

On the Will to Die

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Both learning and reflection move our spirit, to some extent, outside ourselves, engaged and away from this physical vehicle of ours; a condition which looks like death and establishes a kind of studentship for it. Even in goodness; our eventual aim, regardless of what they say, is always pleasure. Knowing that in every pleasure familiar to Man the basic striving towards it is to our liking; the endeavour relishes the worth of the purpose in view. It virtually amounts to a large quantity of it and is of the same essence. Everybody takes one's leave as though they just came in. Regardless of how incapacitated a man may be, he still believes he has a few more decades in him, so long as divinity is on his side. These kind of people walk forward, as Lucretius says, with their heads turned back. Because no matter how much a man cautiously hides, death will hunt him out without fail, and make him poke out his shrinking head. So, we must adopt the attitude of strong-mindedness. We must, furthermore, learn to stand our ground and wage war with death.

Contemplating Death

To start dispossessing death of its serious precedence over us, we shall embrace an approach antithetical to that unexceptional one shared by the common man; let's bereave it of its eccentricity, be its regular visitor and get familiar with its character. Let us keep it in mind and regularly ponder it. At every passing moment, let us bring it to mind and allow our creativeness, with all its facets, amuse itself. Whenever a horse trips over, a tile topples over or a nail faintly stabs, let us immediately meditate on this thought: 'Presuming that was death in disguise?' So, let us stabilise and exercise our power. At the heart of triumph or banquet, let us allow our abstinence to be one which recollects our natural state. Let us at no time be so forcefully sidetracked by sensual gratification or rapture that we fail to remember the many ways in which our happiness is conditional on death or the many ways in which death puts it at risk. That is, after all, what the Egyptians did among their feasts and cheers; they brought a mummified cadaver to act as a notice to the callers.

Practising Death is Liberty

Ultimately, practising death is practising liberty. For a man who gained an understanding of how to die has discarded from his memory how to be a slave. Between the amusements and the courtyards, many thought that man was sticking out masticating over a piece of suspicion or envy, or the misgivings of his desires – All the while, he was contemplating on one person or other who, on departing from occasions

like these, was astonished by a fiery febricity and his climax, with his skull full of slothfulness, fondness and high-spiritedness. Just like us, he was being pursued by that irresistible dormancy that disables, by that ardour that fuddles with our sight. Actually, it hounds and bullies the best of us; we shouldn't think so highly of it if we are to protect our senses. Thoughts like these should not wrinkle your forehead. To begin with, it seems inconceivable not to have a hunch by these equivocal notions, but if you continue to cope with and look over them, you will in due course domesticate them. Still, each passing moment, it seems that we are fleeing ourselves, shirking responsibility and avoiding the unusual menaces of life. A man who agonises over his thoughts and stows them within himself is always prepared; as ready as he could possibly be, so when doom promptly arrives, it carries nothing novel to him – in other words, he forewarned himself to begin with.

As much as possible, we must be intentionally equipped and set, taking good care of any omitted concerns with others – that deliberate training of not only having death on your mind, but also on your lips, is a most useful practice to deliver you from unease. Not to mention; any man who instructed another how to die, also taught him how to lead his life, fearlessly and without excess baggage. It can be found that a resolve to die is harsher to assimilate when you are physically fit than when you are febrile and laid up. In other words, you no longer clasp pleasure with a sturdy hand when you begin to be deprived of the ability to reap its benefits – then you could consider death with a kind of depleted aversion toward it, as you naturally feel yourself to be in its neighbourhood. For as Caesar says, things frequently look larger from a distance and smaller within reach. Thus, it is advisable that you do not grow discouraged by drawing conclusions about things you know little about – the vague, distant and faded should be attended to before being rashly and passionately discerned.

Nature's Gentle Subtlety

It's worth considering that if any of us were abruptly catapulted into elderliness, we would find the sudden metamorphosis intolerable and disturbing. However, more or less indiscernibly, mother nature guides us down a gradual hill. Slowly, she inundates us in that pitiable condition and cushions us, so no thrust is felt when that innocuous youth expires inside us. Nonetheless, in truth, that is a more cruel passing than the thorough disappearance of a withering existence as agedness crosses the great divide. It is not so heinous a jump from a miserable situation to oblivion, but it certainly is serious from a pleasant and booming existence to one filled with hardship and agony. Why should we, then, be afraid of losing that which once lost can't be mourned? If we are terrorised by the innumerable facets of death, is it not more adverse to dread them all than to tolerate one sole ending?

In the same way our emergence nurtured all things, so does our passing bear the end of all things. Death is, indeed, the genesis of another living being. In fact, we sobbed like this upon our birth and we paid an equally dear cost when we pierced this existence, likewise peeling off our preceding wrongs in the process. A long life or a short life – it's beside the point; both are consolidated by death as longness and shortness don't pertain to non-existence. Death is an aspect of yourself, and since birth implies death, they can't be disengaged from each other. So, to flee death is to flee yourself – understand that this aliveness that you are so fond of, this animateness, is impartially split between expiration and existence. From the moment you were delivered, your pathway was driven not only by life but death as well. You were endowed with the offering of life, and death began to eat it hungrily. As Seneca sensibly remarks, "As we are born we die; the end of our life is attached to its beginning." You are in a state of continual dying so long as you are living; when you are no longer in existence, you are after death. So, after life you're dead, but during life you're dying, as Montaigne would say. Not to mention, death nudges those at

death's door more gravely, more crucially and in a more active a way than those undying.

Everything is in Decay

If you never discovered how to make use of life, that is, if life is to no avail and vain, does it even matter if you no longer have it? – it is not like you still need it for anything beneficial or worthwhile. The fitness of living is found not in its length, but in what you make of its continuance. Remember this inevitability: everything is moving with you, nothing is not, in some form or other, being worn out. At your moment of death, whenever that may be, countless other men and beasts and other living things are dying. And nature, seeing what advantages death clings to, purposely mingled a taste of torment into it to interrupt you from cuddling it with an uncontrolled eagerness or imprudence. Furthermore, to vest you in that necessary self-restraint that neither runs away from life nor runs away from death. Thus, nature moderated both between the painful and the pleasurable.

In general, what startles us more than death are the petrifying scowls and arrangements that it typically encompasses. Indeed, it is like an unfamiliar state; where children, mothers, spouses and husbands are all shedding tears and grieving – stupefied and distraught with sorrow; the appearance of pallid and teary-eyed servants; a most dull coffin absent of all light; blazing candles; a bedside mobbed by blind physicians and preachers; briefly, a most enlarged and intensified setting that stirs up one's dismay and terror. Rather than commemorating death in good cheers and honouring it, western people go out of our way to make it as pitiable and miserable as possible, engaging in heavy grief and deplorable, even uncontrollable lamentation. In the west, death has been swept under the carpet, we don't want to bear it in mind or even contemplate the reality of existence; that is, that death is always beside us, and that it's not going anywhere we please. Dispense with the idea that any mortal being can withhold death or potentially circumvent it – this is nothing more than wishful reasoning, it doesn't change the unchangeable state of nature.

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