

Sunday Zoom - July 27, 2025 - 12:30 PM ET - Topic: "Death Is Nothing To Us"

Post by "Don" of July 26, 2025 at 12:16 PM

"Death is nothing" is to be taken literally. Death is not a thing. Nothing and no one can BE dead. Death is not a state of being. Beings can either exist or not exist. The memories of my father bring me pleasure, but he no longer exists. He "lives" in my memory and that of my mother and family and friends. But he is NOT Dead nor is he alive. He simply, as a being, no longer exists.

From my work on the letter to Menoikeus:

124e. Συνέθιζε δὲ ἐν τῷ νομίζειν μηδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι τὸν θάνατον·

δε "and" just serves as "furthermore, to continue, etc."

Συνέθιζε "Accustom (yourself)! Become habituated to!"

ἐν τῷ νομίζειν literally, "in the believing" and along with συνέθιζε means "Accustom yourself in the believing..." We would say "Become accustomed to believing..."

μηδὲν "nothing"

πρὸς ἡμᾶς "for us" "with regards to us"

θάνατον (thanaton) "death" (accusative)

Συνέθιζε δὲ ἐν τῷ νομίζειν μηδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι τὸν θάνατον: "Furthermore, accustom yourself in believing that, for us, death is nothing."

124f. ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ἐν αἰσθήσει·

ἐπεὶ "since" (the cause of something)

πᾶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν "all good things and evil things" (i.e., all pleasure and pain). Remember the ἀγαθὸν "good things" from the Tetrpharmakos and lines 122e and 124b. There is no doubt in my mind that "the good" in these passages is referring to pleasure. If this is the case then, the fact that Epicurus is specifically stating in the next phrase...

ἐν αἰσθήσει "in perception from the senses, feeling, hearing, seeing, etc., and by the intellect"

ἐν αἰσθήσει is important since this seems to imply that all pleasure and pain is experienced through the senses (including the intellect),

124g. στέρησις δὲ ἐστὶν αἰσθήσεως ὁ θάνατος.

Our old friend δε is used again as the conjunction, and this sentence is constructed "backwards" in relation to English. So, let's start at the end:

ὁ θάνατος (thanatos) "death" ὁ is the definite article, often used in Greek in places we wouldn't normally use it in English. We would not translate this as "the death" for example, just "death" in general.

αἰσθήσεως This is the genitive singular of the word above meaning "perception from the senses, feeling, hearing, seeing, etc., and by the intellect" so...

στέρησις αἰσθήσεως "deprivation/negation of perception from the senses, feeling, hearing, seeing, etc., and by the intellect"

So, 124e-g:

"So, accustom yourself in believing that, for us, death is nothing; since all good and bad things (pleasure and pain) are in perception of the senses and the mind; and death is the absolute negation of perception."

Lo and behold, this is the second Principal Doctrine as well as the second Vatican Saying: [Death is nothing to us](#); for what has been dissolved into its elements lacks sensation, and what lacks sensation is nothing to us. ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς· τὸ γὰρ διαλυθὲν ἀναισθητεῖ, τὸ δ' ἀναισθητοῦν οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς.

Just like mention of those beings who are blessed and imperishable is Principal Doctrine 1 and foremost here in the Letter, the idea of "[death is nothing to us](#)" is placed next in the Doctrines and here. Epicurus is consistent in what he sees as important.