

Reading

- Steven Luper (editor), *The Cambridge Companion to Life and Death*

Personal Identity and Death

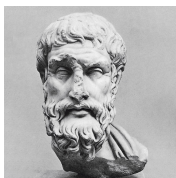
- What are we? If I am fundamentally an **animal** or **body**, then I will die just so long as my body dies. But what if my body isn't so crucial to what I am, and my **psychological** characteristics are? Could I live on even if my body dies? Could my body still be alive even if I die – for instance, with irreversible damage or change to my psychology (e.g., brain damage)?

Life and Death

- Is death a simply a **loss of life**? What does that mean? (What is life, and what is it to lose it?) Suppose one's life-giving forces are suspended – in some scenario where your body is somehow preserved with those forces inoperative, only to be switched on again later. Life is paused. Does that mean one has died?
- Can life be restored after death has happened? Is something like **resurrection** possible? (Whether in a religious framework, or not).

Death and Harm

Is **being dead** harmful or bad for the person who is dead? It seems so, as one can no longer have the goods of life. But the Ancient Greek philosopher **Epicurus** thought not:



“Make yourself familiar with the belief that death is nothing to us, since everything good and bad lies in sensation, and death is to be deprived of sensation. ... So that most fearful of all bad things, death, is nothing to us, since when we are, death is not, and when death is present, then we are not.” (*Letter to Menoeceus*)

Epicurus was a **hedonist** and thought that all that is good or bad for us is linked to sensation or experience of pleasure or pain. When one is dead one lacks such experience, so it can't be bad or harmful for one to be dead.

- What do you think of this hedonist response to the idea that being dead is bad for you?

Death and Mental Health

There are various ways that death can relate to mental health:

- **Grief**: an emotion that can help us process loss, including when someone we know, or love dies. Grief can be positive – part of coping with loss. But it can also be negative – if it becomes prolonged and complex. Philosophers ask what is grief, and what are experiences of grief?
- **Death Anxiety**: fear of death can structure our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours – even on an unconscious level. How might fear of death underly various mental health conditions?
 - Combatting this may be a challenge: since we are so geared towards life, survival, and protection, so fearing death makes sense. So how do we ease death anxiety without giving up on life, and what is valuable in life?