

When Epicurus says that death is the end of sensation, does "end of sensation" in and of itself mean that consciousness ends at death?

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2026 at 1:49 PM

In our Zoom discussion of January 18 2026 we deviated from Lucretius and examined a question that Raphael raised in a video here. The title of the thread seems to be the best way to summarize the issue, but during the course of the discussion several other ways arose:

1. Can consciousness exist without sensation?
2. Does the end of (new) sensation bring the end of consciousness?
3. Does consciousness continue after sensation ends?
4. When Epicurus says that death is the end of sensation, does "end of sensation" in and of itself mean that consciousness ends at death?
5. What does Epicurus say about consciousness?
6. From the Sorites perspective: When you go down the list and subtract each of the five senses, is anything left of consciousness?
7. How does the Epicurean theory of images relate to this question? Can the mind receive images even when all five bodily senses are inactive?
8. Is "consciousness" a modern idea which the ancients would dismiss as a regression in thought?

In the end a lot revolves around "can consciousness exist without sensation?" but asking the question the other ways helps focus on the subtleties.

In the most practical of terms of immediate interest to the "study and promotion of Epicurean philosophy," however, the issue involves how Epicurus meant to be understood in PD2 and the letter to Menoecus:

[PD02. Death is nothing to us](#), for that which is dissolved is without sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.

Letter to Menoecus: *Become accustomed to the belief that [death is nothing to us](#). For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation.*