

Chapter Two: What Is Death?

Multiple Choice

1.0. The novel *Frankenstein* was strongly influenced by all the following EXCEPT the:

- a. ongoing galvanic experiments.
- b. ongoing stealing and market of corpses.
- c. Prometheus myth.
- d. aged author's own preparation for death.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 39

Answer: d. aged author's own preparation for death.

2.0. Darwin's shipboard experiments demonstrated thanatomimesis, which occurs when a:

- a. dead animal is resuscitated by galvanic stimulation.
- b. live animal deliberately appears to be dead in order to avoid being killed.
- c. dead animal continues to move after it is no longer breathing.
- d. live animal consumes a dead animal for food.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 40

Answer: b. live animal deliberately appears to be dead in order to avoid being killed.

3.0. The position that death is not a sudden, massive event, but rather a complex process that takes place over time is promoted by:

- a. Mary Shelley.
- b. Charles Darwin.
- c. Kenneth Iserson.
- d. Bakr Abu Zaid.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 40

Answer: c. Kenneth Iserson.

4.0. "What then is death? It's not much of anything – simply one more event in a sequence that has no intrinsic meaning or value." This view can be found in:

- a. *On the Nature of Things* (Lucretius).
- b. the Old Testament (Christianity).
- c. the New Testament (Christianity).
- d. Islamic writings.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 40

Answer: a. *On the Nature of Things* (Lucretius).

5.0. The "deathification of sex" and the "sexualization of death" are associated with the teaching of:

- a. Islam.
- b. the gospel of James and other passages in the New Testament (Christianity).
- c. the Old Testament (Christianity).
- d. Darwin.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 40

Answer: b. the gospel of James and other passages in the New Testament (Christianity).

6.0. A New Age view of death is most similar to the views of:

- a. Epicurus.
- b. the New Testament (Christianity).
- c. Islam.
- d. the Harvard criteria.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 41

Answer: c. Islam.

7.0. The perspective that death is subject to question, challenge, and revision like any other concept refers to:

- a. healthy skepticism.
- b. symbolic construction.
- c. constructive symbolism.
- d. death denial.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 41.

Answer: c. symbolic construction.

8.0. Mark Twain's account of the municipal "dead house" in Munich highlighted the practice of:

- a. finding people who were alive but had been mistakenly pronounced dead.
- b. dropping hot wax on corpses to search for twitching as a sign of life.
- c. holding a mirror up to the nose and mouth of corpses to see if their breath was moist.
- d. using a wire to connect each corpse to a bell which would ring if any movement occurred.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 42

Answer: d. using a wire to connect each corpse to a bell which would ring if any movement occurred.

9.0. Jack Kevorkian, M.D., believed that this bodily function was the most reliable way to determine if a person is dead:

- a. respiration
- b. skin temperature
- c. skin coloration
- d. the condition of the eye

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 43

Answer: d. the condition of the eye

10.0. For more than 50 years, unresponsive patients considered as "beyond coma" have been known as having the following condition:

- a. melancholia
- b. metacomatosis
- c. respirator brain
- d. silent brain

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 43

Answer: c. respirator brain

11.0. Which of the following Harvard criteria would NOT have been familiar to physicians who practiced a century ago?

- a. unreceptive and unresponsive

- b. no circulation to or within the brain
- c. no reflexes
- d. no movement and no breathing

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 44

Answer: b. no circulation to or within the brain

12.0. A transient vegetative state is defined by:

- a. the cause.
- b. the duration.
- c. the location of damage in the brain.
- d. evidence of reflexes.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 45

Answer: a. the cause.

13.0. The condition which is known to have been caused by brain damage that might be moderated or reversed is referred to as what type of vegetative state?

- a. transient
- b. akinetic
- c. persistent
- d. minimal

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 45

Answer: c. persistent

14.0. In 2008, the President's Council on Bioethics issued a report that examined various perspectives on what is considered to be the most significant development pertaining to death up to this point in time. This phenomenon is known as:

- a. minimally conscious state.
- b. total brain failure.
- c. brain death.
- d. whole brain death.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 46

Answer: b. total brain failure.

15.0. Which interpretation of death was most common in Mesopotamia thousands of years ago?

- a. Death is nothing.
- b. Death is an enfeebled form of life.
- c. Death is perpetual development.
- d. Death is waiting.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 47

Answer: b. Death is an enfeebled form of life.

16.0. Evolutionary biology and philosophy stimulated the view of death as a time of:

- a. cycling and recycling.
- b. enfeebled life.
- c. perpetual development.
- d. waiting.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 47

Answer: c. perpetual development.

17.0. Which view of death emphasizes the three phases of suspension, judgment, and disposition?

- a. perpetual development
- b. continuation
- c. waiting
- d. cycling and recycling

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 48

Answer: c. waiting

18.0. The wheel is a core symbol of life and death for those who practice:

- a. Buddhism.
- b. Shintoism.
- c. Islam.
- d. Judaism.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 49

Answer: a. Buddhism.

19.0. "Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days." This attitude toward death and the dead was expressed in the:

- a. Old Testament.
- b. New Testament.
- c. Quran (Koran).
- d. Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 50

Answer: a. Old Testament.

20.0. The ancient Greeks personified Death (Thanatos) as a twin brother to:

- a. the Ruler of the Deep (Poseidon).
- b. the Ruler of the Gods (Zeus).
- c. Inebriation (Bacchus).
- d. Sleep (Hypnos).

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 51

Answer: d. Sleep (Hypnos).

21.0. Orpheus represented:

- a. the power of forgetfulness of life's sorrows.
- b. the power of music over death.
- c. the power of revenge over both life and death.
- d. safety on the journey from life to death.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 52

Answer: b. the power of music over death.

22.0. Personifications of death have helped people to cope with death by:

- a. objectifying an abstract concept.
- b. expressing feelings that are difficult to put into words.
- c. absorbing some of the shock, pain, anger, and fear that is experienced as a result of traumatic events.

d. all of the above

Difficulty: 1

Page-Reference: 53

Answer: d. all of the above

23.0. The personifications of death found in the 1971 pioneering study included all of the following EXCEPT the:

a. gentle comforter.

b. macabre.

c. time keeper.

d. gay deceiver.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 53-55

Answer: c. time keeper.

24.0. A 1997 follow-up study of death personifications found that:

a. Dr. Jack Kevorkian has emerged as a new image for death - the releaser.

b. there has been a sharp increase in female personifications.

c. women have more "grim and terrifying" images than men.

d. all of the above

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 55

Answer: b. there has been a sharp increase in female personifications.

25.0. We recognize social death by observing how:

a. people behave when they think they are not being observed.

b. a person is treated by others.

c. healthy and vigorous a person seems to be.

d. intelligent a person seems to be.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 55-56

Answer: b. observing how a person is treated by others.

26.0. An individual who feels a "partial death" due to the loss of the ability to conceive children is experiencing:

a. phenomenological death.

b. parapsychological death.

c. social death.

d. proxy death.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 56

Answer: a. phenomenological death.

27.0. The components of *The Undead Complex* include all of the following EXCEPT:

a. something mysterious happens between life and death and between death and life.

b. scary stuff, because the decomposition of the body is so repulsive.

c. something explosive happens as reanimated corpses leave the ground.

d. sacred stuff because gods control the life and death cycle.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 57-58

Answer: c. something explosive happens as reanimated corpses leave the ground.

28.0. Works of art commissioned during medieval times often displayed the theme of death as the:

- a. great leveler.
- b. great validator.
- c. ultimate solution.
- d. ultimate meaningless event.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 60

Answer: a. great leveler.

29.0. Large and expensive funerals entered American life:

- a. in the colonial days.
- b. after the Civil War.
- c. during the 1890s.
- d. after World War II.

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 61

Answer: a. in the colonial days.

30.0. Studies have found that obituaries in big city newspapers:

- a. give equal attention to the deaths of men and women.
- b. give more space and often use more photographs in reporting the death of men.
- c. print more photographs relating to women's deaths.
- d. are usually written by women.

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 64

Answer: b. give more space and often use more photographs in reporting the death of men.

True/False

1.0. The Prometheus story, about a young man who becomes alive again after dying, inspired Mary Shelley's writings.

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 39

Answer: a. false

2.0. The people of many world societies have long believed that death is marked by the separation of soul from body.

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 1

Page-Reference: 40

Answer: a. true

3.0. Before the emergence of Christianity, other religions in the ancient world had emphasized a connection between withering away and fertility.

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 40

Answer: a. true

4.0. **Suicide and martyrdom, especially in earlier eras, were seen by some Christians as a preferred alternative to sexual indulgence.**

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 40

Answer: a. true

5.0. **Schultz and Huet (2000/2001) found that in popular and award-winning films, male characters were six times more likely to instigate death and female characters were twice as likely to be the victims.**

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 41

Answer: a. true

6.0. **In the past, people who experienced a stroke, epileptic seizure, or diabetic coma might have been pronounced as dead instead of receiving treatment.**

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 42

Answer: a. true

7.0. **Catatonia is a neurological condition in which a person is conscious and able to think but cannot move any part of the body except the eyes.**

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 45

Answer: a. false

8.0. **Akinetic mutism is defined by an inability of the human brain to initiate action or speak even with preserved sensorimotor pathways.**

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 3

Page-Reference: 45

Answer: a. true

9.0 **According a report issued by the President's Council on Bioethics (2008), the term "total brain failure" excludes "death" because this condition should be verified rather than just being assumed.**

- a. true
- b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 46

Answer: a. true

10.0 **According to Kastenbaum, virtual reality has decreased the significance of the actual body of the deceased having to be a part of funeral rites and memorialization.**

- a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 49

Answer: a. true

11.0. In Homer's epic, *The Odyssey*, the sailors are visited by a hybrid bird-person with heads that resemble women, who lures them to their death.

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 51

Answer: a. true

12.0. Utilizing the skeleton as a symbol of death developed in medieval Europe.

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 52

Answer: a. false

13.0. In a 1971 study of the ways we personify death, masculine personifications were given much more frequently than feminine.

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 55

Answer: a. true

14.0. In the 1971 study of death personifications, most respondents viewed death as grim and terrifying.

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 55

Answer: a. false

15.0. In a 1997 follow-up study of death personifications, women continued to favor the image of death as the "gentle comforter" while men described death as a "cold and remote" person.

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 55

Answer: a. true

16.0. Feeling dead to ones' self due to drug and alcohol use, or simply from aging, represents a part of phenomenological death.

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 56

Answer: a. true

17.0. **Biomedical developments and portrayal of vampires and zombies as the Undead continue to foster ambiguity about the borderline between “alive” and “dead.”**

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 57

Answer: a. true

18.0. **Unlike zombies, revenants and vampires have been associated largely with the voodoo religion and Creole culture as practiced in Haiti, West Africa, and areas of the U.S. South.**

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 59

Answer: a. false

19.0. **Fatal accidents are one example of a random, meaningless death event.**

a. true

b. false

Difficulty: 2

Page-Reference: 63

Answer: a. true

Vocabulary

1.0. **brain death**

Difficulty: 2

Answer: A condition in which vegetative processes of the body may continue, although the capacity for thought, experience, and behavior has been destroyed.

2.0. **catatonia**

Difficulty: 3

Answer: A neuropsychiatric disorder that at times takes the appearance of stupor, rigidity, immobility, and mutism.

3.0. **coma, comatose**

Difficulty: 1

Answer: A deep state of unconsciousness from which the individual cannot be aroused.

4.0. **EEG**

Difficulty: 2

Answer: The electroencephalogram presents a visual display of the ongoing electrical activity of the brain.

5.0. **intravenous fluids**

Difficulty: 1

Answer: Liquids that are introduced directly into the veins to restore metabolic balance and provide nutrition, avoid dehydration, or treat infections.

6.0. **martyrdom**

Difficulty: 1

Answer: The heroic sacrifice of one's life for a cause or faith.

7.0. minimally conscious state

Difficulty: 2

Answer: Severe impairment distinguished from coma or *vegetative state* by occasional and limited evidence of awareness.

8.0. revenant

Difficulty: 2

Answer: An undead wanderer who does not necessarily behave like a vampire.

9.0. transient vegetative state

Difficulty: 2

Answer: Characteristics are those of the **vegetative state** (following entry) but caused by drugs, extreme cold, or injury that has some potential for recovery.

10.0. vampire

Difficulty: 2

Answer: A nocturnally reanimated corpse who seeks fresh blood.

11.0. vegetative state

Difficulty: 2

Answer: Sleep-wake cycles, respiration, and other vital autonomic activities continue, but awareness and thought are absent. A persistent vegetative state may be reclassified as a permanent VS after long duration.

12.0. virtual reality

Difficulty: 1

Answer: Computer-generated scenes, beings, and events that simulate actual or possible versions of the world.

13.0. zombie

Difficulty: 1

Answer: A reanimated corpse whose death and resuscitation involved sacred rituals but perhaps also drugs. He or she now functions in a lifeless and automatic way. Associated primarily with West African, Haitian, and Creole voodoo practice.

Essay Questions

1.0. List any five of the common signs used in the traditional determination of death.

Difficulty: 2

Answer:

- Lack of respiration
- Lack of pulse
- Lack of heartbeat
- Failure to respond to light
- Failure to respond to movement
- Failure to respond to pain
- Lower body temperature
- Stiffness

2.0. Name the five Harvard criteria for brain death.

Difficulty: 3

Answer:

1. Unreceptive and unresponsive
2. No movements and no breathing
3. No reflexes
4. Flat EEG
5. No circulation to or within the brain

3.0. What is the difference between viewing death as an event versus a state?

Difficulty: 3

Answer:

Event - occurs in a specific way and at a specific time and place; possible to be factual and precise

State - the state that follows the event of death; finding meaning in death

4.0. Describe any three of the meanings that have been given to death.

Difficulty: 3

Answer:

- Enfeebled form of life
- Continuation of life
- Perpetual development
- Waiting
- Cycling and recycling
- Nothing
- Virtual and, therefore, not really death at all

5.0. Describe two problems that may be encountered when telling a child that death is a long sleep.

Difficulty: 3

Answer:

- Children will not be able to distinguish sleep from death
- May cause difficulty in falling asleep
- May cause nightmares
- May cause insomnia

6.0. Explain how Kastenbaum reached the conclusion that the view of the New Age movement toward death is more similar to that of Islam than to the views of Epicurus, Christianity, or the Harvard criteria. Fully describe each view of death in your response.

Difficulty: 3

Answer: Individuals within the New Age movement regard life as a journey through multiple lives, therefore, death is simply a transition to another state of reality. This is similar to Islam where the soul or life essence can also be separated from the physical body. The Harvard criteria, Epicurus, and other atomists define death and life within the parameters of physics and biology; thus death is empirical or physical.

Epicurus - We live and die in a materialistic universe rendering death as just one more event in a long sequence of events without intrinsic meaning or value. Death represents atoms in motion and was patterned after past events.

Christianity - Death is associated with withering away and fertility, but is purposeful. The faithful can alter the impact of death by controlling their lust and through the appropriate exchange of life for death. This could include crop rituals, fertility rituals, and human or animal sacrifices.

Harvard criteria - A biomedical approach to death that includes unreceptive and unresponsive, no movements and no breathing, no flexes, a flat EEG, and no circulation to or within the brain.

7.0. Explain the differences between a minimally conscious state, a permanent vegetative state, a persistent vegetative state, and a transient vegetative state. Use these concepts to explain why Kastenbaum uses the phrase "dead enough to be classified as an appropriate organ donor."

Difficulty: 3

Answer:

Minimally Conscious State - Severe impairment that can be distinguished from coma or vegetative state by occasional and limited behavioral evidence of awareness.

Permanent Vegetative State - All cognitive functions, including awareness, are absent. Sleep-wake cycles, autonomic control, and respiration continue. Condition is of long duration.

Persistent Vegetative State - (transient and permanent vegetative states). Condition caused by brain damage that might be moderated or reversed

Transient Vegetative State - (See persistent vegetative state). Condition caused by drugs, extreme cold, or injury with possible recovery.

The statement "dead enough to be classified as an appropriate organ donor" suggested the importance regarding the development of the Harvard criteria currently being used to determine "when" an individual is dead. Before these criteria were established, the "dead enough" decisions made by physicians were more ambiguous, elusive, and potentially unethical. An improper diagnosis of a patient's state of consciousness could have led to many unnecessary or premature deaths.

8.0. Compare and contrast the views of death as perpetual development, waiting, and cycling and recycling.

Difficulty: 3

Answer:

Perpetual Development - Death state continually develops into something different. On the one hand, this development could be similar to biological evolution where organisms adapt to the environment and become more efficient. On the other hand, this continual development could lead to a complete annihilation of all life forms.

Waiting-in Western Society - This waiting period has three phases: suspension, judgment, and disposition. Living people or souls are in a transitional state between earthly life and the new realm of being. When biological death occurs, the individual is judged and will either awaken into salvation or damnation for eternity.

Cycling and Recycling - Death comes and goes in our lives. Death is just one position of a constantly revolving wheel. All things die, but out of this death comes new life. Funeral rituals often encourage this ideology, sometimes symbolizing a rebirth into a new state of being.

9.0. Compare and contrast the views of death represented by the sirens, the Muses, Orpheus, and the skeleton.

Difficulty: 3

Answer:

Sirens - Winged birdlike creatures with female heads who brought death by luring sailors with sweet songs. Post-Homeric Greeks had to contend with both sirens and harpies. Sirens brought death and harpies obliterated memory, suggesting death could come with or without loss of memory.

Muses - Females depicted in a more kindly light. Muses sang at funerals and guided departed souls on their journeys through the underworld. Some were inspirational to artists, writers, and musicians in their creative efforts.

Orpheus - Famous for powers rather than appearance. Orpheus symbolized the power of music over death. He charmed the fearsome guardians of the underworld and liberated his beloved Eurydice from Hades with his music.

Skeleton - Has been used in artwork and as a symbol for death throughout history. Even today, the skeleton decorates houses during Halloween, and symbolizes poisonous substances on products. It is also culturally conspicuous in the Mexican Day of the Dead celebration.

10.0. Describe the social and political aspects of viewing death as the Great Leveler or the Great Validator.

Difficulty: 3

Answer: Since ancient times, human beings have categorized each other by race, class, gender, ethnicity etceteras. Along with these categories have developed inequalities or organizational hierarchies based in dominance and submission. Writers, poets, and philosophers have often described death as the "Great Leveler" because these categorical differences are really only salient among the living.

Society also uses death to measure the value of its deceased members. Sometimes living individuals spend large sums of money on funeral services and rituals as a means to symbolize the importance or inherent value of their deceased loved one. Elaborate obituaries placed in newspapers also serve as the "Great Validator" or alternate way to affirm the worth of the deceased.