

**REVIEW ARTICLE****The Death in Contemporary Days****Werlang, Rosangela<sup>1\*</sup>, Mendes Jussara MR<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia Social e Institucional (PPGPSI), bolsista (PDJ) do Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Faculdade de Integração do Ensino Superior do Cone Sul (FISUL), Brasil.*

<sup>2</sup>*Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia Social e Institucional (PPGPSI), Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Brasil.*

\*Corresponding Author: E-mail: [rosangela@fisul.edu.br](mailto:rosangela@fisul.edu.br)

**Abstract**

This literature review talks about death and the changes on its concept and meaning over time, aiming at relating this to the different social organizations and issues that involve the individuality and the human finitude. It intends to provoke the reflection about such a respected theme for all of us, related to our own contingency. In this sense, it brings several perspectives through different author's voices, seeking to understand how we got into this contemporary stage where death must be forgotten at any cost. It is a forbidden subject even being, inevitably, part of our daily lives, and whose shield must insure, more and more, the non-participation and non-involvement of the people. Thereby, understanding the death past stages, from its closeness to its banishment of the social life, is a necessary condition to analyzing our own end, and the end of our own individuality.

**Keywords:** *Death, History of Death, Finitude.*

**Introduction**

One of, if not the greatest human concerns, is in regard to death. As well-presented by Matta [1], to know if death can be overcome, to know its meaning, to distress with the paradoxical fact that this is the only social experience that cannot be transmitted, are contemporary issues and are strongly related to the individualism while ethics nowadays and to our social institutions. The worry about death is not modern, but it acquires a different meaning at this time, as there is a kind of awareness related to the human individuality, that in this period, solidifies. Then, in a certain extent, modernity is confused with the image of the individuals, a new human image, unrelated to a lot of ties that used to bind them to the traditional society. [2]. However, the contemporary meaning of death can only be understood if the different men's attitudes towards this constant presence are reviewed.

**From the Antiquity to the middle Ages: from the Near-Death to the Death of the Self**

Ariés [3], on the analysis he makes regarding to death in Western societies, highlights some aspects related to human attitudes towards death.

For this author, there were three important death dimensions, as follows: the tamed death, the death of the self and the death of the other. These three dimensions would be also historical dimensions, which went through time based in types of human relation with death and the undeniable fact of the finitude people are submitted. First, in relation to the tamed death, the idea of the advice, the warning, becomes a basic characteristic, which means that people do not die without having had time to realize that they are about to die. In this sense, there would be a possibility of prevention and the advice would be made by natural signs, or even for an inner conviction, by those whose lives were threatened. When the dying person realized he would not live longer, he would take the necessary precautions and there was a complaint regarding the decadence of life and the likely world's forgetfulness. Death was expected on the deathbed, in silence, uncomplainingly. As a part of this ritual, there was a public ceremony organized by the dying person himself, who presided and coordinated all the protocol to be followed. Children and relatives gathered for the last recommendations, the last good-bye and,

after that, the soul should be “commended”. The familiar simplicity was, therefore, one of the remarkable characteristics of the tamed death. Another feature would be, at the same time, its counterpoint and its contradiction: how public it was. People knew they would die. There was a warning and everybody, even people who were not known by the family, could enter the dying person’s house and bedroom. This is the concept of the tamed death: the familiar death, resigned, patient, organized. The person would die in the deathbed and the pain would be felt by all the presents, but silently, without the dramatic character that will mark it lately. It was not the case of keeping or repressing an unbearable and intolerable pain: the pain was there, but not in an unbearable and intolerable way. All helped the dying person on the death ritual and, since they were young, children could help the parents in this process, staying in silence and keeping doors and windows open, to make the entrance of the death easier [4]. The truth about death was necessary, and an unprepared death was an unfortunate fact. The origin of the fear of death was this, but it was not connected to all kinds of death, but: the treacherous, wily, unexpected and, for this reason, dreadful death. This configuration prevented the farewell, the organization, and the ritual of preparation. Such attitude was specific in a certain, very well defined, historical period: it would come out clearly in the fifth century A.D., disappearing by the end of the eighteenth century without a trace. This familiar attitude and the fact that life and death were getting closer had its genesis connected to the penetration of the cemeteries in cities or villages and its end was set when this “promiscuity” has become intolerable. Besides the close coexistence with the dead ones, during the Antiquity, the cemeteries were always out of town, along the roads, as in *Via Appia*, in Rome [5]. The graves were far from the cities and the diversity of the pagan funerary inscriptions witnessed a society little rich in common opinions related to death and eternity. The grave or tomb were private and privileged places and the dead person was, in a certain way, compelled to explain the meaning of his death, highlighting it in the inscriptions on the tomb. The tomb and mausoleums used to make public the announcements of the dead ones and, in this sense, would transform the everyday landscape, with the desires and impressions of those who passed away. Later, with the rise of the Christianity, the church was placed among the person, the family and the city, becoming a unique institution that would work on the preservation of the dead ones’ memories. These ones were, up to now, “alone”. From this moment,

it is created a new perspective to death: the rituals, which by now were made in cemeteries, became insufficient. The dead ones would start being remembered in cults and in several performances of religious-Christian character. The Church would, then, replace the city on the celebration and the worship of the dead ones.

In Antiquity, the eternity and even the immortality of the soul seemed to be missing as a concern. The widespread opinion was that death was nothingness, an eternal slumber and the idea spread was that an aimless life in the shadows was no more than a tale. There were some speculations regarding to the survival of the soul, however, this was restricted to small sects. Besides de body, the corpse, nothing else existed. Nevertheless, the funeral rituals and the art displayed in the tombs indicated the existence of some anxiety that should, somehow, be appeased. The moribund did not fear the mythological punishments in the imagined hells that nobody ever believed in; they feared the Gods though [5], authoritarian and vindictive, without having ever asked themselves, necessarily, how they would really act. Elias [6] argues to some extent, the position held by Ariés [3] that death was a pacific event in the past. He believes in the idea that, in the civilizing process, the attitudes regarding to death and the way people die, changed. However, the situation is more related to the medieval society, when life was shorter, the dangers less expected, the death more painful and the punishment after death, the official doctrine. There was not a sense of proximity and even “tame” in this perspective, though. Death was, for sure, more public, as people lived closer and their houses would let fewer choices for events related to births or the ones involving deaths. On the other hand, the cover-up and the repression of death, even being always present, changed in a specific way as the time passed by. In this manner, the fear of transitoriness was lightened by the shared fantasy of a life in another place [5]. Even though, the authors agree with the rise on the degree of individualization that surrounded the death and the dying process. The death ritual is, thereby, in a first plan, related to the place where people created a specific world dedicated to this event: the cemeteries. These at the time of Merovingians were always placed far from cities and inhabited places [7]. This relation is noticed lately, also among the Romans, specialists in lining the tombs along the roads. In contrast, the Germans developed rural cemeteries. All these practices will eventually lead to the establishment of a world apart for the dead ones. There was a gap that could be understood as a fear of contact,

taking into consideration that many groups even incinerated the corpses, fearing their return or, also, planted thorny species of vegetation around the tombs, trying to avoid the return of a “nostalgic” soul. Many times the corpse was buried along with the person’s belongings or objects that could, maybe, be used in another life. The body was taken from the village to the cemetery in procession and placed in a kind of a stretcher [5]. Sometimes, banquets were held in the cemeteries, above the tombs. These events were designed to appease the dead and strengthen the family ties and it was not infrequent that people would dance and sing to conjure the dead ones. It is possible to say death is and was, with no doubt, a social phenomenon and the knowledge of this fact is one of the characteristics of humanity. In this scenario, the graves fall into a setting where men leave his mark as he can be recognized over time because of it [4]. Through the rituals elaborated by man along with his “humanization process”, it is possible to notice an effort trying to disassociate the dead from one place in order to introduce it in another place later. The burial, the procession, the tombs and the funeral practices are the material and non-material expressions of a society that looks for ensuring its members that the dead ones are going to an specific place and in a controlled and organized way. It is kept among people the certainty that the ones who passed away left us safely; a necessary feeling to be reproduced to their own group. It can be said that the rites and rituals related to death had (and still have) this function, that is, to make possible the entrance of the dead ones in their new destination. Tombs would be a type of passport of humanity “in the border of no-man’s-land” [8] and would effect the transition from the called “nature state” to the “man state”. In this borders it may be found, since prehistory, a concern about immortality. Such concern starts with a bunch of stones over the corpses, with the objective of ensuring its integrity and, slowly, it is included the dead one’s belongings in the same funerary space. For this reason, weapons, bones, food, will stay with the dead person as useful instruments for the next life’s dimension [5] also, the conservation of the body will be important, as it implies on the possibility of the life’s extension. Besides, it is possible to say that death carries, implicitly, this expectation: the proposal of life being extended in another dimension. Caring for the dead ones, in this sense, makes people think about the guarantee of success for this action.

Little remained of the graves kept away on middle Ages. The pass of the time brought important

changes and innovations related to the dying process. The dead, in the middle Ages, started to coexist with the people alive. What can be understood from this new stage is that there is a new attitude regarding to the dead ones and this attitude has in its core the confidence in the resurrection of the body and the devotion of the Saints or religious martyrs. In fact, the saint’s or martyr’s tombs ended up attracting the graves that were far from the villages or cities and the basilica became the center of a new cemetery *ad sanctos* [9]. The dead no longer seem strange to the people and there is quite a scene related to the tomb’s opening and the removal of corpses. The odors, increasingly unbearable, revealed a situation in which it was possible to notice a very close relation between people alive and the dead [3]. In this scenario, exposed bones could be seen emerging from the soil. They did not cause any surprise, was not seen with repugnance or would cause any discomfort. The coexistence has become so natural that, in a certain point, there was no difference between the suburbs, where dead have always been buried, and the city. This fact shows the abandonment of any aversion to death, in exchange of a kind of “intimacy”. This transformation can be analyzed through the *Book of Life* in which some deeper and deeper association between the individual life and the death can be seen. It would be the moment of “settlement of accounts” for everybody, the settlement of accounts to show at the heaven’s door, [5] what would make people, from now on, responsible for their attitudes on earth. These attitudes will represent their passport for a new life and will determine the place where each one will be allocated, what destiny they will be having. This is the second dimension analyzed by Ariés [5]: the acknowledgment of the death of the self. The death scene also changes: the dying person’s bedroom, place used for the public and familiar gathering, becomes, suddenly, full of supernatural presences agglomerated on the bedstead of the dying person, expression of the *artemoriendi* present from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. These works also showed the speculation about the battle between the good and the evil disputing the dying person’s body and soul, what means that there was no more a guarantee of a good life in the next dimension. Just like that, slowly it started being established a narrow relation between death and the biography of each one of us: the things that have been done in life will represent a license for the new life after death. In addition, we can say that it is in arts where it can be noticed, for the first time, the representation of a corpse. This would usually be represented in decomposition,

representing the human misery, the degeneration and the ruins of life. The repugnance to the decomposition brings in its core the concept of contamination by death, which, in turn, ends up the idea of decline of the individuality. The macabre theme starts to emerge at this time, in arts as much as in literature. The “*transi*”, as it is also called the corpse, will come up, initially, in decomposition for later being shown as a skeleton or even bones. This last proposal would represent the “dry death”. Physical death, presented in a decomposed way, can be considered as one of the expressions of finitude and, also, that immortality was being hardly questioned. It may be said that there was awareness about death, that death became the place where men started getting to know more about themselves [9]. So, it is the pain caused by death that grows, directly related to the dead person’s uniqueness, as being loved and respected. Morin [8] names this horror of death, in its close link to the individuality, the “trauma of death”. In this sense, for the author, the individuality’s affirmation rules the death awareness, the trauma of death and, even, the belief in immortality. It means that when there is a human awareness about his individuality, it emerges, complementarily, an increasing worry about death. Thereby, maybe, the biggest human concern, the death, is not only with the death *per se*, but with the affirmation of the human individuality and, lately, with the certainty about the death.

Gradually, a close link between the death of each person and the awareness of the individuality becomes clearer. From the resignation towards death, there comes a stage where death has an aspect continuously more individual, the *death of the self*, whose links articulate with the attitudes in life. At this time, four important parts would compose the funerals, as follows:

- The expression of pain;
- The forgiveness of the dying person by the priest;
- The funeral procession; and
- The burial.

The expression of pain had a dramatic form, announcing the loss of a loved one, differently of the resignation scenery that was a trace left by the tamed death. This does not imply in saying that death was not intensely felt, but that it was accepted, somehow, as destiny. The forgiveness, in Western terms, will bring the religious connection that exists at the center of the dying process. The priest would forgive the dying person’s sins and, subsequently, his corpse and the funeral procession would be in charge of his

transportation, taking him to the burial place. The procession and the burial were still not related to laypeople, as the priests did not participate at these two steps. They were made for the closest friends and relatives and the priest’s attributions would be concluded with the forgiveness given before the procession. Finally, the burial was fast, without solemnity. At this time, besides the understanding that the process of dying is more and more connected to the process of living, it is notorious the correlation with the idea of *last judgment*, with the image of the hell and its torments reflected on representative death scenes. The notion of last judgment is conceived through the image of a Court: Christ surrounded by angels, carrying pennons, sits on the throne of the judge; the oval aureole that isolated Him disappeared. His cluster surrounds him: rarely were the twelve apostles represented exactly by His side [5]. Each person, at the end of the trial, will be pronounced to go to heaven or hell. An important presence at this picture is Saint Michael, whose scale indicates the division between the chosen and the convicted that will, once again, moved apart by the sword of the archangel Gabriel, being the distinction doubled. The *Book of Life* or *Liber Vitae*, as previously mentioned, will show ostentatious images regarding death at this time. In it, it was possible to see the human concerns of individuality and life’s history of each one. It was organized in columns, where there were transcribed the individual actions taken during life, identifying them. It was a kind of a passport, a criminal record [maybe the first one] that was necessary to be shown at heaven’s door [5]. As well mentioned by Ariés [9], the book is written during the entire life in order to be used only once: at the moment the account is settled, where the active and the passive are compared, where the review leads to an end. From a time characterized by the near absence of a private biography that would disappear in the community, it is presented here the life judgment in its most unique type. The certainty about the continuity of life in another dimension, previously almost considered indubitable, was shaken. The extension of life after death would be only ensured after the last judgment: the weighing of the soul. That is the idea of the good and evil battling for the human soul that offers, without a choice, a pendulum movement to the spectacle.

The concepts related to death and immortality became, according to what was said before, based on the presence of an awareness of the self. Feuerbach [10], conducting some studies, will distinguish three elementary stages that define

the doctrine or the conceptions regarding mortality/immortality on the Western society. They are the following: the Greco-Roman time, the Catholic Christian time during Middle Ages and the Modern time.. For the author, Greeks and Romans neither believe nor were aware of any kind of immortality on the way it can be seen in Modern times. The Roman, according to him, used to live only in Rome, and for this reason they had a limited space and view: they did not know another life different from the real life in Rome and its People. Because of this, the pursuit of the Rome's glory and the expansion of their domains, counted with the ambitious of each person in a particular way. For this reason, the person was a part of its community, being neither out nor above the real and concrete life. The Roman was the soul, the "I" of the Roman; he was something and was aware that he was something, not on his own, but only in union with his people, only in and through them [5]. This implies in saying that the Romans did not see a division between the reality and its possibility. Also, they did not know about the survival or immortality of themselves. The same would happen for the Greeks that, even considering life in another dimension, they would see themselves as a group, never as individuals. Because of this, the belief in immortality with an individual character starts being imagined since the Middle Ages, in a relation with faith and dogma, as an example of what it could be seen before.

During the Catholic Christian time, the belief in immortality would be related to the faith in the existence of God, a divine grace who was aimed at the content of the Christian religion. In the beginning, the individual human had not yet attained the desolate and empty consciousness of his individuality, of his isolated autonomy, had not yet abandoned himself to himself and taken his stand on himself [5]. It means that the spirit of community was still there, but it was a spirit of a specific community: the ones who believed, had faith in the existence of life after death, with divine characteristics; the life in a sacred community. The church represented, then, this possibility and the immortality itself would be related to a decision that was not owned yet. It did not depend on an individual effort, but on a divine indication. Little by little, as mentioned earlier, the life and the individual attitudes start delineating death and the way people would die and, consequently, there is an image from heaven and from hell as places where the person would be able to spend, along with other people, the everlasting life. Evil follows evil and good follows good and, then, life will not cease with death,

because death can take to the eternal salvation and happiness or to the endless misery. This misery is masterfully described in Alligueri's work [11]. The hell, comprised of nine circles unfolded in a conical shape in the direction of the center of the earth, is the original place of Lucifer's fall, the rebellious angel who lives in the Darkness. The first circle is the selection place: here people wait for the verdict of "*Minus*", the judge. He will assign which of the subsequent circles will be their proper place. The second circle is assigned to the lustful, the third for the gluttonous, the fourth to the hoarders and spendthrifts, the fifth and the sixth to envious and gloating. The seventh circle is for the ones who are violent against God, nature and the self. The eighth is for the panderers and flatterers. And, finally, the ninth is where Lucifer is. This last circle is dense and deep, and this is its final dimension. It is set in a huge ice block where the "inhabitants", besides Lucifer, are all traitors. That soul up there which has the greatest pain / the Master said is Judas Iscariot / he inclines his head to the devouring mouth [5]. In fact, it is Lucifer who chews the head with one of his three mouths: the other two are for Cassius and Brutus, Roman Emperor traitors. All the circles get divided in smaller parts, where there would be space enough for all the human sins.

To this extend, it is noticeable, in the middle Ages, the increasingly stronger presence of the Christian idea of resurrection, that is, the capability of returning from the death world. This fact implies in the concept of an immortal individual, and the resurrection, in this case, will be the symbol of the eternity brought in this period. Subsequently, the third stage analyzed by Feuerbach infers on the Modern times, essential for the individual's settlement. The characteristic of the Modern time is that now man is seen as a man, the person is seen as a person, and with it, the human himself is recognized by himself in his individuality as divine and endless [10]. In this sense, there is no more church as a unit, but principles and foundations of faith that will play an essential role. In this context, the Protestantism can be considered as one of the strong expressions of the human individuality, as Christ was considered a God-man. Complementarily, it can be mentioned a study made by Weber [12], that discussed the possible links between religion and economical rationality, this is, the entanglement between the economic and social dimensions and the religious convictions or principles. Weber introduces the idea of a connection between specific orientations, in terms of religious attitude, in this case, the

Protestantism, with the development of a typical rational attitude, typical of the Capitalism, in the economical level of the human life. The man, in the Calvinist view, would be saved or condemned individually, by God. On the other hand, the earthly obligation of everyone would be to work for His glory. The anxiety generated by the uncertainty of salvation would be the final motivation for the work. Because of that, the personal behavior becomes a route to the eternal grace and only the resignation of human's things, the flesh and the sin, would not be enough to guide people to salvation. Resignation would still be necessary. However, it would be strongly related to work, and this work would generate the wealth that should never be wasted or used in an irresponsible way. The wealth was the measure of the recognition achieved the final benediction. This complex intertwine generated a lifestyle, an *ethos*, which, in turn, would have influenced and propitiated the capitalist development. This characteristic "spirit" or the peculiarity of this philosophy of avarice appears to be the ideal of the honest man of recognized credit, and above all the idea of duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital, which is assumed as an end itself. Truly, what is here preached is not simply a technique to make one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an *ethos* [5].

Then, for the work to become the goal of God's glory, the profit should get back to the work, as an investment. Thereby, the capital accumulation became encouraged, in the Weber's perspective. In this context, the Protestantism would have been one of the "causes" of the capitalist expansion in the West. In fact, it can be said that this contributed for the beginning of a specific type of modern rationality that organized the individual behavior and, in its sequence, the behavior on the economical dimension [13]. Bearing in mind what was previously said, there is one element that causes curiosity: the will. It is the material expression of the concerns pertaining the salvation of the soul, bringing up the idea of an agreement that allows the person to save his soul without, necessarily, giving up the goods, the accumulation of wealth that would stay in the earthly dimension. The will is, initially, a contract established between a man and the church, representative of God on earth [14]. This was the religious way to link the wealth to the personal path to salvation [15], demonstrating the contradictory idea of an attachment to the earthly

and non-earthly things to the sacred and the profane ones. A great part of the dead's heritage would be given to the church, to ensure the salvation of the soul. Another part, many times a small proportion of it, would be given to the inheritors and, not rarely, would the dying person distribute a part of his property to the poor, who, along with the priests from the churches, would turn the funeral procession into a masterly event: instead of a familiar event, it would become an event where the reverence for the dead and the grandiosity would show the largeness of the compensation.

The relation between death and individuality will be called by Becker [16] the "individuality within finitude," an existential paradox of the human condition, therefore, the knowledge of and about death would be reflexive and conceptual, being the man aware of his temporary situation, as at the same time he stands out in nature because of his abilities and competencies, it is on and by the nature that he will come to an end. The animal, because of that, would be spared as they "live and disappear with the same lack of reflection: a few minutes of fear, a few seconds of anxiety, and everything is gone" [5]. However, things happen differently with the man. Man starts dying at the same day he is born and the dying process continues day after day, minute after minute, being the time one of the measures for this conclusion. The awareness about his individuality is one of the remarkable characteristics that will emerge on modernity and "this is the context of individualism as a basic principle of the social life that made death look like a problem" [1]. That is what will be discussed next.

### The Modernity and the Process of Secularization of Death

Since Modernity, death will be dramatized, impressive and overbearing. The "death of the other" becomes, each time more, the center of the attention; this means that the other should mourn, cry and suffer for it. Death starts being considered a transgression, a break that takes the man from his "normal" life, from the everyday dimension of being and living. The death in the deathbed gradually starts including the emotion, lament and the expression of pain of those who remain in this world is extreme. The intolerance to separation is an important piece in this new scenario that is being built. "Until the eighteenth century death was a concern only of the one who was threatened by it, nobody else," [3] now, it is not like that anymore. The cult to the dead ones is a necessary activity and the death itself becomes shameful and tries to be interdicted, as a way to

spare the person, hiding his real situation. It was necessary, from now on, to avoid, as much as possible, the discomfort of the pain and the lost from the society and also the family. This can be the genesis of the process of “avoiding” death, when, among the characteristics, it is possible to notice the change on the place where people die. They do not die at home anymore, along with his dear ones, but at the hospital: one era ends to start a new one, impressively rich on the development of science and technology. It is the time of Bacon [17], Descartes [18], Scientific Revolution [19-20], the doubt and, paradoxically, the certainty, of the beliefs on the scientific possibilities and the progress and development brought by the science. It is the empire of the scientific knowledge above the others. Time of a separation between knowledge and ways of knowing. In this context, boundaries are set between the natural world and the human world and, as stated by Capra [21], from a holistic view of man and nature, it is moved to a essentially mechanical view, when nature will be used, especially, for exploitation.

This is where the modern state is built and the death starts becoming perverse. It is the death of *Ivan Ilitch Golovin*, very well written by Tolstói [22]: with pain, sorrow, anguish and loneliness. The unbearable pain is mixed with the feeling of emptiness, and this emptiness is brought by a whole life in conflict between the meaning of existence and the questions brought by the advance of science. Ivan Ilitch's death is an example. He dies alone and with an overwhelming sense of relief. Everything was gone. Slowly, death progressively becomes dirty: Ivan Ilitch's illness is long and the odors and the nature of the care he needed made death inconvenient. It was necessary a sepsis, hygiene, cleaning, combat the body fluids, avoid dirtiness, sweating. In conclusion, it was necessary to overcome the repugnancy caused by the closeness of death at any cost. Consequently, a process of expurgating starts to hide the ugliness brought by the death in its different expressions. It is in this context that the dying person will have a specific place to be sheltered, hidden and interdicted: the hospital. This will be the characteristic place for ill people and illness, which will leave the house and the world of the family to move to this orderly and sanitized place. This setting, filled by medical techniques and by people that, little by little, got specialized in taking care of others, is almost secret, if compared to the dying person's bedroom as already mentioned. This bedroom used to be crowded by relatives and also people from the community that lived nearby. In the hospital,

there is only the patient and one or another family member, if allowed. There are rules there, discipline [23] and the patient will barely be seen at death: he will be protected from the extreme publicity. In this place, the idea of immortality gains new energy with the knowledge brought by the scientific cooperation: the dying person will be preserved until the end. Serum bags, antibiotics, oxygen among other interventions will bring the necessary chance: life will be kept with difficulty and death will be postponed the most. But it is necessary to change the order of the things, increasing the life and, in this sense, a scientific ideology and a biologic philosophy will ensure a system that moves towards a specific immortality: the amortality [8]. It is when, also, big death ceremonies are organized, which will, in a great part, guarantee the order and the social hierarchy [24]. The crisis of the feudal society will, ultimately, determinate a general instability where the representations of death are only one of the expressions of the social, political and economical change that was adopted.

It is time for changes, when the modern State is a State that must serve the capitalism as a model of economical and social development in which the capital is the main instrument for the material production [25]. It must also serve the interests of new social groups, represented by the bourgeoisie that will be, side by side with the working class, as the protagonists of the new order. The capitalist model that emerges is characterized by the concentration of the means of production and this characteristic caused, since the beginning, lots of excluded people, who had nothing more than the possibility to sell their work force. In this sense, the contradictions experienced because of this new model was the source of several battles and revolts of the lower classes, notably the working class, that at this moment suffered significant setbacks from groups of people who got richer because of trade and commercial practices[5]. In this transformation context the death and the view of the dead change. The person ceases to exist after death: at this point, the legal status of man ends, in which he was the subject of legal relations, that is, owner of rights and recipient of duties. At this moment, his legal capacity to act, to have and use his goods, as well as his legal relations as a person, finishes. The legal personality finishes. What remains from the person is a thing: the body. And besides, only the remembrance among the ones who lived with him will remain [26].

Consequently, only the body will be subject to juridical rules, as it could cause health problems

to the population and, also, should be protected against desecration. In earlier times, it could be said that the condition of the dead or of the dying person was not subject to the choice of the ones who were alive and that the remembrance of the dead would mean something bigger: his presence among the living as a remembrance. If the cult to the death during Antiquity and a great part of the Middle Ages allowed all the creativity, during Modernity this practice becomes polemic, at least. Such closeness becomes rare and, to be part of a death spectacle in this period, come to the scene some interdictions: it is not allowed any more burials within the city limit. The relics of saints and martyrs start being moved from nearby churches and cemeteries to further places. This fact designed, in a long and slowly process, the structure of the cities. The epidemics of plague and the big number of deaths that was brought by it, had an influence on the way of thinking and accepting the idea of death in the West, mainly on the establishment of the Modern time. Funeral vigil, funeral mass and burial – all this ended completely or partially, and something different and new took their place. Instead of relatives and friends, the servants of the plague (*becchini*, *beccamorti*) would take the corpse to the grave. Also, the dead that were part of the upper class of the city would be placed on the first grave that was free. People from the middle and lower class would take the corpses out of their houses and would leave them on the streets. Nobody would follow the corpse with tears and candles [5].

The death of the other gradually starts being feared. If before the dead were confined to the Church and the place of his grave did not matter, mainly from the seventeenth century on, there will be an excessive concern with their setting. The place becomes important and there is an interrelation between the place and social class of the dead. It triggers us to check, nowadays, the current divisions: public and private cemeteries, burial places at different prices according to the “view”. In this fear atmosphere, the “vapor” and the smell that came from the graves raised questions about hygiene and health, which would be discussed in analogy with the decomposition of bodies and epidemics and diseases of all kinds. At this point, it can be said that the circle of dissociation of the dead as a person and as a corpse was almost closed. The presence of the corpse must be avoided. Its place must be far enough to avoid any kind of contact and contagion. This is how the body will be inconvenient, dangerous, and must be kept away. No food, drinks or parties for and with the dead. From now on, the cemeteries became places to

praise the memory of the dead, not allowing this kind of contrast. People who lived close to cemeteries, in their complaints, use to say they could conserve neither food nor beverages. Even the metals would change it becomes confusing, then, under the same epithet, the odors of the plague and of the death: the odors then called pestilential [3]. As a result, public health is threatened. An important example can be elucidated by what happened at the Cemetery of the Innocents, in Paris. Large quantities of soil considered contaminated were removed from this place. Also, the remains and parts of corpses were taken out of this place and about forty or fifty common graves were opened and more than twenty thousand corpses were exhumed. These ones were transferred to the Catacombs of Paris, after being transported in more than a thousand wagons filled with bones [5].

There were corpses of about eight or nine centuries being removed from the graves, in a work that seemed endless. This done and redone task, as the cemetery, previously placed far from the city, because of the urbanization process, ended up in the middle of the human settlements again. This slow process continued and the man, who was owner of his death and coordinator of the dying process, has no longer this task, sharing this “chore” with the doctors, new agents whose work would be to give the final advice, earlier delegated to himself, the divine, the priests and the clergymen. The priest was always ready, because it was necessary to follow some rituals that included, among others, the dying person’s confession and forgiveness. When he entered the room, it was a visible sign of the end. Death is pushed to the clandestinely abyss and people avoid talking about it. The death will be “hidden” and a specific process will begin: the process of medicalization [27]. The big event will not be the replacement of the family by the doctor, the power superiority of the doctor, it did not matter what kind of doctor it was the former family doctor was, along with the family’s priest, the assistant of the dying person. His follower, the general practitioner, was away from the death. Except in the case of an accident, he does not know it; it is not inside the ill person’s room where the practitioner is not called to come in, but the hospital, where everyone with a serious illness and risk of death will be sent. And in the hospital the doctor is, at the same time, a man of science and a man of power, a power he will put into practice by himself [3]. The transposition to the hospital opens a new period regarding to the death and dying process and it was accepted by the dying person and the family while the advance of the medical



techniques and the care would show up with the healing and isolation. Death should be overcome and, also, it would not be so public, as it became gradually something inconvenient. *Paripassu* the mourning, unique element that expressed the pain felt by the family becomes a ritual in which the trend, with the advance of the modernity, was to disappear. This was replaced by the desperation, the big gestures to reveal the pain, the several kinds of manifestations. The family was banned from the funeral processions, becoming increasingly reclusive to feel the pain in solitude, without the inference, many times inconvenient, of the others. It had also the purpose of preventing them of forgetting the dead quickly, indulging themselves in the worldly pleasures “of the flesh and the sin.” In such a way, the family stays away, apart from the society, notably women, whose participation in all this process was limited. Firstly, they were limited by the reclusion, at home, and lately, by the black clothes, representing the mourning, the characteristic feeling of pain. Slowly, women start participating on burials and the mourning of their whole lives will be expressed in forty days, for lately be considered almost an interdiction. It would not be good anymore to express pain or sorrow: this should be lived, felt, but as an individual experience that needs introspection. Just as people no longer talk about death, it should no more to be standardized. This “mask” became more and more intense, to the point that Ariés [9] described a scene at least curious where two women arrive home to “prepare” the dead. But the corpse was not there anymore. They ask: where is the “ill”? He must get cleansed, ready and look “healthy”. It is necessary to take care of the dead’s beauty, the same, or better than, he did while he was alive, preferably, without any sign of pain or sadness. After they finish, they called the family to admire the work that was done and say: The patient looks lovely now. He is not a dead anymore, and not even an ill. He is an “almost-alive” that was esthetically sculptured to preserve in the body, the familiar features, the new and well-cared clothes, and the purest angelical expression that must remain in eternity.

## References

1. Matta R (1997) *A casa e a rua: espaço, cidadania, mulher e morte no Brasil*. (5a ed.) Rio de Janeiro: Rocco.
2. Roman J (1996) *Autonomia e vulnerabilidade do indivíduo moderno*. In Morin, E & Prigogine, I. (Orgs.) *A sociedade em busca de valores: para fugir à alternativa entre o cepticismo e o dogmatismo*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget.
3. Ariés P (1989) *Sobre a história da morte no Ocidente*. (2a ed.) Lisboa: Teorema.
4. Rodrigues JC (2006) *Tabu da morte*. (2a ed.) Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz.
5. Ibid
6. Elias N (2001) *A solidão dos moribundos*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar.

## Conclusions

The death’s expulsion from the world of the living resulted on the suppression and, at the same time, on the adhesion of a set of ritual questions, among them, the one that says the dying person should not be told he would die, and this secret would only be told to one or another family member. Death would not be at home anymore, but in a special temple, and the mourning would gradually become invisible, shielded. The pain was individual and must be felt with less intensity. There was a kind of a shade, an interdiction, what is called by Morin the “crisis of death.” This crisis implies on the corrosion of death’s own concept: the emptiness. It is the impotence of the reason towards death that undermines its concept and it is the crisis of the individuality towards death that, in its turn, would be linked to the general crisis of the contemporary world. The social, economic and political crisis in which the modern society was shaped, involved by wars and poorness, loss of structure and new structuring of the capitalist economic model, shocked the human individuality, while this was requested on its essence. Favorite child of a liberal period, the individuality is increasingly more demanded, brutalized, unbalanced and unhappy. There is a kind of “non-participation” of the individual, which contemplates as the death that happened to him as the death he causes. Because of this, the death in contemporary society becomes repulsive and, consequently, it is necessary to deny it. The role of the funeral procession tends to be reduced and the organization of the funeral and the procession itself, when is done, is increasingly set by outsourced services, from companies created specifically for that. The idea of incineration or cremation starts gaining more space, as it is necessary to get rid of the corpse and, the fastest the procedure is, the better. The corpse quick elimination will also eliminate, with it, any fear with or without real basis for it. From the tamed, familiar death, other stages came by: the death of the self and, after this, the death of the other. Nowadays, there is an interdicted death: the one that is not talked about and whose presence is necessary to get rid of quickly, without a trace.

7. Rouche M (1989) Alta Idade média ocidental. In Veyne, P. (Org.) História da vida privada: do Império Romano ao ano mil. v. I. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
8. Morin E (1988) O homem e a morte. (2a ed.) Lisboa, Portugal: Publicações Europa-América.
9. Ariés P (2000) O homem perante a morte. v. I. Lisboa, Portugal: Publicações Europa-América.
10. Feuerbach L (1993) Pensamientos sobre muerte e inmortalidad. Madrid, Espanha: Alianza Editorial.
11. Alligheri D (2007) A Divina Comédia. São Paulo: Martin Claret.
12. Weber M (2000) A ética protestante e o espírito do capitalismo. (15a ed.) São Paulo: Pioneira.
13. Aron R (1999) As etapas do pensamento sociológico. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
14. Silva, JAF (2000) Tratado de direito funerário. v. I. São Paulo: Método.
15. Ariés, P. (19[--]) O homem perante a morte. v. II. Lisboa, Portugal: Publicações Europa-América.
16. Becker E (2007) A negação da morte: uma abordagem psicológica sobre a finitude humana. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
17. Bacon F (2000) The new organon. New York: Cambridge University Press.
18. Scruton RA short history of modern philosophy: from Descartes to Wittgenstein. (2a ed) London: Routledge.
19. Chassot A (1994) A ciência através dos tempos. São Paulo: Moderna.
20. Scruton RA short history of modern philosophy: from Descartes to Wittgenstein. (2a ed) London: Routledge.
21. Capra F (2003) O ponto de mutação: a ciência, a sociedade e a cultura emergente. São Paulo: Cultrix.
22. Tolstói L (2007) A morte de Ivan Ilitch. São Paulo: Martin Claret.
23. Foucault M (1979) Microfísica do poder. (18a ed) Rio de Janeiro: Graal.
24. Vovelle M (1996) A história dos homens no espelho da morte. In Braet, H. & Verbeke, W. A morte na Idade Média. São Paulo: Edusp.
25. Wolkmer AC (2001) Pluralismo jurídico: fundamentos de uma nova cultura no Direito. ( 3a ed.) São Paulo: Alfa-Ômega.
26. Oexle OG (1996) A presença dos mortos. In Braet, H. & Verbeke, W. A morte na Idade Média. São Paulo: Edusp.
27. Roudinesco E (2000) Por que a psicanálise? Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.