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## Book Review

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Christopher M. Moreman, *Routledge Companion to Death and Dying* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 594 pp., \$220.00 (hbk), ISBN: 9781138852075.

This collection of essays brings together an impressive range of different perspectives on death, dying, and end-of-life-care. A substantial book of almost 600 pages, it covers a lot of ground. And it does so in a very interdisciplinary way, including contributions from such fields as history, philosophy, psychology, archeology, literature, ethics, and religious studies. Readers will find applied research relevant to those who offer palliative care to the dying, professionals in ethics, medicine, and law who are engaged in questions about assisted dying and euthanasia, and members of bereavement communities who seek to understand the phenomenology of grief and the possibilities of ongoing interaction with the deceased.

The first part of the book covers religious approaches to death and afterlife from the standpoint of different religious traditions. Constituting almost half of the book, Part One contains contributions from many leading scholars in the field of religious studies. A wide variety of religious traditions are represented, with an unusually broad selection of essays that deal with Asian religious traditions. Stronger entries in this part of the collection cover cultural shifts and examples of practical and technological considerations. For example, T.S. Rukmani's 'Hindu Afterlife Beliefs and Funerary Practice' does a nice job of summarizing change through time in a religion that has a vast history. Less developed entries give little indication of historical change and leave the impression that the religious traditions under consideration are static and contained almost wholly in scriptural accounts. This section of the book will be of particular interest to students and scholars in the field of religious studies. It is enriched by the inclusion of a number of essays on new religious movements (NRMs). The range of articles on NRMs allows for discussion of a wide range of new religions. Readers can see that some NRMs demonstrate an intense focus on death and the post-mortem existence of the deceased (such as the nineteenth-century Spiritualist movement as described by Walter Meyer Zu Erpen in 'Afterlife Beliefs of the Spiritualist Movement', while others (such as many NRMs that came into being in the mid- to late twentieth century) place little importance on sacred narratives, beliefs, and practices related to death and the afterlife.

Part Two moves to a consideration of post-mortem states where the deceased may go after death (reincarnation, heaven, hell, and other post-mortem destinations) and practices (such as cremation, burial, mummification) that may assist the deceased in reaching a post-mortem location while at the same time enabling the living to dispose of the body of the deceased. Cani K. Cann in her chapter 'Digital Memorials' offers a typology of digital memorials and a discussion of problems and possibilities that this

type of memorialization entails in comparison to more traditional methods of perpetuating bonds between the living and the dead. This section of the book is fairly thin compared to the abundance of essays in other sections.

Part Three explores liminal states and liminal beings, including phenomena such as near death experiences, ghosts, vampires, and zombies. This section of the book has some impressive contributions that showcase the contributions of interdisciplinary work. A chapter on animals by Barbara R. Ambros and Laura Hobgood (titled simply 'Animals') brings insights from bereavement theory, ancient archeology, and the history of religions to questions of post-mortem ties between humans and animals. This section also shows how within one discipline new vantage points from interdisciplinary work have disrupted time-honored typologies in useful ways. Lesley A. Sharp's chapter, 'The Talking Dead in Organ Donation and Spirit Possession', for example, offers a critique of hidebound ways that the field of anthropology tends to classify the dead.

Part Four examines experiences related to the dying process from the perspective of the dying and of the bereaved. Entries on conceptual and medical definitions of death, the death awareness movement, and on assisted dying give the reader conceptual tools for understanding broader biomedical and social movements relating to the dying process, the grieving process, and institutional currents that shape how we understand these processes. Part Five focuses on areas of ethical concern, such as suicide, martyrdom, and abortion. Professionals in criminology and law might find Katherine Ramsland's 'The Psychology of Mass Murder and Serial Killing' useful, and medical professionals as well as others involved in end-of-life considerations may find Laura A. Kicklighter's 'Intellectual Disability and the End of Life' helpful. Part Six, labeled 'Additional Scholarly Perspectives', is a catchall of essays that focus on disciplinary perspectives such as philosophical and anthropological theories about death. It is the least integrated part of the book.

While the book may be of interest to a general readership, it is mainly students and academic researchers who will benefit from the publication of this extensive collection of essays. There may be some independent learners in the death and dying community who will appreciate chapters that contribute to debates about assisted dying and other issues with a public policy dimension. But for the most part, this is a collection that will appeal to religious studies scholars and scholars-in-training.

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