

*Present Philosophical Events
Актуални философски събития*

DYING AND DEATH IN 18TH – 21ST CENTURY EUROPE (INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (ABDD07), ALBA IULIA, ROMANIA)

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Since 2008, the Romanian academic world has been enriched by a consistent event focused on thanatology, as Alba Iulia, a Transylvanian city with a medieval citadel, has been the setting of a great international conference, inspired by the great biennial Death, Dying and Disposal Conference that needs no presentation. And, by the way, the DDD will be organized next year in Alba Iulia, joining forces with the Alba Iulian conference and offering an intellectual feast for the death researchers across the world.

The Dying and Death conference has been successfully organized by “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, National Museum of Unification, Alba Iulia and Alba County Council in partnership with Amurg, the Romanian Cremation Association.

The initiative is singular on Romanian soil, as it attempts to unveil the historical aspects of dying and death, moving the emphasis from the mythological and anthropological issues to cultural and recent history. The initiator and organizer Marius Rotar is also the author of an impressive book entitled *Eternitate prin cenușă: o istorie a crematoriilor și incinerărilor umane în România secolelor XIX-XXI* [Eternity through Ashes: A History of Crematoriums and Human Incinerations in Romania in the 19th-21st Century]. The several volumes of the Proceedings were followed by two volumes published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The published volumes encompass fascinating subjects, such as cultural attitudes towards death, various philosophical issues and different social tendencies.

Among the contributors to the conference we may mention scholars from UK, Italy, Poland, Serbia, Belgium, Sweden, France, Netherlands, Romania, Germany, USA, Turkey and Bulgaria. The 7th edition of the Dying and Death Conference held on 4th-6th of September 2014 welcomed scholars from Italy, Serbia, Romania, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Poland and Greece. The panels included subjects as History, Literature, Philosophy, Cremation and Burial, Cemeteries, Attitudes, Identities, Ethnography, Medicine, including issues as suicide and euthanasia.

Romanian scholars were concerned with establishing the Romanian philosophical contribution on the subject of death, as some titles reveal: “From the Death as a Philosophical Issue to the Death of the Philosophy as an Issue” (Daniela Maci) or a biased comparative perspective on agony seen as “death without death” in the case of Kierkegaard and Cioran (Stefan Bolea). Continuing her concern with Sartrean perspective upon death, Adriana Teodorescu presents a link to death and symbolic immortality in Milan Kundera’s *Immortality*, while Adela Toplean addresses the topic of the impact of religion and secularization on contemporary death meanings and practices. The ideological aspects were presented by researchers like Mihai Stelian Rusu, concerned with the concepts of “thanatic nationalism” and “sacrificial patriotism” in 1848-1947 Romania, and Constantina Raveca Buleu focused on exploration of the symbols and meanings of death in the Romanian interwar right wing ideology (1919-1938). Stefan Borbely presented insightful aspects of the “death of an old wanderer”, namely Herman Hesse’s *Knulp*, while Georgeta Orian focused on two fictional representations of the Roman poet Ovid waiting for his death in *Tomis*.

The field of music was explored from the thanatological perspective by Ioana Filipas (“Perspectives on Death in Death Metal”) and by Asztalos Ioan in a captivating presentation on death in popular culture, focused on death illustrated in rock music between the 1980s and present day. In the same area of popular culture, Gelu Teampau held a comprehensive presentation on death and dying in comic-books, while Cristina Douglas captured the attention with a presentation of the imagery of immortality in medical and cosmetic advertising. The trans-disciplinary character of the conference was sustained by Theodora Ormeny’s presentation on the representations of violent death in cinematic productions, taking into account the “linguistic and philosophical implications of the Husserlian *Leib und Körper*”. Another cinematographic concern of a presentation dealt with the “dilemmatic heroic death in World War 2 in Soviet Union”, focused on one literary work of the most important Belarusian writer – *Obelisk* by Vasil Bykov – and its film adaptation (Olga Gradinaru). Helen Frisby offered a glimpse of the urban English funeral (1850-1930) with the focus on magic and modernity, while Alexandru Rusu presented the different approaches of Catholic and Orthodox Church on exorcism and two cases of death by exorcism.

The fields that had only several representatives – journalism (Ana Soviany), medicine (Catalina Ghemes, Ilona Gorog, Jessie Cooper) and architecture (Andreea Pop, Iuliana Adina Apostol) – would require a stronger representation in order to offer a comprehensive view on the mutations and challenges of the researchers from various backgrounds. On the other hand, the panels on Cremation and Burial/ Cemeteries had great presentations, among which we mention Asher D. Colombo, Peter C. Jupp, Marius Rotar, Robert Martin, Hilary J. Grainger, Enrico Cazzaniga, Tamara Ingelsand Patrick Van den Nieuwenhof.

The panels regarding Attitudes/Identities referred to various issues starting with the Unitarian funeral and identity (Csaba Todor), Kashubian death rituals (Aleksandra Kurowska-Susdorf), analyzing four different types of funerals and its representatives (Aleksandra Pavicevic), and presenting attitudes on euthanasia among Romanian medical students and social work students (Albert-Lorincz Csanad).

The panel of ethnography was unfortunately represented only by Romanian researchers, offering various perspectives on Romanian folklore death representations and nobody from other countries. Nevertheless, the joined edition of the DDD International Conference and ABDD Conference will certainly be the generous space for more academics, professionals and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines to present their papers.

To conclude with, the International Conference ABDD07 proved to be, once again, a thrilling intellectual event of great importance for Romania and Europe as well, looking forward to welcoming old and new participants for the next edition.

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