

## The Civil Theology of Inoue Tetsujirō

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At the height of the controversy over the balance of trade between Japan and the United States in the autumn of 1971, Kobayashi Koji, president of the Nippon Electric Company, prefaced a speech on behalf of Japanese industry with the words: "While the Americans, by and large, take a pragmatic way of thinking and think in terms of power relations, the Japanese tend to emphasize 'morality and principles.'"<sup>1</sup> Questions of bias and bloat aside, what is interesting about a remark like this is the way it expresses, in moral terms, what it means to be Japanese.

To account for the widespread permeation of such moral self-images throughout Japanese culture, many scholars have turned their attention to the "moral education" taught in the prewar schools. In this paper I shall examine the "national morality thought" of the Confucian philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō (1855-1944) as an example of the kind of civil theology<sup>2</sup> that gave this instruction its basic rationale. Seeking to develop a philosophy of education that would rest on First Principles, Inoue actually based his work on a rather facile, pseudo-Hegelian identification of the Ideal with the Reality of Japanese history. Though he claimed to be the greatest philosopher east of Suez, his logic was tendentious, his arguments forced and artificial. In fact his philosophy was little more than a smorgasbord spread

1. *Japan times*, 13 September 1971, p. 11. Identical sentiments were expressed as early as 1842 when Sakuma Shōzan wrote in his *Kaibō hassaku*: "The barbarians show no discernment about things like morality, benevolence, and justice. They are sagacious only about gain." Cited in Kosaka 1969, p. 20.
2. Because of its religious nature, Inoue's work is better characterized as a "civil theology" than as an "ideology." By using the former term I also seek to avoid some of the pitfalls of the concept of ideology which, as Clifford Geertz points out, has itself become "thoroughly ideologized" (1964, p. 47).

with the leftovers of former ideological feasts, East and West. Nevertheless, his thinking is instructive as an example of the *immanent* style of civil theology that dominated the thinking of the National Morality Movement.<sup>3</sup>

3. A theoretical dichotomy between "civil religion" and "civil theology" underlies my interpretation of Inoue's work. By "civil religion" I mean a systematic network of moods, values, thoughts, rituals, and symbols that establishes the meaning of nationhood within an overarching hierarchy of significance. While civil religions are the precipitates of traditional religious communities, they transcend specific religious communities and dogmas. The symbols and suasions of the civil religion must speak to "all sorts and conditions of men." "Civil theology," on the other hand, is the articulation of civil religion by the elite. One could say that civil religion—a reticulation of implicit sentiment—is "thought in." Civil theology is "thought out."

There are obviously different styles that can be adopted in both civil religion and civil theology. By "*immanent* civil theology" I mean a religious understanding of society in which the Ideals toward which that society strives are believed to be present, at least in a latent way, in the Reality of its history or institutions (what Hegel called the "social substance"). Though modern political theories aiming at the total conquest of "alienation" are almost inevitably suffused with the aroma of theological immanence, immanent civil theology, in its more archaic forms, seems closely related to what David Apter calls the "theocratic system." By this is meant a political culture in which there is "no sharp distinction between the natural universe and the state, that is, between the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God" (Apter 1967, p. 72).

The ideal-typical opposite of such a "system" is one in which the Ideals society sets before itself are never completely embodied in its "social substance." Apter, for example, juxtaposes the "theocratic system" to what he calls the "reconciliation system," e.g., the philosophical orientation of liberal, constitutional states. In this system, church and state are separated, as are divine and natural law. More important, since in them "secular ends can never really become sacred" (Apter 1967, p. 67), "what there is of the sacred in Western secular government is the framework itself" (Apter 1967, p. 76). Along similar lines, Robert Bellah has suggested that in some societies, the symbols of civil religion can be self-transcending (1970, pp. 185-186).

It is my view that since all religious symbols are both "ideological" (reflecting the "social substance") and "cybernetic" (guiding the "social substance" to higher levels of spiritual excellence), civil theology generally is a *blending* of immanent and transcendental themes. One should therefore make a comparative study of civil religions and theologies not in terms of an absolute either/or, but by plotting them, as political cultures, along a continuum ranging from the *relatively* most "immanent" to the most "transcendental."

INOUE'S ACADEMIC CAREER

Inoue was born in Kyushu, the son of a physician named Tomita Shuntatsu (conjectural reading for personal name). (It was only in 1878 that he was adopted into the Inoue family.) A bright child, he was learning Chinese poetry, history, and the Nine Chinese Classics by the age of seven. By thirteen he was at work on the English language and before long was studying arithmetic, geography, and history with American teachers and English textbooks. In 1875 he enrolled in the Tokyo Kaisei Gakkō, the successor of two schools founded by the Tokugawa government for the advancement of Western studies. There he completed a three-year program in two years. In 1880 he graduated from Tokyo Imperial University (together with Okakura Tenshin) and began to teach philosophy, giving lectures on "the principles of morality," publishing essays on Western philosophy, and collaborating with Ariga Nagao on a dictionary of philosophy. In 1882 he was made assistant professor in the College of Literature at Tokyo Imperial University.

The most formative period of Inoue's youth was the six years (1884-1890) he spent in Europe at the order of the Department of Education. There, while studying German, French, Italian, Greek, Sanskrit, Latin, science, and philosophy, he sat at the feet of Eduard von Hartmann, Kuno Fischer, Wilhelm Wundt, Eduard Zeller, and even met Dilthey and Spencer. On returning to Japan, he boasted that he had not only heard the opinions of these giants, but presented his own to them! He was most deeply impressed by the strength of German nationalism which at that time was still flushed with the success of the Franco-Prussian War.

It was while he was still in Europe being overwhelmed daily by the superiority of Western culture that the question of "mixed residence" (*naichi zakkyo*) arose in Japan. This was the problem whether to allow foreigners to live in Japan without the traditional restrictions, particularly that of living in a foreigners' settlement. Inoue was horrified at the proposal of mixed residence

and sent a letter to Japan stating his case. Arguing along the lines of Spencerian evolutionism, Inoue stated that the Japanese were still at a lower stage of development than the Europeans and Americans, and that they would be at a disadvantage, therefore, were foreigners allowed the right of mixed residence. Specifically, he argued that mixed residence, if allowed, would lead to the following results: (1) the Japanese would lose their land, (2) legal difficulties would arise, (3) there would be a mixing of the races which would weaken the solidarity of the Japanese people and cause physiological changes which, in turn, would reduce the population, and (4) if things truly came to a head, the Japanese might be completely overwhelmed by the foreigners and become extinct.

Soon after returning to Japan, Inoue gave a lecture in which he pointed out the inferiority of the Japanese to Western peoples in nearly all areas—arts, crafts, physiology, character, and scholarship. As Minamoto points out, this conviction he had held as a student in Europe, namely, that the Japanese were in an inferior and therefore dangerous position vis-à-vis the West, became the emotional basis of Inoue's nationalism. His attitude toward the mixed residence problem was evidently quite different from the exclusionist policy of the Tokugawa period. Far from looking down on foreigners as barbarians, he looked up to them as beings on a higher rung of the ladder of evolution (Minamoto 1968, pp. 179-183; Pyle 1969, p. 110). Only after Japan had been modernized and her people unified could the country take the risk of mixed residence. In the meantime Inoue favored a firm government policy that would promote "enlightenment" without mixing the races. In short, his nationalism was, at least initially, a defensive posture.

It was in 1890 that Inoue returned to Japan to become the first Japanese to be made professor of philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University. Until his retirement in 1923 he dominated the Japanese philosophical world from this chair—and from countless other positions of prestige and power.

It was also in 1890 that the Imperial Rescript on Education was proclaimed, a document he later called the “quintessence of national morality” (Inoue 1912, p. 13). In the following year he was commissioned by the Department of Education to write a commentary on the Rescript. This work, the *Chokugo engi*, was the first installment on what was to become a lifelong endeavor to set forth a “national morality.”

*Toward a theory of national morality.* In the *Chokugo engi* Inoue bases all morality on a *private* morality of filial piety, brotherly subordination, loyalty, and sincerity (*kō-tei-chū-shin*) and a *public* morality of a common or shared love of country (*kyōdō aikoku*). Also of importance was his acceptance of the organic theory of sovereignty, a viewpoint which regarded the emperor as the mind and will of the nation, the people as his body and limbs. In this work Inoue tried to go beyond the traditionalists who posited loyalty as an absolute obligation. He liked to boast that he had been able to lay down the *reasons* for loyalty. Nationalism, he felt, could no longer be defended by simple traditionalism. Confucianism itself was too closely bound to the *Gemeinschaft* of an earlier day to provide solutions to the moral questions posed by the exigencies of modernization. In the *Chokugo engi* he argues, therefore, not on behalf of a sacred Confucian state, but for the promotion of a national morality that would enable Japan to resist the political, economic, and intellectual pressure from the West (Minamoto 1968, p. 189). Under such circumstances, morality needed to be buttressed by new “arguments,” new “reasons.”

The “reasons” proposed by Inoue, however, turn out to be merely utilitarian considerations. He argues, for example, that unless children witness their parents showing respect to their grandparents, parents will have no hope of being treated with respect in *their* old age. In the same way he argues on behalf of loyalty and obedience to the state on the ground that disobedience would only harm the people. Disloyalty would be the first

step toward social confusion and the disruption of the hierarchical ordering of society (Minamoto 1968, p. 192). These practical, utilitarian "reasons" he advanced on behalf of the Rescript do not seem to sit well with his incessant warnings against the dangers of utilitarianism as a theory. But consistency was not his forte.

His views were regarded as being generally "progressive" at the time, especially his recognition of the rights of women. Nevertheless, he clearly made the family an instrument of the state, arguing that domestic tranquility must be maintained not merely for the family itself, but for the sake of the state. Unlike some nationalists, such as Miyake Setsurei, Inoue never argued for nationalism on internationalist principles. Though he clearly stood in the tradition of "Eastern morality, Western technology," he was also open, in addition to Western technology, to the gradual but controlled importation of Western *culture* (Minamoto 1968, pp. 194-196).

*Inoue's critics.* Though the *Chokugo engi* was influential (being widely used as a textbook and selling over four million copies), it was not universally accepted. Some criticized it for being too "Western." Miyake Setsurei criticized Inoue for presuming to explain the "why" of loyalty. Together with Kashiwagi Yoshimaru, Miyake believed that only the emperor could "explain" such a thing. No one could assume that Inoue spoke for the emperor. According to Miyake, Inoue's "explanation" of loyalty marked no great advance over the arguments of the traditional absolutists. Moreover, the emphasis on *bushidō* and filial piety found in the *Chokugo engi* were, he believed, simply out of step with the times (Minamoto 1968, pp. 194-196).

Another critic was Ōnishi Hajime, who feared that the *Chokugo engi* would become an exclusive catechism of Japanese nationalism or a form of thought-control. He also objected to making filial piety and loyalty the basis of *all* ethical behavior (Minamoto 1968, pp. 196-198).

*Initial attitude toward Christianity.* In 1891 Uchimura Kanzō was accused of not showing proper respect to the Imperial Rescript on Education, an incident that led to a nasty confrontation between Christianity and Japanese nationalism. Just as the polemics began to die down, Inoue, miffed by an attack made by Kashiwagi on his *Chokugo engi*, rekindled the flames of controversy. In all frankness it must be pointed out that, except for Uemura Masahisa, Japanese Christians in general did not seem to object to the Rescript as such (though some did warn that if the Rescript were interpreted as nullifying the power of conscience or reason vis-à-vis the state, such an interpretation would be contrary both to the spirit of Christianity and to the Constitution). It was at this juncture, however, that Inoue took up the cudgels to argue that “the basis of the Rescript is, in short, nationalism, and Christianity not only lacks this spirit to a great degree but is actually contrary to it” (*Kyōiku jiron* 27 [November 1892], no. 272 as cited in Yamazaki and Miyakawa 1966, p. 122). Christianity, with its belief in a Heavenly Father, contradicts the spirit of loyalty and filial piety. Because of its asceticism and otherworldliness, Christianity can make no contribution to the progress and improvement of Japan. Unlike the Rescript, which is based on the “discriminating benevolence” of Confucius and Mencius, an obligation that gradually radiates outward from the nearest of kin, Christianity strikes an ethical posture similar to Mo Tsu’s “indiscriminate benevolence” (Yamazaki and Miyakawa 1966, p. 122).<sup>4</sup> According to Inoue, Christianity, because of its radical monotheistic position, could not recognize the divinity of the imperial ancestors and their scion, the reigning emperor. Though he himself showed some hesitation about accepting literally the imperial mythology, Inoue did believe in the “divinity” of the emperor. In fact, as Minamoto points out, he invested both the nation and the emperor with one absolute and religious-like value (1968, pp. 207-208). Later, in his *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* (here-

4. This is indeed a clear statement of the importance of “particularistic” commitments in Japanese ethical behavior.

after referred to as the *Outline of the national morality* or, more briefly, as the *Outline*), Inoue would argue that though Confucianism and Buddhism have generally assisted the national morality, Christianity, because of its doctrines of transcendence and equality, was unable to take into account Japan's unique history and environment and had therefore done damage to the national morality. A religion that harms a race can be dispensed with. As a shoe must fit the foot, so he reasons, religion must fit a nation.

Ever since the writing of the *Chokugo engi* it had been clear that the "rationality" and modernizing stance Inoue took were of a sort that could easily be compromised with radical nationalism. His attack on Christianity in the 1893 book *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu* [The collision of education and religion] was the first step in this direction. In this book he joined hands with traditionalists, modernizing nationalists, and militarists in the face of the "threat" posed by Japanese Christianity.

*Philosophical stance.* Inoue liked to distinguish between the "thought of national morality" (*kokumin dōtoku shisō*) and "pure philosophy" (*junsui tetsugaku*). In 1897, in an article entitled "Genshō soku jitsuzai ron no yōryō" [A sketch of the philosophy of phenomenon-reality identity], he presented to the Japanese intellectual community a statement of his own "purely philosophical" position. He distinguishes three stages in the development of philosophy: (1) "monistic, superficial realism" (including naive realism) that takes the phenomenon itself for reality, (2) "dualistic realism" which, mistakenly, "considers reality only in the abstract," and (3) the "philosophy of phenomenon-reality identity."<sup>5</sup> According to his own philosophical stance, "the distinguishable aspect of the world is called Phenomenon, and its

5. According to Yamazaki and Miyakawa (1966, p. 118), the first stage probably represents the theories of Ernst H. Haeckel and Katō Hiroyuki, the second the theories of Eduard von Hartmann and Kant, while the third and ultimate level, bringing together and correcting all previous positions, was represented by Inoue himself.



similar (non-distinguishable) aspect is called Reality.... Phenomenon and Reality are two aspects of the same thing, actually inseparable" (Yamazaki and Miyakawa 1966, p. 119). While the phenomenon is "dynamic" (*katsudōteki*), reality is "static" (*seishiteki*). Both intelligence (*eichi*) and purposeful activity (*mokuteki kōdō*) arise from this fundamental identity of phenomenon and reality "in the Logos" (*sic!*).

*Writings.* In 1900 Inoue began to compile materials for a study of Eastern moral thought. The purpose of this project was to make as available as the works of Western moralists the writings of the East's own Confucian tradition. Among the fruits of these labors were: *Nihon yōmei gakuha no tetsugaku* [The philosophy of the Japanese Wang Yang-ming school], 1900; *Nihon kogakuha no tetsugaku* [The philosophy of the Japanese school of classical learning], 1902; and *Nihon Shushi gakuha no tetsugaku* [The philosophy of the Japanese Chu Hsi school], 1905.

His next notable work (postponing for later consideration his *Outline of the national morality*) was *Waga kokutai to kokumin dōtoku* [The national essence of our country and the national morality] (1926). This work had the rare distinction of being condemned by the ultranationalists because of its rationalistic explanation of the imperial regalia. Though as a result of this insult Inoue resigned his seat in the House of Peers, he continued to give his support to the government. In 1932 he wrote an article justifying Japan's activities in Manchoukuo on the grounds of the *wang tao* ("way of true kingship") (Smith 1959, p. 196). The banality of his political thought was especially clear during the period of ultranationalism. In his *Saisei itchi to kannagara no michi* [Unity of religion and politics and the way of the gods] (1937), he treats politics as the process whereby a society realizes its moral ideals. Japan's "purity of heart," he maintained, was due to the reality of her National Essence. While the Way of the Gods is universal, it has been "realized" only in Japan. Other countries must take Japan as their model in order to overcome their instability

(Inoue 1937, p. 8). The spread of liberalism, equality, democracy, and individualism in Europe necessitated the rise of such "great men" and "heroes" as Mussolini and Hitler. Yet only by force could they restore unity (Inoue 1937, pp. 7-8). Japan, however, is neither a "state based on force" nor a "state based on consent." Rather, because of its principle of *saisei itchi*, it is a country of "spiritualism" or "moralism." Accordingly, Japan differs both from the Western fascist nations and from the liberal democracies. He cites Mencius with approval, arguing that the "aim of politics" is first to cultivate oneself and then to govern the state well. Of course, he adds, one cannot stop at this point, but must go on to work for the peace and advancement of the entire human race (Inoue 1937, p. 20).

*Later views on religion.* In the 1930s Inoue seemed to grow softer on organized religion than he had been in his earlier days. By this time he had come to accept without qualification the support of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism for his principle of "purity of heart." There is also more emphasis on worship and the importance of festivals than in his earlier writings.

In 1939 Inoue published a book called *Tōyō bunka to shina no shōrai* [Eastern culture and the future of China], an apology for Japan's military activities on the mainland. Once again he sought to promote Confucianism for the "pacification" of the Chinese. The realization of a "culture of new East Asia" (*shin tōa no bunka*) in Japan seemed to be the fulfilment of an ideal he had made the lodestar of his life—the unification of the best in the cultures of East and West.

In an essay entitled "Kannagara no michi to tokuiku" [The way of the gods and moral education] (Inoue 1933a) he describes a religious and philosophical principle supporting Japanese institutions that comes close to what today is called "civil religion." The Way of the Gods, he says, is a *kind* of religion (*isshu no shūkyō*). At the same time, it is ethics and politics. It is an inheritance from an archaic period when no such divisions were made in

Japanese culture, when religion, ethics, and politics were undifferentiated. Because this principle is more fundamental and inclusive than Shinto, the ceremonies of Shinto “depend” on it. The Way of the Gods is also the Way of Nature. Consequently, he feels that Hegel’s dictum “the Real is the Ideal and the Ideal, the Real” is perfectly exemplified in Japan, the Country of the Gods. For Inoue, it was a matter of historical fact (*rekishiteki jijitsu*) that Japan was the Country of the Way. Because the Japanese state had been founded on this Way, there was no tension or distance between the Real and the Ideal. The god Ameno-Minaka Nushi is the Natural Way, the original cause of all things, but was later refracted into countless kami and is immanent in them and in all men today. On the ethical level this deity is “conscience,” the aim of which is to cause men to grow toward the Absolute (or kami-nature). According to Inoue, Japan’s Way of the Gods obliges one to become a person of “good character” and, finally, to become a kami himself.

Throughout this essay Inoue characterizes the Way of the Gods with some rather revealing adjectives. It is pure, refined, great or powerful, wholesome, influential, vast, eternal or remote, and displays an all-encompassing magnanimity (*subete o ireru garyō o yūshite oru*). (An Englishman might call it “broad church.”) While its beliefs are powerful, he thinks it a bit thin (*tanpaku*) as a religion. Still, compared with the richness of Buddhism or Christianity, this “thinness,” he finds, is not a “weakness.”

Since it is synonymous with the Way of Nature, Japan’s Way of the Gods is a possibility for all nations. Greek philosophers and German intellectuals have explained it in the West. Confucius and Mencius revealed it to the Chinese. *But nowhere, save in Japan, has it ever been practiced or made the foundation of the state.* In other countries it has ceased to operate because of strife and ethical deterioration. Today (1933) Japan is in a position to be the teacher of the Way for the rest of the world, thereby uniting the world in peace. If other countries would adopt the Way of Nature, they would find it identical with Japan’s Way of the Gods.

Inoue considered Buddhism and Christianity as lacking in political *savoir faire*. Confucianism, on the other hand, was mainly ethics and politics. As a religion, Confucianism, like the Way of the Gods itself, was a bit thin (*kihaku*). But only in Japan was Confucianism ever put to use (*sic!*). Only there was its essence preserved, its good parts maintained intact. Buddhism too was preserved only in Japan, that is, those aspects of Buddhism that coincided with the Way of the Gods. Even Christianity, while withering away in the West, has left behind its essence in Japan. Without a Way of the Gods to guide them, the other countries of the world have suffered constantly from the ups and downs of history. Only Japan, with its Way, has risen above history with its revolutions and wars. For Inoue, it was a "historical fact" that Japan had continued to exist in peace and security for over 2,000 years by basing her life on the Way. And since this was a *fact*, it was also *rational*—at least in Hegelian terms.

Inoue's 1933 essay provides a remarkable outline of the features of "civil religion" in Japan: its inclusiveness, ethical generality, dogmatic simplicity, and structural ambiguity, as well as the overall function of providing a religious foundation for the ideals, legitimation, and theodicy of the nation.

I should like to turn now to a more detailed discussion of the contribution Inoue made to the creation of a national self-identity among the Japanese, to what he calls "national morality thought." The focus will be on his "masterpiece," the *Outline of the national morality*—with occasional side-glances at passages from various other essays. The line of thought contained in these sources forms the basis of that brand of nationalism which developed within the context of Japanese public education. Since scholars have recently shown considerable interest in the textbooks used in Japan before the war to inculcate moral education, it is only fitting that we should investigate more carefully the "theory" behind these books.

“OUTLINE OF THE NATIONAL MORALITY”

The National Morality Movement (*kokumin dōtoku undō*) was one of the religious and ideological measures taken by the government to remedy the moral breakdown of the Meiji system following the war with Russia. Put simply, it was an attempt to update Confucian morality in order to ward off social and political unrest. Nishimura Shigeki, for example, had suggested that the weaknesses of Confucianism be overcome by adopting the strong points of Western philosophy. In a series of lectures entitled “A theory of Japanese morals,” Nishimura maintained that Japan needed a new morality that would include the ideals of self-development, harmony and assistance to one’s family, peace and cooperation in villages and towns, the safety of the nation, “assisting” the world, and peace for all men. As Warren Smith points out, these ideals were congruent with the aims of one of the most important National Morality societies, the Nippon Kōdō-kai, namely:

to strengthen filial piety and honor the gods; to revere the Imperial House and stress the importance of the nation; to protect national laws and plan for the nation’s well-being; to promote harmony in the household and mutual assistance among villages; to guard sincerity and carry out the good and the merciful (Smith 1959, p. 66).

What is striking about these moral manifestos is their insistence upon *both* self-development (that is, the new, Western-style rhetoric of motivation) *and* community-centered values.

The treason trial of Kōtoku Shūsui and others in 1910 caused a deep reaction among bureaucrats and intellectuals. The Home Ministry appointed Inoue Tetsujirō a leader of the National Morality Movement. The purpose of its rather unstructured program was to give inspiration and guidance to the moral education curriculum of the public schools and to give the government’s family-state ideology intellectual respectability. The Movement was largely confined to lectures presented before

educators and to various publications, usually related to problems of national education. The two basic premises of the Movement were: (1) the existence of national moralities which alone can actualize the ideals of universal morality, and (2) the uniqueness and superiority of Japan's national morality among the nations of the world.

In the *Outline of the national morality* Inoue makes a distinction between individual education and group or national education. Individual education is concerned with specific subjects such as mathematics, biology, etc. National education, on the other hand, is a program for educating citizens as citizens. It is a manifestation of a racial spirit that aims at the preservation and defense of the people. Ethics, however, is a Western import and must not be confused with national moral education. National morality is what infuses a living spirit (*iki-iki to shita seishin*) into national education (Inoue 1912, p. 6). Its essence is found in the Imperial Rescript on Education, the "scripture" of Meiji Japan. Inoue compared this document with Shōtoku Taishi's Seventeen-Article Constitution which, he believed, was also a hortatory address on education.

Abstract ethical principles do not change. They are the same East and West, past and present. The national morality, however, is an ethos peculiar to a specific nationality. It aims at actualizing the abstract generalities of ethics. This presupposes *particular* situations and relationships, that is, a *national* life. Environment, the disposition of the race, and the effects of history all contribute to the shaping of each specific national morality. Thus it was largely due to a remote geographical location that Japan developed her unique national ethos. A national morality is not the work of individuals. It is an unconscious, instinctual, spiritual creation seething and bubbling up within a race. Ethics, on the other hand, being more "advanced," develops consciously. It is inferential, universalistic, non-instinctual, unemotional, and intellectual. While the national morality is determined by history (and is therefore conservative), ethics is

open to the future.

Historical investigation of the national morality must be supplemented by a *critical* investigation of the national morality that will bring forth a plan for the people's future moral development. In other words, the study of the national morality must rely on ethics per se since it is ethics that is oriented toward the future. Thus critical research in the history of national morality must throw light on today's principles through weighing those of the past. It must be critical as well as historical, practical as well as normative.

At this point Inoue introduces his notion of selectivity. Certain elements are incompatible with the national morality and must be carefully screened out. He cites as an example the Chinese theory of the change of the Mandate (*ekisei kakumei*) and various Western political theories that condone regicide. These are not compatible with Japan's national morality. A "healthy" ethics will assist in the selection of appropriate elements and in this way guide the national morality toward the future. This he thought could already be seen in Japanese history in the role played by Neo-Confucianism as it shaped the national morality of his own generation.

Inoue made a fundamental distinction between "national character" and "national morality." National character points to the de facto characteristics of a people, national morality to the way citizens *should* behave. The national character of the Japanese is *jissaiteki*, which is to say that they are concerned with empirical reality and not with abstract reasoning. They are optimistic, unostentatious, and feel at one with nature. Among their other natural virtues are their mental acumen, simplicity, and purity. The Japanese, who take frequent hot baths and wash before entering shrine precincts, are extremely pure in their bodily habits, especially, he thought, when compared with other Asians. In contrast to the Chinese, who are dull and slow, the Japanese are emotionally susceptible and respond quickly to stimuli. This means, however, that they are easily taken in

by foreign thought and risk losing their own traditions. On the other hand, the Japanese, because they have been sedentary agriculturalists for so long, have developed many "continuative concepts." This feature contrasts strongly with the customs of Western peoples who were originally nomads. (This nomadic influence, he believed, can be seen even today in the diet of Westerners [meat and milk] and in their clothing, footwear, and constant movement.) Like the French (but unlike the Germans), the Japanese are impatient and cannot bear monotony. This, he felt, was a weakness in the national character. The Japanese are also prone to shallowness, narrowness, and vanity. Progress in the national morality consists of correcting such faults in the national character while affirming the good.

*The national essence (kokutai).* Although the word *kokutai* originated in China, Inoue believed it had a deeper meaning for the Japanese. In Japan it refers, specifically, to the eternal lineage of the imperial family. Yet while the eternal lineage of the imperial family (*bansai ikkei*) constitutes the essence of *kokutai*, there are other characteristics as well. (1) It is predicated on a fundamental distinction between the national essence and political forms (*seitai*). *Seitai* obviously change during the course of history; *kokutai* does not. Other countries identify their *kokutai* with a specific historical regime. China, for example, has no permanent *kokutai* because of her many dynastic changes. (2) *Kokutai* in Japan is based on the unity of loyalty and patriotism (*chūkun aikoku no itchi*) (Inoue 1912, p. 45). Though in the West one's loyalty to the ruler and love for country do not necessarily coincide, in Japan exerting oneself for the nation *means* laboring for the imperial family. (3) *Kokutai* means the "priority" of this imperial family. Japan is a nation founded by its imperial family. Since this family first ruled *and then* created the nation (according to Japanese mythology), the line of emperors has always been *above the law* (Inoue 1912, p. 48). In Europe and America, where nations came into existence *before* their rulers,



rulers have not been able to transcend law and history. (4) The National Essence of Japan is closely related to ancestor worship. National morality and education are ways in which the Japanese execute the “will” of the imperial ancestors. (5) Closely related to ancestor worship is the entire family system (*kazoku seido*). In the case of an ordinary family (*ie*), the head of the house (*kachō*) represents the ancestors and continues the work they left behind (*igyō*). By extension the emperor is the *kachō* of the whole nation, while the nation, united in him, becomes a “comprehensive family system” (*sōgō kazoku seido*). (6) In order for the National Essence to be preserved, it has been necessary always to distinguish clearly between ruler and ruled. No rebellion in Japan has succeeded in putting a rebel on the throne. No immigrations or invasion has interrupted the continuity of the Japanese blood-line.

*Religion and the nation.* Inoue liked to distinguish between established or historical religions and “real religion” (*jissai shūkyō*). Established religions such as Buddhism and Christianity are historical distortions of the messages of their founders. Because established, historical religion tends toward sectarianism. It can have no legitimate place in a program of national education that aims at overcoming factionalism.

Inoue was often irritated by those followers of the established religions (especially Christians) who contended that moral education had had no appreciable effect on Japan. Christianity, he felt, could adopt such an outrageous position only because it was backed by the power of Western countries. Historical religion, however, is in a state of decline, not least in the Christian West. It is largely the religious prejudice and racial emotions fostered by these religions which prevent the union of the human race. Needless to say, he regarded specific revelations as both superstitious and unfair. A god who manifested himself in special revelations would be a god of favorites.

In spite of the shortcomings of the historical religions,

“religion, like all social phenomena, cannot avoid the laws of evolution” (Inoue 1912, p. 61). The movement of evolution was from religion to morality (or real religion). Without real religion one is a “spiritual cripple” (*seishinjō no fugusha*) (Inoue 1912, p.29). Real religion, he thought, is “a kind of emotion in one’s heart toward the universe” (Inoue 1912, p. 30) and is the one and only source of the varieties of religion that appear in history. National education can be associated only with real religion. Because of their personal relationship with the “universe,” teachers of moral education will inevitably advance certain religious elements in their lectures.

As a “spiritual evolutionist,” Inoue regarded the course of religious history as a movement from ancient to civilized religion (*bunmeikyō*). In ancient times religion dominated morality, having the power of life or death over the individual (as in human sacrifice). Civilized religions like Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism are more advanced than the ancient religions since they include numerous moral elements. As one approaches the modern period, however, religion and morality become formally divided, with morality sometimes taking a critical stance toward religion. Not surprisingly, Inoue did not like to hear people refer to Christianity and Buddhism as “ethical religions.” The ethical views of these religions are often inadequate or irrelevant. Inoue declared that religious ethics have never given support to scientific research or economic development. Although the assertion of “rights” had become important during the Meiji period, Inoue felt that neither Buddhism nor Christianity had had any influence in this area.<sup>6</sup> Both slight the present life in favor of a future life. They also neglect the body and fail to teach “hygiene.”

One must learn not to depend on religion, just as the child must learn not to depend on its parents. Like children’s toys, religion was necessary only during the infancy of the race. Dis-

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6. Christianity, he felt, was more concerned with charity than with human rights.

tinguishing between the essence (*hontai*) and the form (*keitai*) of religion, Inoue felt that professional religionists were concerned only with the latter. The essence of religion is in the “mind” (*zunō*). The need for, or defensibility of, a religion depends on its contribution to the national morality. A religion that does not contribute something positive should be abolished. (Inoue rules out, however, both the outright destruction of religion and high-pressure conversions. Believing or not believing, he held, is a private matter.)

The final stage of religious evolution will be a “religion of ideals.” To realize this stage in one’s own life, the individual must rely on himself (*jiriki*), since relying on supernatural sources of power (*tarikī*) is childish. One must perfect his own character. This is what it means to realize ideals *as a human being*. His argument at this point becomes rather abstract. Character, he says, is always incomplete, differing only in levels of perfection. What is called “good” and “evil” in society refers to what is appropriate and inappropriate for the perfecting of character. The perfection of character, however, is an open-ended goal, since it cannot be realized absolutely. What characterizes the perfect personality? As an abstraction from human nature, it cannot be characterized. It has no finite limitations. Personality would seem to entail individuality, the differentiation of one being from others, but in perfection there can be only “one thing.” (If there were “two things,” the result would be relativity and not perfection, since relativity implies mutual limitation.) This, however, leaves us in a theoretical dilemma, for personality without individuality cannot be recognized. At this point we observe that the individual personality (including its aim of infinite perfection) transcends the world of discrimination and enters the world of non-discriminating equality (*musabetsu byōdō*) (Inoue 1912, p. 77). Here we enter the realm of ideals. This is not to say, however, that ideals are merely subjective. For as one advances to the point where he “makes the reality of the universe his aim,” this reality in turn “casts its shadow into the heart of

the individual” (Inoue 1912, p. 77). In short, the search for perfection ends, inevitably, in the identification with the Ideal, which is simultaneously a “reflection of the Real.”<sup>7</sup>

In his collected essays of 1903 Inoue falls back on other philosophical arguments to make the same point. There he argues that the individual is merely a part of nature, a “cell” out of which a society is constructed. “The individual is not a true individual.” Evolutionists from Hegel to Huxley have stressed the unity of the principles of nature. Within this unity, the individual is to nature what a microcosm is to its macrocosm. The self is the power of cognition, a spirit above all forms and relations of time, space, and causality. It belongs to a realm of non-discrimination, to a subjective world based on empathy. Both religion and ethics are based on this realm of subjective empathy. It is from the point of view of this subjective ego that we see that individuals as such do not exist. Like his classmate Okakura Tenshin, Inoue discovered a unitary Absolute beyond all plurality and individuation. At this level god, self, and world interpenetrate. The ultimate ground of religion has been variously described. It is spoken of as Lao-tse’s “Nameless,” Christianity’s “Kingdom of God within,” Buddhism’s “True Mind,” and the internal “T’ien” of Confucianism, not to mention the transcendental “Absolute” of Western philosophy. (In connection with the last category he refers to Plato, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, and Spencer.) Ethics must start from here, from the True Self. Heteronomous ethics is impossible. Moral principles must spring from within (Inoue 1903, p. 212).

Shinto, which held a special place in the ideology of the Meiji state, was treated with reverence by the bureaucrat-intellectuals. According to Inoue, Shinto as a religion is still juvenile (*yōchi no mono*) and cannot be compared with Buddhism or Christianity. Shinto developed together with the Japanese race. While its myths contain many absurdities, their special feature is a constant

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7. Here we have an obvious application of his ontological view of “Phenomenon-Reality identity” to the problem of ethics.

insistence on the “spirit of ancestor-posterity succession.” All Shinto gods are related to the principle of lineage. Descendants carry out the work of their ancestors so that family enterprises are actually transgenerational. Inoue believed that Ancient or Pure Shinto was nothing but ancestor worship.

The worship of the imperial ancestors was not, however, oriented simply to the past. It was also associated with a peculiar type of “prophecy.” Comparing the “prophecy” of Japan with that of other nations, Inoue found that in Indian religion prophecies of the coming of Kalki and Maitreya were vague and uncertain. Since these prophecies are “religious” but lack a “national” meaning, they are nonsensical. Israel’s prophets, on the other hand, started out with “nationalism.” Nevertheless, since their words were fulfilled in Christ, Israel’s prophecy also ended in “religion.” Japan’s prophecy, however, is being fulfilled year by year in the “great principle of the race” (Inoue 1912, p. 97). This prophecy is positive and non-religious (at least in the ordinary sense of the word). It is the prophecy of the eternity of imperial rule, a prophecy constantly being realized throughout the history of Japan. This could be called a “realized eschatology.”<sup>8</sup> Thus while Greek mythology is “social” and Indian and Christian mythology “religious,” the mythology of Japanese Shinto is “nationalistic.”

In his thinking about religion Inoue always gave priority to the principle of compatibility with the central tradition. Confucianism, he believed, was easily absorbed by Japan’s unique racial spirit since its stress on ancestor worship and the family system was compatible with the indigenous tradition. Buddhism, however, was less compatible and even caused civil wars when introduced to Japan. Yet it too has been almost completely assimilated. Much later, Western elements, Chris-

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8. Inoue actually used the English word “realize” (in *kana* form) (1912, p. 98). One is struck anew by the appropriateness of the characterization of the imperial system as an “*immanent* theocracy” (Kitagawa 1966, p. 267, italics added).

tianity among them, were introduced. Though some elements are disruptive, unhealthy, dangerous, and even poisonous, other elements of the Western tradition can, he believed, make a contribution to Japan's own spirit.

Before going on with this synopsis of the *Outline of the national morality*, we will find it of interest to see how Inoue treated Shinto in the 1930s. It has already been indicated that he seems to grow more tolerant of ritual in his later years. Perhaps this was a belated recognition on his part of the importance of government-sponsored national festivals. In his essay "Shintō no tokuchō ni tsuite" [Concerning the strong points of Shinto] (1933b), Inoue describes Shinto as the positive driving force behind the prosperity and development of the race. Other would-be racial religions such as Taoism, Hinduism, and Judaism never really supported the peoples or states of China, India, and Israel. India was united only under Buddhism and, later, under Islam. The fact that India could fall to the English shows that Hinduism had no political power. Nor did Judaism prevent the Jews from being driven into the Diaspora. The case of Shinto is quite different. It has enhanced the national power of Japan throughout the world. The spirit of Shinto has promoted an expectation of the expansion of the Japanese race. Still, Shinto aims not at an actual invasion of other countries but at an ethical and spiritual unification of the world. Influenced by Shinto's conscience (*ryōshin*), other nations will develop into "splendid human societies." Nevertheless, the traditional ideals associated with Shinto can be realized only if the nations of the world are caused to submit to the ideals of "humanity" and "justice" emphasized in Japan.<sup>9</sup>

Shinto not only affirms that one can become a kami after death, it even teaches that one can become a kami while still

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9. The self-deception of Inoue's idealism need not be belabored. Suffice it to say that what we have here is a clear echo of the rhetoric of Japanese militarism, by this time already committed to a fatal adventure on the Chinese mainland.

alive. For this reason, avers Inoue, one should cultivate the divine essence within himself. Because Shinto is a religion that stresses the human personality and its compatibility with divinity, it regards man as “god-with-form” and god as “man-without-form.” (Christianity, he allowed, also emphasizes personality, but at the expense of separating God and man.)

The change in tone in this essay is remarkable. Shinto, no longer merely “positive,” is now on the offensive, spreading the ideals of Japan throughout the world.

*Bushidō: The way of the warrior.* Returning to the *Outline of the national morality*, we must now look at another topic central to Inoue’s “national morality thought”: the Way of the Warrior, or *bushidō*.

Inoue divided the history of *bushidō* into four periods: (1) from Jinmu Tennō to the Kamakura period [660 B.C. - A.D. 1184], (2) from the Kamakura to the Tokugawa period [1185-1602], (3) the Tokugawa period [1603-1868], and (4) the Meiji period [1868- ]. *Bushidō* is found in the earliest period of Japanese history, but it was first revealed not in war but in literature. During the Tokugawa period, *bushidō* was transmitted no longer by warfare, but by education. Needless to say, the meaning of *bushidō* during this period was greatly expanded. Only with the Meiji period, however, was *bushidō* extended to encompass the entire nation. Though *bushidō* was advanced by feudalism, it was not essentially tied to feudalism and could therefore be adopted by the anti-feudalistic Meiji regime. Actually, it was due to the destruction of feudalism that *bushidō* was able to spread through the whole culture.

As might have been supposed, Inoue regarded the Way of the Warrior, together with national education, as the bulwark of national defense. Without it, Japan risked eternal humiliation and ruin.

*The family system and ancestor worship.* The Japanese family system, Inoue held, cannot be conceived of without its ancestors.

“One might say that while ancestor worship is the spiritual aspect of the family system, the family system is the formal aspect of ancestor worship” (Inoue 1912, pp. 205-206).

In the West, though there may be general family principles (*katei shugi*), there is no *kazoku seido* or family system (Inoue 1912, p. 211). Inoue points out that there used to be a family system in the West, especially in Greece and Rome. It was the family system, in fact, that was the secret of Rome’s success and power. The barbarians who, with the help of Christianity, conquered the Roman Empire had unfortunately lost their ancestor worship in the course of their migrations. In this state of weakness (that is, without the support of their ancestors), the barbarians came into contact with Christianity and were converted. This was the end of ancestor worship in the West.

Because in Japan the emperor acts as the *kachō* or household head of the whole nation, the nation can be regarded as one “comprehensive family system.” The emperor represents the ancestors, continues their blood-line, carries out their “last wish” and perpetuates the ancestral cult (Inoue 1912, p. 213). Such “continuative concepts” (*keizokuteki kannen*) are the source of Japan’s strength (Inoue 1912, p. 213). The emperor serves as a “template”<sup>10</sup> for the family state. Civil law is merely a reflection of the reality of this family system.

The ruler and ruled in Japan enjoy a close relationship (Inoue 1912, p. 214). The ruler is both father and mother to his people. Unlike Motoori Norinaga, Inoue does not reject the *principles* of righteousness or other Chinese ideals. He feels, rather, that Japan has supplemented the relationship between ruler and ruled based on righteousness (*gi*) with an emotionally fulfilling parental relationship. The proclamations of the ancient emperors show the deep concern and benevolence they extended even to the humblest farmer. On Kigensetsu, the Japanese Empire Day,<sup>11</sup> the emperor still paid medical bills for the people, though not

10. Here I use Clifford Geertz’s word “template” to translate Inoue’s term *tenpan* (Inoue 1912, p. 213).

11. Inoue believed England’s Empire Day was an imitation of Kigensetsu.



required to do so by the Constitution. In the West, however, while much money goes from the state to support churches, there is little direct support given by the monarch to the people which could match this example.

In Japan good relations between the emperor and his subjects are a matter of historical record. As examples Inoue cites: (1) The story of how Ōkuninushi gave Izumo to the Heavenly Grandson. Though this is a myth, he maintained the story was “true.” (2) The Taika Reforms, during which the people gladly gave all their land to the ruler without resistance. (3) The Meiji Restoration, during which the daimyo ceded their estates to the throne. The action of these daimyo, he says, was exactly like that of Ōkuninushi (Inoue 1912, p. 219)! The relationship between them and the ruler was based on a deep “friendship” that *transcended even the law*. For this there is no parallel in the West. The intimacy of this relationship is also demonstrated in the way the Japanese people are “allowed” to share in the festivals of the imperial ancestors.

Western morality stresses righteousness (*seigi*), charity (*hakuai*), independence (*dokuritsu*), and faithfulness (*shingi*), but Japan’s “comprehensive family system” rests primarily on loyalty and filial obedience (Inoue 1912, p. 226). Since the Chinese had traditionally given priority to filial obedience, it was important for the Meiji bureaucrat-intellectuals to make clear the unity of these ideals and the priority of loyalty within this unity. According to Inoue, there are five basic arguments that can be used to explain the unity of these values. The artificiality of these arguments is apparent today, but because of the way they homologize the values of the traditional family with the imperial system, their importance cannot be exaggerated. The first three are as follows:

(1) Both loyalty and filial piety come from the same subjective source, namely, sincerity (*magokoro*). Only in regard to their object (that is, householder or ruler) do they differ. (This was the position of the Mito School.)

(2) Since the state is only an enlarged family, loyalty and filial obedience, whether directed toward householder or ruler, are the same. One could therefore say that to the householder is owed a "small loyalty" and to the ruler a "large filial piety."

(3) Because of physical distance, one cannot show his loyalty to the ruler directly. Filial piety therefore becomes a substitute form of loyalty, and vice versa.

There follow two arguments Inoue calls "historical":

(4) Loyalty to the emperor is the will of our ancestors.<sup>12</sup> Therefore one's filial piety toward his ancestors is transformed by *their will* into loyalty.

(5) The Japanese people are actually branch families (*bunke*) of the imperial family. According to this argument, loyalty is *literally* filial obedience (Inoue 1912, pp. 269-274).

#### FLIES IN THE OINTMENT: PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

From a philosophical point of view, Inoue's "national morality thought" abounds with difficulties. In the first place, it was based on postulates that made it nearly impossible to deal with politics in a critical way from within his "system." Inoue divided morality into the "private" sphere, that is, the "narrow world" (*semai han'i*) of family and friends, and the "public" sphere—the "broad world" (*hiroï seken*) of society. Political morality is thus merely the "public" morality of individual government officials.<sup>13</sup> Inoue regarded these two moral spheres as inseparable. He believed that if one were a good person in

12. Because of the way dynasties changed during Chinese history, the will of the ancestors in that country was ultimately frustrated. If one's ancestors were loyal to the Ming, giving loyalty to the Manchus would make one incapable of respecting and carrying out his ancestors' will. Thus the historical situation of China, Inoue believed, prevented the realization of "the unity of loyalty and filial obedience" (*chūkō ippon*).

13. He also subdivided public morality into "positive" and "negative" types, depending on whether an act promoted or obstructed public affairs. All citizens have their own duties. For example, the negative public morality of children includes: (1) *not* walking on the plants in public parks, (2) *not* overturning gravestones, (3) *not* writing on the school fence or carving with their penknives on the sides of their desks at school, (4) *not* tipping over the statues of Jizō that stand along the road, and (5) *not* pushing people around in public (Inoue 1903, p. 274).

the private sphere, *it would be impossible to be evil in public* (Inoue 1912, p. 277).

Another equally misguided axiom of his “national morality thought” was the idea that in order to “actualize” ethical norms one need only “particularize” them, that is, nationalize the universal. Inoue was never troubled by the question of man’s ability or willingness to realize his ideals (Sakurai 1971, p. 172).

A third questionable element in Inoue’s thinking was the “rationality” that characterizes his works beginning with the *Chokugo engi*. As previously observed, this was a rationality that could easily compromise with the most extreme forms of nationalism (Minamoto 1968, pp. 191-194). Indeed, we have already seen that, toward the end of his life, Inoue became the apologist for Japan’s military adventures in mainland China. But in what other ways did he try to “illuminate” specific political problems faced by Japan?

Throughout his writings, Inoue maintains a mind-boggling ambiguity toward concrete problems. For example, he claimed to go along with imperialism since it is “the same thing as nationalism” (Inoue 1903, p. 360). At the same time, he felt that an imperialism based on individualism was insufficient as a basis for moral education. His own ethical position, he maintained, went deeper than nationalism since it grounded morality in the True Self and thus in the Universe itself. True religion is “imperialism on the spiritual level” (Inoue 1903, p. 374). This concluding *bon mot* completely obfuscates his entire discussion, leaving the reader mystified as to his real position vis-à-vis imperialism and nationalism.

In the face of serious ethical dilemmas Inoue was often content to remark: “X and Y (non-X) must be brought together.” Actually, the form of argumentation was slightly more complex. It usually went this way:

- (1) X and Y are incompatible.
- (2) But actually X and Y only seem to be incompatible.
- (3) X and Y cannot simply be blended together.

(4) Therefore X and Y must be brought together by selectively and judiciously supplementing the weaknesses of X with the strengths of Y. By the time he reaches step 4, the reader has forgotten the initial premise.

At times Inoue's "syntheses" are brought off simply by a clever *façon de parler*. Take, for example, another concrete problem: Can democracy coexist with monarchy? Inoue's answer is, "Yes, on the basis of 'reciprocity.'" Working for the people is the same as working for the emperor. The pains and anxiety (*kushin*) of His Majesty must be "reciprocated" by the sincerity (*magokoro*) of his people (Inoue 1912, p. 284).

One problem entailed by his immanent style of civil theology is: How can one uphold the separation of *kokutai* and *seitai* and at the same time maintain that in Japan the Real and the Ideal coalesce? Another is that of how ethics can be "autonomous" when there is no "true individual" in whom autonomy can be grounded. With this problem unresolved, Inoue's attempt to reconcile "individualism" with Japanese "familism" is little more than a house of cards. Though his idealistic synthesis of "the best in East and West" may have delighted the ears of his audiences, those who heard him would have been wiser had they heard the chilling words of Sumiya Mikio written some decades later: "Familism fused with individualism is nothing but paternalism" (1972, p. 19).

In view of the foregoing it will be evident that Inoue's works can best be understood as civil theology and not as philosophy per se. He seems to make little use of his epistemological and ontological theories when he turns to the problems of ethics.<sup>14</sup> Though he boasted that "East of Suez, there is no philosopher who can out-rival me" (Yamazaki and Miyakawa 1966, p. 120), his epistemology is little more than a philosophical exercise with scissors and

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14. Generally speaking, Inoue's ethical theories were an easy mix of Sedgwick's theory of happiness, Spencer's evolutionism, and the traditional Oriental ideal of the sage. See Kosaka 1969, p. 242.

paste. Often personal interests took precedence over intellectual integrity. Thus with regard to Inoue's espousal of "spiritual evolutionism" (*seishinteki shinka*) against the social evolutionism of Katō Hiroyuki, Yamazaki and Miyakawa bitterly remark: "In retrospect it appears, however, that this entire episode was nothing more than an internal struggle for leadership within the bureaucratic, academic circle, and it indicated the appearance of a new type of governmental ideologue perfectly suited for the more advanced stage of national development" (1966, p. 122).

#### THE WORK OF CIVIL THEOLOGY

What we lack today in ideology is creative power . . . by which we can stand firmly, without shame, in the world of the nineteenth century . . . Arise, Poet! Arise, you truly great Ideologist! —Kitamura Tōkoku (Scheiner 1970, pp. 223-224)

The influence of Inoue Tetsujirō on the cultural life of prewar Japan can hardly be overestimated. At that time his books, unimaginative as they are, sold in the millions. As a commissioner in charge of compiling books for teaching moral education in the public schools and as an educator of educators, his impact on the Japanese school system was deep and longlasting. From his position at Tokyo Imperial University, where at one time he had over ten thousand students, he dominated the Japanese academic world politically, despite the fact that the National Morality clique was merely one of many academic factions (Ōshima 1968, pp. 94-110). Because a number of his works were commissioned by the government, his thought was as official as any individual's could be. Written long before Japanese politics became overtly pathological, his works actually represented a relatively sane and central point on the ideological spectrum. Though for this very reason his books may be tedious to read today, one must remember that when they were written, he was helping to *create* that center.

Watsuji Tetsurō, who treats him strictly as a scholar, rightly points out Inoue's academic weaknesses, but fails to see that where he was weakest academically, he was strongest ideologically. Watsuji indicates, for example, that although Inoue set out to understand the national morality of the people (*kokumin*), at that time scholarship dealing with national identity was "sloppy" (*sorō*). Yet without an adequate concept of *kokumin*, there could be no understanding of *kokumin dōtoku* or national morality, he argues (Watsuji 1971, pp. 787-788). Here Watsuji is treating Inoue simply as a historian of Japanese ethical thought. When one looks at his work as civil theology, however, it becomes evident that Inoue aimed at nothing less than the *creation of a kokumin*. As he painfully delineated the National Morality, he was seeking to bring that *kokumin* into existence.

Watsuji also points out that Inoue's reconstruction of *bushidō* as an emperor-centered phenomenon and as an ethic peculiar to Japan is completely unhistorical (Watsuji 1971, pp. 784-785). Inoue therefore willfully—but sub rosa—changed the content of Japan's medieval *bushidō* (loyalty to one's feudal lord), making it conform to the emperor-loyalty of the Meiji period. Furthermore, Watsuji insists, Inoue, like other National Morality scholars, failed to recognize the existence of a plurality of "countries" (*kuni*) in Japanese history. He also observes that Inoue disregarded the essential difference between historical research and the discovery of ethical norms, so that in his writing one finds "a confusion of the problems of principle with the problems of history" (Watsuji 1971, p. 787).

Again we must emphasize, however, that Inoue was not merely a historian. On the contrary, he deliberately used and misused history to create the images and templates of civil theology. History, for him, was the source of "continuative ideas"—*bansei ikkei*, *bushidō*, *saisei itchi*, and *kannagara no michi*. Symbolizing the immanence of the Ideal in Japanese history, these concepts gave Japan her identity. In effect they elevated the National Essence above the flux and "terror of history" (Eliade). Thus despite

his wide knowledge of Japan's past, history was not Inoue's real concern. History was important only insofar as it provided him with the elements for constructing a trans-historical national identity. He was concerned not with what happened in history, but with what happened *rightly* in *Japan's* history. For this there were two criteria: (1) the consistency of an event with the dominant imperial tradition, and (2) the harmony of all elements taken together. Ultimately, of course, the National Essence transcended the dialectic of history. It was thought of as eternal. On this eternal and immanent National Essence, Inoue Tetsujirō sought to create both a nation (*kokumin*) and a national morality (*kokumin dōtoku*).

Neither civil religion nor civil theology is a simple "given." Both are socially constructed. Like the Little and Great Traditions they grow out of, civil religion and civil theology, though closely related, differ in their relative degree of sophistication and rationality.

Civil religion is a pre- or semiconscious creation of rather ingenuous, collective sentiments and often includes quite contradictory notions. It constitutes, nevertheless, an implicit network of ideas and feelings, a network that generates some sense of national identity, however illusory. The most important elements that went into the making of the civil religion of modern Japan were precipitates of the religion of family and village. Some Japanese scholars have rightly referred to the ideology embedded in these primary institutions as nascent forms of *saisei itchi*. Yet there were also some aspects of the folk tradition which, had they been nurtured, might have given rise to a more humane and constructive political and social order. From the point of view of the official culture-bearers of prewar Japan, the civil religious sentiments of the folk were too diffuse and multivalent to guide the nation through the exigencies of modern times. After all, popular religion does not tell the politician whether to open his country or keep it closed to the outside world. It does not tell him

whether, or when, his country should take up arms or lay them down. In short, civil religion does not instruct government in the specifics of polity.

Civil theology, to be sure, does not do so either—though it often comes closer. The civil theologian labors in the nebulous and oftentimes vacuous area between the popular climate of opinion (where civil religion has its home) and the explicit articulation of this sentiment as politics. It is he who grafts political action into the stock of national sentiment so that, finally, the one seems to grow naturally out of the other. In spite of the cultural and political significance of his work, the civil theologian is often maligned. Because he gropes his way toward a social and spiritual reality not yet embodied in language, logic, or history, his work is especially irritating to the professional historian and philosopher. From their critical perspective, an *immanent* style of civil theology—one that claims to disclose Ideals already made Real and Rational in the course of history—proves to be the most vexing of all. In this paper, however, I have suggested that civil theologians be treated not as academicians, but as individuals with their own goals and unique mode of discourse. Some *may* even be blessed with a creative genius of their own. Whether the “truly great ideologist” Kitamura called for turns out to be “truly great” depends not on the consistency of his thought, nor on the accuracy of his historical reconstructions, but on the kind of nation he is able to build out of the fragments of tradition.



## Glossary

<i>bansei ikkei</i> 万世一系	<i>Miyake Setsurei</i> 三宅雪嶺
<i>bushidō</i> 武士道	<i>musabetsu byōdō</i> 無差別平等
<i>chūkō ippon</i> 忠孝一本	<i>naichi zakkyō</i> 内地雜居
<i>chūkun aikoku no itchi</i> 忠君愛國の 一致	Nippon Kōdōkai 日本弘道会
<i>ekisei kakumei</i> 易姓革命	Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹
<i>hontai</i> 本体	Ōnishi Hajime 大西祝
<i>jiriki</i> 自力	<i>saisei itchi</i> 祭政一致
<i>kannagara no michi</i> 神ながらの道	Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山
Kashiwagi Yoshimaru 柏木義円	<i>seishinteki shinka</i> 精神的進化
Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之	<i>seitai</i> 政体
<i>kokumin dōtoku undō</i> 国民道德運動	<i>tariki</i> 他力
<i>kokutai</i> 国体	Tomita Shuntatsu 富田俊達
Kōtoku Shūsui 幸徳秋水	Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三
	Uemura Masahisa 植村正久

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