**Title**

COVID-19, Global Ethics, and *Jihi*: A voice from East Asian Philosophy

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**A statement of competing interests and funding support**

This work was supported by Mitsubishi Foundation. The funders played no role in the study design and preparation of the manuscript.

**A statement of any submissions of very similar work**

None.

**Abstract**

COVID-19 has rapidly become a pandemic of an unprecedented scale. Grasping this tragic situation from a macroscopic perspective and striving to create peace in the minds are required to ethicists and philosophers. Buddha’s *Jihi* is a key idea of the East Asian thought. The concept of *Jihi* implies concerning others. It requires people to pray sincerely for the well-being and peace-of-mind of those who are suffering, regardless of nationality, age, gender, or family origin, and mourn this situation together. Thus, *Jihi* can play a role for the global ethics with situations of the pandemic COVID-19 crisis.

**Main article with references**

**1. Introduction**

COVID-19, first detected in Asia in December 2019, has rapidly become a pandemic of an unprecedented scale. In Japan, it began as an epidemic as cases of the coronavirus were confirmed among the passengers of the Diamond Princess cruise ship (1). Currently, as of April 2020, the country is teetering on the brink of explosive infection spread. Depletion of medical resources and exhaustion among medical practitioners are major issues worldwide, as each nation struggles to continue providing medical care to patients in severe conditions. None of us had anticipated such a disastrous state of the world 6 months ago.

A smattering of many societal requests require insight from ethicists and philosophers. Grasping this tragic situation from a macroscopic perspective, i.e., one considering the entire human history, and then striving to create peace in the minds of those living through this horrific era is truly the essential work required of philosophers.

**2. *Jihi* in Buddhism**

Even as secularized a society as Japan is faced with situations of this pandemic COVID-19 crisis, people may unconsciously seek peace of mind, i.e., in Buddhism originated in India.

Buddha’s *Jihi* is a key idea for mentality of Japanese people*.* Our trust in the world forms the foundation upon which we may embrace nature as it is. We place fundamental trust in the truthfulness, fairness, and infiniteness of the intellect that transcends self: this is Buddha’s *Jihi*. *Jihi* is a concept introduced to Japan as an element that forms the basis of Buddhism. The characters 慈 (*Ji* in Japanese, maitrī in Sanskrit) and 悲 (*Hi* in Japanese, karuṇā in Sanskrit) represent the first two of the Four Immeasurables. *Ji*, which means loving-kindness or benevolence, signifies “a heart that longs to provide comfort to living things”; it means to love all things that have life and to seek peace and happiness and consider their interests at all times (2). *Hi* is a result of maitrī, and is compassion; it signifies “a heart that desires to remove suffering from people.” The latter character also encompasses a feeling of compassion for living things, which are subjected to various forms of physical and mental suffering. *Jihi* is Buddha’s gaze that looks upon everything and everyone equally. There is no discrimination between old and young, or good and bad (3). As *Jihi* applies not only to human beings, the essence of *Jihi* also represents compassion, care, protection, and nurturing for all living things (4).

The Pure Land faith is the one of core concepts in Buddhism. The Pure Land faith refers to the belief that a pure world can be sought by casting oneself on Buddha (Amithaba)’s mercy, by realizing that we are powerless beings, and by acknowledging that this life filled with pain and long-suffering is awful. The very awareness that human beings are powerless leads to reliance on *Kami* (*Shinto*’s Gods), Buddha, fate, or nature; a greater power beyond the realm of human beings represents the philosophy underlying the Japanese view of the world that accepts nature as it is (5).

**3. *Jihi* and Global Ethics**

What are the expectations of global ethics during the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic? We believe that one of fundamental pillars of global ethics is to pray sincerely for the well-being and peace-of-mind of those who are suffering, regardless of nationality, age, gender, or family origin, and mourn this situation together. This could be regarded as a request for global solidarity, or perhaps a request for global concern, much like ‘*Sorge*’ [care], as described by Heidegger.

The term “peace-of-mind” is not just synonymous with “lack of worry” or “calmness,” but rather has a more positive and normative meaning. From the perspective of Buddhist thought, and using philosophical/phenomenological terminology, it would be said that the phenomenal is the horizontal, but at the same time, the horizontal is the phenomenal. “Peace of mind” has superimposable meanings: it means a lack of worry or calmness within an individual’s mind, but also represents this in the whole world. Genuine peace-of-mind of the individual is achieved when peace for the whole world is sought. The concept of *Jihi* describes the relationship between such individuals and the whole.

Most other countries or regions likely have similar ideologies to the Buddhist concept of *Jihi.* Charity is one such concept. We should not confine ourselves to the limits of local ethics, especially now that our everyday lives are threatened by the COVID-19 virus. If ideas such as *Jihi* are bringing about peace to people in Asia, then similar wisdom may also offer the same benefit to those in other regions as well. Similar teachings and ideas can come together as one, slowly amalgamating into a notion that surrounds the entire planet as we struggle to work our way through this crisis. This amalgamation of ideas worldwide should be one common objective for global ethics in this time.

**4. Conclusions**

In today’s world, as COVID-19 continues to spread, global ethics can provide peace of mind for people around the world and ease their suffering even a little. To this end, *Jihi* is a concept that could be incorporated into global ethics in Asia. We sincerely hope that the COVID-19 pandemic will trigger the maturation of global ethics, in terms of bringing together loosely connected teachings and ideas similar to *Jihi* from around the world to form an amalgamation of ideas that could save mankind.

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