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DEATH: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Death awareness is a natural sequel to the development of self-awareness—an intrinsic attribute of humankind. The consciousness of man's transience in its known earthly form is thus a universal phenomenon and one which poses intellectually tantalizing questions for the anthropologists. Strangely enough, relatively few anthropologists concerned themselves specifically and directly with the subject, and unlike the philosophers, manifested little fascination with the mystery of death. However, the very omnipresence of death in society creates a situation that death-related behavior is inevitabily incorporated in various studies and moreover, in the past, led to many of the central theoretical developments (60).

When reading through the anthropological literature in one large sweep, one is left with the impression of coolness and remoteness. The focus is on the bereaved and on the corpse but never on the dying. Fabian (29) presents the thesis that approaches to death in anthropology, like the concept of culture, have undergone a process of parochialization which has had the effect of eliminating a universal conception of the problem leaving the discipline bereft of a theoretical plane on which to face challenges such as the subject of death. Thus he claims it was inevitable that the studies dealt with "how others die" and moreover at a safe distance from one's own society.

It also has been maintained that death is not a central issue for anthropologists because of their natural reluctance to intrude in people's lives at a time of anguish (113). This opinion reveals the extent to which death in Western society has become a private affair and also demonstrates the depth of death anxiety engendered by the contemporary cultural milieu.

Powdermaker (167) writes about her field experience in Lesu " 'How can you take notes in the midst of human sorrow? Have you no feelings for the mourners?' I had a quick vision of a stranger walking into the living room of my Baltimore home at the time of a death. The notebook went back into my pocket. But I continued 'Are you not an anthropologist? . . . A knowledge of these rites is absolutely essential! I took the notebook out and wrote what was happening . . . The Lesu people understood. . . ." pp. 84–85.

Thus, the works of the stout-hearted in the profession are reviewed or mentioned in this article which is the first to appear on the subject of death in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*. (Psychology and sociology, too, are late-comers in evaluating the state of their arts with regard to death studies; nevertheless they preceded the anthropologists in publishing on death in the 1977 *Annual Review of Psychology* (63) and in the 1983 *Annual Review of Sociology*.) However, already by the late nineteenth century anthropologists were paying detailed attention to belief in spiritual beings associated with life after death and attitudes to the corpse.

Interesting ethnographic material was collected. The intellectual search was for the origin of religion and man's beliefs about his posthumus fate. From the 1960s onward, anthropologists stressed the socially restorative functions of funeral rites and the significance of the symbolism of death-related behavior as a cultural expression of the value system. Another important motif is the recognition and analysis of the ambivalence of the living toward the dead, involving the theme of transition and the concept of liminality.

The pattern followed for most review articles is to collect the literature dealing with the research problems, summarize critically their findings, with the organization growing out naturally from the research topics. On the anthro-pology of death, however, there seemed to be little consensus on what are the seminal questions which anthropologists should ask; thus the range of data does not render itself easily for comparison. Furthermore, certain themes do not fit neatly into one category but rather fit into many places. Finally, a loose chronological organization was adopted featuring outstanding works at differ-ent periods of time. Works representing specific schools of thought have been grouped together wherever possible. Because a number of aspects of death have not as yet been studied by anthropologists, reference is made freely to work done in other disciplines, notably by sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychohistorians who concern themselves with cultural im-plications of the death phenomenon. These latter professions have been more prolific than the anthropologists in their reactions to the moral and psychocul-tural implications of the scientific and technological revolution characterizing modern society. Prolonged life span on the one hand and mass killings on the other are two examples of such issues which are dealt with in this article.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORGANIZATION AND THEORETICAL INFLUENCES

Classical Approaches

Few areas of contemporary anthropological inquiry are still so dominated by *fin de siecle* thinking as is the study of death and mortuary ritual (22, 29, 60). One need only think how much work has been done on Hertz's 1909 essay (55) concerning left-right symbolism in contrast to the few theoretical advances that have been made on his 1907 essay "La representation collective de la mort" (54).

We have chosen to discuss briefly some major classical works on the study of death in culture, according to their theoretical standpoint. This will include the evolutionary position associated with Frazer (33–35), Tylor (125), and earlier nineteenth century theorists; the sociological schools best exemplified by the work of Durkheim (27) and Hertz (54, 55); the British functionalist school associated with Malinowski (83–84), Radcliffe-Brown (111), and their disciples and the "Rite de Passage" approach associated primarily with Van Gennep (126).

Evolutionary Approach

Death, a subject of central concern for evolutionary theorists, was considered primarily in relation to grander issues like the origin of religion and the progressive unfolding of culture. Tylor (125) sought evidence for his claim that the origin of religion lay in the collective response to death and related states like sleep and dreaming. Frazer (33–35) assembled impressive catalogues of exotic rites meant to document the universality of the fear of the corpse and the belief in the soul and the afterlife. Bachofen (4) drew attention to the way sexuality and fertility dominated the symbolism of funerals. The study of ritual which later became a central issue in modern anthropology was then primarily a means to investigate beliefs.

Despite the fascination which death held for the evolutionary theorists, and the voluminous source books of ethnography which they produced, they did not create a fruitful tradition of research but rather strengthened a trend which remained exclusively the study of "how others die" (Fabian 29). Bendann's (8) study of death customs will be mentioned here, for although she explicitly rejected theoretical evolutionarism, she used the comparative type methodology in keeping with that tradition. Her work may be regarded as a precursor of the cross-cultural method (cf Rosenblatt et al 113). Bendann (8) examined burial ritual and associated ideas in Melanesia, Australia, northeast Siberia, and India, systematically stating "similarities" and "differences" for a wide variety of topics. She dealt with conceptions of the origin of death, causes of

individual death, dread of spirits, attitudes to the corpse, mourning taboos, destruction of property after death, cult of the dead and so forth. Some of her conclusions are well worth attention. In the "similarities" section she concludes:

> Our attention has been directed to the universal pandemonium which centers around the dead body. Not only is it to be shunned by the survivors, but the contagion from it is alarming. Perhaps the reasons which may account for such an attitude may be 1. that the dead body, as such, incites this antipathy; 2. because of its connection with the disembodied spirit; 3. because it is regarded as the carrier of death; 4. because of the relation between the living and the dead . . . (8, pp. 185–86).

In her list of "differences" she sets down basic social variables to guide comparative studies of mortuary ritual. "The investigation shows that the content of the specific features is dependent upon rank, sex, age, social organization, status, environmental, moral, religious differences and myth conceptions, the location of the realms of the dead, the physical condition of the deceased, totemic considerations and kind of life after death" (8, p. 280).

French Sociological Influences

Durkheim, beginning with his famous publications on suicide, gave impetus to the study of the organizational aspects of death in society. His brilliant student, Robert Hertz (54), followed with one of the most original analyses pertaining to death written in this century. Although Hertz's case study focused on the details of a secondary burial ritual in a remote culture area, it still is one of the most cited and seminal works in the field. De Coppet (24) summarized Hertz's main conclusions as follows:

1. Death is not felt as an instantaneous destruction of an individual's life.

2. Death is rather to be seen as a social event, the starting point of a ceremonial process whereby the dead person becomes an ancestor.

3. Death is like an initiation into a social afterlife, making it a kind of rebirth (24, p. 175).

Barley (5) draws on other ideas of Hertz (54) concerning the transformation of "wet" to "dry" in the process of decomposition, as well as the parallelism between the stages of pollution and reintegration of the close relatives with that of the newly dead in the habitation of the ancestors. Huntington & Metcalf (60) drew from Hertz's insight that in Borneo the fate of the soul is modeled on the fate of the body. Just as the corpse is formless and repulsive during the intermediary period, so the soul of the deceased is seen as homeless and the object of dread. Hertz also pointed out that the naming of a newborn child after one recently deceased completes the mourning cycle, leading to reanimation or resurrection of the deceased as well as ensuring the final peace of the soul. "The application of the deceased's name to a newborn child is, in a sense, equivalent

to the final ceremony: like the latter it pacifies the deceased and returns him to life, putting an end to funeral peril and taboo" (54, pp. 74–75). The end of one passage, thus, may be the occasion for the beginning of another. Hertz also discussed the reason why primitive peoples do not see death as a natural phenomenon:

> Society imparts its own character of permanence to the individuals who compose it: because it feels itself immortal and wants to be so, it cannot normally believe that its members, above all those in whom it incarnates itself and with whom it identifies itself, should be fated to die. Their destruction can only be the consequence of a sinister plot. Thus when a man dies, society loses in him much more than a unit; it is stricken in the very principle of its life in the faith it has in itself (54, pp. 77–78).

Similarly, Hertz's statement of socially determined attitudes toward death remains the cornerstone of ethnographic analysis, which Bloch & Parry (14) quote with much approval. Hertz argued:

> The emotion aroused by death varies extremely in intensity according to the social status of the deceased, and may even in certain cases be lacking. At the death of a chief, or a man of high standing a true panic sweeps over the group. On the contrary, the death of a stranger, a slave or a child will go almost unnoticed; it will arouse no emotion, occasion no ritual (54, p. 76).

One is reminded of the tremendous wave of emotion which swept the United States after the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. Humphreys & King (58), in their recent collection of essays *Mortality and Immortality*, state that anthropologists have tended to consider death as the removal of a social person from society, and in dealing with what happens after death, have unreflectively adopted the perspective of Greek epic poetry as discussed by Vernant (127). "It is the fate of the socially significant aspects of the person (status, exploits personal relationships) which matters" (58, p. 2).

Malinowski (83–84) conceived the function of mortality rites, like other ceremonies, to be the dialectic resolution of disruptive tendencies which operate at times of social crisis. His famous quote acknowledging his debt to the "intellectualist" tradition remains a clear statement of the functionalist position:

> The ceremonial of death which ties the survivors to the body and rivets them to the place of death, the belief in the existence of the spirit in its beneficient influences or malevolent intention in the duties of a series of commemorative or sacrificial ceremonies—in all this, religion counteracts the centrifugal forces of fear, dismay, demoralization and provides the most powerful means of reintegration of the group's shaken solidarity and the re-establishment of its morale [Malinowski (84), p. 52]

The functionalist position led inquiry away from the corpse and back to the problem of death for society. The focus became the "social loss," issues of inheritance, redistribution of rights and statuses, and the reintegration of the

mourners into day-to-day life. Radcliffe-Brown (111) emphasized how a person's death constitutes "a partial destruction of the social cohesion" until a new equilibrium is established. He was interested in accounting for ritual expression of sentiments, and in his study of Andaman Islanders demonstrated that weeping affirmed the social bond between people. Ultimately, he concluded that it is the ritual which determines the presence and intensity of expressed feelings. "Without the ceremonial," Radcliffe-Brown argued, "these sentiments would not exist and without them the social organization in its actual form could not exist" (111, p. 324). As a result, one of the social functions of ceremonial customs is to teach, maintain, and transmit the appropriate emotional dispositions from one generation to the next.

Death as Rite of Passage

Although Van Gennep (126) treated funerals in less than 20 pages, his concept of death as one of a series of ritual passages through the life cycle remains one of the best known and perhaps dominant metaphors. Van Gennep had expected that the element of separation would be more marked in funerals than other rites of passage, but his evidence demonstrated that it is the transitional or the liminal which dominates mortuary ritual and symbolism. Like Hertz (54), Van Gennep noted social status aspects of ritual and mourning saying, "the length of the period (of mourning) increases with the closeness of the social tie to the deceased and with higher social standing of the dead person; If the dead man was a chief, the suspension affects the entire society" (126, p. 148). At the same time, persons for whom no rites are performed:

> are the most dangerous dead. They would like to be reincorporated into the world of the living and since they cannot be, they behave like hostile strangers toward it. They lack the means to subsistence which the other dead find in their own world and consequently must obtain them, at the expense of the living (126, p. 160).

Van Gennep, like Hertz (54), highlighted the fact that individuals are often considered to be composed of several components, each of which may have a different fate after death. The purpose of the destruction of the corpse whether through cremation, burial, decomposition etc "is to separate the components, the various bodies and souls" (126, p. 164).

Goody (49) has stated that the human cultures focus on death in two main ways: "Firstly there is what we may loosely call the conceptual aspect of death; secondly, the organizational." These foci include the anticipation of death, its actuality, the ideology, and the internment.

The evolutionists were closer in their concern to the conceptual aspects of death and studied the organizational, i.e. mortuary practices to that end. In contrast, many functionalists used the conceptual aspects to understand the organizational. Hertz's (54) and Van Gennep's (126) lasting contribution was to interrelate the belief system with the mortuary practices.

Recent Publications

Bloch & Parry (14) present an impressive collection of ethnographies around the theme "death and the regeneration of life." The essays discuss the significance in funeral ritual of male fertility as opposed to female sexuality, good death versus bad death, and the dilemma of the unpredictability of death in the context of funeral rites.

Aside from the general excellence of the ethnography, two essays present theories with regard to certain types of societies and the way they conceptualize and ritualize death. For example: Woodburn (133), in discussing four African hunting and gathering societies, discovered that their treatment and disposal of the body were quite simple, even mundane. No formal rites were associated with burial; no search for the cause of death; no clearly defined distinction between the "good" death and a "bad" one; little or no concern with afterlife which in any case is not affected by individual's behavior in this life. Woodburn claims that such a pattern is not characteristic of hunting-gathering societies in general but only those with "immediate-return economic and social organization." These societies like !Kung and the Pygmies of Central Africa are present-orientated, nonaccumulating, highly cooperative, pragmatic and undifferentiated. Woodburn continues that these "immediate-return societies" stress personal temporary grief and the temporary shared grief. . . . Questions of succession and inheritance (and of successors and heirs) scarcely arise since there is no office of household head (if by household head we mean someone with a measure of real control over assets and personnel) nor any other office of much significance nor any property of much value to be transmitted from one generation to the next. When someone dies he is not *replaced* socially by someone else in the sense he or she is in a "delayed-return system." In "immediate-return" systems, Woodburn concludes "the dead are not dispossessed in the interests of the living who derive no significant benefit from any death" (133, p. 206).

Bloch (12), drawing on his own fieldwork with the Merina of Madagascar, discusses a special kind of "delayed-return" society, one dominated by traditional authority. Since authority in these societies is based on unchanging eternal order grounded in nature and or in divinity, Bloch (12) contends, they need to overcome the unpredictability and individuality of death. Such societies place much emphasis on the horror of the pollution of decomposition of the body.

The individuality as represented by the body must be disposed of so that the eternal order will be reasserted.

> It follows, therefore that in those societies focused on traditional authority, there will, as Hertz had noted, always be a double aspect to funerals. One side will focus on pollution and on sorrow, something which in the end has to be removed, and another side will always assert the continuity of something else, a reassertion of the vanquishing and victorious order where

authority has its legitimate place. This reassertion is what necessitates the negation of the process of death (and therefore of birth) and the reaffirmation of the eternal order where birth and death are overcome by representing them as the same thing and where therefore everything is fixed for ever and ever (12, p. 224).

All essays in the collection are of high quality. Bloch's (12, 13b) and Woodburn's (133) papers are chosen for discussion because of their analytical approach to the question of diversity in funeral structure.

One of the outstanding recent book-length monographs with photographs is *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* (Danforth 22) which, following Fabian, "is not just about how others die, but about how we die as well." Tsiaras's photographs document all phases of death ritual from the wake to exhumation. Danforth provides a rich ethnography and structural analysis of "death as transition," demonstrating parallelisms between weddings and death ritual. Particularly illuminating is his discussion of funeral laments. The same song may refer to a wedding in which a bride is about to leave her family of origin to become a member of her husband's family or to the deceased who is "about to be consumed by the earth" (22, p. 114). In the words of one of the funeral couplets which serves as the book's motto: "Songs are just words. Those who are bitter sing them. They sing them to get rid of their bitterness but the bitterness doesn't go away" (22, p. 146).

Robert Jay Lifton, a psychiatrist who ingeniously synthesizes his own professional knowledge and insights with those from history, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy, proposed a universal theoretical framework (74, 76) to deal with the concept "symbolic immortality" or *death and the continuity of life*—the subtitle of his most ambitious theoretical statement, *The Broken Connection* (77). Lifton has focused intensively on death imagery, and the striving for continuity particularly by survivors of large-scale catastrophes. He published research on Hiroshima atomic blast survivors (76), on Vietnam War veterans (75), Japanese suicides (79), nuclear threat (79) and on medicalized killing at Auschwitz (78).

Lifton suggests that a person or a society's "sense of immortality" may be expressed in five general modes: the biological, theological, creative, through nature, and the special mode of experiential transcendence. He claims "we, in fact, require symbolization of continuity—imaginative forms of transcending death—in order to confront genuinely the fact that we die" (77, p. 17). The biological mode epitomized by family continuity, Lifton (76) claims, is the "most fundamental and universal of all modes" and certainly the one most familiar to anthropologists. But this mode never remains purely biological, it becomes simultaneously biosocial and expresses itself in attachments to one's group, tribe, organization, people, nation, or even species.

The theological or religious mode includes notions of survival of the "immortal soul" and/or conceptualizations of an afterlife in which "one is offered

the opportunity to be reborn into a timeless realm of ultimate death-transcending truths" (76, p. 20). The third mode is that achieved through "works"—the mode of creativity; one's human influences, great or humble, which will live on. The fourth mode, the theme of external nature, is very strong, for instance, in Japan. Hiroshima survivors would often quote an ancient Chinese proverb "The state may collapse but the mountains and rivers remain." The final mode, experiential transcendance, depends solely on a psychic state—one so intense and all encompassing that time and death disappear.

The value of Lifton's framework is that it provides a way for looking at cultural orientations to death, especially when during a time of social stress or cultural change, older modes of symbolic immortality are exchanged for others.

Lifton feels that catastrophes associated with World War II (76) and now the threat of nuclear extinction (79) has raised doubts and loss of faith in those modes of continuity. Unlike the beliefs in traditional societies described by Hertz (54) and Van Gennep (126), Lifton maintains that in Western society the link between life and death has been severed, hence his term (77) "the broken connection." As Bastide (6) stated, "if the structure of African cultures is that of a dialogue (between the living and the dead), then the structure of Western society is that of a monologue—but the monologue of the dead" (6, p. 104).

SOCIAL FUNCTION, AMBIVALENCE, AND RESOLUTION

The ethnographic and theoretical potential of the earlier works such as those of Tylor (125) and Frazer (33–35), remaining dormant for a number of decades, slowly surfaced in the late 1950s with the appearance of quite a few publications including some major monographs [Fabian (29), Goody (48, 49), Gorer (50, 51), Mandelbaum (85), and Warner (128)]. Fabian, in a polemical article berating anthropology for its poor contribution to the study of death, maintains that these works cannot be regarded as "trend setting." This comment is apt enough if Fabian's contention is that we were not presented with a new, definitive model for future studies. However, Goody, Gorer, and Mandelbaum's work in particular has been illuminating, each from its own vantage point, a fact that is demonstrated by the innumerable acknowledgments accorded the authors by later researchers.

Godfrey Wilson (131) was one of the first anthropologists to focus attention on the emotional behavior of mourners at a burial ceremony and analyze both the cultural context and function within the general social context. He worked with the Nyakyusa in East Africa, where at a burial, the women weep and the men dance—all with much noise, drumming, and excitement that last for three

or four days. The Nyakyusa explain that if the deceased is a male, then he is being hardened as a warrior, and if a woman, then as a mother of warriors. As male virility is an important attribute, there is often much fighting and sexual activity during the burial period. Wilson noted that such behavior may lead to antagonisms and create social disruption rather than strengthen integration. However, on a deeper level, his data seem to indicate that fundamental themes in Nyakyusa life were reinforced as part of an intense quality of life with emphasis on feasting, expressiveness, and high sexuality.

Mandelbaum (85), in a classic paper entitled "Social Uses of Funeral Rites," wrote that when death occurs "certain things must be done. The corpse must be disposed of, those who are bereaved—who are personally shocked and socially disoriented—must be helped to reorientate themselves; the whole group must have a known way of readjustment after the loss of one of its members" (p. 189). Mandelbaum describes clearly and simply the progression of the funeral ceremonies among the Kota people from the Nilgiri Hills of South India, presenting a functional analysis at each stage and emphasizing the theoretical significance of the fairly widespread custom of two funeral ceremonies. In the case of the Kota, he found it is the "Green Funeral" which takes place shortly after cremation of the body, and "The Dry Funeral" which is held at least every year and includes all deaths since celebration of the last "Dry Funeral." The Kota have two explanations for each ceremony, one religious, the other social. The spirit of the recently deceased is considered polluted and is only purified enough to depart for the afterworld by the time the second funeral has been completed. The "Dry Funeral" ends with the ceremonial smashing of a pot, at which point the villagers rush to their homes without looking back, confident that the dead go the other way. Mandelbaum claims that this "successful rite" demonstrates the self-confidence and cultural assurance of the Kota. With regard to the social explanation, the Kota believe that the dead man retains a number of earthly attributes which only come to an end with the performance of the second funeral. A striking example demonstrating the relatively long passage of time before a man is considered dead is that the widow of the deceased remains her husband's wife up to the completion of the "Dry Funeral." During the time following his physical death, and until her first menstrual period after the "Dry Funeral," a woman's pregnancy is always attributed to the deceased husband. On the last evening of the "Dry Funeral" ceremony, there is a dramatic switch in mood and behavior. The main mourners cease their weeping, cast off their tattered clothes, undergo a purification ceremony, and then join a general celebration. Both widows and widowers are expected to have intercourse, preferably with a sibling of the deceased, and thereby resume normal living again.

Mandelbaum spells out the explicit as well as the implicit purposes of each type of funeral. The explicit purposes are recognized as such by the villagers,

namely, the body is properly removed, and the bereaved are successfully brought through their shock and sorrow back to everyday pursuits with a sense of having done the right and proper thing about the social loss. The implicit purpose is less obvious to the participants; however, they realize that within the family and larger community, "reciprocal obligations are remembered, reenacted, and thus reinforced in the course of the ceremony" (85, p. 195).

In the funeral procession, at the feast, and in all other phases of the death ceremonies the "normal" order of rank is maintained. Thus men come before women, elders before the young men, etc. In this way, the funeral ceremony highlights the central motifs of the culture. Mandelbaum was aware that at the time of death, newly aroused feelings or existing conflictual social situations could become exacerbated. However, he only made a passing reference to the meaning of violent emotionality and other seemingly disruptive behavior when it occurred among the Kota.

Mandelbaum focused on the function of funeral rites in one society, i.e. the Kota people, but his underlying approach was comparative, based on a universal conception of the subject. He briefly refers to other cultures "in order to illustrate some general concepts concerning funeral practices, one of the universals of human social experience" (85, p. 190). Following his interest in the specific function of the "second funeral," Mandelbaum cites Kelley's (64) material on the Cocopa, whose main tribal enterprise is the funeral rites. The bereaved members of the family wail and scream in an unabated fashion for at least 24 hours until the cremation ritual is completed. To encourage the spirit of the dead person to depart swiftly to the afterworld, clothes, food, and utensils are destroyed, which would mean, in their belief, that the spirit could then have those things with him in the next world. The second ceremony, involving most of the tribe, is elaborate with conspicuous gift-giving, public mentioning of numerous dead relatives, as well as being the occasion for further destruction of material goods. Mandelbaum saw the cremation ritual as support for the bereaved family and the mourning ceremony as an integrative mechanism for strengthening tribal life. The fact that there was a constant disposal of capital goods kept the tribe on a low subsistence level, but no doubt the fact that no Cocopa dared inherit anything from a dead relative ensured economic equality.

To illustrate the link between funeral rites and the central motifs of the culture, Mandelbaum cites Parsons' (104) material on the Hopi. Their funeral ceremony is very low-key compared to other life-cycle ceremonies. The main point is to send off the spirit to another realm so that it will not disturb the Hopi ideals of a good and harmonious existence in *this* world. Parsons added, "No Pueblo Indian of the older generation wants a picture of a deceased relative" (p. 203).

Mandelbaum draws from Opler's (96) Apache study to show how funeral rites may contribute to the resolution of the psychological ambivalence of the

bereaved. The study reveals an interesting dialectic in bereavement behavior that is related to paradoxical life situations among the Apache. The nuclear family and close kin are permitted florid mourning behavior, but soon after the burial an elaborately socialized machinery is set in motion for banishing that grief. Opler suggests that these apparently contradictory practices are an expression of the ambivalence felt by an Apache toward his relatives. On the one hand, independent and self-reliant behavior was considered ideal. On the other hand, a person was required to be in a very close, mutually dependent relationship with his relatives, as well as to be responsible for avenging any wrongs inflicted on them. The demand for extreme kin solidarity as well as for strong individual independence created resentment within the Apache individual who usually acceded to the claims of his close relatives. The hostility following the resentment became expressed in an institutionalized, symbolic manner. There was the belief that everyone who gained supernatural power was obliged to pay for this power with the life of a close relative. Furthermore, it was not an uncommon occurrence for an Apache to have a supernatural experience. Opler explains that the individual was given a public opportunity to express his grief at the loss of a person to whom he was emotionally tied, and then he was provided with full support of his culture to wipe out his memory which would otherwise evoke fear and resentment of the past.

Mandelbaum set out to demonstrate the multiple functions and complexity of the content of funeral rites. His theoretical emphasis was on the carthartic aspects for individual mourners and the enhancement of solidarity for the group. Nevertheless, he did not ignore data illustrating that under certain circumstances, funeral ceremonies may engender social disruption rather than promote cohesion, as well as aggravate personal distress. Such was the case in a town in East Central Java at the time of the burial of a young child who died while visiting his relatives (Geertz 6, 41). According to Geertz, the problem lay in the fact that the episode took place during an acute period in the acculturation process. A traditional type burial was no longer congruent with the modern, secular part of the population but as yet they had no alternative ceremony. In the meanwhile, the cultural conflict took on a religious-political color leading to the refusal of the traditional religious official to conduct the ceremony, claiming that the child's family was not of his faith. Finally a solution was found, but only after much personal suffering and community upheaval.

Goody's (48) monograph on mortuary customs deserves to be singled out as an outstanding study combining a broad, well-integrated theoretical analysis with a rich feast of detailed ethnography. His contribution goes far beyond his basic theoretical finding that mortuary practices, including ancestor worship, are linked to the differing importance of inherited property between the matrilineal and patrilineal kin groups among the LaDagaa, a society with dual descent. Goody grants that he cannot demonstrate that property relationships

are the cause of all social change and cautiously goes no further than saying that the universal application of the theoretical implications of his findings with regard to property must remain speculative.

In the process of his study of how and to whom inheritance is allocated, Goody wrestled with fundamental conditions in social life, namely, the expression of ambivalence and conflict on the one hand and the need for conformity on the other hand. The concrete sign of death is the corpse, but no less pressing is the sudden vacuum created by the nonfulfilling of a role which carries rights and obligations. The break in the chain of interpersonal relationships needs to be restored. In his work, Goody builds a natural social bridge between life and death. The funeral ceremonies are manifestly the means by which the actual passage of a human being from the land of the living to the land of the dead is effected. Through the analysis of a complex and detailed network of social dramas that are an integral part of the funeral performances, we come to know the value system of the LaDagaa, their sex and age hierarchy, and their social stress points. A LaDagaa man, for instance, should die in the arms of a close kinswoman and never lying down, for that would be as if he was a slave with no one to take care of him. In addition, a male corpse is washed by postmenopausal women, for in certain attributes, they are "men" and authority is mainly vested in males.

Goody's data illustrates Gluckman's (46) "cross-cutting ties" concept showing how conflicts were resolved between persons belonging to different or even opposing social categories when they found they had certain joint interests. For instance, cathartic services, such as performing a grotesque act as a distraction from severe grief, could be performed by a member of the patriclan for a mourner from the matriclan. Both groups may be interested in having an "outside person" help them relieve their misery and at the same time create bonds between two potentially competing groups through a system of reciprocal services. Goody (48) illustrates the overall dynamic of custom which preserves order in social life through facilitating means of resolving conflictual situations as well as promoting cooperation, particularly after a death. Probably stimulated by the numerous customs symbolizing ambivalent relationships between deceased and survivors, Goody presents a detailed discussion of emotions in the living aroused by the dead man, the latter either in the form of a corpse or as an ancestor already established in the next world. He points out that while nineteenth century theorists saw the relationship between ancestors and their living descendants as positive and loving, Tylor (125) and Frazer (35) saw it as hostile. Frazer, in particular, amassed evidence showing that man is thought to be more hostile to his descendents after his death than during his lifetime. Frazer, somewhat hesitantly, advances the theory that the numerous decoying tactics adopted throughout the world to prevent the dead from menacing the survivors are an outgrowth of the "instinctive fear of the corpse."

Goody (48) points out that Malinowski (83, 84) also resorted to an innate biological explanation like Frazer's, adding, however, that the emotions are contradictory; there is the simultaneous love of the dead person with fear of the corpse. Malinowski continues with the suggestion that the development of funeral customs, connected with the innate belief in spiritual immortality, is part of man's instinct of self-preservation, helping him to handle his fear of the corpse which symbolizes his fear of annihilation. Goody continues to gather support for his focus on hostility and ambivalence as potential causes of disruption at the event of a death. He cites Radcliffe-Brown (111), who concurs on the existence of ambivalence between the living and the dead. The dead man, according to Radcliffe-Brown, becomes the "object of a dysphoric condition of the collective consciousness." Mead (90), too, refers to such an ambivalence. However, in her view, it depends on the cultural idiom of the society, rooted in historical development, as to which aspects of the ambivalent attitude become prominent. Gough (52), in comparing Nayar and Brahman cults, links different expressions of ambivalence toward the dead to differing patterns of socialization, particularly the handling of anxiety associated with parent-child relationships.

Goody, in spite of his self-definition as a comparative sociologist and, one may add, with strong Durkheiman roots, to his credit does not reveal any "instinctive abhorrence" of Freudian insights on death and ambivalence. Freud (36) relates mourning customs and the attributed malevolence of the ancestors to the guilt that all survivors experience because of the negative element that is always present in a close relationship. Freud appears to regard this ambivalence as rooted in the organism and sensitive to societal conditions which may exacerbate or relieve its manifestation. He believed that in primitive society there was a manifestation of deeper ambivalence than in modern "civilized society." (There are many today who claim the opposite.)

There runs throughout Goody's ethnography (48) the theme of conflict rooted in the social system that gave rise to what Freud called ambivalent feelings in the personality. He thus focuses on the distribution of the hostile and friendly components of social relationships which at the time of a death become activated while the personal loss and social vacuum is being dealt with. Goody sees the interlocking of the personality and social systems with the attitudes expressed in the ceremonies and defined by the social system. For instance, the LaDagaa widow's ritual cleansing, necessitated by her possible adultery as a cause of her husband's death, clearly highlights the tension that accompanies polyganous marriages where the husbands have exclusive rights over the wives.

In sum, Goody brought to life, in the study of death, the dynamic nature of custom and carried further Gluckman's ideas on how "custom unites where it divides, cooperation and conflict balancing each other" (p. 23).

GRIEF REACTIONS IN CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Rosenblatt et al (113), concerned about the growing feeling of the psychosocial inadequacy and inappropriateness of mourning patterns in the United States today, turned to other societies to gain cultural perspectives. They did not conduct their own field work but examined ethnographic data from 78 societies, which had adequate descriptions of death customs and were listed in the World Culture Areas (93, 94).

Using a totally different methodology from that of Goody (48), and limiting investigation to specific discrete aspects of mourning behavior, Rosenblatt et al (113) nevertheless joined him in seeking out the mechanisms that may facilitate both the community and the individual to regain the homeostasis one assumed existed prior to the disruption caused by death. This is not a surprising development, for Rosenblatt et al's conceptual framework rested on the anthropological contribution of people such as Hertz (54), Malinowski (84), Mandelbaum (85), and Van Gennep (126). For the psychological dimension, Rosenblatt et al drew from Freudian and Neo-Freudian sources such as Bowlby (16), Freud (37), and Lindemann (81). A basic presupposition taken from the social solidarity and dynamic psychology perspectives and presented throughout the study was that people everywhere build long-term complex interdependent relations. It is further assumed that these relationships produce considerable feelings of attachment involving love, hate, and ambivalence, the termination of which produces suffering and personal disorganization.

In the attempt to identify the essence of universal grief behavior that transcends individual societies, Rosenblatt et al (113) draw a few clear conclusions. First and foremost, the data show that within human society it is a near universal that death is associated with emotionality, and the most usual expression among the bereaved is that of crying. Only the Balinese lacked crying during bereavement. From studies on mourning in modern life (3, 16, 68, 81, 100, 101), Rosenblatt et al expected to find widespread expressions of anger and aggression (both self-directed and other-directed) in all communities. They seem surprised that only 76% of the ratable societies reported overt expression of anger, thus suggesting that it may be concealed as is common in the United States.

Rosenblatt et al then established that, despite a great deal of basic male-female similarity in emotionality, if there are sex differences in emotions during bereavement, it is the women who tend to cry and self-mutilate more than men, who tend to direct anger and aggression away from self. A number of traditional theories were suggested with regard to possible factors that underlie the sex differences in emotional expression. It was suggested that it may be easier to socialize women than men to be overtly nonaggressive, and thus crying may represent a female expression of aggression. Two other opposing

explanations were advanced: there is the belief that women who develop stronger attachments through their role as mothers and wives will be more affected by the loss from a death. Women, however, may not experience death more strongly; they may only be used (and allow themselves to be used) as the person who symbolizes publicly, in burdensome or self-injuring ways, the loss that all have experienced—what has been called an emotional division of labor. Rosenblatt et al cautiously sum up the controversy by stating "we lack the kind of data that would enable us to choose among explanations" (113, p. 128).

Drawing from the ethnographic data, Rosenblatt et al conclude that most societies have developed mechanisms and institutions to control the anger of the bereaved and channel it along nondestructive paths. Ritual specialists are presented as the optimal societal invention for minimizing the possibility of anger leading to attacks, insults, feuds, and other disruptive social behavior. As a result, Rosenblatt et al believe that in a country so deritualized as the United States, the funeral directors may fulfill a positive role in developing a new set of norms for grief and mourning behavior.

In fact, Rosenblatt et al divide mourning into two stages: the expression of emotion and tie breaking. Again, using as an example mourning patterns in the United States, where there is no ritual provision for tie breaking, they seek out ethnographic evidence in other societies for the usefulness of "finalizing" acts. It appears as if there is an elaboration of such acts in many societies, particularly when a spouse dies and these acts have the function of facilitating remarriage. The actual acts include discarding or destroying property, placing a taboo on the name of the deceased, and changing residence. For example, in societies with much ghost fear, there is also a greater likelihood that there will be a stress on ceremonial cleansing of widows, as if symbolically to remove the link with the deceased husband. As prolonged or pathological mourning is regarded as a problem in modern society, before one can apply the "wisdoms" of other cultures it must be borne in mind that "tie breaking acts" are part of a larger ritual involving the support of kith and kin and should be congruent with the central cultural motif of the society.

BUREAUCRATIC MEDICINE AND THE DYING PROCESS

The notion of the "denial of death" became widely popularized by anthropologist-psychologist Ernest Becker (7) in 1973, although it already had been mentioned in 1960 by Berger & Lieban (9). Parsons et al (106) rejected the view that denial is a basic aspect of the American orientation to death and suggest it is more a kind of apathy, characteristic of a situation in which one does not know quite what to do. The general consensus, however, is that Americans do have a problem dealing with death. Manifestations of this

difficulty are the avoidance of dying persons (45) and the avoidance of the bereaved (51); a fear of the fear of death (62); and the feeling of the uncertainty about an afterlife (60).

Glaser & Strauss (44) commented on the paradox that Americans read daily about death in the newspapers yet are reluctant to face "the process of dying." Gerbner (42) goes further and suggests that portrayals of death and dying by the mass media serve symbolic functions of social typing and control and tend on the whole to conceal the reality and inevitability of the event. Glaser & Strauss (44, 45), who did field work in a number of American hospitals, asked the question whether people can die socially before they die biologically. They sought the answer in an intensive study of the social interactions of dying patients with the hospital staffs. They defined four contexts of awareness specifying "who, in the dying situation, knows what about the probabilities of death for the dying patient" (44, p. ix, preface). These awareness contexts are identified as "closed" (in which doctor knows but the patient doesn't); "suspected" (in which patient suspects but is not told); "mutual pretense" (in which both sides know the other knows but collude in agreeing not to discuss the matter); and "open" (in which both sides are openly aware of the dying probabilities). In their subsequent study *Time for Dying* (1968), Glaser & Strauss (45) focus on temporal aspects of the "dying trajectory."

Dying trajectory has duration, shape, and implicit expectations concerning the interrelation of time and certainty. There are four types of "death expectations": 1. certain death at a known time; 2. certain death at an unknown time; 3. uncertain death but a known time when the question will be resolved; and 4. uncertain death at an unknown time (45, p. 18).

Impact of various trajectories are discussed in terms of lingering trajectories, expected quick trajectories, and most disorienting of all, unexpected quick trajectory, e.g. suicide or unexpected death during surgery.

Glaser & Strauss added new insights into the dying process through their original theoretical orientations developed from an analysis of qualitative data obtained from detailed field observations in American hospitals. Their work is considered by many social scientists as ground breaking (Riley 112).

Special attention will be given to the work of Kübler-Ross (68, 69), a psychiatrist who has had a remarkable impact on the incipient movement for increased awareness of the needs of the dying. She is best known for her staging theory. Although she was preceded by the sociologists Glaser & Strauss (44, 45), Sudnow (124), and nursing researcher Quint (110), it is Kübler-Ross's model and approach that have had much international influence, recognition, and also controversial reactions. Germain (43) attributed her impact to these facts: her book appealed to lay persons as well as professionals; timing and societal readiness were appropriate; the professional status of Kübler-Ross as a physician carried greater weight.

Kübler-Ross identified an interdependence between the ideology of modern hospital bureaucracy, reactions of medical staff to death, and the behavior of the dying patient. Although she viewed the patient in close interaction with his or her family, her model concentrated on the personal inner experience of the dying person. After interviewing in depth over 200 terminal patients, Kübler-Ross (68) presented the following construct which included five stages: denial ("The diagnosis must be a mistake"); anger ("why me?"); bargaining (ready to pay by some pious deed for more time); depression (this stage is split into two phases—first, mourning for lost opportunities or regrets and second, entering into a state of preparatory grief); acceptance (peaceful albeit not happy).

The dearth of work on the actual feelings of the dying person in modern times led many professionals to grab at this model and apply it in a slavish fashion. The boomerang came in the form of rather severe criticism of the rigidity of the stages which brought Mauksch (89) to express the following tempered opinion:

> These stages provide a very useful guide to understanding the different phases that dying patients may go through. They are not absolute, not everyone goes through every stage in this exact sequence. . . . But this paradigm can, if used in a flexible insight-producing way, be a valuable tool in understanding why a patient may be behaving as he does (p. 10).

The significance of Kübler-Ross's work (68, 69), from the anthropological viewpoint, lies in the changes she helped to bring about in the cultural climate of death, particularly in the field of medicine in America. Her underlying assumption is that a complex set of social factors led to deepening the fear of death in Western cultures, and this in turn strengthened the mechanism of denial, avoidance, or disbelief. Kübler-Ross reported on the discomfort of the doctors with her research project. Hunt (59) quotes research which describes similar situations in England, Israel, and additional places in the United States [Bloch (15), Caldwell & Mishara (19), Feifel (30–32), Schreibaum (119), Simpson (122)].

In keeping with Glaser & Strauss's findings (65, 66), Kübler-Ross also noted that hospital staffs developed a number of strategies congruent with this atmosphere, including the policy of telling half-truths to mortally ill patients and then blocking further possibilities for communication; or giving intensive palliative biological treatment when the patient only wants "one single person to stop for one single minute so that he can ask a single question" (68, p. 3).

Kübler-Ross, like Ariès (1, 2), Glasser & Strauss (44, 45), and Sudnow (124), believes that the process of dying nowadays has become more gruesome in many ways, more lonely, mechanical, and dehumanized. Mauksch (89), in his sociological analysis, maintains that, by definition, hospitals are rarely responsive to the special needs of dying people. Hospitals as institutions are committed to the healing process, and dying patients are a threat to that defined

role. They create feelings of inadequacy within the medical profession which is expected to deal effectively with disease in a systematic fashion. The dying patient who expresses anger is not seen as somebody who is trying to communicate a personal need but as a deviant who is violating the norm, namely, that a patient should be compliant and appreciative. Mauksh makes a number of suggestions to effect change within the culture of the medical and nursing institutions. He sees the care of the dying not as a skill to be used only when confronted with a patient in the terminal stage, but as applying to the total network of relationships with all patients and their families.

Kastenbaum & Aisenberg (62) both analyze the cultural milieu of death and also speculate on future developments. They, too, see the death system as vastly different from what it was in the even recent past and "quite peculiar" if compared with many of the death systems of preliterate societies where the distinction between death and life is softened rather than sharpened. In modern society, he maintains, death is "transposed, insulated, technologized and decontextualized." The term "transposed" refers to the phenomenon described also by Blauner (11), who pointed out that death and old age have become equated and thus are viewed by the majority of the population as a very distant remote prospect. Furthermore, death is the business of specialists whose work is largely behind the scenes. Even the symbolic aspects of death, Kastenbaum & Aisenberg claim, have relatively little place in our daily life. Visions of the afterlife, whether beautiful or terrifying, are not at all central in the mass media. On the contrary, there is the culturally sanctioned expectation that technological solutions can be found for all problems on this earth—death not excluded. Finally he maintains, the "decontextualization" is a function of the loss of tradition, lineage, or accepted dogma leaving the necessity for individuals to make for themselves their own decisions. This applies to the dying person himself, his family, and professionals who treat him.

Today there is a public surge of interest in death in America which Kastenbaum and others partly attribute to the fear of mass death through the prospect of nuclear warfare. In Lifton's terms, Kastenbaum & Aisenberg (62) express the opinion that there are many thoughtful people who have a new death imagery—the visage of a death to end all deaths because it ends all life. Furthermore, while Americans shield themselves from natural death, the mass media brings worldwide reports of violent deaths into the American living room. A number of citizen movements against various types of pollution and destruction of nature highlight the lethal characteristics of modern society. Finally, there are now more mental health professionals who themselves have confronted death-threatening experiences of our century such as battle, military imprisonment, and concentration camp internment. Palgi (99), focusing on Israeli society, saw mental health professionals and anthropologists interested in this field as an appropriate interdisciplinary team to work on the development

of a conceptual framework to promote new socially accepted creative responses to confrontation with the phenomenon of death.

Hospice Movement

The establishment of the hospice movement in England, and its spread to America, Canada, and primarily to other English-speaking countries, is one of the newer cultural modes in relating to dying people. The hospice as such is a revived cultural phenomenon that was common in medieval times and has its roots in early Christianity. It was reintroduced mainly in reaction to the bureaucratization of death and because of the loneliness and unrelieved physical pain of many of the dying patients. The modern hospice revolves around the old concept of "a good death," and by awareness of the patient's feelings and pain level it aims to help him live to the limit of his potential in physical strength, mental and emotional capacity, and in social relationships. These ideals do not require the erection of costly edifices; on the contrary, they can be activated in a home-care service, provided the philosophy is adopted (38, 70, 117).

Different models of the hospice have been established in various countries. No research, comparative or otherwise, seems available as yet to assess them. The cultural factor is an important one; as Holden (57) points out, "an English Hospice cannot be replicated in the United States any more than an English pub can" (p. 62).

Kastenbaum & Aisenberg (62) raise the question of whether this type of innovative dying-death system will be regarded as "gruesome houses of the dead"; on the other hand, it may dispel many apprehensions by demonstrating that people may be able to continue to function as people right up to the end if given a reasonable opportunity to do so (p. 398). In this way it appears as if new roles may be created both for the caretakers and for the dying person which would prevent a social death preceding the biological death.

THE EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES ON DEATH AWARENESS

Robert Blauner's (11) important paper, "Death and Social Structure" (1966), compares the place of the dead in modern society with its place in preindustrial society. In the modern period, he claims, death has become less disruptive to the collective while its consequences have become more serious for the bereaved individual. Blauner's basic premise is that the key determinant of the social impact of mortality is the age and social situation of those who die. Death is seen as particularly disruptive when it strikes persons who are most relevant for the functional and moral activities of the social order. The extent of the social vacuum created as a consequence of death thus depends upon how deeply

engaged the deceased has been in the life of the society. In modern society, death is characteristically a phenomenon of the old who have retired from work, have completed parental tasks, and are living in relative isolation. Their death, therefore, does not interrupt the business of life. In primitive society, relatively more people die in the middle years, necessitating the reallocation of socially essential roles and rights in an institutionalized manner. Goody (48), for instance, illustrates the importance of transferring to a new husband through funeral ceremonies the rights to the now unattended women, who are still sexually active and capable of reproduction.

Blauner (11) adds his theoretical speculation to explain the almost universal belief in ghosts in preindustrial societies. When people die in the middle years of their life, they are at the height of their activities in caring for the young, in producing food, and in participating in social and ritual occasions. Thus, they die with a great deal of unfinished business. They are in the opposite position of the old in modern society who are already socially disengaged by the time of their encroaching death. Blauner sees the belief in ghosts as reifications of this unfinished business which permits continuation of relationships broken off in an untimely fashion. He attributes ambivalent attitudes toward the ghost to the belief by the bereaved that the dead person is frustrated in having his life cut short. He may want to return to the land of the living, or at least take with him to the spirit world those persons who are important to him. The more the newly deceased had been socially involved, the more he needs to be appeased. Certain categories of the dead demand special attention. Ghosts of women dying in childbirth or who are unmarried and childless may be considered especially vicious because of their frustration. The ghosts of the unmarried are often given mock marriages to other dead souls. Blauner claims that the relative absence of the belief in ghosts in modern society reflects the disengaged social situation of the majority of the deceased who had completed their social obligations prior to their death. Blauner apparently overlooks the fact that the spread of secularization in itself weakened the belief in a type of supernaturalism involving ghosts and spirits. Rosenblatt et al (113), for instance, believe that the well-documented phenomenon found in modern society [Clayton et al (20), Hobson (56), Marris (87, 88)] of a "sense of presence of the dead person" performs the same function that ghost belief does in primitive society. The literature indicates that it is particularly in the case of widows and widowers that the bereaved "heard or felt the presence" of the dead spouse.

In this respect, Rosenblatt et al (174) support Blauner's (11) thesis that while death is less disruptive to modern society, its consequences are more disturbing for the bereaved individual. They write: "to admit to having a conversation with a deceased person or to having seen a supposedly buried person sitting in one's living room is very risky in American society" (113, p. 57). Consequently, many bereaved persons may be unable to talk with others about this area of

experience and potential anxiety. Furthermore, many may be led to doubt their own sanity by experiences of ghost cognitions, which only adds to the burden of their loss. The fully institutionalized and complex customs that are enacted in most traditional societies to handle the emotional residue of close attachment to the deceased no doubt are a comfort for and reassurance to the bereaved individual. Blauner (11), to strengthen his argument about the effect of disengagement of the aged in modern American society in particular, points out that the bureaucratization of death, a natural consequence of most people dying in hospitals, inevitably leads to further impersonalization. The gap is widened between the individual survivor and the deceased. However, from the societal point of view, the practicalities such as the disposal of the corpse, the registration of the death, and the passing on of the inheritance are usually handled with high efficiency. Furthermore, the thinness of the funeral ritual, together with intensive emotional involvement concentrated on very few individuals, a pattern characteristic of modern nuclear families, leaves an unresolved tension in society. It is at the time of the funeral that one of the younger generation often feels guilt and regret for having withdrawn from a parent or grandparent who was once a significant figure in his or her life. Blauner could have added that according to the psychiatric literature (17), prolonged but concealed mourning is apparently so widespread today that it is not an individual problem but a social issue. Blauner (11) concludes that the private nature of the modern funeral ceremony, and the rapidity with which it is performed, has severely weakened its classic functions. The final contradiction is that the very society which has so efficiently controlled the manner of dying and burial, through medical bureaucracy and funeral parlors, has made it difficult to die with dignity. No new concept has arisen to replace the nineteenth century ideal of a patriarch dying at home in comfort, surrounded by his loving and appreciative children and relatives, and being unafraid to "meet his maker."

Blauner (11) guides us along to his conclusion that modern American death, characteristically taking place in a hospital, and most times being that of a person regarded by himself and others as no longer useful, is the epitome of the "dying alone" symbolic theme of existentialism as well as the essence of social inappropriateness.

WESTERN HISTORY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD MORTALITY

Philippe Ariès (1, 2), a French historian and social critic of renown, traces the Western attitude to death, focusing on Europe from early Christian era to the present day. He writes: ". . . I turn and cast my eye over this 1000 year landscape like an astronaut looking down at the distant earth. This vast space seems to me to be organized around the simple variations of four psychological themes . . . the awareness of the individual, the defense of society against

untamed nature, belief in an afterlife and belief in the existence of evil" (2, p. 603).

On the basis of the above assumption, Ariès arranges his massive free-ranging data in chronological order.

(a) The tame death. The dying man was expected to prepare himself for death once he knew his end was near. "The dead live a diminished life in which the most desirable state is sleep." Their sleep may be troubled, owing to their own past impiety, but by and large, the conception of life after death as a state of repose or peaceful sleep is one of the most tenacious forms of the old attitude toward death. The outstanding feature of the tame death was the simplicity with which the rituals of dying were accepted and carried out. ". . . in a ceremonial manner, yes, but with no theatrics, with no great show of emotion" (1, p. 13). This attitude continued well into the Middle Ages.

(b) The death of the self. Ariès describes a shift in attitude from death being almost a minor event to one of immense importance. The impact on the society was not regarded as significant, it was the dying of a personage—the death of self that mattered. While originally limited to the rich and educated, the era of self-awareness and even self-importance became widespread. The custom of writing a will was one of the new expressions of self-assertion, linking life with death by maintaining control over others after one's own death. The afterlife gained greater significance, which led to a clearer statement about the separation between body and soul. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this trend had become firmly established. The deathbed scene which persisted into the nineteenth century had taken on a dramatic and emotional character. It became an expected phenomenon that one's entire life should flash before one's eyes at the moment of death while the forces of good and evil fight for the possession of the soul. The dying person would have to face Judgment Day in the remote future, but his moral attitude at the time of his death would determine his fate in eternity.

(c) Remote and imminent death. The two previous models presented death as a natural phenomenon. However, states Ariès, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries death was no longer regarded as part of the rational scheme of life. It often took on the character of a fearful and violent event similar to the perception of sex at that time. In general, death themes became eroticized as seen in motifs in art and literature. For instance, the new iconography of the sixteenth century showed how "death raped the living." Paradoxically, this change was simultaneous with the beginning of the rise of science, rationalism, and technology. By the nineteenth century, death was left as remote, arousing strange curiosities and eroticisms.

(d) The death of the other. By the twentieth century, Ariès identifies a major change in the concept of self and in interpersonal relationships. With the nuclear family replacing the traditional community and the individual of the

late Middle Ages, affectivity became concentrated on a very few persons whose disappearance caused a dramatic crisis: the death of the other. Ariès claims that this revolution in feeling was as important to history as the related revolution in ideas, politics, socioeconomic conditions, or demography. Under these changed conditions the fear of death was transferred from the self to the significant other. Simultaneously and gradually the belief in sin and hell began to weaken. The survivors now became the central figures, and they no longer mourned the fact of death but rather the pain of physical separation from the deceased. Death began to be regarded as beautiful. With the slow retreat of the fear of the terror of hell, the nineteenth century heralded the great reunion in the next world of those whom death had separated. Ariès sees little difference in attitudes between the religious and the nonbelievers. "It is the paradise of Christians . . . But it is also the world of nonbelievers . . . They have all built the same castle in the image of earthly homes where they will be reunited—in dream or in reality, who knows?" (22, p. 611).

(e) The invisible death. Ariès uses the term "invisible" in a somewhat similar way to others' use of the form "taboo" with regard to the subject of death. Death is no longer seen as natural or beautiful or as socially significant. On the contrary, it became dirty and medicalized. The dying person is expected to die "out of sight" in a hospital where death is brought under full control with the discipline and anonymity of the medical order. Basically, modern society views death as a "massive admission of defeat." Ariès says "We ignore the existence of a scandal that we have been unable to prevent. We act as if it did not exist, and thus mercilessly force the bereaved to say nothing" (2, p. 624). However, the fear of death has crept back with all its savagery with the terrifying popular image of death in the form of a patient whose body is invaded by tubes and needles. Ariès hints at the numerous other complex trends in society, among them the attempt to once again "humanize" death. He refers to the small elite who wish to reconcile death with human dignity. There seems to be a little skeptical smile on Ariès' face as he sums up the aims of these social scientists: "Death must simply become the discreet but dignified exit of a peaceful person from a helpful society that is not torn, not even overly upset by the idea of a biological transition without significance, without pain or suffering and ultimately without fear."

DEATH WITHOUT FUNERAL RITES—THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

Anthropologists appear to have scrupulously avoided confrontation with the modern phenomenon of a selective and unprecedented "death plan" based on ethnic criteria according to racist theories, such as that perpetrated by the Nazi regime in the early to middle 1940s. This issue was first raised by Shiloh (120),

who referred to the Nazi holocaust as the prime case-study of genocide and "a critical manifestation of human behavior that has not received serious attention from anthropologists." Shiloh, however, makes no attempt to analyze the reasons for the noted avoidance behavior; he settles for bringing it to the attention of his readers.

Palgi (97–99), an anthropologist, and sociologists Antonovsky (23) and Shuval (121), undoubtedly influenced by the salience of the concentration camp survivor syndrome among people with whom they worked in the Israeli population, were among the few who have touched on the subject. In different ways, they attempted to trace certain specific behavioral effects of exposure on survivors to this particular kind of violent deculturization. However, both in Israel and elsewhere, psychiatrists, psychologists, and historians, as well as literary persons who underwent holocaust experience, were the main professionals who have concerned themselves with the subject.

One might have thought that at least two questions would have been compelling for anthropology. The first; how was it possible that so large a number of people accepted the role of "victimizer," enacting a death system for which there were no previous rules, norms, or rituals. The second; how did the surviving victim, who had been forced into a premature death-anticipatory milieu with omnipresent death scenes, cope (if at all) after his reentry and reintegration into a normative societal value system.

Langer (71) illustrates the latter difficulty by the following story of a woman survivor who spent her childhood years in Europe during the Hitler era:

> . . . after the war she made her way with her parents to Israel. Shortly after their arrival, a close friend of the family died, and her mother took her to the funeral—the first she ever attended. She remembers the coffin being lowered into the grave, and her own confusion when some men began shovelling in the earth. Turning to her mother in distress and perplexity, she asked: "but where are the other dead people?" The notion in a child's mind that men and women no longer die alone but en masse, that the grave is not "a fine and private place" but a dumping ground for innumerable anonymous corpses, is a pure example of how atrocity may transform our view of human destiny (71, p. xi, preface).

If an attempt is to be made to understand more about that "other reality" of the omnipresence of death, anthropologists have to resort, by the nature of the phenomenon, to the methodology of recent historical reconstruction. Researchers in other disciplines who have worked on the holocaust have found that there are willing informants available both among the victimizers and the victims (78).

The numerous diaries, journals and autobiographical accounts on the holocaust have special relevence for anthropologists. First, a person is usually speaking about his or her anticipated death as well as recording "the death of others." Second, we are presented with a strange kind of potentially ethnographic data from societies, or rather "part-societies," hitherto unknown in

history. Thus Rosenfeld (114), for example, highlights situations referred to by a number of ex-concentration camp autobiographers who had been put through a process of "miseducation" to unlearn their human socialization. A central theme in their accounts was the expression of a feeling of unreality of the omnipresence of death in a world perceived as being without any discernable logic (25, 66, 72, 115, 130). Ka-Tzetnik, a holocaust survivor and writer, tried to explain at the Eichmann trial the weirdness of that experience by saying, "we were people living on another planet" (97, p. 26). The camp survivor has been described as a person with a tremendous sense of being different, an outsider who feels alone and lonely with his kind of difference (10, 95, 107). The psychiatric literature refers to traumatization of the survivor, a condition which might adversely affect even the second generation, suggesting the development of a survivor subculture (28, 40, 65, 67, 132).

With regard to the setting up of a total bureaucratic scheme for mass killing, as was done by the Nazi regime, there have been very few attempts to fathom how such a bizarre "invention" could have been instituted. Milgram's (91) original and controversial laboratory experiment emphasized the role of obedience to authority as a basic element in the structure of society, a fact which he thought could account for the large-scale killings of this century.

Mansson (86), however, maintains that obedience per se is not sufficient as an explanatory concept for the behaviors associated with willingness to tolerate harm to others, including killing and genocide. Lifton (78) concludes from his recent study on Nazi doctors in Auschwitz, and on the Nazi ideology in general, that sadism, viciousness, and scape-goating alone can not account for the putting to death of millions. He stresses rather the collective symbolization of life and death and the power of imagery and suggests that under certain psychohistoric circumstances the group's claim to immortality depends upon its denial of such to others. If the "other," the "enemy," is successfully accorded an imagery of death or evil, as was done in the case of the Jews, then all empathic human feeling for them may be blocked out, thereby allowing for extermination.

Main themes of writers on the holocaust include questions such as whether there is a purpose in recording the phenomenon and in what way our understanding of the human condition has been changed since the event. Delbo (25) writes:

> Why not rather forget the corpses with their tormented eyes, their hands twisted like the claws of frozen birds . . . it serves nothing to remember and I can't give anyone an idea of what they were like. Since I can't make them understand the difference between time there and time here, the time there which was empty and which was heavy with all those dead [(25, pp. 196–97; quoted by Langer (71, p. 242; cf also Levi (72, p. 79)].

Rubinstein (116) raises the philosophical, theological question exacerbated by the holocaust as to whether "God is dead." Wiesel claims that with the

holocaust came the death of the idea of man or as Connetti says ". . . human life is no longer the standard" (21, p. 9). Rosenfeld sums up that the memory must be kept alive at all costs so as to be able to face "the facts of human diminishment and the multitude of questions that arise in their aftermath" (114, p. 187).

DEATH WAYS IN MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The American funeral remains an area of ongoing interest, even fascination for both popular writers [Mitford (92), Waugh (129)] and serious scholars [Bowman (18), Dempsey (26), Fulton (39), Harmer (53), Mack (82), Parsons (105), Parsons et al (106), Pine (108), Stannard (123), Warner (128)] who have examined various historical, sociological, and ideological developments. One more recent discussion which tries to understand "American deathways" in the context of a general anthropology of funeral ritual is that of Huntington & Metcalf (60) in their book, *Celebrations of Death*. Although the authors do not present a new schema, they do draw renewed attention to the symbolic importance of the corpse and revalidation of key cultural values throughout the funeral process. Huntington and Metcalf discuss paradoxical tendencies in contemporary American funerals, one of which they call, "ritual uniformity and indeterminate ideology." They argue that although American culture is far from homogeneous in terms of religion, ethnicity, local tradition, etc, the available ethnography suggests that American funerals are remarkably uniform.

According to Huntington & Metcalf (60), the basic structure of funerals in the USA includes the following stages: rapid removal of the corpse to the funeral parlor, embalming (which many individuals believe, incorrectly, is required by law), institutionalized viewing of the cosmetically restored corpse, and disposal by burial, with a reliance upon professional or religious experts, usually the director of a funeral home.

Ritual uniformity to a certain extent reflects American values of conformity and "the existence of a highly organized group of specialists who control every phase of the disposal of corpses" (60, p. 193).[1] Such factors do not explain the central position of the "restored corpse" which does not bolster a shared ideology concerning the existence and nature of an afterlife as it does in many other cultures, e.g. mummies of ancient Egypt.

The "fiction of probable recovery" in hospital (cf Glaser & Strauss 44, 45), the surreptitious removal of the corpse, and especially the restored image of the

[1]In one recent survey of ethnic differences in attitudes toward death, Kalish & Reynolds (61) suggest that despite interesting differences in emotionality, the majority of respondents—Blacks, Anglos, Mexican-Americans, Japanese-Americans in Los Angeles—agreed that they did not care what happened to their body after death.

deceased as peacefully sleeping, even if his death had been marred with pain, allow mourners to avoid the brute facts of death. Current embalming practices retard decomposition for a matter of weeks, even though techniques exist to do a much more lasting job (one has only to think of Lenin's tomb in Red Square or the recent cryogenic movement in the USA). Embalming, they claim, is part of a general aversion to body processes, which includes as many taboos and euphemisms for defecation and copulation as for death and dying. "In their horror of putrescence Americans resemble the Berawan of Borneo, but their reaction to it is different: the Berawan try to hasten the completion of the process; the Americans try to halt it" (60, p. 196). This desire to halt death is also expressed during ritual viewing in which it is common for mourners and friends to remark "how well the deceased looks." Indeed, burial itself has become a relatively unimportant phase in which the funeral service, now fused with the wake, is held at the funeral home. Following Ariès (1, 2), they show how the image of a "good death" in contemporary America, that is, to die in one's sleep without suffering or awareness of dying, was precisely the "accused death" of the Middle Ages because it did not allow one to contemplate and prepare for death. Whereas in the Middle Ages the dying man was in the center of his own dying, in America they are reduced to puppets.

Finally, however, Huntington & Metcalf (60) argue that common funeral practice reflects the values of a "civil religion in America." The embalmed corpse is a central icon in this civil religion's giving of an aura of "impassive benevolence," all the more powerful a symbol since in most contexts it is otherwise avoided.

Concerning the "extravagance" in American funerals which some commentators have criticized, Huntington & Metcalf (60) show convincingly that although funerals remain a major expense, it is not out of keeping with world ethnographic data in which funeral rites are often used to express prestige and social standing. Comparatively, Americans spend a smaller proportion of their resources on funerals than the Berawan or the Malagary whose death rituals are described by the authors. The social importance of the funeral and its high cost reflect the death-centered quality of the civil religion. As Warner (128) demonstrated, it is the graveyard and death-centered holidays like Memorial Day which provide the local center of community ritual. In contrast, it is the gradual disappearance of formal ritual, as in Britain (51), which is all the more anomalous, expressing the breakdown of communities and the mediation of status by the state rather than by kith and kin (49).

Gorer (50) coined the term "the pornography of death" to suggest that death had replaced sex as the major "unmentionable" topic (cf Feifel, "Taboo Topics"). Writing about Britain, Gorer states, "The natural processes of corruption and decay have become as disgusting as the natural processes of birth and copulation were a century ago" (50, p. 196). As a result, the "majority of

British people are today without adequate guidance as to how to treat death and bereavement and without social help in living through and coming to terms with the grief and mourning which are the inevitable responses in human beings to the death of someone whom they loved" (p. 126). Based on data from a broad statistical sample, Gorer went on to speculate whether the repression of death and the denial of mourning did not play a role in the rise of vandalism and irrational preoccupation with and fear of death.

> If I am right in tracing a connection between the denial of mourning and callousness, irrational preoccupation with and fear of death and vandalism, then it would seem correct to state that a society which denies mourning and gives no ritual support to mourners is thereby producing maladaptive and neurotic responses in a number of its citizens (50, p. 134).

EXPECTATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Researchers Glaser & Strauss (45), Humphreys & King (58), and Huntington & Metcalf (60) agree that there is a great need for more cross-cultural work in the study of death and the dying. Such research should be more than a by-product of some larger ethnographic enterprise and should reflect ongoing theoretical concerns in the study of death-in-culture. For example, Rosenblatt et al (113) describe a long list of topics which they were unable to investigate for lack of adequate data. They also note that in this area, since there is often a clash between ideal and actual behavior, it is important for fieldworkers to distinguish explicitly between the two. This distinction is all the more crucial in times such as ours in which most societies are undergoing rapid social change with the concomitant alterations in beliefs and actions surrounding death (22, 41).

Anthropologists might do well to follow the suggestions of Glaser & Strauss (45) and investigate cross-cultural differences in the way institutions such as hospitals, old people's homes, hospices, or their equivalent handle death. In general, it is important to understand how the manner of dying affects variation in grief and mourning custom—whether in war, or by accident, homocide, suicide, after a long or sudden illness, with different "dying trajectories." Rosenblatt et al's (113) research raises further issues in how societies provide social support for bereaved individuals.

Although some attention has been paid to American funeral directors (92, 108), relatively little attention has been paid to ritual experts who deal with death. Parry's (102, 103) work on Mahabrahmin funeral priests in Kashi (Benares) and their ritual mediation of purity and pollution opens up many interesting issues in the routine handling of the disposal of corpses. Similarly, other organizations such as the traditional Jewish *Havra Kadisha* or the comparable Catholic groups are worthy of study. It is important to know who handles the corpse, in what way, for how long, and what are the social risks involved.

Given the tremendous psychological interest in death and dying (62, 68, 77, 118), it is surprising that there has not been more work in this area by psychological anthropologists. This potentially fruitful field of inquiry lies fallow. LeVine's (73) masterly analysis of Gusii funerals represents an outstanding exception and hopefully heralds a new trend. He analyzes the emotional component at their funerals in terms of grief, anger, and fear, the split representation of the deceased as corpse and spirit, and the perception of the dead as murder victims who are comforted by displays of promised vengeance.

Death remains a mystery, inevitable but unknowable, irreversible but not immutable. The study cross-culturally which must begin with the "death of the other" inevitably leads one back to death of one's self. The challenge for the student of death is to find his place between the anxieties of a lonely individualism and the consolations of merging with something larger.

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