



The Art of Dying

By Peter Fenwick, Elizabeth Fenwick

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A new book to help the dying, their loved ones and their health care workers better understand the dying process and to come to terms with death itself.

The Art of Dying is a contemporary version of the medieval *Ars Moriendi*-a manual on how to achieve a good death. Peter Fenwick is an eminent neuropsychiatrist, academic and expert on disorders of the brain. His most compelling and provocative research has been into the end of life phenomena, including near-death experiences and deathbed visions of the dying person, as well as the experiences of hospice and palliative care workers and relatives of dying people. Dr. Fenwick believes that consciousness may be independent of the brain and so able to survive the death of the brain, a theory which has divided the scientific community. The "problem with death" is deeply rooted in our culture and the social organization of death rituals. Fenwick believes that with serious engagement and through further investigation of these phenomena, he can help change attitudes so that we in the West can face up to death, and embrace it as a significant and sacred part of life. We have become used to believing that we have to shield each other from the idea of death. Fear of death means we view it as something to be fought every step of the way.

Aimed at a broad popular readership, The Art of Dying looks at how other cultures have dealt with death and the dying process (The Tibetan "death system", Swedenborg, etc.) and compares this with phenomena reported through recent scientific research. It describes too the experiences of health care workers who are involved with end of life issues who feel that they need a better understanding of the dying process, and more training in how to help their patients die well by overcoming the common barriers to a good death, such as unfinished business and unresolved emotions of guilt or hate.

From descriptions of the phenomena encountered by the dying and those around them, to mapping out ways in which we can die a "good death", this book is an excellent basis for helping people come to terms with death.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Deathbed visions and coincidences are often classified as supernatural phenomena and the stuff of bad late-night television. But do such classifications do a disservice to the experiences of the dying and the bereaved? Through lengthy oral histories of eerie telepathic and paranormal phenomena, this book attempts to strip away the stigma from analyzing the inexplicable —yet commonly reported—odd incidences that accompany death—the "feeling of unease," the visit from the dying. The authors argue that these reported experiences must be studied, even if they deviate from conventional understanding of the "real" or "normal." What if our minds were wired in a way that has not yet been documented by science? What if hospice workers were more open to the experiences of the dying? Although the Fenwicks' exuberance frequently feels naïve, the scores of testimonies—as well as Peter Fenwick's renown as a neuropsychiatrist —do lend their queries credibility. Ultimately, the authors demonstrate that it may be immaterial if these stories are scientifically plausible since merely documenting these incidences can heighten our understanding of the mind during death and enhance our ability to comfort the dying and their families." - Publishers Weekly, May 2008

Title in article about the book and authors in *Daily Telegraph*, 2008.

Reviewed in *Clinical Medicine Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of L*, 1 April 2009
(Alex Paxton)

"The authors not only manage to show that it isn't always all bad, but raise profound questions about the nature of consciousness." - *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, December 2008.

"Elizabeth and Peter Fenwick have written an *Ars Moriendi* for our age...illuminating and very moving...The book is highly recommended, as death is something we all need to come to terms with in order to live a full life."

De Numine, Autumn 2009
(Marianne Rankin)

"...interesting because a contemporary issue is taken and dealt with sensitively...The book's purposes are extensive, including academic, personal interest or within a hospice setting where death is ever-present. It refers to other books throughout which makes it all the more effective for which-ever of the above it's utilized. Moreover, despite the fact that the topics within the book are personal, they are weighed up with both empathy and impartiality, identifying with believers and non-believers alike."

De Numine, Autumn 2009
(Charlotte Deakin)

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About the Author

Dr Peter Fenwick is an internationally renowned neuropsychiatrist and a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He is Britain's leading clinical authority on near-death experiences and is president of the British branch of The International Association for Near-Death Studies. He also holds appointments at the Maudsley Hospital, the John Radcliffe Hospital, and the Broadmoor Special Hospital for Violent Offenders.

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