

Episode Forty - The Mind and Spirit Are Bodily, Composed of Very Fine Atoms

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Podcast 40 - The Mind and Spirit Are Bodily, Composed of Very Fine Atoms

Welcome to Episode Forty of Lucretius Today.

I am your host Cassius, and together with my panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. Be aware that none of us are professional philosophers, and everyone here is a self-taught Epicurean. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book, "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

Before we start, here are three ground rules.

First: Our aim is to bring you an accurate presentation of [classical Epicurean philosophy](#) as the ancient Epicureans understood it, which may or may not agree with what you here about Epicurus at other places today.

Second: We aren't talking about Lucretius with the goal of promoting any modern political perspective. Epicurus must be understood on his own, and not in terms of competitive schools which may seem similar to Epicurus, but are fundamentally different and incompatible, such as Stoicism, Humanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Atheism, and Marxism.

Third: The essential base of Epicurean philosophy is a fundamental view of the nature of the universe. When you read the words of Lucretius you will find that Epicurus did not teach the pursuit of virtue or of luxury or of simple living. or science, as ends in themselves, but rather the pursuit of pleasure. From this perspective it is **feeling** which is the guide to life, and not supernatural gods, idealism, or virtue ethics. And as important as anything else, Epicurus taught that there is no life after death, and that any happiness we will ever have must come in THIS life, which is why it is so important not to waste time in confusion.

Now let's join the discussion with today's text:

Latin Text Location 161 - 257

Munro Notes:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1716-episode-forty-the-mind-and-spirit-are-bodily-composed-of-very-fine-atoms/?postID=9297#post9297>

161 -176 : the animus and anima are therefore bodily also, since they can move and direct the body ; for this cannot be without touch nor touch without body : the animus too suffers with the body, when the latter is wounded : it must then be bodily, since it suffers from bodily weapons.

177 - 230 : the animus consists of very small round atoms, which can move with extreme celerity and ease; for nothing is so swift as thought : of visible things those which move most easily, as water, are composed of very small round elements : those of the animus then must be eminently subtle. Again the fineness and smallness of the substance of the animus and anima are shewn by this : after death, when they have left the body, it is not perceptibly diminished in size or weight; you may compare it with wine whose flavour is gone, or the like : the elements which compose this flavour are very minute; and their absence does not lessen the weight and bulk of the wine.

231 - 257: the animus is made up of spirit heat air and a fourth nameless substance, the finest and most nimble that can be conceived and made of the smallest and finest atoms : from it comes the beginning of sensation which thence spreads through the several parts of the body : the least pain or hurt, if it reach to this substance, will destroy life at once.

Browne:

This mind can think of itself alone, and of itself rejoice, when the soul and body are no ways affected; as when the head or the eye is hurt by sensible pain, we are not tormented over all the body, so the mind is sometimes grieved or cheered with joy, when the other part, the soul, diffused through the limbs, is agitated with no new motion at all. But when the mind is shaking with violent fear, we see the soul through all the limbs partakes of the same disorder. Cold sweats and paleness spread all of the body over, the tongue falters, the speech fails, the eyes grow dim, the ears tingle, and the limbs quake. In short, we often see men fall down from a terror of the mind, from whence we may easily conclude that the soul is united with the mind, and when she is pressed forcibly with its impulse, then she drives on the body, and puts it in motion.

By this rule therefore we find that the nature of the mind and soul is corporeal, for we see it shakes the limbs, rouses the body from sleep, changes the countenance, and directs and governs the whole man. (Nothing of which can be done without touch, and there can be no Touch without body.) Should we not then allow that the mind and soul are corporeal in their nature? Besides, you see the Mind suffers with the body, and bears a share with it and all it endures; if the violent force of a dart pierces the body, and shatters the bones and nerves, though death does not instantly follow, yet a faintness succeeds, and a sort of pleasing desire of sinking into the ground, a passionate resolution to die, and then again the will fluctuates and wishes to live: the Mind therefore must needs be of a corporeal nature, because It suffers pain by the stroke of darts, which we know are bodies.

I shall now go on to explain clearly of what sort of body this mind consists, and of what principles it is formed. And first I say that the mind is composed of very subtle and minute seeds; that it is so, attend closely, and you will find that nothing is accomplished with so much

speed as what the mind attempts, and proposes to execute. The Mind therefore is swifter in its motion than anything in nature we can see or conceive. But that which is so exceedingly quick to move must consist of the roundest and most minute seeds, that may be set a-going by the lightest impulse. So water is moved and disposed to flow by ever so little force, because it is composed of small and slippery seeds; but the nature of Honey is more tenacious, its moisture is more unactive, and its motion slower; its principles stick closer among themselves; and for this reason, because it consists of seeds not so smooth, so subtle, and so round. And thus a large heap of poppy seeds is blown away by the gentlest breath of wind, and scattered abroad; but no blast can shake a heap of stones or darts. Therefore the smoother and smaller the principles of bodies are, the more easily they are disposed to motion, and the heavier and rougher the seeds are, the more fixed and stable they remain.

Since therefore the nature of the mind is so exceedingly apt to move, it must needs consist of small, smooth, and round seeds; and your knowing this, my sweet youth, will be found of great use, and very seasonable for your future inquiries. This will discover clearly to you its nature, of what tenuous parts it is formed, and how small a space it might be contained, if it could be squeezed together. For when the calm of death has possession of a man, and the mind and soul are retired, you will find nothing taken away from the body as to its bulk; nothing as to its weight. Death leaves everything complete, except the vital sense and the warm breath; the whole soul therefore must needs be formed a very small seed, as it lies diffused through the veins, the bowels, and the nerves; because when it has wholly left every part of the body, the outward shape of the limbs remains entire, and they want not a hair of their weight. And this is the nature of wine, when the flavor of it is gone, and of ointments, when their sweet odors are evaporated into air. And thus it is, when any moisture perspires through the pores of the body, the bulk does not appear less to the eye, upon that account, nor is there anything taken off from the weight; for many and small are the seeds that compose the moisture and the smell in the contexture of all bodies. And therefore we may well assured that the nature of the mind and soul is formed of exceeding little principles, because when it leaves the body, it detracts nothing from the weight.

Munro:

It by itself alone knows for itself, rejoices for itself, at times when the impression does not move either soul or body together with it. And as when some part of us, the head or the eye, suffers from an attack of pain, we do not feel the anguish at the same time over the whole body, thus the mind sometimes suffers pain by itself or is inspirited with joy, when all the rest of the soul throughout the limbs and frame is stirred by no novel sensation. But when the mind is excited by some more vehement apprehension, we see the whole soul feel in unison through all the limbs, sweats and paleness spreadover the whole body, the tongue falter, the voice die away, a mist cover the eyes, the ears ring, the limbs sink under one; in short we often see men drop down from terror of mind; so that anybody may easily perceive from this that the soul is closely united with the mind, and, when it has been smitten by the influence of the mind, forthwith pushes and strikes the body.

This same principle teaches that the nature of the mind and soul is bodily; for when it is seen to push the limbs, rouse the body from sleep, and alter the countenance and guide and turn about the whole man, and when we see that none of these effects can take place without touch nor touch without body, must we not admit that the mind and the soul are of a bodily nature? Again you perceive that our mind in our body suffers together with the body and feels in unison with it. When a weapon with a shudder-causing force has been driven in and has laid bare bones and sinews within the body, if it does not take life, yet there ensues a faintness and a lazy sinking to the ground and on the ground the turmoil of mind which arises, and sometimes a kind of undecided inclination to get up. Therefore the nature of the mind must be bodily, since it suffers from bodily weapons and blows.

I will now go on to explain in my verses of what kind of body the mind consists and out of what it is formed. First of all I say that it is extremely fine and formed of exceedingly minute bodies. That this is so you may, if you please to attend, clearly perceive from what follows: nothing that is seen takes place with a velocity equal to that of the mind when it starts some suggestion and actually sets it a-going; the mind therefore is stirred with greater rapidity than any of the things whose nature stands out visible to sight. But that which is so passing nimble, must consist of seeds exceedingly round and exceedingly minute, in order to be stirred and set in motion by a small moving power. Thus water is moved and heaves by ever so small a force, formed as it is of small particles apt to roll. But on the other hand the nature of honey is more sticky, its liquid more sluggish and its movement more dilatory; for the whole mass of matter coheres more closely, because sure enough it is made of bodies not so smooth fine and round. A breeze however gentle and light can force, as you may see, a high heap of poppy seed to be blown away from the top downwards; but on the other hand eurus itself cannot move a heap of stones. Therefore bodies possess a power of moving in proportion to their smallness and smoothness; and on the other hand the greater weight and roughness bodies prove to have, the more stable they are.

Since then the nature of the mind has been found to be eminently easy to move, it must consist of bodies exceedingly small smooth and round. The knowledge of which fact, my good friend, will on many accounts prove useful and be serviceable to you. The following fact too likewise demonstrates how fine the texture is of which its nature is composed, and how small the room is in which it can be contained, could it only be collected into one mass: soon as the untroubled sleep of death has gotten hold of a man and the nature of the mind and soul has withdrawn, you can perceive then no diminution of the entire body either in appearance or weight: death makes all good save the vital sense and heat. Therefore the whole soul must consist of very small seeds and be in woven through veins and flesh and sinews; inasmuch as after it has all withdrawn from the whole body, the exterior contour of the limbs preserves itself entire and not a tittle of the weight is lost. Just in the same way when the flavor of wine is gone or when the delicious aroma of a perfume has been dispersed into the air or when the savor has left some body, yet the thing itself does not therefore look smaller to the eye, nor does aught seem to have been taken from the weight, because sure enough many minute seeds make up the saviors and the odor in the whole body of the several things. Therefore, again and again I say,

you are to know that the nature of the mind and the soul has been formed of exceedingly minute seeds, since at its departure it takes away none of the weight.

Bailey:

The mind alone by itself has understanding for itself and rejoices for itself, when no single thing stirs either soul or body. And just as, when head or eye hurts within us at the attack of pain, we are not tortured at the same time in all our body; so the mind sometimes feels pain by itself or waxes strong with joy, when all the rest of the soul through the limbs and frame is not roused by any fresh feeling. Nevertheless, when the understanding is stirred by some stronger fear, we see that the whole soul feels with it throughout the limbs, and then sweat and pallor break out over all the body, and the tongue is crippled and the voice is choked, the eyes grow misty, the ears ring, the limbs give way beneath us, and indeed we often see men fall down through the terror in their mind; so that any one may easily learn from this that the soul is linked in union with the mind; for when it is smitten by the force of the mind, straightway it strikes the body and pushes it on.

This same reasoning shows that the nature of mind and soul is bodily. For when it is seen to push on the limbs, to pluck the body from sleep, to change the countenance, and to guide and turn the whole man—none of which things we see can come to pass without touch, nor touch in its turn without body—must we not allow that mind and soul are formed of bodily nature? Moreover, you see that our mind suffers along with the body, and shares its feelings together in the body. If the shuddering shock of a weapon, driven within and laying bare bones and sinews, does not reach the life, yet faintness follows, and a pleasant swooning to the ground, and a turmoil of mind which comes to pass on the ground, and from time to time, as it were, a hesitating will to rise. Therefore it must needs be that the nature of the mind is bodily, since it is distressed by the blow of bodily weapons.

Now of what kind of body this mind is, and of what parts it is formed, I will go on to give account to you in my discourse. First of all I say that it is very fine in texture, and is made and formed of very tiny particles. That this is so, if you give attention, you may be able to learn from this. Nothing is seen to come to pass so swiftly as what the mind pictures to itself coming to pass and starts to do itself. Therefore the mind bestirs itself more quickly than any of the things whose nature is manifest for all to see. But because it is so very nimble, it is bound to be formed of exceeding round and exceeding tiny seeds, so that its particles may be able to move when smitten by a little impulse. For so water moves and oscillates at the slightest impulse, seeing it is formed of little particles, quick to roll. But, on the other hand, the nature of honey is more stable, its fluid more sluggish, and its movement more hesitating; for the whole mass of its matter clings more together, because, we may be sure, it is not formed of bodies so smooth, nor so fine and round. For a light trembling breath can constrain a high heap of poppy-seed to scatter from top to bottom before your eyes: but, on the other hand, a pile of stones or corn-ears it can by no means separate. Therefore, in proportion as bodies are tinier and smoother, so they are gifted with nimbleness. But, on the other hand, all things that are found to be of greater weight or more spiky, the more firm set they are.

Now, therefore, since the nature of the mind has been found nimble beyond the rest, it must needs be formed of bodies exceeding small and smooth and round. And this truth, when known to you, will in many things, good friend, prove useful, and will be reckoned of service. This fact, too, declares the nature of the mind, of how thin a texture it is formed, and in how small a place it might be contained, could it be gathered in a mass; that as soon as the unruffled peace of death has laid hold on a man, and the nature of mind and soul has passed away, you could discern nothing there, that sight or weight can test, stolen from the entire body; death preserves all save the feeling of life, and some warm heat. And so it must needs be that the whole soul is made of very tiny seeds, and is linked on throughout veins, flesh, and sinews; inasmuch as, when it is all already gone from the whole body, yet the outer contour of the limbs is preserved unbroken, nor is a jot of weight wanting. Even so it is, when the flavour of wine has passed away or when the sweet breath of a perfume is scattered to the air, or when its savour is gone from some body; still the thing itself seems not a whit smaller to the eyes on that account, nor does anything seem withdrawn from its weight, because, we may be sure, many tiny seeds go to make flavours and scent in the whole body of things. Wherefore once and again you may know that the nature of the understanding and the soul is formed of exceeding tiny seeds, since when it flees away it carries with it no jot of weight.