THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

The Nature and Timing of the Possible Harm of Death

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PhD in Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an analysis of the possible harm of death, posing three questions: Who is the subject of the harm? What is the nature of the harm? And, when does the harm take place? Epicurus demonstrates on hedonistic grounds that given the irreversible annihilation of the subject and the impossibility of experience, death cannot harm the one who dies *at any time*. The experience condition is central to this claim, stating that experience is necessary for harm. Despite the strength of the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis, it remains counter to pretheoretical intuitions regarding the harmfulness of death. This thesis proposes an alternative justification for the belief that death is harmful by extending the possible subjects of harm to include the bereaved.

It is my view that the No-Subject Thesis successfully shows that death is not harmful to the one who dies, and in support of the Epicurean position, it will be defended against variations of Thomas Nagel's antithetical position. Nagel's view is motivated by the belief that death is bad because it deprives the deceased of some good he or she could have had, had death taken place at a later time. Criticisms of the Deprivation Thesis relate to the effectiveness of counterexamples to the experience condition, and the challenge of the temporal location problem, given that we will assume, along with Epicurus, that death annihilates the subject.

However, this thesis argues that it is a restricted understanding of the possible subjects of harm that causes the counterintuitive conclusion of the No-Subject Thesis. By extending the possible bearers of harm to include the bereaved, and characterising the nature of the harm as the loss experienced by the bereaved, one can posit an unproblematic account of the nature and subject of the harm of death. Indeed, by

identifying a living person as the subject of harm, the experience condition can be satisfied. Furthermore, a clearly delineated temporal location of the harm can be identified insofar as the bereaved are harmed from the time at which he or she learns of the death of the loved other. However, it will be argued that the harm diminishes over time, reflecting the experience of the bereaved that he or she can recover after the loss of the beloved. A defence of this position will be offered, responding to the Epicurean claim that the death of a loved other does not constitute a significant loss in virtue of the belief that individual subjects are replaceable.

By extending the scope of the possible harm of death to account for the social context within which death occurs, one can retain the logical strength of the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis, and yet justify the intuition that death remains a bad thing for the bereaved, giving rational grounds for fearing death in terms of social deprivation.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, is the result of my own work, and that it has not been submitted for examination elsewhere.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores three positions regarding the nature and timing of the possible harm of death for a subject *S*. The Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis states that death is nothing to us: death causes no harm to the one who dies, and there is no time at which harm occurs. Contrastingly, the Deprivation Thesis argues that death harms the one who dies in virtue of depriving the deceased of the value of continued life. However, deprivationists disagree regarding the timing of the harm. I argue for an alternative approach, and suggest that the bereaved are the subjects of harm, in virtue of the loss caused by the death of an irreplaceable loved other.

When discussing whether death is harmful to *S*, the meaning of the locution '*x* is harmful to *S*' should be made clear:[1] *x* represents events or states of affairs, and *x* is 'harmful to' a subject *S* when it is true that, had *x* not obtained, *S* would have been better off. By extension, *x* is 'harmful to' *S* in virtue of making her worse off than she would have been had *x* not obtained. It is in this sense of being 'worse off' that *S* is harmed by *x*. One might assume that death being a bad thing implies that death is harmful; J. M. Fischer notes that within the family of questions concerning death's harmfulness, questions that include the terms 'bad' and 'harm' may be analysed together (1993: p.15). However, it is not obvious that all things that are bad for *S* are necessarily harmful to *S*; Fischer notes 'some philosophers might deny that death can *harm* someone, but they concede that it can be a misfortune or bad thing for the individual' (1993: p.15). Indeed,

[1] A requirement noted by Feit (2002: p. 362).

part of the debate between Neo-Epicureans and deprivationists depends upon whether death is bad despite the absence of directly experienced harm. However, generally speaking, for those who argue that death harms *S*, it is assumed that this implies death is bad for *S*. As a result, within this context, the terms will be used interchangeably.

A harmful state of affairs is an appropriate object of fear, given that it is rational to fear that which causes harm (particularly when experiencing (being causally affected by) *x*). Furthermore, fear motivates actions that promote avoidance of the possible harm. Contrastingly, irrational fears take one of two forms; they are either directed at objects or events that are not harmful, exemplified by phobias of harmless items. Alternatively, irrational fears are indicated by the extremity of reactions to the supposed threat. Whilst the object or event may be potentially harmful (e.g., the possibility of being physically attacked), the subject exaggerates the possibility for harm (e.g., refusing to leave their home). In relation to the subject of death, fearful responses cannot be justified in terms of promoting avoidance, given that death is unavoidable. Thus, the primary means of justifying the rationality of fearing death, or negatively valuing death, is by demonstrating that death is genuinely harmful (even if unavoidable). An alternative manner of arguing for the negative evaluation of death for the one who dies, is by establishing that death is objectively bad; even in the absence of direct harm, death is still a bad thing for the one who dies. If true, this gives good reason to fear death. Indeed, it might be the case that death is bad precisely because it renders experience impossible. However, though there may be objectively bad things it may prove difficult to argue for death to be included in this set.

Regarding the former approach, if it can be shown that death cannot harm the dead, fear of one's own death on behalf of oneself can be alleviated. However, I argue that fearing the death of the irreplaceable beloved is rationally justified, given that this loss causes a reduction in wellbeing that is harmful to the bereaved. Concern for loved others *might* justify negative evaluations regarding one's own death, though it must be emphasised that the bereaved suffer harm, not the one who dies. Evaluations are made in virtue of anticipatory and imagined negative consequences of one's death for the other, rather than any directly experienced harm for oneself, thus the one who dies remains unharmed by their own death.

Given that the nature and timing of the possible harm of death cannot be critically discussed without clarifying the meaning of the term 'death', the first chapter aims at providing an acceptable definition of death. Distinctions will be made between the process of dying, the event of death, and the infinite state of being dead that begins thereafter, assessing the relations between each distinction. It will be assumed that the subject ceases to exist at death. The primary justification for this assumption is that it accords with the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis view of death as nothing to us, a view that will be defended in relation to the deceased, though denied in relation to the bereaved.

Upon providing an acceptable definition of death, analysis of the possible harm of death can begin. To answer this, responses to the following questions are examined: who is the subject of harm, what is the nature of the harm, and when does the harm take place? It is worth reiterating that establishing the harm of death is taken to imply that death is therefore bad. Before appraising the arguments in favour of the harm of death,

the Epicurean response that death is harmless will be examined, as affirmative answers are developed in response to the No-Subject Thesis. Thus the second chapter will present an exegesis of the Epicurean inspired view.

The No-Subject Thesis relies on the Epicurean hedonistic experience condition for harm, stating that one must experience (most generally), that is, be causally affected for harm to have occurred (Rosenbaum, 1993: p. 124). Implicit within this condition is that existence is required for experience; nonexistence precludes experience, thus one must exist to experience harm. However, death annihilates the subject, entailing the impossibility of experience. Thus, the nonexistence of the subject, taken together with the claim that death cannot harm prior to its occurrence, entails that death cannot harm the one who dies. Furthermore, given the Epicurean hedonism that inspires the No-Subject Thesis, if death cannot harm, it is not bad. If death does not cause the deceased any harm, the fear that results from knowledge of death can be removed. Indeed, if the logic of the No-Subject Thesis is sound, to fear death is irrational; it is senseless to fear that which is harmless: Death is nothing to the one who dies.

Despite the robust logical structure of the No-Subject Thesis, the conclusion conflicts with pretheoretical intuitions that regard death as the source of loss, suffering and distress. One can recognise the strength of the No-Subject Thesis, yet be left with an unsatisfactory philosophy of death that does not cohere with apparently rational and commonplace attitudes to death. The question arises as to whether the nature of the possible harm of death has been sufficiently represented by the No-Subject Thesis, or whether important features have been overlooked.

Considering the juxtaposition of ordinary life attitudes towards death and the conclusions of the No-Subject Thesis reveals a fascinating philosophical inconsistency that requires a carefully reasoned solution. One such solution involves presenting the antithetical view that death does indeed harm the one who dies. If death is harmful, then negative responses are justified, and the inconsistency is dissolved. Hence, chapter three presents a critical analysis of the Deprivation Thesis that seeks to confirm the harmfulness of death. Thomas Nagel (1979: pp. 1-10) argued that death's badness is caused by the manner in which it deprives one of life, claiming that experience (and experiencing harm) is not necessary for death to be bad for one. Nagel developed several counterexamples intended to demonstrate the existence of nonexperienced, objectively bad things, and argued by analogy that death is bad for the deceased despite the impossibility of experience. However, the Neo-Epicurean can either account for, or deny, the veracity of Nagel's counterexamples. Despite this initial failure, Fred Feldman (1993: pp. 307-326), Joel Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190), George Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168) and Neil Feit (2002: pp. 359-383) have defended the intuition that death is bad or harmful, introducing comparative judgements intended to demonstrate that the deceased is worse off given death at time *t*.

For any version of the Deprivation Thesis to be accepted, the temporal location of the bad or harm must be successfully accounted for, and the experience condition overcome. Feldman (1993: pp. 307-326) argues for the eternal harm of death. Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190) and Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168) locate the harm of death as occurring prior to the event of death, continuing for as long as one is dead. Feit (2002: pp. 359-383) reasons that death can only harm the deceased after death, and until such

time as they could have reasonably expected to live. I argue that all responses to the temporal location problem are problematic. Consequently, these interpretations of the Deprivation Thesis do not resolve the inconsistency arising from the No-Subject Thesis.

I present an alternative deprivationist solution, arguing that the inconsistency is caused by the restricted focus regarding the *subject* of the harm of death. By extending the possible subjects of harm to include the bereaved, pretheoretical valuations of death as harmful to *S* can be justified; the harm of death can be explained as a result of being deprived of the deceased. Essentially, the bereaved are harmed by the loss of an irreplaceable loved other via their death. The grief experienced as a result of this loss is intuitively painful and unpleasant, however, I shall argue in agreement with Robert Solomon (2004: pp. 75-101) that it is morally good that one grieves. In demonstrating the harm of death, the view that death is a bad thing can be rescued. Given that my solution introduces concepts of grief and personal relationships, the fourth chapter examines an Epicurean inspired approach to these concepts, revealing an account that aims once more at minimising the possible harm of death and the experience of grief, maintaining the position that death is not a bad thing.

Epicurus recommends that one avoid (as much as is possible) all personal relationships other than platonic friendships. Friendship is judged to be the ultimate source of pleasure, though individual friends are replaceable: provided one has alternative friends who permit the satisfaction of the relation of friendship, the death of one particular friend is no loss. Furthermore, grief is conceived of as deceased-directed; upon agreeing to the No-Subject Thesis, one can reason that reactions of grief are unnecessary (though one may yet experience a brief pang of sadness, reason alone can

overcome this initial response). Given that the dead are not harmed, they do not require pity or grief. Whilst this acknowledges the broader social impact of death, the subject of death's harm is necessarily the one who dies, and the lack of harm to the dead motivates the claim that no other is harmed by death. Additionally, though Neo-Epicureans admit of the possible harm to the bereaved in terms of grief and loss, this potential source of pain is reduced to an insignificant level such that it is unreasonable to consider it genuinely harmful. Thus, the living are able to avoid the harm of grieving in response to death in virtue of accepting the No-Subject Thesis and by recognising that no loss has been suffered given the replaceability of friends.

My deprivationist argument begins by denying the replaceability of friends, primarily in virtue of attachment and unrepeatable, shared history. Furthermore, I argue that Neo-Epicureans fail to capture those features of grief that are bereaved-directed, which remain largely unaffected by the conclusion that death is harmless for the deceased. Chapter five builds upon these critical responses and explains who may be included in the set of the bereaved, such that they are harmed by death. I will also offer arguments that aim to demonstrate why grief should not be minimised, despite the intuition that grieving for those one loves is emotionally painful.

My response benefits by identifying the bereaved as the subjects of harm given that the (conscious) living unproblematically satisfy the experience condition. Extendedly, by postulating an existent subject of harm, my account avoids the temporal location problem. The bereaved are harmed by the death of the irreplaceable loved other at the time of learning of her death (which may be at the same time as the beloved died,

or at some later time), and knows that the deceased beloved is irreversibly absent.[2] Furthermore, harm continues, in virtue of the continued absence of the deceased, until the bereaved die and cease to be subjects of experience. However, harm is not experienced at the same intensity throughout: it is most intense at those times closest to bereavement, and reduces over time until harming at only a minimal level, including sporadic, temporally limited – though still painful – 'pangs' caused by missing the deceased beloved. By extending the scope of the possible harm of death to account for the social context within which death occurs, the logical strength of the No-Subject Thesis can be retained, and the intuition that death is a bad thing for the bereaved is justified, giving rational grounds for fearing death in terms of social deprivation.

[2] Knowledge of death is necessary for harm via loss as a result of *death*. Though one can imagine that losses caused by missing persons also causes harm, it is the irreversibility of death that differentiates death from missing persons, and marks it as a special kind of absence. This will be discussed in more detail later.

CHAPTER 1: DEFINING DEATH

I. INTRODUCTION

Before the arguments regarding the value and timing of death are examined, it will prove useful to remove some ambiguity regarding the nature of death. The primary aim of this chapter is to supply an acceptable, defensible definition of death, and to offer an analysis of the distinctions required to allow for proper deployment of the term within future arguments. From the outset it will be argued that death ought to be distinguished from the process of dying and the infinite state of being dead. I will offer a definition of dying, death and being dead that is consistent with the Epicurean position.

II. THE NEED FOR DEFINITION

Given one's ability to differentiate between the living and the dead, one might reasonably assume that 'death' is an easily expressed concept. It is arguably possible to refer to the dead, using the term and its variants appropriately.[1] Indeed, aside from the interest engendered by the fact of personal mortality, the multitudes of social, legal and moral issues associated with the application of the terms 'death' and 'dead' demonstrate the necessity for clarity. The status of the dead, and the relation between the living and the dead,[2] can be understood in at least two ways. The first is to consider the dead as

[1] This introduces debate regarding references to nonexistent entities, but I will say no more on this matter here, not merely for reasons of restricting scope, but also because none of my central points hang on the outcome.

[2] The specificity of the relation is derived not only from the existing/nonexisting relation, but also from the absence of reciprocity.

retaining some socially relevant personal identity, thus one has limited obligations directly towards the dead (e.g., to honour their dying wishes), they are accorded a restricted variety of rights (e.g., that subjects refrain from damaging, or otherwise interfering with the corpse without just cause such as harvesting organs for transplantation or postmortem examination), and there are specific attitudes and behaviours displayed toward the dead that are considered socially and culturally appropriate (e.g., refraining from speaking ill of the dead). The second is to attribute only derived rights and obligations towards the dead. Hence, one might refrain from disrespecting the name of the deceased given considerations for the emotional wellbeing of the bereaved,[3] or alternatively because it may be unjust to verbally attack a subject who is unable to defend themselves in response, and the deceased lack this ability in the strongest sense. Yet even under this secondary derived understanding of the rights of, and obligations towards, the dead, the nature of such rights and obligations are greatly reduced as compared to those of the living. Thus, no matter the nature of the rights of, and obligations towards, the dead, they are appropriately treated differently from the living within a broader social context. Indeed, one might experience concern for those who failed to distinguish between the living and the dead in their treatment of persons.[4] Taken together, these commonplace societal distinctions between the status of the living and the dead give some justification for attempting to define death.

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[3] Sensitivity towards the emotional wellbeing of the bereaved may reflect an assumed direct relation between the death of a subject and harm to the bereaved, insofar as the bereaved experience negative emotional states as a consequence of the death of the loved other.

[4] Treating the dead as if they were still living might be interpreted as an act of potentially problematic denial, as point discussed by Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005: pp. 8-11). Abnormal, or 'complicated' grief is discussed in Hawton (2007: pp. 962-963). Treatment of the living as if they were dead is arguably more worrisome, because this would result in greatly diminished rights, among other reasons.

Further justification arises from the fact that advances in modern medicine have created conflict regarding which subjects ought to be declared dead. The sustaining mechanisms of life-support, respirators and ventilators have increased the complexity of professional judgements regarding declarations of death. The traditional cardiopulmonary criterion for death is often deemed inadequate when such functions can be artificially sustained. Consequently, numerous attempts at *re*defining death have been advanced, all founded upon criteria emphasising variations on an account of brain-death. However, the concept of death underpinning such criteria remains controversial, given the implication that the death of the brain is coextensive with the death of the whole organism. Indeed, there exists disagreement regarding whether brain-death constitutes a redefinition, and not merely a reinterpretation of the same definition, insofar as the loss of brain function is merely an alternative indication of the impending cessation of cardiopulmonary function.[5] Furthermore, there are difficulties in establishing precisely which part or function of the brain is essential for personhood, the lack thereof permitting a declaration of death (insofar as this is assumed to entail the death of the person, though not necessarily of the whole biological organism). Obscurity threatens the concept of death as a result of these difficulties, motivating the search for a satisfactory criterion. Though this particular feature of the discussion fascinates me, none of the positions regarding the harm or badness of death depend upon a particular criterion in order to establish whether death is harmful or bad; all that is required is an understanding of death that can be agreed upon so as to begin debate. As a

[5] See Gervais (1986).

consequence, I reluctantly leave the debate regarding the criterion for identifying death for now.

Whilst it is not possible to examine in detail the clinical means by which declarations of death are justified, it is worth noting that it is only through the declaration of death that social conventions pertaining to death can begin to take place. The grief of the bereaved is initiated by testimony regarding the death of a loved other (or as a result of directly witnessing that death); before receiving this testimony, subjects hope that the loved other will recover. After hope has been quashed, the emotions associated with grief that were previously unwarranted are experienced.[6] It is my view that the reduction in the wellbeing of the bereaved caused by the loss of the beloved constitutes the harm of death, which will be discussed in chapter five. The objective of this chapter, however, is to offer a defensible, working definition of death. Whilst the definition suggested may not be entirely transparent, I trust that it provides a satisfactory foundation for the initiation of debate and analysis.

The term 'death' has three obvious literal applications[7] (as opposed to metaphorical uses as applied to inanimate objects). The first is overarching in denotation, referring to a series of events that lead up to and include the exact last moment of a life; the causal series can extend as far back as is necessary so as to include

[6] When confirmation of death cannot be given, exemplified by long-term missing persons, possibly-bereaved subjects have great difficulty in reconciling grief-like experiences without confirmation of death. Grief may not occur despite prolonged absence, precisely because there is hope that the loved other is not dead. In other cases, the families of long-term missing persons will hold a memorial as a means of formally permitting the experience of grief.

[7] These applications of the term 'death' do not represent an exhaustive list; there may be other applications.

all those events thought to be relevant.[8] This use of 'death' signifies not only the inevitable end of life, but additionally expresses the particular manner and timing of death. Understood as such, death is not a specific concept, but rather functions as an encompassing term used to demarcate and refer to a complete series of events; *S* died *this particular* death, caused by this series of events. The second unrestricted application refers to the fact of finite existence, relating not simply to the death of a particular subject or object, but to the inevitable end of all living things. It is not these broad uses of the term that are of interest here. What is under consideration is the use of the term intended to denote the *specific moment* of death: Death as *the end*, rather than as the ending. For the purposes of this study, the term 'death' ought not to be used to refer to any moment at which the subject is still living. The discussion is limited in this manner simply because the debate regarding whether the dead are harmed by death and being dead, involves discerning whether nonexistence (after having lived) necessarily prohibits harm.[9] Neo-Epicureans argue in favour of the harmlessness of death, whereas most deprivation theorists deny this possibility, (Nagel (1979: pp. 1-10) discusses the matter in terms of death being bad).[10] Clearly, then, if one permits the inclusion of an interpretation of death that comprises moments of existence, one alters the nature of the question.

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[8] For example, regarding the death of Julius Caesar, reference is made to the stabbing by Brutus (and his co-conspirators), the political intrigue, and devising of the murder plot; all those events relevant to the ending of Caesar's life.

[9] Where demonstrating harm is intended to entail that death is bad for the one who dies. Conversely, establishing no harm is thought to be sufficient for justifying the belief that death is not bad.

[10] Exegesis of the No-Subject Thesis and the Deprivation Thesis are given in chapters two and three respectively.

Though Neo-Epicureans and deprivationists disagree regarding the harm of death, all concede that *dying* can be harmful to both the subject who dies, and for those who must witness their dying, hence dying is not the proper focus of attention. Thus, the first delineation required is that death ought to be distinguished from dying, which prevents the inclusion of any moment, or series of events, within which the subject is alive. Additionally, death can be distinguished from being dead, given that death (as understood in the third sense stated above) is a temporally restricted, particular event representing the end of a life, and being dead is the infinitely temporally extended state that occurs thereafter. One can be concerned regarding the fact that life will eventually end without being simultaneously concerned about the nonexistence that follows, and vice versa.[11] Given these distinctions, I suggest that dying is a causal process that precedes death, death is an interval or event that occurs at the end of dying, and being dead refers to the infinite state beginning once death has brought about the complete cessation of life.[12] Whilst this may seem a reasonable distinction, under closer inspection certain philosophical curiosities arise that are worth noting.

If death is an event that occurs at the end of dying, and ceases at the point one becomes dead, it would appear that death consists of an infinitesimal temporal interval, since as soon as one dies the state of being dead begins. Perhaps death and the

[11] Perhaps it is not the instant of death that causes anxiety, but considerations of the eternal nonexistence (after having lived) that cause negative responses. The thought of being eternally absent from the continuing world may give rise to angst, heightened by the realisation that not only does one no longer exist, but that one's nonexistence is insignificant: '*I*' do not matter. Nagel (1979: pp. 11-23) offers an excellent treatment of this. Camus (trans. O' Brien, 2005) and Schopenhauer, (trans. Hollingdale, in Klemke, 2000) argue for the absurdity of life, especially in light of its finitude.

[12] This distinction is used consistently throughout the collection of essays edited by Fischer (1993).

beginning of being dead actually occur simultaneously[13] or, at the very least, considerably overlap. This may lead to the suggestion that death should not be considered a distinct ontological event. Yet it is reasonable to categorise death – the moment that is the end of a life – as distinct from the life that has now ended (since it would otherwise simply be another part of that life), and as the precursor to the eternal state of nonexistence (being dead cannot begin until death has occurred). An additional concern might be that death is difficult to distinguish as a unique event due to its brevity, given that the beginning of being dead immediately terminates the event of death. Yet the brevity of the moment of death does not reduce the impact of the effect; the absolute termination of a life is either harmful/bad or not for *S*, regardless of how brief the moment of death is. Though these issues relating to the brevity of death are interesting, I will not discuss them further. My primary reason for curtailing this enquiry is that the impact of death – especially in relation to grief – exceeds the temporal boundaries within which it occurs, and as such justifies assessing the value of death without attending to questions of duration, boundaries and so on.

The consequence of death is subjectively monumental; death *ends a life*. It is the absolute limit of personal existence, and the impact it has *relative to life* is vast. Thus, it is more charitable to this project that 'death' be considered not merely as an independent interval, but also as referring to a relational causal concept.[14] Furthermore, though death

[13] 'Simultaneously' insofar as death and the beginning of the state of being dead occur at the same time. As such death and the first moment of being dead might be said to occupy the same temporal instant, though they are characterised as independent states of affairs.

[14] This relational understanding must not be confused with the overarching use of the term 'death'. Here 'death' denotes the specific moment that life is ended. Nagel notes the significance of the relation between life and death (1979: p. 1).

represents the end of a life, it is an event within the lives of others. Hence, the value of the consequences of the event of death transcends the time at which it occurred. This point is especially relevant when considering the bereaved as potential subjects of harm, given that dying, the moment of death, and the absence caused by the death of the loved other are all (possibly) experienced by the bereaved.

Thus far, the project of providing a definition has presupposed that there is a unified concept of death, and that the relation between life and death is dichotomous: death has been presented as a temporally limited, particular event that is coextensive with the irreversible end of life.[15] There has been a wealth of discussion as a result of this presupposition, focussing upon the nuances of, and counterexamples to, the cessation of brain function (characterised according to varying emphasis on whole-brain, higher-brain and brain stem functions) and cardiopulmonary function.[16] However, as a consequence of proposed redefinitions of death, and in light of medical developments, the view that death can be rightly expressed as a unified concept is open to doubt. Indeed, death may be viewed more as a process of shutting down, than as a simple 'off' switch.[17] It may be that no matter how death is clinically determined, a counterexample will be available which demonstrates its failure. This might be in the form of subjects judged to be alive who individually satisfy each variant of the brain-death criteria, or a

[15] Morison (1971: pp. 694-698) argues that death is a temporally extended process, and that declarations of death prior to the cessation of this process (which he considers to be the time at which the last cell of the dying organism ceases to function) are either arbitrary or false.

[16] This introduces a broad debate that extends to issues of personal identity, the nature of consciousness and has obvious ethical and legal consequences. It is not possible to discuss the nuances of the role of death within these areas.

[17] Morison (1971: pp. 694-698). See also Scarre (2007: pp. 5-11). Again, despite how interesting I find this feature of the discussion, I do not have room to delve into the details here.

subject declared dead despite failing to meet the traditional cardiopulmonary criterion for death. Supporting this scepticism regarding efforts to define death is the (potential) epistemic limit generated by death: one cannot know (in the fullest sense) the nature of death whilst one is yet living. Furthermore, the previous locution can also express the experiential inaccessibility of death, which if one maintains an evidentialist standard for knowledge[18] may entail that attempts to define death be judged incomplete; one cannot experience death whilst still alive, and without this experience knowledge claims about death cannot be made. Interestingly, the epistemic limit of death leaves room for death to be understood not as annihilation, but rather as a horizon, or boundary. Whatever death is, it is subjectively unknowable whilst alive. Though leaving conceptual space for this alternative understanding of the metaphysical nature of death and the afterlife is beneficial in terms of philosophical interest, given that this thesis is framed by the Epicurean inspired view of death as irreversible annihilation,[19] I will refrain from discussing death understood in this sense, and persevere with the Epicurean inspired analysis of the nature of death. Notwithstanding this, in order to avoid undermining the following attempts at defining death, it is worth examining scepticism[20] regarding knowledge claims relating to the event of death, in virtue of death's inaccessibility.

I'll begin by explaining the fissure that provides the basis for scepticism in slightly more detail. Clearly, one cannot experience death whilst alive, and conceding

[18] Though one need not maintain the evidentialist standard. If evidentialism is rejected, the issue of making knowledge claims regarding that which one has not directly experienced becomes less problematic. For the sake of curiosity however, and to imagine this position in its strongest form, I will continue to interpret it according to an evidentialist assessment of knowledge claims.

[19] A point to be elaborated upon in chapter two.

[20] Morison (1971: pp. 694-698) is a key proponent of scepticism regarding knowledge claims about a precise time of death.

the understanding of death as annihilation, given that death is the absence of all experience, it is not possible to directly experience death once dead (and no way to relate the absence of experience, which if available would contradict the absence of experience). Witnessing the death of the other, or near death experiences (NDE), may offer some derived or near-death experiential data regarding the nature of being *close* to death (though not death proper). This empirical fissure between death and direct experience is intended to support the remaining two sceptical claims. First, the absence of direct experience entails that epistemological claims regarding the nature of death lack justification, and; second, that the absence of direct experiences of death entails that there is no evidential basis for declarations of death. Thus, it may be that definitions and declarations of death from the perspective of the living are dubious at best. If true, one is potentially precluded from being able to define death.

Though these two claims are stated independently, the same criticism applies to each: direct experience of one's own death is not necessary for providing a definition of death, or for declaring that death has taken place.[21] The absence of directly experiencing one's own death does not entail that one has no evidence for the occurrence of death in relation to others. Given agreement with Epicurus that death is the complete end of life (as the No-Subject Thesis states), then provided one can assert which functions are necessary and sufficient for human life, the absence of these same functions equates to death. Observing the cessation of certain vital functions just is observing the occurrence of death from the external perspective of the living: if death is the end of life, then

[21] This point can be interpreted as a more general criticism of the evidentialist standard, but I intend it to relate specifically to definitional attempts aimed at death, and to avoid entering into a debate regarding evidentialism, which is not pertinent to my purposes.

evidence that life has ended is evidence that death has occurred. This is not intended to qualify as a definition of death, but in terms of defeating scepticism relating to the *possibility* of defining death, it is sufficient to assert that one can infer the occurrence of death given the absence of life, and then move to determine what this entails.

Naturally, certitude regarding the event of death will only be as strong as certainty regarding the absence of the relevant functions, but all that is required here is that it is *possible* to discern that death has occurred given the evidence that life-sustaining functions have ceased. It is for this reason that extensive debate and research has focussed upon the nuances between the variants of brain-death and that of cardiopulmonary function as providing the essential functions for life; understanding which (if not all) of these is necessary and sufficient for life, implies understanding why their absence entails death.[22]

Granting that death annihilates the subject permits the claim that there is no qualitative phenomenology of death: one is not lacking in the experience of nothingness in remaining alive. If death entails annihilation there are no qualities to access, or experiences to have, in terms of being dead. From the external perspective of the living, the absence of life-functions can be observed and death can be declared (permitting testimony regarding the death of a subject). In light of this, the sceptic may be confused regarding that which is inaccessible to the living: death as the absence of certain essential functions can – at least possibly – be considered epistemically and empirically available. However, the *nature* of being dead presents a barrier in those regards so long as one is alive. Yet if death is nothingness, there is no nature to access regardless of

[22] Discussing the clinical criteria for death is outwith the scope of this thesis.

one's status. Thus, even if this traditional evidentialist standard is agreed to, epistemic or empirical inaccessibility does not necessarily undermine efforts to define death, or discussing whether death is harmful, a bad thing, or neither. Clearly a particular understanding of the nature of death will have strong implications for responses to this latter concern: if death entails nonexistence, the question becomes whether nonexistence prohibits harm; if death presents a means of transcending to an afterlife, the questions alter to reflect considerations regarding personal survival, the metaphysical nature of the afterlife and so on.

In summary, the need for defining death has been revealed as resulting from the following concerns: first, to ensure shared understanding within the debate, and second, to permit both the restriction of rights and obligations towards the dead, and appropriate responses of grief among the bereaved. I examined a potential challenge regarding the ability to define death, supported by a possible fissure between death and direct experience. However, assuming that death is the end of life, evidence of the absence of the functions required for sustaining life was equal to evidence of the occurrence of death. Consequently, death can be understood as the absence of those functions required to sustain life. This broad articulation of death obviously requires further development, and attention will now turn to discussing dying, death and being dead in more detail.

III. DYING, DEATH AND BEING DEAD

Recall an earlier reference to the distinction between dying, death and being dead, intended to clarify what is being asked when questioning the possible harm of death. Does the question refer to the fact of mortality, or whether dying is a bad thing? Perhaps

the question refers to the harm involved in no longer existing? The following definitions are intended to clarify the meaning of the terms being used when questioning the harmfulness, or badness of death.

The definition of dying as the causal process that precedes death will be the first to undergo analysis. This characterisation of dying gives rise to some interesting issues. The first issue arises from instances in which it appears that death occurs without such a process to foreshadow it, exemplified by instantaneous death. For example, death occurring as the result of a gunshot wound directly to the brain might be an instance in which death obtains without the dying process.[23] It may be argued in response that the dying process was initiated as the bullet left the chamber, but then the dying process begins with external causes. Permitting the introduction of causes external to the subject within the dying process entails that the point (in time and/or event) that dying begins becomes difficult to identify; it could be claimed the dying process began when the correct amount of pressure was placed on the trigger, when the bullet was loaded into the gun, when the assailant formed the intentional desire to shoot the subject, and so on. Thus, in order to restrict the events included in the dying process, it seems reasonable to suggest that dying is a process comprised solely of events internal to the subject. For the gunshot victim, the dying process begins when the bullet penetrates the skull, at which point the damage to the subject is terminal and constitutes a causal process culminating

[23] Another example of instantaneous death would be a subject located at the heart of a nuclear blast. The destruction of the whole subject occurs within such an extraordinarily brief moment, that any attempt to establish a dying process that precedes death appears to be rather desperate. However, given that there are no restrictions on how brief the dying process is, those *incredibly* concise causal processes occurring just before the absolute annihilation of the subject constitute the dying process (perhaps starting from the first burning or disintegration of flesh from the impact of the blast).

in death, albeit extremely abruptly. Yet even in this more carefully stated definition of dying, there remain some difficult cases.[24] When a subject dies of a natural illness, the illness may be the consequence of years of certain abuses (excess salt in his diet for example, leading to hardening of the arteries and a subsequent heart attack): did the dying process begin at the first instance of the abusive behaviour (which overstates the case), or when the incremental abuse combines to cause irrevocable harm (inviting difficulties regarding determining the specific moment)? Furthermore, it may be argued that from the point of birth, one begins to die: one is always dying as an internal process. However, it is misleading (and melodramatic) to claim that the fact of eventual death (perhaps in the distant future) supports the view that a person in good health is currently dying. Indeed, if it is true that one is always dying, this entails that there is no distinction between a terminally ill victim of cancer at the most progressive stage of illness, and a healthy person: both are dying. Clearly, a qualification is required that defines one case from the other, in which the dying process is said to 'intensify' in some respect.

An additional point to consider when defining dying involves the relation between dying and death, generally expressed as the claim that dying precedes death. Consider the following example: A subject *S* is involved in an accident and the injuries sustained are causing *S*'s respiratory functions to cease. Emergency services are called at time *t*, and upon arrival medics quickly surmise that *S* is dying at time *t1*, and will be

[24] This same difficulty is perhaps encountered during any attempt to define the timing and precise boundary of an event, but this is too broad a problem for me to tackle here. I offer my articulation of the beginning of the dying process as an internal causal chain to limit scope, not to entirely resolve the problems alluded to in the previous comment.

dead at t_2. However, the medics are able to perform interventions that allow *S*'s respiratory functions to resume at time t_2, thus at t_2 *S* is not dead. It was true of *S* that *S* was dying at t_1, and yet death did not occur at t_2. This example suggests that whilst dying always precedes death, death does not always follow dying. Thus the definition of dying as that process which precedes death requires two qualifications, one that delineates to some extent when the process commences, and the other to clarify the non-necessary relation of dying to death. Fred Feldman (1989: pp. 375-390) notes these and other difficulties regarding defining dying, offering the following characterisation of dying (dying$_2$ refers to dying as a process, as opposed to dying$_1$ which means simply that one dies):

> 'X is dying$_2$ at t = df. at t, x is engaged in a process which, if it were allowed to run its course without interference, would end in a relatively short period of time with x's death.'
>
> (Feldman, 1989: p. 378)

This makes the non-necessary relation between dying and death intelligible. Even though 'interference' is somewhat vague, one can assume that interference refers to those actions that halt the dying process, thus preventing death. This allows for the above example regarding *S*, in which it makes sense to say of *S* that *S* was dying at time t_1 even though *S* did not die at t_2. However, though Feldman's definition prohibits the counterintuitive claim that one is always dying,[25] the ambiguity of the phrase 'a relatively short period of time' does not solve the problem of identifying exactly when

[25] Although, for those who die young even this qualification would not aid identifying the duration of the dying process, since for them life is only lived for a relatively short time. Of course, this lends itself to establishing the truth to the claim that one is always dying. Yet even if it is granted that one is always dying, I maintain my previous point that a qualification is required in which the dying process is said to intensify in those moments preceding death. Given the need for this qualification, Feldman's use of the phrase that the dying process occurs a 'relatively short period of time' before death is appropriate.

dying begins. Feldman responds to this by introducing a restriction; to include only the causal chain of those process that bring about the cessation of so-called 'vital properties' (1989: p. 382). Though one may be inclined to determine what these functions are, I do not have space to do so here. Perhaps Feldman's intentional vagueness hints at a core issue: in some cases, the beginning of the dying process is indeterminate. For example, a subject develops terminal cancer as the result of alcohol abuse. Noticeable symptoms develop and the diagnosis is delivered on identifiable dates, yet the occurrence of the initial mutation of cells is unknown, as is the precise quantity of alcohol induced damage required for the increase in cell division. However, that these specific moments are unknown is not to say that they are unknowable, thus the indeterminacy is not absolute. Whilst it may be difficult to recognise in some instances, in others it is quite clear when the internal dying process began. Nevertheless, given this indeterminate quality to the dying process on some occasions,[26] it is reasonable to define dying in terms of its proximal relation to death. Thus, dying is an internal process of indeterminate length that, if no intervention occurs, will shortly bring about inevitable death.[27]

Moving now to discuss the term 'death'. I will begin with an admittedly broad definition, aiming to refine it in response to criticism. The relation between life and death is often considered as binary; one is either dead or alive, and death refers simply to

[26] It is worth considering if the issue of indeterminacy has some relation to cause of death. I'm not entirely sure how the distinction would function, however, as one cannot simply divide cases into 'natural' and 'unnatural' causes since both would have instances of indeterminacy.

[27] This understanding of dying could also apply to dying in the sense of 'we are always dying', especially given the brevity of human existence as considered from the objective perspective of the universe. However, this is not the sense of dying that is relevant to the debate between the Epicurean and the deprivationist, and so will not be referred to in any detail hereafter.

the border between the two states. Thus a standard analysis of the concept of death is that it is the end of life:

D1: death = df. *x*'s life ended at *t*.

This broad definition reflects the intuition that death, as experiential nothingness cannot be defined in terms of any positive properties, and must be defined in terms of that which it eradicates. Though D1 presents a truthful account of death, it is not particularly informative. Given that it is assumed that death has no experiential properties, very little can be said other than to reiterate that it is the end of something else (all other properties perhaps). Stated as such, death is a somewhat vapid, albeit graspable, concept. However, to define death as simply the end of life merely necessitates a supplementary definition of 'life' such that its absence or end might be accurately understood as death. Yet developing a definition of life is a genuinely complex matter,[28] involving the difficult task of constructing a definition that encompasses all living things, and avoids including that which is not living. One might begin with a broad definition of life as that which exists, but there are many entities in existence that are not living, such as lengths of string or glass bottles. Narrowing the scope to particular abilities or properties such as cognition or sentience entails the inclusion of artificial intelligence (something that is possibly problematic), and yet rejects the admittance of non-sentient entities such as plants, which is an unacceptable oversight. Whilst it is certainly possible that a

[28] Complexity is increased by the fact that finding a properly representative definition of a general term such as 'life' entails making sense of all the possible consequences of different understandings. For example, whilst one may strive for conceptual clarity by beginning with a limited and purely biological understanding of life, one will have to consider the impact this biological understanding might have on certain ethical considerations, such as when the termination of a life is permissible. The *value* of a life is not necessarily implicit in the biological definition of it. Luper (2009: pp. 11-38) presents an illuminating discussion of this issue.

sufficient definition of life be offered that avoids problems of inclusion, to define death in these terms does not advance deeper understanding of the nature of death. Given that it might be argued that being alive is conditional upon death not having occurred yet, life could be defined as existing before death, and death is defined as no longer existing after having lived. The standard analysis as stated in D1 does not reveal a deeper understanding of the terms involved, and therefore requires refinement.

Further to the above, D1 allows for too broad an application, since the end of life might refer to a series of events that culminates in the termination of a subject's existence. This understanding entails that death can refer to moments in which the subject is still alive. Given that this use is linguistically acceptable, D1 does not offer enough content to satisfactorily define death for my purposes. As stated earlier, the overarching use of 'death' is not the focus of this thesis, but rather it is the unified concept, and the state of nonexistence beginning thereafter that is the subject of debate for the No-Subject Thesis and its critics.

Another consequence of D1 is that conceiving of death as the end of life is consistent with the contradictory views that death entails the complete annihilation of the subject, and that it represents the transition to an alternative form of existence. Though this dual application may be welcomed insofar as it allows for debate to develop, I aim to produce a definition of death that is consistent with the No-Subject Thesis, in which death is characterised as the annihilation of the subject after having lived. Thus, D1 is unsatisfactorily broad, and is not appropriate for my purposes.

Hence, it is reasonable to articulate an account of death that rules out afterlife existence.[29] I suggest the following expression:

> D2: death = df. death occurs at *t* if, and only if, the permanent and irreversible annihilation of the subject after having lived occurs at *t*.

Being dead is the infinite continuation of this nonexistence. I am aware that this is a somewhat controversial understanding of the nature of death and being dead, but it is not arbitrary. There are two potentially contentious elements within D2; the claim regarding the irreversibility of death, and that death entails annihilation. Allow me to begin by outlining the reasons for claiming that death entails annihilation.

First, it is consistent with the No-Subject Thesis, in which death is characterised as bringing about the nonexistence of the subject. To reject this articulation of death as annihilation alters the subject of discourse, introducing an understanding of the nature of death in which the subject (or soul) persists after the body has been destroyed, contradicting the annihilation view. It is important to note, however, that I accept the annihilation view for the sake of argument. I recognise that an afterlife existence is, at the very least, logically possible. Thus, allow that D2 is not intended to prohibit the possibility of an afterlife, but rather is intended as an attempt to resist contradicting the Epicurean inspired framework of this thesis. Furthermore, the extension of the scope of Neo-Epicureanism applies only to those who genuinely hold that death presents the end of existence, and not a mere transition. Those who do not think of death as annihilation have an alternative concept of what the term 'death' denotes; for Neo-Epicureans death entails the complete absence of experience, for those who deny that death entails

[29] This is admittedly a large assumption regarding death and the possibility of an afterlife, but is consistent with Epicureanism and will be maintained for the sake of argument.

annihilation, death represents a transition between lives throughout which the person survives,[30] and therefore death does not preclude experience. Though this entails that the 'anti-annihilation' view could support a conditional view of the negative value of death, much like the outcome of many critics of the No-Subject Thesis,[31] the reason for doing so differs.[32] Indeed, given that the harm of death would depend on the nature of experience thereafter, the harm is not caused by death *per se*, but is perhaps the consequence of behaviour whilst alive. Furthermore, it may not be death that produces conditional harm; rather, it is the state of being dead that has the potential to be harmful to the one who died, given an unpleasant (perhaps even torturous) afterlife. Though death presents the manner of transcending from this mortal life, to one of eternal bliss or damnation, it is arguably not death that instigates the possible harm. As a consequence of the anti-annihilation interpretation, the arguments regarding the harm of death that accept death as annihilation potentially lose their relevance. To aid worthwhile discussion, it is sensible to consent to the Neo-Epicurean concept of death as annihilation before advancing to examine what implications this might have regarding the possible harm of death. In light of this, D2's presentation of death as annihilation

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[30] I do not know which features would be required for survival; traditionally conceived it would be the soul, consisting in those properties essential to personhood (perhaps memory and psychological continuity, though no doubt many others). This is a complex matter, and the project of discerning properties required for afterlife survival is not of concern here.

[31] For deprivationists, the harm of death is conditional upon the result of a comparative judgement between the value of a subject's life given death at *t*, and the value of that same subject's life given death at a later time *t1*. The Deprivation Thesis will be critically examined at length in chapter three.

[32] The value of death is conditional upon the nature of existence thereafter. Thus, if the deceased subject has a pleasurable existence death cannot be considered entirely harmful from her perspective (though she may mourn her past life, the benefits of eternal peace would conceivably eliminate any longings), and the grief of others can be deemed somewhat unnecessary (perhaps even selfish). Contrastingly, if the deceased has a painful existence death can be valued negatively as it has permitted the transition to negative experiences.

will be understood as implicit in any articulation of death proffered throughout the remainder of this discussion.

The irreversibility condition[33] contained in D2 is central to preventing any reference to near death experiences (NDE) as evidence for existence after death, since such experiences are, by definition, neither irreversible nor permanent. Additionally, they are not experiences of death *per se*, but rather they are experiences of certain moments of dying, and given that one is not yet dead whilst one is dying it is conceivable that consciousness could deliver such perceptions. NDE are therefore impotent as counterexamples to the definition of death as the annihilation of the subject; at best they can provide information regarding what it is like to be dying, perhaps close to death, but *not yet* dead. Furthermore, the irreversibility condition resists suggested definitions of death based on 'deathlike' experiences (like that of being frozen or being unconscious), since these deathlike experiences imply only temporary loss of consciousness or nonexistence, whereas death conceived of as the annihilation of the subject entails that the losses are permanent and complete. There is a threat of circular reasoning here: the irreversibility condition features in the justificatory grounds for claiming that the annihilation caused by death is permanent, and is therefore an irreversible state of affairs. Noting that the cessation of certain biological functions has to be irreversible in order for death to be declared breaks the circularity. If it is likely that the cessation of life sustaining functions *can* be reversed, then death will not be

[33] It is worth noting that the irreversibility condition must allow for the possibility of resurrection via an act of God. The term 'irreversible' is suitable; resurrection is a miracle, and an act would not count as such unless it defied the laws of nature (in this case, the permanence of being dead). Thus though under normal conditions death is irreversible, it is not impossible that an omnipotent being could resurrect the deceased.

declared: efforts will continue until such functions can no longer be expected to return. Thus irreversibility is required for death: if the condition is not irreversible, then the subject is not dead. It might be suggested that whilst the cessation of the relevant function is possibly reversible, the subject remains in the process of dying, and is not yet dead. Consequently, the irreversibility condition will continue to feature in all additional definitions of death made herein.

Problematic counterexamples to death defined as permanent and irreversible occur when a subject is said to die and then return to life at a later time. Indeed, given certain advancements in medical technology, it is now possible to artificially sustain the life of a subject who satisfies an agreed clinical criterion for death. In certain cases determining death is less the assessment of a (non)-physical state and is rather a complex ethical and legal issue. An example may illustrate this point: *S* suffers a terminal trauma and dies. Medics manage to resuscitate *S*, though having been starved of oxygen for an extended period of time *S* sustains brain damage and never regains consciousness. *S* cannot exist without the aid of life-support, and some time after the trauma, life-support is removed and *S* dies. This case seems to imply that *S* dies twice, once at the occurrence of the original trauma, and again upon the removal of life-support. Examples of this kind present a *prima facie* contradiction to the broad definition of death as permanent and irreversible; either the definition ought to be altered to reflect such cases,

or it must be demonstrated why one of the instances of death does not meet the definition.[34]

To examine this problem further it will be beneficial to sketch a criterion for death. Though there is much debate over the nuances of this criterion, the following criterion is largely accepted in law and medicine as a comprehensive method for determining death: Death is the 'irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions, or irreversible cessation of all function of the entire brain, including the brain stem' (President's Commission, 1993). At first glance the criterion explicated here may appear to solve the problem, since *S* was resuscitated the cessation of certain functions at the scene of the trauma was temporary, and therefore does not meet the irreversibility condition. Under this interpretation, *S* does *not* die at the point of trauma, and death *does* occur at the later stage when life-support is removed. However, after resuscitation *S* could not continue to live without the aid of life-support, indicating that the *natural* operations[35] of *S*'s body had permanently ceased to function at the point of trauma, thus entailing that the injuries sustained were indeed irreversible (insofar as spontaneous functions internal to the subject are concerned). This is confirmed by *S*'s failure to live when life-support is removed. Of course, this interpretation raises complex issues regarding the identity status of *S* whilst *S*'s life is artificially sustained; it suggests that *S* is dead, despite the inclination to consider *S* alive and existent, though in a vegetative

[34] This example raises interesting questions for medical ethics. E.g., is it beneficial to resuscitate a subject if there is little chance of conscious recovery? What is the status of the unconscious subject? What are the ethical justifications for cessation of life-support?

[35] It remains to be established why the cause of such operations ought to be natural in order to qualify as an indication of life.

state.[36] The profound complexities resulting from the contradictory conclusions regarding whether and when to declare death are fascinating, but are beyond the scope of this thesis. Attention here is focussed on offering an acceptable definition of death from which to progress. Given the problematic example presented above, it is reasonable to attempt to reflect certain advancements in medicine, and it is for that reason that the phrase 'without intervention' is required again. Death as presented in the broad definition D2 can therefore be refined to state:

> D3: death = df. death occurs at *t* if, and only if, the irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions has occurred, or will occur without intervention, or the irreversible cessation of all function of the brain, including the brain stem has occurred, or will occur without intervention.

This articulation of death allows one to determine the death of *S* at the time of original trauma, whilst acknowledging that with medical intervention *S*'s life can be artificially sustained for an extended period of time thereafter.[37] I consider this to be a reasonable account of death, for my purposes.

The last distinction now requires consideration. A definition of being dead, already alluded to above, states that being dead is the infinite nonexistence of a subject that begins after death; it begins at the moment death is complete, and extends into eternity. Thus defined, being dead brings its own philosophical controversy: understanding being dead as nonexistence after having lived precludes the belief that

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[36] There are several other ethical issues arising as a consequence of this problem, such as whether *S* has rights, which rights these might be, and what decisions may be made in *S*'s name.

[37] I understand that there are less extreme instances in which a subject's life might be said to be artificially sustained i.e. without certain daily medication an illness would worsen to a lethal extent, for example, a type1 diabetic who must inject insulin everyday. It might be argued that this medication constitutes such intervention that artificially sustains the diabetic's life. However, the definition refers to intervention occurring after, not prior, to death.

there is any form of life after death.[38] One motivation for understanding the nature of being dead as nonexistence is that it is consistent with the view that death entails the annihilation of the subject. As with the definition of death, this interpretation of being dead coheres with the Neo-Epicurean argument presented in chapter two. Furthermore, it coheres with the experience of loss; one suffers in the absence of the deceased, viewing her absence not as temporary, but as enduring. Indeed, several psychological and sociological studies[39] have shown that belief in afterlife survival and involvement in religious groups reduces the impact of loss and the experience of grief; believing that the loved other has in some way survived death, and that reunion is possible, can prove to be of great comfort to the bereaved. This provides additional reason to maintain a definition consistent with the No-Subject Thesis. Death understood as involving annihilation may, in some cases at least, give rise to a comparatively bleak form of irreversible loss, which may strengthen the claim that the loss experienced by the bereaved represents the harm of death. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that death does indeed entail annihilation, and supplemented with the irreversibility condition involved in death, infer that being dead constitutes infinite nonexistence thereafter.

IV. CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to provide an acceptable definition of death. Definition is necessary for expositional clarity and to ensure a shared understanding of death such that declarations of death can be made, informing the bereaved of their loss. Attempts at

[38] It is worth noting that this understanding of being dead does not exclude figurative sense in which one can be 'immortal'; reputation, professional legacies and so on can survive a subject's death.
[39] See Carr (2003: pp. 215-232); Farnsworth and Allen (1996: pp. 360-367); Kalish (1982: pp. 163-173).

definition were defended from a sceptical challenge, which argued for a fissure between death and direct experience. However, direct experience of one's own death is not a prerequisite for constructing a definition; the absence of functions required for life is evidence of death. The next task involved delineating the tripartite distinction between the process of dying, the event of death, and the infinite state of being dead, offering an examination of each element, and discussing the relationship between them.

In keeping with the No-Subject Thesis, death is characterised as entailing the annihilation of the one who dies. Thus, once the irreversible cessation of the functions deemed necessary and sufficient for life has occurred, the subject no longer exists; the person is annihilated at death. It is Epicurus' view, which inspires the No-Subject Thesis presented here, that nonexistence entails the total absence of experience, entailing that death is nothing to the one who dies. From this it is concluded that death is not a bad thing for the one who dies. The No-Subject Thesis will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2: THE NEO-EPICUREAN NO-SUBJECT THESIS

I. INTRODUCTION

Don't fear god,
Don't worry about death;
What is good is easy to get, and
What is terrible is easy to endure.
Philodemus, *'The Four-Part Cure'* 1005, 4.9-14 (trans. Inwood & Gerson, 1994)

I will begin this discussion of the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis by elucidating the hedonistic foundations of Epicurean philosophy; firstly, because deprivationists criticise the hedonic assumptions regarding the necessity of experiencing harms, and secondly because doing so offers a deeper understanding of the No-Subject Thesis. Later in the thesis, I will introduce Epicurus' reflections on friendship, which I argue lead to a restrictive understanding of the loss and grief experienced by the bereaved. My positive argument will be introduced, describing why this restrictive understanding of personal relationships and attempted minimisation of the grief experience leads to the No-Subject Thesis advancing an incomplete account of the possible harm of death. I will introduce an alternative argument that I believe reflects ordinary life intuitions regarding the nature and timing of the harm of death; the negative valuation of death is justified principally in terms of the impact upon the bereaved. This position will be elaborated upon in the fifth chapter.

II. EPICUREAN HEDONISM

Though no work of Epicurus survives in its entirety, three letters, the *Letter to Menoeceus* ((*LM*) an account of personal happiness), the *Letter to Herodotus* ((*LH*) an account of materialist and atomist physics), and the *Letter to Pythocles* ((*LP*) an account of natural phenomena) remain as quotations in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Sayings of Famous Philosophers* (Hutchinson, in Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. xiii). These arguably provide enough material to construct a generally reliable account of Epicurus' teachings. Surviving isolated remarks, known as the 'Principal Doctrines' (*KD*) and 'Vatican Sayings' (*SV*) help to confirm certain core ideals, though one would be remiss to hold that at least some of the quotations attributed to Epicurus himself are not in fact the opinion of one of his followers (Hutchinson, in Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. xiii).[1] Taking this into account however, enough remains to create an account of Epicureanism that clearly inspires the No-Subject Thesis.

The overarching goal of Epicurean philosophy was to introduce his followers to opinions and attitudes that would assist them in the achievement of *ataraxia*, understood as 'tranquillity of mind', removing mental anxieties and unnecessary desires to enable one to appreciate the simple pleasures available (Hutchinson, in Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. vii). Foremost amongst unwanted (unwarranted) anxieties were those relating to death, hence the attention given by Epicureans to removing fear of death (Hutchinson, in Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. viii).

[1] All references to the classical texts mentioned here are taken from Inwood and Gerson (trans. and ed., 1994), unless stated otherwise.

Epicurus held that the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain are amongst the most basic human instincts (Rist, 1997: p.103). All that is good for a subject can be understood in terms of pleasure, and conversely all that is bad can be accounted for in terms of that which is painful.[2] One can conclude from this that Epicurus was motivated by fundamentally hedonistic convictions. As Epicurus states:

> 'For we do everything for the sake of being neither in pain nor in terror. As soon as we achieve this state every storm in the soul is dispelled, since the animal is not in a position to go after some need nor to seek something else to complete the good of the body and the soul. For we are in need of pleasure only when we are in pain because of the absence of pleasure, and when we are not in pain, then we no longer need pleasure.'
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> Epicurus, *LM* 128 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 30)

According to Epicurus (*SV* 33), humans are innately hedonistic beings; from birth, seeking to eliminate hunger, thirst, and find comfort from cold. Provided a subject is protected from these pains in virtue of satisfying these basic needs, he or she experiences a pleasurable state of affairs: 'For if someone has these things and is confident of having them in the future, he might contend with Zeus for happiness' (Epicurus, *SV* 33, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 38).

There are two constituent elements of Epicurean hedonism that are pertinent to the No-Subject Thesis; first, 'all good and bad consists in sense-experience' (Epicurus *LM* 124, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 29). A subject's wellbeing is a consequence of those states of affairs that are *experienced* (Rosenbaum, 1993: p. 124,

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[2] This is, of course, a narrow view of the relation between pleasure/pain, and goods/harms but it is consistent with the hedonism that grounds Epicureanism, and is worth accepting in order to progress. Additionally, it is consistent with the view that immediate pleasure may ultimately result in pain, and *vice versa*, provided one is willing to take a long-term view of the outcome of certain pleasure and pains (an obvious example would be a love of alcohol, which may bring immediate pleasure, but over a longer period of time result in ill heath which is clearly bad for the subject). See *LM* 129, and *KD8*.

interprets experiencing *x* as being causally affected by *x*, which will be discussed in more detail later).[3] The most straightforward examples are those in which subject *S* inhabits the same spatiotemporal location as that state of affairs that is said to harm or benefit. For example, *S* is harmed in a road traffic accident: physical pain and fear represent the harm. However, spatiotemporal contiguity need not refer to the original state of affairs; direct experience can also involve reflecting on past, and anticipation of future, harmful or beneficial states of affairs. To continue the example, *S* is harmed by traumatic memories of the accident: emotional distress and anxiety represent the harm. Direct experience can be thought to refer to being causally affected by an event or state of affairs (Rosenbaum, 1993: p. 124), though perhaps Epicurus understood it more generally as awareness of physical and/or mental states, sensations and experiences (essentially, pleasures and pains). For Epicureans, one is in pain when suffering bodily disease or injury, or mental anguish and anxiety. These hedonistic intuitions are contained within what I shall call the 'experience condition', which is central to the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis. One must be causally affected by *x* in order to be harmed or benefited by *x* (Rosenbaum, 1993: p. 124). The experience condition is rather controversial, and, as shall be discussed in chapter three, deprivationists argue strongly against it.

The second feature of Epicurean hedonism that is significant for the No-Subject Thesis is that pleasure is characterised negatively, as the absence of pain (*KD*3, *LM* 128). As Epicurus states: 'For we are in need of pleasure only when we are in pain

[3] It is important to note that I acknowledge that not all pains reduce wellbeing, or that all pleasure increase wellbeing. Yet even recognising that there are alternative long-term outcomes for pleasures and pains, it is reasonable to accept that pleasure and pain impacts wellbeing, in a very broad sense.

because of the absence of pleasure, and when we are not in pain, then we no longer need pleasure' (Epicurus, *LM* 128, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 30). This might be interpreted as strongly implying that death as the absence of sensation is therefore a pleasurable state. The Cyreniacs asserted that, according to Epicurus' account of pleasure 'the happiest person is a corpse or somebody asleep' (O'Keefe, 2010: p. 121). This conclusion is potentially problematic given that it contradicts the No-Subject Thesis' view of death as an experiential void. However, the experience condition can be used to dismiss this positive interpretation of death. Given that pleasure or pain must be directly experienced, and following the complete absence of sensation and experience entailed by death, the absence of pain does not constitute pleasure *in relation to death*. Annihilation precludes the possibility for experiencing anything. Thus, pleasure as the absence of pain is not to be confused with pleasure taken from the absence of all experience. Tim O'Keefe notes this response:

> 'While corpses are free from pain and anxiety, there is a large difference between being unconscious and being tranquil. Corpses do not take delight in being free from fear, while we can. So, the Epicureans could say, quite reasonably, that while *aponia* and *ataraxia* are defined negatively as freedom from bodily and mental pain, they are still positive mental states that require a person to be aware of them to be pleasures.'
>
> (O'Keefe, 2010: p. 121)

Far from encouraging the kind of excesses associated with hedonism in contemporary understanding, Epicurus' recommendations were more akin to 'ascetic quietism' (Rist, 1972: p. 101). This is because, as stated, Epicurus advocated that the highest pleasure was simply the absence of pain. Understanding pleasure in terms of not being troubled, or not suffering hardship, is a particularly reserved form of hedonism. There is an intuition that this does not constitute pleasure, but is the minimum

requirement for pleasure to arise.[4] But for Epicurus, pleasures that exceed the absence of pain are not necessarily beneficial (*LM* 128). As Epicurus states: 'No pleasure is a bad thing in itself. But the things which produce certain pleasures bring troubles many times greater than the pleasures' (Epicurus, *KD*8, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 32). To avoid seeking excessive pleasures (and being pained by their lack of satisfaction), Epicurus brings colour and shade to his reserved hedonism, developing a concept of pleasure related to the fulfilment of various types of desires. He argues that not all desires are alike, offering a threefold definition of desire: 'Of desires, some are natural and necessary, some natural and not necessary, and some neither natural nor necessary but occurring as a result of a groundless opinion' (Epicurus, *KD*29, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 34).[5] Pleasure derived from the satisfaction of the *appropriate* set of desires is coextensive with the absence of pain, and would not constitute an excessive pleasure. As is written above in *KD*29, desires are either natural and necessary (first order), exemplified by the satisfaction of thirst by consuming water; natural and unnecessary (second order), characterised by the satisfaction of thirst by consuming wine; and unnatural and unnecessary (third order), such as the excessive consumption of wine, continued long after thirst has been abated. Genuine instances of pleasure are produced by the satisfaction of first order desires; in satisfying these desires, pain is eradicated and pleasure is generated. As Rist notes:

> 'It is the fulfilment of natural and necessary desires which takes away pain, thus, of course, producing pleasure. We recall the cry of the flesh not to be hungry, not to be thirsty, not to be cold. It is natural for the flesh to cry in this way and dangerous for the soul to ignore it.'

[4] This could be thought of as a 'ground zero' for allowing the occurrence of pleasure.
[5] See also Rist (1972: p. 101).

(Rist, 1972: p. 117)

This is not to say that the fulfilment of second and third order desires does not bring pleasure, but rather that the long-term consequences of doing so may result in greater pains than the short-term pleasure gained. Epicurus recognised that not all pleasures would *ultimately* result in benefits (*LM* 128). Thus, one ought to restrict desires to first order desires, the achievement of which it is reasonable to expect, and undemanding to sustain. Furthermore, the satisfaction of such desires is unlikely to bring about eventual pain.[6] This constraint on human desires, and the understanding of pleasure as the absence of pain, motivates the Epicurean claim that what is good is easy to attain (*KD*21), and as he writes elsewhere:

> 'For who do you believe is better than a man who has pious opinions about the gods, is always fearless about death, has reasoned out the natural goal of life and understands that the limit of good things is easy to achieve completely and easy to provide, and that the limit of bad things either has a short duration or causes little trouble.'
>
> Epicurus, *LM* 133 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 31).

Furthermore, as stated in the 'four-part cure', this is followed by the arguably more controversial proposition that what is bad is easy to endure. His justification for this is presented in *KD*4: if a pain were particularly intense it would quickly end (perhaps because of death). If it were less intense it would either be short-lived by its nature, alleviated by the satisfaction of a desire, or it would be of minimal intensity and therefore of little concern to the subject. As Epicurus states:

> 'The feeling of pain does not linger continuously in the flesh; rather, the sharpest is present for the shortest time, while what merely exceeds the feeling of pleasure

[6] Drinking water when thirsty (instead of wine) is indubitably beneficial to one's health, and unlikely to result in ill health.

> in the flesh lasts only a few days. And diseases which last a long time involve feelings of pleasure which exceed feelings of pain.'
>
> Epicurus, *KD*4 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 32)

There are two central issues to raise here. Firstly, even if a pain is not sufficient to end a life, and only lasts a finite period, these limits may not reduce the harm caused *whilst enduring the pain*. An example of this would be the pain a woman experiences whilst in labour and giving birth.[7] Though her pain is, all things considered, short lived, one would be mistaken to conclude that the limited duration of her pain entails that it is 'easy' to endure (this is true, even taking into consideration the joy that birth culminates in).[8] That a pain is temporary, and may be endured does not entail that it is easy to bear. Secondly, though someone suffering chronic pain may admit that this does not preclude pleasurable experiences, it is not inconceivable that the *overall* (all things considered) value of their lives is diminished by enduring chronic pain. Thus, though the harm caused by chronic pain is not enough to prevent moments of pleasure, the level of pleasure experienced is less than it would have been if they did not have the chronic condition. The diminished value of their life could be a source of mental distress, perhaps presented in the form of angst or regret. Moving on, enough has been said for now to conclude that for Epicurus pleasure is the absence of pain, and that the greatest pleasures result from satisfying natural and necessary desires. If one can limit desires

[7] Clearly I am not claiming that childbirth is harmful (given that having a child is the greatest of joys), but am rather referring to the process involved i.e., the intense pain of contractions and crowning, back pain, tearing, and so on.

[8] Painkillers and anaesthetics are available to reduce and even eradicate pain in some cases, which might entail that, for these women at least, labour and birth is easy to endure. But given that pain is not present in such instances, the example no longer meets with the Epicurean notion of a harm that is easy to endure.

such that they are unproblematic to fulfil, and as a result be free from pain (and can expect to remain so in the future),[9] then one may experience *ataraxia*.

The limiting of desires initiates the first of two stages aimed at overcoming fear of death: do not desire to live longer than a typical, natural lifespan[10] as such a desire could never be satisfied. The wise person does not long for immortality, but accepts death as an inevitable limit (*LM* 124). Of course, this does not preclude desiring to live *at least as long* as a typical, natural lifespan.[11] One can rationally desire not to die prematurely, whilst accepting that doing so is possible. One must acknowledge that death is always possible, and accept that death may come at any time (perhaps much earlier than is typical): do not expect to be exempt from the possibility of an earlier death. Extendedly, reject the unnatural desire for an immortal life, given that living for an infinite duration is not the course of a typical, natural lifespan.[12] Considerations of premature death, broadly conceived of as death that occurred earlier than it could have, feature heavily within the Deprivation Thesis, which will be examined in the next chapter. The duration of a lifetime that might denote a premature death is not obvious. Some might argue that every death is premature given that it is always possible that one

[9] The beneficial consequences of limiting desires in the way recommended here can be accepted, but it is not clear that this would lead to freedom from pain. Often the pleasure garnered from a desire fulfilled is only temporary, and the fulfilled desire is often replaced with another, as yet unfulfilled, desire, which extends the scope of desires, and introduces pain once more. Nonetheless, the difficulty of achieving the Epicurean goal here does not necessarily prevent accepting the conditional claim, if only to allow analysis to continue.

[10] The duration of a 'natural lifespan' is open to wide variation, and one is compelled to be vague regarding how long a life might last. This particular issue will have greater import when attention is turned towards the Deprivation Thesis.

[11] References to 'typical, natural lifespan' are made entirely towards human lives, and not the lives of other species.

[12] The nature of immortality is clearly beyond the scope of this discussion.

could have lived longer (however brief that duration might be).[13] Indeed, deprivationists suggest that being deprived of further (positively valued) life is the source of the harm of death.[14]

Epicureans held that upon removing unnecessary desires regarding mortality, there were two remaining impediments to the possession of *ataraxia*: fear of the gods, and fear of death (Hutchinson, in Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. vii). Clearly it is the latter fear – of death and of being dead – that is of principal concern. Epicurus thought that fearing pain in the afterlife, and being terrified of future nonexistence cause anxiety regarding death (*LM* 125). Removing these anxieties would improve overall wellbeing and bring pleasure in the absence of pain. Thus, holding only the first order – natural and necessary – desire to live for a natural lifespan, given one's particular genetic history, lifestyle and circumstances[15] (and recognising that death may come sooner than is expected) represents the first stage in removing fear of death.

The second stage to overcoming fear of death involves agreeing to the termination thesis (*LM* 124-125), which states that death represents the termination of the subject and his or her subjective experience. As is written: 'Death is nothing to us.

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[13] The (ever present) possibility of living longer than one actually lived could be utilised to support the (unacknowledged) desire for immortality. One might always agree to extend one's life by small increments, because one maintains the desire for further life, and such additions could extend infinitely. This point and variants on the theme are discussed by Sorensen (2005: pp. 119-125). Deprivationists utilise comparisons between lives that are eventually ended in death (one later than the other), and as such do not place immortality as a suitable counterpart to 'death at time *t*'. It is not that one has been deprived of infinite value derived from infinite lifespan, but simply that one may have been deprived of additional value in dying at an earlier time than one could have died. It is not necessary to establish the former to prove the latter. Deprivationists and Epicureans alike do not advocate for immortality, but rather debate the value of death given the finitude of typical human lives.

[14] This issue will be addressed in greater detail in chapter three.

[15] 'Circumstances' here refers both to the internal condition of one's health, and to the external states of affairs one might inhabit e.g. if the subject is located in a volatile war-zone.

For what has been dissolved has no sense-experience, and what has no sense-experience is nothing to us' (Epicurus, *KD*2, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 32). This feature of the Epicurean argument against the harm of death directly inspires the contemporary No-Subject Thesis: there is no subject of experience after death occurs, and thus no subject of harm. Indeed it is the absence of a subject of experience that generates the philosophical challenge of explaining how and when the dead are harmed. To reiterate, the hedonistic foundations of Epicureanism, together with the combination of the termination thesis and experience condition, leads the No-Subject Thesis to conclude that death is not harmful to the one who dies. The following quote summarises the discussion presented in this section:

> 'Get used to believing that death is nothing to us. For all good and bad consists in sense-experience, and death is the privation of sense-experience. Hence a correct knowledge of the fact that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life a matter for contentment, not by adding a limitless time [to life] but by removing the longing for immortality.'
>
> Epicurus, *LM* 124 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 29)

Now that the Epicurean hedonism motivating the No-Subject Thesis has been discussed, I will present my contemporary interpretation in more detail. I argue that the No-Subject Thesis is effective insofar as it demonstrates why death is not bad for the one who dies. However, I think that it is too narrow regarding the possible motivations for fearing death, and in identifying the subject of the harm of death. The central problem as I see it arises as a result of underemphasising the social context of death. The losses caused by death go beyond those incurred by the deceased, extending to those endured by the bereaved. The No-Subject Thesis fails to address this secondary sense of loss,

and therefore fails to capture a possible harm of death. Before presenting my own views in greater detail, the No-Subject Thesis requires further elucidation and analysis.

III. THE NO-SUBJECT THESIS

Epicurus' view that death entails the annihilation of the subject is a natural consequence of Epicurean physics; all physical bodies are made up of atoms that disperse, or dissolve, at the point of death, and so the capacity to experience sensation is eradicated.[16] As James Warren confirms:

> 'The argument depends heavily on the Epicurean conviction that the soul is mortal. Like any other composite body, it eventually dissolves into its constituent atoms. The soul is so fragile and composed of such small and mobile atoms, that it dissolves immediately at the point of a living thing's death.'
>
> (Warren, 2010: p. 243)

For Epicureans experience requires existence, and given that death annihilates existence, by extension death annihilates the possibility of experience. This claim makes up the termination thesis, which form the initial grounds for the No-Subject Thesis:

1. Experience requires existence.
2. Death is the end of existence.
3. Thus, death is the end of experience.

Following Epicurean hedonism, and the termination thesis, the No-Subject Thesis agrees that the dead have no subjective existence,[17] and no means to experience pleasure (e.g. of being buried in a peaceful and well-tended cemetery; of being fondly spoken of) or pain (e.g. of the corpse being abused/maimed; of being slandered). One reason for

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[16] See Lucretius *DR*, (trans. Rouse, ed. Smith, 1992: pp. 97-111) for an account of the dispersion of physical atoms at the point of death. See also Gaskin (ed.) (1995: pp. xxxvii-xxxviii), and O'Keefe (2010: pp. 11-73).

[17] They do, of course, have existence insofar as there remains (for some time at least) a corpse, the deceased's belongings and so forth. The memory of the deceased also persists in the minds of others.

believing that the dead can experience pleasure or pain is by mistakenly 'projecting' an existing consciousness on to the deceased, and imagining how one would feel if experience were possible after death. But of course this would be the perspective of a conscious subject, and not the deceased. Given that the living cannot know whether there is an experiential or phenomenological quality to death and being dead,[18] justification for the assumption regarding the experiential void rests on the lack of unproblematic evidence to the contrary. Allowing that it has been accepted for the purposes of argument that death entails annihilation, these concerns will not undergo further analysis. The termination thesis leads the No-Subject Thesis to conclude, along with Epicurus (*LM* 124-125), that death is nothing to the dead in two ways; it is nothing in terms of its nature and its value for subjects. Whilst it is true that death as nothingness terminates the possibility for happiness, one will no longer be present to suffer such a loss.

Rist articulates the Epicurean view as follows:

> 'The realisation that because of man's mortality such happiness itself is limited in that sensation and hence all pleasure ends at death is not disturbing. Indeed so far from being disturbing it is a source of satisfaction. After death we can be completely confident that there is nothing to fear. Death, says *Basic Doctrine* 2, is nothing to us. For what has been dissolved has no sensation, and what has no sensation is nothing to us. Indeed the fear of death being removed, we can enjoy the fullness of pleasure, the highest happiness, in the instant. The man who is able to work the thing out properly and do the proper calculation of the amount of pleasure involved, will grasp that the same pleasure, that is, absence of pain, can be achieved in the instant as in an indefinitely long stretch of time.'
>
> (Rist, 1972: p. 119)

Rist's comments highlight that it is not merely that death is nothing to the one who dies, but that this realisation is itself a source of pleasure. This accords with Epicurus'

[18] This matter was discussed in chapter one.

reserved hedonism, insofar as the absence of mental anxiety related to fearing death would provide pleasure. To reiterate; the absence of pain is equal to the highest pleasure, and given Epicurus' view that fear of death is the source of much unnecessary pain (*LM* 125), the removal of this fear entails a pleasurable state for the subject.

One challenge to this thought involves cases in which it is doubtful that considerations of the pending absence of pain would bring pleasure, e.g., whilst one is dying, given that one might still experience; thoughts of future painlessness may not alleviate current pains. This challenge is undercut by the fact that Epicureans can admit of the harm of dying (though one ought to attempt to minimise this harm), and can emphasise that dying is distinct from death and being dead.[19] Furthermore, current pain may be reduced by the knowledge that it will eventually end. It is therefore the *anticipation* of the absence of pain and not the *actual* absence of pain that is the focus of attention. There might appear to be conflict regarding the appeal to pleasure derived from anticipatory pleasure, given that one is under instruction to avoid anticipatory anxiety regarding some future harm. However, the conflict is resolved by recalling the hedonistic aim to maximise pleasure and minimise pain. It is rational to reflect upon future goods, as this results in additional present pleasure in anticipation, and therefore maximises present pleasure; but it is irrational to reflect on future bads, as this brings about unnecessary present anticipatory anxiety, and in so doing fails to minimise pain.

Though I have reservations regarding the claim that anticipatory anxiety is not a genuine harm, since present anxiety regarding a future possibly harmful state of affairs is indeed a harm that the anxious subject is causally affected by (if anxiety is thought to

[19] A distinction made clear in chapter one.

be harmful), I concede that it represents an unnecessary harm, creating needless pain in one's mental life. Even when the future event is harmful, it would be better to reduce the harm caused by not becoming anxious about it (however difficult it may be to achieve such a reduction, there is good reason to try to do so). Yet, in cases of future harmful events, knowledge of impending pain gives rational basis for experiencing anticipatory anxiety. Nonetheless, anticipatory anxiety is irrational when the future event is not harmful. If the future event either negates experience, or is not harmful, then there is no future harm to be anxious about. Clearly Epicureans think that death satisfies these conditions, and should not be the object of anticipatory fear. Despite being an arguably natural and intuitive response to future harms, in either case, anticipatory anxiety is not necessary.

In addition to establishing the harmlessness of death for the one who dies, there is some evidence to suggest that Epicureans extend their reserved hedonism in an attempt to minimise the harm of dying. This is in spite of the fact that the dying satisfies the experience condition, and can possibly experience (i.e., be causally affected by) the pain potentially involved in dying. Harm could be reduced by concentrating upon past pleasures, giving rise to feelings of happiness that may overwhelm pain currently experienced. In a short fragment of a *Letter to Idomeneus*, Diogenes Laertius records Epicurus as stating:

> 'I write this to you while experiencing a blessedly happy day, and at the same time the last day of my life. Urinary blockages and dysenteric discomforts afflict me which could not be surpassed for their intensity. But against all these things are ranged the joy in my soul produced by the recollection of the discussions we have had.'
>
> Diogenes Laertius, 10.22 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 79)

Thus reflections upon past pleasure could ease the possible pain of dying. However, whatever (even minimal) pain the dying subject experiences precludes the absence of pain required to bring about the highest possible happiness, and once death comes it eradicates all possibility of experiencing the highest happiness. Though death may well be nothing to the one who dies, dying is a potentially painful and frightening experiential process. Though it may be possible to find some pleasure in the last moments of life, the highest pleasure cannot be achieved whilst pain is directly experienced.

Given the claim that pleasure is simply the absence of pain, I can grant that agreeing to the nothingness of death, and removing anxieties about death's harmfulness, results in experiencing pleasure during one's life, free from such anxieties. Though the attempt to extend the Epicurean method beyond the scope of death and being dead is largely unsuccessful in terms of dying, it remains to be seen whether the consequences of the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis can remove anxieties relating to the death of the loved other upon the bereaved. Epicurus suggested that recognising that the dead are not harmed ought to reduce grief, or a sense of loss, among the bereaved (*KD* 40). I will argue against this claim in chapter five.

Epicurus' meditations on death answer the questions regarding the subject, nature and timing of the harm of death by claiming that there is no subject harmed by death, that there is no nature to the harm (because death is nothing, it has no harmful – or beneficial – properties), and that death cannot harm one at any time (*LM* 125). Thus, death is nothing to us. Some expansion on this will bring added clarity prior to articulating the contemporary interpretation presented by the No-Subject Thesis.

Given D3,[20] it follows that after death one ceases to exist, and thus ceases to have the ability to experience. Harm requires experience, thus if one is dead and can no longer experience, one can no longer be harmed.[21] Death is therefore not harmful: death is nothing to the one who dies. Epicurus propounds his view of death in his *Letter to Menoeceus*:

> 'For there is nothing fearful in life for one who has grasped that there is nothing fearful in the absence of life. Thus, he is a fool who says that he fears death not because it will be painful when present but because it is painful when it is still to come. For that which while present causes no distress causes unnecessary pain when merely anticipated. So Death, the most terrifying of evils, is nothing to us, since for the time when we are, death is not present; and for the time when death is present, we are not. Therefore it is nothing either to the living or the dead since it is not present for the former, and the latter are no longer… Therefore death is nothing to us, nor does it matter to us at all, since the nature of the soul is understood to be mortal.'
>
> Epicurus, *LM* 125 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 29)

For Epicureans the necessary impossibility of a subject, *S*, simultaneously instantiating being alive and being dead entails that death cannot harm *S*; it cannot harm *S* prior to its occurrence, since *S* is still alive, and once death has occurred *S* no longer exists to be harmed. Since there is no subject of the harm of death and no time at which harm occurs, there is no harm whatsoever.

If experience is necessary for harm, then harm must occur at a time at which the subject is able to experience it i.e. whilst the subject remains in existence. It is worth reiterating that the term 'death' is intended to refer to the time at which a subject dies

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[20] The definition of death offered in chapter one, which presents death as the irreversible annihilation of the subject.

[21] It might be tempting to argue that the cessation of sensation brought about by death is merciful, as the deceased may no longer suffer any pain, but Epicurus resists this conclusion. Death is nothing, and therefore neither benefits nor harms the subject. Not suffering is beneficial to the subject, but that does not entail that death (or being dead) has benefited them.

(and therefore no longer exists), and 'being dead' is the state of nonexistence that follows death. As discussed in chapter one, given the brevity of the event of death, it is reasonable to assume that the Epicurean argument is intended to relate to both death and being dead. I have attempted to reflect this by using both terms in my interpretation of the No-Subject Thesis. Furthermore, given that Epicureans believed that the concept of something being good or bad in and of itself was mistaken (O'Keefe, 2010: p. 113),[22] beneficial and harmful states of affairs are understood relative to a particular subject: if death is harmful, one must be able to identify who is harmed. All those involved in the debate agree that the subject of the harm of death is the one who dies, given that they are the most directly related to the death – and incurred losses – under consideration. The quote from the *Letter to Menoeceus* offered above captures the traditional Epicurean argument that inspires the No-Subject Thesis, and now that some historical background has been presented, it is time to introduce my contemporary articulation. Following the termination thesis set out earlier,[23] the No-Subject Thesis can be constructed as follows:

1. A state of affairs is harmful for subject *S* if, and only if, *S* can experience it at some time.
2. Thus, a harmful state of affairs for *S* must occur whilst *S* exists.
3. Death and being dead are not states of affairs that occur whilst *S* exists.
4. Thus *S* cannot experience death and being dead at some time.
   Therefore,
5. Death and being dead are not harmful states of affairs for *S*.

[22] 'Epicureans think that the whole notion of something being good *per se* (which the Form of the Good is supposed to be above all else) is a category mistake […] my pleasure is good for me, although, it is probably indifferent for George Bush, and it cannot be "good" as such, without filling in for which agent it is good' (O'Keefe, 2010: p. 113).

[23] On page 46.

Premise (1) captures the experience condition, whilst premise (2) represents the temporal implications of (1). Given that existence is a precondition for experience, the harmful states of affairs must take place whilst the subject exists. Premise (3) reflects the ontological fact that death is the end of *S*'s life, and thus does not occur whilst *S* exists. Being dead occurs after death, and so cannot occur whilst *S* exists. This entails the Epicurean inspired claim, articulated in (4) that *S* cannot be harmed by death before it has occurred, or at any time after death, given the absence of experience. The robust conclusion of the No-Subject Thesis is presented in (5): Death and being dead are not harmful states of affairs for *S*.

Thomas Nagel (1979: pp. 1-10) and Fred Feldman (1993: pp. 307-326) present versions of the Deprivation Thesis that deny the experience condition stated in premise (1), whilst Joel Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190), George Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168), and Neil Feit (2002: pp. 359-383), develop alternative responses to the temporal restriction relating to harms presented in premise (2). These critical replies to the No-Subject Thesis will be analysed in chapter three.

My own interest pertains to determining the appropriate subject of harm, represented by *S* in the above argument. Both the No-Subject Thesis and its critics agree that the subject of the harm of death is the one who dies, given that it is her life that has been annihilated. Yet, given the experience condition, it is precisely because the dead have been annihilated that the possibility of harm is precluded. Thus, if there is a subject who is harmed by death they must be capable of experience, i.e., subjects who exist. I argue in chapter five that *S* ought to stand for the bereaved, and the scope of discussion altered to reflect the social context of death. This would involve including an

additional signifier, *P*, denoting the loved other whose death causes the harm to *S*. Thus, *S*'s death does not harm *S*, rather it is the death of *P* whilst *S* still exists that harms *S*. The bereaved are harmed by death in virtue of suffering the loss of an irreplaceable loved other.[24] Interestingly, the No-Subject Thesis leaves room to argue for this view, entailing that my position ought to be understood as an alternative rather than presenting an outright challenge. However, though one can agree to the Epicurean inspired view, one can challenge a possible entailment of the claim that death is nothing to the one who dies. It is suggested that death as nothing ought to remove fear of one's own death, and fear of the death of loved others: they too will suffer no harm in death, and so feelings of grief are unnecessary (*KD*40). Indeed, given that grief as recognition of loss, and in response to the death of the beloved, will diminish one's mental tranquillity, efforts should be made to minimise such responses to the death of a loved other. My position is intended to repudiate this potential consequence of the harmlessness of death. I suggest that it is evident that the death of the loved other causes a significant and harmful loss and emotional anguish, yet bereavement is a consequence of death that has been largely overlooked in many analytical discussions relating to the harm of death (Solomon, 2004: p. xi; p. 77). Thus, chapter five presents an account of this important feature of the possible harm of death, which I suggest is the loss suffered by the bereaved.

Notwithstanding my perspective on where the key problem lies with the No-Subject Thesis, most disputation is directed toward the claim that death is harmful *to the one who dies*. What is at issue is whether an individual who has ceased to exist can be harmed in some respect by being dead. An analysis of each of the premises will be

[24] Chapter five is devoted to justifying the intuition that the bereaved are the subjects of the harm of death.

given, before discussing why I consider this to be an artificially restrictive view of the possible subjects and nature of the harm of death.

Premise (1) states that a state of affairs is harmful for subject *S* if, and only if, *S* can experience it at some time. Representing the experience condition, this appears at first blush to be reasonably uncontroversial, yet it remains arguably the most frequently attacked premise. All that is claimed here is that for a state of affairs to be harmful, it must be at least *possible* for *S* to be causally affected by that state of affairs. If *S* can *never* experience the potentially harmful state of affairs then that potential for harm is lost. Given the termination thesis, then death entails the impossibility of experience: No state of affairs can be said to be harmful to a dead person, including being dead.

As Rosenbaum indicates, 'one must be causally affected in some way by the situations one experiences' (1993: p.124), and the subject cannot be causally affected if that subject is dead.[25] Admittedly the concept of experience is a philosophically complex one. A full articulation of this concept is too vast for inclusion here, and I do not wish to digress. It is perhaps sufficient for the purposes of this discussion that experience be understood in a broad, and rather basic sense as simply a subject's conscious perceptions, or representations, of both their internal mental states, and that of the external world.[26] Given the Epicurean hedonistic foundations of the No-Subject Thesis, proponents of this view will assert that one cannot experience a harm without

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[25] This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

[26] This is an admittedly opaque understanding of experience, but the philosophical matter regarding the nature of experience is too complex to enter into here. The basic, ordinary language use of 'experience' arguably suffices for my purposes, though the demand for clarity has encouraged the above elaboration. I think it is reasonable to judge the understanding of experience as stated above, given that it is consistent with the Epicurean use of the term; death would annihilate such perceptions (or representations), and as such would annihilate experience.

being causally affected by that harm, or that it be at least *possible* that one be causally affected by that harm. By extension, that which is impossible to experience cannot be harmful. Given that death necessarily negates the possibility for experience, it is necessarily impossible to be harmed by one's own death: the necessarily unexperienceable cannot be harmful. As discussed earlier, this entails the demand that *S* must inhabit the same spatiotemporal location as the harmful state of affairs (which can include presently experienced harms caused by memories of past harms). The deprivationist resists this method of argument, counterclaiming that experience is not necessary for harm: it remains possible to be harmed by unexperienced (and/or unexperienceable) states of affairs. One approach is to try to establish that there are objective harms, or objectively bad states of affairs, and if death is one such harm or bad, then the necessity for experience is removed. It may be the case that experience, direct or otherwise, is not a precondition for harm.[27]

As has been discussed, the experience condition implies that a subject must inhabit the same spatiotemporal location as the state of affairs that subject is said to experience.[28] It is worth making clear that one cannot be said to experience a prenatal or posthumous harmful state of affairs, given that at such times one does not exist. Since

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[27] It is worth noting that the experience condition might raise concerns regarding certain ethical implications. If a lack of existence precludes harm, then one is prevented from claiming that the primary reason the violation of corpses, and the desecration of graves are considered morally and socially impermissible is because the deceased has been harmed by such transgressions. It also raises questions regarding the veracity of the belief that one ought to respect, or carry out, the last wishes of the dead, given that it generates no harmful state of affairs for the deceased if one chooses to renege on such promises. If the No-Subject Thesis is correct, one must locate the rational justification for these moral and social value judgements in another source.

[28] This can include the present state of reflecting on past, or anticipating future, states of affairs which have been, or will be, directly experienced (hence the admission of anticipatory pleasures, and the effort to reduce anticipatory pains).

existence is a precondition for experience, for any state of affairs thought to be harmful, that state of affairs would have to occur whilst *S* exists i.e., prior to *S*'s death, in order for it to at least be possible for *S* to experience harm.[29] This point is expounded in premise (2): a harmful state of affairs for *S* must occur whilst *S* exists. A state of affairs can only be said to harm *S* if *S* can directly experience that state of affairs, and for it to be possible for *S* to experience that state of affairs, *S* must exist. The state of affairs would therefore have to occur before *S*'s death. Since death and being dead do not occur whilst *S* is alive (death is the absolute cessation of life; the two cannot coexist in the same subject at the same time), death cannot be experienced by *S*. As a consequence of these premises, death cannot be said to be a harmful state of affairs to the one who dies at any time.

The temporal relation between harm and the subject presented in premise (2) expresses a central issue within the debate regarding the possible harm of death, herein known as the temporal location problem, arising when one asks; when does the harm take place? The No-Subject Thesis answers the temporal question by stating 'never', but for those arguing for the harmfulness, or badness of death, the matter is more complicated. If the experience condition is accepted, they must explain how death can cause harm whilst one exists i.e. before one has died. If they reject the experience

[29] As a point of interest, the Epicurean could admit that one can presently be harmed by a past state of affairs that occurred prior to one's birth, under the condition that one experience the harm in virtue of existing contiguously with the harmful consequences of that state of affairs. Thus, the Epicurean could account for the harm caused to children born with birth defects as a result of chemical pollution in the environment, or of the mother's excessive consumption of alcohol, though it is important to note that no harm actually occurs until the children experience the harm: the harm to the child is not revealed by comparative judgements with other possible lives in which they were not born with the related birth defect i.e. by missing out on unexperienced goods, but rather by the actual occurrence of the birth defect experienced in this world.

condition, there is more room for manoeuvre, as they can argue for the subject suffering harm at the time of death, or after death has taken place. However, they must then explain how someone who no longer exists is harmed. More will be said on this in chapter three.

In relation to the three questions that provide the framework for the debate regarding the harm of death, the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis' response is straightforward: Who is harmed by death? No subjects are harmed. What is the nature of the harm? It has no nature, as there is no harm. When does the harm take place? Never, one cannot be harmed by death before one is dead, and after death there is no subject to be harmed. Given these responses, supported by the termination thesis and the hedonistically motivated experience condition, the No-Subject Thesis concludes that death is not harmful to the one who dies.

Despite the simplicity of this argument, the conclusion remains in conflict with intuitive responses to death involving fear and anxiety. The options are, then, to either modify one's response to death, in order to remain consistent with Epicurus' logic, or challenge the No-Subject Thesis and seek justification for these ordinary-life responses to death. Given that fear of death persists, it is arguably more reasonable to attempt to argue against the Epicurean view of death, and demonstrate that death does indeed harm someone.

Given that the termination thesis has been accepted for the purposes of argument, further examination of this would be misguided. Evidently, premise (1) is open to successful critical analysis as it remains to be seen whether the claim that the possibility of experience is necessary for harm is defensible. There are potentially excellent

reasons for arguing that certain things are objectively harmful, or bad, thus whether a subject can experience it as such is, in a way, irrelevant: one need not be aware of being wronged to be wronged. Perhaps death depriving one of the goods of life is among the set of objectively harmful, or bad, things. A coherent investigation of the experience condition as presented in premise (1) and the resulting antithetical position was taken up by Nagel (1979: pp. 1-10), and is just a fragment of his theory that argues for the badness[30] of death, on the grounds that it deprives one of the goodness of life.[31] Nagel denies the truth of the experience condition, and as a result a close study of his argument is not merely stimulating, but is essential given that the No-Subject Thesis requires this condition. The limited temporal relation expressed in premise (2) is criticised by both Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190) and Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168), who attempt to locate the harm of death prior to its actual occurrence. Feit (2002: pp. 359-383) alternatively argues that harm occurs after death, again denying the temporal restrictions presented in (2). Each philosopher supports the basic premise that death is harmful or bad because it deprives the deceased of something good, i.e., continued life. As a result, these arguments come under the heading of the Deprivation Thesis, representing the most significant counter to the No-Subject Thesis given in the literature thus far.

My own line of argument differs in approach. I agree that the deceased suffers no harm in death or in being dead, but I do not think that the possibility for harm terminates with the deceased. The bereaved remain to experience the loss that the death of a loved

[30] One can assume here, along with the general aim of the Deprivation Thesis, that demonstrating the badness of death is consistent with the other deprivationist positions that seek to show the harmfulness of death, where harm is thought to entail that death is indeed bad for the deceased.
[31] Deprivationists might argue that the impossibility of experience is itself harmful.

other has caused, and I suggest that the bereaved are therefore the subjects of the harm of death. Though I agree that fully accepting the nothingness of death *might*, by extension, lessen the harm to the bereaved it does not eradicate harm altogether. Essentially, I think that there is an asymmetry in the effectiveness of the cure between concerns regarding one's own death, and those regarding the death of the loved other.

Epicurus acknowledges the social impact of death, and addresses these concerns by trying to diminish the sense of loss involved. Recall the Epicurean recommendation that one retain only those desires that are natural and necessary (and easily satisfied). As Phillip Mitsis notes: 'Aristotle […] thinks that some goods necessary for happiness may be vulnerable to loss. Epicurus maintains the invulnerability of happiness, but he lets the scope of satisfactions expand and contract to adjust to individual circumstances' (Mitsis, 1988: pp.50-51) The implication is that if one eliminates all desires relating to the deceased (the status of which are now unnatural and unnecessary, given the impossibility of their satisfaction), and instead redirect desires for friendship, intimacy and so on towards an alternative, still living other, then one will have undergone little or no loss. Having suffered no loss, and being confident in the view that the dead are not harmed, there is insufficient justification for being harmed by the death of the loved other.[32] One can conclude, along with the original Epicurean position, that death is not harmful.

Before concluding this chapter, and moving on to examine the Deprivation Thesis, there is a final point worth making regarding the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis, in response to a common error regarding the implications of the position.

[32] This will be discussed in chapter four.

Though Epicureans argue against the harm of death, they do not suggest that one ought to welcome, or encourage death (*LM* 126). This reflects the Epicurean understanding of death as nothing to us, both in terms of the absence of sensation, and with regards to value judgements about the nature of death. The fact that it is not bad for the one who dies is not equal to the claim that death is good for the one who dies. Resisting this false dichotomy has the benefit of supporting the Epicurean view that the absence of pain in death does not entail that it is pleasurable. Furthermore, this view does not entail the positive valuation of suicide. Indeed, the No-Subject Thesis is consistent with the view that one ought to live carefully, and enjoy life for the goods that it contains. All that it requires is that one do so whilst calmly accepting one's mortality.[33] This point is reflected in the following quote:

> 'But the wise man nether rejects life nor fears death. For living does not offend him, nor does he believe not living to be something bad. And just as he does not unconditionally choose the largest amount of food but the most pleasant food, so he savours not the longest time but the most pleasant. He who advises the young man to live well and the old man to die well is simple-minded, not just because the pleasing aspects of life but because the same kind of practice produces a good life and a good death.'
>
> Epicurus, *LM* 126 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 29)

Seneca reports in his *Letters on Ethics* that Epicurus reproaches those who long for death no less than those who fear it: 'it is absurd to pursue death because you are weary of life, when you have made death worth pursuing by your way of life' (Seneca, 24.22-23, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p.103). Thus the Epicurean attitude towards death does not imply the endorsement of suicide, and distinguishes the position from nihilism.

[33] Accepting that death will come is not equivalent to welcoming it, and does not mean that one cannot desire to live at least as long as a typical natural lifespan, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Furthermore, these comments confidently answer any mistaken claim that Epicurus' belief that death was not harmful would therefore entail that he welcome premature or unnatural death.

IV. CONCLUSION

Epicurus grounds much of his views in the hedonic belief that all goods and bads can be characterised by directly experienced pleasure and pain respectively, and that the greatest of all pleasures was simply the absence of pain. Observing that fearing death brought much anxiety, Epicurus made the following recommendations: First, one ought to hold the natural and necessary desire to only live for a typical lifespan and accept that death will eventually come. Second, one must reject the belief that death harms the one who dies. Demonstrating that death is harmless entails that there is no rational justification for fearing death.

The reserved hedonism grounding the No-Subject Thesis states that experience is a necessary condition for harm or pleasure to occur. The experience condition combined with the termination thesis entails that death ensures the absence of a subject of experience: Death is nothing to the one who dies. An additional implication of the termination thesis and experience condition is the highly restricted scope for the possible temporal location of any harm; harms can only occur at those times at which the proposed subject of harm exists. Thus death consists in no harm; there is no subject in existence to be harmed, and no time at which the harm takes place.

In agreeing to the Epicurean inspired conditions of the No-Subject Thesis, fear of death should be removed. Yet it remains in conflict with commonplace negative

attitudes towards death, and the belief that it is a bad thing *for someone*. Attention will now turn to supporters of the Deprivation Thesis, who attempt to justify these negative valuations of death.

CHAPTER 3: THE DEPRIVATION THESIS

I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the anti-Epicurean Deprivation Thesis. Thomas Nagel (1970) offers the original deprivationist view, but the core intuition has given rise to several interpretations. I have chosen to study those that turn on the difficulty of identifying the temporal location of the harm of death. So, alongside Nagel's initial argument I will discuss solutions to the temporal location problem presented by Feldman (1993: pp. 307-326), Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190), Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168) and Feit (2002: pp. 359-383). Following the structure of this thesis, the deprivationist position will be assessed in terms of the three questions regarding the possible harm of death: What is the nature of the harm; who is harmed; and, when does the harm take place? This last matter concerning the timing of the harm also involves the related question regarding duration: When does the harm begin and end? Deprivationists agree on responses to the first and second questions; it is suggested (along with Epicurus) that the subject of harm is the one who dies. Furthermore, there is agreement that the nature of the harm, or badness, of death is understood in terms of deprivation. This deprivation may be accounted for in terms of the value of the life one could have had, had one not died at that time (but at a later time), or may be related more specifically to the thwarting of desires or interests.

Despite sharing the intuition that death is a bad thing because it deprives one of something valuable, deprivationists give different answers to the complex problem of

identifying *when* death is bad for, or cause harm to, the one who dies. The issue – herein named the temporal location problem – derives from attributing harm to a nonexistent subject. If the subject no longer exists after the harmful state of affairs has occurred, and the subject cannot be harmed by a state of affairs before it occurs,[1] then there is no point in time at which the subject is harmed. One might suggest that the harm occurs at the time of death, but this is precisely the time at which nonexistence begins, and so prevents the subject from being harmed.[2] These concerns led Epicurus to conclude there was *no time* at which death could harm one. Thus deprivationists give great attention to the temporal location problem, and the diverse replies differentiate the arguments from one another. Nagel argues that the badness of death is, at least, very difficult to locate in time (1979: pp. 1-10); Feldman claims that it is bad eternally (1993: pp. 307-326); Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168) and Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190) offer variations on the view that one begins to suffer the harm of death before death takes place; and Feit argues that death can only harm one after one has died, but that the duration of the harm is restricted (2002: pp. 359-383). I find that all variations are unsuccessful, but this should not lead to a rejection of the deprivationist intuition. I agree that *if* death is harmful or bad for *S*, then it is in virtue of what it deprives *S* of. The fundamental difference is that I do not think the dead are harmed. Instead, I argue it is the bereaved that are the subjects of death's harm as a result of being deprived of the continued

[1] Perhaps as the result of being reluctant to grant backwards causation, or in taking issue with a harm occurring before the event said to initiate harm has occurred.

[2] Even if it were possible to establish that the time of the harm coincides with the moment of death, the negative state of affairs would occur over such a minimal duration, it is difficult to reason that it could constitute a harm if considered in non-relative terms.

existence of the deceased beloved. Before presenting my position, and because it draws upon the deprivationist intuition, I will now examine the deprivation thesis.

II: THE ORIGINAL DEPRIVATION THESIS: NAGEL AND FELDMAN

In 'Death', from *Mortal Questions* (1979) Nagel argues; 'if death is an evil at all, it cannot be because of its positive features, but only because of what it deprives us of'[3] (Nagel, 1979: p.1). This is consistent with the definition of death presented in chapter one of this thesis: since death is nothingness, it cannot cause harm, or be bad, because of what it is. Any possible harm, or badness, must therefore come from the negative relation death bears to life; death remains understood relationally rather than as an isolated event. This hints at Nagel's response to the question of who might be the appropriate subject of the harm of death. Given that for every death there is a particular life that has been eradicated, the obvious candidate for harm will be the person who has died, and have therefore been deprived of their life. In agreement with Epicurus, Nagel specifies that it is the deceased that he wishes to discuss:

> I shall not discuss the value that one person's life or death may have for others, or its objective value, but only the value it has for the person who is its subject. That seems to me the primary case, and the case which presents the greatest difficulties.
>
> (Nagel, 1979: p.2)

There is little doubt that the nonexistence of the subject presents a challenge for deprivationists arguing for the badness or harmfulness of death, yet Nagel's statement

[3] It is worth mentioning that Nagel does not use the word 'harm' in this text, but instead discusses whether death can be an evil, misfortune or a bad thing for those who die.

above leaves room to discuss alternative subjects (albeit as secondary cases). For me, the alternative cases involve the value of a person's death for the bereaved.

Nagel argues that death is bad in virtue of *deprivation*: it is not the state of being dead *per se* that Nagel suggests is evil, rather it is the loss of life – all the goods that it provided, and could possibly have continued to provide – that is abhorrent, stating; 'It is *being* alive, *doing* certain things, having certain experiences, that we consider good. But if death is an evil, it is the *loss of life*, rather than the state of being dead, or nonexistent, or unconscious, that is objectionable' (1979: p.3). Nagel holds that it is not merely nonexistence that motivates feelings of fear in regards to death, since prenatal nonexistence is not regarded with fear (1979: p.3).[4] Similarly, periods of unconsciousness (such as sleep) are not the object of fearful responses. Instead, Nagel believes that death is feared specifically because of its relation to life, and the degree to which life is valued, stating:

> If we are to make sense of the view that to die is bad, it must be on the ground that life is a good and death is the corresponding deprivation or loss, bad not because of any positive features but because of the desirability of what it removes.
>
> (Nagel, 1979: p. 4)

Thus, death deprives one of the life one would have continued to have, had death not occurred. The nature of death's badness, or harm, is the deprivation it causes. If loss of life is abhorrent, this implies that the cause of such loss is therefore a bad thing. Thus death is a bad thing. From this Nagel makes a rather strong claim, and argues for the

[4] This particular point relates to the symmetry problem, as introduced by the Epicurean Lucretius in his discussion regarding the folly of fearing death, Lucretius, *DR* (trans. Rouse, 1992: pp. 111-120). Though an interesting feature of the discussion regarding the fear of death, I do not have room for elaborating upon this mere passing reference.

objective value of life, entailing that the deprivation of life is an objective bad. Nagel writes:

> […] it is good simply to be alive, even if one is undergoing terrible experiences […] There are elements that, if added to one's experience, make life better; there are other elements that, if added to one's experience, make life worse. But what remains when these are set aside is not merely *neutral*: it is emphatically positive. Therefore life is worth living even when the bad elements of experience are plentiful and the good ones too meagre to outweigh the bad ones on their own. The additional positive weight is supplied by experience itself, rather than by any of its contents.
>
> (Nagel, 1979: p.2)

This is not an uncontroversial position. Though existence certainly ensures the possibility of a life containing overall positive value, it is not sufficient to justify the stronger claim that being alive is an unconditional good, given that there are abundant examples of a life so full of suffering[5] that it is given a subjectively negative (or zero) valuation. This is exemplified by cases of suicide, requests for assisted suicide, formal agreements to 'do-not-resuscitate' orders, and decisions to terminate pregnancies when severe abnormalities have unfortunately been discovered. Of course, I am not asserting that certain lives are necessarily valueless, but rather that there are cases where people decide that being alive (or continuing to exist) is no longer a good thing, implying that it is not true that life is good under any conditions. Rather than arguing for the weaker claim that death is only contingently bad (i.e., when life is good, but not when life is bad), Nagel makes the stronger claim that death is necessarily bad for the one who dies, in every case in which a subject dies. I think that the conditional claim that death is sometimes bad, or harmful, will be more easily defended than the stronger version. This

[5] Examples of such suffering are numerous, and easy to imagine, whether the suffering be attributed to illness or tragedy. Benatar (2004: pp. 155-168) takes this position to its logical conclusion, discussing whether it would be better to never have come into existence.

is because the stronger claim may be undermined by the following counterexample:[6] *P* has an incurable degenerative disease, causing persistent, debilitating pain that is difficult to manage even with powerful pain medication. *P* does not value her life positively, and has considered the prospect of ending her life before her illness progresses any further. There is a strong intuition that death would not be a bad thing for *P*, indeed, it is the complete (and only) resolution of her pain. It is important to note that stating that death would not be a bad thing does not entail that death is therefore a good thing: death is an experiential void. To not suffer is a good thing, but this is not a good that *P* can experience if *P* is dead. What would constitute an active good for *P* would be the discovery of a cure for the disease, which might encourage her to value her life more positively. It is problematic for Nagel that the strength of his position does not allow for the possibility that death could not be bad in cases such as *P*'s, where life has a (subjective) negative value judgement based on the contents of that life.[7] More argument is required to explain why this subjective value judgement, and the autonomous decisions about the value of one's life, ought to be entirely discounted, or overruled.

Moving on, it is worth highlighting that the different deprivationist interpretations of the locution '*x* is bad for *S*', where *x* represents death, has implications for claims regarding the timing of the harm, or badness, of death. For Nagel, the

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[6] Aside from the counterexample given above, should one concur with Nagel's view, this unconditionally positive valuation of life has interesting implications for ethical concerns regarding euthanasia, capital punishment, suicide and abortion, though I will leave the related discussion of such implications unexamined here.

[7] It is under similar conditions that request for assisted suicide, and do-not-resuscitate orders, are granted in countries where such practices are legal.

expression '*x* is bad for *S* at *t*', is not required.[8] Instead, Nagel interprets statements regarding when death is bad as equivalent to stating '*x* is bad for *S*' (1979: pp. 3-5). This is because death is a special kind of misfortune, bearing a necessary relation to the subject. Nagel notes that: 'If death is a disadvantage, it is not easy to say when a man suffers it' (1979: p. 3), later suggesting that we need not specify a time to be able to say that *x* was bad for someone (1979: p. 5). Feldman shares this coextensive understanding of the two locutions, but interprets it as an eternal harm (1993: p. 321). Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190), Pitcher (1993: 159-168), and Feit (2002: 359-383) all seem to distinguish between the two locutions, given that they each offer an account of when death begins being bad, or harmful. I too resist the equivocation, and think that if something is bad for a subject, there ought to be a time at which one can show it was bad. I will argue for this point in more detail, so that Nagel and Feldman's view of the timing of death's harm can be rejected for reasons beyond my brute intuitions.

Allow me to begin by expressing Nagel's argument regarding when death is bad, after which I will examine Feldman's account of the eternal harm of death. Nagel argues that a subject *S*'s death is bad for *S*, even though it is difficult to say when it is bad (1979: p 3). One might argue that this epistemic difficulty is not necessarily a significant problem, especially if Nagel is right and death is objectively bad. Indeed, if the badness of death is understood as a relation that holds between the bad state of affairs (death) and its subject, in virtue of that subject's inherent mortality, and that

[8] See Feit (2002: pp. 359-383) for elaboration on this feature of deprivationist accounts.

relation holds at all times, the question of the specific time of the misfortune may seem less pressing.[9] As Nagel explains:

> […] most good and ill fortune has as its subject a person identified by his history and his possibilities, rather than merely by his categorical state of the moment – and that while this subject can be exactly located in a sequence of places and times, the same is not necessarily true of the goods and ills that befall him.
> (Nagel, 1979: p. 5)

And later writes:

> [A]lthough the spatial and temporal locations of the individual who suffered the loss are clear enough, the misfortune itself cannot be so easily located. […] Nevertheless if there is a loss, someone must suffer it, and *he* must have existence and specific spatial and temporal location even if the loss does not.
> (Nagel, 1979: p. 7)

Thus, despite arguing for the evil of death, Nagel does not think it essential to name a particular time when death was evil for the one who died. Nagel denies the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis' claim that if an event or state of affairs is bad, or harmful, it *must* be so at a particular time (reflected by premise 2 of my interpretation, p. 52). It is in this sense that death is understood by Nagel to be a special kind of misfortune, unlike other misfortunes that are more easily located at particular times. Perhaps an example will make this clearer: imagine a subject *S* who sustains a serious, though temporary injury as a child, and then dies in early adulthood. According to Nagel, despite the fact that both states of affairs are bad for *S* in the sense of making *S* worse off than *S* would have been had the harmful states of affairs not obtained, the injury and early death are bad for *S* in different ways. The injury is bad for *S* at particular times, whereas *S*'s death is bad for *S* as a relation, in virtue of *S* being mortal. Hence, though both states of affairs

[9] Feit (2002: pp. 360-361) thinks that Nagel is arguing that death is atemporally bad, but I am less inclined to agree with this than I have been in the past. Nagel seems to be suggesting there is an epistemic rather than metaphysical difficulty here.

are bad for *S*, they each relate to *S* in different ways and so can be understood as distinct instantiations of being bad for *S*.

There is reason to agree with Nagel on the special status of death as compared to (most) other evils. Consider again the above example: In the case of injury, *S* exists and is capable of experiencing the pain and frustration of a debilitating physical harm. In the case of death, *S* ceases to exist and cannot experience anything. Indeed, given acceptance of Epicurean hedonism, if one has any hope of offering an account of the harm of death *to the one who dies*, it cannot be on the basis of death being experienced as harmful:[10] it would be beneficial to retain the special status of death as a nonexperienced (possible) harm. Furthermore, in most cases the harm incurred by the injury was avoidable, whereas death is ultimately unavoidable. Thus, there is support for the view that death is a special kind of harm, or bad, if it is to be harmful, or bad, to the one who dies.

Having outlined Nagel's position regarding when death is bad, allow me to raise some concerns about it. My primary concern is that Nagel is simply sidestepping the temporal location problem rather than addressing it properly. If death is bad because it deprives one of life, and this deprivation occurs from the moment of death onwards (since this is when the dead begin to be deprived), then this seems to be a *possible* time for the misfortune to begin. The difficulty then is explaining how a nonexistent subject can suffer the misfortune of being deprived of something, but Nagel proposes a solution to this (which will be discussed below). Nagel states that the losses involved in death

[10] It is still possible to demonstrate how the bereaved could experience the harm of death. This restriction on experience relates solely to a discussion regarding possible harm to the one who dies.

are not necessarily located in a sequence of time (1979: p. 5), yet it is reasonably clear when the deprivation began (perhaps at the specific moment of death, or at some point in a process of which one might offer estimated boundaries, which may be vague but still a locatable temporal duration). Nagel needs to say more about why the epistemic difficulty of locating the misfortune in time is enough to give up on attempting to do so.

It might be the case that because death is objectively bad, it is bad at all times that it occurs, and so offering a specific time of misfortune is not required. Yet, there are other (possibly) objectively bad things that seem to have identifiable temporal locations. For example, a healthy subject who suffers the misfortune of being paralysed after an accident is an intuitive case of a (possibly) objective bad, which has a clearly identifiable time of harm (i.e., harm begins at the time of the accident).[11] If being an objectively bad thing does not entail being temporally unidentifiable, then there is reason to demand more from Nagel, and resist agreeing with him until an account of when death is bad is given. It is for this reason, together with the claim that death is necessarily bad, that I reject Nagel's deprivationist account. However, the deprivationist intuition remains unaffected by these more specific concerns, and analysis will continue, in order to determine whether the Deprivation Thesis can be accepted.

Before continuing to examine Nagel's argument, I would like to discuss Feldman's response to the temporal location problem, given in 'Some Puzzles About the Evil of Death' (1993: pp. 307-326). Like Nagel, Feldman equivocates the locutions '*x* is bad for *S*' and '*x* is bad for *S* at time *t*', and propounds the view that if something is bad

[11] I am not claiming that there are objectively bad things, but rather that if there are, this example might be one such objective bad.

for *S* at *t*, it is bad for *S* even if *S* does not exist at *t* (1993: p. 321). This entails that *x* can be bad for *S* throughout time, transcending the temporal duration of *S*'s actual existence. In short, Feldman denies the Epicurean claim that existence and experience are necessary for harm.

In answer to the question as to *when* death is bad for the one who dies, Feldman's response is clear. Utilising the comparative technique indicative of the deprivationist approach, Feldman states:

> [T]he answer to this question is "eternally". For when we say that her death is bad for her, we are really expressing a complex fact about the relative values of two possible worlds. If these worlds stand in a certain value relation, then (given that they stand in this value relation at any time) they stand in that relation not only when [*S*] exists, but at times when [*S*] does not.
>
> (Feldman, 1993: p. 321)

Given that the negative value of a harmful state of affairs holds throughout time, irrespective of existence, the deceased will be subjected to the harm of her death eternally. The only requirement for harm, or badness, is that the value for the subject is lower given the state of affairs obtaining, than it would have been had the state of affairs not obtained. Once it has been determined to be lower, the relative values hold eternally.

Despite Feldman's eloquent and thorough argument, I think his view raises some potential difficulties. One possible problem is whether it entails that *all* future harms are always bad for *S*. I can see no reason why Feldman's view does not entail this, given the understanding of relative values holding eternally. Thus, for any and all harms suffered, one is eternally harmed. Yet there are examples of temporally restricted harms (temporary illnesses or injury) that do not seem to reduce wellbeing eternally. Indeed,

one might expect a certain amount of temporary harms in a lifetime without this necessarily impacting upon overall wellbeing (if valuations of overall wellbeing account for the possibility of a number of temporary harms or misfortunes). If Feldman's view does not entail this more general claim regarding the nature of harms, then one must ask again; is death a special case of harmfulness, perhaps as a result of its inevitability? Yet, for any bad state of affairs that does actually obtain, it fulfils the statement: 'if a state of affairs is bad for *S*, then it is bad for *S* eternally' (intended to be similar to Feldman 1993: p. 321), which is consistent with Feldman's view. Thus, *all* bad states of affairs are eternally bad for *S*, and are inevitably harmful in the same manner as death. This is an extreme consequence, and not one that is easily accepted given that there are at least some bad states of affairs that appear to have a well-defined temporal duration for the harm that they result in (e.g., an ankle sprain, that is fully recovered from within six weeks). Such events cannot be said to have harmed the subject who suffered them prior to the bad event occurring, and it is difficult to maintain the view that this harm extends prior to the subject's conception. The eternal harm of spraining an ankle requires further argument, given that such harms seem *prima facie* temporally restricted. Given that there are at least some harmful states of affairs that do not harm eternally, it is possible to argue that death is among these non-eternal harms (this does not exclude the possibility of death remaining a special kind of harm, since it could be a special kind of non-eternal harm). Supporting the claim that death is a non-eternal harm is the desire to avoid suggesting that *S* is harmed by death prior to its occurrence, perhaps due to concerns regarding backwards causation.[12] Indeed, even if one is sympathetic to the

[12] Pitcher (1993: 159-168) and Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190) offer arguments in favour of death harming

view that death is a bad thing for *S*, one might not wish to agree with Feldman's position that it is bad for *S* even before she exists. Furthermore, the eternal harm of death seems to make the fact of mortality (i.e. death at any age, no matter how late in life it takes place) an evil, which presupposes that the harm of death is necessary, a view I have argued against.

In light of these concerns, I suggest that if death harms at any time, it is more reasonable to agree with Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168), Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190), and Feit (2002: pp. 359-383), that the harm is temporally restricted rather than eternal. Concerns remain regarding when harm begins (and ends), and how one justifies the duration suggested. Furthermore, if the harm of death occurs after death, the experience condition must be overcome before the Deprivation Thesis can succeed.

Having rejected Feldman's eternal view, allow me to return to Nagel's original Deprivation Thesis. An important feature of Nagel's view is the comparative technique of the deprivationist position; if life is a good thing, then death, which deprives one of life, is a bad thing. The comparative judgement is driven by intuitions of the following kind: it is better to be than not to be, since being, in itself, is a good thing; it is better to have existed and suffered than to never have existed at all; one is worse off for having died than one would be were one to continue to live. One may attempt to argue against this more generally, and claim that the comparative judgement cannot be made between something (the positive value of life) and nothing (valueless death). *Perhaps* there is some metaphysical sense in which this general criticism is defensible; if there is nothing, how can life-death value comparisons be drawn? However, given that death is conceived

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before it occurs, which will be discussed in the next section.

of as nothing, one would imagine that it is value neutral. If it is value neutral, then anything of positive value is therefore 'better than' death, but following from this, anything of negative value is 'worse than' death. Whilst this is consistent with certain beliefs (like those involved in the unfortunate case of *P*'s negative subjective valuation sketched earlier), it also provides justification for Nagel's strong claim for the intrinsic goodness of life. For if life has positive value in and of itself, it will *always* be comparatively better than death, no matter the ills suffered whilst alive. I have previously discussed the problematic nature of this strong position.

Nagel defends the deprivationist position from the above general criticism, by articulating the position not as a life-death comparison, but in terms of a life-life comparison. Essentially, deprivationists present the argument for the harmfulness, or badness, of death in terms of the value of the possible life one would have had, had one not died at that time, compared with the value of the life curtailed by death at an earlier time. Thus the comparative judgement is calculated between the value of the actual life a subject *S* lived, and the value of the possible life that *S* could have lived, had *S* not died at time *t*. The metaphysical complexities of comparing something with nothing are deftly avoided, and an arguably more straightforward comparative judgement is made between the value of actual and possible lives. Yet, even though these comparative judgements can be made, deprivationists still need to overcome the experience condition central to the No-Subject Thesis, and explain how death can be bad for, or harmful to, the one who dies. With this in mind, Nagel must offer argument explaining how a state of affairs can be bad for a subject, without that subject being capable of experience. Whilst Nagel recognises bad states of affairs that meet the Epicurean experience

condition, he expresses doubt regarding these being the only states of affairs that ought to qualify as bad for someone: 'There certainly are goods and evils of a simple kind […] which a person possesses at a given time simply in virtue of his condition at that time. But this is not true of all things we regard as good or bad for a man' (1979: p. 5). Nagel introduces here the antithetical idea to premise (1) of the No-Subject Thesis: A state of affairs is harmful for subject *S* if, and only if, *S* can experience it at some time. Instead, Nagel argues for the contrasting position that experience is *not* a necessary precondition for something to be bad, or harmful, to a subject. Indeed, there are states of affairs that are bad regardless of who may or may not experience them at any time. Experience of the bad, or harmful, state of affairs is irrelevant, all that matters is that the state of affairs actually obtain. The Nagelian subject can be harmed by event *e* regardless of whether the subject experiences the harm resultant from *e*, all that matters is that *e* is a genuinely harmful state of affairs, insofar as it deprives them of something of positive value. If Nagel can demonstrate that experience is not necessary for misfortune or harm, then premise (1) will have been shown to be false. If misfortunes, or harms, do not require experience, then there is no reason to assume that being dead (and therefore losing the status as a subject of experience) presents a limit to suffering harm or misfortune. If Nagel is correct, and death is bad in virtue of depriving one of the positive value of further life, the deceased's lack of experiential capacities does not prevent this deprivation being bad for them.

Nagel establishes his position by giving examples of nonexperienced misfortunes brought about by deprivation, arguing by analogy that if these are accepted as misfortunes, then by extension so too is death. Nagel has a twofold task; first,

establishing the existence of nonexperienced misfortunes; second, Nagel must demonstrate that those examples are analogous with death. The first example, which I shall call 'the intelligent man', is as follows:

> An intelligent person receives a brain injury that reduces him to the mental condition of a contented infant, and that such desires as remain to him can be satisfied by a custodian, so that he is free from care. Such a development would be widely regarded as a severe misfortune, not only for his friends and relations, or for society, but also, and primarily, for the person himself […] The intelligent adult who has been *reduced* to this condition is the subject of this misfortune. He is the one we pity, though of course, he does not mind his condition.
>
> (Nagel, 1979: p.5)

Nagel (1979: p. 4) offers further examples in which supposed misfortunes occur in subject independent context, such as the man betrayed by all those he loves, respects and admires (I shall refer to this counterexample as 'the betrayed man'). The man never becomes aware of the multifaceted betrayals, yet there is reason to agree with Nagel, that the man is inadvertently suffering as a consequence of continued and persistent deceptions. This intuition is highlighted by the belief that one would resist the opportunity to live under such conditions. These examples emphasise the limited sense in which harm, or misfortune, is understood in the experience condition. If the only states of affairs thought to harm are those experienced, then one excludes all those that harm without any causal contact with that state of affairs. When subjects are unknowingly mocked or disparagingly discussed by others one would be inclined to say that those subjects are suffering in some way. One might argue that the overall wellbeing of the subject's life is diminished by betrayal, and the subject is harmed by this reduction in overall wellbeing, regardless of whether the subject happens to experience it. Some would not hesitate to agree that the intelligent man has suffered

harm as a result of his brain injury. He has been deprived of the life he would otherwise have had, despite the stipulation that he is unaware of the loss himself. Arguably his unfortunate condition is harmful to him irrespective of his epistemic relation to it: his awareness of the state of affairs is *perhaps* irrelevant when judging his condition negatively. Nagel draws an analogous relation between these examples and that of the deceased subject, claiming that both can legitimately be the subjects of misfortune without experiencing the bad state of affairs: Experience is not necessary for misfortune, or harm. It is important to note that in proposing the analogy between these examples and death, Nagel is not contradicting the previous claim that death is a special kind of misfortune, rather, there are special kinds of misfortunes that need not be experienced in order to be bad for that subject, and that death is one of these special nonexperienced misfortunes. These special misfortunes are to be distinguished from those bad states of affairs that are experienced as bad by a subject during the times they occur.

At the core of the deprivationist argument is the intuition regarding objective bads, or harms; that there are some things that are bad for *S* no matter if they are experienced as such. It is in this way that a nonexistent subject, who cannot experience harm, can still be thought to suffer some misfortunes in death. It is Nagel's view that the loss of life, and being deprived of all its positive value, is bad for the one who dies in just this objective sense. Later I will examine Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168) and Feinberg's (1993: pp. 171-190) view that the thwarting of desires and interests be included as a bad that need not be experienced. If the deprivationist suggestions are true, the dead can suffer the misfortune of losing their life (and all that this loss may

entail i.e., the thwarting of certain interests and desires) and can therefore suffer posthumous harm despite their inability to experience.

A criticism against Nagel's counterexamples has a weaker and stronger version. The weaker version suggests that in these examples the subjects at least retain the *possibility* of coming into direct causal contact with the harmful state of affairs, which is consistent with the Epicurean experience condition, and premise (1). It is possible that one might have suspicions regarding various betrayals, and experience anxiety regarding the possibility of discovering that these suspicions are justified. As discussed in chapter two, Epicurus held that anxieties resulting in mental disturbances belonged to the set of most grievous harms, hence the possibility of discovering betrayals would be a genuine harm, or misfortune. Additionally, brief realisations of diminished capacities could be harmful.[13] This weaker criticism contends that harm is caused by the psychological unrest involved in the potential for discovery. Whilst this criticism *may* be true of the betrayed man, insofar as it is possible that he may overhear a derogatory comment or conversation, or that he feel insecure that his relationships are not as genuine as they appear, this weaker criticism does not extend to the case of the intelligent man. If this injury is permanent and irreversible, the man will *never* become directly aware of his lost potential. In this example, as in death, the loss is identified through the comparative judgement of the possible (a continued life/ a full existence) with the actually obtaining reality (death/ a limited existence). This case still presents a counterexample to premise (1) and the experience condition. An additional comment regarding this weaker

[13] For example, a person suffering from dementia, for whom moments of lucidity in which they realise that the majority of their mental states are not reflective of reality can be deeply distressing.

criticism, one that Nagel raises, is that betrayal is bad in and of itself: it is not bad simply because it is discovered (1979: p. 5). The harm is not resultant from the revelation of the betrayal, but rather because duplicity has occurred at all. Indeed, there is reason to believe that deceit without revelation is *more* harmful and cruel, because the betrayal is twofold; first, the initial act of betrayal, and secondly, continuing to withhold the truth of the initial act. This would imply that discovery, and the potential for revelation, is not the source of the harm of betrayal. One can conclude that the weaker criticism of Nagel's counterexamples fails.

Rosenbaum proposes a stronger version of the above criticism the consequence of which is that Nagel's counterexamples are compatible with premise (1). Allow me to sketch Rosenbaum's argument, beginning by noting that he agrees with Epicurus that 'if a person cannot experience a state of affairs at some time, then the state of affairs is not bad for the person' (1993: p. 123). Central to Rosenbaum's argument is the condition that for *S* to have experienced the bad state of affairs, *S* must be causally affected by it (1993: p. 124). This causal understanding of experience is consistent with the experience condition outlined in chapter two. To soften the condition, Rosenbaum suggests that this is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for experience, adding that one may experience (be causally affected by) something without being aware of it (1993: p. 124). Though there are obvious examples of being aware of having experiences, there are others in which awareness is not an obvious feature. Rosenbaum uses the example of (perhaps unknowingly) being irradiated by low-level radioactivity; one is causally affected by this experience, even though one may not be aware of it (1993: p. 124). Though it is true that most other examples of experience involve

awareness, I agree with Rosenbaum that it is possible to experience something in terms of being causally affected by it, without being aware of it. One can then argue that Nagel's counterexamples are, in fact, examples of this type of experience without awareness, and as such are consistent with premise (1) of the No-Subject Thesis. As Rosenbaum explains;

> 'All [(1)][14] requires for something to be bad for a person is that the person *can* experience it (perhaps not consciously) at some time, not that he actually experience it consciously. We can grant that what one *does not* consciously experience can hurt one without granting that what one *cannot* experience can hurt one. All [(1)] requires for an event or state of affairs to be bad for a person, implicitly, is that the person be able to experience it at some time, not that the person be aware or conscious of the causal effect at some time.'
>
> (Rosenbaum, 1993: pp. 126-127)

The intelligent man experiences his condition, even if he is not consciously aware of his condition (or that fact that it is a misfortune for him), which is consistent with premise (1) of the No-Subject Thesis. Thus, the Neo-Epicurean supporter of the No-Subject Thesis can agree that his condition is a bad thing for him. Similarly, one might think that the betrayed man experiences the betrayal (even when he is not consciously aware of it), especially if betrayal is a type of harm or misfortune that actually involves a (perhaps temporary) lack of awareness: to not know one is being betrayed just is experiencing a feature of betrayal. It might be that the badness of betrayal is constituted by the act of betrayal without knowledge of it, the possibility for discovery, and the actual discovery of the betrayal. Thus, even if the betrayed man *never* becomes consciously aware of his betrayal, one could still agree that he experiences the misfortune of being betrayed.

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[14] Altered to reflect the formulation of the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis expressed here.

An additional concern relates to the strength of the analogy Nagel makes regarding the badness of the losses involved in paradigmatic cases, such as a subject who loses a limb after an accident, and the loss of life caused by death. Rosenbaum recognises this issue too, and notes that losses can be described as happening when; 'A person *P* loses good *g* only if there it a time at which *P* has *g* and there is a later time at which *P* does not have *g*' (1993: p. 127). Whilst this principle can be unproblematically applied in the case of the subject who survives an accident, but loses a limb, and in Nagel's example of the intelligent man, and the betrayed man, given that each subject continues to exist at the later time *t* at which they do not have good *g*. However, in the case of death, there is no longer a subject at the later time *t* to experience the loss of good *g*. Nagel does not seem concerned about the lack of existence, perhaps as a result of arguing for the necessary evil of death. However, as I have already argued, it is not obvious that death is objectively bad, nor is it obvious that losses are objectively bad (and need not be experienced). Though certain cases of loss are clearly unfortunate (like that of the loss of a limb), there are cases of loss that seem good given certain conditions, for example, an obese person losing weight and improving their overall wellbeing as a result (though this, of course, is a loss that is experienced). So, it is not clear that loss is an inherently bad thing, and it is equally unclear how it can be bad when there is no subject to suffer it. Suffice to say that more is needed to explain why the absence of a subject who experiences the loss is no barrier to this loss being a misfortune.

A related criticism asks whether is it possible to suffer nonexperienced misfortunes, or harms, after death in the same way as one is whilst alive? Clearly this

question does not pertain to physical pain, but the example of the ruination of a reputation may prove less straightforward. Perhaps the name of the deceased may be dishonoured even after they cease to exist. Yet, the dead have no existence, and cannot be causally affected by the revelations: they feel no shame, and cannot make amends or defend themselves. Perhaps the thought that the deceased is affected is little more than the living *imagining* the way the deceased would have reacted to the event, had they remained alive. Furthermore, it is arguably more appropriate to identify the bereaved, as the subjects of harm; those who must attempt to reconcile the personal (fond, or respectful) memory of the deceased with damning posthumous revelations. Imagine a deceased politician is discovered to have taken bribes whilst acting in government, her reputation is destroyed and her accolades rescinded. She cannot be punished or shamed by this discovery, since she no longer exists. Her widowed husband, however, must endure the ignominy of his wife's dishonesty, and the loss of the credibility of her name; the bereaved experiences incredulousness regarding his ignorance, or suspicion that he too is untrustworthy. Perhaps there is space to develop an argument that aims to demonstrate that those who suggest that the deceased are harmed are confused about the subjects of harm in these instances. It is precisely because one is dead that no state of affairs whatsoever can be experienced; the subject(s) of harm, if there are to be any, are the bereaved, who must endure the destruction of the deceased's reputation.

In summary, Nagel proposes the view that death harms the one who dies in virtue of depriving them of the continued life they could have had, had they not died at that time. Nagel contests the experience condition as expressed in premise (1) of the No-Subject Thesis and attempts to demonstrate cases of nonexperienced misfortunes,

arguing by analogy that death is one such misfortune. However, the Nagelian project fails; the counterexamples designed to prove the falsity of premise (1) are shown to be compatible with it, and the analogy itself is called into question by considering Rosenbaum's general principle of experiencing loss.

Notwithstanding these criticisms of Nagel's argument, the deprivationist position benefits from agreement with several common beliefs about death. In ordinary life death is associated with loss: death is the annihilation of the self, or is experienced as an absence via the annihilation of the other. The misfortune of death is equated with the absolute end of all possibilities, threatening the satisfaction of at least some desires and interests. In these terms, the possibilities death deprives one of represent the essence of the harm of death. Many would agree that the finite nature of existence is suggestive of loss in the context of a good life, as Nagel states; 'He has lost his life, and if he had not died, he would have continued to live it […] its possibility is still that of the continuation of a good for him, if life is the good we take it to be' (1979: p. 7-8). This thought is exemplified by the fact that premature death is particularly abhorrent to most people: in dying early the subject has been deprived of a longer period of life (and the possible goods it would have contained). In this reaction lies the assumption that the potential for possible goods is relational to age. Yet, is it true that as one ages, desires and interests deplete, or that the potential for happiness decreases? This is a narrow view of personal endeavour through time. Whilst certain desires and interests may alter over time, those held do not necessarily lessen in intensity: the hope regarding the happiness of one's children may well be equal to the same hope for one's grandchildren. Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny that the death of an infant is mourned partly due to the belief that the

potential to, at the very least, *become* has been irrevocably lost, and that this minimal potential is greater at such a young age.[15] Furthermore, the degree to which one regards premature death a tragedy has almost certainly to do with a quantitative judgement regarding potentialities, and there can be no denying that a younger person possibly has a greater length of time to fulfil more potential goals etc. than an aged person. Agreement with these intuitions regarding the badness of death and associated deprivation supports a continued study of the deprivation thesis.

Given the argument against the necessary evil of death, all forthcoming variants of the Deprivation Thesis are understood in terms of the weaker claim that death is *contingently* harmful to the one who dies, given the right conditions obtaining. One defence of the Deprivation Thesis, articulated by Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168) and Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190), attempts to overcome the problem of a nonexistent subject by locating the harm of death at a time when the subject still exists. Thus the harm of death occurs prior to death, satisfying the experience condition. I argue that in the endeavour to resolve one problem, Pitcher and Feinberg simply introduce others.

III. DEFENCE OF THE DEPRIVATION THESIS: PITCHER AND FEINBERG

Aside from the 'problem of the subject' (Feinberg, 1993: p. 172), the temporal location problem arguably poses the greatest challenge to the Deprivation Thesis. Consider again Rosenbaum's principle of loss: 'A person *P* loses good *g* only if there is a time at which *P* has *g* and there is a later time at which *P* does not have *g*' (1993: p. 127). If *P* dies

[15] I have been considering the view that the time of death is as much a definition of identity as the time of birth, though there is no room to discuss this matter here.

and therefore ceases to exist there is no later time at which *P* does not have good *g*, since there is no *P*. For the harm of death to be constituted by loss there has to be further explanation as to how a given property (such as good g) can transcend the later time and be lost by subject *P*. Pitcher (1993: p. 162) and Feinberg (1993: pp. 173-174) argue that death is bad in virtue of thwarting desires or interests, therefore depriving the dead of certain continued goods. As Feinberg writes:

> 'The main support for the view of death as harm, however, comes not from ordinary language, but from whatever support has already been mustered for the analysis of harm as set-back interest, which, given the universal interest in not dying, implies that death is a harm. The continuance of our lives for most of us, at most moments in our lives, is something manifestly in our interests, and that being so, the sudden extinction of life would, as a thwarting of that interest, be a harm.'
>
> (Feinberg, 1993: p. 173)

And later continues:

> 'Indeed, there is nothing a normal person (in reasonable health and tolerable circumstances) dreads more than his own death, and that dread, in the vast majority of cases, is as rational as it is unavoidable, for unless we continue alive, we have no chance whatever of achieving those goals that are the ground of our ultimate interest.'
>
> (Feinberg, 1993: p. 173)

Subjects can unknowingly be in possession of interests that will be thwarted (either by death, or posthumously), and as such can be harmed by being the bearer of thwarted interests (Feinberg, 1993: p. 174; Pitcher, 1993: p. 162). A critic of this view might note that death annihilates the subject along with all their desires and interests, and so to suggest the above implies that desires and interests can have existence (and fulfilment requirements) independent of the subject who first developed them (Feinberg, 1993: p.176). Given *certain* instances this is problematic, for example, the interest in going for a walk has no independent existence external to the subject; thus, if the subject no longer exists, neither does the interest. However, other examples do not face this issue. It is

reasonable to request that certain acts be carried out (and interests fulfilled) after one has died. This is exemplified by executing a will, and the social and legal duty to respect the (ante-mortem) wishes of the deceased.[16] This behaviour appears to contradict the view that interests do not have subject-independent existence. A further example involves the parental interest in the success of one's (especially immediate) descendants, which continues, and can be fulfilled or thwarted (at different times), after death. Hence, there is potential support for the view that interests can transcend the lifetime of the subject with whom they originated, and the thwarting of such interests can therefore harm, or be bad for, the deceased.[17]

However, I suggest that the interests in question are annihilated along with the subject, and that such examples present a form of confusion regarding the source of the interest. Rather, I argue that the living subject develops an interest in fulfilling the ante-mortem interest of the deceased, and as such the interest belongs to the living subject. An example might make this clearer; a dying woman makes a deathbed request that her child become a teacher. The woman eventually dies, and her child duly forms an interest in fulfilling the deathbed request of her mother. The mother's interest in having her request fulfilled ceases, but crucially the child's interest in fulfilling the request continues (this example can be applied more broadly to the success of one's descendents). The two can coexist whilst both subjects are alive, but one will continue

[16] Kafka famously requested that his manuscripts be destroyed after he died, and yet they clearly survived, which raises a genuine ethical question (one which is beyond the scope of this particular discussion) Kafka, (trans. Muir, 1992, xxxii).

[17] It is worth asking whether unexpressed interests potentially continue after death, or if continued existence is conditional upon expressing (testifying to) the interest. If it is required that another person witnesses the expression of an interest, this *may* lend itself to the view that even expressed interests do not have independent existence.

to exist whilst the other ceases with the annihilation of the subject. The request of the dead woman no longer exists as *her* interest, it is the interest of her daughter, and its fulfilment is wholly determined by, and of interest to, the living child. Thus, there is an *appearance* that the interests of the dead have posthumous existence, but it is, in fact, the interest of the living that exists. Of course, we can refer to the past (ante-mortem) interest of the deceased (given that the past interest did previously exist), in much the same way as we can refer to past possessions of the deceased, though naturally the possessions that previously belonged to the deceased exist independently of them, unlike interests. So, one can make statements regarding the interest *S had* in the success of her decedents whilst recognising that she will not be affected if (at some times) her decedents suffer. Perhaps a beneficial consequence of my view is that it is consistent with the experience condition of the No-Subject Thesis: only the living can be causally affected (harmed or benefited) by the outcome of their interests and desires, including those relating to the ante-mortem interests of the dead.

Moving on, recall, that the temporal location problem arises from questioning when death is bad for the deceased, and resolutions to the problem have to address the absence of a subject of misfortune or harm. There are two remaining possible answers; either harm or misfortune occurs posthumously (from the moment of death onwards, for either limited or infinite duration), or harm or misfortune occurs prior to death. In regards to posthumous misfortune or harm it is difficult to identify a subject who suffers the harm or misfortune, and the ante-mortem reply must face concerns regarding how an event causes harm or misfortune before it actually occurs.

Both Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190) and Pitcher (1993: pp. 159-168) support a variation of the Deprivation Thesis, arguing that death harms the one who dies. Both clarify that the dead are not harmed posthumously, thus avoiding issues relating to the absence of a subject. Instead Feinberg (1993: pp. 183-184) and Pitcher (1993: p. 162) suggest that the harm of death occurs *ante-mortem*: death harms the living person. This distinction leads to the conclusion that death harms prior to the time at which it occurs (i.e., whilst one exists) in virtue of events that obtain at or after death (i.e. whilst one no longer exists), resting upon Nagel's position regarding nonexperienced misfortunes (or, in Feinberg's and Pitcher's texts, harms). Setting out the following distinction defends the ante-mortem view from the problematic implications of backward causation:

> The interests harmed by events that occur at or after the moment a person's non-existence commences are the interests of the person who is no longer with us, not the interests of the decaying body […] A dead person can be described in two different ways: (1) as he was at some stage of his life – i.e. as a living person or (2) as he is now, in death – mouldering, perhaps, in a grave […] the first is a description of an *ante*-mortem person after his death and the second a description of a *post*-mortem person after his death.
>
> (Feinberg, 1993: p. 182)

This clarification has the added benefit of allowing references to the dead; such references are aimed at the ante-mortem subject. Pitcher introduces the temporal location problem by asking; 'Is it possible for something to happen after a person's death that harms the living person he was before he died' (1993: p. 162). The question can be extended to ask; if this is possible, how is the problem of retroactivity avoided, given that it is implied by the suggestion that death harms prior to dying? This difficulty is avoided by dismissing the misleading view that any actual physical causation occurs (Pitcher, 1993: p. 164; Feinberg, 1993: p. 184). Here it is understood

that later events do not *cause* an alteration in the prior status of the ante-mortem subject, rather it is proposed that the later posthumous event 'makes it true' (Pitcher: 1993: p. 168; Feinberg, 1993: p. 185) that the ante-mortem subject was harmed: by being a subject whose desires and interests would be thwarted (either by death, or by another cause after death), the ante-mortem subject is harmed, regardless of whether they knew about it, or experienced the thwarting. As Feinberg writes:

> The antemortem person was harmed in being the subject of interests that were going to be defeated whether he knew it or not. It does not become "retroactively true" that as the subject of doomed interests he is in a harmed state, rather it was true all along.
>
> (Feinberg, 1993: p. 185)

And Pitcher states:

> On my view, the sense in which an ante-mortem person is harmed by an unfortunate event after his death is this: the occurrence of the event makes it true that during the time before the person's death, he was harmed – harmed in that the unfortunate event was going to happen. If the event should not occur, the ante-mortem person would not have been so harmed. So the occurrence of post-mortem event is responsible for the ante-mortem harm.
>
> (Pitcher, 1993: p. 168)

Thus there is no backwards causation involved in either Pitcher or Feinberg's account of ante-mortem harm. Rather, having an interest that was going to be thwarted, or as Feinberg puts it 'was actually doomed' (1993: p. 186), unknowingly harmed the subject.[18]

If this account of ante-mortem harms holds true, it has consequences for premise (2) of the No-Subject Thesis by stating that the harm of death begins whilst *S* exists. This fulfils the experience condition, and contradicts the conclusion as a result. Recall

[18] I have previously thought that the language Feinberg uses here regarding doomed interests might imply a deterministic attitude towards interests. I no longer think this is the case.

that these premises state that: (2) a harmful state of affairs for *S* must occur whilst *S* exists. The ante-mortem argument challenges this by claiming that because the desires and interests a subject possesses begin prior to death, the harmful result of death (the thwarting of desires and interests) begins before death; the harm occurs when the interests that will ultimately remain unfulfilled exist. Feinberg specifies that 'the harmed condition began at the moment he first acquired the interests that death defeats' (1993: p. 186). Although the distinction made between the post-mortem and ante-mortem subject has the beneficial consequence of enabling references to the deceased, the argument outlined above faces some challenges.

First, there are several reasons why one's interests may be unfulfilled; their failure to be fulfilled is not necessarily the result of death. It is possible that had death not occurred some other state of affairs would have obtained that would have thwarted the interest.[19] This point could be used to claim that death is not the source of harm, but rather it is the thwarting of desires, no matter the cause, that is harmful to subjects. Indeed, if the experience condition is true, and subjects must be causally affected by something in order to be harmed, death would provide a barrier to suffering the harm of interest thwarting.

Sharing Nagel's intuition regarding nonexperienced misfortunes, Pitcher notes that the subject need not know, be aware, or mind that the interests thwarted by death will remain unfulfilled (1993: p. 165), perhaps thinking that this would suffice to

[19] It is not obvious that the thwarting of desires is necessarily harmful. For example, self-destructive desires that provide pleasure in the short term, but harms one, or others, in the long-term. Thus, if there are certain cases in which the thwarting of a desire is not bad, it is not clear that the thwarting of desires by death directly leads to death being harmful to the one who dies, though this particular argument would have restricted application to these cases.

overcome the experience condition. However, as has been discussed, all that is required for experiencing harm is that the subject be causally affected by the harmful state of affairs, not that they be aware of it (know of it, or mind it). Thus, *if* it is the case that being the bearer of a doomed interest is indeed harmful, the No-Subject Thesis can allow that this is harmful to the subject, so long as they are alive and can be causally affected in some manner by the possibility of the interests future thwarting. Of course, this would require an explanation as to how a subject can be causally affected by possessing an interest that still retains the *possibility* for fulfilment whilst they are alive, even though death eventually makes it true that it would be unfulfilled.

Pitcher's argument also results in the following unappealing consequence. As the harm of death occurs when the doomed interest exists, it is possible that the interest in remaining alive (for now, if not always) commits one to being harmed by death *all the time*. This (perhaps unconscious, non-rational) interest is a fundamental feature of being; one strives to survive by forming relationships, seeking shelter and nourishment etc. However, given the inevitability of death, even this most basic interest is doomed to failure; as soon as one wills to survive (and this interest need not be explicitly articulated) death begins to harm, entailing that one is harmed by death constantly. Feinberg notes this issue, though not aiming his comment at Pitcher, stating that 'It would follow that if it was going to happen that he would die at time *t*, he must have been in a harmed condition for almost all of his life before *t* – a conclusion that does not at first sight carry much conviction' (1993: p. 186-187). Were one to lose the will to live, one would no longer be harmed by death, but then one would arguably suffer the

social and personal consequences of apathetic living.[20] Neither option is particularly appealing, which raises doubts regarding the motivation for taking up Pitcher's position. Given the Epicurean hedonic aim of maximising pleasure and minimising pain, one could coherently reject Pitcher's argument on these grounds. Indeed, this consequence of Pitcher's argument is precisely the position that Epicurus sets out to dispel, seeking to reduce the mental disturbance caused by concerns about death.

Feinberg avoids the above issue by making a distinction between 'partial' and 'net' harm (1993: p. 187), entailing that one is only partially harmed by having interests that remain unfulfilled as a result of death. This partial harm is comparative to how many interests have been successfully satisfied throughout a lifetime (1993: p. 187). Thus it is better to die later when it is probable that more interests will have been fulfilled, than earlier, as doing so will have reduced the net harm incurred. However, though this account of harm reduces the constant level of harm implied by Pitcher's account, to only partial harm, it does not address the implication that the interest in living results in constant harm; from the moment one is born one is harmed by death, albeit only partially so, and the only way to live without the harm of death is by losing the interest in continuing to live (though not necessarily willing to die). Furthermore, this harm is intensified by wanting not merely to exist, but to have a life full of activities, desires, interests, hopes, etc. In virtue of arguing that thwarted interests cause harm, this account implies that it is better to live with fewer interests and so forth, as the fewer maintained, the less net harm incurred via the thwarting of interests by death. Again, it

[20] Losing the will to live need not necessarily lead to the desire for death. Although, were one to lose the will to live and attain the desire to die, in seeking death and killing oneself death does not cause harm in the manner suggested by Pitcher, rather death has brought about the satisfaction of one's desire.

is questionable whether one would want to adhere to an argument that implies disengaging with others and activities (i.e. the pursuits of 'life' in general), even if this lessens the net harm incurred via death.

Though this point is raised in criticism, Epicurus' limiting of desires may provide a response. Recall that Epicurus recommends that one restrict desires to only the natural and necessary, thus maximising the possibility of desire satisfaction, and minimising the potential for unsatisfied desires and consequent mental distress (*KD*29-30; *SV* 21). The idea that one is harmed by death in virtue of having an interest in continuing to live (plus other interests that might be defeated by death), can be dealt with in the following Epicurean way. First, accept mortality as the nature of existence: do not long for more life than is reasonable, and recognise that death is always possible; second, limit desires and interests to those that are easily fulfilled, so that one can be confident in their fulfilment. Of those that *may* survive death (if this is indeed possible), recognise that their outcome is not within one's control, and that their failure or success will not affect one. For example, one can hope that one's decedents will succeed, but build into that hope the realistic view that there may be moments in which they will suffer.

However, a distinction between Feinberg's position and the Epicurean recommendation rests on the Epicurean emphasis on community membership and friendship (*KD*27-28). It is available to the Neo-Epicurean to retain certain natural and necessary desires (that of the security provided by friends) in full knowledge of the possibility of their curtailment (that friendships will eventually be ended by the death of some member of the friendship). Feinberg's position implies that the possible end of personal relationships via the death of a subject gives reason to resist having an interest

in such relationships, given that doing so would reduce overall net harm. Thus, Feinberg's argument results in the counterintuitive implication that one ought to avoid personal relationships, given that this is an interest that may well be thwarted by death. Of course, this assumes that one seeks to avoid harms, which is not obviously true. However, one often requires good reason to willingly engage with a possible harm given that most people are predisposed to avoid things that will make them worse off. Perhaps Feinberg could argue that the benefits of personal relationships outweigh the possibility of being harmed by their ending. Though this response is acceptable in relation to personal relationships, there would need to be a similar argument offered for all interests one chooses to maintain insofar as one can either ensure their fulfilment, or explain why the possibility for thwarting is not sufficient to avoid having the interest (and suffering the partial harm as a result of it being thwarted).

Feinberg might also argue that perhaps the persistent partial harm of death provides motivation to do as much as possible before death. However, this reply only succeeds if time of death is known, enabling the satisfaction of the majority of interests before death: most people are not privy to this information. Given that death is always possible, this might prompt one to treat every day *as if* it were the last, ensuring interests have been fulfilled and thereby avoiding their thwarting. This might remove the harm of death in terms of thwarted desires, but it is also highly improbable that one could live in such a manner (despite the frequency with which it is recommended that one does so).[21]

[21] I am thinking here of both the emotional and practical improbability of living as if this particular day were one's last.

A general concern regarding linking the misfortune of death with the outcome of interests and desires is that the status of interests and desires can alter over time. For example, one's interest in the wellbeing of one's decedents can be satisfied at some times, thwarted at others, only to become satisfied again as a result of their inconsistent wellbeing levels. Though the contingent harm Pitcher and Feinberg argue for may be able to accommodate these shifts in status, it causes problems for Feinberg's claim that the later event entails that it was 'true all along' that the interest was doomed (1993: p. 185). If Feinberg is right, one would have to agree that it was true all along that *S* was harmed by a thwarted interest, during the times at which it is thwarted, however, if that interested later became fulfilled, one would have to claim instead that it was actually false all along that *S* was harmed, given that *S* has now benefited from the fulfilment of an interest. This alteration appears to undermine the 'true all along' of Feinberg's position. I am unconvinced by this aspect of Feinberg's argument, and rather than agreeing to the idea that it becomes apparent that it was *true all along* that *S* was harmed, I am inclined to argue that it becomes apparent that of two possibilities (success and failure), one turned out to be the case at this later time. Of course, one can apply this backward looking perspective to statements about their life, after the outcome of the interest has been (perhaps only temporarily) decided, but this does not alter the fact that until that time, being harmed or benefited by the outcome was entirely open and hence could not have been true all along. Indeed, it is not obvious that one is harmed by a possibility, especially in those instances in which it is yet to be determined whether thwarted interests are harmful in the absence of a subject.[22]

[22] This related back to my earlier comments on p. 48 regarding the irrationality of anticipatory fear

Additionally, given that neither Pitcher nor Feinberg specify when death ceases to harm the one who dies, and accepting their understanding of interests for the sake of argument, it is a reasonable assumption to state that the harm of death continues at all times that the interest of the dead is thwarted. If the interest referred to relates to the wellbeing of one's decedents, then it is possible to be harmed so long as decedents exist. This could mean that the dead could be harmed hundreds of years after their death, which seems to overstate the case somewhat. It seems unreasonable to suggest that the ancient ancestors of *S* are currently harmed by *S*'s pregnancy losses, even if these subjects had an interest in the success of their family line. It is my view that this position would benefit from offering a non-arbitrary temporal limit regarding when death can be bad.[23]

Moving on, I'd like to highlight a feature of Pitcher's argument, that Feinberg also refers to (1993: p. 184), which is relevant to my own view regarding harm to the bereaved. Pitcher uses examples of bereavement (1993: pp. 165-167) to demonstrate the harm of death via defeated interests, which I think suggests that harm to the bereaved could be accommodated within the deprivationist intuition (though this was not the aim of the examples). These examples pull at the intuition that there is something harmful about death by appealing to cases in which a subject suffers the loss of a loved one. Both of these involve men who are harmed by the death of their sons, in virtue of an interest in the son's welfare, as Pitcher writes: 'Suppose that Mr. Black's son Jack is killed in an airplane crash many miles away. Given that his son's welfare is one of

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regarding something that is not necessarily harmful.

[23] I agree with Feit (2002: 359-383) that the harm of death is temporally restricted, a view that will be examined in the next section of this chapter.

Black's strongest interests, the son's death harms Black (is a great misfortune for him)' (1993: p. 165). Pitcher later repeats the point noting of Bishop Berkeley's knowledge that his son was going to die young: 'this knowledge was a torment to Berkeley precisely because he regarded it as a great misfortune that his son was going to die young' (1993: p. 166). Though I do not intend to argue for the harm of death for the bereaved in terms of thwarted interests, it is interesting that the harm involved in bereavement is taken for granted; the use of such examples implies that deprivationists may well accept my view regarding this mode of death's harm.[24]

Nonetheless, due to the concerns outlined above regarding the ante-mortem response to the temporal location problem, it is worth examining an alternative deprivationist approach. Feit (2002: p. 360) suggests that the temporal location of the harm of death takes place post-mortem. Like Nagel he constructs a comparative judgement between the value of *S*'s life given death at time *t*, and the value of the possible life *S* could have had, if *S* had not died at time *t*, but at a later time *t1*, arguing that the loss of this value is a misfortune for the dead (2002: p. 362). Should Feit's argument fail to convince, then I will conclude the Deprivation Thesis does not demonstrate the harmfulness of death for the one who dies. Further to this, if the No-Subject Thesis is to be rejected, it must be repudiated on alternative grounds.

[24] A difference between my view and Pitcher's is that he thinks that death is no barrier to Mr Black's suffering (1993: p. 165), whereas I will argue in chapter five that the harm to the bereaved ceases at their death.

IV. DEFENCE OF THE DEPRIVATION THESIS: FEIT

In his paper 'The Time of Death's Misfortune,' Feit states his position regarding the timing of the harm of death as beginning at the time of the subject's death (2002: p. 368-369). However, far from supporting the view that harm continues eternally, i.e., for the infinite duration of being dead, Feit argues that there is a distinct temporal duration of the harm: it continues only as long as the subject could have reasonably expected to live, after which the subject is no longer harmed by an earlier death (2002: p. 369). As Feit states: 'when death is bad for the person who dies, it is bad for her at all and only those times during which she would have been alive, had she not then died' (2002: p. 360). To calculate the harm incurred, Feit utilises a comparative value judgement between the overall value of the actual life *S* had, given *S*'s death at time *t*, and that of the overall value of the possible life *S* could have had, had *S* not died at time *t* (but died at a later time *t1*) (2002: p. 362). To clarify the nature of these value judgements, Feit makes a distinction between the intrinsic value of a state of affairs for *S*, with that of the overall value of a state of affairs, which includes both extrinsic and intrinsic values of states of affairs for *S* (2002: p. 362). This resembles Feinberg's distinction between net and partial harms (1993: pp. 186-187), insofar as something can be a partial harm to a subject i.e. it can have a negative intrinsic value, but when taken together with all other relevant states of affairs, the overall net harm is negligible (or at least compensates the partial harm) i.e. the negative intrinsic value of a particular state of affairs within a life does not sufficiently diminish the overall value of that life. The distinction entails that a state of affairs *p* might be bad for *S* at specific times and durations, without *p* being overall bad for *S*, insofar as it might result in increased overall value. Hence, even if it is

the case that given ~*p* at time *t* there are moments – or extended periods – in which *S*'s value might be zero,[25] for the collection of the entire state of affairs relevant for inclusion within the value judgement, *S*'s overall value is still greater given ~*p*, than the value for *S* given *p*. Thus, even though there may be moments of zero value given ~*p*, this does not necessarily detract from the conclusion that *S* has been deprived of additional value in having situations prevented (i.e. of being deprived) by death at the earlier time *t*.

What is of particular interest to Feit is calculating the value of certain states of affairs, relative to the subject for whom they obtain, as he states:

> The kind of value that we are looking for is thus an *agent relative overall value* […] We must say that the value – good, bad or neutral – that an event has for a person is a function of how well off she would have been, had the event not occurred, as well as of how well off she is (given that the event occurs).
> (Feit, 2002: p. 362).

Further to this, Feit argues that in forming comparative value judgements, one can assess not merely that a particular state of affairs is bad for *S*, but also *how* bad it is for *S*. To calculate how much harm occurs, a comparison is made between the overall value for *S* in which the state of affairs obtained, and that in which the state of affairs failed to obtain (Feit, 2002: p. 363). Feit notes that there is a presumption that the comparison reveals that the former has lesser value than the latter, which in turn supports the conclusion that death is a bad thing for *S* (2002: p. 363). Thus, for Feit 'the overall value that a state of affairs has for a person is a function, in part, of facts about what would have been the case had that state not obtained' (2002: p. 363). Yet, for every proof of death's harmfulness, one could propose a state of affairs in which not dying has at least

[25] Which is equal to the value of *p* at time *t* for *S*.

equal, or even lesser overall value for the subject's life. Though this point is genuinely troublesome for the Nagelian view of the necessary badness of death, Feit can accommodate this by arguing for the contingency of death's harmfulness. Though one can make comparisons that reveal that the deceased has not been deprived of significant (or, any) value, provided Feit can construct a comparison that demonstrates that the subject has been deprived of positively valuable life, it may be possible to argue that death has harmed the deceased (though the experience condition must be addressed).

Feit states his position regarding when death is bad as follows:

> I am convinced that if a certain state of affairs is bad for me, then there is some *time* at which it is bad for me. I am also convinced that, in the relevant sense of "bad for me," a state of affairs cannot be bad for me until it obtains (occurs, is present) […] Presumably when one's death is bad for him, it is bad for him throughout some interval of time and then ceases to be bad for him […] For example, it seems to me to be correct to say that Abe Lincoln's death isn't bad for him *now*, although there were times in the past when it was bad for him.
>
> (Feit, 2002: p. 366-367)

For Feit the misfortune of death begins at the time of death in the actual world, and ends at the time at which the subject could have reasonably expected to continue to live, which is calculated by referring to the nearest relevantly similar possible world in which the subject did not die at *t*, but lived longer (2002: p. 369-370). Furthermore, an event can only begin being bad for a subject when the first bad consequence takes place (2002: p. 369). I think that *if* death does cause harm, and is bad for someone, it occurs in this temporally restricted manner. Limiting the duration of harm benefits from reflecting the pretheoretical intuition that those who died in the long-distant past are no longer suffering as a consequence of their earlier death. This deals with a previous concern regarding the ante-mortem harm view, which implied that one's ancient ancestors could

be harmed by a current pregnancy loss. Furthermore, it reflects the intuition that if death is bad at all – premature death is worse than death that takes place in old age, given that in the former case harm occurs over a longer duration (and deprives one of greater value) than in the latter. This may be considered a benefit of Feit's position if one shares this intuition.

Feit does not merely place restrictions on the temporal duration of the harm, but also articulates the nature of the comparative judgement with great clarity, offering an illuminating explanation as to how one makes valuations across possible worlds in which particular states of affairs are altered. His primary stipulation pertains to those states of affairs referred to in order to obtain the most accurate agent relative values to allow comparison (2002: p. 362). Thus, one can assess the total consequence of *p* in this actual world by identifying all those states of affairs that obtain in this world, but do not obtain in the ~*p*-world (2002: p. 367). Additionally, the situations prevented are calculated by identifying all those states of affairs obtaining in the ~*p*-world, that do not obtain in the *p*-world (2002: p. 367). The total consequences, and the situations prevented by *p* obtaining are mutually exclusive, and the different values permit one to assert just how much *p* obtaining has deprived one of (2002: p. 367). Feit's view therefore entails comparing the value of all and only those states of affairs that are relevant to calculation; 'the overall value of an event ought to be conceptually linked to the notion of the consequence or outcome of that event' (2002: p. 368). Essential to calculation is that the value of the collection of states of affairs prior to *p* obtaining is equal in all worlds involved in comparison (2002: p. 369). Feit presents his account of the temporal duration of death's badness, or harm, as follows:

> *OBAT*: State *p* is overall bad for *s* at *t* if and only if (1) *p* starts being overall bad for *s* at or before *t*, and (2) *p* does not stop being overall bad for *s* before *t*.
> (Feit, 2002: p. 372)

Whilst I consider Feit's limitations on the duration of the misfortune of death to be the strongest response to the temporal location problem, the 'problem of the subject' (Feinberg, 1993: p. 172) remains. Given Rosenbaum's principle of loss (1993: p. 127), Feit must overcome the challenge of explaining how a nonexistent subject can be causally affected by the loss of the value of a continued life. The posthumous harm of death *might* be acceptable if one could argue that loss is necessarily harmful, or a misfortune. However, there are examples of loss which seem to benefit the loser (a straightforward example might be the health benefits brought about by an obese subject's loss of excess weight, or perhaps the loss of an abusive relationship), and so it is not at all obvious that loss is inherently harmful or a bad thing. More needs to be said to convince that losing this possible additional value is a misfortune for a subject who cannot experience the loss. Of course, Feit may suggest that the loss of a good thing is inherently bad for *S*, but without an account of why the presence of a subject is entirely unnecessary for this particular kind of loss, and an alternative principle of loss offered, the problem of the subject remains. As it stands, the experience condition is a genuine difficulty even for Feit's well-considered deprivationist account.

Though I have no reservations regarding Feit's particular formulation of calculating compared values, and am sympathetic to the effort made to limit the temporal duration of harm, there may be a possible criticism raised regarding the content of the comparative judgements. How does one calculate how much longer the subject might reasonably expect to live, such that it demonstrates that the deceased has been

deprived of a valuable duration of life by dying at an earlier time? Given that Feit argues that the value of each life used for comparison up to the time of the earlier death must be equal, in order to ensure that the difference can be attributed to the event of death, and to no other cause, one ought to alter only those states of affairs that relate to the event of death. Accepting that minimal alterations are preferable in order to promote convincing outcomes, given certain circumstances, it may not be reasonable to expect to live any longer. Given that greater differences would occur in a world where *p* happened a great deal later, or not at all, it is possible to argue that the nearest relevantly similar possible world is actually one in which *p* happens in the closest temporal location to that of *p* in the actual world.

Given consistency in antecedent events, it might be possible to argue that *S* could not have lived much longer than they did. As such, the value of the additional life *S* has been deprived of is minimal at best – it may even be entirely negative if the extension of the dying process is physically and/or psychologically painful. It is important to note that this criticism does not imply a predetermined time of death, such that it is *impossible* that a subject live much longer than they did. Rather it is suggested that it may not be reasonable to expect to live much longer than one did. Though Feit argues for the contingency of the harm of death, and can therefore accept examples in which death does not harm the deceased, if it is unreasonable to expect to live longer (entailing that death will come, if not at the earlier time, briefly afterwards), then the harm of death in virtue of deprivation is minimal at best.[26]

[26] Jeff McMahan (1988: pp. 32-61) raises a similar point regarding the causal overdetermination of the time of death, which Feit addresses (2002: pp. 377-380).

It is worth noting a potential Epicurean response to Feit's account of assessing the harm of death. Recall that Epicurus emphasises not merely the inevitability of death, but also that it is always possible (*LM* 126-127). One should not *expect* to live any longer than one does, given that death is a constant possibility of one's existence. Thus to expect longevity is an unreasonable expectation, one that fails to fully acknowledge the inescapability (and persistent threat) of death, and does not accept that death can come sooner rather than later. This is not a question of having confidence in living long, but rather that it is not rational to *expect* to do so, given the ever present possibility of death. To expect longevity is to consider oneself exempt from the fact that death can occur at any time. This is an unreasonable attitude, according to Epicurus (*LM* 127). Perhaps Feit could respond by altering the language of his position, substituting 'reasonably expect to' for 'reasonably desire to', hence one is harmed by being deprived of the duration of life one desired (but did not expect) to have. However, Feit may not feel compelled to make this alteration, and could respond to the criticism in the following way: given a general understanding of the typical lifespan of a human being, and taking into account the circumstances unique to a particular life, one could calculate a (general) expectation to live a certain duration. Thus, a subject who does not have a family history of heart disease or cancer, who has a healthy lifestyle, engages in regular physical activity, and does not willingly take unnecessary risks (she is a very careful driver, only uses pedestrian crossings, etc.) could use these facts to justify a reasonable expectation to live till approximately eighty years of age. Yet, even granting this, one would have to question whether the possibility of an earlier death is taken into account when calculating an expected lifespan (allowing for these may reduce expectations).

Though Feit's comparative judgement is carefully reasoned, these issues regarding the expectation for longevity, the possibility that the subject has not been deprived of much value, and the problem of the subject means that I withhold agreement with this account.

Interestingly, there is a pre-emptive Epicurean response to the Deprivation Thesis' comparative assumption that a longer life will contain greater pleasures.[27] As there is a limit to pleasure that can be reached in a finite period, a finite life can contain as much pleasure as an infinite life (*KD*18-20). Thus there is no reason to assume that the dead have been deprived of further pleasures by dying at time *t*, given that they may have reached the limit of pleasure by time *t*. The consequence of this is that a brief extension of life can still yield the greatest limits of pleasure, and having reached such limits death cannot deprive the dead of further pleasure. Tim O'Keefe notes the Epicurean justification for limiting pleasures in this manner:

> Epicurus has perfectly good reason to set a limit on pleasure: once one has reached the state of functioning perfectly healthily in body and mind, a state that moreover is free of all turmoil and distress, one cannot increase the "amount" of that state or the satisfaction one takes in it.
>
> (O'Keefe, 2010: p. 123)

Indeed, as Epicurus states 'Infinite time and finite time contain equal pleasure, if one measures its limits by reasoning' (*KD*19, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 33), thus given the achievement of *ataraxia*, there is no further pleasure that death can deprive one of, nor extended life offer.[28] Though this is beautifully consistent with Epicurus' overarching hedonic philosophy, it requires support to overcome the intuition that

[27] This Epicurean response is highlighted in Warren (2004: pp. 247-248).
[28] See Mitsis (1988) for extensive discussion on this point.

additional life proffers at minimum the *possibility* of additional pleasure, or that *ataraxia* would be better for longer. Notwithstanding Epicurus' particular response to the Deprivation Thesis, the temporal location problem, together with the absence of a subject of experience remain issues for the Deprivation Thesis.

V. CONCLUSION

This chapter offered an analysis of the Deprivation Thesis, a position motivated by the intuition that death has deprived one of additional life, and assumes that the additional life is of positive value. This is a powerful intuition, not merely because one takes life to contain at least the possibility for positive value, but also because death could have occurred later than it did. The greatest problems deprivationists face is establishing the temporal location of this proposed harm via deprivation, and responding to the experience condition that is left unsatisfied given the absence of a subject. Granting that there is no subject to experience harm after death, it is difficult to demonstrate how a subject could be harmed by her death, after she has died. Furthermore, given reservations regarding the intelligibility of harm occurring prior to the cause of harm, there is suspicion regarding positing the harm of death as occurring prior to death. The various interpretations of the Deprivation Thesis examined herein failed to supply unproblematic responses to the temporal location problem, and did not demonstrate conclusively that experience is not necessary for harm.

If the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis is to be refuted, it requires an alternative approach. I believe an alternative is available, and that the strong intuition grounding the deprivationist position can be rescued. It is reasonable to hold that death

has deprived one of something, given that it causes the absence of a previously existing subject. I think both the deprivationist and Epicurus are mistaken regarding the identity of the subject who is deprived. It is my view that it is the bereaved – those standing in an appropriately attached relation to the deceased – that are deprived given the death of the loved other at time *t*. Many of the restrictions placed upon the discussion thus far have been kept in place to remain consistent with the Epicurean position, but given the failure of the Deprivation Thesis there is good reason to challenge these restrictions. In the remaining chapters I will argue that the subjects of harm be altered to include the bereaved, and examine Epicurus' position regarding this possible harm of death.

CHAPTER 4: EPICURUS AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite responding with clarity to the three framing questions of this thesis, the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis does not capture the broader social implications of death. By restricting the subject of harm to the one who dies, the Epicurean secures success, but I suggest there are other subjects who might be harmed by death. The experience condition, together with the termination thesis, makes it difficult to demonstrate how death is bad for, or harmful to, the dead. The previous chapter discussed efforts to overcome the conditions of the No-Subject Thesis, yet perhaps these conditions can be met by considering an alternative subject. I suggest that it is the still living bereaved who are the subjects of the harm of death. All those subjects with whom the deceased shared significant attachment are harmed in the aftermath of her death. My position is intuitive and yet the experiences of the bereaved have been largely overlooked within this debate (Solomon, 2004: p. *xi*, p. 77). I consider this to be undeserved: whilst death annihilates the life of the one who dies, it takes place *within* the lives of others. Characterising death in only the self-directed manner of the Epicurean overlooks the broader social consequences of death, those that are bereaved-directed.[1] Death not only deprives the dead of continued life, it deprives the bereaved of the loved other's continued presence. It is this mode of deprivation that is of interest to me. I

[1] 'Bereaved-directed' is used in place of 'other-directed' as I mean to refer to both the self as bereaved, and the bereaved other for whom one has concern (e.g. the bereaved spouse, who has concern for her child who is also bereaved by the death of their loved other).

suggest that by reflecting on the social context of death one can retain the strength of the Epicurean No-Subject Thesis, and yet capture the pretheoretical deprivationist intuition that death can be harmful. Any risk of contradiction (that death is both harmful and not harmful) is removed by altering the subject of harm from that of the one who dies, to the bereaved.[2] Thus, though *S*'s death is not bad for *S*, it may yet prove to be bad for *P*, who loves *S*.

Though I allow that death is not bad for the one who dies, I want to addresses the issue of harm to the bereaved. This harm can be understood in broad terms as the loss of a most valued and loved subject, and the negative implications of this loss (for example, the distressing grief experience, and certain practical consequences[3]). Given the Epicurean basis for the No-Subject Thesis, it will be interesting to examine the Epicurean attitude towards bereavement. In keeping with the general view of death, there is reason to think that Epicureans seek to minimise the possible harm caused to the bereaved. Harm is minimised due to the implication that personal relationships are replaceable, so the death of a friend is not a loss to be mourned. Furthermore, given that the dead are not harmed, they are not appropriate objects of one's pity or grief. After presenting an analysis of Epicurean friendship,[4] criticisms will be raised against the following three assertions: first, the implication that individual friends are replaceable; second, that grief is unnecessary given that the dead are not to be pitied, and; third, that

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[2] An alteration I mean to argue for in chapter five.

[3] These consequences can overlap and have implications for one another. For example, deep sadness during grief can result in long-term absences from work, which may in turn cause the loss of employment.

[4] Though my position is in relation to all form of close personal relationships, given Epicurus' views on romantic and familial relationships (which will be outlined in this chapter), I emphasise the term 'friend' and its derivatives in reference to any Epicurean personal relationship. For Epicurus, friendships constitute the most pleasurable form of personal relationship.

personal relationships ought to be restricted to platonic friendships so as to avoid the possibly painful consequences of the passions.

II. EPICUREAN FRIENDSHIP

The relation of friendship bore great importance for Epicurus, who valued it as the supreme source of pleasure[5] (*KD*27) in light of the view that in securing trustworthy friendships, one can feel confident that mental tranquillity will be sustained throughout life (*KD*28). However, the emphasis placed upon the role of friendship has faced criticism regarding an apparent tension between the egoistic hedonism grounding Epicureanism, and the intuition that *genuine* friendship is altruistic and other-directed. Friendship is usually understood as a reciprocal relationship, in which agents are loved, valued and respected as an end in themselves. Central to this is that one does not seek friendships purely for reasons of utility. Although a friend may be useful in certain circumstances, and utility may have initiated interest in the creation of friendship, treating another individual as a means to one's own ends is generally regarded as counterproductive to enduring friendship. Permitting this intuitive account of friendship, and given the egoistic hedonism of the Epicurean ethic, the question is posed as to whether any Epicurean can value friends as ends in themselves without inconsistency. If unresolved, the tension between the background concepts of egoism and altruism is thought to undermine the ability of Epicureans to properly conceive of friendship. Though it would be interesting to examine this general criticism, this tension will not be

[5] Pleasure as the mental tranquillity that results from an absence of both physical and psychological pains, as discussed in chapter two.

discussed in detail here; my treatment of Epicurean friendship only attends to features relevant to the criticisms enumerated above. Thus, much of the debate surrounding Epicurean arguments defending their ability to form genuine friendships must be disregarded for reasons of expositional brevity.[6] For the sake of argument, I will agree that the Epicurean can engage in friendship without inconsistency, in part due to the recommendation that one be willing to take risks on behalf of friends (*SV* 28), and that friendship is worth choosing for its own sake (even if it originated due to self-interested utility) (*SV* 23).[7] The focus of my attention, then, involves examining the implication of Epicurus' views on friendship that individual friends are replaceable, which in turn supports the view that no significant loss has been suffered, and that responses of grief (as a potentially harmful consequence of loss) are unnecessary (strengthened by the belief that the dead are not harmed). I intend to argue against both the implication of replaceability, and the view that grief is unnecessary. Following this, I will discuss Epicurus' restrictive understanding of personal relationships, which suggest that only platonic friendships can bring about the *greatest* pleasure. Epicurus considers sexual and familial relationships to be the source of excessive anxieties, and unnecessary (though arguably natural) desires (*DL.RE* 118); one needs good reason to engage in such relationships (*DL.RE* 119). I suggest that in pursuit of mental tranquillity, Epicurus not only avoids innumerable pleasures, but also excludes those relationships that present the

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[6] For a discussion of these matters see Brown (2002: pp. 68-80); Rist (1980: pp. 121-129); Mitsis (1988: pp. 98-128).

[7] In previous drafts of this thesis I have included a discussion of Epicurean responses to criticism regarding the egoistic motivation for taking risks, and the possibility of contradiction in valuing friendship for its own sake, whilst advancing the view that pleasure is the only thing worth choosing for its own sake. However, this was removed for reasons of relevance. I am aware of the issues involved, however.

most obvious challenge to implied replaceability. By admitting the pleasure derived from certain relationships,[8] such as family and/or spouse or partner, it is possible to establish the irreplaceability of certain loved others, such that their death presents a genuine loss to the bereaved. Indeed, I intend to argue that the death of an irreplaceable loved other causes the real harm of death. Allow me to begin by outlining the Epicurean understanding of friendship in more detail.

The landscape of Epicurus' views on friendship can be drawn via a presentation of the justification for instigating and sustaining trustworthy friendships. Given the egoistic hedonism grounding Epicureanism, and the recommendation that one pursue one's own pleasure, one could be forgiven for assuming that it is irrational for an Epicurean to instigate and maintain friendships, since such relationships intuitively imply a willingness to (on occasion, at least) give precedence to interests and the pursuit of pleasures that are not one's own. This alone may give sufficient justification to argue that the egoistic hedonism of Epicureanism supports a normative claim that one ought to lead a solitary life, separated not merely from the political and familial spheres[9] (Brown (2010: p. 179; pp. 180-181), but also the broader social sphere necessitated by the bonds of friendship. Furthermore, there are repeated references to the benefits of self-sufficiency throughout the remaining texts (*KD*14; *SV* 45, and *SV* 77), which may lead

[8] Those relationships that are stable i.e., not abusive, dysfunctional or harmful to subjects within the relationship.

[9] Epicurus recommends one refrain from getting involved in politics, disengage from family life (including the refusal to marry), and resist biological urges to have children, unless environmental changes such as a decreasing population entail that procreation would be advantageous to one, and thus the most rational action (*DL.RE* 118 and 119). This view will be discussed later in this chapter.

one to the conclusion that to engage in friendships would be inconsistent with the general social implications of Epicurean philosophy. As Mitsis notes:

> Epicurus' ethical theory is commonly taken to be narrowly egoistic, and many of his maxims on friendship reveal a correspondingly prudent and careful attention to self-interest. His emphasis on the security and utility afforded by friends, his continual effort to link friendship and pleasure, his description of friendship as a means to relieve anxiety – all give strong indications of a somewhat timid, but nonetheless inflexible egoism. Clearly if personal pleasure is the ultimate goal of the Epicurean's actions, his hedonic calculations can include others only as a means to his own selfish gratification.
>
> (Mitsis, 1988: pp. 98-99)

This assumption presupposes that Epicurus was ignorant of the myriad pleasures of friendship, yet there is evidence which shows that he was acutely aware of the beneficial consequences of friendship, and as a result encouraged his followers to engage in such relationships, proclaiming: 'Of the things which wisdom provides for the blessedness of one's whole life, by far the greatest is the possession of friendship' (Epicurus, *KD*27, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 34). Indeed, Epicurus writes of friendship, with an uncharacteristically romantic tone; 'Friendship dances around the world announcing to all of us that we must wake up to blessedness' (Epicurus, *SV* 52, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 38). Furthermore, as Seneca notes in the *Letters on Ethics*, reference to the benefits of self-sufficiency in no way undermine the recommendation to engage in friendship (*S.LE* 9.1), stating that: 'Although a wise man is self-sufficient, he will still want to have a friend, if for no reason, in order to exercise his friendship, so that so great a virtue might not go to waste' (Seneca, *S.LE* 9.8, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 81).[10] Epicurus encourages his followers to form

[10] It is worth noting that Seneca disagrees with the Epicurean apparently egoistic motivation for engaging in friendship.

friendships as a consequence of their unrivalled capacity to bring one pleasure. As his critic Cicero notes:

> Epicurus indeed says this on the topic [of friendship]: that of all the things which wisdom has contrived which contribute to a blessed life none is more important, more fruitful, or more pleasing than friendship. And he proved this not just in his discourse, but much more clearly by his life and deeds and character.
>
> Cicero, *ND* 1.65 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 63)

Throughout the remaining texts Epicurus held that friendships provided the principal means to achieve *ataraxia* (*KD*27; *KD*28). However, in keeping with his reserved form of hedonism, pleasure garnered from friendship is not characterised in terms of positive experiences (though Epicurus often references the joy derived from philosophical discussion between friends) (Armstrong, 2011: p. 126).[11] Rather, it is the mental tranquillity resulting from the knowledge that friends offer protection from (possible future) pains that is important (*SV* 34). In removing anxieties concerning future pains, one ensures mental tranquillity, and hence *ataraxia*. Of course, Epicurus does not think that friendship prevents the possibility of enduring pain; there is a reasonable expectation that pains may be experienced during one's lifetime, but in keeping with the view that nothing terrible is long lasting (*KD*4; *SV* 4), Epicurus claims '…that security amid even these limited [bad things] is most easily achieved through friendship' (Epicurus, *KD*28, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 34). Thus the protection and support offered by a friend entails reduced concern regarding various

[11] Epicurus uses the memory of philosophical conversations with friends in order to override the physical pains he experienced whilst dying (*DL.LI* 10.22). Philodemus, a follower of the Epicurean school, states in fragment 28 of *On Frank Criticism*; 'We can show by reasons that are as numerous and as beautiful as are the things that come to us by friendship, none is so great as having someone to whom one shall tell what is in one's heart and whom one shall hear speak back. For very greatly does our nature desire to reveal to others what it is thinking.' Quoted in Armstrong (2011: p. 126).

sources of discomfort; pains will be banished at best, and minimised at worst, provided one has friends who will offer the required support. [12] Additionally, the Epicurean view of justice encourages mutual agreements to cause no harm to one another (*KD*31), in turn strengthening security among friends. It is not merely that mental tranquillity is obtained as a consequence of engaging in friendships, but that such mental tranquillity is entirely *secured* by those friendships. Thus, it is not solitude that is the natural consequence of Epicurus' egoistic hedonism. In view of the fact that it has been judged to be the supreme source of pleasure and mental tranquillity, friendship is the recommended social practice of Epicureanism.[13]

Given that insecurity regarding the probability of suffering future pains disrupts mental tranquillity, one is rationally justified in obtaining security from such disruptions. Consequently, it is not irrational for an Epicurean to seek out and sustain friendships. Interestingly, Epicurus notes that it is not that friends *actually* come to one's aid that provides the release from anxieties relating to vulnerabilities. Rather, it is that one has confidence that they will provide aid if required that is the relevant detail: 'We do not need utility from our friends so much as we need confidence concerning that utility' (Epicurus, *SV* 34, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 38).

It is worth noting that the security offered in friendship is reciprocal, and the Epicurean can allow for other-regarding action in light of establishing the means for the

[12] Recognising that friendships have their basis in respect and reciprocity, and in acknowledgement of the above problem, Epicurus urges his followers not to unilaterally view friends as subjects capable of bringing about pleasure, but also that reciprocation is required; assisting friends in the pursuit of their pleasures, protecting them from pains, and valuing their interests as (at least) equal to one's own, and in many cases giving them priority. The Epicurean is encouraged to treat friends in the same manner as one would treat oneself, given that doing so is the most efficient means to securing a trustworthy friendship This is captured by Cicero (*ND* 1. 63 and 1.64).

[13] Evans, (2004: pp. 407-424), presents an excellent overview of this.

greatest security.[14] This view is supported by the Epicurean view of justice: 'The justice of nature is a pledge of reciprocal usefulness, [i.e.,] neither to harm one another nor be harmed' (Epicurus, *KD*31, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 35). Furthermore, if one were to fail to come to the aid of a friend in need, one risks destabilising the security of future assistance towards oneself.[15] Though it is tempting to discuss this reciprocity in more detail, my concerns are more specific in nature, and sufficient background has been given to allow critical analysis of the following three assertions: first, the implication that personal relationships are replaceable; second, that grief is an inappropriate, or unnecessary, response to the death of the loved other, given that the dead are not harmed and are not to be pitied, and; third, that relationships ought to be restricted to platonic friendships (where possible).

III. REPLACING INDIVIDUAL FRIENDS

Having offered a broad account of Epicurean friendship, I can now address the first of my concerns regarding a possible implication of Epicurean attitudes to personal relationships, which is that individual friends are replaceable. Justification for this implication comes from the view that it could be argued that the relation of friendship is also an immortal good: 'The noble man is most involved with wisdom and friendship, of which one is a mortal good, the other immortal' (Epicurus, *SV* 78, trans. Inwood and

[14] Brown (2010: p. 184), argues that paining oneself for the sake of a friend could be a source of pleasure in and of itself.

[15] Extending this point, for the Epicurean, there is good reason to sacrifice one's life for the sake of a friend. Given that death is harmless, it is preferable to damaging the security of a friendship by not coming to his or her assistance. Discussed in Evans (2004: p. 422).

Gerson, 1994: p. 40). Given that an individual friend is mortal, they must be replaced after their death in order to maintain the immortal good of friendship. As Rist notes:

> In a sense friendship provides the immortality for the group which death removes from each of its individual members. Friendship can be passed on for ever within the Epicurean community; perhaps this is at least a part of the reason why Epicurus can believe that, while wisdom and friendship generate a noble man, it is not wisdom alone which outlives each individual who possesses it. Friendship too is deathless, for the community of the wise lives on.
>
> (Rist, 1972: p. 136)

Provided alternative subjects remain to be friends, the death of a particular friend will not constitute a loss as confidence in the utility of friendship will remain.[16] Furthermore, to ensure that pleasure is not diminished by the death of a friend, the Epicurean supporter of the No-Subject Thesis could recommend altering relevant desires; discard the unnecessary (perhaps painful or frustrating) desire to interact with the (ante-mortem) deceased, and redirect relevant desires towards alternative relationships (*SV* 21; *SV* 35). These recommendations, taken together with knowledge that the deceased is not harmed by being dead and is therefore not to be pitied, can be used to argue that to grieve the death of a friend is unnecessary (though may still be natural). Following from this, the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis' claim that death is nothing can be extended beyond the subject who dies to all those bereaved by that subject's death. If successful, the No-Subject Thesis has addressed arguably the most significant reasons for fearing death, including those with a social facet; fear of being harmed by one's own death, fear of how one's death might harm others, and fear relating to how the other's death might harm oneself and other bereaved subjects. The first of these fears is addressed by the No-Subject Thesis directly, whereas the second

[16] Which is in keeping with the four-part cure.

and third variants are dealt with by acknowledging not merely that the dead are not harmed, and that there is no rational justification to feel badly on their behalf, but also that one can look to alternative, still living friends to fulfil the role that the deceased has absented. In ensuring that the term 'friend' has a referent, the (immortal good) relation of friendship is preserved and, given the emphasis on friendship rather than individual friends, one has no rational justification for grieving over a loss, since no loss has been suffered.

I will argue against the proposed implication that friends are replaceable, and counter that the irreplaceability of individual subjects offers (at least partial) explanation for the negative emotional experiences of the bereaved. Whilst the dead may not be harmed by their death, the neutral value of death cannot be extended beyond this restricted application. Indeed, it is the bereaved that ought to be properly considered the subjects of the harm of death. Additionally, I argue that pity *for the deceased* is not the only characterisation of negative emotional responses to the death of the loved other, and the emphasis Epicurus places upon this is misguided, though perhaps well intended. It is my view that Epicurus misrepresents the causes of grief, thus failing to adequately capture the nuances of this consequence of loss caused by death, entailing that the relevance of the argument is unacceptably restricted. Given that my argument is in response to the Epicurean inspired account, further explanation of the implied replaceability of friends is required. From this I will develop what I call the problem of irreplaceability, and introduce alternative motivations for grief. Taken together, these points challenge Epicurus' restricted understanding of both personal relationships and the nature of grief.

Recall *SV* 78, and the suggestion that it is the relation of friendship is an immortal good rather than individual friends. Accordingly, friendship as a general relation will result in equal pleasure for those concerned, especially given an agreement, in accordance with Epicurean views of justice, to do no harm to one another, and provide security from possible harms. This provides partial motivation for establishing the Epicurean community: to facilitate opportunities for followers to establish several, strong friendships,[17] so that the death of one friend does not cause a dramatic reduction in the overall level of pleasure. O'Keefe writes that, 'even though a wise Epicurean benefits from his friends, he should have a network of friends such that the death of one of them will not ruin his life' (2010: pp. 170-171). Hence, though one can be parted from a friend by his death, provided there is a replacement in the form of alternative friends, one's pleasure will not be diminished: the suggested immortal good will be sustained. Indeed, desiring a particular individual's friendship could be thought to be an unnatural and unnecessary desire; in part because it is supported by the (perhaps mistaken) belief that individual friends give pleasure, and not the relation of friendship itself, but also because an individual may not always be available (indeed, given human mortality her unavailability could be absolute). As is stated: 'One should not spoil what is present by desiring what is absent, but rather reason out that these things too were among those we might have prayed for' (Epicurus, *SV* 35, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 38). Thus, it is advisable to desire friendship in general, a desire that can be

[17] Epicurus did not encourage one to engage the friendship of just anyone, rather endorsing a selective approach stating that; 'One must not approve of those who are excessively eager for friendship, nor those who are reluctant. But one must be willing to run some risks for the sake of friendship' (Epicurus, *SV* 28, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 37).

easily satisfied by multiple agents, and imprudent to desire an individual friend; a desire that can only be satisfied by a single agent, and whose satisfaction may, at times, prove difficult (if not impossible). Given that Epicureans endeavour to remove false opinion and to minimise all desires to those that are natural and necessary, and granting the above points, there is reason to suggest that the Epicurean may favour the relation of friendship in general as the primary source of *ataraxia*. The pleasure derived from friendship is not dependent upon the replaceable individual bearers of this relation.

An additional reason for suggesting the implication of replaceability comes from the Epicurean view of justice. Though the claim that justice involves reciprocal usefulness supports Epicurean friendship (*KD*31), there are later comments regarding justice that also lend themselves to the suggested implication of replaceability. Epicurus states:

> '[…] And if objective circumstances do change and the same things which had been just turn out to be no longer useful, then those things were just as long as they were useful for the mutual associations of fellow citizens; but later, when they were not useful, they were no longer just'
>
> Epicurus, *KD*38 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 36)

This might suggest that because the dead have no utility, they can no longer fulfil the obligations of Epicurean friendship. Furthermore, if there are alternative subjects who can provide confidence in the utility of their friendship, they ought to take the place of the deceased; doing so would not be unjust. This replacement in no way undermines the value of the friend whilst they were alive, and allows fond remembrance of, and loyalty to, the deceased. However, individual friends are replaceable, and replacing them does not conflict with the Epicurean understanding of justice.

Allowing the possible implication of replaceability, and noting the logical interpretation of friendship between two subjects as *sRp*: the Epicurean, *s*, might suggest that it is irrelevant who satisfies *p*, provided that there are existent referents to fulfil the relation. Indeed, this abstract formalisation of friendship perhaps best represents the Epicurean understanding of this particular relation, rather than attempting to articulate it in terms of specific referents. Understood in this way, it is available to the Epicurean to argue that one should not feel saddened by the death of a friend, provided one has another friend to act as the referent of *p*: individual friends are replaceable, and pleasure sustainable. If friends are replaceable, then the Epicurean can claim that the feeling of loss upon the death of a friend is the consequence of an erroneous opinion; even though a friend has died, and is in an ontological sense now absent, one remains the bearer of the relation of friendship and therefore has not lost that particular source of pleasure. Thus, in terms of the primary Epicurean goal of pursuing pleasure, no loss has been incurred.

Further justification for this claim relates to the earlier discussion regarding the pleasure and security gained via friendship. Epicurus argues that happiness and pleasure should not be vulnerable to the variables of fortune, 'contending that no real harm can come to wise men, since their happiness cannot be diminished by chance' (Mitsis, 1988: p. 120). To ensure the invulnerability of happiness, subjects must learn to be flexible regarding desires; when the object/subject of desire is difficult to obtain, one must cease desiring it. Furthermore, one ought to redirect desires to that which is easy to obtain. As Mitsis notes: 'guided by his determination to ensure that we can achieve happiness in any situation, he allows the scope for happiness to expand and contract to fit individual

circumstances' (1988: p. 121). Were one to focus all desire on an individual friend, one's happiness would be at the mercy of their availability; this would contradict the view that happiness is invulnerable to chance. Thus, desiring an individual friend is not recommended. Furthermore, adjusting the range of desires in the manner expressed is consistent with the Epicurean four-part cure: that which is good is easy to obtain, and one can reduce anxiety by ceasing to desire that which cannot be easily acquired. Thus, harm to the bereaved can be minimised by removing certain (unnatural and unnecessary) desires relating to the deceased that are now impossible to satisfy (*SV* 35). Instead one ought to substitute another existent friend in place of the deceased. This replacement permits the fulfilment of the natural and necessary desire to enjoy the immortal good of friendship that, in turn, allows the achievement of *ataraxia*. Furthermore, if the unnatural desire for contact with the deceased were retained, anxiety caused by the inability to satisfy such an irrational desire would diminish overall wellbeing and levels of pleasure. This supports my claim that it is an implication of the Epicurean position that particular friends are not necessary for happiness; all that is required is some collection of subjects who fulfil the relation of friendship:

> All those who had the power to acquire the greatest confidence from [the threats posed by] their neighbours also thereby lived together most pleasantly with the surest guarantee; and since they enjoyed the fullest sense of belonging they did not grieve the early death of the departed, as though it called for pity.
>
> Epicurus, *KD*40 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 36)

Thus, the wise Epicurean recognises that a particular individual is not necessary for her happiness, or for the pleasure of friendship, given that she retains membership of a wider community of friends who can sustain her happiness and provide security against

pains.[18] This is not to say that the Epicurean cannot be a loyal friend, show respect and honour friends in remembrance, but rather that she can recognise that the security essential for *ataraxia* is still available to her. Thus, in virtue of inhabiting an inclusive community, the death of an individual friend causes no loss, does not reduce opportunities for pleasure, and is therefore not harmful.

Yet, generally speaking, subjects do experience sadness (grief) when a friend dies, which may undermine the Epicurean position. The Epicurean can respond by recalling that grief, resulting form the loss of the beloved, experienced in the immediate aftermath of the death of a friend is mitigated by the knowledge that opportunity for security and pleasure remains in the form of alternative friends. Successfully transferring desires in the manner described entails that no loss of pleasure has taken place, ensuring that the wise person's happiness remains invulnerable to chance; immune even to the death of loved others. Indeed, Plutarch reports that Epicurus stated: 'The memory of a dead friend is sweet' (*NP* 1105e, quoted in Warren, 2004: p. 40), implying that remembrances of past friendships are actually a source of pleasure, which presumably allay against any transient pains one might experience upon their passing.

To grieve the death of a friend is to hold the false opinion that the dead are somehow harmed by death, and to mourn or lament their passing is to erroneously consider their death a loss. Furthermore, to feel bereft by the death of a friend is to mistakenly retain an unnecessary and unnatural desire for that which is absent, overlooking the sources of pleasure remaining. To continue to desire contact, and

[18] My interest here is not in the term 'pity' (which will be discussed in more detail below). Rather, I am interested in the sense of 'belonging' and 'living together' that is emphasised in this doctrine, along with the reference to grieving within this community.

maintain attachment to the deceased[19] is therefore unnatural and unnecessary, given that it is impossible to satiate (and because another friend can satisfy the relation of friendship). Consequently, and in keeping with the No-Subject Thesis, death does not harm; the dead cannot be harmed, since they are dead, and; the bereaved are not harmed, since they have experienced no loss, and can recognise that the deceased do not suffer. Thus, death is harmful to neither the bereaved, nor the dead.

I wish to argue against this implication of the Epicurean view, introducing what I call the problem of irreplaceability with regard to friends, which in turn affects the proposed invulnerability of happiness. Death causes a loss that cannot necessarily be restored in every instance, and the deprivation entailed causes harm to those who experience it. Clearly, this draws on the powerful intuition that drives the Deprivation Thesis; that the nature of the harm of death is located in the fact that it deprives one of something. However, I suggest that it is the bereaved that are deprived of something by death. Death resulting in the loss of an irreplaceable friend (or any other subject who stands in a loving, sufficiently attached relation) deprives the bereaved of that irreplaceable individual and further deprives them of the potential continuation of the pleasure gained from the relation to them.

[19] My use of 'deceased' does not refer to the subject as they are now, in the state of being dead, but (as Feinberg (1993: pp. 171-190) and Pitcher (1993pp. 159-168) would have it) the ante-mortem subject i.e. the person as they were before they died. This is not to say, however, that there are no bereaved subjects who take action to communicate with the deceased as they are now, in the state of being dead, and so make use of agents claiming to be able to communicate with the dead i.e. mediums, spiritualists and so on. However, given that I have rejected the concept of after-life existence (for the sake of argument), this understanding of desiring further contact with the deceased will not be addressed here.

IV. THE PROBLEM OF IRREPLACEABILITY

Whilst the implied replaceability of individual friends is consistent with the Epicurean framework, it is counter to the intuition that friends – and other loved ones – are unique individuals who bear a specific relation to one that cannot be replaced with an equivalent subject, simply because there is no such equivalent. Any substitution entails an alteration in the nature of the relation. Thus the death of an irreplaceable loved other is a genuine loss. The following section will attempt to justify this intuition such that the implication of the replaceability of friends can be set aside.

Given the Epicurean emphasis on utility and the provision of security, if one judges friends simply in terms of their characteristics (i.e., the ability to provide security against future harms), then it is possible, in principle at least, to identify another subject who fulfils these characteristics. Thus, friends are replaceable insofar as they meet the (improper) definite description 'the subject who provides security against future pains.' This is because pleasure is derived not from that individual friend (their uniqueness perhaps derived from a shared history, sense of humour, or interests); rather, it results from the security provided by engaging in trustworthy friendships. According to Epicurus, friendship is valued for its contribution to *ataraxia*, and all that is required for this is the pleasure brought about by the security provided by any member of the set of friends. All other (possible) pleasures are essentially extraneous to the requirements of Epicurean friendship. Yet, the pleasure derived from friendship cannot be adequately accounted for solely in terms of security: this does not reflect the myriad pleasures friendship offers. Of course, Epicurus does recognise that there are other pleasures to be enjoyed in friendships, but it must be admitted that none of these are necessary for the

achievement of *ataraxia*: they could be absent from friendships without impacting upon the pleasure (security) gained. The additional pleasures derived from shared humour, the development of empathy and camaraderie etc. are natural, but ultimately unnecessary for Epicurean purposes. Thus, one could engage in a friendship with someone who does not share anything with one other than a belief in the Epicurean ethic, and still achieve the *ultimate* pleasures derived from friendship. This conclusion leads back to the general criticism noted earlier, since a friendship that does not involve some of the additional pleasures non-exhaustively listed above is not easily reconciled with the pretheoretical view of friendships. It might be suggested that the relation between a company-director and her employees could offer the same security as the Epicurean friend, and perhaps more appropriately coheres with the implication that individuals are replaceable. Indeed, one could formalise the obligation to provide security by means of an explicit contract and the payment of wages, thus increasing confidence in the provision of security from future pains. The relation between an employer and staff would suit Epicurean purposes, and fulfil all functions for which friendship is intended. Thus, one might ask, why does Epicurus posit friendships and not any other, perhaps more formal, relationship as the highest source of pleasure? Doing so tacitly implies that there is value to friendship, to the individual purveyors of friendship, over and above the provision of security from future pains. Indeed, perhaps the pleasures derived from friendship, those not captured within the context of providing security from pain, are better understood as positively pleasurable, i.e., not merely as the absence of pain. Such pleasures are derived from e.g., shared interests, humour, reciprocal love, affection, attachment, and – most importantly for my purposes in this chapter – the

comfort of shared history.[20] Furthermore, without the existence of these additional pleasures, concerns arise as to whether the Epicurean account lacks the capacity to account for feelings of love towards friends; how can one love another individual if one does not take some pleasure from the properties and features that make her *who she is*? This concern is unnecessary, however, as there is evidence that Epicurus advocates valuing one's friends as equals, and loving them as one loves oneself (*ND* 1.66-1.68). Given this, Epicureans *can* accept these additional pleasures within friendships, but to remain consistent they must be characterised as (natural and) unnecessary. Yet one could argue that 'additional' pleasures are in fact essential for the creation of friendship and are far from being the extraneous, or unnecessary, pleasures Epicureans might categorise them as. It is often through shared interests, experiences and thus history that friendship is created and strengthened, and without efforts being made to engage in mutual interests, it is difficult to envisage a relationship developing beyond the surface level of initial acquaintance. Indeed, it is this first appeal to the additional pleasures acquired from friendship that permits more robust criticism of the implication of replaceability, and that as such the death of a friend causes no loss to the living. It is my intention to argue, in agreement with David Cockburn (1990: pp. 148-158), that the affection one bears for the loved other is not a mere matter of repeatable characteristics (i.e. the provision of security), but arises – in part at least – from the fact that they are *that* particular subject.

[20] This list is not exhaustive. I am not attempting to define the nature of friendship in this thesis, but only intend to utilise intuitions regarding the nature of friendship so as to challenge the specific understanding of the relation as characterised by Epicurus.

When considering the pleasure derived from the company of an individual friend, the uniqueness of the individual is made clear, and the truth of irreplaceability revealed. Valuing a friend implies that one appreciates their individuality, and at least some of their properties. Indeed, for both the Epicurean and her critic, the particular set of properties that comprise an individual friend is, in some sense, important. For the former they are important in regards to recognising how that friend might best provide security from pains, for the latter they contribute to the manner in which one loves and values friends as ends in themselves.[21] In understanding that the particular properties of a friend are significant, the weakest argument for an individual friend's irreplaceability may be formed.

One argument for irreplaceability develops from the ontological fact that though there may be alternative subjects who share properties that the deceased had, and are capable of performing the roles that the deceased has absented, they are distinct subjects. Though it is possible to repeat certain qualities, it is not possible to repeat the specific manner in which those qualities were instantiated by the deceased.[22] As Neera Kapur Badhwar argues, death causes a particular loss, and the gain provided by a replacement is, in turn, a separate gain: the latter does not cancel out the former:

> …the loss cannot be completely made up by acquiring a new friend – the loss of the old friend is a distinct loss, the gain of the new friend, a distinct gain. Even when one ceases to *feel* the loss, because of the passage of time, and the presence

[21] I do not wish to reintroduce whether Epicureans can consistently value friends as an end-in-themselves. The point here is not that Epicureans *cannot* value friends as ends-in-themselves, but rather that the pleasure of friendship is often written in terms of security/utility rather than in terms of individual characteristics.

[22] This understanding of irreplaceability could be generalised to (possibly) all concrete existent. However, the concept of attachment (to be discussed in chapter 5) assists in limiting the scope for identifying irreplaceable subjects/objects. One can more easily replace a favoured chair than the loved other, given that one's attachment to the latter is far deeper than to the former.

> of other enriching activities and experiences in one's life, it remains true that different […] friendships engender different forms of love and happiness.
> (Badhwar, 1987: p. 14)

There is a literal sense, then, in which the death of a friend causes the loss of the unique set of properties and features that constituted that friend. Gaining a new friend does not eradicate or replace the loss, because the loss is of a qualitatively and numerically distinct set of properties and features. Upon a friend's death, it may be possible for alternative agents to fulfil qualities and roles related to the deceased, but this does not entail that there is no longer an absence. What is absent is the individual who previously instantiated that specific set of qualities, and performed those roles, in a unique manner. However, whilst numerical distinctness is obviously true, it is insufficient as a stand-alone criticism against the implication of replaceability. As alluded to above, although the particular set of properties are made irreversibly absent by death, it is *possible*, in principle at least, that alternative agents possess these properties, and in turn fulfil the roles that the deceased performed, in both public and private spheres, such that the requirements of the roles are still met. Consider again my suggestion that it is the relation of friendship that provides pleasure for the Epicurean. It is of little significance that an individual's particular set of properties have been eternally lost via death; provided another subject can fulfil the relation of friend, no loss of pleasure has occurred. As Cockburn notes:

> When I try to describe the individual that I love I only manage to produce a description that another could, in principle, satisfy. That is to say, all of the observable characteristics of the individual I love are repeatable in principle.
> (Cockburn, 1990: pp. 150-151)

Consider a widower who remarries; provided his new wife instantiates the set of properties required to satisfy being the bearer of the relation of wife he has not suffered the loss of a wife. The death of his first wife created an absence – the relation of being his wife (or of being married to…) – which the marriage to his new wife fulfils in all necessary aspects. However, there is a secondary sense in which the death of a friend can be considered a loss, which extends the previous criticism, and poses the real force of the problem of irreplaceability.

There is a mode of expression that supports the view that it is the relation one desires, over and above the individual, which can be unpacked when one examines what is being expressed when announcing the desire for a friend. Before initial contact with other (particular) subjects, one might make the general reference to desiring friendship, but I would argue that upon meeting particular agents the allusion shifts from this general mode of expression towards referencing a specific individual, i.e. one desires that particular subject's friendship (perhaps, above all others).[23] As Cockburn writes:

> …insofar as I am committed to an *individual* I do not think of him or her as a *type*; what is crucial to my thought about the other is not, or not simply, the fact that he or she satisfies a certain description which another person could, in principle, satisfy. There is an idea of irreplaceability which is central to the love of a particular individual.
>
> (Cockburn, 1990: p. 148)

The expression of the natural and necessary desire for friendship develops from the general statement 'I want a friend', to a far more nuanced, explicit, context-dependent desire 'I want *this* friend for reasons *x, y & z*.' Successful, long-lasting friendships, involving strong attachments to a friend result in a more explicit desire for

[23] This point is perhaps stronger in relation to spouses/partners, though it does apply to the (possibly juvenile) concept of a 'best' friend.

this individual friend. Furthermore, although the orthodox Epicurean response may be activated, causing the desire for a particular individual to be abandoned given their absence (*SV* 35), and converting the specific desire to return to the general expression, it is not necessarily the case that finding an alternative will satisfy even the more general expression. Consider again the widower who remarried; his new wife *P* may share in his love of walking, as did his deceased first wife *Q*, but *P* doesn't have quite the same stamina, and prefers to walk along less challenging, flat terrain. His more general desire to have a wife has been satisfied by remarrying, but the more specific desire of having a wife who enjoys the exertion of mountainous walks has not. The relation of wife is fulfilled, but it is not the *same* relation as has previously been instantiated. Perhaps one could claim that the widower has lost the distinct relation of 'first-wife', and in gaining a new wife, replacing this distinct loss with the new relation of 'second-wife'; there is no other individual who can fulfil the unique relation of 'first-wife', though the new unique relation of 'second-wife' can still satisfy the general relation of 'wife'. The relationships one forms with subjects are unique simply in virtue of the fact that each subject is different; being the man's wife does not render the different women interchangeable. If subjects were interchangeable, then one would never form specific desires to be in their company, nor perceive any qualitative difference between the experiences of being with them rather than some other subject. A deceased friend can therefore never be entirely replaced; at best one can find an equally pleasurable, though distinct, alternative friendship. It is in this sense that one can argue that the death of a friend entails a genuine loss, even in instances in which alternative friends are available to replace the deceased, perform the absented roles, and satisfy the general relation of friend.

Elaborating on the above point might strengthen this position. Reference has been made to the uniqueness of the instantiation of certain characteristics, properties and so on, but given that any particular characteristic or property is possibly repeatable it is incumbent upon me to present an argument that precludes this possibility. I have made passing reference to shared history, but this feature of personal relationships has a more significant role than first appears. It is my view that by emphasising references to the shared history involved in personal relationships, one can establish the irreplaceability of the bearers of those relationships. In referring to shared history I mean to express both cases in which subjects experience the same states of affairs together, and a shared history which refers to independently experiencing the same state of affairs, and then sharing testimony. Both manifestations of shared history can produce a similar sense of empathy, understanding, and confidence in shared perspectives, all of which engender and galvanise close attachments between individuals.[24] Relevant to this discussion is that it is through shared experience and history that a particular instantiation of the relation of friendship becomes distinct, and all the more valued for its distinctness.

Implicit within shared history are particular, explicit spatial and temporal relations between those subjects who share the history, for example; 'the one who attended that concert in Glasgow with me', 'the one with whom I had a child in 2010', or 'the one who taught me how to play guitar', and so on. One can find another friend who enjoys the same music, but not one with whom one attended that particular concert. Though it is possible that one can engage in a new friendship with an alternative individual who also happened to attend the same concert (testimony to the fact may be

[24] Attachment will be discussed in chapter five.

what initiates the friendship), the specific memory of one's actions during the events of that day can only be shared with one's original friend. 'By building into the history references to her spatial relations to other things at particular times we can produce a description which necessarily individuates: picks out a single individual' (Cockburn, 1990: p. 154). The unrepeatable nature of history strengthens this point; upon the death of the loved other who satisfies those historical descriptions, relating specifically to the bereaved, there is no other who can replace that subject for the bereaved. Indeed, once that loved other dies, the shared testimony is lost, and all that remains is one's own personal, internal recollections. Recognising that shared memory is now lost no doubt causes distress upon the death of a friend; distress arising from the belief that whatever can no longer be brought to mind – even with the use of memorial aids – has now entirely disappeared. The memories that represent the shared history between friends provide a unique description of an irreplaceable subject, which can only be satisfied by the subject of those memories, and no other (Cockburn, 1990: p. 154). Though it is possible that one encounter another subject with a similar history, this subject cannot satisfy the specific spatiotemporal historical relations to oneself in exactly the same manner as the now deceased, given that such relations are in the past. Thus, the shared history between friends is not merely a source of pleasure within friendships (communicating reflections on past experiences often gives rise to positive emotional reactions) it also confirms the irreplaceable nature of that particular relationship. Furthermore, it is these shared experiences, history and memories that strengthen attachment between friends and, as I intend to argue in chapter five, this attachment helps to justify my belief that the bereaved are harmed by death.

It may be argued that grief (as an unpleasant consequence of the harm of loss via death) is representative of believing in the irreplaceability of the loved other; one grieves partly because one will never again encounter that unique individual. The concept of shared history assists in the justification of these future-directed concerns by providing the context for viewing repeatable characteristics as unique, and as therefore irreplaceable. Perhaps an example will make this point clearer; two friends share a particularly dry sense of humour, and whilst attending a conference together they note a remark made by the speaker and turn to each other and laugh. Upon the death of one of the friends, the other regretfully states; 'I'll never hear that laugh again.' Though it is possible that there exists at least one other subject who has the same laugh, and shares the same sense of humour as the deceased and the now bereaved, it cannot replace '*that* laugh' referred to by the bereaved. The deceased's laugh was valued, in part, because the bereaved understood what motivated it, and has shared in its expression over an extended period of time. Cockburn makes a similar point, in reference to his wife's smile:

> When, then, my distress focuses on the thought that I will never see that smile again what is at issue is not simply, as I put it, a particular 'facial configuration'; there is a reference to context which is crucial. Now there *may* be cases in which we can capture the force of the words 'that smile' without spelling out a context in a way which involves a reference to the *past*. There are, however, clearly cases in which this *cannot* be done. For example, I spoke of her smile catching my eye. It would not be *that* smile, in the sense that concerns us here, if she had been a total stranger […] When I reflect, on her death, that I will never see 'that smile' again it is a smile on the lips of that individual, with whom I share a history, that I am thinking of.
>
> (Cockburn, 1990: pp. 156-157)

As an additional point, Epicurus does not appear to recognise that there are degrees of closeness in friendships. Though Epicurus' account reflects that friendship,

in general, provides pleasure, it does not (indeed cannot, given the view that there is a maximum degree of pleasure derived from any given state of affairs, including friendship, which is simply the absence of pain), recognise that some friendships are more pleasurable than others. If some friendships are more pleasurable than others, this implies even greater confidence in the provision of security than the minimal level.[25] Thus, though less significant friendships *may* be replaceable, given the impossibility of repeating shared history and resultant attachment (in successful relationships), the closest friendships are irreplaceable; equal pleasure may not be obtained via any alternative.

It may be that after the death of an old friend, one engages in new activities and initiates a new friendship, thus replenishing the quantity of subjects who bear the relation of friends, but the qualitative natures of the old and new friendships do not constitute such a straightforward replacement. The depth of the emotional attachment and trust, built up over the extended duration of the previous friendship, exceeds the new friendship simply as a result of the fact that extent of trust and depth of emotion take time to develop. Unless one can ensure that one has an equally well-established friendship with the replacement friend as with the deceased, the quantitative substitution does not equate to a similarly valuable qualitative experience of friendship. If trustworthiness in the form of having confidence in the provision of security from future pains is taken to be the primary value of friendship, and if the value of the replacement friendship is less than that of the friendship one had with the now deceased insofar as one is not as confident in such security, one can rightly state that one has suffered a loss

[25] Confidence does, after all, come in degrees.

at the very least in terms of the pleasure derived from friendship. Given that it may take some time before confidence against future pains is restored, the death of a friend entails a loss to the bereaved, at least for some time. However, this loss demonstrates that friends may yet prove to be irreplaceable given that it is possible that the confidence of the bereaved is never restored to quite the same degree.

In relation to these points, it arguably undermines the regard with which a cherished friend is held to consider her so easily replaced. Indeed, to consider one's closest friend substitutable arguably contradicts the belief that she is one's closest friend, given that replaceability is a counterintuitive property of genuine, intimate friendships. The Epicurean may accuse one of clinging on to unnecessary (and perhaps unnatural) desires for that which is now absent (*SV* 35). Given that such desires are impossible to satisfy, the most rational course of action is to simply cease maintaining such desires. However, notwithstanding the psychological complexities of willing an alteration in desires motivated by the powerful emotion of love, as well as companionship and familiarity, it is unclear that being in the possession of desires regarding the dead is indeed unnatural and unnecessary.

Allow me to begin by stating that it is natural to desire that a friend not be dead, or that one could continue to engage in the pleasures of their friendship.[26] It is natural to do so under the condition that the desire is not motivated by concerns for the deceased's wellbeing, but is rather instigated by the reduction of one's overall wellbeing, e.g., life is worse without her presence, and may continue to be so hereafter. There is nothing

[26] Of course, this desire relates to the ante-mortem person. Indeed, attachment to 'the dead' should be understood as attachment to the person they were before they died.

unnatural, even under Epicurean conditions, about desiring that which would improve wellbeing (insofar as it diminishes pain). Furthermore, it is intuitive to argue that were one to encounter something that one would have enjoyed (even more) if shared with one's now deceased friend, it is natural to wish that they were still able to share that experience. Though it is unparalleled in its ability to eradicate the subject, death is not as successful at removing all traces and memory of the deceased. Indeed, death does not immediately (if ever) sever attachment to the loved other, though it does inevitably alter the manner of the attachment.[27] Given that memories of the deceased remain in the consciousness of the bereaved, thoughts and desires regarding them will inevitably occur. As such, continued desires and considerations regarding the dead can be deemed natural, though perhaps unnecessary given the impossibility of satisfying certain variants of the desire (i.e. the desire for her company, as opposed to the desire to smell her perfume which can be satisfied). Given that Epicurus agreed that one might possess natural and unnecessary desires, it is available to me to argue that the desire for a particular friend, and the specific relation of friendship that they satisfy, is one of the natural and unnecessary category, and need not be absolutely rejected in the manner recommended by Epicurus. Indeed, the quote from Plutarch, referred to earlier,[28] remarking that memories of the dead are sweet suggests that Epicurus would not have encouraged a complete severance of all concerns regarding the (ante-mortem) dead.

The death of an irreplaceable friend is a significant loss to the bereaved, justifying my claim that death has the potential to harm insofar as it deprives the

[27] This point will be discussed in chapter five.
[28] On p. 126.

bereaved of the deceased. Chapter five develops this proposed connection between loss, attachment, and the harm of death for the bereaved in more detail. Having argued in favour of the irreplaceability of certain friends, I will move now to the second of my criticisms, which aims to demonstrate that the Epicurean understanding of grief is mistakenly restricted.

V. AGAINST THE EPICUREAN ACCOUNT OF GRIEF

Given the negative emotions associated with grief (sadness, depression, anger, to name but a few) there is reason to believe that it is an unpleasant consequence of loss via death (and is potentially harmful, insofar as it reduces wellbeing) for those who experience it. Yet further argument is required to support the claim that grief is an unproblematic reaction. Though one may argue that death results in loss, and that one can grieve this loss, the Epicurean can reply that grief, though arguably a natural reaction to the death of the loved other, is unnecessary for the following reason; the dead are not harmed by death, and if the dead do not suffer, there is no reason to grieve for them. This response reveals a narrow understanding of the nature of grief that is entirely directed towards concerns for the deceased (or deceased-directed).[29] Epicurus held that grief is an expression of pity *for the dead*: a result of the false belief that the dead are harmed (perhaps in virtue of being deprived of further pleasures) (*KD*40). By demonstrating that the dead are not harmed, the Epicurean removes the need for pity, and by extension

[29] I use the phrase 'deceased-directed' since 'other-directed' could apply with equal veracity to the deceased other, and to the bereaved other e.g. the widow's concerns for her child's grief. Thus, to remove any confusion I utilise the alternative phrase 'deceased-directed' so as to reflect the Epicurean understanding of grief as pity for the dead.

the motivation for grief. It is further suggested that any bereaved-directed motives for grief are removed by appealing to the replaceability of friends, though this has been called into question. This restricted understanding of grief will be examined, and I will argue that grief contains several bereaved-directed concerns. Though it may be true that the harmlessness of death for the dead reduces *some* harm to the bereaved (they may be comforted by thinking that the deceased no longer suffers), the No-Subject Thesis does little to relieve bereaved-directed concerns. An asymmetry is revealed between the consolation provided by the Epicurean inspired thesis regarding thoughts of one's own death, and those concerning the death of the loved other for those still living (including oneself). Allow me to offer further evidence for the Epicurean view of grief as pity for the dead, before addressing the potential contradiction involved in an Epicurean admitting of the possibly harmful grief experience. I will then offer my own account, that grief has a bereaved-directed dimension; in addition to concerns regarding the deceased, the bereaved can have concerns regarding their own wellbeing, and the extent to which they are worse off in the absence of the deceased. Additionally, one has concerns for other bereaved subjects regarding their experience of loss (how they will cope, be affected by the absence, etc.), the exemplar being a parent's concern for the bereaved child. What is interesting for my purposes is that the Epicurean cure cannot ease these concomitant bereaved-directed concerns within the grief experience.

The understanding of grief and the recommended attitude towards the dead is impressively consistent with other relevant features of Epicureanism. The intention is to diminish the experience of grief in virtue of undermining the rational justification for it. By minimising this potentially distressing experience, the Epicurean aims to remove an

unnecessary source of mental anguish. As has been discussed, the first reason to forgo grieving is to remind oneself that friends yet remain. The second reason appeals to the No-Subject Thesis, reminding the bereaved that the dead do not suffer, and additionally emphasises the fact of human mortality. Given that death is inevitable, there is no justification for bemoaning its occurrence, especially as one can achieve *ataraxia* even in a finite existence (*LM* 127; *KD*20; *KD*21). Putting matters relating to how naturalness need not diminish harmfulness aside, one *may* be willing to concede for the sake of argument that the inevitability of death might reduce surprised responses to the death of the loved other.[30] In accepting the finitude of human existence, and reflecting on the harmlessness of death for the dead, Epicurus concluded that the grief experience could be minimised. As stated by Rist: '…when one of them dies, they will not lament his death, for they will recognise that he does not need pity' (1972: p. 136). This suggests that grief arises from concerns about the dead. Thus, if grief is deceased-directed, and the No-Subject Thesis is accepted, then the bereaved have no reason to experience grief. Furthermore, given the egoistic hedonism of Epicureanism, it is irrational to allow unnecessary pain in the form of emotional anguish. Indeed, even if momentary grief is experienced, the Epicurean can still take pleasure from the terminated friendship; joy is found in reflecting on the past pleasures of the friendship shared with the deceased friend (Rist, 1980: p. 129).[31]

In addition to the above, the Epicurean might suggest that false opinions regarding the unfulfilled desires of the deceased and the harm of deprivation could also

[30] Incredulousness in the form of the denial of death will be alluded to as a feature of grief in chapter five.
[31] Maintaining a fond attachment via recollection will be referred to again in chapter five, as it meets with certain intuitions regarding long-term grief responses to bereavement.

be the cause of grief. Mourners may lament all that the deceased will be absent from, and think the exclusion from all the pleasures of life is tragic. However, these concerns involve the belief that the deceased is somehow harmed by their inability to fulfil the desire for such pleasures. Yet, given the No-Subject Thesis, the desire has been annihilated along with the subject (and their capacity to be causally affected by the thwarting of the desire). Thus those that grieve do so as a consequence of mistakenly projecting the perspective of the living onto the deceased; the bereaved make the error of imagining how the deceased would have felt, had they been able to experience such deprivation, and know that certain desires would remain unfulfilled, and deduce from this that the deceased is an appropriate subject of pity. As the Epicurean Lucretius writes

> They say, 'Never again will a happy house or wonderful wife welcome you, nor will your children rush to steal kisses and touch your heart with deep joy. No longer will you be able to enjoy prosperity and look after your household. Poor, poor man. A single hateful day has stolen away all your many rewards of life. But they do not add: 'Nor do you have any remaining desire for those things in addition'. If they were to see this in their minds and be consistent with it in what they say then they would free themselves from much mental anguish and fear.
>
> Lucretius, *DR* 3.894-3.903 (quoted in Warren, 2004: p. 35).

Thus, upon being reminded of the conclusion of the No-Subject Thesis, the grief of the bereaved can be reduced, and the reduction in wellbeing potentially caused by grieving is avoided. Extensive periods of mourning, and displays of grief, are unnecessary: the appropriate response to the death of a friend ought to be one of untroubled acceptance. As Warren (2004: pp. 35-37) notes, whilst it is permissible to admit that the deceased will no longer experience the love and affection of her friends, one cannot extend this admission to support the value judgement that being excluded in

this manner is in someway harmful to the deceased. To maintain this is to tacitly assume that the deceased retains existence insofar as they are the subjects of deprivation. I have argued that this assumption is incorrect. The No-Subject Thesis, taken together with the claim that grief is largely deceased-directed, supports the Epicurean conclusion that grief is unnecessary. Both the perception of loss, and grief in response to that loss, are no longer possible sources of the harm of death.

It is worth noting, however, that Epicureans were more sympathetic to another cause of grief, understood as an unnecessary, though arguably natural response to the (eventually replaceable) loss of a loved other. However, this concession does not justify extended periods of mourning. Given the implied replaceability of friends, the loss could be rebalanced by the company of either new friends, or greater attention from established friends. Thus grief, if experienced at all, causes only brief pain that is easy to endure (consistent with the four-part cure). Criticisms of this implication notwithstanding, alluding to the natural response of grief among the bereaved provides an intriguing acknowledgement of the broader, social implications of death. Before discussing the emphasis on grief as pity for the dead, it is worth exploring this in more detail.

A statement by the later Epicurean, Plutarch advances the view that demonstrations of grief and sadness can be rationally justified under Epicurean ethics, and claims that Epicurus himself argues in this manner. In keeping with general remarks regarding egoistic motivations for other-regarding actions, the claim is that one ought to lament the death of a friend since doing so will give the appearance of considerate

sentiments towards others, which other friends will judge favourably, thus increasing the trust and strength of these alternative friendships. As Warren notes:

> […] Epicureans do allow some grief since not to do so would be the sign of a much worse position, that of being entirely without emotion […]. Not to grieve at all at a friend's death is the sign of a cruel disposition […] and an irrational concern for winning a reputation […]. Aristodemus refers to letters written by Epicurus on the death of one Hegesianax to the father and brother of the deceased as evidence of the Epicureans recognising that grief is a natural emotion.[32]
>
> (Warren, 2004: p. 40)

To fail to display any behaviour associated with grief may be viewed as insensitivity towards the deceased; a lack of care for the value of his life and the friendship he offered, which may negatively impact upon other subject's opinion of one. Furthermore, the temporary mental anguish possibly experienced is balanced by the pleasure brought about by securing the trust of other friends. As Plutarch states:

> …They argue with those who eliminate pains and tears and lamentations for the deaths of friends, and they say that the kind of freedom from pain which amounts to insensitivity is the result of another and greater bad thing, savagery or an unadulterated lust for fame and madness, and that this is the reason why it is better to suffer something and experience pain, and by Zeus even to weep copiously, swoon and [experience] all the sentiment which they indulge in and [even] write about, and so come to seem tender and given to friendship.
>
> Plutarch, *A Pleasant Life* 1101a (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 79)

There is reason to criticise this view, however. Given that fellow Epicureans subscribe to the No-Subject Thesis, there would be no expectation of displays of grief behaviours, and so to weep and swoon at the funeral of a friend could be judged to be a display incongruous with shared opinion. There are other means of demonstrating fondness and respect for the deceased that the Epicurean could recommend as consistent with the belief that death is harmless, exemplified by reflecting joyfully on past

[32] Greek terms have been removed.

conversations and speaking highly of the deceased's contributions. Plutarch's view could apply to instances in which an Epicurean comes into contact with other subjects who are not members of the Epicurean community, and who would have expectations of perceiving grief-behaviours. Yet given the atypical nature of Epicurean friendships, it is likely that Epicureans restrict such relationships to only include other Epicureans (Brown, 2002: p. 72). Thus there is reason to refrain from endorsing the above argument. Despite this criticism, any pain one *might* experience upon the death of a friend is not merely brief, but is entirely compensated by the enduring friendships that not merely remain, but may even be strengthened given an increase in attention. Indeed, the loss is temporary, lasting only until one locates a replacement friend (which, given the Epicurean entreaty for close communities, would presumably be a brief period).

One might consider the reference made to (fleeting) pain experienced upon the death of a friend a rather careless admission from the Epicurean, given that it implies that death *does* have the potential to cause harm, contradicting the previous claim that death is *nothing* to us. The Epicurean Philodemus makes reference to what he calls the 'truly natural bite' (Sanders, 2011: p. 229) caused by considerations of premature death, or of how – more importantly for my purposes – one's death might affect loved others, which could be extended to refer to the painful emotions any bereaved subject might experience when grieving the death of a loved other.[33] O'Keefe makes a similar suggestion; '…the Epicurean Philodemus says that it is natural to shed a tear and feel a "bite" of sorrow at the thought that people you love will face material hardship because

[33] Philodemus himself does not use this example, but I see no reason why one couldn't extend the 'bite' of sadness consequent from considerations of death to the more specific concerns one has regarding the death of loved ones.

of your death' (2010: p. 171), going on to say; 'A person who does develop this sort of other-regarding love for friends and family might be expected to feel a bite of pain at the thought that they might suffer from his death, even if it could have no impact on him directly' (2010: p. 171).[34] However, as Sanders notes, Philodemus takes care to add 'that this bite amounts to 'a mere pricking' and not a 'great pain' for the sage' (2011: p. 229). It is fascinating to read this acknowledgement of the social consequences of death, albeit one that is reduced to 'a mere pricking'. Even if the pain is fleeting, it is a harmful state of affairs caused by death insofar as it represents a temporary reduction in wellbeing suffered as a direct consequence of the death of the beloved. I take it that the Epicurean would argue, in accordance with the four-part cure, that because such pain is temporary, it is easy to endure, especially given that desires can be redirected to more achievable ends (O'Keefe, 2010: p. 171). Indeed, the Epicurean can argue that, even though it may be a natural response to loss, the 'bite' can be dismissed as unnecessary given acceptance of the No-Subject Thesis, perhaps understood as an idiosyncratic cognitive habit inherited from pretheoretical thinking. Despite the efforts made to minimise the 'truly natural bite' concerning certain aspects of death considered within the social framework, conceding that death has the potential to cause (albeit brief) harm to the bereaved, makes this confession noteworthy. Indeed, the naturalness of (temporary) grief is particularly interesting given my previous argument for the irreplaceability of

[34] It is worth noting that Philodemus may not be an orthodox Epicurean, however (O'Keefe, 2010: p. 171)

friends; if friends are not immediately, if ever, replaceable, then the continuous loss caused by the death of friends potentially justifies extended periods of grief.[35]

While the Epicurean can possibly diminish the strength and longevity of the 'bite' experienced when the loved other dies, it cannot be altogether eradicated. Though there is some truth to the intuition that the emotional and practical support of remaining friends can give comfort to the bereaved, the 'bite' of grief provides evidence of one way in which the bereaved are causally affected by the death of the beloved, and though it may only cause a temporary and minimal reduction in the wellbeing of the bereaved (under Epicurean conditions) the painful 'bite' may still be harmful to the bereaved to experience. Because this 'bite' arises as a direct consequence of the death of a loved other, death has the potential to be harmful to someone. It might appear that confessing to this albeit temporary harm contradicts the claim that death is nothing to us, yet admitting of this brief 'pricking' is consistent with Epicureanism. Epicurus could remind the critic that the view that death is nothing is related to the value of death for the one who dies, which leaves room for the occurrence of the 'bite' of the bereaved's grief. Thus, given the restricted application of the Epicurean method, the appearance of contradiction quickly disappears. As Warren writes:

> Certainly, the Epicureans placed a great deal of significance on the ties of friendship between fellow followers of Epicurus' teaching and here the grief at the loss of some such friend seems to be caused by the loss of such a valuable tie. However, such grief as the Epicureans do allow is certainly compatible with their view that the dead are not themselves to be pitied. What pain there is at such a loss is most certainly the pain felt by those still alive at the new absence in their lives.
>
> (Warren, 2004: p.40)

[35] The relation between loss, grief and the temporal extension of the harm of death will be discussed in chapter five.

It is for this reason that my argument is not intended to be located in opposition to Epicurus, but is more appropriately conceived of as an extended study of the possible harm of death: I do not mean to argue that death is bad for the one who dies, but rather that the death of a loved other is bad for the bereaved who loved them. I offer an alternative approach designed to threaten the Epicurean suggestion that the bereaved ought not to grieve the death of a friend beyond the natural and brief pricking, and argue that an accurate account of the grief experience requires extension beyond deceased-directed concerns, to bereaved-directed concerns. Furthermore, the consequences of the No-Subject Thesis cannot diminish the bereaved-directed concerns included in the grief experience, and as such, grief can be reinstated as a rational response to death.

I have insisted that being deprived of *x* does not harm the dead, because the dead no longer exists to experience the loss of *x*. Given this, it is inappropriate for the bereaved to pity the dead as a result of their losses. However, Rosenbaum's principle of loss (1993: p. 127) can be unproblematically applied to those subjects who experience (are causally affected by) the absence of that which is lost i.e. the loved other, which would intuitively be the bereaved. Thus the bereaved crucially satisfy the experience condition central to the Epicurean understanding of harm: only the bereaved are causally affected by being deprived of the deceased. Thus, it is not only the deceased who has to be taken account of in a discussion regarding the potential harmfulness of the deprivation of death; the bereaved are the only subjects available to experience the harm of that deprivation.

Having identified the bereaved as the subjects who experience loss via the death of a loved other, it is reasonable to argue that the bereaved, under certain conditions, will experience grief as a result of that loss. However, if grief is entirely deceased-directed the No-Subject Thesis provides excellent justification for abandoning grief. It is my view, however, that grief also arises from a number of bereaved-directed concerns. Consider a bereaved daughter, who has certain (albeit irrational) thoughts regarding how sad it is for her father that he will not witness her graduation ceremony, but many more thoughts will take the form; 'how sad it is for me, that I have been deprived of his presence at my graduation ceremony. I won't hear him say how proud he is of me, or see his expression of joy. His death has deprived me of all these experiences.' The grief experience need not contain desires regarding the deceased (even though it often does): one can feel sadness due to the absence of the deceased, perhaps because of the irreversibility of that absence. Yet, rather than understand grief as self-pity, or as consisting solely of idle desires for the return of the deceased, grief ought to be conceived of as arising from an acknowledgement of loss. Epicurus could dismiss such desires as unnecessary, but grief as awareness of loss, or absence, cannot be dealt with in the same way. Furthermore, interpersonal harm cannot be reduced simply by recognising that the other is not harmed by their death, because one's pain is not solely felt on behalf of the other (i.e. regarding what they have been deprived of), but is also directed at that which one has been deprived of as a consequence of the death of the other. The losses suffered by the bereaved are multifaceted, and as such, grief should not be perceived as having only one object. Instead, I suggest that grief is aimed at all that is lost, and that it is far more complex and nuanced than solely pity for the dead.

Thus, though one might take comfort from the belief that the dead are not harmed, this will do little to diminish the suffering the bereaved experience as a result of those deprivations that relate directly to them, and other bereaved subjects.

Consider again that which death deprives one of, giving particular attention to the bereaved. Utilising Lucretius' emotive example given earlier in this chapter, the attitude of the bereaved can be recast as follows: 'Never again will I welcome you into our happy home, nor will our children feel the comfort of your arms around them as they rush to give you kisses. No longer will we be able to enjoy our prosperity together; all our future plans are gone. Poor, poor us. A single hateful day has stolen away all the rewards of our life together.' As contrived as this characterisation may be, it captures the bereaved-directed feature of grief. The bereaved reflect not only on what the deceased no longer experiences, but also on what she is deprived of. The bereaved's awareness of all that they have been deprived of motivates intense and (sometimes) extended grief. Given that the relation of friendship requires at minimum two bearers to satisfy the relation, and given the irreplaceability of (significantly attached) friends, the loss of one bearer as a result of death entails the loss of that specific relation for the remaining subject, i.e., the bereaved. Importantly, the bereaved *experience* these myriad losses: the loss of the loved other, the loss of the relationship as it was,[36] and the loss of the possible future they could have had, had the loved other not died at that time. Additionally, given that the dead cannot be deprived of anything, the loss of the relationship as it was can principally be characterised by the impact it has upon the bereaved *for the bereaved*:

[36] The relationship undergoes drastic alteration upon the death of a subject, but attachment can be retained after death i.e., the bereaved may still regard the deceased with love, warmth, etc.

'My friend is dead; I will miss their laughter, their wise words. My life is worse in their absence.' Indeed, grief can be experienced most intensely when the bereaved concentrates his mind on how the absence of the deceased has adversely influenced the structure of his internal and external life (the loss of the relationship; the loss of the love, affection, support, trust, etc. bestowed upon them by the deceased; the loss of the possible life they could have had with the deceased, had they not died at that time, etc.). These bereaved-directed concerns are not entirely emotional in nature; they can also take a more pragmatic form, which I understand as another possibly harmful consequence of the loss suffered by the bereaved. If the deceased provided financial support or perhaps medical care or childcare etc., the bereaved might experience stress and anxiety at having to identify alternative sources of income or care. These concerns are not related to the deceased, and the knowledge that the deceased are not harmed will do little, if anything, to alleviate such anxieties. Indeed, given the death of a loved other, the bereaved often wonder: 'How will I cope? What will I do?' articulating precisely those concerns I mean to emphasise. There is deep sadness, anger and so on resulting from the negative impact the death of the loved other has upon the bereaved, that their lives have been made worse by the loss of that subject for whom they bear great affection. One might suggest that the No-Subject Thesis intensifies certain aspects of the grieving process, insofar as thoughts of the absolute absence of the deceased might frustrate one at times in which great emotional pain is experienced precisely in virtue of that absence.[37]

[37] An intuition possibly supported by the comfort certain bereaved subjects experience as a consequence of believing in an after-life i.e., that the deceased has not been annihilated.

There are two obvious Epicurean responses to these bereaved-directed concerns. The first of which involves appealing to the replaceability of friends. As has been argued, though this might reduce some of the pragmatic losses insofar as one might locate alternative sources of childcare and so forth, it is unlikely to entirely eradicate the loss of a close, significantly attached loved other. Strong attachments intuitively take time to develop, and it is unlikely that a replacement can be immediately obtained that equals the depth of emotional attachment that has been lost via death. The second response (briefly mentioned earlier) appeals to the threefold distinction between desires.[38] The grief experience can involve appetitive qualities, exemplified by desiring the return of the loved other. If the Epicurean can demonstrate that desires of this form (i.e., those relating to the deceased) are unnatural and unnecessary, then it may be possible to diminish these bereaved-directed features of grief.

The Epicurean might argue that given the impossibility of satisfying desires relating to the deceased, and the presence of alternative friends capable of fulfilling the roles vacated by the deceased, those desires relating to the deceased are among the set of unnatural and unnecessary desires. As a result, efforts ought to be made to eradicate such desires, and in so doing, reduce the experience of certain aspects of grief i.e., the desires of the bereaved relating to the deceased. As I have noted, these desires are not all there is to the grief experience, so even if one accepts the Epicurean response, and eradicates such desires, it is still possible for one to experience grief simply because one has lost someone of supreme value. Notwithstanding this, it might be argued that certain desires belonging to the bereaved are perhaps better characterised as natural and

[38] An overview of the structure of desires was given in chapter two.

unnecessary, which in turn entails that one is under no obligation to entirely dismiss those desires: it might be that it is natural to desire that which one loves, values and brought joy to one's life. However, given the impossibility of fulfilment, one should endeavour to reduce and alter these desires over time. This is consistent with certain pretheoretical intuitions regarding the attitudes and behaviour of the bereaved. Whilst it is understood that the bereaved might desire the return of their deceased loved other, it is hoped that over time this desire will diminish and the nature of the attachment will be altered (though not eradicated). The alteration in attachment to the deceased reflects the view that death has rendered the satisfaction of such desires, and the reciprocation of attachment, impossible.[39] Given that acknowledging the grief of the bereaved is consistent with the Epicurean view, my position remains one of extension rather than opposition. However, it is important to note that I disagree with the attempted minimisation of the grief experience, occurring as a mere bite or pricking with no impact on overall wellbeing. Instead I argue for a temporally extended experience of grief, responding to the genuinely harmful loss suffered by the bereaved. Before elaborating on the nature of grief, which will be discussed in chapter five, I will present my third criticism of the Epicurean understanding of personal relationships and the implications of the death of the other for the bereaved, which challenges the emphasis on platonic friendship as the greatest source of pleasure.

VI. THE PROBLEM OF IRREPLACEABILITY EXACERBATED

[39] The nature of this altered attachment will be discussed in chapter five.

Given that certain subjects can be valued as irreplaceable in virtue of their individuality, and the uniqueness of the shared history involved in each personal relationship, and given that irreplaceability entails genuine loss upon the death of such subjects, I believe it is possible to extend the problem of irreplaceability to include other personal relationships beyond those of platonic friendships. Furthermore, by extending the scope of irreplaceability, the losses suffered and grieved over by the bereaved are relationally extended. In turn, examples of death's harmfulness are increased. Given restrictions on personal relationships, one can argue that Epicureans fail to attend to alternative possible sources of the harm of death. Allow me to outline the Epicurean position regarding other personal relationships, before arguing for their inclusion and demonstrating how this exacerbates the problem of irreplaceability.

Whilst Epicurus did not explicitly argue against marriage (or long-lasting romantic relationships) and the family, he did make specific critical remarks regarding the unnecessary nature of sexual love. Given that sexual love is a (non-necessary) feature of marital relationships, one could be forgiven for surmising that Epicurus' support for marriage was limited at best. Indeed, endorsement of marriage and family bonds reaches only insofar as the sage deems it appropriate to engage in such relationships, as is reported:

> 'And indeed the wise man will marry and father children, as Epicurus says in his *Problems* and in the *On Nature*. But he will marry [only] when it is indicated by the circumstances of his life at a given time. And some will be diverted from this.'
>
> Diogenes Laertius *DL.RE* 119 (trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 43)

Undermining this *prima facie* endorsement of marriage and the family is Epicurus' criticism of loving, sexual relationships, and related 'passions'. The wise man is

encouraged to refrain from engaging in contact with a subject if it is likely that one will fall in love, and become irrational due to the force of passions: 'If you take away the chance to see and talk and spend time with [the beloved], then the passion of sexual love is dissolved' (Epicurus, *SV* 18, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 37). Epicurus held that sexual relationships generally produce far greater pains than pleasures, and therefore directly contradict the hedonic goal of all action, hence the ultimately disapproving judgement regarding these relationships (Hutchison, in Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p.xii). Hutchison comments on the argument against sexual love, and the prioritising of platonic friendship above all other forms of personal relationship:

> He [Epicurus] disapproved of sexual love, because it ensnares the lover in tangles of unnecessary needs and vulnerabilities. Here's the typical pattern: first lust, then infatuation, then consummation, then jealousy or boredom. There's only anxiety and distress in this endlessly repeated story, except for the sex itself, and Epicurus regarded sex as an unnecessary pleasure, which never did anybody any real good – count yourself lucky if it does you no harm! There's nothing intrinsically wrong with casual sex but what is more important than either love or sex is friendship.
>
> (Hutchison, in Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. *xi*)

As is stated by the Epicureans themselves: 'They do not believe that the wise man will fall in love […] Sexual intercourse, they say, never helped anyone, and one must be satisfied if it has not harmed' (Diogenes Laertius, *DL.RE* 118, trans. Inwood and Gerson, 1994: p. 43). Thus, given the distractions arising from the passions, the wisest Epicureans would chose to refrain from loving relationships, thus avoiding the extensive array of pains that, in Epicurus' opinion, would inevitably ensue. Indeed, it is a common thought among Epicureans that whilst 'passion destroys our security; friendship will help provide it' (Rist, 1972: p. 129). Given the dictate to avoid contact with those whom one may potentially love (*SV* 18), it becomes problematic to determine when, or if at all,

the wise man would declare it appropriate to marry and have children (assuming marriage was judged to be a non-necessary condition for procreation). Thus, it is possible to argue that by characterising sexual relationships in fundamentally negative terms, and by emphasising the pleasures of platonic friendship above all others, Epicurus overlooks an alternative source of pleasure derived from stable, successful loving relationships, in both sexual and familial forms.

I do not mean to deny that pleasure can be derived from platonic friendship; what I argue is that there are other forms of (at least equally) pleasurable personal relationships, that are not adequately represented under Epicurean conditions. My paradigm examples are that of the relationship between parents and children, and spouses, or partners[40] though admittedly emphasis will be placed upon the parent-child relationship as this presents the greatest opportunity for security via significant attachment. It is important to note that in referring to the parental relationship I include both biological parents, and those subjects who fulfil the parental role (including the provision of love and fulfilling parental obligations, and all that these features entail) despite the absence of a direct biological relation, or in bearing an alternative biological relation to that of mother or father.[41] Recall that, according to Epicurus, the provision of security from future pains provided by platonic friendship gives one pleasure. It is not that friends actually come to one's aid in times of trouble (for such situations may never arise), but that one is confident that aid would be provided, if required. It is not

[40] These kinds of relationships include heterosexual, homosexual and transgender relationships. Forgive my brevity, but it is the close emotional attachment that is of concern here, not a discussion of the sociopolitical and interpersonal nuances of every form the relation of 'spouse' or 'partner' might take.
[41] This would include adoptive parents, stepparents, legal guardians etc.

unreasonable to claim that, under certain conditions, one's confidence regarding the provision of security against future pains retains at least an equal degree of certitude when related to family members, and/or one's spouse or partner. The conditions restricting confidence pertain to the degree in which the relationship adheres to expectations regarding a 'normal' standard of those qualities associated with the relevant relationship.[42] Given involvement in a familial relationship that meets one's expectations of a stable, intimate, emotionally attached relationship, one can garner arguably the greatest degree of confidence in the capacity of family members to provide security against future harms. Indeed, aside from the necessity of doing so, meeting the physical and emotional needs of one's newborn child establishes attachments that in turn engender a strong sense of security for the child. Importantly, it is this primary relationship that provides one's first experience of security, such that one can recognise what it is to be protected from pains, and it is the continuation of this relationship throughout life that strengthens confidence in the provision of security. For every painful state of affairs that is either avoided or alleviated by a child's parents, that child's confidence in security from future pains is either confirmed or increased. Furthermore, the unconditional nature of the parental love bestowed upon a child (in those stable, 'normal' cases) arguably results in the highest degree of confidence in distinctly Epicurean terms. The unconditional provision of security is taken here to be a

[42] One might expect reciprocal love, faithfulness, respect, and equal value given to desires, interests, and so forth within one's marriage or partnership, alongside the absence of violence, any form of abuse, and other restrictions tacitly or explicitly agreed upon. Similarly, one would expect the parent-child relationship to involve unconditional love and fulfilling all duties of care towards one's child (involving meeting the basic physical, developmental and emotional needs of one's child). Of course, these lists are not exhaustive, but it is outwith the scope of this thesis to describe the nature of such relationships beyond establishing that they are capable of delivering security against future harms to those involved.

result of unconditional parental love: a parent will make every effort to protect or prepare their child against harmful states of affairs, in all and every instance that it is possible for them to do so. This is not to say that parents can always provide such security against future pains, but merely that a child of such parents can feel absolutely confident that they will endeavour to do so should such harmful states of affairs occur. Recall that for Epicurus all that is required for security is that one feel confident that aid would be provided if necessary. Thus, the unconditional love underpinning the security provided by parents to their children brings with it absolute confidence that, should the child be threatened by a possible future pain, his or her parent will provide security (where possible) from it. This is not to say that the confidence involved in parent-child relationships is necessary, insofar as it is impossible that a parent not provide security from future pains, given that it always possible that parents fail to fulfil this role. However, the child's confidence is higher given a history of successfully fulfilling this role. It is important to note that I do not wish to claim that these familial relationships do not bring with them certain frustrations, anxieties and various other Epicurean pains, and therefore may be the source of a reduction in wellbeing for certain durations (whether temporally restricted or extended). However, I suggest that, under certain conditions, they bring about such great pleasures as to outweigh any pains. Indeed, unconditional love may well be adequate to redress any temporary reduction in wellbeing caused by the parent-child relationship. The unconditional nature of parental love, together with the historical provision of security against pains, produces a particularly close attachment between parent and child. This attachment entails that the confidence one has related to the security provided by these relationships is at least

equal to that of friendship, supporting my claim that the parent-child relationship ought to be included when referencing significant relationships, the loss of which justifies the experience of grief among the bereaved. Similar points can be related to other, wider family relationships, particularly those of siblings, though it can sensibly be extended to include any other family member with whom one establishes significant attachment.

I also wish to include sexual love among the set of relationships that can provide at least an equal degree of pleasure as that of Epicurean platonic friendships, however I cannot argue for inclusion in the set of pleasurable relationships on the same grounds as that of familial relationships, given that sexual love is (generally) conditional rather than unconditional: most sexual relationships are conditional upon certain (explicit or tacit) 'rules' between subjects (frequently exemplified by the condition of fidelity), and if the conditions are not satisfied, the relationship will often end. Thus, security must arise from some other feature of the relationship. Before identifying the source of security within sexual relationships, a distinction must be made between casual, fleeting relationships and those that are more permanent in nature. I hold that the Epicurean view of sexual relationships relates perfectly well to short-term, casual relationships: they do not provide security, and it is doubtful that they bring much happiness to those involved. Those with whom one has only fleeting interaction with, or with whom interactions are not sufficiently emotionally attached cannot be relied upon to provide security against possible future pains. But the unreliability of these relationships should

not bear negatively on the kind of sexual relationships that I mean to discuss; that of long-term formally or informally committed relationships.[43]

Though the love involved in long-term, committed relationships[44] is not unconditional, the conditionality does not impede the capacity of the bearers of the relationship to provide security against possible future pains, just as it does not impede the ability of Epicurean friends to do so. First, as in the case of the parent-child relation, significant emotional attachment develops over time; shared history, confirmation of reliability, trustworthiness, reciprocated affections and so on, can support the belief that this significant chosen other can satisfy the Epicurean understanding of a relationship that provides the greatest pleasure. Secondly, tacit or explicit commitment (via formal or informal ceremony, behaviours, actions and words) to the loved other places them in a privileged position; that of being chosen as an irreplaceable other, and given priority above others in terms of attention, affection and attachment. That one chooses to make an explicit or tacit commitment to another subject implies that one chooses to fulfil certain obligations towards that subject, one of which would most certainly be coming to her aid, should it be required. Indeed, that priority is given freely may in part explain why such relationships are valued. Though attachment may decline, or be severed

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[43] There may be subjects who have more sexual partners than friendships, which might appear to undermine my claim that loving, sexual relationships provide as much security as Epicurean friendships. However, given my dismissal of short-term relationships, that do not produce deep attachments between subjects, I think I can admit of such cases without it causing any difficulty for those long-term, meaningful and significantly attached relationships that I am referring to. If each of the shorter sexual relationships produced attachment equal to that of the kind I appeal to, then they would meet with the Epicurean conditions for security, and again would not be problematic for my account. Saying this, it is important to note that I am not trying to argue that sexual relationships are *more* secure than friendships, but rather that there are some kinds of sexual relationships that can be at least as secure as friendships.

[44] Again, it is worth noting that I am referring here to stable, respectful, loving and 'healthily' attached relationship here, not those involving violence, abuse, or any other form of mistreatment.

altogether in virtue of breaking the conditions of the loving relationship, in those instances of healthy relationships the attachment between subjects is both stable and secure. Thus, in those loving relationships in which the background conditions are honoured, each subject can expect security against future pains, in accordance with Epicurus. Indeed, there is often an expectation that, if faced with a choice between coming to the aid of a friend or a spouse, the subject will prioritise the spouse's needs (perhaps by determining that the friend's spouse will attend to her needs in lieu of one's absence), implying an intuitive hierarchy of personal relationships.

Having established that sexual and familial relationships can provide pleasures consistent with Epicurean friendship, their inclusion within the scope of those who might feel bereft after the death of a loved other is justified. I can now argue for the irreplaceability of these loved others, such that his or her death is a genuine loss, and justifies the experience of grief. The potentially (minimally) adverse causal effect of grief given a loved other's death is restricted solely to friends only in those cases in which friends are the only still living bereaved who loved the deceased. It is reasonable to extend the potentially adverse causal effects to family members, spouses or partners, in those cases in which the deceased had reciprocal, emotionally invested attachments with these subjects. Warren includes these other subjects amongst those possibly harmed by death in the following passage:

> If it turns out that we should not think of death in that way then perhaps some of the pain of grief can be lifted. But even if it is agreed that death is not bad for the person who dies then it is still possible that someone else's death may be bad for the lives of friends, relatives, and so on who survive, since they surely had some emotional and personal ties with the now deceased and their lives may well be adversely altered by this new absence.
>
> (Warren, 2004: p. 2)

Thus all those sufficiently attached to the deceased, who experience grief as a result of the loss of the loved other in virtue of her death, ought to be included in the set of those who might experience the 'truly natural bite' of the harm of death.[45] The grief experienced by a parent upon the death of their child is often considered to be the most profound grief of all, presumably because this is taken to be the worst kind of loss; for all those considerations regarding why death is pretheoretically judged to be a bad thing, those matters are seemingly intensified in cases of childhood mortality.[46] Indeed, the event of miscarriage or stillbirth may provide strong examples of how the harm of death is more appropriately associated with those remaining than in the deceased themselves.[47] If death does not harm the one who dies, and yet death is harmful to the bereaved, then the mother of a miscarried child is a particularly acute example of this. I specify the mother as she must experience both the process of absenting and the resulting absence of a previously existent being within her own body. The loss can be conceived of in terms of the physical absence of the foetus or baby, *and* in terms of the loss of the possible future containing that unique, irreplaceable child. The father, of course, experiences the pain of losing a child too, but it differs insofar as his suffering relates more to the loss of the future independent physical presence after the child had been born, which is inherent within the loss of the possible future containing that irreplaceable child. The grief that may be experienced by the parents in this situation can only be accounted for if one

[45] A full account of those subjects included in this set will be offered in chapter five.

[46] For example, one might argue that the loss of a possible future is greater, given that more time has been lost, and the loss of love is greater, given that that the normal value of parent-child love is unconditional.

[47] I do not mean to support the claim that the miscarried child has no personal identity, and therefore is of no concern. For example, that the Deprivation Thesis does not apply to the foetus; if it applies at all, it most certainly would extend to a foetus. Bradley (2009: pp. 121-126) provides an excellent discussion of this particular issue.

accepts the recommendation for the extension of Epicurus' position; first, by extending the subjects of harm to those still living (i.e. the bereaved); second, by accepting that some loved others are irreplaceable, in virtue of which a genuine loss has occurred, and; third, by accepting that grief contains a significantly bereaved-directed element.

What is made clear through this example is that a child is entirely irreplaceable; though one might go on to have other children, or have already had other children, there is no other subject who can replace that specific child, after that child has died. Furthermore, and in reference to a previous criticism, upon the loss of a parent, a child loses the shared history relating to her entire existence up until that moment. Thus, the problem of irreplaceability is exacerbated when one considers certain specific relationships. Consider again the parent-child relationship; if an only child is separated from her parents by their death, then she is also separated from all the memories that those individuals might have testified to; of her birth, first steps, first words etc. the early history of her life is lost.[48] Equally, if one parent dies, the remaining bereaved parent has only his recollections of these events to refer to. Indeed, one's identity as a parent is fulfilled by the existence of that irreplaceable child, and upon his or her death, that identity is also lost to the past.[49] This can be extended to apply to siblings; there are certain childhood events that are uniquely shared only between siblings, and as such, upon the death of a sibling, the irreplaceable subject who shares the history of that childhood is lost. There simply are *no other subjects* who can satisfy these historical

[48] Other persons may be able to recall and testify to some events, but there will be certain historical features of the child's life that are lost.

[49] The English language has terms to refer to bereaved spouses ('widow' and 'widower'), and children ('orphan'), there is no equivalent term for a bereaved parent. Farnsworth and Allen (1996: pp. 360-367).

descriptions, and so these subjects, bearing these additional forms of personal relationships (parent-child, sibling, partner or spouse) are also irreplaceable to just the same degree as has been previously discussed.

One *may* meet new friends who can fulfil the role of deceased friends (to a greater or lesser extent) but there are certain subjects, whose relation to one is intrinsically unique (mother of… father of… son/daughter of… brother/sister of… etc.), and therefore upon the death of these loved others, one loses that security forever. Thus, there is good reason to experience anxiety or distress regarding the future or present loss of (at least some) members of the set of attached relationships.

VII. CONCLUSION

It is my view that certain close friendships are irreplaceable. The Epicurean may argue that over time, even close friendships destroyed by the death of one subject can be replaced by concentrated efforts and attention directed towards a substitute friend. Though there may be a natural bite or pricking of grief, the relation of friendship remains and so grief is swiftly eradicated. However, I have argued against the replaceability of persons; given the particular, unrepeatable, shared history, as well as the unique bearers involved, no significant relationship could be replaced in its entirety. Taken together, the Epicurean restriction of personal relationships, the overemphasising of deceased-directed aspects of the grief experience, and the attempted undermining of the natural response of bereaved-directed grief, results in an explanatory gap in the Epicurean account of the harm of death. Thus, given certain conditions pertaining to attachment within relationships, the grief experience can be taken to reflect the harmful

losses suffered by the bereaved caused by the death of the beloved. Though the Epicurean can admit of the grief of the bereaved, she does not represent the depth and impact of the grief adequately. As a result, the Epicurean metaphysics of death is unnecessarily restricted, lacking the ability to adequately capture the depth of the social implications of death, and so my extended account is offered as a more inclusive alternative.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BEREAVED AND THE POSSIBLE HARM OF DEATH

I. INTRODUCTION

Though the Neo-Epicurean and Deprivationist disagree regarding the harmfulness of death, they both insist that the subject of harm is the one who dies. Whilst the relation between death and the one who dies is direct, I suggest that discussing the *harm* of death in isolation from social contexts is mistaken. Furthermore, to minimise the impact of death on the bereaved is an error. Indeed, whilst it is true that only *S* can undergo *S*'s death, it is also true that only the living can *experience S*'s absence and the (possibly) negative states of affairs that this entails. Thus, there is reason to take note of social dimensions within a philosophical analysis of the nature and timing of the possible harm of death.

Given the conditions of the No-Subject Thesis, the bereaved are the most obvious subjects to be causally affected by the death of the beloved.[1] Death is both the end of one life, and a significant event occurring within the lives of others.[2] Allowing this social context entails that it is *at least possible* that other subjects are harmed by *S*'s

[1] The impact of death might be challenged by instances in which the moment of death passes unnoticed. However, even in these cases the remains of the dead *may* be discovered at a later date, exemplified by the traumatic experience of discovering a corpse, a trauma unlikely to be lessened when the dead person is unknown to the discoverer. Though there are conditions under which one could become accustomed to discovering corpses (perhaps during wartimes (whether a soldier or non-combatant), or a member of the police force or emergency services etc.), repeatedly bearing witness to such things could prove to be a negative experience. It is possible that the dead subject is never found, and may be a harmless death, but given that my account promotes the contingent harm of death, I can admit of this possibility.

[2] Along with births (one's own and one's children) the death of a loved one could be considered *the* most significant event that takes place within a life: it imposes changes to the bereaved in a most dramatic and non-consensual manner.

death. The irreversible annihilation of a subject entails their removal from both the public and private spheres; death leaves an absence, which results in the experience of loss for those who are *sufficiently attached* to the deceased.[3] It is this appeal to love and attachment within relationships that will restrict the scope for harm.

Given the emphasis placed upon experiences of loss, it is clear that my position can be aligned with deprivationist accounts. However, my view relates to the harm of deprivation incurred by the bereaved, and attempts to describe the harmful consequences of this 'social-deprivation'.[4] It is important to note that I agree with Epicureans regarding the harmlessness of death *for the dead*. However, I disagree with restricting the possible subjects of harm and attempting to minimise the grief experience in the wake of loss. It is important, indeed obligatory (Solomon, 2004: pp. 75-101), to grieve for those one loves, even if it is painful to do so.

It may prove less philosophically demanding to identify the bereaved as the bearers of the harm of death, given that the loss of the beloved is experienced by the bereaved, but I think that this accurately reflects ordinary life. Of course, this requires argument to elevate it above brute intuition. This chapter will provide an admittedly broad account of the manner in which the bereaved are harmed by the death of the

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[3] Though the particular moment of death may pass in isolation, the deceased is now absent from the world in whichever contexts, and to the extent, that they were involved in it: the richer and more multifaceted a subject's social involvement, the more noted the absence, increasing experiences of loss for bereaved subjects. Naturally, this particular feature can be reversed; the more withdrawn from social interaction, the more likely it is that death will pass with little or no distress to others. Though death annihilated the life of the deceased, it takes place *within* the lives of those still existent subjects standing in significantly attached relations to the deceased. Indeed, love and attachment are preconditions for the harm of death: a local business frequented by the deceased will not be harmed in the same way as the bereaved, if at all, given that it is highly unlikely that the business owners were particularly attached to the deceased. Indeed, the business owner meets the Epicurean view of replaceability, given that any other customer may replace the deceased.

[4] I must thank Alasdair Richmond for this phrase.

beloved. I will discuss grief caused by this loss, examining Robert Solomon's view of the moral goodness of grief (2004: pp. 75-101). Grief demonstrates the good moral character of the bereaved, but this does not diminish the painful nature of grieving *for the bereaved*. However, it is precisely because grief is morally good that the Epicureans are mistaken in their attempt to minimise or eradicate the grief experience.

I suggest that appropriate responses of grief require love and attachment within reciprocal relationships. Indeed, these relationships are essential for articulating a criterion for the bereaved, such that they are the subjects who suffer harm via the death of the beloved. I will argue that the harm endured by the bereaved is consistent with the experience condition, and that though my position rests on an essentially deprivationist intuition, it avoids the metaphysical difficulties faced by the Deprivation Thesis presented here. I aim to demonstrate that death deprives the bereaved of the person that they loved, and this is a directly experienced, genuine harm.

My argument for the harmfulness of death is a modest one. I do not think that the harm of death is necessary, in that death is *always* harmful to the bereaved. This 'always' can be understood in (at least) two ways: first, that for any subject *S*'s death, at least one bereaved subject *P* experiences the loss of *S*, and is therefore harmed by *S*'s death; second, the expression could have a temporal interpretation, stating that the harm *P* experiences has continuous temporal extension: the harm persists as long as *P* is deprived of *S*'s existence (or presence) in *P*'s life i.e. for the remainder of *P*'s existence. Alternatively, I argue that the harm of death is at most a *contingent* harm. It is possible that for any subject's death, there exists no subject who fulfils the definition of the bereaved, and as such no subject who suffers as a result of that death. It is tempting to

add another sense in which the harm is contingent; in those cases in which there is at least one subject who fulfils the definition of the bereaved, that subject may not be harmed by loss *at all times*, but merely at *some* times throughout the duration in which they are deprived of the deceased beloved. Thus, harm is not experienced at a constant intensity throughout bereavement. However, I resist this temptation given that, as a consequence of being deprived of the deceased beloved, the bereaved *may* be harmed throughout her life in virtue of a reduction in her overall wellbeing. Even though it is also possible that her wellbeing levels be reinstated, as they were prior to the death of the loved other, it is also possible that the reduction in her wellbeing means that she would have been better off had the loved other continued to live and she had avoided being harmed by death altogether. Though the harm caused by death might lessen in intensity over time, the overall wellbeing of the bereaved *may* be constantly diminished in virtue of surviving the death of an irreplaceable loved other. It is these cases that are of interest to me.

In response to the three framing questions of this thesis, I answer in the following manner. Of the contingent harm of death: the subjects of harm are the bereaved; the nature of the harm is constituted by being deprived of the beloved by her death, and; the temporal location of the harm is (in most cases) contemporaneous with the time at which the bereaved learns of the death of the beloved (at the time of death, or some later time), and persists at varying intensity[5] until the bereaved themselves die and cease to be subjects of experience.

[5] This obviously requires more explanation; this general expression is sufficient for now, however.

Before articulating my position regarding the criteria for the bereaved, and the nature of the harm, it is important that I justify the move from the deceased to the bereaved as the subject of harm in the hope of allaying concerns regarding relevance. It might appear that to alter the subject of harm results in a position that is at crossed-purposes to the debate presented thus far, yet there is no logical barrier to this move. The following section offers justification for altering the bearers of the harm of death.

II. AN ALTERNATIVE SUBJECT OF HARM

As I have noted, deprivationists and Epicurean theorists agree that the subject of harm could only be the one who died, given that it is their life that has been terminated. In terms of this restriction, the project of demonstrating death's harm has been unsuccessful. I have argued that the strength of the experience condition causes great difficulties for the Deprivation Thesis. In response, I provide an account of the harm of death that appeals to a subject who satisfies the experience condition.

The Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis is at variance with the intuition that death is a bad thing. Epicurus would argue that despite the ubiquity of this intuition, it is wrong: upon rejecting the erroneous belief that death contains the possibility for experience, the intuition that death is a bad thing for the one who dies can simultaneously be rejected. However, challenging the theoretical restriction regarding the possible subjects of harm may give rise to support for this intuition. When considering the general issue of the potential harmfulness of death for subjects, it is possible to assess the question under at least four interpretations:

1. *S'*s death for *S*.

2. *S*'s death for *P*.
3. *P*'s death for *S*.
4. *P*'s death for *P*.

The familiar self-directed 'No-Subject' assessment of the harm of death is captured in (1), and though (4) shares the direct reference between the subject who died and the value of the death under consideration, it differs insofar as it is another's death and not one's own. The interpretations given in (2) and (3) articulate the social context of death, giving rise to deliberation regarding the consequences of a particular death *for another, still living subject* (either self (*S*) or other (*P*)[6]). The debate thus far clearly emphasises (1), yet it is reasonable to assess the harmfulness of death under the alternative interpretations: the question retains its meaningfulness across all applications. Given the strength of the No-Subject Thesis, one can respond to (1) and (4) by stating that death is nothing to the one who dies. Given the discussion presented in chapter four, the Epicurean response to (2) and (3) may be to say that though it may be natural to experience some brief period of minimal sadness in response to the death of the loved other, the experience of grief is unnecessary. As ought to be clear, however, the scope of the harm of death is far broader, and more nuanced, than Epicurus suggests, and as a result the arguments provided do not diminish the possible harm to the bereaved. Interestingly, there is reason to think that deprivationists may respond to (2) and (3) by acknowledging the suffering of the bereaved in virtue of being deprived of the beloved

[6] *P* could stand for any bereaved subject as a result of one's death, whereas *S* could stand for any bereaved subject, including oneself, as a result of the death of a loved other.

via their death (Pitcher, 1993: pp. 165-167; Feinberg, 1993: p. 184), though none argue for this specifically.

Though I agree with the 'No-Subject' response to (1) and (4), I have an alternative view on the correct response to (2) and (3), one that emphasises that which is only suggested by deprivationists. It is worth noting that though I will argue that one's death may be bad for others, this does not necessarily cause harm to one whilst one is still alive. The one who dies is not currently harmed by the possible negative impact her future death might have upon those who love her. However, empathetic concern for loved others permits a negative evaluation of her death *for them*, though this is not a harm that she will experience given that upon her death (and the occurrence of harm to the bereaved) she will no longer be the subject of experience.

It is my view that the answer to the question of the harm of death is obvious. It is clear to any person witnessing the suffering of the bereaved that death has harmed them in some way. It is in this ordinary sense that there is an alternative subject of harm, which in turn partially motivates my view that the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis presents a misleading oversimplification of the discussion of the possible harm of death. Consider the answer to the possible subject of the harm of death expressed in a more abstract form. It will resemble something like this:

Sub: *S* is harmed by death

Here, *S* is an 'empty vessel' about whom a particular value claim can be made. I suggest emphasising the contingency of *S* and whom this abstract sign is intended to stand for. The identity of *S* is not necessarily fixed prior to translation into ordinary language; it must represent *all* who may *possibly* be harmed by death, and therefore this

must include not merely the subject whose death it is, but also to those who may be otherwise adversely affected by that same death. The causal relation between death and the harmful state of affairs for *S* must be direct, in that had that death not occurred, then *S* would not have suffered this harm. If *S* cannot refer to all possible bearers of the harm of death, which includes both the living and the dead, it fails to perform the abstract role for which it is intended. Furthermore, if *S* is only intended to stand for the deceased, then one is guilty of presupposing that it is only the one who dies who can be harmed by death. It is this presupposition that I am arguing against. I suggest recasting the proposition in the following two ways:

Sub1: *S*, the one who dies, is harmed by death

Sub2: *S*, the bereaved, is harmed by death

Both versions are acceptable translations, though it is only (1) that has been under consideration within the debate thus far. It is my view, however, that (2) captures the subject of harm, for an entirely Epicurean reason; the bereaved exist, and therefore retain the ability to experience harmful states of affairs. The bereaved can be causally affected by the loss incurred, an ability obviously nullified by death for the deceased. It is in this manner that the experience condition is satisfied, which in turn enables me to argue for the harmfulness of death on the No-Subject Thesis' own terms. Allowing that the subject of the harm of death is the bereaved, the nature of the harm can then be identified with the loss (and the consequences of loss) experienced by the bereaved.

One potential criticism I would like to dismiss is the view that identifying the bereaved as the subjects of harm implies the 'transference' of harm from the deceased to the bereaved. Given that each individual must die his or her own death (and be alone in

that death), how can it be that the harm of that particular death be experienced by anyone other than the subject who died? Yet in recognition of the strength of the experience condition, it is incredibly difficult to demonstrate that the dead are harmed by their loss of life. Nonetheless, I insist that death is the cause of harm, and the harm is understood in terms deprivation, or loss. Furthermore, deprivation would not have occurred, had death not taken place.[7] The only subjects who can experience the deprivation of the beloved's existence (and suffer as a consequence) are those subjects who are capable of experience; the living most generally, and the bereaved more specifically, are therefore the bearers of the harm of death. The harm does not 'transfer' from the deceased to the bereaved; in those cases in which harm occurs as a result of death it is the bereaved who suffer it. Furthermore, despite the appearance of some disconnect between the particular death said to cause harm, and the subject said to be harmed, the causal relation between the death and the harmful state of affairs for the bereaved is direct. Had that death not occurred, then the harmful state of affairs – the loss experienced by the bereaved – would not have occurred.

In light of this, it is important to note that this social dimension is necessary, though not sufficient, for the harm of death. Of course, death in a social context does not in and of itself entail harm. One can imagine cases in which though there are living subjects related to the deceased, the relations do not involve the attachment required for

[7] Though it is possible that the subjects I refer to as those who are harmed could be deprived of the deceased by other means, e.g., they could have decided to leave the family home, workplace etc. This might suggest that death is not the source of harm; some other cause could deprive one of the loved other, thus it is deprivation that is harmful, and not death. However, all other causes of deprivation are, in principle, possibly reversible, e.g. the subject could return to the family home etc. Death is unique in that irreversibility is absolute (as stipulated in chapter one). Once the beloved dies, there is no possibility of return, and as a result, the deprivation caused by death is necessary i.e. it cannot be otherwise.

harm. For example, a daughter has a particularly difficult and fractious relationship with her overbearing father. She has fondness for her father, but upon his death, the pleasurable experience of living free of his judgement entails that she does not experience harm in the fullest sense (she may, of course, feel the natural 'bite' of sadness as referenced by Epicurus). Essentially, the loss of her father does not bring about a reduction in her wellbeing. It is not merely that a particular relation is instantiated, it is the *nature* of the relation – which I argue is a significantly emotionally attached relation – itself that determines the degree to which death harms within any given social framework. This possibility supports my modest claim that death is contingently harmful. Indeed, given the contingent nature of the harm of death, examples in which little or no harm takes place can be accommodated provided there are adequate examples in which harm does indeed occur. Taken altogether, and in the absence of any further *prima facie* reasons to the contrary, these arguments give grounds to permit the inclusion of the bereaved as possible subjects of the harm of death.

Allow me summarise my position thus far. Though I take an alternative stance on who might be the subject of harm, my motivation for doing so is founded upon Epicurean rationale: The subjects (there may be multiple subjects) of harm are those who must suffer the absence of a loved other. The bereaved *still exist*, and as a result *can* directly experience the intrinsic harm of death, in virtue of the loss that this entails. Furthermore, there is an obvious temporal location for the beginning of the harm: the harm of death takes place at the time at which the bereaved are deprived of the loved other, and learn of this deprivation (which may, or may not be at the same time as the death occurred), and continues thereafter. The harm of death transcends the particular

moment of death via the continued absence of, and continued attachment to, the loved other within the lives of the bereaved. This is because one can possibly experience some suffering in virtue of loss at any and all times at which the deceased is absent from one's life. Though this suffering may diminish over time (though reoccurrences of more or less intense harm remains possible), the wellbeing of the bereaved may not recover from the reduction caused by the death of the loved other, thus it is possible to be harmed by death continuously. This alternative answer to who may be harmed by death reflects the intuition that one can fear the death of loved others, and in cases in which one is anxious about one's own death, this often results from considerations of harm to loved others. Thus, though the Epicurean inspired No-Subject Thesis seems to be correct given restricted application, it is incomplete. Consequently, though certain specific fears regarding one's own death are addressed by the No-Subject Thesis, it is ineffectual in regards to alternative rational justifications for fearing the death of loved others, or for concerns regarding how one's death might cause them suffering. Having justified extending the scope of possible subjects harmed by death to include the bereaved, an account of who is to be included in the set of the bereaved will be offered, which will be determined by the nature of the relation between the bereaved and the deceased such that his or her death causes the bereaved harm.

III. THE BEREAVED

Given my insistence that the bereaved are the subject of the harm of death, it is important that I make clear who these subjects are, which involves giving an account of the attachment I think is necessary for harm to occur. Furthermore, it is the reciprocal,

loving attachment between subjects that justifies grief as a rational reaction and response to bereavement.[8] I agree with Robert Solomon (2004: pp. 75-101) that grief is, in fact, an obligation borne out of the love and attachment the bereaved have towards the deceased. The loss of the beloved causes intensely distressing emotional experiences, supporting the intuition that this loss (caused by death) is harmful to the bereaved.[9] These points will be developed in the next section.

I aim to describe the bereaved by giving an account of the nature of a generalised relation between subjects, such that upon the death of one, the remaining subject can be said to have suffered a significant loss i.e. bereavement. It is only under conditions of sufficiently close, reciprocal emotional attachment to an irreplaceable loved other, that one is bereaved (and is harmed) upon their death, a relation exemplified by parent-child, spouses and life-partners.[10] I will also note that, in addition to reasons given in chapter four, the strength of attachment to particular subjects promotes the status of irreplaceability. In exploring the relationships between the bereaved and the deceased it is revealed that whilst death does not harm the one who dies, it *does* cause harm to the bereaved, and can be rationally feared as a consequence of this capacity to cause harm.

A *prima facie* criterion for the bereaved might take the following form:

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[8] Grief without this attachment is irrational, though experiencing sadness may not be. One can be moved, and experience sadness upon hearing of the death of an unknown subject, but it would be inappropriate to grieve for this subject given the lack of relationship prior to the subject's death: one has not lost anything of note other than (perhaps) the possibility of meeting the now deceased subject in the future, though this alone is not enough to justify grief, otherwise every unknown subject's death would be the cause of grief.

[9] An implication of my position that fear of death can be rationally justified in relation to the (possible) death of the loved other; provided I demonstrate that the grief experienced by the bereaved is a genuine, unproblematically temporally located harm, then one can rationally fear death – under the contingent conditions set out here – as a source of harm. Recall that it is rational to fear a state of affairs that causes harm in terms of reducing psychological and/or physical wellbeing.

[10] This list is not exhaustive; one can include siblings and other wider-family relations, as well as particularly close friendships.

B1: bereaved = df. those subjects who love and/or care for the (deceased) other. Whilst one would expect reference to 'love' and 'care' when discussing who might be bereaved, B1 is too broad. One reason for this is that the term 'care' can refer to more practical considerations of tending to the needs of the (dying) subject. Medical practitioners provide care for dying patients, but in most cases it would be a mistake to consider them bereaved upon the death of patients they had previously cared for. This is not to say that medical practitioners cannot form bonds with patients, especially given long-term terminally ill patients with whom the medical practitioners spend extended time, allowing for the formation of relationships that go beyond that of 'normal' staff-patient relationships, and become more intimate friendships. Yet given that the establishment of close bonds between medical practitioners and patients is not considered 'good practice' (General Medical Council, 2006), it is reasonable to assume that instances in which a medical practitioner and a patient form close personal relationships, they have transcended the normal, practical sense of 'care' and have entered into a more emotionally refined, personal sense of 'care' for the deceased. Furthermore, one does not have to tend to the practical needs of others in order to be bereaved upon their death. One can pass over these duties to professional carers, and still retain the identity of the bereaved. Hence, B1 is too broad to successfully identify the bereaved.

Intuitively, the bereaved ought to fulfil the alternative, emotional sense of 'care' for the deceased, which can be characterised by interest or concern for the wellbeing of another subject. It is difficult to imagine feeling bereft of a subject that one did not care for in the sense described. However, examples can be given in which one cares for a

subject, demonstrating concern for their wellbeing, but remaining detached to the extent that, were that subject to die, one would not be harmed by that death in the way I intend to explain. The distress caused by being deprived of the beloved is distinct from the sadness one might feel after learning of the death of a subject one cared for. I argue that it is the depth of loving attachment that distinguishes the two. Many (non-medical) professional relationships involve having other-directed interests. Social workers and teaching staff are key examples; demonstrating concern for student and service user's wellbeing is an expected key professional attribute (possibly involving the previous practical sense of care). Thus, despite the fact that the emotional sense of 'care' is a constituent part of the relation between bereaved and deceased, caring for someone as an individual relation is too broad to identify the bereaved. Clearly some refinement is required to narrow the scope.

I suggest that 'care' be subsumed into the concept of love given that it is reasonable to assume that one generally cares for those that one loves (in both the practical and emotional sense). However, the concept of love is notoriously complex, and though I use the term throughout this discussion, I will avoid an investigation of the nature and properties of love. An ordinary language understanding will suffice for my purposes; love can be understood as an intense, long-lasting affection for another subject (exemplified by sufficiently close parental, sexual and platonic relationships). Rather, drawing on the findings of John Bowlby (1991), I discuss the nature of the relationship between relevant subjects in a more general sense, and subsume the concepts of love,

care and affection within the term 'attached' and its derivatives.[11] I believe that the bereaved can be identified in virtue of the particularly 'strong affectional bonds' (Bowlby, 1991: p. 39), i.e. the attachment, that they have to the now deceased loved other.[12] I will offer an acceptable, working understanding of attachment that is consistent with the concept of irreplaceability articulated in chapter four: given that attachment occurs over time, and is not easily replicated, the strength of attachment, in part, leads to the status of irreplaceability. Furthermore, I argue that the degree to which one is emotionally attached to another subject explains the painful emotional states experienced as a consequence of irreversible loss, or deprivation, via the death of that subject. Attachment also helps to explain certain practical implications for the bereaved that can cause *temporary* harm, given that the deceased may have been the particular subject who performed certain duties, or fulfilled certain roles, within the lives of the bereaved. Allow this to be represented in the following way:

> B2: bereaved = df. those subjects who are sufficiently emotionally attached to an irreplaceable (deceased) loved other.

Thus, only those subjects who satisfy B2 are bereaved by the death of the beloved. For all those who are not sufficiently attached, painful emotional reactions to the death of a subject are unnecessary (arguably mistaken and/or inappropriate).[13] Indeed, given a detached relation to the deceased, it is unlikely that painful emotions are

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[11] Though it is important to note that I disagree with Bowlby's (1961: 317-340) view that grief is a disease (Kopelman, 1994: p. 211). Kopelman (1994: 209-220) notes a difference between grief and disease: diseases are bad, but grief is good. Kopelman (1994: 209-220) argues on nonmoral grounds that grief is good because it is adaptive: it enables the bereaved to eventually respond to loss, and restructure their lives in the wake of the death of the beloved. I argue on moral grounds for the goodness of grief as a demonstration of love and attachment.

[12] I reiterate that attachment is to the ante mortem deceased, i.e., the person they were before they died.

[13] It will be argued below that sadness can be justified as a response in such cases of unattached relationships.

experienced, and those that do arise (perhaps as a consequence of empathy or compassion) are fleeting in nature.[14] The absence of attachment entails that no loss has really been suffered: attachment is a precondition for the negative consequences of loss. Furthermore, this attachment explains the suffering of the bereaved in virtue of the loss and separation caused by the death of the irreplaceable beloved. Allow me now to provide supporting argument for the suggested criterion, making clear what the term 'attachment' means.

Attachment begins in infancy, between children and their caregivers, (in most cases their parents, though this can obviously include other subjects such as siblings, grandparents, foster-parents, carers etc.), and develops into adult relationships. It is a life-long practice of engagement and maintenance of close, loving relationships between subjects (Bowlby, 1991: p. 39). It is essentially a set of behaviours that 'results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual… During the course of healthy development attachment behaviour leads to the development of affectional bonds or attachments' (Bowlby, 1991: p.39). Thus, a parent consistently responding correctly, or positively, to the cries of her infant child will establish a secure, confident attached relationship, in which the infant recognises her as the individual who is most likely to meet his needs. Attachment develops as a consequence of the successful repetition over time of this behaviour-response[15] relation. Within the context of adult relationships, the behaviour-response dynamic can be

[14] Thus one can survey the newspaper and experience only momentary (or no) sadness regarding the deaths of non-combatants in a distant war, in part because one has no attachment to these subjects.
[15] When using this 'behaviour-response' locution, let it be taken for granted that I am referring to positive responses i.e. those that encourage attachment.

illustrated by examples in which a subject places trust in another individual, choosing to confide a secret, and finds that the secret remains unreported; alternatively, a subject demonstrates reliability, or offers continual support throughout a challenging time. Attachment develops in virtue of successfully meeting the needs of another subject, and alongside this attachment comes security, emotional bonds and intimacy. Clearly, reciprocation is required for attachment within relationships, given that if positive responses are only performed by one of two subjects, it is unlikely that the relationship would endure (though, many relationships can endure with an imbalance regarding the behaviour-response relation, there must be some minimal reciprocation to enable the relationship to persist over time). This account of positive responses to behaviour additionally has reference to emotional states. Thus, if the experience of love, and accompanying behaviours, are not reciprocated, or met with positive responses, it is unlikely that secure attachment will develop. Though there may be overwhelming biological urges to form attachment to a parental-figure, if this subject does not respond appropriately, the attachment will be tenuous, and insecure, at best.

There is a fundamental evolutionary benefit to forming strong attachments to others, insofar as such attachments bring with them security from external dangers (Bowlby, 1991: p. 40); once sufficiently emotionally attached, subjects will endeavour to protect one another from harms, provide emotional and practical support and so forth. This feature of the attachment theory presented here reflects the Epicurean motivation for engaging in friendship. Recall that Epicurus held that friendship provided the utmost source of pleasure in virtue of providing security from possible future pains (*KD*28), thus recognising the protective consequences of forming close bonds with other subjects.

Notwithstanding the critical discussion regarding replaceability, there is reason to believe that Epicurus would have no fundamental objection to attachment within relationships.[16]

Deep emotional bonds accompany the security borne from attachment;[17] love persists throughout attached relationships, and harm occurs when death deprives one of the subject to whom one is attached. As Bowlby writes:

> Many of the most intense emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption and the renewal of attachment relationships. The formation of a bond is described as falling in love, maintaining a bond as loving someone, and losing a partner as grieving over someone. Similarly, threat of loss arouses anxiety and actual loss gives rise to sorrow; while each of these situations is likely to arouse anger.
>
> (Bowlby, 1991: p. 40)

Represented as a natural predilection of humans,[18] attachment has beneficial consequences for my position. In addition to security, confidence and deep affection, attachment engenders the valuation of certain individuals as wholly irreplaceable. This is because attachment develops as a consequence of repeatedly responding positively to certain behaviours; as basic and fundamental as breastfeeding an infant as soon as hunger signs are displayed, to as advanced as knowing precisely what to say to give calming reassurance to a particularly anxious friend. In repeatedly responding 'correctly' over time, this individual becomes best suited to meet those needs, such that this particular individual is identified above others as providing security, love, reassurance, comfort, and so on. In being valued above others, this individual becomes

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[16] Restricted, perhaps, to friendships.

[17] As always, 'love' here refers to parent-child, sexual and platonic loves, though arguably parent-child love would be the paradigm given the unconditional nature of such love.

[18] Though it is not unreasonable to suggest that other species may form bonds of attachment.

irreplaceable: no other subject could respond in as satisfactory a manner. Indeed, in moments of crisis, it is so often these irreplaceable subjects that one calls for, and looks to for comfort. Appealing to the repetition over time of appropriate responses, the formation of attachment coheres with previous references to the importance of shared history in establishing a particular individual as irreplaceable.

In virtue of the strength of attachment between subjects, the loss caused by the death of the irreplaceable beloved provokes deeply distressing, painful emotional reactions and responses which will be described in more detail below. Given that the purpose of attachment is to achieve proximity to, and maintain the valued relationship with, the loved other, being temporarily deprived of his or her presence brings about actions and behaviours aimed at reinstating closeness. Thus, if one's spouse travels abroad on business, each partner will (most likely) feel inclined to make contact whilst apart; when a infant's parent leaves the room, the infant will feel compelled to either follow, cling or cry, to ensure reconnection as swiftly as possible (Bowlby, 1991: pp. 9-14).[19] One can infer from this that when the loss of a subject to whom one is sufficiently attached is irreversible, and reconnection made impossible by death, the behaviours of crying, clinging (to various memories or belongings), of anger at enforced separation, and the continued desire to reconnect would continue for some time (and reoccur at intervals throughout separation) (Bowlby, 1991: p. 42). Indeed, attachment does not cease at the time of the death of the loved other, but continues in an altered manner for

[19] This particular attachment behaviour is often called 'separation anxiety' and is a common feature of early years development. Bowlby (1991: pp. 9-14) offers a concise overview of infant separation anxiety.

an extended time (possibly until the bereaved themselves die).[20] Such behaviours are easily recognisable as consistent with grief reactions. As Bowlby states:

> In such circumstances all the most powerful forms of attachment behaviour become activated – clinging, crying and perhaps angry coercion. This is the phase of protest and one of acute physiological stress and emotional distress. When these actions are successful the bond is restored, the activities cease and the states of stress and distress are alleviated.
>
> When, however, the effort to restore the bond is not successful sooner or later the effort wanes. But usually it does not cease. On the contrary, evidence shows that, at perhaps increasingly long intervals, the effort to restore the bond is renewed: the pangs of grief and perhaps an urge to search are then experienced afresh. This means that the person's attachment behaviour is remaining constantly primed…The condition of the organism is then one of chronic stress and experienced as one of chronic distress. At intervals, moreover, both stress and distress are likely again to become acute.
>
> (Bowlby, 1991: p. 42)

Thus, one grieves in response to loss, in part, because one is attached to the deceased. Distress occurs when attached relationships are temporarily severed, and this distress is intensified when the severance is permanent. Indeed, being attached to another subject arguably compels one to grieve over their absence, hence my view that the bereaved can be identified in virtue of the attached relation to the loved other.[21] One would intuitively appeal to the parent-child relation as an exemplar of a sufficiently attached relationship; the parents have nurtured and encouraged the healthy development of the child, and unconditional love is reciprocated between subjects. Upon the death of a parent, one would immediately identify the child as the bereaved (indeed, one might go so far as to hold that the child is the subject of the most harm, given the strength of attachment between her and the parent, and the trauma of their continued absence),

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[20] More will be said on this continued attachment below.

[21] Solomon (2004: pp. 75-101) argues that grief is a moral obligation, and therefore a good thing to do. I will discuss this position in the next section.

(sub)consciously identifying her (and other close family members, who one would assume also have sufficiently close attachment) apart from other attendants at the funeral. One might also include certain friends, among the bereaved, acknowledging long-lasting or particularly close friendships that engendered strong bonds of attachment. Recognising attached relationships allows the identification of certain subjects as bereaved. Thus there is reason to accept B2.

Having accepted B2, it is useful to anticipate a possible counterexample, and respond accordingly. The first response is designed to eliminate cases in which a subject *S* claims to have an attached relation to another subject *P* that they have no reciprocal relationship, or close involvement with.[22] Though *S* is convinced of the attachment between *S* and *P*, this conviction is mistaken, primarily in light of the fact that true attachment can only develop within the context of behaviour and response. As described above, throughout the formation and continuation of genuinely attached relationships, the attachment forms as a consequence of behaviour that successfully brings about closeness and availability of the loved other: it is an essentially reciprocal relationship. Thus, in the absence of appropriate responses, as described above, the experience of attachment is mistaken. It is not enough that one simply believes a relationship to be one of close attachment; it is required for bereavement that attachment is reciprocated. This point is also made by considering the alternative case in which the mistakenly attached subject *S* dies, and the non-attached subject *P* is entirely unmoved by *S*'s death (if *P* ever comes to know of the death of *S*).

[22] Instances in which a fan, *S*, of a public figure, *P*, professes to have a significant relationship with *P*, despite the fact that they have never met. *S* is delusional, though this may not minimise his belief in, and experience of, attachment to *P*.

In addition to the condition of reciprocation there must be prior (shared) history to justify the experience of loss and subsequent grief.[23] I do not intend to qualify how long the shared history ought to be to justify being bereaved. My reluctance for doing so is an attempt to avoid charges of arbitrariness, and in recognition of the fact that temporal duration does not necessarily reflect the intensity of the attachment between subjects. Though it is necessary that there be shared history between the deceased and the bereaved, it is less important to determine how far back this history stretches. Notwithstanding this cautious approach, the following clarification is useful: the shared history ought to consist in more than a momentary meeting. It is not enough to have briefly met the deceased to consider oneself bereaved upon their death. This fleeting acquaintance represents a shared moment, a singular experience, which is not equal to sharing, enjoying and recollecting an entire history, made up of an indeterminately large set of experiences. It is therefore sensible to make the minimal determination that shared history requires more than a single meeting with the deceased. It is worth noting that this appeal to (indeterminately extended) shared history is consistent with previous comments made regarding the irreplaceability of a loved other, insofar as it cannot be recreated upon his or her death.

In summary, the bereaved are those subjects who are sufficiently emotionally attached to the now deceased irreplaceable loved other. Furthermore, attachment must be (or, have been) reciprocal, and occurred over an indeterminate period of time resulting in a valuable, shared history. It is only those subjects who stand in an

[23] Milligan (2008: pp. 213-30) suggests the same restriction, without which experiences of grief are deemed false.

appropriately attached relation to the deceased that are bereaved upon his death, who experience the harm caused by the loss of an irreplaceable loved other upon their death. Having provided a criterion for the bereaved as the subjects of the harm of death, the nature and timing of the harm to the bereaved will now be analysed.

IV. THE HARM OF DEATH: LOSS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRIEF

Like the deprivationists, I maintain that death is harmful because it deprives one of something valuable. Of course, the deprivationist perspectives presented here all claim that being deprived of continued (positively valued) life harms the deceased. My view is that it is being deprived of irreplaceable people that are valued (perhaps above all others) that harms the bereaved.

Even granting that not all losses are harmful, it is still reasonable to claim that the loss of an irreplaceable, loved, and highly valued person counts as one example of a harmful loss. Essentially, it is bad for one to be deprived of those one loves by their death: *loss* is the reason death harms the bereaved. Loss of this kind also brings about reductions in wellbeing insofar as it causes emotional distress (grief), brings unbidden changes that can be difficult to cope with, and deprives the bereaved of all the goods associated with that person, including all associated possible future goods.

Recognising the importance of the social context of death, and emphasising the impact of death on the bereaved, means that I can retain the intuitive principle of the deprivationist position – that death is bad because it deprives one of something valuable – without introducing any of the metaphysical difficulties regarding the absence of a subject, and the temporal location of the harm. Essentially, death is harmful because it

deprives the bereaved of the irreplaceable loved other with whom she shared significant attachment. My account of the harm of death satisfies the experience condition because the bereaved live through the death of the beloved, and therefore are able to experience (be causally affected by) the harm of deprivation. Recall Rosenbaum's principle of loss; 'Typical losses that are bad for persons seem to instantiate the following principle: A person *P* loses good *g* only if there is a time at which *P* has *g* and there is a later time at which *P* does not have *g*.' (Rosenbaum, 1993: p. 127). Clearly, the bereaved satisfy the conditions stated here, provided that they continue to exist after the beloved's death. The harm of death begins when the bereaved learn of the death of the beloved (which is perhaps at the time deprivation begins, or some later time), and continues until the bereaved cease to exist. It is important to note that the harm is not experienced as constant throughout: in virtue of (positive) grief responses to the loss of bereavement, and rebuilding one's life, harm diminishes over time.

Though it is possible for the bereaved to reconstruct their lives and acclimatise to the changes brought about by the death of the beloved, pangs of distress of more or less intensity can occur at any time at which they are deprived of the beloved. Because the bereaved maintain an altered attachment to the beloved (simply in virtue of loving them), he or she will continue to note their absence, and miss them. The continuous experience of loss can still produce moments of intense distress, long after the beloved died. Furthermore, given that the bereaved would have been better off had the loved other not died (but died at a (much) later time), it is reasonable to state that the bereaved are, all things considered, worse off having experienced the loss of the loved other via her death. In light of this, I argue that death harms as long as it deprives the bereaved of

the irreplaceable beloved. Allow me to begin this section by discussing the manner in which death harms via loss and deprivation, before moving to outline my understanding of grief, explaining the importance of its role, and why grief ought to be defended from Epicurean minimisation.

The Harm of Loss via Death

I insist that the nature of the harm of death is to be associated with the loss incurred by the bereaved. However, it is not merely the beloved that the bereaved loses, but the relationship they shared, and all the (possible future) goods associated with her in addition. Thus the losses experienced by the bereaved are multifarious in nature. It is not enough to simply list all the ways in which the bereaved are causally affected in negative (harmful) ways by the loss of the beloved, what is important for my purposes is emphasising the *significance* of the loss, for it is in this way that the harmfulness of death can be demonstrated. As noted during the discussion regarding the replaceability of persons in chapter four, if the project of demonstrating harm took the form of listing losses, for every loss mentioned, one could provide a possible replacement and remove the potential for harm. The harm of death is therefore not solely about the particular loss (e.g., of a wife), but rather the significance of what is lost (e.g., of *her*, as wife). Once again the concepts of attachment and irreplaceability are central to explaining the significance of the loss of the beloved, such that it brings about harm to the bereaved, especially given that loss in and of itself is not necessarily harmful.

I have argued for the irreplaceability of loved others, and claimed that in virtue of this status, their death entails a genuine and significant loss. Recall that a subject is

irreplaceable in virtue of an unrepeatable, shared history, and the depth and nature of the attachment shared. Of course, underpinning attachment and strengthening valuations of irreplaceability is the experience of love between subjects. Taken together, love, attachment and irreplaceability all support my claim that the loved other is supremely valuable to one, which in turn justifies the claim that the loss of the beloved is the worst kind of loss. To be clear, the seriousness of the loss is proportional to the importance of that which is lost. Given that, in an entirely ordinary sense, persons are generally considered to be of the greatest value, and the greatest source of happiness, within a subject's life, the loss of a person is consequently judged to be the most profoundly serious loss.[24] If loving, attached relationships with irreplaceable others are taken to be a good thing, then the loss of that good is the related bad.[25] I can argue, in accordance with the Epicureans, that this is a good thing given that engaging in such relationships provides one with the security Epicurus held to ensure *ataraxia*.[26] There are, of course, more intuitive reasons for thinking that loving, attached relationships with irreplaceable others are good, but I have chosen to highlight the agreement with Epicureans to limit scope, and to undermine motivation for criticism. Thus death, which causes the loss of the irreplaceable loved other, and irreversibly alters the relationship, is a bad thing that harms the bereaved.

Being lovingly attached to another in the manner I have explained means that one is always vulnerable to the harm of loss (Solomon, 2004: p. 77). As Solomon notes

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[24] This is to be contrasted with, for example, the loss of an umbrella, which, though irritating, is not typically taken to be a serious loss that causes a significant reduction in wellbeing.
[25] This is reminiscent of Nagel's justification for the misfortune of death (1979: p. 4).
[26] As discussed throughout chapter 4.

in his discussion of grief: 'The loss for which one grieves has much to do with the emotional significance of the personal relationship' (2004: p. 81). It is the nature of the relationship in addition to the irreplaceability of the beloved, then, that determines the significance of the loss. Thus, the loss of the beloved, with whom one shared the most profound attachment, determines that the loss suffered, and grieved over, is of the worst –and most harmful – kind. Indeed, the loss of a loved person is often considered the paradigm example of a loss that someone can suffer. If the subject were replaceable, and attachment tenuous or limited, then that subject's death would not cause one to lose anything of significant value. It is in this way that irreplaceability and attachment are central to the experience of a significant and harmful loss.

An additional point is that one's identity is, in part, a reflection of certain attachments and relationships, and the death of the irreplaceable loved other immediately forces monumental changes within the structure of the daily life of the bereaved, in both external and internal senses. In losing the beloved via her death, one loses the part of one's own identity that was formed in relation to her. As Solomon notes:

> And regarding intimacy, on one hand, intimacy as vulnerability becomes almost tautological, because the ultimate vulnerability of any relationship is the possibility of loss and grief. On the other hand, intimacy as closeness, the complexity and mutual dependency of the prior relationship, would suggest something profound about the nature of the loss. What one loses, in an important sense, is part of one's *self*.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: pp. 81-82)

So, for example, *S* is the mother of *R*, the wife of *P*, etc., upon the death of *S*, those whole (complete) relations are fundamentally altered; *R* has a no-longer-existent mother *S*, whose contributions to the relationship have been annihilated, along with *S*'s

existence. The present and hoped-for future relationship has been extinguished, and *S*'s relation to *R* as mother can only be articulated in past tense. So too for *P*, whose identity as 'husband of *S*', shifts to '*S*'s widower,' and who must accept that the reciprocal relationship is now past, and the planned future with *S* has been irrevocably altered. The beloved *S* is now absent from the life of the bereaved, as is the antecedent relationship shared with *S*. Indeed, Solomon writes:

> 'But the lost beloved isn't a mysterious presence. He or she is a painful absence […] What one misses, what one longs and grieves for, is the lost relationship, perhaps even more that the beloved as such, who may, in fact, not have been much present in recent years.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p. 89)

Though I agree with Solomon's overall position, I refrain from agreeing to the last sentence of this quote, as it goes against the intuition that it is irreplaceable persons that are of central importance. Indeed, this suggestion regarding missing the relationship more than the particular loved other is consistent with the Epicurean implication that provided one remains the bearer of the relation of friendship, one does not suffer having lost a friend as a result of their death. If it is simply the relation of being a 'friend of…' or 'wife to…' that is significant, then it is possible to find a replacement to satisfy this relation, and remove the harm of loss as a result of the death of a loved other. I have already argued for the importance of the individual subjects within these relationships,[27] and so simply note that this is a difference between Solomon's position and my own. However, in discussing grief, Solomon emphasises that grief is experienced in response to the losses suffered in virtue of the death of the beloved, reflecting my own view of the harm of death:

[27] During chapter 4, pp. 128-141 and pp. 155-165.

> 'It is obvious that grief is suffering brought about by the recognition of a loss. Grief is not just a feeling or a Jamesian sensation […] but an engagement with the world, the recognition of a real loss in one's world; and it consists, accordingly, of perspectives and ideas (that is, thoughts, perceptions, and memories). […] to restrict the phenomenology of grief to bodily feelings is to miss the emotion almost entirely. Grief is dominated by the idea that someone, the beloved, is no longer there. He or she is *missing*. Grief is noticing, painfully, that he or she is *not there*. Such perceptions of absence are important, if neglected, in philosophy […] An absence can be more poignant, more noticeable, more obsessive, than any presence.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p.80)

This captures my intuition that the harm of death is located in the losses it brings about, in the painful absence of the now deceased beloved, and that grief is the morally obligatory response to that loss. The bereaved suffers because she has lost the irreplaceable beloved, the relationship she shared with him or her, and the loss of that feature of her identity that was formed in relation to the beloved. Attig also notes that the change to whole relationships caused by death is particularly painful for the bereaved[28]:

> Suffering is by definition the loss of wholeness and the distress and anguish that it entails. The loss of wholeness includes profound effects of bereavement on daily life pattern, life narrative, and connection with larger wholes. When we lose someone we care about or love, we experience our daily life pattern as undone. It can never be just as it was before the death. And the extent of the devastation is roughly proportionate to the prominence of the place in daily life held by the deceased.
>
> (Attig, 2004: p. 347)

One can understand the concept of change as a consequence of the death of the loved other in myriad ways, involving alterations within the structure and dynamics of

[28] It is worth noting that Attig's point that life can never be as it was before reflects my intuition regarding the irreplaceability of loved others; though one may remarry, or have more children, it is not that the absence has been filled by a substitute, and hence there is no longer a loss, but that new relationships have been formed.

both public and private spheres.[29] Thus, there may be certain environmental changes brought about by the literal absence of the loved other from the family household, social circle, workplace, etc., which has negative implications for the bereaved in both emotional and pragmatic senses. An example of such changes involves the now-incomplete family who must move home after the death of the loved other who provided the main source of household income; the enforced move can produce resentment and frustration, especially given that such change was imposed and unwelcome. Arguably more significant are the changes in the structure of the emotional life, which can be made clear by referencing the concept of attachment, expressed earlier.

Given that emotional states are characteristically directed towards subjects or objects, the complete annihilation of the subject of certain emotional states belonging to the bereaved can be the cause of intense, temporally extended anguish. This is, in part, because the emotional states involved in attachment – love being the paradigm – belonging to the bereaved and directed towards the now deceased beloved are not immediately annihilated along with the subject they are directed toward. 'Many of the feelings, desires, motivations, dispositions, habits, and expectations that shaped daily life when he or she lived remain within us but no longer cohere with reality' (Attig, 2004: p. 347). There is a compulsion among the bereaved to continue to experience love and a certain level of attachment to the deceased beloved, even though doing so invites

[29] Of course, the extents to which such changes will occur are relative to the deceased's involvement in both public and private spheres. This can be accounted for in my modest, contingent account of the harm of death.

distress and frustration.[30] This imposed, disruptive change in the emotional structure of the life of the bereaved caused by the loss of the deceased beloved is indubitably painful to endure: the structure of life in terms of present states of affairs and future plans has been irrevocably altered in an overwhelming and distressing manner. Furthermore, such alterations possibly compound the reduction in wellbeing caused by the loss of the loved other: in addition to internal causes for reduction, e.g., experiencing painful emotional states, there are also external causes for reduction in wellbeing, e.g., in terms of lifestyle, environment and financial insecurity.

The Epicurean response would invariably take the form of referencing the replaceability of friends, recommending that one structure the content of life and relationships so as to accommodate the death of any given subject. However, given the criticism presented in chapter four, it is no longer available to the Epicurean to argue for the replaceability of deceased others. Whilst it is possible that certain practical consequences of loss can be replaced, e.g., an alternative source of income can be found, childcare can be arranged and so forth, the loss of the irreplaceable loved other is not so easily dealt with. For example, there is no other subject who can be *S*'s son, *P*'s mother, except *S*, and were *S* to die, *P* would lose the unique source of unconditional maternal love, support and security provided by *S*. Though an alternative subject may take on

[30] Similar points could be made in reference to instances in which the loved other severs the relationship, exemplified in cases of divorce or separation. The subject who did not choose to end the relationship does not immediately cease experiencing love for the ex-partner, even though they are no longer present and the relationship has been terminated. Where these examples differ, and what makes grief regarding the death of a loved other a special case, is that in the case of divorce or separation, the loved other still exists (and it therefore remains possible that the decision to separate may be reversed) and therefore the emotional states have an existent subject to whom they are directed. Upon the death of the loved other, the subject no longer exists in any form other than in memory, and the absolute absence of the loved other, not merely from the relationship, but from the world, therefore differs from the absence of the loved other simply from the personal, private sphere.

certain maternal roles, and love may emerge within new relationships, the shared history and instinctive attachment shared between *S* and *P* is irreversibly lost.[31] So it is for all significantly attached, loving relationships between irreplaceable subjects. Thus, the death of an irreplaceable loved other constitutes a genuine loss; it deprives the bereaved of the loved subject, to whom he or she has developed strong attachments. Given such attachment, death brings about a change of such proportions that distressing emotional responses as are experienced by the bereaved are almost as inevitable as death itself. Indeed, as shall be argued below, grief in response to the death of the beloved is morally obligatory. Death is harmful simply because it deprives the bereaved of the irreplaceable loved other; in virtue of loving attachments to others, one is always vulnerable to the harm of loss.

Of course, it is precisely this vulnerability that the Epicureans attempted to guard against, encouraging one to live in such a manner so as to ensure that one's happiness is not dependent upon the vagaries of chance (Mitsis, 1988: pp. 120-121). However, as is suggested by the arguments presented in this thesis, I do not think it is reasonable to expect one to resist forming the kind of loving attachments that result in the valuation of others as irreplaceable. The basic (unconditional) attachment displayed in healthy parent-child relationships, for example, might be considered irresistible, and always open to the vulnerability of loss. Indeed, the benefits of engaging others in meaningful attachments arguably offset the risk of loss, and ensuing pain.

A final note regarding the significance of the loss caused by death is that it is not merely the irreplaceable beloved that the bereaved loses, nor the related features of self-

[31] The memories of the deceased are a significant loss involved in the loss of shared history.

identity, but also the possible future goods related to the deceased. Thus death does not merely cause the bereaved to lose what she had, but also what she could have had in the future. If the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased is taken to be a good (even in the Epicurean hedonic sense of providing pleasure, and protecting from pains), then the loss of that good is harmful to the bereaved. Furthermore, if the relationship would have continued to be good for the bereaved, had the deceased not died, then death has deprived the bereaved of that continued good. The death of the beloved has caused the bereaved to lose all the possible future goods that they could have shared with the deceased, and those goods that could have been provided by the deceased.

Solomon (2004: p. 95-96) notes an interesting implication of this altered future, that it has certain consequences for the past. After the beloved has died, one's memories and reflections 'are no longer so definitive' (Solomon, 2004: p. 96). There is a revisionistic nature to memory, and without the beloved there to correct or confirm, memories of the past alter and shift, and are even entirely lost. This loss is, in itself, a potentially harmful consequence of death. Being aware that one must rely on one's fallible memory, and knowing that, in the future, one will perhaps forget more than one will remember is itself a source of distress. Solomon notes the potential harm in altered, revisionary memory when he writes: 'This may be painful in an unexpected sense, insofar as one succeeds in doing this' (2004: p. 96). Of course, it is common that the bereaved revise the past in a largely positive manner, in which case one might wish to argue that this particular feature of death is not actually harmful (to the bereaved). Agreement with this will depend upon whether one believes remembering truthfully is as important as remembering fondly, where the two things do not produce the same

interpretation of a memory. Notwithstanding this point, enough has been said to establish that the loss of an irreplaceable, loved other is a serious loss which, I suggest, harms the bereaved.

In terms of the temporal location of the harm of death, I propose that death begins harming the bereaved when he or she learns of the death of the beloved, which can be at the same time deprivation begins (i.e., the time of death), or at some later time. However, harm is not constant throughout bereavement; it is greater at those times closest to initial bereavement, and diminishes over time as the bereaved reconstruct their lives in response to the death of the beloved. But this does not entail that the bereaved is no longer harmed by the death of the loved other. There are two senses in which this is the case. Firstly, in an all-things-considered (overall) account, the bereaved *P* would have been better off had the irreplaceable loved other *S* not died at that time. Given that *P* would avoid being deprived of *S*'s existence, and all related goods, *P*'s wellbeing would not have been reduced by the death of *S*. Thus, even though the wellbeing of the bereaved can eventually be improved, the overall value of wellbeing has been reduced by the death of the irreplaceable loved other. Using arbitrary values, take *P*'s wellbeing to be valued at 1000 in this world prior to the death of *S*. The harmful experience of the loss of the beloved via her death reduces *P*'s wellbeing to 300[32] at those times closest to initial loss, though over a period of five years, positive responses to loss facilitate a gradual return to a wellbeing level fluctuating between 850 and 950. In another, otherwise relevantly similar, possible world in which *S* does not die before *P*, *P*'s

[32] This may seem like a dramatic reduction in wellbeing, but testimony to the grief experience justifies the drop. See Romanyshyn (1999) for an evocative description of grief and mourning.

wellbeing fluctuates between 900 and 1000 until *P*'s death. Thus, *P* is worse off in this world in which the irreplaceable loved other *S* dies, and *P* experiences this loss as a consequence. Secondly, 'pangs' of more or less intense suffering as a consequence of being deprived of, and missing, the beloved can harm the bereaved at any time throughout the rest of her life, and for every moment of distress caused by bereavement, her wellbeing is to a greater or lesser extent diminished. This is represented in the previous example in which *P*'s wellbeing fluctuates between 850 and 950, even once certain responses have improved the wellbeing of the bereaved after the initial reduction. Thus, the bereaved are worse off than they would have been, had the loved other not died.[33]

Arguably the least harmful state of affairs in relation to death (given mortality) is to die alongside the irreplaceable loved other; death does not harm the dead, and being dead entails avoiding the harm of loss. However, far from promoting this controversial view (which would have dubious ethical consequences, to say the least) it is better to accept that death is harmful to the bereaved, and promulgate a compassionate attitude to bereavement. Indeed, in recognising the harm of bereavement, it is possible to justify various therapies and grief-work that would enable the bereaved to strengthen coping methods. This directly contrasts with the dismissive Epicurean attitude to grief, in which the pain of the bereaved is undermined as unnecessary. This attitude denies the moral goodness, and obligation, of grieving those one loves, and in denying this, calling into question the attachment professed to. By accepting the harm caused to the bereaved

[33] This example shares the structure of the Deprivation Thesis, using comparative judgements to motivate the claim that death is harmful.

by the death of the beloved, one allows the bereaved to demonstrate the love and respect they feel for the deceased via grief, even if doing so is painful.

It is worth making a pre-emptive response to potential counterexamples in which *P*'s wellbeing increases after the death of *S* beyond the level achieved before *S*'s death, which in turn entails *P* is not harmed by *S*'s death. My position can accommodate such examples in light of advocating for the contingency of the harm of death. I can accept without difficulty that there will be instances of death in which the bereaved come to be better off after the death of the loved other, than she was prior to it: it is not required that *all* deaths are harmful, merely that some deaths are. The critic might respond by noting that the loss still occurred in every case, thus meeting with my understanding of harm and yet presenting a positive outcome in which the bereaved do not appear to be harmed. A possible reply to this would note that at those times closest to the death of the beloved, and provided that the relationship satisfied my understanding of attachment, the wellbeing of the bereaved would have been significantly diminished, thus, though improvement eventuated, the bereaved still experienced the harm of losing the beloved. Indeed, one might argue that in spite of an eventual increase, the simple fact that the bereaved have had to suffer through the death of an irreplaceable loved other entails that wellbeing can not be improved beyond a certain diminished level (though the diminished level may still be reasonably high, all things considered). Even in cases in which wellbeing exceeded previous levels, *overall* wellbeing is possibly diminished by the temporary reduction incurred during the initial loss. Given that it is possible that the bereaved could have attained this peak of wellbeing (having made improvements to her

life by other means) and avoided suffering the harm of losing the beloved, the death of the irreplaceable loved other remains harmful.

I argue that the temporal duration of the harm of death can be equal to the duration that the bereaved are deprived of the deceased, where learning of the death of the beloved occurs at the same time as his or her death. This allows my position to capture the intuition that an earlier death is worse than one that occurs later in life.[34] A simple reading of harm related to time of death entails that the earlier the time of death, and the longer the bereaved must endure the pain of his absence, the greater the harm incurred. Thus, a widow who survives her husband's death at the age of thirty endures a longer period in his absence than that of a widow who survives her husband's death at the age of seventy-five. Indeed, it is often thought that a premature death is harder for the bereaved to cope with than the death of the beloved at an old age.

Though it may be analysed as a benefit to my position, I am unconvinced by this intuition. It is not obvious to me that, in some cases at least, earlier death is any worse *for the bereaved* than later death. Deborah Carr (2003: pp. 215-232) found an asymmetry between what is thought of as a good death for the deceased, and a good death for the bereaved. Carr characterises a good death most generally as one that occurs in old age (2003: p. 215), but found that those widowed as elderly individuals found the adjustment in status, lifestyle and identity incredibly stressful, and emotionally painful (2005: p. 232). Given that the bereaved spouse has (in the cases represented by

[34] This is, of course, not a straightforward relation. One might argue that death during the first few years of life is not as bad as death during one's twenties or thirties, given that adults have had the opportunity to invest in strongly attached relationships, the severance of which is potentially incredibly painful for the bereaved. Bradley (2009: pp. 113-147) offers an interesting discussion of this view, though he argues that dying in infancy is worse than dying in one's adolescence.

Carr) had a long lasting attached relationship with the deceased, to be alone in a previously shared environment can be deeply painful, even more so when the environment was shared over a lifetime. The struggle to adapt to the status of widow(er), with a longer shared history with the deceased and less time to create alternative attachments (though I argue alternative attachments do not negate the experience of loss, given continued – though altered – attachment to the deceased), might imply that death occurring at the end of life is not necessarily less harmful to the bereaved than one occurring earlier. Essentially, the loss is just as significant, no matter when it occurs. Notwithstanding this point, the intuition of the relation between premature death and greater harm can be accounted for within my understanding of the harm of death, and if this intuition is accepted, my position enjoys this benefit.

In summary, I hold that death is harmful because it deprives the bereaved of the irreplaceable loved other, with whom he or she shared a deep, loving attachment. In virtue of the status of irreplaceable, and the attached relation, the loss of the beloved counts as a significant loss, which has a monumental, and largely negative, impact upon the internal and external life of the bereaved. Furthermore, the bereaved is deprived of all possible future goods associated with the deceased beloved, and so the losses are multiple. This harmful loss extends to all times at which the bereaved is deprived of the deceased beloved. However, it is not constant throughout; the harm is greater at those times closest to initial bereavement, diminishing over time as the loss is responded to, and life reconstructed in the wake of bereavement.

The Significance of Grief

Though I associate the harm of death with loss and deprivation, a significant feature of the experience of this loss for the bereaved is the grieving process. I had previously thought that it is grief itself that harms, but have come to believe that grief[35] is a morally obligatory response to, and expression of, the pain of a harmful loss: ultimately, it is the *loss* that causes harm to the bereaved. As Solomon notes:

> 'It is easy enough to see why we should think of grief as a "negative" and undesirable emotion. Its very presence means that we have suffered (which, I will argue, is not to be confused with the claim that we have suffered *from* grief). But grief, I want to argue, is not just a form of suffering, nor merely a response to a devastating loss. Grief is a *moral* emotion […] It is for this reason that grief is not only expected, as the *appropriate* reaction to the loss of a loved one, but also in a strong sense is *obligatory*, and much more.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p. 75).

It is in this way I shall argue against the Epicurean view that grief ought to be minimised, or that it is unnecessary.[36] Despite the fact that grief is painful and unpleasant for the bereaved to experience, insofar as it involves deeply distressing emotional states, it contains a moral dimension by demonstrating love and respect for the beloved, and as such ought to be supported.[37] It is this moral dimension that explains why the bereaved would not will their grief away (though they would, of course, will that the beloved had not died, demonstrating once more that it is the loss

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[35] It is worth noting that grief is here understood in a generalised, albeit Western sense. I am aware that grief behaviours differ depending on social and cultural norms, but I do not have space to develop a discussion on the various modes of expression that grief takes. Nussbaum (2001) presents an excellent discussion on the matter throughout. Furthermore, the expression of grief can be divided according to gender: see Bowlby (1991); Stinson *et al* (1992: pp. 218-223); Parkes (1996: pp. 117-129).

[36] As discussed in chapter 4, pp. 141-155.

[37] Kopelman (1994: 201-220) offers a discussion on whether grief is good or bad on nonmoral grounds. I have decided to narrow the scope of my discussion to moral concerns, in keeping with Solomon's position.

that harms rather than grief). As Solomon notes in the quote above, grief is more than just pain; it is the means by which the bereaved demonstrate (to themselves, as well as others) that they love, value and miss the deceased beloved. Thus, I insist that grief is an essential part of bereavement, and must be defended from Epicurean attempts to minimise it. Furthermore, I agree with Solomon (2004: pp. 75-101) that the bereaved are morally obligated to grieve in virtue of the love and attachment they shared with the deceased beloved, which provides additional reason to protect it from the Epicurean hedonic aim of minimising all pains.

I argue that death harms the bereaved by depriving them of the irreplaceable loved other, and that grief is a rational, morally good – though deeply unpleasant – response to that deprivation. By acknowledging the losses death causes for the bereaved, and protecting grief from claims that it is unnecessary, the intuition that death is harmful can be rescued. I will outline my understanding of grief, and the view that it is a 'moral emotion' (Solomon, 2004: p. 75), and explain why it is important that the metaphysics of death leaves space for grief, even though it is painful for the bereaved to experience it. It is worth noting that the pattern of the ongoing process of grief mirrors the temporal structure of the harm of death, as will be explained below.

Grief can be understood as a response to several examples of loss, but grief experienced in response to the death of a loved other is arguably the most profound and intense example of this process. Grief is therefore understood specifically in relation to the death of the loved other, to the exclusion of all other possible causes. Additionally, given that (generally speaking) the subjects one loves are valued above all else, the death of a loved other represents the greatest, most tragic loss one can suffer. Indeed, one

could argue that the death of a loved other is a greater loss than the loss of one's own life: harm is experienced in the former, whereas the latter is an experiential void.[38] It is worth noting an interesting implication of the Epicurean conclusion that death is not bad for the one who dies, and that it is arguably better to die for one's friend than to live with the guilt of not helping them, and the insecurity that such unreliability would bring (*SV* 56-57). The implication is that death is not the worst thing that can happen to one. Extending this, one could argue that surviving the death of the loved other, and experiencing the pain of grief and the insecurity resultant from their absence is worse for one than one's own death.

A second clarification refers to the epistemic feature of grief; it requires that the bereaved subject have knowledge of the death of the loved other (Solomon makes the same observation, 2004: p. 84). Thus one must believe that the beloved is dead before grief can occur. In cases in which the beloved disappears without trace, those attached to him or her often express an inability to grieve; they require confirmation of death before they can begin to respond to this absence. Until such time as death can be confirmed, the not-yet-bereaved can placate certain fears by focussing on the possibility of a positive outcome, and the safe return of the beloved. One could argue that living in this 'limbo' as a possibly-bereaved subject is, in some respects, worse than the experience of bereavement, loss and grief: the possibility of a positive outcome could prove torturous at all times at which it remains unrealised. However, this particular

[38] Indeed, in a tragic event such as a house fire, in which all but one member of a family die, the survivor may be found to wish that they too had died and not been left to suffer the pain of multiple bereavements. It is worth noting, however, that this belief may alter over time: if grief lessens over time, then the value of surviving as being worse than death may alter to be judged more positively.

form of absence is not the focus of my discussion. Suffice to say that it is not merely absence that is required for grief, but knowledge that the absence has been caused by irreversible death. Interestingly, absence without knowledge of death causes the same experience of deprivation among those who love the missing person, however, I maintain that death is a special case insofar as it is irreversible (under the conditions discussed in chapter one), and that the dead are entirely absent from the world, and not just from the limited private sphere of a particular group.

The third important clarification is to distinguish grief from sadness in response to loss.[39] Though sadness is inevitably a feature of the grief experience, it is not coextensive with grief. There are two central reasons to distinguish grief from sadness. Firstly, sadness can be experienced regarding some state of affairs without necessarily being about the death of the loved other. Indeed, one can experience objectless sadness, whereas grief has a direct, specific object i.e. the death of the loved other (Solomon, 2004: pp. 83-84). Secondly, one can experience sadness without experiencing any of the other emotional content attributed to grief in addition: there is more to the phenomenological experience of grief than simply being sad.

A final reason for distinguishing sadness from grief is that a far broader range of subjects can experience sadness upon learning of the death of the other without these subjects being included in the set of the bereaved. Subjects who have never encountered the deceased may express sadness upon their death, perhaps as a consequence of empathy towards the bereaved, or in keeping with a distanced admiration for the

[39] Solomon (2004: pp. 83-87) makes a similar distinction.

deceased, but they do not *grieve* for the deceased.[40] As noted, this distinction can assist distinguishing between the bereaved family at the funeral of a public figure, and the individuals paying respect as the cortège passes. The former experience grief (in virtue of significant attachment), the latter experience varying degrees of sadness (in virtue of the absence of significant attachment). This is in keeping with Solomon's view, as he states:

> It follows that one might not have the *right* to grieve if one does not have this kind of intimacy with the deceased […] On the other hand, having such intimacy seems not so much to entail grief as to make it obligatory.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p. 82)

It is tempting to appeal to temporal boundaries to assist the distinction between grief and sadness, since sadness can abate more rapidly than feelings of genuine grief. Whilst the deceased's family may take months to move beyond intense distress, those 'mourners' who lined the streets will find that their sadness is lifted within hours or days. Though reasoning in this manner is appealing, there are counterexamples that prevent one doing so. Consider the subject who learns of the death of a colleague. This subject had professional respect for the deceased, and found them pleasant to converse with whilst in the workplace. The relationship did not develop beyond this courteous, professional level. The subject experiences a fairly high level of sadness caused by the death of the colleague, and continues to experience a minimal amount of sadness when reminded of the former colleague (perhaps when the replacement for the deceased's role makes continuous errors, or lacks the same warm manner). The sadness experienced by

[40] Milligan (2008: pp. 213-230) offers an interesting discussion of the inappropriateness of outpourings of public grief for certain public figures (his paradigm example being Princess Diana).

this subject has a similar temporal structure to that of grief experienced by the bereaved. It is felt most keenly at those times closest to the time of death, and whilst the sadness or grief is found to reduce over time, experiences of it can intensify at specific times given certain internal or external provocation. As a consequence, temporal duration does not necessarily clarify the difference between those who grieve, and those who are saddened.[41] The distinguishing properties between the grief-stricken bereaved and the merely sad are located within the nature of the antecedent relationship with the deceased: the closer the attachment relation between the subject and the deceased, the more likely it is that they experience grief proper, rather than mere sadness. This feature of grief also reflects the nature of the loss caused by death as described above; the intensity and depth of grief experienced is (in 'normal cases') proportionate to the significance of the loss. This explains why one grieves the death of those one loves, but merely feels sad regarding the death of others (if one feels anything at all); in the former case one has suffered a significant loss, whilst in the latter case death does not cause one to lose anything previously valued.

The above point once more relates to the important feature of my position, which is the connection between loss, grief, and attachment: it is the love and attachment that explains the harm of the loss and the need for grief. This is something Solomon emphasises throughout his own discussion on grief (2004: pp. 75-101). I have argued that there must be significant emotional attachment between the bereaved and the deceased. Furthermore, the bereaved must experience grief. If a subject experiences no

[41] More generally, experiences of sadness and depression can have indefinite temporal extension, in precisely the same manner as grief.

grief on learning of the death of the beloved, that subject is not considered bereaved. It is difficult to imagine that a subject has been harmed by death if the loss does not cause them any distress, and/or have other negative implications for them. Indeed, if one were to profess to an attached relationship with *S*, as described here, and yet did not grieve the death of *S*, doubts regarding one's moral character, and the nature of the attachment would arise. Solomon makes a similar point when he writes: '[…] a person who does not grieve or does not grieve sufficiently at the death of a loved one is subject to the most severe moral censure. His or her character is thought to be deficient if not depraved' (Solomon, 2004: p. 78). Thus, for my purposes, grief is necessary for bereavement. An initial benefit of this understanding of the relation between grief and the bereaved is that it allows for the contingency of the harm of death, since it is possible for a death to fail to cause anyone to grieve that loss. Perhaps more importantly, it is this relation between loss, grief, and attachment that supports the view that grief is a moral emotion, that it represents more than suffering that ought to be minimised. Essentially, it is right – morally good – to grieve in response to the death of a loved, valued and irreplaceable person.

My reason for believing that grief is more than simply a painful, unpleasant experience, and something that Solomon discusses (2004: pp. 78-79), is that even though one does not like pain, and does not enjoy grieving, grief is something one feels one ought to experience upon the death of the beloved. This implies that grief is somehow experienced as a duty or obligation (Solomon, 2004: p. 78), arising from love and, of course, attachment. As Solomon writes:

> 'If grief were simply a negative reaction to a loss, or even a physical condition that (it has often been pointed out) fits the definition of a mental disorder, a medical illness, this would be incomprehensible. A person who did not grieve would be considered fortunate, like an athlete who has a high threshold of pain, or a risk taker who remains unafraid in circumstances that would scare the wits out of most normal people. But grief is not merely "normal" or "natural," nor is it only customary or "appropriate." It is morally obligatory, whether or not, as an "inclination," it would pass the test for a "duty" in the Kantian scheme of things. *Some feeling are obligatory*, and this is because they are woven deeply into the fabric of our moral lives.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p.78)

It is perhaps this sense of duty and grief as obligation that explains why the bereaved do not make great efforts (at first) to eradicate his or her painful grief, as if it were an illness that could – and perhaps should – be treated with a pill. It is worth noting that this passive attitude to grief usually passes as the bereaved begin to restructure their lives in the wake of loss.[42] Thus, though grief is deeply unpleasant, it is endured as a demonstration of respect and love for the deceased. Grief allows the bereaved to express the fact that she misses the deceased, and that the absence causes her pain: through grief she demonstrates that she is worse off without the beloved. The view of grief as a moral emotion is also reflected in social expectations, as noted above; grief is viewed as evidence of the good moral character of the bereaved, indicative of the value she placed on the deceased. As Solomon writes: 'But grief is a far nobler emotion than this [a predictable malaise], and however painful it may be, it honors and lays bare the most important attachments of our lives' (Solomon, 2004: p. *ix*). Thus, one grieves because one loves, and the demonstration of grief is evidence of the depth of the attachment, and

[42] This usually occurs in cases of normal grief, though it is possible that some bereaved find the painful content of grief to be so overwhelming that he or she seeks medical solutions. This has caused some to suggest that even normal cases of grief are examples of mental illness (Wilkinson, 2000: 289-304). The treatment of grief with antidepressants does not, of course, 'cure' grief however given that the cause cannot be removed.

the seriousness of the loss. Taken together, it is easy to see that grief has this moral dimension entailing that it is more than a pain that ought to be minimised or avoided. As Solomon notes, grief puts one in touch with the fact that one loves (Solomon, 2004: p. 79). Allow me to outline what I take to be the process of grief, before moving to defend it from Epicurean minimisation.

In agreement with Thomas Attig (2004: pp. 341-360), I hold that grief ought to be understood as consisting in (at least) two experiences: it is a choiceless emotional reaction and a chosen set of responses (2004: pp. 343-344) to the death of the loved other.[43] As noted above, the attachment relation between the bereaved and the irreplaceable other exemplified by loving relationships[44] justifies experiences of grief in those cases in which this attachment is fundamentally, irreversibly altered by death.

Grief, then, is both a passive reaction, something that 'happens' to the bereaved, and an active response to loss, consisting in choices aimed at moving beyond emotional pain, towards reconstructing life in the wake of significant loss (Attig, 2004: pp. 341-360). Reactive grief, occurring at those times closest to initial bereavement, represents the most intense period of distress experienced by the bereaved, whereas responsive grief, occurring at a later time – after initial bereavement and usually following reactive

[43] It is important to note that it is not necessary that all bereaved subjects experience both reactive and responsive grief; some may only experience one feature of grief. Furthermore, the experiences may overlap, or bereaved subjects may find themselves returning to reactive grief after responsive grief has begun. My understanding of grief expressed here is deliberately broad, in an attempt to reflect the idiosyncratic nature of the grief experience.

[44] The phrase 'loving relationships' is intended to refer to all forms of love, though for the purposes of this thesis the most relevant referents are those of familial, sexual and platonic love.

grief[45] – mirrors the gradual diminishing of the harm of loss experienced by the bereaved (reduced eventually to a minimal level, though including 'pangs' of pain caused by deprivation). The aim of this latter period is to 'relearn' (Attig, 2004: pp. 350-351) how to live in the absence of the irreplaceable other, the outcome of which is overall positive i.e. a recalibration – and possible improvement – of wellbeing. In short, grief is most intense at those times closest to when the beloved dies, as this is when loss is felt most keenly. As the bereaved learns to live with the loss, the intensity of the grief experience diminishes. This reflects my claim that though deprivation continues, harm to the bereaved does not persist at the same level over time.

Though grief constitutes a painful experience for the bereaved, it has the capacity to effectively facilitate recovery from the initial pain involved in encountering the death of an irreplaceable loved other. This provides an additional reason for protecting grief from Epicurean minimisation; grief is a necessary process that allows the bereaved to acknowledge (both privately, in terms of admitting the loss, and publicly, in terms of expressions of grief) and cope with the profound loss they have suffered. By legitimising the experience of grief the bereaved are able to express reactions to the harmful loss suffered, and in doing so, avoid repressing their true feelings. By acknowledging the 'rightness' of the grief experience, one can aid the bereaved in recovering an acceptable level of wellbeing.

Reactive grief captures a more traditional understanding of grief. It is intended to refer to the initial reaction to being bereaved, and the loss of the irreplaceable

[45] Though this is not to say that reactive grief is entirely finished; the bereaved can find themselves experiencing choiceless reactions to the loss of the deceased beloved at any time after the beloved has died.

beloved. This primary 'reactive agony' (Attig, 2004: p. 343) involves little or no choice in terms of how it is instantiated by the bereaved: it simply happens to her. Given the absence of conscious choice regarding how one reacts to the pronouncement of the death of a loved other, this allows for inconsistent expressions of grief evidenced in ordinary life. Thus, for some, the news will be met with a certain numbness, shocked silence or disbelief, others might find themselves becoming aggressive, whilst others immediately begin to weep. This non-rational reactive feature of grief usually (in normal cases of grief) subsides as one becomes more active in grief, moving beyond passively experiencing reactive grief. However, it would be careless to define the duration of reactive grief. Suffice to say that the choiceless reaction to the death of an irreplaceable loved other may extend for several weeks or months, and might take several forms.[46] Thus, the bereaved may experience numbness and denial whilst coming to terms with the reality of the absolute loss of a significant other, and once this loss has been accepted, find himself becoming angry and frustrated (perhaps that death has happened now, and not later; or that dramatic changes have been brought unbidden into his life), and later depressed that the cause of his pain has also eliminated his primary source of comfort.

[46] This characterisation of reactive grief is representative of what might be called 'normal grief'. Normal grief is reflected by those instances in which the bereaved experience the most profoundly painful emotional states at those times closest to learning of the loved other's death, and in which those painful emotional states lessen over time, though they may temporarily peak once more at certain intervals. This is contrasted with 'complicated' grief, in which the bereaved experience 'severe long term reactions to their loss. This kind of reaction may be associated with adverse health outcomes' (Hawton, 2007: p. 962). Complicated grief may be undermined by concerns regarding whether it is grief proper, or an instance of mental illness, as noted by Wilkinson (2000: pp 289-304).

As stated above, reactive grief is something that *happens to* the bereaved, whereas the secondary sense of grief is characterised as a set of chosen responses. Responsive grief consists in an active, deliberate set of choices (Attig, 2004: p. 343), as Attig states:

> Death, bereavement, and our grief reactions are not matters of choice. But grieving in the quite contrasting second sense of the term as an active response to them is pervaded with choice. Grieving as response is not yet another matter of what happens to us but rather a matter of what we do with what happens to us. We must choose our own path in transforming the course of our lives following bereavement.
>
> (Attig, 2004: pp. 343-344)

Though there may be painful moments within responsive grief, it ultimately engenders the reconstruction of the life of the bereaved, which in turn produces an improvement in her wellbeing. The most significant feature of responsive grief is that it is active; it involves conscious decisions regarding how one chooses to respond to bereavement, and the painful emotions inherent within reactive grief. In this sense, responsive grief follows on from reactive grief (though the transition from one to the other is no doubt vague, overlapping, and indeterminate), the bereaved will begin to accommodate the changes imposed by the death of the irreplaceable loved other. Though alterations in the life-structure of the bereaved have been irrevocably altered by death, the bereaved can begin to re-orientate herself within this new framework: she will become accustomed to the alternative possibilities of her future prospects, whilst remaining aware of the impossibility of fulfilling those plans containing or relating to the deceased. Indeed, it is probable that she will eventually come to see some of the alternative possibilities in a favourable light, rather than simply regarding lost possibilities negatively. It is important to note that these alterations are all bereaved-

directed; she is responding to the changes that the death of the loved other has brought into *her own life*. Thus responsive grief coheres with my broader understanding of grief as containing bereaved-directed concerns in addition to being about the deceased.

The bereaved responds to the causal effects of the death of the loved other (including his absence); changes not merely to her present, but additionally to future-directed desires, hopes and plans, by eventually choosing to identify alternative motivations, interests, and goals. By locating 'new meanings' (Attig, 2004: p. 341-360) within her life, shifting the dynamics of continuing relationships, allowing herself once more to seek comfort in certain familiar habits (a practice that may have previously felt like a form of betrayal: to enjoy alone what was once enjoyed together). As Attig notes:

> We engage with the loss, come to terms with our reactions to it, reshape our daily life patterns, and redirect our life stories in light of what has happened. We respond as the multi-dimensional beings we are: We exert physical energy. We work through and express emotion.
>
> (Attig, 2004: p. 343)

Thus action is taken via conscious decisions to accommodate the loss of an irreplaceable loved other; to live through reactive grief which diminishes wellbeing whilst experiencing painful emotions, with the aim of re-establishing an acceptable level of wellbeing.[47] Death transforms the lives of the bereaved and, in instances of normal grief, the bereaved eventually begin to respond to this transformation by choosing to reconstruct their lives utilising different practices, behaviours, attitudes, and how they come to engage with others, such that the possibility of enjoyment, pleasure and happiness is believed to be reinstated.

[47] I previously introduced complicated grief, which can be viewed now as an excessive extension of reactive grief from which responsive grief does not eventually emerge.

It is in virtue of the ongoing process involved in responsive grief, and in light of the fact that the loss continues until the bereaved die, that I am resistant to the view that grief, and the feeling of loss, must come to an eventual end. My understanding of responsive grief is usually considered 'moving on' from loss, but given that the bereaved continue to love the deceased, I am inclined to interpret positive responses to loss as a manner of accommodating loss whilst retaining an altered attachment to the deceased. The loss continues, even though grief diminishes. Thus grief is not wholly negative, and contains certain positive qualities. Solomon makes a similar point when he writes:

> 'Thus we should be careful about thinking of grief as a "negative" emotion. It occurs in our lives in unwanted circumstances, and its very presence means that we have suffered a serious loss. But the value of an emotion is not measured only by the circumstances that prompt it, and it might just be that grief is the most desirable, and in that sense "positive" emotion in a tragic situation. […]And I will argue that grief is "positive" in another, more straightforward sense as well, a sense in which it is a continuation rather than a cessation of love.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: pp. 80-81)

Another difference between my account of grief and more traditional understandings is that grief has been characterised by many experts[48] in terms of stages with distinct emotional phases. Anger, despair, loneliness, depression, anxiety, hopelessness, denial, isolation, guilt, yearning and several other negative states are all repeatedly included in descriptions of grief. However, I have decided to articulate grief as a deliberately indefinite process, for several reasons. First, for any exhaustive list of the proposed emotional stages of grief, there will be counterexamples in the form of certain grieving subjects who do not experience some of these emotions and related stages. Alternatively, the experience of the emotional states may not follow the stages in

[48] Bowlby (1991); Kübler-Ross (2005); Dean (1988: pp. 157-165) lists several other authors of grief-as-stages.

a linear fashion, the stages are not mutually exclusive, and subjects may frequently return to one particular emotional state and find the experience of anger or depression, for example, to dominate their grief experience (Kübler-Ross, 2005: p. 7). Thus, in order to avoid offering an account of grief that can be immediately undermined by failing to capture these nuances as a result of imposed specificity, I have taken the decision to leave my description of grief as fluid and non-exhaustive.[49] Grief is a complex process, experienced differently by individual bereaved subjects, varying not merely due to the subject's disposition, but also in virtue of the nature of the antecedent relationship between the bereaved and now deceased loved other.

Furthermore, characterising grief as a series of stages that must be endured until such time as the bereaved 'move on' from the death of the loved other implies that attachment to the deceased is eradicated over time. This assumes that grief is an entirely passive process, and views grief as having an arbitrarily located end point. I argue that both these assumptions are mistaken. Firstly, I think that it misrepresents reactive grief as grief proper, holding this singular aspect of grief to constitute the grief experience. Secondly, it fails to acknowledge that chosen responses to grief ought to be included as a constituent part of grieving, therefore reflecting the ongoing experience of grief and loss in which the bereaved continues to experience temporally restricted painful emotions at intervals throughout the remainder of his life as a consequence of the ongoing deprivation of, and altered attachment to, the irreplaceable loved other. Thirdly, stage-

[49] An additional reason to avoid specificity is that, having made previous attempts to articulate the numerous possible emotional states involved in grief, and the various motivations for them, I have come to realise that such a project is broader than the scope of this thesis, involving references to theories on the nature of emotions, among other concerns.

theories encourage an end point to grief, promoting the concept of 'moving on' and detachment from the deceased. Yet I maintain the view that grieving, in a minimal sense of remembering the deceased fondly, missing her for brief periods, regretting her absence from a particular event etc., continues at specific times at intervals throughout the duration of bereavement. Grieving the death of an irreplaceable loved other only ceases at the time at which the bereaved dies, at which point he ceases to be a subject of experience. If grief were considered as an entirely negative, painful emotion, this extension would seem to condemn the bereaved to suffering, however, given the morally positive, and reconstructive, nature of grief, the extension of grief throughout the lives of the bereaved is less troubling. Additionally, I share with Attig the view that just as loving attachment justifies the experience of grief given the loss of an irreplaceable loved other, a continued – albeit fundamentally altered – attachment to the deceased[50] entails that grief is always minimally present within the fabric of the life of the bereaved after initial reactive grief subsides. Solomon seems to share this view of continued attachment in grief when he states:

> 'In our understanding and analysis of grief, it is important, I think, to give proper due to the relationship – that is, both the interrupted and presumably reciprocal relationship and the ongoing, unreciprocated relationship represented by the memory of the loved one (or the loved one as remembered).'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p. 87)

Essentially, though death annihilates the one who dies, it does not necessarily annihilate the attachment the bereaved experience towards the deceased.

[50] Again, attachment is to the ante-mortem beloved; the person they were before they died.

As discussed in chapter four, the Epicureans aimed to minimise or undermine the experience of grief among the bereaved (e.g., *KD*40).[51] There are two central ways of arguing in favour of this; firstly, in reference to *KD*4, to remind the bereaved that the pain of grief is easy to bear, and; secondly, that grief contains irrational (unnatural and unnecessary) desires that ought to be eradicated. I will discuss the latter reason, concerning the appetitive features of grief first.

The term 'grief' is a convenient ellipsis for a complex set of beliefs, emotional expressions, dispositions, actions and behaviours (Attig, 2004: p. 343). It also involves intentional attitudes and certain desires in virtue of continued attachment.[52] The love the bereaved continues to bear for the deceased compels the grieving bereaved to desire the loved other's return, and such desires are rendered impossible to fulfil in virtue of death. To be compelled via loving attachment to desire the impossible is no doubt a torturous experience for the bereaved.[53] Donald Gustafson (1989: pp. 466-467) argues that the primary desire of grief (that the beloved not be dead) is irrational given that the belief that justifies grief (that the beloved is dead) ensures that the desire cannot be satisfied. Furthermore, and as Solomon notes, this desire cannot produce any 'effective action' (Solomon, 2004: p. 82); there is nothing one can do to bring the beloved back to life.

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[51] Chapter 4, pp. 141-155.

[52] Examples of grief related intentional attitudes, beliefs and desires would be: that the death of the loved other is viewed as a bad thing for one; the belief that life has irrevocably altered and that future directed hopes must be adjusted given the absence of the irreplaceable loved other; and the (irrational) desire that the loved other had not died.

[53] I will argue that some of the choices made during responsive grief are aimed at altering such desires. Thus rather than love forcing the bereaved to yearn for the return of the loved other, continuing love will instead promote fond memories and the desire to, e.g., "honour" the deceased by performing certain tasks, fulfilling death-bed requests, etc. The relationship with the deceased is not altogether lost, but is fundamentally reshaped in virtue of continuing to care for the deceased and acknowledging the previous role the deceased had, in spite of understanding their irreversible absence.

The Epicurean would invariably emphasise that desires that are impossible to fulfil are among those that are unnatural and unnecessary, and as such, this desire undermines the rationality of grief. Furthermore, given that one is encouraged to refrain from having this kind of desire (*SV* 21), the Epicurean has reason to attempt to minimise grief. Desires that are necessarily unsatisfiable are a source of great mental anguish and under Epicurean lights, the cause of unnecessary pain. Thus grief as longing for the deceased beloved ought to be reduced as much as is possible. Though there is reason to be sympathetic to the Epicurean goal of minimising pains, there are at least two reasons to disagree with the application of this goal to the grief experience.

First, the claim that the irrational desire of grief is unnatural and unnecessary contradicts the commonsense intuition that desiring contact with that which one loves is natural (though it can admittedly be unnecessary). I argue for the natural status of retaining certain desires related to the loved other given close attachment, and as such can respond to Epicurus by denying the immediate wholesale rejection of this desire directed towards the loved other, simply in virtue of continued attachment. Though the desire for the return of the beloved is irrational, it appears to simply be a natural feature of grief. As Solomon notes: 'grief involves the turmoil of an impossible desire, an inability to accept the loss, and the persistent demand that it not be so. The *process* of grieving is the process of coping with that impossible desire and that intolerable loss' (Solomon, 2004: p. 85). However, I suggest that this desire is felt most keenly during initial reactive grief, and that responsive grief marks an alteration from a desire to a wish that the beloved had not died (Solomon, 2004: p. 83). When discussing the distinction between sorrow and grief, Solomon notes that 'Wishes are by their very nature contrary

to what is the case' (Solomon, 2004: p. 85), and so wishing that the beloved had not died does not result in the same irrationality as desiring that death had not occurred. This is because to wish that the deceased were, for example, present at an important family gathering, acknowledges that this *cannot* be the case. As a result the wish does not give rise to the same frustration as the equivalent desire. Allowing for the grief process permits a shift in the attitude of the bereaved from holding a natural, though irrational desire, to a rational and natural wish that the loved other were still alive. Given that, in most cases, this shift occurs without effort, there is no need to minimise grief for this reason alone.

A second, and perhaps stronger reason for rejecting the Epicurean minimisation of grief is that the desire related to the return of the deceased is not the only desire involved in grief. Indeed, there are several examples of desires in grief that are easily satisfiable, and as such meet with the Epicurean view of natural and necessary desires. It is my view that desires to honour the wishes of the dead and respecting the memory of the dead, for example, are an important appetitive feature of grief, all of which are satisfiable. Indeed, though Epicurus would encourage one to avoid desiring the return of the beloved, given his views on recalling the pleasures of friendship (*DL: LI*, 10.22; *NP* 1105e) there is reason to believe he would not object to desires of this kind. Thus I share Solomon's view when he writes of the dedicatory quality of grief:

> 'The idea that grief involves only one paradoxical desire – the desire that the loved one not be dead – ignores one of the most dramatic features of grief. Grief also includes a strong desire to commemorate and honour the lost person, to satisfy, presumably, some of his or her most basic (though not necessarily spoken) desires and wishes.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p. 92)

Of course, the deceased is not harmed or benefited by the bereaved successfully commemorating her, or by honouring or carrying out her ante-mortem wishes. However, the bereaved can take comfort (or pleasure) from satisfying her desire to honour the deceased. Thus there is good reason to reject the minimisation of grief on the grounds that it contains only irrational (unnatural and unnecessary) desires.

An additional reason for the Epicurean attempt to minimise grief is that, based on the hedonic foundations of Epicureanism, the pain involved in grieving ought to be reduced as much as possible. Disruptions to mental tranquillity caused by the loss of the beloved constitute genuinely painful experiences, unproblematically meeting the experience condition expressed in this thesis. Furthermore, given that the distressing emotional content of grief increases in intensity in proportion to the significance of attachment between the bereaved and the deceased, the reactive grief experience can be overwhelming, such that the pain outweighs most other pleasures. Thus, a reduction in the wellbeing of the bereaved is an implied consequence of grieving. Additionally, the loss of the irreplaceable loved other results in the absence of pleasure (Epicurean security) specifically provided by the deceased, which in Epicurean terms amounts to the most grievous pains. By reducing grief, the Epicurean can reduce the occurrence of these pains, and rescue the bereaved from this barrier to *ataraxia*. The Epicurean may appeal to *KD*4, and try to argue that such emotional 'pains' are only short lived, and are therefore easy to endure. However, I have already argued against this feature of the Epicurean position,[54] on the grounds that even if a pain is not sufficient to end a life, and only lasts a finite period, these limits may not reduce the harm caused *whilst enduring*

[54] On p. 42.

the pain. Secondly, though long-term (perhaps minimal) pain does not preclude pleasurable experiences, it is not inconceivable that the *overall* (all things considered) value of the life of the subject is diminished by experiencing this continued pain. As a result, this response is ineffectual.

More importantly, however, as I have argued above, grief should not be reduced simply to pain. The Epicurean has failed to note the moral dimension of grief, and does not grasp the obligation to grieve as a result of loving the deceased. It is good to grieve for those one loves, even though doing so is painful for the bereaved. By encouraging one to overcome grief, the Epicurean unwittingly asks that the bereaved cease to love. This request is as unreasonable as it is unsuccessful. As Solomon notes (in reference to the Stoics, though relevant to the discussion here):

> 'Grief is often described as a consequence of love, its downside. (It is this painful downside that the Stoics wanted to eliminate, even at the cost of abandoning all loving attachments.) But the thesis I am arguing here […] is that grief is the continuation of love, and it shares its object with love. This is what makes it not only painful but personally obligatory as well, for the obligations of grief are the obligations of love.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p. 90)

The Epicureans attempt to make happiness invulnerable to loss, by encouraging a lack of attachment to specific individuals, but in the pursuit of the tranquillity of mind, the Epicureans miss out on the vast pleasure of love. Furthermore, the Epicureans fail to see the positive features of grief; that it demonstrates one's respect, love and attachment, that it allows one to reconstruct one's life in the wake of loss, and so on. The pain of grief, then, is not something we necessarily want to eradicate; there is an honour in grief that is worthy of protection. Given that grief indicates love, there is good reason to refrain from accepting the (well intended) Epicurean minimisation of grief. As Solomon

states (in reference to the Stoics, though, again, it clearly has application to the Epicurean position described here):

> 'The loss suffered in grief may be enormous and irredeemable, but the further loss suffered by ignoring or denying the importance of the grieving process only amplifies, it does not ease, the suffering. The denial of grief, as the Stoics saw so clearly, first requires the denial of love, and that is a price most of us are unwilling to pay.'
>
> (Solomon, 2004: p.101)

Having defended grief from Epicurean minimisation, the last point of note is that the pattern of grief reflects the temporal structure of the harm of death. Given that temporal issues make up a central component of the metaphysics of death, it is a benefit of my position that it avoids the challenges faced by other deprivationist accounts.[55] As stated above, like Feit (2002: pp. 359-383), I maintain that the harm of death has specific temporal duration. The harm of death begins when the bereaved gain knowledge[56] of the death of the beloved, and begins being deprived of him or her. Harm continues with decreasing intensity throughout the life of the bereaved, though there may be pangs of more or less intense harm, when the loss is felt more keenly, at certain intervals, and terminates when the bereaved themselves die, ceasing to be subjects of experience. Oftentimes, the temporal duration of the harm of death is equal to the duration that the bereaved are deprived of the continued existence of the deceased.[57] So too with grief,

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[55] Previously outlined in chapter three.

[56] The epistemic feature of the debate regarding the harm of death gives rise to some interesting points, insofar as knowledge of the death of the beloved is important for initiating grief, and realising the extent of the loss suffered. An additional point of interest is that one could grieve on the basis of a justified false belief regarding the death of the loved other. The parents of a soldier incorrectly thought killed in action have justification to grieve (their grief is no less profound for being mistaken), though naturally their grief would subside were they to learn of his survival. The possibility of reversal in cases of erroneous reports of death distinguishes grief based on justified false beliefs, from grief based on justified true beliefs.

[57] There may, of course, be a delay between the time of death and the time at which the bereaved learn of the death. This might imply disconnect between death and the harm it causes. However, the causal

the most intense spell of reactive grief begins when the bereaved learn of the death of the irreplaceable beloved, and continues at deceasing intensity, though still containing pangs of more or less intense distress, until the bereaved themselves die.

One reason to reject this view in relation to grief appeals to so called 'delayed responses' to knowledge of the death of a loved other. An example of this might be the grief experience of the parents of premature twins; both infants suffer complications as a consequence of premature birth, but one twin weighs slightly less than the other. The smaller twin is unable to survive, and dies within a few hours. The marginally heavier twin does not respond well to initial treatments, but after making slow progress, her condition improves. The parents are devastated by the traumatic arrival of their babies, and though they fully acknowledge the death of the smaller twin, so much attention is aimed at the twin who remains, that they do not begin to grieve for her brother until much later. This delayed response may present a counterexample to the claim that grief begins when knowledge of the death of a loved other is obtained. More commonly, the bereaved can find that they avoid grieving at first, that time is filled with funeral preparations, or attending to other bereaved subjects, delaying the painful emotions that will eventually arrive. I argue, however, that these examples demonstrate forms of the strategy of denial or disbelief sometimes involved in grief (Kübler-Ross (2005: pp. 8-11), a (perhaps subconscious) strategy which allows the bereaved time to prepare for ensuing painful emotions. In the case of the parents of the premature twins, the needs of the remaining twin impels them to avoid attending to the death of their son; they can

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sequence is initiated by death, and the harms are identified with the losses this entails. So, even if knowledge of the loss occurs after the loss, death is still the cause of the harmful loss.

acknowledge that he is dead, but their daughter's struggle for life is such that they can, and perhaps should, give her all their attention. It is not until their daughter's health has stabilised that the bereaved parents can experience the sadness caused by the death of their son. The same can be said for more common instances of so-called delayed grief; 'keeping busy' is a strategy of denial. Thus, delayed grief can be recategorised as an extended instance of the denial involved in grief, and grief maintains a symmetrical temporal structure to that of the harm of death characterised as loss.

I hold that the harm of death lasts until the bereaved cease to be subjects of experience. However, the degree of harm is not constant throughout this duration, given that the bereaved can eventually respond positively to accommodate the loss of the beloved. The harm is at its greatest at those times closest to learning of the death of the loved other, which is reflected in, or expressed by, reactive grief. However, this period might extend beyond the immediate aftermath. Thus the loneliness the bereaved experiences can diminish wellbeing for many months, possibly extending into years. However, the intensity of this loneliness subsides in time due to the form of grief that involves chosen responses to the effects of bereavement. Hence, though still present, the degree to which loss diminishes the wellbeing of the bereaved may be reduced to a minimal level. Eventually reactive grief subsides, and the potentially beneficial effects of responsive grief begin to improve the wellbeing of the bereaved. Again, this demonstrates the symmetry between the harm of loss and the grief experience, which in turn allows one to recognise the suffering of the bereaved in virtue of losing the beloved.

In summary, in agreement with Solomon (2004: pp. 75-101) I understand grief as a morally significant, ongoing process, arising as a consequence of loss, love and

attachment. Though grief demonstrates good moral character among the bereaved, it is still an intuitively painful experience for him or her. However, it is not that the bereaved would have been better off had they not grieved, but rather that they would have been better off had the beloved not died. Despite the intuitively painful nature of grieving, the moral value of doing so entails that it ought not to be minimised, contrary to Epicurean recommendations.

V. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the positive feature of my thesis, in which I articulated my own account of the harm of death. It is my view that death is bad for the bereaved in virtue of depriving her of the irreplaceable loved other, and all associated goods. The bereaved are identified in virtue of the attachment they share with the deceased, and as a result of the grief that they experience. The concepts of attachment and irreplaceability are central to understanding why death is a bad thing for the bereaved, insofar as together they explain why the loss of the beloved is a significant harm (especially given the fact that losses are not always harmful). Given that grief is essential to my understanding of bereavement, it was important that I defend grief from the Epicurean attempt to minimise the grief experience. It is my view that the positive moral quality of grief ensures that it is a process that the bereaved ought to experience, even though doing so is unpleasant. I suggested that the temporal structure of the harm of death, characterised as loss, shared the same structure as grief; harm is most intense at those times closest to bereavement, and continues for all those times that the bereaved are deprived of the

beloved via her death. However, I noted that the harm diminishes over time as the bereaved restructure their lives in response to loss.

CONCLUSION

This thesis presented a critical discussion of the nature and timing of the possible harm of death, in which the arguments of Epicurus, deprivationists, and my own position were examined. Three essential questions provided the framework for analysis; who is the subject of the harm, what is the nature of the harm, and when does the harm take place? Epicurus and deprivationists both advance a restricted account of the possible bearers of harm, and argue that only the deceased can suffer the harm of death. I argued that this restriction is unreasonable, and offer an alternative view that identifies the bereaved as the appropriate subjects of harm. In promoting this view I remove the inconsistency between the logical strength of the Epicurean position, and pretheoretical negative responses to death: far from being regarded as nothing, death is more commonly valued as a bad thing for some subject(s).

Before analysing accounts of the nature and timing of the possible harm of death, I offered a definition of death, and made some important distinctions. First, death was distinguished from dying and being dead. Dying was found to have a non-necessary relation to death, insofar as a subject could be said to be dying at time *t*, and yet life-saving actions could prevent death at time *t1*. Dying is an internal process, of indeterminate length that, without interference, will shortly bring about death. Death was defined as occurring at *t* if, and only if, the irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions has occurred, or will occur without intervention, or the irreversible cessation of all function of the brain, including the brain stem has occurred, or will occur

without intervention. Being dead was simply understood as the infinite state of nonexistence that followed thereafter.

The Epicurean No-Subject Thesis establishes a logically compelling argument that death is nothing to the one who dies. The hedonic foundations of Epicureanism supports the experience condition, stating that for any state of affairs or event to cause harm to a subject, that subject must (at least be possibly capable of) being causally affected by that state of affairs or event. Essentially, experience is necessary for harms. Extendedly, existence is a precondition for experience. Thus, given the Epicurean assumption that death annihilates the subject, death renders experience impossible. Admitting the impossibility of experience entailed by death, the dead cannot be harmed by being dead. Additionally, the living cannot be harmed by death prior to its occurrence, given that they still exist. In arguing for the harmlessness of death, Epicurus can provide clear responses to the three framing questions: there is no subject of harm, given that the dead no longer exist; there is no nature of harm to explain, and; given that there is no harm, and no subject of harm, there is no time at which the dead suffer the harm of death.

Despite the clarity of the No-Subject Thesis, death is still regarded as a bad thing. Indeed, intuitive responses to death (and thoughts of death) can be generalised as largely negative in nature: the bereaved display behaviours that one would associate with suffering, and when thoughts of the possible death of a loved other are reflected upon, reactions can take the form of discomfort, anxiety, or distress, and efforts will be made to cast such thoughts aside. Thus, the Epicurean 'cure' for the fear of death is

inconsistent with ordinary life: either ordinary responses to death are entirely irrational, or Epicurus fails to capture all possible sources of death's harmfulness.

The Deprivation Thesis develops an antithetical position to the Epicurean account, though deprivationists do agree to the Epicurean restrictions regarding the possible subjects of harm and the assumption of annihilation. Whilst deprivationists disagree regarding the timing of the harm, they share the title in virtue of claiming that the nature of the harm of death is identified with the manner in which the deceased are deprived of the value of continued life, had death not occurred at time *t*. Thus, in response to the three framing questions, deprivationists argue that the dead are the subjects of the harm of death; the nature of the harm consists in being deprived of the life they could have had, had they not died, and; the timing of the harm can be conceived of as eternal, or as occurring at some ante-mortem, or postmortem time. Nagel (1979: pp. 1-10) argues against the experience condition, stating that the nonexistence of the dead does not preclude the possibility of enduring harms. However, Nagel's counterexamples are found to be consistent with the Epicurean view, and the experience condition remains undefeated. The temporal location problem similarly poses a significant challenge to the view that the dead are harmed. Feit (2002: pp. 359-383) proposed what I judge to be the most reasonable account of the temporal location of the harm, stating that harm has restricted temporal dimensions: the dead are harmed for only that duration of continued life that they could have reasonably expected to live. However, doubts were raised regarding the expectation to live for a particular length of time. Furthermore, the experience condition remains undefeated by all articulations of the Deprivation Thesis. Despite the failure of the Deprivation Thesis, it is possible to

rescue the intuition grounding the view that death is harmful if one is prepared to acknowledge the social context of death, and extend the possible subjects of harm to include the bereaved.

Prior to fully articulating my position regarding the harm of death for the bereaved, I examined Epicurus' views on this possible source of harm, offering a critical examination of Epicurean attitudes to personal relationships and the nature of grief. Epicurus emphasises friendship over all other forms of close personal relationships, implying that it is only via the relation of friendship that subjects gain access to the utmost pleasure (judged to be confidence in the provision of security against possible future harms). However, it is simply being the bearer of the relation of friendship that is required by Epicurus. Thus, there is an implication that individual friends are entirely replaceable, and provided one has access to alternative friends, the death of one friend does not cause harm. In replacing the deceased with another friend, one has not lost the source of pleasure i.e. satisfying the relation of friendship. Thus, death does not cause the living to lose anything, even those who have established close personal relationships with the deceased.

Epicurus admits of the natural pang of grief, but attempts to reduce this potentially painful emotion to something that is easy to endure (in keeping with *KD*4), and therefore not painful to those who experience it (however briefly). Essential to this reductive project is the view that grief is deceased-directed. Thus, in accepting that death does not harm the dead, one can argue that to experience grief is entirely unnecessary. Taking this deceased-directed concept of grief, together with the view that the still living has not suffered any loss, provided there are alternative, replacement

friends available to permit one to continue to satisfy the relation of friendship, death has not caused the still living any significant harm. Thus, the Epicurean can conclude, death harms neither the dead, nor the living.

I challenge this reductive, restrictive approach to the social context of death, and argue that the Epicurean fails to recognise the bereaved-directed nature of death, and that the implication of replaceability is mistaken. In reference to the latter, I demonstrated that by allowing the inclusion of alternative personal relationships (parent-child, in particular), one could establish the irreplaceability of loved others, partly in virtue of the unrepeatable, shared history between subjects. The death of an irreplaceable loved other presents a genuine loss to the bereaved, and captures the intuition that death deprives one of something of value. In terms of the former, I attempted to emphasise features of grief that are directed either towards oneself as bereaved, or towards bereaved others. Thus, knowledge that the deceased are unharmed by nonexistence does not minimise the harmful experience of loss in virtue of the death of an irreplaceable loved other.

In light of these challenges to the Epicurean account of the social context of death, I presented my argument regarding the nature and timing of the possible harm of death, responding to the three framing questions of this thesis in the following way: The bereaved are the subjects of the harm of death; the nature of the harm is constituted by being deprived of the irreplaceable loved other, and all associated goods, via her death, and; the timing of the harm begins when the bereaved learn of the death of the loved other, is most intense at those times closest to becoming bereaved, and continues at a diminishing – and eventually minimal – level until the bereaved cease to exist, and

therefore cease to be subjects of experience. The bereaved were defined as those subjects who maintained a significantly emotionally attached relationship to the loved other. As a consequence of death, the bereaved must endure the painful and irreversible loss of the loved other, and come to terms with unwelcome alterations to an attached relationship. Given that the harm of death constitutes a genuinely harmful state of affairs, and insofar as it is a genuine possibility for all those subjects sufficiently attached to loved others, I argued that fearing the death of the beloved a rationally justified fear.

Recall in the introduction I articulated the nature of rational fears, stating that such fears can be defined as those fears directed at events or objects that will possibly or actually harm one in some respect. *S*'s fear of death can be rationally justified if, and only if, it can be demonstrated to be harmful to *S*. Epicurus can successfully argue against the irrationality of *S*'s fear of *S*'s death, in virtue of the strength of the No-Subject Thesis. However, as I hope to have demonstrated, the loss of an irreplaceable loved other justifies my view that death can be harmful to the bereaved. Thus, given that death harms the bereaved, *S*'s fear of *P*'s death is rationally justified. By extending the scope of the subjects of harm to include the bereaved, and discussing the possible harm of death within a social context relating specifically to sufficiently close, lovingly attached relationships, one can argue in favour of the veracity of the pretheoretical intuition that death is a bad thing for bereaved subjects.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Taken from Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson, (trans. and ed.) *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994, unless states otherwise:

DL.LI – Letter to Idomeneus: Diogenes Laertius
DL.RE – Report of Epicurus' Ethical Views: Diogenes Laertius
DR – Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, in James Warren, *Facing Death: Epicurus and his Critics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004
KD – The Principle Doctrines
LM – Letter to Menoeceus

LP – Letter to Pythocles
LH – Letter to Herodotus
ND – Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*
NP – Plutarch, *Non Posse*, in James Warren, *Facing Death: Epicurus and his Critics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004
S.LE – Seneca, *Letters on Ethics*
SV – The Vatican Collection of Epicurean Sayings