

A Middle Way Approach for the Conflicts between Death, Impermanence and Non-Self in Buddhist Philosophy

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Abstract : Since the birth of the Buddha himself more than 2000 years ago, Buddhism has continued to lead many people's lives. Scholars and Buddhists have contributed to give detailed explanations to all kinds of issues within the structure of Buddhist philosophy to make Buddhism more complete. Different schools have developed, therefore leading to a lot of different branches within Buddhism. Although they all follow what the Buddha himself taught, they still have various explanations to even fundamental issues. As one of the fundamental problems regarding our lives, death is widely discussed in Buddhism. The controversy regarding death is its seemingly incompatibility with the idea of non-self and impermanence, which is what I will discuss in this essay. The idea of rebirth is the basic structure of birth and death, which suggests a connection between this life and the next. Therefore, according to common logic, we should tell that there is something that connects each life, an agent that receives the process of rebirth, which is normally known as a soul. In Buddhism, non-self is also an important concept which speaks to the illusion of a self or soul. The idea of rebirth and non-self seems contradicted. Many different schools of Buddhism attempt to resolve such conflicts, but there are logical flaws within the arguments they made. Thus, I raise a better solution: Different from the annihilationist view, non-self in Buddhism speaks only to the illusion of a self in each moment. There is a self that exists as a sum of all our karmas which we can achieve after Nirvana. However, the nature of such a self is still emptiness. There are no agents needed as one rebirth since the whole cycle of rebirth is the self. Then, the contradiction between rebirth and non-self can be resolved.

Keywords : Buddhism, impermanence, non-self, reincarnation

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