

# Episode Twelve - Nothing But Combinations Of Matter And Void

**Post by "Cassius" of March 22, 2020 at 6:46 PM**

Welcome to Episode Twelve of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, the author of "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

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 with today's episode let me remind you of our three ground rules: 1: Our focus is on [Classical Epicurean Philosophy](#) as the ancient Epicureans understood it, not on how modern commentators interpret it today. 2. Our approach is "Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean," and we aren't going to try to sell you Stoicism, Humanism, Buddhism, or Marxism. Epicurus was unique and we aren't going to put him in a box of conventional modern morality. 3. We don't approach Epicurus as either a minimalist or as a hedonist or an atheist as those terms are commonly used. We're going to study Epicurean philosophy exactly as Lucretius taught it, and that means that feeling - pleasure and pain - are the guides that Nature gave us to live by, not gods, idealism, or virtue ethics, and it also means that supernatural does not exist, which means there's no life after death, and any happiness we'll ever have comes in THIS life, which is why it is so important not to waste time in confusion.

In episode twelve we will continue our discussion of the void, and introduce the issue of the properties and qualities of material things, and what that means for issues such as time, and for existence and non-existence. We will be discussing this over several episodes, and we hope you'll join us as we continue through Book One.

Now let's get started with today's discussion, with Charles reading the first part of today's text, followed by Elayne with the second part:

Here is the text that will be covered in Episode Twelve. The Latin version of Book One has this as beginning at approximately line 330 of the [Munro Latin Edition here](#).

**[Review the prior sections of Book 1 of Daniel Browne by clicking here.](#)**

[1743 Daniel Browne Edition \(click link for English and Latin\):](#)

[401] I could by many arguments confirm this system of a void, and fix your faith to what I say, but these small tracks I have drawn, to such a searching mind, will be enough; the rest you may find out without a guide. For as staunch hounds, once put upon the foot, will by nose soon rouse the mountain game from their thick covers, so you, in things like these, will one thing by another trace, will hunt for truth in every dark recess, and draw her thence.

[411] But if you doubt, or in the least object to what I say, I freely promise this, my Memmius, my tuneful tongue shall, from the mighty store that fills my heart, pour out such plenteous draughts from the deep springs, that tardy age I fear will first creep through my limbs, and quite break down the gates of life, before I can explain in verse the many arguments that give a light to one particular. But now I shall go on to finish regularly what I begun.

[420] All nature therefore, in itself considered, is one of these, is body or is space, in which all things are placed, and from which the various motions of all beings spring. That there is body common sense will show, this as a fundamental truth must be allowed, or there is nothing we can fix as certain in our pursuit of hidden things, by which to find the Truth, or prove it when 'tis found. Then if there were no place or space, we call it void, bodies would have no where to be, nor could they move at all, as we have fully proved to you before.

[431] Besides, there is nothing you can strictly say, "It is neither body nor void," which you may call a third degree of things distinct from these. For every being must in quantity be more or less; and if it can be touched, though ne'er so small or light, it must be body, and so esteemed; but if it can't be touched, and has not in itself a power to stop the course of other bodies as they pass, this is the void we call an empty space.

[439] Again, whatever is must either act itself, or be by other agents acted on; or must be something in which other bodies must have a place and move; but nothing without body can act, or be acted on; and where can this be done, but in a vacuum or empty space? Therefore, beside what body is or space, no third degree in nature can be found, nothing that ever can affect our sense, or by the power of thought can be conceived. All other things you'll find essential conjuncts, or else the events or accidents of these. I call essential conjunct what's so joined to a thing that it cannot, without fatal violence, be forced or parted from it; is weight to stones, to fire heat, moisture to the Sea, touch to all bodies, and not to be touched essential is to void. But, on the contrary, Bondage, Liberty, Riches, Poverty, War, Concord, or the like, which not affect the nature of the thing, but when they come or go, the thing remains entire; these, as it is fit we should, we call Events.

[460] Time likewise of itself is nothing; our sense collects from things themselves what has been done long since, the thing that present is, and what's to come. For no one, we must own, ever thought of Time distinct from things in motion or at rest.

[465] For when the poets sing of Helen's rape, or of the Trojan State subdued by war, we must not say that these things do exist now in themselves, since Time, irrevocably past, has long since swept away that race of men that were the cause of those events; for every act is either properly the event of things, or of the places where those things are done.

[472] Further, if things were not of matter formed, were there no place or space where things might act, the fire that burned in Paris' heart, blown up by love of Helen's beauty, had never raised the famous contests of a cruel war; nor had the wooden horse set Troy on fire, discharging from his belly in the night the armed Greeks: from whence you plainly see that actions do not of themselves subsist, as bodies do, nor are in nature such as is a void, but rather are more justly called the events of body, and of space, where things are carried on.

### Munro:

[401] And many more arguments I may state to you in order to accumulate proof on my words; but these slight footprints are enough for a keen-searching mind to enable you by yourself to find out all the rest. For as dogs often discover by smell the lair of a mountain-ranging wild beast though covered over with leaves, when once they have got on the sure tracks, thus you in cases like this will be able by yourself alone to see one thing after another and find your way into all dark corners and draw forth the truth.

[411] But if you lag or swerve a jot from the reality, this I can promise you, Memmius, without more ado: such plenteous draughts from abundant wellsprings my sweet tongue shall pour from my richly furnished breast, that I fear slow age will steal over our limbs and break open in us the fastnesses of life, ere the whole store of reasons on any one question has by my verses been dropped into your ears. But now to resume the thread of the design which I am weaving in verse.

[420] All nature then, as it exists by itself, is founded on two things: there are bodies and there is void in which these bodies are placed and through which they move about. For that body exists by itself the general feeling of man kind declares; and unless at the very first belief in this be firmly grounded, there will be nothing to which we can appeal on hidden things in order to prove anything by reasoning of mind. Then again, if room and space which we call void did not exist, bodies could not be placed anywhere nor move about at all to any side; as we have demonstrated to you a little before.

[431] Moreover there is nothing which you can affirm to be at once separate from all body and quite distinct from void, which would so to say count as the discovery of a third nature. For whatever shall exist, this of itself must be something or other. Now if it shall admit of touch in however slight and small a measure, it will, be it with a large or be it with a little addition, provided it do exist, increase the amount of body and join the sum. But if it shall be intangible and unable to hinder any thing from passing through it on any side, this you are to know will be that which we call empty void.

[439] Again whatever shall exist by itself, will either do something or will itself suffer by the action of other things, or will be of such a nature as things are able to exist and go on in. But no thing can do and suffer without body, nor aught furnish room except void and vacancy. Therefore beside void and bodies no third nature taken by itself can be left in the number of things, either such as to fall at any time under the ken of our senses or such as any one can grasp by the reason of his mind. For whatever things are named, you will either find to be properties linked to these two things or you will see to be accidents of these things. That is a property which can in no case be disjoined and separated without utter destruction accompanying the severance, such as the weight of a stone, the heat of fire, the fluidity of water. Slavery on the other hand, poverty and riches, liberty war concord and all other things which may come and go while the nature of the thing remains unharmed, these we are wont, as it is right we should, to call accidents.

[460] Time also exists not by itself, but simply from the things which happen the sense apprehends what has been done in time past, as well as what is present and what is to follow after. And we must admit that no one feels time by itself abstracted from the motion and calm rest of things.

[465] So when they say that the daughter of Tyndarus was ravished and the Trojan nations were subdued in war, we must mind that they do not force us to admit that these things are by themselves, since those generations of men, of whom these things were accidents, time now gone by has irrevocably swept away. For whatever shall have been done may be termed an accident in one case of the Teucran people, in another of the countries simply.

[472] Yes for if there had been no matter of things and no room and space in which things severally go on, never had the fire, kindled by love of the beauty of Tyndarus' daughter, blazed beneath the Phrygian breast of Alexander and lighted up the famous struggles of cruel war, nor had the timber horse unknown to the Trojans wrapt Pergama in flames by its night-issuing brood of sons of the Greeks; so that you may clearly perceive that all actions from first to last exist not by themselves and are not by themselves in the way that body is, nor are terms of the same kind as void is, but are rather of such a kind that you may fairly call them accidents of body and of the room in which they severally go on.

### **Bailey:**

And besides by telling you many an instance, I can heap up proof for my words. But these light footprints are enough for a keen mind: by them you may detect the rest for yourself. For as dogs ranging over mountains often find by scent the lairs of wild beasts shrouded under leafage, when once they are set on sure traces of their track, so for yourself you will be able in such themes as this to see one thing after another, to win your way to all the secret places and draw out the truth thence.

[411] But if you are slack or shrink a little from my theme, this I can promise you, Memmius, on my own word: so surely will my sweet tongue pour forth to you bounteous draughts from the

deep well-springs out of the treasures of my heart, that I fear lest sluggish age creep over our limbs and loosen within us the fastenings of life, before that the whole store of proofs on one single theme be launched in my verses into your ears.

[420] But now, to weave again at the web, which is the task of my discourse, all nature then, as it is of itself, is built of these two things: for there are bodies and the void, in which they are placed and where they move hither and thither. For that body exists is declared by the feeling which all share alike; and unless faith in this feeling be firmly grounded at once and prevail, there will be naught to which we can make appeal about things hidden, so as to prove aught by the reasoning of the mind. And next, were there not room and empty space, which we call void, nowhere could bodies be placed, nor could they wander at all hither and thither in any direction; and this I have above shown to you but a little while before.

[431] Besides these there is nothing which you could say is parted from all body and sundered from void, which could be discovered, as it were a third nature in the list. For whatever shall exist, must needs be something in itself; and if it suffer touch, however small and light, it will increase the count of body by a bulk great or maybe small, if it exists at all, and be added to its sum. But if it is not to be touched, inasmuch as it cannot on any side check anything from wandering through it and passing on its way, in truth it will be that which we call empty void.

[439] Or again, whatsoever exists by itself, will either do something or suffer itself while other things act upon it, or it will be such that things may exist and go on in it. But nothing can do or suffer without body, nor afford room again, unless it be void and empty space. And so besides void and bodies no third nature by itself can be left in the list of things, which might either at any time fall within the purview of our senses, or be grasped by any one through reasoning of the mind. For all things that have a name, you will find either properties linked to these two things or you will see them to be their accidents. That is a property which in no case can be sundered or separated without the fatal disunion of the thing, as is weight to rocks, heat to fire, moisture to water, touch to all bodies, intangibility to the void. On the other hand, slavery, poverty, riches, liberty, war, concord, and other things by whose coming and going the nature of things abides untouched, these we are used, as is natural, to call accidents.

[460] Even so time exists not by itself, but from actual things comes a feeling, what was brought to a close in time past, then what is present now, and further what is going to be hereafter. And it must be avowed that no man feels time by itself apart from the motion or quiet rest of things.

[465] Then again, when men say that 'the rape of Tyndarus's daughter', or 'the vanquishing of the Trojan tribes in war' are things, beware that they do not perchance constrain us to avow that these things exist in themselves, just because the past ages have carried off beyond recall those races of men, of whom, in truth, these were the accidents. For firstly, we might well say that whatsoever has happened is an accident in one case of the countries, in another even of the regions of space.

[472] Or again, if there had been no substance of things nor place and space, in which all things are carried on, never would the flame of love have been fired by the beauty of Tyndaris, nor swelling deep in the Phrygian heart of Alexander have kindled the burning battles of savage war, nor unknown of the Trojans would the timber horse have set Pergama aflame at dead of night, when the sons of the Greeks issued from its womb. So that you may see clearly that all events from first to last do not exist, and are not by themselves like body, nor can they be spoken of in the same way as the being of the void, but rather so that you might justly call them the accidents of body and place, in which they are carried on, one and all.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of March 29, 2020 at 7:34 AM**

**[ADMIN NOTE: The material below will be discussed in Episode 13, rather than 12:]**

Today's discussion of Lucretius (Episode 12) contains a couple of really deep issues worth noting before we start:

1) The difference between the PROPERTIES of atoms that are unchanging, and The QUALITIES of BODIES that do change and vary by situation. We are going to have to look closely at whether ATOMS have qualities, or whether only BODIES (combinations of atoms) have qualities, which I think is the case. We also need to look at the terminology because I personally think that EVENTS which is used by Daniel Brown (and closer to the Latin) is much better than ACCIDENTS as used by Munro and Bailey and many others.

## 4. Physics

Book 1 sets out the fundamental principles of Epicurean atomism.

1.149-482. First comes, in effect, Lucretius' ontology. Nothing comes into being out of nothing or perishes into nothing. The only two *per se* entities are body and void; all other existing things are inseparable or accidental properties of these (Lucretius' own terms for which are *coniuncta* and *eventa* respectively). Two further items that might be suspected of existing independently of any concurrently existing body or void, (1) time and (2) historical facts, are argued to be in fact existentially parasitic on the presently existing world, and thus not after all *per se* existents.

2) this section contains the very interesting discussion of the Helen / Trojan war reference, and gathering what it means is not easy. I think he is using this to again get at the issue of "Existence" and what that word means. I think he is saying that we need to be careful to make sure we do not think that the story of the Trojan war "exists" as some archetype or in another dimension, and he argues that by saying that the events of the Trojan war are long gone and no longer "exist" in real form.

3) Last point maybe is to point out that he says that TIME does not exist except as a function of the movement of bodies. That one may actually be easier, and this is mentioned in the letter to Herodotus that we can compare.

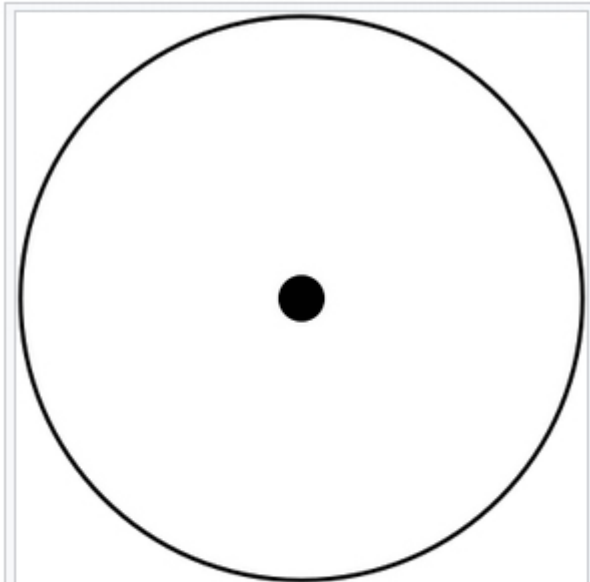
### Quote

Moreover, you must firmly grasp this point as well; we must not look for time, as we do for all other things which we look for in an object, by referring them to the general conceptions which we perceive in our own minds, but we must take the direct intuition, in accordance with which we speak of "a long time" or "a short time," and examine it, applying our intuition to time as we do to other things. Neither must we search for expressions as likely to be better, but employ just those which are in common use about it. Nor again must we predicate of time anything else as having the same essential nature as this special perception, as some people do, but we must turn our thoughts particularly to that only with which we associate this peculiar perception and by which we measure it. For indeed this requires no demonstration, but only reflection, to show that it is with days and nights and their divisions that we associate it and likewise also with internal feelings or absence of feeling, and with movements and

states of rest; in connection with these last again we think of this very perception as a peculiar kind of accident, and in virtue of this we call it time.

There are lots of aspects of all this to consider but one is "Who would argue that 'actions of themselves subsist, as bodies do, or are in nature (such as is a void)?"

Is that a reference to Platonism?



The circled dot was used by the Pythagoreans and later Greeks to represent the first metaphysical being, the **Monad** or **The Absolute**

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monism)


## Interpretations [ edit ]

The traditional interpretation of Parmenides' work is that he argued that the everyday perception of reality of the physical world (as described in *doxa*) is mistaken, and that the reality of the world is 'One Being' (as described in *aletheia*): an unchanging, ungenerated, indestructible whole. Under the *Way of Opinion*, Parmenides set out a contrasting but more conventional view of the world, thereby becoming an early exponent of the duality of appearance and reality. For him and his pupils, the phenomena of movement and change are simply appearances of a changeless, eternal reality.

Parmenides was not struggling to formulate the laws of conservation of mass and conservation of energy; he was struggling with the metaphysics of change, which is still a relevant philosophical topic today. Moreover, he argued that movement was impossible because it requires moving into "the void", and Parmenides identified "the void" with nothing, and therefore (by definition) it does not exist. That which does exist is *The Parmenidean One*.

Since existence is an immediately intuited fact, non-existence is the wrong path because a thing cannot disappear, just as something cannot originate from nothing. In such mystical experience (*unio mystica*), however, the distinction between subject and object disappears along with the distinctions between objects, in addition to the fact that if nothing cannot be, it cannot be the object of thought either:



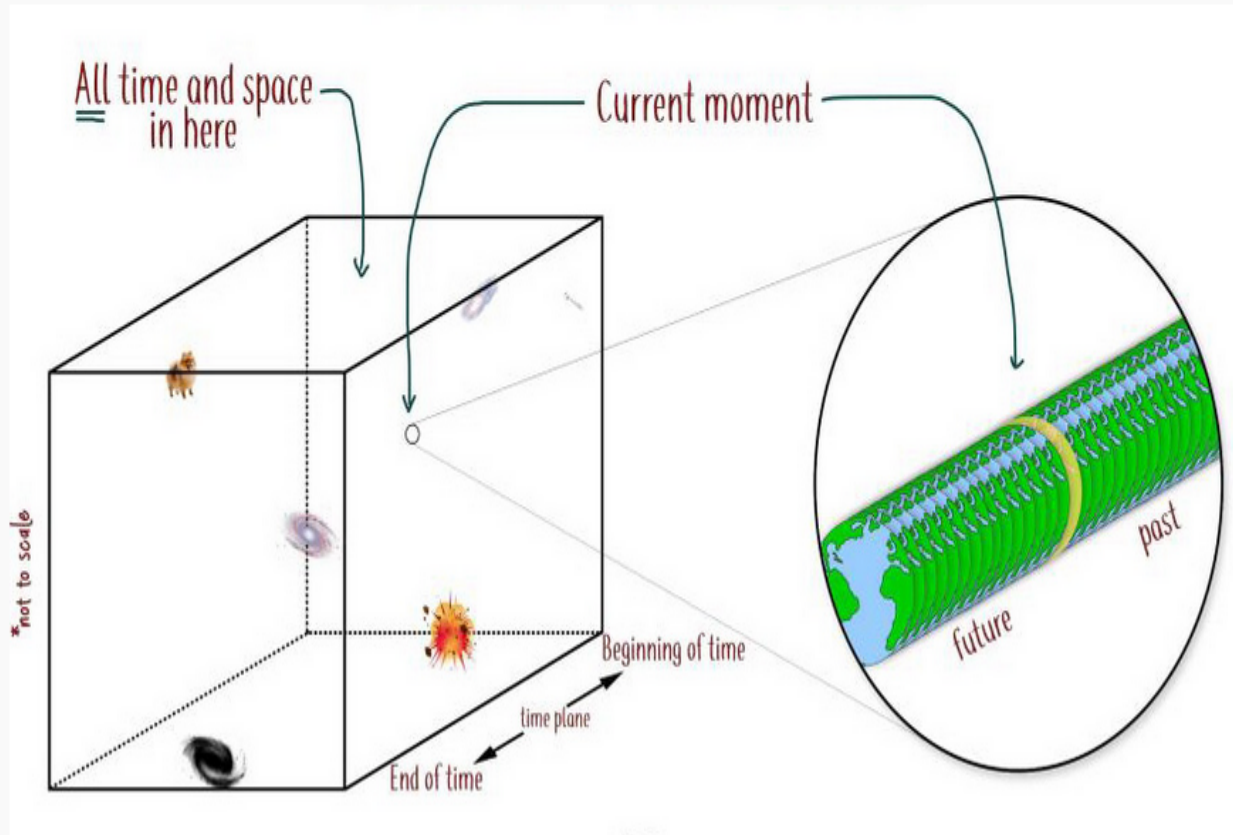
Being according to Parmenides is like a sphere. 

# The block universe theory, where time travel is possible but time passing is an illusion

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ABC Science By Dr Kristie Miller for Catalyst

Posted 1 September 2018 at 3:17 pm



The block universe: it contains everything that has ever happened and will happen at any time and at any place. (ABC Science)

# Growing block universe

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

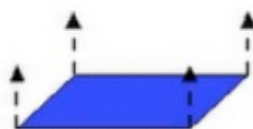
According to the **growing block universe theory of time** (or the **growing block view**), the past and present exist while the future does not. The present is an objective property, to be compared with a moving spotlight. By the passage of time more of the world comes into being; therefore, the block universe is said to be growing. The growth of the block is supposed to happen in the present, a very thin slice of spacetime, where more of spacetime is continually coming into being.

The growing block view is an alternative to both eternalism (according to which past, present, and future all exist) and presentism (according to which only the present exists). It is held to be closer to common-sense intuitions than the alternatives. C. D. Broad was a proponent of the theory (1923). Some modern defenders are Michael Tooley (in 1997) and Peter Forrest (in 2004).

<https://www.preposterousuniverse.com/blog/2015/04/0...eality-of-time/>

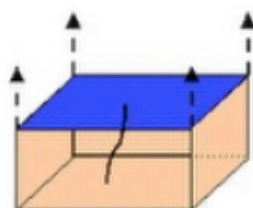
## 3 METAPHYSICS OF TIME

**Presentism**  
"Nowism"



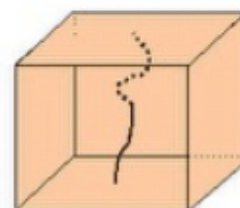
The Present

**Possibilism**  
"The Tree Model"



Past & Present

**Eternalism**  
"The Block Universe"



Past, Present, & Future

### **Post by “Cassius” of March 30, 2020 at 2:51 PM**

Episode Twelve - Nothing But Combinations Of Matter and Void - has now been released. Our full panel begins the discussion of the implications of the Epicurean doctrine that all things are composed of matter and void. Please let us know your comments below, and if you have questions, please let us know and we will work to address them either here or in the next podcast.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/24645933>

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### **Post by “Don” of April 2, 2020 at 10:21 PM**

Very good episode. I wanted to thank Julie in particular for sharing her background as I was also someone initially drawn just to the Ethics of the philosophy. That was the bread and butter as far as I was concerned. "How do I live an Epicurean practice?" Initially, I was similar to how Elayne described some people's reaction with the Physics: It's just science, duh! (to paraphrase). But the more I investigate I can begin to understand how Epicurus built the whole structure to stand on each successive step. I want to delve a little deeper into the Letter to Herodotus now with a different perspective.

And thank you, Julie, for standing up for the Letter to Menoikos 😊

Thank you all for the work you're doing on these!

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of April 2, 2020 at 10:57 PM**

The same for me: I completely took the physics for granted. Nice podcast!

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2020 at 6:19 AM**

Yes! When I put together that clip of Elayne, the "duh" clip from Julie was next on my list to do! And there were some really good lines by Charles and Martin as well. I think rather than make more highlight clips right now I am going to stick with adding notes (like these) to each podcast, and also setting up threads for upcoming podcasts, but I can't say how much I appreciate the input from Elayne and Julie and Charles and Martin in producing these.

Over time we need other formats where we can get others (like the two of you who commented above) involved in a more "ad hoc" way, but what I'm beginning to see is that getting a group of people to do this week after week after week builds up a - what would be the word - "style" or "consistency"? - that is really helpful.

Over time you also get to find out things about people that you had no idea were true. I was pretty sure from the beginning that Martin had very good expertise in physics, but I was very surprised when Julie in this episode displayed her knowledge of Zeno's paradox being based on infinitely divisible lines. And of course in this episode too Elayne surprised us with the "block" universe!

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2020 at 6:31 AM**

Also I should mention that in order to not get totally sidetracked on it we never read the full passage that is the source of so much discussion/argument. For the record it is this passage:

*We must consider that of desires some are natural, others vain, and of the natural some are necessary and others merely natural; and of the necessary some are necessary for happiness, others for the repose of the body, and others for very life. The right understanding of these facts enables us to refer all choice and avoidance to the health of the body and (the soul's) freedom from disturbance, since this is the aim of the life of blessedness. For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear. And when this is once secured for us, all the tempest of the soul is dispersed, since the living creature has not to wander as though in search of something that is missing, and to look for some other thing by which he can fulfil the good of the soul and the good of the body. For it is then that we have need of pleasure, when we feel pain owing to the absence of pleasure; (but when we do not feel pain), we no longer need pleasure. And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good. And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when*

*greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided. Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgment on all these matters. For the good on certain occasions we treat as bad, and conversely the bad as good.*

*And again independence of desire we think a great good — not that we may at all times enjoy but a few things, but that, if we do not possess many, we may enjoy the few in the genuine persuasion that those have the sweetest enjoy luxury pleasure in luxury who least need it, and that all that is natural is easy to be obtained, but that which is superfluous is hard. And so plain savours bring us a pleasure equal to a luxurious diet, when all the pain due to want is removed; and bread and water produce the highest pleasure, when one who needs them puts them to his lips. To grow accustomed therefore to simple and not luxurious diet gives us health to the full, and makes a man alert for the needful employments of life, and when after long intervals we approach luxuries disposes us better towards them, and fits us to be fearless of fortune. When, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality, as is supposed by some who are either ignorant or disagree with us or do not understand, but freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind. For it is not continuous drinkings and revelings, nor the satisfaction of lusts, nor the enjoyment of fish and other luxuries of the wealthy table, which produce a pleasant life, but sober reasoning, searching out the motives for all choice and avoidance, and banishing mere opinions, to which are due the greatest disturbance of the spirit.*

I thought Charles had a great point of analyzing the issue here as one of the temptation to "idealize" a particular form or type of pleasure over all others. That's a point that I need to add into my most lengthy post on this subject: [The Full Cup / Fullness of Pleasure Model](#)

And really, as I think about it, Julie's emphasis on the implications of the "sober reasoning" part is really a good way of looping back the previously stated *we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time.*

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## **Post by “Paquin” of July 24, 2021 at 3:34 AM**

I agree with the previous posters - another fascinating episode.