

Article By Dr. Emily Austin - "Epicurus And The Politics Of The Fear Of Death"

Post by "Don" of December 12, 2025 at 12:09 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

It would seem that if you "feel okay with" the concept of death, then the process of dying should theoretically not cause as much anxiety.

Excellent point [Kalosyni](#), and you actually gave voice to something similar rolling around in my head.

(Caveat: I'm still getting around to reading Dr. Austin's paper)

[TauPhi](#) gave the four "fears of death" from the paper:

- (1) the fear of being dead;
- (2) the fear that one will die, that one's life is going to end;
- (3) the fear of premature death; and
- (4) the fear of the process of dying.

I would agree that Epicurus directly attacked (and won against, from my perspective):

- (1) - no sensation/no existence/no thing
- (2) - Epicurus emphasized that we and every other compound thing is transient, mortal, and will eventually dissolve. There is nothing to fear from the FACT that our life will end. It feeds directly into (1). The 2nd line of the tetracharmakos is literally something like "There is no need for the suspicion of something awful happening when we die. 'When we are dead' is a nonsensical/irrational statement because we will not BE after we die."
- (3) - In the greater scheme of things, there really is no such thing as "premature" death. We die when we die. That is NOT to say we don't feel grief - *biting, gnawing, indescribable, screaming* grief - if someone dies young or "before their time." But who's to say what one's "time" is? There are things that happen by chance, things that happen by necessity, and things we have control over. The time of our death (unless under controlled circumstances) is up to chance by and large.

To get even more granular, there seem to be several sub-divisions of (4). If one has a terminal diagnosis (as in the clip [Kalosyni](#) played), we can decide if we want to go through months of chemotherapy or to live out our lives, with pain managed, and live as fully as possible before dying. Do we "rage against the dying of the light" or do we "go with the flow"? I'm not going to judge either decision, but it's a decision on the "process" we would go through. Both have pain

and pleasure involved. There is also fear of the way one will die. If we make choices to avoid certain circumstances, we need not fear some ways that lead to death. But, there is a BIG element of chance to the WAY in which we might die. Getting in the shower, slip on the soap, bang your head, massive concussion, no one finds you for awhile. Not seeing a speeding car and stepping off the sidewalk. Genetic abnormality in a brain vessel or your aorta completely undetected and one ruptures. Choking on a piece of food while dining alone at home. If we would obsess over the ways in which we might die, we would drive ourselves to all kinds of fear, anxiety, and depression!

Okay, now I need to read the paper before I comment anymore.