

# Thought experiment - A vacation without lasting memories

**Post by “Kalosyni” of October 1, 2024 at 11:06 AM**

Set-up:

You must take a year-long vacation, but your memory of it will be erased, all your photos and notes to yourself will be lost or deleted, and anything you buy during that time will also be taken away at the end. In essence it will be as if it never happened, except for the people that you talked to during that time will still remember.

Question:

Given the above scenario, what do you do during that one year time?

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**Post by “Don” of October 1, 2024 at 12:32 PM**

Hmmm....I would think do as little a possible. Memories work both ways: as personal experiences to rerun in one's mind, and shared experiences to be retold with others. If half of that equation is gone, what's the point?

Your scenario sounds a little like dementia. Everyone around the person remembers, but not the person "taking the vacation." How do we deal with friends or family that have dementia?

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**Post by “Kalosyni” of October 1, 2024 at 2:13 PM**

Looks like more explanation is needed... ( [Don](#) this is not about dementia, but I see how you might have thought that).

After you die, you won't be around to know that you can't remember anything that happened during your life.

But by running through the thought experiment, my idea was that we can recreate a portion of what the lack of knowing would be like. As the body dies our consciousness also disperses (dies), and we won't remember anything because there won't be a brain to remember. This thought experiment is to help step outside of our "business as usual" frame of mind which has trouble cognizing the state of death.

So here is again, what I wrote for the scenerio:

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

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**Post by “Kalosyni” of October 1, 2024 at 2:15 PM**

For the thought experiment, I should state that during that one year, everything including your memory functions as normal. It would be only after the one year is over that your memory is erased.

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**Post by “Don” of October 1, 2024 at 5:46 PM**

Hmm... I'm still struggling with the hypothetical, even in light of your revision.

The **\*\*big\*\*** difference in taking a year vacation and not remembering and dying and having no memory is that we don't get to interact with the people that do remember after the we die. There's a finality to death that gets lost in the hypothetical. I think I can appreciate what you're trying to do.

To me, that finality has more to do with being content with the idea of dying right now. Have you treated people so you don't regret anything you've done? Have you lived your life as you wished? It's not a *YOLO* (You Only Live Once) or *FOMO* (Fear of Missing Out), and we can't - or *most likely* can't - quit our jobs and run off to live on the beach in Tahiti (or whatever scenario one prefers)... but thinking about dying right now certainly puts things in perspective: relationship, career choices, recreation, etc. Meditare mortem "Meditate on death."

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### **Post by "Don" of October 1, 2024 at 6:17 PM**

I would offer a version of the hypothetical.

Riffing on [Cassius](#) 's "Epicureans don't live in a cave" and in light of [the book I've just started listening to](#):

What happens to your life if there is no one to remember you? If your memories are solely your own with no one who experienced them with you? Do you *need* someone to remember you when you die? Do you *need* someone to *mourn* you?

I think I know my answer, but I'm going to tag team on this thread with that little question.

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### **Post by "Godfrey" of October 1, 2024 at 6:58 PM**

Love that book! My daughter and I listened to it on a cross continent trip a couple of years ago.

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### **Post by "Kalosyni" of October 1, 2024 at 8:26 PM**

#### [Quote from Don](#)

Hmm... I'm still struggling with the hypothetical, even in light of your revision.

I'll need to think about if it is possible to revise it (and add in the element of how much money would be available for the hypothetical "vacation"...and that there is also the option that it

could be a "stay-cation").

[Quote from Don](#)

To me, that finality has more to do with being content with the idea of dying right now.

There is the aspect of accepting death when the time arrives, and there is also the aspect of making choices during a lifespan.

Of course in the real world, we need to work and do household upkeep so that we can have sufficiency and a certain level of comfort...so there is the necessity of procuring the necessities for the continuation of life.

[Quote from Don](#)

If your memories are solely your own with no one who experienced them with you?

Ultimately we each have a unique vantage point on reality which gives rise to our subjective inner experience - so much of what we experience is held subjectively. After we die it won't matter if we sat on the butt our whole life or if we were a globe trotter. But the quality of either choice does matter - was the moment to moment unfolding experience of sitting on the butt "okay"? Or was the moment to moment unfolding experience of globe trotting "okay"? (and did unwanted consequences come about from acquiring the wealth which was required to be a globe trotter?) By "okay" I mean that it was satisfactory and not painful in some way.

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## Post by “Don” of October 1, 2024 at 9:20 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Of course in the real world, we need to work and do household upkeep so that we can have sufficiency and a certain level of comfort...so there is the necessity of procuring the necessities for the continuation of life.

This made me think of...

[VS41](#) One must laugh and seek wisdom and tend to one's home life and use one's other goods, and always recount the pronouncements of true philosophy.

γελᾶν ἅμα δεῖ καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῆ λήγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀρθῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

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## Post by “Pacatus” of October 2, 2024 at 5:23 PM

I’ve been muddling over this thought experiment since [Kalosyni](#) presented it. I think that the way it is presented – particularly the liberating vacation metaphor – cuts right to the bone in terms of how we make decisions today in the face of our impending (no matter our age or what we might expect) death and dissolution (including our memories). Maybe my age resonates with how I think about it. 🙄

[Don](#) ‘s dementia take is not so far off the mark I think, but I look at it the other way round from what I understood his perspective to be: suppose I were diagnosed with an early-stage but progressive dementia which is likely to be total at the end of a year (and I might not even recognize those friends, or what they are talking about).

I’m still “muddling” – especially since Kalosyni’s experiment is cast in Epicurean terms, rather than some radically presentist Cyrenaic frame. Let’s just say that, for me, it is seriously thought-provoking.

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And it reminds me of an old (1965 - 1968, when I was in high school 🥲) TV series called "Run for Your Life," starring Ben Gazzara. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Run\\_for\\_Your\\_Life\\_\(TV\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Run_for_Your_Life_(TV_series)).

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of October 3, 2024 at 11:22 AM

In last night's Zoom we briefly talked about this thread, and it was helpful for me. It seems that the above scenerio was not translating to others in the same way as it happened in my own thinking.

I was attempting to isolate and produce a sense of awareness of how mortality is complete - that any and all sense of "who I am" and "what I have done" is gone when consciousness ends. What remains after my death is: 1) an ephemeral memory within the minds of people who still live 2) some essence of what I have taught others through my words and my actions 3) written books or other creative endeavors which may last beyond my death, but which will at some point in time be destroyed or lost.

And now a slightly different scenerio:

Imagine yourself having just come out of having lived an entire year, but you cannot remember anything that happened. But other people can remember what you did during that year, and you also still experience any consequences of what you did. The point of this exercise is to bring into focus the choices around pleasures of the body and what you will pursue and what you will reject (and as in the Letter to Menoecus not the pleasures of a profligate).

Also, so that after you die will it have mattered if you were an astronaut, a college professor, a parent, a retail sales worker, an internet blogger, etc. etc. - but more that as you lived you went through life with a clear mind and "an enjoyable smooth sailing".