The Importance of Religious Perspectives in the Thinking of Chikuro Hiroike on Moralogy and their Educational Implications

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Abstract

In the history of human civilisations it is evident that the role of religion is morally ambiguous. On the one hand, much human hurt has been perpetrated in its name. On the other hand, moral teachings and the exemplary lives have often be directly associated with individuals centrally associated with religious traditions.

Such ambiguity may provide the main explanation for the tensions which exist between moral education (ME) and religious education (RE), or in the reticence towards religion in the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and his inheritors.

This presentation will examine the thinking of Chikuro Hiroike to discover the extent to which religion and morality are completely separate from each other or mutually interdependent and challenging.

It will go on to consider what working criteria Hiroike identifies for distinguishing what is positive from what is negative in religious sources for the practice of supreme morality. This section will include critical reservations about aspects of imperial and state Shinto as well as comparable elements in other traditions.

The final section will concentrate on the implications for the practice of both ME and RE in public education in the contemporary world.

I am very grateful to the Institute of Moralogy and Reitaku University for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts on Chikuro Hiroike's work in Moralogy. It is evident that the challenges facing humanity increase in their range and complexity exponentially year on year. That is true locally, nationally and internationally. That is true whether we live in a rural village, a small town or a large conurbation. That is true for individuals as children, young people, parents and grandparents.

Cosmos and chaos

The scale of cosmic evolution is truly astonishing.   In *macro* terms, awareness of planet earth within our own immediate universe of sun and moon and stars takes our breath away.   We can scarcely begin to imagine that it can be multiplied a thousand times.   In *micro* terms, awareness of the tiny intricacies of organic and inorganic life and of the interdependence of the whole evolutionary process is 'jaw-dropping'.   We can scarcely begin to imagine the minute particularities involved.

In the midst of all these glorious contingencies, life is precarious.   There is disease, disaster and and death.   There is mechanical failure and human error.   There is ignorance and self-deception, selfishness and willful evil.   We are acutely aware that human capacities for creative transformations have never been greater.   Never greater either is human capacity for destruction.

Science and Religion

Chiruko Hiroike was aware of this overall context and most of his life's work was devoted to helping others make better sense of it.   Throughout, he did this as a man of science and a man of faith.   In proclaiming the discipline of Moralogy, he brought together the concerns about the ordering of human behaviour with the stance of the scientist.   Customs and habits, laws and conventions are open to investigation from a whole range of academic disciplines anthropology, sociology and psychology, comparative law and literature, history, philosophy and theology.   How and why people behave as they do can be scrutinised and mapped.   The many volumes of his writings attest to his diligence in wanting to understand the variations and continuities involved.

In proclaiming the discipline of Moralogy, he also operated with strong religious convictions.   His personal devotion to Shinto connected directly with a wide Buddhist frame of reference, and extended into a wider appreciation of other religious traditions, especially the Confucian, Christian and Jain.   The very act of mindfulness, with its built-in sense of the importance of motive and intention was central to all he did.

Presenter limitations

In making any presentation at this conference I need to acknowledge some serious limitations.   This is my first visit to Japan.   I am in no sense a specialist in Japanese life and culture, neither in the religion of Shinto nor in the system of Education.   Instead, my specialist interests are the fields of Religious Education and of Moral Education—especially in the UK and Europe, and also in the USA.

As I have prepared for the conference, several considerations have led me to be even more hesitant about making judgements or suggestions which are based on an understanding which is incomplete.   For instance, I have become aware of the strength of debate regarding the historical reliability of the claims asserted for Shinto in the popularised scholarship of much of the twentieth century.   Hiroike researched and wrote within the resources available to him from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.   If he were researching and writing today, he might well arrive at different interpretations and conclusions.   I mention this both to indicate that I'm aware that there is an important issue here and that I am in no position to pass judgement on it.

A second consideration is that I have become more aware of the determination not to make any provision for Religious Education within public education. During much of Hiroike's lifetime he appears to have held a 'seamless' view of Religious Education reflective of the view that that religion was pervasive in Japanese homes and communities, to the extent that no distinctive attention was needed for it in schools.   Whether or not that would be his view today, I am in no position to judge, but as I intend to explain I do want to press for the question to be asked again in regard to religion in public educational provision today.

A third consideration is that I recognise that the relation between religion and ethics, as also between Religious Education and Moral Education, has become more complex and contentious in Japan as in other countries throughout the world.   Hiroike acknowledged the importance of a 'non-religious' starting point, as in the case of the Confucian tradition, but he went on to claim that within that tradition there were implicit theological assumptions.   Again, I will suggest that there may be an important philosophical point here which has implications for the science of Moralogy and its implementation globally. There are five main sections A-E in what I have to say.

A.   The multiplying sense of plurality of religions

During Hiroike's lifetime the nature and extent of diversity in religious belief, behaviour and belonging was already substantial and well known. Hiroike certainly took religions seriously as a determining presence in Japan and throughout the world.   He recognised diversity, but sought a common ground which he found in the Supreme Morality.   However, his own access to this, beyond a shrine context, was principally textual and book based.   This took him to the mainstream heart of religious traditions, but not to the full range of individual variations in response.   These have multiplied in ways he could not have anticipated in consequence of the massive surge in global

population and the extensive migrations.

In the year 1900 global population is estimated to have been around 1.5 billion (1,619,626,000). A century later four times greater at between 6 and 7 billion. Of these Japan makes up 1.8%, UK 0.86%, and USA 4%. Figures for religious self-identification suggest 85+% of the world's population identifies with one religious allegiance or another.

There is little sign globally of religious diminution, but plenty of sign of shifts in the apparent strength of one religious tradition relative to another. The numbers of adherents of some religions are on a par with general population expansion. For example,

Christians were approximately a third of the world's population in 1900 and remain so.

By contrast some have not kept pace:

	1900	2000
Jews	12,292,000 (0.8%)	14,434,000 (0.2%)
Shintoists	6,720,000 (0.4%)	2,760,000 (0.05%)

Yet others have expanded, some quite dramatically:

	1900	2000
Muslims	199,941,000 (12.3%)	1,188,243,000 (20+%)
New Religious Movements	5,910,000 (0.4%)	102,357,000 (1.7%)

There are also global shifts in the distribution and presence of religions between countries and continents beyond any that Hiroike could have anticipated. *Christianity* is sometimes referred to as a Western religion, but in reality there are many more Christians living in Asia, Africa and South America than there are in Europe and the USA. *Hindus* may remain predominantly in the Indian sub-continent but there are now settlements across Europe. Even more evident is the dispersal of *Muslims* across the world with around 3 million in the UK and 5 million in the USA. In Japan, so I am told, for all its relative homogeneity as predominantly Buddhist, there are significant numbers of followers of new religious movements, Shintoists, Confucianists, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims as well as those rejecting all religion.

The increasingly shared condition both nationally and globally is that of plurality of belief. In any particular nation one religion may predominate, but alongside it there will be the presence of other religions and also a rejection of any religion. Thus, in the UK and the USA the pattern is Christian and

Secular and Multi-faith with all three terms being necessary to characterise the national equation of beliefs. How would the pattern best be described in Japan?

The full extent of this multiplication of plurality would have been difficult for Hiroike to anticipate in the first third of the twentieth century. It would have been even more difficult for anyone then to comprehend the personal and social impact of technology on travel and communication. Journeying and migration have been a fact of human life since our earliest origins, but not through the air. For centuries message sending and conversation has happened between people at huge distances from each other, but not with instant access to voice and face. What once were known 'second hand' through travellers' tales are now accessible directly through global tourism, television reporting, internet links and the mobile phone/ipod. The scale of this technological shift is difficult enough to comprehend for those of us living through it, it could not have been even remotely in the mind of Hiroike—however familiar he was with the gramophone.

We can be confident that Hiroike would have wanted to respond to it positively, as consistently he did to the natural environment. He valued the givens of nature and no less he valued human capacities to create and manufacture. As a scholar and as a person of deep religious conviction, he would have wanted to take full account of the changing nature of religious plurality. As an avid communicator, he would have wanted to take advantage of the new means of communication in addition to the book and the lecture hall.

It is a fact of life that children and young people are now surrounded by a plurality of religious beliefs and values. These reach them as immediately as any domestic voices. The consequence can be bewildering confusion and estrangement from any consistent allegiance. The educational challenge to assist them in making sense of it all has therefore never been greater.

B. The autonomy of ethics

Religion has been and is a universal element within the history of human civilisations. Tragically however its contribution has been ambiguous, as inspiration for both good and bad. For this reason, especially from within the western philosophical tradition there has been a strong movement to establish a base for ethics which provides grounds for critiquing any beliefs and actions which are of dubious moral worth even when apparently justified by appeal to religious authority.

A specially powerful example of morally questionable interplay between religion and humanity can be seen in patriotism. Sense of national loyalty is

as powerful as any interim boundary which comes between the individual and global humanity, and certainly not necessarily negatively so. Expressions of patriotic energy and enthusiasm can be tremendously creative and gratifying, not least in an Olympic setting—think of the Japanese football team! But the loyalty can sometimes become distorted and misplaced. If that can happen with patriotism, it can even more so when religion is added to the equation.

Recent events in Gaza illustrate this all too well. Jews and Muslims share the same status as Christians—they are all 'children of Abraham'. Even more to the point, they individually share the same status as everyman and every-woman past and present—they depend on the same creative source for life. Yet there are Muslim Palestinians who appear to crave the elimination of Israel; "haven't the rockets been daily advertisements of this fact?" There are Israeli Jews who have been ready to obliterate homes and children; "don't the TV pictures and casualty figures demonstrate this?" And both asserting religious legitimation—for the continuous expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank since 1967 and for Muslim self-sacrifice in suicide bombing.

The last 100 years has seen other global expressions of this lethal combination of patriotism and religion becoming totalitarian forces. They are visible in the expansionist causes of Germanic Nazism and Soviet Communism, each possessing pseudo religious appeal and force in which Christianity had its part. They are also visible in Japanese militarism in which Shinto in its state dominated form also had its part. The revered position of the Emperor in a Shinto tradition, which Hiroike himself took care to document, became politically distorted and narrowed to give questionable legitimacy to territorial claims that threatened to obliterate the humanity of others of different parentage.

I am convinced that Hiroike's profound belief in the Supreme Morality was such that he would have called in question any nationalism which became turned in on itself. For him, esteemed ortholinons are not only Japanese. It is clear from his writings that he was critical of some of the Japanese adventurism that had taken place in China and Manchuria. Whether or not he would have considered it necessary or either philosophically/theologically acceptable to acknowledge an autonomous reference point for ethics that is not tied to one particular revelatory framework is a different matter. He would certainly have considered there was authority from within his own Shinto convictions for critiquing wrong political actions, but what if those in authority within that tradition were to decide otherwise? Would he have welcomed an alternative court of appeal?

C. Kung, Global Ethics and World Parliament of Religions

In one sense Hiroike's Supreme Morality is an attempt to identify a corroborative reference point for human behaviour which can be authenticated by an appeal to religious authority which goes beyond that of any single religion.   The introduction of the concept of 'moralogy' itself asserts that there is a common scientific base from which it is possible to extrapolate a universal approach to ethics.

Attempts to establish such a claim have a long history.   In the classical western and semitic religious traditions this can be found in the notion of 'natural law', in the Indian traditions in '*sanatana dharma*' and many individual scholars have set out their versions of the golden core of shared values (eg CS Lewis' *Illustrations of the Tao*).

Probably the most impressive development of this position in recent years is to be found in the Global Ethics of Hans Kung and the endorsement of this approach by the World Parliament of Religions.   In the early 1990s Kung set out an approach to the many moral crises facing humanity—poverty, discrimination, war, environmental disaster—which is rooted inclusively in religions. He coined the oft cited adage 'No peace in the world without peace between religions'.   The signatories are genuinely comprehensive of religious traditions from throughout the world, and they include those from secular humanist organisations.

His approach was then endorsed by a gathering of religious leaders in Chicago in 1993 (on the centenary anniversary of a similar gathering) and this has been followed through in other gatherings—as will this year be the case in Melbourne in December 2009.

Criticisms come from several directions, especially those who insist on:
・the particularity and exclusiveness of their own religion's claim to truth
・the irrelevance of religion for our global future
・the philosophical tensions between different belief systems on key issues.

Whilst the first and second of these would be discounted by Hiroike, it is likely that he would recognise the serious challenges in the last of these.

Examples of tensions which cannot easily be resolved are theistic belief or denial thereof, interpretations of gender (eg status and role of women) and sex (eg homosexuality), and valuations of nature, especially animals and being vegetarian.   The Global Ethic as formulated and agreed was open to atheistic stances, affirmative of gender equality and the interchangeability of roles, reticent about the definition of sexual immorality, and permissive about meat -eating.   Hiroike might well share some of these views, but not all.   Overall, however, there is good reason to think that he would have been positively

appreciative of this general development.

D.   Development according to Kohlberg and Fowler

Just as there have been attempts to arrive at a common system of human valuing from within religious frames of reference, there have also been attempts from social scientific starting points. In spite of the widespread popularity of cultural relativism, there have been anthropologists and sociologists who have spoken of cross-cultural continuities and transnational norms. An example of such is Lawrence Kohlberg's stage sequence of moral development, claimed as a cross-cultural pattern of formation. With others he claimed that this can be verified across cultures and continents as a universal experience—in effect a social-psychological version of natural law.   Hiroike would certainly find much that is attractive in such scientific thinking.

It is against this background that the thinking of Nobumichi Iwasa is especially important. He has identified and expounded a direct correlation between the approach of Lawrence Kohlberg and that of Chikuro Hiroike.   He finds a direct equivalence between the moral responding characteristic of Kohlberg's stage 6 and that found in Hiroike's Supreme Morality. Neither Kohlberg nor Hiroike claimed that this is the normal mode of thinking and behaving on the part of most people in society, but both consider it to be a universally desirable developmental and educational end.

One of the incentives for Kohlberg to develop his theory was his acute awareness of what human beings had shown themselves to be capable of doing to their fellow men and women in respect of Jews during the second world war. I am in no doubt that Hiroike shared a similar sense of compassion in the development of his theory of Supreme Morality.   The test however for both is whether their respective theories have the resilient capacity necessary for making a difference in practice.   Neither would want simply to be describing a hypothetical state of mind that would conveniently change its tune to suit the actual context for actions.   Both would agree that 'actions speak louder than words'.

I call this 'the clever devils gap'.   It is relatively easy to teach children, young people and adults that there is a difference between self-considering and other-considering behaviour.   It is much more difficult to have brought them to the point of their individually choosing consistently to behave altruistically. For instance, group or gang members may behave altruistically towards fellow member of the group or gang, but behave quite differently towards most others. The notorious Madoff phenomenon of a befrauding ponsi company is an extreme instance of a common reality, and so too was the Aum Shinrikyo

episode in 1995.   Even 'a devil' can be familiar with moral vocabulary without
it changing his/her behaviour.

In much of his writing Kohlberg gave little attention to religion.   In that
respect there is a stark contrast with Hiroike's writing where religion is
central.   The evident exception to this is Kohlberg's later introduction of a
Stage 7 in which faith and transcendence is overtly acknowledged.   There is
some scope here for further direct linking with Hiroike, however, that scope
may be limited by the fact that if Stage 6 is reached only exceptionally by
people generally, a more elevated stage may be reached by even fewer.

At this point I think it is useful to mention the work of James Fowler on
Stages of Faith Development.   He worked in parallel with Kohlberg form
many years, and latterly at Harvard.   In distinction from Kohlberg, however,
he argued that religion and ethics are continually interdependent.   He also
preferred to use the word 'faith' more than 'religion', because he defined both in
the following inclusive way:

> "If faith is reduced to belief in credal statements and doctrinal formula-
> tions, then sensitive and responsible persons are likely to judge that
> they must live 'without faith'.   But if faith is understood as trust in
> another and as loyalty to a transcendent center of value and power,
> then the issue of faith—and the possibility of religious faith—becomes
> lively and open again" (*Stages of Faith* p. 14).   "Faith is an orienta-
> tion of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbour, to the universe;
> a total response; a way of seeing the world and of handling it; a
> capacity to live at a more than mundane level; to see, to feel, to act in
> terms of, a transcendent dimension....Faith is a foundational category
> for all religious life, and, indeed, for all human life." (pp. 113-5)

My reading of Hiroike suggests that he would find this language quite
attractive.   In his characterising of the Confucian tradition as fundamentally
religious, I think he shows a readiness to see religion and faith as universal
human characteristics.   He would think of 'having a faith to live by' as a
defining human priority, whether or not that faith is expressed in terms which
are formally theistic.   Humans are teleologically driven beings and that sense
of purpose is at the centre of the personal equation of meaning that each of us
lives with.

E.   Religion and ethics as priority components in Education

Disorder, disappointment and lack of human fulfilment must be acknowledg-
ed as a fact of life locally, nationally and globally.   Both individually and
collectively, we are aware of the gulf between human potential and what is

actually being achieved. One vehicle which is better placed than most to change this is education.

Hiroike refers directly to this, and within his educational approach is what he identifies as the need for continuous self-examination. However, although his approach to Supreme Morality is set out in an inclusive way, when applied in the sphere of education it appears that teachers will only be true to their calling if they are imbued with 'pure orthodox learning'—a quintessentially Shinto understanding. This seems to me to be appropriate enough in the context of education provided by Shinto institutions. But throughout the world, and even in Japan, most schools, colleges and universities are not Shinto inspired. For this approach to be universalized in Japan and beyond, in accordance with Hiroike's recognition of the equivalence of this learning in the wisdom of other traditions, an effective structural mechanism is required to drive forward the necessary change.

At this point, I would want to suggest a model for educational provision which corresponds to many of Hiroike's interests, whilst at the same time making religious and moral sense in terms which others would more easily recognise. It draws on experience from within England and Wales, but it is developed in a way that is intended to have potential for application also in the different national contexts of Japan and the USA.   It has an 8-fold form:

1. My starting point is a social and political context which is *plural* in respect of faiths that are informative of most societies and the individuals within them. The exact composition of that plurality will vary from one nation to another, as will the respective educational systems within each of them.

2. Wherever there is a public provision for education, paid for out of state taxation, I suggest that the curriculum for all children and young people should include a strand which is 'Religious and Moral'. The name (s) for this may differ from one country to another, but the substance will be common.

3. The priority will be to encourage the development of a 'religiate conscience' in every pupil.

4. Being 'religiate' will not be the same as becoming 'religious' in terms of one particular faith perspective.   Instead it will be awareness and appreciation of the depth of human insight and wisdom within the living religious traditions of the world.

5. These religions will principally be ones that reflect the ongoing complexity of beliefs and faith communities within an individual nation, but open to others which continue to shape humanity globally. They will be met in teaching activities and resources which involve their distinctive stories, visual

components and performative expressions.

6.   Within the religiate conscience, 'conscience' refers to the springs of moral action in each and every individual, and includes the grounds of intention and motivation which inform both attitude and behaviour.   Conscience is also cross-culturally a term common to national constitutions and international law.   It includes a cultivated sense of self-examination.

7.   The process of teaching and learning will show the spirit of open inclusiveness associated with Hiroike, explicitly extended to include those whose starting points are outside the framework of institutional religious belonging.   It will be different from but complementary to any separate provision for education, which sets out to induct boys and girls into one particular faith.   As a means of maintaining the balance between grass roots and hierarchical authority, there will need to be councils, at both local and national levels, which are each representative of professional educationalists, faith communities and politicians with a combined interest in the transformation of religious and moral education.

8.   The habit of reflection and self-scrutiny, which transcends both sectional loyalties and conventional moralising, can then be promoted in such a way that enhances critical intelligence and the sense of interdependence which Hiroike himself valued so much.

Conclusion

I'll end with a final question: might it be that such an eightfold path is a direct manifestation of Moralogy?   It avoids the dangers associated with exclusive religious/ideological nationalism.   Instead, it is in keeping with the 2006 Basic Law of Education article 15: "The attitude of religious tolerance, a general learning regarding religion and the position of religion in the social life, shall be valued in education."   And it goes deep in promoting authentic moral engagement.

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