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靈魂存在嗎？——瀕死經驗的啟示

關啟文

摘要

人有靈魂嗎？唯物論與二元論的哲學爭論很複雜，任何一方要徹底駁倒另一方都不容易。隨著醫學進步，近年不少關於瀕死經驗(NDE)的研究為這問題提供不少新的資料。若有一些NDE被證明是可靠和真實的話，的確會對唯物論構成挑戰。

本文會指出對NDE的認識與醫療照顧（特別是垂危的病人）息息相關，然後探討種種對瀕死經驗的自然主義解釋。生理學理論包括：NDE純粹是藥物的作用；是缺氧所致等。而心理學理論則包括建構論，人格解體的效應，幻想和想像，或出生時的記憶等。我認為現時還沒有醫學科學或心理學的理論能充分和全面解釋NDE的現象。我接著探討一些可靠知覺的案例和研究，並指出這對瀕死經驗的可靠性提供相當支持。我的結論是：NDE的存在是不能抹殺的，而且NDE對靈魂的存在似乎提供了某程度的支持。

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大乘中觀哲學的生死觀

張穎

摘要

生死是任何哲學和宗教都不能迴避的問題，佛教更是如此。相比中國傳統的儒家思想，佛教對死亡，甚至如何去死具有更詳盡的梳理和論證。而佛教的生死觀又源於佛教的核心的教義以及其背後的哲學思考。根據佛教的教義，覺悟、解脫或涅槃意味著從根本上去除人生的煩惱，而佛教認為，人生最大的煩惱便是生死輪迴之煩惱。但大乘佛教的反對將覺悟與紅塵、涅槃與輪迴看作絕對的二元對立，因此強調在生死煩惱中體驗超越的時空和宇宙的真理。本文以大乘中觀學派為主，從其「緣起性空」的哲學脈絡和「相即不二」的辨證思維，審視大乘佛教的生死觀以及它對中國儒道傳統的補充與融合。最後，文章論述中觀學的生死觀在當代臨終關懷中的啟示意義。

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Habermas and *Zhuangzi* against Liberal Eugenics

David Chai

摘要

是否有一種道家的基因增強倫理學？考慮到時間差異，道家思想能容納這樣一種提問嗎？就生命科技的持續進展而言，我們所面臨的存在論威脅是無比真實的。圍繞著自然與人造的爭論曾經牢固地樹立在神學家與哲學家的頭腦之中；然而最近在自由優生學的喧囂中上述爭論已然消失殆盡。這一運動激起了幾位傑出人士的反對，包括哲學家尤爾根·哈貝馬斯。他們反對的立足點就是基因操控抹煞了人性本質與人造物之間的差別。道家原則上贊同這一反對，但卻是出於不同的理由。本文將表明道家可以提供一種存在—宇宙論辯護——如莊子在關於疾病與畸形的故事中所表明的——以加強哈貝馬斯從社會—政治視角出發的對自由優生學的批評。雖然沒有直接提到自由優生學本身，但與哈貝馬斯一樣，這些故事表明人類生命的開端根本說來是超出人類控制的，而改變這一根基就意味著重塑自我與自由的涵義。

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Does the Soul Exist? What Near-Death Experiences Reveal.

Kwan Kai Man

Abstract

Do human beings have a soul? The philosophical debate between materialism and dualism is highly complex, and it is difficult for one side to convince the other. Due to advances in modern medicine, we now have much more research on the phenomena of near-death experiences (NDEs), and these new data provide more information to settle this debate. If some NDEs were shown to be veridical, it would pose a challenge to materialism.

This paper is the first to argue that the understanding of NDEs is in fact very relevant to medical care, especially the care of terminally ill patients. I explore various naturalistic explanations of NDEs. Physiological theories appeal to the effects of drugs or oxygen deficiency. Psychological theories include constructivism, the defense mechanism of depersonalization, and the appeal to fantasy. I argue that these theories cannot provide an adequate explanation of the phenomena of NDE. I then examine cases of veridical perception in NDE and review the related research. I argue that these cases provide considerable support for the veridicality of at least some NDEs. I finally conclude that we should not dismiss the significance of NDEs and that they seem to provide some support for the existence of the soul.

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Near-Death Experience and Soul: A Response to Kwan Kai Man

Joe Lau

Abstract

Do near-death experiences (NDEs) show that the soul exists? This paper argues that it is premature to draw such a conclusion, even if current science cannot fully explain all features of NDEs. Clear and univocal evidence is needed, but many reports of NDEs are problematic and subject to conflicting interpretations. In addition, many cases of NDEs took place in circumstances where residual neural activities could not be ruled out. Progress can be made with better experimental designs and brain imaging techniques. The paper concludes with a discussion of physicalism and its logical connections to out-of-body experiences.

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Near-Death Experience and the Limits of its Philosophical Implications

William Sin

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to reject Kwan's claim in his paper "Does the Soul Exist? What Near-Death Experiences Reveal." As Kwan draws heavily on references from Pim van Lommel, I also reject van Lommel's position. Kwan and van Lommel's claim is that the phenomenon of NDE supports the view that people's experiential content and their consciousness exist independently of their physical bodies. I raise three objections to Kwan. First, I argue that there is a fundamental difference between life and death; therefore, the phenomena of NDE may give us little idea of whether some form of experience exists after death. Second, there is no evidence that an NDE happens at the exact moment the patient's body shuts down. Third, the potential biological and physiological explanations of NDE are excluded by Kwan and van Lommel without good reason, and the explanations they offer to replace them are far from convincing.

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A Confucian Response to Kwan

Fan Ruiping

Abstract

Kwan addresses near death experiences (NDEs) from different perspectives. His attitude is reasonable and humble. Basically, he indicates that scientific studies of NDE can neither prove nor falsify the existence of the soul. Given this circumstance, religious explanations cannot be excluded as unreasonable. He also rightly points out that one may not draw on NDEs to defend only one particular religious view, such as that of Christianity. This commentary essay suggests that it may also be heuristic to study NDE from a Confucian metaphysical perspective. The classical Confucian view considers the basic element of the cosmos to be *qi* (air/energy 氣), which is believed to be both material and spiritual at the same time. Thus, Confucianism has kept a distance from either Platonic dualism or modern materialistic reductionism. The soul under the Confucian conception includes two parts: the *hun* (魂 the intelligent soul) and the *po* (魄 the animal soul). When a human being dies, "the intelligent soul returns to heaven; the body and the animal soul return to the earth." Accordingly, it is crucial for Confucians to perform ritual sacrifices to seek the union of a deceased ancestor's soul. NDE may take place at the moment the *hun* and *po* have just separated, but are not yet far from each other.

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A Philosophical Response to Kwan

Lawrence Yung

Abstract

This article reviews Kwan Kai Man's discussion of whether alleged cases of near death experience can give support to the existence of the soul. Kwan's discussion strikes a balance between scientific explanations of near death experience and traditional religious views of the soul. The existence of the soul has remained a philosophical problem since ancient Greek philosophy. However, Socrates's attempt to prove the existence of the soul in the *Phaedo* clearly shows that a purely philosophical approach is inadequate. The existence of the soul is a cross-disciplinary problem that calls for cross-disciplinary investigation. Kwan's discussion is a good example of how philosophical thinking and methodology can contribute to this cross-disciplinary investigation into the existence of the soul.

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Death and Dying in Chinese Madhyāmika Buddhism

Ellen Y. Zhang

Abstract

Death is one of the major issues for all religious traditions; it is especially so for Buddhism, as Buddhist teaching is centered upon death and the impermanence of life. This essay discusses death and dying from the framework of the philosophy of life and death, as outlined in the Māhayānic Buddhism of China. The discussion centers on early Madhyāmika Buddhism and its non-dualist approach to samsara and nirvana, this world and the other world, and life and death. The essay shows that the notions of reincarnation and karmic action offer an alternative perspective on the finitude of human existence and reflection upon life's uncertainty pertaining to the experience of death. The author contends that the theory of interdependent origination explicated by Madhyāmika Buddhism helps Buddhists to develop adaptive qualities that enable a person to remain balanced in the maelstrom of change and impermanence. This realization of the impermanence of life and the emptiness of interdependent origination leads to the Buddhist ethical positions of no self and non-attachment.

The essay also addresses the question of hospice care from the perspective of Buddhism as a religious support system. Although Buddhists understand that suffering is a part of life, there is a general desire to avoid suffering whenever possible. Hospice care is important in Buddhism not only because Buddhists recognize the weakness and fragility of the body and mind in the process of death and dying, but also because Buddhists see the connection between the patient's end-of-life needs, both physical and spiritual, and the well-being of other people associated with the patient. The essay argues that a positive attitude toward life and death, as presented in Madhyāmika Buddhism, can help patients and their families to deal with the pain and anxiety of terminal illness.

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A Response to "Death and Dying in Chinese Madhyāmika Buddhism"

Abstract

This article comments on Zhang Ying's essay "Death and Dying in Chinese Madhyāmika Buddhism". The central thesis of Zhang's essay is that Madhyāmika's non-dualist approach to samsara and nirvana, this world and the other world, and life and death helps narrow the gap between life and death and consequently remove our fear of death, which in turn has important implications for hospice care. However, Zhang did not explain how this non-duality can be put into practice, which is a major defect of Zhang's paper. And if accessibility to non-duality in practice is not fully explained, people's confusion around hospice care remains. Moreover, Zhang's essay fails to explain the implications of Madhyāmika's non-dualist approach for the practice of hospice care in contemporary society, which Zhang promised to do so.

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The Madhyāmika and Buddhist Views on Life and Death

Yao Zhihua

Abstract

This essay highlights the tension between the Madhyāmika and mainstream Buddhist views on life and death. As an extreme position that aimed to refute the ideas of Abhidharma and Yogācāra, the Madhyāmika view cannot properly reflect the mainstream Buddhist view on the issue. To explain the possibility of reincarnation, Buddhists developed the concept of a mental continuum, which is in contrast to the Hindu idea of a soul (*ātman*) and the Jaina idea of subtle matter (*pudgala*). Many Buddhist philosophical schools have expounded various concepts along this line, for instance, the Theravāda concept of a life continuum (*bhavāṅga*), the Mahāsāṃghika concept of root consciousness (*mūlavijñāna*), the Mahīśāsaka concept of the aggregate that penetrates life and death (*āsamsārika-skandha*), the Vātsīputrīya concept of person (*pudgala*), and the Yogācāra concept of store consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). With these concepts, the mainstream Buddhist schools assume life after death in the form of a mental continuum.

In contrast, the Madhyāmikās developed their view on life and death based on their doctrine of non-duality. For them, life is no other than death and death is no other than life. It is not necessary that there is life after death. By comparing the various views on death among different world religions, we learn that the Madhyāmikās' view is similar to the Daoist view that sees death as another form of union between heaven and earth, and hence is not substantially different from life itself. I conclude that there is a certain tension between the Madhyāmika view of life and death and the mainstream Buddhist view, and, to a certain extent, it is non-Buddhist.

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Habermas and Zhuangzi against Liberal Eugenics

David Chai

Abstract

What would a Daoist ethics of human enhancement look like? Can Daoism even entertain such a question given the temporal disparity? In light of the ongoing advancement of biotechnology, the ontological threat awaiting us is all too real. Indeed, the debate surrounding natural versus artificial has long been entrenched in the minds of theologians and philosophers alike; in recent years, however, it has been swept up in the commotion over liberal eugenics. This movement has prompted several prominent figures, such as the philosopher Jurgen Habermas, to interject on the grounds that genetic manipulation erases the distinction between the human and the manufactured. Daoism, in principle, would agree, but for different reasons. This paper shows how Daoism can contribute to Habermas's social-political opposition to liberal eugenics by offering an onto-cosmological line of defense, as seen in the stories on illness and malformation in the *Zhuangzi*. While not referring to liberal eugenics per se, these stories argue, as does Habermas, that humans have a beginning to life that is ultimately beyond their control, and to alter this origin is to recast the meaning of selfhood and freedom.

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A Common Front between Habermas and *Zhuangzi*?

Wang Qin

Abstract

Chai attempts to demonstrate how *Zhuangzi* can be used to supplement Habermas's arguments against liberal eugenics. He argues that both Habermas and *Zhuangzi* would view liberal eugenics as falling on the wrong side of the natural/artificial divide. It is debatable whether his interpretation of *Zhuangzi* as both fatalist and epistemically modest suits this conclusion. In particular, it is doubtful that someone who is suspicious of whether humans can ever have knowledge of nature would be entitled to assert that liberal eugenics is unnatural. Even if this position is possible, it would be one that equally rejects Habermas. Habermas attempts to isolate genetic engineering from acceptable interventions in a person's life. Daoism, to the extent that it rejects liberal eugenics, would equally view the latter kinds of interventions as misguided. Chai's Daoist ethics of human enhancement, therefore, could hardly be used to supplement Habermas's position.

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A Question to the Daoist Approach against Liberal Eugenics

Benedict S. B. Chan

Abstract

In the debate over liberal eugenics, scholars such as Nicholas Agar argue that liberal eugenics can benefit the world in different ways; it is helpful, for example, in preventing genetic diseases. Nevertheless, scholars such as Jurgen Habermas are against liberal eugenics because they consider liberal eugenics to be too artificial and to erase the distinction between the human and the manufactured. David Chai argues further that Daoism, especially Zhaungzi's views, can contribute to Habermas's argument by offering an ontological base. In this paper, I raise the question of whether such a Daoist approach is too strong and may reach a conclusion that most people cannot accept. Although this does not mean that the Daoist approach must be mistaken, it is at least a legitimate question that Daoists should answer.

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Daoism and Liberal Eugenics: Response to Chai

Michael Campbell

Abstract

In this paper, I respond to David Chai's attempt to buttress Jürgen Habermas's critique of genetic enhancement with Daoist metaphysics. I argue that this attempt is unsuccessful because Habermas's position begins with the conviction that ethical prescriptions cannot be derived from metaphysical truths. I then consider whether Daoist metaphysics on its own might provide grounds for rejecting enhancement. I suggest not. To support this, I present a dilemma for Daoist critiques of enhancement: either Daoism rules out both therapy and enhancement, in which case it is too demanding, or it rules out neither therapy nor enhancement, in which case it is too permissive.

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