

Eighth Meeting: The Evil of Death Continued – Nagel, Rosenbaum, Feldman

1. Epicurus's "Evil Implies Awareness" Argument

1. At no time after death are we conscious.
2. If at no time after death are we conscious, then nothing good or bad happens to us after death.
3. If nothing good or bad happens to us after death, then being dead is not bad for the one who dies.
4. Therefore, being dead is not bad for the one who dies.

2. What Does "death is nothing to us" mean?

"death is not bad for the one who dies"?
"it is irrational to fear death"?

A Principle Linking Harm and the Rationality of Fear: If something is not bad for a person, then it is irrational for him to fear it.

4. Nagel

"If death is an evil at all, it cannot be because of its positive features, but only because of what it deprives us of."

- Nagel, "Death" (*MD*, p. 62)

The Deprivation Approach: death can be bad for the one who dies; death is bad for the one who dies when it deprives him of goods.

Three Objections to the Deprivation Approach:

1. "it may be doubted that there any evils that consist merely in the deprivation or absence of possible goods, and that do not depend on someone's *minding* the deprivation" (p. 64). Cf. The Experience Requirement.
2. Epicurus's "No Time" Argument. "... there seems to be no time when death, if it is a misfortune, can be ascribed to its unfortunate subject" (p. 64). "If death is a disadvantage, it is not easy to say when a man suffers it" (p. 63).
3. The Lucretian Problem / Asymmetry Argument. Consider "the asymmetry ... between our attitudes to posthumous and prenatal nonexistence. How can the former be bad if the latter is not?" (p. 64).

5. Rosenbaum

The Heart of Rosenbaum's Argument (*MD*, pp. 121-122):

(A) A state of affairs is bad for a person P only if P can experience it at some time.

(E) P's being dead is not a state of affairs that P can experience at some time.

Therefore, P's being dead is not bad for P.

Cf. **The Experience Requirement**: if a person is not conscious at some time, then nothing bad is happening to him at that time.

6. Two Kinds of Evil: Intrinsic and Extrinsic

x is intrinsically bad =df. x is bad in itself; x is bad independent of any consequences or preconditions; x would still be bad even if it didn't lead to anything else bad.

Hedonism (restated): a state of affairs is *intrinsically* good for a person iff it is her experiencing some pleasure at some time; a state of affairs is *intrinsically* bad for a person iff it is her experiencing some pain at some time.

Extrinsic badness is more complicated:

“A central component of hedonism, as I have formulated it above, is the view that pain experiences are the only things that are *intrinsically* bad for a person. This view is consistent with the view that many other things can be bad for a person—so long as these other things are not *intrinsically* bad. Other bad things will be said to be intrinsically bad for a person. Thus, a hedonist can surely say that illness, poverty, injustice, and ignorance (to mention just a few obvious evils) are great evils for a person. But these things are not *intrinsic* evils according to hedonism. Their evil is derivative. They are evil only because they happen to be connected to pain.”

- Feldman, *CWR*, p. 133

7. Two Interpretations of Epicurus's “Evil Implies Awareness” Argument

Epicurus's “Evil Implies Awareness” Argument – “Intrinsic” Interpretation

1. At no time after death are we conscious.
2. If at no time after death are we conscious, then nothing intrinsically good or intrinsically bad happens to us after death.
3. If nothing intrinsically good or intrinsically bad happens to us after death, then being dead is not intrinsically bad for the one who dies.
4. Therefore, being dead is not intrinsically bad for the one who dies.

Epicurus's “Evil Implies Awareness” Argument – “Extrinsic” Interpretation

1. At no time after death are we conscious.
2. If at no time after death are we conscious, then nothing extrinsically good or extrinsically bad happens to us after death.
3. If nothing extrinsically good or extrinsically bad happens to us after death, then death is not extrinsically bad for the one who dies.
4. Therefore, death is not extrinsically bad for the one who dies.

Two Accounts of Extrinsic Badness:

CP: If something is extrinsically bad for a person, then it is bad for him or her because it leads to later intrinsic bads for him or her.

EB: Something is extrinsically bad for a person iff it makes his or her life worse than it would have been; (in other words: iff the life in which it occurs is worse for him or her than the life in which it does not occur).