The Right to Kill; the Right to Die

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In previous work on the project on the conceptualization patterns used in the domain of death and dying, a data base of comparable genres in the discourse was made. The discourse genres included medical and counselling, current news reportage, religious writing, essays, poetry, and interactive (conversational) discourse. Six general conceptual categories were found necessary to make an exhaustive, underlying conceptual pattern analysis based on the work of George Lakoff et al. (1980, 1987, & 1989) of the contemporary discourse in this domain. The purpose of the earlier studies (2005) on Death and Dying was to shed light on the relative language-cultural perspectives and values that shape understanding in regard to this universal experience (see Table 1).

Death-related concepts were found to be significantly linked to those of life, such as in JOURNEY metaphors, AFTER LIFE concepts, and negations of LIFE concepts, such as "go to heaven/hell;" "she is with the angels;" "he's not with us anymore;" "to say good-bye;" "to meet death;" "reborn in eternity;" "to call him home." The dead in English are described as *at rest, in repose, departed, gone home to God, safe in the arms of Jesus*, and so on. In Japanese a common deferential expression is *naku naru* (disappear), *ushinau* (to lose), *shi o mukaeru* (to welcome death), *ano you e iku* (go to that world beyond), and so on. Religious discourse in the domain, with its roots in Christianity in English and Buddhism in Japanese, did show distinctive culturally specific aspects. Metaphors specific to each language-culture were also found. What were very much noted were the strong emotive aspects of the discourse in both languages in the domain but with significant variation depending on the genre type, that is, in *logos* and *mythos* discourse.

In effect, DEATH is the great arbiter of life. It provides the end point or defining act of all that we consider to be alive, whether in nature or more particularly in the value systems of humankind. That fact has been the frame for the specifics of the discourse in a fundamental way. Death thus makes us face issues about the quality and purposes of living, challenges us with choices, and valuates our experiences of time.

In the present topic-based research, the six categories have essentially remained, but the delineation has developed. In particular two broad aspects in the discourse data have come to the fore. One is that of the perspective of the survivor, which needs to be differentiated from the event itself and its judged significance. Secondly, the data have been expanded to allow for more sources on the three topics which reflect the personal, evaluative, emotive discourse in contrast to the descriptive, informative nature of the public discourse. The former focuses more on the emotional impact of death and dying, feelings of anxiety, values about one's life, personal worth, etc. Such personal experiential discourse is difficult to access and faces the barrier of taboo attitudes in regard to discussing the personal experiences on these topics. In order to accommodate the attitudinal as well as informative purposes of the discourses, the underlying conceptual patterns have several primary patterns within each category as well as sub-patterns which focus on various attitudinal aspects which were deemed important in the discourses (see Table 2).

In the conceptual category ACTION, the informative purpose of describing some action such as suicide, abortion, capital punishment, or the fact of death itself as an event, is

Table 1: General Conceptual Categories

1. ACTION/EVENT   2. CONTAINER
3. ENTITY   4. JOURNEY
5. STATUS   6. TIME

Table 2: Conceptual Patterns of Death

Category	DEATH/DYING	FROM SURVIVOR'S PERSPECTIVE	LIFE RELATED CONCEPTS
A. ACTION	1 DYING IS AN ACTION/EVENT; 1-a/b: IN A POINT IN TIME/AT A PLACE; 2 DYING IS A PROCESS; 2-a: CONDITIONS OF DYING; 3 DEATH IS ANNIHILATION		
C. CONTAINER	1 DEATH IS A CONTAINER; 2 DEATH IS DESTROYING A CONTAINER; 3 DEATH IS LOSS OF CONTENTS; 3-a/b/c/d/e: LIQUID/HEAT/FIRE/FLAME/BREATH		1 LIFE IS A CONTAINER; 2 LIFE IS THE CONTENTS IN A CONTAINER; 2-a/b/c/d/e: LIQUID/HEAT/FIRE/FLAME/BREATH
E. ENTITY	1 DEATH IS A PERSON; 1-a/b: POSITIVE(FREINDLY)/NEGATIVE(FEARFUL); 2 DEATH IS AN ENTITY; 2-a/b/c: A MOVING ENTITY/A FEARFUL ENTITY/A HEAVY ENTITY; 3 DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY; 3-a: COMPENSATION FOR PRECIOUS ENTITY; 3-b: LOSING A PRECIOUS POSSESSION; 3-c: CUTTING OFF A LINE; 3-d: DESTROYING AN ENTITY; 3-e: STEALING AN ENTITY	2 DEATH IS AN ENTITY; 2-b: AN ANNOYING ENTITY; 3 DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY; 3-d: DESTROYING AN ENTITY; 3-e: STEALING AN ENTITY	3 LIFE IS AN ENTITY; 3-a/b/c: PRECIOUS POSSESSION (A GIFT/A LINE)
J. JOURNEY	1 DEATH IS DEPARTURE (with NO RETURN); 2 DEATH IS THE END OF THE JOURNEY (FINAL DESTINATION); 2-a: RELIEF FROM BURDEN/STRUGGLE; 3 DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE; 3-a: WITH DESTINATIONS (HOME/NIRVANA/PARADISE/HEAVEN); 3-b: AN ESCAPE ROUTE; 4 DYING IS A JOURNEY		1 LIFE IS ARRIVAL; 2 LIFE IS A JOURNEY; 2-a: WITH BURDEN/STRUGGLE; 2-b: A PATH
S. STATUS	1 DEATH IS DOWN; 2 DEATH IS LACK OF MOVEMENT; 2-a/b: SLEEP OR REST/SILENCE; 3 DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE; 4 DEATH IS FREEDOM; 5 DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION; 6 DEATH IS BONDAGE	3 DEATH IS SEPARATION/LOSS	1 LIFE IS UP; 2 LIFE IS CONSCIOUSNESS/AWARENESS; 4 LIFE IS BONDAGE
T. TIME	1 DEATH IS A PHASIS OF LIFE; 1-a/b: WINTER/NIGHT		1 LIFE IS A CYCLE; 1-a/b: A YEAR/A DAY

mostly found in written public discourse including the time and place of the circumstances. However, even in such a neutral stance, the manner or process of the death is often included as the focus of the discourse. E.g. "death by hanging," "gunned down," "shoot to death," "lethal injection," "electrocution," "die in a horrible, painful way," or "horrendous death," in English, and in Japanese *kubi o tsuru* (=hang the neck), *gan de shinu* (=die of cancer), *yasurakuna shi* (=peaceful death), or *syokku shi* (=death by shock/heart attack).

Similarly, in the ENTITY category conceptual patterns often had the feature characteristic of "person" but even without the "person feature" usually had features which dwelt on negative feelings such as fear and threat. The third pattern in the category focuses on "loss" and various ramifications of it (destroying, stealing, cutting).

The JOURNEY category constituted four conceptual patterns: one on the beginning of the journey, the departure; one on the end of the journey; one on the destination of going to another place; and dying itself viewed as a journey. These patterns are explicated in the specific topic papers which follow.

Purposes

1. To make a cross-cultural analysis of the conceptualization patterns in the topic domains of abortion, suicide and capital punishment in English and Japanese.
2. To create a data base of genre in the contemporary discourse related to these topics.
3. To shed light on how the language-cultural perspectives in English and Japanese shape our understanding and social values in this universal experience of death.

Data Sources

1. PUBLIC DISCOURSES: news reportage, essays, specialist books, homepages, magazine articles.
2. PRIVATE DISCOURSES: interviews, diaries, internet message boards, movies, poetry, confessional writing.

Analytical Issues

1. Comparability of inter-language data: Genre as noted above were focused on which were judged pertinent to the domain topic and which could usually be found in both languages. Quantity of the number of articles/writings and other sources could only be roughly maintained, but a balance of types was sought. As the discourse of the topics varied from country to country depending upon what was currently on the public agenda or in the private sphere, whether a particular topic or aspect of it (e.g. survivors' feelings about the commission of suicide) was taboo or not. While capital punishment had a strong public debate in the United States, it was hardly an issue in Japan even though the death penalty was legal.
2. Exhaustive analysis of the data: All expressions found in each text were analyzed into some conceptual pattern. Since calculating the frequency of tokens either within a text or between texts could not have a reliable implication, this was not an objective. However, the general tendency of use could be judged from the overall repetitive use of token

expressions relative to the respective genre they occurred in. The data related to the category ACTION/EVENT tended to be descriptive and highly repetitive within a limited range of words, reflecting a *logos* type of discourse. Where the implications of a person's life values or emotive expressions were sought for a *mythos* type of language came to the fore.

3. Conceptual ambiguity and token expressions: Since all vocabulary utilized in the discourse on each topic was to be analyzed into some pattern, the choice in some cases was difficult as the underlying concept could have some ambiguity as a frame of reference. The Japanese expression *naku naru* which is a common polite deferential term for "to die" can be construed to relate to the concept of LEAVING THE VISUAL FIELD or to the LOSS OF AN ENTITY. The context of the discourse is often helpful, and the determination of the native speaker depended on such context of use.

4. Conceptual pattern labelling: While this research has been informed by the accumulated research of George Lakoff et al. and has tried to maintain wherever possible the extant labelling, the exhaustive analysis of all expressions in the topic domains has necessitated framing the patterns into categories as in Table 1. In particular the descriptive neutral type of discourse needed to be included, which necessitated the ACTION/EVENT category and conceptual patterns related to it. This is seen as a development of the conceptual analysis to be applied to corpus-based research rather than limited collations of expressions.

Discourse Mode Types

The research into the discourse on death and dying revealed a significant expressional difference in the language used, depending on whether it was meant to be informative and neutral descriptive, such as what we have in much of the public discourse, or whether it deals with the personal expression of a person's life valuation, the cognizance of attitude and feelings. Karen Armstrong (2005) suggests that there is an essential dichotomy in how people in their varied cultural experiences represent their understanding of life and its vagaries. She terms these two types: *logos* and *mythos*:

Logos (is) the logical, pragmatic and scientific mode of thought that enabled (people) to function successfully in the world. Unlike myth, *logos* must correspond accurately to objective facts. It is the mental activity we use when we want to make things happen in the external world: when we organize our society or develop technology. Unlike myth, it is essentially pragmatic. Where myth looks back to the imaginary world of the sacred archetype or to a lost paradise, *logos* … trying to discover something new, to refine old insights, create(s) startling inventions and achieve(s) a greater control over the environment. Myth and logos both have their limitations. In the pre-modern world, most people realized that myth and reason were complementary; each had its separate sphere, each its particular area of competence, and human beings needed both these modes of thought. (Armstrong, 2005, p. 32)

Myth tells us what we have to do if we want to become a fully human person. Every baby… has to leave the safety of the womb, and face the trauma of entry into a

terrifying unfamiliar world. Every mother who gives birth, and who risks death for her child, is also heroic. … there is no ascent to the heights without a prior descent into darkness, no new life without some form of death. Throughout our lives, we all find ourselves in situations in which we come face to face with the unknown…. We all have to face the final rite of passage, which is **death** (Armstrong, 2005, p.38).

The research into the contemporary discourse on capital punishment, suicide, and abortion from a cross-cultural perspective shows the significant roles of the discourse modes of *logos* and *mythos* in the manner of understanding the issues related to such deaths, in particular how the conceptual categories and the conceptual patterns are utilized. This is particularly true of the public discourse in contrast to the private, but is also significant in the predominance of the rational neutral over the personal in some genres.

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