

The Subject of History in Miki Kiyoshi's "Shinran"

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In 1932, the young Marxist thinker Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) pegged his equally young colleague Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945) as “the brightest star on the horizon” of Nishida philosophy (HEISIG 2001, 3). Tosaka died in prison on August 9, 1945, less than a week before Japan’s surrender of the Pacific War. Miki died in prison on September 26, 1945, barely a week before the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers issued the directive to release all prisoners being held under the terms of the Peace Preservation Act (*Chian ijihō* 治安維持法). The timing and circumstances of Miki’s death seem to lend it a particular kind of weight—novelist Toyoshima Yoshio writes that Miki died just as the age was on the verge of “a great revolutionary conversion [*tenkan* 転換]”: times were ripe for change, Miki’s thought ripe for use, and then, “all of a sudden, he is dead” (TOYOSHIMA 1967).

An unfinished essay on the Jōdo Shinshū patriarch Shinran was found amongst Miki’s belongings; it was assembled for publication in 1946,

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and received some public and critical attention in the postwar milieu, invested perhaps with surplus meaning as a posthumous work. Assessments of the place of the Shinran essay in Miki's larger body of work vary, in part simply because of the difficulty of dating the manuscript. Because it is the last text of Miki's to be published, it is tempting, of course, to read it also as Miki's last words, as though it was intended to be a summation of his thought. Shigenori Nagatomo seems to suggest that indeed we should read it this way, finding in what he calls "Miki's last, though unfinished, writing" the "culmination" of Miki's religious dimension, that element of his thought dealing with "the concept of the ego developing into religious awareness" (NAGATOMO 1995, 2 n.2). Harry Harootunian too calls the essay Miki's "last work"; suggesting that it was written in a state of exhaustion (HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 358), he characterizes it as a record of Miki's attempt "to return to the tradition of religious thinking and action of Shinran"—that is to return to some native home—though he "never quite got there" (HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 358). Karaki Junzō, on the other hand, doing a close examination of the manuscript, identifies the Shinran essay as belonging to an earlier period, possibly as early as the late 1930s, and in any case decidedly not Miki's last work (KARAKI 2002, 80); on this view, the essay should be read as a record of Miki's earlier views, rather than an expression of his mature thought (see also Kunō Osamu's introduction to the Shinran essay in KUNŌ 1966).

Nagatomo and Karaki seem to agree, however, that the Shinran essay represents a turn away from Miki's usual Marxian interests. Miki's political philosophy, according to Nagatomo, is well served with a Marxist reading, but his religious dimension is something else—it "cannot be covered by this orientation" (NAGATOMO 1995, 2 n.2). Karaki suggests that we see in Miki's consideration of Shinran not so much the efflorescence of a religious dimension, but an expression of the religious, eternalist side of Miki stricken by fear of the consequences of the humanism to which Miki was rationally committed, a fear of the nothingness that must follow death (KARAKI 2002, 83–84). Both then would seem to me to share the understanding that the Shinran essay represents a turn away from Marx, and cannot be read through a Marxian lens, except perhaps negatively.

What strikes me about the Shinran essay though is that the line of thought most clearly developed in it is neither anthropological nor theological but historiographical, with page upon page devoted to rehearsing the details of *shōzōmatsu* 正像末 (the three ages of true, counterfeit, and final *dharmā*), which, Miki says, constitutes the Buddhist view of history (MIKI 1999, 173). The essay begins with the assertion that it is quite right to say that Shinran's thought is defined by its having "made something human of Buddhism" (MIKI 1999, 156), but what Miki is working toward is the claim that this is only possible because Shinran grasped the Buddhist teachings in terms of his own historical situation in relation to *shōzōmatsu*—"human reality," writes Miki, "is essentially historical reality," and again, taking another stab at the same passage, "history is the human being's most profound reality" (MIKI 1999, 196). I would assert that in taking up the question of the Buddhist view of history, Miki is in fact writing through and about Marx. The Shinran Miki is after in this essay is a Shinran whose historical consciousness was sufficiently raised. In this paper I want to situate Miki and his Shinran in the context of mid-twentieth-century Japanese thought, in order to suggest why there might be certain obstacles standing in the way of an assessment of Miki's Shinran as a Marxian Shinran, and then try to work out what it is in Miki's version of Buddhist history that I take to be Marxian. Finally by way of conclusion I want to briefly mention one implication of the Shinran essay which I think does indeed suggest a serious break with Marx.

MIKI'S MARGINALITY

Miki's position as a representative of Japanese Marxism is somewhat bedeviled. His relationship with the chief representatives of Marxism in Japan during his lifetime was an uneasy one—in 1930, the same year he was arrested and jailed for having violated the Peace Preservation Act by making a donation to the Japanese Communist Party, he was ousted from the Proletariat Science Research Institute (Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūjo プロレタリア科学研究所) after being denounced by Hattori Shisō (1901–1956) as "a bourgeois social democrat" (DOAK 1998, 248). In 1938 he became a member of the imperial Shōwa Research Asso-

ciation (Shōwa Kenkyūkai 昭和研究会); following his death, despite the fact that there is little sign that Miki himself had lost interest in Marxism, this period of involvement with the state comes to be viewed as an apostasy, or *tenkō* 転向.¹ Further, like Tosaka, one of Miki's chief concerns was the question of subjectivism (*shutaisei* 主体性) (KOSCHMANN 1981, 615); in the post-war period, this came to be seen as an unorthodox area of interest, with the Japanese Communist Party officially denouncing subjectivism in 1948 and leading party intellectuals sharply critiquing efforts to read Marx through Nishida (KOSCHMANN 1981, 623). As the Kyoto School and Marxist camps become increasingly polarized following the end of the war then, Miki comes to occupy a doubly marginal position—if he was too interested in Marx to warrant posthumous inclusion in the Kyoto School proper, he was too involved with the Kyoto School to be readily embraced by post-war Marxists.

At the same time, Hattori was developing a doctrinaire interpretation of Shinran in his *Shinran nōto* 親鸞ノト [Notes on Shinran, 1948], in

1. It seems to me that the image of Miki as a *tenkōsha*, especially when combined with the counter-image of Miki as a political martyr, has so much power that it has taken on a life of its own. Andrew Barshay, for example, who positions Miki as the emblematic apostate turned martyr, writes that “In a sense Miki represents both prewar Marxism and prewar social science, *in extremis*” (BARSHAY 1992, 377). Christopher S. Goto-Jones seems to attribute Miki's *tenkō* to the weakness of *both* of his philosophical commitments: “He never fully embraced Marxism and his will was broken by government pressure. Unlike the other members of the Kyoto School, who generally demonstrate impressive continuity throughout their careers, Miki underwent an abrupt *tenkō* in the late 1930s” (GOTO-JONES 2005A, 105). In another work, however, Goto-Jones proposes a more sympathetic reading of Miki's intellectual career, suggesting that the involvement with the Shōwa Kenkyūkai was not mere submission but an attempt—even if a failed attempt—to engage state power, noting that Miki continued to “identify himself with the ‘Left’” even after his “apparent *tenkō*” (GOTO-JONES 2005B, 5) and that in fact Miki never made “a significant intellectual reversal or *tenkō*” (GOTO-JONES 2005B, 16). The narrative usefulness of the image of Miki as Marxist-turned-apostate-turned-martyr—the very fact that this image allows him to represent the intellectual movements of the prewar *in extremis*—should perhaps make us a little bit suspicious. Michiko Yusa and Massimiliano Tomasi flatly state that “The description of Miki Kiyoshi as a ‘Marxist’ and as someone who gave his life for his ideological conviction is a myth,” albeit one “believed by many” (YUSA and TOMASI 1998, 655); I would suggest that the description of Miki as an apostate too might have a slightly mythic quality.

which he sought to “take Shinran out of the temple, and out of Japanese philosophy shaped like a Western-style temple, and... release him in the vicinity of the peasants—the very place where Shinran was when he was alive” (cited in YOSHIDA 2006, 386). The temple Hattori is referring to is Honganji, the power center of institutionalized Jōdo Shinshū; the Japanese philosopher he has in mind is Miki, whose interpretation of Shinran he reads as distorted by a desire to serve the interests of the state (YOSHIDA 2006, 387). Although some of the details of Hattori’s interpretation are later called into question (YOSHIDA 2006, 387), and the issue of just which segments of the peasantry Shinran worked with becomes a matter of debate for social historians, the idea that what Shinran gained through the experience of exile was a new sense of class consciousness and that his tradition was rooted in solidarity with the underclass proves to have considerable appeal. Tomoko Yoshida suggests that Hattori’s vision of Shinran as a social reformer exerts an influence on both Ienaga Saburō and Kuroda Toshio in terms of their assessments of the historical significance of Jōdo Shinshū, and it seems to me that the image of Shinran we find in the *Shinran nōto* continues to have a certain currency in later sectarian studies as well, with Hirose Takashi, for example, arguing that Shinran’s ideas of equality derive from his experience of social exile (HIROSE 1980, 45–48).

Miki is not writing a social history of the feudal period, and so his Shinran is not immediately recognizable as the doctrinaire Marxist Shinran. But more than that, the doctrinaire Marxist Shinran is in some sense called into being precisely as a critique of Miki’s Shinran—it is not only that the usual Marxist version of Shinran does not happen to resemble Miki’s version: it *specifically* does not resemble Miki’s version. So the context for the reception of Miki’s Shinran essay over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century is one in which it is easy to read the Shinran essay as Miki’s last work and in which the received understanding is that at the end of his life, Miki’s relationship to Marxist thought was one of profound struggle; one in which there is a widely circulated image of the Marxist Shinran and Miki’s Shinran is pointedly not that version; and one in which Miki himself is remembered by the Kyoto School as a Marxist but by the Marxists as a member of the Kyoto

School. All of this, I think, encourages the setting aside of Marxian categories of analysis when reading the Shinran essay.

If, however, we go back to Nagatomo's assertion as to what the Shinran essay is really about—"the concept of the ego developing into religious awareness"—we find something worth looking at more closely. It is true that Miki has much to say about realization (*jikaku* 自覚)² in the Shinran essay, but he qualifies this as historical realization, writing that for Shinran, "the realization of one's humanness is intimately bound up with the realization of history" (MIKI 1999, 173) and that Shinran "realized himself in the age, and the age in himself" (MIKI 1999, 181). Elsewhere, Miki is critical of Japanese philosophy's lack of interest in the temporal, characterizing Japanese thought as featuring

a pattern of thinking which is expressed by the term *soku* [即]... in which I see an essence of this [so-called Eastern] naturalism... insofar as it is *soku*, it is not of process and temporal in its meaning, and consequently it is not historical. Even in Nishida's philosophy, which is the very first philosophy to infuse humanism into Eastern philosophy, what is still lacking is the process, and temporal, historical perspective. (cited in NAGATOMO 1995, 19, his interpolation)

In Jōdo Shinshū, he finds a variety of Buddhist thought that he can position as exquisitely temporal and historical in its concerns.

SHINRAN'S HISTORICAL REALIZATION

The *shōzōmatsu* view of history holds that history begins unspooling with the enlightenment of Śākyamuni Buddha and proceeds through three ages: the age of true dharma (*shōbō* 正法), the age of counterfeit dharma (*zōbō* 象法), and the age of final dharma (*mappō* 末法). According to the calculations of late-Heian Buddhists, the age

2. I am translating *jikaku* as "realization" here in order to preserve what I take to be the Buddhist ring Miki intends the word to have in the particular context of the Shinran essay, and because it is easy to render as both a verb and a noun. See SAKAI 1991, 162 n.6, though, for a discussion of the complications of translating the term *jikaku*.

of final dharma began during the eleventh century. The defining characteristic of the age of final dharma is that while the Buddhist teachings remain in the world, they have lost all of their efficacy, and neither practice nor enlightenment is possible—the Buddhist path is, for all intents and purposes, closed. This means that everyone born during the age of final dharma is, necessarily and without exception, a *bonbu* 凡夫—someone who has not entered the Buddhist path and who therefore has not come into contact with the Buddha's transformative power. The *bonbu* is an abjectly ordinary person. The practice of *nenbutsu* 念仏, or calling the name of Amida Buddha in order to gain rebirth in his Pure Land, comes to possess immense appeal under these circumstances, because it purports to be effective even for the *bonbu*. Shinran's teacher, Hōnen, identifying *nenbutsu* as the practice that will work for the *bonbu*, and identifying his age as one in which everyone is a *bonbu*, holds that *nenbutsu* must therefore be the practice selected especially for his age. Hōnen thus identifies *nenbutsu* as the primary practice and every other practice as support for the *nenbutsu*. Shinran takes up Hōnen's view that *nenbutsu* is primary, and insists that every other practice be abandoned.

As Shinran understands it, the practitioner is assured of birth in the encounter with Amida; this encounter takes place in the calling of the name (*myōgō* 名号) but is actually the working of the vow. This means that true calling, the calling through which the practitioner is assured of birth in the Pure Land, must be the *nenbutsu* of other-power (*tariki* 他力) and not the *nenbutsu* of self-power (*jiriki* 自力), which at best lands the practitioner in the womb palace or castle of doubt. The *nenbutsu* of other-power is then from the standpoint of the practitioner the abjection of self-power and subjection to absolute other-power; this means that it is subjectively experienced on the one hand as the joy attendant upon being grasped by Amida, and on the other hand as an apprehension of the self itself as totally and wretchedly lacking self-power. To call the name, in other words, is to realize the self as abjectly ordinary.

This turns out to be quite interesting when cast in the light of the *shōzōmatsu* understanding that all beings born during the age of final dharma are abjectly ordinary, if you happen to be a philosopher whose primary concerns are history and subjectivity. It means that when the practitioner realizes herself as abjectly ordinary, she does not arrive at

a kind of psychological self-awareness or a purely subjective self-awareness; rather she arrives at historical self-awareness—realizing the self as abjectly ordinary is to realize the historical fix in which one finds oneself. This makes calling the name a practice of realizing one’s historical situation, which is what Miki means, I think, when he says that Shinran realizes himself in the age. At the same time, although the accounts from the sūtras make it possible to assess either through calculation or empirical observation whether or not one has been born into the age of final dharma—that is, they make it possible to grasp the historical situation objectively—in calling the name, the historical situation is grasped not as external reality but as internal, subjective reality (MIKI 1999, 180). This makes calling the name the practice of realizing that subjective reality, which restores the practitioner to subjectivity as a human being in history, which is what Miki means, I think, when he says that Shinran realizes the age in himself. Calling the name thus becomes the practice of naming the relationship between history and human beings.

If, however, Shinran’s historical realization is understood only as a realization of the present moment (or the reality of final dharma) (MIKI 1999, 175) and not as the present age contingent upon past ages, then that realization is temporal, but not really historical. If, in other words, the age of final dharma is conceived of as a way simply of talking about being in time or in samsāra, in contrast to Amida Buddha’s being outside of time or outside of samsāra, then there is no age other than “the age of final dharma,” and the significance of the preceding dharma ages as past historical realities is lost. And as Michael Marra has pointed out, the equation of the age of final dharma with samsāra itself, or human existence itself, is in fact usually taken to be one of the chief innovations of Shinran’s thought (MARRA 1988, 292). Miki thus has to find a way to maintain that the three dharma ages are discrete, and that they are subjectively grasped as such by Shinran. He does this by developing an unorthodox interpretation of Shinran’s experience of turning through the three vows (*sangan tennyū* 三願転入).

The process of turning through the three vows is described in the final chapter of Shinran’s *Kyōgyōshinshō* as follows: “I, Gutoku Shinran... departed everlastingly from the temporary gate of the myriad practices and various good acts and left forever the birth attained under the twin

sāla trees. Turning about [*kainyū* 回入], I entered the ‘true’ gate of the root of good and the root of virtue.... Nevertheless, I have now decisively departed from the ‘true’ gate of provisional means and, [my self-power] overturned [*tennyū* 転入], have entered the ocean of the selected Vow” (SHINRAN, *Kyōgyōshinshō* VI:68; translator’s interpolation). The three fields here—the gate of the myriad practices and various good acts, the gate of the root of good and the root of virtue, and the ocean of the Original Vow—are understood to correspond to vows nineteen, twenty, and eighteen of Amida’s forty-eight-fold vow, and to the path of the sages, the path of self-power *nenbutsu*, and the path of other-power *nenbutsu*. Shigematsu Akihisa writes of this process

in asserting the superiority of the eighteenth vow over the nineteenth and twentieth (the so-called *sangan tennyū*), Shinran concedes that he himself had earlier dwelled at the intermediate stages of the nineteenth and twentieth vows: looking back on his life, Shinran recalls that during his days on Mt. Hiei, he was guided by the nineteenth vow; [and] as Hōnen’s disciple, he came to follow the twentieth vow. (SHIGEMATSU 1997, 305)

This kind of interpretation suggests that the course of Shinran’s institutional life is the course traced in his reflection upon the three vows, and further that the moments at which Shinran turned from the nineteenth vow to the twentieth vow, and from the twentieth to the eighteenth, can be identified as moments in his social life as a practitioner, so to speak; as Miki points out, one of the principal questions of interest arising from this understanding of turning through the vows is when the two conversions took place exactly (MIKI 1999, 200). Miki vigorously criticizes this question as betraying a confusion of the chronological for the historical: “Attempting to precisely establish the sequence of years in a confession like this—in an account of his own interior life—is meaningless, if not impossible.... The chronological and the historical are not the same” (MIKI 1999, 202).

Against this chronological approach, Miki proposes his own “thoroughly historical” reading (MIKI 1999, 202), which takes the account of the turning through the three vows as a description of the course of Shinran’s interior life. The turning through the three vows must there-

fore take place in the hidden depths of Shinran's interiority, and—if we follow this line of thinking—Shinran himself must in some sense be both that which is turning through or overturning and that which is turned through or overturned. Furthermore, Miki says, it is a mistake to think of turning through the three vows as simply an assertion of the superiority of the eighteenth vow; it is true, he allows, that the nineteenth and twentieth vows are subject to criticism from the standpoint of the eighteenth vow, because the eighteenth vow negates the nineteenth and twentieth vows, but it is a negation that appropriates (*sesshu* 撰取) what it negates. I think we can say then that the eighteenth vow—the so-called Original Vow—emerges out of the sublation of the nineteenth and twentieth vows. The process of turning through the three vows, properly understood, is dialectical.

This matters for two reasons. First, Miki has already tried to establish that there is an intimate relationship between Shinran's interior life and history, and so if the turning through the three vows describes the course of Shinran's interior life, it must also describe the course of history itself. Miki suggests that each of the three vows corresponds to a different dharma age—the nineteenth vow is for the age of true dharma, which Miki has earlier characterized as the age of keeping the precepts; the twentieth vow for the age of counterfeit dharma, earlier characterized as the age of breaking the precepts; and the eighteenth vow for the age of final dharma, earlier characterized as the age of no-precepts (*mukai* 無戒) (MIKI 1999, 184). This makes turning through the three vows into turning through the three ages. Miki can thus understand Shinran himself as having realized not just the age of final dharma, but each of the three dharma ages, as subjective personal experience, making his awareness of his own historical situation one granted through an awareness of the totality of the historical process.

Second, it means that the dharma ages themselves can be understood as unfolding dialectically, with the age of true dharma (keeping the precepts) negated by the age of counterfeit dharma (breaking the precepts), and sublated in the age of final dharma (no-precepts). Against the usual view of the dharma ages as a way of logically divvying up a twelve-thousand year period of continuous decline then, Miki can hold both that the age of final dharma is a new age, separated from the preceding ages

by what I think we can characterize as an epistemic rupture—"in the age of final dharma, there must be *another Buddhist teaching*... the Buddhist teaching of this time must be completely separate from that of the age of true dharma" (MIKI 1999, 184)—and at the same time maintain that the age of final dharma is historically given by the preceding ages. *Shōzōmatsu* is thus made to describe not steady degeneration but a dialectic giving rise to the age of final dharma; the Buddhist view of history is revealed by Miki to have been, all along, a dialectical view of history, realized by Shinran subjectively as the birth of Shinran himself.

It is true that the vocabulary Miki uses in the Shinran essay tends toward the Buddhist rather than the Marxist—it is the *bonbu* who concerns him here rather than the members of the proletariat, and the I-Thou relationship that gives rise to the I here is the relationship between the practitioner and Amida rather than the buyer and the seller—but he does finally allow that the *shōzōmatsu* view of history is in some sense “analogous to the development of the Concept [*gainen* 概念] in Hegel” (MIKI 1999, 194).³ Where for Hegel, however, the question at hand is the question of the Concept and human beings are only instruments of the Concept, for Shinran, human beings themselves are the question (MIKI 1999, 195). I would point out here that it is hard to imagine it having escaped Miki’s notice that there was another thinker who was, like Hegel, concerned with the development of history through the dialectic, but for whom the question was not the question of the idea but the question of concrete human existence—that thinker, of course, being Karl Marx.

What Miki is doing in the Shinran essay then, it seems to me, is interpreting Shinran’s question as a Marxian question, and concluding that Shinran’s answer is a Marxian answer. That is to say, the essential event

3. In his “Centering and the World Beyond,” Takeuchi Yoshinori argues for an even more fully developed Hegelian reading of Shinran, saying that the triad among “the threefold vow, the threefold movement of eschatology, and the threefold transformation of the religious individual represents a central relationship that we may, without exaggeration, liken to the Hegelian triad of the absolute spirit, the objective spirit, and the subjective spirit. There is such a dialectic method of a ‘phenomenology of the religious spirit’ at work in the way Shinran develops the final part of his major work, the *Kyōgyōshinshō*” (TAKEUCHI 2004, 53).

in Shinran's life—the event of calling the name—is understood by Miki as Shinran's realization of himself as *bonbu*, that is as an individual historical subject located inextricably at the heart of a universal historical process, such that said-universal process is realized in Shinran *not* as a universal process but as “more than anything else, an unsparing critique of Shinran alone” (MIKI 1999, 182). In this apprehension of the self as a historically-given subject at the center of history, the liberating function of history—Amida's original vow—is likewise realized “as striking at the core of his own self” (MIKI 1999, 210), as being “entirely for the sake of Shinran alone.” So in realizing the self as a human subject thoroughly and primordially enmeshed in the dialectical unfolding of socio-historical time, Shinran achieves absolute freedom as a real human being.⁴ This Shinran is Marx's *Gattungswesen*, or species-being, who even in absolute isolation is the “totality of human manifestation of life” (MARX 1975, 299).

SHINRAN AS A MAKER OF HISTORY

If Shinran's realization is historical in the sense that it is given through and as awareness of the three dharma ages, it is also historical in the sense that it opens up the evental moment in which Shinran, as the founder of the Jōdo Shinshū, becomes what Miki calls “a new point of departure” (MIKI 1999, 195). Against his initial implication that Miki's turn to Shinran represents a weary flight out of the twentieth century back to some native home then, I think Harootunian is right when he says later that in fact the same notion that circulates in Miki's writings on historical materialism—that “what characterized history as actuality was its capacity ‘to realize the self in history as an oppositional one’”

4. We can get a sense of how far Miki is from the center of the Kyoto School here by comparing this understanding of Shinran's “for the sake of myself alone” with Nishitani Keiji's understanding of the same passage. Nishitani writes in his “The Problem of Time in Shinran” that Shinran's “for the sake of myself alone” is the expression of a Shinran who has been “extracted from world history and the entire span of time,” who “passes clear of the scene of joint-existence with other men and stands, as it were, as the only person, alone in the universe” (NISHITANI 1978, 21).

(HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 374)—is what drives his interest in Shinran. For Miki, Harootunian suggests, “Shinran’s greatness stemmed from this conception of an oppositional self” (HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 374). What Shinran uncovers in the depths of his interior subjectivity is socio-historical reality; what he produces out of this realization is an alternative socio-historical reality, a field on which to practice a new set of social relations—Shinshū’s *dōbōdōgyō* 同朋同行 (fellowship of practitioners). This is a vision of Shinran as a reformer not of the class structure but of the whole fabric of socio-political reality.

If we hold that the Shinran essay is concerned primarily with the individual ego, if we treat it as divorced from socio-political thought, we miss the significance of Miki’s suggestion that the *dōbōdōgyō* is the real product of Shinran’s *nenbutsu* and that through the *dōbōdōgyō* a revolutionary egalitarian social order is established. Miki’s reading of Shinran then is not a Marxist reading, but it is surely a Marxian reading, concerned with the same questions of subjectivity and history that otherwise preoccupied Miki, and coming, it seems to me, to the eminently Marxian conclusion that what prompted Shinran’s historical realization was not the happenstance of exile but his having understood that the question posed by *shōzōmatsu* was “at its origin and in every respect, that of his own *present moment*” (MIKI 1999, 176), and thus acquiring what Walter Benjamin has called the historian’s revolutionary awareness of history as “time filled by the presence of the now” (BENJAMIN 1992, 261). Amida’s Pure Land comes to be understood in this light not as a paradisaical afterlife or way out of death, but as a revolutionary socio-historical order: that which appears when—to borrow from Miki borrowing from Rennyō—in the form of the *dōbōdōgyō*, “the Buddha-land [*bukkoku* 仏国] is built upon the earth” (MIKI 1999, 210).

On the other hand, if we hold that the Shinran essay is only a reiteration of Miki’s Marxian concerns, we miss the significance of Miki’s note that while in the face of the original vow, all beings, as *bonbu*, are equal, “this kind of equality”—religious equality—“does not reduce human beings to ‘the masses’ [*gunshū* 群衆]” (MIKI 1999, 185). In valorizing “religious equality” in this way, Miki comes to emphasize the face-to-face encounter between the individual and Amida, which has to be unmediated: the self that conceives of itself as in relation to Amida only as “an

example of the category [*ruigainen* 類概念]” is, according to Miki, “not the truly real self” (MIKI 1999, 209). The category returns—it is what becomes the “concrete universal” of *dōbōdōgyō* (MIKI 1999, 210)—but in the moment of historical self-realization, it is dropped off. So the I-Thou relationship between individual and society that Miki examines elsewhere is supplanted in the Shinran essay by the I-Thou relationship of individual and Buddha, and society is displaced to a secondary position; when it returns, it returns as the absolute equality of the *dōbōdōgyō*. In other words, while Miki is interested in the way in which religion might coax out historical consciousness, the material he is working with here, and the way in which he is working with it, do not seem to provide any moment in which that historical consciousness can manifest as *class* consciousness. I think that Miki is doing this on purpose; he is plainly concerned with differentiating the existential religious equality on offer through Shinshū from “external social equality” (MIKI 1999, 185). But obviously in setting aside class, he sets aside a critical category of Marxian historiography. Bearing in mind then that the Shinran essay is unfinished and in some key places fragmentary, it seems to me that it describes a Marxian Shinran, and intimates a classless Pure Land, without imagining the necessity of a historical class revolution in between.

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