



The Psychology of Death in Fantasy and History

Jerry Piven

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This volume investigates the impact of death consideration on such phenomena as Buddhist cosmology, the poetry of Rilke, cults and apocalyptic dreams, Japanese mythology, creativity, and even psychotherapy. Death is seen as a critical motivation for the genesis of artistic creations and monuments, of belief systems, fantasies, delusions and numerous pathological syndromes. Culture itself may be understood as the innumerable ways that societies defend themselves against helplessness and annihilation, how they mould and recreate the world in accordance with their wishes and anxieties, the social mechanisms employed to deny annihilation and death. Whether one speaks of the construction of massive burial tombs, magical transformations of death into eternal life, afterlives or resurrections, the need to cope with death and deny its terror and effect are the sine qua non of religion, culture, ideology, and belief systems in general.

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