

Religion and Ethics

Separate Volume 6

Report on IAHR 2005 Tokyo: Panel 02J

Life and Religion: Bio-ethics Viewed from Oriental Perspectives

Convener: TOKUNAGA, Michio

Respondents: NARAYANAN, Vasudha and OCHIAI, Hitoshi

Panelists: ARAI, Toshikazu; NAMAI, Chisho; SAWAI, Yoshitsugu; SHIOJIRI, Kazuko

Japan Association of Religion and Ethics

December, 2006

INTRODUCTION

The 19th World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) was held in Tokyo on March 24–30, 2005, whose theme was:

“Religion: Conflict and Peace.”

This supplementary volume presents the papers given by members of the Japan Association of Religion and Ethics. The theme of this panel session was:

*“Life and Religion: Bio-ethics Viewed from Oriental Perspectives,”
consisting of four panelists and two respondents.*

Compiled in December 2006, by the Japan Association of Religion and Ethics

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IAHR 2005 Tokyo: PANEL 02J

14:00~16:00 p.m., March 25, 2005

**Life and Religion:
Bio-ethics Viewed from Oriental Perspectives**

Organized Panel, English

Convener:

TOKUNAGA, Michio

Respondent(s):

NARAYANAN, Vasudha and OCHIAI, Hitoshi

Panelists:

ARAI, Toshikazu:

A Pure Land Buddhist View of Life and Bio-Ethics,

NAMAI, Chisho:

On Ethics of Life from the View Point of Buddhism,

SAWAI, Yoshitsugu:

Constructing a New Code of Bio-ethics from the Perspective of

IZUTSU Toshihiko's "Oriental Philosophy",

and

SHIOJIRI, Kazuko:

Life and Death in the al-Qur'ān

【ABSTRACT】

Due to a tremendously rapid progress of the contemporary medical science, we are forced to deal with serious bioethical issues which we have never been faced with before. In order to reconsider such issues, our panel will be discussing the significance of life from “Oriental” perspectives. Denoting firstly the ambiguous notion of “Oriental” on the basis of IZUTSU Toshihiko’s “Oriental Philosophy,” we would like to clarify Buddhist, especially Mahayana and Pure Land, and Islamic views of life, and by doing so we intend to disclose what is lacking for considering the urgent issues evoked by the present medical technology.

CONVENER’S REMARKS ON PANEL

Good afternoon, everybody,

Our panel is organized by four panelists and two respondents on the theme “Life and Religion: Bio-ethics Viewed from Oriental Perspective.” In study meetings in Kyoto, we have been working to explore bioethical issues from religious perspectives with members of different religious studies, and this panel is comprehensive one of our past studies.

Of course, we know that the word “Oriental” is very much problematic because the notion of “Orientalism” has infiltrated deep into people’s minds with a limited or special meaning as applied in the 19th century of the West. In our terminology “Oriental Perspective” is not applied in that sense, nor is used in the way that Edward Said criticized the Western way of treating the East.

The word “Oriental” simply indicates “Eastern” or “Asian” as they literally mean. “Bio-ethics Viewed from Oriental Perspective,” therefore, means that there

may be something meaningful in the Eastern religious thoughts for thinking of the on-going rapid progress of the contemporary medical science.

Now, let the speakers present their papers, and after their presentation, I would like to have the comments by the two respondents on the papers. Today for this panel we have four paper presenters:

Arai Toshikazu of Soai University, Osaka, on the theme “A Pure Land Buddhist View of Life and Bioethics.”

Namai Chisho of Koyasan University, Wakayama, on “Ethics of Life from the View Point of Buddhism.”

Sawai Yoshitsugu of Tenri University, Nara, on “Constructing a Code of New Bio-Ethics from the Perspective of Izutsu Toshihiko’s ‘Oriental Philosophy.’”

Siojiri Kazuko of Tsukuba University, Ibaragi, on “Life and Death in the al-Qur’ān.”

We have invited two respondents for giving some comments on the papers. Let me introduce them:

Prof. Ochiai Hitoshi of Doshisha University, Kyoto, and

Prof. Narayanan Vasudha of University of Florida: as you may know, she is the former President of IAHR.

Professor Ochiai and Professor Narayanan, thank you so much for joining us today.

My name is Tokunaga Michio of Kyoto Women’s University, Kyoto. I am the convener of this panel and I am taking the chair. We have to share only 2 hours, 120 minutes, with the 4 paper presenters and the two respondents. And, therefore, let me divide the time. 20 minutes is given to each of the four paper presentations and 15 minutes to each of the respondents.

A Pure Land Buddhist View of Life and Bioethics

ARAI, Toshikazu

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1. Buddhism and Ethics

Buddhism and ethics by nature contradict each other. Ethics is a code of conduct that regulates people’s actions from outside. Buddhism, on the other hand, reaches the very core of their existence and develops the capacity to see right and wrong from within. While ethics is founded on general agreement in a certain community and is subject to change from time to time and from place to place, the Buddhist emphasis on wisdom and compassion is in itself its own claim to supreme truth, but at the same time it precludes any dogmatic rules concerning people’s behavior. Even so, both are keenly concerned with people’s ways of living, speaking and thinking, and both give guidance to them so that people can live in harmony with each other and be contented with themselves.

The term “bioethics” means “ethics in connection with life.” The issues it covers range from the beginning stage to the ending stage of human life. On the one hand, we have the ancient issues surrounding abortion and mercy killing (also called euthanasia), and treatment of the severely handicapped. On the other hand, we have the up-to-date issues related to human embryonic stem cells, genetic examination of fetuses and selection of favored ones, human genome research, and so on. We should not forget the issues surrounding brain death – whether it can be treated as real human death and whether organ transplanta-

tion is a justifiable medical procedure.

Bioethics is always in the process of evolution, trying to catch up with the rapid advance of life science and biotechnology, and yet it is not likely that there will be complete agreement about different issues. What I am trying to do in this presentation is present a Pure Land Buddhist view of life, in order to facilitate the effort to work out a generally acceptable code of bioethics.

2. Buddhist View of Life

The Buddhist view of life is represented by Śākyamuni Buddha's teaching of "dependent origination." This means that everything that has form has come into existence from innumerable causes from the past and is in the process of change at any moment. In other words, everything that has life is interconnected with and interdependent upon each other in terms of time and space.

Suffering arises when we are not aware of the fact that things are always in the process of change and cling to certain conditions like wealth, power, influence, fame, beauty, and even life, wishing that those favorable conditions would continue unchanged. Whereas birth, old age, sickness and death are natural phases of life, people suffer when they fail to see this reality and cling to youth, health and life that are passing away from them at every second.

Another influential thought that originated in pre-Buddhist India and was incorporated into the Buddhist view of life is that of transmigration. According to this thought, every living being has been going through cycles of births and deaths since the beginningless beginning of time and will continue to do so for eternity. The underlying force that causes these cycles is the aggregate of actions (karma) that the beings take during each life cycle. Buddhism arose as a way to attain liberation from the life of transmigration and from the tyranny of karma.

However, the concept of transmigration has a positive side also: it points to the depth of life and interconnectedness of all life, as Shinran said, "All sentient beings, without exception, have been our parents and brothers and sisters in the course of countless lives in many states of existence."¹ The corollary of this viewpoint is that the animals and birds we see may be incarnated forms of our deceased close relatives, ancestors and friends.

No life is born without reason and every form of life is equally precious. The use of animals for experimental purposes is, then, committing a serious offense to life. Because Buddhism sees life in the process of change, or incessant

¹ *Tannisho*, Chapter 5; *The Collected Works of Shinran (CWS)*, 664.

creation and destruction, there is no room for arguing when “personhood” as a moral being starts in the course of conception and pregnancy. Using embryonic stem cells for biomedical research and application is, therefore, as severe an offense to life as the laboratory use of animals.

3. Pure Land Buddhist View of Life

Pure Land Buddhism evolved as a path to Buddhahood mainly for those ordinary people who, due to karmic causes, had no choice but to engage in worldly activities and even to kill, steal or tell lies. That is why Pure Land Buddhists have been strongly concerned with their karma-bound existence and keenly sought liberation from the realm of transmigration.

The key terms expressing the Pure Land Buddhist view of life are blind passion (in Japanese, “*bonnō*”), Primal Vow (in Japanese, “*hongan*”) and birth in the Pure Land (in Japanese, “*ōjō*”). “*Bonnō*” can be described as our innate drive to commit selfish acts even at the cost of others’ possessions or life. From this perspective of life, all worldly acts, including efforts to advance scientific discoveries and technological innovations, are the work of “*bonnō*.” The reason is that our sight is so limited that we always fail to see the overall, global effects of our actions. In the last analysis, however famed and respected the scientist may be, he may be working for his own livelihood, fame, prestige and wealth. The Primal Vow mentioned above is the working of Amida Buddha’s wisdom and compassion that make us realize our *bonnō*-bound reality and guide us to birth in the Pure Land and ultimately to Nirvana. The entire process occurs beyond our cognizance, so it is called “*jinen*,” usually translated as “naturalness,” or “to be caused to become so.”

The mainstream Pure Land Buddhism in Japan was established by Honen (1133-1212) and Shinran (1173-1262). Briefly speaking, they taught that by exclusively pronouncing the Name of Amida Buddha while completely entrusting ourselves to the Buddha’s Primal Vow, we are saved by Amida, never to be abandoned. The act of pronouncing the Name of Amida Buddha is called “*nembutsu*” and it is the core practice for Pure Land Buddhists.

Concerning the relationship between our worldly activities and religious life, Honen said, “Our three basic acts of everyday life, that is, wearing clothes, eating food, and living in a house, are supportive acts for our *nembutsu* life. If we do those acts only to please ourselves, they will become acts that doom us to

the three evil realms (hell, the realms of hungry ghosts and beasts).”² In this way, Honen approves our worldly activities as legitimate, as long as we do them to facilitate our pursuit of truth, always reflecting on our karma-bound nature.

Any argument about ethics comes down to that of good and evil, right and wrong, and just and unjust. Concerning this, Shinran is quoted as follows:

I do not know what is good and what is evil in the ultimate sense. The reason is if I knew as thoroughly as the Tathāgata does that something is good, I would be able to say that it is good, and if I knew as thoroughly as the Tathāgata that something is evil, I would be able to say that it is evil. However, we are ordinary foolish beings with all sorts of blind passions within ourselves and this is the world, like a burning house, where nothing is permanent at any moment; everything we do is vain and empty, and nothing is true and real. Only the nembutsu is sincere.³

Shinran’s statement quoted above corresponds with Honen’s view on our worldly activities. We are not able to see the long-range causes and effects of any single act of ours, and yet we quarrel and fight, claiming we are right and others are wrong.

Thus, for both Honen and Shinran, everything we do in daily life was an act caused by our blind passion (“*bonnō*”), and pursuing our selfish desire would return us to the realm of transmigration. In other words, Pure Land Buddhism regards human existence as fundamentally evil, and Amida’s Primal Vow operates on such human existence.

4. Medical Practice as a Practice of Compassion

From early times Buddhists compared the relationship between the teacher and his followers to that between the doctor and his patients. In his masterpiece *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran quoted the following statement by Śākyamuni Buddha from the *Great Assembly Sutra*:

The person who teaches the Dharma should think of himself as king among physicians and of his work as the elimination of pain. He should think of the Dharma that he teaches as sweet nectar or milk of the finest taste. The person who listens to the Dharma should think

² *Shinshu-Shogyo-Zensho* IV, 684. Translated from Japanese to English by Arai.

³ *Tannisho*, Postscript; *The Collected Works of Shinran*, 679.

that excellent understanding thereby increases and grows and that his sickness is being cured. Such a teacher and listener can make the Buddha-dharma flourish. They dwell always in the presence of the Buddhas.⁴

The “sickness” that the patients suffered is blind passion, variously called ignorance, foolishness, blindness, ego-attachment, and so on. The Dharma teacher’s job was to awaken them to this reality and guide them to the realm of peace and joy that is free of suffering. The teacher taught the Dharma for the sake of the listeners’ spiritual and physical wellness. The true Dharma teacher was literally a “healer.”

Śākyamuni Buddha himself acted like a counselor and prescribed the best “medicine,” or spiritual advice, in accordance with the person’s ability to understand, his personality and the condition he was in. The underlying spirit was respect and compassion for the individual who took refuge in the Buddha.

Buddhists never saw “body and soul” as separate entities. An example testifying to this point is the story of King Ajātaśatru. According to the *Nirvana Sutra* as quoted in Shinran’s *Kyōgyōshinshō*, the king suffered a terrible skin disease from severe remorse over killing his father and usurping the throne. His cure came about when he sought guidance from Śākyamuni Buddha, who not only freed him from the pain of the skin disease but also from the agony of shame and self-reproach.⁵ The Buddhist king Aśoka Maurya (268-232 BCE) of ancient India stated that he had hospitals built and herbs planted throughout his realm as part of his campaign for “victory by Dharma” to create peace and happiness.⁶ Prince Shōtoku (574-622) of ancient Japan created the Hall of Giving Medicines (*Seyaku-in*) and the Hall of Caring for the Sick (*Ryōbyō-in*) in the Shitennōji Temple in Osaka that he established in 587 ACE.⁷

To sum up the foregoing discussion, in their effort to bring about spiritual peace and happiness to people, Buddhists were always concerned with the physical welfare of their fellow humans. They were in agreement with ancient Greek Hippocratic healers in terms of respect of individuals, careful observation of the patient’s symptoms and trust in nature’s power of healing. Both Buddhists and Hippocratic healers regarded restoring health as the goal of their

⁴ *Kyōgyōshinshō, Volume on True Entrusting; CWS, 118.*

⁵ *Kyōgyōshinshō, Volume on True Entrusting; CWS, 125-138.*

⁶ N.A. Nikam and Richard McKeon (ed. & trans.): *The Edicts of Asoka*, 66 (Rock Edict II, Pillar Edict VII).

⁷ *Iwanami Bukkyō-jiten (Dictionary of Buddhist Terms, published by Iwanami Publishers): “Shotoku-taishi” and “Shiin.”*

medical practice. This is the original point of medical "arts."⁸

5. A Pure Land Buddhist's View on Modern Medical Science and Technology

Our civilization has been established on a massive exploitation of nature. Our exploitative activities have expanded all over the surface of the earth, to the depth of the earth and the ocean, and even to space. Furthermore, human activity has reached such extremely minuscule worlds of microbes, germs, cells, genes, molecules, and atoms. Our dilemma is, our "civilized" life places us farther away from nature. Yet, all we do is manipulate and interfere with natural processes so that we may get favorable results. This is true with such state-of-the-art biotechnology as cloning and genetic engineering.

From the Pure Land Buddhist viewpoint, the driving force behind these scientific and technological developments is "*bonnō*" with which we were born. When our *bonnō* is at work, we see things in the external world as objects to be controlled or subjugated. For example, in the research with embryonic stem cells and its application to medical procedures, we are treating the tiny components of individuals as objects, or materials, not as human-beings-to-be. There is an assertion that the leftover ES cells are not humans, or even fetuses up to certain months of growth are not "persons," but in the Buddhist point of view, anything that has life, anything that is living, has equal weight as fully grown individuals.

Another aspect we must pay attention to is the condition called "brain death" which was created by advanced medical technology. Discussions are far from conclusive, but it has been medically and politically decided that brain death is a form of death. This has opened the way for organ transplant, in which the body of a brain dead person is used as a source of spare parts for other persons' bodies. Also, the success of in vitro fertilization has made it possible to "select" desirable babies, while "killing" the less favored ones. We seem to be becoming numb about the fact that we are actually "killing" more lives than the ones that are allowed to live.

I would also like to point out the fact that medical treatment with state-of-the-art technology has benefited only a fraction of the world's population. This means that a great number of human embryonic stem cells and brain-dead persons, not to mention those animals used for medical experiments, have sacrificed their lives to help a very small percentage of people to live for a few more

⁸ Robert Bartz, "Remembering the Hippocratics: Knowledge, Practice, and Ethos of Ancient Greek Physician-Healers," *Bioethics* (ed. by Mark G. Kuczewski and Ronald Polansky), 3-29.

years. The life science and biotechnology only serve the richest people in the richest nations, while the majority of the world's population still suffers poverty, malnutrition, sub-human living conditions, short life expectancy, illiteracy and even slavery in the form of "structural violence." This should be called injustice.

Buddhism sees life as a continuous process beginning with ovular fertilization, birth, old age, sickness, and death which manifests itself with the cessation of breathing and heart-beating; and as explained earlier, this cycle itself is a manifestation in this world of the life that repeats birth and death from time immemorial to eternity. In this traditional Buddhist view of life, no act that involves "killing" is condoned, such as abortion, manipulation of regenerative processes including artificial insemination, use of excess human embryonic stem cells merely for purposes that fit our needs, prenatal genetic examination and selective termination of fetal growth.

In determining death, it is also important to note that a person's physical death does not always mean that he is socially and morally dead. As long as other people feel his contribution to their lives, he is still "alive."

However, from the Pure Land Buddhist standpoint, humans are bound to kill, steal, and tell lies, which are strictly prohibited in traditional Buddhist precepts. Living a life itself involves sacrifice of other lives, and hence we are bound to accumulate karma for transmigration. Hopefully, this Pure Land Buddhist perspective of life may give us an opportunity to reflect on the grave offences we are committing against life, and may act as a deterrent to the uncontrolled advance of biotechnology.

6. Conclusion

I have sought to point out in the above discussion that our scientific research of natural phenomena and its application to technology are rooted in our innate, irrational blind passion. Today's civilization is characterized by three sets of alienation: alienation of our life from nature, alienation of self from others, and alienation of reason from emotion. The Buddhist emphasis on wisdom and compassion is the key to reunifying this serious bifurcation of modern life.

Honen's admonition, "Our three basic acts of everyday life, that is, wearing clothes, eating food, and living in a house, are supportive acts for our nembutsu life. If we do those acts only to please ourselves, they will become acts that doom us to the three evil realms" is a warning to us that if we pursued worldly activities only to gain wealth and fame, we would degrade our human dignity and re-

spectability and doom ourselves to a wretched status equal to those beings in hell, hungry ghosts and beasts. Our excessive pursuit of rationality has resulted in the loss of ability to see things as they are, which is called wisdom. With the extreme advances of science and technology, we have acquired more knowledge and skills, but lost wisdom.

Shinran said, "Signs of long years of saying the nembutsu and aspiring for birth can be seen in the change in the heart that had been bad and in the deep warmth for friends and fellow-practicers; this is the sign of rejecting the world. You should understand this fully."⁹ Perhaps Shinran meant to say that even though we are bound to commit evil deeds due to the working of evil passion and past karma, as we entrust ourselves to the Dharma and say the nembutsu, we will come to know the limitation of our worldly activities.

Those who are in the medical profession should limit their activities to genuine healing activities and should search for ways to cure illnesses without sacrificing brain dead people or ES cells. Brain death does not necessarily justify medical specialists to use one person's organs to make others live for a few more years. Organ transplant does not necessarily guarantee the organ recipient a good quality of life.

Another issue to be addressed is the fact that such high-tech medical treatments as organ transplant, medical treatment based on embryonic stem cell research and genetic engineering only benefit extremely wealthy persons at present. There is a danger that the development of advanced medical technology may result in exploitation of the poor who choose to sell their organs for money or in overt or covert pressures on others to donate their organs for medical research. There is even a possibility that it might entail such criminal acts as kidnapping street children or ordinary citizens to use their organs for organ transplant.

The most important thing is death education. Religious and educational organizations should help people learn to accept death as part of life. Everyone knows that man is mortal, but hardly any one thinks it is his or her own problem. All the recent advances of medical technology can be defined as a manifestation of man's desperate struggle against death and dying. From the Buddhist standpoint, the attachment to life is a typical form of blind passion. People would eventually find more peace and quiet if they learned to accept the fact that life is always in the process of aging and dying. Finally, those in the medical profession should focus not only on the pathological aspect of life but also on the moral and spiritual aspects of life.

⁹ Shinran, "Lamp of the Latter Ages," (CWS), 551.

Life and Death in al-Qur'ān

SHIOJIRI, Kazuko

1. Eastern Perspective?

While Judaism and Christianity are regarded as the mainstay of the Western Civilization, Islam is usually seen as one of the major Eastern Civilizations. However, having originated from West Asia, Islam shares the same Semitic traditions with Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, ever since its birth in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, it has vastly expanded westward and eastward, so it is not quite right to classify it within the category of Eastern Civilizations.

Since Islam has developed a civilization based on a mixture of varieties of peoples and cultural traditions, it is characterized by cultural syncretism. This means that, contrary to the general view of Islam held by non-Islamic people, Islam is a very flexible and openhearted religion toward other religious traditions. With these general background remarks about Islam, I will proceed to discuss the Islamic view of life and death in the light of al-Qur'ān, the Islamic divine Book.

2. From "dahr" to the Providence

Islam is a religion that asserts the oneness of the God most strictly among the other religions of the same origin. In al-Qur'ān in which the God's words talked to Prophet Muhammad were collected and compiled, the human being is required to live according to the God's commandments whether he/she is alive or dead. In al-Qur'ān, it seems to me that there is no distinction from the beginning between the living and the dead. Al-Qur'ān indicates us that both of this world and the hereafter are assumed to be the place for human being to live in. The life once created by the God, after having passed the short span determined in this world, is to resurrected and to live the perpetual life.

Before Islam, a very strict fatalism had dominated the people living in the Arabian Peninsula, where the notion of the time "dahr" had directed the human

destiny. Nobody could escape from the rule of the time. When the given span of the life is over, there comes the absolute end to the human being forever. There was not any idea or hope for the hereafter where the human being would be restored or resurrect. Those who worshiped many idols thought that the gods created the human being and left them in this world without any hope or salvation from the dread of the death. This is a pessimistic fatalism where the death is thought to be a simple end. There were no meanings or ideas both for the life and the death. Al-Qur'ān describes their sentiment.

I quote Q. 45/24:

They say, "There is nothing but our worldly life, and we live and we die, nothing but the destiny (dahr) destroys us."

One of the reasons why Prophet Muhammad was persecuted and disparaged by the Meccans at the time was this notion of the eternal resurrection after the death.

In the Qur'ān, in stead of the severe fatalism before Islam, the view of the life and the death is controlled by the divine providence. There, the death is taught as an inevitable process to the eternal life. Islam, as well as Judaism and Christianity, gave the time and history the eschatological meaning. The appointment of the prophet in al-Qur'ān is related to this meaning of the providence. With this appointment, the concept of "dahr" that symbolizes the inhuman destiny before Islam was rejected, and the God's guidance was introduced into the human destiny. Then human destiny has become changeable by his/her own decision to follow or not to follow the God. There, the history has become the stage where the infidel is to be demolished and the faithful is to be rewarded in their future lives. The God's will is to become clear and known all in the day of the last judgment.

3. Creation and Eschatology

In al-Qur'ān, the human being is created by God as a vice-gerent of God on the earth.

I quote Q. 6/2:

"It is the God who created you from mud then settle your life span."

Human being can live only once in the world and in the hereafter for ever. He can never be re-born in these two worlds as another human being nor as any

other animal. The transmigration of the life or RINNE TENNSHOU is not accepted in Islam, though in al-Qur'ān there are some verses that show some kind of transmigration in the hereafter (Q. 2/65, 7/166, 5/60), (to those who don't obey the God, "Become a monkey in the hereafter".), and the Sufism also introduced the transmigration of soul in the hereafter, but the reincarnation in this world is completely rejected.

As the God created this world, there was the beginning to the world, and what has beginning is not eternal and should have the end. The history of the human being started at the creation of the universe then continues to the end of the universe. The creation is the creation of both the universe and the human being. Therefore, the time of the individual is placed inside the time of the universe. The existence of the human being is the part of Microcosmos and the existence of the universe is the part of Macrocosmos. The history of the world seems to fall on the cycle of the individual.

In Islam, the God not only had created the universe in ancient times, but also is creating and re-creating this world still now moment by moment. The God's creation of the universe is the continuous creation. In this continuous creation, the world is integrated continuously.

In the first Chapter of al-Qur'ān, the day of the End is described as the day of the religion (yawm al-dīn). The day of the religion is the day of the universe and of human being. The day of the End is a point of the contact that relates this world (dunyā) and the hereafter (ākhirah).

I quote the Q. 23/115:

"Did you suppose that I created you aimlessly? Did you not think that you should be sent back to us?"

In al-Qur'ān, every human being is God's creature, who exists in this world by God's creation, and returns to the God after having passed his/her determined time span. The End of the universe is the time for the every creature to return to the God. This is the providence of the God. (Q.7/156, Q.29/64, Q.36/51-58)

Thus, according to al-Qur'ān, human being, alive or dead, is to live according to the God's Commandments. In the dimension of the Providence for the Creation of world and the Eschatology, there is no more distinction between the living and the dead. Under the God, both the living and the dead are imposed to follow God's will. While the completion of the creation means the return of the whole creatures to God, the life in the hereafter should be the real one rather than the life in this world. There human being should spend their life-time toward the

next world. Al-Qur'ān suggests both this world and the next to be the places where human being should live together. The faithful who are suffering and are being tormented in this world are to live their true lives peacefully in the hereafter. This is the religious salvation taught in al-Qur'ān for both the living and the dead.

Just as we saw before, though human being is created by God, to obey God as a vice-gerent of the God or to disobey the God is chosen by his/her own decision. Then the destiny of human being is changed according to his/her free decision. Here the history is the scene of recompense where the infidel will perish and the faithful will live the future lives forever. The whole Providence will be revealed at the last day, the day of the last judgment.

I quote al-Qur'ān (40/11):

"They say that Oh Lord, You take our life twice and revive us twice."

Here, it is said there are two deaths and two lives: one of the deaths is our situation before the birth, and the other death is the ordinary death after our life span, and one of the life is our birth and other life is the life after the resurrection in the heaven. Human being before the birth is just like a dead, for he/she does not exist in this world. However, the second death, which is between the two lives, is most significant, because in al-Qur'ān, this death is an inevitable passage to the eternal life.

Thus, we can say that human being should consider seriously the two lives on both sides of the death, and here, the living and the dead are both "living".

Even though Islam does not deny the worldly happiness, the true life should be spent in equilibrium in the hereafter. There is not any difference in the sentiment between Muslim people and us when they deplore and mourn over the death of the relatives. However the most important purpose for human being is to receive the supreme bliss in the heaven.

I quote Q. 29/64:

"The life in this world is no more than an amusement or a play. The abode in the hereafter is the real life if you know it."

Human being is deprived of his/her soul when he/she died, and the soul will be returned back to this same person at the time of the resurrection. Whether the same body at the death will be restored to him/her or not, or what kind of the body will be given to him/her when he/she will be returned to the God? These questions have been the long dispute among the Muslim scholars even now.

Al-Qur'ān teaches that the human being is adorned with the honor to be a

vice-gerent of the God on the earth, and is borne the heavy responsibility. This doctrine attracts attention in the perspective of the modern ethics. While the human being is alive, he/she has to fulfill their lives and their responsibility as the honored vice-gerent of the God, and he/she could acquire the happiness in the hereafter according to the judgment or the estimation for his/her worldly life. This is not only the foundation of the Islamic ethics, but also it is the basic element for the salvation of both the living and the dead.

4. Eastern perspective and Islam

In this life-death concept in al-Qur'ān, we could see the unique Islamic Bio-Ethics, that the human being is created once and is resurrected for ever by the God. The destiny of the creature should be on the hand of the God, and it is never permissible for the human being to control the lives of the human being. Therefore, in the medical scene at present, there are so many arguments for or against the transplanting of the organs, brain-death or heart-death, in-vitro fertilization, and so forth. But, I do not have time to enter the medical bio-ethics of Islam today, and I just repeat the basic doctrine in Islam for the life. The life of every creature is created and controlled only by the hand of the God. This is also the main source for the prohibition of the suicide.

Now, we must come back to the first question, how it is viewed through the Eastern Perspective: is the Qur'ānic life-death concept to be Eastern or universal? In Islam the dead are never dead in the next world, for the faithful live the eternal lives in the Paradise near God, and the unbelievers or the sinners are threatened to stay in the depth of the hell for ever. In Islam as well as in the Judaism and the Christianity, human being cannot be re-born again in this world taking the shape of the other creature. In Islam the resurrection is not Rebirth, but Return ('iādah) to the creator, the God.

In some thought of the Buddhism, the final salvation is not the rebirth, but the return of the spiritually awakened to the Pure Land where he was born as an ordinary person. In Buddhism, the hereafter is not the paradise but the place where ordinary person should suffer again. But the resurrection in the hereafter is said to be birth, not the rebirth.

It is really difficult to compare the Islamic doctrines with the Buddhism concept that contains large range of variety, and it is not suitable to quote the both concepts of the hereafter easily. But as a whole, in Buddhism, human being, both living and dead, are to be saved by the Buddha or spiritually awakened in the

long run.

Here I take up briefly the concept of ancestor worship in the East, where the dead ancestors are seen alive in somewhere in the heaven or under the earth. Now, the concept of the living of the dead is compared with the concept of the co-existence of the living and the dead in the ancestor worship in the Eastern tradition. In this view, we can understand that the dead is not dead but they always co-exist with the livings.

In Islamic eschatology, there is one death between the two lives, the life in this world, and the life in the next world. The death is a necessary passage for the human being to return to the Creator in order to live his/her real life. In al-Qur’ān human being is above all the creature created by the God. As a created, and as a vice-gerent of the God, human being should be humble to other creatures and has to fulfill his/her responsibility in this world. Islamic bio-ethics should be built on this basic principle.

To examine Islamic life ethics through the Eastern perspective would develop the new sphere for the religious ethical studies, mainly for the theme of the bio-ethics. The basic principle in Islam that the human being is created by the God and that the living and the dead are both living in the hand of the God may give us a new dimension to understand religious bio-ethics.

On Ethics of Life from the View Point of Buddhism

NAMAI, Chisho

[This paper contains only the abstract and the hand-out delivered at my presentation on 25th March 2005. Just now at this point, I would like to present my ideas as follows, and would like to discuss on these issues as a speaker of Buddhist circle.]

Bio-Ethics deals with the ethical issues presented from the field of modern technologies, especially concerned with life-science. However, we should not treat these issues only from the scientific point of view in order to constructing static code-system of law to control over new technologies adjusting them into modern society, but we should also concern from the other perspective of life, in which more dynamic ethics can be activated positively.

I would like to discuss some characteristic issues from a Buddhist point of view in constructing new ethics on life. By showing the concept of ‘life’ in the circle of Eastern Buddhists at first, I would like to present more important our attitude for lives in order to recover our original healthy state of spirituality.

I. Life and Ethics -Points of issue to be discussed-

1. Meaning of “life”

- 1.1. life as a whole that is socially, physically, mentally, and spiritually organized.
- 1.2. holistic life activities without isolation from the original state of life.

2. Pain and Care

2.1.pain

--isolated states of life in the state of interdependent origination

[*pratītyasamutpāda*]

--sentient beings are in pain (一切皆苦)

painful life in isolation from the original state of life, relation with other lives, wholly organized physical state, or emotional satisfaction.

2.2 care

- life in healthy state
- understanding the reality of life

3. Way of Life

3.1. In conditioned state of life

- 1.1 physical harmonious states within the limitation of individual body
 - 1.2. dynamic activities of life in harmonized state
 - activities of dynamic life in its original state
 - demolishing false conceptions which obstacle the original nature
 - 2.1. demolishing obstacles
 - to be free from stickiness of desires for ones selfish life.
 - 2.2. understanding of other lives --ethics--
 - 2.3. awakening the reality
 - to know ones own life nature
- 3.2. Primordial healthy state of life

II. Life in Pain and Compassionate Care

I. Actual State of Living Beings in Pain and Their Ethical Problems

1. **Painless Civilization?** (Cf. M. Morioka: *Painless Civilization*)

1.1 modern society seeking for hedonistic way of life

1.1.1. misunderstanding of modern hedonism

(Cf. An episode of the Buddha's care for a mother who lost her newborn baby)

1.1.2. overcoming pain

1.2. difficulties in *uttarakuru* (northern continent)

2. Care for Sentient Beings

2.1. For an essay to reconstruct Ethics of life

2.1.1. awareness of the meaning of life

2.1.2. innovation for vivid life

2.1.3. motivation for life in good quality

2.2. creative lives of awakened beings

3. Care for an Individual / Care of Community

3.1. sense of easterners on life (Cf. Research Reports by the team of Prof. Ida, Kyoto University)

3.1.1. life in a community (On Buddhist community in Taiwan,

Cf. Some reports by the facilities of the Institute of Life-and-Death Studies

at Nanhua University (南華大学)

3.1.2. care from community

3.1.3. eastern sense of life in natural/ social/ human relation

3.2. technical point of view

3.2.1. care of isolation

3.2.2. care in family, regional community in which one leads his own life.

3.2.3. care thankful one's own cultural background

III. Three concepts can be effective in order to reconstruct Ethics of Live

-- From eastern point of view --

1. Sense of satisfaction [content, self-control]

1.1. to activate ones own life as a meaningful existence.

2. Sense of Care and Compassion [*Karunā*]

2.1. to activate other lives, in connection to ones own life in state of interdependent origination [*pratītyasamutpāda*].

3. Awareness of Ones Real life in Cosmic Harmony [*Prajñā*]

3.1. to live as a Cosmic Individual

Constructing a Code of New Bio-ethics from the Perspective of IZUTSU Toshihiko’s “Oriental Philosophy”¹⁰

SAWAI, Yoshitsugu

With the rapid development of medical technology, we face the challenge of constructing a new code of bio-ethics. To guide us in this task, we propose an “Oriental perspective.” In this context, the word “Oriental” is not meant to highlight the traditional contrast between “East” and “West,” but rather to denote a perspective which includes not just Eastern thought but also the thought of Semitic religions such as Islam and Judaism as well.

This presentation discusses the issue of constructing a new bio-ethical code, based upon the “Oriental Philosophy” of IZUTSU Toshihiko (1914–1993), a leading Japanese scholar of Islamic Studies and Oriental thought. By taking into consideration the thought not only of East Asia, but also that of Islam and Judaism, Izutsu attempted a “synchronistic structuralization” (*kyōjiteki kōzōka*) of Oriental thought.¹¹ Within the scope of “Oriental Perspectives,” which form the basic theme of this panel, Izutsu’s “Oriental Philosophy” seems highly relevant, not least in the construction of a new bio-ethics.

I

In his attempt to structuralize Oriental thought synchronistically, Izutsu does not only pay attention to Indian, Chinese, and Japanese thoughts, but also attempts to incorporate Islamic and Judaic thoughts into his hermeneutical or semantic scheme as well. For example, the Islamic worldview of the “unity of existence,” discussed by Ibn ‘Arabī, an Islamic Sūfī thinker, is also regarded as representing “a fundamental pattern of Oriental thought.” There is obviously no historical connection between Sūfī thought in Islam and the Taoistic one in China: he

¹⁰ This article was also published in the March 2006 issue of *Tenri Journal of Religion*, No. 34, edited by Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion, Tenri University.

¹¹ IZUTSU Toshihiko, *Ishiki to honshitsu [Consciousness and Essence]*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983.

points out that Islam is "a particular form of Semitic monotheism" while the Taoistic thought is "a philosophical elaboration of the Far Eastern type of shamanism".¹² But he maintains that it is significant that both Sūfī and Taoist thoughts philosophically share the same foundation, i.e., the same way of understanding the nature of reality, although their detailed contents are certainly different from each other. Moreover, both of them do not constitute a logical inquiry of being, but "begin philosophical thinking by experiencing 'being.'"

In the religious or cultural contexts of Oriental Philosophy, the nature of being is experienced through the methods of intuitive experiences that go beyond the human senses. As soon as being or the nature of reality is intuitively experienced, it manifests itself with multiple structures. It is then clarified that reality, observed with metaphysical intuition, does not merely consist of a one-layered structure, but it consists of multi-layered structures and is different from the everyday image of an ordinary person since it represents a deeper dimension of being.

The bio-ethical question of what constitutes "life" is inseparably related to what we mean by "death." In recent years, increasing possibilities of organ transplantation and the medical prolongation of life have prompted various academic circles to reconsider the definition of death. Independent of any religious perspective, the life sciences, which are based upon modern rationalism, have come to focus on life alone, ignoring the role death plays in every life. Modern life science typically tends to embrace and control life rationally. Nowadays, however, we need a new perspective in which human life and death are seen, not as wholly divorced, but rather as forming a continuum. The meaning of human life must be explored from the viewpoint of death, too. Yoichiro Murakami, a leading Japanese philosopher of science, points out that life contains both a "self-organizing principle" and a "self-destructive one".¹³ In short, since death is built into life, one cannot really understand the conditions of human life without death.

Izutsu's "Oriental Philosophy" illuminates these issues through a discussion on the "superficial" and "deep" levels of consciousness. According to the life scientific viewpoint mentioned above, all things and events are seen as existent and subject to rationalistic analyses. From the perspective of "Oriental Philosophy," however, they are human products of "discrimination" (*vikalpa*), that is, mere human distinctions based upon Izutsu's so-called "semantic articulation of

¹² IZUTSU Toshihiko, *Sufism and Taoism*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983, p. 479.

¹³ MUEAKAMI Yoichiro, "Life as seen through Death," *Cosmos-Life-Religion: Beyond Humanism*, Tenri: Tenri University Press, 1988, pp. 253-257.

language" (*gengoteki imi bunsetsu*), which means an "articulation of being" (*sonzai bunsetsu*).¹⁴ From this Oriental Philosophical perspective, one could negate the reality of things in the empirical world, inasmuch as it constitutes only the "superficial" dimension of being. Izutsu points out that the main stream of Oriental Philosophy has been traditionally "anti-cosmic," that is, ontologically deconstructive. Characteristically, it thoroughly deconstructs the cosmos from its basis by introducing such fundamentally negative concepts as "nothingness" (*śūnyatā*) into the ontological structure of the world.

At a "deep" level of being, there is no ontological demarcation to divide various things from one another. Thus, the common-sense or natural-scientific ontology could be dismissed as merely "superficial"; all things and events lose their superficial fixation or solidity, merging the one into the other. In Izutsu's words, at the deepest level of being, "the whole disappears into the infinitely floating, amorphous, unlimited, unarticulated mass." An ontological deconstruction is therefore a fundamental standpoint in his "Oriental Philosophy." In Oriental thought, such philosophical views are found in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Islamic Sūfism, Indian Vedānta philosophy, and so on.

II

As an example of deconstructive Oriental Philosophy, the Indian concept of transmigration (*saṃsāra*) posits a repetition of life and death within circular time. In Hindu and Buddhist thoughts, life and death consists of the circular structure of life, extending from the past, to the present, and into the future. Human beings repeat life and death eternally until the attainment of emancipation (*mokṣa*) or enlightenment (*nirvāṇa*); the soul (*ātman*), as the nature of humans, transmigrates from the present life to the next life inasmuch as it does not attain emancipation or enlightenment. Thus, human life in the present life is not thought to be the end of life, but is illustrated, so to speak, as a mere wave of an eternally continuing river. In reconsidering a bio-ethics from the viewpoint of Indian thought, a human life does not end with death, but continues even after death. In our quest of a new bio-ethics, it is important to understand this Indian way of thinking that life and death cannot be divided.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that Izutsu regards both Ibn 'Arabī and the Tao-

¹⁴ IZUTSU Toshihiko, *Ishiki no keijijogaku* [The Metaphysics of Consciousness], Tokyo: Chuokoron-sha, 1993.

ist sages as picturing “the process of creation as a perpetual and constant flow”.¹⁵ As the phenomenal world transforms itself each moment kaleidoscopically, nothing remains static. “Dying and being alive, being subsistent and perishing, ... all these are but the constant changes of things”.¹⁶ Izutsu says:

Thus the whole process of creation forms a huge ontological circle in which there is in reality neither an initial point nor a final point. The movement from one stage to another, considered in itself, is surely a temporal phenomenon. But the whole circle, having neither an initial point nor a final point, is a trans-temporal or a-temporal phenomenon. It is, in other words, a metaphysical process. Everything is an occurrence in an Eternal Now.¹⁷

At the depth of life or consciousness, Izutsu points out, “all things in the phenomenal world are constantly changing from one form to another. Everything is ontologically involved in the cosmic process of Transmutation.” Moreover, he maintains that Western thought has a tendency to identify “nothing” as nihility, which is existentially equated with death, while Oriental thought has some characteristics of regarding “nothing” as the starting point of being, that is, as the origin of life. These characteristics, developed by Oriental philosophers through the meditative experiences, have been religiously or philosophically expressed from ancient times.¹⁸ The above-mentioned characteristics of Oriental thought imply the inseparability of “life” with “death.” From the perspective of his so-called “Oriental Philosophy,” one could find the possibility of understanding “life” through “death” and an understanding that life and death are “but the constant changes of things.”

In a semantic space constructed with the superficial or rational level of consciousness, especially a modern scientific one, life is merely focused upon: the element of death is usually eliminated from one’s perspective. While consciousness gets deeper, each of the essential boundaries among things gradually becomes obscure characterized by a floating. At the depth of consciousness, both life and death could be regarded as being “constantly changing from one form to another.” Such a floating amorphous condition of consciousness or reality is represented in the Hwa Yen or Kegon philosophy of Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions,

¹⁵ IZUTAU Toshihiko, *Sufism and Taoism*, p. 492.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 493.

¹⁸ IZUTSU Toshihiko, *Imi no fukami e [Toward the Depth of Meaning]*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1985, p. 286.

too. This Buddhist philosophy was especially developed in China, incorporating such thoughts as Mādhyamika, Yogācāra, and Taoist thoughts. Hwa Yen philosophy maintains its ontological scheme consisting of such four *dharmadhātu*-s (the realms of dharmas) as “the *dharmadhātu* of the non-obstruction of Li against Shih,” i.e., the realm of the principle against things in total freedom and merging (*riji-muge*), or as the *dharmadhātu* of non-obstruction of Shih against Shih, i.e., the realm of things against things in total freedom and merging (*jiji-muge*). Izutsu argues that this philosophy represents the metaphysical standpoint in his Oriental Philosophy.¹⁹

In connection with the Oriental perspective of the inseparability of “life” with “death,” it is worthy to mention the Japanese novelist Endo Shusaku (1923–1996). His novel entitled *Fukai kawa* (*Deep River*) treats the meaning of life as being in the continuity of birth and rebirth.²⁰ In this novel, Endo suggests how the Christian teaching and faith in Japanese culture might become by situating the motif of “transmigration” (*tenshō*) in the novel. On the basis of his understanding of Christianity that “Christianity in the European style is not absolute,” we may say that he intended to provide a Japanese style of Christianity. One of the main themes of *Deep River* was the inquiry of “fitting Christianity into the Japanese mind” by incorporating the idea of “transmigration” as the continuity of human life with death.

Conclusion

Adopting Izutsu’s perspective of primordial deconstruction, we might seek to reconsider the depth of life. In our bio-ethical concerns, this perspective serves as a corrective to a rational “superficial” view of life, which focuses on such natural sciences as life science. “Oriental Philosophy” may thus contribute to the recognition that “life” in a profound sense includes death, that it has a dimension deeper than its common-sense, scientific perspective, and that the meaning of life must be understood in the continuity of life and death. These insights may contribute to a new bio-ethics. Thus, when we reflect upon life and its meanings from such a viewpoint, we may present a new bio-ethics recognized from the perspectives of compound eyes.

By deconstructing superficial consciousness and the ordinary, as well as the

¹⁹ IZUTSU Toshihiko, *Kosumosu to anchikosumosu [Cosmos and Anti-Cosmos]*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989, pp. 3–102.

²⁰ ENDO Shusaku, *Fukai kawa [Deep River]*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996

rationalistic space of meaning constructed by it, we can go beyond modern scientific views which pay attention to the aspect of life alone, eliminating the aspect of death built in life in general, and bring oneself into the depth of an absolutely non-articulated being. Thus, from the perspective of life elucidated by “Oriental Philosophy,” we could come to hold a new semantic space to understand human life as a continuum of life and death, that is, the constant changes of life from one form to another. In short, in observing the meaning of life from the perspective of Izutsu’s “Oriental Philosophy,” we hold the possibility of constructing a new bio-ethics, which perceives the meaning of “life” through “death,” that is, an inevitable aspect of life which the modern sciences have not eliminated.

RESPONSE
To
Life and Religion: Bioethics Viewed from Oriental Perspective

Hitoshi OCHIAI

I would like to start my response to Prof. SAWAI's presentation. He made his point on the relevance of IZUTSU Toshihiko's Oriental philosophy to our panel. According to IZUTSU, Oriental philosophy makes a difference between the superficial and deep dimensions of being. Beings at the superficial dimension are definite and articulated as what they are. On the contrary, a being at the deep dimension is indefinite and not articulated at all as if chaos or nothing. Modern science observes beings at the superficial dimension. Oriental philosophy, however, watches a being at the deep dimension.

Standing on the point of view of Oriental philosophy, there is no articulation and no difference in the being at the deep dimension. Therefore, there is no difference between “saved” and “not saved” where it must occur in the deep dimension of being, and so Oriental philosophy can say all beings are already “saved”. Similarly no difference is posited between good and evil in Oriental philosophy. However, ethics must decide good or evil on our conducts. In that case how can Oriental philosophy deduce ethics? Is the being just as it is good? Is there any ethics?

I have a couple of questions. First, here are professionals on Pure-Land Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, what do you think about IZUTSU's Oriental philosophy? Is that a common understanding of Oriental perspective? Second I think Oriental philosophy can not deduce ethics at all, what do you think about my point?