Xiong Shili, Kiyozawa Manshi, and the Logic of Transformation

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Received: 2 March 2021 / Revised: 9 September 2021 / Accepted: 16 November 2021 /

Published online: 24 February 2022

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Abstract

This paper offers a comparative-philosophical examination of how the early 20th-century Chinese philosopher Xiong Shili (1885–1968) and late 19th-century Japanese philosopher Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903) thought about the topic of transformation. Although the two thinkers face similar material and intellectual circumstances – both attempt to develop an idealist philosophy of mind to combat naturalism – my focus is on demonstrating that they occupy inverted philosophical positions on transformation. I begin by discussing their different evaluations of logic. Xiong considers logic nothing more than a tool for combating false views that must be abandoned upon achieving its goal. Kiyozawa has a positive understanding of logic and thinks that it can be used speculatively to conceive of our relation to the unlimited. I then show how their differing evaluations of logic are rooted in their divergent views on transformation. Kiyozawa conceives of transformation as a process of spiritual evolution from matter to mind; that is, for him something transforms into something else. To Xiong, transformation is the sole reality; that is, for him there is only: transformation. In the last part, I supplement idea-historical reasons for their inverted positions vis-à-vis transformation with a philosophical examination aimed at revealing the existential attitudes from which Xiong and Kiyozawa theorize and engage in practice. To that end, I heuristically apply Kiyozawa's two-gate theory. Within the framework offered by this theory, Xiong can be considered a philosopher of self-power, and Kiyozawa one of other-power.

Keywords Kiyozawa Manshi · Xiong Shili · Transformation · Logic · Yogācāra

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1 Introduction

This paper offers a comparative-philosophical examination of how the early 20th-century Chinese philosopher Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968) and late 19th-century Japanese philosopher Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903) thought about the topic of transformation. Xiong is perhaps best known as the mentor of several high-profile New-Confucian philosophers such as Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) and Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978). In his 1932 *New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness* (新唯識論; hereafter ‘New Treatise’), Xiong combines a critique of Yogācāra Buddhism with the metaphysical teachings contained in the Chinese classics to formulate a philosophy in which transformation is the sole reality. Kiyozawa was a priest in the Shin school (浄土真宗) of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism and one of Japan’s first modern philosophers, having studied Western philosophy (among other subjects) at the newly-formed Tokyo University. The pan-developmentism (萬有開展論) he unfolds in his 1895 *Draft for the Skeleton of a Philosophy of Other-Power* (他力門哲學骸骨試稿; hereafter ‘Draft’) incorporates Western philosophical and Pure Land Buddhist elements into a vision of reality in which the dynamic interplay of the limited and the unlimited manifests itself as a process of spiritual evolution.¹ Mainly out of concern for scope, I restrict my discussion in this paper to the two works singled out above – works that I take to be sufficiently representative of the more mature philosophical positions of their authors.

My main reason for comparing the two philosophers is that they hold philosophical positions vis-à-vis transformation that are diametrically opposed, even though they face similar material and intellectual circumstances. Materially, they are confronted with societal upheavals targeting the religious organizations with which they find themselves associated, suffer at the hands of a weak personal constitution making them prone to illness, and must come to terms with the far-reaching modernization of, and influence of foreign thought on, their respective burgeoning nations. And intellectually, besides a considerable overlap in their conceptual heritage – next to the various forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism also comprising the metaphysics of *ti* (體; substance) and *yong* (用; function),² which is fundamental to East Asian conceptions of transformation – both develop an idealist philosophy of mind to combat the naturalism of their contemporaries.

Xiong and Kiyozawa are idealists in the sense that they think individual consciousness is adrift on an ocean of mentality (Kiyozawa) or that ocean itself (Xiong). Owing to their opposing views on transformation, the type of idealism they uphold is different. Xiong is primarily a monist: he thinks that a single principle, nominally referred to as ‘constant transformation’ (恆轉), accounts for the expression of

¹ Among Kiyozawa’s high-profile disciples can be counted Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875–1971) and Akegarasu Haya 暁烏敏 (1877–1954). That he moreover had a certain degree of influence on Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), the main representative of the Kyoto School of Philosophy, is clear. For a study on Kiyozawa’s influence on Nishida, see Fujita 2003.

² The *ti-yong* distinction goes back to Wang Bi’s (226–249) commentary on the *Dao De Jing*; see Chan, 1963: 323.

reality (體).³ Because for him mind is co-extensive with all things in existence, and because he discusses illusion and reality in terms of the auto-perception of mind, a subjective idealism is secondarily embedded within his monism.⁴ The Kiyozawa of the *Draft* accepts the existence of matter and seemingly leans towards dualism. However, since in the final analysis all matter is subject to a process of spiritual transformation, I typify him as an ‘objective idealist.’ That is, reality is spiritual and exceeds limited beings.⁵

There is an idea-historical explanation for their opposing views of transformation: whereas Xiong’s view that reality is transformation derives from Chinese classics such as *Yijing*, *Dao De Jing*, and *Zhuangzi*, Kiyozawa’s conception of transformation as the subjection or conversion of matter to spirit is garnered from Western philosophical sources. I argue that such an explanation, while valuable, does not fully account for a difference that I take to be existential. The central aim of this paper is to get to the bottom of their opposing views on transformation, not only idea-historically but also philosophically.

Another motivation for the comparison is that it provides insight into the development of modern East Asian idealism at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. At the time, the contact China and Japan had not only with the West but also each other intensified, forming the impetus for a flurry of intellectual development. Recent historical scholarship on the emergence of modern Chinese philosophy has shown that in addition to Western philosophy and Confucianism the Yogācāra Buddhism that was reintroduced to China via Japan played a pivotal role in its formation.⁶ Since it maintains the ultimate reality of mind, Yogācāra can be regarded a species of idealism.⁷ A revival of Yogācāra occurred in China when the Japanese scholar Nanjō Bun’yū 南条文雄 (1849–1927) sent his Chinese friend, the scholar Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911), a great number of Buddhist texts, among which were key Yogācāra texts and commentaries that had earlier been lost in China (Xiong, 2015: xiii).⁸

Although he initially accepted it without reservations, Xiong eventually subjected Yogācāra to a sustained critique. This has led some to believe that Xiong is primarily of the Confucian persuasion. However, John Makeham argues that Xiong

³ Since to Xiong the term ‘reality’ is a synonym for ‘fundamental reality’ (本體 or 實體) (Xiong, 2015: 56), I use the term in this sense as well when discussing his philosophy throughout the paper.

⁴ Xiong rejects Western idealism as the view that there are ‘real minds’ in Xiong, 2015: 110. To Xiong, mind has no self-nature but is the expanding movement of that which does, namely constant transformation. Since the expression of reality (that is, its movement) is mental, but reality itself, which is beyond oppositions such as mind and matter and being and non-being, is not, Xiong’s subjective idealism is secondary to his monism.

⁵ The strongest indication of Kiyozawa’s objective idealism in the *Draft* is found in Sect. 16 on panmentalism (萬有心靈); see Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 417–418. The objective idealism of the *Draft* stands in marked contrast with his later ‘spiritualism’ (精神主義), which, since it is a practical teaching, forgoes philosophical speculation on the ultimate nature of the universe and therefore according to Kiyozawa is unrelated to idealism. Consider Kiyozawa, 1955 (6), 29–32.

⁶ See Makeham, 2014.

⁷ The view that Yogācāra is a type of idealism is not uncontested; see Garfield & Westerhoff, 2015: 4–5.

⁸ See also Jorgenson, 2014.

continued to draw upon Yogācāra as a resource for developing his own ontology (2014: 33). Although Xiong's view of transformation in the *New Treatise* is rooted in the abovementioned Chinese classics, his idealist tendencies are idea-historically perhaps best traced to Yogācāra.

In Kiyozawa's case it may similarly be tempting to link his idealism to Yogācāra, especially when contrary to Xiong he is without contention a Buddhist philosopher. However, doing so is problematic. Whereas Xiong discusses Yogācāra extensively, Kiyozawa mentions it only sporadically. More importantly, as a Shin Buddhist Kiyozawa rejects certain key Yogācāra doctrines. Whereas to Shin Buddhism the universality of salvation is beyond question, Yogācāra contests that universality by challenging the idea of buddha-nature (仏性) and doubting the inherent capacity of some humans to attain enlightenment.⁹ Kiyozawa's main idealist inspirations are for that reason perhaps better sought in Western philosophy. In the *Draft* he relates his pan-developmentism to the philosophies of Leibniz and Hegel (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 422). Not expressly mentioned by Kiyozawa but certainly in the background are the idealist views of Hermann Lotze (1817–1881), who enjoyed great popularity in Kiyozawa's time and likewise argued that matter is subservient to the normative activity of spirit.¹⁰

The section that follows shows how Xiong and Kiyozawa have opposing evaluations of logic. Xiong thinks that logic must be abandoned upon achieving its goal of combating false views. By contrast, to Kiyozawa logic is a means for conceptually considering our relation to an absolute that is unfathomable. In the third and fourth sections I show how these evaluations relate to their differing views on transformation. Kiyozawa thinks that logic can be used introspectively to map the process of spiritual evolution towards ever-greater enlightenment. For Xiong, transformation is reality and to conceive of it as changing from something into something else or as somehow accumulating misguided. Transformation cannot be conceptualized using logic but is to be directly perceived. In the last section I argue that an idea-historical examination alone cannot capture the philosophical difference between Xiong and Kiyozawa. I heuristically offer an existential reason for this difference by drawing on Kiyozawa's theory of the two gates of practice.

2 Logic

Xiong and Kiyozawa find common ground in understanding logic as the art of disputation – an understanding that is traditionally Buddhist because it fits well with Yogācāra, and especially Madhyamaka, sensibilities. The creative interplay between these two schools propelled Buddhist logic to ever-greater heights, and although Buddhist logic failed to develop further from within Chinese Buddhism – and by extension, Japanese Buddhism – an appreciation for logic and its use in discussion

⁹ For the rejection of the concept of buddha-nature by Yogācāra, see Tagawa, 2009: 101–104.

¹⁰ For Lotze's views in this regard, see Beiser, 2014: 267.

is part and parcel of all forms of Buddhism.¹¹ The importation of Western science and philosophy during the second half of the 19th century gives a renewed impetus to the investigation and application of logic in East Asia. The compound 論理, used in both Chinese and Japanese as the equivalent of the English word ‘logic,’ is suggestive precisely of the art of disputation, consisting as it does of the characters for ‘discussion’ or ‘argument,’ and ‘principle.’¹² The term comes into circulation in Japan during the 1870s, when positivism and utilitarianism are greedily absorbed by Japanese intellectuals.¹³

In the context of Western philosophy, the word ‘logic’ has a long history and can refer to several things. For neither Xiong nor Kiyozawa does the word strictly refer to what is called ‘symbolic logic’ today. Although Kiyozawa employs symbols in the formulation of his arguments, he was active prior to the *fin de siècle* revolution in symbolic logic at the hands of philosophers such as Frege and Russell. Xiong, who is active after it, aligns himself with Bergson, rejecting any kind of atomism (including logical) in favor of the view of reality as an uninterrupted flow from which abstraction is not possible.¹⁴ Consequently, symbols play no role at all in the *New Treatise*.

In most cases when Kiyozawa’s contemporaries heard the term ‘logic’ they would have associated it with the work of John Stuart Mill (in particular his 1843 *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*), which enjoyed a positive reception immediately upon the dawn of the Meiji period (1868–1912).¹⁵ From the 1880s onwards, concurrent to the flight that the study of German rationalism and idealism took in Japan, logic becomes much wider in scope – a trend we see reflected in Kiyozawa’s writings. Kiyozawa not only studies German rationalism (Leibniz) and idealism (Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel), but also Lotze and the at the time well-known English philosopher of evolution Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), showing himself familiar with their widely varying conceptions of logic.¹⁶ In moving well beyond Mill’s conception of logic Kiyozawa engages in a philosophical enterprise that bears resemblance to British absolute idealism and the later Kyoto School of Philosophy.

¹¹ See Jorgenson, 2014: 68–71.

¹² Etymologically, the word ‘logic’ derives from the Greek τέχνη της λογικής, or the art (tekhnē) of logic (logikēs). It may not be unreasonable to surmise that the choice for 論理 as the rendition of the English ‘logic’ is partly inspired by the Dutch ‘redeneerkunde,’ itself literally meaning ‘the art of reasoning.’ The work of Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897) is important to rendering this conjecture plausible; consider that he studied philosophy in Leiden under Simon Vissering (1818–1888) and Cornelis Willem Opzoomer (1821–1892), two Dutch philosophers with positivist and utilitarian affinities. On the opening page of Nishi’s 1874 *Chichi Keimō* 致知啓蒙 the English ‘logic’ and the Dutch ‘redeneerkunde’ are referred to as 致知學, or ‘the study of extending knowledge.’ *Chichi Keimō* can be considered Nishi’s introduction for the general Japanese intellectual public to Western logic, particularly that of Mill. Precisely when 論理 became the standard translation for ‘logic’ is unclear to me, but we see Nishi already refer to logic (ロジック) as 論理學 in no. 23 of the *Meiroku Zasshi* 明六雜誌.

¹³ See Havens, 1970: 8.

¹⁴ Xiong mentions Bergson by name a few times in *New Treatise*, generally approvingly. See e.g. Xiong, 2015: 111.

¹⁵ This is due to Nishi’s efforts (see note 12). See Havens, 1970, in particular 100–108.

¹⁶ Kiyozawa studied these philosophers at Tokyo University under the American philosopher Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853–1908), who attempted to synthesize the philosophies of Spencer and Hegel.

Accordingly, for Kiyozawa logic is not merely the art of disputation. The term can also designate the theory of judgment, the study of the laws of thought or the principles of being. Kiyozawa does not shy away from trying to integrate these various forms of logic into his own philosophy. I would typify his orientation in this regard as ‘speculative.’ Xiong, who sticks to understanding logic simply as the art of disputation because he is skeptical of the capacity of logic to be anything more, is critical of its speculative employment. While logic may have its uses when it is confined to the phenomenal world (for example in scientific practice), it cannot in any way be used to represent the ultimate, including our relationship to it.

Even though Xiong and Kiyozawa ultimately have opposing views of logic, it must be stressed that logic, understood specifically as the art of disputation, was of great practical value to both. It had the capacity to liberate arguments from sectarian contexts in which the validity of an argument was often determined on the basis of a long-standing tradition of authoritative interpretation rather than an argument’s own internal merits. Logic could thus serve to legitimate syncretic tendencies – and Kiyozawa and Xiong can both be identified as syncretic philosophers.¹⁷ Rather than simply accept that traditions are different and therefore discussion is only possible within but not between them, Kiyozawa often urges his reader to consider issues logically, instead of through a sectarian lens.¹⁸ Xiong’s mastery of the *reductio ad absurdum* seems to precisely target those who rely on the time-worn rhetorical strategy of convincing others by means of *argumenta ab auctoritate*.¹⁹ He indeed stresses that his own positive account of transformation is not based in any former master, making established tradition only a barrier to understanding it (Xiong, 2015: 94).

Though a powerful tool in his hands, Xiong subjects logic to a critique that is aimed at demonstrating the limits of its capacity to represent reality. The best simile to capture his attitude towards logic is perhaps the well-known image of the raft that should be discarded upon reaching the other shore. To Xiong, what a *reductio* argument shows is that an opponent’s argument is invalid, not merely because it fails to refer to any existing objective state of affairs, but because it is internally contradictory. By no means is a *reductio* argument meant to establish any kind of positive truth, and the *reductio* is his logical weapon of choice for this very reason. Logic is to be used to demonstrate why a certain view is mistaken; to establish truth, an entirely different means is needed altogether: that of direct perception (which I discuss in more detail in Sect. 4). Upon having exhaustively taken down all mistaken views, the raft of logic has served its purpose and is to be abandoned, lest the raft mistakenly becomes the goal instead of the means. Not the raft, but the person riding it is to reach the other shore.²⁰

For Kiyozawa, limited beings such as ourselves are incapable of perceiving the unlimited directly. Only unlimited beings such as buddhas can do so. Since, as

¹⁷ For Xiong’s syncretism, see Xiong, 2015: xvii–xxii.

¹⁸ See e.g. Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 428.

¹⁹ Consider e.g. the series of refutations found in Xiong, 2015: 30–49.

²⁰ Consider e.g. Xiong’s negative evaluation of Mahāyāna logic in Xiong, 2015: 56.

limited beings, we are tied to the laws to which the relative is subject, the way in which we perceive reality is the result of our karmically-determined condition. How we conceptualize the unlimited is the result of our conditioned cognition as well. What we conceive when we consider the ultimate is not the ultimate directly, but our *relation* to the ultimate, mediated through our condition. This does not make all conceptions of the unlimited false by default; instead, they are true as long as we realize their conditioned character. Logic is the tool that we, who are tied to the human condition, use to talk about our relationship to the unlimited. The importance of this tool is attested to by the historical Buddha himself, who after all used logic to teach us (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 428).

To Xiong, names (or their combination in propositions) are principally incapable of capturing the ultimate – reality – and thus fail to refer to it. Naming depends on contrast – mind is only mind in contrast to matter, being is only being in contrast to non-being, et cetera – and reality is beyond all such oppositions. In writing of the ultimate, Xiong is using names that are nothing more than placeholders marking inside of discourse ‘something’ that resists conceptualization (Xiong, 2015: 91–92). Therefore, none of his propositions that have the ultimate for their logical subject are in any way about the ultimate. Any talk of it remains strictly provisional. Kiyozawa would agree that no proposition about the unlimited can be true *unconditionally*. However, since to him reference to the unlimited is always conditioned by the mediated relationship we have to it, that our names or concepts cannot represent the ultimate directly is no real issue, and in fact entirely to be expected. Logic accordingly plays a much more positive role in Kiyozawa’s philosophy than in Xiong’s.

Since to Xiong reality cannot be the topic of conceptual discourse, logic can in his eyes only be used apophatically to combat those who think their name for or proposition about the ultimate in fact refers to it.²¹ If Xiong were to encounter, say, Thales, then Xiong would argue simply that the ultimate is *not* water, denying a predicate of it without intending to at the same time in any way ascribe any positive characteristics to it. For this reason one of his names for the ultimate is ‘Absolute Void’ (至虚) (Xiong, 2015: 50), paradoxically implying that the key predicate of the ultimate is that nothing can be predicated of it. Xiong’s usage of paradox, though, merely intends to awaken cognition to its own fundamentally deluded nature. We can escape logical paradox by using direct perception directly to become aware of reality.

Kiyozawa thinks that we can positively discuss the unlimited, even though he accepts all talk about it to be conditioned. Xiong might therefore reject Kiyozawa as someone who relies on the kataphatic mode of explanation directly to speak of the ultimate. Kiyozawa would likely retort that we can speak of the unlimited using analogy (比言) (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 408). This counterclaim would be dismissed by Xiong, who would warn that analogies and metaphors regularly end up reified

²¹ For the difference between the apophatic and kataphatic modes of explanation, see Xiong, 2015: 87–88.

and mistakenly taken for real entities.²² The ultimate cannot be referred to – not even indirectly through analogy. All we should logically say of it is that it is not this, not that, et cetera, ad infinitum, without in any way intending positively to say that the ultimate *is* not-thisness or not-thatness.

To Xiong logic is thus no more than a tool – albeit a powerful one – to combat false notions as to what the nature of the ultimate is. In this, Xiong’s appreciation of logic is identical to Nāgārjuna’s: logic is a tool with which to negate mistaken conceptions; and when it comes to the ultimate, all concepts are necessarily mistaken. From Xiong’s perspective, however, Nāgārjuna ends up too invested in logic since he continuously uses it to destroy – or, more neutrally, ‘empty’ – all possible views.²³ Xiong rejects this as nihilism, stressing that while the use of logic to dismantle deluded views does not get us to any positive knowledge of reality, we have another means available to us for doing so: direct introspective perception.

Before explaining how direct perception according to Xiong provides us with positive non-conceptual awareness of reality, let me in the next section first further clarify how Kiyozawa conceives of the ultimate and show in more detail how this connects to his positive estimation of logic.

3 Kiyozawa’s Pan-Developmentism

In the *Draft*, the ultimate is conceived as a substantial whole (一體) consisting of two parts, the limited (有限) and the unlimited (無限). Our primary encounter with these parts is in our practical relationship with reality. We move through life avoiding suffering and seeking comfort (離苦得樂). However, any object in the world that can provide us with happiness can inflict the pain of loss once it goes missing or is destroyed. This brings with it the realization that everything in this world is subject to birth and decay. Our world is evidently *limited*: pleasure everlasting cannot be found in it. If such a thing as pleasure everlasting exists, it must be found in the realm of the *unlimited*, where birth and decay hold no sway and constancy rather than change is the rule. What we must do to attain genuine peace of mind (安心立命) is accord our mind or spirit (精神) to be in harmony, not with any object in the limited world, but with the unlimited itself (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 395).²⁴

The mereological relationship of the limited and the unlimited is special. Suppose we divide the world up into a mental and a non-mental (e.g. material) part, then if we put these two parts together, we obtain all of reality. As long as we conceive of the two parts as constituting a whole, they imply one another. In the special case of the limited and the unlimited, however, the unlimited is always the whole, and the

²² As e.g. when previous Yogācāra masters thought of seeds (果) as having self-nature; see Xiong, 2015: 64–65.

²³ Cf. Makeham, 2014: 269.

²⁴ Note that to Kiyozawa the unlimited is not simply a practical postulate in the Kantian sense, since he accepts Descartes’ ontological argument (in Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 397). Interestingly, Kiyozawa disregards Kant’s rejection of that argument (in *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, A592/B620–A603/B631), mistakenly writing that it has gone logically unchallenged.

limited always a part. Whereas in the example of the mental and the non-mental the two parts must qualitatively have the same status, the unlimited is of a superior status to the limited and exceeds it. It is not possible for the limited to exist apart from the unlimited, for by definition the unlimited encompasses everything that is limited (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 397–398).

Accordingly, even though the unlimited and the limited form one substantial whole, the unlimited must exceed the limited. Kiyozawa terms this the ‘fundamental contradiction’ (根本の撞着). No matter how many limited things we put together, their combination does not equal the unlimited. Even were we to push the limited to infinity, the unlimited still exceeds it in virtue of being singular, not many. There is thus no way for the two ever to be equal in status. Then again, the unlimited, being identical in substance to the limited, inheres in the limited, and thus is the many. Therefore, the fundamental contradiction is that at the same time as the one is not the many (the unlimited is singular) and the many is not the one (the plurality of limited things does not equal the unlimited), the one must be the many (each limited thing reflects the unlimited) and the many must be the one (the unlimited inheres in each limited thing) (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 399–400).

Kiyozawa stresses that the relation between the limited and the unlimited is not static, but dynamic. If we consider the obverse side of any limited thing, we find that the unlimited is reflected in it. However, the limited does not simply remain the limited, having the unlimited for its converse; likewise, the unlimited does not simply remain the unlimited, having the limited as its obverse. Instead, the two flow into one another: the unlimited becomes the limited at the same time as the limited becomes the unlimited. The limited is thus not a pure limited: it transforms into the unlimited. And the unlimited is not a pure unlimited: it transforms into the limited (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 407–412). Only this dynamism properly captures their substantial identity, or so Kiyozawa thinks.

Adopting the dynamic standpoint allows us to conceive of reality as subject to a process of spiritual evolution. Nothing inside of the phenomenal realm remains the same – everything is constantly changing. This change is to be understood as the transformation of matter into mind. We find ourselves surrounded by living and non-living things that each partake in universal development. Stones may be purely material objects now, but they too at the end of the evolutionary process will have become spiritual. Humans may be creatures that at the moment are only half-awakened, but they, too, will inevitably attain to the level of enlightenment of the *buddhas* (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 418).

As spiritual evolution progresses, the activities (作用) characteristic of mind, namely intelligence, emotion, and volition, reach ever-higher levels of differentiation and integration. What appears contradictory at the lower levels of spiritual evolution in fact turns out to be harmonious at the higher levels. We experience the evolution of spirit introspectively as the ability of our consciousness to unify disparate phenomena by tracing these back to a common source. Value is thereby bestowed upon existence. This may be what Kiyozawa means when he claims that stones become spiritual: when we bestow value upon the stone, it is connected to the universal movement of mind towards ever-greater levels of enlightenment. Kiyozawa’s own example of this value-bestowing process involves rain and smoke. Since

rain falls and smoke rises, the unrefined understanding considers them unrelated or even opposed phenomena. However, as learning (學問) progresses, we see that rain and smoke are subject to similar natural forces. Having been unified in this manner, rain and smoke gain value that they did not have before. They used to be perceived as enemies that threaten our existence, but now that we have gained a proper understanding of them, they become means of our sustenance (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 415–417).

Kiyozawa's objective idealism consists in viewing spiritual evolution as an autonomous process that we experience but do not thereby constitute – we could indeed not constitute it because it far exceeds the capacities of any limited mind. Two activities of universal mind properly make up the process of spiritual transformation. The first is communication (感傳), or the activity that continually subsumes causes under their effects in such a way that the cause is preserved in the effect. Naturally, the effect serves as a new cause, which is in turn is subsumed under a new effect, ad infinitum (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 403–404). The second is the identity of self-awareness (自覺). It connects and relates all the various causes and effects, making them intelligible as belonging to a single order, weaving a thread that can be followed all the way back to a single source: the dynamic identity of the unlimited and the limited, or the unfathomable absolute (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 404–407).

Kiyozawa argues that the source of the identity of self-awareness must be the absolute since the relative lives in a world that is marked by impermanence and as such cannot on its own accord integrate and unify a chain of otherwise disparate causes and effects. It is because of the two universal activities of mind that we experience a coherent universe. Should they be lacking, our existence in the real world would be akin to a dream in that images would haphazardly come and go without there being any lawful connection between them (Kiyozawa, 1955 (4): 404–407). Experience would then be impossible because nothing would be intelligible. Since we evidently do experience an intelligible world, we must assume the activities of universal mind, both of which far exceed our own limited, half-awakened individual mental capacities.

Kiyozawa is formulating a metaphysics of constancy-in-transformation by combining the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (因緣所生) with the German idealist philosophy of unity. Since the doctrine of dependent origination denies that anything in the phenomenal world has self-nature or substance and all simply is a matter of causes, conditions and effects, it holds that any constancy we observe in the world is none other than the product of our delusions or state of unenlightened ignorance (無明). To bring a sense of order and lawfulness into this picture, Kiyozawa introduces communication and the identity of self-awareness to make possible the mechanism of what Hegel refers to as *Aufhebung* inside of a dependently-originating universe. That is, because causes are preserved in their effects, causes and conditions do not combine to produce effects in a haphazard manner but do so in an orderly fashion. Since we can trace the chain of causes and effects back to the absolute as the ultimate source, each link in the chain – be it a product of delusion or of enlightenment – is a moment of the true. It is for this reason that logic can be

more than the art of disputation: unlike Xiong, to Kiyozawa our concepts of the ultimate are not by definition false, but true to the extent that they are unificatory and value-bestowing. Kiyozawa's solution to what Xiong considers the nihilism implicit in Buddhism thus involves the importation of concepts from the Western philosophical tradition, most notably – but certainly not limited to – German idealism.

4 Xiong: Reality as Transformation

Kiyozawa seems to fear that the doctrine of dependent origination taken on its own results in a world in which nothing is coherent, all is chaos. Theoretically, that in a dependently-originating world everything is devoid of self-nature is not a problem to him; that such a world may just as well be one of pure nothingness, since no intelligible experience can occur within it, is. Practically, the viability of the Buddhist path towards enlightenment is doubtful in a dependently-originating world. Since we not only in fact do intelligibly experience the world but also know of beings that have reached enlightenment before us, the doctrine of dependent origination must be *incomplete*. Xiong, however, thinks that the doctrine is *false* because it fails to recognize that it is not the case that everything is devoid of self-nature. In its relentless negation of all things in existence as empty, Buddhism – and Madhyamaka in particular – makes the mistake of negating the one thing that in fact *does* have self-nature: reality. It thus plunges the world into nothingness for no good reason at all.

As stated in the introduction, even though they share a common Buddhist backdrop and similarly develop an idealist philosophy to combat naturalism, whereas Kiyozawa looks to the philosophical systems of the West in voicing his views on transformation, Xiong turns to the Chinese classics and various Neo-Confucian texts to formulate his. Succinctly put, the difference between the two is that according to Kiyozawa, everything transforms from something into something else, while to Xiong, transformation itself is ultimate. That is, to Kiyozawa matter changes into spirit as the limited and the unlimited reciprocally flow into each other. By contrast, to Xiong there is no such thing as transformation from something into something else. Transformation is not a type of transference (Xiong, 2015: 111–112). Reality *is* transformation and its movement constant. If 'Absolute Void' is one placeholder name for the ultimate, then 'constant transformation' is another.

The expansive movement of transformation is called 'mind.' In naming this movement 'mind,' it is contrasted with its opposite, matter, which is the contractive movement of transformation (Xiong, 2015: 177–178). Both are functions (用) of transformation, that is, expressions of the movement of reality. Xiong's idealism consists in seeing mind as co-extensive with all things in existence (that is, there is no thing that is not mind). Its expansion is limitless and reaches all the way back to its source: transformation. That source, however, is itself not mind. Mind is the *movement* of transformation contrasted with the movement of its counterpart, matter; it is not transformation itself, which is indistinct. Therefore, while transformation is mind (mind is the function of transformation), it also differs from mind

(mind, which is distinct, does not have self-nature; transformation, which is indistinct, does).²⁵ This is why Xiong's subjective idealism is embedded in his monism. He is not a monist because he thinks reality is mental, but because ultimately everything – mind and matter alike – is an expression of the one indistinct reality.²⁶

For Xiong, since reality has self-nature and mind is its expression, mind too is transformation. And because 'individual' consciousness ('individual' because to Xiong there is no such thing) is mind, it too is an expression of reality, and likewise transformation. If transformation expresses itself as movement but does not itself transform (that is, if transformation does not transform to become non-transformation), and if we *are* transformation (rather than merely a part of it), then it is no longer necessary – even nonsensical – for us to transform from a half-awakened state into one of full awakening, as Kiyozawa has it. In Buddhist terms, in that case we always already are inherently enlightened. Xiong thus accepts the idea of an inherent buddha-nature with which we are identical in the strongest possible sense, although he himself does not use the term 'buddha-nature' and simply speaks of 'the nature' (性), which to him refers to reality – transformation – and in the case of humans is concealed by mistaken habituated tendencies.²⁷

'Individual' consciousness obscures the nature it has been endowed with when it establishes the phenomenal world through discernment (慧). Discernment relies on sensory experience and logical inference and is thus inadequate to the task of learning about transformation. Sensory experience yields knowledge of the 'external' world; reality, however, is not something that can be seen, heard, or otherwise experienced by means of the senses. Reality also cannot be captured in concepts or obtained through logical procedures. It is non-conceptual, singular, and must 'exist' directly as self-nature; that is, supporting itself, it must be without a base. To become aware of reality, we should cultivate realization of the nature in wisdom (智) (Xiong, 2015: 21–22). The sole means for gaining awareness of reality is direct perception, which relies neither on sensory experience nor on logical inference.

One particularly stubborn habitual tendency or delusion is believing that there are objects 'out there' which we perceive and consequently find reflected in 'our' mind, whereas the truth is that any object is a cognitive object reflected within mind – universal mind – itself. It is for this reason that Xiong is a *subjective* idealist. As the expression of reality, mind is its auto-perception. When mind functions in tandem with delusion or mistaken habituated tendencies, 'individual' consciousness falsely believes in the illusion of material objects 'out there' or cognitive objects 'in here' (Xiong, 2015: 29). In that case, mind qua 'individual' consciousness perceives objects where there are none. However, when we succeed in cultivating pure habituated tendencies, thereby accomplishing the nature that heaven has endowed us with (Xiong, 2015: 317), we perceive – or rather, become aware of – reality. Either way,

²⁶ Cf. Makeham, 2014: 250.

²⁵ Consider the paradoxical statement in Xiong, 2015: 183–184 that mind both is identical to fundamental reality and different from it.

²⁷ For 'the nature' and 'buddha-nature,' see footnote 38 of Makeham's introduction to the *New Treatise* (Xiong, 2015: xx).

since mind is expansive and reaches everywhere without obstruction, and mind is the movement of reality, when ‘we’ perceive the nature, mind perceives itself.

Direct perception, which can become aware of that which exists baselessly, is a matter of introspectively tapping into mind. The word ‘introspection’ is not used by Xiong in an ordinary manner. To him it does not signify ‘individual’ consciousness finding within itself what it cannot find outside itself. Whatever is perceived as internal to our consciousness cannot amount to direct perception of the ultimate, since the ultimate is neither ‘out there’ nor ‘in here’ but beyond such dualities. Genuine introspection, true self-perception, is mind – universal mind – perceiving itself (Xiong, 2015: 24–25).

We have seen Kiyozawa likewise stress the importance of introspection for the activity of bestowing value. However, what Kiyozawa calls ‘introspection’ does not equal to what Xiong calls ‘direct perception,’ since to Kiyozawa our minds can never intuit the whole of reality, but only a part. For Kiyozawa, buddha-nature cannot be perceived directly by limited beings such as ourselves; it is something that can only be revealed to us by the absolute.²⁸ What we bear witness to in introspection is according to Kiyozawa the spiritual evolution that integrates all of existence into a unity. As humans, we always find ourselves parts of a whole, reflecting (on) that whole. To understand how that whole operates, Kiyozawa makes use of a logic that we can call ‘transcendental’ in the Kantian sense: he begins from our experience of the world as lawlike and intelligible, and from this extrapolates what must be the case for such experience to be possible. Since our own mental capacities are limited, communication and the identity of self-awareness must be activities of the unlimited. Xiong has no need for such a transcendental logic: to him, it is possible to intuit the whole directly because we are ourselves identical to that whole, rather than merely parts (Xiong, 2015: 170–175). His main problem is how to subsequently properly express the inexpressible; how to communicate awareness of reality to his students.

To Kiyozawa, the speculative use of logic is the value-bestowing activity whereby differences are integrated and unified as originating and terminating in a single source. For Xiong, Kiyozawa’s speculative logic would simply be another form of discernment. That is, by carving up into conceptual parts what is originally a non-conceptual whole (reality or the ultimate), Kiyozawa’s speculative use of logic establishes the purported reality of a whole host of fictional entities such as the unlimited, the limited, matter, and spirit. Originally, all these entities are lacking in self-nature. Lacking self-nature, to Xiong it would come as no surprise that these entities in Kiyozawa’s thought occur in conceptual pairs that necessarily imply one another (as for example when the mental implies the non-mental). Since discernment can impossibly establish each of the halves as baselessly subsisting on their own (that is, everything we know by means of discernment has its basis in one thing or another), it makes them appear to us as mediated by their contrary opposite, as

²⁸ Consider the closing remarks of the fifth chapter of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証: ‘...when we reach the Buddha Land of Peace and Bliss, Buddha-nature will certainly be revealed to us – through the merit transference by the Primal Vow-Power’ (Shinran, 2003: 230).

is the case with Kiyozawa's categories. For that very same reason transformation knows two opposing yet correlating movements – expansion and contraction – when we attempt nominally to conceptualize it.

For Xiong, that Kiyozawa considers transformation in terms of the conversion of matter into spirit is mistaken. Since mind already is everywhere and everything as the expansive movement of transformation, that conversion is already complete – indeed, it never knew a beginning. If we do think such conversion is occurring, it is because through discernment we have established a reality for ourselves in which we have habituated to deluded concepts. Neither is the entire process of evolution, nor the chain of cause and effect, preserved in the current state of the universe. There is no *Aufhebung*.²⁹ Where Kiyozawa seeks constancy-in-transformation, Xiong considers transformation the only constant. At each instant, the entire universe is created anew (Xiong, 2015: 73). If there is a thread running through it, it is the one of delusion.

5 The Two Gates

Above, I have detailed the inverted positions vis-à-vis transformation of Xiong and Kiyozawa. Whereas to Xiong transformation is the final reality, to Kiyozawa everything transforms from something into something else. And while to Xiong transformation is the only constant, to Kiyozawa there is constancy-in-transformation. How is this possible? How can Xiong and Kiyozawa under similar material and intellectual circumstances think a similar theme – transformation – and yet arrive at diametrically opposing positions? In the introduction I offered an idea-historical reason for this. Whereas Xiong's philosophy of constant transformation hearkens back to Chinese classics that contain powerful expressions of what may be considered China's original philosophy of never-ending transformation, Kiyozawa is predisposed to seek out that which is continuous inside of transformation because he is under the influence of Western philosophy and evolutionary theory.

True though these reasons may be, to my mind they do not sufficiently explain why, faced with *similar* circumstances, the two go off into *opposite* directions. Idea-historical considerations risk reproducing the very difference for which we must try to find an explanation in the first place. I therefore wish to propose a purely philosophical reason for the fundamental difference between the two, provisionally basing myself on Kiyozawa's theory of the two gates of religious practice. Considered through this lens, while Xiong practices the gate of self-power (自力門), Kiyozawa practices the gate of other-power (他力門). The value of the two-gate theory in this context is that it is a heuristic that allows me to conceive of their opposing views on transformation a-historically as the product of two irreducible existential attitudes.

What is Kiyozawa's two-gate theory? To answer this question, let us return to Kiyozawa's fundamental contradiction. When it comes to thinking the relationship

²⁹ Cf. Xiong, 2015: 70–71: 'Mind-consciousness is able to flow uninterrupted only through constant renewal and a complete absence of abiding with the old.'

between the unlimited and the limited, we run into an antinomy: the unlimited must simultaneously be identical to and yet distinct from the limited. They are identical, because the limited and the unlimited form a single substantial whole. They are distinct, because the unlimited exceeds the limited in status. That this contradiction is fundamental means that it is irreconcilable. The propositions that constitute it cannot be reduced to one another and are in theory both true. This being the case, there are no theoretical grounds for choosing either gate; the decision between them is an existential one.³⁰ According to Kiyozawa, philosophers attempt to derive the source whence the fundamental contradictions springs but consequently end up pursuing a never-ending dialectics; people of religion are by contrast concerned with practice and must accordingly choose to accept either side of the contradiction as a belief at the expense of the other.

When one chooses to believe that the limited and the unlimited are identical, one practices the path of self-power. Since one then believes oneself to *be* the unlimited, one thinks it possible to reach the ultimate on one's own accord. One readily bears within oneself the capacity needed to free oneself of ignorance and perceive reality with the clarity of the mind of a buddha. What is needed to activate that potential is a certain amount of ascetic practice aimed at ridding oneself of the impurities that obstruct one's buddha-nature. If one chooses to believe that the limited and the unlimited are different in that the latter is of a higher status than the former, one practices the path of other-power. In that case, one recognizes one's shortcomings as a limited being and refrains from attempting to reach the ultimate on one's own accord, trusting that the power of the ultimate reaches into this world and taking refuge in it, instead (Kiyozawa, 1955: 401–402). The revelation of one's buddha-nature is then left to other-power.

Within Kiyozawa's two-gate theory, Xiong can be identified as a self-power philosopher. Since I am here applying a schema that is foreign to Xiong's philosophy, let me immediately clarify that Xiong would not acknowledge the existence of Kiyozawa's fundamental contradiction. The proposition that the limited and the unlimited are different to him is simply *false*. He would consequently not acknowledge the bifurcation into two gates, either. The two-gate theory involves a dualism that Xiong would reject in the first place. Nonetheless, I think that the application of Kiyozawa's two-gate theory is justified because in denying one half of the fundamental contradiction Xiong in fact affirms Kiyozawa's practical solution to it at the level of religion: namely, that one for the sake of practice assumes one half of the fundamental contradiction to be true at the expense of the other. Xiong has already passed through the gate of his choice; now, on the other side of it, the other gate is no longer an option. It is the resolution of the fundamental contradiction in an original choice that in the final analysis, or so I submit, sets the two philosophers in opposition.

³⁰ That this decision is 'existential' is my way of putting it; Kiyozawa himself does not employ the term. I call the decision 'existential' because even though we are *free* to choose either option, a choice *must* be made. To Kiyozawa himself there is such a thing as a 'good' or a 'bad' choice, since each option represents a teaching and people's capacities (機) make them better suited for one teaching over the other. See Kiyozawa, 1955: 429.

What does it even mean, though, to identify Xiong as one who has chosen to practice the gate of self-power? By no means that Xiong affirms the existence of the self as a self-subsisting, individual entity. Such an entity, we have seen, does not exist. In fact, what the gates of self-power and other-power share is the rejection of the self as the source of its own individual strength. The source of power for those who practice the gate of self-power is in fact the unlimited; hence Kiyozawa's qualification of the gate of self-power as those who believe that the limited and the unlimited are identical. That at which the practice of the gate of self-power aims is the destruction of the delusion that the self has self-nature; in so doing, the mirror in which the true self can be recognized is wiped clean to find buddha-nature – or the nature, as Xiong has it – reflected in it.

How is Kiyozawa's gate of other-power different from this? Whereas Xiong staunchly rejects the proposition that the limited and the unlimited are different, Kiyozawa accepts it. Although symmetry dictates that Kiyozawa ought to reject as false the proposition of the identity of the limited and the unlimited, I think he does something slightly more subtle. By my lights, he qualifies that proposition to mean that the limited and the unlimited are identical *in substance*. To return to the metaphor of the ocean used in the introduction and qualify it in more detail, to Kiyozawa a wave (the limited) and the ocean (the unlimited) are both composed of water – that is, they are made of the same substance – but ultimately a wave and the ocean are different in status in that the ocean encompasses the wave. Their transformation into one another is made possible by their *difference* (that in terms of status, the one is not the other) and that they are both composed of water. This difference is the very thing Xiong, walking the path of self-power, rejects: for him, the wave *is* the ocean. Their *identity* makes transformation from the one into the other superfluous. The wave is the expression of the movement of the ocean of constant transformation.

As a heuristic for making explicit an existential difference the two-gate theory can offer a description of that difference, but never an explanation for it. It thus has limits that are like those of the idea-historical method. That is, we still do not know *why* Xiong and Kiyozawa practiced the paths that they did – and as a philosopher I take this to be an entirely acceptable and even desirable outcome. The reason for this is that existential choices – particularly those between the two sides of a fundamental contradiction – lie beyond explanation; being original, they are not part of, but rather initiate a chain of causes and effects. At the end of that chain, especially in the case of philosophers, its investigators ought not to find another cause but a choice that, as Kiyozawa has it, is unfathomable.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I have presented Kiyozawa and Xiong as two philosophers who under similar material and intellectual circumstances pursue the development of an anti-naturalistic idealism while radically differing in their conceptions of transformation. Since Xiong thinks mind is auto-perceptive, co-extensive with all things in existence, and the function of reality – transformation – I have identified his position as a subjective idealism embedded in a monism. Kiyozawa's objective idealism consists

in the view that matter is subject to spiritual transformation – a transformation that exceeds the capacities of any limited being. Their views on transformation translate to two differing evaluations of logic. Kiyozawa uses logic speculatively. Its applicability extends beyond the relative world and can be used to consider our relation to the ultimate. As a value-bestowing activity, logic allows us to map the transformative process of matter into spirit introspectively. Xiong thinks that logic can only be used as a tool for combating those who have deluded notions about the ultimate. We should instead rely on direct perception to become aware that transformation is reality.

There is an idea-historical explanation for their differing views on transformation. Whereas Kiyozawa imports Western philosophical concepts and uses them to formulate a vision of constancy-in-transformation, Xiong takes his ideas from China's pre-Buddhist past and recovers from it a philosophy of constant transformation. I have argued that idea-historical reasons alone are not sufficient to articulate why their views on transformation diverge in such a radical manner, much less to account for the inverted quality of the two positions they occupy. I have provisionally made use of Kiyozawa's two-gate theory to suggest their conceptions of transformation are in line with two opposing existential attitudes. Within Kiyozawa's framework, Xiong is a self-power philosopher who staunchly rejects the idea that the ultimate is different from us. Xiong's view of transformation is thus rooted in identity. We *are* the ultimate, for which reason we can be aware of transformation in moments of complete lucidity. By contrast, Kiyozawa is an other-power philosopher who thinks the ultimate outranks any limited being. His view of transformation is therefore rooted in difference. In his search for traces of the ultimate in the phenomenal realm, Kiyozawa finds confirmation of a salvific other-power at work in our midst.

Acknowledgements I thank Eric Nelson, Greg Moss, Hugo Hogenbirk, Dirk-Jan Laan, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

Funding I am a recipient of the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme administered by the Hong Kong-based Research Grants Council (RGC).

Data Availability N/A.

Code Availability N/A.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest N/A.

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