

The Spirit and Vision

On Macrobiotics

If you decide to embark upon the macrobiotic way, know that you will change. Your whole life will change. It is inescapable, unavoidable. It will remain impressed on the very foundation of your existence. And, once having experienced the effects of the Unique Principle, you will not be able to forget it no matter how hard you try. For the Unique Principle is harmony and its memory never sleeps.

After a period, when you have nourished body and mind the macrobiotic way, remembering proportion, and combining in yourself the bitter, the pungent, the salt and the sweet, balancing your food intake between Yin and Yang, it may occur to you for some reason, or for none at all, to forsake the Unique Principle, to forget the whole thing.

Understand before you begin that you will not be allowed to forget. Not only will your body protest and memory haunt the hours of your day, but the inner man, your true self, having tasted the elusive nectar, having ventured, even briefly, over the border into the long yearned-for state called harmony, called happiness, called peace, called grace, will evermore plague you seeking return. The macrobiotic discipline is nothing if not revolutionary. Exercising it, you will completely remake and remold your character, your body and brain. (B.)

Chewing is most important in macrobiotics. You have no teeth in your stomach nor in the intestines. So you must chew in your mouth, 50 times per mouthful, at least. If you have no time to chew, or if you are so busy that you cannot taste quietly your food and drink, you have no qualification to step into this Macrobiotic diet. (B.)

Many people think that Macrobiotics is a 20th century variety of stoicism. But he who cannot drink, smoke, eat fruit or meat is a cripple. Macrobiotics is a way to build health that enables us to eat and drink anything we like whenever we like without being obsessed or driven to do so. Macrobiotics is not a negative way of living...it is a positive, creative, artistic, religious, philosophical. (B.)

On Acupuncture

Throughout the world today, acupuncture is in a state of confusion. Although it is still practiced in the Orient and has become fashionable in Europe, this acupuncture is no the same as that of the ancient Far East. The fact that these contemporary schools, as serious and well-intentioned though they may be, are different and in conflict with each other is evidence that they lack the essence of life itself, which is embodied in the unique principle. (I.)

In its true spirit, acupuncture cannot be appreciated except by those who have understood the unique principle and applied it in their daily lives by following the way of eating. Without this fundamental understanding and its biological application, the practice of acupuncture could be dangerous. (I.)

On Judo

The ultimate aim of Judo is to make strength unusable to and suppress fear which is the origin of all evil and conflicts. (M.)

On Tolerance

If (B.) you have to learn to be tolerant, you reveal that your understanding is limited. There is nothing intolerable in this world. All things are tolerable.

The whole of nature (birds, bees, animals, fish and every truly free human being) accepts all with great pleasure: bad weather like good, death like life, difficulty like joyfulness. There is neither protest, objection nor complaint, for everything is in equilibrium. He who accepts everything with great pleasure has no need to know the meaning of tolerance. (C.)

On Gratitude

Those who know true gratefulness never forget that they were once ill; they always remember who or what healed them and are eternally thankful. (B.)

Introduction

This month is the 16th anniversary of George Ohsawa's death. Throughout his energetic lifetime he was always growing and changing. His written works span nearly 40 years. They show many degrees of transformation and development. He also translated some Western literature into Japanese, including *The Meeting of East & West*, by Northrup and *Man the Unknown* by Alexis Carrel. He was instrumental in introducing acupuncture into Europe, as Joseph Needham acknowledges in his recent book, *Celestial Lancets*.

Many people beginning macrobiotics have not read George Ohsawa's writings. Through his many works we can come to know him and his spirit. He is the one person who clearly saw the principles of a universal cosmology, giving it full clarity and practicality and called it macrobiotics. Through his strength and perseverance he has given the most important part of the dream for true peace: a strong foundation.

We have read through all of Ohsawa's material current available, including

On Himself

I have suffered misgivings in calling this volume *The Macrobiotic Guidebook for Living* since I have no qualifications as a teacher of morals, much less the ambition to be one. My biggest desire is to give of my years of experience in dealing with a fundamental relationship - the one that exists between food and life.

As you read, you will surely conclude and with good reason, that I have been a gourmandizer all my life! I have been so big an eater that I have surprised and frightened myself more than once.

My big appetite would surely have brought me to an early, miserable death had I not been engaged in an unending search for the secret of food. It was most fortunate that near the end, when I was almost dead, I found Macrobiotics. (B.)

of George Ohsawa

various French books not yet translated. Selecting quotes that show the scope, depth and heights of his ideas and dreams were difficult choices. This should only be an encouragement for you to read him more thoroughly. Still, Ohsawa would not mind our choices, for as he said in *A 4,000 Year History of China*,

"The simplicity of Lao Tzu's book, Tao Te Ching, shows perfectly the original nature of the Unique Principle. As for me, I wrote hundreds of books as if to prove my poor application of the Unique Principle. I don't write books. I only manage to show my foolishness."

Each person's time on Earth is never long enough for those who love him. Ohsawa's biggest gift to us is a vision, a dream of a healthier and wiser Family of Humanity. He would not want anyone to follow in his exact path. We each have our own. But the endless dream is shared by all. As Bashō, the famous 17th century Japanese poet, said,
*Do not follow the footsteps
of the ancients...
Seek what they sought.*

—M.R.

On Cooking

The cook is a veritable physician-artist. The cook is like a great musician who creates a serenade, a rondo, a march, an allegro, or a lullaby with just one scale of five notes. The cook resembles a flutist who draws a pure and passionate melody from a little tube of bamboo. But above all the cook is a poet like Whitman, Verlaine, Rodenbach, Mallarme, or Pierre Louys. The poems are simple, full of silence, comprehensible, extremely profound, and symbiotic. In them everyone finds a different meaning. Moreover there are some cook-artists who understand the complete significance and the superiority of macrobiotic cooking—a way of preparing food that gives not only health but also eternal joy; not only just a feeling, but in the long run a sensitivity for absolute justice. (G.)

On History

Across the history of all countries in the whole world, there is not one example of a person who saved his country from confusion, from violence, from misery by applying an immutable Instructive Principle which showed the way of order and peace. (L.)

Great men survive forever. The difference between the great and the small is their longevity in time and space, that is to say, the dimension in their memory. The longer they live in the memory of a nation or world and the greater the number of those who admire, the better for us--their successors. (K.)

On Love

To love a child, to love a man, or to love a woman is not necessarily love, it is often sentimentalism, that is to say, selfishness. We do not know how to untangle the conflict between love and liberty. We don't know that the principle of liberty and that of love is but one. It is the ignorance of the principle which causes the conflicts, the tragedies, and all the evils. (M.)

By all means enjoy love in the animal fashion, at the first stage of judgement, mechanical or blind. But develop yourself, your love, to the second, sensorial level(which however, always ends tragically). Then raise your love to the third, sentimental level(which always ends in hallucinations). Hurry along, then, to reach intellectual love(as illustrated in the biographies of numerous scientists), social love(revolutionaries and reformers) and ideological love(philosophers). Finally, attain the seventh stage of judgement--Supreme, Infinite, Eternal Love where only endless happiness and infinite freedom are seen, felt and known. This is a goal, and the result, of macrobiotics. (E.)

On Food

My most significant discovery in America is that here the idea of a principal food has entirely disappeared. No professor or man of medicine nowadays seems to be aware of its great value. By contrast, it has always been of primary consequence in the life of the Orient to the point that it was even defied in the beginnings of our history.

The idea of principal food, the basis and significance of which is primarily biological and physiological, and only secondarily economical, geographical, and agricultural, is one of the most fundamental discoveries of man. (C.)

I am not against the theories of modern nutrition in the least. I merely say that such a concept of nutrition, physiology or life is incomplete and that we cannot rely upon it as the basis for establishing health. For us to rely on such incomplete theories as a guide to health and full life can be extremely dangerous. (B.)

Those who believe that we cannot live without meat, sugar, milk, fruit and alcohol as well as those who cannot stand these foods are already experiencing deep illness in their digestive tracts as well as in their thinking. They are mentally and physically sick, having arrived at the intermediary stage between mental and physical illness: Allergy. Those who are free can live with these foods or without them. (G.)

Food and the phenomena of life are very closely related: where there is no food, there are no phenomena of life. Growth, size, strength, wisdom, ignorance, ideas, attitudes, activities, the rise and fall of race and nation--all are affected. They are dependent, determined and controlled by what we eat and drink.

On the simplest level, we are alive because of our appetite for food. If we are at all thankful for that life, we are expressing our gratitude for the hunger that is its driving force.

He who has a healthy appetite can

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enjoy the simplest meal, even one that consists of no more than a bowl of rice. What a gift from nature is hunger. Who can afford to be without it?(B.)

I wonder why so many people (including myself) fall ill in the first place, why they tolerate suffering for so long. The answer is a simple one: we are all ignorant of the simple, clear relationship between food and life. (B.)

On Life

Death is neither a final point nor is it the entry into the next world. Death is in reality an interval, a tiny gap in an infinitesimally small corner of the grand canvas of empty, infinite space. Without this canvas no world could exist.

We must abandon the exclusivity that has brought us to the point of thinking that "our life" is ours and by us. We must recall occasionally that the great, infinite space--the Absolute, Eternity--is our true life, the origin of our will and spirituality. (H.)

On Understanding

This indispensable Unique Principle is not difficult to comprehend, anyone can understand it, even a child. What is difficult is the practice necessary to assimilate it into one's self. For example, no one ever drowns in water if he does not struggle. Even when one knows the principle conceptually, if one cannot remain calm in the water, then he struggles and drowns. That is why one must learn this principle and use it continuously--to deeply know it. In this way, one learns to swim.(L.)

Understanding with the brain, by intellectual conception, is not complete. However, understanding with the stomach is not all, either. Even understanding with all the cells isn't. You should have understood through the brain, through the stomach, through the cells, and through your existence itself, by your activities and your influence on your society and on humanity at large. (M.)

I agree that to follow any teaching blindly, even that of our ancestors, is unwise. Merely to eat as we have been taught is not enough. But to reject that teaching without trying to understand it is equally foolish. The result is what we have today: the deep insight of our ancestors has been completely forgotten; it lies ignored, discarded as old-fashioned. (B.)

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On Levels of Judgement

You can go from one level of judgement to another higher one only when you have exhausted the possibilities of your present one and have judged it insufficient and useless. (G.)

In this finite, limited, relative world, there are two antagonists at all levels: Yin and Yang (centrifugality and centripetality), female and male, cold and hot, death and life, sadness and joy, spiritual and material. Man becomes a dualist when he observes these two sides to phenomena without seeing their unity. Antagonism is found at each of our relative levels of judgement. In reality, these antagonisms are the "heads" and "tails" of the same coin. Extremes of antagonism "touch" each other and co-mingle. One kills his lover at the extreme of love! While this appears contradictory, it is just such contradictions which animate the world and from which man struggles at all cost to save himself. Most men end their lives still puzzled by the enigmas of existence. To understand and enjoy such contradiction, one must unveil the Supreme Judgement.(E.)

The lotus flower is nice and noble, stylish and pious. But its roots are covered with the dirtiest mud in the bottom of the pond; it helps produce and feed these fine flowers. Many people admire lotus flowers, but they ignore or hate the dirty mud at the bottom of the pond. They are sentimentalists or hypocrites with a narrow and superficial mentality. (B.)

Without a struggle, lively or calm, our judgement does not progress. Still, as we have learned through history, struggles have not led to a solution for humanity. Why? Judgement has been warped by superstition and by education that has been directed solely at our sensual, sentimental, and intellectual levels of judgement--which is to say, our lower levels of judgement. And low judgement is much stronger than high judgement because we live in the physical, material world while our high judgement is spiritual. (G.)

On Attachment

Too much attachment is the cause of all sickness and unhappiness. Detachment is the only road to health. Attachment is loss of freedom. Attachment of any kind is the beginning of unhappiness. Even the attachment to the idea of detachment must be eliminated. (G.)

On Faith

Crimes, hostility, poverty, wars and especially so-called incurable illness are all the end result of a lack of faith. Faith is the solid foundation upon which judgement rises. If you have confidence only in man-made contrivances such as laws, power, knowledge, science, money, drugs and medicines, you have faith only in relativity, not in infinity. Since all relative judgement is transitory and of little value, you should learn the structure of infinity, the eternal Creator. (C.)

On Religion

If a religion cannot guarantee health, the fundamental basis of happiness, then I consider it false: a mere opiate. It is false and deceitful, nothing more than superstition. (E.)

On Change

Every day, every minute, one sees great changes and our life must be an unceasing adventure! Adventure is the big change--stagnant life is death! The earth and all the worlds, flying every second at an enormous rate towards an unknown point of foreign origin (the eternal world), seems to enjoy showing us that liberty and justice are nothing but an adventure. (J.)

On Meditation

Real prayer is the meditation that helps us to recognize once and for all the infinite richness that we have all possessed since the very beginning without beginning. The fundamental preparation for meditation is fasting. True fasting is to detach yourself from all that you love the most but that is not absolutely necessary for life: sugar, pastry, fruit, alcohol, exotic or out-of-season products, meat, dairy food, chemicalized food, etc. (G.)

