

PEOPLE DON'T DIE

Awakening to the full reality of human existence

By Yehuda Tagar

*“For one has still to ask how the human being behaves in this death process. He remains..... His integrity is preserved; since he has lost absolutely nothing of that which was and belonged to his substance during the visible life. — he has only removed a form of visibility.
Immanuel Hermann Fichte¹ (1796-1879)*

Thus does this human knowledge of the spirit brings us face to face with the challenge: Are we going to arrive in that place where it is given to human beings to unite in a common experience of the spiritual — for we are expected there, we are awaited — or, having passed through many births and deaths, shall we come at length to a point where the word of reproach rings out: You were expected, and you did not come!

Rudolf Steiner, 23rd November 1923.

People don't die. It is a myth which became the unquestionable dogma for European dominant materialism evolving over the past 600 years². Bodies die. But everything of the nature of consciousness and relationship in human life is made of spirit and of soul, not of chemistry. Why should all that disappear into nothingness just because the physical organism disintegrates? If we do not regard ourselves, our parents, our children, our loved ones as if they are only bodies while they live – why should we regard them as only bodies once their bodies die? Yet this assumption of the death of the soul dominates our culture, our academic life, our worldview, our discourse. It is for me a painful, diminishing, frustrating contradiction.

The dead are with us, closer than they were before they died. That is my experience. Listen to your heart and you will find them there, very close. They are not really dead and you will not really die. Your body will die but you will not die. Be prepared.

As for the living – how can people develop their awareness of the core element in themselves that cannot die? Some have this certainty from birth and it never disappears, in spite of the materialistic culture and education all around them. Others receive the certainty of their spiritual reality through some remarkable spiritual experience, sometimes through meditation, sometimes through crisis, sometimes through a near-death experience. Others come to it purely philosophically and logically, liberating themselves from the assumptions, the shackles and the intellectual prison of dogmatic materialism through the power of pure independent thinking. Others are inspired to awaken to the spiritual dimension of themselves and of reality through special teachers, reading, meditation, music, literature, nature, the arts.

Being ready to die was the official goal of all the initiation mysteries centred in the ancient world. Those who have not lost their fear of death would not be deemed qualified to be leaders of society on any level. The founder of Philosophy, the new initiatory process from 600 BC onwards, Socrates, declared this to be the highest purpose of all philosophical striving: to be prepared to die when the moment comes. He was ready when his moment came, because he touched the eternal part of himself while he still lived through the pure power of his thoughts.

Gotlib Fichte (1762-1814), founder of the 'Continental philosophy' called 'German Idealism' and the creator of the ontology of the human 'I' - once stated that: *“if you want to prove to yourself that you are an immortal being – act like one”*. This statement is for me one of the most inspiring pieces of practical philosophy that I have ever met.

A Psychophonetics counselling client called me from another country asking for help. She was working as a carer with a 90 years old woman who was in the process of dying slowly in her old home. In that same house where she lived - her late sister, late husband and late nephew died in recent times. My client had to stay in that house and she could not sleep at night because the presence of the three ghosts of the diseased persons kept her awake, becoming visible to her, frightening her, making her worry about losing her mind.

¹ *Anthropologie, Die Lehre von der menschlichen Seele* (1856)

² the publication in 1543 of Nicolaus Copernicus' *'On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres'* marks the beginning of the Scientific Revolution.

First I confirmed with her that she is not going mad. One living person lives in that house and three dead ones. So what? Most people are completely blind or closed-hearted to such a possibility but my client is naturally open to it, so they communicate with her, because they can, because there is no one else for them to communicate with and obviously they need something. She is there to help one person, so they think maybe she can help them too. This could be as real as meeting with living people, only three of them lost their bodies. Because I spoke about it like about any other normal human affair – she calmed down.

Next I helped her to establish for herself a certainty of her role, task, work, her choice to be there, her professional identity. A common picture was created between us: she is there by choice; she is a professional of care; she is trusted with the responsibility for maximising the wellbeing of the person in your care; she is available to whatever help she is able to offer. That was clear and strong, centring, grounding and orienting for her.

Next: her fear. Again, a reality check: what is there to fear? Some people, connected to the house where she lives and works – need some help. If neighbours living next door would ask for help – would that be scary? The only relevant question is: can you help them or not. She did not know if she could help them. OK, I said, let's find out what help they need. That was completely new to her. Do I suggest that she can talk to them? Why not, I said, they are obviously talking to you already, or trying to. Is there anything bad about any of them? No. Her faithful dog is with her, and at night, when they come to visit her, the dog sleeps peacefully. If they were really bad and presenting a danger to her – would her faithful dog be sleeping peacefully? Surely it would bark at them to chase them away, I suggested (it helped that I had dogs as faithful friends in my life for many years). She agreed. The fear was gone.

Then she realised that they needed something. Are they here? Yes. They already joined the conversation between us (me on the telephone from Slovakia). Tell them that they are welcome, I said. They were happy about it. What do they want? They want some kind of party, celebration, she said. They did not say goodbye properly yet. But she did not feel that she could do it for them because she did not know them when they were alive. Who can? They named a living relative that could do it for them, whom my client knows because he is visiting the house regularly. Will you talk to him about it? Yes. Are they happy about it? Yes. End of the conversation. You will sleep well tonight, I said, I am sure. End of the session. She did sleep well that night. The following day she informed me that the relative came, that she talked to him and that he is very happy to help organise that celebration with the dead.

What did I do for her? Not much, because not much was needed. I legitimised and normalised human communication across the threshold of death. We have all been there and we will all be there again soon enough. We may all have some unfinished business left behind after we die, some attachments to living people, some unfulfilled human needs. Not all of us die when we are ready for death. In fact very little in normal modern human life prepares us for this inevitable transition.

This was not the first time that dead people entered my Psychophonetics counselling sessions. I experienced it for the first time 30 years ago in Australia when I just started my work as a Psychophonetics counsellor. Through entering the experience of a client deeper and deeper – it became clear that there is someone else there with his own reality, but not physical. I accepted it and a dead person, deeply attached to my client, was very worried about her and was himself guilty and in trouble. I realised that he is asking for help. My client accepted that there are three of us there. She passed the message to him that she is ok now and he does not have to worry about her anymore. That was completely new to him and he was very relieved. (all the communication is taking place through my client, not directly through me). We encouraged him to sense the beings that are there for him to support him on his further journey. He sensed them. He was relieved and he moved on. The client was relieved of a burden that was there inside of her with no explanation for a few years. It was a very healing session.

Since that time it has happened many times in many forms. The Psychophonetics sessions became an opportunity for people saying last goodbyes, for reuniting in renewed friendship, for completing unfinished business; for healing the wounds of abortions and miscarriages and for speaking words that had to be spoken; for delayed forgiveness and for blessing. It was always beautiful, deeply touching, deeply human and healing.

When I moved to South Africa in 2002 I realised that for the Africans, especially the black Africans – the dead are a very real and very present everywhere and always. They call their dead 'The Ancestors'. The relationship between the living and the dead is for most of them a daily reality. They do not talk much about it openly because officially the Christian church does not approve of such communications, but they all know it and they are all a part of it. 200,000 registered native healers called 'Sangomas' are visited regularly by about 80% of the black population, where the Ancestors conduct the interaction.

I worked with children, in the supervision of their carers there who were abused at an early age in orphanages. Often they could not sleep at night for fear that the abuser will come back to hurt them. I encouraged them to invoke a protection of their choice. It was always what the African call 'The Ancestors' – relatives who died. They could always find an uncle or a grandmother on the other side who were happy to help them to protect them in their sleep, to love them.

At one point in 2003 I was asked to try to help a troubled young man in his mid 20's north of Johannesburg who could not sleep for years. In the conversation he revealed to me that during the time of the mini civil war between the various black tribes which took place alongside the transition from Apartheid to black majority rule (killing some 15,000 people) – he was a young teenage and a member of a gang whose job it was to kill people from the opposite gangs. He was 15 years old at the time and he did what he was told. 10 years later the people that he killed were haunting him at night and he did not dare to close his eyes. He lived in constant fear of them and their revenge and with a heart-wrenching guilt and remorse about what he did. He opened his heart to me and everything was spoken between us.

I proposed that we call for a meeting between him and the people he killed. He was shocked by the idea. I suggested that such a meeting is happening every night anyway for him and it does not go away. What is there to lose? Does he have a better idea about how to move on? He did not have any better idea. He agreed reluctantly out of a despair that was deeper than his fear.

Shaking and trembling and white in the face he held my hand while I encouraged him to close his eyes and let them come. He did. They came. He could not look them in the eyes. I asked him to speak his truth. He spoke, crying, shaking and sobbing. All he could say was: "I am sorry. I am so sorry. I did not know what I was doing. I don't know if you can forgive me. I cannot forgive myself. I am so sorry".

Then he calmed down, breathing quietly at last, his eyes still cast down. A long moment of loaded silence followed. "are they still there?" I asked. "they are". "Look at them, I think they are waiting for you. Maybe they want to reply to you". He held my hand tightly and slowly lifted up his gaze and looked forward at them, standing silently in front of him. His mouth fell open in amazement like a man who just cannot believe what he is seeing. His eyes were fixed forward in a total shock. "What are they saying?" I eventually asked. "they say that it is ok now. They forgive me. They wanted me to know that they are ok. They are not angry with me".

I encouraged him to trust this meeting, his sight, their communication, this special meeting. His heart was at peace. He looked as if he had just emerged from being drowned in the deep ocean for a long time. He breathed freely. He was still amazed.

He has slept peacefully ever since.

On the 1st of November every year Slovaks go to the cemeteries to honour their dead. Quietly they come to the place of the thousands of sparkling lights and the flowers-covered graves, they stand there for a quiet moment together and go. I have been there a few times with them. I always feel deep respect for these people honouring their dead as real people. There is a deep spirit of dignity and respect, not only for the dead – for all of us.

People don't die. We don't die. Our bodies let us go into our pure soul existence which was there all along, but covered up by the busy life of the body. The people that we loved while we lived – we still love them when we die, and they love us. Human reality and relationship is only partially body-based. It is madness and a disrespect to who we really are - to assume that people just disappear with their mineral bodies. Human beings are not collections of minerals.

Let us relax into our deep reality.

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