Symbolic immortality through children. A thanatological perspective

Abstract:

Culture and death are tied in a bijective relationship. Death challenges culture and culture moulds the face of death, to the extent that the latter cannot be conceived of as not being, in some measure, cultural. Rites, beliefs, religions and immortality are some of the cultural products engendered by death. This study has two main objectives. First, it aims at reflecting on the status of immortality as a cultural product, and, thus, analysing the mechanisms by which immortality can be seen as a symbolic construct. Second, it examines the non-religious symbolic construction of the continuation of existence through children. The role of this second section is to deconstruct this myth from a point of view that merges modern Thanatology with the sociology of knowledge, searching to discover and investigate the social and cultural issues entailed by immortality-through-children.The relation to one's children deserves special attention as it merges nature and culture in an extreme and paradoxical way. If there is a critique that can be brought to this immortality myth, it does not target its ontological necessity, but its absolutization and its being deemed as natural, when being first and foremost cultural.

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