

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 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.)

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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.)

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On Health

The person who has never been sick is not truly secure because his health is a gift from his parents. They have provided him with a strong foundation that he can eventually destroy through bad judgement.

True health is that which you yourself have created out of illness. Only if you have produced your own health can you know how wonderful it actually is. (B.)

If you do not have the will to live most simply and happily, you must not and cannot be cured.

Sick people incessantly express the wish for a cure; they claim to have the will to rid themselves of disease at any cost. Will of this variety is merely a desire to escape from the status quo defeatism. It reveals an unwillingness to accept the eternal order in life, the order that oscillates between difficulty and pleasure. We must continually re-create our own happiness by recognizing and curing disease at every instant of our lives.

Many a man wishes to be cured by others or by some mechanical device, all the while by-passing his own involvement and personal responsibility. People of this sort do not deserve a complete cure. They must not and, in fact, cannot be cured.

The Will, by contrast, is unique and works in quite a different manner. The Will to Life seeks and finds, first of all, the beginning cause of all unhappiness, all disease, all injustice in the world and then proceeds to eliminate it without using violent, artificial means. It conquers through methods that are in accord with the structure of the Infinite Universe, naturally and peacefully.

The drive to cure only symptoms or to have control of one's health without accepting responsibility is comparable to the notion on the part of an individual that he can step in front of a moving train and not be struck down. It is simple exclusiveness and egoism; it eclipses and denies Will, the order in the Infinite Universe. (C.)

On Happiness

He who thinks that happiness depends on the circumstances reveals himself to have low judgement. Supreme judgement always shows us the best way of conducting ourselves on a daily basis under any circumstance. (G.)

Your freedom, justice, health and joyfulness must be completely yours. Health or freedom given by others is a debt that must be paid sooner or later if you are not to remain a slave or a thief.

In truth, you cannot pay all that you owe in this life, because you have nothing but what you owe. You will be freed from debt if you distribute infinite joyfulness and thankfulness to everyone you meet. This amounts to a real understanding of the structure of the infinite universe and its justice. The earth gives back ten thousand grains in return for each grain she has received. "One grain, ten thousand grains" is the biological law of this world. He who violates this law cannot live happily. (C.)

All our unhappiness comes from our judging ability in total or partial eclipse. (K.)

Peace cannot be obtained on a collective basis. It is not dependent on others. It is individual and personal...and may be further described as the ability to change sickness to health (and vice versa), unhappiness to happiness (and vice versa), and slavery to freedom (and vice versa). He who cannot do so does not know absolute peace. (E.)

On War & Violence

Law is always force or violence. Peace cannot be established by any law nor any legislation. Such peace is peace in prison. (K.)

Weapons and their ferocity are in reality the very symbol of fear. The more and bigger you fear, the more and greater weapons you want to have. (K.)

Fear is the mentality of those who anticipate defeat. To fight is to be ignorant of happiness. This is why victory is double-edged: It always calls for defeat, but it can only be the beginning of defeat, on this planet (M.)

On Friendship

The intimate friend is most precious in this world. The number of your intimate friends is an indication of your liberty and happiness...The intimacy of friendship is parallel with your conception of the world. If you can have an intimate friend, your power will be a thousand times fortified. But there are many who cannot make even a few friends in this world where some two hundred fifty millions of their brothers and sisters are living. Poorest is he who cannot make even his wife an intimate friend. (K.)

On Truth

If the truth is not unique, and absolute, it is not the truth. If the truth is divided, what we have are finite facts limited by time and space. (G.)

On Symptomatic Treatment

If you don't believe yourself to be responsible for your sickness whatever it may be, then you are a dualist. If your symptoms disappear or are destroyed by a symptomatic treatment, it amounts to nothing more than a transfer of the illness to another location, or the postponement of the calling of your debt. (G.)

If symptomatic medicine does not undergo reform, it will be the ruination of mankind. Unfortunately, scientific and technical medicine is not based on awareness of Life. Consequently, it cannot cure disease. Instead it employs destructive weaponry: radium, gas, x-rays, and radioactive cobalt. Modern Western Medicine does not see that the symptoms of disease are the most useful alarms Life has bequeathed us. (E.)

He who cannot explain the mechanism of cause and effect cannot save the unhappy, sick person...Instead he deceives him with a very seductive word - karma. The sick people who cannot find the ultimate cause of their sickness in their behavior and judgement are incapable of curing the slightest illness, even one as small as varicose veins. To attack and destroy symptoms instead of reforming daily behavior is to postpone the day of cure. Sooner or later it ends in a catastrophe. It is well worth noting that there is only one fundamental illness: Ignorance of the order of the universe, lack of supreme judgement, which has been brought about by the embryological, physiological, familial, scholastic, and social education. (G.)

On Family

You can enjoy a truly happy life only if you have a child. This is so obvious if one spends some time at an old-age home for childless, lonely people. It is very depressing. How sad it is to give up having children only because you do not want to take the trouble to raise them. The individual who avoids parenthood because he wants the freedom to enjoy himself or because his income is low, is a coward. He will never understand or enjoy pleasure, gratitude or happiness. (B.)

We all seek happiness in our lives. Yet most of us forget that married life - the well-spring from which the family grows - can and must be the factory that produces this happiness.

What makes a family happy? Mental and physical health, first of all. Macrobiotics is the most practical, easy way to fulfill this requirement. (B.)

Scolding by our parents is part of our training for life and we should look up to them with gratitude for it. Either we get this training from them when we are young or from life itself later on. By the same token, we should not attempt to side-step the scolding of God - sickness. (B.)

Whether a home is happy or not depends upon the health of its inhabitants. Here the importance of the mother or wife cannot be over-emphasized. In her hands lies control of the life source, the well-spring of power - the kitchen. She must be willing to acknowledge the importance and dangers of food. She must have clarity of mind and be gentle, careful, tolerant, clever. She must know and understand Macrobiotics and be capable of applying her knowledge at all times. (B.)

On Spoiling Children

Nature is violent and severe and only he who was trained to withstand nature's painful test can become happy. Behold the pines which seem to scratch the sky. They grow on the mountain rocks, without compost, without water, in constant struggle against the snow and the glacial wind, holding up its spine straight to the sun. The sap which oozes out seems to be 1000 years old. Oh, the wood which carpenters use grows not in the fertile fields.

In spite of this lesson from nature, parents spoil their darling children. They satiate them with food and dress them warmly. Because they spoil them,

the children become weak. As they become weak the parents treat them with even more sweetness. Thus, children growing up no longer view their parents as one should view a father and mother. These children take their parents as free servants. (L.)

On Healing

Our macrobiotic medicine cannot be considered medicine in a country where symptomatic medicine holds sway. Our medicine is not all curative, palliative or symptomatic but rather educational. It teaches those who are sick now to heal themselves. The cure is totally dependent on their will and on their comprehension. (G.)

Healing power is in our minds. The material for opening our minds and for healing disease, however, is food. (B.)

How can we judge someone? To judge is to know the ultimate cause with a view to freeing the person from his original error. Judging outside the framework of truth is to inflict punishment, and this punishment never works. Teaching without knowing this unique truth creates intellectual criminals. (G.)

Macrobiotic medicine has many really wonderful medicaments extracted from plants. With these natural medicines and proper diet, it is easy to cure any disease, but it is exceedingly difficult to cure a patient. He must be taught how to become a free man and how to do this with all his heart and with his deepest imagination, faith and will. (A.)

On the Change of the Seasons

When the long cold winter and yin come, spring is not far. The transformation of yin winter into yang spring doesn't happen overnight. Just as one prematurely decides that spring has arrived earlier than usual, cold returns to make us shiver. The cherry tree, however, knows by itself what to believe. It remains on guard, holding tight its buds. Winter does not take the place of spring all at once nor change each day step-by-step directly from yin to yang. It is a process of alternating yin and yang, which subtly moves forward until the day when one arrives at spring without even realizing it. (L.)

On Man and Woman

The most important characteristic for a man is bravery. In addition, he must also have the following traits: strength, reliability, firmness, adaptability, courage, and tolerance.

The most important characteristics for women are self-denial, tolerance, sweetness and punctuality...in a word, womanliness. I do not imply that a woman must be obedient. I simply mean that she should not be stubborn. (B.)

The kitchen is the pharmacy of life, and the woman the pharmacist. She is the planner of culture; the director of the play...she determines whether or not it is tragic or joyful. Though her husband may be cruel, stubborn or stupid, the wife who understands Macrobiotics well enough can change him even if it takes three, five, ten or twenty years. The longer it takes and the more difficulties there are to be overcome, the greater the significance of her achievement. The biggest task always takes the longest time. In this sense, the evolution of humanity depends primarily upon the judgement of women. (B.)

More Gems

Symbolically, air is infinite freedom, water is unlimited receptivity, and light is supreme judgement. Their natural combination and transformation, in accordance with the order of the universe, is called "grains and vegetables." (G.)

Jesus is a Grand Master of Judo: when attacked by thousands of enemies much more powerful than himself, he defeated them all and his victory has been lasting for more than 19 centuries. (M.)

I alone recommend a macrobiotic vegetarian diet as one of the easiest ways to attain most rapidly the supreme state of man. But you should take another way if you find something better. (N.)

Quote Sources

Can you guess which books of Ohsawa's these quotes come from? In the next issue of MacroMuse, we will publish the sources (hints are given at the end of each quote).

Sources of Ohsawa's Quotes

Here are the sources we promised you for last issue's (April) collection of Ohsawa quotes entitled *The Spirit and Vision of George Ohsawa*:

- [A] **Book of Judgement**
George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation (G.O.M.F.)
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- [B] **Guidebook for Living**
Translated by Herman Aihara, Ohsawa Foundation Inc., Los Angeles, CA., 1967
- [C] **Zen Macrobiotics**
Ohsawa Foundation Inc., 1965
- [D] **The Unique Principle**
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- [E] **Cancer and the Philosophy of the Far East**
Swan House, Binghamton, New York, 1971
- [F] **Practical Guide to Far Eastern Macrobiotic Medicine**
G.O.M.F., San Francisco, 1973
- [G] **Jack and Mitie in the West**
G.O.M.F., Oroville, Translated by Ken Burns, 1981
- [H] **Life and Death**
G.O.M.F., Oroville, 1971
- [I] **Acupuncture and the Philosophy of the Far East**
Tao Books and Publishers Inc., Boston, MA., 1973
- [J] **George Ohsawa Dies in the Congo**
G.O.M.F., 1973
- [K] **Two Great Indians in Japan**
Five Elements Research, New London, CONN., 1974
- [L] **4,000 ans d'Histoire de la Chine**
Librairie Philosophique J. Virin, Virin, France, 1969. Excerpts translated by Peggy Rossoff.
- [M] **Le livre du Judo**
Unpublished translation by Patrick Momal.
Edited by Michael Rossoff.
- [N] **The Macrobiotic (#110)**
G.O.M.F., Oroville, 1975