

Kiyozawa Manshi and Nishida Kitarō

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1. Introduction

KIYOZAWA Manshi 清沢満之 was born in 1863 and Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 in 1870; the former a product of the waning years of the Tokugawa shogunate, the latter a child of the dawning Meiji era. With only seven years separating their births, and both having studied philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University (present-day Tokyo University), it would not be surprising if the two knew each other personally. However, for some inexplicable reason, their lives took diverging courses.

Of course, it can be surmised that Nishida was aware of Kiyozawa's name already in his university years. After finishing his courses at the Faculty of Letters, Nishida returned to Kanazawa to search for a job. During this time, he was in close correspondence with his good friend Yamamoto Ryōkichi 山本良吉 (1871–1942). In a letter, dated October 20, 1894, Nishida mentions Kiyozawa's name: "The other day, Uno told me that philosophy professor Tokunaga (Kiyozawa) Manshi could no longer teach at his school in Kyoto because of serious lung problems, and therefore Uno had written Imagawa asking whether he knew of anyone who might be able to teach philosophy. Since nothing would make me happier than being able to teach philosophy, I wrote to Imagawa earnestly inquiring after the position."¹ The Imagawa men-

¹ *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū* (The Collected Works of Nishida Kitarō, hereafter abbreviated as NKZ), vol.18, pp. 28–29.

tioned here is Imagawa Kakushin 今川覚神 (1860–1936), formerly a principal of Kanazawa Public Middle School.² In 1894, Imagawa had moved to Kyoto Ōtani Middle School. Nishida apparently wrote Imagawa asking for his help in securing a job teaching philosophy at Shinshū Daigakuryō and Ōtani Middle School.

At this time, however, Nishida's move to Kyoto did not materialize. Instead he moved to Ishikawa prefecture to take up successive posts at Nanao Branch Middle School and Fourth National High School. However, after about a year at his second position, he was removed. He was helped through this difficult period by Hōjō Tokiyuki 北条時敬, his old teacher at that school, through whose efforts Nishida was able to secure a new post at Yamaguchi High School. This is precisely the time that Nishida met Kiyozawa. According to Yoshida Kyūichi 吉田久一, Nishida and Kiyozawa “met in the lodgings of Kiyokawa Enjō 清川円誠 (1863–?), a fellow graduate of Tokyo Imperial University's philosophy department around 1897.”³ On September 3, 1897, while stopping over in Kyoto on the way to Yamaguchi, a note in Nishida's diary reads “Visited Mr. Kiyokawa.”⁴ This is probably when he met Kiyozawa. Yoshida, however, writes that “the two men parted without getting a chance to know each other well,” and Nishida's journal fails to mention Kiyozawa's name.

This would prove to be their only face-to-face encounter. However, Kiyozawa's influence on the formation of Nishida's thought is by no means small, a fact that can be clearly seen in the following entry in the latter's diary (January 14, 1902): “I am impressed by Mr. Kiyozawa's writings in *Seishinkai* 精神界 (Spiritual World).”⁵ Thus, we might say that a really true meeting between Nishida and Kiyozawa did not take place in their one brief encounter, but rather by means of the written word.

Kiyozawa passed away the following year in 1903 on June 6, at the age of 40. About a month later, we find the following event recorded in Nishida's diary: “Today (July 17) around 6 p.m., I visited Inaba at Jōkōin 常光院. We spoke about Kiyozawa. Stayed the night with Inaba.”⁶ “Inaba” here is Inaba Masamaru 稲葉昌丸 (1865–1944), Kiyozawa's junior by two years, who had

² In 1892, this school changed its name to Ōtani Middle School.

³ Yoshida 1961, p. 28.

⁴ NKZ, vol. 17, p. 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

studied education at the Ikuei School established by Higashi Honganji as an institute for elite education, before being sent with Kiyozawa to study at Tokyo Imperial University in 1881. Together with Kiyozawa and Imagawa, Inaba had fought for reform within the Shinshū Ōtani-ha (Higashi Honganji) administration and as a result of their involvement in this movement, Inaba, along with Kiyozawa and others, had been expelled from the Ōtani priesthood. Inaba had gone to Yamaguchi in search of employment, and thus had become one of Nishida's co-workers. Nishida became fast friends with Inaba, who came to Yamaguchi a month after Nishida. During the Yamaguchi period, entries such as "Visited Mr. Inaba" and "Mr. Inaba called" are frequent in Nishida's journal. Furthermore, in a letter addressed to Yamamoto Ryōkichi (September 15, 1899), Nishida writes "In Yamaguchi, the person in whom I have complete trust is Inaba Masamaru. On first sight, he is a genial gentleman. Although he seems undistinguished, he is someone you can count on. I value his friendship greatly."⁷ We may consider Inaba as the man who awakened Nishida's interest in the thought and religious faith of Kiyozawa.

When he arrived in Yamaguchi, Nishida had been burdened with many problems, regarding his family and so on. However, it appears that he experienced a kind of spiritual transformation there. In a letter to Yamamoto, dated November 11, 1897, Nishida writes the following: "When I first came here, I truly found everything around me disagreeable. However, after spending a great deal of time alone, thinking, I began to feel somewhat at peace. Although I was dissatisfied with many things then, looking back at myself I feel ashamed at how mean I was. I was deeply moved by the words from the sixth chapter of Matthew: 'Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?'"⁸ We are free from complaints when we abide by these words. Abiding by these words allowed me to pave over any discomfort or complaints."⁹ Here, we can see that the Bible provided spiritual support for Nishida at this time. However, the word "sitting" (*taza* 打坐) often appears in his diary. In an entry relating to a trip to Kyoto for the purpose of practicing Zen meditation (January 5, 1898), we can find the following account: "Purchased copies of the *Taikōroku* 退耕録 (Record of Taikō), *Mujintō* 無盡燈 (Inexhaustible Lamp), and a biography of Zen monks at the Baiyō Bookstore."¹⁰ *Mujintō* was the title of a journal published by the Shinshū

⁷ NKZ, vol. 18, p. 51.

⁸ Matthew 6:27.

⁹ NKZ, vol. 18, p. 46.

¹⁰ NKZ, vol. 17, p. 24.

Daigakuryō during the midst of the reform movement by Kiyozawa and his companions. Except for a brief period, Kiyozawa wrote an article in virtually every issue of this journal and Inaba was also a frequent contributor. We may thus conjecture that, before this trip to Kyoto, Nishida had already heard about *Mujintō*, as well as Kiyozawa's thought, from his friend Inaba.

2. Union with the Infinite

In this way, Nishida began to develop a strong interest in religion during his stay in Yamaguchi, and he would soon have the chance to present his thoughts on such matters in the pages of *Mujintō*. The opportunity of doing so arose when Nishida's junior classmate at Tokyo Imperial University, Yamamoto Yasunosuke 山本安之助, published a piece entitled "Risei to shūkyō 理性と宗教 (Reason and Religion)" in the February, March and May 1898 issues of the journal. Nishida presented his views of religion while voicing his critique of Yamamoto's perspective in the very next issue (June 1898). It seems likely that Nishida's piece, "Yamamoto Yasunosuke kun no 'Shūkyō to risei' to iu ronbun wo yomite shokan wo nobu 山本安之助君の「理性と宗教」と云ふ論文を読みて所感を述ぶ (Impressions upon Reading Yamamoto Yasunosuke's 'Reason and Religion')," found its way into *Mujintō* through Inaba's offices.¹¹

As the title indicates, Yamamoto's piece is an inquiry into the relation between reason and religion, but is particularly characterized by his emphasis on the place of reason within religion. Here, he claims that religious doctrines and beliefs cannot be attributed to a transcendental Being, but rather are brought forth by means of the reasoning of religious geniuses. Furthermore, he stresses the role played by reason in guiding religious emotions. In response, Nishida expresses doubts about such claims: "It seems that while you emphasize the external forms of religion as knowledge, you are unwilling to discuss its foundations in terms of the inner emotions."¹² In other words, according to Nishida, the core of religion is not to be found within knowledge or rationality, but rather in the intuition of the Absolute Infinite (*zettai mugen* 絶対無限). Nishida expresses this point in the following way: "That by which religion is religion is not to be found in any creeds or rituals, but in an indefinable moment by which we leave the mundane world into the

¹¹ Kitano Hiroyuki makes the same conjecture. See Kitano 1994, p. 605.

¹² NKZ, vol. 13, p. 72.

Infinite to be united with what philosophy might call the Absolute. Call them emotions or call them intuitions, but at any rate this is the place where true religion comes alive. Buddhism calls this ‘liberation,’ while Christianity regards it as ‘salvation.’”¹³

In this way, in the form of a rebuttal to Yamamoto’s views, Nishida presented the essentials of his own thoughts on religion. Here, I would like to make two points. First, the main contours of Nishida’s views on religion, which would eventually be developed in *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 (*An Inquiry into the Good*), are already present in this essay. At the outset of the first chapter (“The Religious Demand”) in the fourth part (“Religion”) of this text, Nishida makes the following claim: “The religious demand concerns the self as a whole, the life of the self. It is a demand in which the self, while perceiving its relativity and finitude, yearns to attain eternal, true life by uniting with the power of the Absolute Infinite.”¹⁴ According to Nishida, the essence of religion is to be found in “reformed life” generated from this union with the Infinite.

The second point I want to make about Nishida’s understanding of religion found in “Impressions upon Reading Yamamoto Yasunosuke’s ‘Reason and Religion’” is that it has many points in common with that of Kiyozawa’s. In *Shūkyō tetsugaku gaikotsu* 宗教哲学骸骨 (*Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion*), which Kiyozawa published in 1892, he explains the core of religion in the following terms: “The essence of religion lies in the transformation of the finite into the Infinite through the workings of the power of the Infinite. From the standpoint of the finite, we might say that it refers to the way that the finite develops and reaches the Infinite. Although the finite takes many forms, as far as it concerns us humans, we may say that it refers to the way each soul or each consciousness evolves and attains to the Infinite—this is the essence of religion.”¹⁵ Thus, it is clear that Kiyozawa’s understanding of religion is close to Nishida’s view that the religious grounds of religion is to be found in “the escape from the finite into the Infinite.”

As noted above, Kiyozawa discovers the core of religion at the point where the finite is converted into the Infinite. In fact, how to understand the connection between the finite and the Infinite is one of the central problems in

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Nishida 1990, p. 149; original in NKZ, vol.1, p. 169.

¹⁵ *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū* (*The Collected Works of Kiyozawa Manshi*, hereafter abbreviated as KMZ), vol. 1, p. 12.

Kiyozawa's philosophy of religion. In describing the relation between these two, he employs the expression: "identity of the two terms" (*nikō dōtai* 二項同体). He insists that the finite and the Infinite are not separate but are of the same substance: "Are the finite and the Infinite of the same substance or not? If not, there must be a substance of the finite besides that of the Infinite. This is contrary to the definition of the Infinite; for, then, the Infinite must be limited or finite. Hence, they must be of the same substance."¹⁶ If the Infinite is understood as something distinct from and opposed to the finite, it remains nothing more than a finite entity. To be truly infinite, it cannot be distinct from the finite; rather it must be of one substance with the finite. This is Kiyozawa's claim.

However, to me, there is one problem in looking at things in such a way, which is, we risk falling into an affirmation of the finite as it is, or, in other words, absolutizing the finite. Kiyozawa himself probably recognized this. During a period of illness three years later in 1895, he wrote *Tariki-mon tetsu gaku gaikotsu shikō* 他力門哲学骸骨試稿 (Draft of a Skeleton of a Philosophy of the Gate of the Other Power), which contains a section entitled "Yūgen no soto ni mugen ari 有限の外に無限あり (The Infinite is Beyond the Finite)." Here, he makes the following argument: "Previously, I developed my arguments making the Infinite my fundamental concept. Because there can be no limits to the Infinite, it is impossible to say that the finite exists distinct from, and beyond, the Infinite. However, what would happen if I change my standpoint and make the finite my fundamental concept? Since the finite exists as a distinct entity, it cannot be of one substance with the Infinite, which does not exist as a distinct entity. Therefore, if the Infinite exists, its substance must be found beyond the finite."¹⁷ Looking entirely from the side of the Infinite, we cannot help but think that everything is inside the Infinite; however, from the point of view of the finite, the Infinite is clearly beyond the finite. That is to say, Kiyozawa clearly recognizes that he was only seeing one side of the matter when he used the expression "identity of the two terms."

Since the *Draft of a Skeleton of a Philosophy of the Gate of the Other Power* remained unpublished, Nishida probably was unaware that Kiyozawa had developed his thoughts in the way described above. Instead, Nishida follows the argument as presented in the *Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion* while

¹⁶ KMZ, vol.1, p. 139.

¹⁷ KMZ, vol. 2, p. 47.

discussing his views on the relationship between the finite and the Infinite in his “Impressions upon Reading Yamamoto Yasunosuke’s ‘Reason and Religion’.” There, Nishida says, “I cannot accept that the Infinite is found when the finite is discarded, that the Absolute exists apart from the relative, or that a transcendental God exists beyond the world. No, I think that the Infinite that discards the finite is finite; the Absolute that discards the relative becomes the relative, and that the God that is beyond the universe is not the omnipotent God. The true Infinite is found only inside the finite, true Absolute only within the relative and the truly omnipotent God is found within the everyday changing world. The expression ‘God is everywhere’ probably describes this situation.”¹⁸ It seems clear that lying behind Nishida’s argument here, is the idea of “the identity of the two terms” found in the *Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion*.

Kiyozawa and Nishida also have a similar understanding of the relationship between religion and philosophy. In the first chapter (“Religion and Science”) of the *Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion*, Kiyozawa contrasts faith and reason, or religion and philosophy, in the following way. On the one hand, they are similar in that they are both related to the Infinite, but on the other hand, they differ fundamentally with respect to the way this relationship occurs. “Reason or philosophy begins with the search for the Infinite and never stops its pursuit until it finally grasps at it; when, however, it grasps or realizes its object, the work of reason is over, and philosophy is finished; and this is just the starting point of faith or religion. In other words, faith or religion begins by believing in the existence of the Infinite and tries to enjoy its blessings.”¹⁹ As far as philosophy is concerned, the Absolute is at all times an object of investigation, and its goal is to elucidate the Absolute through such investigation. Religion, in contrast, begins from the Infinite, or, more precisely, from gaining fulfilment through the Infinite and attaining conviction of its existence. To use Kiyozawa’s words, religion begins with the “acceptance” (*juyō* 受用) of the Infinite. For philosophy, the Infinite is the goal, whereas for religion it is rather the point of departure.

We might add that, rather than a mere theoretical conclusion emerging out of his philosophy of religion, this point is based on Kiyozawa’s own personal experience. In this regard, a note entitled “‘Dai’ no kantoku 「大」の感得 (Realization of Greatness),” written by Kiyozawa during his Tokyo Imperial

¹⁸ NKZ, vol. 13, pp. 74–75.

¹⁹ KMZ, vol. 1, p. 145.

University days, merits attention. This note is introduced in *Kiyozawa Manshi sensei* 清沢満之先生 (My Teacher Kiyozawa Manshi) by Nishimura Kengyō 西村見暁. According to Nishimura, this hastily scribbled note “was recorded in a fit of frenzy upon being moved by some strong impression”²⁰ and was not meant to be made public. However, it is an important source for understanding Kiyozawa’s religious experience. For example, it states:

Touching the heartstrings at the depths of my heart
 A feeling I don’t remember having felt until now
 New power never felt before
 New desire
 Mysterious awareness of power
 New power suddenly awakened within the self
 A power of a new birth
 Awareness of this new power breaks forth
 Inner potential.²¹

Or the following fragment:

We have greatness
 Opportunity to discover ourselves
 We are great
 Through faith in greatness alone do we live.²²

Kiyozawa’s remark that “acceptance” is the first step in religion may have its origin in an experience like this. Such experience may also explain the following assertion Kiyozawa makes in the *Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion*: “. . . there is no need of studying philosophy for those who can at once believe in the existence of the Infinite.”²³ The Infinite is not something to be elucidated through philosophical quest but rather is something to be grasped or “accepted” immediately and all at once. This was Kiyozawa’s fundamental idea. At the same time, however, he does not want to exclude philosophy from religion altogether. Religion, he says, “never refuses the service of reason in explaining and extinguishing the *doubts* which arise within religion itself.”²⁴ This helps us to clarify Kiyozawa’s perspective: religion and philosophy are mutual supports for each other.

²⁰ Nishimura 1951, p. 81.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²³ KMZ, vol. 1, p. 145.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

As we have already seen, in his “Impressions upon Reading Yamamoto Yasunosuke’s ‘Reason and Religion’,” Nishida found the core of religion in the union with the Infinite or the Absolute. Further, in discussing how to realize this unity, he contrasts the “rational faculty” (*rikairyoku* 理解力) with religion. According to Nishida, the rational faculty dissects and explains reality and, for this reason, cannot grasp reality as a whole. Only religion can bring about unity with the Infinite. Nishida explains this in the following way: “Entering into the Absolute Infinity of religion is to enter into true Absolute Infinity, to obtain a direct realization of the grounds of cosmic existence.”²⁵ Here, Nishida emphasizes both the sense of immediacy and the independent character of religion. At the same time, in the following passage, we find his explanation of the relation between religion and knowledge or philosophy: “Therefore, I do not say that knowledge is entirely unnecessary for religion, or that religion and knowledge are contradictory. Genuine religion and genuine knowledge are naturally united—to think otherwise would be a mistake.”²⁶ In sum, we might say that Nishida and Kiyozawa understood the relationship between religion and philosophy in fundamentally the same way.

The discussion above leads us to several conclusions: first, Nishida’s earlier theory of religion was developed in his response to Yamamoto’s “Religion and Reason,” and second, it seems to show the influence of Kiyozawa’s theory of religion. In addition, it would seem that the focal point of this latter connection may be found in *Mujintō*, in which both Kiyozawa and Inaba were deeply involved.

3. Absolute Trust

Besides their connection by way of *Mujintō*, Kiyozawa and Nishida were also connected through the journal *Seishinkai*. Mentioned previously was Nishida’s 1902 diary entry (“I am impressed by the writings of Kiyozawa in *Seishinkai*”), indicating that he came to know of Kiyozawa’s Spiritual Activism (*Seishin-shugi* 精神主義) through this journal.

The first issue of *Seishinkai* was published in January 1901, which began with Kiyozawa’s essay entitled “Spiritual Activism (*Seishin-shugi*).” In the opening sentence of this essay, Kiyozawa writes of the “perfectly firm ground” that is necessary to human life, as well as the “Absolute Infinity”

²⁵ NKZ, vol. 13, p. 78.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

through which this ground is attained. He also states that the goal of Spiritual Activism is “to seek sufficiency in one’s own inner spirit” by establishing ourselves on the perfectly firm ground of our lives. Furthermore, Kiyozawa argues, “Spiritual Activism makes one’s own spirit its fundamental principle, and proclaims that we attain peace when our spirits find contentment in our present situation and are able to act with complete freedom.”²⁷ In other words, the goal of Spiritual Activism is the attainment of personal “peace.”

At the same time, however, Kiyozawa emphasizes the following point: full satisfaction of the first principle of Spiritual Activism does not mean reliance on self-power. In other words, it does not refer to the position that, to gain personal peace, one must rely on one’s own strength. In his words, Spiritual Activism is rather founded upon “the philosophy of Other Power” (*Tariki-shugi* 他力主義). “Perception of color or the smelling of fragrance does not derive from the color or fragrance themselves. They are all based on the dynamic activity of the one inconceivable power. . . . We cannot freely control the thoughts that arise in our minds from one instant to the next. We are all absolutely existing within Other Power.”²⁸ In such a way, Kiyozawa expresses this fundamental experience, after which, for the first time, we can freely control our lives, and achieve a peaceful existence. In order to describe this experience—or rather, the state of finding oneself in the midst of such an experience—he employs the word “spirit.” All sacred writings and rituals, it may be said, are but secondary derivations of this fundamental experience. In an article entitled “*Shinran shōnin no gotanjō-e ni* 親鸞聖人の御誕生会に (On the Occasion of Shinran Shōnin’s Birthday),” Kiyozawa makes the following remarks: “Religious images, sacred scriptures, rituals and religious creeds are but shadows of the true spirit. One must take care not to fall into the delusion that these shadows are the true spirit. A true, vigorous, living religion exists definitely in the realm of the individual spirit.”²⁹ Once again, the core of religion—the vivid experience within one’s own soul—can be best expressed through the term Spiritual Activism. Based on this assertion, in the same article Kiyozawa says, “in a word, religion is subjective reality, it is the experience of spirituality.”³⁰

²⁷ KMZ, vol. 6, p. 92.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Here, we can see Kiyozawa's understanding of religion diverge somewhat from that of Nishida's in *An Inquiry into the Good*. For example, the latter writes unequivocally that the purpose of religion is not the acquisition of "spiritual peace." "Today, there are many people for whom religion means spiritual peace. However, to think in such a way is to err. Such people believe that they have come to full understanding of the true meaning of religion by extinguishing the passions of an active life in the waters of stoic indifference. However, religion is not to be sought for the sake of spiritual peace—such peace is simply a by-product of religion. The religious demand is a great demand of life, which is unavoidable even though we may wish to avoid it."³¹ We might be justified in reading the above sentences as Nishida's criticism of Kiyozawa. Whereas Kiyozawa marks the goal of Spiritual Activism as spiritual contentment, the former's understanding of religion is one that lays persistent emphasis on "life reformation."

Although there is substantial antagonism between the religious understandings of Nishida and Kiyozawa, at the same time, we must also note that they are on the same ground when it comes to the idea of the religious core, which is to be found in the vivid experience of the Absolute. In *An Inquiry into the Good*, within the chapter entitled "The Essence of Religion," Nishida states: "At the most profound level, religion acquires the meaning of the unification of God and humans, and the true meaning of religion is found in grasping the significance of this unity, in breaking beyond one's own consciousness and experiencing the lofty universal spirit that functions at the base of consciousness."³² Again, to express his view that actual experience is the essence of religion, Nishida uses the phrase "experience of spirituality," the same term that Kiyozawa uses. "If we assume that reality is spirit and that our spirit is simply a small part of it, then there is no reason to feel wonder at breaking through one's small consciousness and realizing one great spirit . . . Great people have spiritual experiences far deeper than those of average people."³³ Nishida's words here overlap with those of an article by Kiyozawa entitled "Mizukara anadori mizukara omonzuru to iu koto 自ら侮り自ら重すると云ふ事 (On Self-contempt and Self-respect)" published in *Seishinkai* (November 1902), where the author makes the following claims: "If we give importance

³¹ NKZ, vol.1, p. 170.

³² Nishida 1990, p. 156, slightly altered; original in NKZ, vol.1, p. 177.

³³ NKZ, vol. 1, p. 166.

to our tiny egos, we will be roused by the things of the objective world. If, however, we allow our tiny egos to return completely to the expansive heart of the Tathāgata, then there is no subject opposed to an object, nor any object opposed to a subject—everything is submerged within the mysterious workings of the Tathāgata. When we reach this point, we can appreciate the fact that everything is due to the will of the Tathāgata.”³⁴ Though the expression differs—instead of Kiyozawa’s phrase, “everything is submerged within the mysterious workings of the Tathāgata,” Nishida calls this “experiencing the lofty universal spirit that functions at the base of consciousness,” or perhaps simply, “realizing one great spirit”—the intent appears to be the same.

Given the above, we can conclude that the journal *Seishinkai* provided a connection between Nishida and Kiyozawa’s thought, and that by virtue of this connection, the former was stimulated in various ways. However, there is one more instance of a relation between Nishida and *Seishinkai*. This is the fact that Nishida himself published an essay entitled “Chi to ai 知と愛 (Knowledge and Love)” in this journal in August 1907. This article was later included in *An Inquiry into the Good*, where it makes up the fifth chapter of the fourth part. Nishida was asked to write this article for *Seishinkai* by Akegarasu Haya 暁鳥敏 (1877–1954), a member of Kiyozawa’s circle Kōkōdō 浩々洞, who had taken part in the editing of this journal since its founding. In a diary entry dated August 2, 1907, Nishida notes “Akegarasu came,” and the very next day he writes, “Drafting an essay called ‘Knowledge and Love’ for *Seishinkai*.” Finally, an entry from August 5 states “Akegarasu returned.”³⁵

In an essay entitled “Nishida Kitarō shi no tsuioku 西田幾多郎氏の追憶 (Reminiscences of Nishida Kitarō),” included in the monthly report of the first edition of Nishida’s *Collected Works*, Akegarasu mentions that he first met Nishida sometime in 1901 or 1902. Around this time, the latter left Yamaguchi High School to accept a teaching job at Fourth National High School in Kanazawa, and, along with Horii Koretaka 堀維孝, was involved in a private academy called “Sansanjuku” 三々塾 for student-character development. Akegarasu notes that he was frequently invited to give talks there, and thus, had the opportunity of meeting Nishida. Akegarasu also gave a lecture on the *Tannishō* at Nishida’s Fourth National High School.

In the essay “Knowledge and Love,” Nishida takes up the problem of absolute oneness in pure experience. “We forget the self, and at this point an

³⁴ KMZ, vol. 6, p. 126.

³⁵ NKZ, vol. 17, p. 187.

incomprehensible power beyond the self functions alone in all its majesty.”³⁶ Specific examples are taken from the Gospel of Mark: “And [Jesus] said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt,”³⁷ and the *Tannishō*: “I really do not know whether Nembutsu may be the cause for my birth in the Pure Land, or the act that shall condemn me to hell.” In this way, does one abandon one’s self, entrusting oneself entirely to the great power that works within. In this short chapter “Knowledge and Love,” Nishida provides us with a very concise explanation of his own personal understanding of the core of religion.³⁸

We can also see this understanding of religion in a short essay entitled “Gutoku Shinran 愚禿親鸞 (Foolish, Stubble-haired Shinran)” published four years later, namely the year after Nishida had moved from Gakushūin to Kyoto Imperial University, in *Shūso-kan* 宗祖観 (Perspectives on the Founder of the Sect), a collection of papers published by the Ōtani Gakushi-kai in April in commemoration of the 650th anniversary of Shinran’s death. We might hazard a reasonable guess that it was Inaba Masamaru who had asked Nishida to write this article, given that the former at that time held an important position in the Ōtani-ha, and was very much involved with matters pertaining to the memorial ceremonies.

In this paper Nishida writes the following: “. . . in the place where this (human) knowledge, this (human) virtue is thrown away, new wisdom is acquired, new virtue is achieved, and one is able to enter into a new life. This is the true meaning of religion. Matters of religion have nothing to do with so-called scholarship or learning.”³⁹ This understanding of religion closely echoes that of Kiyozawa, which can be seen especially in the following remarks taken from “Shūkyōteki shinnen no hissu jōken 宗教的信念の必須条件 (Essential Conditions of Religious Faith)” published in the November 1901 issue of *Seishinkai*. “Before one can think of entering into religious faith, one must first distance oneself from all dependence on things other than religion”⁴⁰; and further, “For a person who wishes to enter the world of religion, filial loyalties and patriotism, both of which pertain to the realm of physical existence, must be tossed away. All matters of human justice, morality, sci-

³⁶ Nishida 1990, p. 174.

³⁷ Mark 14:36.

³⁸ NKZ, vol. 1, p. 199.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 407.

⁴⁰ KMZ, vol. 6, p. 76.

ence, philosophy, without exception, must be abandoned and only then, will the expansive realm of religious faith be opened wide.”⁴¹ In addition, Kiyozawa insists that this “realm” results from “complete dependence on Tathāgata.”⁴² This is further explained by Kiyozawa in an entry in his diary, *Rōsenki* 臘扇記 (December Fan): “Absolute trust (reliance) means not possessing anything at all (Zen), living unselfishly (Confucianism), and forgetting the self (with sincerity and entrusting, forgetting the self).”⁴³

As noted above, in order to describe the essence of religion, Nishida quoted in “Knowledge and Love” passages from Mark (“And [Jesus] said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt”), and the *Tannishō* (“I really do not know whether Nembutsu may be the cause for my birth in the Pure Land, or the act that shall condemn me to hell”), both of which emphasize “trust.”

In conclusion, I would like to consider the relevance of the religious thought of Kiyozawa and Nishida for us today, with special attention to the fact that the former, in his essay “On the Occasion of Shinran Shōnin’s Birthday,” clearly distinguishes between spirit itself and its shadow (reflection); in other words, between the vigorous activity of life and its outward expressions (form). We might say that underlying Kiyozawa’s Spiritual Activism is the idea that the experience of a “true, vigorous life” constitutes the core of religion, and Nishida emphasizes that such an experience involves a quest for “life reformation.” Perhaps the thought of these two great thinkers can urge us to pay more attention to the intrinsic “life reforming” aspect of religion.

(Translated by James Mark Shields)

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 77.

⁴² Ibid., p. 78.

⁴³ KMZ, vol. 8, p. 341.

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