

# Hiroike's Wisdom and the Challenges of Our Time: Educational Implications

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary societies are characterized by rapid changes due to the population and the scientific and technological revolution. In this context, the processes of globalization and the pursuit of materialist gains have led to the dehumanization of man by undermining the ethical foundations of society that have always ensured proper deportment within individuals and families, while sustaining tolerance and harmony across racial, cultural and religious boundaries.

The aim of the present paper is to explore the way in which, in today's changing world, Hiroike's vision and his principles of supreme morality remain of paramount relevance and can help to establish a new morality that can provide each individual with a true meaning of life, and bring about orderly and harmonious development in society and the humanization of modern civilization.

Based on the universal nature of Hiroike's vision, this paper intends also to explain how, in our African societies that have been marked by deep civil strife and intercommunal divisions, current moral education programmes based on traditional values, can integrate Hiroike's ideals such as Tolerance, Benevolence and Righteousness as a way to the realization of individual perfection as well to the achievement of peace, stability and social harmony.

## II. THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

### II.1. Change and its Dilemmas

The post-war era has been marked by deep, and wide-ranging changes that have affected, to various degrees, all parts of the globe. Because of their particular impact and significance, they are usually referred to as the triple

explosion of population, science and its technological applications as well as the rise of peoples' aspirations.

The demographic explosion as a contemporary phenomena has created a situation where the world's population has doubled within a generation, generating de facto, a sharp imbalance between the earth's inhabitants and the resources to sustain them. Nowhere has this tendency been felt than in the new nations of the third world where population has increasingly become youthful in its composition. This situation raises major challenges in terms of security and social stability if the youth's rights to education, employment and other fundamental necessities are not properly addressed. Indeed, as experience has shown during the unsteady periods that Africa has gone through, it is the younger generation who have been the most violent and disruptive elements of society, under the manipulation of unscrupulous politicians.

On the other hand, the scientific and technological revolution, while it has helped to enhance life through advances in the fields of medicine and agricultural production, has also been a source of human insecurity by enabling the fabrication of weapons of mass destruction and other harmful substances that threaten our natural environment and the very survival of mankind.

The information and communication technology has, by narrowing down the distances between nations and cultures, created what historian Marshall MacLuhan has rightly called a "Global Village". In this perspective, the globalization of cultural and social life and economic transactions has contributed to the gradual marginalization of local cultures and the moral values that underpin them.

Hence, there has slowly emerged what anthropologist Margaret Mead calls a "solitary and misunderstood generation" that is cut off from its elders with the tradition and norms that they embody.

The rise of peoples' aspirations under the catalytic effect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has, in addition to enhancing progress and the establishment of democratic institutions, created antagonisms within and among nations, while intensive competition for wealth, power and privilege has triggered divisions and violent confrontations between tribal and religious communities.

## **II.2. The Moral Paradox**

In the African context, the process of westernization has gradually eroded the binding power of traditional value systems as well the social institutions which embodied those norms that shaped youth behaviour and ensured social harmony.

In a stable and homogeneous traditional society, the set of attributes and the system of values to be internalized were clearly understood by the older and the younger generations alike and so were the lines of communication between parents and children. Problems of moral guidance for the young arise in the contemporary unstable society where the crisis of values is compounded by external influences and the collapse of parental authority due to the generation gap.

Commenting on the decline of value consensus due to rapid social change, Cummings et al. (2001: 7) say:

“In times of relative tranquillity, there is likely to be a high level of values consistency, but in times of rapid change, this consistency may break down”.

In the same perspective, as H. Rwantabagu (2003: 2) has observed, the technological revolution, by easing inter-cultural communication, has generated “youth culture” thus eroding the binding power of traditional values.

In this respect, P. Erny (1972: 39) has remarked that the contemporary family can no longer easily mould the personality of the young in conformity with the old ideals that are on the decline. Hence, the moralizing influence of the family is waning while the school as an agent of socialization has faltered, leaving the young in a sort of “cultural non-man’s land” in which deviant behaviour has become the norm.

In this respect, the loss of customary virtues such as temperance, decency of speech and social demeanour, selflessness, honesty, solidarity and above all, the strict respect for human life, has generated such depraved inclinations as alcohol and drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, violence, exclusion and intolerance on the basis of ethnicity, political or religious affiliation. Hence, as it was stressed by scholars such as, D. Nizigiyimana (1999: 47), the political and social crises and civil wars that have been a hallmark of many African countries, are, above all, crises of moral values.

In this perspective, the contemporary crisis may be said to be due the disorientation of our education systems with the collapse of the family as a framework of identification while school education has become more concerned with the transmission of scientific knowledge than with the inculcation of moral principles.

Hence, if Rabelais was right by saying that “science without conscience can only spell the ruin of our souls”, science “should be guided in the proper direction by morality”. Indeed, as it has been well stressed (IOM; 1987: 3-4), the cause of the science paradox in our age, is that “people have failed to develop their moral spirit sufficiently and therefore have not utilized modern

advanced technology for the proper promotion of human happiness”.

According to Hiroike, the present age is marked by a paradoxical situation whereby advances in science and technology have brought some material progress but also problems related to the dehumanization of society and the constant menace to human existence and survival. Therefore, the opinion is strong that science and material progress must be guided in their evolution by Morality. The source of unhappiness within individuals, families and communities is that people have not developed the moral dimension of their lives. Only the practice of morality will therefore ensure human happiness, through the acquisition of a true meaning of life. In this perspective, Hiroike emphasizes that:

“We can obtain happiness only through a manifestation of a noble moral spirit in accordance with the will of God and through the observance of several moral conditions proper to the case. In other words, happiness is essentially the result of the practice of morality”.  
(2002, I: 101)

Here, he blames the fall moral standards in society on the contemporary neglect of character formation through moral and spiritual education in schools.

The challenge of our time is therefore to seek efficient ways of rehumanizing humanity through the revitalization of fundamental values such as enshrined in Hiroike’s wisdom and his vision of supreme morality. Indeed, as Karl Jaspers has emphasized, “in order to overcome the present crisis, the advent of people who can give new moral paradigms to mankind is absolutely necessary”.

In this line, Hiroike has remarked that “moralogy has succeeded in proving that man’s moral sense is the most important factor in preventing the recurrence of such troubles as trade depressions, lack of credit and bankruptcies”.

### **III. CHIKURO HIROIKE’S WISDOM, SOCIAL HARMONY AND WORLD PEACE**

#### **III.1. Hiroike’s Thought and Social Harmony**

##### **1° The Role of Moralogy**

According to Hiroike, Moralogy is a comprehensive science which seeks to find universal laws of human existence in order to enlighten man’s way to peace and happiness.

Taking inspiration from Auguste Comte’s *Sciences of Society* (IOM, 1987: 7), Hiroike purports to explain the causal relationships between the adoption of

specific mental attitudes and sound conduct and the achievement of happiness and human progress. He argues that Moralogy is a science for perfecting one's character. It is a field of study aimed at the realization of individual and collective peace. On this, Comte says that "it is necessary to demonstrate scientifically that the successful development of society is accompanied by the development of a rational knowledge of morality.

In the same perspective, Hiroike argues that "the improvement of society and the realization of world peace are ultimately made possible through the elevation of personal character and the practice of Supreme Morality".

According to him, moralogy has two purposes. One is to make clear the authority of moral practice through the scientific demonstration of the effects of the practice of conventional age-old morality. The second purpose is to explain scientifically the characteristics of supreme morality as practiced by the world sages since ancient times. Another purpose is to enlighten human conduct and to enhance smooth interpersonal and inter-communal interactions.

## **2<sup>o</sup> Supreme Morality and its Relevance Today**

For Hiroike, Supreme Morality represents the "common moral principles running through the moral systems practiced by Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, and Jesus Christ, as well as the moral system handed down by generations of the Japanese Imperial Family" (IOM, 2001: 400).

So, Supreme Morality would be a body of orthodox, authoritative moral principles, as enunciated and practised by the great Sages of the world. They are kinds of standard, transcendental, universal principles that go beyond the confines of times and space.

According to the author, the Sages who embody Supreme Morality were inspired by the will of God. They aspired at self-denial, living and loving (even dying) for others. All the great Sages were not selfish. They possessed and practised such virtues as benevolence, tolerance, uprightness and temperance.

Hiroike, like Aristotle before him, believed that right thinking is essential to right conduct. He says that "the practice of Supreme Morality perfects character and enables the one who practices it to enjoy "perpetual happiness" and "heavenly nobility". On this, Aristotle (1965: 39) adds that "happiness derives from an activity of the mind led by virtuous actions".

In this perspective, Hiroike's moral principles of tolerance, benevolence and humility, underpinned by self-knowledge are essential elements for building inner peace within individuals as well as sound and harmonious interpersonal and international relations. Indeed, as Rwantabagu (1998: 53) has

stressed, “world peace depends, to some extent, on peace and harmony in individuals’ lives, as well as on sound inter-human and intercultural relations. As it was underlined, “it is morality that supports civilizations” (IOM, 1987: 50). It is therefore by designing national constitutions on the basis of sound moral principles that truly democratic and stable societies in which freedom and basic civic rights are guaranteed, can prevail. In this respect, the aim of the media and of civil society institutions ought to enlighten the minds of the people by the way of moral principles (IOM, 1987: 87) so as to achieve harmonious and law abiding human communities, stable nations and a peaceful humanity.

### **III.2. Hiroike’s Conception Peace and World Order**

In his thinking, Hiroike (2002, II: 117) believed that peace in the world cannot be attained unless inter-human and international relations are guided by sound moral principles. He says: “Supreme morality is the universal moral criterion for creating peace in the world”. He goes on saying that given the present progress and direction of human society, time has come for all peoples who do not share the same language, religion or opinion to cooperate. The moral criteria for an international age, he argues, must be ones which can integrate the cultures of East and West, transcending sectarianism, faith, race and culture. Indeed, at all times, sages and statesmen have been advocating a peaceful world that is inspired by altruism, real benevolence, tolerance, and love for mankind.

This belief was shared by Hugo Grotius and Woodrow Wilson who said that peace should be underpinned by supreme morality and altruist concern for mankind (2002, II: 117).

Indeed, peace is not a mere absence of conflict and confrontation. It is rather the realization of order and harmony between individuals communities and among nations, based on equity, justice, and the full respect for fundamental human rights.

Hence, like Socrates, Hiroike opposed the evils of militarism and narrow nationalism while advocating for cosmopolitanism. On this, he said that “the ultimate objective of the human race is to embody cosmism and cosmopolitanism”. Hence like the Greek Philosopher, Hiroike was a citizen not only of his country, but also of the world at large.

## **IV. THE EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE: CASE OF BURUNDI**

### **IV.1. The Traditional Framework**

Within the traditional setting of Burundian society, in Central Africa, the

younger generation were gradually, each according to his level of understanding, imparted with the principles of morality to guide their daily lives.

The method as used in indigenous pedagogy was thus based on a strategy of dialogue in which all partners (parents and children) played their respective parts. Hence, the personality of young people was slowly and imperceptibly moulded and impregnated with the prevailing social norms and values. Like the greek "Arete" the attributes and general virtues that a young Burundian aspired to achieve was "Umutima" or "Conscience" and "Ubuntu" or "Humanity". Self-respect, Sharing, Loyalty to one's Family, Devoted Parenthood and Responsible Citizenship were also emphasized. The latter was not only internalized but also experienced and practiced in everyday situations through deeds of patriotism, by protecting the weak and the elderly, by abiding by the laws and justice, respecting the rights of everyone and protecting the environment for the benefit of the present and future generations.

In this respect L. S. Senghor has observed that: "Morality in Black Africa is active wisdom. It is not a catechism that is recited. It is a way of living that is realized in and by society and, above all, within oneself".

By and large, the westernized inherited formal school system has put no emphasis on the moral dimension of personality. Many are of the opinion that this gap may be somewhat responsible for the amoral and unruly behaviour among the people that have led to violence and to a protracted civil conflict that the country has plunged into for more than a decade.

#### **IV.2. The Contemporary Context**

Hence, in the wake of the deep social crisis and extensive violence and destruction that Burundi has gone through, and following UNESCO's dictum that "wars begin in the minds of men and that it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be erected", it has become imperative to design a moral education programme aimed at restoring ethical standards among the younger generation. The Catholic Church-initiated programme (BNEC, 2005) to be taught in all the country's schools and colleges is based on the principles of traditional pedagogy such as:

- 1) The respect for human rights and dignity
- 2) Truthfulness and Honesty
- 3) Solidarity and Cooperation
- 4) Protection of the Natural Environment
- 5) The Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts
- 6) Responsible sexual behaviour.

Based on the universal nature of Hiroike's ethical principles, the latter may

inform the proposed curriculum in the Burundi school system. Indeed, as J. A. Lauwerys has observed: “The inner content and the full meaning of the system of morality is universal”.

In a nation that has experienced serious social strife and deep-rooted divisions within the community, the following principles derived from Hiroike’s thought could be adapted and integrated within the school curriculum of Burundi.

### **1° The Ethics of Tolerance**

This involves the development of the capacity to understand, to appreciate differences of a cultural, ideological, religious or ethnic nature, by putting forward what unites people rather than what divides them. The principle of complementarity and solidarity for the common good should prevail.

In this perspective, C. Hiroike urged citizens not adhere to narrow and exclusive nationalism, but to adopt cosmopolitanism. He said:

“When we look back on the path of humankind in an attempt to put our future into perspective, it is obvious that the ultimate objective of the human race is to embody cosmism and cosmopolitanism”. (IOM, 2001: 371)

This, according to him, was the right path to the achievement of peace and harmony between communities and nations; this principle should therefore feature high on the Moral Education Curriculum.

### **2° The Ethics of Benevolence**

Peace making, says Hiroike, must be based on true love for mankind. The principle of benevolence relies on the spirit of true altruism based on the fundamental Christian commandment of “Loving one’s Neighbour”. This implies the ideal of living for the sake of others. In our societies that have been affected by deep intercommunal strife, it is imperative that school curricula lay particular emphasis on the acquisition of this attribute by the younger generation, while attempts should be made to allow them to practice it through services to the community.

### **3° The Ethics of Self-Examination**

This attitude towards self and society is fundamental in human interactions. It derives from the feeling and the realization of our limitations as individuals and that we need to explore our inner selves rather in the Socratic sense of “know yourself”. Self-knowledge as a moral attitude fosters humility which entails tolerance and benevolence based on the respect of the rights of



other human beings in their cultural, religious and ideological diversity. This is an essential condition for maintaining genuine peace between individuals, communities, and nations. Indeed, it has been stressed:

“The sure method for realizing universal peace is to enlighten the minds of the people of the world by way of moral principles which can solicit strong self-examination of our propensity for egocentricity”.  
(IOM, 1987: 87)

The educational implication is, as N. Hans and J. A. Lauwerys (1969: 35) suggested, for teachers to “maintain in the pupils a system of moral attitudes which will prepare them for social life”.

Humility and self-renunciation, based on self-knowledge, are therefore prime virtues that should be high on the agenda of school programmes.

Within the context of Burundian society, Hiroike's principles of morality and the traditional values of “Ubuntu” (Humanity) and “Ubushingantahe” (Uprightness and Integrity) could blend to form the foundations of a broad-based and balanced moral education programme. And, as Hiroike has suggested, the teaching of moral principles should avoid a passive, magisterial approach in favour of an interactive and real-life oriented approach, “praxis” having precedence over “logos”. He emphasizes that supreme morality needs practice, for without practice, neither perfection of character nor attainment of happiness is possible” (2002, III: 7). He also advocates and indeed underlines the fact that the teaching of moral principles should have deep spiritual dimensions as supreme morality comes from the divine spirit of benevolence, as expounded by the sages and spiritual leaders. Hiroike, like Plato and Aristotle (1965: 46), emphasized that moral education should be initiated at an early stage so as to shape character of children when it is easiest to mould.

To be relevant to our time and to have far-reaching outcomes, moral education must assume a comparative dimensions by seeking the best ideas and practices from the South, East and West, so as to mould a new moral order for our time. Indeed, even UNESCO (1987: 66) has stated that “the establishment of universal moral criteria is one of the important tasks of its educational activities”.

## V. CONCLUSION

Hiroike was a great thinker of his time and for all time. His moral principles transcend all races, religions, cultures and national boundaries. He believed in the complementarity between the mental and the moral dimensions of human personality. The two components ought to be developed harmoni-

ously in any educational endeavour.

At a general level, the universal principles enunciated by Hiroike and his followers should be integrated into school curricula everywhere while taking into account local cultural realities.

In the light of this and in view of the deep social crisis that African countries such as Burundi have been wading through for some time, the family, which according to Lévi-Strauss is the “atom” of society, should play a basic role by words, deeds and attitudes in the consolidation of peaceful relationships among the people. In this perspective, moral education should contribute to the genesis of building a society that is more decent and mindful of the nobility and dignity of man.

The family and the school should harmoniously aim at education for “wholeness” by transmitting a kind of “Sophia” based both on being and on knowing. This would constitute an answer to Aristotle’s dilemma when he was wondering whether “education should be directed mainly to understanding or mainly to moral education and whether the proper studies to be followed are those which make for goodness, or those which advance the bounds of knowledge”.

Inspired by Hiroike’s moral principles, the education provided at home and in the classroom, must produce men and women ready to discern between right and wrong, to perceive and accept responsibilities and to order their conduct accordingly. This is essential if our world is to become a more humane and peaceful place to live in, for the present and the future generations.

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