



George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation
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Part One

Life and Death

Regarding Life and Death, Oriental and Occidental thought are completely opposite to one another, as is clearly apparent in *Life* magazine (August 6, 1965) and *Time* magazine (September 24 and November 12, 1965).

“Man dies a little each day.”

And explains:

“In spite of the development of medicine, longevity has not been prolonged at all. The decrease in infant mortality creates the statistical illusion that the life span for Americans has been increased...

“The nourishment of American infants is particularly harmful...

“Knowledgeable gerontologists (specialists in problems of old age) do not believe in the existence of a drug that can prolong life...

“Science has very slowly increased longevity but has not fortified human vitality at all...

“According to statistics, if heart and kidney diseases were completely eliminated, longevity in general would be increased by no more than ten years. The disappearance of cancer would increase it by only 1.8 years...

“Autopsies performed on young G.I.s (aged 18-22 years),

who died in the Korean War, revealed many a case of unsuspected arteriosclerosis. We are forced to conclude that gerontology must begin its research in the cradle...

“It appears to be a necessity that child specialists reconsider their views on infant nutrition...

“It is known that among animals, the one whose head is the largest in proportion to the rest of its body, lives the longest. Take the squirrel, for example. By comparison to its body, its head is the largest of all. It lives the longest. And incidentally, its intelligence is superior... *(See Editor’s note on page 19.)

“No one dies of old age. Everyone dies of some disease, e.g., diverse heart ailments, diabetes, rheumatism, neuralgia, cancer...

“The head—only 2% of the total body weight—consumes 25% of the oxygen assimilated by the organism...

“Each day sees the destruction of several million human body cells...

“According to gerontology, the principal cause of aging is rapid hardening of collagen or connective tissue, a kind of simple-protein that is found everywhere—beneath the skin, in the cartilage, filling intercellular space. It forms 30% of the total protein in the body. The suppleness and elasticity of babies is a direct product of new collagen...

“When collagen gets hardened, there is no hope that it will recover its flexibility. A certain Dr. Corn, however, is experimenting with mice on the premise that bean protein will be helpful in combatting this condition...

“The Academy of Gerontology receives more than three million dollars in donations per year, besides which the U.S. Department of Health grants thirty times that amount

for research in the same field...

“Some think it appropriate to study the future and treatment of “healthy” oldsters in our society since the cause of old age will be uncovered before long. Others (like Dr. M. C. of the Boston University Medical Faculty) think gerontological research has not gone beyond the level of cancer research, fifteen years ago...” (*Life Magazine*)

As we study material such as this from *Life*, it seems apparent that *death* is the most important discovery in the Occident over the centuries; its prime motivation. The Orient, by contrast, found *life*.

The Occident was and still is terror-stricken by its discovery. The Orient cried out in joy and passionate wonder. What an example of the front and back of the same coin.

This is why the Occident has been the birthplace of science, physics, the study of the realm of matter... all hyper-involvements with the visible world. The Orient, on the other hand, gave birth to religion, to the study of the Tao and metaphysics, to the study of spirituality and the invisible world.

Occidental medicine draws its motive power from the dead body, e.g., autopsies, microscopic study of slides prepared from fixed dead material, alleviation of suffering; the medicine of the Extreme Orient from the discovery of the grandeur of the Universe and spirituality. (See *The Yellow Emperor's Book of Internal Medicine*. Ed.)

In an article entitled, “Death is our Constant Companion,” *Time* declares:

“For man, there exists no more oppressive thought than this:

“We must inevitably die...

“Civilization is a fortress whose foundation sinks deep into the world of death...”

“The Egyptians made a vast cemetery and garden of soul out of their entire land...

“The spoils of war were not what motivated the Aztecs to conquer Mexico. They were spurred on by the desire to satisfy the cruel greed of the carnivorous gods...

“Man has erected vast constructions of the intelligence in order to overcome the torments and horrors of Death:

“All philosophies from that of Socrates 2300 years ago to that of Karl Jaspers today have only been efforts at preparing man for death. Many others have endeavored to render death impotent, be it by magic or by reason...

“Death is nothing to us because what is dispersed is incapable of feeling; what cannot feel at all is nothing, according to Epicurus...

“Montaigne repeated this sentiment in his celebrated formulation:

“Death is of no concern to us whether we are alive or dead. If we are alive, we exist and we are not troubled. If we are dead, it matters not—we exist no longer...

“The Three Fates are armed with great shears while Father Time holds a menacing scythe...

“The great effort of Christianity is to overcome death:

“Oh death, where is thy victory?

“Oh death, where is thy sting?

“cried Paul the Apostle...

“The skeleton that sits astride the pale blue steed in the Apocalypse laughs hollowly...” (*Time* magazine.)

This is the sort of judgment that exerts its power over the earth;

it annoys men, pressures them, terrorizes them into both sublime and violent conduct.

In the Occident and especially the United States today, the attitude toward the mystery of death is to turn away completely from established tradition.

The medical point of view makes it appear that death has been deferred more and more. Scholars like Norbert Wiener seriously believe that we can prolong human life for as long as we care to. Yet they tremble at the thought of the time not too distant when man will have completely over-populated the earth.

Socially speaking, man has become more and more inhuman and close-fisted as regards the ceremonials of death and mourning. Only the passing of a Kennedy or a Churchill brings to our ears, once more, the sad sound of the funeral drums.

From the religious viewpoint, the assurance and even the idea of immortality have become quite obscure and inexact. The eventuality of death, once dominated by dark mystery and horror, is completely forgotten. In this, there is very deep significance.

THE RATIONALIZATION OF DEATH

In the thinking of modern man, the problem of death is left out of the questions like:

Who are we?

How should we live?

Man's thinking does not link his ephemeral life to those sources in mythology which are his hereditary wealth, born of hope and astonishment. Modern man uses all his power to eradicate the unhappy finality...death.

For Carl Jung, death gives life its reason for being. He is quite opposed to the abandonment of the traditional judgment that upheld this way of seeing death. He warns us that we must stop thinking of