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**“Mortal Harm and Mortal Fear”**

**Abstract:**

What do we talk about when we talk about fear of death? Contemporary philosophers of death don't talk much about it at all. More worryingly, though, when they do, what they say is often inadequate, self-undermining, or ambiguous, or so I will contend. The explanation for this, I believe, stems from philosophy of death's focus on so-called "mortal harm" issues: whether, why, and to what extent death is bad for the person who dies. Questions about the rationality and intelligibility of fear of death are treated as secondary to and contingent on the resolution of mortal harm questions; i.e. our attitude towards death is or ought to be governed by the presumed threat that death poses to our well-being, or so it is assumed. In practice, however, discussion and even relative consensus on some mortal harm issues has not resulted in any comparable clarity on fear of death; mortal harm theories cannot account for fear of death of a certain order. In the end, I will suggest, we cannot begin to do full justice to fear of death unless we detach it from theories about the badness of death.