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## The Direction of Death and Life Studies

ICHINOSE Masaki (Leader of the G-COE Death and Life Studies Program, Department of Philosophy)

After a ten year run, as of March 2012, the COE “Death and Life Studies Project” has at last come to an end. When the project was launched in 2002 under the leadership of professor Shimazono Susumu, it was impossible to predict what the content would become and what fruit it would bear. Going into it, we had only the vague understanding that we had to approach the problem of “death and life” from the perspective of the humanities, and above all we had to bring the problems of practical ethics into the range of material covered. However, after the Death and Life Studies Project was established, we appointed professor Shimizu Tetsuro the first Uehiro Chair for Death and Life Studies, and through research into opinions on death and life, as well as the core research and education activities of the so-called recurrent education of healthcare providers, the factual foundation and structure of the project was taking shape. As a result, we have received a considerably high evaluation as a COE project in the arts and humanities. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the DALs representatives and affiliated professors, as well as the specially appointed researchers and young research assistants who have supported the project over these past ten years.

Having borne the responsibility of leading the project for its final two years, I would like to share a few feelings and perspectives in these last remarks. Since even before recruiting for the 21st Century COE some ten years ago, there was a discourse of “The Uselessness of the Faculty of Letters.” In fact, in Japan today university faculties called “The Faculty of Letters” have become the minority. Many are now called “The Faculty of International something or other,” “The Faculty of Human something or other,” or “The Department of Information something or other.” Perhaps this is an expression of the principle that “all that rises must come down.” However, while it may be possible for political powers, should academia simply allow itself to succumb to the whims of what happens to be fashionable at the moment? In reality, if one looks only at the condition of book sales, the academic disciplines within the Faculty of Letters enjoy great popularity and are anything but useless. They are in-and-of themselves of value even in view of economic markets. Even more, the basic perspective of the Faculty of Letters that discusses the way people live and the way they die put in the context of language and culture is a promising academic approach. The first time I heard this “Uselessness of the Faculty of Letters” being discussed, I felt strongly in this way, and thought that the Faculty of Letters must somehow survive within this distorted, present-day estimation of its worth. Then came the COE recruitment, and I proposed the concept of Death and Life Studies. In this time of need, I thought that perhaps this could become a conceptual framework that would be able

to encapsulate the Faculty of Letters in its entirety. Even after ten years have passed, I believe it is still necessary to maintain an awareness of the danger that the Faculty of Letters faces.

However, in order for Death and Life Studies to have a capacity to encompass the whole of the Faculty of Letters and it is necessary for it to become an area of research with a single independent discipline in a narrow sense as well. I believe it is not until the Death and Life Studies establishes such a discipline that it can become a concept representative of the humanities in the broader sense. So, how should it be done? First of all, we must go through a trial and error process of considering what field of study it may best conform to. To this end, we must make a decided effort to expand our territory and not get caught up by the pre-existing concept that Death and Life Studies = people’s opinions of death and life. As our project is called “Death and Life Studies,” there accordingly needs to be a focus on life, and this is certainly a characteristic trait of our Death and Life Studies project in comparison to other projects that may call themselves Thanatology, and may also lead to it becoming an independent discipline. Thinking along these lines, I have come to be involved with the Death and Life Studies Project from a slightly different point of view. I have taken to dealing with problems that focus on questions of how to live in this world in relation to making medical decisions, criminal liability in legal issues involving the mentally ill, the relationship between people and animals, the problem of low-level radiation exposure, and so on. As a result, though still developing, I feel as though the significance of this thing called Death and Life Studies has come to gradually take shape.

From now, even from the institutional perspective, is it not perhaps better to declare in advance what the characteristics of Death and Life Studies will be? For example, through the training of responders on telephone life lines, the specialized training for the chaplains of prison inmates and those on death row; or through focusing on the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake, and ways in which Death and Life Studies can play an active part in the recovery effort, can the independent discipline of Death and Life Studies not be fostered by weaving such social activities into the characteristics central to the concept of Death and Life Studies? Next year, Death and Life Studies will be succeeded by the Center of Death and Life Studies and Practical Ethics. Though the journey is long, we must concentrate on proceeding one step at a time.



## DALS after the COE



### — About the Center for Death and Life Studies and Practical Ethics

IKEZAWA Masaru (Director of the Center for Death and Life Studies and Practical Ethics, Religious Studies)

Death and Life Studies, established in 2002 and carried out through the 21st Century COE and the Global COE programs, is about to come to a close. However, one of the original aims of the COE program was to create a new research center, and the various achievements of the last ten years must be brought forward into the future. For this reason, the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tokyo decided last April to establish the Center of Death and Life Studies and Practical Ethics as a successor organization. Although the scale of the new center will not be equal to that of the COE program, budgetary support has fortunately been put into place starting in April. While the COE program is drawing to a close, this does not spell the end for Death and Life Studies.

I would like to comment on why the two fields of death and life studies and practical ethics have been combined in the name of the new center. Alongside the COE program, the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tokyo had for some time also carried out the university-wide “Education in Practical Ethics Program.” This program was closely related to the COE program, jointly organizing symposia (the symposium “Axial Age” held in 2008 and the conference “The Potential of Death and Life Studies” in 2009 are examples of this cooperation). One of the central issues in practical ethics is that of bioethics. Since this is also a subject that the field of death and life studies is concerned with, the two fields of inquiry were combined in the establishment of the center.

We are thinking about four main foci for the center’s activities. First is the expansion of the aforementioned education program into the “Education in Death and Life Studies and Practical Ethics Program.” The implementation of this program as a university-wide inter-disciplinary project from April onward has already been decided. While this is an initiative limited to just one university, it is significant that specialized education in the fields of death and life studies and practical ethics is conducted.



The second focus is to carry on and further develop the recurrent clinical education for medical and caretaker personnel that has so far been conducted by the Uehiro Chair for Death and Life Studies (this has taken the form of the seminar “Death and Life Studies for Medical and Caretaker Personnel” and the Practical Clinical Ethics seminar). We are seeking to not only turn this into a fixed program, but if possible also into a program that is officially recognized by the University of Tokyo.

Thirdly is the organization of international symposia and academic conferences. Each year, the COE program convened special symposia, workshops, and lectures in the double digits, and this formed the center of its activities. Since the budget will be drastically reduced, it will very likely be difficult to continue our activities on the same scale. However, through the many conferences that have been organized so far, a

growing network has come into existence that spans not only Japanese scholars, but foreign researchers as well. It would be foolish to not use this existing network. Even if it is only several times a year, these activities have to be continued.


Fourth is the training of young scholars. I am realizing that through these ten years of DALS activities, the term death and life studies as well as its related mindset – to combine theory and practice in order to create knowledge about how one should live in full awareness that humans are ultimately bound to perish – is becoming established in Japan. However, this is still a new field. What is indispensable for the development of this field of study is the training of young scholars. This is why the COE program made the training of young scholars one of its points of focus alongside the organization of symposia and conferences. Despite the financial limitations, this initiative has to be carried on.

Finally, the achievements of ten years of DALS have been extremely multi-faceted (they have certainly exceeded what anyone imagined ten years ago). While I am very proud of this fact as someone who has been involved in DALS from its inception, I have to admit that there is still much left to be done. Take, for example, last year’s disaster. Although many of our academic activities have dealt with the phenomenon of mass death (caused by wars or disasters), there is still room in the context of death and life studies for further discussion concerning how to think about the issue. In this regard, I seek to develop new areas of inquiry, including the problem of the ethics of technology that has been brought to light through the nuclear accident.



## The Earthquake Disaster and the Power of the Traditional View on Death and Life

SHIMAZONO Susumu (Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Religious Studies)



The Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, brought with it damage caused by several tsunamis and the accident at the nuclear power plant, leaving a trail of destruction. It was felt that the mourning of the nearly twenty thousand victims was the duty of all of us who live in Japan. Buddhist priests from the entire country visited the devastated areas on the forty-ninth day after the disaster and together performed services for the dead. It is probably almost unprecedented that the significance of funerals and rituals of pacification (*irei*) in which the spirits of the dead are commemorated and grief is shared has been so strongly recognized. During the last few years, interest has focused on new forms of funerals such as “natural funerals” and “tree funerals,” and this has led to the publication of such books as *No need for funerals* (Gentosha) by Shimada Hiromi or *Temples that don't do funerals* by Akita Mitsuhiro (Shinchosha). It has been argued that people are increasingly losing their attachment to traditional funerals. A feeling of distance towards the traditional view on death and life is spreading, and people sense that they need to rethink their view on death and life. Attempts to give expression to this search for such a new view have also increased in popular entertainment such as comic books, movies, and music.

For example, the song “Sen no kaze ni natte” (“I am a thousand winds that blow”), which became a sudden hit after Akigawa Masafumi performed it in the annual New Year’s Kohaku Uta song competition in 2006, was sung by Ayano Kanami, a member of the Takarazuka theater group, at a charity concert held in honor of the tenth anniversary of the Great Hanshin earthquake in 2005. Various forms of pacifying the spirits of the dead emerged in the wake of the Great Hanshin earthquake, but rather than the traditional Buddhist rituals, ecumenical forms stood out. Also, in the movie *Departures* (*Okuribito*), which won an academy award in 2008, the owner of the funeral parlor emphasized that the feeling of sending off the deceased is something that goes beyond any one particular religion or sect when he said, “We serve any religion.” The basic theme of this film is that while the work of morticians who prepare the dead for funerals has absolutely nothing to do with the doctrines of the traditional religions, it is exactly through the ecumenical and non-traditional character of the ritual that feelings for the dead are deepened.

The systematization and development of Death and Life Studies, in which we are currently engaged, is directly related to this situation in which rituals based on the traditional view on death and life are losing their relevance and in which people increasingly feel discomfort with them. The areas of civil life in which people have to make choices for themselves have grown. On the basis of this phenomenon, gathering academic insights and offering academic explanations, Death and Life Studies seeks to foster knowledge that can form the basis of a new professional specialization in response to this search for meaning by the people. Alongside

medical and psychiatric contexts directly related to the grief caused by death and bereavement, Death and Life Studies has focused on rituals and customs surrounding death.

However, in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake it was apparently felt that what is effective are the traditional Buddhist funerals and rituals of pacifying and mourning the dead. This might have to do with the fact that the North-East, which was affected by the disaster, is an area in which the traditional rituals still have credibility, and sutra recitations by Buddhist priests are often shown on television. It is likely that this is due to the fact that the region has only few large cities and the age of its inhabitants is also higher than the national average.

However, this is not the only reason. The Great East Japan earthquake taught us the limits of human knowledge and capabilities. Dumbfounded, I watched scenes in which everything that had been built by human hands was destroyed. Miyazawa Kenji’s poem “Ame nimo makezu” (“Strong in the Rain”) was read a lot. This poem seeks to inspire a sense of altruism to help others, but also encourages being a “lumphead” (*deku no bō*). A “lumphead” is an image used for the bodhisattva Sadaparibhuta in the Lotus Sutra. This bodhisattva is an ascetic who prays for the Buddha nature of all people. However, he is a figure who is also completely ridiculed for this by others.

For Miyazawa Kenji, he is also a symbol for an attitude of reflecting critically on “pride” and “pride in one’s superiority (*zōjōman*).” It can be said that the poem “Strong in the Rain” critically reflects on the arrogance of mankind, and depicts an attitude of bowing one’s head before the wisdom of the people of the past. Can mankind, which has developed scientific knowledge, give birth to something new in regard to the view on death and life? Even if that was the case, is it not that ultimately reliance on past views cannot be escaped? It may be that Death and Life Studies will be forced by the Great East Japan earthquake to once more become aware of the meaning of reconsidering the power of tradition.

This realization of the power of tradition has probably been made even stronger by the massive damage caused by the earthquake and tsunamis, and by the nuclear disaster that occurred on top of this. It seems that the nuclear disaster has caused a critical examination of our past way of life that has put excessive emphasis on economic development, and it has made people return to a religious sense of value that expresses awe for nature and is mindful of human arrogance. What is hoped for in regard to future recovery is the restoration of social bonds and an awakening of a spirit of mutual help. It seems to me that religion can play many roles also in this regard. It might be that we are witnessing a turning point in Japan’s modern history, which has heretofore sought to catch up with and overtake the material civilization of the West. It appears that those who feel this way are not few.



## Earthquakes, the Vulnerable, and Academia

MUTO Kaori (Associate Professor at the Institute of Medical Science, Medical Sociology)

In October, I visited Fukushima prefecture, accompanying a female friend, who is a wheelchair user and had voiced her desire to see the reality of the devastation caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake. For many years, she has been engaged in community services for the disabled, and currently offers patient counseling at a local hospital. Her motivation for the visit was clear in her own words, "I feel that the shock I had initially received from this disaster is gradually fading, and want to subject myself to a blow that will not so easily fade... [omission]... I want to take part in this unprecedented loss, event, and turning point for Japan and humanity. If somebody were to say 'It is impossible for you to visit, because you are handicapped,' then the same would as well apply to my current place of residence, which is completely unaffected by the disaster. I have been engaged in changing society for thirty years, and cannot resolve myself to take the role of an outsider or spectator in this case. However, with these thoughts kept to myself, I want to visit the affected areas. Without being intrusive, as a genuine visitor, I want to feel in silence what I should do from now on." (Personal communication with the author) My students, too, agreed with her unwavering will, and came along to help and drive our vehicle.

However, before departure, we had to decide what to do if a tsunami warning was issued while walking along the coast. We knew that in the coastal area nothing but the foundations of buildings remain. Would it be actually possible to reach the designated evacuation area carrying a woman in a wheelchair? Despite our objections, my friend ordered us to just leave her in such a case. However, the day of departure arrived before we had reached a consensus. We drove along the coast from Soma city to Minami Soma city and further on to the demarcation line 20 kilometers from Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. Luckily, we did not encounter a situation that would have forced us to evacuate. Taking numerous impressions away from the experience, everyone returned to everyday life.

One of the issues that the Great East Japan Earthquake brought to light was the support system for those in need of assistance during disasters. In 2005, the Central Disaster Prevention Council required the municipalities to draw up plans for the provision of evacuation assistance to the elderly and handicapped. The various municipalities established plans for assisted evacuations under the motto of "Self-help and Mutual Assistance." This system was put to the test during the disaster.

However, the results of this system were extremely sobering. Among the dead that could be identified, 55.7% were aged 65 or older (September 9, National Police Agency). Furthermore, those that perished while engaged in assisting the evacuation of another person (the following figures are aggregates including the

dead and missing from three prefectures) also include 202 members of the fire department (April 19, Fire and Disaster Management Agency), 56 social workers (July 13, Japan National Council of Social Welfare), and 20 nurses (September 2, Japanese Nursing Association). There are no official numbers for casualties among helpers and care workers.

In the 2005 Support Plan for those in need of assistance during disasters, it was assumed that those would come on their own efforts to the evacuation area, and the Plan only gives guidelines for what to do after their safe arrival. In 2006, the Plan was amended to add procedures from the stage of assisted evacuation to the evacuation areas. This change was probably the result of the efforts of those falling into the category of "persons in need of assistance."

However, the number of those who perished during the assisted evacuation was extremely high in the case of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The head of a group whose members have intractable diseases stated that if the outcome of their success invited such great loss of life, then he is truly devastated. What was the "right thing" to do for a visiting nurse who pushed her patient onto the second floor before disappearing in the floods, disregarding her superior's evacuation order? When I asked what the "right thing" to do was to friends who are physicians or nurses, they expressed their anguish and stated that they have not been trained to abandon their wards or that they are damned whatever they do. This does not only apply to healthcare professionals. I have also met a married couple who told me in tears how they looked at each other and abandoned their grandmother to save themselves when they saw the tsunami closing in. Those who survived are plagued by guilt and remorse and occupied with recovery efforts.

For me, the Great East Japan Earthquake was an event that seemed to mock us, saying, "I told you that the vulnerable in your society were truly weak." All the concepts and ideas generated by social movements and academia to date were also virtually destroyed. However, as long as one lives in Japan, it is impossible to live without thinking of disasters. What, then, can Japanese academia do in this situation?



## The Death of My Heroes

YOKOSAWA Kazuhiko (Professor of the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Psychology)

I would like to write about two Americans of my generation who died in the prime of their lives. What they have in common is that they both made spectacular achievements in the field of high-tech, and as their deaths both received great media attention in the United States, I am sure that many of you will know them. In their vigorous productivity up until the time of their deaths, one perhaps feels a difference from the death and life perspectives of the Japanese. However, I do not intend to make such comparisons, but this may in fact end up becoming more of a eulogy offered to my heroes.

One of them was Steve Jobs, who died on October 5th, 2011. Though it was a moment that everyone was prepared for, his death came unexpectedly soon, just over one month after he stepped down from his position as CEO of Apple. His legendary presentations of new products and his often repeated “Stay hungry, stay foolish” closing remarks from a Stanford University commencement speech caught the attention of a great many people. The biography *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson went on sale in October and became one of the best sellers of the year in the United States (a Japanese translation was also soon released).

Without a doubt, he was a hero of my generation. Of course, I never met him, but there was probably not a day in the last 25 years that I did not touch one of the products that he introduced to the world. I am that much of a Mac freak. In the corner of my office is something my students call the Mac museum, where all of the old Mac computers I have used in my research are lined up on a large set of shelves. When I look at them again after all these years, I have the strong feeling that I have lived along with him for at least the last quarter of a century.

Steve Jobs asks us, if we imagine that today is the last day of our lives, is what we set out to do really worth doing on our final day? If not, then this is the time to change something in our lives. Surely, even if it is work valued by society, there are plenty of things that we would end up spending time doing that might not be thought of as suitable for one's final day, but we satisfy ourselves by saying that there is nothing that can be done about it. Not everyone can live with the willfulness of Jobs. However, if it were possible, I would like to spend my last day lecturing and discussing the themes of my research.

There is a model for this final lecture. It was the lecture by Randy Pausch, professor at Carnegie Mellon University. Held on September 18, 2007, this lecture can be seen on video sites online, and it begins with him presenting the results of medical examinations that revealed ten cancerous tumors in his liver, and the fact that he had been given three to six months to live. It was light-hearted, however, and not by any means a serious telling of the story. He touched only briefly on his own field of virtual reality, and the majority of the lecture was about the importance of

seeking to fulfill your childhood dreams (why he chose this theme becomes clear at the end of the lecture). He tells us that when an obstacle presents itself on the path to fulfilling our dreams, it is a chance to prove to ourselves just how much we truly want what lies on the other side of the wall. A book entitled *The Last Lecture* was released based on this talk (translated into Japanese under the title *Saigo no jugyo - Boku no inochi ga aru uchi ni*) and became a best seller in the United States, but he died on July 25, 2008 at the age of 47. However, this lecture was what helped him to live longer than the three to six months he had spoken of at the time.

It is clear that Americans generally like moving stories of living life to its fullest when the end is near, but I feel that in the stories of these two individuals in particular we can see an American ideal that accepts people who have become adults without throwing away their childhood hopes and dreams. The reason these two are heroes for me is likely because I myself have somewhat of an American character. While I was in the United States I had lively banter with the students, and while I regret that I might be revealing something about myself here, it is relevant. The Faculty of Letters is a broad field, but at times the Japanese model is too narrow.

At Carnegie Mellon University there is a lecture series based on the supposition, “If you knew of your own death.” This is of course only a supposition, but Pausch's lecture is also one of this series. I have also wondered what theme I would choose for my final lecture, but nothing approaching “knowing my own death” comes to mind. When engaged in cutting edge scientific research there is no doubt that it is important to pursue ideals and have dreams. On the other hand, I wonder if the feeling I have that many students only act when they know that answers will be forthcoming is evidence that I have gotten old. Certainly, as the deaths of people from my own generation who have worked so hard increase, I cannot help but feel a sense of regret. In these cases all the more, I should follow the example set forth in Pausch's lecture, and in my final lecture recognize the screaming responsibility to pursue ideals and realize my own dreams.



## *Shichi go san* and Archaeology

ONUKE Shizuo (Professor of the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Archaeology)

Though not to the extent of my colleagues who specialize in ancient gravesites, even I as an insignificant archeologist have some experience with excavating graves. While only in the form of the bleached bones of ancient people, I suppose that I have had the most contact with the bodies of the dead of all the members of the Faculty of Letters' teaching staff connected with Death and Life Studies.

Because of the properties of the acidic soil in Japan, even when gravesites are discovered in ancient ruins they are often empty and it is evidently the case that the bones have completely decayed and turned to earth. Acidic as the soil may be, when investigating graves from around the time of the Edo period it is also possible to have the chance discovery of somewhat fresher remains. As a researcher this should be cause for joy because of the plentiful data that can be gathered, but it is something that I would rather not encounter if possible. In the Tokyo University Museum there are a lot of human bones from the Jōmon period on display, but these belong to a rare group of specimens that were found in special circumstances such as shell mounds and the like.

As the southern part of the Yangtze River basin in China has the same type of acidic soil as Japan, remains tend not to last, but in the alkali soil in China's loess zone bones remain well intact for thousands and tens of thousands of years. They will never return to the earth here. Accordingly, a large number of human bones turn up in surveys of burial sites in this area. Like earthenware and stone tools, for archeologists thinking about the society of the time, human bones could be said to be a treasure trove that bring about a great deal of information. For archeologists who handle *things*, however, problems of the heart are a most difficult subject, and thoughts of the tears that likely flowed for the entombed who are being dug up never come to mind. In the natural course of events, we would ask anthropologists to classify the bones themselves, and together with the information gathered there, we archeologists would classify the burial method and accessories in order to consider the society and customs of the time.

I believe there to be a difference in notions of what happens after death, or different thoughts on bones, in areas where bones decay and return to the earth, and areas where the bones remain *ad infinitum*. Though it is not a practice unknown in Japan with its acidic soil, in the loess zone of China it was common even thousands of years ago that after the body decayed and only the bones of the deceased remained, there would be a second burial in a different grave. As a specialist in the prehistoric period far removed from later times with historical documentation, I do not want to say anything carelessly, but I believe this custom may be related to notions of the world after death.

As I teach a course in Chinese archeology, the

subject of graves constantly comes up. Why are the ages of seven, five, and three – celebrated landmarks for a child known in Japanese as *shichi go san* – important in life? As I explained above, a great number of human bones come out of ancient ruins in China's loess zone. Among them, it was common practice that only infants were not buried in gravesites located outside of village or community areas, but were rather buried in earthenware vessels located just outside of homes. Accordingly, putting aside whether or not excavation can provide all of the answers, theoretically you can calculate the number of people who were born and died in a given place at a given time by adding the number of people buried in graves with the number of infants buried in these earthenware vessels. And as the bones found in China's loess zone are well preserved, anthropologists can determine gender and calculate the approximate age of death. Having done so, you can go on to calculate the average life expectancy for people who were born and died in the area. The result is that the average life expectancy in agricultural societies of the Neolithic period some 7,000 years ago was about 20 years, and that life was so short in the past is generally quite surprising. I may have already been caught out by people reading this, but there is in fact a trick in the math. If you consider how many adult graves were excavated and the number of infants found buried in earthenware vessels, infants account for approximately 40 percent of the total. This means that just under half of babies born died before reaching the ages of seven, five, or three – the important landmarks of *shichi go san*. Reading books of historical population studies in Europe, the spread of medicine and hygienic conditions that allow for babies to be safely raised is very recent, and the infant mortality rate in Europe was incredibly high before the Industrial Revolution.

The average life expectancy for children who lived safely through the most vulnerable time of infancy and beyond the *shichi go san* period therefore becomes 35 years. Having said that, perhaps a few of you feel relieved, but it is still less than 40, and it was very rare for people to live beyond the age of 60.

Surely, making it through the *shichi go san* period and reaching the age of 60 are causes for celebration.



## Egyptian Japanese International Conference:2011

Ohtoshi Tetsuya (Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Oriental History)

On September 17-18 and September 23, academic exchange symposia between Egypt and Japan were held at the International Conference Center Hiroshima and on the Hongo Campus of the University of Tokyo. These events were the continuation of the DALs symposia "Dialogue on Death and Life: Views from Egypt" held in Cairo and Alexandria in the fall of 2009, which garnered a very positive response, and had the added significance of repaying the kind reception we had received in Egypt. The symposia in Egypt were the first time that DALs had engaged with the Middle East and Islam, and the two symposia held in Japan were an important opportunity to further strengthen this contact.

At first, the Japanese symposia were planned with a focus on medicine and bio-ethics in order to continue the discussions started at the symposia held in Egypt. However, the world changed significantly with the so-called January 25 Revolution in Egypt and the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11. With this, our plans for the symposia themselves changed towards an ambitious attempt to jointly discuss the current situation of Egypt and Japan, which are facing the aftermath of a revolution and a large-scale natural disaster respectively, from a global perspective. Post-revolution Egypt and post-disaster Japan, which is still groaning under the weight of the nuclear accident, are both in severe situations, and continue to desperately search for a solution to their respective problems amidst this great upheaval. It is precisely despite the fact that their vectors of experience differ that a strange resonance can be discerned between the two countries. It was around this idea that there should be occasion to reflect together on what has occurred in the two countries that the plans of the Egyptian and Japanese sides came together.

We decided to invite four scholars from Egypt with intimate knowledge of the true state of the revolution and who are involved in various projects of documenting the revolution, and Japanese specialists with a good grasp of the state of things in the Tohoku area that was devastated by the earthquake. Furthermore, we strove to give the discussion more depth by organizing one of the symposia together with the Partnership Project for Peacebuilding and Capacity Development of Hiroshima University (HiPeC). Actually, this is the first time that anyone has invited Egyptian scholars to Japan for a discussion of the January 25 Revolution.

Another peculiarity of these symposia was that following the wishes of the Egyptian participants, one of them was held in Hiroshima. Almost all Egyptians have heard of Hiroshima and because of the political and geo-political position of Egypt, the name Hiroshima has special emotional connotations for Egyptians. Through professor Machida Soho, with whom we had already worked together on a previous occasion, we asked Hiroshima University's HiPeC for

their cooperation.

After visiting the Hiroshima Peace Site on the morning of the 17th, the following two days were taken up by the international symposium "Peace from Disasters - Indigenous Initiatives across Communities, Countries and Continents." After a minute of silent commemoration led by P. Maharajan (Tribhuvan University, Nepal), and following a welcoming addresses by Yamane Yasuo (the vice-president of Hiroshima University), Sato Yuhei (Governor of Fukushima prefecture, read in absentia), Yuzaki Hidehiko (Governor of Hiroshima prefecture, read in absentia), and Ohtoshi Tetsuya (The University of Tokyo/DALS). Togawa Masahiko (Hiroshima University) discussed the ideas behind the symposium.

In the first session, "Peace-building and Democracy across Communities, Countries and Continents," Khaled Azab (Bibliotheca Alexandrina) and Arai Etsuyo (JETRO) functioned as chair persons. Because of space constraints, I will only touch here upon those aspects of the symposium that are related to Death and Life Studies. The first presentation was by Ezzedine Choukri Fishere (The American University in Cairo/Former Director of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Culture, Author) and entitled "Peacebuilding and Democracy: How the Arab Spring Could Be an Opportunity for a Truly Lasting Peace in the Middle East" and it served to set the tone for the entire symposium. The presentation refuted the long-held belief that authoritarian regimes are needed to keep the peace in the Middle East. In the same session, Katsunuma Satoshi (The University of Tokyo) made an interesting historical comparison in regard to the elections that are the greatest focus of the Egyptian revolution in a paper entitled "Egypt's Experiences with the Electoral System after the Revolution of 1919."

The second session was entitled "Nuclear and Environmental Peace for Better Human Life." In it, Kanamori Osamu (The University of Tokyo) gave a presentation with the title "After the Catastrophe - Rethinking the Possibility of Breaking with Nuclear Power." Alongside showing the logical foundation and a roadmap for a break with nuclear power, Kanamori also made a number of valuable suggestions.

Session three, "Spiritual Reconciliation from Devastations," consisted of the two presentations "Unthinking Social Disasters: Three Paths toward Care for Traumatic Memories" by Kawamoto Takashi (The University of Tokyo) and "Muslim Christian One Hand: the Copts under the Islamic Rule" by Magdi Guirguis (Kafr El Sheikh University). The profundity of the presentation by Kawamoto, who is himself from Hiroshima, and his realistic suggestions elicited a strong response from the audience. Guirguis' presentation provided thoughts on the coexistence between Coptic Christians and Muslims, while also including the current revolution in his considerations.



The next day featured panel discussions starting in the morning based on the presentations of the previous day. Alongside the participation of Shimazono Susumu (The University of Tokyo) and Louay Mahmoud (Bibliotheca Alexandrina) from the Death and Life studies side, functionaries of JICA, UNITAR, and Hiroshima prefecture also spoke. As the allocated time was short, all participants had prepared comments in response to the presentations. The last session was dedicated to collecting ideas and suggestions. Although my own style of communication tends to be very non-confrontational, an Indian scholar who was present aggressively argued for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and despite the fact that we did not have opportunity to discuss this issue at the time, the overall discussion was given a strong impulse thanks to this contribution.

For Death and Life Studies, the greatest accomplishment of the Hiroshima symposium probably was to have gained the opportunity for academic exchange with participants from South and South-East Asian countries, such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Nepal, India, and Indonesia. This was thanks to the HiPeC network, and it was a good inspiration for future academic exchange to be conducted by DALs, which has had almost no academic contacts with the South and South-East Asian countries so far. Also, by choosing Hiroshima as the site for this symposium, I believe that the relationship between nuclear power and the issue of atomic weapons on the one hand and the Egyptian revolution on the other was made very lucid.

After an excursion to Miyajima, we traveled on towards the Kansai region. Our foremost aim was to meet Morimoto Kosei, who is not only a top representative of the field of Islamic history in Japan with experience of studying at Cairo University, but has also served as abbot of the temple Tōdaiji. Currently, he is the director of the Culture Center at Tōdaiji. As a typhoon was approaching, we sat in a guest room at Tōdaiji and listened to Morimoto expound on the history of the temple. As historians were also present among the Egyptian participants, both sides enthusiastically compared their countries' histories. Next, we entered the main hall of the temple and received a detailed introduction to the teachings of the Kegon sect, also including a brilliant comparison of this branch of Buddhist thought with Islam. Afterwards, we were invited to Morimoto's house, which is one of the residences located on the temple grounds, and our comparative discussions concerning Egyptian, Islamic, and Japanese civilization would take no end. The Egyptian participants showed that they were very impressed with Morimoto's statements, that put emphasis on maintaining a sympathetic understanding of other cultures and civilizations, the same attitude that could also be seen during the high period of Islamic civilization and also

in Japanese history. There was even one Egyptian participant who declared that he wants to train scholars of Buddhism in Egypt and then send them to Japan for further studies.

After moving on to Tokyo on the 23rd, we held the Egyptian Japanese international symposium "2011 - Commemorating the Dead in a Time of Global Crisis." First, Shimazono Susumu and His Excellency the Ambassador of Egypt in Japan Hisham El-Zimaity gave opening addresses, and the pre-noon first session consisted of two keynote lectures presided over by Yanagihashi Hiroyuki (The University of Tokyo). First up, Ezzedine Choukri Fishere talked about "Remembering, Recognizing and Recovering: Helping Arabs Out of Victimhood," displaying an Arab pride that seeks to maintain scientific objectivity while going face-to-face with history and the memories of the past. Several members of the audience told me how impressed they were with this talk. On the Japanese side, Kabayama Koichi (Director of the Printing Museum Tokyo, Honorary Professor at the University of Tokyo) gave a talk with the title "The Death and Rebirth of Society - The Consequences of the Black Death and the Lisbon Earthquake." Based on a broad range of historical evidence and using a discussion of the two historical events of the Black Death and the Lisbon Earthquake, Kabayama showed how mankind has recovered from massive disasters, using them as a kind of springboard for revitalization. I commented on the two talks by showing a variety of ways in which Egypt and Japan resonate with each other, such as the Egyptian influence on global social movements including Japanese examples.

The second session held in the afternoon was entitled "Records and Memory," and had Suzuki Izumi (The University of Tokyo) act as chair person. First, Hara Takeshi (Meiji Gakuin University) gave a presentation with the title "Disaster Remembered, Disaster Forgotten: The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Imperial Family," in which he compared and discussed the reaction of the imperial family to the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the Great East Japan Earthquake of last year, probing the essence



of disaster memories. In his presentation "Memory of Modern Egypt and the Revolution Documentation," Khaled Azab introduced the audience to a project of the Bibliotheca Alexandria that seeks to document the revolution. Sato Kenji (The University of Tokyo) gave his comments, focusing on the issues of the people who are recorded and those who remain unrecorded in history, the position of those who are commemorated or mourned, and the revolutionizing of records.

The third session, "Services for the Dead and Memory," was presided over by Akiyama Satoshi (The University of Tokyo) and consisted of Suzuki Iwayumi (Tohoku University) presenting on "Dealing with the Dead - The Reemergence of Earth Burials after the Great Tohoku Earthquake" as well as

Louay Mahmoud talking about "The Relationship with the Dead Saints, or Revolution as an Option: the Traditional Egyptian Means of Defeating Evil." The two presentations were extremely interesting, dealing with the issue of what kind of changes can be seen in traditional rituals, customs, and worldviews during times of disaster and revolution by drawing on new insights and on-the-ground information from Japan and Egypt. Magdi Guirguis' comments touched on a comparison of religious specialists in Japan and Egypt, the high standard of academic work in Japan and its appeal, as well as Death and Life Studies' oppositional standpoint towards Eurocentrism.

The fourth session was taken up by the plenary discussion. After Togawa Masahiko from our collaboration partner HiPeC had summarized the various papers carefully, he commented from the perspective of Indian and South Asian Studies on how victims should be treated in historiography. Furthermore, based on the accomplishments of previous DALs symposia, Ikezawa Masaru (The University of Tokyo) made overall comments about the issue of memories of mass death and the intensity of aspirations for the future. Afterwards, a plenary discussion was held based on all presentations and comments, and we were made painfully aware of the time constraints.

Overall, it was probably unavoidable that it would be difficult to meet the challenge of discussing the Egyptian revolution and the Great East Japan Earthquake within a single framework. However, it can be said that this is exactly the global situation with which we are currently confronted and that the current question is what kind of civilizational choices we will make in this situation. It is very significant that this issue was discussed this last September. Furthermore, it seems that the co-temporality and various links between Japan and Egypt in regard to the different kinds of social movements and the nuclear issue will be the focus of more discussion. Also, as the discussion developed in a direction advantageous to historiography, as could be seen in the issues of memory and records, I felt that there is still opportunity left for historiography to contribute to Death and Life Studies.

Commenting on the organization of the symposia, as if reflecting the chaos following the revolution and

earthquake disaster, the preparations for these symposia were also at the mercy of the developing situations. However, just as had been the case during the symposia in Egypt, when it was time for the Egyptian and Japanese scholars to work together, they saw eye to eye with one another. I also want to mention that there has been a request for the continuation of these symposia from the Egyptian participants. Unfortunately, Emad Abou-Ghazi, who had already worked with us in organizing the Egyptian symposia could not participate on this occasion, as he accepted the position of Minister of Culture on request from the revolutionary forces. He had been the one who was pushing for the Hiroshima symposium, and was negotiating a leave to come to Japan until the last minute, but unfortunately could not make it in the end. However, the fact that Emad Abou-Ghazi has continued to organize the Egyptian participants of this academic exchange certainly contributed greatly to the success of the symposia.

As always, I would like to express my deep-felt gratitude to everyone who acted as presenter, commentator, or chairperson, all DALs project researchers, everyone at HiPeC beginning with Yoshida Osamu, the members of Le Club Bachraf (an Arab musical ensemble that is active worldwide) who enthused the conference participants with a surprise performance, and more than anyone else Takano Yotaro (The University of Tokyo, Psychology), who kindly yielded the lecture hall to us. (Videos of the papers being delivered at the symposium held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina during our visit to Egypt can be seen on the homepage of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.)



## Academic Workshop

### “The Buddhist View on Death and Life – The Basic Tone of Pure Land Thought” Public Seminar “Hiraizumi Culture and Commemoration of the Dead”

KOJIMA Tsuyoshi (Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Chinese Philosophy)

As part of one of the projects that DALs has planned and conducted in collaboration with other universities, two events were organized together with Iwate University’s “Formation of the Hiraizumi Research Center” project.

In June 2011, the inclusion of “Hiraizumi – Temples, Gardens and Archeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land” in the list of world cultural heritage sites was decided at the 35th World Heritage Committee Session. Since before this official decision, a research group with the title “Formation of the Hiraizumi Research Center” had been formed at Iwate University under the leadership of Professor Yabu Toshihiro of the Faculty of Education, which investigates Hiraizumi culture from an international perspective.

The aim of conducting research into the 12th century Hiraizumi culture, which was founded on the Pure Land thought that had come from the mainland, partly overlaps with the aims of the DALs project, which seeks to contribute to modern clinical knowledge while also studying the intellectual traditions of Asia. It is because of this that the two events were jointly organized. These events were not included initially in the plan of activities for the academic year 2011-2012, but were hurriedly organized after the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011. A summary of the events is provided below.

#### 1. Academic Workshop “The Buddhist View on Death and Life – The Basic Tone of Pure Land Thought” (June 6, 2011, Iwate University)

Pure Land thought provided the intellectual foundation of Hiraizumi culture. DALs representative professor Shimoda Masahiro (Indian Philosophy/Buddhist Studies) gave a lecture at Iwate University attended by approximately 50 people. I acted as chairperson, and after introducing the audience to the activities of the DALs project, professor Shimoda talked for about one hour about the birth process of Pure Land thought and its particularities. In response to the lecture, Professor Yabu, who specializes in Chinese philosophy, asked about the differences and similarities between Buddhism and Confucianism. The audience was then given opportunity to ask questions, and a lively discussion was had surrounding the

questions of the nature of Buddhist thought and its influence on Japanese folk culture among other issues. In particular, when at the very end a question about the Buddhist concept of nothingness (S. *sunyata*) was posed, professor Shimoda gave an enthusiastic and easily comprehensible answer based on his own academic ideas.

#### 2. Public Seminar “Hiraizumi Culture and Commemoration of the Dead” (August 6, 2011, Hiraizumi Cultural Heritage Center)

The Hiraizumi Cultural Heritage Center, the venue for this event, is located at the base of Mt. Kinkei that towers over Hiraizumi. Apart from the above-mentioned project “Formation of the Hiraizumi Research Center,” this three-part public seminar was conducted with the support of the Iwate Higher Education Consortium, the Iwate Board of Education, the Hiraizumi Board of Education, Television Iwate, and Kahoku Shinpō News. The seminar was attended by 80 people.

I took on the role of chairperson and we dedicated a moment to the memory of the victims of the earthquake. DALs leader professor Ichinose Masaki gave the opening address, and after a guitar piece entitled “Mourning and Recovery” had been performed, professor Satoh Makoto (Japanese History) from the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology at the University of Tokyo gave a paper entitled “Disasters in Antiquity and the Ritsuryō State.” In the presentation, he discussed the damage caused by the so-called Jōkan Earthquake and its accompanying tsunami during the Heian period based on a specialist’s reading and analysis of written historical sources. A panel discussion formed the third part of the public seminar in which professor Oishi Yasuo (Ethnology) from Morioka University, professor Kikuchi Kazuko (Nursing Science) from Iwate Prefectural University, and professor Kimura Naohiro (Musicology) from Iwate University, representing the three universities that form part of the Iwate Higher Education Consortium, discussed the issue of how the dead have been traditionally sent off by the living based on their own respective research. The discussion also naturally extended to the problem of how the dead should be sent off in the future, and although the time available was limited, the event had a profound content.





## Symposium “Loss and Purpose in Life”

YAMAZAKI Hiroshi (Associate Professor of Medical Sociology at Shinshu University/ formerly Uehiro Lecturer of Death and Life Studies at the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, University of Tokyo)

On July 29, 2011, the symposium “Reproduction, Loss, and Purpose in Life” was held in a conference room of the Sanjo Conference Hall at the University of Tokyo. This symposium was organized by the MEXT sponsored study group “Scientific Evaluation and Development of an Education that Strengthens a Feeling of Purpose,” and held in collaboration with the Grief Counseling Center, the Perinatal Loss Study Group at St. Luke’s College of Nursing, and the Uehiro Chair for Death and Life Studies at the University of Tokyo’s School of Humanities and Sociology. DALs also lent its support, and the symposium was thus realized through the collaboration of many groups.

Since an opportunity for the discussion of loss and medical care during the perinatal period had already been provided once before with the autumn seminar “Death and Life Studies of Reproduction” that formed part of the 2008 foundation course “Death and Life Studies for those in the Medical and Caretaker Professions,” the current occasion marked the second time the topic was treated. However, in global comparison the topic has not received much attention in Japan, where the reproductive mortality is extremely low.

In this situation, what can clinical staff, family members, friends, and wider society do in order to enable those who have undergone loss and whose suffering has gone unnoticed to once more gain a sense of purpose in life? The aim of this symposium was to discuss this issue from an interdisciplinary perspective, incorporating death and life studies, birth help, obstetrics, nursing science, ethnology, and religious studies.

Darcy Harris from the University of Western Ontario, King’s University College, was invited to act as keynote speaker, giving a presentation with the title “Grief in the Context of Reproductive Losses” in the pre-noon session. One thing that was memorable about the presentation was that it did not only discuss sources of loss and grief surrounding reproduction that everyone can easily imagine such as stillbirth, miscarriage, the death of a newborn baby, or abortion, but also included infertility and menopause among the causes. Another fascinating point was that there are elements in modern medical technology that further complicate such feelings of loss and grief.

For example, by looking at fertilized embryos with the help of a microscope as part of treating infertility, the patient can feel affection for the “child” even before pregnancy. However, it is not certain that the fertilized embryo that has become the target of affection will turn into the child one is so strongly hoping for. Therefore, it can be said that infertility causes an “ambiguous loss” that has no physical existence, despite the fact that one has a clear psychological yearning. Also, in the sense that infertility constantly reminds one throughout life of the fact that one has no children, it can be also regarded as a “nonfinite loss” that causes chronic grief. This was a fresh perspective on the issue.

In the afternoon, Ota Naoko from the University of

Shizuoka first discussed the kind of support available in Japan to those who have experienced loss during the perinatal period. The peculiarity of loss that occurs in connection with birth is that because in these cases death occurs simultaneous with birth, memories of the “child” are very limited for the “mother.” Therefore, the idea was raised that it is the role of the medical personnel to support the process in which women become “mothers.”

Next, Suzuki Yuriko from Tohoku Gakuin University gave an historical overview of folk customs related to the birth and death of children in Japan, showing how the death of a child through abortion was not regarded as the “death of a person,” but that this perception began to change in the 1970s when it became possible to find out whether a fetus was alive in the womb through advances made in healthcare technology in obstetrics. As a result, the “life” of a child came to be respected, giving birth to the new practice of *mizuko kuyo* (rituals made for aborted fetuses).

Lastly, Takeuchi Masato from the Toho Humanized Care Center explained from the standpoint of an obstetrician that loss and grief experienced during the perinatal period are becoming a problem due to the relationship between medical practitioner and patient having become cut and that the kind of bereavement therapy in these cases needs to be one based on a more humane approach.

After the three presentations, Yamazaki Akemi from Sophia University and Shimazono Susumu from the University of Tokyo commented on the papers from the perspective of nursing science and religious studies respectively, discussing how one can take one’s farewell of the “children” that have been lost through miscarriage as family members and the difficulty of turning grief into strength, contributing to the course of the overall discussion.

A survey conducted among the approximately one hundred participants showed that many of them learned a lot about the issue of loss and purpose in life surrounding reproduction and were highly satisfied with the symposium. There were also many who requested further events that deal with this topic, and I hope that there will be opportunity to continue the discussion in the future.

Finally, as I left the University of Tokyo in September 2011, this symposium was my last main project for DALs. At this point, I would like to express my deep-felt gratitude for the cooperation of all involved in DALs. I wish for the continued success of Death and Life Studies at the University of Tokyo.



## Japanese-Taiwanese Conference

### “Toward an East Asian Death and Life Studies”

ITO Yukiko (DALs project researcher, Ethics/Japanese Thought)

On October 7, 2011, the international Japanese-Taiwanese conference “Toward an East Asian Death and Life Studies” (organized by DALs and the Center for Japanese Studies and the College of Liberal Arts of National Sun Yat-sen University) was held at National Sun Yat-sen University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. When the Global COE program was inaugurated in 2007, one of its aims was to “deepen academic exchange with Asian countries,” and DALs has put this into practice through conferences in Beijing, Taipei, and Seoul. The conference in Kaohsiung marked the concluding, fourth event in this series.

The audience was very diverse and beyond the nine members of the Japanese delegation and the nine presenters and chairpersons on the Taiwanese side, including Taiwanese and foreign students as well as members of the general public. The conference started at ten o'clock in the morning.

In the first session, Takeuchi Seiichi (Kamakura Women's University, Ethics) gave a presentation with the title “The Sensitivity to Evanescence – Crisis as Tipping Point,” discussing the potential that resides in evoking the “genetic memory of our distant ancestors” in the form of the concepts of transience (J: *mujō*) and evanescence (J: *hakanasa*) in order to overcome the current crisis of the Great East Japan Earthquake and use it as the basis for a change for the better. Next, Ichinose Masaki (professor in the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Philosophy) reported on the discussions currently taking place in Japan concerning the problem of prolonged exposure to low levels of radiation in a paper entitled “Unknown Territory after the Great East Japan Earthquake – The Structure of Debates about Exposure to Low-level Radiation in Japan.” He argued that a response to the situation is called for that is grounded in a thorough awareness of the scientific antinomy and moral dilemmas of the issue.

In the second session that followed the lunch break, Lin Yaw-sheng (professor in the Department of Psychology at National Chengchi University) gave a paper entitled “The Cultural Thought of Life and Death Studies in Taiwan” representing the joint research he conducted with Yee Der-heuy (professor in the Institute of Religion and Culture at Tzu Chi University), one of the scholars who created the foundation for death and life studies in Taiwan. This paper discussed the history of the field of death and life studies and the current state of research. Alongside the following presentation by Yang Chih-siang (associate professor in the Department of Chinese Literature at National Sun Yat-sen University) with the title “The Semantics of Funerals and Images of Life and Death in Asian Cinema – Analysis and Thoughts on the Cultural Significance of the Films *Fuhou qiri* (Taiwan) and *Okuribito* (Japan),” which featured an investigation of how contemporary people perceive traditional rituals related to death and life based on a comparative reading of Taiwanese and Japanese cinema. By having a general and a specific discussion of death and life studies

combined in a single panel, we were able to gain a good sense of the state of death and life studies in Taiwan.

Continuing, the third session featured one presentation each from the Japanese and Taiwanese sides concerning the further development of death and life studies in East Asia. In his paper “Bio-ethics and Religion – A Reexamination of Engelhardt,” Ikezawa Masaru (Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Religious Studies) examined the logic of the American bio-ethicist Tristram Engelhardt, whose arguments concerning bio-ethics incorporate Christian concepts. Ikezawa showed how insights on death, life, and bio-ethics can be effectively derived from religion in East Asia, even if one does not belong to any specific faith. Liao Chin-ping (research fellow in the Center for Japanese Studies, National Sun Yat-sen University) compared the “philosophy of death” of the modern Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime and the religious practice of the Tzu Chi Foundation, a Taiwanese religious group, in his presentation “Death and Life in Practice – Tanabe Hajime's Philosophy of Death and the Religious World of Tzu Chi.” He proposed that a response to actual instances of death and life, such as the Great East Japan Earthquake, can be reached by combining the self-reflectivity and practical knowledge of Tanabe's philosophy with the Tzu Chi Foundation's power to act.

After these presentations, Kaneko Akira (professor in the Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion at Tenri University and currently visiting professor at Chinese Culture University) made some overall comments, followed by a discussion among all participants. Incorporating questions and answers concerning the various papers as well as the state of death and life studies research in Taiwan and Japan, the discussion carried on well beyond the planned closing time of 6:00 pm.

Like Japan, Taiwan is an earthquake-prone country, having experienced a major earthquake in 1999. As such, the Taiwanese have shown great interest in the Great East Japan Earthquake and the nuclear accident. In this regard, it was the hope of the Japanese and Taiwanese conference participants to receive new practical impulses concerning death and life studies by seeing how the Japanese reacted to the March disaster and how their way of thinking and view on death and life has changed. This whole new theme meant that the conference was not merely limited to providing a closing summary of the “Toward and East Asian Death and Life Studies” conference series.

Publication of the proceedings of this conference in Japanese and Chinese is planned for spring 2012.





## 30th DALs Research Seminar

ISHIDA Masato (Assistant Professor of Philosophy, University of Hawai'i at Manoa)  
FUKUMA Satoshi (DALs Project Researcher, Social Philosophy)

This past July 21, 2011, we invited Ishida Masato, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa to give a lecture as part of the DALs Research Seminar, which was held in Lecture Hall 2 of the Faculty of Law and Letters Building 2. The audience consisted of ten people, and a lively debate was held around the topic of Dōgen's view on death and life, professor Ishida's talk. To give a brief summary of Ishida's background, after graduating from Waseda University, he studied at universities in Canada and the US, eventually receiving his PhD in philosophy from Pennsylvania State University. He specializes in the philosophy of Charles Peirce, a founder of pragmatism, as well as traditional Japanese philosophy, the topic of his lecture on this occasion.

Ishida's talk was entitled "Life and Death: Reflections on Dōgen's Radical Event Semantics." As can be discerned from the title, he tried to illuminate Dōgen's teachings from the vantage point of analytic philosophy, and more specifically D. Davidson's "event semantics."

Ishida focused in his discussion on the line reading "It is a mistake to consider that we pass from life to death (*sei yori shi ni utsuru to kokorouru ha, kore ha ayamari nari*)" found in the "Life and Death" fascicle of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*. Of course, this line does not suggest that we will not die. Dōgen accepts that we die when our bodies cease to exist. What, then, is Dōgen trying to say here?

Ishida argues that it is possible to interpret Dōgen's proposition as saying that "If we think of birth and death as events, then it cannot be said that birth turns into death." For example, if we interpret birth and death as events, that is, literally as something that comes into being, then it is impossible that death follows birth decades after one is born into this world (unless losing their identities as individual events). However, Dōgen's view on death and life is more complicated than this. Ishida focuses on Dōgen's concept of "being-time" (*uji*). He sees in the concept of "being-time" the idea that "all being is time," which means that all things do not exist within time, but are time, and that there is no universal present that cuts across distinct moments. In the case of Dōgen, all "nows" related to our experience as well as all "nows" in general represent an absolute perspective, and the world and its entire spatiotemporal structure (including the order of events) is interpreted from this perspective. Therefore, if one thinks of life (birth) and death (extinction) as events, then they can be interpreted as representing separate and independent "nows" ("When we say birth, there is nothing but birth, and when we say extinction, there is nothing but extinction (*sei to*

*iu toki ni ha, sei yori hoka ni mono naku, metsu to iu toki, metsu no hoka ni mono nashi*"). Accordingly, as birth does not mean that something is actually born into a pre-existing world, it is therefore called "unborn" (*fushō*), and conversely as nothing actually becomes extinct in the event called extinction, it is referred to as "non-extinction" (*fumetsu*) (in "Life and Death"). If thought in this way, life and death are both manifestations of the world, and it is not a matter of which is privileged over the other. According to Ishida, this is why Dōgen argues: "When birth comes, therefore, it is just birth [and nothing else], when death comes, it is just death such that you serve it well. Do not shun, do not hope."

To further analyze Dōgen's view on death and life, Ishida introduced temporal pluralism, perspectival constructivism, and relativity theory in his discussion, even going so far as to conduct a comparison with Western and Eastern philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Leibniz, and Nishida Kitarō. In conclusion, Ishida stated that Dōgen's arguments constitute an attempt to change existing ideas and perspectives on death and life. That is, in order to perceive death and life with the "True Dharma Eye" (*shōbōgen*), one has to abandon one's old familiar views.

After the lecture, the discussion was carried on vigorously at the reception. (By the way, some members of DALs received the hospitality of Ishida on the occasion of the East-West Philosopher's Conference held at the University of Hawai'i in May.) Through professor Ishida I became once more aware of the importance of applying contemporary analytical tools to Japanese philosophy as one way in which Japanese scholars can be active abroad.



## Conference “Death and Life Studies Surrounding Pacifying the Spirits of the Dead and Radiation Exposure”

HOTTA Kazuyoshi(DALS project researcher, Indian Philosophy)  
ITO Yukiko(DALS project researcher, Ethics/Japanese Thought)

On December 23 and 24, 2011, the conference “Death and Life Studies Surrounding Pacifying the Spirits of the Dead and Radiation Exposure,” organized by the G-COE “Development and Systematization of Death and Life Studies” project, was held in the city of Nagasaki with a total of 18 professors and researchers in attendance.

Behind the decision to make Nagasaki the venue for this conference was the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011. The adverse effects of radiation exposure were not limited only to the area surrounding the Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant that was destroyed by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami, but broadened to include areas as far away as Japan’s capital city of Tokyo, and the chain of events that followed captured the world’s attention. For a great many Japanese, this nuclear accident and the damage caused by the low-level radiation that came with it brought to mind the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that took place during the Second World War. Having a fresh look and rethinking how the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, direct victims of atomic bombing and radiation, overcame hardship and recovered is something that contemporary Japan cannot help but do as it faces the current problem. In addition, Nishimura Akira (Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Kagoshima University), who is a specialist in research surrounding the pacifying of spirits of the dead in Nagasaki, was scheduled to deliver a paper, which also contributed to the decision to locate the conference in Nagasaki.

On the first day in the conference room of the Best Western Premier Hotel Nagasaki, Nishimura delivered a talk entitled “The Power of the Third Person: A Proposal from Research Concerning the Pacifying of the Spirits of the Dead to Death and Life Studies.” In Nagasaki, which received virtually no recovery assistance from the country immediately following Japan’s defeat in the war, citizens voluntarily took it upon themselves to take care of and lay to rest those who were killed by the atomic bomb. In the process, survivors superimposed themselves onto the dead to whom they otherwise had no connection, and created relationships based on a sort of comradeship between the living and the dead. He proposed that the problem found in contemporary terminal care as to how to consider the involvement of third parties could be perceived in this form of a sympathetic, but removed third person. This talk was followed by Kanamori Osamu (Professor of Philosophy / History of Scientific Thought, Faculty of Education, University of Tokyo), who commented that as can be seen in the wake of the nuclear incident in Fukushima, in the contemporary scientific community in Japan the consciousness of this construct of a sympathetic third party that will protect people’s health and the public good is gradually declining. He suggested that because of this, in society as a whole it is becoming increasingly difficult to establish a sense of community or a broader public sphere. In the discussion that followed, arguments were exchanged from a number of sides about the

impulse to pacify the dead, the problem of doing so in a non-ritualistic manner, and so on.

From the morning of the 24th and into the afternoon we visited the Peace Park, Peace Memorial Museum, and other institutions related to the atomic bombing. As part of the large-scale memorial peace projects conducted by the administration, Nishimura carefully explained the process of how the meaning of the crypts spontaneously built by the people changed, and variations in the plans for the recovery of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that we had heard about the day before.

That evening in the same hall we were in the previous day, a session was held on the theme of “The Issues and Arguments Surrounding Exposure to Low-level Doses of Radiation.” To begin, Shimazono Susumu (Professor in the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Religious Studies) pointed out the deficiencies in epidemiological data from Hiroshima and Nagasaki referenced in discussions of contemporary low-level radiation exposure, such as the fact that there is no data related to Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the first five years after 1945, and that because the damage incurred was underestimated there are a great number of objections to what the upper limits of permissible radiation exposure should be. The “mainstream” of Japanese scholarship related to radiation, however, is trying to ignore these facts. Next, Ichinose Masaki (Professor in the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Philosophy) pointed out that within the confusion among scientists and specialists concerning an “objective evaluation” of the incident, the negative feelings of unreasonableness, anxiety, and distrust harbored by people toward the current nuclear incident transform into an even deeper sense of despair, and may be becoming the main obstruction to recovery in affected areas. He carried on to argue that this state of scientific antinomy and the moral dilemmas involved are spiraling out of control, and that we must think of a way to deal with this reality looking forward.

It has now been one year since the disaster. We have in no way exhausted discussion of the issues of how to face the nearly 20,000 victims of the disaster, how to advance recovery, or how to deal with the problem of radiation. Including the results of this conference, there is no shortage of material that Death and Life Studies can and must transmit. In the final year of the COE, this conference affirmed yet another new challenge for Death and Life Studies.



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