

Kiyozawa Manshi

A CASE OF THE RECEPTION
OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY IN JAPAN



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Outline

1. Introduction to Kiyozawa Manshi
2. Problem from Shin-ran – a kind of Logical Jumping
3. Kiyozawa's Handling of the Problem – Influence of the Western Philosophy

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Introduction to Kiyozawa Manshi – 1

Kiyozawa Manshi – A Japanese Buddhist thinker in the Meiji era

- ▶ lived in the latter half of the 19th century, Japan
- ▶ famous for a Japanese Buddhist thinker
- ▶ belonged to the True Pure Land Sect of Buddhism(浄土真宗)
- ▶ wrote many research books about Buddhist thoughts
- ▶ opened Otani University, known as one of a Buddhistic University in Japan
- ▶ He hasn't been so famous for a long time

Historical Background

- ▶ Because of the internal contradiction of Tokugawa government and the pressure of the western capitalism, latter half of the 19th century Japan was forced to totally change, politically, socially, and, economically, which is called ‘Meiji-Ishin(明治維新)’.
- ▶ So, in this period of Japan, there was a serious tension between Japanese traditional things and new western things.
- ▶ Also in the world of Japanese thoughts including Buddhist thoughts, some thinkers adapted to the western culture, and others opposed to them.
- ▶ **However, Kiyozawa’s acceptance was somehow unique.** Namely, he **made use of** the theoretical aspects of the western philosophy, in order to **revive** the traditional Japanese Buddhism.

Philosophical Aspects of Kiyozawa Manshi

- ▶ He studied Philosophy at University of Tokyo, and taught the history of western philosophy at some schools.
- ▶ He is sometimes said to be a Buddhist philosopher in early modern Japan.
- ▶ In this philosophical aspect, it can be said that, among modern Japanese philosophers, he was **almost the first modern philosopher that encountered with the western philosophy.**

The Life of Kiyozawa Manshi

- ▶ He was born in 1863, and died in 1903, lived only 39 years.
- ▶ In his 20s, he studied philosophy, especially about the theory of Hegel and Spencer.
- ▶ However, after he passed over 30, he began to **lament** the state of Japanese popular Buddhism at that time.
- ▶ According to him, Japanese popular Buddhism was in a state of crisis, **because it doesn't have theoretical foundation.**
- ▶ So, he started to set an aim of his study as this: **to unify the practice and the theory** in the field of Japanese Buddhism. Throughout his thoughts, this trial is expressed in a word **‘Spiritualism(精神主義)’**.

Writings

Philosophical

- ▶ *Metaphysics*(『純正哲学』)
- ▶ *Lecture of the History of Western Philosophy*(『西洋哲学史講義』)

Religious

- ▶ *Skeleton of A Philosophy of Religion*(『宗教哲学骸骨』)
- ▶ *Spiritualism*(『精神主義』)

Conclusion of this section

- ▶ **To unify the practice and the theory** in the field of Japanese Buddhism – Practical motivation of his ‘Spiritualism’
- ▶ In this presentation, I pay attention to his **theoretical aspect** of ‘Spiritualism’.
- ▶ In the next section, I will focus on **a kind of logical jumping**, existing in Japanese traditional idea of True Pure Land Sect of Buddhism.
- ▶ And in the third section, I will see how Kiyozawa handled this jumping. Here, I will claim that **Kiyozawa’s way of handling of this jumping was influenced by the western philosophy.**

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Problem from Shin-ran – a kind of Logical Jumping – 1

Introduction to this section

Presupposition

- ▶ As I said before, Kiyozawa belonged to the True Pure Land Sect of Buddhism.
- ▶ In this respect, it can be said that Kiyozawa was influenced by medieval Japanese Buddhist, Shin-ran(親鸞)(1173-1262), the opener of this sect.
- ▶ Many researchers point out that Kiyozawa's 'Spiritualism' is considered as an application of Shin-ran's pray to the modern world.

What is jumping

- ▶ there is a logical jumping between the **stage of our everyday practice** and the **stage of the salvation of Amitabha(阿弥陀)**
- ▶ **from our point of view**, there is a logical jumping

Problem from Shin-ran – a kind of Logical Jumping – 2

Shin-ran's Thought

- ▶ Shin-ran was one of a follower of Hou-nen(法然)(1133-1212), who was the opener of the Pure Land Sect of Buddhism(浄土宗).
- ▶ Hou-nen's main teaching is that, if we pray to Amitabha, we will be saved – person who doesn't pray, cannot be helped
- ▶ But Shin-ran opposed to Hou-nen's idea, and put an emphasis on the belief to religion itself, not on praying.
- ▶ So, according to Shin-ran, under our situation of salvation, there are no religious ranks between us.
- ▶ He taught that we should be awaken to the 'Absolute Other-Power'(絶対他力).

Kiyozawa's Worry

- ▶ So, Hou-nen advocated the 'Self-Salvation', while Shin-ran advocated the 'Other-Power'.
- ▶ Therefore, according to Shin-ran, we should not endeavor to attain this state, but the Absolute Other-Power of Amitabha exerts the power.
- ▶ So, we don't have to understand this jumping, but just only believe.
 - Of course, I don't think Kiyozawa attacked this idea.
 - But he worried that popular people will misunderstand this idea, and will think they don't have to esteem the religion.
- ▶ As I said before, in order to revive the traditional Japanese Buddhism, Kiyozawa started to demand 'Spiritualism'.

Conclusion of this section

- ▶ So, from Kiyozawa's point of view, we should esteem Shin-ran's idea, but Kiyozawa thought that, because of the lack of its theoretical aspects, traditional Japanese Buddhism at that time was in a state of crisis.
- ▶ Therefore, Kiyozawa's task becomes as follows:
Shin-ran's idea of jumping should be theorized, **without neglecting the characteristic of the 'Absolute Other-Power'**
- ▶ In the next section, I will show you how Kiyozawa handled this task
– He used a word 'fundamental inconsistency(根本の撞着)', which meaning is similar to the western philosophical concept, 'Match of confrontation products'.

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Introduction to this section

- ▶ In this section, first, I will show you the key point of Kiyozawa's 'Spiritualism'.
- ▶ Generally, Kiyozawa's 'Spiritualism' corresponds with Shin-ran's thought.
- ▶ Namely, 'Spiritualism' also has a jumping.
- ▶ But from Kiyozawa's Philosophical writings, we can find a hint to explain this jumping – 'fundamental inconsistency'.
- ▶ Then, I will compare this idea with the western philosophical concept, 'Match of confrontation products'.

Kiyozawa's 'Spiritualism'

- ▶ First, he says that, in order to live, everyone must have any 'Standing Point(立脚地)'. And according to him, this 'Standing Point' must depend on the 'Absolute Infinite Being(絶対無限者)'
- ▶ Here, Kiyozawa believed that, just by practicing the religion, we directly come in touch with this 'Absolute Infinite Being', and he labeled this practice as 'Spiritualism'.
- ▶ Secondly, he opposed putting one above the other by objective points of view, and agreed with the **subjective view**. But this means that **we should be satisfied with the situation looked at in the eyes in our own**.
- ▶ And thirdly, these assumptions are supported by the idea of the 'Absolute Other-Power(絶対他力)', which is the same as Shin-ran's idea.

Jumping of Kiyozawa's 'Spiritualism'

- ▶ Here, I will focus on the point that there is a certain type of jumping in the 'Spiritualism'.
- ▶ In the field of our actual practice, he recommends us **to act as limited beings**, not to touch with the infinite being.
- ▶ However, on the other hand, he also says that, in order to live, we must **depend on the 'Absolute Infinite Being'**. Here, the important point is that the 'Absolute Infinite Being' must concern with our everyday lives.
- ▶ So, although the stage of 'Subjectivism' and the stage of 'Absolute Infinite Being' are **plainly different, both two thoughts concern the same situation of our everyday life.**

‘fundamental inconsistency’

- ▶ In *Skeleton of A Philosophy of Other-Power*(『他力門哲学骸骨』), Kiyozawa presented this problem as a word ‘fundamental inconsistency’.
- ▶ According to him, if we closely examine the logic of existence, we finally bump into this ‘fundamental inconsistency’, for example, the situation that one and multitude, or finite and infinite are connected and supported each other(「一と多、有限と無限の相即」).
 - If we thoroughly examine two seemingly opposite poles, we suddenly come to the idea of union of the two.
- ▶ In this respect, we can easily connect Kiyozawa's ‘fundamental inconsistency’ with the western traditional concept, ‘Match of confrontation products’, which is known to the concept as Nicolaus Cusanus or Hegel.

Conclusion and the Remaining Topics

- ▶ As we have seen, Shin-ran and Kiyozawa has a similar kind of logical jumping, between the stage of our everyday life and the stage of the 'Absolute Infinite Being' (or Solvation of Amitabha).
- ▶ But it is important to notice, that both two thinkers thought that this jumping is not a problem at all.
- ▶ Among this, it can be said that, Japanese early modern thinker, Kiyozawa Manshi struggled to theorize this jumping itself, by using make of the concept of the western philosophy.
- ▶ I have left too many topics. For example, how about the relationship between Kiyozawa and the western medieval Christian theories?