

RELI2732 Notes

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1 Definitions

1.1 A

1.2 B

1.2.1 Brain Death

- **complete loss of all brain function**
 - both voluntary **AND**
 - involuntary
 - this is how it differs from a vegetative state
- used as a **legal indicator of death** in many jurisdictions

1.3 C

1.3.1 Cosmology

- study of the **origins of life** and **the universe**
 - large scale properties of the universe as a whole
- what is the **religious culture's** view of the **universe**?

1.4 D

1.4.1 Discourse Community

- group of people who **share** a common discourse (**common rhetorical goals**)
 - i.e., a **set of basic values and assumptions**
 - think Dungeons and Dragons players
- in the past discourse communities were a lot harder to form
 - limitations of media
 - if a story was **important enough** to share **it was a big deal**

1.5 E

1.5.1 Epoché

- suspension of judgement
- withholding of assent
- all **judgements** on **non-evident** matters are **suspended**
- role in **phenomenology**
 - block biases and assumptions
 - explain a phenomenon in terms of an inherent system of meaning
 - this predisposition **must be assumed** before phenomenological study
- don't worry about the **truth of stories**
 - worry about what they mean to people

1.6 F

1.7 G

1.8 H

1.9 I

1.9.1 Iron Crutch Li

- Li Tieguai

- one of the **eight immortals** of **Taoist pantheon**
 - able to leave his body and commune with deities
 - while he was gone his body was **like a dead person**
 - always back within 7 days
- had an assistant
 - tasked with watching over his body
 - one day heard his mother was dying
 - decided to burn Li's body after 6 days instead of 7
 - but Li was not dead
 - when he came back he took the body of a beggar with an iron crutch

1.10 J

1.11 K

1.12 L

1.13 M

1.13.1 Memento Mori

- “reminder of mortality”
- “remembrance of death”
- medieval Latin Christian
- **reflection on mortality**
 - consider **vanity of earthly life**
- the idea of being conscious of death
 - reflect on
 - lives
 - morality
 - place in the world

1.14 N

1.15 O

1.15.1 Ontology

- study of **existence**
- what does it mean to exist?
 - **monistic**
 - one fundamental principle
 - e.g., scientism
 - **dualistic**
 - two fundamental principles
 - spirit and matter

1.16 P

1.16.1 Phenomenology

- consider **phenomena** as **distinct from being**
- focus on **consciousness** and **objects of direct experience**
- see definition of **Epoché**
 - actively not deciding the truth of a claim
- in the context of religious studies
 - look at the **lived experience** of religious people

- do not approach from an internal faith-based perspective

1.17 Q

1.18 R

1.19 S

1.19.1 Soteriology

- study of **religious doctrines of salvation**
- *soterios* = salvation in Latin
- Christianity
 - Christ is the savior
- some religions **don't have a soteriology**

1.20 T

1.20.1 Taphophobia

- **fear of being buried alive**
- before medical advances, death was not always clear
 - safety coffins to address this
 - designs to allow the buried person to signal they are alive

1.20.2 Thanatology

- **study of death**

1.20.3 Theology

- how are gods understood?
- study of a **religion from within**

1.21 U

1.22 V

1.23 W

1.24 X

1.25 Y

1.26 Z

2 Introduction

2.1 Buddhist Parable of the Mustard Seed

- begins with a commentary on **reincarnation**
 - “flowing-on for a hundred thousand ages”
 - “evolved in this Buddha-era among gods and men”
 - **cosmological claim**
- Gotami-tissa
 - poor family
 - “skinny Gotami”

- Gotami has a son
 - people respect her now
 - **son dies**
 - this **drives her crazy**
 - “sorrow-to-the-point-of-madness”
 - she still feels attached to the body
- she desperately carries the body around
 - begs for medicine for her dead son
 - people revile her but she does not understand
- finally, a wise man tells her to **ask the Buddha for “medicine”**

2.1.1 What Sort of Medicine is the Man Talking About?

- **advice/teaching** rather than physical medicine
- in fact, the Buddha tells her:
 - go to a house where they have not experienced death
 - ask them for a mustard seed
- Gotami searches for a family who has not experienced death
 - she cannot find one
 - so what use are their mustard seeds?
- finally she realizes the **futility of her madness**
 - death is a fact of life

2.2 Wari Mortuary Cannibalism

2.3 Religious Ritual (Characteristics)

- rituals
 - **invariant**
 - tied into **understanding** of an overall act
- religious rituals
 - **embedded in cultural systems**
 - performed
 - real audience
 - marriage
 - funeral
 - imagined audience
 - prayer
 - formalistic
 - **rules-governed**
 - traditionalistic
 - **invariant**
 - not that it **doesn’t change**
 - rather that it **appears not to change**
- ritualization **posits the existence of an authoritative reality**
 - this reality **dictates the immediate situation**

2.3.1 Effects of Ritual

- forms/**reinforces communities**
- connect actions with **authoritative reality**
- experiential and performative explanation of social realities
 - reverence of elders in Chinese religion
 - at a funeral, the youngest descendent acts as the deceased for a day
 - they get to experience reverence for the day

2.3.2 The Rite of Passage

- involve a **change of social status**
 - e.g., Bar Mitzvah
- three stages
 1. **separation**
 - taken out of every day situation
 - separated from typical social circumstances
 2. **liminality**
 - between two different states
 - e.g., both boy and man at once
 - individuality is limited
 3. **reintegration**
 - often with special signs of having completed ritual
 - e.g., wedding rings

2.4 Van Gennep's Rite of Passage

2.5 Various Definitions of "Death"

2.5.1 Traditional

- cessation of breath

2.5.2 Chinese Culture

- Iron Crutch Li
- the dead were left out and venerated for a period of time
 - perhaps like Iron Crutch Li they were just visiting the gods

2.5.3 Harvard

- a person can be declared dead IF
 - **brain function** is **irreversibly lost**
 - even though heart/lung activity is present due to **mechanical support**
- **brain death**

2.5.4 Veatch's Four Possibilities

1. irreversible loss of the **flow of vital fluids**
2. irreversible **loss of soul**
3. irreversible **loss of brain function**
 - including self-regulation (involuntary function)
4. **loss of capacity for social function** due to **loss of higher brain function**

2.6 Issues with Comparative Study of Religion

- there are *certain* cases for which this might be okay
 - keep it objective
 - focus on specific comparison/contrast
 - how does a given religion handle death?

2.6.1 E.B. Tyler

- **primitive cultures**
 - somewhat pejorative
 - can one culture be more primitive than another?

– inferior to another?

2.6.2 Essentialism

- the assumption that there is **one original religion** from which **all others branch**
- **no evidence for this whatsoever**