

# Responding To A Video Entitled: "Quantum Physics Debunks Materialism" - Collecting Arguments Against Anti-Epicurean Uses of Quantum Physics Theories

Post by "Cassius" of October 3, 2020 at 9:43 AM

A friend of mine recently sent me this video link below. The first 11 minutes or so is a simplified restatement of what is supposedly current science. I have no way of knowing whether it is accurate or not, but regardless of that, once they get to about the 12 minute mark, they begin to assert that quantum physics establishes that mind **creates** reality, I think they are way over any line of reasonableness. After the 12 minute mark it gets worse and worse. The further you go the clearer it is that the purpose of the video from the beginning was to advocate such "mind over matter" assertions pointing to theism and/or Platonic idealism.

This is pretty much the beginning of what I object to around 12:22, but it gets a lot worse:

[pasted-from-clipboard.png](#)

And this is the full video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4C5pq7W5yRM>

I have seen this kind of reasoning alluded to many times before, and one of these days I would like to see if we can produce something in response to materials of this type and perhaps this one in particular.

My general expectation is that much of the observational data explained in the first part of the video is accurately reported, but that the conclusions drawn from those observations are not the only ones that can be drawn, and because those conclusions conflict with other aspects of human reality, those conclusions are invalid.

I ran this by Martin, and he suggested that I be sure to note "that we are not interested in wasting our time to debate/refute every nonsense which is out there, but we want to make sure that our friends are aware of such examples of science being misrepresented by charlatans to fool people into believing nonsense."

I know that only a limited subset of people here at Epicureanfriends.com are motivated to pursue this issue, and probably a smaller number of those are qualified to attack it with any

legitimate expectations of producing a thorough refutation.

But one of the purposes of this forum is to "group-source" the work that needs to be done in keeping people from being led astray by false philosophies, and surely issues involving Physics are uniquely of interest to those raised in Lucretius and the details of Epicurean philosophy. So with that I'll launch the thread and hope over time we can develop a productive approach to responding to things of this type.

At the very least, perhaps we can begin to compile a list of sources and/or authorities (Victor Stenger?) who are ahead of us in responding to these assertions.

In the meantime, here is a quote from Lucian's "Aristotle the Oracle-Monger" which seems appropriate:

Quote

And at this point, my dear Celsus, we may, if we will be candid, make some allowance for these Paphlagonians and Pontics; the poor uneducated 'fat-heads' might well be taken in when they handled the serpent—a privilege conceded to all who choose—and saw in that dim light its head with the mouth that opened and shut. **It was an occasion for a Democritus, nay, for an Epicurus or a Metrodorus, perhaps, a man whose intelligence was steeled against such assaults by skepticism and insight, one who, if he could not detect the precise imposture, would at any rate have been perfectly certain that, though this escaped him, the whole thing was a lie and an impossibility.**

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## Post by “Susan Hill” of October 3, 2020 at 1:40 PM

Most of this is completely in accord with the Advaita Vedanta that I am familiar with, with Brahman being the pure awareness/consciousness manifesting objects of awareness. It would add that our "reality" remains mostly stable, consistent and immune to our mental manipulation, because we have developed a "consensus reality" created by all conscious minds through history.

Whenever I have encountered information on quantum mechanics, this is the sort of information that is presented. I have not read rebuttals. Of course, the New Age movement has latched on to this big time, and this is how we have "energy-workers" and people thinking they can manifest anything through the power of belief or visualization.

I have a B.Sc. so am well acquainted with scientific method, but I worry that it might take some serious mathematics to debunk this stuff, and maybe that is why the information is not readily accessible to the general public.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 3, 2020 at 4:53 PM**

Yes Susan I think this viewpoint is VERY widespread. At various times in the past we have had people come through the Epicurean groups who are very "into" the physics aspect, and some of them have been very helpful in opposing these conclusions. I get the impression from discussions a couple of years ago that Victor Stenger might be a writer who goes in a more Epicurean direction, but I am not sure. At the present time we have [Martin](#) who has a lot of interest in this area, but perhaps not so much on the ultimate theoretical conclusions and definitely without enough time to devote to writing some in-depth material on it. Scattered about in other threads here, which I would have to go looking for to find, I've posted about articles here and there which might point in a more positive direction, but I haven't had the expertise, time, or motivation to pull anything together.

I will stake out the position, however, that I think we have here an issue that is deeper than just quantum physics itself. It seems to me that there are clear parallels between what we confront today and what Epicurus faced in certain aspects of Platonism or Pythagoreanism, in which "advanced mathematics" and/or geometry were being used to advance theistic theories that Epicurus felt compelled to respond against. It's my view that this is why we have the texts preserve the debate about the size of the sun, and why Epicurus chose to accept what he interpreted to be the evidence of the senses rather than accept the claims made by the geometers.

So there's a great opportunity for someone who really wants to dig into this to explore at length some really fascinating material, but it's a big project that will take a certain type of person to accomplish. In the meantime, however, we do need to develop more approachable explanations for why the most extravagant claims made by these guys need to be dismissed without letting them worry us.

That's why I quoted that phrase from Lucian and I do think it is exactly applicable.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of October 3, 2020 at 6:19 PM**

Victor Stenger, at least in *God and the Atom*, seems quite favorable to Epicurus. I posted a review of sorts: [God and the Atom by Victor Stenger: a very brief review](#). That strained the limits of my non-scientific background. 😊

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 3, 2020 at 6:25 PM**

Godfrey what I don't know because I haven't taken the time to read is whether Victor Stenger really grapples with quantum physics theory. Do you recall?

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 3, 2020 at 6:29 PM**

Sigh - I do not seem to have a good collection of links from past discussions. I will see what I can find and post them here, including:

[Roger Penrose Says Physics Is Wrong, From String Theory to Quantum Mechanics](#)

[No Big Bang? Quantum Equation Predicts Universe Had No Beginning](#)

I have not watched this, but given Roger Penrose's position in the article above, this is probably worth including:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orMtwOz6Db0>

This one may be even more on point, an interview about his book: "Fashion, Faith, and Fantasy in the New Physics of the Universe"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNqnbELDO5A>

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of October 3, 2020 at 6:31 PM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1708-responding-to-a-video-entitled-quantum-physics-debunks-materialism-collecting-ar/>

Yes he does. This particular book is a history from Democritus to the year the book was written, and quantum theory is included in that. He has many other books and it could be that another one deals with it in greater depth for those interested. His basic premise in all of his books seems to me to be that modern science refutes the belief in the supernatural.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 3, 2020 at 6:42 PM**

Just this short excursion back into the subject of quantum physics this afternoon leads me to wonder if we should not consider Roger Penrose first, maybe even higher than Victor Stenger, as the leading exponent of the way to deconstruct the destructive arguments that some draw from quantum physics.

Rather than just leave the entire issue hanging, it would be good to have at least one suggestion to give to people who are interested in pursuing this subject.

Does anyone have nominations besides Roger Penrose and Victor Stenger?

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### **Post by “Susan Hill” of October 3, 2020 at 8:16 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I will stake out the position, however, that I think we have here an issue that is deeper than just quantum physics itself. ....

So there's a great opportunity for someone who really wants to dig into this to explore at length some really fascinating material, but it's a big project that will take a certain type of person to accomplish. In the meantime, however, we do need to develop more approachable explanations for why the most extravagant claims made by these guys need to be dismissed without letting them worry us.

Yes, I see what you mean. This could be a huge topic. Unfortunately, I am in need of, shall we say, converting myself, although I am quite willing and even anxious to be convinced. Some of those Vedantin scholars have incredibly rigorous logic... Much more so than Plato, and they didn't lose the bulk of their writings like we did from Classical antiquity. But I also feel that the conclusions that they come to may lead adherents into a very dark place - one wholly

unsuitable to human nature. An Orthodox priest once told me that some things were removed from the Bible and became Apocrypha, not because they were deemed theologically unsound, but because they caused too much confusion and disquiet in the Church. The more I learn, the more I favour this approach: If it makes us miserable, scrap it!

I will certainly review the material you have posted. I'll only play devil's advocate if you want me to. 😊

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### Post by “Cassius” of October 3, 2020 at 8:40 PM

Ha -- the Devil seems to have MANY advocates in the world, maybe too many! 😊

It's pretty clear that the current state of this topic among those who discuss it is a question of dark vs darker implications, and so my observation is that most people who want to remain sane simply refrain from discussing it. The ones who like to discuss it in current terms seem to be dominated by those who find fascination in dancing in the darkness, so to speak.

But of course being a loyal Epicurean I am convinced that there will eventually be a way forward that vindicate the non-supernatural "reality-based" perspective, and we sore need leaders in this department - it is too important an area in which to default. Maybe Roger Penrose is an example or has clues to the way forward; maybe not.

So at present we are left in an uncomfortable position of being on the defensive in an area that was originally an Epicurean strength, and that needs to change. The best defense is a good offense! 😊

But for now I don't see much for us to offer except to look for and compile links to those who have tried to engage on this field, and then by strength of willpower affirm that our conclusions are strong that life is too important to us to give up and give in to those who have succeeded in turning "science" into a tool of supernaturalism and skepticism.

And in the meantime take what comfort is possible in knowing that we aren't the first in the position we're in ---in need of

***a man whose intelligence was steeled against such assaults by skepticism and insight, one who, if he could not detect the precise imposture, would at any rate have been perfectly certain that, though this escaped him, the whole thing was a lie and an impossibility.***

## **Post by “Joshua” of October 4, 2020 at 9:23 AM**

Sadly, my experience arguing with a flat-earther in the family—and bear in mind, I work in land-surveying—tells me that this project is likely to involve a lot of fruitless irritation.

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## **Post by “Susan Hill” of October 4, 2020 at 2:24 PM**

My notes from the first Roger Penrose video above. Fascinating stuff! But maybe not what you were looking for?

Some of this are just theories he is working on:

Consciousness arises at the quantum level inside neuronal microtubules and cannot be explained as computations between synapses.

“I don’t like the word materialism, because we don’t know what material is.”

General anesthetic shuts down the microtubules and thereby consciousness. It is not a normal chemical interaction.

Quantum mechanics is a provisional theory, and in very early days.

In the split-screen experiment, it is not the observers consciousness that collapses the wave function, but a proto-consciousness within the state itself that decides to go one way or another.

Understanding, intelligence, and awareness are separate things.

Another universe may have existed before the Big Bang. The steady-state theory of the universe was disproved by the microwave background traces that go all the way back showing that there had to be a beginning to things: a primordial atom.

Black holes will eventually eat most of the galaxies and then finally evaporate themselves.

The infinity of a universe can be observed from without. It is only infinite from within that universe. You can have infinities of different sizes.

Energy, mass, and frequency are equivalent. Therefore, every particle is a clock.

Without mass there is no measure for space and time.

The photons that exist at the end of one universe go into the next Big Bang. We can see the gravitational waves of the dead black holes from the last universe.

The meaning of life is not a stupid question. We are only scratching the surface.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2020 at 3:43 PM**

Thank you!

#### [Quote from Susan Hill](#)

In the split-screen experiment, it is not the observers consciousness that collapses the wave function, but a proto-consciousness within the state itself that decides to go one way or another.

Wow THAT sounds weird!

Most of the rest sounds about as complex as I would expect it to be. Thank you for taking the time to make those notes!

THIS is something I surely agree with, and applies to our conversation here too:

#### [Quote from Susan Hill](#)

Quantum mechanics is a provisional theory, and in very early days.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of October 4, 2020 at 4:06 PM**

#### Quote

The infinity of a universe can be observed from without. It is only infinite from within that universe. You can have infinities of different sizes.

Huh? By the standard definition this makes no sense: what's he talking about?

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## Post by “Susan Hill” of October 4, 2020 at 4:10 PM

He also said in another interview that “Somehow, our consciousness is the reason the universe is here.”

Penrose seems to be universally regarded as a genius in physics circles, and so not quickly dismissed, but he is also something of a maverick.

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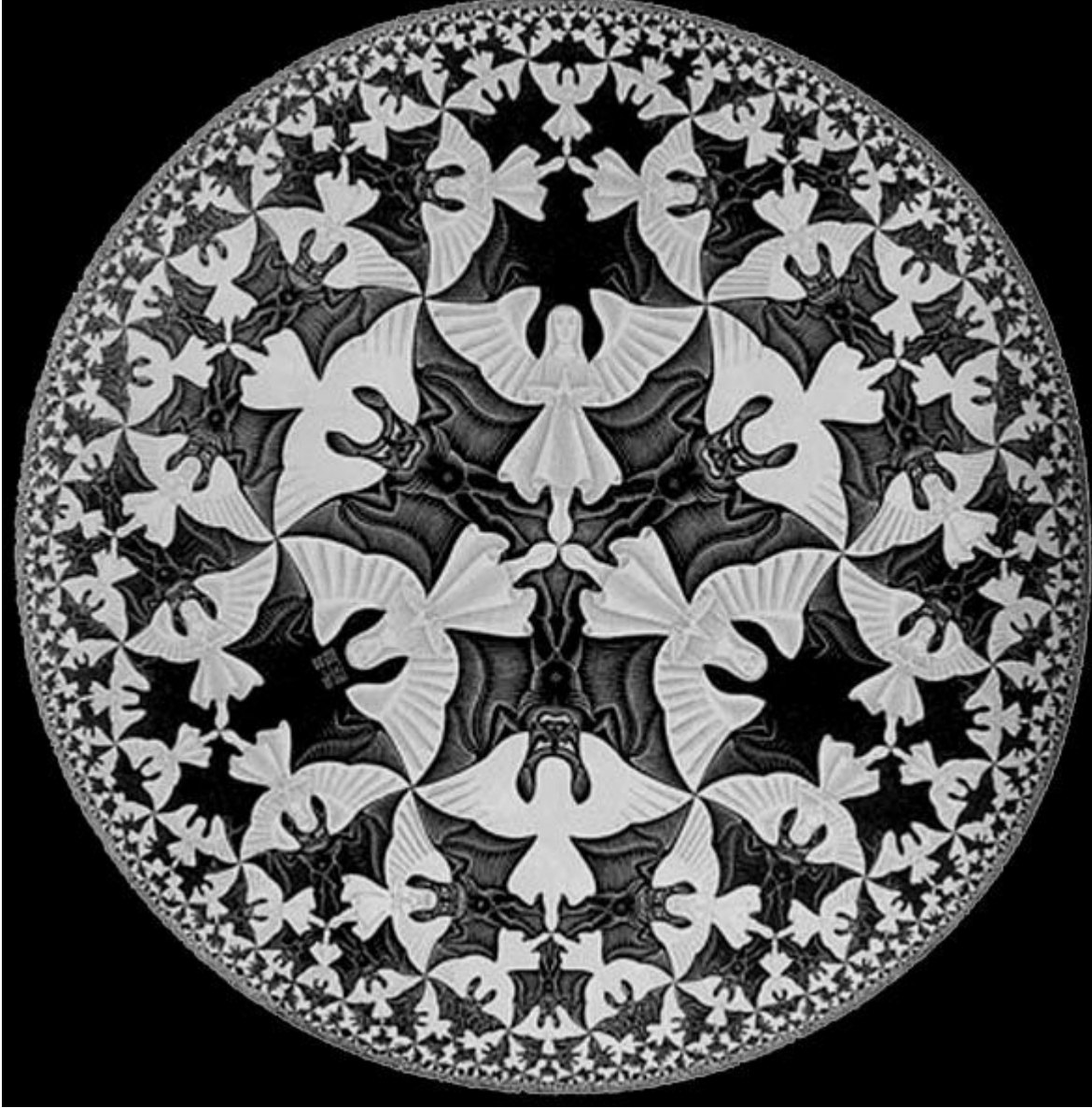
## Post by “Susan Hill” of October 4, 2020 at 4:16 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Quote

The infinity of a universe can be observed from without. It is only infinite from within that universe. You can have infinities of different sizes.

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infinitely  
d space.

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**Post by “Godfrey” of October 4, 2020 at 4:29 PM**

Thanks Susan! Of course I'm not as smart as Penrose 🤪 but to me, infinitely small is different from infinite in extent. One Epicurean argument is against infinite divisibility of atoms, but I'm not even sure if this is addressing that argument. Another Epicurean argument is that the universe is infinite in extent, but it doesn't seem like he's addressing that argument. He

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1708-responding-to-a-video-entitled-quantum-physics-debunks-materialism-collecting-ar/>

mentions infinities of different sizes, but again I think that applies to number but not extent (?).

I started watching that video but got interrupted; I'll have to get back to it at some point and try to catch his argument if I can.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2020 at 4:50 PM**

I hope my linking to him above does not prove to be a total waste of time. I am so stale on all this that that is possible. I hope we can triangulate on some productive sources, but I'm not at all sure Penrose is it.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of October 4, 2020 at 6:39 PM**

Regarding infinity, he begins talking about it around 1 hour 13 minutes in the video.

All I can say is... I'm going to take a nap now.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2020 at 7:18 PM**

Don't sleep too long, Godfrey! I have high hopes that you are the one who is going to unwind all of this for us! 😊

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of October 4, 2020 at 7:58 PM**



### **Post by “Godfrey” of October 6, 2020 at 12:47 PM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1708-responding-to-a-video-entitled-quantum-physics-debunks-materialism-collecting-ar/>

Timely news:

<https://www.latimes.com/science/story/...and-andrea-ghez>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of October 6, 2020 at 1:21 PM**

I was wondering if Roger Penrose was still alive -- apparently he is! Thanks Godfrey!

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### **Post by “Susan Hill” of November 19, 2020 at 4:19 PM**

This video is the best information I have found on the theory of consciousness that Roger Penrose has been working on. It is a difficult lecture, but gets better as it goes along, and the second half is more biology than physics. The Q and A session at the end is excellent.

There is some pretty solid science here, with successful experimentation. If you choose to watch it and can't stand the math, jump ahead to the 40min mark. I would like to watch it again before I make suggestions on how the theory may relate to anticipations, “images” of the gods, and to epistemology in general, but I think there is something important here:

<https://youtu.be/xGbgDf4HCHU>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of November 19, 2020 at 7:25 PM**

I think I am the one who introduced Roger Penrose into the thread, and unfortunately (or should I say, as usual) I haven't had time to follow through on reading up on him in detail.

However to add this to the mix here is a link that is critical of at least some of Penrose's positions: [https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Quantum\\_c...s#Roger\\_Penrose](https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Quantum_c...s#Roger_Penrose)

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1708-responding-to-a-video-entitled-quantum-physics-debunks-materialism-collecting-ar/>

**Post by “Susan Hill” of November 19, 2020 at 7:56 PM**

Thank you, Cassius. It looks like all of the papers listed were written 1 to 11 years before this YouTube presentation. I don't think Penrose and Hameroff had been able to publish their experimental results before then. The issues raised seem to be addressed in the presentation, but I would be interested if you find anything else of this nature.

It's a long presentation, so I understand if people give it a miss!