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## EPICTUREANISM AND DEATH

### 1. Introduction

Perhaps the most frequently cited argument in philosophical discussions of death is the one embodied in the following passage from Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus*:

Make yourself familiar with the belief that death is nothing to us, since everything good and bad lies in sensation, and death is to be deprived of sensation. . . . So that most fearful of all bad things, death, is nothing to us, since when we are, death is not, and when death is present, then we are not.<sup>1</sup>

From this line of reasoning, Epicurus concludes that it is irrational to fear death, a conclusion that his disciple, Lucretius, buttresses with his materialist conception of persons and his 'mirror-image' argument concerning the temporal and evaluative symmetry between prenatal and posthumous nonexistence.<sup>2</sup> While atomism provides much of the underlying rationale for the thesis that death is nothing to us, what ultimately motivates the arguments that Epicurus and Lucretius advance in its defense is the goal of *ataraxia*, or peace of mind, which can be attained only through the exercise of cool, dispassionate reason.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, some philosophers have presented a formidable challenge to the thesis that death is nothing to us in the form of what may be called the Deprivation of Goods Principle. According to this Principle, death can be bad for someone to the extent that it deprives him of the goods he would have enjoyed if he had continued to live.<sup>4</sup> Thus the two rival principles presupposed by the competing theses that death is or is not bad or evil are the Existence Principle, which can be formulated as

EP A person can be the subject of some misfortune only if he exists at the time the misfortune occurs,<sup>5</sup>

and the Deprivation of Goods Principle, or

DGP Death is bad for some person, S, to the extent that it deprives him of goods he would have enjoyed had he continued to live.

Given that so many philosophers have defended DGP and rejected EP, it is tempting to conclude that the doctrine that Epicurus and Lucretius

champion is not a tenable one. Such a judgment can be made on the ground that the Epicurean arguments advanced in support of EP are unsound, owing to some premise or premises that are false or otherwise ill-conceived. Presumably, such falsity derives from the failure of those premises to account for certain modal intuitions on which DGP relies, specifically regarding trans-world identity, the doctrine that individuals exist in more than one possible world. But these intuitions have by no means been spelled out adequately in the literature. Indeed, when they are spelled out, we come to see that the Deprivation of Goods Principle leads to unpalatable consequences, which in turn leaves little to recommend DGP as a viable alternative to EP in particular and Epicureanism generally. What ultimately disarms the challenge to Epicureanism is that trans-world identity cannot do the work that proponents of DGP implicitly assume it can. By contrast, the Epicurean conceptions of persons and death, and *isonomia*, the atomistic theory that life and creation are always counterbalancing death and decay, combine to tell in favor of the rival thesis.<sup>6</sup> One interesting implication of *isonomia* is that if everyone were to live out a complete life span of, say, eighty years, then the atomic balance of the world or universe might thereby be disrupted, in which case an increase in life years for each person beyond the time at which they actually die would on balance be worse for all of us as well as for future generations.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I shall argue that DGP fails on its own terms, independently of the question of whether EP is tenable. The title of my paper should not be taken to imply that I endorse all of the doctrines of Epicurus, only that my arguments are in the spirit of the theses often attributed to him.

## 2. *Persons and Death*

Let us reconstruct the Epicurean argument for the claim that death should not concern us. Its validity hinges crucially on two features: hedonism, which is explicitly stated in the first premise; and an implicitly assumed atomistic or materialistic conception of persons which informs all of the premises. In fact, there is a core argument addressing the goodness or badness of death, and a subsidiary argument addressing the rationality or irrationality of fearing death.<sup>8</sup> More precisely:

1. Nothing is good or bad for a person except what makes him experience pleasure or pain.
2. The dead feel nothing.
3. Therefore nothing is good or bad for one who is dead.

From which it follows that:

4. One's state of being dead is not (good or) bad for the one who is dead.
5. But if something is not bad when it is present, then there is no rational ground, at any previous time, for fear of its future presence.
6. Therefore, it is irrational for a person to fear his future state of being dead.

Lucretius reinforces the conclusion of the core argument at (3) with his own argument for the symmetry between past and future. Citing the event of the Carthaginians waging war on Rome, which occurred before Lucretius and his readers were born, he reasons "we felt no pain. Just so, when we shall not exist, when body and soul, / of which we are fashioned into one, shall be sundered, / nothing at all will be able to affect us / who will then not exist, nor stir our sense."<sup>9</sup> This passage embodies the well-known 'mirror-image' argument of Lucretius, designed to show that prenatal nonexistence and posthumous nonexistence are on a value-neutral par. That is, neither the time before we exist nor the time after we exist can be good or bad for us precisely because we cannot experience pleasure or pain at either time. Hence the period before we were born and the period after we die are equally value-neutral, a judgment that underwrites the claim that we have no reason to be concerned about death.

As David Furley points out, the 'mirror-image' argument does not imply anything about present emotions.<sup>10</sup> Rather, Lucretius seems to understand the present as a neutral point of reference from which to evaluate two distinct periods when we do not exist. The force of this point and the validity of the argument spelled out above, however, rest crucially on an Epicurean conception of persons and the related definition of death. These in turn will determine the truth or falsity of the Existence Principle. Although Epicurus offers a rough sketch of personhood and death in his *Letter to Menoeceus*, Lucretius gives more perspicuous accounts of these two conceptions in Book III of *De Rerum Natura*.

Epicurus and Lucretius conceive of a person as a union of soul and body.<sup>11</sup> Yet it would be mistaken to try to locate this conception within the classical framework of dualism, according to which a person is a union or composite of a material body and an immaterial soul or mind. For, unlike Cartesian dualism, and unlike Socrates' contention that a person just is an immaterial, immortal soul, Epicurean souls and bodies are both material.<sup>12</sup> Since material things are corruptible, and whatever is corruptible is mortal,

it follows that Epicurean souls and bodies—Epicurean persons, in short—are mortal. Put another way, insofar as a person is a union of an atomistic body and the atomistic soul, he is constituted by an agglomeration of atoms. And Death is defined as the separation and dissolution of soul-atoms from the body as they return to the vast reservoir of atomic material in the universe. Moreover, in his *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus asserts that once the soul is dispersed it “no longer has the same powers nor is capable of movement, so that it does not possess sensation either.”<sup>13</sup> If a person is a union of a soul and a body, and sensation derives from that union, then persons cannot experience anything once that union is dissolved. Furthermore, since death is defined as the separation and dissolution of the soul from the body, it follows that we cannot experience anything after death. It is in virtue of the soul that the body and thus the person is sentient. Nevertheless, the soul, which, like the body, is merely an agglomeration of atoms, is corruptible and thus mortal. There are, then, no rational grounds on which a person could fear or anticipate any putative immortal existence.

More interesting for present purposes is what Lucretius has to say about memory. Now, it is not clear how the combination of atoms that constitute a person's soul at a particular time or stage of his life can generate the faculty of memory. Yet it is apparent in Book III of *De Rerum Natura* that he takes memory to be a necessary (though surely not sufficient) criterion of personal identity. Here Lucretius acknowledges the possibility that the same collection of atoms constituting a person prior to and during dissolution may, at some point in the future, be recombined into a materially identical object.<sup>14</sup> This is consistent with one of the tenets of atomism, namely, that any and all combinations of atoms may recur through space and time. No such recombination possibly could be me, though, since the continuity of my memory would have been disrupted as a result of the dissolution of my soul-atoms and body-atoms. For Lucretius, then, necessary and sufficient criteria for the identity of persons involve a physical synchronic and diachronic condition—the union of a body and a soul at a time and through time—and a psychological diachronic condition—continuity of memory through time.<sup>15</sup>

A materially and qualitatively identical union of body and soul at distinct and unrelated times could not be one and the same person, owing to disruption of the continuity of memory. Since the identity relation depends on this causal relation involving memory, and since the latter is severed upon dissolution of my soul-atoms, it follows that there is no identity between my present existing self and other selves that might have existed before I came into existence or which might exist after my death. Accor-

dingly, if I have no memory of a past self constituted of what very well may be the same soul- and body-atoms that constitute me now, then I have no reason to be concerned about that person, that self.<sup>16</sup> By parity of reasoning, if continuity of memory will not hold between my present agglomeration of atoms and some possible future combination of those same atoms, then I have no reason to care about the future self those atoms will constitute or about any experiences that self might have.

In the light of these considerations, it seems to follow that one could not claim that death is bad or evil for a person to the extent that it deprives her of goods that she would have enjoyed otherwise. For if a person, S, by dying at some time T, ceases to exist at and all times after T, then S could not experience any bad or evil at some later time T', on pain of incoherence. For this reason, one cannot invoke a life-death evaluative comparison involving S, since death precludes the continued existence of S, which is a necessary basis on which to make such a comparison. Nevertheless, many philosophers maintain that a case can be made for the coherence of just such a claim. It is to their arguments that I now turn.

### 3. *Why Death May Be Bad*

Recall the Deprivation of Goods Principle (DGP), which we can recast as a counterfactual conditional in subjective mood. Or more precisely:

DGP' If some person, S, had not died at some time T, then she would have enjoyed the goods of which her death deprived her by living until some later time T'.

To evaluate the truth-conditions of this counterfactual, we should follow David Lewis and say that the truth (or falsity) of a counterfactual conditional is based on comparative similarity of possible worlds. Specifically, "a counterfactual is true if every world that makes the antecedent true without gratuitously departing from actuality is a world that also makes the counterfactual true."<sup>17</sup> Using the corner sign '>' to denote the relation of counterfactual dependence of the consequent on the antecedent of the conditional, we can assert that

$(P > Q)$  is true if and only if Q is true at all the P-worlds that are closest to the actual world.<sup>18</sup>

Applying this model to DGP', it is true that if S had not died at T, then she would have enjoyed goods of which her death deprived her by living until T' if and only if the proposition that S would have enjoyed those goods is true at all those possible worlds where S does not die at T which are very

similar to the actual world. And two worlds are similar in terms of the comparative states of affairs which obtain in them, or alternatively in terms of the propositions that are true in them.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously, before proceeding further with the analysis of counterfactuals and how they bear on the question of why death may be bad, it is necessary to define what a possible world is. Possible worlds are not to be mistaken for concrete individuals that are causally and spatio-temporally distinct from the actual world and which can be discovered empirically. Rather, we *stipulate* possible worlds in virtue of the alternative descriptions we apply to the actual world.<sup>20</sup> That is, possible worlds are functions of our imagining ways things in the actual world might have been but in fact are not. In other words, possible worlds are abstract objects representing *ways* things might have been, as distinct from the universe or cosmos, or the *things* that are that way.<sup>21</sup> The obvious advantage of construing possible worlds as stipulated and abstract instead of concrete and empirically discoverable is that it provides us with the semantic resources to determine the truth-conditions of a counterfactual conditional like DGP' while at the same time avoiding any untoward ontological commitments.

Continuing with the same modal strategy, a proposition is said to be true in a given world if it would be true if that world were actual. Likewise, an object exists in a given world if it would exist if that world were actual. Furthermore, an object has a property in a given world if it would have that property if that world were actual. And an object *x* has a property *p* *essentially* if and only if *x* has *p* in every world in which *x* exists, whereas *x* has *p* *accidentally* if and only if *x* has *p* and there is a world in which *x* exists but lacks *p*.<sup>22</sup>

With respect to the case at hand, we stipulate what might have happened to the deceased person in the counterfactual state of affairs or world in which she does not die at, say, thirty, but instead goes on to live for, say, eighty years. Now, to say that a person, *S*, exists in two distinct worlds *W* and *W'* is just to say that she would have existed in *W* had that world been actual and would have existed in *W'* if that world had been actual. That *S* exists in two worlds is equivalent to asserting that there are properties exemplified by *S*-existing-in-*W* which *S*-existing-in-*W'* fails to exemplify, and conversely. Therefore, *S*-in-*W* and *S*-in-*W'* have distinct properties. On the strength of these points, the anti-Epicurean can hold that *S*-in-*W* represents a person living for thirty years, whereas *S*-in-*W'* represents the same person living for eighty years. Working within this modal framework, the advocate of a possible goods argument can maintain quite plausibly that the only difference between *W* and *W'* is that *S* dies at *T* (thirty years) in the former and *S* dies at *T'* (eighty years) in the latter.



The motivation for explicating trans-world identity should by now be apparent. For unless it can be said intelligibly that one and the same person who dies prematurely at age thirty in the actual world can exist in a distinct possible world in which she lives to be eighty, one cannot claim that death can be bad for this person. There are two reasons for making such a claim. First, one could not refer to that person at any time beyond the time of her death. Second, a life-life evaluative comparison on which the judgment of the badness of death relies could not be made.<sup>23</sup> If the person's existence comes to an end in the actual world *W* when she dies at *T*, then surely it follows that she could not experience anything in any possible world at some later time *T'*. Thus, in accordance with the Existence Principle, death would be nothing to her indeed. Nevertheless, I shall proceed on the assumption that trans-world identity is a tenable doctrine and that it can be brought to bear on Epicureanism generally and the Existence Principle in particular.

We are now in a position to assess the truth-value of the counterfactual conditional *DGP'*. Recall that the truth of a counterfactual is a function of the relation of comparative similarity of worlds. Suppose that among all the worlds there are, one world, *W*, is most similar to another world, *W'*, that the worlds are nomically compossible (i.e., the same laws of nature hold at both worlds), and that the respective histories of these worlds are exactly alike up to a particular time *T*, at which point they diverge. Thereafter, some state of affairs obtains in one world which fails to obtain in the other. Suppose further that the relevant states of affairs are that *S* dies in *W* at *T* (thirty years), which is the point of divergence between the two worlds, and that *S* dies in *W'* at *T'* (eighty years). Finally, suppose that  $(P > Q)$  stands for "If *S* had not died at thirty, then he would have gone on to live for eighty years and thereby enjoy the goods of which death at thirty deprived him." The *P*-world, the world of the antecedent, is exactly like the actual world up to the time at which *S* dies, or *T*. On the other hand, the *Q*-world, the world of the consequent, differs from the actual world insofar as it involves *S* living for eighty years rather than just thirty. From these suppositions and the semantic rules for counterfactuals, we can infer that the consequent is true in that possible world where the antecedent is realized which is closest or most similar to the actual world in terms of the states of affairs which obtain in it. If the  $(P \& Q)$ -world, the world to which the conditional as a whole refers, is more similar to the actual world (up to *T*) than any alternative  $(P \& \sim Q)$ -world, then the counterfactual in question comes out true.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, since one of our suppositions is that the worlds at issue are nomically compossible, we effectively rule out the possibility of any miracle



that might explain the divergence between  $W$  and  $W'$  after  $T$ , or of a possible reconvergence of the two worlds at some later time  $T'$ . Similarly, we rule out so-called “big-consequence” events at  $T$ , after which the worlds would be radically dissimilar.<sup>25</sup>

Although he does not acknowledge it explicitly, the type of modal framework which I have just spelled out determines the plausibility of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic goods which Fred Feldman draws in a recent book.<sup>26</sup> By his lights, roughly pleasure and pain are intrinsically good or bad to the extent that a person can directly experience either at a particular time. Contrariwise, something is extrinsically bad for a person if and only if he would have been intrinsically better off (i.e., would have experienced pleasure or pain directly at a particular time) if it had not taken place. Thus the badness or evil of death is a function of extrinsic evil, and what makes death extrinsically bad is that it deprives a person of the intrinsic value he would have experienced if he had not died when he in fact did.

According to Feldman, Epicurus went wrong in failing to see that death could be extrinsically bad (though he would admit that it could be intrinsically bad).<sup>27</sup> That death can be bad in this way appears to vindicate DGP and DGP' at the same time that it vitiates EP. Nevertheless, I shall now show that DGP, DGP', and the modal assumptions on which they rest cannot stand up to scrutiny. Indeed, DGP' emerges as a principle with counterintuitive implications. As a consequence, EP and the Epicureanism that informs it will come to be seen as more promising alternatives with respect to the mortal question that is at issue here.

#### 4. Problems with DGP and DGP'

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that trans-world identity and the life-life evaluative comparison which it makes possible satisfactorily sustain the Deprivation of Goods Principle. Our modal intuitions make it intelligible to say that a person,  $S$ , can exist across times and through worlds, which implies that  $S$  has at least one property in world  $W$  at time  $T$  which she lacks in another world  $W'$  at time  $T'$ . By definition, these would be *accidental* properties. Now, recall the Epicurean and Lucretian definition of death, which states that a person dies and therefore ceases to experience anything once the soul-atoms dissolve and the soul separates from the body. Crucially, unlike being a smoker or a good philosopher, having a soul is an *essential* property, a property that a person has in every possible world in which she exists. Therefore, if  $S$  is without a soul after her death in  $W$  at some time  $T$ , then she cannot be said to exist in some putative possible

world  $W'$  at some later time  $T'$  following the dissolution of her soul-atoms and the soul's separation from her body.

Earlier, I noted Lucretius' admission of the possibility that the same collection of atoms which constitutes a person at one time may be reassembled at another time. Correspondingly, though, he adds that this could not be the same person, because the continuity of her memory would have been disrupted as a result of the dissolution. Memory and the soul-body unity jointly constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for synchronic and diachronic identity of persons. On this view, the person who dies in what the modal theorist calls the actual world would cease to exist forever. Hence it is idle to speculate on how things might have been for "her" beyond the time of her death.

Equally problematic, if not more so, is DGP itself. Again, when we posit possible worlds we simply stipulate ways the actual world might have been. Saying that if a person,  $S$ , who dies at  $T$  in  $W$  had lived until  $T'$ , then he would have enjoyed the goods of which death deprived him is an instance of this practice. Yet it is tendentious to stipulate this of one person and not of all persons who die prematurely. More precisely, it is tendentious to restrict the interpretation of the quantifier that attaches to  $S$  to an existential one, whereby the quantifier ranges over only one individual, instead of construing it as a universal quantifier ranging over all individuals who die prematurely. Another questionable *ad hoc* feature of the modal strategy is the stipulation that the availability of goods remains constant across worlds and times. In sum, stipulating ways the actual world might have been is question-begging in a way that illicitly ensures the truth of the counterfactual conditional embodied in DGP'.

There are two issues at stake here which are conveniently ignored by defenders of the Deprivation of Goods Principle: the number of persons for whom premature death may be bad; and the nature and availability of the goods without which deceased persons are deemed misfortunate. Imagine that *every* person who dies at twenty, thirty, or even forty years were to live out a complete life span of eighty years. Imagine further that the goods in question are clean air, water, health care, food, and the like. Also, imagine that the majority of people consume more than they produce. Unless population decreases between the earlier and later periods, there may very well not be enough of these goods to be enjoyed by each and all of those persons who would have died at an early age but somehow were able to live out a complete life span. Given such a scenario, it is instructive to borrow terminology from Derek Parfit.<sup>28</sup> Each person would be better off living an additional thirty years. However, all would be worse off by living

the additional years, since the availability and quality of the goods in question would be adversely affected by, in the sense of being inversely proportional to, the increased number of people living eighty years. In this world, there may very well be a net disvalue for each person when comparing the longer life with the shorter one—even if one were to live for only thirty years. The outcome would not be what Parfit calls “The Repugnant Conclusion,” or extreme overpopulation and a correspondingly very low quality of life for each person.<sup>29</sup> We *would*, however, have a case of the Tragedy of the Commons writ large, which is enough to cast doubt on the plausibility of DGP. No modal strategy can support DGP because, unlike the properties, propositions, and states of affairs which constitute possible worlds, the goods that I have just mentioned are not abstract but rather concrete objects that are not amenable to our modal intuitions.

All of this has damning logical implications for the alleged truth of the counterfactual conditional DGP'. The temporal gap between the obtaining of the state of affairs expressed by the antecedent and the state of affairs expressed by the consequent in any counterfactual conditional may make for large qualitative differences between the Q-world and the P-world, which can affect the truth-value of the conditional as a whole. It may be the case that the P-world is exactly like the actual world in the sense that S enjoys the same amount of goods in the P-world as he does in the actual world. However, if the temporal gap between the P-world and the Q-world is one of forty years, then it is unlikely that S would be able to enjoy to the same degree the same amount of goods by living up to the time of the Q-world, or eighty years. For the quantity of goods would remain constant while the availability and quality of the goods for each person like S would diminish as more persons competed for such goods between the time of the antecedent and the time of the consequent. So from the possibility that *each* person who dies prematurely might be better off by living out a complete life span, it does not follow that *all* persons would be better off by living longer than they in fact do.

Some possible world in which S alone lives for eighty years instead of forty would indeed be very similar to the actual world. But a possible world in which everyone who actually dies at thirty or forty years lives to be eighty would differ enormously from the actual world. Thus it seems that the counterfactual conditional ( $P > Q$ ) comes out false, on the ground that the ( $P \& Q$ )-world we have imagined is very dissimilar from the actual world. Instead, we have a ( $P \& \sim Q$ )-world, where P and Q are not cotenable propositions, since, with DGP' in mind, we do not want to claim here that if P had been the case, then Q would not have been the case.

Presumably, one could, on strictly logical grounds, insist on the plausibility of stipulating that S and no other individual figure as the singular term in the antecedent and consequent. This would ensure the truth of the counterfactual. Yet this would, in effect, be tantamount to saying

DGP" If S had not died at forty but instead had lived to be eighty, and everything else were held fixed, then S would have enjoyed the goods of which his death deprived him.

Formally, this would yield  $(P \& R) > Q$ , where the complex, conjunctive proposition  $(P \& R)$  is clearly an instance of strengthening the antecedent. Yet rules of inference for counterfactual conditionals involving strengthened antecedents may prohibit us from validly inferring Q from  $(P \& R)$ .<sup>30</sup> So DGP" may be false on logical grounds alone.

The Deprivation of Goods Principle, whether formulated as a straightforward assertion (as in DGP) or as a counterfactual conditional (as in DGP' and DGP"), cannot be sustained without begging questions. Consequently, it cannot be shown in any compelling way that death is bad for the person who dies, since if everyone were to live for as long as S does, then everyone's ability to enjoy goods for even thirty years would be adversely affected in both present and future generations.

### 5. Conclusion

I have argued that the Epicurean and Lucretian conception of persons and definition of death are tenable and untouched by the doctrine of trans-world individuals. This establishes the truth of the Existence Principle. Furthermore, I have shown that the Deprivation of Goods Principle fails on its own terms. These two features vindicate the Epicurean thesis that death is nothing to us. The upshot of this discussion can be put in the following way. If we do not accept the limit that comes with premature death, or any period of time which entails less than a complete life span for everyone, then we may very well end up being worse off than if we did accept such a limit. Without this, to borrow a phrase from Thomas Nagel, "it may be that a bad end is in store for us all."<sup>31</sup>

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## NOTES

1. From *Epicurus: The Extant Remains*, ed. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 85. The passage in the *Letter* is at 124–127.
2. In Book III of *De Rerum Natura*, trans. as *The Nature of Things* by Frank O. Copley (New York: Norton, 1977), lines 830–41, pp. 75–76.
3. See Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus*, 82, in Bailey, p. 53, and *Letter to Menoeceus*, 128, in Bailey, p. 87. Also, Lucretius, Book III of *The Nature of Things*, lines 319–22.
4. Among those who can be said to have advanced and defended various forms of this Principle are: Thomas Nagel, "Death," in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 1–10; Harry Silverstein, "The Evil of Death," *Journal of Philosophy* 77 (July 1980), 401–24; George Pitcher, "The Misfortunes of the Dead," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (April 1984), 183–88; Anthony L. Brueckner and John Martin Fischer, "Why is Death Bad?," *Philosophical Studies* 50 (1986), 213–21; Jeff McMahan, "Death and the Value of Life," *Ethics* 99 (October 1988), 32–61; and Fred Feldman, *Confrontations with the Reaper* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), chs. 8 and 9. A noteworthy pro-Epicurean account of death is given by Stephen Rosenbaum, "How to be Dead and Not Care: A Defense of Epicurus," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (April 1986), 217–25.
5. This precise formulation is from Jeff McMahan's "Death and the Value of Life," though he calls it the "Existence Requirement" (p. 33).
6. *Letter to Herodotus*, 39 ff. Also Book II of *The Nature of Things*, lines 573–75. Charles Segal offers an illuminating discussion of this theory as it relates to atomism, as well as the relation between Epicurus and Lucretius in *Lucretius on Death and Anxiety* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
7. See *The Nature of Things*, Book I, lines 248–64, and Book II, lines 67–79. Also, Segal, pp. 26–45, 238–45.
8. My presentation of Epicurus' arguments follows closely that of David Furley, "Nothing to Us?" in *The Norms of Nature*, Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 75–91, at p. 76.
9. *The Nature of Things*, Book III, lines 832–41.
10. *Op. cit.*, p. 76.
11. *Letter to Herodotus*, 63–68, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 125–26; *The Nature of Things*, lines 843–46.
12. See *Phaedo*, 87a ff. Also, Descartes' *Sixth Meditation*.
13. 65a10, or p. 41 in Bailey.
14. Lines 847–51.
15. *Ibid.* It is instructive to compare Lucretius' views on memory with those of Locke on consciousness in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, ch. 27.
16. Although the term 'person' may imply a broader or more extended sense of continuity than 'self', I use the two terms interchangeably here. Thus both terms denote one and the same entity.

17. "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow," in *Conditionals*, ed. Frank Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 48–75, at p. 56. See also Lewis's *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), especially pp. 1–36; and Robert Stalnaker, "A Theory of Conditionals," in Jackson, pp. 28–45.

18. Here I am following the views of Jonathan Bennett, as expressed in "Counterfactuals and Possible Worlds," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4 (December 1974), 381–402, and "Counterfactuals and Temporal Direction," *Philosophical Review* 93 (January 1984), 57–91.

19. *Ibid.* Also Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, pp. 48–52, and "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow," pp. 53–65.

20. This is Saul Kripke's version of possible worlds, as presented in *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 44, 49. Michael Loux provides a helpful overview of possible worlds in his "Introduction" to *The Possible and the Actual*, ed. Loux (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 15–64.

21. See Peter van Inwagen, "Plantinga on Trans-World Identity," in *Alvin Plantinga: A Profile*, J. E. Tomberlin and van Inwagen, eds. (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1985), pp. 101–20, especially n. 2, p. 118. Also Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), ch. VI.

22. *Ibid.* And "Two Concepts of Modality," in *Philosophical Perspectives, I, Metaphysics* ed. J. E. Tomberlin (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1987), pp. 189–231, at p. 195.

23. In "The Evil of Death," Silverstein offers a conception of persons which has them existing in four-dimensional space-time. Presumably, this allows for coherent life-life comparisons. Insofar as his concept of persons allows them to exist across times and worlds, I take it and the doctrine of trans-world individuals to be equivalent.

24. See Lewis, "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow," and Bennett, "Counterfactuals and Temporal Direction."

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Confrontations with the Reaper* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 133–42.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40.

28. What I have in mind are what Parfit calls theories that are directly or indirectly collectively self-defeating. See *Reasons and Persons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially pp. 55–66 and Part Four, "Future Generations."

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 381–90.

30. See Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, pp. 31–33. Also, Stalnaker, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

31. "Death," p. 10. Despite ending his paper with this phrase, Nagel defends the thesis that death is bad.