含義中沒有孤立的個己。這裡也沒有其它實體。因此，這個「X」就是我、我自己、你、每一個人和世界萬物。假使如此，「X」怎會死呢？死和再生的觀念又怎能應用於「X」呢？所以，我們必須認定自己是這個「X」。

在另一方面，佛教說得很清楚，除非一個人開悟，或爲**本性**之外，他將永遠受多元生命的鎖鍊控制，並必須經過輪廻中無盡的死和再生。因此，佛學是我們應當認眞地去研究的教義；它提供許多方法給人類，使他們能認識或體會到我們的本性，由此解脫了無窮盡、無法控制的死和再生。在多半的情況下，它們是痛苦的根源。

同時，我想强調一下，在日常生活中，多元生命的理論比開悟時所見到的「X」更重要，因爲我們沒有全部開悟，便仍爲輪廻所控制。假使我們忽視多元生命的理論，僅僅在想：『我是宇宙，我不會死』，便犯了極大的錯誤。因爲當死亡來到時，我們照舊會害怕。

爲了結束今天的談話，我想介紹兩個在日常生活中最重要的社會學現象，它們是：

㈠殺人。殺人並不是除去了一個人的敵人或者反對者，也不是如一般人通常所想，勝利的表現。恰恰相反，既然只有人的肉身被毀壞，被害者便仍舊存在。因此殺人並不是勝利，却可能是自己煩惱的開始。

㈡自殺。自殺並不是痛苦的結束。人的肉體或許已經毀滅，但生命却延續著，問題會由於自殺的結果變得更複雜和嚴重。

這是我爲什麼在演講一開始便說：如果我們知道死後會怎麼樣，我們對生的態度就會大大的改變。忽視這個重要問題的政治學家、政治家和哲學家可能由於短見而犯下嚴重的錯誤。在我第二次的演講——業的眞理中，我會更深入地討論到這個主題。

（本譯文為周胡安素之初稿，匆促付印，若有未盡善處，下次修正。）

或許能幫助我們去瞭解開悟境界中所闡釋的「X」。這個便是「能」。

我們從現代科學中獲知，宇宙中的每件東西都是「能」所表現的形態。電、熱、光、火、聲音、化學反應、物質，全是「能」所表現的形態。「能」本身是看不見、聽不到、嗅不出、嚐不到、觸摸不到的。但宇宙中却充滿了它所表現的形態，它們的數量無限，而且是看得見、聽得到、嗅得出、嚐得到、觸摸得到的，也就是說，都是人類的器官可以發覺的。因此，「能」被認爲是宇宙中最根本的存在。但我們必須注意，「能」只是人類獨斷地爲它選擇的一個名字。事實上，從這個名字被採用後，「能」的定義已經有了修正。所以，請不要執著於字典上的定義。我對這個字的詮譯可能和某些科學家們不同。我在這兒採用的這個名辭——能，指的是宇宙中的某些東西，它包涵整個宇宙，所看不見、聽不到、嗅不出、嚐不到、或爲人的器官所觸摸不到的。但它在無數形態中表現著自己，這些形態是知覺得到的。它既然包含全宇宙，便不能增減，也無動作。簡而言之，「能」就是宇宙，宇宙就是「能」。

如果你們了解我在上面所形容的「能」，你們便該不太難於了解佛教開悟境界中的那個「X」。根據佛理，在開悟時，一個人便體會得到他的「X」（也只有那個「X」）包含著全宇宙；也就明白「X」就是宇宙，宇宙就是「X」；「X」不一增減；「X」沒有動作，「X」也不會受汚染或淨化。因爲「X」是如此難於說明和了解，二千五百多年來，佛教徒們爲了澄清這個觀念，曾經給過它許多名字。我認爲最簡單的名稱便是**本性**（譯者按，此處本性實指眞如或本來面目，非指一般概念的自性）。**本性**這個字意味著全宇宙的現象都是從**本性**引出來的，而不是和它分開的。與「靈魂」論不同的是，**本性**的

㈢根據佛理，任何一個生命不能永恆地住在天堂中，也不會無限期地囚居在地獄裡。生命將延續下去，且不斷地變換形態。這一種在五個生存形態中流動的生和死的現象，就叫做輪廻(Saṁsārà)。

㈣生和死的觀念，只在我們提到一個個別的事物時才有意義。如果把話題移轉到那個事物更基本的本質上去，則生和死的概念便不適用了。水和H_2O是一個例子：水爲個別的事物，H_2O則是它更基本的本質。一隻金戒指是個別事物，金子則爲更基本的原料；這是另一個好例子。

㈤這一點極其重要：如果一個人認定自己是人類的話，他便確然經過了死和再生。而水如被認定是水，或者金戒指被認定是金戒指，它們也應用得上這一個原理。假使一個人認定自己是「X」，他便沒有死亡；即使以人類形態出現的「X」被毀滅，這一個說法也適用。從「X」的觀點來看，只有形態會不斷的改變；「X」本身則是不變的。再者，如果水被認爲是H_2O，或金戒指被認爲是金子，也用得上這一個原則。因此，如果我們想脫離死亡或輪廻的話，我們應當避免做的第一件事便是認自己是人類。很不幸，一切都與我們的願望相違背。我們牢牢地被縛在人類這個生存形態上，這是我們不能脫離輪廻的原因。

佛陀教義的基本目的是使人脫離輪廻。所以佛教的要旨乃是教導人們如何將自己認定爲「X」，佛教並不要人們將「X」看作靈魂，因爲靈魂並不是終極的，它仍受制於死亡和再生，就像H_2O受制於分解爲氫氣和氧氣與再結合。佛教要我們將自己認定爲開悟境界中所闡釋的「X」。它啓示我們，在開悟的境界中，「X」是人類心智所不能理解的，只有覺者才認識它，體會得到它。如果事實的確如此，我們該怎樣去理解它，說明它呢？很幸運的是，我們從現代科學中找到了一些東西，它

變。當H_2O以一種美麗、潔白的結晶體（即人們所謂的雪）的形態出現時，或者以一種細微的小水珠（所謂霧）的形態出現時，H_2O也仍舊是H_2O。

現在，一個很有趣的概念發生了。當水消失或變爲水氣和冰時，如果以生死概念來表達，你是否會說，在那一個當兒，水死了，而水氣和冰却出生了？或者，當雪和冰融化了變成水時，你會不會說，在那一刻雪和冰都死了，而水却出生了？不僅從你這一個旁觀者的觀點看，事實確然如此，即使從水的觀點來看，也是如此。那就是說，如果我們只把水看作水。可是，水如果不只是被看爲水，也被看爲H_2O，那麼生死的概念便不適用了。當H_2O的外貌從水變爲水氣或冰（或反變過來）時，H_2O並沒有變。雖然它的外貌和物理特徵曾經變過無數次，而人們也爲它取了許多名字；H_2O並沒有眞正地經過『死和再生』。即使它的特徵和外貌曾改變了許多次，除非等到H_2O分解爲氫氣和氧氣，它還是H_2O。關於這一點，我以後再解釋。

從這個類推，我們可以看出印度教和佛教所提示的多元生命論，比我們在乍視之下更有道理，更接近眞理。因此我得到了下面的結論：

㈠在宇宙中有某種東西，近似H_2O和它的各種形態，如水、水氣、雪、霧或冰，我將稱它們爲『X』。這個『X』以登入天堂者、人類、畜牲、餓鬼和囚居地獄者五種形態出現。基督教和印度教稱這個『X』爲靈魂。在佛教的塵世境界中，『X』也可以叫做靈魂。

㈡五種生存形態是可以互變的。準此，一個人會再出生，成爲登入天堂者、畜牲、餓鬼或囚居地獄者；而在天堂者也會再出生成爲人類、畜生、餓鬼或囚居地獄者。同樣道理，一個囚居地獄者同樣能以其他形態（包括人在內）再出生。

到天堂和地獄嗎？』如果有人確能使我們看見天堂或者地獄，我們難道不會說，那祇不過是一種幻覺或者鬼術，因此便不相信吧！如果你研究過電磁光譜，你會同意我的說法，認爲人的眼睛只能看到宇宙無限小的一部份，並有極多東西是我們看不見的。幾百年前沒有人看得見人類肉身的全部骨骼的結構，但現在我們却可以用X光來透視。我們在顯微鏡下的宇宙和外太空的調查方面，進步得非常之快。誰說不是呢？也許若干年後，有人發明了一種新的偵察儀器，使我們從現在可見的光波上看到不同的光波長度，而人類也許發覺所謂地獄就在地球上；再不然，太空儀器送回了一些外太空的照片，恰恰便是佛陀所說的天堂或人間之一的寫眞。

關於第二個問題，地球各地的記錄不時報導過某一個人記起了他的前生，而另外一些人（例如某些西藏喇嘛）又說得出他將在那兒投胎入世。但是所有的這些報告都沒有足够的科學證明，能說服我們，使我們相信再生確有其事。

現在我要從另一個角度去看，在我們所住的宇宙中是否有一些現象能够闡明生與死的觀念，並提供這個神秘問題的一些線索。使我深信這個觀點有其價值的簡單理由是，我們人類只不過是大自然的一個產品（例如吸引力的力），完全爲一切大自然的定律所控制。因此，可以應用於其它大自然創作的現象，也能應用於人類。

很有趣的是，在我研究這個問題的時候，發現在這個宇宙中有若干現象能對人類生存的多元生命論提供很好的類推。最簡單而又容易了解的，便是H_2O的多種形態。

我們大家都知道H_2O吧？當然。

H_2O是水的化學分子式，表明兩份氫氣配一份氧氣。當水在沸點上變成水氣或者在冰點上結爲冰時，化學分子式並沒有

印度教和佛教都持有這一種多元生命論，但觀點却大大的不同。印度教相信，當人和婆羅門——全能的神——融合時，這種生死的概念便沒有意義。佛教的說法是：在人開悟時，它就失去了意義，不再有用了。要瞭解這個佛教概念，我們必須先明白佛教所解釋的世界現象的兩種境界：一種名爲開悟的境界，就是覺者體會到了終極眞理的境界。另一種叫做塵世的境界，這一種境界又可再分爲兩種境界，一爲智識境界，也就是我們此刻所聚集在這兒的境界，另一個叫做凡俗境界，便是一般世人所屬的境界。

生和死的概念，在開悟的境界中是不適用的。（這一點我以後再說明）但在塵世的境界中，佛教持有多元生命的見解，並承認一個人的獨立存在，這一點可以和基督教及印度教所提到的靈魂比較。靈魂可以因此保持它的獨立存在，並以登入天堂或做人類、做畜牲、做餓鬼或下地獄的任何一種形態在連續的生命中出現。

但我必須指出，所謂獨立存在的延續，並不是說肉體可以轉移到來世，或者說儲藏在腦中的一切可以進入來世（腦是肉體的一部份）。事實上，肉體是時時刻刻在那兒變的。看看在不久以前拍的那些照片，你便會同意我的說法。眞正進入來世或未來的生命中，並構成獨立存在的連續的，乃是一個人今生一切行爲的果。在佛教和印度教中，這便是「業」的定律，這一點，我在下次的演講中再加以說明。

講到這裡，你或許會說：『㈠很好，請讓我瞧瞧天堂和地獄，以及那些在其中生存者；㈡請你證明看看，我在生前便存在，而且在死後仍舊存在。』

爲了回答第一個問題，讓我問你：『你相信你的眼睛看得

我們對生的態度大爲改觀的。

我們須知道，孔子並沒有說死是一切斷滅，他也沒有說死後不再有未來的生命。他的意思是，活在世界上要做一個規規矩矩的人，這比尋求死後生命的答案更爲重要。

可是，多數的宗教都有一套關於死後生命的教義。在全世界的宗教中，有兩種理論最爲特出：一元生命論和多元生命論。一元生命論說：當一個肉體的生命誕生時，所謂「靈魂」的精神實體便寓居其內，死亡是這一肉體的毀滅，而靈魂却不然，死後，靈魂會昇入天堂，或墮入地獄——視造物主的判斷而定。基督教便代表這一類學說；它只止於此，不再向前擴展，也就是說：每一個人只有一個地球上的生命，以後將永恆地住在天堂享福或者在地獄中受苦，永遠沒有離去的機會。這一套說法能否代表我們對耶穌教義的全部理解，便不清楚了。耶穌很可能知道更多的涉及生死的教義。然而，在當時，即使這一個有關生死的有限概念，也不容易爲人所瞭解。耶穌沒有時間更進一步地教導人們，並將他們的理解提昇到更高的境界。多元生命論說：一個人的生和死不過是他一連串無限生命中的一環，這個人徘徊在五種不同形態的生存中。這五種生存的型態是：登入天堂居住，做人類，做畜牲，做餓鬼和囚居地獄。一個人在死後會再度出生，並進入另一種生存境界中；他或她可能重新做人，或登入天堂，或做畜牲，做餓鬼，或囚居地獄。反過來說，一個囚居地獄者同樣能以畜牲、人類等形態再度出生，而一個登入天堂者也會死亡，並再度出生，成爲人或下降地獄……等等。這一種生命或生存形態的變遷會無限地繼續下去，以迄於連環的中斷；這時生與死的概念對他才不再有意義了。

在基督教的聖經，約翰福音第十六章第十二節中，耶穌基督對他的門徒們說：『我還有很多事要告訴你們，但你們現在擔當不了。』這就是說，基督傳授給門徒的教義只是他所知道的一小部份，因爲在當時，他的門徒理解還未到達某種水準，只能吸收那麼多的緣故而已。耶穌不幸在三十三歲時去世，時間不允許他傳授給門徒一套完整的教義。耶穌知道而未曾講的究竟是什麼？至今，還是一個無法解答的問題。

在另一方面，佛陀却活到八十歲。從他開悟的時候算起，他教導他的門徒們整整四十五年，足够他漸次引導他們去學習、實行他的不同階段的教義——從解脫自我爲中心及人類痛苦的解脫到最深奧、超世俗的教理。

如果我們假設地球上這兩大宗教的創立者都具備高深的智慧，那麼佛陀所闡釋的許多教義，可能便是耶穌知道但沒有時間傳授給門徒們的。從這個觀點來看，我認爲基督徒研究佛學似乎具有一種特殊的意義，那就是去尋求耶穌知道却未曾說出的教理。

佛教的生死觀也許就是耶穌未談到過的這一類思想。這便是我說了上面那些話的原因。現在，讓我談一談在人們心目中懸疑了數千年的一個神秘的問題。這個問題就是：『人死了以後會怎麼樣？』

實際上，一切政治思維和哲學觀念的體系，如孔子思想一樣，所談的只是生，不是死。孔子說過：『未知生，焉知死？』從實際的觀點來看，關於生的一切問題，確然比較重要，也是我們較爲熟悉的，但這種看法却使我們不再去尋找問題眞正的答案。死的事實，以及死後怎樣的問題，依舊懸而未解。尤其更可能的是：如果我們知道死後會發生什麼的話，那將會使

美國紐約華美協進會主辦
中華學術講座

在我們日常生活中的佛教

第一講：生與死的概念

沈家楨主講

喜生厭死本是人類的天性。比如說，我們每年有一天都要歌唱「祝你生日快樂」，可是一旦談到死亡，却沒有人不感到悲哀了。殊不知「未知死，焉知生？」宗教的精神就是從死找出生的關係。耶穌基督對死後問題曾經提到過，可惜說得還沒完整，他就去世了。而佛教對死的解脫方法，不僅具有深入而正確的理論，並且更有那切實可行的途徑讓人來遵循。

最近世界宗教研究院院長沈家楨博士應華美協進會的聘請，一共開了四堂課。第一講：生與死的概念；第二講：「業」的真理；第三講：自我（空）的概念；第四講：喜悅的泉源。

講演者沈家楨博士，根據了佛陀四十五年講學的重點，靈活地利用科學常識，簡明扼要地解答了有關生和死的種種問題，指導人們走向開悟的境界。

本刊首先登載這四篇創作。相信這困擾了人類數千年的生死煩惱，在經過沈博士善巧方便地深入淺出解說後，大家對於人生一切的疑惑、障礙，都將得到一個徹底的清除，而從內心同聲奏出那真、常、清淨、喜悅的樂章來！

譯者註

saṁsāra. It can be a terrible mistake if we neglect this multi-life theory and simply think, "I am the universe and there is no death," for when death comes, one will still be horrified.

As a conclusion to today's talk, I wish to introduce the following views of two of the most important sociological phenomena in our daily lives. They are:

1) Killing does not mean the elimination of an opponent or enemy, and the achievement of victory, as one usually thinks On the contrary, since only the physical human form is destroyed, the victim still exists. It is therefore not one's victory, and it could be the beginning of one's troubles.

2) Suicide does not mean the end of suffering. The physical human form may be destroyed, but life goes on. The problem could become much more complicated and serious as a result of this self-killing.

That is why I said in the beginning of this talk that the attitude of the living could be very much changed if we knew what happened after the so-called death that we observe. Political scientists, politicians, and philosophers who ignore this important question could be making a serious error out of shortsightedness. We look into this subject more penetratingly in my second talk, *The Truth of Karma*.

to clarify the concept. The simplest term, in my opinion, is Original Nature. The word "original" signifies that all world phenomena are derived from Original Nature, rather than being separate from it. Unlike the concept of "soul", Original Nature implies no isolation of the individual. There can be no other entity. This "X" therefore, is I, myself, is you, is everyone, and is everything. If "X" is like that, then how can "X" die? How can the concept of death and rebirth be applicable to "X"? This Original Nature, therefore, is what one should identify with.

On the other hand, Buddhism makes it clear that unless one is enlightened and becomes Original Nature, one is always subject to the chain of multi-life and undergoes the endless death and rebirth that is *saṁsāra*. Buddhism, therefore, is a teaching that we should look into seriously because it provides ways and means for us as human beings to realize and recognize our Original Nature, whereby we can rid ourselves of the endless and uncontrollable death and rebirth, which in most cases is the source of suffering.

At the same time I wish to emphasize that in our daily life the multi-life theory is even more important than the enlightened vision of "X", because we are not all enlightened and are still subject to

name arbitrarily chosen by human beings. The definition of energy has, in fact, been modified since the word was first used. So please do not adhere strictly to the dictionary definition of the word. I may interpret the word differently than do some scientists. The word energy, as I use it here, is given to something in the universe that comprises the entire universe and that cannot be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched by human organs, but that can manifest itself in numerous forms that can be detected by the senses. Since it fully comprises the entire universe, it cannot be increased or decreased, it has no motion. In short, energy is the universe and the universe is energy.

If you are able to comprehend what I have described above as energy, then you should have less difficulty in understanding "X" as explained in Buddhism at the enlightened level. Upon enlightenment, according to Buddhism, one realizes that one's "X", and only that "X", comprises the entire universe; that "X" is the universe and the universe is "X"; that "X" cannot be increased or decreased; that "X" has no motion, and that "X" can be neither defiled nor purified. Because "X" is so difficult to explain and to comprehend, Buddhists, for over 2500 years, have given it many different names, in the attempt

one can identify oneself with "X". Furthermore, Buddhism does not teach us to treat "X" as the soul, because the soul is not the ultimate and is still subject to death and rebirth, just as H_2O is subject to disintegration into hydrogen and oxygen and reintegration. Buddhism teaches us to identify ourselves with "X" as interpreted at the enlightened level. At the enlightened level we are told that "X" is something incomprehensible to the human mind and that it can only be realized and recognized by the enlightened ones. If that is so, then how can we comprehend and explain it? Luckily, in modern science I do find something that can probably help us immensely to understand the interpretation of "X" at the enlightened level. This is energy.

In modern science we learn that everything in the universe is a manifested form of energy. Electricity, heat, light, fire, sound, chemical reaction, matter, all are different manifested forms of energy. Energy itself cannot be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched, but all over the universe its manifested forms, infinite in number, can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched, or otherwise detected by human organs. Energy, therefore, can be considered as the ultimate existence of the universe. It should be noted, however, that energy is only a

reference is shifted to a more fundamental nature of that object, the concept of birth and death is not applicable. Water and H_2O are an example: water is the specific object, H_2O the more fundamental nature. A golden ring, which is a specific object, and the raw gold, which is a more basic material, constitute another good example.

5) This is important: If one identifies oneself as a human being, then one does undergo death and rebirth. The same applies to water if water is identified as water or a golden ring if it is identified as a golden ring. But, if one identifies oneself as "X", then there is no death, even when the form of "X" appearing as a human being is destroyed. From the point of view of "X", there is only a continuous change of form, while "X" remains unchanged. Again, the same applies if water is identified as H_2O or a golden ring as gold. Therefore, if we wish to be rid of death, or *saṁsāra*, the first thing we should avoid is to identify ourselves as human beings. Unfortunately, this goes entirely against our will. We are strongly attached to our identity as human beings, and that is why we are in *saṁsāra*.

Now the basic purpose of Buddha's teaching is to enable one to remove oneself from *saṁsāra*. Therefore, the essence of Buddhism is to teach how

makes more sense and could be closer to the truth than might have been apparent at first. I therefore draw the following conclusions:

1) Equivalent to H_2O and its manifestations, such as water, vapor, snow, fog, or ice, there is something in the universe, which I refer to as "X", which is manifested in the five forms of heaven-dweller, human being, animal, ghost, and hell-dweller. In Christianity and Hinduism, "X" is called the soul. In Buddhism, at the mundane level, "X" can also be called the soul.

2) The five forms of existence are interchangeable. Thus, a human being can be reborn as a heaven-dweller, or a ghost, or a hell-dweller. A heaven-dweller can also be reborn as a human being, or an animal, or a ghost, or a hell-dweller. By the same token, a hell-dweller can also be reborn into other forms, including that of a human being.

3) According to Buddhism, one cannot live in heaven eternally, nor will one stay in hell indefinitely. Life goes on, with its form changing continuously. This phenomenon of the continuous flow of death and rebirth among the five existences is called *saṁsāra*.

4) The concept of birth and death is only meaningful if one refers to a specific object. If the

Now a very interesting concept arises. When water disappears and is changed into vapor or ice, would you not say that at that very moment, if the concept of birth and death is applied, that water is dead and vapor or ice is born? Or when snow or ice melts and becomes water, would you not say that at that instant, snow or ice is dead and water is born? This is not only true from your point of view, as an outside observer; it is also true from the point of view of water, if water is identified only as water. However, if water is not identified only as water, but also as H_2O, then the concept of birth and death does not apply. H_2O remains unchanged when its appearance changes from water to vapor or ice or vice versa. H_2O has not really undergone "death and rebirth," although its appearance and physical characteristics may have changed an infinite number of times and people may have given it many different names. H_2O will not undergo death and rebirth in the future, although its appearance and physical characteristics will change numerous times until H_2O disintegrates into hydrogen and oxygen, which phenomenon I will explain later.

From this analogy we can see that the multi-life theory as suggested by Hinduism and Buddhism

I am, therefore, using another approach to see if there are some phenomena in the universe in which we live that can explain the concept of birth and death and that may give some clues to this mysterious question. The simple reason that convinced me that this approach has merit is that we human beings are no more than a product of nature and are entirely governed by all the natural laws, such as gravitational force. Therefore, the phenomena that apply to other natural creations may very well be applicable to human beings.

As I studied the question, interestingly enough, I found a number of phenomena in the universe which provide good analogies to the multi-lite theory of human existence. The simplest and easiest for us to comprehend is the multi-form of H_2O.

Do we all know H_2O? Yes.

H_2O is the chemical formula for water, signifying two parts of hydrogen to one part of oxygen. The chemical formula H_2O does not change when water turns into vapor at the boiling point or into ice at the freezing point. Nor is H_2O different when it appears in a beautiful, white, crystalized form, which people give the name of snow, or in minute liquid particles suspended in the air, called fog.

tion, or magic, and therefore not believe it? If you have studied the electromagnetic spectrum, you may agree with me that our human eyes can only see an infinitesimal part of the universe, and that there are so many things our eyes cannot see. A few hundred years ago, no one could see the whole bone structure of a living human body, but now we can see it by means of X-rays. We are advancing very rapidly in the investigation into the microscopic universe and also into outer space. Who knows? Maybe a number of years from now, some new detective instrument will be invented that will enable human beings to see a different wave length from the presently visible light wave, and human beings may discover that the so-called hell is right here on earth; or, space instruments will send back some picture of outer space that could turn out to be one of the heavens or worlds postulated by Buddha.

With respect to the second question, sporadic records all over the world have reported that someone, an ordinary person, remembered his past life, or that others, like certain Tibetan high lamas, could tell where they would be reborn. But all of these reports do not have enough scientific proof to convince us conclusively that rebirth does exist.

individuality and appear in the form of a human being, or a heaven-dweller, some kind of animal, a ghost, or a hell-dweller in consecutive lives.

I should point out, however, that the continuation of individuality does not mean that a physical body will be transported into the next life, or that everything stored in one's brain, which is a part of the physical body, will pass into the next life. As a matter of fact, the physical body changes from moment to moment. Just look at photographs taken some time ago and you will agree with me. What do pass into the next life or future lives, and constitute the continuation of individuality, are the effects of what one's actions in this present life. This is called, in Buddhism and Hinduism, the law of karma, which I shall explain in my next talk.

At this point you might like to say, "That is fine, but (1) please show me the heaven and hell where dwellers in those existences may be found, and (2) please prove to me that I existed before my birth and will still be in existence after my death."

To answer the first question, may I ask, "Do you believe that your own eyes are capable of seeing heaven or hell?" If someone did show us heaven or hell, would we not say that it was just an hallucina-

birth and death becomes no longer significant to a being.

Hinduism and Buddhism hold this multi-life theory, but with a major difference in their views. Hinduism sustains the belief that the concept of birth and death becomes insignificant when the being is merged with the Brahman--Almighty God. Buddhism says that it becomes insignificant upon enlightenment, because the concept of birth and death is no longer applicable. To understand this Buddhist concept, we must first understand that Buddhism explains world phenomena at two levels: one is called the enlightened level, that is, realization of the ultimate truth by the enlightened ones, and the other is called the mundane level, which can be further divided into the intellectual level, where most of us here find ourselves, and the common level, to which the majority of the peoeple on earth belong.

At the enlightened level, the concept of birth and death is no longer applicable. I shall explain this later. At the mundane level, however, Buddhism holds the multi-life theory and recognizes the individuality of a being, which can then be compared with the "soul" as taught in Christianity and Hinduism. The soul can therefore maintain its

only this one life on earth and will thereafter remain eternally either in heaven, in bliss, or suffering in hell with no chance of ever leaving. Whether or not this implication represents a complete understanding of Christ's teaching is unclear. It could be that Christ had much more to teach about birth and death, but, in his time, even this limited concept of birth and death was not easy for people to understand. He did not have time to teach them more and to bring them to a higher level understanding.

The multi-life theory says that the birth and death of a being is only one segment of a chain of infinite lives of a being, who wanders among five major kinds of existence. The five existences are: heaven-dweller, human being, animal, ghost, and hell-dweller. After death a human being is reborn into another existence. He or she could again be a human being or perhaps would be a heaven-dweller, or an animal, or a ghost, or a hell-dweller. By extension, a dweller in hell can also be reborn as an animal, a human being, etc., and a heaven-dweller can also die and be reborn as a human being, hell-dweller, and so forth. This change of life form, or existence, goes on indefinitely until and unless the chain breaks, which occurs when this concept of

is true that problems concerning the living are more important and intimate to us, but such an approach evades the search for a real answer to the question. The fact of death, and the question as to what happens afterward, remain. Furthermore, it could very well be that the attitude toward the living could be very much changed if we knew what happened to one after death.

It should be noted that Confucius did not say that death is extinction, nor did he say that there is no future life after death. He meant that to live as a decent person on earth is more important than to search for the answer to life after death.

Most religions, however, have a teaching about life after death. Two teachings predominate among world religions: one is the one-life theory and the other is the multi-life theory. The one-life theory says that birth begins the life of a physical body, wherein a spiritual entity called the "soul" abides, and death is the destruction of that body, but not of the soul. After death, the soul, depending upon the judgment of the creator, will ascend to heaven or descend to hell. Christianity represents this theory. This teaching ends here, somehow, and goes no further. The implication is that each person has

various stages of teaching, from a self-centered liberation from human suffering to the most profound supramundane doctrine.

If we assume that these founders of two of the greatest religions on earth were both persons possessed of profound wisdom, then many teachings expounded by Buddha could be those which Christ knew but did not have time to teach.

With this view in mind, it seems to me that the study of Buddhism by Christians can have a special significance, that is, the search for what Christ knew but did not say.

The Buddhist concept of birth and death could be a good example of just such an area of thought. That is why I have said these few words first.

Now, let me go to the mysterious question which has hung over the human mind for thousands of years. The question is, "What happens to one after death?"

Practically all systems of political thought and philosophical ideas, such as Confucianism, deal in their teaching only with the living. Confucius said, "We do not even know the living, how can we know the dead?" From a practical point of view, it

four lectures. It is believed that after reading the skillful expositions given by the lecturer, designed to remove all delusions and hindrances one may suffer in life, our readers will have their mind thoroughly cleansed of the afflictions of birth and death which have bothered mankind for thousands of years, and will, in one voice, sing the song of the truth. permanence, purity and joy.

An-su H. Chow

In the Christian Bible, in the Book of John, Chapter XVI, Verse 12, Jesus Christ tells his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto ye, but ye cannot bear them now." That is to say, what Christ did teach his disciples was only a small part of what he knew, because the level of understanding of his disciples at that time was such that they could only absorb so much. Unfortunately, Jesus died at the age of 33. Time did not allow him to give his disciples a complete course of teaching. What Christ knew and did not say remains an unanswerable question.

On the other hand, Buddha lived for 80 years. He had 45 full years from the time of his enlightenment to teach his disciples: long enough to gradually lead his disciples to learn and practice

To love life and abhor death is human nature. For instance, one day in each year we sing, "Happy birthday to you!" But as soon as we start talking about death, everybody feels sad. Yet, how can one "know life without knowing death?" It is the spirit of religion to find the meaning of life from death. Jesus Christ also mentioned the after-death problems. But, to our regret, he passed away before he could treat with the subject in full. The methods taught by Buddhism to liberate one from death are not only backed up by a profound and sound theory, but are borne out by thoroughly practical ways that can be followed by any one.

Recently, Dr. C. T. Shen, President of the Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions, in response to an invitation from the China Institute in America, delivered the following four lectures:

1. *The Concept of Birth and Death*
2. *The Truth of Karma*
3. *The Concept of Self (Emptiness)*
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LECTURE 1:

THE CONCEPT OF BIRTH AND DEATH

By Dr. C. T. Shen

President

The Institute for Advanced Studies

of World Religions

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