

Lent -2026

Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.

In the Catholic tradition, on Ash Wednesday ashes are imposed on a fore head. The words *Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return* while a cross is made. Death is where we resolve the ontonic (that way it is, the circumstance) and epistemic (that way we think it is, the situation). So, with St. Benedict's admonition: *Always keep death before your eyes*, we offer a challenge this Lent: *give-up fear of death and dying.*

On The Edge of the Unknown: Death - the Ultimate Nondual Experience

When does human life begin? An age old question yet unanswered. When human life begins depends upon one's philosophy: At the conscious/ unconscious intention to generate a human zygote? The moment of conception? At the first heart beat? At the first breath? Seven days after birth?

On the other hand ... "Birth" and "Death" are just terms describing an illusion as there is no birth and no death. Huh?

Essentially, human life never begins or ends. Life is a form of energy. Energy cannot be created or destroyed. Energy just individuates. Emptiness is Form. Form is Emptiness. Hence, we may speak of the transformation of matter and energy. We are essentially just collapsing waves. "This" is just a wave function. *I am just a wave function.*

So let us assume that there is an event we label as "birth" and another as "death".

THE FACT OF DEATH has several considerations that death is:

1. an intellectual construct.
2. an empirical fact.
3. an observable occurrence.
4. a finitude.
5. objective-external.
6. abstract-general.
7. unowned.

Death as an intellectual construct takes on many meanings or no meaning whatsoever. Death is the end. Death is the beginning. Death is the completion. There is no death as there is no life. Therefore, Death is an illusion. What?

All living things cease to be living things. "Dust to dust." "Ashes to Ashes." If we trust our senses, we experience human forms apparently in death, real or imagined. (Enter stage left: ZOMBIES!!)

Eternal means "no beginning and no end". Finite means "a beginning and an end". Infinite means "a beginning and no end". Given conventional reality, depending upon one's philosophical orientation, death begins at the moment human life beings. We could say death begins at the first inspiration and ends with the last expiration. At best, death is a finite experience with infinite or eternal overtones, depending upon one's cosmology. Does the universe continue to come into being and out of being? The answer suggests an overtone.

If one takes one's own death PERSONALLY, then death is a subjective-internal experience as such. If one takes one's own death with equanimity, dispassionately, then death is an objective-external experience.

This discussion may be said to be an abstract-general consideration about death. All of the preceding may be taken with a grain of salt or a ton of gold bullion. In ether case, it is not until we actually die to our own selves that we CAN actually live. Until we die to our own selves, death is un-owned. Being un-owned, we kid ourselves into thinking we are indestructible, this pill or that procedure will give us life eternal when in truth such only masks the inevitable, if we are honest with ourselves - otherwise we are just neurotic, the hallmark of duality. At least we are keeping Big Pharama and its enablers in business.

The essence of neuroticism is fear, in this case THE FEAR OF CEASING-TO-BE.

This fear

1. is an emotional response.
2. arises from empirical fact.
3. is a personal apprehension.
4. is awareness of one's finitude.
5. is subjective-deep.
6. is specific-personal.
7. is owned.

Remember Frank Herbart's *DUNE* and the Litany of the BeneGesserit?

"Fear is the little mind killer.

Fear is the little death.

I will face my fear,

I will allow fear to pass through me.

Once fear is gone, only I remain."

Such a remembrance would be an emotional RESPONSE to death. Otherwise, we REACT with terror, remorse, sadness, hope and so forth - all natural dualistic emotional reactions to death: another's or one's own.

The basic human emotion is FEAR, specifically, the FEAR OF DEATH. This is a fact of life. To the degree we might wish to and do avoid death in all its trappings, to that same degree do we express neurotic behaviors, specifically, anxiety as the definitive symptom we may label as ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY:

1. is inner state-of-being
2. arises from one's own internal 'nothing'.
3. is existential disclosure.
4. is a constant internal threat.
5. arises from the core of my self.
6. is more *mine* than my death.
7. lays claim to my self.

ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY depicts an inner state-of-being. We are anxious if not anxiety itself. We may experience (if we allow) a vague, free-floating sense of doom - the other shoe is about to hit the floor. We may be consciously aware of this angst or not depending upon the degree we distract ourselves from ourselves. Distraction may be any behavior we engage in so that we do not have to face the reality of our own existence: addictive, over involvement in Drugs, Sex, Rock'n Roll; TV; Athletics-Sports; travel or vacations; social media, *etc.*

ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY arises from one's acknowledged or unacknowledged internal 'nothing'. We are distracting ourselves from the reality that in the stream of things we are essentially nothing to speak of given the sum (117 billion+/-) total of humans before (300,000 years+/-), during and after our presence now in human form. There is really nothing within us of worth or value so we stuff ourselves with material things we really do not need or even want, with wine-men/women-song, with blind acquisition of material or spiritual wealth and other forms of DENIAL (*Don't Even kNow I Am Lying*).

ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY is an existential disclosure. Life is continually offering us lessons. Birth and Death are obvious givens of human existence. Anxiety is but yet another teacher. Sometimes a life-changing event occurs that puts us directly in touch with the fact of our mortality. Are we living our life or is our life living us? We may say we lack confidence in ourselves or trust in ourselves to do this that or the other thing. If we but listen to our anxiety, we come to know that we create a lack to avoid owning up to an essential truth: **That in the Face of Death we are the Masters of our own Fate.** By saying we lack confidence or trust, we shift from ourselves the burden of responsibility to our created lack.

ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY is constant internal threat. Because we are anxious about the eventuality of our death and are, hence, in some state of reactive threat, we may REACT to external situations which may cause us harm. We know that discretion is the better part of valor, yet we react unconsciously rather than take a more responsive (*i.e.*, responsible) tactic. When we are in touch with our internal threat of the fact of our own being no-more, we tend to be less reactive and more responsive.

ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY arises from the core of my self. The more in touch we are with our own anxiety, the more we come to know that we are actually the creator of that anxiety of being no more. A duality (self/anxiety) dissolves within a sense of just being Presence (for the lack of a better term). All things change, everything remains the same.

ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY becomes more mine than my death. Thus, I own my anxiety and my death ceases to be a consideration.

ONTOLOGICAL ANXIETY lays claim to my self. Thus, instead of we becoming slaves of our anxiety, we have let it pass through us and know: only I remain. This I as unidentified, boundless Presence, let us say.

It is the human condition that we tend to choose DENIAL (*Don't Even kNow I am Lying*) as our natural dualistic stance toward being no-more. (When we are no-more, our duly loving surviving family members may neurotically duke it out for the spoils (such as they may be) of our life.) When we are no-more, such as we have known ourselves ceases to be. Hence, we grow apprehension in the face of OUR death. Ego is a thought form. There is no ego as such. We create our ego, our entry ticket into Duality. Ego (ego identity) wants to be. Without it, we would not be - or so we think. We let our ego be who we are. We let go of our personal responsibility to live our life. This ego lives our life for us, creates erroneous distinctions such as Life and Death situations wherein we can be afraid and anxious, self-centered and egotistical - because, ghee whiz, isn't that the way it is? Enter a discussion on our Default Mode Network (www.wrmosb.org/theo-sec1-2.html#1-2-1).

Fear is just a symptom, essentially, of my guilt, symptom of the fear that "I cannot handle this circumstance." We know we are skirling our personal responsibility for our own integrity, our nondual way of being, not living out the aspects of the Mind of a Child (www.zenmonks.org). We know we are just actors on a stage and overlook the fact we are the producers and directors of our own show on Planet Earth. We create distractions (excuses, rationalizations etc.) for ourselves so we

do not have to own our own finitude - not intellectually, but emotionally. **I am a living death sentence.**

When we actually feel in the depth of our being human that we are a living death sentence and allow that realization to pass through us and we let it go, then and only then are we free of the fear of being no-more. We may even find it humorous that we ever thought, much less believed, we were (who we thought ourselves to be).

We realize that our death is just a specifically personal event within the alleged stream of things and is of no consequence in itself. We sense the folly of taking life personally and, hence, we realize how we have victimized ourselves by our own creation, our ego that we made-up to meet our fantasy of the way we thought people, places, things and events were/are or supposed to be. All that we have experienced is our own creation. We make life to be what it is or is not. (www.wrmosb.org/wizard/w-04.html)

We realize that we have used our Fear of being no more to avoid taking personal responsibility for our own integrity. We realize that Life and Death or both are just our created fantasy, a mirror reflection of whom we have created ourselves to be and not be. Once owned, we can smile at our fear of being no-more and just let it be no-more, as if it ever was.

- Thank you for owning your death.
- Know no fear.

Many blessings to you and yours.
Peace and Joy!

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict