

A Reflection on Death

When I consider the countless humans that have lived their lives down through history, most are forgotten. The names and deeds of only a few are remembered. Their pains, joys, victories and defeats, like themselves, are now but shadows. And so it will be with all who I know.

Passing time will turn the calamities I worry about, the possibilities I fear, and the pleasures I chase after into mere shadows. Therefore, I will think about the reality of my own death that I may understand what is of true value in life.

Because death may soon come – and no one knows whether today will be their last day – I will repay all debts, forgive all transgressions, and be at odds with none. I will squander no time brooding on past mistakes, but use each day as if it were my last. I will purify my mind rather than unduly pamper the body. Because death may soon come, and separation from those I love, I will develop detached compassion rather than possessiveness and clinging. I will use each day fully, not wasting it on fruitless pursuits and vain longings.

And so, may I be prepared when death finally comes. May I be fearless as my life ebbs away. May my detachment help in the freeing of the heart.

Source: Adapted from Rod Bucknell and Christ Kang (compilers), *The Meditative Way* (London: Routledge, 1997), pages 89-90.