

# **Cancer and the Philosophy of the Far East**

**George Ohsawa**

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Other books by George Ohsawa in English include: *The Art of Peace*; *Essential Ohsawa*; *Gandhi, the Eternal Youth*; *Jack and Mitie*; *Macrobiotic Guidebook for Living*; *Macrobiotics: An Invitation to Health and Happiness*; *Order of the Universe*; *Philosophy of Oriental Medicine*; *The Unique Principle*; *You Are All Sanpaku*; and *Zen Macrobiotics*. Contact the publisher at the address below for a complete list of available titles.

Cover design by Carl Campbell  
Text layout and design by Carl Ferré  
Keyboarding by Alice Salinero

First English Edition      1971  
First G.O.M.F. Edition    1981, 1984

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 78-159569  
ISBN 978-0-918860-35-8

# Publisher's Preface

I am taking the opportunity to publish this preface because of misunderstandings which have arisen about George Ohsawa's writings.

In his lifetime, George Ohsawa tried to unite religious and cultural organizations (such as "Ito-En," "Chushin-Kai," "Japanese Women's Federation," "Japanese Yoga Association," "Seicho-No-Ie," etc.) which were interested in macrobiotic philosophy.

In December 1963, he gathered these foremost Japanese spiritual, cultural, and medical leaders together for a meeting in Tokyo. At this meeting, he asked them to compile advice on healing for the Western World. The result of that idea materialized into this book, but it ended up as solely George Ohsawa's writing instead of the compilation of many writings which he had hoped for.

Ohsawa learned both Oriental and Western approaches to health; he is one of the few who knew both the shortcomings of Western medicine and the advantages of Oriental medicine. Therefore, in this book, he is offering advice on the cure of cancer from the Oriental medical point of view. However, this is not the cancer cure book that most people would imagine, but rather it is a spiritual book on how to overcome the fear of incurable diseases, of which cancer is one.

On June 30, 1982, the Los Angeles Times published an article called "Perhaps Cancer Can Be a State of Mind," written by Colman McCarthy. In this article he writes: "At a recent New York Academy of Medicine Conference, Dr. Joan Borysenko, speaking on 'fear, hope and cancer', said that there is considerable data that points to an influence of behavioral factors on the course of a disease.

Hopelessness, helplessness, and fear correlate with decreased survival. These emotions are associated with hormonal changes that depress the activity of the immune system. The preservation of hope, the determination to fight the disease, and the will to live are correlated with enhanced survival and improved quality of life.”

Recently, the medical healing establishment has begun taking into account the patient’s mind and behavior, as well as diet, along with conventional treatment. However, in the medical field today very few know how to preserve a patient’s hope, faith in a cure, or will to live. Contrary to Western medicine, Oriental medicine developed ways of improving the mental and behavior of patients.

Eastern culture developed spiritually, while Western culture developed somewhat materialistically. The former developed understanding of mind and spirit. The latter developed wealth, technology, and science. Western medicine, therefore, generally takes the materialistic approach to the curing of sickness. Western medicine’s methods of cancer cure are cutting, burning, and poisoning. Those methods do not show much success. One of the reasons Western medicine cannot succeed curing cancer lies in the fact that cancer creates fear, mental instability, and psychological problems. To these situations Eastern medicine can make a contribution, because Eastern religion (such as Buddhism) established a psychological approach to illness.

George Ohsawa is presenting in this book the spiritual cure for sickness, and especially cancer. I believe that someone who is suffering from fear, as well as uncertainty, will be able to benefit by reading this book repeatedly. George Ohsawa said in this book, “In order to cure a cancer patient who has already surrendered, it is first necessary to change his attitude. This must be accomplished at any cost.” That attitude that must change is revealed in this book. This is a book of spiritual healing.

*Herman Aihara*  
*July 1984*

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# Author's Letter of Introduction

Paris, 1963

Dear Friends of all Countries,

I have written this book at the beginning of my seventy-second year, still following the same path I have walked alone for fifty years. My aim in this, my seventh work in French, is as always to produce mutual understanding between East and West. I want to help you understand the mentality of the Orientals and other colonized peoples whom Lèvy-Bruhl has called "primitive." The way things are going today, this mentality should soon disappear. Primitive people everywhere are nearing extinction or assimilation by the "civilized," after the manner of the American Indian.

The primitive mentality is without doubt simple, childlike and sometimes even ridiculous. But it possesses something which is very beautiful, very practical and very profound. Unknown among civilized people, this precious jewel is an extremely simple dialectical philosophy condensed into two antagonistic words: Yin and Yang, Tamas and Rajas, etc. This philosophy, a synthetical [Ed. note: based on synthesis or unification; opposed to "analytical" or differentiated.] understanding of the world, is the wellspring and unifying force of all sciences and techniques of the Far East. Oriental medicine, for example, is only one application of this Unifying Principle according to which all phenomena appear to us as opposites.

Dialectical monism was also well known in Europe, even two thousand years before Christ, among the Druids and the Celts. In fact, it has never been totally destroyed even in modern times. The principal agent of its decline has been the manner in which the religion of Jesus, Christianity, has been interpreted. That is to say, it has been rendered absolutely dualistic (meaning two natures: Good

and Evil, God and the Devil, Material and Spiritual, Soul and Body). St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, was a fanatical dualist: "In this world," he claimed, "there can never be too much good." This is a wholly artificial view.

Hegel, however, studied and taught this paradoxical monistic dialectic. Then Karl Marx, a student of Hegel, made use of the principle to strengthen his own sociological theory. His followers, in turn, have succeeded in establishing a powerful society based on dialectical logic. The modern-day result has been the development of the world's first Sputniks.

But no one has yet discovered the way to apply this dialectic to the science of life. In the West, biology, biochemistry, physiology and medicine have failed to penetrate to the essence of life. They study only the structure of the living, utilizing physical and chemical observations, which stop at the level of the electron. Yet Life (Oneness) is far more profound than this. It creates the nuclei of all atoms as well as all organisms capable of transmuting these atoms. Life transmutes atoms without requiring either great heat or pressure. Is this not miraculous? And it creates, above all, the mental and spiritual activities such as imagination, comprehension, judgment, will and thought.

The philosophy of the Far East, unifier of biology, biochemistry, physiology, agriculture, botany, zoology and medicine, teaches us how to cure all illnesses declared "incurable" by Western medicine; and this by a method sometimes called "paradoxical"—that is, without bloody operations, using no chemical products, and functioning solely through the simple choice of daily foods. This method is known as macrobiotics.

Many of you have seen it work. Its practice has cured great numbers who had been declared "incurable" by official medicine. Some of you have taught it and have saved many others so that today most health-food and large department stores in France, Belgium and the United States carry macrobiotic (locally grown, whole) foods. Yet official medicine continues to ignore the appearance of macrobiotics, even though it *has* recognized the utility and effectiveness of acu-

puncture, which I introduced to the West more than thirty-five years ago. Undoubtedly this is due to the fact that acupuncture is a symptomatic treatment so simple to learn that one can apply it without having to study the Unifying Principle in depth. (Massage and moxa are equally symptomatic, easy to learn, and practical.) There are tens of thousands of practicing acupuncturists in Japan, hundreds of thousands in China, and at least five thousand in Europe (mainly in France and Germany). In 1956, it was widely discussed in all the Parisian newspapers. And recently an extensive article called "A Different Medicine: Acupuncture" appeared in the magazine *Planète* (Number 13).

Flower arrangement, Judo and Bonsai (natural miniature landscaping)—applications of the Unifying Principle of Yin and Yang which I began demonstrating in Paris forty years ago—are widespread today. Above all, rice cultivation, which was completely absent from France forty years ago, is now a major agricultural enterprise. Today France is one of the largest producers of rice in Europe—100,000,000 kilos per year. [Ed. note: one kilo equals about two pounds.] One can buy it everywhere, even in 50-kilo sacks. Forty years ago, however, rice was sold only in two-ounce boxes! I was forced to buy about a hundred boxes a month! How difficult it was to find a grocer able to satisfy me...

But everything changes. Time marches on. There are now five macrobiotic restaurants in Paris where one can eat whole ("brown") rice, as well as others in New York, Los Angeles, and even Stockholm: Viking country!

Why then doesn't official Western medicine recognize and recommend macrobiotics? Could it be that it is avoiding loss of face?

At any rate, since official medicine is helpless before cancer, it is now considered by Western man as his greatest enemy. Yet, according to the dialectical philosophy of Eternal Happiness and Absolute Freedom, cancer is in reality a profound benefactor of mankind. It is cancer that slows down the catastrophic speed of our civilization—which is hurrying pell-mell toward the very extremities of dualism!

While hydrogen bombs restrain us from totally annihilating one



another, cancer saves us from the dead end of scientific and technical materialism—a stranger to life, to spirituality, to the world itself, and to the Absolute Justice that creates and governs everything, everywhere.

You have already seen sick people who have cured themselves by studying and practicing this dialectical philosophy, in Europe as well as in the United States. Often, they had been officially declared “incurable,” not only of cancer but of all sorts of physical and mental diseases as well. And what is more, they have attained what men have sought for thousands of years: Eternal Happiness (awareness of the Absolute Justice of all that ever happens, any time, anywhere).

The aim of all the great religions of man has been, it seems to me, to teach the individual how to overcome his physical and mental sufferings; that is to say, how to attain health, longevity, and emotional control, which are the fundamental bases of human happiness and freedom.

But through the centuries, religions have fallen into the hands of professionals who are nothing but phonographs reciting sacred words. Some scholars, it is true, possess conceptual knowledge of the aims of religion but, unfortunately, they remain impractical.

Having spent more than fifty years studying and teaching the Unifying Principle, I believe that the time has come to address myself to Occidental thinkers, asking them to study this paradoxical logic, childlike and apparently “too simple,” yet in reality very practical and effective when applied to daily life. Such is my purpose in writing this little book.

It is now generally recognized that our scientific and technological civilization, if not all of humanity, is on the brink of catastrophe! Modern civilized man is engulfed in dark clouds of uncertainty, of political, sociological and physiological fear, of fear of crime and “incurable” disease, the most deadly of which is cancer.

Civilized people have, without doubt, succeeded in revolutionizing this world of slavery and misery and in establishing a brilliant scientific and technical base without equal or precedent in the entire history of mankind. We all admire and cherish it.

But “the bigger the front, the bigger the back.” This brilliant civilization, and with it all of humanity, are threatened from moment to moment with extinction. We can reduce ourselves to dust!

What a pity!

But what is the cause of this potential self-annihilation?

Scientific, technological civilization, gigantic and extremely powerful in its apparent scope, plunges onward with ever-increasing speed, constantly accelerating through the darkness of an unknown sea. The crew of this huge ocean liner mobilizes all its precision instruments in an effort to chart a safe course. But alas, the instruments do not provide the hoped-for results. The entire crew is exhausted and desperate...

Among the millions of passengers on this liner is an old Oriental who knows how to point a safe passage, according to a constellation of far-distant stars. He willingly offers his knowledge of an ancient astronomy which, according to Bios the Elder and Bios the Younger, could predict solar eclipses four thousand years ago! However, his astronomy is not all that this old passenger has to offer; he would also like to show you a way of life which is capable of changing all unhappiness into happiness. In fact, this old traveler can affirm that the greater the unhappiness, the greater the happiness that is reached in overcoming it!

In conclusion, let me say that all your criticisms, no matter how informal, will be received with great joy. I am entirely at your disposal and will gladly furnish you with any information you wish concerning this philosophy-physiology of the Far-East.