

Episode 270 - Life Is Desirable, But Unlimited Time Contains No Greater Pleasure Than Limited Time

Post by "Joshua" of March 9, 2025 at 6:51 PM

Quote

Apparently Democritus held that the soul may continue to exist for at least some period of time after death.

Perhaps, but as we discussed Democritus' views regarding death are open to interpretation. It's possible that he believed that corpses were capable of perception for a time while the atoms of the soul gradually dissipate after death. Another interpretation holds that Democritus was only commenting on 'apparent corpses', bodies that seem dead to all appearances but still cling to life in ways not easily perceptible to the senses. To put it in modern language, a person who shows no vital signs might not yet be brain dead, and might still be producing measurable brain activity even without respiration or blood circulation.

So for Democritus the precise line between life and death is not clear. However, once a person is truly and completely dead, all perception has ceased. He did not believe in life after death.

An Epicurean might say that "the soul dies with the body". Democritus might say that "the soul and the body both die, but the precise moment of either death is uncertain."

Would Epicurus disagree with this? If at bodily death the atomic compound of the soul disaggregates into atoms, is this process uniform and instantaneous? This might be the kind of question Democritus is asking.