

Living and Dying – A Natural Continuum

These days, in discussing the topic of Death, the common approach is first to question whether indeed there is life after death, and, if so, the form or nature of this life after death. These two questions take up so much of the discussion that they seldom allow time to consider anything else, for example the possibility of how this life could influence or determine the nature of what could possibly happen when we inevitably have to leave this Earth; in other words, when we die.

Indeed, since death is an integral part of living, should we not take the counter intuitive approach of trying to understand death from the perspective of living? After all, every adult knows that the future is always born out of the present. Therefore, the afterlife must be born out of the present life.

Actually, this approach, which we can describe as “natural development” is not entirely new. It was the common way in which all pre-Abrahamic (i.e. Judeo-Christian-Islamic) societies viewed death. They accepted death as a natural phenomenon, not something to be avoided, ignored or feared. Indeed, in some cultures death was seen as something good to which the people looked forward.

The birth of the modern era of “Realism” has contributed significantly to the separation of Living from Dying. As a consequence, modern man views death as something to be avoided, or combated. Indeed, the effort put into trying to prolong living at all costs clearly shows that modern man sees death as “unnatural” and an enemy.

To be fair, Realism, alone, did not “kill” death. One could argue that the frightening imageries of a Life of suffering and horrific torments that are a staple of the Abrahamic religions drove many, out of fear, to seek comfort in anything that promised an escape from the draconian visions of the religious afterlife in which one suffered torments for the slightest of infractions. Even something as innocuous as a dietary infraction could earn a person some prolonged suffering in Hell or Purgatory. Is it any surprise then that the rebellion against this imagery of death started in Europe, the most “Christian” of societies, where the yoke of the religious establishment was strongest?

Unfortunately, rebellion, avoidance or rejection against a natural phenomenon does not mitigate against any consequences that may arise, if we thereby fail to do that which we should have done. Granted, the person or institution that drove one to rebellion is also culpable, and will face their own consequences.

By separating death from living, death has become the great unknown which everyone knows they must inevitably face. But out of ignorance and fear many understandably avoided investigating or even thinking about it, preferring to wait until the time comes. This attitude, which is similar to the Ostrich that buries its head in the sand to avoid witnessing an oncoming event, is not only counter protective but exposes one to unnecessary and avoidable dangers. By contrast, the ancients, who saw death as an integral part of the experiencing of Life, and the only gateway to the next phase of existence, lived their lives in preparation for this inevitable event. More important is that by seeing living and dying as interrelated, focus was placed on understanding how one affected the other.

Today, because of our attitude towards death, there is no common and universally accepted understanding of its meaning and essence, even

though we must all experience it. Worse perhaps is that there is no concerted effort to seek and establish such a universal understanding. We strive with all our strength and resources to understand and harmonize practically every aspect of living, to help make our lives more "meaningful" and more comfortable. But we give less thought to what comes next, even when we have an inner sensing that there could be more to life than just material wellbeing and comfort.

Also, because we give little thought to what comes next, we generally live our lives as if it all starts and ends here on Earth. Many believers who talk about heaven and hell, do so with little conviction, as evidenced by the general preference for gratification of the present over any altruistic overall future benefit. Also, because many believers have no firm conviction in the Spiritual law of sowing and reaping, we do "good" only when it is convenient. At best we strive to abide by the letter of the law of the land but not the Spirit behind the law, especially if we can get away with attaining our desire, regardless of how it may affect others. That is, if we even think of that.

But, all of this counts as negligence that can have dire spiritual consequences, because as we think and act today so we setup the environment in which we live our tomorrow, which for many is the afterlife. Thus, if we design our life on Earth in such a way as to think only of ourselves or to take advantage of others, it naturally follows that we are paving the way into a future environment occupied by selfish people and oppressors. Such a life then allows us to continue the life that we have chosen, until such a time as we tire of it and begin to genuinely wish for something else, and to act differently. Thus, the selfishness that we experience in this future environment of our own design, and which many arrive at in the afterlife, is simply our choice. Any suffering or torment that we experience there is not injustice. In fact it is justice because that is what we want. We just happen now to experience the effect and intensity of our

desire because, unlike on Earth where we coexisted with others of a different persuasion, everyone there is striving for the same, i.e. to take advantage of each other. The struggle for dominance in such an environment invariably involves strife, and violence if necessary.

When seen from this perspective, perhaps one can now see the truth embedded in the horrific visions of an afterlife of suffering associated with some religions. In truth, there were also imageries of an angelic afterlife, though fewer than those of suffering. The preponderance of images of suffering was simply a true reflection of the proportionate desires of the people that made up the society. Therefore, instead of quarrelling with the messenger, people, with the guidance of true spiritual leaders, could have been warned and encouraged to change their desires towards a different outcome. Unfortunately, those who used this imagery did not themselves understand or appreciate their importance, and used them instead as tools for controlling and exploiting a complaint congregation. With the correct understanding of this imagery, people would have been helped to appreciate the pathway towards which their Earthly desires and activities were leading them.

However, simply believing in an afterlife does not give meaning to this phase of existence because an existence of suffering in Hell/Purgatory, or even one of blissful idleness associated with Heaven would sooner or later become meaningless if we do not understand the purpose of such experiencing and the role of man in that life. We know from our experience of life on earth that it does not take long for anyone who attains to their desire for a life of leisure devoid of purpose to begin to suffer from mental and psychic aberrations. Such people soon become overwhelmed by the feeling of futility or a loss of purpose and coherence, and the events in their life no longer hold any value to them. History is full of examples for anyone who wishes to investigate this fact.

This truism of life on earth applies to the afterlife because it is the same essence in man that exists in the here and the hereafter. Therefore, *life on earth and in the hereafter can only have meaning when it involves purposeful activity (work)*. Needless to say, this raises the question of what constitutes purposeful activity that gives meaning to Life.

The fact that humans who are actively engaged in the struggles of living, still experience occasionally the feeling of futility shows that activities to which we have assigned purpose do not automatically give meaning to our lives.

Hopefully, the excerpt below from the book "In The Light of Truth", (The Grail Message), gives insight on the nature of activity that gives meaning to our life. It also serves as another wakeup call to the fact that the nature and form of our afterlife is totally determined by how we live our Life now on earth. Hopefully, it will also help to put death in the proper perspective for us who are living on Earth.

"So far your endeavors have proved you to be useless servants in the vineyard of the Lord! For you fritter away your time in utterly useless toying, and burden the great talent lying within you as a gift from God with the unnecessary trifles of the vain earthly intellectual volition, all of which you must leave behind when you depart this life.....

Awake, so that you can create for yourselves a dignified garment of the spirit here upon earth, and will not have to enter the beyond like paupers as you have done hitherto, in spite of the fact that you were given such great treasures for your sojourn on earth! You are like a king who childishly plays with the scepter, and who imagines that this scepter and the wearing of the crown alone suffice to make him a king!

What man needs to investigate in the first place is only that which helps in his ascent and thus also serves to further Creation! In all his activities he should ask himself what advantage they will bring both to himself and to mankind. One goal must henceforth dominate every man – to recognize and also to fulfill the place he, as a human being, must occupy in Creation!"

Abdrushin

In The Light of Truth (The Grail Message)

Lecture 12: "Motion" – a Law of Creation" (Volume III)