

Second Philosophy

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Title	Is Death Harmful?
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INTRODUCTION

For many this may seem an almost ridiculous question. Of course death is harmful, most would say, it ends our life and we should be fearful of it. However over the centuries many philosophers have considered the issue of death and have come to very different conclusions. Some indeed see death as doing us harm either at the point of death or in some cases after we are dead for some time. Others have seen the fear of death as illogical since death cannot harm us at all. Others again see death as a good not harmful thing.

~ The Arguments ~

- Epicurus (Died approx 270 BC) said this of death, “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.”
- Lucretius (Died 52 BC) said, “And since the Man who Is not, feels not woe (For Death exempts him and wards off the blow, Which we, the living, only feel and bear), What is there left for us in Death to Fear?”
- Ludwig Wittgenstein (Died 1951) said, “Death is not an event in life. Death is not lived through.”

With such formidable philosophers pointing out that since we don't exist in death, it is not part of living, or the experience of living, why should we continue to fear death? We may fear the process of dying, that's another matter and a concern for the living, but death can hold no fear for a non-existent subject who is no where and in no time.

Not so fast say others there is a definite sense in which death can harm us. Death is the end of life. It removes our possibilities. It removes our futures. It removes the good things of life. To die at any time is a tragedy to die young, before your time, is a particularly intense tragedy.

Not only that you can be harmed after your death as well. In 1924 Franz Kafka the novelist asked his friend Max Brod to destroy his papers after his death. Brod refused to do this and later published two of Kafka's greatest works 'The Trial' and 'The Castle'. Many would argue that although we gained Kafka was harmed. If your reputation is slandered or libelled. If your last wishes are disobeyed by deceit then have you not suffered harm even though you are long dead? Is there not something of your in the present and in the past that can still be harmed after your death?

Yet again other philosophers dismiss both of these camps. Death is not a harm and it is not just irrelevant it has positive aspects. Death by ending life can do us all a favour. Do we really want to live forever; do we always want to go with life? Isn't it nice to know that even the most evil tyrant will be struck down eventually. Is early death such a tragedy? For some it allowed them to enjoy the sunshine of fame and glory without the long decline into mediocrity.

Take Alexander the Great (Died 11th June 323 BC aged 32) either he died at the top of his Greek civilising game and immortal or his death removed the greatest warmonger the world had ever seen up to that time. Either way you could say his death was a blessed relief?

Do we really want evermore life? Doesn't death give us the final horizon we all need to make sense of ourselves? As E.M. Forster said in *Howards End*, “Death destroys a man: the idea of Death saves him.”

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NOTE:

This debate is not designed to involve a proof of the existence of God or the soul. If we assume both of these entities then there is no harm in death and the soul goes to its just fate on the death of the body. There is then no debate on harm.

QUESTIONS:

1. Were Epicurus, Lucretius and Wittgenstein right to say that death should not be feared?
2. Are the dead harmed at the moment of their death?
3. Can the dead, like Kafka, be harmed after their death?
4. Is death a good thing rather than a harmful thing?

REFERENCES:

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Some Information on Kafka`s last wish:

<http://lawlit.blogspot.com/2008/09/franz-kafkas-last-wishes-and-kafka.html>

Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions*

Chapter 1 Death.

Mark Rowlands, *The Philosopher at the End of the Universe*

Chapter 9 Blade Runner and the Meaning of Life.

Craig Bourne, *Philosophical Ridings: Motorcycles and the Meaning of Life*

Chapter 2 First Gear-The End of the Road What`s So Bad About Death?

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DISCUSSION:

Oswy: OK folks I would like to start with questions 1 and 2 which were a little out of sequence there. Can we be harmed at the point of death?

Simulat: Is it a harm to be prevented from doing what you want to do?

Shingles: that depends upon what we are referring to when we say 'we'.

Oswy: Eolas I think that is the core of this debate. For a living person we might say something that hurts their interests but can you say that of the dead?

Oswy: Sim if you don't exist, how can you be prevented?

Sluggly: dead people don't exist, so no

Shingles: is the 'self' ones active consciousness then?

Eolas: yes, but that's exceedingly vague - does harm mean anything that hurts a person physically? Then not all death fits that category... is it something happening that someone doesn't want? Then again, not all death fits that as some people welcome death

Renald: Dead people do exist... they just aren't alive.

Oswy: Sluggly, I think that is what the range of philosophers quoted were saying exactly

Alaya: I see death as a harm if its provoked by another person, in an act of coercion

Simulat: Oswy - you might want to support your family and they might fall into poverty if you die - isn't it a harm to die then?

Eolas: if you want to know if death is harmful at the point of death, I'd imagine you'll find a great difference between the deaths of a 16 year old from a gunshot wound versus an 80 year old man who dies in his sleep

Eolas: can we get a less vague definition

Alaya: lol Ren

Renald: Sim, isn't that a condition, though? At most that would establish that there can be harm associated with death. Is the question whether death itself is harmful?

Sluggly: I suppose it could harm them if they come back to life...

Sojourna: I think a living person is harmed by death, in so far as they want to continue the project of living. Once dead though, harm doesn't make sense.

Oswy: Eolas so you are saying harm varies with age but whatever your age there is no person to harm they are dead.

Seneca: Should we feel differently about death (nonexistence after life) than we do about the long period of existence we enjoyed before we were born or conceived? I can say with some confidence that the earlier nonexistence wasn't bad for me.

Eolas: haha.

Jack: Wouldn't it behove us to first define what death is? And conversely, life?

Eolas: I'm not saying harm varies with age; but with situation

Simulat: are pain and suffering the only sorts of harm that can befall a person?

Oswy: Sim you might want to do all sort of things have all sorts of possibilities but there is no one there to care your dead you can't suffer anything.

Eolas: harm in death, I should say

Lokifluff: how can we define death exactly?

Eolas: that's my question Sim - we need to define Harm...

Oswy: Sim the living might be harmed by your death but you are not

Lokifluff: I don't imagine anyone here has been there...

Marya: Jack, perhaps we can say death is not existing, and life is existing, as best as we are able to know what these things are at this point

Seneca: Epicurus assumed that death was our complete annihilation; Nonexistence.

Shingles: And if we take the self to include at its fundamental core a will to life, which we exploit from the moment of birth, then like Sojourna's implying, it harms us fundamentally to be dispossessed of Life, Seneca

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Eolas: Loki, can we just say that death is the termination of our physical existence?

Renald: Marya... not existing of what? :-)

Simulat: that is just defining harm in a particular way isn't it Oswy? By implication

Magenta: I think we see death as failing to achieve what we wanted to before we die

Makrina: All the philosophers quoted assume that Seneca

Alaya: Sojourna, we don't know what happened to them after death, if they suffer not being here .if the were put to death by an act of coercion, there comes the legend of the dead coming to hunt ...back

Marya: not existing of this world Ren :)

Oswy: Seneca, that argument has been used by many philosophers before birth we are not concerned so why worry about after death?

Simulat: sort of begs the question - why is that the definition of harm?

Shingles: As animals we crave living

Renald: Magenta, yes... that seems to be a popular source to cite for the harm involved...

Sojourna: Alaya, sure, but I cannot make assumptions about what happens after death - as Epicurus said, if death is, then I am not. And that's that. I am not. after death, that is.

Seneca: I think 'harm' requires a setback of one's interests. If ones interests haven't been set back, then one has not been harmed. But death doesn't set our interests back, it eliminates them.

Sojourna: Seneca, I would agree with you.

Eolas: I've known several old men (and elephants and tigers if you want to talk other animals) who are perfectly fine with dying when they reach that point.

Alaya: it' an assumption to say that there are not, also....

Eolas: I don't think that many of them felt dying was subverting their interests

Shingles: our most fundamental interest is the satisfaction of a will to life, is it not. Look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs for example, Seneca

Renald: Shingles... have we found any case of life without death?

Eolas: I've known many people who viewed dying as a fine culmination to a life well-lived

Simulat: Seneca - isn't it in your interest to have your family prosper, and doesn't that interest continue even if you are dead?

Oswy: If I don't get back to you straight away then I apologise as usual this debate is complex. All Can I make the point here that we need to keep the dead and the living apart. The living may fear death the living may be harmed but the dead cannot.

Sojourna: Eolas, yeah, I think that people who have time to prepare for death, have a different feeling about it. My 16 year old cousin died after a longish battle with cancer, and at the end, he seemed quite ready to go - so there seemed no further harm could be done to him at that point.

Seneca: I think our interests may often be in conflict with the 'will to life,' at least as that phrase is usually understood, Shingles.

Seneca: Schopenhauer certainly thought that the will to life operates in us in a way that may be contrary to our interests. I think he was right!

Renald: Oswy, I don't agree that we need to do that. It's an option worth exploring.

Eolas: yeah Soj.... which is what I mean really - it's not about age, but situation related to death

Lokifluff: life is a priori to Maslow's needs

Shingles: often conflict with? That's worrying. Besides it's the 'will to power' which IS the will to life, Seneca

Sojourna: Eolas, yes, I think so.

Renald: All... if death is a natural part of life, then all of our will or interest in life would naturally include death in some way, it seems to me.

Eolas: if I had a debilitating disease, I might be a lot more receptive to my death and think it was a good thing than if someone stabbed me in a botched robbery

Alaya: the assumption that there is nobody to be after,, is only pointing to the material aspect, according that this is what we see dying,, but we didn't see the person dying and decaying, only the body, maybe they are suffering for a while maybe not, but we cant say they are decaying, and not anymore nor there either

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Shingles: that suggests to me that he had the wrong conception of a will to life, Seneca

Oswy: I hear people talking about interests but how can a dead person be interested in anything?

Eolas: so I suppose the question is whether death harms *other people*

Lokifluff: what happens after death can harm the memory of

Sojourna: Oswy - wasn't your question about harm done to the dead at the time of death and not to the living?

Oswy: Eolas I am sure it does but that is not the question. The issue is our irrational fear of death itself.

Shingles: unless all matter is somehow compelled, then I guess they cannot, Oswy

Eolas: is it the issue?

Simulat: I agree Renald - I think a point comes when we welcome death - but isn't it a harm to have something forced on you that you don't want?

Eolas: I didn't get that from the premise

Sojourna: Ah, ok, sorry we are still on question 1. Fear?

Seneca: If I lie and slander someone and ruin her reputation after she has died, have I done something wrong to the person I slander?

Simulat: For instance - If I am not harmed by being murdered, why is murder a crime?

Shingles: But you can harm their memory

Oswy: Soy Yes I am taking the point of death to be the point when the physical conscious person ceases to be.

Renald: Sim, again that brings particular conditions into it. Unless you are formulating a fundamental desire for immortality?

Sojourna: Sim! Wow, good point there! In fact, it is usually a crime when one does not want to be murdered. But you mean in terms of euthanasia cases?

Sophia: because you harm other living sim,

Renald: Also, Sim, it depends on who or what is doing the forcing... life forces all kinds of things on us.

Simulat: sure Renald - circumstances change the meanings of things

Eolas Darwin sighs... we *need* definitions Oswy... everyone is using harm in different sense

Eolas: physical harm, emotional harm, "harming memories"

Seneca: While we're living, we don't want to be murdered. So we have an interest that explains why we make murder a crime. I don't think this means we need to assume that death is a harm to the person who is already gone.

Shingles: there's a dictionary available online

Simulat: Sojourna - that is my point - its not harm to die if you want to die - but if you don't want to die then it is

Oswy: Eolas This debate is about those definitions. So far we have gotten to the point where the philosophers say No harm in any sense/

Eolas: death should be feared if there is a reason to fear it... but if you're 97 years old and you've had a great life.... I don't anticipate being afraid

Sojourna: Sim, yes.

Oswy: Now you may think that does not make sense?

Seneca: Well, being killed is bad, Sim. But the death that comes at the end of it? I don't think that's among the bads one suffers in being killed.

Alaya: it sure lead to the question, are we decaying with the body, that lead to the meaning of the fear of our self termination, not the death of the body. Death could mean one or they other, and in one of the situation bring no fear

Seneca: Woody Allen had a different view though. He said something like "I wouldn't mind dying if it weren't the death that comes at the end of it."

Eolas: Oswy, the debate is centered around questions that are deeply individual.

Jack: if one retains awareness after death, then I tend the think harm in any sense is possible; if awareness ceases with the body, then I would say it isn't.

Eolas: EACH situation of death may be harmful or not - in any sense you wan to use the term "harm"

Lokifluff: "I am not afraid of dying - I just don't want to be there when it happens"

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Simulat: Seneca - I can't believe you would be sympathetic to a murder standing over a corpse saying to you - "What's your problem? The guy isn't suffering and doesn't care"

Seneca: I'm with Jack T on this one! I think a lot depends on what one thinks death really is.

Alaya: Loki, what will be there, what is not the body..

Oswy: Let me make a concession. So, philosophers say death is a harm because it ends our futures ie things we have planned to do. Does that make sense to anyone?

Sojourna: Yes, makes sense.

Eolas: no it doesn't Oswy

Jack: yes that makes sense to me as well

Eolas: only if death comes prior to someone's sense of a lived life

Shingles: it harms us because fundamentally we want to stay alive unless we are very confused!

Oswy: Soj, how can the dead feel aggrieved at no future?

Seneca: The problem is that it also ends all of the things that caused us to value our futures.

Schopenhauer: Dying is harmful because during that time we are still aware of the impending "end"; during that time we are aware of all the things we never got to do in life. However, once we are dead, we have no knowledge that we ever lived, nor of anything we wanted to do.

Alaya: lol yes and no if you have old age and finished because the body is tired,, than it can look like a relieve

Marya: what is it that doesn't work for you in that explanation, Eolas?

Sojourna: Oswy - good question, one I hope to be able to answer a few months into my degree :p

Oswy: All Is there a sense that the harm cannot be judged by the dead but only by outsiders?

Eolas: What doesn't work in that explanation is the assumption that there are no circumstances under which its possible to *not* have plans for the future

Oswy: The sense of harm lives on in the living as a sense of harm. its a pretty weird idea?

Eolas: as we've already noted, old age, debilitating disease, crippling accidents.... etc.

Sojourna: I'm not sure about future selves and future ownership of our identity. But I know that if we cannot miss or feel harmed that we did not live before our birth, the same should apply for after our death. But it doesn't seem to. Yet, I know that is right.

Alaya: Oswy, this we cannot know, the death of the body didn't show that the person is decaying with the body, and not present somehow..

Eolas: there are plenty of situations in which people could legitimately not be planning or preparing for "future"

Seneca: What does this view imply about the value of life, Sojourna?

Marya: Well, a person that is about to commit suicide, I expect would have no plans for the future, outside of ending his/her life, Eolas

Simulat: Can't the harmfulness of death be something that depends on circumstances Eolas?

Eolas: and such death wouldn't be a terrifying concept or a concept that harms those people; of course it depends entirely on circumstance! but that's my point....

Oswy: Schopenhauer I agree but I think you are talking about the living and not the dead again.

Eolas: which is why I keep requiring more strict definitions of "harm"

Seneca: If life is a good thing, shouldn't we bring more people into existence so that they can enjoy it too? Save them from the dark misfortune of nonexistence? :-)

Eolas: if you leave it vague, then we sit here for an hour, and walk away with exactly what we knew going in

Eolas: i.e. "sometimes death is harmful and sometimes it isn't"

Renald: Oswy, when I'm not operating in a mode that would be dismissed by many as mystical... I think what existence the dead continue to have once dead depends entirely on the living. It's in our memories and recollections, or reconstructions and imaginations, that the dead continue. How they continue, and how well, thus depends on the effect they had while living, on their contemporaries who survive them. It's those survivors who decide what kind of "afterlife" the dead will have, and it's the "virtual" continued imagined existence of the dead who judge.

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Sojourna: Seneca - about not owning our future selves? Well, it would certainly change a lot of things about our lives.

Seneca: I think the view that death is bad has implications about what we should do for the people who don't exist but who might.

Shingles: the unborn are not to be pitied, yet the disposed of life are, Oswy

Eolas: hell... Oswy's note already showed that.

Seneca: I think the dead are beyond pity, Shing.

Eolas: we're sitting here avoiding making distinctions between murder/force and dying in ones sleep.... between "harm to the dead individual" and "harm to their families"

Shingles: that confuses me, Seneca

Renald: Eolas, that's a distinction regarding dying, not death.

Sojourna: Yes, Shingles, it is an odd thing, but it certainly feels that way! I'm trying to come to terms with not feeling that way about my future self. But it is hard. Don't you think? So, at least as far as I am concerned, my death would be shame for me. (oh dear third time today I speak of my death - if I'm not here next week, you all know why!)

Eolas: indeed... you don't think that makes a difference Renald? Death in and of itself isn't really worth discussing all that much to be honest

Marya: I'm inclined to agree with that Ren, it is essentially those that remain alive that are subject to any form of 'harm'

Eolas: it's inevitable and not that interesting, and a moot point since everyone dies

Renald: Eolas, I do of course think that makes a difference... but also it establishes two different differences, at least.

Alaya: Seneca from our point of view how can we see for the leaving one....

Shingles: it baffles me why you attended in that case Eolas, lol

Eolas: the way in which a person dies, however, has a lot of bearing

Renald: Ah, Eolas, I see. I'm still attempting to address the original questions... I think.

Oswy: All My suggesting that the dead continue in the living would also explain the feeling we have about the young and old dying. The old don't have much of a future the young do so we feel it more for them in ourselves.

Lokifluff: so does what a person does in the face of death with their life Eolas

Seneca: I think grieving for the dead has to do with our own living losses, not with those of the dead person.

Sojourna: Oswy, you mean to say there is more "future" potential for the young, and so more to lose?

Eolas: huh Loki? I didn't get your question, or not a question

Lokifluff: re the way a person dies has a lot of bearing

Eolas: nm... I understand.

Alaya: exactement, Seneca, this is why I think it's good to answer for our own death; not for the others

Eolas: yes

Lokifluff: np

Eolas: definitely

Oswy: Eolas surely it is worth discussing. One it comes to us all. 2 Our attitude to it affects our living time. If we have the wrong attitude to death then we have the wrong attitude to life?

Eolas: Actually Oswy, you just demonstrated exactly what I mean

Oswy: Soj Yes.

Alaya: is death is something for yourself.....not the others death

Eolas: *death* isn't worth discussing; what you do in the face of it; how you die

Shingles: oh yes it is

Eolas: how you live your life related to death; those thins matter; death by itself isn't really very interesting if you avoid questions of afterlife; because it's just a fact

Alaya: how do we figure our own ending?

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Oswy: Eolas If I have a morbid fear of death and that affects my whole life, I think that is worth discussing?

Lokifluff: but you would be discussing the fear Oswy - not necessarily the death

Eolas: saying "there's a tree over there" is a boring statement... but knowing that you have to do something... act, in order to get there, is what's debatable

Lokifluff: fear is for the living

Sojourna: Oswy - do you really? (Because I DO!)

Eolas: again Oswy - you're discussing 2 different things

Renald: Eolas, in a way we are, of course, discussing how we live in the face of death because, as you say, there isn't anything to say about death beyond speculation. But that's still quite a different matter than the process of dying.

Oswy: Loki I only come to that point by seeing that death is no harm, so I focus on life instead carpe diem and all that

Alaya: Eolas how do you know now if one here is not sick and already facing his near death...than it is not an abstraction

Eolas: if you want to discuss fear of death; let's do that

Sojourna: Eolas - it's the topic of the discussion?!

Eolas: if you want to discuss the way dying affects our morality

Eolas: no it isn't; the topic of the discussion is "is death harmful"

Lokifluff: but do we say that death is no harm in order to allay our own fears?

Marya: I expect everyone wants to feel that their lives have had some effect in the world, that they have done something that matters, that they have been valuable in some manner or another - and the ending of one's life is the ending of the opportunity to do these things, which is likely to be a strong reason to fear it - for what is left behind, and not for one's own 'feelings'

Oswy: Soj I was throwing a lifeline to those who think that death can harm us by removing our futures. Nagel etc thinks this.

Eolas: which is vague and impossible to answer.

Sojourna: OK, Oswy. Got it

Alaya: Eolas the topic is it harmful for who, is facing it; or for who talk about it

Eolas: the topic isn't titled "is fear of death valid?"

Shingles: Death does harm us.

Simulat: hmm - there is a weird quality to this discussion because it focuses only on the definition of harm, and doesn't seem to recognize that we actually act as if death is harmful most of our lives - its something that we strive to avoid

Sojourna: Eolas - question 1. Fear.

Eolas: Shingles, please define harm

Eolas: because if you welcome death or are not robbed of your conception of future by it, is that harmful?

Alaya: nope validity isn't measure there

Sojourna: Sim - oh yes, quite true - and I think if we could just accept Epicurus on this, we would really be able to enjoy ourselves much more in this life.

Shingles: it injures us, it defies our most fundamental drive, Eolas

Sophia: if one feels sorry for what is left behind then he would feel it while he is alive, not after death

Eolas: Shingles, you keep saying "us" as if all drives at all points in life are the same and for the same reasons

Jack: death harms the living not the dead.

Eolas: its fine if you can't conceive of a situation in which a person might want to die, or be indifferent towards it.... but I don't think that's very accurate

Marya: Sometimes people do not focus on such things a great deal in their lives Sophia, because humans are inherently selfish beings - they tend only to focus on their 'legacy' when that opportunity to make a difference is under threat

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Renald: Marya, that's how I see it, too. And so what can be harmed in oneself after one's death is the ongoing effect of whatever one achieved while living. But, of course, having died, the self harmed by that is not the self one was while living. It isn't alive, it's a virtuality, a copy stored in the medium of the minds of the living or, if one is especially effective, in some cultural structure that transcends generations.

Oswy: Right doesn't stop the discussion on the topics already raised but I want to raise the other two questions as well. Can we be harmed well after death like Kafka? And is death a harm at all should we not welcome it more?

Alaya: Eolas validity isn't something ask there, but rather the conception of death that could implies fear or harm

Shingles: Well, as a believer in the Will To Power, I would say that there is that common drive in all forms of life on this planet, Eolas

Eolas: Alaya- I know, that's my point. Which is what is a problem

Eolas: Shingles, you still haven't answered the question

Simulat: Yes Sojourna - life is hard, then you die - that saying has always been a great comfort to me because it makes me appreciate the good bits and shrug off the bad bits - but still, even though I have that comfort, my normal state of mind is that I treat dying as a harm

Shingles: what question, Eolas

Eolas: it's fine to say that most creatures have a drive to live... but is that true across all cases?

Alaya: what is death after all

Eolas: you're making a general statement that cannot be made

Alaya: what is it the end of

Oswy: Sorry if I am not picking up all the points but we can do that on Facebook later. Anyway was Kafka harmed by his friend Brod?

Sojourna: Sim, me too, but I think that feeling is decreasing the older I get... I think :p

Eolas: which is enabling you to answer the larger question without dealing with the specifics.

Renald: Alaya, indeed, what is death? A death is the end of a life, not the opposite of life, anymore than birth is.

Alaya: if we could know what is it the end of, we can more see if it's harming

Eolas: That question Oswy - is one that interests me a lot...

Oswy: In a strange way I think he was although he was long dead.

Alaya: but Ren, I only can see the death of the body, nothing more

Eolas: if a person is dead, after they're dead, they can no longer be harmed directly.

Shingles: yes it can, and yes it is. Life at its simplest, the bacterium, is driven to exploit and overpower all about it, this condition is present in every elaborated example of life from the first bacteria, Eolas

Eolas: but if they left specific instructions, do we respect their wishes?

Oswy: I am a historian so I see reputation as important. Again its part of the idea that the dead exist on in us.

Sojourna: I don't think Kafka was harmed - Kafka made those wishes as a living man. As a dead man he has no wishes.

Marya: How do you perceive him to have been harmed Oswy? He is dead ... he is not subject to feelings

Eolas: Shingles.... you're *still* denying the idea of people possibly having reasons to no longer care about that drive

Jack: it appears to me from reading this discussion that death is harmful only to the living whether it be through fear of it or ending our living plans, etc., but for the dead - which is a different state of being or non-being whichever the case may be - i do not see it as harmful. Once dead it is likely that things that mattered to us when living do no matter anymore.

Sojourna: But something else, maybe Kafka's legacy, was harmed.

Renald: Oswy, it seems complicated in Kafka's case... he was certainly betrayed... but harms are not all equal. In a way, one's life, once finished, is like a work of art. If it's any good it begins to stand on its own, the artist loses control of it.

Shingles: how would that be relevant, Eolas?

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Eolas: and if you want to get into biology, there are dozens of species who dies immediately following mating

Simulat: We sometimes even disregard the directly expressed wishes of living people Eolas - so why should the wishes of the dead be sacrosanct?

Eolas: it's completely relevant because you are saying that in *all* cases death is "harmful" without dealing with the specific problem of your logic

Shingles: yes, but that doesn't refute my point, Eolas

Sojourna: Jack - yep, I think so...

Schopenhauer: Kafka may have made those wishes, but had Max Brod obeyed, we would be deprived of one of the greatest writers. Those two works are considered classics of twentieth century literature. So I don't think Kafka was harmed. But then again, he considered himself a failure, and supposedly thrived on that failure.

Eolas: if you say it's harmful because it violates our basic urges, you have to prove that those urges apply to everyone at the moment of death; and frankly - I think you have the wrong urge.

Alaya: Ren there is a lost, when one have no more body, and its all the pleasure that this body was bringing, so the arm, in the provocation of that pleasure, is cause by an something that arm, the body, but death I cannot see what it does in itself

Oswy: All I don't want to get all mystical here but I am saying that in a way the living give the dead immortality. If you knowingly don't do what they want in their last wishes or lie about them after death then you harm them through your actions??

Eolas: sex is the driving imperative, passing on genetic material - not simply "living"

Marya: Oswy, you might harm 'someone', but not the dead person

Milton: There is also the issue of behaving so as to establish that, as a general proposition, that those expecting to die, can take pleasure or at least comfort in the probability that their wishes well be honored, especially with respect to their property (as this touches on other rights as well). That expectation is most credibly established by honoring the reasonable wishes of the deceased.

Eolas: life enables people to pass on their genes, and that's great but if you're 80 and you've already done that?

Eolas: why is death harmful to those people?

Oswy: Schopenhauer Did Kafka have the right to control his work after death?

Renald: Schopenhauer, that's what I meant to suggest... if we reconstruct a faithful model of Kafka, I'm sure it would be outraged by the betrayal, almost more so because those works are so highly regarded. At the same time, cultures now have even more reason to continue reconstructing models of Kafka... so it's doing him good... unless he would have rather been forgotten. :-)

Shingles: ah, but this reproduction, an exploitation of resources about that life form is derivated from its basic natural urge to overpower, Eolas

Alaya: *in the provocation of the end of the body pleasure, is it only what it is....

Oswy: This raises some complex stuff on inheritance and copyright?

Alaya: if death isn't an end but a change?

Oswy: All The living may harm the living as Eolas and Shingles are demonstrating but are the dead harmed by our deceit?

Milton: Oswy, to some extent. But only because it is analogous. The logic of the duration of copyright beyond the author's death is to give the copyright marketable value DURING the author's lifetime. No other way for an 80 year old writer to get full measure. :)

Eolas: anyway.... I wonder about those questions

Eolas: The world is probably better off for Kafka's writing.

Oswy: Milton But doesn't the artists estate heirs get benefit as well?

Alaya: if death is a change, and only its premature provocation, sudden and violent could bring an awful passage through it, not being prepared, and full of anger., the type of death, can than make all the difference

Lokifluff: I can't help but think that Brod harmed his relationship with Kafka, or rather, the memory of his relationship with Kafka, and we all benefited as a result of that...

Marya: Interesting, so while it may have annoyed him, you feel that since the release of his work served a greater good, that it overruled the possible harm of going against his wishes, Eolas?

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Eolas: Well.... perhaps... it's just an interesting thing to me; especially as A. an artist, and B. an atheist

Oswy: All Kafka didn't want the world to have those novels yet the living ignored his wishes. Have we not harmed him. Hang your head in shame anyone who has read them.

Renald: We can harm the dead... but insofar as they exist in our recollections and reconstructions, they are our possession in ways the living aren't. We can harm our possessions... but the question of what is harm and what isn't is akin to what developers have to go through to remodel historic buildings.

Marya: lol Oswy

Eolas: cause.... I mean... I have a lot of work which I really wouldn't want shown posthumously

Shingles: although if the last will and testament is something we will give as much respect as a living person, Kafka's works were effectively stolen from him, we cannot get around that

Milton: Oswy, certainly. And as one who believes ardently in both the moral and pragmatic value of property rights, I applaud that. But still the basic intent behind the present law is to put younger and older authors on more nearly equal footing in respect o harvesting the full value of their work. Whether they get that value by giving it to their heirs or selling it is beside the point in my opinion.

Oswy: All, consider this What if Kafka had left work that really damaged his reputation eg it was racist. This has happened . Would he have been harmed then?

Eolas: but what if someone did show my work to people after I die and they really love it? Obviously I wouldn't care, because I'm dead.... but my legacy would be benefitted, even while my memory would have been smirched a little

Simulat: I don't think they were stolen from him Shingles - his wishes were not obeyed - but that happens all the time

Oswy: Milton but in a sense the dead are guiding the living and we say this is worthy of respect.

Eolas: right.... Os - so at what point do we respect the wishes of the dead? And why?

Renald: Oswy... is a lie harmed by being revealed?

Lokifluff: when we wish to maintain or honour our relationship with them

Milton: Oswy, no argument. 3/4s of my heroes are dead.

Shingles: I think that presented with the choice of whether to respect Kafka's wishes or not, Brod chose not to, this cannot be gotten around

Alaya: I think we shouldn't do anything of the will of a dead one, but only give the things he own to who he ask before his death, any dead will isn't harming if honor or not, the dead , but the living only

Oswy: Ren That is the point in what sense if any can the dead be harmed once long dead? The lie certainly harms the living by giving a distorted picture of the dead person.

Eolas: I agree with that I think Alaya

Renald nods

Jack: I think it likely, once we have passed, that the affairs of the living or things that matter to us as living beings no longer hold the same meaning for us.

Eolas: but if you've made a specific plan for how you want your life's work distributed, and people simply ignore that?

Marya: Perhaps Kafka did not perceive there to be value in his work - this is not an uncommon thing - Brod perceived it as valuable, and so has many who have read his work - so ultimately, despite going against Kafka's wishes, Brod actually may have done 'him' good as opposed to harm

Eolas: I personally think that it's impossible to "harm" the dead

Oswy: Alaya That is what we do but why do we feel obliged to follow the wishes of a non existing person in those cases .

Eolas: as I believe that when I'm dead, I completely and irrevocably cease to exist, but I wouldn't want my memory harmed

Renald: Oswy, what someone dead intended to "live on" past them can indeed be harmed. But that "living on" is the responsibility of the living, who must look to their own benefit or harm.

Seneca: I agree with Loki here: Brod had a reason to respect his friend's wishes and honor his promise. But in this case, he also had other reasons to see that his friend's work was published. I think he made the right choice,

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but not because there were no contravening reasons. Still, the reasons have nothing to do with the dead interests of his dead friend.

Oswy: Marya. That argument opens lots of strange doors. The living can then interpret what is best for the dead. Isn't that disrespecting their autonomy and can the dead have autonomy?

Eolas: I don't think the dead can have autonomy Oswy

Renald: No... not really.

Alaya: distributed Eolas, not really about that, but donated, only...to someone cause it will go to the government, and people, the living one are aloud to receive what is given before the death, if the death was previdsible, and if not, than the same, if there is a donation paper

Shingles: we are presented with a choice then, do we grant partial autonomy to the dead or not, Oswy & all?

Eolas: well... no, I'm talking still about myself Alaya; the government won't be getting rights to music I've composed

Renald: Shingles... where would any autonomy in the dead rest?

Oswy: Eolas As a historian I think it is essential that they do. Other wise history becomes dangerously variable. We can walk all over the dead at will.

Shingles: in their last will and testament, I would suggest, Ren

Eolas: Oswy, you and I will disagree to a great deal on that tip

Marya: I don't think so Oswy - I think it is common for us not to see value in what we do at times, and it is difficult for us to stand outside of ourselves and see our work objectively - it takes someone else to see it for it's value (or not) at times - and no, I don't see that a dead person has any feelings at all, and so cannot be harmed (only those who have something to win or lose by the action stand to be harmed or rewarded in any manner)

Eolas: I don't believe government should be in the business of preserving anything but liberty; but that's another question

Oswy: I am going to fling in Question 4 to this amazingly rich discussion. Is death a good thing? So why fear it.

Eolas: and point of fact....

Shingles is amazed

Eolas: JS Bach for example, left all of his scores to his children

Alaya: well Eolas I accept the donation will, but not any work done with the effects of the dead things,, not any commandment to do nor work...nothing

Simulat: It depends Oswy :-)

Milton: On the issue of harming the dead, I hesitate to mention it as Oswy has already touched on it - but I do believe a writer's immortality is more than a figure of speech. For the core of identity is our patterns of thought, our knowledge, our attitudes, our way of processing information, etc. And that CAN be and IS reproduced by influencing other and shaping their minds. This in not mystical view at all. That immortality is not all or none but almost always something in between. I'd say a lot of Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, or Ludwig von Mises is alive and well. :)

Marya: lol Sim

Renald: Oswy... question 4 is very important... I don't think much of the negativity we customarily view death with is warranted or healthy. But it's possible to go to far the other way... I think ambivalence is probably best :-)

Eolas: and the kids held on to his music for a long time..... Didn't do anything with it - and it wasn't until Messian found the work that it was brought to prominence again

Oswy: Milton I think I agree with a lot of that.

Eolas: and now it's stronger than ever

Shingles: excellent point, Milton

Alaya: anything that the dead wish to be done, shouldn't be done ..nothing can satisfied his desire after death nor arm if not done..

Eolas: Not enough Mises Milton ;)

Seneca: (Mendelssohn, I believe, Eolas)

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Eolas: Um.... yes... sorry Seneca

Shingles: but if we allow that, don't we endanger the legacy of the long dead, as Oswy suggests, Alaya?

Oswy: On the good of death. Doesn't it bring glory to some eg Keats Alexander. Wouldn't it have been better if some had died earlier? Genghis Khan Saddam Hussein etc . And none of us wants to live forever do we?

Simulat: Seems Keynes is being resurrected :-)

Alaya: people can publish the material if they find an artist worth or not, even if the dead have wished it, it doesn't promise success anyhow

Seneca: Maybe the value/disvalue of death and life are always perspectival judgments of value that depend on the situation of the person making the valuation.

Simulat: do we do that for him, or for ourselves?

Eolas: Keynes hasn't been gone in 60 years Sim

Oswy: Thanks Milton some very good contributions.

Seneca: From the perspective (nonperspective) of the nonexistent, existence is not a value.

Eolas: we've had nothing but Keynes but that too is another issue (one that infuriates me); 60....gah.... 80 now

Seneca: From the perspective of the living, death is a disvalue. But once death arrives, that perspective is gone.

Marya: it is for ourselves Sim - since the dead person feels nothing

Renald: Oswy... what-if is a fun game... but not a way to find solutions.

Shingles: interesting. When we are in our prime, about 18-21 lets say, I suspect that many of us do wish to remain in that youth forever, I think that rejection of immortality comes with aging and as the body deteriorates, Oswy

Eolas: I think it just changes Shingles; I have never had a desire for physical immortality; seems remarkably boring

Oswy: Ren I was making the point that we should see death as a more welcome thing

Eolas: but I would certainly like to create things that are immortal; leave my stamp on the world.... etc.

Seneca: But Oswy, maybe it depends on which life it is from which we're welcoming (or not) death.

Renald: Shingles... I don't know for certain, but I don't think it's just the body... including the brain. I think it's the mind, I think we close off possibilities as we live... I think there are simply limits, and death is the ultimate.

Shingles: I would suspect it would only be boring from some fault of the beings perspective, I myself would love it

Seneca: The value cannot be determined apart from the perspective.

Oswy: All Doesn't death the great reaper save us all from our megalomania about immortality?

Renald: Oswy, I agree, sometimes death is to be welcomed, and it sometimes comes to people at the best possible time, even if that means a short life. But knowing which is which...

Seneca: I don't think all values need to be perspectival in this sense, by the way. I don't know.

Oswy: I am thinking of my old friend Heidegger again. Doesn't death save us all in the end and give us a sense of perspectives horizons etc.

Shingles: I think that sense of limitation and closed off possibility occurs as the body deteriorates, its because the mind/body/brain are all parts of the same being, I think that impression comes first from the body and then is reflected in the thinking, Ren

Eolas: I think that is particularly true for people like myself Os

Renald: Shingles, you could be right. I haven't lived enough lives to have enough data. :-)

Eolas: one of the sort of atheist vs. religious, issues I deal with a lot is the idea that death as a solid endpoint to my life compels me to do different things than people who believe they will just go on forever in some variety of heaven

Renald: Oswy, I have a lot of sympathy for that position. Of course, it has an inescapable whiff of sour grapes to it... which is not unexpected from Heidegger. but still...

Oswy: All Could I not now say that death is to be welcomed in general terms its what makes us human in the first place?

Eolas: well... not "human" but "alive"

Renald: Oswy, not death only, but along with the rest, yes.

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Shingles: 'rescuing us from megalomania', now that's a curious notion

Renald: That is, what it seems to be to be human includes mortality. Without it, we would be something else, or human would mean something else.

Oswy: Right well we have been going for an hour and these are complex issues. I will draw the official debate to a close. Please continue informally if you wish.

Shingles: we would be more than human if we were not mortal

Oswy: Shingles I think we would be unbearable?

Renald: Shingles, that's an acceptable description... but more than is still other than.

Alaya: Ren what if we prepare already something during the life in the body, something remain, to enjoy after something after and be as real and that the will is only a fake of it , an usurpation made to make people believe and institution that promote this will, made here as if you could continue here....using our grief , as an occasion for to influence us about that , but in fact, the real will, was something else to prepare as it is for a travel, and that here would be only the preparation , the practice

Oswy: Could I just remind everyone that our sister site on Facebook Second Philosophy gives everyone a chance to follow up these debates in a more reflective way. I will open the discussion tomorrow.

Shingles: You seem very pessimistic of human nature. Why would that make us unbearable, Oswy?

Renald: Alaya, if I understand you, I do agree there is great danger for the living in giving TOO much respect to the dead.

Eolas: You're probably right Ren.

Alaya: Ren, too much respect to the dead will, and also no enough of them living

Renald nods at Alaya

Oswy: It would be Hubris run wild.

Eolas: That's an interesting point, Oswy... I don't know about that so much, but I think it would skew the incentives a hell of a lot

Renald: I agree, Oswy... I think we would begin to require infinite space... in order to get away from those others we'd had to much of and who'd had to much of us. Perhaps when we have teleportation and more robust artificial or terraformed environments...

