

Mortals. Living in spite of.

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At the conclusion of the festival, we group together the main considerations that emerged during the proceedings on a topic that is as sensitive as it is inescapable.

Death knocks on the door. Taking away a loved one, a relative, a friend, a colleague, even a stranger... So it happened during the pandemic years, when our condition of mortality became evident again, so it happens every day of our lives, because this experience – so dramatic and radical – represents a constant for all of us who experience and live the human condition, as if humanity and mortality were, after all, two variants of the same experience.

These experiences and issues were widely discussed in Trento, November 2-11, 2023, within the *Mortali festival. Living despite*, which has focused on the complex dimension of mortality, to try to reflect on some of the dynamics that this condition triggers. How have we reframed the experiences that the pandemic has aroused in us and to what extent have we instead removed them, to resume at perhaps an even more frenetic pace our daily rush through life? Beginning with these questions, an attempt was made to understand how we deal with the experience of illness and death today, in terms of reflections, practices and attitudes.

Sonia Lunardelli, Cristiano Modanese and Elena Camerella started, launched and built, step by step and from the bottom up, this series of meetings and discussions: the initiative – welcomed and supported by Fondazione Hospice Trentino Onlus – was realized by networking different organizations and entities based in Trentino-Alto-Adige, including Fondazione Bruno Kessler, bringing together speakers who – on a national and international level – dedicate their work to these issues.

The festival began with a guided tour of Trento's Monumental Cemetery: to the end of considering the places and ways of death today, dialogues were constructed on stories of illness and resistance, in a meeting dedicated to Piergiorgio Cattani, and life lived fully until the moment of death was discussed in a meeting-meditation led by journalist Massimo Orlandi and theologian Vito Mancuso. Carlo Casonato, a jurist from the University of Trento, Edoardo Geat, a resuscitation physician and chair of the APSS Ethics Committee, and Loretta Rocchetti, a physician and Head of training at Hospice Cima Verde, presented the tool of advance directives and shared care planning in cases of present and/or advanced illness. In a discussion between bookseller Federico Zappini and philosopher Davide Sisto, who dedicated his book *La morte si fa social. Immortalità, memoria e lutto nell'epoca della cultura digitale* (Bollati Boringhieri 2018) to a

reconstruction of death in the times of digital technology, reflected on the forms that death takes in a digital age and era.

Laura Campanello – a philosophical counselor and who is involved in support and training in care settings such as hospitals and hospices and who also devotes her own writing work to death and life, as evident in her latest book, *Ritrovare l'anima. Esercizi filosofici per trovare la propria via alla felicità* (BUR 2023) – led a reflection on death and dying today, and in a *death café* conversation with Annie Benoit, who from support experiences considers the importance of rediscovering the beauty of life.

Art today suggests and provides pathways for approaching and reflecting on this experience: be it visual art, dramatic art, film art, it was given ample space in the festival, in an attempt to offer tools and opportunities for reprocessing that are important for those who have faced and are facing the experience of dying, as those who have lost a loved one, those who practice care work, those who enter support spaces, like volunteers.

Life can be seen as *A journey to be taken care of*: Giada Lonati, a doctor in charge of the Vidas Hospice in Milan, and the actors of the *Slow Theatre* company thus titled the show they performed on the festival's final day, that raised a lot of attention and found a large audience among people eager to listen, exchange views, and reflect, even if challenging, on death and mortality. Living in spite of this awareness, in spite of the pain of losing a loved one, in spite of an experience of illness that can change the way we look at and inhabit the world, this seems to be the challenge that the *Mortals* Festival tried to launch and take up. Remembering that communities need collective rituals to deal with the loss of a human being, even more so when the loss affects so many human beings.

Looking at this great mystery – for that is what death remains – Shakespeare writes in *Hamlet*: Hamlet: “To die, to sleep Nothing else. To die to sleep. to sleep, perchance to dream”.

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