

ESSENTIAL OHSAWA

FROM FOOD TO HEALTH, HAPPINESS TO FREEDOM

GEORGE OHSAWA

Edited by Carl Ferré

George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation
Chico, California

By George Ohsawa
The Book of Judo
Cancer and the Philosophy of the Far East
Essential Ohsawa
Four Hours to Basic Japanese
Gandhi, the Eternal Youth
Macrobiotic Guidebook for Living
Macrobiotics, An Invitation to Health and Happiness
The Order of the Universe
Philosophy of Oriental Medicine
Practical Guide to Far Eastern Macrobiotic Medicine
The Unique Principle
You Are All Sanpaku
Zen Macrobiotics

Cover design by Bill Gonzalez

First Edition	1994
Second Printing	2002
Current Edition, minor edits	2013 Feb 15

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 93-46028
ISBN 978-0-918860-57-1

Printed in the United States of America

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FOREWORD

Like Lao-tsu, Confucius, and the prophets of the Old Testament, George Ohsawa envisioned a new era for humanity: an era of health, peace, and freedom for everyone. Being a man of thought *and* action, theory *and* practice, justice *and* love, George Ohsawa dedicated his life to the actual realization of health and peace. In other words, he did more than simply envision a new world; he was a citizen of that world and invited all of us to join him. In order for everyone to reach that destination, he offered a universal compass—in the form of the Unifying Principle—and a valid passport—in the form of a macrobiotic way of life.

With crystal-clear insight, Ohsawa revived, revitalized, and reinterpreted humanity's universal, traditional cosmology. He made it new, fresh, and accessible to everyone, using any and every opportunity to reveal its simplicity, practicality, and relevance. He applied this cosmology again and again on a practical level to show us how to change sickness into health, difficulty into ease, war into peace, and unhappiness into happiness.

As a person of endless compassion, Ohsawa undertook the challenge of sharing this universal treasure with everyone. He offered hope to people around the world and helped change the direction of civilization itself. For this reason, Ohsawa's appeal transcends time and place. People in all corners of the globe continue to be inspired by his vision, and also by his life story. As you

will discover in the pages of *Essential Ohsawa*, the man is just as fascinating as the message. In fact, the two are inseparable.

Ohsawa appeared at a critical time in history: a time when the technological and industrial revolution threatened to alienate humanity from nature and from itself; when East and West clashed in a life-or-death struggle; when the destruction of the environment assumed global proportions; when the possibility of nuclear warfare threatened all life on Earth; and when the biological, psychological, and spiritual degeneration of humanity spread like wildfire across the planet. However, like the first rays of the morning sun appearing in the darkness, George Ohsawa's philosophy of natural living appeared as a necessary and refreshing antidote to these destructive trends. Contained in this philosophy—so succinctly presented in the following pages—are many ideas that are now commonly expressed. For example:

- Ohsawa's teachings about respect for nature and ecological living are the same as those of today's worldwide environmental movement, including the call to adopt grain- and vegetable-based diets to reverse environmental destruction. Moreover, Ohsawa's thinking on the economic justice of diet has been echoed in books such as *Diet for a Small Planet*, *Diet for a New America*, and others in which grain-, vegetable-, and soybean-based diets have been advocated as a solution to world hunger and a fundamental means for preserving scarce natural resources, including tropical rain forests.
- Ohsawa's emphasis on whole natural foods and his teaching that one's body and the soil are united in a very real way can now be heard in the organic, natural food, and natural farming movements. The use of pesticides and other chemicals in the production of food is now recognized as a threat to both personal and planetary health, and there is a call for a return to organic methods. Natural and organic foods are no longer restricted to specialized retail stores but are appearing with increasing frequency on supermarket shelves.
- Ohsawa's belief in the superiority of plant-based diets is now shared by medical scientists and researchers around the globe. This

belief is being expressed in official reports, such as the landmark *Dietary Goals for the United States*, issued by the United States government in 1977. Population studies, such as the China Health Study, point to far lower rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other chronic diseases among people consuming grain- and vegetable-based diets.

- Ohsawa's introduction of Far Eastern and other traditional healing modalities—including acupuncture, moxibustion, herbal medicine, meditation, visualization, and other mind/ body approaches—provided fertile soil for the growth of the holistic, alternative, and natural health movements, and for growing public acceptance of these approaches. In recent surveys, one-third of all Americans were found to be using alternative healing approaches, including macrobiotics. Many physicians, other health-care providers, and the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) are studying and investigating alternative medicine. Ohsawa's dream of a synthesis of Eastern and Western medicine may occur sooner than we think.
- Ohsawa's teaching that eating a balanced diet of whole natural foods can help reverse chronic and acute illness, confirmed by over fifty years of experience, is now being taken seriously by medical science. On the biochemical front, researchers are discovering numerous compounds in grains, beans, sea vegetables, miso, and fresh vegetables that inhibit the growth of cancerous tumors. On the clinical front, studies such as those conducted by Dr. Dean Ornish, in which a grain and vegetable-based diet was found to reverse long-standing coronary blockage, a leading cause of heart attack and stroke, confirm Ohsawa's faith in the healing power of one's own body, given the right nourishment.

The increasing popularity of macrobiotics among persons with cancer along with the publication of documented stories of cancer recovery has led NIH to approve an official study of macrobiotics and cancer. In the near future, a naturally balanced diet along the lines of macrobiotics may become a primary component of the modern health-care system. In addition, Ohsawa's teaching about personal responsibility for health is gaining increasing acceptance in the fields of public health and preventive medicine.

- Ohsawa's pioneering discoveries in atomic transmutation along

with his application of yin and yang in the world of chemistry and physics helped pave the way for the appearance of an entirely new school of scientific thought. In this new school, all things are seen as interrelated, not separate, and the Cartesian division between mind and body, observer and observed, and humanity and nature is being replaced by a more holistic and unifying paradigm.

- Ohsawa's vision of a planetary civilization united by a common dream of health, peace, respect for nature, and an intuitive awareness of our origin and destiny as human beings, is steadily being realized as his ideas continue to spread across national, racial, ideological, and geographic boundaries. From Sydney to St. Petersburg, Boston to Buenos Aires, Colorado to the Congo, Oroville to Osaka, a growing number of people are pursuing Ohsawa's ideas.

Essential Ohsawa should do much to further Ohsawa's vision. I have often dreamed about a book such as this during my years as a teacher of macrobiotics at the Kushi Institute in the Berkshires and throughout the world. I thank Herman and Cornelia Aihara, Carl Ferré, and the staff of the George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation for their patient effort in producing *Essential Ohsawa*. I also thank Rudy Shur of Avery Publishing Group for inspiring the Foundation to undertake this worthwhile project. This book is indeed a treasure.

I hope you enjoy Ohsawa and accept his smiling invitation to a new world of health, happiness, and infinite adventure.

Edward Esko

PREFACE

For many years, Herman and Cornellia Aihara, founders of the George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation and Vega Study Center, and I had dreamed of producing a multi-volume series containing all of Ohsawa's books in order to make his thinking more accessible to people. This project had not materialized partly due to the enormity of the task but also because many of the books are restatements of the same thing: An explanation of the Order of the Universe and its practical application to natural living.

The idea for *Essential Ohsawa* was born a few years ago at the Vega Study Center in Northern California during a meeting with Rudy Shur of Avery Publishing Group. Rudy had come to meet with Herman and Cornellia regarding publication of their book *Natural Healing From Head to Toe*. After discussing the Aiharas' work, Rudy asked if we'd be interested in having Avery publish a book of Ohsawa's writings containing a definitive statement of the most salient aspects of Ohsawa's beliefs. Thus, Rudy's idea crystallized our project to a manageable size and was met with great enthusiasm.

First, all of Ohsawa's works available in English were copied, organized by subject, and retyped. Then began the fascinating task of distilling a file cabinet full of material into one cohesive book. During the process, it became obvious that this book should contain the underlying principles of Ohsawa's ideas and writings

along with a sampling of the great variety of subjects about which he wrote. These subjects range from science to religion and from guidelines for daily living to matters of the spirit and one's ultimate dreams. Thus, the book is arranged into three parts: Foundations of the Body, Principles of the Mind, and Dreams of the Spirit.

Part One contains Ohsawa's thinking on diet, health, and curing disease. He truly believed that simple, natural eating and drinking lead to health. This method had worked for him—actually, it had saved his life—and he saw many thousands of people helped by it during his lifetime. However, Ohsawa didn't want people to blindly follow any dietary or health practice, including his own; he wanted people to have a thorough understanding of the principles behind it. As he wrote, "Any art, practice, or technique is quite dangerous if it has no firm, theoretical foundation."

The foundations of Ohsawa's dietary practice are described in Part Two, which includes his ideas on increasing one's judging ability and on education, yin-yang theory, and the origins of Far Eastern philosophy. Ohsawa also believed, as he wrote, "Any theory, be it scientific, religious, or philosophical, is quite useless if it is too difficult to understand or impractical for daily living." His own theories are understandable with minimal effort and are very practical.

The real power of Ohsawa's thought, and some of his most inspiring writing, is contained in Part Three. Here, his thinking on the ultimate human desires of happiness, peace, and freedom are presented. Ohsawa taught that while a healthy body and mind can bring one partial happiness, the greatest happiness is achieved in giving to others. Such happiness leads to infinite freedom and eternal peace.

The book concludes with a brief End Note by me, a chronology of the events in Ohsawa's life by Herman Aihara, and a list of the writings of Ohsawa compiled by Herman and me.

The writings included in this book have been taken from many works and edited to make a unified presentation. Those who have read Ohsawa's original works, or those who will do so, should be aware of decisions made in the editing process.

Ohsawa wrote in Japanese, French, and English for a great variety of audiences. He used language to appeal to the Japanese before, during, and after World War II; to the French in the 1950s; and to the Americans in the early 1960s. Ohsawa spent many years in France and the United States and loved the West. However, his writings for the Japanese before and during the war had to be anti-West in order to be read or even published. Most of this anti-West tone has been omitted from this book.

His writing on diet was written with the French in mind. Ohsawa had observed that no matter how limited he made his dietary suggestions, the French always cheated and ate a broader range of foods. Thus, he made a dietary suggestion of brown rice, gomashio (sesame salt), and a little bancha tea only. This diet became known as diet number seven and was to be used for short times as with a fast. When this diet was brought to the United States, however, Americans were able to follow it without cheating and for long and, at times, dangerous periods of time. However, much of Ohsawa's writing on diet is consistent with today's macrobiotic practice, and it is this writing that has been included here.

Ohsawa liked to shock people in order to move them to action. Thus, his writing can be extreme at times. While enough of this more extreme writing has been included for flavor, much of it has been omitted because it serves no useful purpose in understanding Ohsawa's philosophy in this day and age. If you want full-strength Ohsawa, you may wish to read the complete originals.

Ohsawa wrote mostly at a time when the terms "man" or "mankind" were commonly used in reference to both men and women. Rather than update this, the language has been left in its original form and is not intended to be exclusionary in any way.

Most of Ohsawa's books available in English were translated from Japanese or from Ohsawa's French. It is difficult to convey the meanings exactly, and to compound the difficulty, all of Ohsawa's works available in English, including those written in English, had previously been edited by many people. Thus, the writing style varies slightly from section to section. However, terms that have been used in different ways in the various writings

have been changed in this book so that their usage is consistent. For example, Ohsawa used both the term “Unifying Principle” and the term “Unique Principle” to describe his philosophy. Even though the ideas are quite unique and Ohsawa used “Unique Principle” for its shock value, “Unifying Principle” has been chosen because it better conveys Ohsawa’s message of the unification of all things.

It is rare in this day of specialists to find a person with such a broad understanding of so many fields. Ohsawa was a philosopher in the original sense of the word—one who studies the principles that cause, control, and explain facts, events, and life itself. We perceive of a philosopher as a person sitting at a desk lost in books most of his or her life. However, Ohsawa was a philosopher of action. He was the greatest of adventurers, traveling the world, conducting endless experiments on himself, and spending time in jail for his beliefs.

Photos and remembrances of Ohsawa by those who knew him personally have been included to help show his human side. If you are fortunate enough to know any of the authors of these remembrances, take the opportunity to ask them about Ohsawa. Watch their faces light up, their voices fill with enthusiasm, and their spirits be uplifted once again when they remember the man who helped give the very meaning of life to so many.

Carl Ferré



George Ohsawa picnicking at Big Sur, 1963. Herman Aihara is seen in background, wearing a cap.