

**Allan Kellehear: *The Inner Life of the Dying Person***

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'Is this the promised end?', questions the loyal baron Kent upon seeing King Lear, thrashing and violent and crazed, before his death, (5. 3. 237), 'Or image of that horror?' Like the classical tale of a wrecked, dying Lear, negative images abound of the dying in their descent towards death. Conventionally disparaging associations of the dying include melancholy, pain, rage, folly, dependence, isolation and decrepitude. For the observer, such images provoke deep fear and terror of the dying other, and for many, such images create deep anxiety around the fact of innate mortality. Yet, Kellehear asks in this timely book, is the dying process actually as negative as these archetypal and enduring depictions make it seem? And is the resultant anxiety these negative images provoke preventing 'wondrous' and 'surprising' moments in dying to emerge in important ways?

Kellehear descends from the armchair projections and structural theories of previous scholars and employs a promising method to investigate the dying process: engagement with the dying themselves. Indeed, it is the author's close contact with the dying over his long career – beginning first with his doctoral research where he interviewed 100 persons with six months left to live, and continuing with his academic and community-based research around death and dying, palliative care and hospice – that has sharpened his sensitivities to the 'everyday' psychological experiences of the dying that are far more complex than any monolithically depressed picture. And though his intent is to create a full-bodied narrative of human psychology amidst the dying process, Kellehear's book acts also as social corrective and critique, and thus promotes fervently the idea that dying, too, is 'positive',

in that it is 'life affirming, life building and life enhancing.'

This book provides a comprehensive look into the psychological journey that the dying encounter between the time they learn that death is imminent and before they meet their end. Drawing on diverse interviewees, from elderly residents in nursing homes to hospice patients with cancer and inmates on death row, he argues that the conscious awareness of imminent death acts as a rupture in a person's psychological experience, and thus sets forward universal shifts in dying persons' emotions, social interactions, meaning-making, and reflections. Kellehear contends that at a cellular level, 'life has recognized and used dying and death as an integral part of its inner workings' (p. 2). He paints death as central to life itself, and claims that each organism's psychological responses to the 'threat of death' reveal an inclination towards 'self-enhancement' and 'self-preservation'. Kellehear suggests that dying, instead of resulting in endless loss, is productive and generative of even more life. For example, cells destroy chemicals and reorder them for their very survival, and larger animals prey on smaller ones to sustain their life force. Far from being monolithically destructive as the discourse suggests, death, Kellehear insists, makes the natural and the social anew in revitalising ways.

Kellehear devotes one chapter to each of what he perceives to be the universally experienced elements of everyday dying experiences, including Suffering, Fear, Courage, Resistance, Sadness and Anger, Hope and Love, Waiting, Review and Remembrance, Aloneness and Transformation. In each, especially the experiences that might typically be seen as net negative, Kellehear explores how every experience in dying leans towards fruitfulness, affirming and enhancing life in its own way. For example, in Chapter 2, he argues that suffering, with its urgent and total so-

matic demands, throws humans into a new, tentative state and thus unsettles all of the foundations of their previous everyday life. Helpfully, he argues, this allows dying people to wake up to 'reflection and questioning' from which all conscious humans necessarily grow and transform. In Chapter 6, he assures the reader that the anger in dying, usually stemming from 'a general feeling of helplessness', can actually give a person 'a sense of power and self-assurance'. And sadness in dying may heighten the experience and appreciation of joy, as in the case of a TV reporter suffering from ALS who feels profound sorrow for her decline, but also feels 'great joy and happiness about everything' she experiences 'at the moment'. In Chapter 10, Kellehear uses examples from hermits and recluses to reveal how those in isolation, a state in which the dying often find themselves, can experience 'perplexing, frightening, or ecstatic' states and will in their silence be able to forge a 'new connection' spiritually and psychologically that produces a more responsive state of being. Time and again, Kellehear challenges the tropes of depressing and damaging deaths and argues that the positive dimensions of death should be used to contribute and to inform public understandings of 'quality of life, dignity, hope, and living until we die' that structure both conversations around and resources for the dying. Tempering the abundance of negative images with positive ones, dying may be reimagined not as a tear in the social fabric but actually as its very source of reinvention. With such a paradigm shift, attention to and investment in the dying might be seen as a potential for social strengthening and transformation, not as a waste. In this way, Kellehear returns sociality and humanity to the dying and provides ample argument for the politic to do the same.

Kellehear's book helpfully infuses the conversation about dying with the voices and experiences of the dying themselves.

This counteracts trends that collapse investigations of the dying with mere institutional analyses or reports from caregiver perspectives, and radically shifts the nexus of knowledge about death from the people who work with or study it to those that actually *experience* it. There is a dearth of academic literature on the dying precisely because it is so very difficult to pry into the lives of the dying as they are nearing the end. It is with bravery, generosity, and kindness that Kellehear engages his informants, and his artful use of poems turns what could have been a stark psychological prose into elegant and sensitive narrative. Importantly, Kellehear commits himself to a broad scope of dying experiences, and in this he rightfully articulates the complexity of emotion that occurs in the dying process. And in perhaps his major contribution to dying studies, Kellehear insists that death is much more than mere vanishing or loss. By claiming that the dying have much to contribute *through* and *because* of their imminent death, he rescues the dying from their early grave and reminds us that they still have much to give.

Yet Kellehear's argument would have been more persuasive in several ways. First, Kellehear needs more proof to substantiate his strong claims that learning of an imminent death creates a psychological rupture in an individual and such a rupture begets a complex, intricate emotional experience. Here Kellehear's use of data is thin. He makes narrative vignettes speak only to certain experiences of dying, like *Suffering* or *Love*, instead of showing how, within one narrative, a person experiences complex psychological feelings in their dying, both positive and negative. The book would have been helped by developing the psychological trajectories of a dying few, instead of using brief, decontextualised accounts from interviews of many diverse dying people. Second, Kellehear would have done well to defend his assertion that there are universal types of psychological

experiences in dying and that these types provoke similar substantive experiences. Do all dying persons unequivocally experience Review and Remembrance, Anger and Transformation? And qualitatively, does the category Suffering rightfully capture and speak to the diverse hardship of dying experienced by a hospice patient and a death row inmate as he implies it does? There is considerable evidence that individual subjectivities are powerfully formed by social, political, and economic forces—for example, nursing homes that use numbing pharmaceuticals that curb Suffering's potential to transform, or prisons mandating Aloneness as penalty and structuring such isolation to preclude joy or spiritual awakening. Kellehear therefore needs to demonstrate further that regardless of context and contingencies, the universal psychological structures of dying emerge similarly in humans and at times positively so.

Nevertheless, Kellehear's insistence that individuals' subjectivities have, for too long, been collapsible into what institutions make them to be is an excellent critique and a persuasive one. Those working with or studying the dying, Kellehear insists, must open up the possibility of the dying as complexly agentive, feeling and thinking in their final months, days, and minutes. With such an insight, future studies may emerge to question further the negative tropes of dying and to explore the particularities of the extent to which, and ways in which, our impending mortality does indeed uniquely affect our selves and our experiences. And perhaps more importantly, this book will help practitioners working with the dying be watchful for the diversity and wealth in dying experiences. Now more than ever, as modern forces push dying further out of sight, we need a roadmap on how to attend to the dying in new and sensitive ways. Not only has Kellehear provided such a roadmap, he has also given reason why such a practice is so mean-

ingful: in acknowledging the dying other's transformation, he insists over and again, we may ourselves be transformed.

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**Swen Hutter: *Protesting Culture and Economics in Western Europe: New Cleavages in Left and Right Politics***  
Minneapolis, MN, 2014: University of Minnesota Press, 220 pp.

Swen Hutter has written an excellent book about protests and political cleavages in Western Europe, focusing primarily on protest events and political process in six countries (Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, and Switzerland) from the 1970s to 2005. The book takes as its starting point the growing literature on the political effects of globalisation and notes that such studies often have a narrow focus on electoral politics or protest politics. By neglecting protests, which have become an important part of the political process in Western Europe and beyond, one could get a misleading picture about important societal actors such as radical right parties. On the other hand, research centred only on social movements or focusing only on protest politics tends to miss important political and economic processes that can facilitate or hinder mobilisation and affect the political consequences of such actions. Hutter's book makes important theoretical and empirical contributions by combining cleavage studies, electoral studies, and studies about protest events to improve our understanding of the consequences of globalisation.

The book starts by discussing the development of political cleavages, particularly the two central transformations of Western European politics since the early 1970s and the rise of the integration-de-