



## FORUM

# The Myth Of Judgment

by Leonard Jacobs

*Have macrobiotic leaders and followers lost the spirit of living in harmony with nature, of compassion for others, of non-greed and non-credo? Our hard-hitting contributor says yes and urges a spiritual and social reawakening which can alter the course of macrobiotics.*

In this Golden Age of macrobiotics, while the media, book publishers, and the natural foods business is discovering how to market a new diet, we have to make a choice. Is macrobiotics a hobby for the well-to-do sick, a mystery religion for the insecure, or a serious way of life for people concerned with re-learning how the order of nature can make our lives more simple and harmonious?

As many people with serious and/or terminal diseases turn to macrobiotics out of desperation, they are rarely interested in the deep philosophical basis of this old/new way of life. They want to relieve their symptoms and will even pay hundreds of dollars to young men with no prestigious degrees and certificates on their walls to learn about exotic Oriental foods in the hope of a cure. Upper middle class people, with incredibly esoteric diseases, who may even need their suffering as a way to recover their native intuition, are patronized—in the same way as the ailing monarch was served by the court wizard, hoping for a piece of the action. These people are the self-centered middle class who at one time had been considered to be the root of degeneration in modern society, and yet are now being catered to with awe and open hands. "Either give us your excess, since we can better invest it in our organic farms, tempeh shops or learning institutions, or suffer the consequences."

And from the perspective of the patient/client, this bland and strange diet is a mere eccentricity and hopefully not more than a passing fancy—a hobby to pass their time while the dread disease miraculously vanishes. Little of the passion for a new world or a regenerated society remains. The dream of our macrobiotic ancestors is replaced with devotion to sick people.

As a mystery religion, macrobiotics has fallen into the hands of the power hungry and insecure—people who hope to control the masses by their keen diagnostic skills. "Look into my eyes and you will bare your soul, heart, liver, kidneys, and even your sex life." Wielding this false power, we have created a division between our righteous selves and those unrighteous others. We have the answers and are all too willing to

tell others just that. Little concern that the answers are limited and often foolish. Little matter that these answers are not much different from what George Ohsawa was teaching over 30 years ago. This power over others is most likely a result of insecurity and fear. We may be absorbing the fear of others and making that our reason for being. After all, if we do not have power over life and death, and the abilities to conquer their sicknesses, what good are we?

So we hold that false power as a new idol, and are producing a new illusion, one which is driving many of our lives: greed. On the other hand, there is another choice, one which was our original dream for macrobiotics—a cultural and political revolution.

Many of us began macrobiotics from a concern over injustices and social issues: the war in Vietnam, Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, poverty, hunger, or the rising incidence of degenerative diseases. We had made a commitment to changing the world, and realized that this change needed to come from within. A change in our diet would, we expected, mean a change in our health, and eventually a change in our consciousness. This commitment is a serious business and one which means a commitment to truth, in whatever form it is found. It requires of us that we examine our fears and express our inadequacies. Understandably, as we grew older and increased in our responsibilities to our families, money became a growing concern. Yet even this issue could be resolved through creativity and imagination.

I suggest that those of us who still have the dream of a new world based on the principles of macrobiotics commit ourselves to discovering those precepts which are going to form the basis of this life. Macrobiotics is not expected to be a refuge for scholars to isolate themselves from each other and the world. It is a community, and since its members are trying to think together, it may be called, at least in potentiality, an intellectual community.

This is a community which demands of its members serious reflection and deep commitment to dialogue. We need to bring issues into focus so that they may be

---

**We have lost the spirit of "non-credo."  
We are afraid to challenge the teacher, or even ourselves.**

---

---

**We hold a false power as a new idol,  
and are producing a new illusion,  
one which is driving many of our lives: greed**

---

clearly seen and intelligently debated. As in any self-respecting institution, dialogue participants are free to take individually any public positions they like. Yet this seems to be a difficult proposition. Even though dialogue implies the candid exchange of ideas and a willingness to learn from one another, this seems to be harder to achieve in our community than in most. We seem unwilling to talk about our differences: the process is unsettling and can lead who knows where. The safest thing is to look, act, and speak like everybody else. We have lost the spirit of "non-credo." We are afraid to challenge the teacher, or even ourselves.

I suggest that we explore the possibility of including some new precepts in our practice. Right diet is a good first step, but with a semi-Taoist orientation which maintains an amoral outlook on life, we are often doing little more than catering to the indulgences of our respective egos. However, these precepts, as Robert Aitken explains in his new book *The Mind of Clover*, need only be "skillful means for us to use in guiding our engagement with the world. Not commandments engraved in stone, but expressions of inspiration written in something more fluid than water. Relative and absolute are altogether blended." One of these precepts I suggest should be the Buddhist concept of non-stealing.

**G**enerosity, which had been a major component of our macrobiotic teaching, conflicts with the indulgences encouraged by society. True practice of macrobiotics encourages ethically motivated people to move outward into society, to engage in the larger community. Avalokiteshvara (introduced in the *Heart Sutra*) is the Bodhisatva of Mercy, who by his or her very name expresses the fact that the truth not only sets you free, it also brings you into compassion with others. In the Far East the name is translated in two ways, "The One Who Perceives the Essential Self at Rest," and "The One Who Perceives the Sounds of the World." This implies that spiritual attainment and discovery of truth includes listening to the suffering of other creatures.

Somehow, our acquaintance with the unique Principle has resulted in what may be a mere glimmer being worshipped as something real and substantial. Regardless of our background, our first taste of macrobiotic foods and Oriental philosophy gave us insights that we identified with "Enlightenment." However, this initial glimmer was only the beginning of our unfoldment, not the end. We need practice and perseverance like any student of a spiritual discipline. We made the beginning into the end and lost sight of what was to become a much deeper realization of the world. One regular practice can be right eating, but another may be called "non-stealing." This is a precept we can use as a complement to greed.

Stealing is a pervasive element of our lives and is the nature of our economic system. Based on greed and the illusion of need, this is the force which drives competition and conflicts, exploitation and ecological disruptions. As we see the result of greed around us and realize that we only change the world by changing

ourselves, let's begin by following this precept of non-stealing, and begin by examining how we are seduced by appeals for consumption. Mahatma Gandhi said: "We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants. One who follows the observance of Non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his own wants. Much of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of the breaches of the principle of Non-stealing."

**I** suggest that when compassion is missing, possession and acquisition are the same as stealing, and fuel for the illusion of need. When the mind experiences the transparency of all things and their intimate relationships, there is the realization of freedom and truth. Possession may be necessary, but let's examine the difference between our way and the delusions of greed, hatred, and ignorance that feeds the industrial and political systems, threatening the very structure of life. When we determine the fees for our consultations, seminars, certification programs, let's be clear that these determinations may be motivated by the same delusions that motivate the politicians and bureaucrats we are attempting to cure. Balance of yin and yang means to harmonize—not to compete on the same level. The same ignorance that encourages the depletion of air, water, and food, is driving us to increase our charges and polish our business practices. Where is the compassion for the suffering? And where is the change in consciousness we expected along with our change in blood quality?

---

**The dream of our macrobiotic ancestors  
is replaced with devotion to the sick.**

---

From the Mohawk Native American Nation comes this statement: "We are shown that our life exists with the tree, that our well-being depends on the well-being of the vegetable life, that we are close relatives of the four-legged beings. In our ways, spiritual consciousness is the highest form of politics. . . . We believe that all living things are spiritual beings. Spirits can be expressed as energy forms manifested in matter. A blade of grass is an energy form manifested in matter—grass matter. The spirit of the grass is that unseen force which produces the species of grass, and it is manifest to us in the form of real grass."

This passage is part of the "Haudenosaunee Address to the Western World," presented to the United Nations at Geneva in 1977. It is insights such as these that make clear how little we know and how insignificant the macrobiotic movement actually is. The dissolution of our delusions and the realization of infinity come through constant practice. We need to acknowledge the social being that we are and through our

—Continued on next page

—Continued from page 21

expressions of life, make changes, small but significant. As Gary Snyder once wrote: "the mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both."

Each of our acts is a statement into how we are creating the world. Each time we consider raising our fees and increasing our possessions and power, we are catering to our lowest needs and continuing the injustices in the world. I believe that our situation in macrobiotics has changed too fast for our ideas. And so our ideas have degenerated into slogans—forms of words that pass through the mind without putting any strain on it, and that only cause imperceptible mental disturbance, if any, in those who hear them. The current atmosphere in macrobiotics is not unfavorable to the pursuit of knowledge, which we now see as the path to power and prosperity, but it is hostile to the pursuit of understanding and wisdom. Wisdom requires knowledge, but is not synonymous with it and does not flow automatically from it. Thus the myth of judgment. Judgment without depth of understanding is nothing more than empty information.

My point is that unless a society can develop and maintain intellectual communities devoted to under-

standing and wisdom, unless it has centers of independent thought and criticism, it is bound to make sad mistakes. A community with knowledge and information centers, but without independent thought, systematic criticism, understanding, and wisdom, may have the illusion of power, but it will also be the most dangerous in the world. Or it will disintegrate, for justice is the cement that holds a community or movement together.

I believe that there are a considerable number of people both within and without the macrobiotic community who share in these concerns. They are aware of the gap between macrobiotic ideals and policy and performance. They want to narrow it. They want to join the search for justice and understanding, and they are searching traditional cultures and their own heritages for inspiration and guidance. I suggest that we allow ourselves the indulgence in a new slogan or motto which may encompass our objectives for this type of pursuit toward changing ourselves and the world. It is a line from Walt Whitman: "Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a new world."

*Leonard Jacobs* is the publisher of the East West Journal and editor of the recently published book: *Natural Childcare—The Macrobiotic Approach to Raising A Healthy Family*.

---