

Seventh Meeting: The Evil of Death (continued)

1. Epicurus's "Evil Implies Awareness" Argument

"Accustom yourself to believe that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply awareness, and death is the privation of all awareness. ... Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us"

- Epicurus, "Letter to Menoecus."

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 death is not bad for the one who dies.
4. Therefore, death is not bad for the one who dies.

Hedonism (to a first approximation): a state of affairs is good for a person iff it is his experiencing some pleasure at some time; a state of affairs is bad for a person iff it is his experiencing some pain at some time.

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

2. Epicurus's "No Time" Argument

"Death ... the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer."

- Epicurus, "Letter to Menoecus."

1. Anything that is bad for someone must be bad for that person at a particular time.
2. There is no time at which death is bad for the one who dies.
3. Therefore, death is not bad for the one who dies

3. 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.