

Exploring Buddhist Ethics for New Technologies

Susantha Goonatilake
Royal Asiatic Society Sri Lanka
susanthagoona@gmail.com

Ongoing developments in information, bio- and nano-technology are reordering evolution, and transforming our very physical and mental bases. An examination of the literature indicates that the dominant, Eurocentric ethical systems for these new technologies are derived from Christianity, Judaism or Islam (“Abrahamaic” religions) or from presumably "secular" roots. The ethical system in the Abrahamaic religions is “revealed” by “God”, but the new developments challenge some of the core Abrahamaic ethical assumptions. Western "secular ethics" are ultimately derived from the idea of "humanity", a Eurocentric concept of humans as “sacred” which probably derives from the ideas of the Renaissance Humanists. But, in an increasingly non-human and “post-human” world, humanity has to be transcended in search of ethics. As the production, consumption and creative bases of the world increasingly shift to Asia, Asian thought could provide answers to these culture impregnated issues. A major trans-Asian approach, Buddhism, is not revealed, and has a strong core of observations and philosophy. Buddhist approaches with change and process as its core have direct relevance to a future where both the human and his environment are constructed and reconstructed.

The paper explores the literature of the core Buddhist position on the human body and mind, as well as the environment he operates in, as not given or sacred but constructed and changing.

The paper concludes that an orientation from this core Buddhist perspective of continuous change, no permanent self and both human and nature as constructed would fit better as a cultural orientation to examine and live in a future where humans and nature are continuously reinvented and reconstructed. Buddhist ethics from such a perspective may better fit the emerging world.

Key words: *New technologies, Ethics, Eurocentrism, Buddhism*