

Supreme Morality as a Way of Life for Human Beings Living within the Network of Interdependence

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1. Chikuro Hiroike: Father of Moralogy

Chikuro Hiroike is sometimes called the “Father of Moralogy” (the English version of his biography is indeed entitled *Chukuro Hiroike: Father of Moralogy*) for Moralogy, as systematically presented in the more than 3,000 pages of his *Dotoku-kagaku no Ronbun (Treatise on Moral Science)* in 1928, was an unprecedented academic endeavor, vast in scope. The areas it covers are so multitudinous that readers interested mainly in what it has to say about their own specialisms may find it difficult to grasp the author’s broader intentions and the whole scheme of the work. So a brief outline of some of the unique and outstanding features of Hiroike’s academic interests and career that shed light on his sincere efforts to establish Moralogy as a new science is perhaps necessary.

(i) His early career as a provincial teacher

Hiroike was born in 1866 in the southern island of Kyushu, Japan. He received only primary school education but later studied extensively by himself. His first job was as a provincial teacher, in which role he engaged in many activities to promote school education as well as welfare of local people. Publication of a moral education textbook at the age of twenty-two can be regarded as one of his efforts towards that end.

(ii) His extensive study of Japanese history

In his late twenties he established himself as a historian, publishing a monthly journal, *History for the Layman*, before becoming involved in a national project, the compilation of the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Things Japanese*, which was the largest work of its type ever published in Japan. Hiroike was responsible for a quarter of the entire encyclopedia, writing most

of the entries connected with religion, for example, a tribute to his extraordinary mental and academic capabilities.

- (iii) Being awarded a doctorate for the first systematization of the field of the history of oriental law

Hiroike learned from a paper by Dr. Hozumi, the country's great authority on law and later Hiroike's mentor, that several systems of law had existed in the world but that the laws in oriental countries had not been studied systematically. He made this his research field and gained a doctoral degree in law from the Japanese government in 1912 for his pioneering work. The government gazette reported of the award, "It can be said that the historical study of Chinese law is the area that Japanese students in law should be engaged in but there have been very few who actually dared to study it. In fact the area, as a whole, can be described as "a totally untouched field". Under such circumstances the author of this dissertation may be the only one who has been engaged in the field for many years, publishing several books and articles in the field. This thesis, a part of his work in this field, makes a very extensive study of the literature and bases its judgments on the modern western theory of jurisprudence, bringing order out of chaos and establishing a system. This work has certainly opened a new academic field in a vast uncultivated land. Nobody can judge whether his arguments and conclusions are appropriate, but it is certain that such an academic endeavor had never been made before and it is undoubtedly a great contribution to the advancement of study of the field." Clearly, Hiroike's dissertation was original, innovative and penetrating.

- (iv) His deep veneration for the supreme morality manifest in the ancestors of the Japanese Imperial House

Another characteristic aspect of Hiroike's work as a scholar was his sincere respect for, and involvement in the study of, the Imperial House of Japan. Dr. Yorikuni Inoue, Hiroike's teacher and an authority on the Japanese classics, suggested that he should study the reason why the Imperial House of Japan has continued to exist in Japan without a break in its lineage for more than two thousand years. Hiroike took this proposal very seriously and made it the central theme of his studies for many years, in the course of which he became convinced that the first cause of the unbroken line succession lay in the great virtue of the Imperial Ancestress, while the second was the high virtue of successive emperors. This finding was to play a very important role in the system of Moralogy; in the *Treatise*, after discussing in chapter XII how Socrates, Jesus Christ, Buddha and Confucius practiced supreme morality,

Hiroike devoted a whole chapter (XIII) to the supreme virtue of Amaterasu Omikami who is believed to have laid the foundation of Japan's Imperial House. Hiroike left the following account of how closely his academic interests and career were connected with the Imperial House of Japan, revealing in the process just how deep and wide-ranging his approach was.

Through a comprehensive study of natural sciences as well as spiritual sciences it became clear that this universe was, so to speak, the body of God and the law of the universe or the law of nature was His spirit, and that the physical body of human being, which constituted a part of this macrocosm, was a microcosm. In addition, it also became clear that humans, a part of this macrocosm, would naturally evolve if they follow the law of the universe and would degenerate if they do not. This is not a theory of my invention, but a majority of western scholars have argued the same thing. In effect, I realized it was very important to study the law of the universe. I also came to realize that the essence of the law of the universe could be seen in the supreme morality of our imperial ancestors as well as the teachings and conducts of various sages in the world which were in agreement with this great morality.

Then, I came to understand that although the sciences are classified into many branches such as jurisprudence, politics, economics and so on, they are something like the thumb, little finger and index finger. So, instead of studying the respective fingers one by one I should rather study the arm itself as it is the root or the basis of all fingers. This way, I thought, I could obtain substantial knowledge about the thumb, little finger, index finger and the rest. Based on this way of thinking, I got, for the first time, the idea of studying fundamental science as the basis of all the sciences. In other words, I made up my mind to study what the universal law of nature was. This was the beginning of my study of moral science, and this occurred when I was about thirty years old. ...

Hiroike was to adhere for the next thirty years or so to this conception of fundamental science as the basis of all sciences.

(v) The changes caused by his own life experiences

Hiroike faced a series of life crises in his mid-forties and determined to devote his remaining days to clarifying the principles and methods of realizing true peace and happiness for the whole of humankind. In 1928 he finally published the Japanese original of his *Treatise on Moral Science: A First Attempt to Establish Moralogy as a New Science* in Japanese. This voluminous work may be regarded as a concrete example of the idea of "moral science as

the foundation of all sciences” that he had first conceived in his thirties.

2. The *Treatise* and the *Characteristics* as Fundamental Documents in Moralogy

The *Treatise* was the first systematic document about Moralogy (the English translation of this work published in 2002 is entitled *Towards Supreme Morality: An Attempt to Establish the New Science of Moralogy*). Since its voluminous nature meant that it was not so easy to read through, Hiroike made a recording of its shorter introduction so that the essential messages of Moralogy would be more accessible not just to scholars but to ordinary people too. This he published as the *Characteristics of Moralogy and Supreme Morality* in 1930. The *Treatise* and the *Characteristics* can therefore be viewed as his most fundamental writings on Moralogy.

Of the earlier chapters of the *Characteristics*, we may summarize the contents of those on “the principles underlying the natural and social classification of mankind”, “the principles of the struggle for existence in human society”, and “the principles governing man’s instinct for self preservation” as follows:

- (i) As human beings, we differ in the degree to which we enjoy the elements of happiness such as health, longevity, knowledge, morality, wealth, social status and so on.
- (ii) To gain greater happiness, we must understand the various factors that contribute to our present health, etc. Of these factors, the most crucial is one’s own mental attitude and conduct.
- (iii) We all want to attain a happy life and strive for this purpose, an effort we may call the struggle for existence. The pursuit of a moral life and, above all, a morality of highest quality are the most effective paths to reach this goal for conscious human beings like ourselves.
- (iv) However, when we look at society today, we see that many people choose their path by following their instinct for self-preservation. This is the cause of the multitude of problems and conflicts that exist in society and prevent people from becoming truly happy.

After making these observations about the generality of humankind, Hiroike went on to discuss the morality of a higher quality that he had discerned in the teachings and lives of the spiritual leaders of mankind. Hiroike called this supreme morality and in the *Characteristics* he sketched its essence in terms of the following five principles, emphasizing their practical application in our lives.

- (i) The principle of the renunciation of self
- (ii) The conception of God
- (iii) The principle of the precedence of duty over personal rights
- (iv) The ortholinon principle (concerning the lines of succession of fundamental benefactors)
- (v) The principle of human enlightenment and salvation

Thus in the *Characteristics* Hiroike recommended the practice of supreme morality to readers as the most effective and certain way to obtain happiness. However, there are other themes in the *Treatise* that do not receive so much emphasis in the *Characteristics*. One such is the fact that we live within networks of interdependence. I believe this fact is of the greatest relevance to supreme morality, and I wish to devote the remainder of this paper to clarifying why this is so.

3. “The principle of mutual aid” in the *Treatise* and in the Preface to its second edition

In the first edition of the *Treatise on Moral Science* Hiroike cited many studies related to the concept of networks of interdependence. Having consulted the work of many scientists in various fields on this subject, he summarized the evidence as follows:

Viewed from the scientific standpoint, however, the content of this universe constitutes a system in which all the phenomena are related to one another. In particular, the living things on the earth are related to one another not only in their physical forms but also in their living functions. For example, carbon dioxide which is given out by animals becomes food for plants, while oxygen given out by plants becomes food for animals, and the organic parts of both become food for each other. Organic objects come into existence within, and depend on, various forms of inorganic matter. Inorganic matter undergoes changes owing to the living activities of organic objects. Moreover, when organic objects lose their functions and die, they are reduced to inorganic matter ...

Recent science has thus proved on a factual basis the existence of unity in the universe. In addition, recent progress in physiology, biology and experimental psychology has proved both in animal and man the connection between mental activity and the body. Also, the latest achievements of anthropological and sociological research have clarified that the mental activity of each individual is connected with that of another, and a person’s moral mind and moral conduct are wholly reflected in the minds of others

thereby creating in human relationships different degrees of intimacy, and subsequently causing unions or separations, and different degrees in each individual's happiness (*Treatise*, I, 111-112).

Hiroike supported this statement with a lengthy quotation entitled 'Man and the Web of Life' from Arthur Dendy's *Animal Life and Human Progress* (1919). Part of it says, "Now one of the indispensable ideas which must be gripped is the idea of the web of life, the correlation of organisms, the linking together of vital interests in a *Systema Naturae*" (*Treatise*, I, 112).

When he came to deal with the social aspect of human life, Hiroike was clear that interdependent relationships on the mental level are what constitute the essence of human society. He includes quotes from many sociologists to support his contention that the quality of mental relationships between individuals who form social groups constitutes the most important element in human society. Thus in one such quote (from Charles A. Ellwood's *An Introduction to Social Psychology*) we read, "... we must conclude that ... the criterion of the social is *interdependence in function on the mental side*. It is inter-mental life in a group of individuals which makes possible social life. ... It is mental interaction, or the functional interdependence of individuals on the psychic side, then, which constitutes society" (*Treatise*, I, 448). Another work which Hiroike cited in the context of discussing interdependent relationships that extend in space and time was Léon Bourgeois' *Solidarité*. Part of what he quoted from this work runs as follows:

... this mutual dependence between the parts of living beings also exists between the beings themselves and also between the entirety of these beings and the environment (milieu) in which they are placed. ... this dependence is not limited to the condition of his physical life alone, rather it extends to intellectual and moral phenomena, to the acts of his volition, and to the works of his genius.

This dependence links him with all and everything, in space and time ... Nor is it not sufficient to consider the bond of solidarity that unites man with the rest of the world at any moment of his existence. This bond does not merely unite all parts of that which exists at any given time; it also brings together that which exists today and that which existed yesterday, the entire present and the entire past, as it will also unite the entire present and the entire future (*Treatise*, I, 424).

The abundant evidence from the findings of various sciences provided by Hiroike to clarify what fundamentally conditions human existence on the earth can be summarized in the following five points:

(i) The content of our universe constitutes a system and all phenomena

in it are related to one another.

- (ii) Interdependent relationships exist not only between living beings (animals and plants) but also between the animate and inanimate worlds. The fact that the strong prey upon the weak can be regarded as one form of such interdependent relationships.
- (iii) As human beings, we are members or parts of the universe and so are related to everything that exists in it and not just to one another.
- (iv) What constitutes human society is the mental interaction or interdependence between individuals.
- (v) This interdependent relationship extends to, and unites, all things in space and time.

As this shows, Hiroike was clearly very aware of our interdependent relationships as human beings with all things that exist in space and time, but he did not emphasize this as a principle in the *Characteristics* (1930). It was only four years later, when he came to publish the second edition of the *Treatise* in 1934, that he overtly attached the greatest importance to the principle of mutual aid and to the fact that we live within networks of interdependence. He wrote an extensive “Preface to the second edition” of the *Treatise* which he put at the very start of the book so as to capture his readers’ attention, apologizing that it displaced the appreciations by renowned scholars. The preface (and so the entire *Treatise*) now begins by emphasizing that we human beings are but one of the phenomena of a universe where everything follows certain laws or principles and, this being so, we must follow the law of the universe or the universal law of nature. It goes on to explain that the law of the universe consists of the principle of mutual aid. Thus, it can be said that the opening of this Preface shows how important and central the principle of mutual aid was at the time of the second edition (six years after the first). I believe, therefore, that if Hiroike had written a second and completely new book on moral science he would have included, and attached greater significance to, a new chapter on the principle of mutual aid or networks of interdependence. In the absence of such a work, we must fall back on the evidence of the opening paragraphs of the Preface to the second edition to support this contention.

When heaven and earth parted, presenting a universe where all kinds of existence came to constitute the world of phenomena, none of those processes were the result of accident. They must all have followed certain laws or principles. Hence it is certain that, we human beings, brought into the universe and existing in the same, must follow the universal law of nature. For no other reason than this, in the books of Confucian philoso-

phy, this law is often referred to as the universal highway and like a public road indeed, it symbolizes the law by which all people must abide. The sages of the world teach that those who follow the law shall evolve, while those who disregard it shall degenerate. They themselves followed it and showed us the way.

The universal highway, which is a way for every person to follow, signifies a principle upon which the universe is organized. This principle is realized where all things exist, and work in harmony with one another, either coordinately or in-coordinately by helping one another according to the principle of mutual aid. The word harmony here covers the idea of 'proportionate equilibrium' as well as the 'leveling and democratic law' or 'causation'. Thus, animals, plants and minerals exist displaying interchangeability, by depending on and helping one another, coordinately or in-coordinately, and animals themselves live displaying interchangeability among themselves, by depending on and helping one another, coordinately or in-coordinately. There is also, however, an agency working for 'absorption' or 'sacrifice of the little or few for the great or many' which functions for the necessary existence of the whole universe or various organizations of different scales.

When a man, having renounced his selfishness, manifests this truth, not only physically but also spiritually, with the aim of enlightening the human mind, then it can be said he is following the universal highway. A more detailed explanation would be as follows: —It cannot be said that a man is following the universal highway until he has freed himself from his selfish instincts and has made spiritually pure and sincere efforts aimed at enlightening the human mind, realizing a proportionate benevolence, or exercising proportionate treatment.

All phenomena will change, but there remains unchanged the fact, for all time and in all places, that we human beings do evolve if we follow the universal highway, practise supreme morality and live in security, peace and happiness (*Treatise*, I, 1-2).

Here we can see a very important element of Hiroike's profound philosophy, his understanding of the interdependent nature of all that exists in the universe as the expression of the universal law of nature and, further, its essential identity with the way of life exemplified by the spiritual leaders of mankind. We can sum up this understanding as follows:

- (a) Human beings, as one phenomenon of the universe, have to follow the universal law of nature,
- (b) The sages, the spiritual leaders of mankind, called this law the "univer-

sal highway”, meaning the way all people have to follow,

- (c) The universal law of nature can be understood as the principle of mutual aid, and its essence is revealed in practice of morality of the highest quality by the sages of the world.

So we must add a further point about what fundamentally conditions human existence to the five mentioned above, namely that the content of the universal law of nature and the principle of mutual aid are given concrete form by the characteristic behavior of all those spiritual leaders of mankind. If we, as human beings who are conscious and spiritual by nature, choose to live according to the principle of mutual aid, taking this principle spiritually, we will free ourselves from our self-centered mentality and come to act with the aim of enlightening the human mind.

In arguing thus, Hiroike was integrating two previously disparate entities: the universal law of nature as something to be grasped objectively, and the supreme model of human moral behavior. This achievement was not the product of his intellectual inquiries alone. From the days of his youth he had been interested in morality, that is, in an unceasing search to clarify the substance of the law of nature and, at the same time, to find the way to achieve true security, peace and happiness for humankind. He worked very hard into his forties accumulating a vast store of knowledge, but badly damaged his body in the process. When faced with a life-threatening illness as a consequence, he looked for guidance to the sages or spiritual leaders of humankind, asking them directly: “What would you have done in such difficulties? What is the way to true security, peace and happiness for mankind?” In posing such questions he was seeking answers not just for himself but for all humankind. For him, integrating the concept of the law of nature and the sages’ deep benevolence towards all living beings was not a theoretical matter. It was utterly real and therefore deeply significant.

4. Supreme morality as a way of life for human beings living within networks of interdependence

Having demonstrated scientifically that all things that exist in this universe are related to one other, and that interdependent relationships occur not only between living beings but also between living beings and inanimate things, Hiroike concluded that to live in accordance with the law of nature or the principle of mutual aid meant to live properly as a member of networks of interdependence and that it was sages, the spiritual leaders of mankind, who were the concrete embodiment of how we should behave as members of net-

works of interdependence. He called the common essence of their teachings and behavior Supreme Morality.

Today, we consider our serious problems to include curbing emissions of greenhouse gasses, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable development, compliance, and so on. Hiroike may be regarded as one of the pioneers of the recent movement to consider moral problems from a global standpoint or in the context of the ecosystem, proposing supreme morality as a radical way to change our fundamental relationship with all that exists. The principles of supreme morality that Hiroike derived from his studies of the lives and thinking of the sages, the leaders of mankind, are as follows (the order in which they appear here differs from that in the *Characteristics*).

(i) Benevolence should be extended to all living beings as well as to all human beings on the earth (the concept of God or principle of benevolence).

The earth on which we live is the only planet in the solar system where water exists in liquid form. This very rare phenomenon alone makes it possible for all kinds of living beings to exist and flourish. We human beings are but one of the phenomena on this earth, living together with other animate beings in an interdependent relationship. This global network of interdependence, in which we are just one member of the whole system, requires us to have a sense of cosmic modesty—an understanding that our life is made possible by the very special condition of the earth in our universe—and to have respect for all other living beings. We should not hurt or kill other people or other beings, but instead live in harmony with them. The deep love and respect we should have for all people and other beings on the earth is exemplified by the conduct of the leading figures of humanity.

(ii) We should free ourselves from self-centeredness and the instinct for self-preservation (the principle of the renunciation of self).

Unlike animals, which depend on their instincts for self-preservation, we human beings have great intellectual capacities. However, we are not necessarily free from self-centeredness, which often causes serious problems including conflicts with other people, the unequal distribution of goods, environmental destruction and so on. Self-centered human thinking and behavior is the major factor disrupting the harmony of the network of interdependence. The above-mentioned exemplary figures of human history can be said to have been free from this self-centered mentality and the instinct for self-preservation. It is very important for us to become deeply aware of these tendencies and try to overcome them, very difficult though this can be. In our efforts to

achieve this, we have to understand that we live within networks of interdependence and must behave accordingly.

(iii) Showing respect for the fundamental benefactors of our bodily, social and spiritual existence (the ortholinon principle).

As we try to widen our perspective and begin to grasp the fact that we live in networks of interdependence, we will come to see that there are people who have worked very hard for the development and harmony of these networks. They are the benefactors who have greatly benefited us (1) in our bodily existence and our happy family life, (2) in our safe and orderly social life, and (3) in our meaningful and satisfactory spiritual life. We owe a lot to them. Hiroike coined the word “ortholinon” to describe these benefactors, because the concept had been lost after the era of the great sages. By respecting and following the example of our benefactors, we will be able to overcome our self-centeredness, little by little.

(iv) Working with heartfelt devotion for the promotion of the happiness of all people in the world (the principle of the precedence of duty).

If we understand the past contributions of important benefactors to networks of interdependence, we will become grateful to them. At the same time, we will realize that, in simply seeking our own satisfaction, we ourselves have done very little for the networks of interdependence. As members of interdependent networks, and because we owe so much to them, we have a duty to do anything we can to help other people. Over time we will start to feel that working for other people while expecting nothing in return is satisfying and enjoyable.

(v) Making efforts to share with other people the awareness that we are all members of interdependent networks (the principle of human enlightenment and salvation).

As already mentioned, we have a tendency to think and act in a self-centered way. But once we become aware that we are members of interdependent networks, as well as trying to put into practice the four preceding principles, it is very important that we share this insight with others. As we all live within such networks, it is not enough for us to keep this awareness to ourselves. The great spiritual leaders of human history all devoted themselves wholeheartedly to sharing this awareness with others.

All these main principles of supreme morality can be regarded as being

oriented toward changing our fundamental relationship with all that exists, not just other human beings. Therefore, if those of us who are working very hard to solve the problems mentioned above understand the significance of supreme morality, our efforts will be much more effective.

In the *Treatise* and *Characteristics* Hiroike used the argument that the practice of supreme morality is the most effective and reliable means to achieve happiness, (i.e. health, longevity, good luck, the prosperity of our descendants and so on) to recommend supreme morality to his readers. We, though, can employ a new way of reasoning about the concept of happiness. We can argue that since we live within the network of interdependence and are supported by so many people and things on the earth, the enjoyment we experience from qualitatively improved relationships with them might well become our most important source of happiness, and we will not be able to enjoy health, longevity, good luck or the prosperity of our posterity without improving our relationships with other people, society, our environment and so on.

5. The situation with regard to the principle of mutual aid after Hiroike

Hiroike passed away in 1938, ten years after the publication of the *Treatise*. Since he could not know what would happen to his country and the world after his death, we cannot avoid a few words about how the principle of mutual aid stands in the world today.

- (i) Due to the great advances made in the study of DNA and ecology, the interdependent relationships between all things that exist in the world are becoming ever clearer.
- (ii) The development of information technology has greatly expanded the possibilities for communication between people, but the quality of such communication has not necessarily been improved.
- (iii) Egocentric or selfish behavior has not been properly controlled, causing us more, and more serious, problems.
- (iv) The explosive expansion of human economic activity has harmed the global environment. Despite a growing emphasis on the key concept of sustainable development, the situation has not yet improved.
- (v) There is growing understanding of the nature of the global crisis. Discussions about ethics that make reference to the ecosystem are now taking place, but we still cannot say that the future here is bright.

Today, we face many problems on the earth. However, if we approach moral problems in each area separately, we will not be able to deal with them properly or solve them completely, because each of them is closely connected

with problems in other areas. For example, even if some people try to decrease their emissions of greenhouse gasses, others will simultaneously be trying to sell automobiles in developing countries or to encourage driving on expressways by lowering tolls, causing traffic jams in the process. Thus, efforts to solve individual problems separately can be likened to a Whack-a-Mole game (*mogura-tataki*). As soon as you have whacked one mole, another immediately pops up. Such a strategy cannot lead to a fundamental solution.

The Japan Society for Global System and Ethics was established in 2006 based on the perception that we are members of the global ecosystem and that various problems on the earth today cannot be solved unless we approach them with a global system perspective. Shuntaro Ito, the first president of the Society, having enumerated the serious problems we face at the start of the 21st century (including environmental crises, species extinction, desertification and deforestation, religious conflicts, terrorism and so on) emphasized that these are insoluble while we confine our concerns within the boundaries of our regions, countries, cultures or civilizations. This is why, he declared, we have no choice but to establish a global system ethics.

6. Fundamental examination of ourselves as a member of networks of interdependence

Having listened to a number of talks at the November 2007 UNESCO session on the future of the human species and the planet, Michel Loreau gave his own view of how ecology and ethics should interact in future:

Everything said here leads to the following conclusion: rather than seeking to control and master nature at any cost, human beings should learn to recognize themselves as a conscious part of nature and learn to live with the life that surrounds them. Hence, scientific ecology calls for a new relationship between humanity and nature that accepts and even celebrates the diversity of life. It is here that ecology and ethics meet: a new ethics is necessary to accommodate the findings on scientific ecology (Loreau, M., 2007, p. 66).

Other experts present also confined themselves to calls for such a new ethics. But Chikuro Hiroike had already provided exactly this by proposing the principles of supreme morality as the proper way of life for human beings who must live within the network of interdependence or the ecosystem. His thinking does not only explain why it is that we ourselves are the cause of the manifold serious problems confronting us today. It also offers grounds for hope, since if we are prepared to change fundamentally our thinking and

behavior, to accept that we, as inseparable parts of the universe, are related to everything, animate and inanimate, in it, then we will already have set in motion a radical improvement in our ability to deal with moral problems. This is why the principles of supreme morality, as expounded eighty years ago by Chikuro Hiroike in the *Treatise* that marked the creation of Moralogy, are in reality still our most reliable guides to a better future.

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