

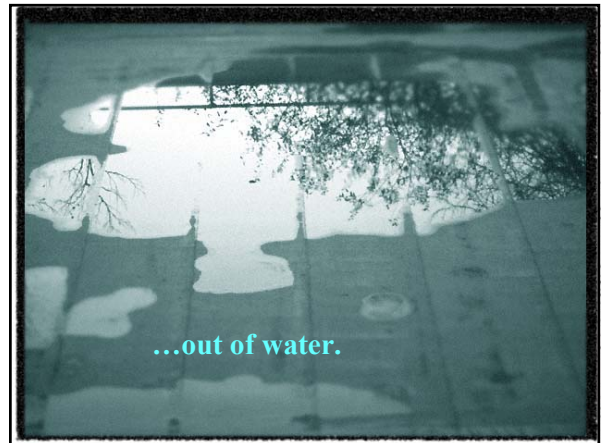


On the Nature of Things

Atomic Theory of the Soul

- Soul is made of atoms, just like everything else (III, 161).
- The body acts like a vessel for the soul (III, 555).
- When body dies, soul atoms are no longer contained in their proper arrangement.
- Soul is destroyed at the body's death (III, 440).
- Soul can't exist without a living body...

...any more than Frosty the Snowman could be made...



...out of water.



Soul is not Immortal

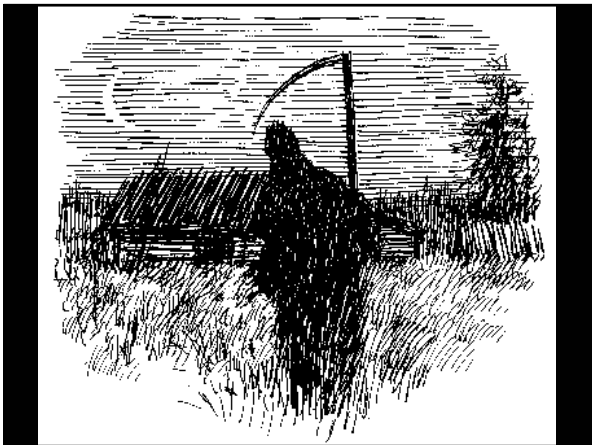
- Soul develops and deteriorates along with rest of body (III, 445).
- Soul infected by disease and alcohol just like body (III, 465-85).
- If soul pre-existed body, it would remember doing so (III, 670).
- Etc.

Irrelevance of the gods

- Gods *do* exist—made of atoms.
- Gods live far outside our world.
- Gods did not create our world.
- Gods do not intervene in our world, and have no relevance to us.
- We have ideas about the gods from dreams.
- Gods have no more importance than distant planets and stars.

Irrationality of Fear

- Should we fear the gods?
- No—they take no interest in us.
- Should we fear death?
- No...
- “Death is nothing to us” (III, 830).



Fear of Death?

1. Fear of dying.
2. Fear of after-life—Hell? Uncertainty?
3. Fear of there being nothing after death—Death as THE END.

Fear of Death

- Epicurus: “Death is nothing to us, since when we exist death is not yet present, and when death is present then we do not exist.”
- Lucretius’ “Loss” argument (III, 894-903).
- Lucretius’ “Symmetry” argument (III, 971-977).

Fear of Death

- Lucretius’ “Loss” argument (III, 894-903)



Fear of Death

- Your teddy bear will end up in the trash.
- Something is bad for you only if you mind it.
- If you don't mind it, it wouldn't be a bad thing for you.
- You won't care about your teddy bear then.
- It won't be a bad thing for you then that your teddy bear ends up in the trash.

Fear of Death

- You will die.
- Something is bad for you only if you mind it.
- If you don't mind it, it wouldn't be a bad thing for you.
- You won't mind being dead when you are dead.
- It won't be a bad thing for you then that are dead.
- Is that a good argument? Other cases?

Fear of Death

- Is that a good argument? Other cases?
- You will be cut open...
- but you'll be anesthetized.
- Is it irrational to fear something that won't be bad for you when it happens?
- Tell a young idealist: You'll be rich & corrupt.
- But by then you'll want to be rich & you won't mind being corrupt.
- Nothing to fear? Consolation? Regret?



Fear of Death

- Can *now* fear the prospect of something that will happen later, even if you know later you won't mind it.
- It makes it even worse that you now know that later you won't care!

Fear of Death

- Lucretius' "Symmetry" argument (III, 971-977).
- You didn't exist for many years in the past.
- There's nothing fearful about that.
- So why be bothered by the fact that you won't exist in the future?

Fear of Death



Fear of Death

- Is death bad just because of your non-existence?
- Death is bad because it ends projects that you care about.
- But doesn't your prior non-existence limit projects by causing you to start on them later?

Fear of Death

- But if Lucretius is right that death is not bad, does this mean it is *never* bad?
- Does it not matter whether you die now, or 60 years from now?
- Perhaps it depends on your life-prospects.
- Is there some good to being alive regardless of what your life-prospects are?