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū* (The Collected Works of Kiyozawa Manshi), ed. Akegarasu Haya and Nishimura Miyake, 8 vols. (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1953–56), vol. 6, p. 141ff.; hereafter all citations of Kiyozawa's writings are from the *Zenshū*.

[4] Clearly, there is much thought of a similar nature in the antimaterialistic phase of the Stoics and early Buddhism. The former's disdain of nationalistic identification corresponds to the Buddhist notion that the *saṅgha* is above society and its laws; both uphold the ideal of the solitary ascetic and describe his spiritual goals in negational expressions such as, in the case of the Stoics: "Athens is beautiful. Yes, but happiness is far more beautiful—freedom from passion and disturbance, the sense that your affairs depend on no one" (from Bertrand Russell: *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 264).

[5] That is, the theory of two truths, the idealism of Yogācāra, the anti-conceptual

to Shinran are his notions of the enlightenment of faith (*shinjin* 信心) as the central religious issue; the mutual exclusion of self-centered, self-motivated practice (*jiriki* 自力) and "other"-centered practice (*tariki* 他力); and the expunging of the traditional life-style within monastic communities (S., *saṅgha*) for priests, urging instead that they live in the secular world yet remain "neither monk nor layman" (*hisō hizoku* 非僧非俗). Kiyozawa is clearly indebted to Shinran in ways beyond calculation, but what begs further investigation is precisely how Kiyozawa differed from the orthodox policies expounded by the Higashi Honganji Shinshū church of his time—an area of study unfortunately beyond the limits of this paper. Kiyozawa's religious understanding was labelled heterodox (*i-anjin* 異安心) by the church establishment, yet he himself became a founder of a new lineage of Shinshū thought, based upon the academic study of Shinran's ideas, that continues to this day. In any case, there seems little doubt that Kiyozawa is very close to Shinran on points of Shinshū doctrine: the rejection of the imperative of living in a monastic community, the dynamic of *jiriki* practice being subjugated by *tariki* experience, and maintaining an attitude which confronts one's ignorance while affirming one's liberation by means of the "Other Power" as a model expressing the pan-Mahāyāna ideal of *nirvāṇa* = *saṃsāra*, enlightenment = defilement.

Turning to the events of Kiyozawa's life, it is probably significant for his free-thinking views on Shinshū doctrine that he did not become a priest through hereditary obligation. Beginning with the precedent established by Shinran in the thirteenth century, the Shinshū priesthood did not require celibacy, resulting in a hereditary transmission. However, like many other significant figures in the Meiji period, Kiyozawa was actually born into a lower-ranking samurai family. He was raised in the eastern part of the Nagoya metropolis, an area in fact originally enfeoffed to the bakufu ruling family. Thus we can probably assume a strong influence by the prevailing Neo-Confucian samurai values of the late Tokugawa period: self-discipline, frugality and propriety in human relations. But Kiyozawa's neighborhood was also a stronghold of lay Shinshū belief, and Kiyozawa seems to have been particularly touched by his own mother's piety.

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dialectic of Mādhyamika, the nirvāṇa = saṃsāra equation of Prajñā-pāramitā, the interpenetrating organic cosmology of the Avataṃsaka (J. Kegon) sutra, etc.

Always an excellent student in school, he was placed in a preliminary medical school by his father at the age of 15. Though he achieved high marks, he quit in the same year, apparently due to a lack of motivation. It was at this time, when urged by a local priest,[6] that Kiyozawa chose to enter the religious path as a solution to his career quandary. He later wrote of this period as one in which he had little actual religious motivation, but found himself attracted to the course of study offered by the Honganji. He was ordained at the age of 15 in 1878, moving to Kyoto to study at the Honganji high school. In 1883 he entered Tokyo University in humanities and lost no time in choosing to focus on the study of Western philosophy. Under E. F. Fenellosa, the first foreign professor of philosophy in Japan, he eagerly pursued Hegel, Spinoza, Mill and Spencer. On graduation, he continued into graduate school in religious studies, attracted strongly to Hegel (Fenellosa's own philosophy was a mixture of Hegel and Spinoza).

His rejection of utilitarianism for the idealism of Hegel certainly foreshadows his later moral and ethical alienation from the Meiji social and political propaganda of "enrich the nation and strengthen the armed forces" (*fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵). Philosophically, Hegel was significant for Kiyozawa because here he found the notion of an infinite dimension of Reason which Kiyozawa then extended to the Pure Land Buddhist concept of *anjin* 安心 (religious assurance, or literally, "pacified mind"). It was his understanding that, more than merely a phrase from traditional doctrine, *anjin* was a psychological experience based in a universal logos. At this time, Kiyozawa also developed a Hegelian-like organic view of the universe as an infinite whole composed of finite parts.[7] Yet he was sophisticated enough to see the fallacy in Hegel's odd belief in the supreme power and glory of the state, something noteworthy because his study was taking place when the sociopolitical ethic surrounding Kiyozawa in fact professed the same ideals as those put forth by Hegel. Instead, he seems to have cleverly maintained Hegel's metaphysical model as a means of resisting the increasing politicization of values by the state in Japan in the 1880s and 1890s by focusing on the greater significance of universals.

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[6] Ryūge Kūon 龍華空音.

[7] From Hegel he also adopted the concepts of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis: 定立, 反定立, 総合.

His writings at this time also express a deep self-reflection on the Buddhist concept of affliction by ignorance (S. *kleśa*, J. *bonnō* 煩悩), and the importance of the traditional monastic rules of discipline. To some degree we can attribute the strength of his concern to his having entered the priesthood as a teenager. It is known, for example, that he was teased for his seriousness by his high school classmates who had all grown up in temples and had become somewhat blasé about their Buddhism; they gave him the nickname "Bishop." But it is clear that Kiyozawa's spiritual concerns became the dominant motivating force in his life at some point during his study while at Tokyo University, for he forsook a promising academic career to work instead for the reform and revitalization of his church. Academically, Kiyozawa Manshi could have become Japan's first scholar to establish a comprehensive philosophy based on Western models; indeed one of his classmates wrote, "Of the 12 or 13 of us, Manshi was the only one who could rise to the highest position in something, the only one who would leave something behind after his death besides a tombstone."[8] Nishida Kitarō, who did go on to become Japan's first modern philosopher, remarked: "Originally there were many people in Japan who studied philosophy, but the only people whom we should really call 'philosophers' were Ōnishi Hajime and my own Kiyozawa Manshi."[9]

Upon finishing his graduate program, Kiyozawa immediately began working within the Higashi Honganji educational system, an institution whose reform will occupy him until his death. He told others he owed the church his labor because it educated him despite his poverty, but Kiyozawa conceived of his obligation in a way that would infuriate the slow-moving church hierarchy. His efforts to reform the manner in which young priests were educated also became a vehicle for expressing his philosophical and religious ideas, because the major issue in his struggle with the church was the content of Shinshū doctrine and what it implied ethically. From his first positions at the age of 26 as ad-

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[8] As quoted in Yoshida, p. 71.

[9] ibid., p. 1. Cf. pp. 30–31 where Yoshida points out that Nishida was close to the Seishinshugi movement and contributed an article to the movement's journal *Seishinkai* entitled "Knowledge and Love" which also appeared in his famous *A Study of Good*. Yoshida feels Kiyozawa had a more direct philosophical influence on Nishida than D. T. Suzuki.

ministrator and instructor, he began to petition, speak out publicly, and lobby for higher educational standards. Unfortunately, at this time the Higashi Honganji organization had huge debts to repay and was committed to a major reconstruction project of one of its main temples in Kyoto. Coupled with a reticence to alter the feudalistic relations between church and lay supporters remaining nearly intact from the Tokugawa period, this financial burden kept the church's hands tied whenever Kiyozawa and his idealistic followers suggested major changes in curriculum, academic requirements, etc. In 1897, while leading (at the age of 35) what had become a nationwide *cause célèbre* in the newspapers[10] to accept a number of changes within the church and its institutions, including democratic choice of the next head administrator and objective principles of research for all Buddhist doctrine, Kiyozawa Manshi was censured[11] by his church.

The censure was lifted one year later, and merely three years after its onset, changes in the leadership of the Honganji resulted in Kiyozawa being named president of the reformed (and to be rebuilt) Shinshū University, the forerunner of present day Ōtani University. Although this represented a degree of recognition of the value of his ideals by the Ōtani-ha organization, his stay in this position was short-lived. Barely a year after his appointment, Kiyozawa resigned over yet another ideological conflict. The issue this time was a debate within the university over the need for secular accreditation of the school, with the majority of the students demanding certification of their faculty by the Ministry of Education. Kiyozawa refused to give in to what he clearly saw as secular encroachment upon his religious institution, saying: "This is out of the question. Our students are here only to deal with purely religious questions."[12] Kiyozawa by this time had become undeniably cynical about the real rewards of the values of materialism and its accompanying social movements that he saw in Japan toward mono-

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[10] High school and college students who signed petitions in support of the movement were expelled by church administrator Atsumi Kaien. Inoue Enryō and Nanjō Fumio also supported Kiyozawa who at one point managed to assemble 2500 believers in Kyoto at a conference of his own design to discuss educational goals and policy.

[11] The term used was *jomei* 除名, referring at least to removal from office, but whose exact ramifications are still unclear to me.

[12] Yoshida, p. 144.

[13] ibid.

polistic capitalism and authoritarianism; he had no desire to watch Shinshū University turn into another of the "worldly universities set up for those seeking bread and fame."[13] Although the cries of protest were only for the ouster of his administrator, Sekine Jinnō, he himself also resigned, for the policies were indeed his own.[14]

These experiences, while seemingly disastrous for his career, in fact only served to strengthen Kiyozawa's resolve toward the significance of his ideals. They also produced through the years a loyal group of young intellectuals who supported his causes. The last such group before Kiyozawa's death was called the Kōkōdō, meaning 'The Cave of Direct, Intuitive Perception,' and together they produced the last and best known in a string of publications initiated by Kiyozawa called *Seishinkai* 精神界, or 'The Realm of the Spirit.'

Seishinkai came out monthly with essays by Kiyozawa and others in the Kōkōdō. Often considered blasphemous within the traditional Buddhist world, *Seishinkai* had a tremendous impact among intellectuals at the time.[15] Many of Japan's leading prewar Buddhist scholars emerged from this group, including Tokiwa Daijō, Murakami Senshō, Sasaki Gesshō, Akanuma Chizen, Kaneko Daiei, and Soga Ryōjin. Indeed, one of the commonly echoed praises of Kiyozawa Manshi heard today centers on his heroic struggle to purge Buddhist thought, especially Shinran's, of much of the doctrinal ossification that had all but obscured its spiritual message to the modern world. The journal itself was so named for a movement known as *Seishinshugi* 精神主義, the name given to the ideology of the Kōkōdō.[16] In a small rented house in Tokyo that became their 'cave', Kiyozawa lived with a number of his followers in a sparse, rather ascetic life-style. Their motto, hung in the

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[14] Campaigns were immediately formed among students to retain Kiyozawa, but he refused to be persuaded to return to his position.

[15] It is considered one of the two progressive journals which had the greatest impact on the Buddhist world in Japan in this period. The other was *Shinbukkyō* 新仏教.

[16] It remains unclear to the author whether or not Kiyozawa's choice of the name *Seishinshugi* reflected a conscious translation from the Western word, *Spiritualism*. Although the meaning of the latter has varied in different contexts, we can be certain that Kiyozawa at least was not drawing on the late nineteenth century movement centering around communication with the dead. However, the idealist movement called by this name may have influenced Kiyozawa, given an essay he wrote entitled, "*Seishinshugi to Seijō*" ("Seishinshugi and Idealism").

central hallway, read, "Without bitterness toward heaven, without seeking among men." Tokiwa Daijō, the great Tendai scholar, later remarked that "the life-style of the 'cave' made it seem as if the *saṅgha* of ancient times had appeared right before your eyes."[17] Although Kiyozawa was only able to participate for two years due to the deterioration of the tuberculosis that was soon to take his life, he was clearly the figure who directly inspired the group. He gave public lectures every Monday night, and soon after his death, the fledgling movement began a "back to Manshi" campaign.[18]

His attempts at reforming his church having run their course, Kiyozawa at this time settled down in an attempt to forge his ideas into a social pragmatic for the intellectual society of his time. For the Kōkōdō the message of *seishinshugi* was that "perfect freedom," defined as spiritual in nature and thereby devoid of social conflict, was attainable through diligent asceticism and study. By this late stage in Kiyozawa's relatively short life, his "conversion to *tariki*" is well attested, especially in his famous essay entitled "*Waga Shinnen*," or "My Faith," where he attributes all his accomplishments to the work of the Tathāgata.[19] Nevertheless, in explaining *seishinshugi*, Kiyozawa does not profess pantheistic beliefs; in fact he is rather critical of the other Buddhist leaders who have blurred the distinction between sacred and profane. In his lambasting of what he considered the overly secularized Buddhism of Inoue Enryō, Murakami Senshō, and Nakanishi Gorō, he expresses a theme we will examine below in some detail, namely, that religion has intrinsic value and only suffers when judged by nonreligious standards:

"When reaching an understanding that religion occupies a different kind of locale outside any benefit to society or ethical action, one has then taken a step within it and no longer sees any need to evaluate religion from outside of it. This is the proper standpoint of *seishinshugi*. Therefore, rejecting external standards, *seishinshugi* bases its

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[17] Yoshida, p. 150.

[18] Yoshida gives a number of examples throughout his biography of Kiyozawa Manshi to explain the decline of the movement after Kiyozawa's death until its own extinction in the 1920's.

[19] Translated by Bando Shōjun, "The Great Path of Absolute Other Power" and "My Faith," in *The Eastern Buddhist*, vol. 5, no. 2 (October 1972), pp. 141–152.

standards internally; without affixing our gaze on objective structures, we hold the subjective mental states to be essential. At times this may mean subjectivism, at other times it may mean introspective analysis."[20]

Before we discuss Kiyozawa's ideas on religion and ethics, let us first take a look at the philosophical currents in society that may have influenced his views. We know that as the Neo-Confucian influence upon Tokugawa rulers grew, Buddhism was increasingly looked upon with rancor by the secular establishment in the late Edo period. The Mito school, which played a major role in the revolution leading to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, often made Buddhism the scapegoat for the nation's economic shortcomings. In one case of Mito school influence, the regional daimyo of Satsuma during the 1850s, Shimazu Nariakira, announced a plan to melt down all Buddhist bells under his control for the manufacture of guns and ammunition. As fate would have it, he died before he could carry this out and the policy was discontinued.[21] The first year of the Meiji Restoration saw an official policy enacted in which Shintō shrines were to be purged of all Buddhist elements, reflecting the Mito ideology that blended Shintō nationalism and Neo-Confucianist feudalistic loyalty. This policy included everything from removing all Buddhist art from Shintō shrines and Buddhist words from the names of Shintō deities (and the shrines themselves) to forced laicization of Buddhist monks living in Shintō establishments. Known today as "*haibutsu kishaku*" 排仏毀釈, this policy of oppression probably was aimed more at the restoring of prestige and power to the emperor and the Shintō myth surrounding the imperial family than the goal of purging Japan of all Buddhist influence; its social impact upon the *sangha* was nevertheless of major proportions. In the 1890s the government relaxed its attack,[22] and by the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, every established Buddhist sect had become supportive of the military incur-

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[20] From a speech given in 1901 to the 14th Summer Seminar of the Kansai Association of Buddhist Youth; cf. Yoshida, pp. 159–60.

[21] *Nihon Bukkyōshi: Kindai Kinseihen*, vol. III, eds. Ienaga Saburō, Tamamuro Taisei et al. (Kyoto: Hozōkan, 1967), p. 276.

[22] Chiefly due to the influence of Itō Hirobumi, who saw in Buddhism a conservative force of no small potential benefit to the political goals of expanded capitalism at home and imperialism abroad.

sion into Manchuria, displaying an eagerness to affirm their chauvinism by willingly sending clergy as chaplains to the war front.[23] By now the *sangha* was expected to provide an ethic for the nation by upholding both the morality of the Imperial Rescript on Education and the materialistic optimism of modern capitalism.[24] The psychological trauma experienced during the first 35 years of Meiji by the Buddhist world in Japan is an area deserving far greater study.

As if this was not enough, Western Enlightenment thinkers in Japan, strongly influenced by John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, also seemed to possess an inexhaustible supply of ideological ammunition to hurl at Buddhism. Buddhism was frequently derided for holding that passions led to suffering and depravity; instead the Japanese were urged to accept the "modern" notion that the passions were at the very core of so-called natural human rights. Some even claimed that the more civilized nations of the world achieved their status at least partly because they displayed greater passion than their backward neighbors![25] To thinkers like Nishi Amane and Katō Hiroyuki, the Buddhist esteem of asceticism seemed to be holding the nation back from a Darwinian social evolution based on the pursuit of pleasure. It is probably safe to generalize here that most Japanese Enlightenment thinkers encouraged the growth of capitalism for its value of increasing the country's strength, although they did raise arguments about the necessity of distinguishing between the Japanese "people" (*minzoku* 民俗) and the Japanese "nation" (*kokka* 国家), one of the most fundamental issues of Japan's modern political identity.[26] The Protestant thinker, Tokutomi Sohō, active in the democratic movement contemporary

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[23] *Ajia Bukkyōshi—Nihonhen VIII: Kindai Bukkyō*, eds. Nakamura Hajime, Kasahara Kazuo, Kanaoka Hidetomo (Kosei Shuppansha, 1972), vol. VII.

[24] Buddhist monks at this time had to be examined and approved by the Ministry of Education before they were allowed to serve as school teachers to children.

[25] "*Kindai Bukkyō ni okeru Rinri to Shūkyōsei ni tsuite*" ("Ethics and Religiosity in Modern Buddhism") by Ikeda Eishun, in *Nihon ni okeru Rinri to Shūkyō*, ed. by Shimode Sekiyo (Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1980), p. 249.

[26] Enlightenment thinkers in Meiji Japan have been criticized for generally remaining essentially political in their outlook, resulting in a lack of concern for the individual internalization and corresponding value shift that took place in Europe. It is not surprising that most of these Enlightenment ethics were, however deep their understanding, unable to withstand the same ethical politicization that Japan has undergone for most of its history.

with Kiyozawa Manshi, wrote an essay entitled "*Hiensei*" 否厭世, "A Negation of Worldly Pessimism," in which he rebuked Buddhism for its alienation from worldly concerns, and lamented Japan's fate of historically accepting Buddhism because it impeded the growth of Japan's capitalistic economy.[27]

The charge of misanthropy came not only from capitalists, but socialists (many of whom were Christians) as well.[28] Undaunted, Buddhist sectarian establishments continued to operate a system of ascetic discipline based on world renunciation. Yet in the later Meiji period individuals did emerge who, unable to ignore the political pressure, began to speak out in an effort to reconcile Buddhist renunciation (*shukke* 出家) with the sociopolitical demands of an ethic pursuing economic and military expansion. Perhaps the best known of the apologists was Inoue Enryō, who argued that Buddhist culture had made significant contributions to the Japanese nation in the past and should not be seen as an obstacle to its development in the future.[29]

But, for Kiyozawa Manshi, people like Inoue Enryo typified the morass of his church—i.e., people with a shallow understanding of Buddhism expressing positions based more on feelings of nationalism than any philosophical conclusion or religious experience. Kiyozawa himself had definite opinions about this question of rapprochement between Buddhism and Japan's social and political ideals: "If we can agree that life, property, power and fame are worldly *dharmas* (i.e., elements, issues), then it is clear that for anyone seeking freedom, disdain for the world is essential."[30]

Yet as much as Kiyozawa affirmed the importance of worldly pessimism, he equally opposed the traditional Buddhist path of renunciation. His resolution of this apparent conflict stems from his ideas about the relationship of religion and ethics. Kiyozawa realized that, at least in the case of Buddhism, flight to a monastic community merely

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[27] Yoshida, p. 186.

[28] This is not to say, however, that all Enlightenment and/or Christian thinkers were in unanimity on this point. Yoshida mentions (pp. 187–88) that the correspondence between Kiyozawa and Ōnishi Hajime, a Christian philosopher, shows the latter's affirmation of *ensei* 厭世, "worldly pessimism," as of primary importance to the strength of the Buddhist message.

[29] *Nihon Bukkyōshi*, vol. III, p. 114.

[30] "*Shinrei no Shuyō: Ensei*" (35), vol. 6, p. 321ff.

meant substituting the ethical system of the monastery for that of society; it did not solve the issue of how ethics and religion should be viewed vis-à-vis each other. He instead focused on the fact that all ethical systems were based on social and psychological expediencies, hence transient and moreover impossible to live by. Religious truths, on the other hand, should be transhistorical as they are universal and atemporal. One should be involved with the issues of society, but inwardly maintain a calm, focused demeanor. Kiyozawa's term for this was 'externally a layman, internally a monastic' (*gaizoku naisō* 外俗内僧).[31]

In order to understand Kiyozawa's writings on the imperative of discriminating religion from ethics, one must first be familiar with the implications of the Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrinal concept of absolute and worldly truth. Absolute truth (S., *paramārtha*) is infinite, transcendent, and noncontextual; worldly truth (*saṃvṛti*) manifesting in specific circumstances that color its meaning, is the truth we come to know as conceivable. From a political point of view, a somewhat secularized notion of worldly truth is open to manipulation by authority. This is precisely what has happened throughout the history of Buddhism in East Asia and Tibet, where sutras were regularly chanted and even created expressly for the protection of the state and at times emperors even declared themselves Bodhisattvas (J. *gongen* 権現), fusing their political and religious authority. No less was this true in Meiji Japan, when, after the abandoning of the *haibutsu kishaku* policy, the government quickly found support among the established Buddhist sects for a new spirit of reintegration.

For Kiyozawa, this was clearly a travesty of Buddhist *saṃvṛti* ethics, however old this history of cooperation in Japan. Although he could have argued for a separation of church and state based upon his studies in the early *Āgama* sutras, Kiyozawa instead brought forth an interesting analysis in terms of Shinshū theology. Here is one presentation of it:

"In general, when one compares worldly truth and morality, or worldly and the nation-state (*kokka*), one should lay out the qualities of each of them. First of all, concerning worldly truth and morality, one must know what is meant by worldly. Upon trying to explain this,

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[31] "*Hoyōzakki*," vol. 5, p. 8ff.

one immediately notices that worldly stands alongside absolute truth as part of the doctrine of *tariki* Shinshū. In other words, it is not a teaching of morality but a teaching of religion; it is not a teaching about the path of men but about the path of Buddhas. Seeing this, it goes without saying that worldly truth is something to be explained by a religious person, and that its goal must be to produce religious results. On the other hand, morality is morality, not religion; it is a teaching of the way of men, not the way of Buddhas. Hence, it is something that should be expounded by a moralist, and its goal must be to produce moral results. Although politicians do not avoid speaking about business matters, politicians are not merchants."[32]

Elsewhere, in his essay entitled "*Shūkyō to Rinri to no Sōkan*" 宗教と倫理との相関 (The Correlation between Religion and Ethics), Kiyozawa attacks three standard arguments traditionally offered for the unitary view of religion and ethics. These are too lengthy to explain in detail here, but in his rebuttal to the first argument, a crucial element of his own thesis on the disestablishment of religion and ethics is expressed which deserves exposition. It concerns the danger of overrationalizing the irrational. The first argument states the "unitary" position in which religion and ethics were completely fused in ancient times, merely discriminating a rational dimension of this unified whole as ethical and an irrational one as religious; through time the ethical split off from the religious and exists today in a thoroughly rationalized format.[33] Kiyozawa then raises the following issue:

"We then must ask why present day ethics were once ancient religion. The answer to this would have to be based on human intelligence. For today human intelligence has developed such that we have rational ethics, but in ancient times we had superrational[34]

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[32] "*Shūkyōteki Dōtoku* (*Zokutai*) *to Futsū Dōtoku to no Kōshō*" ("The Relationship between Religious Morality and Ordinary Morality"), vol. 6, p. 212. This essay, Kiyozawa's last, will be carried in a future issue of this journal.

[33] Vol. 6, p. 374ff. The other two arguments run as follows: (1) Religion is required as a means to restrain the masses, i.e., the real purpose of religion is ethics. (2) Religion and ethics amount to the same thing since our main focus should be on practicing virtue and public good through judgements made of free will. This practice may be called either religion or ethics (depending on the situation).

[34] The two poles in this argument I have rendered rational and superrational following Kiyozawa's use of the unusual word *chōri* 超理 to designate non-rational elements

religion because of a lack of such development. We have two questions that must be raised at this point: 1) If we take what may be rational today and determine that it was something superrational in the past, then can we not assume that what is superrational today may one day very well become something rational? 2) Does not this imply, then, that what was valued for its efficacy as superrational in the past has lost that value today?

"Thus we have come to the point where for some people what is rational today is sufficient by itself, and there is no need whatsoever for anything superrational. And the amount [or degree] of which something is either rational or superrational is, from all points of views, still something acceptable as rationalized. We may reach a point where there is no need for the superrational, and yet we don't know how to judge the degree of this. Probably in the end, we will never be able to establish such judgements, . . . [hence] like in ancient times the superrational is a necessity for us today. . . . Thus we have no choice but to establish both religion and ethics. And from all points of view they cannot be undifferentiated."[35]

What Kiyozawa is reminding us of here is how the value of the sacred as sacred is weakened when it is subsumed by the profane, which in this case means social ethics. Kiyozawa's rhetoric betrays his deep concern for the necessity of maintaining religious values as such, fearing that any amalgamation of religion and ethics weakens the significance of each. Above he expresses the importance of perceiving religious issues as religious, clearly his overriding concern in this matter. But elsewhere, Kiyozawa also elucidates the contrary case, i.e., how religion as authority can corrupt ethics and morals. In his efforts to distinguish Buddhist morality from other belief systems which use external pressure to influence behavior, he notes the following:

"In other words, because the arbitrary thought-construction, 'you must do this, you must not do that', is added to the arbitrary abstractions of ordinary morality where one is merely ordered to 'do this, don't do that', one thinks of the situation as one in which a solemn

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instead of the common word for irrational, *higōri* 非合理. The prefix *chō-* here commonly means "trans-" as in "transcend" (*chōetsu* 超越) or "super-" as in "supernatural" (*chōshizen* 超自然).

[35] Vol. 6, pp. 375–76.

command has come down from God or Buddha saying, 'you absolutely must do this', or 'it is forbidden for you to do that'. Accordingly, people come to think that the crucial matter of their salvation will depend upon their ability or lack of it to execute moral behavior. . . . Hence, it is natural that an extreme anxiety develops regarding one's ability to behave appropriately."[36]

The issue of "appropriate moral behavior" is a central one in Kiyozawa's understanding of the spiritual significance of worldly truth (*samvṛti*), although not in the usual sense. Here it must be seen in terms of the phrase quoted above, "the goal [of worldly truth] must be to produce religious results." Instead of extolling the merits of living by moral standards, Kiyozawa instead focuses on the spiritual significance of the existential dilemma arising when we face the fact that ultimately we can never really execute "appropriate moral behavior," or as he succinctly puts it, "Knowing we must practice ethics, why are we unable to perfect this?"[37] Kiyozawa's answer is, again, thoroughly Buddhist: "It must be because of the profound existence of the so-called habits and inherent tendencies in each one of us."[38] In other words, our mental afflictions, the core cause of human suffering in Buddhism, are no less relevant to the anguish we feel about our inability to lead morally perfect lives than they are to our struggle for spiritual liberation. Utilizing the Shinshū concepts of *jiriki* and *tariki*, Kiyozawa labels the attachment to social and philosophical norms as "*jiriki* ethics," i.e., goal-oriented, ambitious and futile. Ethical concern itself, however, is never slighted in Kiyozawa's work: "The person who has attained a religious perspective inevitably realizes how imperative it is to uphold ethics. So saying this, we can state that those who do not perceive the importance of ethics have not yet entered into a religious perspective."[39] But the anxiety over the failure to easily establish ethical norms that are just and workable is an important lesson for Kiyozawa about the limits of our rationality. In this, as in his eschewing of the benefits of materialistic culture and any optimism about political reform, Kiyozawa remains a sort of "inner-worldly ascetic" (Weber), simply

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[36] ibid., pp. 221–22.
[37] ibid., p. 388.
[38] ibid.
[39] ibid., p. 378.

because, in his case, he denies the objective value of human perception.[40] Finding a purpose to this ethical impossibility, Kiyozawa reaches the following conclusion:

"The intent of the worldly truth teaching of Shinshū does not lie in seeking success in the area of its execution . . . [it] does not aim at the usual goal of competency in the execution [of the teaching] such that we perform a creditable or splendid deed. . . . In that case, just where does the objective of Shinshū's worldly truth lie? Its aim, in fact, is to lead one to the perception that one cannot perform these moral tasks. . . . For the most basic impediment blocking the entrance to *tariki* faith is the thought that one is able to practice *jiriki* discipline. Although there are many kinds of *jiriki*-disciplined practice, the most common are our acts of ethics and morality. While thinking one's moral behavior can be carried out commendably, it is ultimately impossible to enter into *tariki* religion."[41]

Kiyozawa Manshi thus affirms the paradoxical conclusion that the purpose of Buddhist morality is to teach us that we are incapable of living by it. Although he is nowhere explicit about which moral systems he includes in "ordinary morality" (does it include the morality of other religions?), his assumption that Buddhist ethics are somehow unique in their self-negating premise, in fact, clearly violates their original intent. The ethical and moral values of early Buddhism directly reflected a conception of self-development through discipline and insight marked by demarcated stages along a spiritual path of achievement (S. *mārga*) and there is no doubt Kiyozawa knew of this. The concept of the *mārga* is the essence of *jiriki* Buddhism; but through the Shinshū theological perspective, Kiyozawa came to the realization that "it is actually an indispensable condition for becoming religious that one (experiences) the perception that when one honestly seeks to per-

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[40] Interestingly, in his essay entitled "*Kojin to Shakai no Kankei*" ("The Relationship of the Individual and Society") published in 1897, Kiyozawa suggests the optimal social structure for Japan would be a model incorporating both Individualism and Socialism. Yet, just one year later, his romance with left-wing ideology seems to have gone awry, for in his article entitled "*Kojin to Shakaishugi*" ("The Individual and Socialism"), he is openly antagonistic to what he sees as the potential in Socialism to become another political system wherein the state has precedence to the point that it inhibits individual cultivation through self-reflection.

[41] Vol. 6, pp. 218–19.

form actions as per ethics or morality, in the end things do not go as one thought they would."[42] This is an interesting conclusion given its historical context. But it also suggests to us the general premise that, in order to thrive, religion requires moral paradox if not moral failure of its own values.

In the Seishinshūgi movement during his final years, Kiyozawa presents us with a rare combination of extreme individualism yet near total self-effacement. His repeated rejection of the politicized values of both secular and sacred society reveals a world of Buddhism significantly different from the vast majority of politically and socially accommodating Buddhist thinkers of his day. On the one hand he claims that our belief in God is not because He exists, rather He exists because we believe in Him. On the other, his extreme humility in essays like "*Waga Shinnen*" gives credit for all his achievements to the Tathāgata (Amitābha). Ethically, he keeps returning to the same point: good and evil are relative concepts, yet individuals set themselves up as ethical arbiters. And excluding those few who are enlightened, everyone's judgement is impaired by previous experience (*karma*) and personal aspiration. In an age when the scientific method had just emerged as the efficient means for rationalizing an ordered society, Kiyozawa wrote essays like, "We must free ourselves from the misconceptions of objectivism" ("*Kyakkanshugi no heishū o dakkyaku subeshi*" 客観主義の弊習を脱却すべし). Some of his most moving language can be seen in his writings on the social theory of "survival of the fittest" which glorifies competition as a healthy imperative for "progress" of the human race.[43] Here he concludes that we should reject the premise of regarding others as being in competition and thereby in opposition with us, but instead as Buddhas to be cherished and respected. On this point, one might argue that Shinran's idea of *akunin shōki*, i.e., that it is bad people who awaken to faith the easiest (because of their minimal *jiriki* interference), already precludes social Darwinism from Shinshū theology. But Kiyozawa took this a step further by affirming that the concept of "bad people" is largely a question of social class, and that thieves and murderers are not necessarily evil at all. In other words,

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[42] ibid.

[43] Cf. "*Hon'i Honbun no Jikaku*," vol. 6, p. 476ff.; "*Wagō no Kokoro*," vol. 6, p. 273ff.; and "*Zaiaku Shōji no Bonbu*."

liberation has nothing to do with good and evil; the real issue is ignorance and all of us are equally ignorant in spiritual matters, he reminds us, even scholars, whom he criticizes for their nonpragmatic "research Buddhism" (*kenkyū bukkyō* 研究仏教).[44]

Everyone feels some imperative to lead an ethical life-style, whether he is expressly religious or not. But Kiyozawa questions any idea of the perfectibility of man, or even the optimism that man's condition spiritually and emotionally will improve with the social progress of modern society as measured by increased democracy and a growing material standard of living. There is an apparent paradox here because as a Buddhist, Kiyozawa stands in one of the few religious traditions that does affirm the potential of each person to attain the spiritual status commensurate with the founder of the faith. Certainly relevant here is the notion of *mappō* 末法,[45] and perhaps we should perceive Kiyozawa as a modern interpreter of *mappō* for the twentieth century. In any case, he seems to be trying to tell us that all spiritual attainment, laying aside the question of perfectibility, must pass through, if not be based upon, a realization that all judgements of human behavior spring from a consciousness that is egocentric and severely impaired by ignorance, misconceptions, misperceptions, prejudices, etc. This is what he means by *jiriki* ethics. It is important to remember that Kiyozawa does not seek to purge all notion of ethics from our lives, both externally and internally. Rather he strives to offer a means to alleviate "those pains unrelieved by morality."[46] Another way of saying this, to borrow a phrase from his disciple, Akegarasu Haya, is that morality and ethics can create a significant obstacle to spiritual progress by fostering an attitude of smugness and complacency in those who feel they are obeying the rules and therefore profess "to have no guilt about their actions."[47]

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[44] Cf. Yoshida, pp. 16–17.

[45] The last of the three historical periods of Buddhist teachings before the coming of the next historical Buddha, Maitreya. As much as 1400 years before Kiyozawa's lifetime, many Buddhists in East Asia believed that so much time had passed since the historical Buddha had explained the truth that this third period had begun, and it was therefore now impossible for anyone to attain Buddhahood in this corrupt world by their own efforts.

[46] Yoshida, p. 17.

[47] "*Seishinshugi to Seijō*," in *Seishinkai*, vol. 1, no. 2; cf. Yoshida, p. 195.

We may now be able to trace the three basic textual sources of Kiyozawa's thought on religion and ethics. From the *Āgamas*, the earliest strand of Buddhist literature, comes the fundamental issue for all Buddhist thinkers: ignorance pervades everything we think or do and there is no way of trusting our judgements until ignorance is totally eliminated. From the Stoic philosopher Epictetus derives the conviction that the focus of one's practice must be on one's own mind, as well as perhaps the Socratic tradition in which ethics must be linked to knowledge. Finally, from Shinran stems the sophisticated argument combining *jiriki* and *tariki* with the two truths theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

It can probably be argued that Kiyozawa Manshi addressed the question of religion and ethics from a religious point of view because for him the central issue was how to preserve the supra-rational nature of religious experience without succumbing to ethical rationalization. Edward Shils' comment that "the more successful [rationalization] becomes, the more it endangers itself, the more it lays itself open to resistance,"[48] was made nearly eighty years after Kiyozawa's death, yet I think it affords an insight into the ethicoreligious polarity as Kiyozawa saw it. The point here is simply that it is reasonable to see movements like Seishinshūgi emerging as idealistic shelters against the storm of politically rationalized ethics pervading Japan at the dawn of its modern imperialistic era. Kiyozawa and others no doubt were keenly aware of the spiritual weakness of sectarian Buddhism revealed when its political ostracism in the early Meiji period produced apologetics and compromise instead of acceptance of its isolation as an opportunity to strengthen its message. Kiyozawa's refusal to take stands on specific ethical issues makes it hard to see him as a philosopher; yet as a religious figure he eludes Weber's categorization as either ascetic or mystic.[49] However enigmatic we may regard Kiyozawa Manshi, for

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[48] *Tradition*, by Edward Shils (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press: 1981), p. 316.

[49] Weber's typology can be found in his essay translated as "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. Gertz and Mills, pp. 322–59. Briefly, the active ascetic is defined as one who participates in the world as God's tool, seeking to tame what is "creatural and wicked" either in the external world or within himself. Mysticism instead implies a passive attitude to become a "vessel of the divine," for "the creature must be silent so that God may

someone living at a time when the powerful elements of society were remarkably successful in spreading a uniform social ethic, his struggle to retrieve spirituality from what he considered the transient thoroughfare of ethical norms may truly be called heroic. And the persistence of the myth of social homogeneity among the Japanese people only magnifies the relevance of his thought today.

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speak." Kiyozawa cannot be seen as a mystic either of contemplative flight from the world or of the inner-worldly type because there is no trace of consciously imposed passivity in his concept of *tariki*. Active, disciplined meditative practice is of the utmost importance to Kiyozawa, yet he neither seeks to master the world as a "rationally active ascetic," nor sees a need for avoiding any activity in the orders of the world (asceticist flight from the world). In short, Kiyozawa rejects both renunciation as well any escape from practicing self-cultivation. The traditional Buddhist monastic would probably fit into the "asceticist flight from the world" category, but Shinshū has struggled to bring Buddhist asceticism back into society without the notion of attempting to control its direction away from evil.