

## **The Invisible Public Realm and the Visible Public Realm**

### **The Medical High technology controversy in Japan**

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There are four value ideals underlying discussions about high tech medicine in Japan. The welfare of human being (WH), the dignity of humanity (DH), Respect for individuals (RI), and the Sanctity of life (SL). Sometimes these values clash with each other. For example, in the debate on human embryo experimentation human, welfare conflicts with human dignity. Such experimentation could promote human welfare, but it is seen by many as an affront to human dignity. Sometimes the values add up. In the environmental debate, and concerns about pollution, we find human welfare, human dignity and respect for individuals conflict with sanctity of life.

#### **Religiosity as cultural background**

The religious background of Japan is, in the depths of people's soul, relevant to how the public will react to nanotechnology as it develops. This background is mainly a syncretism of Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The culture is deeply imbued with religious and mystical ideas and feelings, although on the surface it appears there is no strong attachment to any religious faith. Regarding the relation of science and religion there is a popular inclination to spiritualism or healing therapies. Worship of one's ancestors, in particular one's dead parents, and a strong sense of continuity with one's ancestors, is still partly alive. There are still in existence some rituals and ceremonies for animals that have died or been killed, for aborted fetuses, and used daily instruments (such as needles for sewing). Many Japanese have, in the depths, a sense of identification with nature, and this influences their attitude to technological developments.

#### **Tentative placement of bio-nanotechnology**

Because of the sense of continuity between generations and belief in spirits of one's dead parents, it is likely that modern technology involving any perceived 'interference' with the natural continuity of human life from generation to generation might be seen in a very negative light. For example, this was the case of brain death and organ

transplantation. This could also apply to bionanotechnology.

We will be asking a number of questions in the context of our culture. What is the relation between biotechnologies and nature as we understand it? Is nanotechnology an extension of an existing technology or is it a new technology, or does it have new features, which present new ethical and religious questions?

It seems possible that the future development of nanotechnology will raise questions about coexistence (cohabitation) with all kinds of bio-machine beings: non-terrestrials including androids, cyborgs, robots, etc. In order to resolve these questions, we need a new conception of life and living. This may be arise or be promoted with a new understanding of the self-recovering dynamic circle of from injury or harm through dissolution or crisis, and illness to repairing or recovering, and ease.

Towards a "Life ethics" at a new stage of technology

I propose we need a new "Life ethics", that is an ethics based on a deeper understanding of life in its creativity, interdependence and historical and evolutionary continuity. Regarding the public, this will bring together the two realms of what is 'the visible public realm', which is we who are here now, making decisions, developing technology, reforming institutions, regulating and making laws and so on; and the 'invisible public realm' of our ancestors, our past communities and family members, and their culture, as well as future generations, our great children and so on, and their possible culture and living conditions. There is another sense. Regarding "the life", the visible applies to normal tech, while the in visible means nanotech.

My metaphysical premises is the whole historical reality, or linkage, of human life within the context of all life and all physical reality. Individual beings are the various manifestations of Life itself. Individual beings are life-manifestations seeking or resigning from "ease" with their condition. In this view of reality one must consider as fundamental the long-term doing of harm and suffering of harm, whether it is inevitable, necessary, the extent of necessity is various, unnecessary and so on. One must in particular consider the long-term inter-generational accumulation of harm ("karma").

The "life ethics" is our willingness to accept responsibility for the present and future beings' "ease," based on the gratitude for life, which includes a sense of sin (owing to accumulated harms). An attitude of gratitude for one's life is essential here. Human

beings need to re-identify ways of celebrating their gratitude for life, their joys and sorrows, together. The “ease” which we seek is not to be found in technology alone, but in a collective solidarity and responsibility, in which technology and the visible public realm are put in proper perspective.