In a desire for eternal life, men have considered death as a passage, as a painful step, and they have bowed before its “mystery” to the point of veneration.

Even before men knew how to work with stone, marble, and iron in order to shelter the living, they knew how to fashion matter to honour the dead.

Churches and cloisters richly wrapped their tombs under their apses and choirs, while huts were huddled against their sides, miserably sheltering the living.

The cult of the dead has, from the first moments, hindered the forward march of man. It is the original sin, the dead weight, the iron ball that humanity drags along behind it.

The voice of death, the voice of the dead has always thundered against the voice of universal life, which is ever evolving.

Jehovah, who Moses’ imagination made burst forth from Sinai, still dictates his laws. Jesus of Nazareth, dead for almost twenty centuries, still preaches his morality. Buddha, Confucius, and Lao Tzu’s wisdom still reign. And how many others!

We bear the heavy responsibility of our ancestors; we have their defects and their qualities.

So in France we are the children of the Gauls, though we are French via the Francs and of the Latin race when it comes to the eternal hatred of the Germans. Each of these heredities brings with it obligations.

We (the French) are the oldest children of the church by virtue of who knows which dead, and also the grandchildren of the Great Revolution. We are citizens of the Third Republic and we are also devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We are born Catholics or Protestants, republicans or royalists, rich or poor. We are always what we are through the dead; we are never ourselves. Our eyes, placed atop our heads, look ahead and, however much they lead us forward, it is always towards the ground where our dead repose, towards the past where the dead lived that our education allows us to guide them.

Our ancestors...the past...the dead...

Whole peoples have died from this triple respect.

China is exactly where it was thousands of years ago because it has guarded the first place in their homes for their dead.
Death is not only a germ of corruption due to the chemical disintegration of man's body, poisoning the atmosphere; it is even more the case because of the consecration of the past, the immobilisation of the idea at a certain stage of evolution. Living, it would have evolved, would have been more advanced. Dead, it crystallises. Yet it is this precise moment that the living choose to admire it, in order to sanctify it, to deify it.

Usages and custom, ancestral errors are communicated from one person to another in the family. One believes in the god of his fathers, another respects the fatherland of his ancestors... Why don’t we respect their lighting system, their way of dressing?

Yes, this strange fact is produced that while the externals and the daily economy improve, change, are differentiated, that while everything dies and is transformed, man, man’s spirit, remains in the same servitude, is mummified in the same errors.

Just as in the century of the torch, in the century of electricity man still believes in tomorrow’s paradise, in the gods of vengeance and forgiveness, in hells and Valhallas as a way of respecting the ideas of his ancestors.

The dead lead us, the dead command us, the dead take the place of the living.

All our festivals, all our glorifications are the anniversaries of deaths and massacres. We celebrate All Saints Day to glorify the saints of the church, the Feast of the Dead so as not to forget a single dead man. The dead go to Olympus or paradise, to the right of Jupiter or God. They fill “immaterial” space and they encumber “material” space with their corteges, their displays, and their cemeteries. If nature didn’t take it upon itself to disintegrate their bodies and to disperse their ashes, the living wouldn’t today know where to place their feet in the vast necropolis that would be the earth.

The memory of the dead, their acts and deeds, obstruct the brains of children. We only talk to them about the dead, we should only speak to them about this. We make them live in the realm of the unreal and the past. They must know nothing of the present.

If secularism has dropped the story of Mr. Noah or that of Mr. Moses, it has replaced it with those of Mr. Charlemagne or Mr. Capet. Children know the date of death of Madame Feregonde, but don’t have the least notion about hygiene. Some young girls of fifteen know that in Spain a certain Madame Isabelle spent an entire century wearing one blouse, but are strangely upset when their first menstrual period comes.
Some women, who have the chronology of the kings of France at the tip of their fingers without a single mistake don’t know what to do with a child who cries out for the first time in its life.

While we leave a young girl next to he who is dying, who is in his final throes, we push her away from she whose belly is opening to life.

The dead obstruct cities, streets, and squares. We meet them in marble, in stone, in bronze. This inscription tells us of their birth, and that plaque tells us where they lived. Squares bear their titles or those of their exploits. Street names don’t indicate their position, form, altitude or location; they speak of Magenta or Solferino, an exploit of the dead where many were killed. They recall to you Saint Eleuthere or the Chevalier de la Barre; men, incidentally, whose only quality was that of dying.

In economic life it is also the dead who trace the lives of all. One sees his entire life darkened by his father’s “crime,” another wears the halo of the glory, the genius, the daring of his forefathers. This one is born a bumpkin with the most distinguished of spirits, that one is born noble with the most vulgar of spirits. We are nothing through ourselves; we are everything through our ancestors.

And yet...in the eyes of scientific criticism, what is death? This respect for the departed, this cult of decrepitude, by what argument can it be justified? Few have asked this, and this is why the question is not resolved.

And in the centre of cities, don’t we see great spaces that the living piously maintain: these are cemeteries, the gardens of the dead.

The living find it good to bury, right next to their children’s cradles, piles of decomposing flesh, carrion, the nutritive element of all maladies, the breeding ground of all infections.

They consecrate great spaces planted with magnificent trees and depose typhoid-ridden, pestilential, anthracic bodies there, one or two meters deep. And after a few days the infectious viruses roam the city seeking other victims.

Men who have no respect for their living organism, that they wear out, that they poison, that they put at risk, are suddenly taken with a comic respect for their mortal remains when they should be rid of them as soon as possible, put them in the least cumbersome, the most usable form.

The cult of the dead is one of the most vulgar aberrations of the living. It’s a holdover from those religions that promised paradise. The dead must be prepared for the visit of the beyond: give them weapons so they can participate in the hunts of Velleda, some food for the trip, give them the high viaticum, prepare them to
present themselves to God. Religions depart, but their ridiculous formulas remain. The dead take the place of the living.

Whole groups of workingmen and women employ their abilities and energy at maintaining the cult of the dead. Men dig up the earth, carve stone and marble, forge grilles, prepare a house for all of them in order to respectfully bury in them the syphilitic carrion that has just died.

Women weave the shroud, make artificial flowers, fashion bouquets to decorate the house where the pile in a just-ended tubercular decomposition will repose. Instead of hastening to make these loci of decomposition disappear, of using all the speed and hygiene possible to destroy these evil centres whose preservation and maintenance can only spread death around them, everything possible is done to preserve them as long as possible. These mounds of flesh are paraded around in special wagons, in hearses, through the roads and the streets. When they pass, men remove their hats. They respect the dead.

The amount of effort and matter expended by humanity in maintaining the cult of the dead is inconceivable. If all this force were used to receive children then thousands and thousands of them would be spared illness and death.

If this imbecilic respect for the dead were to disappear and make room for respect for the living, we would increase the health and happiness of human life in unimaginable proportions.

Men accept the hypocrisy of necrophages, of those who eat the dead, of those who live off the dead; from the priest, giver of sacred water, to the merchant of eternal homes; from the wreath seller to the sculptor of mortuary angels. With ridiculous boxes that lead and accompany these grotesque puppets, we proceed to the removal of this human detritus and its distribution in accordance with the state of their fortune, when a good transport service, with hermetically sealed cars and a crematory oven constructed in keeping with the latest scientific discoveries would suffice.

I will not concern myself with the use of ashes, though it would seem to me more interesting to use them as humus rather then carrying them around in little boxes. Men complain about work, yet they don’t want to simplify those gestures that overly complicate occasions of their existence, not even to do away with those for the imbecilic – as well as dangerous – preservation of their cadavers. The anarchists have too much respect for the living to respect the dead. Let us hope that some day this outdated cult will have become a road management service, and that the living will know life in all its manifestations.
As we’ve already said, it is because men are ignorant that they surround a phenomenon as simple as death with such religious mumbo jumbo. It also worth noting that this is only the case with human death: the death of other animals and vegetables doesn’t serve as the occasion for similar demonstrations. Why?

The first men, barely evolved brutes, devoid of all knowledge, buried the dead man with his living wife, his weapons, his furniture, his jewels. Others had the corpse appear before a tribunal to ask him to give an account of his life. Man has always misunderstood the true meaning of death.

And yet, in nature everything that lives dies. Every living organism falls when for one reason or another the equilibrium between its different functions is broken. The causes of death, the ravages of the illness or the accident that caused the death of the individual are scientifically determined.

From the human point of view then, there is death, disappearance of life, that is, the cessation of a certain activity in a certain form.

But from the general point of view death doesn’t exist. There is only life. After what we call death the transformative phenomena continue. Oxygen, hydrogen, gas, and minerals depart in different forms and associate in new combinations and contribute to the existence of other living organisms. There is no death; there is a circulation of bodies, modifications in the aspect of matter and energy, endless continuation in time and space of life and universal activity.

A dead man is a body returned to circulation in a triple form: solid, liquid, and gaseous. It is nothing but this, and we should consider and treat it as such.

It is obvious that these positive and scientific concepts leave no room for weepy speculations on the soul, the beyond, the void.

But we know that all those religions that preach the “future life” and the “better world” have as their goals causing resignation among those who are despoiled and exploited.

Rather than kneeling before cadavers it would be better to organise life on better foundations so as to get a maximum amount of joy and well being from it.

People will be angered by our theories and our disdain: this is pure hypocrisy on their part. The cult of the dead is nothing but an insult to true pain. The fact of maintaining a small garden, of dressing in black, of wearing crepe doesn’t prove the sincerity of one’s sorrow. This latter, incidentally, must disappear. Individuals should react before the irrevocability and the inevitability of death. We should fight against suffering instead of exhibiting it, parading it in grotesque cavalcades and false congratulations.
This one, who respectfully follows a hearse, had the day before worked furiously at starving the deceased; that one laments behind a cadaver who did nothing to come to his assistance when it would have been possible to save his life. Every day capitalist society spreads death by its poor organisation, by the poverty it creates, by the lack of hygiene, the deprivation and ignorance from which individuals suffer. By supporting such a society men are thus the cause of their own suffering, and instead of moaning before destiny they would do better to work at improving their conditions of existence so as to allow human life its maximum of development and intensity.

How could we know life when the dead alone lead it?

How can we live in the present under the tutelage of the past?

If man wants to live, let him no longer have any respect for the dead, let him abandon the cult of carrion. The dead block the road to progress for the living. We must tear down the pyramids, the tumuli, the tombs. We must bring the wheelbarrows into the cemeteries so as to rid humanity of what they call respect for the dead, but which is the cult of carrion.

Albert Libertad 1907
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