

RELI2732 Notes Pre-Midterm

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January 8, 2019

Contents

1	Definitions	4
1.1	A	4
1.2	B	4
1.2.1	Brain Death	4
1.3	C	4
1.3.1	Cosmology	4
1.4	D	4
1.4.1	Discourse Community	4
1.5	E	4
1.5.1	Epoché	4
1.6	F	4
1.7	G	4
1.8	H	4
1.9	I	4
1.9.1	Iron Crutch Li	4
1.10	J	5
1.11	K	5
1.12	L	5
1.13	M	5
1.13.1	Memento Mori	5
1.14	N	5
1.15	O	5
1.15.1	Ontology	5
1.16	P	5
1.16.1	Phenomenology	5
1.17	Q	6
1.18	R	6
1.19	S	6
1.19.1	Soteriology	6
1.20	T	6
1.20.1	Taphophobia	6
1.20.2	Thanatology	6
1.20.3	Theology	6
1.21	U	6
1.22	V	6
1.23	W	6
1.24	X	6
1.25	Y	6
1.26	Z	6
2	Introduction	6
2.1	Buddhist Parable of the Mustard Seed	6
2.1.1	What Sort of Medicine is the Man Talking About?	7
2.2	Wari Mortuary Cannibalism	7
2.3	Religious Ritual (Characteristics)	7
2.3.1	Effects of Ritual	7
2.3.2	Van Gennep’s Rite of Passage	8
2.4	Various Definitions of “Death”	8
2.4.1	Traditional	8
2.4.2	Chinese Culture	8
2.4.3	Harvard	8
2.4.4	Veatch’s Four Possibilities	8

2.5	Issues with Comparative Study of Religion	8
2.5.1	E.B. Tyler	8
2.5.2	Essentialism	9
3	Primal Perspectives	9
4	Death in the Ancient World	9
5	Jewish Perspectives	9
6	Christian Perspectives	9
7	Muslim Perspectives	9

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 Van Gennep's 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 Various Definitions of “Death”

2.4.1 Traditional

- cessation of breath

2.4.2 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

2.4.3 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**

2.4.4 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**

2.5 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?

2.5.1 E.B. Tyler

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

2.5.2 Essentialism

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

3 Primal Perspectives

4 Death in the Ancient World

5 Jewish Perspectives

6 Christian Perspectives

7 Muslim Perspectives