

Why was Socrates a Sage?
Chikuro Hiroike's Engagement With Western Ethics

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SUMMARY

Why did Chikuro Hiroike prefer Moralogy to Ethology to describe his new science and how is this linked to his treatment of Socrates?

Hiroike judged Socrates to be a sage because of how he died, not because of his teachings as the creator of virtue ethics. Even so, Western ethics was still very attractive to Hiroike, firstly because it aspired to universality, just like Moralogy. This is evident in the philosophy of Socrates himself and in that of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Cicero, as well as in more modern works by Spinoza, Hume and Kant.

Writers on ethics like Grotius also placed strong emphasis on two subjects dear to Hiroike's heart, the law and peace. Such works were deemed scholarly, and perhaps even scientific, both traits that resonated strongly with Hiroike. Finally, like Moralogy, ethics was accessible to all, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, etc.

But Western ethics also has shortcomings for Hiroike. There was insufficient common ground between its different schools, preventing it from attaining the kind of certainty in moral matters that he felt essential. Most importantly, it failed to acknowledge a personal God and the existence of divine benevolence, which were central to supreme morality and, for Hiroike, the most important universals.