

Chikuro Hiroike, Modernity, and Morality

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Accounts of the crafting of *Morality* naturally begin with the unique character, talents and life experience of its creator. But they cannot stop there, for the final form that Chikuro Hiroike's thinking took in the *Treatise* was also greatly influenced by the very singular features of the times and the places that he inhabited. In fact these particularities not only helped shape *Morality*'s content, but also made its very creation achievable and necessary. So the world as Hiroike encountered it deserves as close study as the man himself; a precise account of the questions it put to him enhances our understanding of the answers he gave.

Much of the course of Hiroike's life was shaped above all by the impact of modernity on Japan (filtered through the process of Westernisation); it made *Morality* possible by giving him the very narrow window of opportunity he required to create it. One of many examples of this point is fact that Hiroike was able to move on from a career as a schoolteacher in Kyushu to scholarly activity on a much wider stage. Such an opportunity would not have existed had he been born even a generation earlier, say in 1836 instead of 1866; he would, in that case, already have been 46 when Waseda University was founded in 1882, effectively denying him the possibility of the doctorate on the history of oriental law that shaped much of the thinking of the *Treatise*. Shifting his birth back in time even a decade or two would make many other key events difficult, if not impossible, to imagine.

Even more significant, though, were the ways in which modernity created the urgent need for *Morality*, and so shaped its essence. In its broadest context, Chikuro Hiroike's life and work strove to meet the challenge that modernity posed to the world in respect of moral conduct. Moreover, since this challenge had a global impact, Hiroike, in parallel with figures in other countries seeking to meet it at about the same time, inevitably had to look for a solution that did not just apply to Japan. So, in the widest perspective, *Morality* represents one of several attempts across the globe in the early 20th century to resolve the problem of defining the essence of moral conduct, a problem that has characterised, indeed defined, modernity, since it first

appeared in the world.

No definition of 'modernity', including this one, will pass unchallenged, since few phenomena are more studied or contentious; modernity's opaque complexity makes it far, far easier to criticise the various offerings of others than to produce a formulation that will satisfy all. Different academic disciplines take entirely incompatible approaches to characterizing the concept, and everyone has to begin by choosing between them. The sociologists laid early claim to the term, but as has been rightly noted, after surveying their initial failings at the 'abstract analysis of the emergence of modern society', whether Comte's 'crudely abstract schema of successive epochs' or the problem of the 'constant tension between nomothetic generalization and ideographic data' that entrapped Weber and Durkheim, it is a relief to turn to the great 19th century historian, Jacob Burckhardt. He argued for 'the Renaissance as the period of the discovery of the individual...that mark it as the first modern epoch', and while we may not agree with this characterization, at least 'his method is historical, i.e., he accepts the uniqueness of the events and their time-bound and linear nature. There is no search for scientific laws that govern human society in general or the transition from one type of society to another. He is thoroughly immersed in the specificity of the Renaissance' (Garner, 1990, pp. 49–40).¹⁾

Since modernity wrongly claims a universality and inevitability for itself, fully acknowledging the role of specificity and contingency in its appearance is indispensable to understanding it properly. Here it will be argued that modernity was in origin, and remains in essence today, solely the product of Western civilization. Granted, its external manifestations (science, technology, industrial urbanization and mass society notable amongst them) have been exported and adopted elsewhere, but they do not constitute modernity's essence. Many historians (not just Burckhardt) have rightly detected its spirit well before those external features ever appeared, and even in the entirely 'modern' 21st century that spirit remains confined to those areas of the world dominated by the West, to its continuing bewilderment and distress.

Modernity emerged in the humanistic movement of the Italian Renaissance, issuing from a deep fissure in Western civilization that opened in the very laying of its foundations. That cleft, between Greco-Roman thought and the Christian faith, was

1) Burckhardt's claim to have identified the place and time of the 'discovery of the individual' has been much disputed, not least by post-modernists with a view of 'the individual' very different to his (cf. J. J. Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (Palgrave: 2004), pp. 5–7). Others have been more concerned to antedate 'the discovery' than grapple with 21st century redefinitions of 'the individual', focussing, for example, on 'interiority' or 'selfhood' (which function effectively as synonyms for 'the individual') in the 12th century Renaissance. But while recent studies, e.g. Laura Ashe's *Early Fiction in England* (2015) and Susan Kramer's *Sin, Interiority, and Selfhood in the Twelfth-century West* (2015), may highlight the significance of the invention of fiction or of the new theological understanding of autonomy in early medieval Europe, for reasons given below even such 'transformative' innovations cannot be taken as evidence of the origins of modernity.

never bridged, indeed could never have been bridged. Many attempts to span the two were made, but none succeeded, and in Italian Renaissance humanism the gap between them widened to a gulf, creating a division within Western civilization that endures to the present, and which led to what was in effect a state of cold civil war. This conflict is often portrayed as a dispute over the existence of God, of religion versus secularization, but since the developed Christian conception of God owed much to Plato, this cannot be the story's essence. Rather, at root the struggle was, and remains, one between two antithetical and incompatible views of the essence of moral conduct. Neither party to this dispute has, to date, triumphed. Both have succeeded only in inflicting serious damage on the other. It is this ruinous impasse that confronted Chikuro Hiroike as he came to maturity in the far west of Japan, and his life's mission was to try to find a way to circumvent it.

If, in accounting for the emergence of modernity, it is accepted that no real synthesis between Latin Christianity and Greco-Roman thought was possible, the puzzle is why it was ever attempted in the first place and why so much effort continued to be invested over many centuries in an endeavour doomed to fail. The initiative for a synthesis came nearly exclusively from the Christian side of the divide, and almost from the outset some there had serious misgivings about its wisdom. Jaroszynski notes the view of some early Christians that pagan philosophy should have no place in their culture on the grounds that it was trying to supplant the Bible. He also cites early authorities like Tatian and Tertullian who argued that pagan culture was not just unnecessary to their faith, but could actually draw people towards heresy (2007, p. 77).

A strong case can certainly be made that early Christian hostility was not to philosophy *per se*, but primarily to the help it afforded to heresy. The overriding focus of the first apologists was on the dangers within, not outside, their community; to take a well-known example, even in Tertullian's *Prescriptions against Heretics* (with its oft-quoted rhetorical questions, 'What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the Church with the Academy, the Christian with the heretic?'), Greek philosophy was largely the victim of collateral damage inflicted during the main assault on Christian heretics like Valentinus and Marcion.²⁾ The balance of fear tilted even further away from philosophy and towards heresy once Christianity attained a dominant status in the Roman Empire in the 4th century, a state of affairs that was to remain unchanged for centuries. Jaroszynski (2007, pp. 79–80) draws attention to evidence from the 11th century

2) Thus in chapter 7 of *The Prescriptions*, Tertullian calls down 'A plague on Aristotle, who taught them [the heretics] dialectic, the art which destroys as much as it builds, which changes its opinions like a coat, forces its conjectures, is stubborn in argument, works hard at being contentious and is a burden even to itself.' Granted that this is an attack on a general aspect of the philosophical method on the grounds that it never arrives at certainty, it was the use to which heretics put that method which really roused Tertullian's ire. When it suited his purposes, he himself was far from averse to wielding weapons of argument forged by Greek philosophers.

Benedictine monk and cardinal Peter Damian, and the 13th century pope, Gregory IX in this regard. Damian, sometimes viewed as a member of the 'Tertullian family', was certainly capable of writing such trenchant dismissals of the ancients as the following.

I reject Plato, prying into the secrets of hidden nature...Pythagoras also...I count for little...I likewise turn aside from Euclid, stooped from his perplexing studies of geometrical figures. Finally, all the rhetors with their syllogisms and their sophisticated quibbles, I consider unworthy...May the simplicity of Christ instruct me, and may the true ignorance of the wise break the bonds of my uncertainty...Let my guardian angel tell me that which all the unskilled dialecticians are ignorant of; let the wise speak of unlearned things which ignorant wisdom does not understand. (Resnick, 1990, pp. 115, 117)

But it is also the case that Damian, himself 'well trained in the arts and in dialectic', was far from opposing 'every use of dialectics or philosophy in the life of faith', and his real targets were those of his contemporaries within the Church whom he felt aimed to 'overturn true doctrine', 'pseudo-intellectuals who would boldly apply their skills in dialectic to questions touching on God' (ibid., pp. 115, 119). Much the same point can be made about Gregory IX's letter of 7 July 1228 to the theological faculty of the University of Paris, in which he cautioned them to 'teach pure theology unfermented by worldly learning and cease adulterating the word of God with the fictions of philosophers' (Young, 2014, p. 49).

So why did even those within the Christian tradition most suspicious of pagan philosophy not turn their backs on it completely? Had the original status of Christianity as 'a marginal branch of Judaism whose founder left no known written works' (MacCulloch, 2009, p. 9) remained unchanged over the centuries, this might just have been possible. Although, thanks to the conquests of Alexander the Great, Judaism had for centuries been immersed in a sea of Greek language and culture, it kept its head above water by drawing very clear lines between itself and that culture (though not without passing through at least one severe internal crisis, the revolt of Judas Maccabeus and the cleansing of the Temple of Jerusalem). As Gruen notes, many Jews in the Diaspora as well as Palestine were thoroughly Hellenized, but while their Hellenic environment could be taken as a given, 'their Judaism remained intact' (2016, p. 23). In distinguishing itself from, and indeed claiming superiority to, the Hellenic world, Judaism had the advantages of a religious identity with clear boundaries both geographic and ethnic (the former being potential rather than actual in the diaspora), and a claim to chronological priority. It could, and did, assert that Greek culture and philosophy was derived from Jewish thought, and any who sought to upset this order of precedence were simply ignored by rabbinical Judaism. Philo of Alexandria, for example, tried to 'mediate between Hebraism and Greek philosophy...unifying the

Bible and Platonism', despite the difficulties involved in trying to combine 'the 'personal' God of the Scriptures and the 'abstract' God of philosophy' (Bonazzi, 2009, p. 239). This fate of his attempt is very revealing; Philo's writings were to have a powerful influence on Christianity, but none on Judaism.

Early Christianity was far more receptive to such 'mediation' than Judaism because it was an aftercomer and also because it found itself in a different, and a weaker, position. By choosing to adopt a universal and therefore multi-faceted mission to the Gentiles, it forfeited the coherence and adamant nature of Judaism. Whether that choice owed more to the 'Great Commission' described in the conclusion to Matthew's Gospel or to Paul of Tarsus can be debated, but either way it meant that Christianity had perforce to address itself to 'Latin-speakers, Greek speakers and those speaking Oriental languages' (MacCulloch, 2009, p. 3) in ways that were culturally as well as linguistically understandable to each of them. In seeking to convert pagans, therefore, more understanding of their erroneous ways could be shown than to those of heretics. The writings of a leading 2nd century apologist, Justin Martyr, demonstrate this well. In contrast to his overt disagreements with the Gnostics, in his search for 'effective missionary tools' he tried to find common ground between Christian ideas and classical philosophy, and even sought 'complementarity' with elements of pagan religion like the Sibylline Oracles (Toca, 2017, p. 260). While the new religion spread quickly to the seat of the Empire in Rome and points west, its main impact initially was in the Hellenic eastern Mediterranean, where its adherents were often regarded with disdain as ignorant outsiders, especially in the urbane, civilized environment of great cities like Alexandria.

To win acceptance in a hostile and dismissive world, then, the price to be paid for vanquishing prejudice and suspicion was a tolerant attitude towards pagan thought characteristic, for example, of Justin Martyr and therefore of his pupils, including Tatian. Forbearance was not just a tactic, however. It also reflected the fact Justin himself was a convert, and in this he was far from alone; many of those most instrumental in Christianity's initial expansion in the Hellenic eastern Mediterranean also did not encounter the faith until adulthood; and, like Justin, they could not unreasonably look back on their youthful philosophical training as having prepared the ground for their conversion (and much of the same is true with Augustine in respect of Cicero's *Hortensius*). Rejecting any further participation in pagan religion was relatively easy for these converts, but stripping themselves of their education, and of its habits of thought, was another matter entirely. Nor indeed was this necessary, or even desirable, for Greek philosophy retained great value for the converts, and for those they instructed, as a training in method, even if much of the content of its teachings might need re-evaluating or discarding in the light of Scripture. As Osborn (1997, p. 44) puts it,

‘...if by philosophy is meant the practice of argument, as when Clement claims the necessity of philosophy because one would have to argue to prove it superfluous, then all second-century Christian thinkers (even Tatian) were disciples of Athens. Indeed Christian theology came into existence and European thought began, because of the practice of argument, which was learnt from Athens and used according to the rule of faith or canon of truth.’

The impact of Athens was felt directly in the eastern Mediterranean where Christianity made its greatest initial inroads, but its importance diminished over time. As it spread further west, Christianity came into increasingly close contact with the thinkers of ancient Rome who had translated Greek philosophy into their own language and culture, and this became the principal forum in which the western Church came to engage with classical thought. Establishing a definitive view of figures like Cicero became completely unavoidable once Christianity established itself as the imperial religion in the 4th century, for this decisively changed the nature of its relationship with pagan thought; whereas previously the issue had been one of confrontation and coexistence, now it became a question of how to deal with an inheritance. Yet even though the pressure to make concessions may have eased, the essence of the problem remained.

Of all the repeated and strenuous attempts of the early western Church to reconcile Christian and pagan thought (though not Christianity and pagan religion, which the Church worked ceaselessly to eradicate) the most distinguished and thoroughgoing was that of Augustine. For him, as for perhaps most Christians of his era, pagan thought was to be set within bounds, occupying a subordinate position, a part-time auxiliary to faith rather than one of its legionaries. Brian Stock’s recent study of Augustine’s role in developing the key concept of the ‘self’ highlights how his thinking on the subject shifted after baptism from philosophical to theological or exegetical. But rather than abandoning philosophical methods, he used them to analyze concepts that were entirely Biblical in origin. His mature view of the self was therefore a combination of philosophy, theology, and history (2017, pp. 3–4).

Implicit in this approach was the early church’s continuing belief that pagan philosophy was far less dangerous than heresy, that it could be domesticated and made useful in the service of Christianity. The collapse of the Empire in the 5th century reinforced this perception. The institutions of the western Church did not just act to fill the vacuum of political authority this created; they also worked long and hard to preserve the thought of the ancient world during the so-called ‘Dark Ages’. The texts of the pagan philosophers, together with the Latin language in which many were written, now became the sole possessions of the Church; they assumed something of the character of a collection of intellectual relics that had to be guarded, treasured even, housed in monasteries, copied and recopied for the benefit of

posterity, treated as resources, adjuncts to faith, rarely if ever to be emulated or superseded. In this the western Church was to prove to be vastly overconfident, mistaken in its conviction that Greco-Roman thought could be eternally confined as an indentured servant with clearly prescribed duties; *philosophia ancilla theologiae*, in Peter Damian's formulation. In particular, it underestimated the existential threat that the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers of ethics posed to it, failing to appreciate how radically incompatible was their thinking with the Christian approach to the world of human behaviour.

The essence of this incompatibility was, in the words of Isaiah Berlin (p. 56), between 'two incompatible ideals of life, and therefore two moralities'. Perhaps it is better to use the terms 'ethics' and 'morality' to differentiate them, and we may question whether they belong to 'public' and 'private' life as separate spheres. But Berlin's point about the unbridgeable gap between their irreconcilably different views of the purpose of human beings, and how they should live in this world, still stands. He outlines these two approaches as follows.

'One is the morality of the pagan world: its values are courage, vigour, fortitude in adversity, public achievement, order, discipline, happiness, strength, justice, above all assertion of one's proper claims and the knowledge and power needed to secure their satisfaction; that which for a Renaissance reader Pericles had seen embodied in his ideal Athens, Livy had found in the old Roman Republic, that of which Tacitus and Juvenal lamented the decay and death in their own time.'

Over against this, Berlin continues (pp. 56–57),

...stands in the first and foremost place Christian morality. The ideals of Christianity are charity, mercy, sacrifice, love of God, forgiveness of enemies, contempt for the goods of this world, faith in the life hereafter, belief in the salvation of the individual soul as being of incomparable value — higher than, indeed wholly incommensurable with, any social or political or other terrestrial goal, any economic or military or aesthetic consideration.

From the depths of this fundamental divide between classical ethics, where the civic virtues claimed pride of place, and Christian morality, where the focus was on the salvation of the individual soul, modernity was to emerge.

The severe difficulties, indeed the impossibility, inherent in trying to reconcile ethics and morality was most evident in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante, who represent the high-water mark of Christianity's endeavor to resolve the mismatches in the DNA of the West. Aquinas' attempts to pair the bases of the classical and theological virtues reveal the full extent of a crisis that, as MacIntyre says, was 'much more than a theoretical question' (2007, p. 167). The task was made no easier by the growing availability of Greco-Roman sources, but rather than reject this

classical inheritance *tout court*, Aquinas and some of his contemporaries strove for a synthesis that would reconcile pagan philosophy, notably that of Aristotle, with scripture. The great stumbling block was the nature of virtue, whose essence altered radically whenever one moved from the world of ethics to that of morality; Aquinas had somehow to find an answer to the central problem, 'How is the practice of the four cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, temperance and courage to be related to that of the theological virtues — faith, hope and charity?' (ibid., pp. 167–168). To treat them as somehow equivalent in nature, as belonging to a single category, was to try to mix oil and water, for as MacIntyre goes on to note, the theological virtues of charity and forgiveness had no place in the classical view of the world. 'Aristotle in considering the nature of friendship had concluded that a good man could not be the friend of a bad man; and since the bond of authentic friendship is a shared allegiance to the good, this is unsurprising. But at the centre of biblical religion is the conception of a love for those who sin' (ibid., p. 174). The gulf here is in fact even wider than MacIntyre indicates, since there is no Christian equivalent of Aristotle's 'good man'; if the story of the Fall in Genesis is accepted, then all human beings are inevitably sinners, a point reinforced by Jesus who, when asked whether a woman should be punished for adultery, answered, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her' (John, 8:7).

A host of further difficulties presented themselves. As Austin notes (2017, pp. 123–124), 'Aquinas follows Augustine in arguing that the exemplar of human virtue must preexist in God...It makes sense to see justice, wisdom, mercy, and charity as participations in divine virtue since God is just, wise, and loving. However, it is not clear that God can be temperate (having no bodily appetites), brave (needing nothing to fear), or religiously devout (having no superior to worship).' Aquinas argued that the Incarnation solved this problem, but at the cost of implying that Christ's human existence must be eternal rather than temporary.

The best that could be done was to arrange the virtues in some kind of hierarchy, with the Christian ones occupying the higher ground. Thus the theological virtues are 'infused' by God, and here Aquinas 'completely dismisses Aristotle's dictum' that 'virtue always exists in the mean between two extremes' (Anderson, 2020, pp. 27–28). This inevitably means that 'Aquinas surpasses Aristotle...by making his understanding of virtue dependent on the divine...Charity is that infused habit that constitutes right appetite for the supernatural, ultimate end, eternal life with God...The infused virtues alone aim at the good, which is the ultimate end. Hence, without the forming presence of charity, the intellectual and moral virtues will always fall short of virtue in the most proper sense of the term' (ibid., pp. 29–30).

For Aquinas, 'acquired' pagan virtues were only ancillary, subordinate, and this view persists to the present (Mattison, 2019). Classical philosophy could be brought

within the precincts of Christianity, but some parts of the mansion remained forever off limits, a boundary demarcated very clearly in the greatest medieval attempt at a synthesis between pagan and Christian experience, Dante's *Divine Comedy*. On his allegorical journey, the poet ascends from the *Inferno* to *Purgatorio* before finally entering *Paradiso*. His guide through the first two of these regions is the Roman poet, Virgil, the 'most sweet father' (*Purg.* 30.39) whom Dante holds in the highest honor. But Virgil, as a pagan, cannot enter paradise and so yields place to Beatrice (*Purg.* 27. 126–129) as the poet's guide. At this moment,

*in me ficcò Virgilio li occhi suoi,
e disse: Il temporal foco e l'eterno
veduto hai, figlio; e se' venuto in parte
dov' io per me più oltre non discerno.*

Within the limits of the possible, Dante did his utmost for Virgil, and by implication for all ancient Greek and Roman authors, a tribute to the depth of his humanity as well as of his respect for them. Humanism, though, overturned the barriers set in place to contain their influence, and in the process created modernity.

Humanism is widely accepted as a defining characteristic of the Italian Renaissance, though when and why it came into being has been the subject of much recent scholarly debate. There is a good measure of agreement, though, that its appearance in the north of Italy was contingent on the unique features of that region in the medieval period; it was, as Witt notes, highly urbanized, with relatively high social mobility, growing commerce and industry, and a republican form of government (2012, Introduction).

How classical thought in general, and its ethics in particular, came to escape the tutelage of Christian morality is, therefore, not simply a tale of the rediscovery of lost ancient texts, although this certainly played its part. For such texts, and the humanism they nourished, were available not just in northern part of the Italian peninsula, but throughout Europe. So it is the manner of their reception and use in Renaissance Italy, and the fact that this process was not controlled by the Roman Catholic clergy, that matter more. The 'precocious emergence of Latin — literate laymen' is clearly very important here, though Witt has cautioned against seeing this as 'simply a corollary of the Italian inheritance from ancient Rome: namely the existence of an urbanized, republican society and the enriching effect of regional and international commerce' (ibid). Even so, he does accept that 'after 1300 there emerged an intellectual movement, Italian humanism, which ultimately established laymen's lives as equal in moral value to that of clerics and monks...[and that] the advent of humanism was intimately connected with the broad, longterm changes in Italian political, social and cultural life that were creating the first early modern European society' (2003, pp. 1, 4).

The effect of these changes was to do much more than raise the 'moral value' of lay lives; as Witt himself notes (2012, p. 438), 13th century developments were 'to foster the birth of a self-conscious urban morality that subsequently first in Italy and then in western Europe as a whole, would challenge and ultimately replace the medieval ethos dominated by rural, clerical and chivalric values'. We need accept neither the phrase 'urban morality' in preference to 'urban ethics' nor the term 'replace'. But that humanism was to pose a fundamental challenge to Christian morality cannot be denied.

Witt's account of the origins of humanism has been criticised as overly teleological (e.g. Cotza, 2018), but for our present purposes this is secondary. The key issue for us is the relationship between the Church and the new humanism, since this was to bring about the conflict between ethics and morality that set in train and defined modernity.

The changing assessments and uses of the writings of Cicero illustrate this well, confirming that Italian humanism cannot simply be explained in terms of the rediscovery of texts — Cicero had, after all, been influential as far back as the Carolingian Renaissance of the 8th century, when Alcuin's treatment of rhetoric 'merely took over Cicero's focus on judicial oratory' (Witt, 2003, p. 12). True, one such disinterment has been assigned great significance. As Eisner (2014, p. 755) notes, 'Petrarch's 1345 discovery of Cicero's personal letters in Verona has long been regarded as a foundational moment in the historiography of the Renaissance, whether one takes the term as referring only to a movement associated with humanism or to the period that also goes by the name of early modern.' Much has been made of the claims that Petrarch made about himself in his commentary on these letters; that he had a 'new historical self-consciousness', an entirely new conception of the relationship between the present and the past, and that he elevated reason above authority (*ibid.*, pp. 756, 761, 764). He is also alleged to have believed that the 'light' of the ancient world had been lost during the Christian 'Dark Ages' and that the world of antiquity was superior to that of his own times (*ibid.*, pp. 783). The point remains, though, that while he found much to admire in Cicero, he was very aware of his faults, and in no sense treated him as a model. Indeed, for Witt, 'Among Petrarch's greatest achievements was his Christianization of the humanist movement, the integration of ancient pagan learning with Christian literature' (2016, p. 65).

How successful this attempt at integration was need not detain us, for the important point is to contrast it with what came subsequently. As Marsh notes, 'Cicero's influence on the Renaissance is central to the movement we call humanism...his philosophical works were now read with interest, both as an alternative to the Aristotelianism of the universities and as a precedent for the gentlemanly discussion of ethical theories and moral questions' (2013, p. 316). 'Gentlemanly discussion' here

is a very significant phrase, since it is the hallmark of modernity, a sign that a radically new setting for considering the most fundamental aspect of human behaviour had been created. Medieval Rome might be decayed, in ruins, but the status of its ancient philosophy was to be elevated; handmaiden no longer, it would be treated as mistress of the house. Greco-Roman ethics would now enter into mortal conflict with Christian morality, with Cicero in the van.

James Hankins has recently provided a detailed account of how ethics came to challenge morality. While accepting Witt's argument that humanism antedated the Italian Renaissance of the 14th and 15 centuries, he argues that Renaissance humanism represented a new *paideuma*, or elite culture. He agrees this was in origin Christian, but argues that it was also shaped by 'a civilizational crisis of great magnitude' marked by the disintegration of the authority of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, the ravages of war and financial bankruptcy, the growing challenge of the Ottoman Turks and finally the terrifying appearance of the Black Death in 1347–1349. This explains 'why Petrarch and his followers came to believe that a new, more unreserved, indeed passionate embrace of the pagan civilizations of the past was necessary to prevent the collapse of Christendom' (2019, ch. 1), implying that Christendom could not save itself. It was in dire need of rescue.

Much of Petrarch's despair certainly takes the form of mortified Italian pride, resentment at loss of status, and longing for the glory of empire. But it is couched in terms of 'moral decline', with Italian corruption of the Latin language taken to be one of the 'moral effects of barbarism'. Italians had thereby 'ceased to be human, falling below the level of beasts' (ibid.). This amounted to a remarkable reevaluation of Roman antiquity. Far from being a pagan civilization denied the light of the true religion, it was now deemed morally superior to the Christian present in many respects, and so able to offer Christendom the key to salvation now it that stood in desperate need of a moral renaissance.

This inversion plainly had its dangers; how could Christian teachings avoid being subordinated to pagan philosophy? Only by a rigid separation of spheres, a divorce between the human (or secular) and the divine that effectively excluded God from the world. For Petrarch, pagan philosophers, even Cicero, were not fully trustworthy on the divine matters; hence 'Human philosophy should rightly restrict itself to the world of men', but there it could have free rein. Petrarch's 'brand of "Socratic philosophy" ...skeptical about pagan theology but eager to exploit the wisdom of the ancient to reform the sublunar human world, including the world of politics...would become paradigmatic for humanists' (ibid.). Ethics, essentially political in nature, now dominated the secular sphere.

Petrarch's significance, then, was to deepen 'the admiration for ancient authors that had long existed in medieval culture into...a longing for the restoration of lost

qualities of mind, for the return of ancient virtue...[turning] the new *paideuma*...into...a way of forming the mind, oriented above all to the acquisition of virtue, wisdom, and eloquence' (ibid.). The central concept of 'virtue' was defined and disseminated by a vast program of translating the works of Greek philosophers into Latin, to the point where it was possible to 'credit Greek philosophy with having invented civility itself, the moral consciousness that allowed civilization to flourish.' The dangers of this were obvious. 'Greek philosophy here threatens almost to take the place of religion as a social glue, but the humanists, however anti-clerical they could be at times, were as a rule careful not to challenge the primacy of the Christian religion in the spiritual realm', not least by differentiating the secular from the eternal (ibid.).

Warning signs there certainly were, for 'in some milieux...the paganism of the ancient could become an alternative in the realm of imagination...[where] it became possible to enact...pagan values incompatible with Christianity' (ibid.). But for the most part, Christian morality was not confronted but largely side-lined, relegated to the private sphere as preparation for the individual's entry into the afterlife. Humanism's 'virtue politics' focused 'on improving the character and wisdom of the ruling class with a view to bringing about a happy and flourishing commonwealth. It sees the political legitimacy of the state as tightly linked with the virtue of rulers and especially their practice of justice, defined as a preference for the common good over private goods' (Hankins, 2019, ch. 2). While in terms of aspirations this may sincerely have been envisaged as preparing the ground for the restoration of Christendom, its practical effect was to create a space in which a thinker like Machiavelli could flourish.

Hankins argues convincingly enough that Machiavelli was an atypical figure in Renaissance humanism, but his writings are compelling evidence that humanist advocates of 'virtue politics' did not just fail in their avowed mission to rescue the cause of religion, but actually weakened it by creating a secular space from which it could lay morality under siege. 'Virtue politics', Christian morality's self-appointed rescuer, could not even defend itself against *virtù*, for as Hankins notes, Machiavelli rejected the early humanists' Christian utopia 'in favor of his more realist dream of ancient Rome, when the Campus Martius echoed to the sound of marching youth and the altars of the gods swam in blood' (2019, ch. 19).

Greco-Roman ethics had at its core a mission to produce good, or virtuous, citizens; hence it was in essence political, concerned above all with the survival and flourishing of the *polis*, the city-state or the *res publica*, the commonwealth. This, too, was Machiavelli's goal, and given that kings and the church feared republican commonwealths, they were most unlikely to prefer Machiavelli's pagan *virtù* to the Christian virtue of prudence. This may well be the source both of Machiavelli's 'preference for commonwealths aiming at expansion that lies at the heart of his theory

of republics' and of much of his 'probably well-deserved reputation as a neo-pagan in conflict with Christian values' (Pocock, 2010, p. 151). But in any event, Christian morality was to be sacrificed without hesitation if it obstructed the goal of the Machiavellian state, namely empire. Moreover, since military strength mattered overwhelmingly in achieving this, rulers and citizens were to be valued solely on the grounds they contributed to the expansion of the state. This meant not simply ignoring Christian morality, but actively undermining it whenever it obstructed the process of politics. Elements of Christian morality such as humility had no place in this new, or reborn world of ethics, as Pocock goes on to make clear:

Glory is a pagan value, and Machiavelli may be read as consciously reversing the morality of Augustine, for whom *libertas* and *imperium* were expressions of the *libido dominandi*. Or is he indicating that pagan and Christian values were both open to Europeans of the Renaissance, but could never be reconciled? If so, the republic is a pagan rather than a Christian polity. Machiavelli apparently preferred the ancient religion that worshipped the gods of the city, as more conducive to political *virtù* than were Christian meekness and pacifism. (ibid., p. 152)

The implications of this new ethics were radical. Isaiah Berlin, in his summation of Machiavelli's outlook, rightly notes (2013, p. 46) that, 'There is no serious assumption of the existence of God and divine law; whatever our author's private convictions, an atheist can read Machiavelli with perfect intellectual comfort. Nor is there piety towards authority, or prescription — nor any interest in the role of the individual conscience, or in any other metaphysical or theological issue.' Eternity had thus effectively been abolished. The secular and its ethics alone remained.

Machiavelli is often described as a, if not the, founder of modern political thought, bequeathing to the future 'an important paradigmatic legacy: concepts of balanced government, dynamic *virtù*, and the role of arms and property in shaping the civic personality' that was to have particular importance in the history of Britain and the United States (Pocock, 2016, Introduction). If, as argued above, ethics is essentially political in nature, why is Machiavelli also not deemed to be a founder of modern ethical thought? Partly this was because his *virtù* was very limited in scope, designed quite specifically to remedy what he took to be the problems of the early 16th century northern Italian city state, rendering it a far narrower concept than the 'virtue' that was the legacy of more mainstream humanist 'virtue politics'. The highly militarized *virtù* that characterized the citizen soldier did not resonate with the monarchical governments of the 16th and 17th centuries; they feared an armed populace and could, at need, hire mercenaries to do their fighting, looking to their civilian populations as an economic resource rather than cannon fodder.

Nonetheless, the secular space created by 'virtue politics' and the Greco-Roman

texts that it prized continued to exist, albeit usually on the margins. The new ethics did not disappear, and Christian morality could not reduce antique philosophy to its previously ancillary status, not least because Christendom was so badly fractured by the Protestant Reformation of the early 16th century. As with the early Church, institutional Christianity once again gave priority to the danger of heresy, of deviant Christian belief, rather than to the challenge of classical thought. True, Luther was far less enamored than his opponents of Aristotle in particular and pagan philosophy in general, but the fissiparous nature of Protestantism, its military struggle for survival with the forces of the Counter-Reformation and the disputes within its ranks over issues like salvation meant that it had little time or energy to address the world of secular thought. For its part, the Catholic Church continued to regard Aristotle in particular as a useful ally; its 1616 condemnation of Galileo was in part justified on the grounds that his claims did not accord with the geo-centrism of both Aristotle and Ptolemy, as well as contradicting the authority of the Bible. While symptomatic of a broader trend in which ‘for the first time Catholic teachings hardened into theses (or “dogmas”) that were no longer open to critical discussion, even by sympathetic believers’ (Toulmin, 1990, p. 78), the Galileo affair had even greater significance; it revealed the obsolescence of any campaign against classical philosophy. For modernity and its ethics had begun to slip the leash of Greco-Roman thought and to assume its mature identity.

The early Italian humanists who dominated the adolescent phase of modernity had been students in the presence of masters; for them, salvation meant above all else rescuing, disseminating and studying the texts of the Greco-Roman world, whose authors were for them guides who could reveal how to restore the civilized standards destroyed during the Dark Ages of barbarism. This fundamental sense of inferiority, of a lack of confidence akin but not identical to modesty, did not disappear when humanism expanded north of the Alps in the 16th century. It characterized, for example, the ‘restatement of classical skepticism’ made by Montaigne, who ‘claimed in the *Apology* that “unless some one thing is found of which we are *completely* certain, we can be certain about nothing”’: he believed that there is no general truth about which certainty is possible, and claimed that we can claim certainty about nothing’ (ibid., p. 42). This presumably ruled out Christian moral teachings as divine in origin, but it also had implications for ethics, for as Toulmin (1990, pp. 75–76) notes:

Aristotle saw intimate connections between ethics and rhetoric: for him, every ethical position was that of a given kind of person in given circumstances, and in special relations with other specific people: the concrete particularity of a case was “of the essence”. Ethics was a field not for theoretical analysis, but for practical wisdom, and it was a mistake to treat it as a universal or abstract science.

This approach, characteristic of Montaigne, did not survive long into the 17th century, which saw a sustained campaign to dethrone Aristotle from his position of influence. Yet what was not to change was the belief that ethics was entirely secular in nature. Indeed that belief was reinforced, since ethics now became exclusively the province of philosophers who deemed themselves to possess the greatest insight into the nature of the world. A representative figure here is Spinoza, whom Fraenkel situates in a tradition of ‘philosophical religion’ that stretches back to Plato. This represents the complete reversal of the formula of Peter Damian; now it is a case of *theologia ancilla philosophiae*

The key to understanding a philosophical religion is its moral-political character...something ordered to what is best — whether an organism or the celestial spheres, a human life or a political community — is taken to be rationally ordered...the rational principle that accounts for this order is identified with God. The conception of God as Reason is the metaphysical foundation of a philosophical religion...the best human life...is ordered towards attaining Godlikeness through the perfection of reason...how does [this] square with the God of traditional religion who speaks, gives laws...and so forth... The answers...is...a systematic claim that non-philosophical devices are necessary to order a religious community towards what is best (2012, pp. 6, 7, 11).

Reality fell far short of such aspirations even during the lifetime of Spinoza (let alone after it), for many reasons other than the hostility of traditional religious institutions in Europe. For one thing, philosophers continued to prove themselves an exceptionally fractious group, adept above all at demolishing the opinions of others and so most unlikely to arrive at a consensus or to provide the kind of clarity and certainty necessary for a moral life. Even worse, perhaps, the very concept of ‘reason’ had shown itself to be mutable, a subject for debate. The transition from the ‘reasonableness’ of late Renaissance humanism to the ‘rationality’ of Descartes is one that Toulmin both chronicled and lamented.

From 1650, European thinkers were taken with this appetite for universal and timeless theories...it overwhelmed Aristotle’s warnings about the need to match our expectations to the nature of the case...Ethics and politics joined physics and epistemology as fields for abstract, general, eternal theory. Like a great Moloch, this appetite for theory consumed all branches of practical philosophy: case ethics, practical, rhetoric, and all. (ibid., p. 83)

This was confirmation that the essence of philosophy was disagreement about fundamentals, and that it was a field of enquiry where change seemed more a matter of fashion than of cumulative progress. Toulmin certainly judged that the turn to theory was little short of a disaster for philosophy, arguing that a return to the ‘reasonableness’ of the 16th century was necessary to extricate the discipline from the

cul de sac in which it found itself trapped in the 1990s. One does not have to accept his premises or prescription to agree that the impact of the thinkers of the 17th century did create very severe problems.

For Descartes, rational thought could not rely on inherited tradition: empirical procedures rooted in experience rather than theory were in his view compromised, since they perpetuated the folklore of a given culture and period, and rested finally on superstition, not reason...Wherever possible, then, the “rational” thing to do was to start from scratch, and to insist on the certainty of geometrical inference and the logicity of formal proofs...

The ideals of reason and rationality typical of the second phase of Modernity were, thus, intellectually perfectionist, morally rigorous, and humanly unrelenting. Whatever sorts of problems one faced, there was a supposedly unique procedure for arriving at the correct solution...Unfortunately, little in human life lends itself fully to the lucid, tidy analysis of Euclid’s geometry or Descartes’ analysis.

It is unsurprising, then, that a critique of Descartes’ methodology, particularly as it applied to thinking about ethics, was neither long in coming nor sympathetically gentle in tone when it did arrive. The so-called ‘British moralists’, notably Hume, lay in wait, and charity was not their strongpoint, as we shall see.

Toulmin’s judgment that Descartes represented the ‘second phase of Modernity’ is certainly perceptive, but we might amend it by saying that, with Descartes, modernity achieved maturity, emancipating itself completely from the tutelage of the classical world. Rather than incorporating ancient thought into his philosophy, Descartes was looking to supersede it, and had high hopes that all would see the wisdom of what he was proposing; as Sorell (1999) notes, ‘...Descartes did not think Aristotle *had* to be criticized or refuted for his influence to be undone...He hoped that his metaphysics would make Cartesianism look a better ally of the Catholic Church than Aristotelianism.’ Those who came after him, notably Hobbes, were far less reticent about the shortcomings of pre-modern philosophy, especially when it came to questions of ethics. As Stauffer notes, Hobbes argued that all prior moral philosophy had caused political chaos, “The sophists of the past”, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch, being “the champions of anarchy” (2018, p. 14).

With Cartesian geometry, the birth of calculus and the advent of Newtonian mechanics, those who were now becoming conscious of themselves as modern could point to achievements of their own era that outshone those of the ancients. Their growing self-confidence and sense of independence became clear during the so-called ‘Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns’ that broke out in France and Britain at the turn of the 18th century. It has been claimed that this ‘Battle of the Books’, as Swift termed it, ended with honors even; ‘All those activities that seemed to work by

accumulation, such as the sciences and philosophy, were won for the modern, while all those that seemed to depend on imitation, such as literature and the arts, were left securely in the hands of the ancients' (Levine, 1991, p. 2). But the 18th century was to prove that philosophy was far from being a discipline that worked by accumulation. Cartesian rationalism, despite finding plenty of disciples, did not prevail even in his native country, for 'The philosophy of the French Enlightenment was not marked by a tendency towards abstract, pure, or transcendental reason, but was rather marked by a suspicion toward such understandings of reason and by a turn toward corporeal sensibility' (Lloyd, 2018, p. 151).

Things were even worse across the English Channel; the leading figures of the 'Scottish Enlightenment' proved yet more hostile to Descartes than their French counterparts, as Hope (1989, p. 23) makes clear.

...Francis Hutcheson (1694–1745) was optimistically telling his students that man is naturally virtuous: pagans can be good in spite of not being Christian...[saying when challenged] he did not mean that no part of virtue rests on love of God, but that even non-Christians are endowed with some moral sense...Although Hutcheson was no sceptic, he set an example as a free-thinker who challenged religious dogma. Hume drew more from him than that, however. In particular he adopted both Hutcheson's theory of moral sense and battery of criticisms of moral rationalism. Hutcheson warned against taking reason as the source of moral knowledge. Reason is essentially reflective and its ideas have to come from somewhere else. Moral ideas originate in certain kinds of pleasure and displeasure, which reason cannot feel...He was the first of the 'mathematical' utilitarians: he urged measuring right and wrong by the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

In their turn, Hutcheson, Hume and Smith, the empiricist 'British moralists', came under fire from Kant, who wished to restore reason to its position on the commanding heights of ethical thought. While, as Kim notes, Kant conceived of his task in its broadest aspect as being 'to effect a synthesis of both the rationalist and empiricist elements in thinking and develop them into a highly original theory of cognition and its objects that is superior to his predecessors', he did in fact weight the scales against the empiricists, founding 'morality on the elusive yet rich notion of pure reason at the center of his moral edifice' (2015, Introduction). This abandonment of any real attempt at synthesis was further evidence that philosophy was unable to find firm and common ground on which to fulfill its self-appointed task as teacher of ethics. Like Toulmin, MacIntyre sees this as the inevitable consequence of abandoning Aristotelianism. Again, one need not agree with either his diagnosis or prescription to accept that the philosophical patient has suffered paralysis after being forced to swallow ethics whole.

...the dominant moral culture of advanced modernity has continued to be one of unresolved and apparently unresolvable moral and other disagreements in which the evaluative and normative utterances of the contending parties present a problem of interpretation...[the result was] several rival and incompatible accounts, utilitarians competing with Kantians and both with contractarians, so that moral judgments, as they had now come to be understood, became essentially contestable, expressive of the attitudes and feelings of those who uttered them, yet still uttered *as if* there was some impersonal standard by which moral disagreements might be rationally resolved (2007, ix–x).

The problems created by the absence of consensus among ethicists were compounded by the growing prestige of science and its attendant theoretical and empirical methodologies. This became clear during Hiroike's lifetime in the attempts to construct a new ethics by those, such as Thomas Dewey, who were greatly influenced by the Darwin's account of evolution as a process of constant change, with no fixed, stable entities. Wishing to see ethics follow biology down this path, Dewey's approach to all prior ethical thought could only be eclectic. As Carden notes, for Dewey the successes of empirical modern science highlighted the inadequacies of moral philosophy which, failing to incorporate 'the experimental method of science...tended toward the old dualisms characteristic of the quest for certainty' (2006, pp. 45–46). Thus anyone wishing for at least a modicum of certainty in respect of moral knowledge, for guidance on how to live in the world, would just have to learn patience; the task in hand now was the study of moral behaviour, not moral belief. The only certainty espoused by Dewey and other ethicists of whatever hue was that the ongoing failure of modern moral (or better, ethical) philosophy did not indicate any need to take seriously again the teachings about morality that had been the possession of Christianity since its birth. For ethicists, the answer to the failure of ethical philosophy was simple; it was more and better philosophy and science, and certainly not any questioning of the enterprise itself.

This direction of travel could apparently not be reversed, even for philosophers like Hegel, whose early writings, as Horn (2010) notes, reveal that his 'interests emanated from religious concerns', leading him to react strongly against Kant's legalistic approach to ethics; what mattered for the young Hegel was 'the way of love, as opposed to rules of morality, including those dictated by Kantian moral duty' (ibid.). Hegel's subsequent path was symptomatic. Following the work of W. H. Walsh, Horn describes how, from a starting position where 'a particular characterization of the Christian concept of love is promoted by Hegel, not only as the true foundation for any morality, but also as a primary clue into the nature of existence itself, Hegel shifts his ground decisively; unity becomes a logical rather than a moral necessity, so that the 'moral/religious question "How can we love all of humankind?" is changed into

“How can life be understood as a whole that is both differentiated and undifferentiated?” (ibid.). This trajectory away from morality characterises modernity in its mature phase, but the result was a proliferation of questions rather than answers. The only remaining consensus, the sole certainty, was that Christian morality had nothing of value to offer.

Christian institutions and beliefs, though, while the target in the West of increasing criticism on a number of fronts as the 19th century advanced, did not disappear from the fray; as Chadwick notes,

At the beginning of the [19th] century nearly everyone was persuaded that religion and morality were inseparable; so inseparable that moral education must be religious education, and that no sense of absolute obligation in conscience could be found apart from religion. That moral philosophers taught the contrary made no difference...therefore those who undertook to provide a system of morality which should have no links with religion...had a task of exceptional difficulty, a task which was perhaps beyond their power if they wished to make their system of morality no mere theory but a system which would touch the conscience of a large number of ordinary men and women. (1975, pp. 229–230)

The result, then, was a state of mutually intended destruction leading to a peculiar kind of stalemate. Philosophers of ethics, having banished Christian morality from their enquiries, had proved themselves entirely incapable of providing an alternative set of moral precepts to supplant the teachings of a Christendom apparently fractured beyond repair; some indeed among the philosophers, like Schopenhauer, accepted that it was beyond their capabilities to provide such teachings. In their turn, Christian institutions and thinkers had failed to recover the ground lost to the ethics of the philosophers and could content themselves only with pointing out the manifest failures of this new project (MacIntyre is a representative, if later, example of this tendency; his advocacy of a return to Aristotle and Aquinas may be more positive an approach than that of most other critics of philosophy, but his prescription of a pre-Italian Renaissance renaissance is more akin to a sleeping draught than a cure for the ills of modernity).

Modernity, then, as it presented itself to Chikuro Hiroike, was a force that had both won and lost the civil war that characterised Western civilization in the second half of the 19th century. Its philosophers, resolutely secular and intransigent in their denial of the validity of Christian morality, may have achieved intellectual dominance in promoting the cause of ethics. But they had failed to create a coherent body of teaching about moral conduct that commanded anything like broad social influence and acceptance. Given this defeat and the vacuum that resulted, Christian institutions, while often proving themselves inadequate guardians of the moral teachings that they had inherited, retained some measure of authority in conveying these

teachings to society at large.

The West, and in particular the spirit of modernity that had secured a commanding but not completely dominant status within it, therefore presented Chikuro Hiroike with a difficult and complicated task. Far from being able to provide him a seamless cloak in the critical matter of the nature of moral conduct, the West could only offer up some badly torn pieces of cloth and very little in the way of guidance about what to do with them. Happily, though, modernity also provided Hiroike with some of the tools that he would use to fashion a new mantle for humankind in the shape of Moralogy. To understand the way he used them to craft this, though, we will need to chronicle how the process of Westernization in Japan unfolded and examine the way Chikuro Hiroike experienced and responded to it.

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