

The Ortholinon Principle and Reverence: Civilizational Reflections on Hiroike, Schweitzer, and Gandhi

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Introduction

Among the concepts and terms in Chikuro Hiroike's moral science, none is more puzzling for foreigners than the term "ortholinon." It is a term so central to his thought that every year, around the anniversary of Chikuro Hiroike's death (June 4th), an "Ortholinon Festival" is held on the campus of Reitaku University. Despite the term's Greek etymology (orthos + linon), it refers to an aspect of Hiroike's thought that is more "Japanese" than any other.¹⁾ Yet the ideas behind the term have a resonance far beyond the borders of Japan. In this essay, I explore what I consider to be the foundation of the ortholinon principle itself, "reverence," a term famously associated with Albert Schweitzer but which is possibly the most effective prism through which the lives and thoughts of Hiroike himself (1866-1938), Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) may be viewed, compared, and understood. These three giants of ethical thought and action have never been discussed together in a comparative essay.²⁾ Such a comparison sheds light, I

believe, on their respective philosophies as well as on the origins and challenges of ethical thought in the modern era and the relationship of ethics to the idea of civilization.

Hiroike lived in Japan; Schweitzer lived in Europe and Africa; Gandhi lived in South Africa and India. In these very different places, they led vastly different lives. Yet their lives show some significant parallels, as does the evolution of their thought within their individual life stories. Several points in common provide the context for understanding their central issues. First, they shared a fascination for the thinkers and sages of a time in history identified by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers as “the Axial Age”. Like the sages of the Axial Age, all three were committed to ethics, both in their personal lives and in their thinking. Second, all three believed that, in the modern world, matter and spirit were deeply embattled, and that matter was winning the battle. Third, because they so deeply felt that the outcome of this battle was not a foregone conclusion, they dedicated themselves to preserving and enhancing the spiritual in all human endeavors. These commonalities permit an analysis based on two kinds of grounds for comparison: (1) these thinkers’ relationship to Axial Age thinkers in particular and to the practice of “axial thinking” in general; (2) the resonance that the classical notion of “parallel lives” has for a comparative understanding of their intellectual and spiritual trajectories.

The Axial Age and Axial Thinkers

Karl Jaspers described the “Axial Age” as a time in human history that was central to the spiritual development of humanity.³⁾ The 700 years between 900 and 200 BCE saw the birth of several of the world’s major religions or worldviews:

Hinduism and Buddhism in India, Confucianism and Daoism in China, monotheism in the Middle East, and philosophical rationalism in Greece.⁴⁾ The major figures belonging to the Axial Age are Buddha, Confucius, Mencius, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Jeremiah and Isaiah. These sages, said Jaspers, took “the step into universality” (Jaspers 1953, 2). Buddha, Confucius and Socrates are three of Hiroike’s five great sages. Two of his sages may engage in what we call “axial thinking” but they do not belong to the Axial Age proper: Jesus Christ and Amaterasu Omikami, the first because he lived some 200 years after the commonly accepted end of the Axial Age, the second because Japan had no Axial Age and because, though Amaterasu Omikami is important in Japanese history, especially as an explanation for the continuity of the royal house, she is primarily a figure of legend and myth.

The Axial Age was a historical period with chronological boundaries, and the sages who lived during that time were axial thinkers. However, axial thinking can occur in any historical period. Axial thinkers are what Schweitzer would label “elemental thinkers.” According to Schweitzer, in *Out of My Life and Thought*, elemental thinkers ask “the most fundamental questions about the relationship of man to the universe, about the meaning of life, and about the nature of what is good” (Schweitzer 1990, 228).

Axial thinkers tend to see nature as the reflection of Divine Mind or *nous*, sometimes called divine reason or pure intelligence. They may or may not identify that pure intelligence as God. But however they may articulate “pure intelligence,” they recognize nature or natural law as the source of truth and of morality. For them, nature and reality are one. Moreover, the highest form of morality, what Hiroike would call Supreme Morality, derives from natural law. The “good

life” is one that unfolds in harmony with natural law, “truth,” and morality.

Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi became axial thinkers through study and contemplation, as well as through reflecting on their own pivotal life experiences. Each of them went through at least one initial significant crisis, followed by several subsequent crises that inspired them to attain fundamental insights about reality, truth, morality and how one should live. Eventually, they also arrived at insights about the relationship between the life of an individual and his society, and between both and civilization itself.

At the center of all their thoughts and activities on behalf of humanity was something very simple and very deep: “reverence”. Each man began to acquire reverence through those experiences that transformed him from an ordinary person concerned with ordinary things to someone concerned with the elemental, the universal, and the eternal. Reverence also became the foundation of each man’s evolving sense of compassion and benevolence, the foundation therefore of each man’s moral vision.

The Concept and Strategy of “Parallel Lives”

In his most famous work, *Parallel Lives*, the Greek historian Plutarch (AD 46-120) placed side-by-side 23 pairs of lives, one Greek and one Roman. For Plutarch, character influenced the lives and actions of men. He believed, further, that although his portraits of each pair of men may not be based on a specific biographical or historical connection between the two, each paired portrait illustrated virtues and vices that were valuable as lessons in how to live. Although Plutarch has been criticized for exaggerating the parallelism of some of his paired lives, his strategy of illustrating moral

issues through biography has influenced Western writers as diverse as Shakespeare, Montaigne, Boswell, and Emerson. In this essay, I follow Plutarch to the extent that I consider Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi to have led “parallel lives” that were also moral lessons in themselves. Moreover, all three of them were very much aware of the paradigmatic connection between biography and morality, and they emphasized that connection by using their own lives as examples.

For Hiroike, the lives of Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ and Amaterasu Omikami presented paradigmatic lessons in how to live. He says so repeatedly and at length. Without formally placing himself on the same level as these figures, Hiroike discussed his own life as a paradigmatic lesson in the conduct of life. In the last poem he wrote, in April 1938 just weeks before his death, he asked his disciples to “cherish the teachings” of his new science of morality and to be “born anew.” He ended that brief poem with affectionate paternalism, signing off, in its last words, as the “father of morality” [モラロジーの父] (Hiroike, 2005, 579–580). Moreover, he frequently told his students to look at the example of his own life for an understanding of morality. Such statements continued right up to the end. On May 14th, 1938, for example, he wrote that of the three things that comprised the ortholinon principle, the first and most important was “the very actions of myself, the founder of morality, over the years” (Hiroike, 2005, 581).

In 1905, Schweitzer wrote to his future wife that he had given up the ambition to become a great scholar and that, above all else, he wanted to be “simply a human” (*Schweitzer-Bresslau Letters*, 2003, 65). Years later, in 1957, Schweitzer told the American journalist Norman Cousins, who had come to visit him in Lambaréné: “I came to Lambaréné because I

wanted my life to be my argument. I didn't want my ideas to become an end in themselves. The ideas took hold of me and changed my life" (Cousins 1960, 195). Similar statements linking his life to his central ideas occur throughout his works and in a number of interviews. For example, as Schweitzer told the British journalist James Cameron in 1954, "every philosophical decision of [my] own has been translated into action," into living (Cameron 1967, 167). We know also from Schweitzer's writings on figures like Jesus Christ, St. Paul, Bach, and Goethe that he considered certain lives to contain rich moral lessons for his contemporaries and across the centuries.

During his campaign to improve the lives of India's untouchables, Gandhi wrote, "my life is one indivisible whole".⁵⁾ On other occasions, he said things like "my life is my message." At times, he admitted that he was full of imperfections and errors. Yet he also maintained that, having been true to himself, his lifelong quest had been to know himself (the echo to Socrates' statement, *γνώθι σεαυτόν*, is deliberate) and that he could say "without arrogance and with due humility [that my] message and methods are, indeed, in their essentials for the whole world".⁶⁾ Despite the abundance of such contradictory statements,⁷⁾ it is clear that he viewed himself both as a paradigm of the ethical life and as the incarnation of India. During his lifetime, he accepted as his due what the people called him: a "great soul" (Mahatma), "Father" (Bapu), "Father of India" or "Father of the Nation," sometimes relishing the honorifics, sometimes humbly rejecting them. Sometimes he also referred to himself in the third person as the Mahatma, as he did so without self-irony in addressing the Indian National Congress on the eve of his departure to London for the Roundtable Conference of 1931, requesting the authority to speak for India. Such self-refer-

entiality annoyed many of the English colonial administrators with whom Gandhi dealt, and not a few of his Indian compatriots.

Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi did indeed lead parallel lives in Plutarch's sense. Hiroike did not meet or know about Schweitzer or Gandhi. Neither Schweitzer nor Gandhi knew anything about Hiroike. The relationship—or non-relationship—between Schweitzer and Gandhi is more problematic because, while each knew of the other's existence, they never met. Gerhard Kunz, in his essay entitled "Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer," insists that Gandhi never heard of Schweitzer, never mentioned him, never met him, and never exchanged any letters with him (Kunz 1969, 54). This is wrong. James Brabazon, in his authoritative biography of Schweitzer, recounts an interesting episode (Brabazon 2000, 383-384). It seems that Gandhi wrote Schweitzer while the latter was staying at Lausanne in 1936 after his trip to England. Would Schweitzer be willing, asked Gandhi, to receive Jawaharlal Nehru at his Lausanne home after Nehru's release from a British jail? It would be a way of Nehru becoming accustomed to freedom again. And so Nehru spent some time with Schweitzer.⁸⁾ Schweitzer already knew of Gandhi by 1936, for by then he had published the first and second editions of his book, *Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker: Mystik und Ethik* (1934; 1935), translated into English in 1956 from the 1935 edition as *Indian Thought and its Development*. A large portion of chapter 15 is devoted to Mahatma Gandhi (Schweitzer 1956, 225-238).⁹⁾ In that chapter, Schweitzer considers Gandhi's philosophy to be "a world in itself" (Schweitzer 1956, 225), and Gandhi himself to be continuing "what the Buddha began," namely transferring to the political sphere the "spirit of Ahimsa" (Schweitzer 1956, 231).¹⁰⁾ Schweitzer's comments are not

profound, but they do show considerable familiarity with Gandhi's thought.

Schweitzer's words on Gandhi, brief as they are, point not only to similarities between them, but also to potential differences, similarities and differences that pertain to all three thinkers in this essay. The "parallel lives" of Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi, unfolding as they did in comparable but not completely identical patterns, encourage the exploration of the relationship between an individual's life and morality; and between both and the idea of civilization itself. They encourage us to think about the ethics of responsibility in the modern world. To whom or to what principle(s) do we owe respect and reverence, and why?

Parallel Quests and Transformative Experiences

The lives of profound truth-seekers often seem to present us with a particular experience through which their future path suddenly reveals itself. These are transformative experiences of insight and understanding. Such transformative moments include those of Buddha after days of strenuous meditation under the Bodhi tree; of Jesus Christ in the desert; of St. Paul on the road to Damascus; of St. Augustine in his garden overhearing a child's voice chanting "dare to read," and then obeying that voice by opening the Bible at random, finding in it the passage that will change his life.

Hiroike commemorated his most decisive experiences with vows and visits to several shrines over the years, for instance, in 1885, 1894, 1928, and 1933. But his most significant experience of awakening and resolution, which occurred in 1912, came about differently. In 1912, he suffered an illness that became serious in September, worsened through the months of October and November, and reached a climax on December

6th, when the doctors gave up on him and dismissed him from the hospital on December 7th. Life-threatening illnesses often prompt introspection, and Hiroike's diary entries during those months document an increasingly intense self-examination. On October 13th, he calls his illness a "crucial turning point in the journey toward my own spiritual peace and enlightenment." A month later, on November 14th, he decides that he has been too self-absorbed and that he needs to practice "self-abandonment" in order to work for the happiness of mankind. This Bodhisattva ideal, the awakening of compassion, becomes even stronger on December 6th and 7th when, at death's very door, he makes a vow to God. If granted one more year, Hiroike says, he will "write down the truth not heretofore available, based on the true precepts the various sages of the world wrote in regard to human salvation. If [granted] more time, I will dedicate all my academic achievements, honors and social status to God and make a living sacrifice of myself. I shall endeavor to bring salvation to the human mind for security and happiness of all humankind and the eternal peace of human society" (Hiroike, 2005, 308-309).

A day or so after making this vow, the crisis ebbed and his illness went into remission, whereupon Hiroike asked God for 20 more years. The collective authors of *Chikuro Hiroike: Father of Moralogy* label this episode a "turning point," for it marked the real beginning of his foundational work on that "new" discipline he called "Moral Science" (Hiroike, 2005, 312). He would have almost 26 more years, until his death on June 4th, 1938.

When Albert Schweitzer was 23, he decided that in seven years he would abandon his multi-faceted career as a theologian, a philosopher, and a musician; then he would study medicine and afterwards devote himself to helping people in

central Africa. We have no evidence that a personal crisis motivated this decision. It was an idealistic decision made in the comfort of his upper middle-class European home, but he made it knowing that it would mean the abandonment of an increasingly successful career as he took on the challenges of practicing medicine amidst the poverty of equatorial Africa. Yet he could not have known how deeply transformative his experiences in Africa would be. Without a doubt, the deepest of these experiences occurred on an African river in 1915, two years after his arrival. Despite the many difficulties of establishing his hospital and caring for the Africans, he was successful and happy. Then the Great War, subsequently known as the First World War, broke out in August 1914.¹¹⁾ African troops immediately took over his hospital; for a time the care of his African patients suffered; it became clear that the hospital would have to close.

In his view, the Great War conclusively destroyed any illusions Europeans might have had about the progress of western civilization. Already, in 1899, he had intuited that a corrosive materialism was eating at the heart of western civilization and that, says James Brabazon, “civilized man had lost sight of civilization’s purpose”. No philosopher had ever dealt with this problem. Schweitzer decided to be the first (Brabazon 2000, 97). Although he had spoken with friends about writing a book entitled “We Epigoni” [that is, “We the Successors” or “We the Latecomers”] about the decline of western civilization, he had not done much writing. His friends had considered the proposed book to be an example of *fin-de-siècle* pessimism at odds with the optimism to be found in an ever-improving European society.

The war confirmed for him the paradox at the heart of western civilization: its “progress” was also its “decline” or, as he put it, its “decay”. Schweitzer might have gone to

Africa as a medical doctor and not as a missionary. Nevertheless, he had gone with a “missionary” frame of mind, believing that he was bringing to primitive people the benefits of an advanced civilization, that he was bringing light to darkness. In the midst of his isolation in Africa, he decided to return to his intuitions of 1899 and to try to explain how and why Europe’s tragedy, eventually to become the world’s tragedy, had occurred and what a possible remedy might be. Taking advantage of the virtual “house arrest” to which he had been subjected at the war’s outbreak, he began work on a book about the problem, on the second day of his enforced internment (Schweitzer 1990, 144). In these altered circumstances, his 1899 intuitions about the course of history had become an urgent and even personal problem.¹²⁾ Try as he might, however, he could not find the key to the argument of the book.¹³⁾ His authorial paralysis continued for months. But suddenly and unexpectedly, his future path revealed itself to him in 1915, much as it had for Hiroike in 1912.

Here are Schweitzer’s words describing his mental condition and his discovery: “For months on end I lived in a continual state of mental agitation... I was wandering about in a thicket where no path was to be found. I was pushing against an iron door that would not yield. All that I had learned from philosophy about ethics left me dangling in midair... Also, philosophy almost never concerned itself with the problem of the connection between civilization and concepts of worldview. [In this state of mind, I had to journey up the Ogowe River, to visit the sick wife of a missionary.] Slowly we crept upstream. Lost in thought I sat on the deck of the barge, struggling to find the elementary and universal concept of the ethical that I had not discovered in any philosophy. I covered sheet after sheet with disconnected sentences merely trying to concentrate on the problem. Two days

passed. Late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase '*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*' [Reverence for Life]. The iron door had yielded. The path in the thicket had become visible. Now I had found my way to the principle in which the affirmation of the world and ethics are joined together!" (Schweitzer 1990, 154-155)

The use of metaphors like darkness yielding to light, or of confusion yielding to clarity, or of a path opening in a wilderness, are common in enlightenment stories from the Buddha to St. Augustine and beyond. Schweitzer's experience is a bit different from those in that the central insight is a moral one that leads both to a philosophy of life and a theory of civilization.

The phrase "Reverence for Life" has a number of connotations that perhaps are not evident in English or Japanese. The German original for reverence, "Ehrfurcht," is the key word here. In German, those connotations include the sensation of awe and wonder in the face of the tremendous power of nature, for example a storm in the ocean, a hurricane, a flood. More broadly, they may also include the experience of awe and wonder in the face of the cosmos, the patterns of the heavens, and the cycle of the seasons. Everything is subject—both human and non-human—to natural law. Natural law, which is the same as the law of all creation, according to Schweitzer, reflects an irreducible and powerful urge: what he termed "the will-to-live." This urge is a positive drive; it is affirmative. It says "yes" rather than "no". Just as we recognize the "will-to-live" in ourselves (for instance, we resist dying until the end or near the end), so must we acknowledge that will in others. Once we do so, recognizing our kinship with other human beings and with all life, compas-

sion arises within us. Compassion, in turn, awakens our spirit of benevolence. When we act on our benevolence, we put into practice the principle of the affirmation of the world. That action is itself moral or ethical. Thus, for Schweitzer, “Reverence for Life” is a profoundly moral way of being in the world. The greater the reverence, the greater the selflessness: Schweitzer’s insight on the Ogowe River became a theory of altruism, compassion and benevolence born out of the sense of profound gratitude for the miracle of the world and the universe.

Schweitzer did not describe these insights in this way in 1915. But I believe that at some level he sensed their transformative complexity on that African river. Over the next 50 years, as he developed and refined his insights, the idea of “reverence for life” was to be enormously consequential both for him personally and for the history of ethical thought.

Some have accused Schweitzer of being an agnostic rather than a Christian, despite his Christian upbringing, training and work in the church and despite his scholarship dedicated to the New Testament, the life of Christ and the teachings of St. Paul. These accusations are exaggerated, but they contain a germ of truth, for Schweitzer’s “reverence for life” is not limited to one religious tradition or dependent on a belief in one God who promises salvation through Jesus Christ. Schweitzer’s notion of reverence has a much broader source and resonance. For him, God becomes in essence a principle of nature, a universal power or force. Such a notion of God as a principle or as “pure intelligence” resembles the notions that both Hiroike and Gandhi had of the divine. Quite frequently, in the *Treatise*, Hiroike couples the word “God” with “mind,” “nature,” “natural law,” “the Reality of great nature,” “the decree of heaven,” or “the universal law of causality”; this sort of strategy of explanatory qualification may reveal

doubts about the existence of a personal, anthropomorphized God in the western sense. And yet Hiroike prays to this God and makes vows to him. Gandhi also has an idiosyncratic conception of "God". He may make vows to "God" or feel that "God" has spoken to him or is "testing" him in this or that way. However, as he frequently told interviewers and as he wrote in his *Autobiography*, for him "God" was, finally and simply, "Truth,"¹⁴⁾ and thus not confined by Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity.¹⁵⁾ All three men, then, despite professing a "personal" connection to "God" (however defined), moved away from the notion of an anthropomorphic God identified with a single religion and toward the notion of God as nature, natural law, pure mind or energy, truth. In doing so, each of them increasingly espoused a universalist approach to religion itself and to the religious experience. It was perhaps inevitable for each of them to be criticized by the more fundamentalist practitioners of their original faiths, whether that was Buddhism, Shintoism, Christianity, or Hinduism.

Gandhi's transformative experience does not have a transparently symbolic turn from darkness to light, from despair to joy, from purposelessness to purposefulness. Though his reaction to the experience is more pragmatic than Schweitzer's, the moment itself is just as decisive for his future. Married at 13, Gandhi was sent by his family to London at 19 in order to study law. After he finished his studies in three years, he returned to India and tried to practice law but met with little success. In 1893, he was offered a job as a lawyer for an Indian company in South Africa. Shortly after he arrived, as he wrote in his autobiography, he experienced an incident of racial discrimination unlike anything he had experienced before. The incident occurred on an overnight train to Pretoria, where Gandhi was

heading in order to visit a client. Gandhi rode comfortably in his first-class compartment until the train reached Maritzburg at about 9 p.m. At that point, a new passenger, a white South African, got on the train, entered Gandhi's compartment and was shocked to have to share it for the night with a "coloured man". He called for train officials to remove Gandhi and to send him to third-class, where Africans and other people of color traveled. Gandhi insisted that he had a valid first-class ticket and refused to move. The train official called for a police constable, who physically ejected him from the train. The train steamed away and Gandhi went to the waiting room to sit until the next morning. He had no overcoat, since it had remained in the luggage that the station attendant had taken away from him. Maritzburg is at high altitude; the winter night turned bitterly cold. As Gandhi sat shivering throughout the night, he turned over in his mind what had just happened to him.

That experience is recalled in the following way in his autobiography: "I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finalizing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial and only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice. So I decided to take the next available train to Pretoria" (Gandhi, M. 1983, Part II, Chapter 8, 95-98).

This small incident is the beginning of Gandhi's transformation into the Mahatma and the Father of India. The initial cause is neither a sickness unto death, as was the case

with Hiroike, nor a trauma like that of the First World War, as was the case with Schweitzer. For Gandhi, that small injustice on that cold night in Maritzburg became part of a larger issue, establishing a pattern that would be repeated throughout his life. Over and over, he interprets a specific event or policy as symbolic of an important principle. For example, in late summer of 1906, the Legislative Council of the Transvaal introduced an "Asiatic Act" that would require the registration of all Indians by means of photographing and fingerprinting, and it would require all Indians to carry "Identification Cards" with them at all times. Since white South Africans were not subject to similar requirements, Gandhi viewed the law as racial discrimination. So he called for a meeting of the Indian community and proposed at it that all Indians resist the act by non-violent means. He asked his fellow Indians to be willing to go to jail if necessary, as well as to suffer physically from the consequences of their non-violent resistance or "Satyagraha". The non-violent resistance would last for seven years, until the law was repealed. This experience was the beginning for Gandhi of "Satyagraha" as a concept and a strategy. His transformation had begun with a quest for justice concerning a single problem, but soon that quest became much more. Eventually, back in India, through Satyagraha and other strategies, he liberated his country from the yoke of British colonialism.

After their transformative crises and experiences, Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi each made crucial decisions that emphasized duty over rights, others over oneself, and service over any other kind of action. The turn toward duty and toward others, coupled with the commitment to service, awakened within each man the heart of compassion, the heart of benevolence. From this moment until the moment of their deaths there occurred something relatively rare in the lives of

most persons: the expansion of their personalities due to a conscious and conscientious adoption of benevolence as their principal attitude in life.

For Hiroike, the practice of benevolence took the form of gratitude toward the ortholinons, a gratitude that becomes a debt that must be repaid through benevolent acts. He called these acts “returning favors to ortholinons.” Such actions were not only limited to individuals. Ultimately, “returning favors to the ortholinons” became social and cultural acts that benefited the nation and culture in general.

On more than one occasion, Schweitzer said that he could not accept “good fortune as a manner of course but must give something in return” (Schweitzer 1990, 82). The main justification for this ‘good fortune principle’ is, for Schweitzer as it is for Hiroike, gratitude. Further, gratitude based on reverence will lead to actions that will improve one’s society, one’s nation, and humanity in general. Thus, personal experiences, attitudes and behaviors are related to larger issues of society, civilization, and humanity.

For Gandhi, through Ahimsa and Satyagraha, the goal was Moksha or spiritual liberation on the personal level. On the national and civilizational level, also through Ahimsa and Satyagraha, the goal was liberation from British colonialism. For Gandhi, that liberation would benefit both Indian and British culture. It was a civilizing process, therefore, that also was deeply moral.¹⁶⁾

As Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi matured, each of them developed a particularized vocabulary to express his insights and his life’s work. For Hiroike, the terms are conventional morality, supreme morality, moralogy, and ortholinon; for Schweitzer, “reverence for life” “will-to-life”, and “ethics”; for Gandhi, Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Brahmacharya, Swaraj, Swadeshi, and Moksha, terms that come from Sanskrit.

Schweitzer's terminology is clear enough, as he preferred standard language to the use of a more specialized vocabulary. Let me define the Sanskrit terms as Gandhi used them, before turning to Hiroike's ortholinon principle in relation to "moralogy" per se and to our contemporary world. Ahimsa is usually defined as non-injury to other living beings, but for Gandhi it also meant "love" for the "underlying unity of life" (Gandhi, M. 1983, 312). Another translation might be "reverence".¹⁷⁾ In his view, "love" leads to "Truth," which for Gandhi is another way of saying that Ahimsa leads to God. Satyagraha literally means "holding on to the truth";¹⁸⁾ Gandhi transformed that concept into non-violent action, or resistance, in the quest of justice (and "truth"). Brahmacharya refers to chastity, celibacy, and self-control; it was a spiritual discipline which Gandhi himself had begun to practice in his thirties and one that he later required of those living with him in his ashrams (or religious hermitages). Swaraj literally means "self-governance," but for Gandhi it signified "home rule" and India's independence from Britain. Swadeshi refers to the policy and practice of using goods (like clothing) made in one's own country, not in the colonizing power. In order to symbolize his quest for emancipation from the British Empire, Gandhi took off his British suits and put on Indian clothing, made from Indian cloth, and wore that for the rest of his life. Moksha is spiritual liberation, which Gandhi thought could be attained through renunciation, self-control, Ahimsa and, in his particular case, Satyagraha. In a sense, Gandhi related spiritual liberation to political liberation. That which gives liberation its motivating energy is "reverence"—or love and respect for other human beings and the willingness to suffer injury and pain oneself before being the cause of pain in others. The principle of non-violence contains all these "motions of the heart". In effect, over a life-

time of thought and action, Gandhi bound all these Sanskrit terms—the most central of which are Ahimsa and Satyagraha—and their English equivalents into a coherent and cohesive spiritual, philosophical and political worldview.

The Ortholinon Principle, Shinto, and Reverence

For Hiroike, the word “ortholinon” points to a complex set of unifying principles, actions, and attitudes, all related in one way or another to “reverence” as the driving force in what he calls “supreme morality.”

For several years, the ortholinon principle was an obstacle to my understanding Hiroike. Both the idea and the term are generally considered to be difficult for westerners to understand, and I was no exception in this regard. What is the source of the difficulty? It arises, in part, because Hiroike deliberately complicated matters. He invented an odd-sounding western word “ortholinon” to translate the Japanese word “dento” [伝統], which normally means “tradition” in ordinary Japanese. But he enlarged the common meaning of “dento” [伝統] by giving it a new set of connotations. At the same time, he gave his new English word a Greek etymology and yet made it reflect a very Japanese worldview. It is important to untangle this linguistic and conceptual knot, for its values lie at the heart of Hiroike’s “moral science”.

Why did Hiroike feel it necessary to create this unusual term with its recondite etymology, ‘orthos’ meaning straight and ‘linon’ meaning line? Was it an attempt at a scientific linguistics in order to make it appear that his essentially humanistic ideas had a scientific and objective foundation? Alternatively, why was he trying to give the term connotations that the Japanese term by itself did not possess? What is the relationship between the idea of “straight lines” and the

three major ortholinons Hiroike identified: family, national, and spiritual? I knew that the ortholinon principle owed something to Confucian piety, with its respect for one's ancestors. I also knew that the ortholinon principle was a more profound concept. But I did not really know why.

Then I visited the Ise Shrine, long considered to be the spiritual home of the Japanese people. Only then did I begin to appreciate the profoundly cultural dimensions of "the ortholinon principle". After my visit, I read Motohisa Yamakage's *The Essence of Shinto* and other works about Shinto. I returned to the Ise Shrine and saw with more knowing eyes what I had earlier intuited. In Shinto, as Yamakage explains, what is straight is valued, what is crooked is not. Straightness becomes a moral category, a representation of "the good". With Yamakage and in the Ise Shrine, I began to understand Hiroike spiritually, not just intellectually. Everything in the Ise Shrine teaches: the gates, the straight paths, the straight trees, the stones, the smaller shrines as well as the central shrine, the Okagura ceremony, the continual periodic renewal of the entire shrine itself, the sense of order that is not imposed on nature but seems to arise from its very center. Everything is imbued with Kami, the divine spirit, especially the spirit of Amaterasu Omikami, to whom the inner shrine, the *Kotaijingu*, is dedicated. The Shrine teaches, much of it through silence, the divinity of nature as well as the benevolence of Amaterasu Omikami. We are encouraged to feel reverence toward her and, because of that, gratitude toward other ortholinons. According to Hiroike, a "straight line" leads from her through the royal family and explains Japan's unbroken line of royal succession. Similarly, also according to Hiroike, a line should bind us to our spiritual ortholinons, to our families, and to our nation. This very Japanese way of thinking is

sometimes difficult for foreigners to appreciate.

The “ortholinon principle,” therefore, is a concept rooted in Shinto and expanding out from it. In Hiroike’s words, the ortholinon principle “is a spiritual and material law of human life that has been extracted by the sages from the orderly unified law of the universe. It is the law of individual security, of the orderly unification of human society, and of the everlasting happiness of mankind” (Hiroike 2002, III, 118). The key to happiness and to a moral life is an order in the self which reflects the order of the universe. Those great spiritual teachers—the ortholinons—who have given us this “key” are to be venerated. Out of gratitude for this gift, we must “return favors to ortholinons” (Hiroike 2002, III, 115). Amaterasu Omikami may be the principal Japanese ortholinon, but for Hiroike there are others: our teachers, our family, or national leaders. Some of these ortholinons comprise the world into which we are born: our nation, our family, our particular system of government and its leaders. Some ortholinons become our spiritual teachers through our life experiences. We can choose our ortholinons, to an extent, and our moral compass—the way we conduct ourselves in the world—is a result of the biological and cultural situations into which we have been born and of the choices we make in life and the ortholinons we come to know and learn from.

What in Hiroike’s own life experience began as gratitude for his own survival after his 1912 illness has gradually been transformed into a “moral science” (morality) derived from natural law and applicable to the individual in relation to his particular society and civilization, eventually to all humanity.

Moralogical Conclusions

It is true that Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi saw the

world through the particular lenses of their culture's terminology and symbols. It is perhaps inevitable, then, that their language sometimes may lead us to believe that their ethical systems are local. If we believe that, we are mistaken. They were all axial thinkers. They intended their teachings to be universal, not local. They designed their terminology to be a door that opened onto the wider world. Theirs was a universalizing strategy because for them it would be impossible to have an ethics that did not have a claim to universality.¹⁹⁾ That is why Hiroike coined new terms in western languages and expanded the connotations of Japanese terms like *dento*, 伝統.

Schweitzer and Gandhi used similar strategies. For Schweitzer, *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* refers to all life, not the life in a particular culture, or even just human life. "The will-to-live" is not a historical concept but a biological one, applicable to all life. "Ethics" refers to moral behavior not only in an individual but in a society and civilization as well. And Gandhi expanded the meanings of Ahimsa and Satyagraha, as we have seen. All three followed these strategies because they were elemental thinkers who wanted to be universal and to have a universal resonance for their thought.

In this, Hiroike, Schweitzer and Gandhi resembled the thinkers of the Axial Age. Those thinkers and sages seldom considered their teaching to be culturally limited or bound. Buddha, for instance, did not claim that the four noble truths and the eight-fold path were limited to Indian culture. Suffering exists and it is universal. Suffering is caused by desire, and desire is universal. The way to eliminate suffering is to eliminate desire, a universally applicable insight. Or consider the *Bhagavad Gita*, whose central teachings are relevant to all humanity.

In a previous essay on Karl Jaspers and Chikuro Hiroike,

I argued that moralogy was culturally based but not culturally bound. It is precisely those features of moralogy which are so powerful—the ortholinon principle, the importance of Amaterasu Omikami, the reverence for one’s ancestors and the nation—that make moralogy so Japanese. Moralogy is, in part, a reflection of the uniqueness of Japanese history, cultural values, and spiritual legacy. But it also has a resonance for humanity, for civilization as an ideal and as a reality, as well as for our contemporary global world.

Both Schweitzer and Gandhi were critically aware of the relationship between morality and civilization. For instance, Schweitzer wrote, the “ethical acceptance of the world and of life [is related to] the ideals of civilization.”²⁰⁾ He also said, “The will to civilization is the universal will to progress that is conscious of the ethical as the highest value.”²¹⁾ Although Gandhi had harsh things to say about Western civilization, he was, like Schweitzer, similarly positive and even hopeful about civilization in general when the respect for morality was present. For instance, he wrote in a pamphlet entitled *Ethical Religion*, “True morality, true civilization, and true progress are always to be found together.”²²⁾ Hiroike might well have written these sentences.

And yet, for all their good intentions, each of these men experienced important failures late in life. Despite his efforts to counter Japanese aggression in China,²³⁾ Hiroike was rebuffed by the royal house, though not persecuted or imprisoned for his opinions. One wonders what this experience did—if anything, at the time—to undermine his faith in the wisdom and benevolence of the national ortholinons; one wonders, also, how his faith in the ortholinon principle and in the benevolence of the royal house itself might have been affected, had he lived another eight or ten years.

As stellar as Schweitzer’s reputation was, it suffered after

he won the Nobel Prize for Peace. Journalists visiting Lambaréné were shocked. A typical reaction is that of James Cameron, who visited Lambaréné in 1954 and wrote about it in the 10th chapter of his autobiography, *Points of Departure*. Cameron registered surprise that Schweitzer has not paid more attention to making Lambaréné more presentable and comfortable. Reacting to the fact that there was no electricity except for the operating theatre, Cameron wrote: “the Doctor had fenced off all mechanical advances to a degree that seemed both pedantic and appalling..... The Hospital existed for him rather than he for it. It was deliberately archaic and primitive, deliberately part of the jungle around it, a background of his own creation which clearly meant a great deal more philosophically than it did medically” (Cameron 1967, 161). A more balanced and generous assessment is offered by Norman Cousins in *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambaréné* (Cousins 1960, *passim*). Cousins stayed a good deal longer than Cameron did and realized that the clinic at Lambaréné was “archaic and primitive” for a good reason: it served Africans without intimidating them. Schweitzer recognized, for example, that when a patient came to the clinic, his whole family tended to come with him and to stay until he was cured. So the clinic became in effect a village for hundreds of patients and their families, something that would not have been permitted had the clinic been organized only in accord with western values. Despite the work of Cousins and others, the myth of Schweitzer’s benevolence and efficacy was permanently punctured.

It has often been remarked that despite Gandhi’s efforts to secure non-violence as the guiding principle in India’s life and politics, one of the results of the drive toward independence was a civil war between Moslems and Hindus more violent, with the loss of more lives, than during any comparable

stretch of time during British rule. Gandhi was unable to prevent the partition of India (and the establishment of Pakistan as a new—and Moslem—nation). Some blamed Gandhi, this most peaceful of men insistent until the very end on a united India as a home for Hindu and Moslem alike, for India's troubles. It was perhaps foreseeable—indeed Gandhi had such premonitions from time to time—that he would be assassinated.

What do such failures tell us about the fate of axial thinkers and about the effectiveness of moral thought in our imperfect world? They tell us, of course, that the world will remain imperfect, that “the good” will finally be able to do no more than mend a few threads in the torn fabric that is the actual world. And yet this gap between the ideal and the real should not lead to defeatism. Socrates once answered a critic of his utopian vision in *The Republic* by saying that, however impossible it may be to achieve, it nevertheless exists as an ideal, “in heaven,” as a kind of model or eternal form, to imitate and to learn from. The same may be said of thinkers of the Axial Age, well as of axial thinkers like Hiroike, Schweitzer, and Gandhi.

As idealistic as they were, however, they recognized the world for what it was. Hiroike saw the final futility of his efforts to alter Japanese history, but he tried nonetheless. Schweitzer recognized, as he told James Cameron, that “man is a clever animal, who behaves like an imbecile” (Cameron 1967, 166), yet he devoted his life to improving the lot of people in Africa and to working on the behalf of peace in the world.²⁴⁾ Gandhi, as optimistic as he sometimes declared himself to be about human nature, was under no illusions about the violence and self-interest that lurked in the hearts of most men.

Hiroike was very much aware of self-interest. He called

it “conventional morality,” which he defined as the morality of institutionalized religion and ordinary ethics the world over. Most people, he maintained, were moved to act morally not out of altruism but out of self-interest. To call such actions “moral” was, in Hiroike’s view, to mislabel them. The doctrine of salvation in Christianity as a motivating factor in human behavior was, he believed, a case in point. By offering salvation to Christians, and to Christians only, Christianity encouraged the morality of self-interest, and that, according to Hiroike, was therefore not true morality. Hiroike opposed such “conventional morality” with “supreme morality,” which is in essence an ego-less morality of actions always on behalf of others without regard for one’s self-interests.

Most historians would agree that most, if not all, nations act out of self-interest first. Most historians would also agree that most nations also defend their actions and policies by appealing to “morality.” According to Hiroike, in these instances nations are appealing to “conventional morality,” thereby deluding themselves that they are truly acting “morally.” If nations were to act on the basis of “supreme morality,” the history of the world would be different. Hiroike wrote, “The future of mankind depends on the principles and methods which we adopt in serving our ortholinsons” (*Characteristics*, 194). The future depends, that is, on whether or not we adopt “supreme morality” as the system of ethics that influences the policies and actions of nations, businesses, communities, families, and individuals. Like the critic of Plato’s utopian vision in *The Republic*, I remain skeptical, even as I do not cease to hope. Perhaps Schweitzer said it best toward the beginning of his magnum opus on culture and history, the second volume of *Philosophy and Civilization*: “a civilization that does not develop spiritually is like a ship

without a rudder heading for catastrophe” (Schweitzer 1949 (1923), 2). Schweitzer published those words in 1923, eight years before the invasion of Manchuria, sixteen years before Germany invaded Poland, thus igniting the Second World War, eighteen years before the Pacific War, twenty-two years before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not to mention all the wars and disasters—including those of ecology and economics—before and since.

The spiritual development of humanity is the issue, not its religious development, for religions have been at the center of many of the world’s most destructive conflicts. To put it in Hiroike’s language, the future depends on whether it is supreme morality that determines our decisions on the environment, international relations, politics, or economics, or whether those decisions are determined, at whatever level, by conventional morality, therefore by self-interest, by fear, by our aggressive instincts, by national pride, or by greed. That is the continuing challenge that we face today and in the future.²⁵⁾

Notes

- 1) The fullest definition of “ortholinon” occurs in volume three of the *Treatise or Towards Supreme Morality* (Hiroike 2002, III, 111-120).
- 2) *An Outline of Moralogy: A New Approach to Moral Science*, collectively authored by members of the Institute of Moralogy at Reitaku University, mentions in passing Schweitzer and Gandhi in a single sentence as examples of people in the 20th century who are “close to the level of sages” and whose “lives offer a high standard of conduct for mankind” (An Outline, 1987, 71). There are no further comments or analyses of these thinkers either on their own terms or in relation to Hiroike.
- 3) See, for instance, the following works by Jaspers (Jaspers 1953) (Jaspers 1951) (Jaspers 1962).
- 4) See *The Great Transformation*, by Karen Armstrong (Armstrong 2006, passim). See also *Way to Wisdom*, by Karl Jaspers (Jaspers 1951, 96-100).
- 5) *Harijan*, 2 March 1934.
- 6) *Young India*, September 17, 1925.

- 7) At one point he called himself “a curious mixture of Jekyll and Hyde” (*Young India*, October 8, 1925).
- 8) I have been unable to find any record of their conversations together, and I have not been able to track down the original Gandhi letter to Schweitzer. No such letter is printed in Gandhi’s *Collected Works* (90 volumes. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Trust, 1983). Gandhi did reprint in *Harijan*, 11 November 1947, an appreciation of Schweitzer that he received in a letter by Maude Royden, dated November 8, 1947. She called Schweitzer a true Christian of “stark and terrifying honesty” who was “regarded with suspicion by the orthodox.” See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 89, 497-498.
- 9) The original German edition of 1934 does not contain these pages on Gandhi. Apparently, they were added by Schweitzer for the 1935 edition, which is the edition used by the translator, C.E.B. Russell. See the 1934 edition (Schweitzer 1934).
- 10) Ahimsa may be considered to be Gandhi’s term for what Schweitzer called “Reverence for Life.” That is the central point of Gerhard Kunz’s essay (Kunz 1969, 53-62).
- 11) Robert Payne, in *The Three Worlds of Albert Schweitzer*, summarizes this part of Schweitzer’s career with sensitivity and insight (pp. 123-128). My description depends on that of Payne. For a fuller version, see the biography of Schweitzer by James Brabazon (Brabazon 2000, 239-287).
- 12) In his biography of Albert Schweitzer, James Brabazon describes the events of 1899 which led to the initial intuition and the 1915 river journey which led to his most profound philosophical insight, the “reverence for life” (Brabazon 2000, 87-89).
- 13) The work eventually appeared in two volumes 1923, the first entitled *The Decay and Restoration of Civilization* and the second *Civilization and Ethics*. There were supposed to be four volumes in all in this series, which he called *The Philosophy of Civilization*, but the last two remained in draft form, never submitted to publishers by Schweitzer. See the bibliography (Schweitzer 1923, passim) (Schweitzer 1949 (1923), passim).
- 14) At the end of his *Autobiography*, Gandhi wrote that “my uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth ... and that the only means for the realization of Truth is Ahimsa” (Gandhi, M. 1983, 453).
- 15) Gandhi did not care much for the God of the Old Testament, whom he considered to be an angry, judgmental and vengeful being. He preferred the teachings of Jesus Christ, especially as stated in the Sermon on the Mount, though he found Jesus’ compassion, restricted as it was only to other human beings, to be more limited than Buddha’s, which was “extended to all living beings” (Gandhi, M. 1983, 140).
- 16) For a more detailed consideration of Gandhi and civilization than I have

the space for here, see the essay by Raghavan Iyer. In Iyer's view, for example, "Gandhi viewed civilization as that which assists moral excellence, moving individuals and society to Truth and nonviolence. True civilization aids self-realization and nurtures universal brotherhood. In his definition, civilization is that mode of conduct which points to the path of duty" (Iyer 1989, 125).

- 17) Again, see Gerhard Kunz's essay on Gandhi and Schweitzer.
- 18) Here again, it could be said that Satyagraha means also holding on to God.
- 19) Whether or not there can be an ethics without a foundation in moral imperatives that are universally applicable, or make the claim to universality, is an issue that is explored, with subtlety and brilliance, by the French thinker Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995). See especially Lévinas's *Totality and Infinity*, which he published in French in 1961 (translated into English in 1969).
- 20) Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, 155.
- 21) Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, 148.
- 22) See Gandhi, *Ethical Religion*, passim.
- 23) In November 1935, Hiroike invited the former Prime Minister Makoto Saito to the newly established Moralogy College and lectured him on the principles of moralogy and on benefits of peace. Saito was favorably impressed. Unfortunately, a few months later, he was assassinated. The most important visitor to the Moralogy College in those years was Prince Tsunenori Kaya, who first came in April 1937. Earlier that year, Hiroike had gone to the prince's residence and lectured on "Historical Considerations of Japan's National Polity and Warnings for the Future." It was a plea for peace. All in all, Hiroike delivered ten lectures to the prince over the course of the next year, the last lecture being delivered in April 1938. The lectures were noble efforts but had no mitigating effect on Japan's aggression in China. See *Chikuro Hiroike: Father of Moralogy* (557-569).
- 24) See, for example, Schweitzer's Nobel Prize acceptance speech of 1954 and his two statements, "Peace or Atomic War?" of 1957 and 1958, published as an appendix to Cousins' *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambaréné* (Cousins 1960, 227-254).
- 25) For their help on this essay, I want to thank my wife Elaine Palencia, and my colleagues at Reitaku University, Nobumichi IWASA, Fumiaki MOCHI-ZUKI, Masahide OHNO, and Nakamasa SO.

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