

On Being and Non-Being, Life and Death

Mankind and all sentient life have an innate fear of death. The reason for that is Darwinian Evolution. Past species that did not assiduously avoid death had a greater tendency for their members to die individually in the incessant competition and struggle for survival, and that led to their specie dying out. Our human specie is an evolved successor to earlier species all having evolved a strong aversion to death.

That being the case, intelligent species use their intelligence to speculate on death, its causes, how to avoid death, where death leads, etc. And, death being innately fearsome as all species have evolved to feel, intelligent species invariably deny death by postulating that life goes on after death, albeit in a different context.

And, they adopt that belief in spite of there being absolutely no evidence to support it and a large amount of significant evidence contradicting it. The only reason for mankind's belief in life after death is the urgent need to deny that which is so feared -- personal death.

The contradicting evidence includes:

- The evidence of the human remains and their condition in every grave, entombment, and mausoleum as time after death progresses;
- The absence of any report back from persons who have died;

- The unresolvable after-life complexity of people who lived sequentially, that is successively in time, existing simultaneously.
- The biological evidence of all other life species from plants to chimpanzees.
- The problem of the infinite boredom of aware existence forever;
- That infinity itself is impossible;
- And, whereas life after death would require acts or intervention by a god or some supernatural entity, *The Origin and Its Meaning* [<http://www.The-Origin.org>] has shown that both the universe and intelligence are the result of natural actions, neither using nor depending on a god or supernatural entity, which do not exist and never did.

People behave that way, so believing in life after death, because for each individual its own death is too fearsome to accept. They so believe in spite of that their so believing creates continuous fear, anxiety, and concern during their life over how their death will work out, whether favorably or badly.

On the other hand, numerous philosophers and writers have concluded in comparing having life with being dead, that is comparing being with non-being or existence with non-existence, that non-being, being dead, is far to be preferred. For example:

- In his *Apologia* Plato presents Socrates embracing his coming end and giving his several well thought out and intended reasons;
- Sophocles wrote, "... Thy portion esteem I highest, Who wast not ever begot ...";

- Voltaire said, “We like life, but all the same nothingness also has its good points.”
- Schopenhauer states, “... it remains at least doubtful whether existence is to be preferred to non-existence ... [and] ... if experience and reflection have their say, non-existence must surely win.”

Others saying the same include such as:

- the author(s) of the biblical book “Job” and the author(s) of the biblical book “Ecclesiastes”
- Bede the Venerable, Pascal, Hume, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Santayana, etc.

There are a number of reasons in support of that conclusion all based on our condition of awareness in the state of non-existence, which state is also the case when we become dead after having been alive. In non-existence there is no pain, no suffering, no frustration, no disappointment, and so forth. Furthermore, in non-existing we have no awareness and, therefore, no feeling of actually not-being, no feeling of something lost, or missed. As the Christian rites of burial propose it is a state of “eternal rest” and “eternal peace”.

What more could one ask for than eternal rest, eternal peace, eternal absence of pain and suffering, with eternal non-awareness of any “living” missed, anything at all missed ?

We all know from experience that life assuredly has a lot of pain, suffering, frustration, disappointment and so on. All of the major religions view life as a painful, unpleasant testing ground, a “vail of tears”. We choose to bear all of that only because of our innate fear of death.

True, we also know from experience that life may have, and perhaps occasionally actually delivers: joy, happiness, feeling of accomplishment and so forth. But, no matter how much and how

fully those are experienced in life, upon entering death and non-being those experiences become meaningless to the deceased who has no awareness of them.

And, if one is to enjoy “being remembered” for things of his life, the enjoyment of that can only be in the anticipation before death of the appreciation looked for to be received after death, for once dead there is no experience of it at all.

Therefore, death, that is the ending of life, or even better life or personal existence never having been, never having begun, is overwhelmingly to be preferred. Non-existence provides everything that could be wished for.

Never having existed is not available to us but entering into permanent non-existence is readily available. Death is not to be feared. Rather it is to be eagerly embraced.

Of course, there are those who believe in a life after death choosing to so believe in spite of the absence of any evidence whatsoever because they have not rationally thought out the reasoning presented above. Those believers condemn themselves not only to a lifetime of fear and anxiety over how their death will work out but also to a continuous dreadful fear of dying.

Regardless, we are all guaranteed to some time die, to some time receive the release of death and its eternal peace. Then, those of us having sufficient courage and curiosity choose to embrace life while it is thrust upon us in spite of all of the negative aspects. Life is a once-only chance to experience what there is to be experienced before becoming nothing, which it is certain we will get to experience. Not only that, but death is within our power to have whenever we would wish if the experiencing of life should become too adverse.

Therefore, one should live without fear of death, living life to the maximum as long as one can put up with its adversities; and one

SECTION 14 – ON BEING AND NON-BEING, LIFE AND DEATH

should embrace death when one chooses its release or when it comes on its own.