

INGLESE

NOME

Max

.....
notes from book "Death and beyond",

COGNOME

Edinburgh

CLASSE

MATERIA

July 1998

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Eastern and Western Perspectives on DEATH.

Book: // Death and Beyond in the Eastern Perspective // Jung Young Lee, (1994), Gordon and Breach, New York

understanding death is as important as understanding living

Life is Death and Death is Life

lots of scientific advancement yet those in the West remain hopelessly ignorant about death

Western thinking on death based on primitive ideas; ancient ancestors and religious texts
gender and sex openly debated today. Death remains taboo. Subject still wedded to
uneasiness, suffering and depression.

many avoid the subject. ~~tempt~~

People are accused of not being optimistic enough!!!

Western thinking on death seen as emotionally childlike. In the East,
Western thinking like teenage boys who don't want to understand the reality of their
girlfriends in case it destroys their illusions. HA!

In the East, subject of death is not as taboo.

West's attitude to death is unhealthy, the result of the West's dualistic values system.

Bible: Genesis 3:3, death is the result of man's sin. Life is a gift of God. ~~Adap~~

In the West, life is associated with goodness, while death is linked to evil.

Everything in Western thinking is "either-or". Either you are with us or against us mentality.

Western thinking is binary. Sees death and life in conflict.

Youth and health valued - Age and decline are not.

Elderly in the West neglected and isolated. Frightening and horrible to be elderly in the West today!

~ Death is devalued

In the West, an idea is not accepted unless it is proven. Then it is accepted as correct.

In the East, ideas are accepted until they are proven to be false.

BIG DIFFERENCE!

In the West, that which is not proven is false. In the East, what is not proven may still be accepted as true until it is shown to be otherwise.

In the West, there is A and not-A. This leads to bigotry against not-A.

In the East, A and not-A are seen as two sides of the same thing. There is interest in the integration of knowledge. Thinking is by nature inclusive. Western philosophy is exclusive. It focuses on distinctions in knowledge, in separation. It focuses on half of human existence, on life. This creates an unhealthy attitude to death.

- Western thought is based on conflicting dualism.

- Eastern thinking is based on complementary dualism, on understanding the wholeness of reality, not the individual parts.

Eastern philosophy is concerned with the problems of life and death.

Death is important because of life, and life is important because of death.

To be old is valuable because the values accumulated during life can be retained, even in death.

The Bardo Thödol, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, gives practical instructions on life AND death. A manual for both.

// the first coldly scientific and reasoned analysis of the after-life state uncontaminated by guesswork //

Those who have been close to death in the West confirm much of what it says.

The Bardo Thödol is complemented by China's I Ching (Yijing, or the Tao, The Way). The authors of each book were not aware of the other.

I Ching: change is the ultimate reality. Change creates things, reproduces them, and changes them again.

Death is the changes in consciousness that take place before, during and after dying.

consciousness and the unconsciousness ~~gij~~ are within the realm of change, they are two sides of the same thing.

Life and death are two sides, opposites that are essentially undifferentiated, even though they are existentially differentiated.

Instead of dualism, 1 or 0, life and death are a continuum. opposites are not in conflict but complimentary to each other.

change changes all things, but change itself is changeless BRILLIANT!!

The Tao, The Way, is moving along and standing still simultaneously. (THIS IS WHAT THE ORIGINAL CHARACTERS MEAN).

It is changing and yet unchanging at the same time. change is the constant that does not change. The presence of change is unchanging.

Life is death, death is life

In the West, people resist death. It is viewed as the enemy of life. Death undermines the notion of 'survival' and all that Darwinian/(Herbert) Spencerian BS thought, based on the notion of survival.

In the West people seek to prolong and intensify life. Western civilisation is
//fundamentally a human reaction to the power of death. //

Christian Resurrection: central to Western thought. Life overcomes death, LIFE TRIUMPHS!! This is a denial of reality.

Death can't be defeated, yet its existence is often consciously dismissed in the West. This is a superficial approach, because it doesn't attempt to solve any of the problems of death. It intensifies and mystifies death's reality. Death is seen as the enemy of life. Nonsense!

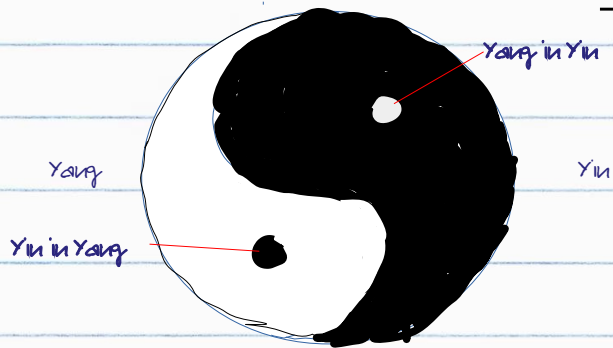
Good and evil, light and dark, life and death - they are all viewed dualistically in the West, one the enemy of the other.

Just as yang cannot exist without yin, good cannot exist without evil, and life cannot exist without death. There is no way to separate life from death because one can't exist without the other. Where there is no life there is no death, and where there is no death there is no life. The intrinsic unity in the two means it's possible to say that in life there is death, just as in death there is life. They are essentially one, the same, but existentially two.

Yin and Yang

Yin = death

Yang = life



Two parts, mutually intertwined in harmony. BALANCE

The light side has a dark dot, the dark side a light one. Light is not absolute, it has dark within. Dark is not absolute as it also has light. The light side presupposes the existence of dark, and vice versa.

In the light section, the dark is small and hard to see, and vice versa.

As the light increases, the dark decreases, and as the dark increases, the light decreases.

Like the day, which reaches a maximum level of light before darkening, the night does the opposite. Life reaches a peak and then fades. A natural process; the transition one state is always relative to the other: one side grows, the other decays, and vice versa.

To speak of yin is to speak of yang at the same time. To speak of life means we must also speak of death.

one is explicit, the other implicit. one is in the foreground, one in the background.

Death is in life but unmanifested, and life is in death, unmanifested.

Midday is the greatest intensification of light and the greatest de-intensification of darkness. Midnight is the opposite. Both are the extreme poles of the two.

As soon as one reaches its maximum, it starts to retreat towards its minimum.
At the maximum point each begins to yield to the other.

Dark is light unmanifested while light is dark unmanifested. The light is light because there is darkness and the dark is dark because there is light. One needs to understand both to see the whole. They are mutually dependent.

Life is death unmanifested, and death is life unmanifested. Death is the background to life, and vice versa. They are mutually dependent, inter-related, because they are essentially undifferentiated, the same.

Silence and sound

When we hear music, we don't hear the silence behind, but it's still there.

When music stops we hear the silence again.

Silence is sound unmanifested, and vice versa. They are one, but manifest in two different phenomena. Sound is silence vibrated, it is a change in the waves.
Silence is sound unvibrated.

Law of conservation of energy, derived from the Special Theory of Relativity

$$E = mc^2$$

Energy is equal to mass times the speed of light squared

Within energy there is mass and within mass there is energy (subject to certain existential conditions being met.)

Not separate. Different manifestations of the same thing. Energy is mass unmanifested and mass is energy unmanifested.

So...

death is defined in terms of life and life is understood in terms of death

To separate one is to dismiss them both, because they are the same thing.

Death cannot be the enemy of life. The two complement each other and fulfill each other. To separate life from death is to make life incomplete and meaningless.

This means that life and death must share the same vitality. !!!!! YES

Remember: life and death are human ideas. The distinction is meaningless from the standpoint of eternity.

creatures live to die. This is the fulfillment of life, the end of one part of the cycle. Without life there is no death and without death there is no life. To separate them is meaningless, because together they are what make existence.

Death is Birth, Birth is Death!!

Death is the end for the living manifestation, but the beginning of the dead one.

Birth is the beginning for the living and the end for the dead manifestation.

Both death and birth begin at the same point, at the moment of change. They both begin at the same place and end at the same place.

Dying is the beginning for the death phase. Dying is the birth of death, the beginning.

Everything in the universe, including birth and death, has yin and yang, because everything is in the process of change. Birth is the renewal and regeneration of the old while death is the degeneration of the new.

It's possible to talk of // the life of death // . Like life, death must go through a period of expansion and contraction too.

Is there a spirit, or soul?

cannot prove or disprove the existence of the soul. Can make certain statements that may support the possibility.

The concept of yin and yang, of there being two sides balanced together in harmony, is a phenomenon repeated throughout the universe. This suggests that there should be a counter-side to our physical existence.

It suggests that there is a spiritual body and a physical body that are complimentary to each other. If one exists, so must the other. If we deny the existence of the spiritual body, we deny the existence of the physical one.

one is active, one is inactive. Both are interdependent.

If this is so, then some element of the physical body must remain when we die, within the spiritual body.

MAKES NO SENSE! No part of the physical body remains when someone dies.

To make sense of this means understanding the nature of the physical body.

The body is a collection of cells and bits of tissue. More to it than that. Also the psychic and mental structures, consciousness, there is essence.

Think of a knife, which is defined by its function. There is no knife without its sharpness, just as there is no sharpness without the knife. It's essence is its function, not its physicality.

The physical body is the foreground to the spiritual body while the spiritual body is the background to the physical one. The spiritual body is the manifestation of the spirit. It is consciousness that is the manifestation, which is at its most feeble when we die, and which grows when we live.

Just as mass and energy are the same, the law of conservation of matter says matter cannot be destroyed.

A radical transformation of energy at the time of death, a transition from mass to energy, in the form of consciousness. Mental contents retained, in patterns and ideas. Western studies confirm this.

At the moment of death and for some time after, brain activity is high and comes in waves

consciousness is the flip-side of unconsciousness one is manifest within the physical body, one in the spiritual.

According to the **Bardo-Thödon**, the spiritual body, the inverse side of existence, is made visible to us in 6 ways.

3 when we are alive, + 3 in death

Life and death are transition states, periods of existence which change from one to another. Everything changes, everything is a process of change.

1 in dreams, when we are unconscious

2 in the womb, and

3 in a state of deep meditation. Mostly unknown in the West this is unknown. Can be replicated however, by taking LSD or mescaline.

other 3 manifestations of the spiritual body's existence during 3 non-living, non-physical body stages.

1 at the moment of death

2 the state of being dead, the moment of Reality of Death, or luminosity, when the dead realise they are dead and face having to review their lives.

3 During reincarnation.

During the rebirth, at the time of the dawning, the dead remain unconscious of the light for some time. This continues during the first three years of life when we usually do not remember anything at all, even though our lives restart at conception.

When we die, and when we are dead, there are opportunities to escape this cycle of rebirth. Need to understand them if we are to be successful.

To escape the endless cycle, need to learn lessons in life, know what to do when we die.

The reward is a transition to a higher level of consciousness.

Supporting evidence

Evidence to support these ideas, to strengthen the case for there being a soul:

- countless reports of near-death experiences that reflect what's described in the Bardo Thödol. White light ahead, life replayed before them.

Individual experiences of death are not identical. As every life is different, so is every death.

We all experience death in our own way. The way death is experienced is a reflection of a person's life and state of mind when they enter the first stages of the transition.

After death it's important for the spirit to distinguish between clear lights and dull lights.

6 dull coloured lights, each with a different meaning. White = Devas, spiritual beings. Dull coloured smoke = Hell. The dead should not be afraid of the lights, or be attracted to them. They are reflections of their own minds, their lives. To overcome them and escape, the dead need to understand and master the art of non-thought.

In the Bardo Thödol, 3 numbers are often repeated - 3, 5 and 49.

There are 3 Bardos of death, and 3 Bardos of life, as well as the 3 bodies of the Buddha.

There are the 3 elements of the Christian Trinity.

5 is commonly repeated because of the first 5 days of each Bardo, and the 5 elements - water, fire, earth, matter and air.

49 is the maximum expansion of the sacred number seven - $7 \times 7 = 49$.

There are 49 stations of active existence, 49 days of mourning in traditional Chinese culture, and 49 days between life and rebirth. Not to be taken literally.

Before people die, most realise what's happening. Then they typically live for up to 7 days, though usually for only 3 or 4. Exact time depends on their mental and physical state.

A peaceful mental state is important at the time of death. Those unwilling to die, who fight the transition, must learn more about the meaning of life.

The art of living is also the art of dying.

In the West, there is an unwillingness to die and this is thought to produce unfavourable results. People resist what they should not. This creates difficulties. The Western medical establishment should not prolong or interfere in the process.

Dying unconscious, and full of opiates, is not a good way to make the transition. The mind should be active, conscious. Those who are asleep should be awakened gently by pressing on the arteries.

The moment of death is crucial. It determines the future existence. "Be ready, with your bags packed and a tranquil heart", said Pope John.

A good death frees the soul from the eternal cycle of living and dying, and allows us to find eternal life. Death is the moment when we discover our true selves, something which was

hidden in the abyss of our unconsciousness. NICELY PUT!!

The dying person needs faith to accept the light of the void without fear. The dying person should be fully awake at the moment of death, not sleeping.

When the light comes, his heart stops

The body should not be touched, for 'the dying person is alone the captain of his soul' at this moment. No relative or partner should weep or wail. There should be no sound.

For the dying, this is the moment of self liberation

Dying in a

hospital, away from home, is distressing. It is not a good way to die.

Harder for the person to be aware of the moment of death 'A hospital death can be as bad as the death facing a shell-shocked soldier on a battlefield.'

At the moment of death a tremendous intensity of energy is created. The Bardo Thodol describes what Western doctors are discovering. (refer to academic paper on this and Guardian article.) The light of the dying body

appears as Astral light, intense radiation, which the living cannot see.
(some claim can't they?)

Bardo Thödol describes the next stage of death, if the dying person is unable to liberate themselves and break the cycle. visions of their past life, realisation that they are dead.

This is where people talk of seeing themselves as a body on operating table from above, or hearing the weeping of friends. It begins the process of reincarnation, with the coloured lights, with visions of deities, with manifestations of good and bad.

Many examples of people whose behaviour cannot be easily explained without reincarnation: talking in ancient languages as a children, for example.

The phenomenon of reincarnation was accepted in the New Testament. It's what happens to Jesus.

Council of Constantinople in 553AD, church changed its mind and formally rejected the idea of reincarnation.

Reasons why the West continues to reject the idea of reincarnation.

Thinking of science and religion is based on the linear movement of history.

Time moves in a line, with history seen as a constant advancement of progress. In the Bible too, there is movement from promise to fulfilment, from a beginning to an end.

In Asian traditions too, time is not viewed as linear.

Eastern perspective is supported by contemporary developments in astronomical science.

General Theory of Relativity says space is curved. Everything which moves in space takes a curved path. Everything moves along a circle, or an ellipse, including time.

The West's rejection of reincarnation stems from its belief in heaven and hell too, in the idea that there are places where the dead go and stay forever. Negates the idea of reincarnation

What happens after death? It depends entirely on the person dying, who is 'the captain of his soul'. He alone is responsible for his liberation from the cycle. Depends on what he is.

Law of karma: destiny is conditioned by one's past. // Life is preparation for death //. Much depends on the dying person's last thoughts. Whisper the right idea to the dying, chant the same words to help the dying person escape from the dying illusions and break free from the cycle. Help to move into the light. Even the dead can hear the instructions apparently.

The Bardo Thödol teaches the process of self-control and self-realisation at death

eggs
wrapping paper
Scarf for M