



# Five Meditations on Death: In Other Words . . . On Life

*François Cheng*

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Philosophical discussions on the ways that death makes life meaningful and sacred

- Reveals how being conscious of death gives our fate its full meaning, inviting the reader to contemplate life in the light of their own death
- Examines the author's experience of ancestor worship in his native China and the beliefs that underlie it
- Explains how death is a transition in a longer living process not visible from the modern "black and white" view of life and death
- Translated by award-winning translator Jody Gladding

Born from intimate discussions with friends, these five meditations on death from poet-philosopher François Cheng examine the multiple ways the prospect of death significantly shapes life and is, in fact, what makes life meaningful and sacred.

Written at the age of 84, in the twilight of life, these meditations each approach the human understanding of death from different yet intertwined perspectives, effortlessly returning to certain themes and ideas, questioning them again more deeply with each passing. The author shows that death is a transition in a longer living process not visible from the modern "black and white" view of life and death. He examines his experience of ancestor worship in his native China and the beliefs that underlies it: Our ancestors are alive in another form, that what is living can never die and what is dead has never lived. Cheng looks at the consequences of a world that has abandoned the sacred and avoids the mention of death, a world now blindly staggering through the chaos it has created, yet which can return to balance if we once again embrace the essential sacredness of life as well as death.

Throughout these five heart-baring meditations, Cheng invites us to contemplate life in the light of our own death. He reveals that to be conscious of death gives our fate its full meaning. Our death is an integral part of our great adventure in becoming. For if birth is a seed, then death is the fruit--the final sacred product of a life well lived.

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