

# Episode Thirty-Four - The Atoms Do Not Possess A Faculty of Sensation

Post by "Cassius" of September 1, 2020 at 11:00 AM

Great topics to discuss Tim! I bet [Don](#) would agree with me that this is similar to what we're currently discussing here: [Stoic Objections to Epicurean Doctrine on Infinity of The Universe](#)

Here is the way I would begin to unwind your statement:

## [Quote from timrobbe](#)

I think it was Bernard Shaw who stated that given enough time, a monkey would type a copy of Shakespearean works. Eternity would certainly be enough time.

This is almost exactly what Don and I are discussing, and my view is that Epicurus would NOT take this position. Yes over an eternity of time and an infinity of space and innumerable number of things are going to happen, but at the same time Epicurus was very focused on limits and bounds and that "everything" is not possible given simply time and space. That's a very important issue to discuss and I hope others will chime in but for the moment I just want to raise it.

## [Quote from timrobbe](#)

I understand Epicurus deduced God(s) must exist because atoms and void are both eternal and limitless (leading to PD 1).

No, I do not think that Epicurus deduced that gods must exist because atoms and void are both eternal and limitless -- at least, that is only a relatively small part of the analysis. Important, yes, because it is important to everything, but as to the existence of "Gods" we have a couple of very specific lines of reasoning that are basically along the lines of (1) anticipations, as explained by Velleius in Cicero's "On the Nature of the Gods" and (2) images of the gods, which is referenced in Lucretius. Again here I would refer you to the much longer discussion of this in DeWitt's book. Do you have a copy of that? If not, let me know. But I think the main point is that there is a lot more to the "god" story than the eternal/limitless nature of the universe. I don't think there is anything in Epicurean theory that requires that gods exist purely because the universe is infinite and eternal.

[Quote from timrobbe](#)

Given that atoms and the void (and the swerve) are eternal and limitless, it is an almost certainty that after death our atoms once again will eventually form out bodies and minds again.

This argument appears in Lucretius but not in the form of admitting that it is true, but by saying that EVEN IF it were true, it would make no difference to us, since we can't remember past lives. That's not the same as saying that it is an absolute certainty, but I can see how someone could argue that, especially from a Nietzschean "eternal recurrence" perspective.

OK back to Lucretius - this occurs near the end of book three -- here, the HUMPHRIES version:

[Death Is nothing to us](#), has no relevance

To our condition, seeing that the mind  
Is mortal. Just as, long ago, we felt  
Not the least touch of trouble when the wars  
Were raging all around the shaken earth  
And from all sides the Carthaginian hordes  
Poured forth to battle, and no man ever knew  
Whose subject he would be in life or death,  
Which doom, by land or sea, would strike him down,  
So, when we cease to be, and body and soul,  
Which joined to make us one, have gone their ways,  
Their separate ways, nothing at all can shake  
Our feelings, not if earth were mixed with sea  
Or sea with sky. Perhaps the mind or spirit,  
After its separation from our body,  
Has some sensation; what is that to us?  
Nothing at all, for what we knew of being,  
Essence, identity, oneness, was derived

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1673-episode-thirty-four-the-atoms-do-not-possess-a-faculty-of-sensation/?postID=8781#post8781>

From body's union with spirit, so, if time,  
After our death, should some day reunite  
All of our present particles, bring them back  
To where they now reside, give us once more  
The light of life, this still would have no meaning  
For us, with our self-recollection gone.  
As we are now, we lack all memory  
Of what we were before, suffer no wound  
From those old days. Look back on all that space  
Of time's immensity, consider well  
What infinite combinations there have been  
In matter's ways and groupings. How easy, then,  
For human beings to believe we are  
Compounded of the very selfsame motes,  
Arranged exactly in the selfsame ways  
As once we were, our long-ago, our now  
Being identical. And yet we keep  
No memory of that once-upon-a-time,  
Nor can we call it back; somewhere between  
A break occurred, and all our atoms went  
Wandering here and there and far away  
From our sensations. If there lies ahead  
Tough luck for any man, he must be there,  
Himself, to feel its evil, but since death  
Removes this chance, and by injunction stops  
All rioting of woes against our state,

We may be reassured that in our death  
We have no cause for fear, we cannot be  
Wretched in nonexistence. Death alone  
Has immortality, and takes away  
Our mortal life. It does not matter a bit  
If we once lived before.