

Thanatos In psychology and Medicine

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According to Sigmund Freud, humans have a life instinct--which he named "Eros"--and a death drive, which is commonly called (though not by Freud himself) "Thanatos". This postulated death drive allegedly compels humans to engage in risky and self-destructive acts that could lead to their own death. Behaviors such as thrill seeking and aggression are viewed as actions which stem from this Thanatos instinct. However, scientific research has found little evidence that most people have a specific drive toward self-destruction. The behaviors Freud studied can be explained by simpler, known processes, such as salience biases (e.g., a person abuses drugs because the promise of immediate pleasure is more compelling than the intellectual knowledge of harm sometime in the future) and risk calculations (e.g., a person drives recklessly or plays dangerous sports because the increases in status and reproductive success outweigh the risk of injury or death).

Thanatophobia is the fear of things associated with or reminiscent of death and mortality, such as corpses or graveyards. It is also known as necrophobia, although this term typically refers to a specific fear of dead bodies rather than a fear of death in general.

Thanatology is the academic and scientific study of death among human beings. It investigates the circumstances surrounding a person's death, the grief experienced by the deceased's loved ones, and larger social attitudes towards death such as ritual and memorialization. It is primarily an interdisciplinary study, frequently undertaken by professionals in nursing, psychology, sociology, psychiatry, social work and veterinary science. It also describes bodily changes that accompany death and the after-death period.

Thanatophoric dysplasia, so named because of its lethality at birth, is the most common lethal congenital skeletal dysplasia with an estimated prevalence of one in 6,400 to one in 16,700 births. Its name Thanatophoros, means "death-bearing" in Greek.

Euthanasia, "good death" in Greek, is the act or practice of ending the life of an individual who would otherwise experience severe, incurable suffering or disability. It typically involves lethal injection or the suspension of extraordinary medical treatment. Doctor Jack Kevorkian named his euthanasia device the Thanatron.