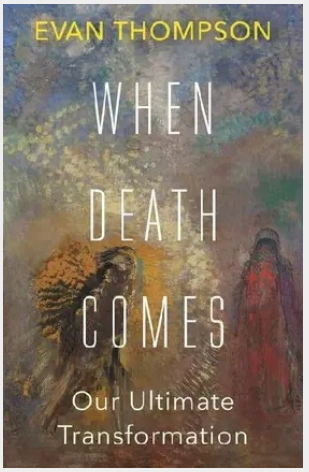
Thompson

# When Death Comes

Our Ultimate Transformation




We have never known more about the biology of death, but we have never been more removed from the experience of dying. Science on its own cannot illuminate the darkness. Only in partnership with philosophy and literature, and in touch with human experience, can it help us come to terms with death—and its significance for life. In When Death Comes, Evan Thompson—a renowned philosopher and author of groundbreaking books on the mind and consciousness—offers a deeply original literary, philosophical, and scientific account of the meaning of mortality. Bucking the tide of reductionism, he interweaves neuroscientific research with the perspectives and practices of philosophical and spiritual contemplative traditions. Thompson considers works by Leo Tolstoy, William James, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and Gabriel Marcel as well as the case of Jahi McMath, a teenage girl whose family did not accept her brain-death diagnosis. He also shares powerful reflections on his own father's passing. Ultimately, this book shows that death is not an unfathomable conclusion but a transformative experience. Human death cannot be reduced to brain death, and near-death experiences are not brain-generated illusions. Consciousness might survive bodily death, mystical experiences enable us to transcend our mortality—and love and hope give us power in the face of death.

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