

The Black Mirror: Looking at Life through Death

Raymond Tallis



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In this beautifully written personal meditation on life and living, Raymond Tallis reflects on the fundamental fact of existence: that it is finite. Inspired by E. M. Forster's thought that "Death destroys a man but the idea of it saves him," Tallis invites readers to look back on their lives from a unique standpoint: one's own future corpse. From this perspective, he shows, the world now vacated can be seen most clearly in all its richness and complexity.

Tallis blends lyrical reflection, humor, and the occasional philosophical argument as he explores his own postmortem recollections. He considers the biological processes and the senses that opened up his late world and the million-nooked space in which he passed his life. His inert, dispossessed body highlights his ceaseless activity in life, the mind-boggling inventory of his possessions, and the togetherness and apartness that characterized his relationships in the material and social worlds. Tallis also touches on the idea of a posthumous life in the memories of those who outlive him. Readers who accompany Tallis as he considers his life through death will appreciate with new intensity the precariousness and preciousness of life, for here he succeeds in his endeavor to make "the shining hour" shine more brightly.



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