

Bioethics from the View of Buddhism

This article is a revision of a public lecture hosted by this Institute on 30 October 2006.

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Introduction

THANK you for introducing me, my name is Mori. About five years ago, on November 17th, 2000, I had the opportunity to present a public lecture on “Science and Buddhism.” Therefore, it is my second time to participate in the lecture series sponsored by the IOP (the Institute of Oriental Philosophy).

“Science and Buddhism” was not a simple topic to discuss, yet bioethics is an even more complex topic. Therefore, please feel free to strictly critique my lecture if there is any information that you may find objectionable.

Recently, various articles on Bioethics have been published. Just the other day (October 28th, 2006), the Asahi Newspaper reported that Tokyo High Court announced it is ruling regarding actress, Aki Mukai and her husband and professional wrestler Nobuhiko Takada’s baby’s registration as their actual child. The baby was born overseas through a surrogate-mother. The article reported that 3 days prior (on the 27th), Shinagawa Ward decided to make an appeal in response to this ruling.

There was another article reporting a case of a 50 year old mother who gave birth as a surrogate-mother for her daughter and husband. The article points out that Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology held its executive board meeting and did not discuss any clear legal measures to be taken regarding this incident of the 50 year old surrogate-mother which violates the Society’s code that prohibits surrogate pregnancies. In addition, there was an article that accounts the story of organ transplants in Ehime Prefecture that is suspected to be involved in the buying and selling of organs.

Background of Bioethics

The topic of bioethics has been taken up recently in current events due to the rapid progress of medicine, yet the issues of bioethics originally come from simple beginnings. It originated from the examining the subject of birth in relation to birth control, artificial abortion, euthanasia and death with dignity.

Aside from euthanasia and death with dignity, there are rare cases of married couples who don't take part in birth control currently in Japan. Also nowadays, artificial abortion is not considered unusual and is accepted. On the other hand, in the past it became an issue because children were originally thought of as a gift from the gods, that each living being had a life span, and the issue of life was in the domain of the gods and entrusted mystics. There remained a question of whether it was acceptable for human beings to intervene with such matters.

Even now, and before the establishment of Catholicism, the natural birth control such as the rhythm method is the only type of birth control allowed. Therefore, we should not necessarily overlook these issues. Conversely, when it comes to artificial abortion, the topic of both bioethics and legal issues becomes unavoidable and should be discussed in particular.

Still alongside the advances in scientific technology, various additional dilemmas arise. In the realm of reproduction, artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization are already considered ordinary and have expanded into newer issues of surrogate-mothers, pre-conceptual sex selection, genetic diagnosis of the fertilized egg, genetic transplants, and cloning.

Concerning the treatment of illness, blood transfusions are considered matters of ethics in relation to a religious doctrine against blood infusions. Anyway, the ardent debate on cerebral death (brain death) has passed and organ transplants are now commonly performed. On the other hand, the buying and selling of internal organs has been an issue for organ transplants. Nevertheless, it seems that organ transplants between blood relations are rarely questioned and frequently performed. Rather, the prospect of creating the internal organs and muscle or nerve cells of human beings with ES cell lines (Embryonic stem cells are pluripotent cells that form the base for internal organs. Cultures of cell are taken following the extraction of an early stage embryo after fertilized eggs have repeated cell division) and the subject of gene therapy has become a focus of discussion.

Therefore, the phrase, "leaving it up to the gods or mystics" is rarely

used nowadays in the field of bioethics. The question of bioethics has clearly surpassed sphere of religion and is currently being discussed as social and legal issues. The other day, I visited the university library to research some references for today's lecture. The library is basically set up using the Japanese decimal classification system. Nonetheless, contrary to my expectations, the books on bioethics were placed in the 400's section instead of the 100's section. The 100's section is usually houses books on religion, philosophy, or books on logic while the 400's section is an area for books on natural sciences.

The Standardization and Weathering of Issues of Bioethics

Although the origins of bioethics were linked to "godly and mystic realms" with some sort of awe, it is now considered a common topic in general. As one example, in Japan, it was reported that 100,189 children were born by in vitro fertilization by 2003. And during one year in 2002, an estimated 15,233 children were born by the same method. In vitro fertilization has become a common form of treatment for married couples who want children and have difficulty with pregnancy.

Conversely, there are even greater severe numeric facts. Regarding artificial abortions, in 1997, statistics reports from the Ministry of Health and Welfare shows that in 337,799 artificial abortions were performed and in 2001, there were 341,588 cases reported. In the same year, in 1997 there were 1,191,665 newborns and in 2001, there were 1,170,662 newborns accounted for. For every newborn baby there is an artificial abortion with a ratio of 28.3% and 29.2%. When adding the number of artificial abortions and newborns, the ratio becomes 22.1% and 22.6% respectively. In brief, for every new life that forms in the mother's womb, a little over 1 in 5 end in artificial abortions.

Though these numbers have come into the open, it is widely known that in reality a much greater number of pregnancies have been terminated. According to one account, there is an estimated maximum of 5,000,000 cases and minimum of 3,000,000 cases of drugs used for abortion in one year. These figures implies that the number of abortions would be 3 to 4 times more than newborns. They are too many to believe. However, it is generally supposed that there are 3 times more artificial abortions performed illegally. Then the number of fetuses which will never see the light of day surpasses the number of newborn infants.

In Buddhism, human life begins when the fertilized egg is conceived in the mother's womb. Therefore, in India, a person's age is counted

from this moment. Although the Buddha passed away at eighty years of age, the beginning of his life was counted from the moment he was conceived in his mother, Māyā's womb. In Japan, the Buddha's birthday is marked on April 8th. However, this is merely the date that he came out of his mother's womb and the true date of his birthday is actually 10 months earlier, at the time of conception. Hence, we are not born "from" our mother's womb but "in" our mother's womb. Later, I will discuss the idea of transmigration in Buddhism. If we do not consider the moment of birth in the womb as the birth date of a newborn, a void of time between the moment of death and birth will occur.

In this way, the fetus is already on its way to starting its life from inside the mother's womb, so if a monk were to perform an abortion, he would be violating the Buddhist precepts, found guilty of murder and ex-communicated. Thus, if there is an estimated 1,000,000 babies who are blessed and born each year in Japan, the numbers of babies whose lives are cut short go beyond that. This situation where murder has become a common practice is a serious matter. It should not be overlooked and must be brought back into attention in the field of bioethics.

The term "bioethics" was first used by Professor V.R. Potter at the University of Wisconsin in 1970. Therefore, the term has only been in use for about 35 years. The first so-called "test-tube baby" was born in 1978 in England and in 1984 in Japan. I do not know how those children are doing now, but the child in England will be 28 years old this year and the child in Japan is still 22 years old. In this sense, the matter of in-vitro fertilization should not be faded yet. Despite effective advances in reproductive medicine, and extremely rapid progress in gene manipulation, has begun to affect not only the field of medicine, but also affects various other areas such as welfare, environmental issues, legal issues, population issues involving measures for the declining birthrate, the illegal buying and selling of organs due to poverty, food policy, and health issues caused from food which has been genetically altered. Recently, the subject of bioethics has expanded to a much broader range in this way.

Perspectives on Surrogate-mother Births

The opinion of each case varies on the individual and their position. For example, about 10 days ago, there was an article in the Asahi Newspaper entitled "A Look into Surrogate-Mother Birthing," (October, 21st) which surveyed the opinions of 3 people. The article reported an incident where a menopausal mother was a surrogate-mother for her daugh-

ter and husband. I am sure some of you have read the article.

One of the commentators, Tsutomu Araki, president of the Nippon Medical School, prohibited surrogate-mother birthing during his term as chairperson of Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and stated four reasons for the objection to surrogate-mother birthing:

1. would cause a child to be separated from its birthmother, thus interfering with the welfare of that child.
2. would cause mental and physical anguish for the surrogate-mother who would be connected to the child as third party.
3. causes relationship problems for the family.
4. is not well accepted by society.

Needless to say, there were no reasons given related to the mystical realm. However, Dr. Araki comments in this article that we have little choice but to accept the public's opinion and a voice of patients despite the complex nature of this issue, since there are many couples, like the Mukai's who choose surrogate-mother birthing overseas.

Yoko Matsubara, Professor of Graduate School of core ethics and frontier sciences of Ritsumeikan University, takes an opposite stance on the issue. She states that while birth and pregnancies may always face some danger, she fears that the risk of lawsuits involving surrogate-mother birth is far greater and will attract less people to the profession of obstetric.

Another commentator, Dr. Yahiro Netsu (Director of Suwa Maternity Clinic) told the paper, "My heart cannot be saved by turning my back on couples who cannot have children due to a lack of sperm, eggs, or a non-existence of a uterus, but still hope to have children." He is the doctor who performed this surrogate-mother procedure. I believe his prime reason to take part in it is his sense of duty as a doctor to help fulfill the wishes of patients. He also commented on the criticism regarding women as "baby making tools," by stating that it the same as using women as tools when bringing a bride from overseas for the sake of continuing a lineage or adding an extra member to a family's work force. In addition, he stated that prohibiting surrogate-mother birthing in Japan but overlooking them when they take place overseas is the same as "illegally dumping our waste" overseas and that a pregnant woman in her fifties faces the same risks as elderly women who play sports or go hiking. He expressed that medicine is an accumulation of experiments on the human body in a sense. It may sound rather tactless, but nonetheless this can also be seen as one reason.

In the same Asahi Newspaper, reported on October 16th, Takahide

Mori, MD PhD, Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University and President of International Society for In Vitro Fertilization (ISIVF), shared his expert opinions on the matter by stating that, “Married couples have the particular right to choose to have children. To take away the means of having children from married couples who have no other options is an infringement on the pursuit of their happiness.”

Additionally, Kayako Noguchi, secretary general of “Tsugiki Kazoku No Kai,” an adoptive parents’ support group, expressed her views in the same article by stating, “How will the child react when he or she is old enough to know the truth? If you are considering the child’s feelings in the future, having the grandmother as a surrogate-mother is not an option.”

As I will touch on this subject later, I feel that we need to respect the child’s feelings more, but as Dr. Araki of the Nippon Medical School mentioned, “We need to protect the child’s right to know its blood relations, but it is not necessary for the parents to thoughtlessly tell the child that it was conceived from surrogate-mother birthing.” Dr. Netsu consults the party involved by initially telling them, “Let’s proceed by keeping everything in the open for the sake of our successor.” Yet, he grieves that the families who keep in contact with him even after the birth of the child has decreased to 10%.

Perhaps, the mothers, fathers, and parties involved who have children this way, will not tell the facts to the child in many instances. I cannot know how they feel, but it seems that there is factor of guilty feelings involved. They may feel that it is in the best interest of the child to hide the truth, but if they have faith that they made the right choice, they should not feel they must hide the truth from the child. Or it would appear that it is too much of a burden for parents who have children in this way because they carry a far greater amount of responsibility compared to parents who have children naturally.

Bioethics—Perspectives on Life and the World

There is a necessity to discuss the issue of bioethics from different perspectives, fields and its relation to the modern world. As I have mentioned earlier, I feel that is important to re-consider the issues of bioethics from the aspect of religion and philosophy and focus again on its origins. If science continues to advance at such an accelerating speed, I fear it may go beyond our control and give rise to an irreversible consequence. It will be too late when the issue turns into something out of a science fiction movie. In addition, as individuals we are all involved

with the issue of bioethics. Simply stated, the issues of bioethics lie in the attitude we have when we face our last moment of life, how we accept death, how we tackle incurable illnesses, or how to I would react if I could not have children myself. Regarding this issue, it makes very little difference as individuals whether you are doctor, lawyer, politician or a teacher of religion.

It is most important that as individuals we hold steadfast and correct views of the world and life. Although I am sure there are various perspectives of life and world views, as a Buddhist I have focused on studying Shakyamuni Buddhism and believe it to be the correct teaching. Therefore, I would like to discuss bioethics from this standpoint. Incidentally, you may be unfamiliar with the term, “Shakyamuni Buddhism.” Actually, I’ve only recently started using this term so it is not commonly used at all. The teaching is derived from Shakyamuni Buddha who was born in India 2,500 years ago and is commonly known as Southern Theravāda Buddhism or Early Buddhism. Or it may be recognized as Hinayana Buddhism that means “inferior way” in comparison with Mahayana Buddhism that means “great way.” Yet, there is no question that Hinayana Buddhism is discriminatory in naming.

Whether it is called Early Buddhism or Southern Theravāda Buddhism, its naming cannot be deemed justified. Shakyamuni Buddhism not only spread through the southern areas of Thailand and Sri Lanka, but also expanded to China and Japan. And according to the travel diary of Xuanzang who was famous Buddhist monk also known as Táng-Sānzāng, in the 7th century India, Shakyamuni Buddhism was far more prevalent than Mahayana Buddhism. So, Shakyamuni Buddhism was not just limited to early period.

The reason why I call it “Shakyamuni Buddhism” is that Early Buddhism or Southern Theravāda Buddhism is based on the teaching of historical Shakyamuni himself. On the other hand, Mahayana Buddhism is referred to as the teachings of Amitābha Buddha or Bhaisajyaguru known as Medicine Buddha or Vairocana Buddha or “eternal Buddha” of the Lotus Sutra whose name is Shakyamuni but it doesn’t mean historical Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Worldview of Shakyamuni Buddha (1)

—Life Is Not a One Time Drill

According to one of the central pillars of Shakyamuni Buddha’s views of life and the world, we do not live only one life. Our life extends into the next life and you can say we also possess a past life. You may not

remember how you came into this life from the past, but it will connect to your next life which can be defined as one part of “transmigration” (samsara) in Buddhist terms. Here is an episode which Buddhist scholars often quote: When the Buddha was asked whether there is life after death, he gave no answer keeping silent. This is commonly taken by many scholars as denial of transmigration. They mean “life after death” is not the true teaching of the Shakyamuni Buddha. But they are wrong. The Buddha did not answer the question clearly because he asked, “whether there is life after death of Buddha who has found a solution from transmigration.” In short, the question was not about our ordinary people. I hope you will read my paper for further detail entitled “On Transmigration: Re-examination of *Avyākata*, *Paṭiccasamuppāda* and *Anattan*” (*Bulletin of Orientology. Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters, Toyo University* No. 58, March 2006).

Surely, transmigration is a very basic foundation of Buddhist life and world views. If there was no such thing as transmigration, we would have no need to perform funerals, and 1 or 3 year death anniversaries. If there was no life after death, there would be no Pure land of Perfect Bliss. This applies to all types of Buddhism not just with Shakyamuni Buddhism. If there are any Buddhist documents such as Sutras and the scriptures by many historical founders of Buddhist school such as Nichiren which state that our lives are a one time drill, I would like to peruse them.

However, it is up to the individual whether to believe this or not. Still, as Buddhist scholar, I must strongly oppose the idea that Shakyamuni did not expound the concept of transmigration or that there is no life after death. I am not questioning the individual’s principles, but I do question the teachings of the Buddha.

If we could think of life as continuing on after death and we believed that to be true, the ways we accept announcement of approaching death when becoming ill, would differ considerably.

Although it may sound conceited of me to say so, I have no fear of my own death. I always tell my students that I cannot imagine that I am here by coincidence and come from nothing. Even though I do not recall it, I feel that my life existed before I was born into this world, and that I am consciously aware that is the reason why I exist right now. I am not afraid of death because I cannot believe that my life will disappear like a cloud mist without any trace of shape. I feel that I will continue to exist in different form. I mean to say that I look forward to being reborn into my next life because I have not done anything wrong or shameful and have strived to live a good life. Nevertheless, it is possible that I could

not be brave as my word in the face of my actual death.

Recently, I had a discussion with the chief doctor of the terminal care team in the Tokyo University Hospital. He told me that he was disappointed when he looked to Buddhism for mental support, immediately after he was first appointed as the chief of the terminal care team. When I explained the view of life from a Buddhist perspective, he said that it was exactly what he was looking for and I gave my book to him. It is most likely, that the doctor had read a misinterpretation of Buddhism that stated there is no life after death.

The world view that “life is continues after death,” is a notion that can become one guideline when contemplating bioethics.

The World Views of Shakyamuni Buddhism (2)

—Being Born into This World of Our Own Accord

Another pillar of Shakyamuni Buddhism’s views on life and the world is that human beings are born into this world of their own accord. Our children sometimes such rude things as to their fathers saying, “I didn’t ask to be born.” In fact, in the world view of Buddhism, we are born into this world of our own choice. If our parents could give birth to us any way they wanted, they would most likely do a better job of giving birth to us. And they would never have to worry about infertility, to begin with.

In the sutras of the Shakyamuni Buddha, it is written that the world and society we live in and single individual’s life was not created from God (*issaranimmānāhetu*) nor created coincidentally (*ahetu-apaccaya*) nor determined by destiny (*pubbekatahetu*). It stems from our actions. Therefore, it is called the doctrine of karma (*kammavāda*), the theory of moral acts (*kiriyavāda*), and the doctrine of human effort (*viriyavāda*).

In a word, we as individuals have a responsibility to create our own happiness. If we become unhappy, we cannot blame our parents or society because we are responsible for our own lives. From the standpoint of parents, they cannot take the place of their children’s suffering. Whether you like it or not, we have to carry our own burdens on our backs. In Buddhist terms, it is referred to as “*kammassakata* (reaping what we sow).” This also applies to us in the same way as individuals, in society, and in the world. We can change society with a single vote and we can also change the earth’s environment if we stopped wasting unnecessary electricity and gas. In Buddhism, this is called the theory of collective karma (summary of individual karmas). In addition, in Shakyamuni Buddhism it is explained that, this sort of collective karma creates and

also destroys the solar system in outer space. Being addicted to gourmet food or becoming lazy causes wars, epidemics, famine, and eventually create causes that lead to the destruction of the earth. If we avoid killing living things, providing medicine and food to people, we can avoid such casualties. Whether conditions on earth remain good or bad, all depends on the results of the actions of the people who exist in it. It means that as individuals we create our own lives as well as the communities and earth we live in.

In this way, for better or for worse the results based on our actions is termed “karma.” Since our actions are a result of our intentions, we can view the true nature of “karma” as our intentions.

As Japanese, we mourn the dead for 49 days. We call it *Chū U* and *Chū In* (the period of time between death and rebirth). The character for “U” for *Chū U* and the character for “In” for *Chū In* is derived from the Heart Sutra (*Sutra of the Heart of Wisdom*). Within that verse, exist five elements that represent the body and mind; 色 (form), 受 (sensation), 想 (recognition), 行 (mental action), 識 (consciousness) which is found in the following Heart Sutra’s verse:

色即是空 空即是色 受想行識亦復如是 (Form does not differ from Emptiness. Emptiness does not differ from Form. The same is true for Sensation, Recognition, Mental action, and Consciousness).

The condition of which we live and work now is called *Hon Nu*, the moment of death is called *Shi U* and *Shū U* is the moment at which you are reborn and conceived inside the mother’s womb. In between *Shi U* and *Shō U*, *Chū U* exists. You cannot see it, but it has form in which you will be reborn and is composed of the five elements of 色 (form), 受 (sensation), 想 (recognition), 行 (mental action), 識 (consciousness) that I mentioned earlier. And is termed “Gandarva,” after an aroma consuming fairy or “being of the causal continuum of consciousness.” A dog’s Gandarva takes the form of a dog and a person’s Gandarva take the form of a human being. It is said that *Chū U* last 49 days, so in Buddhism when people pass away, we mourn them for 49 days and pay our respects to the deceased.

Hence, an entire life’s worth of actions that have been taken up to the moment of death is crystallized into one karmic spirit in *Chū U* and enters the fertilized egg and finally develops into a life form for the first time in the mother’s womb.

As a result, according to the world views of Buddhism, childbirth takes more than just a mother’s eggs and father’s sperm coming together. The birth of a new life is critically dependent on the child’s will as a

Gandarva to enter at that moment. It is not guaranteed that a healthy married couple will conceive children through intercourse even with all the proper conditions. A sage like the Buddha can choose his parents by free will, but as common mortals we choose our parents from accumulation of our karma. Thus, we unconsciously choose our parents and are born into this world. In effect, our will and karma are directly connected to our birth while making our parents an indirect factor.

This all may sound unbelievable, but when you consider it from a worldly Buddhist perspective, transmigration is not difficult to understand. What do you think?

Autonomy

By the way, it has been said that bioethics is based on the ideas of informed consent and autonomy. Autonomy means “self-determination” and informed consent helps “correctly making self-determination.” Thus, it can be said that the core principle of bioethics is autonomy.

In the Japanese language, some suggested translations for informed consent are “explanation and agreement,” “explanation and understanding convincing and agreement,” “agreement based on thorough explanation and understanding,” and “self-determination based on carefully thinking.” I would like to make a distinction from autonomy by stating that it is defined as “thorough explanation and understanding for the purpose of attaining agreement.”

Let us take a look at who “self” refers to in “self-determination” at birth. Is it the mother or the father? By the time children develop into a certain stage, we tell our children to make their own decisions as adults. Therefore “self” refers to that child himself. Although parents raise the fetus through reproductive activity, the child is the very person being born. If independence and self-determination are required of a child after birth, then a child should be granted the same right at the time of birth.

With this in mind, we have no way of confirming the intention of the child at the time of birth. Also, as parents it is natural to have desire to carry all the burdens of our children, but that is out of our hands. For instance, most parents want to change places when seeing their sick baby suffering. Yet, we all know that in reality that cannot be possible.

It could be said that the biggest dilemma in bioethics pertains to birth lies in the verity that a child must bear his own responsibilities himself, but does not possess his right of self-determination.

Given this perspective, the most important principles in bioethics may

be that when children grow up they should be informed of the facts of their birth as they really are, and feel happy to have been born and take initiative to take on their own responsibilities in life. We need to prepare such situations for them. I think in the case of birth this could be considered informed consent, though it reverses the usual order. If parents cannot tell the child the truth of its birth, it could not be said that informed consent was carried out.

Buddhism classifies death into two types. One is death due to the termination of your life, the other is having your life cut short by an unfortunate incident. It is not difficult to send words of sympathy at a funeral of those who died of natural death, but it much more difficult to think of words to give those who died of accidents, or were victims of crimes or died young. Duration of our life is most definitely not a result of destiny, but rather the result of your life's karma. If we take care of our health we can prolong our lives, but we can also bring harm to it by not taking care.

Hence, facing death of the former type is our responsibility, but we cannot take responsibility for death of the latter type, even if we wanted do so, because it is caused by uncontrollable outside forces. That is why it is called the "death with one's boots on." Despite the fact that there is no such thing as a happy death or an unhappy one, I believe that the former can be considered a happy death and the latter can be seen as an unhappy death. Though an auto accident death could be considered his portion of life, then there would be no distinction between the theory of destiny and karma-theory. Therefore, I disagree.

Whether it is vitro fertilization or birth by a sarrogate-mother, we can say that it is the will of the child to be born under such conditions because his karmic spirit enters the fertilized egg at that moment. Yet, if informed consent does not take place after the child has grown up, a problem will arise. At that point, the child has already been born so even if the parents were asked to do so, they have no way of taking responsibility.

If we assume that happy births occur when children are naturally born following their karma, it is easier for them to accept that they must take responsibility for their own lives. However, if children who were born with in vitro fertilization or borrowed wombs were asked to take responsibility for their own lives, it would be thought of as an unhappy birth because it is hard for them to control the situation. I am sure that there are cases where children born from in vitro fertilization and borrowed wombs are happy with coming into this world, but if those children suddenly hold their parents responsible for their lives, what can their par-

ents do for them?

The World Views of Shakyamuni Buddhism (3)

—Death Approaches Even With a Grateful Life

Another pillar of Shakyamuni Buddhism's life and world views is to have appreciation for being born as a human being, yet, to be born means that we must someday die. In Buddhist terms, we refer to this as "*Sabbe-saMkhaaraa-anicca*" (all composite phenomena are impermanent) and "*Sabbe-dhamma-anatta*" (all phenomena are empty and selfless. So even if we wish for long life and health, things may not always turn on the way we want. In other words, if possess unreasonable desires then our suffering becomes much larger.

I am sure that you are familiar with the Japanese comedic story telling of "Hanami No Aduchi" (The Vengeance at the cherry-blossom viewing), a tale about young people in the Edo period who lived in a downtown called Shitaya who trying to find something interesting to do that wouldn't cost a dime. They decided to gather a crowd and start a rumor about a fake vengeance. Their plot was as follows: after a curious crowd was growing enough, a man made-up as a worshipper who were on his way to a nationwide pilgrimage to the Kokubunji Temples participates in arbitration and pulled out *sake* (rice wine), something to eat, and *shamisen* (a three stringed instrument) and starts to have a drinking party. However, unexpectedly a real samurai made his way toward the group. That is the story. At the scene of assumed vengeance the young man says, "Hey there, are you Dango Kushisuke, the evil man who killed my father seven years ago without punishment? Meeting you here is like the blind turtle finding a floating wood and meeting the day to see the Udumbara flowers. Now, you must stand up and fight me fair and square!"

There is another story, called the comedic tale of Takadano-baba which is a place where held the duel of Yasubē Horibe, a member of "The Loyal Forty-Seven Samurai (Chūshingura)." This story is also a type of "vengeance play" where a vengeance is faked and people gather to watch. A Rōnin (former samurai warrior) father and his child charge the outdoor tea houses some money as their share for the play.

There is a speech in the story that reads, "Because of travel to avenge thou, I have been windswept and drenched by the pouring rain, while looking forward eagerly to get my revenge. Meeting you here is like the blind turtle finding a floating wood and meeting the day to see the Udumbara flowers. Now, I avenge my father! I challenge you to fight me

fair and square!”

The line about the blind turtle symbolizes that low probability of encountering Buddhism is the same as a blind turtle finding in the ocean a floating sandalwood stick with a hole in it to carry him when coming up for air every 100 years. Depending on some sutras, the turtle is referred to as the “one eye-turtle,” but has the same meaning.

“*Udumbara*” is Sanskrit name of a flower. It belongs to the fig family. The leaves look like fruits and wraps around many flowers inside it so that they cannot be seen from the outside. There is a myth that it blooms once only every three thousand years. In the Buddhist scriptures, everything is exaggerated so the flower is said to bloom only once during countless ages. This also symbolizes the rarity of being born a human.

I am trying to say that thankfully, we were not born cows or horses, or even worse fly or cockroach which is hated by everyone. Recently, since pets are well cherished, some of you may think that you wished you were born a dog or hope to be re-born as a cat. Yet, if a witch told you she would grant you your wish to become a dog, nobody would choose to do so.

There are those who are not grateful to be born a human being and waste their lives. The scripture point is that being born a human is no easy matter and that we should not live our lives full of regret. We must live this life to the fullest because the causes we make in this life will be a core decisive factor of what life we will have next.

Nevertheless, since all things are impermanent in life whether you like it or not death becomes apparent at some point in time. Even if you desire immortality, that is impossible. We must accept our life span for what it is. As I mentioned before, our life span is something we create ourselves and not left up to destiny. There are some inevitable circumstances, but it is not impossible to live a health and long life if you maintain a healthy life style. Still, there is little chance that a hundred years of age will progress to two hundred. That is precisely why we must make use of our lives within the prescribed life span that was created by our karma.

It is difficult to clearly say how to live your life to the fullest but since I am sure that most of you here today are Buddhist, I think that it means to live a life according to Buddhism. I will not discuss this in detail to all of you because it would like a Japanese proverb, “to preach Buddhism to Shakyamuni Buddha,” but I would like to make one point that the principle training of Shakyamuni Buddhism is to live with the “little desire and contentment.” In other words, live with the least desires, but live with the biggest amount of content.

People have always had a strong sense of greed and easily become self absorbed. Yet, if we minimize our desires, we can let go of our self-ish nature. And we can put ourselves in other people's shoes and understand them better. Thus, we can eradicate prejudice and live according to the Middle Way. Then we can rejoice in the happiness of others and share the suffering of others as well. At times, the happiness of others become our suffering and vice versa, but I am certain that all of you understand well that true joy is derived from sharing happiness with others.

If we think of "little desire and contentment," "rejoicing in the happiness of others," and "sharing the suffering of others" as keywords, I doubt that anyone will make such comments regarding the topic of a fifty year old woman who chooses to be surrogate-mother and say, "A married couple has a specific right to have children. If you take away the only option a married couple has for bearing children, you are also taking away their right to pursuit of happiness."

A kind of person who becomes a donor would most likely share the same sentiments to begin with. Therefore, if you can share this same attitude as a one who receives such procedures, then there would be no need for the buying and selling of organs. Also, if we become aware that death is inevitable, then the desire to prolong our life by buying other people's organs would diminish. Lately, it seems many people go to China to receive organ transplants. There was a Chinese person who was being interviewed on television. The person commented by saying, "I just cannot agree with selling and giving up such a valuable resource to foreigners for profit." It is said, that in China the organs of those who undergo the death penalty are reused. This actual situation is far removed from the idea of "sharing the suffering of others as our own."

So far I have mentioned that *in vitro* fertilization or surrogate-mother birthing can be said the result of the child's will in a sense. Yet, there is a possibility that informed consent will not successfully take place. Then, the parents should hold back their desires.

Conclusion

I think it may be rude to discuss those topics in such an official way or in formalism, because there are many people who carry the unspeakable suffering. Therefore, as I said in the beginning, I gave my lecture from the standpoint of how to live, how to age, how to die as individuals. My intention is not to advocate the banning of surrogate-mother birthing or organ transplants. I would just like to say that if we ever encounter

issues of bioethics, then as individuals we should manage the situation based on the teaching of Buddhist perspectives of life and the world and hold fast to our principles.

In an ethical issue, we should take a responsible approach and make judgment based on the individual's perspectives of life and the world. And it is not inconvenient to say that guidelines can be established within a collective group who share the same values. Yet, in society various kinds of values must be allowed, so I do not feel that my opinions that I have shared up to now are absolute.

Only, I believe we can construct some guidelines for bioethics from the life and world views of Shakyamuni Buddhism as stated. In short I have summarized them in the following principles:

1. Living a long life in this world is precious. It is further noble to live a life that faces death by looking forward to the next with enthusiasm.
2. People are born of their own will. The basis of bioethics is informed consent and respect of autonomy.

The birth of the child must focus on that child's self-determination and not the self-determination of the parents. In this sense, you should inform the child the truth of his origins so that the child is convinced that he is responsible for his own life. It can be called informed consent, though not usually order.

3. The best way to live is to live life to the fullest in limited time we have and accept the fact that as humans we are both transient and selfless. The greatest possible way to live is to "rejoicing in the happiness of others," and "sharing in the suffering of others." I hope that the recipients as well as donors of procedures will share the same outlook.

I will end my lecture on this note and I thank you for listening to my speech today.