This book considers two basic questions: how can we live well in the face of death?; and when, if ever, is it legitimate deliberately to bring human life to an end? It does so by considering the distinct theological approaches to death shown by four outstanding Christian thinkers: Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and Karl Rahner. These philosophers’ thoughts constitute a single extended argument on the theology of death which can be set out in relation to the practical realities of grief, fear, and hope in the face of death. There is a rightful place for grief, a good grief, even for a Christian. Augustine teaches us that death is something with which we have to contend, and indeed that the difficult and painful process of contending with death is a means through which we are brought to our final joyful end. A key point for Thomas Aquinas is that, in itself, it is always wrong to kill a human being on account of the dignity of human nature. Rahner adds that it also stands in contradiction to the supernatural destiny of human beings. Rahner is at his most profound in describing how the need to surrender oneself to God in death is anticipated throughout life. The aim of this book is not primarily to make a contribution to the knowledge of the history of theology, but rather, through engagement with the thought of theologians of the past, to reflect on some of the practical and existential issues that the approach of death presents for us.

Epilogue

Walter Glannon

in Bioethics and the Brain
This epilogue presents a synthesis of discussions in the preceding chapters. It emphasizes five general points that should frame any discussion of what measures of or interventions in the brain can or cannot tell us about human mentality, thought, and behavior, and whether or to what extent we should use them. These are (i) that no two brains are alike; (ii) that although the brain generates and sustains the mind, the mind is not reducible to the brain; (iii) that before we consider manipulating the brain to alter mental capacities, we should consider how these capacities may be adaptive; (iv) that neuroscience can inform our ethical judgments; and (v) that whole-brain death is not the same as the death of a person.

The Casualty Gap

Douglas Kriner and Francis Shen

Many have long suspected that when America takes up arms it is a rich man's war, but a poor man's fight. Despite these concerns about social inequality in military sacrifice, the hard data to validate such claims has been kept out of public view. The Casualty Gap renews the debate over unequal sacrifice by bringing to light new evidence on the inequality dimensions of American wartime casualties. It demonstrates unequivocally that since the conclusion of World War II, communities at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder have borne a disproportionate share of the human costs of war. Moreover, they show for the first time that when Americans are explicitly confronted with evidence of this inequality, they become markedly less supportive of the nation's war efforts. The Casualty Gap also uncovers how wartime deaths affect entire communities. Citizens who see the high price war exacts on friends and neighbors become more likely to oppose war and to vote against the political leaders waging it than residents of low-casualty communities. Moreover, extensive empirical evidence connects higher community casualty rates in Korea and Vietnam to lower levels of trust in government, interest in politics, and electoral and non-electoral participation. In this way, the casualty gap threatens the very vibrancy of American democracy by depressing civic engagement in high-casualty communities for years after the last gun falls silent.
Personalised accounts of out-of-body (OBE) and near-death (NDE) experiences are frequently interpreted as offering evidence for immortality and an afterlife. Since most OBE/NDE follow severe curtailments of cerebral circulation with loss of consciousness, the agonal brain supposedly permits ‘mind’, ‘soul’, or ‘consciousness’ to escape neural control and provide glimpses of the afterlife. This study looks at the work of five key writers who support this so-called ‘dying brain’ hypothesis. The author disagrees with such otherworldly mystical or psychical interpretations, ably demonstrating how they are explicable in terms of brain neurophysiology and its neuropathological disturbances. The trust of this claim sees the recorded phenomenology as reflections of brains rapidly reawakening to full conscious-awareness, consistent with other reported phenomenologies attending recovery from antecedent states of unconsciousness: the ‘re-awakening brain’ hypothesis. From this basis, a re-classification of NDE into early and late phase sequences is given, thereby dismantling the untenable concepts of ‘core’ and ‘depth’ experiences. The book provides a detailed examination of the spiritual and quasi-religious overtones accorded OBE/NDE, highlighting their inconsistencies when compared with classical accounts of divine disclosure, and the eschatological precepts of resurrection belief as professed credally. In assessing the implications of anthropological, philosophical, and theological concepts of ‘personhood’ and ‘soul’ as arguments for personal survival after death, the author celebrates the role of conventional faith in appropriating the expectant biblical promises of a ‘New Creation’.

The academic study of death rose to prominence during the 1960s. Courses on some aspect of death and dying can now be found at most institutions of higher learning. However, these courses tend to stress the psycho-social aspects of grief and bereavement, ignoring the religious elements inherent to the subject. This book addresses the teaching of
courses on death and dying from a religious studies perspective. The book is divided into seven sections. The hope is that this book will help to unify a field that is now widely scattered across several disciplines.

Heaven
Jerry L. Walls

Published in print: 2002 Published Online: November 2003

The Christian doctrine of heaven has been a moral source of enormous power in Western culture. It has provided a striking account of the ultimate good in life and has for two millennia animated the hope that our lives can be fully meaningful. Recently, however, the doctrine of heaven has lost much of its grip on the Western imagination and has become a vague and largely ignored part of the Christian creed. Not only have our hopes been redefined as a result, but also our very identity as human beings has been altered. In this book, Jerry L. Walls argues that the doctrine of heaven is ripe for serious reconsideration. He contends not only that the orthodox view of heaven can be defended from objections commonly raised against it, but also that heaven is a powerful resource for addressing persistent philosophical problems, not the least of which concern the ground of morality and the meaning of life. Walls shows how heaven is integrally related to central Christian doctrines, particularly those concerning salvation, and tackles the difficult problem of why faith in Christ is necessary to save us from our sins. In addition, heaven is shown to illumine thorny problems of personal identity, and to be an essential component of a satisfactory theodicy. Walls goes on to examine data from near-death experiences from the standpoint of some important recent work in epistemology, and argues that they offer positive evidence for heaven. He concludes that we profoundly need to recover the hope of heaven in order to recover our very humanity.

Persons, Interests, and Justice
Nils Holtug

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: May 2010

This is a book on welfare and its importance for distributive justice. Part I is concerned with prudence; more precisely, with what the necessary and sufficient conditions are for having a self-interest in a particular benefit. It includes discussions of the extent to which self-interest depends on
preferences, personal identity, and what matters in survival. It also considers the issue of whether it can benefit (or harm) a person to come into existence and what the implications are for our theory of self-interest. A ‘Prudential View’ is defended, according to which a person has a present self-interest in a future benefit if and only if she stands in a relation of continuous physical realization of (appropriate) psychology to the beneficiary, where the strength of the self-interest depends both on the size of the benefit and on the strength of this relation. Part II concerns distributive justice and so how to distribute welfare or self-interest fulfilment over individuals. It includes discussions of welfarism, egalitarianism and prioritarianism, population ethics, the importance of personal identity and what matters for distributive justice, and the importance of all these issues for various topics in applied ethics, including the badness of death. Here, a version of prioritarianism is defended, according to which, roughly, the moral value of a benefit to an individual at one time depends on both the size of the benefit and on the individual's self-interest, at that time, in the other benefits that accrue to her at this and other times.

Execution and Invention
Beth A. Berkowitz

Execution and Invention: Death Penalty Discourse in Early Rabbinic and Christian Cultures argues that ancient rabbis and Christians used death penalty discourse to invent themselves as figures of authority. This approach runs counter to much previous scholarship on the subject, which claims that ancient Jews opposed the death penalty and would have abolished it if not for its presence in the Bible. The book explores this scholarship and shows it to have been fueled by modern anti-Semitism, polemics with the the Jewish Enlightenment’s inheritance of anti-rabbinism, as well as controversy in the United States over capital punishment and its abolition. The book moves beyond this “humanitarianism” approach, inviting us instead to see the problem of building and maintaining authority as the crux around which ancient death penalty discourse developed. Drawing on ritual theory, postcolonial theory, and scholarship on criminal execution in other historical contexts, Execution and Invention asks new questions of the ancient texts: How and why do ancient western religions talk about killing criminals? What are the social consequences of this kind of violent talk? What kind of authority is imagined by these texts, and What strategies do the texts use to make this authority seem compelling? Combining the
contemporary theory with classical source critical approaches, the book closely reads a variety of ancient texts describing criminal executions. It newly interprets these texts, showing that their descriptions of violent deaths have a complex social function. In the process, the book spins out the social implications of capital punishment and overturns enduring stereotypes of Judaism and Christianity.

The Right to Life and Conflicting Interests
Elizabeth Wicks

The right to life is a core human right which has not yet received the detailed legal analysis that it requires. This book provides detailed, critical analysis of the controversial human right to life and, in particular, assesses the weight of competing interests which could and/or should serve to override the right. This contemporary study of the right to life focuses on the legal, as well as ethical, issues raised by the value of life in modern day society. It seeks to analyse the development, meaning and value of the fundamental human right to life in the context of its conflicts with other competing interests. The book begins with an overview of the right to life in which the concept of life itself is first analysed, before both the right and its legal protection and enforcement are subjected to historical, philosophical and comparative analysis. The remainder of the book identifies, and assesses the merits of, various competing interests. These comprise armed conflict; prevention of crime; rights of others; autonomy; quality of life; and finite resources. The right to life is unusual in having potential application to so many of today’s ethically controversial questions. This new work investigates specific topics of current political, legal and ethical concern such as the right to life during international conflicts, the role of lethal force in law enforcement, the death penalty, the right to life of a foetus in the context of legalized abortion, and the significance of quality of life and autonomy issues in respect of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The Need for a Theological Approach to Death
David Albert Jones

in Approaching the End: A Theological Exploration of Death and Dying
At least two well-developed bodies of literature have emerged on practical questions relating to death, one the concern of psychology, the other the concern of ethics. These flow from two basic questions: how can we live well in the face of death? and when, if ever, is it legitimate deliberately to bring human life to an end? The perspective of faith can help to assess and evaluate the many, sometimes conflicting, responses to these questions of different schools of psychology and of philosophy. The method adopted by this book is to consider the distinct theological approaches to death shown by four outstanding Christian thinkers: Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and Karl Rahner.

Models of Cellular Regulation

Baltazar Aguda, Avner Friedman, and Visiting Associate Professor, The Ohio State University

The human genome of three billion letters has been sequenced. So have the genomes of thousands of other organisms. With unprecedented resolution, modern technologies are allowing us to peek into the world of genes, biomolecules, and cells, and flooding us with data of immense complexity that we are just barely beginning to understand. A huge gap separates our knowledge of the components of a cell and what is known from our observations of its physiology. This book explores what has been done to close this gap of understanding between the realms of molecules and biological processes. It contains illustrative mechanisms and models of gene regulatory networks, DNA replication, the cell cycle, cell death, differentiation, cell senescence, and the abnormal state of cancer cells. The mechanisms are biomolecular in detail, and the models are mathematical in nature.

The Weeping Willow

Lynne Dale Halamish and Doron Hermoni

This book is a practical and direct handbook for grieving. It presents 30 stories from real life that examine how we grieve and how we can help those who grieve—whether the griever is oneself, someone we care about, or a client or patient. The authors present vignettes from practice that show how death—lingering, unexpected, violent, or self-inflicted—
and the loss of a relationship—to oneself or with a child, sibling, parent, mate, grandparent, or friend—give life to grief, together with the process by which each person fully encounters his or her grief. Each story is no more than two or three pages, and the authors follow each one with a short summary of its teachings and a selection of annotated recent references for those who wish to read more about a topic.

**Assisted Death in Europe and America**

Guenter Lewy

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: January 2011


Item type: book

This book provides a detailed account of four regimes of assisted death for which there is a substantial body of data as well as observational research: The Netherlands and Belgium have legalized both voluntary euthanasia as well as physician-assisted suicide; the state of Oregon allows physician-assisted suicide; and in Switzerland assisted suicide can be provided by non-physicians. For each regime the book describes the unique cultural, political, and legal context in which the legalization of assisted death has taken place. It analyzes problem areas that have developed, such as the issue of assisted death for patients with mental suffering or the termination of life in pediatric cases, and the effectiveness of each system of regulation is assessed. While accurate factual information cannot settle the moral debate over assisted death, it nevertheless is a precondition of any well-founded argument. The conclusion discusses the lessons that can be learned from the experience of these four regimes, and analyzes a model statute for physician-assisted suicide that has been proposed for the United States.

**An Illuminating Comparison: Augustine and Ambrose on the Theology of Death**

David Albert Jones

in Approaching the End: A Theological Exploration of Death and Dying

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: September 2007


Item type: chapter

The argument of Augustine in *De civitate Dei* is strikingly similar to that of Ambrose in *De bono mortis*. However, while Ambrose treats death as something good in itself, Augustine sees it as bad in itself. Their contrasting attitudes have practical effects on how they regard virginity,
marriage, and mortification; on how each reads the letters of Paul; and on their discussions of suicide and martyrdom. Furthermore, it leads to a noticeable shift in the Christian treatment of fear of death, grief, and the care of the dead (that is, prayers said for those who have died).

In One Way Natural, in Another Unnatural: Death in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas
David Albert Jones

In the Summa Theologiae, Thomas Aquinas develops Augustine's anthropology with the help of the rediscovered metaphysics of Aristotle. Thomas comes to stress that the power of understanding of the 'separated soul' is very weak. Death is natural as regards matter (the destructible body) but not as regards form (the indestructible soul). Death in itself is always a bad thing and it is only incidentally (per accidens) that death is, for some, the beginning of heavenly bliss. Thus, homicide and suicide can be seen to be wrong because, in themselves, they are acts of destruction.

Final Reflections
David Albert Jones

An examination of the thought of Ambrose, Augustine, Thomas, and Rahner shows them to constitute a single extended argument on the theology of death. This can be set out in relation to the realities of grief, fear, and hope in the face of death; in relation to the practices of suicide and euthanasia; and in relation to the more complex issue of withdrawal of treatment. Christian hope affirms both the need and the difficulty of acknowledging one's own approaching death. Rahner is at his most profound in describing how the need to surrender oneself to God in death, the need to die like a martyr, is anticipated throughout life. If, by the grace of God, death can be freely endured — and this is no easy task — then the final surrender in death will be the end of death and the
preamble to our true end: eternal happiness in which death will be no more.

Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature
Simon Gaunt

Medieval literature is fascinated with the idea that love may be a fatal affliction. Indeed, it is frequently suggested that true love requires sacrifice, that you must be ready to die for, from, and in love. Love, in other words, is represented, sometimes explicitly, as a form of martyrdom, a notion that is repeatedly reinforced by courtly literature's borrowing of religious vocabulary and imagery. The paradigm of the martyr to love has of course remained compelling in the early modern and modern period. This book seeks to explore what is at stake in medieval literature's preoccupation with love's martyrdom. Informed by modern theoretical approaches, particularly Lacanian psychoanalysis and Jacques Derrida's work on ethics, it offers new readings of a wide range of French and Occitan courtly texts from the 12th and 13th centuries, and argues that a new secular ethics of desire emerges from courtly literature because of its fascination with death. This book also examines the interplay between lyric and romance in courtly literary culture, and shows how courtly literature's predilection for sacrificial desire imposes a repressive sex-gender system that may then be subverted by fictional women and queers who either fail to die on cue, or who die in troublesome and disruptive ways.

Well-Being and Death
Ben Bradley

This book addresses philosophical questions about death and well-being. It defends two main theses. The first is hedonism, or the view that pleasure is what has intrinsic value for us. The second is a difference-making principle about value, according to which (i) the value of an event for a person is determined by the difference it makes to the intrinsic value of that person's life, and (ii) the value of an event for someone at a time is determined by the difference it makes to how well-off the person
is at that time. These views have the following implications: things that happen after someone has died cannot harm that person; death itself, however, is bad for people after they die (contrary to what Epicurus thought), by making its victim worse off at those later times; death is worse the earlier it occurs, so it is worse to die as an infant than as a young adult; death is bad for fetuses and animals in essentially the same way as it is for adult humans; the only sensible way to make death less bad is to live so long that no more of a good life is possible.

In Every Way a Good Thing: Death in the Thought of Ambrose of Milan

David Albert Jones

In Approaching the End: A Theological Exploration of Death and Dying


In De bono mortis, Ambrose puts forward three deaths: death to sin so as to live to God; death as the completion of this present life; and the death of the soul due to sin. Ambrose maintains that bodily death — death as the completion of this present life — is not neutral, but rather is always a good thing in itself. For everyone, it frees the soul from the prison of the body and for Christians it also brings the eternal joy of heaven. It was Ambrose's great achievement to unite Christian and Platonic piety and metaphysics into a single vision of the meaning of human death.

Not Good for Anyone: Death in the Thought of Augustine of Hippo

David Albert Jones

in Approaching the End: A Theological Exploration of Death and Dying


In De civitate Dei book XIII, Augustine argues that bodily death is always a bad thing in itself. Careful consideration of the story of the fall from Eden shows it to be the very opposite of the Platonic fall myth. The Eden story sees the union of body and soul as natural and the separation as a punishment. The Platonic fall sees the separation of the soul as natural and the union with the body as a punishment. Augustine's approach to death is thus in sharp contrast to that of Ambrose.