

Dying Well: The Meaning and Value of Death

A Lecture by Ira Byock, MD

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As part of the **Medical Humanities** series of events organized by **Pamela Schaff** and **Erin Quinn** of **Keck School of Medicine of USC** and **Hilary Schor** of **USC College** and **USC Law**, **Visions and Voices** presents a lecture by **Ira Byock, MD**, entitled *Dying Well: The Meaning and Value of Death*. To help you pursue Byock's reflections on death, grief and the fullness of living, **Ross Scimeca** of the **USC Libraries** has selected the following resources.

Introduction

Alfred Doebelin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* contains a number of interesting meditations on death and meaning in human life. After a lifetime of misadventures, the main character, Franz Biberkopf, finds himself at an institution for the criminally insane. When Death appears in his cell, Franz asks him why he exists. Death replies that human existence would be meaningless without Death. Man is the only animal that knows every living creature will eventually die—including loved ones, friends and the self. Death's point is that the wise, unlike Franz, realize this and plan their lives accordingly. By contrast, Franz lived an unreflective life; accidents, rather than intentions, directed his actions.

Doebelin presents these existential themes in a naturalistic way through the novel's dialogue between Franz and Death. Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, among countless other philosophers and writers, meditate on similar themes. In this philosophical tradition, death evokes the idea of nothingness and reveals the urgency of creating meaning in human existence. As in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, the confrontation with death is a necessary precondition for the self-conscious creation of meaning.

Further Reading in Medicine and Philosophy

Ending Life: Ethics and the Way We Die

By M. Pabst Battin

Online Library R726.B329 2005eb

Doheny Library R726.B329 2005

What Is the Meaning of Human Life?

By Raymond Belliotti

Philosophy Library BD431.B389 2001

Dying Well: The Prospect for Growth at the End of Life

By Ira Byock

Gerontology Library HQ1073.B96 1997

Death and Western Thought

By Jacques Choron

Gerontology Library BD444.45 1963B

The Right to Die with Dignity: An Argument in Ethics, Medicine, and Law

By Raphael Cohen-Almagor

Leavey and VKC Libraries R726.C635 2001

Death and Spirituality

By Kenneth J. Doka

Gerontology Library BT825.D37 1993

The Philosophy of Death

By Steven Luper

Gerontology Library BD444.L87 2009

Readings in Thanatology

Edited by Josh D. Morgan

Gerontology Library BD443.8.R43 1997

Facing Death: Where Culture, Religion, and Medicine Meet

Edited by Howard M. Spiro

Doheny and Leavey Libraries R726.8.F33 1996

The Quest to Die with Dignity: An Analysis of Americans' Values, Opinions and Attitudes concerning End-of-Life Care

By Beverly A. Tyler

Doheny and Gerontology Libraries R726.8.Q47 1997

The Good Death: The New American Search to Reshape the End of Life

By Marilyn Webb

Leavey Library HQ1073.5.U6W43 1997

Recommended Journals

To access the following e-journals, enter their titles into the search box from the E-Journals tab at www.usc.edu/libraries. From within the online journals, search for key words such as *dying, dignity, end-of-life care, death AND meaning, death AND value, bereavement*, and the like.

American Journal of Bioethics

Death Studies

Ethics & Medicine: A Christian Perspective on Issues in Bioethics

The Internet Journal of Law, Healthcare, and Ethics

The Journal of Bioethics

The Journal of Clinical Ethics

The Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics

The Journal of Medical Humanities

The Journal of Medical Humanities and Bioethics

The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy

Medical Ethics

Medical Humanities

Omega: An International Journal for the Study of Dying, Death, Bereavement, Suicide, and Other Lethal Behaviors

Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine

Yale Journal of Health Policy, Law, and Ethics

Death in Literature and Film

There is a great deal of literature and film that explores the human experience—and the meaning—of death and grieving. Below are just a few of the works that will help you continue exploring the universal themes in Dr. Byock's lecture.

A Death in the Family

By James Agee

Doheny Library PS3501.G35D43 1998

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

By Vicente Blasco Ibanez

Leavey Library PQ6603.L2C813 1924

The Plague

By Albert Camus

Leavey Library PQ2605.A3734P413 1948

***The Seventh Seal* (based on Bergman's play *Wood Painting*)**

By Ingmar Bergman

Leavey Library LVDVD 680

The Death of Ivan Ilych

By Leo Tolstoy

Doheny Library PG3366.S6D74 2008

***Our Lady of the Assassins* (based on Fernando Vallejo's novel *La virgin de los sicarios*)**

By Barbet Schroeder

Leavey Library LVDVD 1165