

*The Carter-Jenkins Center*  
*presents*  
*“The Memorial to Anna Freud Series”*



# **Humberto Nagera M.D.**

**Director, Carter-Jenkins Center**





**The Denial  
of  
Death  
by  
Humberto  
Nagera M.D.**



**Humberto Nagera M.D.**

**Psychoanalyst, Children, Adolescents and Adults**

**Professor of Psychiatry at the University of South Florida**

**Director, The Carter-Jenkins Center**

**Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, University of Michigan**

## **Factors in Human Nature that reinforce the tendency to deny death**

- **Among the factors intrinsic to human nature are :**
  - 1) The phase of animism (p.29)**
  - 2) The inherent narcissism (narcissistic phase) (p.28)**
  - 3) The Instinct of self-preservation (p.31)**
  - 4) The question of egocentrism (p.30)**
  - 5) Difficulties in understanding death in children and adults (p. 32)**

## **Factors in Human Nature that reinforce the tendency to deny death**

- 6) Types of defenses used against the idea of death\* (p.2)**
- 7) The factor of timelessness in the unconscious**
- 8) When is a person alive ? When is a person dead? What dies body or soul? (p.1)**
- 9) We know from the analysis of patients of the immediate real presence of dead parents, grandparents, siblings etc as if they were alive which further obscures the fact of death and dying (#8, p 413)**

## **Factors in Human Nature that reinforce the tendency to deny death**

- 10) Freezing of the body for a later resurrection**
- 11) Cults and mass suicides to join or continue life somewhere else. p 3**
- 12) Issues of cremation (according to religions). Some condone the practice of cremation (Hinduism) while others (Catholicism) oppose it**
- 13) Psychoanalysts themselves frequently tend to reduce the fear of death to something else such as castration anxiety, fear of separation etc(#8, p 413)**



## **Factors in Human Nature that reinforce the tendency to deny death**

- 14) The difficulties we have in replacing a valued but now dead object (an innate refusal to accept their death that leads and requires a long process of mourning) (F p.294)**
- 15) Death of important objects is always felt as an abandonment and since no one wants to be abandoned we try to deny death in our valuable objects including ourselves**
- 16) Dead objects reappears in dreams. Meaning of this to children and adults**



## **Factors in Human Nature that reinforce the tendency to deny death**

- 17) Belief of many savages that they will never die if their lives were not cut short by sorcery**
- 18) Role that religion plays in the denial of death**
- 19) Role the concept of God plays in the denial of death**
  - Our childhood belief in the omnipotence and omniscience of our parents, evolving to the superego and the idea of a major power out there i.e., God**

## Brief consideration of other factors

- 1) **Exceptions to self-preservation (not necessarily accepting the idea of ceasing to exist). Examples**
- 2) **Further links the idea of a Creator, an immortal god etc**

## **Some present views on death of our American Indians**

- There is no death, only a change of worlds (Duwamish)**
- When you die, you will be spoken of as those in the sky, like the stars (Yurok)**
- In death I am born (Hopi)**
- They are not dead who live in the hearts they leave behind (Tuscarora)**
- All who have died are equal (Comanche)**
- Life is not separate from death. It only looks that way (Blackfoot)**

## **Some present views on death of our American Indians**

- Death always come out of season (Pawnee)**
- Life is as the flash of the firefly in the night, the breath of the buffalo in winter time (Blackfoot)**
- It is good for the living to perform ceremonies for those who have died (Winnebago)**
- One has to face fear or forever run from it (Crow)**
- Men in search of a myth would usually find one (Pueblo)**

## OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE DENIAL OF DEATH



































**The Denial  
of  
Death  
by  
Humberto  
Nagera M.D.**

# A Carter-Jenkins Center

production



# The End

Copyright 2006

