

Eleventh Meeting: Lucretius's Argument

1. Lucretius's Argument

“Think too how the bygone antiquity of everlasting time before our birth was nothing to us. Nature therefore holds this up to us as a mirror of the time yet to come after our death. Is there anything in this that looks appalling, anything that wears an aspect of gloom? Is it not more untroubled than any sleep?”

- Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*

One Interpretation of Lucretius's Argument

1. The fact that you didn't exist before your birth does not merit negative feelings.
2. If the fact that you didn't exist before your birth does not merit negative feelings, then the fact that you won't exist after your death does not merit negative feelings.
3. Therefore, the fact that you won't exist after your death does not merit negative feelings.

2. Nagel's Response

our postmortem nonexistence has this feature: *it could have begun later*
our prenatal nonexistence lacks the mirror feature: *it could have ended earlier*

3. Feldman's Response

our postmortem nonexistence has this feature: *it's not beginning later deprives us of goods*
our prenatal nonexistence lacks the mirror feature: *it's not ending earlier deprives us of goods*

4. Kamm's Response

5. Parfit's Response

One Interpretation of Parfit's Argument

1. It is reasonable to be more concerned about future evils than about past evils.
2. My postmortem nonexistence is a future evil and my prenatal nonexistence is a past evil.
3. Therefore, it is reasonable to be more concerned about my postmortem nonexistence than about my prenatal nonexistence.

Possible Lucretian Rejoinder:

- 1*. It is reasonable to be more concerned about future *experienced* evils than about past *experienced* evils.

6. Brueckner and Fischer's Response

One Interpretation of Brueckner and Fischer's Parfitian Argument

1. It is reasonable to care more about future experienced goods than about past experienced goods.
2. Our postmortem nonexistence deprives us of future experienced goods.
3. Our prenatal nonexistence deprives us of past experienced goods.
4. Therefore, our postmortem nonexistence deprives us of something it is reasonable to care more about than what our prenatal nonexistence deprives us of.