

**A Causal Relationship between Gratitude as a Positive Feeling and Well-being  
----from the Viewpoint of Dr. Chikuro Hiroike's Moral Philosophy and Positive  
Psychology<sup>1</sup>----**

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**Abstract**

UNESCO aims at promoting the well-being of all children and young people through good quality education. Recent psychological studies have provided scientific proof of a causal relationship between gratitude as a positive feeling and well-being. In addition, since gratitude is regarded as a moral virtue, it may be possible to take a moral approach to this relationship, as Dr. Chikuro Hiroike did when creating Moralogy. This paper, which focuses on gratitude, begins by reviewing some of the main topics recently treated by positive psychology, and then proceeds to offer an explanation of the moral philosophy of Moralogy in respect of gratitude and well-being. The hope is that, in so doing, it will corroborate recent psychological and philosophical studies and help to validate the practical strategies for intervention they recommend.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based upon my presentation to the 2nd International Conference on Moralogy at the University of Perpetual Help (2019), our theme being the “Comparative Expression of Gratitude”. By way of background, a very brief account of the genesis of our joint research project on gratitude based on Moralogy may be helpful here. Reitaku University and Perpetual Help University began this academic collaboration in 2016, with two open lectures being given at the UHP campus by Reitaku professors. Dr. Tetsuro Mizoguchi gave a talk entitled “Introduction: Reitaku University, the Economics of Corruption”, while I myself spoke on “Japanese Culture, Business and Morality”. At the time we had not formulated any very clear idea about the themes of our joint academic venture, but in 2017 the process of realizing a fully fledged and interactive project was accelerated when Professor Gabriel Archemedez Flores visited Reitaku and the Hiroike Chikuro Memorial Center, and learned more about our founder’s moral philosophy and Moralogy. In 2018, Reitaku University sent a delegation to PHU to flesh out a joint research undertaking on Moralogy based on a working proposal by Professor Flores, the theme of which was “In Search of Modern Filipino Ortholinons”. The UPHSD team comprised Dr. Eduardo Zialcita (Dean, Graduate School), Professor Belinda Conde (Director, R&DC), Professor Gabriel Archemedez Flores, Professor Roland Montano, Professor Neliza Casella, Professor Mary Josephine Duritan, Professor Dennis Camatog and Professor Dane Jacinto. The RU team comprised Professor Kazunobu Horiuchi, Professor Takao Inukai and myself. This meeting was followed by the first Lecture Forum on Moralogy, in which the Reitaku professors offered the following lectures: I myself spoke on “Moral Education in Japan’s Tertiary Sector”; Professor Horiuchi discussed the “Effects of Moralogy Education”; and Professor Inukai offered “In Search of Supreme Morality: An Outline of the Institute of Moralogy and the Activities of Its Research Center”. After further academic interaction and fruitful discussions between our teams, we decided to focus on the study of gratitude as a joint research project.

Keywords: UNESCO, positive psychology, gratitude, well-being, Moralogy

## 1. Introduction

UNESCO, declaring that good quality education is the foundation of health and well-being, outlined in its Strategy on Education for Health and Well-Being how we should act to promote “better health and well-being for all children and young people” (UNESCO, 2016, p.5). Teachers are those who must actualize these goals, especially that of promoting well-being among pupils and students at school. Naturally, therefore, they will have to equip themselves with a scientific approach to, and understanding of, the means of achieving well-being through education before engaging in practical pedagogical work in its delivery. This is easier said than done, though, since the meaning of well-being in education is not always obvious. For one thing, the concept has many facets, including the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity, as well as good mental and spiritual health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning in life, and the resources to cope with stress and mental troubles. Fortunately, however, recent academic studies by positive psychologists and neuroscientists have highlighted some psychological elements that they believe provide a link between our feelings and well-being and everlasting happiness. One of these connections for which they provide scientific evidence is the causal relationship between gratitude and well-being.

Since gratitude can be also regarded as a moral virtue, how best to nurture it should be one of the indispensable themes of moral education. Dr. Chikuro Hiroike, an eminent scholar and educator, and the founder of Reitaku University, recognized the importance of gratitude in our moral life as we seek to enhance our character. He himself conducted scientific research into well-being from the viewpoint of morality more than 60 years ago, and viewed it as integral to Moralogy (the word he coined to denote his study of moral science), thus rendering it able to shed fresh light on the relationship between morality and gratitude. Consequently the present paper, taking gratitude as its main focus, will first review some of the main topics recently treated by positive psychology, and then proceed to offer an explanation of the moral philosophy of Moralogy in respect of gratitude and well-being. The hope is that, in so doing, it will supplement recent psychological and philosophical studies and help to validate the practical strategies for intervention they recommend.

## 2. Some Recent Cultural Trends in Japan in the Light of Western Psychology

It might be helpful at this point to offer a brief outline of some recent general trends in Japan relating to gratitude. The appearance of a number of scientific studies on how to realize well-being in daily life has caught the attention of the media and people in general in the country, and this has inevitably stimulated great interest in the topic of gratitude. A prime example of this phenomenon is a book published in 2013 by Professor Ichiro Kishimi, the philosopher and Adlerian psychologist, entitled *The Courage to Be Disliked*, which became an enormous best seller in Japan as well as

elsewhere in Asia, with more than 3 million copies sold. A conspicuous feature of this book is the way it applies a combination of twentieth-century Adlerian psychology and Greek philosophy to demonstrate how people can make themselves free, change their lives and achieve real happiness. Professor Kishimi used the same psychological methodology in *The Courage to be Happy* (2016), the sequel to his global bestseller. Neither book was a purely academic work of psychology, and both are more than tinged with a philosophical way of thinking.

In addition to Adler, there are several important positive psychology scholars to whom a special attention is paid in Japan. Takashi Maeno, Professor in the Graduate School of System Design and Management at Keio University, who conducts research into theories on contemporary happiness<sup>2</sup>, highlights the following four eminent scholars as being particularly influential (Maeno, 2019, pp.54-55): E. Diener, often seen as the founder of the study of well-being, who created the measure of life of satisfaction known as SWLS or Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, E., Horwitz, J., & Emmons, R.A., 1985, pp. 63-74); Daniel Kahneman, Eugene Higgins Professor of Psychology, Emeritus, and Professor of Psychology and Public Affairs, highly regarded in Japan for his scholarly work on the relationship between well-being and the economy, and the author of a famous book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Kahneman, 2013); Martin E.P. Seligman, who has clarified the conditions needed for well-being and flourishing, as well as setting out the new goal of the Positive Psychology movement with his argument that happiness created by positive emotion is one of its five pillars, along with Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2011); Ilona Boniwell, the founder of European Network for Positive Psychology, who created SPARK Resilience with Lucy Ryan in 2009 to teach children problem-solving and to build resilience through the techniques of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), encouraging them to question and re-frame their reactions to difficult situations (Boniwell, 2012); and M. Csikszentmihalyi, a Hungarian-American psychologist, very known for his research on the experience of flow, a psychological concept he introduced in his best-selling book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. He recognised and named the psychological concept of flow. In terms of their academic approaches, Diener and Hahneman may be regarded as representative empirical psychologists who emphasize objective observation and the experimental method as the source of information when studying and trying to explain psychological phenomena; while Seligman, Boniwell, and Csikszentmihalyi as eminent clinical psychologists, are more concerned with the practical application of psychological theories. They not only diagnose and treat diseases of the brain, emotional disturbances, and behavioral problems, but also actually raise the bar for alleviating the human condition beyond traditional psychological treatments.

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<sup>2</sup> For a representative of his happiness projects, see his article on “local happiness” (<https://archive.issueplusdesign.jp/project/local-happiness/743>).

### 3. Gratitude as a Positive Emotion

Gratitude as a positive emotion that can increase happiness and well-being should certainly be included in any discussions of this topic. It is common knowledge, based simply on everyday experience, that happiness is closely related to gratitude; for example, 95% of respondents to a Gallup Survey on “gratitude” in 1998 said that expressing gratitude made them feel at least happy, while over 50 % said it made them extremely happy (Emmons & McCullough, 2004, p.172).

Academic research into the relationship between gratitude and well-being or happiness has benefitted a great deal from positive psychology, in terms both of its recent advances in the field of cross-cultural findings about character strengths and virtues, and its innovative psychological interventions designed to increase individual well-being. Attitudes to gratitude have changed radically as a result. Traditional psychological science and practice focused on the treatment of mental illness and relief from suffering since, as P. C. Watkins and others argue, “psychology has been more interested in studying human vice than virtue”. Gratitude was therefore “one of the neglected virtues in psychology” (Watkins, P. C., 2003, p. 431). Today, however, the impact of positive psychology has induced a change of direction, with gratitude an integral part of interventions that make people lastingly happier. This trend is a valuable and positive development in the science of psychology.

Positive psychology began to flourish in the late 1990’s, but this does not imply that scientific progress in this field had not been made before that. For it should be noted, as I mentioned earlier, that more than 60 years ago, scientific study of well-being from the viewpoint of morality was being promoted by Dr. Chikuro Hiroike. In 1928 he published his magnum opus, *A Treatise on Moral Science: A First Attempt to Establish Moralogy as a New Science*. We now have a three-volume English translation of the Japanese original, entitled *Towards Supreme Morality: An Attempt to establish the New Science of Moralogy*, though this did not become available until 2002, unfortunately. Through studying the world’s great sages, including Buddha, Christ, Confucius, and Socrates, as well as *Amaterasu Oomikami*, the sun goddess in Japanese Shinto mythology, Hiroike sought to identify what he called “supreme morality” as a means of bridging East and West and enhancing the prospects of world peace. He thereby created Moralogy, the scientific study of morality, which aims to realize individual well-being through building human character. His *Treatise* also highlights the importance of gratitude, distinguishing between ordinary gratitude, directed only to one’s own profit or merit as part of traditional or conventional morality, and more holistic and refined gratitude directed far more broadly and deeply to all things, as an aspect of the supreme morality practiced by the sages. In this way, he treated gratitude more extensively than does positive psychology, relating it not merely to everyday satisfaction and instances of good fortune, but also to suffering and difficulties such as illnesses and disasters, for which people may ordinarily find it very difficult to be grateful.

### 4. A Gloss on Some Recent Psychological Studies on Gratitude and Well-being

As recent studies on gratitude and well-being are too extensive and varied to be covered in the space available here, here we will focus only on the direct relationship between gratitude and well-being and highlight two of its most conspicuous features.

Firstly, then, the above-mentioned studies by Watkins and others on the theme of gratitude sought to develop the Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT) as a valid measure of “trait gratitude”, and to evaluate its relationship to subjective well-being (SWB). They found that “grateful individuals tend to be happy and well adjusted”, and that there are “strong relationships between dispositional gratitude and various measures of happiness and SWB” (Watkins et al., 2003, p.448). They also found that trait gratitude has several components, including “a sense of abundance”, “an appreciation of simple pleasures”, an appreciation of “the common everyday pleasures of life”, and an appreciation of “the contribution of others to their well-being”. However, they only demonstrated the existence of a correlation, a strong association between gratitude and happiness, rather than seeking any possible causal relationship between the two, e.g. whether gratitude causes happiness, or vice versa. Here they only offered the vague psychological notion that happiness and gratitude may operate in a “cycle of virtue,” by which “gratitude enhances happiness, but happiness enhances gratitude as well” (*Ibid.*, p. 449).

Secondly, this work led to further research on gratitude in connection with psychological interventions, which sought to establish whether the relationship between gratitude and well-being is correlational or causal. Emmons and McCullough, for example, investigated the effects of a “grateful outlook” on psychological and physical well-being in three experimental studies: participants in studies 1 and 2 were asked to keep weekly or daily records of the moods they experienced in one of three sets of circumstances (hassles, gratitude listing, and either neutral life events or social comparisons); in study 3, members of a group of people with neuromuscular diseases were assigned either to the gratitude condition or the control condition. The results showed that gratitude clearly led to the enhancement of psychological well-being in the gratitude-focused group, suggesting that psychological intervention in the form of self-guided gratitude exercises may bring about emotional, physical and interpersonal benefits (Emmons and McCullough, 2003, pp. 377-89). This successfully demonstrated the existence of a causal relationship between gratitude and well-being or happiness.

Seligman and others have also focused on psychological interventions that increase individual happiness, demonstrating that the relation between gratitude and well-being is a causal one. Using a sample recruited through the Authentic Happiness website, they attempted to compare the effectiveness of a placebo control exercise (early memories) with five different happiness exercises, namely: a) Gratitude visit (writing and delivering in person a letter of gratitude to someone who had been especially kind to them but had never been properly thanked); b) Three good things in life (writing down every night for a week three things that had gone well that day and identifying a causal explanation for each good thing); c) You at your best; d) Using signature strength in a new way (using

one of one's top five strengths in a new and different way every day for one week); and e) Identifying signature strength. Of these exercises, (b) and (d), for example, "increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms for six months" and (a) "caused large positive changes for one month" (Seligman et al., 2005, p.416).

It is significant here that Emmons and McCullough also paid special attention to Fredrickson's 'broaden and build' model of positive emotion in terms of the mechanism that caused the gratitude-outlook group to experience elevated moods of well-being (2003, p.387). This theory argues that positive emotions can "broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources" (Fredrickson, 2001, p.219) and is now one of the most compelling hypotheses frequently cited in the field of positive psychology.

In Japan, too, experiments were conducted, based on the findings of Emmons and McCullough, to examine whether, in the case of Japanese people, counting one's blessings actually enhances well-being. Unfortunately, however, the desired or expected outcomes have not yet been identified, and the contribution of gratitude to the enhancement of SWB is still not experimentally proved (Aikawa et al., 2013, pp.125-38). Aikawa suggests that this may be because of differences between the emotion of gratitude in Japanese people and that in Western people (Aikawa, 2016, pp. 57-59), while Hanai and others assert that participants in the studies lacked the opportunities, or psychological interventions, that might allow them to sharply recall and "savor" the experience of gratitude (Hanai et al., 2014, p.108). Clearly further experimental studies are desirable here, especially from the viewpoint of cross-cultural investigations between Japan and other countries, especially the Philippines.

## **5. Some Points for Us to Consider Relating to Comparative Studies into Gratitude Involving Japan and the Philippines, and the Viewpoint of Moralogy**

### **(1) Cultural Differences**

As just noted, we should be aware that the Japanese experience of gratitude may differ from that in the West, and a key concept to deepen our understanding of this is emotional indebtedness (Aikawa, 2016, p. 63; Yonino & Aikawa, 2014, p. 47). According to Tsang, in the West, especially the United States, "gratitude and indebtedness are not identical emotions, but occur differently in reaction to differences in perceived benefactor intention" (2006, p. 205), while in Japan emotional gratitude tends to be recognized as a compound emotion including both emotional gratitude and emotional indebtedness, interacting at the level of gratitude. One possible psychological explanation, often mentioned in academic studies, of this relationship between gratitude and indebtedness in Japanese psychology is the introspective method applied to psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine. This, along with Morita psychotherapy, is regarded in Japan as one of the most representative psychotherapies. The core insight of the introspective method theory is that it induces one's realization of sin and love for others, whereby the cognition and emotion that appeared to be receptive, self-

denying and passive at the beginning, come to be connected at a deep level to active and affirmative Japanese emotions by the end. It is through this dynamic interaction between emotional indebtedness and gratitude that emotional indebtedness (the feeling of *sumanasa*) is intensified, and emotional gratitude is deepened and greater self-insight achieved, triggered by this emotional indebtedness (Ikeda, 2017, p. 71).

In fact, the introspective method is often employed in Japan as a counseling strategy as well to help people refresh their sense of gratitude, with people being assigned a theme and asked to devote themselves to solitary meditation as follows:

The theme has three elements: “Look back on your past and try to remember 1) the services others have done for you, 2) those you have done for others, and 3) the trouble you have caused to others”. It sometimes takes Japanese patients a long time to remember all the incidents they should, but most can recall them after several days, and they often shed tears when they realize how much they have tormented others. Many focus on their mother and realize they have not yet sufficiently repaid her favors; they also become aware of how much they owe to individuals other than her (Nakayama, O., Ryan, K. et al., 2011, p. 116).

Through this psychological process, which includes both emotional gratitude and emotional indebtedness, those who receive proper counseling through the introspective method begin to feel grateful, which in turn helps them to solve their emotional problems.

In Japanese culture, we may find various manifestations of gratitude in connection with moral indebtedness. Such feelings of gratitude are sometimes captured by the Japanese word *on*, which strictly speaking should be translated as “that which we should feel indebted to somebody for” or “that which we owe to others” (Nakayama, O., Ryan, K. et al., p. 110). This idea underpins much social behavior as, for example, when we call our teacher “*on-shi*”, which means “the teacher to whom we are indebted,” and when we hold a “*sha-on-kai*” or “Gratitude Party” to express our thanks to our teachers when we graduate from school.

Is this psychological phenomenon unique to Japanese culture, or is it also found in Philippino culture, which has been richly endowed with a combination of legacies from the East and the West? Or do our two countries exhibit conspicuous differences as well as common characteristics?

## (2) Objects of Gratitude

In Japan, we commonly use the phrase, “*okage-sama-de*” in response to an enquiry about our health. In Western culture, as the object of our gratitude is almost always made clear, this might literally be translated as “I owe it to you or God that I am in good health”. In Japan, however, the object of gratitude in this phrase is not directed to any specific person or something greater, but much

more vaguely and extensively to “everyone and everything responsible for one’s good health, including Nature, the gods and the Buddha” (Nakayama, O., Ryan, K. et al., p. 113).

In psychological studies on gratitude, it has been a common practice to conceptualize emotions on two levels, state and trait (Rosenberg, 1998). Trait gratitude is characterized by individual differences, while state gratitude is linked to objective situations, where one experiences emotional gratitude resulting from another individual’s expression of gratitude. Arguing that gratitude directed to nonhuman objects is to be finally categorized as state gratitude, or gratitude to one’s present situation, Aikawa suggests the necessity of separating the objects of gratitude into two categories, human and nonhuman, since one cannot expect to obtain rigorous results from psychological experiments into counting one’s blessings if the objects of gratitude include ambiguous ones such as gratitude towards the fact that nothing in particular has happened all day (Aikawa, 2016, p. 62). However, just as with the case of “*okage-sama-de*”, there may be occasions when we find it difficult simply to separate the objects of gratitude according to this two-category-system, though generally speaking, here in Japan, there seem to be more studies on human than non-human objects of gratitude.

So in order to make a comparative study about gratitude, it may be necessary to pay more attention to nonhuman objects of gratitude, since Japanese feelings of gratitude are sometimes closely connected to religiosity. In the West too, among religious people, one can find a positive correlation between gratitude and religiosity, for “intrinsic religiosity may enhance gratitude because these individuals see the ultimate source of all benefits in life in a good God” and “grateful individuals are more likely to feel in control of their destiny through the actions of divine entity who is interested in their well-being” (Watkins et al., 2003, pp. 440-41).

## **6. Supplementary Suggestions about Positive Psychology from Moralogy**

The studies of positive psychology previously cited suggest that gratitude is closely linked to the positive emotions one experiences from beneficial outcomes. Emmons and McCullough define gratitude as follows; “prototypically gratitude stems from the perception of a positive outcome, not necessarily deserved or earned, that is due to the action of another person”, though feelings of gratitude can also be elicited by various life experiences (Emmons & McCullough, 2003, p.377). They regard “the benefit, gift, or personal gain,” whether material or nonmaterial, as personal outcomes, and in terms of their relation to well-being, they point out that “one’s ability to notice, appreciate, and savor the elements of one’s life has been viewed as a crucial determinant of well-being” (*Ibid.*, p.378). A more restricted definition of gratitude might be “an emotional response to a gift” or “the appreciation felt after one has been the beneficiary of an altruistic act” (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000, pp.56-57).

Another important question presents itself here. Generally speaking, feelings of gratitude and well-being arise more readily in positive or blessed life circumstances, where we enjoy gains or benefits, than in difficult ones where we are forced to encounter negative emotions, for example, as in

the case of suffering harm. In such negative cases, how can we utilize an adaptive psychological strategy to interpret our life circumstances in order to “savor” them in a positive manner?

Jennifer Moss, cofounder and chief communications officer of Plasticity Labs, provides a case study in her essay, “Happiness Isn’t the Absence of Negative Feeling” (*Happiness*, 2017, pp. 3-12). When her husband, Jim, fell severely ill, he decided at the hospital that there was “something more to his healing than just dumb luck”, for which he should become very thankful. In fact, he was thankful for “the people who changed his sheets”, “the family that would bring him hot meals at dinner”, “the nurse who would encourage him”, and “the extra attention his rehab team would give him on their own time”. What made him to do this? According to Jennifer, he was most influenced by Seligman’s *Flourish*, and they subsequently incorporated Seligman’s “PERMA” (the five tenets of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment/achievement) into their lives. Her final thoughts mirrored the words of Vanessa Buote, a postdoctoral fellow in social psychology; “being happy and leading rich lives is about taking the good with the bad, and learning how to reframe the bad”.

We can agree with her that our well-being is not “the absence of suffering” but “its ability to rebound from it”. Having said that, however, in the case of Jim, we should note that what he attempted to do was to be thankful only for the benefits he received in his hospital bed, and the objects of his gratitude were those who took care of him in their different ways. In other words, it is not yet clear how he actually felt about his impersonal or nonhuman “dumb luck” itself, or whether he was able to accept his ambivalence itself with gratitude or not. Though his attitude of trying to find any upsides to his circumstances and savoring them is, needless to say, very praiseworthy, we can fairly ask if there was any way, in addition to his admirable deeds, to positively savor the dark side itself and even to change it into an object of gratitude.

Psychological studies also point out that state gratitude includes the avoidance of a worse outcome, meaning there are occasions when gratitude occurs in negative as well as positive situations. S. Coffman (1996), for example, found that the dominant emotion among survivors of Hurricane Andrew was gratitude, though these survivors had suffered significant losses. According to Watkins, what they seemed to be very aware of was “the counterfactual that a much worse situation could have ensued” or “a negative event that could have taken place but did not” (Watkins, 2014, p. 42). In this case, again, rather than reframe the disaster of the hurricane itself as the object of gratitude, they seemed to try to alleviate their pain and suffering by supposing the ‘if-case of the worst’, which cannot be said to be the acceptance of reality but merely the pursuit of possibility.

## 7. Gratitude and Moralogy

### (1) Japanese *Ho-on* and the Gratitude of Indebtedness

Hiroike also refers to *ho-on* as “the time-honored act of gratitude in the East...a sense of

gratitude for the benefit given by God and other people and at the same time the practical moral conduct to repay the debts”, and asserted that “this idea makes the doer really happy” (Hiroike, vol.3, 2002, p.62).

As mentioned above, however, in this idea of *ho-on*, Moralogy departs from the term’s general meaning in ordinary or traditional morality, since true *ho-on* here means the principle of returning favors to more specific objects, namely, ortholinons, for which Hiroike gives two reasons. Firstly, he urges us to understand the importance of this principle of *ho-on* as a natural moral law of human society, writing that:

... all things have appeared in the universe and we human beings, having also been born as one of the phenomena, have helped this universe gradually to develop, the older bringing up the younger, the younger in return supporting the elder –which constitutes a biological law of the universe. Furthermore, or in other words, it is duty of humankind to participate actively in this overall design of God (*Ibid.*, p.115).

He further thinks that our active participation in God’s design is consonant with “cultivating the foundations of society” which is “a natural moral law of human society”, imbued with both justice and grandeur.

Secondly, he urges us to express our thanks for “the toil and efforts of the sages and their followers”, because they “strove throughout their lives for the spiritual salvation of mankind” and the results of their toil and efforts “combined into one driving force to produce today’s civilization and what happiness of mankind now pertains” (*Ibid.*, pp. 116-17). This idea of respecting ortholinons is not based on “emotional stimulation caused by private human relations and private favours” but on our rational understanding of “the public road of the universe” embodied in the law of nature, and “the deep inspiration aroused by the great favours of those predecessors who practiced public morality to develop the universe”.

Hiroike, therefore, regards any act of gratitude stemming from traditional morality as derived and developed from “the self-centredness” of people, performed “mostly in return for personal benefaction”, which does not agree with “the truth of the universe which is disinterested and fair” (*Ibid.*, p.182).

## (2) The Object of Gratitude

In Moralogy, we revere all things as sacred and acknowledge gratefully our inner and outer life as a Divine gift. Japanese spiritual traditions such as that found in the *Kojiki*, or *Record of ancient Matters* (712) and the Buddhist doctrines of the *Mahayana* school, indicate the coexistence of the divine and the material, pointing to the truth “that Reality, *i.e.*, God, manifests itself in the cosmic phenomena, signifying the oneness of God, universe and nature” (Hiroike, vol.3, p. 105). God in this case does not mean the supreme deity in any particular religion but the reality of the universe in a

philosophical sense. Though it is impossible and futile to attempt to prove the existence of this transcendent divine being scientifically with our limited human intellect, Moralogy assumes with the sages that cosmic phenomena manifest the power of God or Reality. If so, “all our mental conduct and material life are made possible by divine grace” (*Ibid.*, p.105), and the benefits and merits which we receive should be not thought of as the outcomes of our own efforts, but as “God’s grace to be gratefully received” (*Ibid.*, p.104).

### (3) Gratitude for Misfortune and Ordeals

Hiroike also wrote that those who attribute their misfortunes to the actions of others and show dissatisfaction or defiance in their behavior cannot obtain happiness or well-being, while those who accept every situation they encounter as a gift from their ortholinos, and make efforts with gratitude, will at least attain real happiness or well-being (*Ibid.*, p.75). According to him, if one’s mind is well tempered in supreme morality and possessed of the true spirit of benevolence, one will be able to “accept with pleasure and appreciation whatever difficulty arises”, reflecting on oneself and regarding such as an ordeal given to one “through the grace of God” (*Ibid.*, p.48).

In fact, Dr. Hiroike himself had a much harder experience than Jim. After enjoying remarkable success as a scholar, many years of overwork made him seriously ill, and he suffered a crisis of health that brought him to the brink of death. In intense pain, and tasting the bitter waters of life, he came to realize that success is totally different from happiness. Examining the self-centred life that he had lived to date, he came to see how he had been aiming at worldly fame and fortune, and decided instead to dedicate all his energies solely to the realization of the security, peace and happiness of all mankind. Through what was termed a kind of religious or spiritual conversion, he reached a very elevated state of mind, accepting even misfortune positively, to the point where he could say, “I have *fortunately* become ill”. After having miraculously recovered from his fatal illness, Hiroike made up his mind to devote all his efforts to the establishment of moral science, a new field of moral thought he called Moralogy. This conversion experience in his life is crystalized as one of the fundamental principles for the practice of supreme morality, namely, “Show gratitude, bearing responsibility of one’s destiny”. He believed that one who awoke to “the causes that constitute his own destiny”, set “himself responsible for its improvement” and led “a life of gratitude” was nothing but a person who had “awakened to the fundamental cause of human life”. Gratitude is an expression of love for our destiny.

### (4) Conclusion

From the viewpoint of the study of well-being, in their quest to realize actual happiness in our lives both positive psychology and Moralogy may be seen to belong to the same academic discipline.

Positive psychology seeks to integrate empirical psychology (an approach to the study and explanation of psychological phenomena that emphasizes objective observation and the experimental method as the source of information about the phenomena under consideration), and clinical psychology, which provides ongoing, comprehensive mental and behavioral health care to those with psychological needs. In terms of the relationship between these elements, the latter is a psychological specialism seeking to understand, prevent, and relieve psychological distress (as well as promoting subjective well-being) by employing the science, theory, and clinical knowledge of the former.

Morality also utilizes both theoretical and practical approaches to the realization of human well-being, but its methodology, while availing itself of the insights of psychology, is much more interdisciplinary and extensive. In fact, Morality defines itself as “a new science developed with a view to attaining happiness for all mankind, consisting, as a vertical thread, of the highest principle of thought, morality and faith commonly underlying the doctrines, percepts and practices of the sages, and, as a horizontal thread, of principles of the natural and mental sciences which have been developed recently” (Hiroike, vol. 3, p.393). Accordingly, Morality treats the issue of human well-being in a more extensive and integrated way than does positive psychology. It views it in the context not merely of subjective positive feelings induced at the level of ordinary individual experience by instances of good fortune or the small satisfactions of daily life, but also as a much broader experience rooted in the security, peace and happiness of larger communities such as society, the nation and the entire world, seen through the lens of supreme morality as practiced by the world sages who are our role models. However, as any perusal of *A Treatise on Moral Science: A First Attempt to Establish Morality as a New Science* (Hiroike, 1928) reveals, the psychological theories on which Morality is based are more than 60 years old now, and so it might well benefit from a reexamination in the light of the remarkable discoveries made by psychological researchers in the years since its creation. This is one possible path that positive psychology and Morality could follow to create a mutually complementary relationship.

More specifically, for example, the approach taken by Morality might offer valuable psychological insights into the process of recovery from suffering and difficulties such as illnesses and disasters, events which to ordinary people may seem meaningless but which the world sages and Dr. Hiroike treat as occasions for gratitude. Then, too, a more scientific understanding of Dr. Hiroike’s personal suffering may be possible through the use of the psychological theory of Post-traumatic growth (PTG)<sup>3</sup>, which tries to explain the kind of transformation that can take place in people who endure a psychological struggle following adversity and experience positive growth afterwards. Some

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<sup>3</sup> See W. G. Bennis & R. J. Thomas, (2002), *Crucibles of leadership*, *Harvard Business Review* (pp. 5-11); J. Haidt, (2006), *The Happiness Hypothesis: Putting Ancient Wisdom and Philosophy to the Test of Modern Science*; R. G. Tedeschi & C. G. Calhoun, (1996), The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma, *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 9, pp. 455-471; R. G. Tedeschi & C. G. Calhoun, (2004), Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual foundations and empirical evidence, *Psychological Inquiry*, 15, pp.1-18.

recent research findings on this topic may help us to extend and refine our understanding of the whole concept of PTG. Even so, we should not forget that human beings are so complex that a purely psychological approach may never fully be able to illuminate their holistic reality. For this reason, a more philosophical approach, even one that echoes the words of Friedrich Nietzsche: “Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker” (What doesn't kill me makes me stronger!), may be helpful. At the deepest level, however, we can look to the moral dimension when seeking to evaluate whether, and to what extent, people who exhibit positive responses, including gratitude, to traumatic difficulties and tribulations are subsequently able to achieve virtuous growth.

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