



# **CULTURE, CONTEXT, AND THE MYSTICAL**

some anthropological notes

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# PERSPECTIVE IS EVERYTHING

George Burns and the leading question...

epidemiology, genetics, ecology, sociology, psychology, health promotion = public health



# THE DOMINANT VIEW OF THE MYSTICAL

(E.G. NDES, DEATHBED & BEREAVEMENT VISIONS)

- PSYCHOLOGY ASSUMPTION = MENTAL PROCESSES/EMPHASIS
  - MEDICAL ASSUMPTION = NDE IS ABOUT DYING
- NEUROSCIENCE ASSUMPTION = DYING IS A BIOLOGICAL EVENT (ETIC)



# THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF THE MYSTICAL

## 4 ILLUSTRATIVE CONTEXTS

- **SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION** – DYING & BEREAVEMENT ARE PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCES
  - **SOCIAL RUPTURE** – THE DEAD MUST PLAY BY THE CULTURAL RULES
- **SOCIAL TRANSITIONS** – IDENTITIES (AND THEN EXPERIENCES) ARE CREATED BY RITUALS
- **LANGUAGE IS CULTURE** – NO EXPERIENCE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD SEPARATE FROM THE LANGUAGE THAT DESCRIBES THEM



## THE INTERDISCIPLINARY SIGNIFICANCE

- GUARDS AGAINST BIOLOGICAL REDUCTIONISM
  - DISTRIBUTES THE SEARCH FOR CAUSE BY WEIGHTED DETERMINANTS
  - PROVIDES FOR UNDERSTANDING POPULATION & EXPERIENTIAL DIVERSITY
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## PARTING THOUGHTS

- C. WRIGHT MILLS
- SMILE, SMILE, SMILE
- THE FASTEST TIME TO EDINBURGH

THE AFTER-DINNER CONVERSATION AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE