

# **Episode 277 - TD07 - Platonism Says This World Is Darkness But The Next World Is Light - Epicurus Disagrees!**

**Post by "Cassius" of April 15, 2025 at 12:03 PM**

Welcome to Episode 277 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

**Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at [EpicureanFriends.com](http://EpicureanFriends.com), where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.**

**This week we continue our series covering Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations" from an Epicurean viewpoint. This series addresses five of the greatest questions in philosophy, with Cicero speaking for the majority and Epicurus the main opponent:**

- 1. Is Death An Evil? (Cicero says no and Epicurus says no, but for very different reasons)**
- 2. Is Pain An Evil? (Cicero says no, Epicurus says yes)**
- 3. Does the Wise Man Experience Grief and Fear? (Cicero says no, Epicurus says yes)**
- 4. Does the Wise Man Experience Joy and Desire? (Cicero says no, Epicurus says yes)**
- 5. Is Virtue Sufficient For A Happy Life? (Cicero says yes, Epicurus says no)**

**As we found in Cicero's "On Ends" and "On The Nature of the Gods," Cicero treated Epicurean Philosophy as a major contender in the battle between the philosophies, and in discussing this conflict and explaining Epicurus' answers to these questions, we will deepen our understanding of Epicurus and how he compares to the other major schools.**

**Today we turn our attention further to "Is Death An Evil," and we will read beginning in [Section XXVI](#) where the discussion continues with more about the Pythagorean / Platonic view of the human soul.**

**We may be able to conclude the discussion of life after death this week, as most of the major arguments have already been given, and the remainder from 24 - 30**

seems more like miscellaneous wrap-up.

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Our general discussion guide for Tusculun Disputations is here:  
<https://epicureanfriends.github.io/tusculundisput...lish/section:12>

And a side-by-side version with comments is here:

[EpicureanFriends SideBySide Commentary on TD](#)

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/65672390/media>

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 15, 2025 at 12:09 PM

In the next several sections Cicero continues his general argument that the soul is divine, but by now the argument is familiar and he does not introduce a lot that is new.

One thing that Cicero does introduce however, and that we'll want to discuss, is that Cicero says god forbids us from taking our life into our own hands and ending it early:

### Quote

But these reflections are of long standing, and borrowed from the Greeks. But Cato left this world in such a manner, as if he were delighted that he had found an opportunity of dying; for that God who presides in us, forbids our departure hence without his leave. But when God himself has given us a just cause, as formerly he did to Socrates, and lately to Cato, and often to many others,—in such a case, certainly every man of sense would gladly exchange this darkness, for that light: not that he would forcibly break from the chains that held him, for that would be against the law; but like a man released from prison by a magistrate, or some lawful authority, so he too would walk away, being released and discharged by God. For the whole life of a philosopher is, as the same philosopher says, a meditation on death.

But Cicero also notes that Socrates left voluntarily:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4402-episode-277-td07-platonism-says-this-world-is-darkness-but-the-next-world-is-lig/>

### Quote

and it was because he was influenced by these and similar reasons that Socrates neither looked out for anybody to plead for him when he was accused, nor begged any favour from his judges, but maintained a manly freedom, which was the effect not of pride, but of the true greatness of his soul: and on the last day of his life, he held a long discourse on this subject; and a few days before, when he might have been easily freed from his confinement, he refused to be so, and when he had almost actually hold of that deadly cup, he spoke with the air of a man not forced to die, but ascending into heaven.

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### Post by “Cassius” of April 15, 2025 at 12:11 PM

Also, Clcero is stating explicitly that "meditating on death" is meant in the sense of spending your time now while you are alive, thinking about how wonderful it will be when you are dead:

### Quote

For what else is it that we do, when we call off our minds from pleasure, that is to say, from our attention to the body, from the managing our domestic estate, which is a sort of handmaid and servant of the body, or from duties of a public nature, or from all other serious business whatever? What else is it, I say, that we do, but invite the soul to reflect on itself? oblige it to converse with itself, and, as far as possible, break off its acquaintance with the body? Now to separate the soul from the body, is to learn to die, and nothing else whatever. Wherefore take my advice; and let us meditate on this, and separate ourselves as far as possible from the body, that is to say, let us accustom ourselves to die.

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### Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2025 at 9:12 PM

Episode 277 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. Today's episode is entitled: "Platonism Says This World Is Darkness and the Next World is Light - Epicurus Disagrees!"

If you only have 10 minutes to spare, be sure to listen to the closing by Joshua and Kalosyni starting at about 47:12.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4402-episode-277-td07-platonism-says-this-world-is-darkness-but-the-next-world-is-lig/>

## Post by “Joshua” of April 22, 2025 at 9:53 PM

I think these are the passages I quoted from Christopher Hitchens' *God is not Great*;

### Quote

There is one more charge to be added to the bill of indictment. With a necessary part of its collective mind, religion looks forward to the destruction of the world. By this I do not mean it “looks forward” in the purely eschatological sense of anticipating the end. I mean, rather, that it openly or covertly wishes that end to occur. Perhaps half aware that its unsupported arguments are not entirely persuasive, and perhaps uneasy about its own greedy accumulation of temporal power and wealth, religion has never ceased to proclaim the Apocalypse and the day of judgment. This has been a constant trope, ever since the first witch doctors and shamans learned to predict eclipses and to use their half-baked celestial knowledge to terrify the ignorant.

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One of the very many connections between religious belief and the sinister, spoiled, selfish childhood of our species is the repressed desire to see everything smashed up and ruined and brought to naught. This tantrum-need is coupled with two other sorts of “guilty joy,” or, as the Germans say, *schadenfreude*. First, one’s own death is canceled—or perhaps repaid or compensated—by the obliteration of all others. Second, it can always be egotistically hoped that one will be personally spared, gathered contentedly to the bosom of the mass exterminator, and from a safe place observe the sufferings of those less fortunate. Tertullian, one of the many church fathers who found it difficult to give a persuasive account of paradise, was perhaps clever in going for the lowest possible common denominator and promising that one of the most intense pleasures of the afterlife would be endless contemplation of the tortures of the damned. He spoke more truly than he knew in evoking the man-made character of faith.

And here is [Tertullian](#) being being predictably revolting. Note the glancing reference to Epicureanism;

### Quote

Moreover, what a spectacle is already at hand--the second coming of the Lord, now no object of doubt, now exalted, now triumphant! What exultation will that be of the angels, what glory of the saints as they rise again! What a kingdom, the kingdom of the just thereafter! What a city, the new Jerusalem!

But there are yet other spectacles to come--that day of the Last Judgment with its everlasting issues, unlooked for by the heathen, the object of their derision, when the hoary age of the world and all its generations will be consumed in one file.

What a panorama of spectacle on that day! Which sight shall excite my wonder? Which, my laughter? Where shall I rejoice, where exult--as I see so many and so mighty kings, whose ascent to heaven used to be made known by public announcement, now along with Jupiter himself, along with the very witnesses of their ascent, groaning in the depths of darkness? Governors of provinces, too, who persecuted the name of the Lord, melting in flames fiercer than those they themselves kindled in their rage against the Christians braving them with contempt?

Whom else shall I behold? Those wise philosophers blushing before their followers as they burn together, the followers whom they taught that the world is no concern of God's, whom they assured that either they had no souls at all or that what souls they had would never return to their former bodies? The poets also, trembling, not before the judgment seat of Rhadamanthus or of Minos, but of Christ whom they did not expect to meet.

Then will the tragic actors be worth hearing, more vocal in their own catastrophe; then the comic actors will be worth watching, more lither of limb in the fire; then the charioteer will be worth seeing, red all over on his fiery wheel; then the athletes will be worth observing, not in their gymnasiums, but thrown about by fire--unless I might not wish to look at them even then but would prefer to turn an insatiable gaze on those who vented their rage on the Lord.

'This is He,' I will say, 'the son of the carpenter and the harlot, the sabbath-breaker, the Samaritan who had a devil. This is He whom you purchased from Judas, this is He who was struck with reed and fist, defiled with spittle, given gall and vinegar to drink. This is He whom the disciples secretly stole away to spread the story of His resurrection, or whom the gardener removed lest his lettuces be trampled by the throng of curious idlers.'

What praetor or consul or quaestor or priest with all his munificence will ever bestow on you the favor of beholding and exulting in such sights? Yet, such scenes as these are in a measure already ours by faith in the vision of the spirit. But what are those things which 'eye has not seen nor ear heard and which have not entered into the heart of

man'? Things of greater delight, I believe, than circus, both kinds of theater, and any stadium.

Display More

Every aspect of Greek and Roman culture is brought before his creepy, leering and 'insatiable gaze', every expression of it is condemned to everlasting torment, and the witness of that torment is one of the keenest pleasures of paradise.

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### Post by “kochiekoch” of April 23, 2025 at 12:08 PM

Something that impressed me when I looked up Cicero on the Wikipedia page, to get some background on the man so frequently mentioned here on the forum, was how calmly he took his own impending death. He must have really believed he was going to a better place. The last few episodes here explain his thinking.

[Cicero - Wikipedia](#)

>>As reported by [Seneca the Elder](#), according to the historian [Aufidius Bassus](#), Cicero's last words are said to have been:

Quote

*Ego vero consisto. Accede, veterane, et, si hoc saltem potes recte facere, incide cervicem.*

I go no further: approach, veteran soldier, and, if you can at least do so much properly, sever this neck. [\[121\]](#)

He bowed to his captors, leaning his head out of the litter in a gladiatorial gesture to ease the task. By baring his neck and throat to the soldiers, he was indicating that he would not resist. According to Plutarch, Herennius first slew him, then cut off his head.<<

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### Post by “Joshua” of April 23, 2025 at 11:16 PM

Here are the lines from *Julius Caesar* that I paraphrased. It seems probable that Shakespeare was alluding to *Tusculan Disputations* in this dialogue.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4402-episode-277-td07-platonism-says-this-world-is-darkness-but-the-next-world-is-lig/>

## Quote

**Cas.** Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

**Bru.** No, Cassius; for the eye sees not itself  
But by reflection, by some other things.

**Cas.** 'Tis just,  
And it is very much lamented, Brutus,  
That you have no such mirrors as will turn  
Your hidden worthiness into your eye,  
That you might see your shadow. I have heard  
Where many of the best respect in Rome  
(Except immortal Caesar), speaking of Brutus  
And groaning underneath this age's yoke,  
Have wish'd that noble Brutus had his eyes.

**Bru.** Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,  
That you would have me seek into myself  
For that which is not in me?

**Cas.** Therefore, good Brutus, be prepar'd to hear;  
And since you know you cannot see yourself  
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,  
Will modestly discover to yourself  
That of yourself which you yet know not of.  
And be not jealous on me, gentle Brutus:  
Were I a common laughter, or did use  
To stale with ordinary oaths my love  
To every new protester; if you know  
That I do fawn on men and hug them hard,  
And after scandal them; or if you know  
That I profess myself in banqueting  
To all the rout, then hold me dangerous.

Display More

Is Cassius Longinus exploiting his knowledge of Platonism to persuade Brutus to rise against Caesar?

## Quote

The soul has not sufficient capacity to comprehend itself; yet, the soul, like the eye, though it has no distinct view of itself, sees other things: it does not see (which is of least consequence) its own shape; perhaps not, though it possibly may; but we will pass that by: but it certainly sees that it has vigour, sagacity, memory, motion, and velocity; these are all great, divine, eternal properties. What its appearance is, or

where it dwells, it is not necessary even to inquire.

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### Post by “Don” of April 23, 2025 at 11:51 PM

Great episode everyone. ☐☐

One nit to pick: While I realize it's a common English idiom, my contention remains that we have to be careful using phrases like "when we're dead" or "being dead" and so on.

We can't "be" dead. When we are, death is not. When death is, we are not. Perpetuating that idiom undercuts "death is no thing." "After we die" is fine. "When we have died" would work. "When we're dead" could be taken as admitting there's a "we" that could "be" dead, could sense "being dead." Don't give the eternalists an opening.

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### Post by “Patrikios” of April 27, 2025 at 10:31 AM

In this Episode 277, Cicero appears to make wild leaps, that just by contemplating the beauty of nature, we are supposed to conclude all these supernatural attributions accrue to a manipulative, punitive, personified deity.

“Thus, though you see not the soul of man, as you see not the Deity, yet, as by the contemplation of his works you are led to acknowledge a God, so you must own the divine power of the soul, from its remembering things, from its invention, from the quickness of its motion, and from all the beauty of virtue. Where, then, is it seated, you will say?”

From reading DeWitt, and Epicurus’ letters, it appears that Epicurus was describing the ‘soul’ as what we know today as our nervous system. Our nervous system includes the brain and nerve cells that run throughout our body carrying both thought-initiated commands to move certain muscles, as well as carrying the signals from our 5 senses.

“Of the Twelve Principles the most important was the third: "The universe consists of atoms and void." Since the void is incapable either of delivering or receiving a stimulus, it followed that the **soul**, which is capable both of stimulating and being stimulated, must be corporeal by nature, composed of atoms.” [DeWitt: Epicurus & His Philosophy, p6]

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## Post by “Don” of April 29, 2025 at 8:05 PM

### [Quote from Patrikios](#)

“Of the Twelve Principles the most important was the third: "The universe consists of atoms and void."

There is no extant text by Epicurus called the Twelve Principles. DeWitt came up with those on his own and gave his list the name of a lost text. I'm not saying "the universe consists of atoms and void" isn't a fundamental principle, but there is no way Dewitt should be saying it's "the third." Sorry. This aggravates me every time it comes up.

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## Post by “Bryan” of April 30, 2025 at 1:15 AM

### [Quote from Don](#)

Twelve Principles

Yes, I think the *only* reference to the work we have is at D.L. 10.44b (that color shifts with atomic position).

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## Post by “Don” of April 30, 2025 at 4:50 AM

Exactly, [Bryan](#) I'll just point back to what was said a year ago...

Thread

### [General Notes On Fundamentals of Nature](#)

This thread is for discussion of the list of twelve fundamentals such as suggested by DeWitt or Clay here:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/wcf/twelve-fundamentals-of-nature/>



<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4402-episode-277-td07-platonism-says-this-world-is-darkness-but-the-next-world-is-lig/>

Cassius

June 13, 2024 at 10:23 PM

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## Post by "Cassius" of April 30, 2025 at 7:30 AM

To make it easier for Patrikios to find the other main article referencing this topic, here's the Diskin Clay article where he goes down a similar path to DeWitt's interpretation. Don is definitely correct to say that the list does not survive for us to be sure what it said:

File

### ["Epicurus' Last Will and Testament" - by Diskin Clay](#)



Article by Diskin Clay



Cassius

January 23, 2021 at 3:15 PM