

[Made in response to u/Shawnix85's post in r/Existentialism]

Hey there, I've also recently been going through the same terrors as you have been. I'm really sorry that this has rocked you for so long. As others have said, this terror is one shared with our understanding given by being humans.

I don't know if what I can provide will help for you, but it did for me. I don't fully feel like myself, or a continuation of what I was like fully since before having that terrifying "epiphany" of contemplating eternal oblivion. However, I do feel like I am on a path towards feeling comfortable again, and towards merging with the same path of "feeling" as I had before.

Firstly, I'd recommend watching and listening to some of Alan Watts. He uses a lot of intellectualist words, but I found his logical pathways towards thinking about this topic to be helpful for me. This video was the first I watched that included him, and it's one I watched repeatedly when the terror arose again: <https://youtu.be/IdEA5zc-zIU>

Secondly, let me discuss the some perspectives on this that have somewhat helped me. Maybe they won't for you, and maybe don't read past this if the idea of time possibly not existing / breaking down would freak you out more. Sorry you had to read that if so, lol.

I want to understand this terror I feel from a logical point of view, at least firstly – as it stems from my understanding of death in the physical, material and pragmatic world view I've garnered from the sciences.

Here is a path I have gone down, one that helps me.

Life, in a very true way, is perception. If I don't exist, I don't perceive. If I don't perceive time, time can't exist. It all condenses or stretches into a single "thing" of non existence. If I don't perceive the world around me, like literally in any fashion, it can't actually exist. To me, this appears to be true. If there is no way, no senses, to perceive and experience – to the viewer, in factual reality, nothing exists and time doesn't move on or even begin.

As I explored my fear of oblivion and non existence, I learned that much of it related to the thought of loss. Loss of existing. Loss of memories. Loss of my personality. Loss of my place. You're right, having lived – it makes death very different than not having been born. At least from a perspective point of view. Death is losing everything that exists, if you view it as loss.

However, if I die and time breaks down for me. If it ceases to exist. So does everything, and nothing. In a weird way, nothing ever exists or has existed in that point of view. If there was time before I was born, time where I lived, and time after my death – it all loses any manifestation once the perception of time and space cease.

So, nothing existed once I die. It's not a loss of myself, and of the world around me, etc. It will have never been a thing. It never HAS been a thing. Nothing is lost because nothing was created.

(Its weird to think about because, of course, right now things DO exist and have always existed. However, when a person dies I see it as two things being completely true; One, the world continues to exist for others – In the perspective of the other, you have existed and you have died, and the world will remain a fact. And also, at the same time, from the dead's point of view – or lack there of – nothing ever existed and nothing was lost. Two states of reality / lack of reality are factual. It only exists because it is perceived. Interestingly, and separately might I add, I found that this actually lines up with our current understanding of quantum physics in certain ways)

Branching off of the previous path I had gone down, another came up for me.

If life is perceiving, existing – then that means there IS SOMETHING. This may be weird to point out, but I bring it up because of a thought process. Have you ever considered why there is something, rather than nothing? Like, I'm typing this on my computer, which is made up of stuff that exists in something called space. And I perceive that. In our current understanding of the universe, it tends to roll towards entropy and wanting for things to cease. So why does something exist, rather than nothing? It's just weird right? We DO experience, rather than NOT-us NOT-perceiving NOTHING.

So, considering SOMETHING does EXIST. That means that NOTHING DOESN'T. That isn't saying that nothing isn't real. That is saying that nothing doesn't exist – as that is the fact and state of "nothing."

So, just perhaps, considering that something exists rather than nothing not existing, perception after death MAY continue. I'm considering this from a logical point of view. Not to say that it is guaranteed or even fully scientific to think so. However, considering something DOES exist, something IS perceived, can it end? Can something not exist considering nothing doesn't exist as well?

If perception is a fact of, well, whatever this all is – then perception would just somehow continue being a fact. Maybe memories don't carry, maybe personality doesn't carry, maybe nothing carries but perception. However, looking at it from that possibility (and to me it feels fairly logical, though not definite, to look at it like so), death isn't the end of this whole thing.

This isn't meant to be spiritual. Maybe perception is all there is, and so therefore it doesn't end. Whether that means something else somehow exists for this perception after human death, or that all of perception feels as though it continues due to time breaking down in a way where the end of time is not a thing for it – I don't know.

That could in a weird way be considered an afterlife, if perception continues while time also continues.

I want to get cemented in this, as what I see as, logical reasoning before I believe in a spiritual afterlife. If I believe in one, I want it to be true to my understanding. I don't want to use the idea of an afterlife as a support or way to ease fear – though I don't at all knock anyone else for doing so. Maybe I'll believe in one in the future. I did in the past. But I want it to be from true faith, not from fear.