

THE IMPLICATIONS OF MATERIALISM FOR POST MORTEM SURVIVAL IN  
LUCRETIAN AND ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PHILOSOPHY

A Thesis submitted to the faculty of  
San Francisco State University  
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by

Jerome Darin Tatum

San Francisco, California

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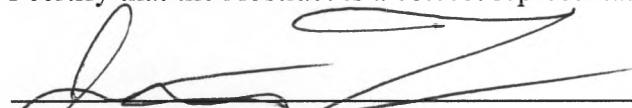
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Jerome Darin Tatum  
San Francisco, California  
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Lucretius' belief in an atomic structure of the universe that is very similar to the view modern science holds, helped to inform his views about the lack of possibility for the survival of the soul after death. He feels that we should not worry our minds with the fear of death, because at death, the body and the soul cease to have experience. I will show that the ancient Egyptians also had an understanding of science and the mind that are similar to some contemporaries in the field. I will compare the views of Lucretius on science and the mind with that of the ancient Egyptians. Egyptian views present a powerful challenge to Lucretius' view. I will argue that the ancient Egyptians had legitimate reasons to oppose the view of Lucretius that there is absolutely no possibility for the soul or consciousness to survive the process of death.

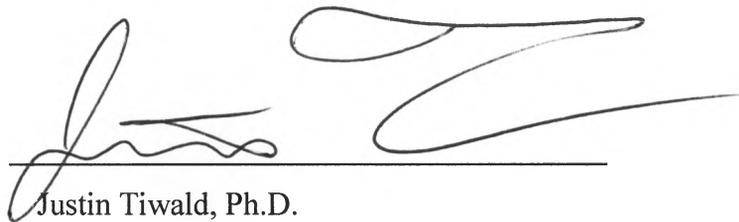
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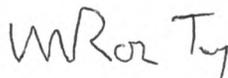
## CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *A Philosophical Debate on Post Mortem Survival Between the Frameworks of Titus Lucretius and the Ancient Egyptians* by Jerome Darin Tatum, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in Philosophy at San Francisco State University.



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## PREFACE AND/OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Before attending San Francisco State University to study Philosophy, I was a full time student at CSU East Bay, majoring in Business and Accounting. Although I enjoyed learning the different aspects of business I realized it wasn't the path I was supposed to stay on. Due to extenuating circumstances with my job, which resulted in me being placed on academic probation at CSU East Bay, I went through a much needed period of self reflection, coming to the conclusion that I should pick a major in school, and subsequently a career in a field that I am passionate about. Thus, I decided to change my major, and transfer to SFSU to study Philosophy and Religion. I enjoyed philosophy so much that I decided to enroll in the master's program. While taking a course on Hellenistic philosophy with Dr. Hood I was introduced to the philosophy of Lucretius. I admired his poetry and was impressed by his understanding of physics and how it shaped his beliefs on the possibility for postmortem survival. I had long been an admirer of ancient Egyptian philosophy similarly for their understanding of the universe and how it shaped their views on postmortem survival that were opposite of Lucretius. After writing a term paper on the topic Dr. Hood graciously accepted my request to expand my term paper into a thesis and for her to be the chair of my thesis committee. I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Hood for allowing me to indulge in my passion by studying this topic through the lens of these incredible philosophers that has resulted in an expansion of my understanding of both philosophies. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr Rorty who stepped in for Dr. Hood who was absent due to medical leave for my last semester. Dr Rorty was instrumental in the completion of my thesis providing indispensable insights and her infamous talent for editing. I'd also like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Tiwald whose suggestions for my thesis have fundamentally determined my goal for the project and my approach to achieve my goal. Last, I'd like to express an unspeakable gratitude to my mother who has grounded me spiritually, My Father who gives me unconditional love and support, my twin brother whom I bounce all of my philosophical ideas off, along with my other two brother and my family and friend but especially my beautiful wife who has been a loyal partner and my inspiration.

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## **I. Introduction**

The answer to the question of whether there is a possibility for post mortem survival is generally based on the philosophical view of the individual answering the question. A materialist believes that all phenomena in the world can be reduced to something physical. In this view the mind or soul can be reduced to the physical body, typically the brain. Therefore when the brain dies the mind or soul ceases to exist as well. Lucretius was one of the most famous ancient philosophers to see the world through a materialist lens. He believed that since the soul was made of atoms, then it must cease to exist like all other physical things. The ancient Egyptians were the first civilization to write about the afterlife and its relevance to their religion and society. Egyptians viewed death as an opportunity to liberate the soul or consciousness from the bondage of the material world. They believed that all phenomena in the world could not be explained by merely appealing to the physical aspects of the universe. Direct correlations in the Dogon's cosmology drawings, use of terms, and meanings of those terms reveal a close similarity to the ancient Egyptian Cosmology. By using both cultures to decode the cosmology story it can be demonstrated how they both have an understanding of the nature of reality analogous to contemporary atomic, quantum and string theory. Experiments in quantum science have revealed how fundamental consciousness is to the actual existence of the physical universe. Quantum science may actually imply the survival of consciousness beyond the process of death. Modern day scientists are beginning to conduct studies on consciousness that support the claims of past life and

near death experiences. This possibility should not lead to worry, but on the contrary can create optimism for a new paradigm in understanding life and consciousness. This non materialist view of the world has benefits that cannot be realized by materialists. The materialist view is deficient in the sense that there is no possibility for postmortem survival and the benefits that accompany this possibility. I will argue that the ancient Egyptians had legitimate reasons to oppose Lucretius' view that there is absolutely no possibility for the soul or consciousness to survive the process of death.

My motivation behind this project is to celebrate Lucretius for his philosophy that poetically describes a materialist view of the world. Lucretian philosophy is replete with scientific as well as psychological insights that have contributed to our modern way of seeing the world. I also seek to highlight a limitation of the materialist view that is problematic for those who believe in post mortem survival. The materialist view contends that there is no possibility for post mortem survival because consciousness can be reduced to the physical body specifically the brain. Ancient Egyptian thought is rarely looked upon as a philosophical source within academia. However there are over three thousand years of texts collected from the ancient Egyptian civilization that are philosophical as well as psychological and scientifically beneficial. These fields are relevant to this project because for both Lucretius and the ancient Egyptians, their understanding of physics shaped their philosophies which had psychological implications. I will show that ancient Egyptian thought is parallel to some modern views in the fields of philosophy, psychology and science. The ancient Egyptians provide a

robust account of the universe and man that allows for several possibilities of post mortem survival. Egyptian compatibility with modern thought makes Egyptian philosophy a viable candidate to adopt for those who want to have an understanding of the world that allows for the possibility of post mortem survival.

Before we proceed I would like to further explicate my intentions for this project. I am not attempting to deductively prove or demonstrate that the aspect of human consciousness that has been traditionally referred to as the soul can survive death. What I am claiming is that the ancient Egyptians had reasons to disagree with the view that there is absolutely no possibility that the soul can survive death. The key word here is 'possibility' because we are not at a point where we can prove such matters one way or the other. Therefore the claim that there is no possibility for the soul to survive death is an overreach considering the knowledge that we have on the topic. I am using the philosophy of Lucretius and the philosophy of the ancient Egyptians to flesh out this claim. It also should be noted that when I use the term "soul" I am referring to consciousness in the broadest sense. I mean to refer to the aspect of consciousness that has identity and experience. On the simplest level I am referring to the conditions necessary for the existence of persons over time.

In the first section of this paper I will convey the philosophical views of Lucretius. His understanding of physics puts him firmly in the school of atomism. His views on the soul are formed based on his understanding of atomism. He believes that the inability of the soul to survive death should have psychological and ethical implications.

The next section of this paper will be an examination of ancient Egyptian Philosophy. It is the similarity between Egyptians cosmology and quantum theory that more than likely motivated them to a more profound understanding of consciousness. By seeking to understand consciousness they provided a conceptual pathway for the possibility that consciousness can survive the process of death. They also explain how the soul's capacity to experience an afterlife can have psychological and ethical effects on us. The last section of this paper will be an analysis of both philosophical views. Within this analysis I will raise some critiques on the philosophy of Lucretius that I also see to be critiques of modern day materialists concerns about whether the soul can survive the process of death. I will also explain why I believe that the ancient Egyptians had good reasons to oppose the view that the soul has no possibility of surviving the process of death.

## **II: Philosophical views of Lucretius**

Lucretius believed that the soul is material and therefore mortal. His views on the natural world, referred to as atomism, inform his understanding of what constitutes the soul or consciousness and its capacity to survive the process of death. This understanding has psychological implications. He feels that we should not worry our minds with the fear of death because at the point of death, the body and the soul cease to have experience. This view would suggest that if there is an afterlife, then there is cause to worry.

Lucretius sets out to convey the philosophy known as Epicureanism, which he does in the form of a poem. Epicureanism is the philosophy of Epicurus, which proposes,

in a nutshell, that the purpose of life is pleasure. It should be said that Epicurus preferred the pleasures of the mind, such as philosophy, over and above sensual pleasures such as drugs, sex and food. But it is this focus on pleasure that motivated Epicureans to seek ways of ridding themselves of the pain and suffering that was associated with fears of and anxieties about death. Religion occupied the dominant philosophical views at the time which led the majority of people to fear death due to the possibility of having a bad experience in the afterlife. Lucretius set out to put an end to what he viewed as superstition with his philosophy of nature. Lucretius is an interesting person to study specifically for his scientific views, many of which are the foundations of modern physics. Stephen Greenblatt credits Lucretius as being the answer to the question of how the world became modern. Thomas Jefferson who was the founder of one of the first democratic governments in modern time wrote, "I am Jefferson....an Epicurean" (Greenblatt 2011). We can credit the inclusion of the pursuit of happiness into the declaration of independence to the influence of Epicurus. Jefferson along with many other influential characters in modern times were heavily influenced by Epicurean philosophy. The philosophy of David Hume, the evolutionary theories of Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin and the atomic theory conveyed by Albert Einstein should all be seen as products of the influence of Lucretius.

### **Lucretian Physics**

In the first section of his poem, *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius lays out what

he sees as the fundamental properties and laws of physics. The first principle that Lucretius leaves us with is still understood as a fundamental law of physics. “The first stage of this study will have this rule as its basis; nothing ever springs miraculously out of nothing” (Smith 2001). In this quote Lucretius is stating very plainly that you can’t get something from nothing. The universe could not have magically appeared out of nowhere. There must be something there in order to generate something else. This view is similar to the conservation of energy principle that has been established by modern physics. The conservation of energy principle states that energy is never created nor destroyed but transforms from one form to another. There must be some type of generation that occurs to create the world. We can see this within nature. Whether we consider plant life or animal life, there must be a germination of a seed to procreate new life. If the universe could appear spontaneously from nothing then we might expect other things in nature to have this feature to appear spontaneously from nothing. Lucretius does not believe that this is possible. “If things could be created out of nothing, any kind of thing could be produced from any source; nothing would need a seed” (Smith 2001).

Lucretius held another view that modern physics wasn’t able to confirm until the late 19th century. Atomism is the idea that all matter consist of invisible, indivisible particles called atoms. Atom in Greek means ‘not divisible’ or ‘not able to be cut or divided’. Although there are several differences from the atomism that Lucretius wrote about and contemporary atomic theory, the fundamental concept within both theories is the same. All physical matter can be reduced to atoms. “Bodies composed of solid and

indestructible matter do exist. It is these which, according to our teaching are the seeds and primary elements of things, the constituent and components of the universe” (Smith 2001). According to Lucretius, the atom is the smallest particle of matter in the universe because it is indestructible. Because the atom is indestructible, the atom can exist eternally. It is the eternal atom that that is responsible for constituting the universe, along with the void, which is empty space. We know now that the atoms can be divided into sub-atomic particle such as electrons and photons. Although this aspect of his theory was not entirely correct, the fact that he proposed this view and gave empirical reasons why he believed it to be so in the midst of several competing theories is impressive. Since Lucretius believed that all things were made of combinations of matter or void, when it came to the soul, he believed that it too was so composed.

### **The Material Soul**

Lucretius believes that the soul is a material thing, and therefore a part of the physical world. It is made of particles that must be extremely subtle, round and smooth (Smith 2001). This is because the soul must be more like a vapor or steam, compared to a fluid like water or a solid like ice. Lucretius identifies the soul as breath, heat, air and a mystery element. The mystery element is responsible for the motion within the body. The soul is made of two parts, one being more dominant than the other within human beings. These are mind and spirit, with mind being more dominant because it acts as the captain that steers the ship that is the body. The mind, located in the breast, is the seat of the

intellect and regulates reasoning and logic. The spirit, which is the other aspect of soul, is disseminated through the whole body and regulates sensations. It is this view of the constitution of the soul that leads him to believe that the soul was mortal and would cease to have experience at the point of death.

Lucretius believed that the soul could not exist without the body and gave an account of what would happen to the soul at the point of death. We are given an analogy as an explanation of the fate that the soul will face. First, Lucretius invites us to think of smoke rising from a sacrifice that has just been burned on an altar. Although the soul is material and made of atoms, we're to think of the soul as this smoke or vapor-like substance. Then he suggests we imagine a vessel that is filled with water that has just shattered. "You perceive that the liquid flows out on all sides and disperses, and since mist and smoke dissolve into the breezy air, you must assume too that the spirit is dissipated" (Smith 2001). Lucretius assumes that the soul will exit the body in a way similar to the way water leaks out of a broken vessel. But since the soul is like a vapor it will not leak out of the body like a fluid, but will rather disperse into the air like smoke. According to Lucretius the soul is lighter than smoke, so it will return back to its ultimate particles much more quickly than smoke. He is clear that that the soul perishes at this point and all thought, feelings and experiences cease. He does not say whether we actually experience the soul leaving the body and dispersing into the air, so it's not clear whether this last act of the soul is painful. He may be putting so much emphasis on the soul "perishing much more quickly and being resolved more speedily into its ultimate

particle” because he wants us not to worry about any possible experience of pain. Since the soul reverts back to its atoms much faster than smoke, which disperses into the air fairly quickly, if there is any pain, or pleasure, for that matter, it would end relatively fast.

Lucretius thought that it was impossible for the mind to exist without the body because the mind depends on the body just as the body depends on the mind for its survival. Mind and body also depend on each other in order to actually enjoy life. “The body and mind as vital forces owe their energy and enjoyment of life to their interconnection: divorced from the body, the substance of the mind cannot by itself produce vital motions; and the body, once abandoned by the spirit, cannot live on and experience sensation” (Smith 2001). According to Lucretius, the mind and body play crucial roles in our ability to function as human beings. The body is responsible for motion or movement. It is the body that allows the soul to be mobile. Without the body the soul would not be able to walk, run or ride in a plane or car. All movement would be impossible because the mind would not have a body to move. The mind is responsible for giving the body the experience of sensation. All five senses have corresponding body parts that detect the particular sensation that we experience. Without the nose, the mind would not have the ability to smell. Without the ears, the mind would not have the ability to hear. He believes that the soul is a physical part of the body and just as a nose or ear would decompose once it is detached from the body, so will the soul. Once again Lucretius invokes the water in the vessel analogy to draw more parallels. He wants us to think of the body like a vessel for the soul. To think of the soul existing without the body

is as preposterous as thinking that the vessel could break, but the water still somehow remain together as if it was still in the vessel.

### **Reasons to Reject the Survival of the Soul**

Lucretius gave several arguments for why he believed that the soul could not survive after death. One of his examples directs our attention to the development of the mind through the course of human life. We can observe that babies have underdeveloped minds and depend on adults to do essentially everything for them. When an adult is in her prime the mind is also. The prime years are when the mind is most active engaging in families and careers. When the body is old the mind also deteriorates. In old age forgetfulness is prevalent and there is less capacity for mentally strenuous activities. This process implicated the mortality of the soul (Smith 2001). Lucretius also felt that the lack of memory that most people have of a past life was problematic. Although reincarnation is not a necessary implication of postmortem survival, Lucretius believed that the lack of memory objection was relevant to the issue. Perhaps he is directing this objection at a particular type of post mortem survival specifically the accounts that assert reincarnation. His question was, if the soul does persist after death and is reincarnated why don't we have any knowledge of our past lives? He felt that even if the soul persists after death, if it is changed so much that there is no knowledge of its past existence, then it must be admitted that it is a different soul. These concerns were enough to convince Lucretius that there was no possibility of an afterlife. Lucretius' understanding of the soul has

psychological implications for our approach to death.

### **Lucretian Psychology**

Lucretius meant for this theory about the constitution and mortality of the soul to ease the worrying mind. There is no need to fear death, because neither the body nor the soul will have any experience past that point. Lucretius states, “The wise man does not depreciate life nor does he fear the cessation of life” (Hicks 1931). For Lucretius, it is irrational to spend a life worrying about a state that will never truly be experienced. In this way death can be described as the end of experience. He also believes that this understanding makes mourning for those who have passed unjustified. We should not fear and mourn the death of others because it is inevitable. To fear or mourn an inevitable death is ultimately a waste of time. It is also senseless to have regret for things that one might have done if not for death. Often people on their death beds tend to regret the things in life that they will not get to do, whether it be completing a project like writing a book or making an album or raising children. We should not have regret for things that we may perceive ourselves as missing out on due to death, because desire ceases at death. Furthermore, he suggested that claims of punishment in afterlife are really just metaphors for or warnings against circumstances that we experience here on earth. These stories about the pitfalls of seeking power, endless desire, and the anticipation of punishment for crimes, are all experiences we have as humans on earth, not as souls in an afterlife. His wish was for people to read his philosophy of the soul and feel peace of mind in the idea

that there will be no day of judgment in the event of death, or any other experience for that matter, because all experience will end at death.

### **III: Philosophical Views of the Ancient Egyptians**

Lucretius' belief in an atomic structure of the universe, a suggestion that is very similar to the view modern science holds, helped to inform his views about the lack of possibility for the survival of the soul after death. The ancient Egyptians also had an account of nature that helped to inform their views about the possibility for the survival of the soul after death. A decoding of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs reveals that they had an understanding of the cosmos that resonates with atomic, quantum and string theory. It has also been suggested that they also offered an accurate depiction of cellular reproduction (Scranton 2007). Laird Scranton is a computer programmer whose job description consists of making connections between computer program languages. His task is to identify the original program and then determine how two programs that are being compared differ from the original and each other. His skill set made him the perfect candidate for an unusual research project. Scranton compares the cosmology of the Dogon tribe currently located in West Africa with that of the Ancient Egyptians of North Africa. These two cultures are interesting case studies, specifically for the astronomical understanding that's been attributed to them. The Dogon tribe had knowledge of the existence of Sirius B before western astronomers could identify the star with a telescope (Temple 1976). Discovered in 1862, Sirius B is a dwarf star that orbits Sirius A. This was

confirmed by the use of a telescope. The mystery is how the Dogon knew about Sirius B without the use of a telescope or any other instrument. Astronomy also plays a large role in ancient Egyptian culture as well. The great pyramids at the Giza plateau are aligned with the constellation of Orion (Bauval 1994). A comparison of the cosmological stories of these two cultures shows not only that these two systems are very similar, but that they are also encoded with several layers of meaning.

### **Egyptian Cosmology**

Scranton has suggested that the cosmology of the Dogon and the Ancient Egyptians have at least three layers of meaning. The first layer of meaning is the actual cosmology story that functioned as a tool to aid in memorizing the other meanings. The second layer of understanding was on the level of physics. The cosmology tells the story of what happens to matter, from the physical world of atoms down to the quantum world of string theory. The third layer of understanding was on a biological level. The cosmology on this level tells the story of how cells reproduce in both the mitosis and meiosis processes.

Cosmology stories are generally seen as the religion of these ancient cultures, having no scientific relevance or implications to give importance to the story. Now we can shed some light on the purpose of these ancient stories. Alternatively, we can choose to read them in a different way. Instead of querying them for religious implications, consider the possibility of other uses. These stories were rather a tool to help students

remember the science lessons that were being taught to them. By learning the cosmology story, a student can simply plug in the alternate meaning in order to ascertain all the many levels of meaning within the story (Scranton 2007).

In his decoding of the cosmology of the Dogon and the ancient Egyptians, Scranton suggests robust theories that resonate with present-day atomic, quantum and string theory. The Dogon's cosmological story of Amma depicts the process of matter from the atomic level down to string theory (Scranton 2007). Amma correlates with the ancient Egyptian god Amen; both emerge out of the waters of chaos, making them symbolic of the emergence of matter from the unformed universe. Coming out of the unformed universe is the Po, which is symbolic of the atom. The Dogon's description of the Po accurately describes how protons, neutrons and electrons behave. The symbol that the Dogon use to represent the Po looks like modern diagrams depicting the orbit of the electron. In both cosmologies the self emergent god creates twin gods in a pantheon of eight. The numbers two and eight point to the structure of water as two hydrogen electrons that combine with eight oxygen electrons. Protons, electrons and neutrons are represented as the sene seed that constitute the Po. The sene seed goes through a germination process that is very much like the concept of spin within physics. Modern science insists that there are four types of spin, and there are common depictions of what these four types of spin look like. The Dogon descriptions and drawings of the germination of the sene seed match Stephen Hawking's diagram depicting the four types of spin (Scranton 2007). Modern science claims that there are over two hundred

fundamental particles floating around in the universe. The Dogon make the more specific claim of exactly two hundred and sixty six fundamental particles. This is typical for the Dogon, who often provide more details about these processes than modern science. What creates the germination process of the Po is what could be described as no less than modern day string theory. The Dogon believe that the vibrations of cosmic strings are the cause of that atomic structure mentioned previously. The Dogon depiction and description of cosmic strings and how they behave are identical to the most current understanding of the theory presented by Brian Greene (Scranton 2007). This is one way that Scranton relates both cosmologies to modern day string theory.

Another story that we find in Egyptian cosmology is reference to the mother goddess Neith. Neith is said to have created the universe by weaving it into existence. The story of Neith is similar to a Dogon cosmology story about the universe coming into existence as a result of the weaving of a spider. The spider's name is Dada, a word which means mother in the Dogon language. Both stories convey that the universe was created by the weaving of a mother-like figure. "It is significant that it essentially attributes the world to the movement of threads – just like the Dogon mythology and modern string theory" (Scranton 2002). Furthermore, Neith's symbolic representation in hieroglyphs can be drawn in two ways, perhaps for a specific reason. The strings in string theory have simple ways in which they intersect and complex ways in which they intersect. Both of these ways can be drawn in a diagram. Both of the ways that Neith's name is drawn are almost exactly how simple and complex intersection between strings are depicted in

diagrams within string theory. This is another way that a correlation between modern string theory and the cosmology story of the Dogon and the ancient Egyptians can be made. I have shown just two of five ways that Scranton attempts to verify his claims that the two cosmology stories are similar [and also describe] quantum theory.

The third possible translation of the cosmological story was meant to educate students on the fundamental reproduction of life through the process of mitosis and meiosis. The one God that emerges, Amen in Egypt and Amma for the Dogon, represent the first cell. The first act of this self-emergent god is to create twin deities. This represents the reproduction of a cell by splitting in mitosis. The next act of Amen/Amma is to create a pantheon of eight deities, representing the meiosis process. "I am the One, that becomes Two, that becomes, Four, that become eight, then I am One again" (Scranton 2002). This pantheon always consists of four males and four females, like the chromosomes in meiosis. Meiosis begins with a somatic cell that has a homologous pair of chromosomes numbering forty six in total, constituted by twenty three chromosomes each from mom and dad. The first phase of meiosis is for the cell to duplicate its chromosomes, giving it two twin pairs. In the next phases the cell splits, resulting in a total of two cells each having a twin pair of 46 chromosomes. In the next phase the two cells split separating the twin chromosome resulting in four cells each with only one member of the homologous pair, giving each cell twenty three chromosomes each, two of them male and the other two female. These haploid cells with twenty three chromosomes each are the egg and sperm cells that come together to form a zygote

consisting of 46 chromosomes, half from mom and half from dad. The ancient Egyptian understanding of biological reproduction and the creation of matter on a quantum level may have some implications to why they believed in the possibility of the immortality of the soul. I will say more about this in the analysis section of the paper.

### **The Duat**

The ancient Egyptians had a view the opposite of that of Lucretius. They maintained that the soul does survive the death of the body. A complete version of the journey that the soul takes through the Duat or Amduat, which is translated as ‘underworld’, is found in a text from the tomb of Thutmosis III. This text describes death as a process that is separated into twelve sections representing the twelve hours of night. Consciousness correlates with the rising and setting of the sun in the twelve hours of the day and the twelve hours of the night. The sun in this reading serves as an analogy of what happens to our consciousness when we die. Just as the sun seems to travel above the earth for twelve hours during the day and below the earth for twelve hours during the night, the soul is thought to exist on earth in a physical body while alive and travels through the underworld upon death.

In the first hour of the night the Sungod is to be seen as a guide through the subconscious. The Sungod is qualified to be a guide in the underworld due to his experience in his daily travel through the twelve hours of the night. The star that is our sun is a symbolic representation of the inner sun that generates life. “At the collective

level, he is then the creative spirit of the unconscious that brought about the evolution of human consciousness; at the personal level he is a symbol for a higher ego of self” (Abt & Hornung 2003). Just as the outer sun travels through the twelve hours of the night, humans access the collective unconscious while dreaming during the twelve hours of the night. I will say more on the collective unconscious latter in the paper. Dreams play an integral role in mediating between the conscious and unconscious realms. In this depiction of the duat, the sun, along with a pantheon of gods are carried through the underworld on top of a boat. The boat can be understood as a “solid mental concept” that is the product of the ancestors who treaded the waters of the unconscious and mapped a way through the process. The goddess Maat also accompanies the sun on its journey through the duat. The goddess Maat who represents truth, justice, balance, harmony and order is present in the first hour of this journey, informing us that the unconscious world has order; we just need to get accustomed to what that order is like. Now that we have some of the psychological framework of this twelve hour process, a description of the remaining eleven hours will follow in a slightly briefer manner.

In the second hour the moon on the boat is meant to symbolize another form of regenerativity. Just as it takes the sun twelve hours to regenerate in a day, it takes the sun twelve lunar cycles to rejuvenate the seasonal process. The conversation between the Sungod and the lunar fertility god of the seasons signifies the benefit of life generativity that can be gained by having a thorough knowledge of the subconscious. There is an inundation that takes place in the third hour, and this can signify preparation for

psychological hardships. In this hour the Sungod is referred to as the great interpreter, highlighting his ability to interpret the wisdom of the unconscious realm to the conscious realm. In the fourth hour the setting changes from a flooding Nile to a dry desert. In order to move through the desert the boat must be pulled by snakes. The snakes symbolize trusting the deepest aspect within, known as “gut feeling,” especially when there are no other sources to rely on for guidance. This is also conveyed by the Sungod’s loss of vision, forcing him to rely only on his voice to speak with the deities during this hour. In the fifth hour the unions of opposites begin. In order for the human psyche to be whole we must know how to orient all aspects the subconscious. The union of fire and water creates a lake of fire for the destruction of the Sungod’s enemies; and it also provides nourishment for the Sungod. This is to show how the unconscious can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the knowledge and attitude of the individual. In a similar way, the flood of the previous hour can be a disaster or can provide soft soil for crops. The return of sight in the sixth hour symbolizes the recreation of consciousness. The crocodile that appears in this hour lets us know that the recreation of consciousness takes place at the deepest most primordial level of the subconscious. At this point we are halfway through the night and the new flame of the soul has been lit representing a renewal of consciousness. This is a crucial point in the journey because the soul is halfway through the journey and is starting to gain confidence. But it has the second half of the journey still to complete.

The seventh hour is particularly dangerous because the new light that was created

in the previous hour may now be experiencing its most vulnerable moment. We are to guard ourselves psychologically when we are at the beginning stages of self realization, as this is the time where attacks on our journey will be the most prevalent. However, at this point we are halfway through the night and can begin to feel confident and emboldened in our ability to complete the journey, symbolized by a protective serpent that will encompass the Sungod for the remainder of the journey. In the eighth hour, we are reminded to reconnect with the supporting deities of the unconscious realm by “redressing” or reconstructing the gods. This allows them a renewed presence within our minds so that when we need them they are there to give us a renewed sense of purpose. In the ninth hour the subconscious unites with the conscious, giving it the power of negative psychological entities. In the tenth hour the concept of duality is present but there is an imbalance, represented by the solar, or right, eye being larger than the lunar, or left, eye. It is also in this hour that the soul has the power to help other souls who have drowned in the waters of the unconscious, suggesting that at this stage in the process the soul has gathered enough experience to begin helping others through their psychological issues. In the eleventh hour the solar and lunar eyes are balanced, signifying a balance in the right and left portions of the brain. This balancing establishes a connection between the conscious and unconscious realms. In this hour any evil that has hindered the soul from achieving rebirth is separated from the soul and thrown into the lake of fire forever. These evils consist of lust, greed, dishonesty and any other vice that troubles the human psyche. In the twelfth hour the soul is presented as a fully actualized Sungod. Emphasis is

put on the knowledge and effort needed to complete the journey through the dark night. The primeval gods in this scene are there to convey that rejuvenation is a basic function of the universe; therefore the primeval gods that exist before creation will be there to assist. The psychological reading of the soul's journey through the twelve hours of the night provides understanding and meaning to the Egyptian project to investigate the possibility of life after death.

Another alternative interpretation of what the afterlife means to the ancient Egyptians is offered by Scranton. The actual word that the Egyptians use to represent the afterlife may have several meanings, to show that the underworld should be understood in layers. The word "Tuat," which is an alternate way to represent Duat or Amduat, is represented by a star glyph within a circle. The star symbolizes the morning star at dawn, the sun that has just completed the journey through the night. For the Dogon the star glyph within the circle is a reference to our modern day string theory, as the strings were thought of as rays of the sun (Scranton 2007). If we look at the root of the word "Tuat", it can illuminate the implication of the process of matter materializing as a result of cosmic strings. The root tu or tua means "to give" and when used in the word tuat it means to give growth to mass. Exploring these interpretations we can conclude that the Egyptians had at least three levels of meaning for the Amdaut or afterlife. The first is the general storyline, the second is the psychological understanding of the collective unconscious and the third is about physics, specifically the creation of matter as a result of cosmic strings. It seems that the ancient Egyptians meant to connect consciousness and the collective

unconscious with the creation of matter in the universe. I will say more about the collective unconscious later in the paper. If read in this way, the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians are aligned with the view that it is consciousness that is creating the physical universe and not the other way around.

### **Philosophical Aspect of Maat**

In order to have a comprehensive understanding any part of ancient Egyptian civilization one must understand Maat and how she plays a role. Maat's three aspects are cosmological, religious and philosophical. The cosmological aspect of Maat consists of her representation of the order that created and sustains the universe. In her religious aspect Maat was worshipped as a goddess of balance and harmony. Philosophically, Maat is a moral and ethical code that all Egyptians were expected to observe in order to maintain the balance of society. Maat represents the principles of truth, justice, balance, harmony and order. All of the creator gods, even including the supreme creator God Atum-Ra, must submit to the will of Maat because the universe is created with these principles as its foundation.

We should interpret Maat's moral ideals in two ways, the moral ideal as a theme and the moral ideal as a norm (Karenga 2004). The moral ideal as theme is a way of looking at the spirit of the moral ideal. It is more like general parameters or principles for action as opposed to a more normative set of rules to follow. The theme is an all-encompassing concept that should be present within all actions similar to virtues. Maat as

a theme represents truth, justice, balance, harmony and order. Therefore, if an act is to be considered moral, it must fall under these themes. For example, let's consider the act of slavery. Slavery may produce a certain amount of order in a society because free labor allows for a thriving economy. However, slavery lacks the theme of justice or fairness for the individual being enslaved. On the contrary, we can consider the act of being honest with friends and family. In this act we can see the presence of all five themes. Truth is implied in the act of honesty. Justice is present in the act because generally friend and family deserve the truth. Balance is similar to temperance and allows for more of a virtue ethics approach to moral issues as opposed to a teleological or deontological system of ethics. This means that honesty is a general guideline but not mandatory in all cases. In situations where honesty does not produce all five themes, an individual may choose not to be honest. Honesty generally provides an order that is harmonious as opposed to the order that may result from slavery. These themes reinforce each other within Maat so that the proper character is developed relegating moral action to second nature.

The moral ideal as a norm consists of rules or guidelines. Following these rules ensures that one's actions are morally justified. In ancient Egypt there are several texts that are normative, giving specific rules and guidelines for moral action inspired by Maat. When an Egyptian dies, the heart of the individual is weighed by the goddess Maat against a feather. If the heart is heavier than a feather, the individual's soul would be destroyed. In the ancient coffin text "The Coming Forth By Day" there are forty two negative 'confessions' of Maat called the Declaration of Innocence. Below is a list of ten

of the forty two things a soul must not have done in order to be considered righteous:

1. I have not committed sin.
2. I have not committed robbery with violence.
3. I have not stolen.
4. I have not slain men and women.
5. I have not stolen grain.
6. I have not purloined offerings.
7. I have not stolen the property of the gods.
8. I have not uttered lies.
9. I have not carried away food.
10. I have not uttered curses.

These negative confessions are to be made to the goddess Maat during the judgment of the soul. These negative confessions are to be seen in the same light as the Ten Commandments for Christians and the eightfold path to Buddhists. Adherence to the behavior represented in the confessions would lead to a harmonious life on earth and possibly immortality in the afterlife.

#### **IV: Analysis of Both Philosophical Views**

##### **The Immaterial Soul**

Proscribing various behaviors in terms of their effect on a possibly surviving soul is a persuasive strategy for encouraging proper behavior in civil society. However evocative Lucretius' atomism is for understanding the possible nature of reality, this normative argument is not open to him, since his version of materialism precludes the survival of the soul. If the soul is material, we would expect the soul to be as subject to the natural process of generation and decay as all other types of matter. If we think of the

human soul or consciousness as non-physical or immaterial, we can leave open the question of whether the soul could survive the physical process of death.

David Chalmers holds the view that consciousness is not physical or material. Chalmers believes that approaching the topic of consciousness requires the understanding of a distinction between an easy problem and a hard problem. Chalmers describes the easy problem as acknowledging an “ability to discriminate stimuli, or to report information, or to monitor internal states, or to control behavior” (Chalmers 2003). Although these abilities are clearly capacities of consciousness, the cause of these abilities is hardly a mystery. Two thousand years ago Lucretius noticed that the mind seems to grow and deteriorate with the body, and his explanation was that it was virtually identical with it. He believed that the mind was intrinsically connected to the body and could not exist without it. We now know that it is our brain that regulates consciousness. We can use a radio as an example. A radio plays music based on the radio’s ability to detect radio waves. If the radio is good then the music will come in loud and clear. If the radio is old or malfunctioning then the music will be low and filled with static. So a baby’s consciousness will be underdeveloped due to the development of the baby’s brain. The consciousness of the old man is deteriorating along with the brain of the old man. When that old man died Lucretius believed that the soul must die with him but this is an incorrect assumption. Chalmers’ easy problem can be understood as a rebuttal to Lucretius’ objection that the connection between the mind and the body implies that one cannot exist without the other. Chalmers shows how the easy problem answers how the

mind is so intrinsically connected to the body. A whole field of neurobiology is slowly but surely connecting the dots to explain this aspect of consciousness, but there is a hard problem that isn't answered so easily with this science or any other, according to Chalmers.

The hard problem is concerned with the issue of our subjective experiences. There is something it is like to be a human being. This can be understood as phenomenal consciousness. Chalmers describes phenomenal consciousness as, "states of perceptual experience, bodily sensation, mental imagery, emotional experience and more" (Chalmers 2003). Humans know what it is like to feel the pain of a sharp object cutting the flesh, to see the blend of blue, yellow and red colors in a sunset and to smell the variety of aromas when walking through a garden in the spring. There is an obvious correlation between our experiences and the physical processes in the body, so it's understandable why one would think that if they explain these processes then they have explained consciousness. But understanding these processes doesn't answer the question, why are these processes accompanied by experience? Also where does our consciousness originate? Let's revisit our radio analogy. If the radio begins to malfunction then it will cease to play music. Just because the radio stopped playing the music does not imply that something is wrong with the radio wave. A person would be mistaken if he believed that because the radio stopped playing, the radio wave must have ceased as well. This person would also be mistaken if he believed that the radio was creating the radio wave. Analogously, a person is mistaken when he believes that just because a person's body

ceases to function, then the mind must also cease to function. A person is also mistaken with he believes that the body, specifically the brain, creates consciousness or the mind. A materialist tries to reduce the issue of subjective experience to a physical process so as to say that there is no phenomenal experience that can't be explained by physics. Although Lucretius does not attempt to explain consciousness by way of neuroscience, he does give a fairly detailed account of what happens to the soul upon death that is entirely physical. This conjunction in experience, however constant, need not be considered as equated to 'causation. For this reason, I have chosen Chalmers' objection to demonstrate how the physical account of the soul given by Lucretius is inadequate to fully explain consciousness or the soul.

Chalmers gives three arguments for his view. These are the explanatory argument, the conceivability argument and the knowledge argument. The first argument Chalmers terms the explanatory argument. He calls it the explanatory argument because it attempts to explain the difference between the easy problem and the hard problem. The explanatory argument is as follows:

- 1) Physical accounts explain at most structure and function
- 2) Explaining structure and function does not suffice to explain consciousness
- 3) No Physical account can explain consciousness.

This argument is pretty straightforward. While explaining structure and function

of the brain and other physical processes are fine for answering the easy problem, the hard problem of why these processes give rise to consciousness is not answered. Chalmers takes this argument a step further by stating, “What cannot be physically explained cannot be itself physical” (Chalmers 2003). Since consciousness cannot be fully explained by way of a physical account, then we must begin to think of consciousness as something beyond physical or material. Lucretius went wrong by trying to give a physical account of consciousness by making atoms constituents of the soul. Even if we accepted the account of the soul given by Lucretius we still would need a more robust account of consciousness, because consciousness cannot be fully explained through a physical account. However if we consider consciousness or the soul to be a nonphysical, immaterial thing then we can begin to see how a physical process that ceases with the function of the body need not necessitate the cessation of conscious. On the contrary, acknowledging that consciousness is not physical increases the possibility that consciousness can survive the physical process of death. If the soul is not physical or material then it may not have the process of generation and decay that the body has. It is easier to understand that an immaterial or non-physical soul could survive the death of its physical body than if the soul was understood to be physical or material.

### **Response to Memory Objection**

Lucretius conveys another argument against the idea that the soul can survive death by attacking the idea of reincarnation, raising the issue of memory. He believes that

the fact that most people do not remember living any past lives is an objection against the thesis that the soul survives death and can be reincarnated—a thesis of several ancient Greek cosmologies, including Plato. He feels that even if the soul does survive death, if it changes so much that it has no knowledge of existing as a soul in a previous life then it would count as a new or different soul. I believe that this would be the first question that people would ask upon trying to convince them that they have a soul that survives death. The ancient Egyptians must have been faced with similar questions because they give a possible explanation to the inquiry. There are apparently several different possibilities for post mortem survival in ancient Egyptian philosophy. The purpose of the duat is ultimately regeneration of the soul into a new form of life. This new form of life could be what is considered a lower form such as plant or animal or a higher form such as merging with the Sun God. The new form of life that is taken is determined by the journey through the duat and the life lived here on earth.

The ancient Egyptians believed that there would be a judgment of one's life at the point of death. The Goddess Maat would weigh the heart of the deceased in a balance against the weight of a feather. If the heart was heavier than the feather then the soul of the deceased would be destroyed. John Anthony West sheds some light on what the Egyptians meant by the destruction of the soul. He claims that the destruction of the soul referred to the loss of the memory of past lives that most of us experience (West 2001). According to West there is a metaphysical component that accompanies the moral life that is ruled by the principles of Maat. Living one's life according to Maat, along with

gaining some fundamental knowledge of self through the study of Egyptian text or observing nature and consciousness, could result in the expansion of consciousness. It may be that consciousness has the ability to expand into the knowledge of past lives and more, once we engage consciousness in the proper way. Of course, the question of reincarnation is separable from the question of survival; but one can allow for both under some conceptions of the nature of the soul. It may also be the case that consciousness can be contracted to a mundane physical existence with no knowledge of past lives as well. The Egyptian view, as West presents it, allows for both options, making reincarnation with memory an additional reward for a life lived in accord with Maat.

Even some contemporary world-views allow for the possibility of reincarnation, thus implying the survival of the soul after death. In *Many Lives Many Masters*, Dr. Brian Weiss explains how he was using hypnotherapy with a patient named Catherine to help her with her phobias. The doctor told Catherine to go back to when she first started experiencing the phobias and instead of going back to her childhood she went back 4,000 years to a past life. Catherine explains in an emotional cathartic way her experience of losing her life by drowning. After the session she was healed of her phobias. Weiss knew that imagination couldn't heal phobias and became unsure about whether Catherine's past life regression was real. In a later session, while under hypnosis, Catherine claimed to be in the presence of Weiss's deceased son and father. Catherine told the doctor things about his son and father that were impossible for her to have known unless her claim was true and Weiss was convinced. Dr. Weiss now offers life regression

seminars using hypnotherapy to cure phobias and other psychological issues across the country (Weiss 2003). This contemporary example suggests that there is a possibility that some individuals remember and experience what they feel to be a life that they have already lived. The process of remembering a past life in Weiss' cases seems to have a healing effect in the way that facing a repressed trauma can be a psychological cure for mental illness. The ancient Egyptians held the view that it is possible, maybe even likely, that a person would not remember their past life unless they began the process to 'Know Thyself,' an inscription written on all temples in Egypt. Once you begin to know yourself, in this case through hypnotherapy, one may begin to gain knowledge of past lives. Weiss' work suggests there is at least the possibility that these claims are true. The Egyptian position has a better chance of accounting for that than the materialism of Lucretius.

### **The Collective Unconscious**

The ancient Egyptian's account of what happens to the soul in the amduat during the afterlife has a dual role that strengthened the possibility and usefulness of their account. The first role was to serve as a map to guide the deceased soul through the duat successfully. The soul is to travel through the twelve hours of the night in order to rise again like the morning sun. Each hour presented the soul with tests or initiations that the soul either passed or failed. Lessons were to be learned by the soul throughout its life in order to pass the tests that were presented to the soul in the duat. A successful pass

through the duat could mean rebirth into a good human life or becoming a Sun-God that dwells in the heavens. An unsuccessful pass through the amduat could result in a reincarnation into a bad human life or even a lower form of animal. The second role was to serve as a map to guide the living human through the course of life. Lessons learned from the amduat could be used in life and vice versa, because the amduat functioned like what Carl Jung referred to as the collective unconscious.

The collective unconscious, as posited by Jung, is the aspect of human consciousness that all humans share. In the classical psychology model the conscious state is the level of agency that we experience when we are awake. The subconscious state is a level below the conscious state that is thought to regulate the majority of the bodily function as well as having the capacity to store memories and traumas experienced at the conscious level. Both conscious and subconscious states are personal to each individual, so your conscious and subconscious are separate from mine. The collective unconscious, on the other hand, is the part of our subconscious that connects us all. “What we learn in the Amduat is about that part of our psyche which we share with all human beings. This common or collective unconscious was rediscovered in the twentieth century by the Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung” (Abt & Hornung 2003). A thorough knowledge of and respect for the collective unconscious is necessary to navigate the terrain of unconsciousness, which could prove to be a difficult process. This is evident when people use drugs like DMT that is purported to access this aspect of the unconscious. When people are unaware of the terrain of the unconscious it can result in

disasters such as “bad trips” or “psychotic episodes.” According to the ancient Egyptians, a thorough knowledge of the duat or collective unconscious can lead to eternal life or the immortality of the soul. It also acquaints us with our own psyche, which could prove extremely useful through the course of a life. Of course, this process may not go exactly as it is depicted in Thutmosis’ tomb. “Each of the 12 hours shows on one hand a particular situation of the process but on the other hand - paradoxically - also refers to the whole journey in different ways” (Abt & Hornung 2003). The twelve hours of the night can represent processes in the journey giving detail of what to expect and what actions that should be taken to make it to the next hour and ultimately rebirth or immortality. On the other hand each stage can represent a process that characterizes the whole journey through the night. We should begin to see this story of the soul’s journey through the twelve hours of the night as also having the dual function as a psychological account of what the ancient Egyptian called the duat and what we refer to as the collective unconscious.

The collective unconscious consists of archetypes or reoccurring themes within human life that are meant to prepare humanity for the journey through life. An example of a human archetype is the hero story that we can find in ancient religion and mythology as well as modern stories and movies. The hero story serves as a model for humans, so if we are called on to be a hero in real life, we are prepared for the situation and can begin to anticipate the common pitfalls. The ancient Egyptians felt confident in asserting that this information would benefit the living as well and the dead. The amduat states

repeatedly, “It is good for the dead to have this knowledge, but also for a person on earth, a remedy - a million times proven” (Abt & Hornung 2003). The ancient Egyptian’s analogue to what Carl Jung called the collective unconscious is the duat or underworld where souls go when they die. This analogy gains credibility through its explanatory power. It is logical to think that if the human soul survives the process of death then there would be some fundamental similarities. If one were looking for fundamental similarities within human consciousness one would need to look no further than the collective unconscious. It would also follow that by identifying these similarities by way of symbolic archetypes at the fundamental or primordial level of human consciousness we would have the lessons needed to live a life on earth which results in a heart that is lighter than a feather and would guarantee a successful passage through the duat. The collective unconscious is the perfect candidate for the destination of human consciousness once it ceases to inhabit the human body.

### **The Near Death Experience**

A phenomenon that may shed some light on the ancient Egyptian duat that has been widely experienced by humans across the globe is the non locality of consciousness as produced by the near death experience (NDE). Dr. Peter Fenwick, a neuropsychiatrist at King’s College Institute of Psychiatry in London has carried out a study of over 300 NDE’s. (P. Fenwick & E. Fenwick 1995). Dr. Fenwick started out as a skeptic, but now believes that the brain and consciousness are not the same, but are separate things. If the

mind can exist without the body then the prospect of an afterlife after the body has ceased to function becomes more possible. A person is considered clinically dead when heart and brain activity ceases, which is also expected to lead to the cessation of consciousness. But for some this is not the case. The out of body experience represents an experience of the world without a physical body. When the brain and heart stop working, consciousness can leave the body and obtain information that may be accessed once consciousness returns (P. Fenwick & E. Fenwick 1995). In the NDE, consciousness may persist after heart and brain function ceases. There are strong commonalities between the reports of individuals said to have had NDE's.

Some of these commonalities are consciousness leaving the body, meeting other beings some of whom are relatives who have passed away, a life review, seeing or experiencing a brilliant light, and an overwhelming sense of peace, safety and love (P. Fenwick & E. Fenwick 1995). These commonalities are particularly interesting to me because they can also be found in the Egyptian amduat, including the commonality of meeting other beings, sometime relatives who have passed away. In the amduat, all throughout the twelve hours of night the deceased soul is met by beings, some of which play the role as guides while assisting the soul on its journey. The life review is another commonality of the NDE. People often tell of stories of their life passing before their eyes in what seems like an instant. In the duat, the life review is symbolized by the weighing of the heart against the feather. By weighing the heart the whole life of the individual could be analyzed. The negative confessions of maat served as a self

evaluation of one's life. By weighing the heart, people would ultimately judge themselves. A light hearted person feels that the life that was lived was a good life, but the heavy hearted individual has not learned the lessons required to pass successfully through the amduat.

The most publicized commonality is the approach to a brilliant light, sometimes at the end of a tunnel. The light is almost overwhelming but also simultaneously welcoming to the point where people feel drawn to it. Often people think of this light as a God-like figure. This is also the most prevalent motif in the journey through the twelve hours of night. The ancient Egyptians used the brightest object within their reality to symbolize this brilliant light. The soul is accompanied by the Sun-God Amen-Ra who guides the soul along the journey. The purpose of the journey is to ultimately merge with this brilliant light and become the Sun-God. The NDE is commonly accompanied by a feeling of peace, safety and love. Amen-Ra is seen as a father figure type of God that looks upon his creation as children. The unconditional love that great parents usually show to their children is analogous to the unconditional love of Amen-Ra. The consistent and life giving light that the sun provides humanity and the rest of earth with, is meant to be seen as a testament to the love of God. There is no eternal damnation in the Duat. Eventually all souls experience the unconditional love of Amen-Ra, ultimately merging with the light and becoming the love of God.

The University of Virginia's Division of Perceptual Studies has been studying reincarnation for four decades. Over twenty five hundred cases have been analyzed where

children have made claims of remembering past lives. The study attempts to verify the children's claims to see if all or a part of their testimony is valid. Several children even had birth marks that were identical to the deceased person that the children had claimed that they used to be. A psychiatrist and researcher for this division named Jim Tucker, M.D. analyzed these twenty five hundred cases and says that he is convinced that reincarnation is real (Tucker 2005). The phenomenon of reincarnation speaks directly against the claims of materialist that consciousness is created by the material world, specifically the brain. For Tucker it is apparent that consciousness can exist before the brain that is thought to have produced it.

### **Response to Sudduth Critique**

Michael Sudduth contends that empirical arguments for postmortem survival fail to do the job that they claim to do. He applies formal logic to these arguments to show that their conclusions do not meet the bar of being deductively valid and sound. He shows that the survivalist claim may not be more likely than other exotic hypotheses that may have the same explanatory power. Sudduth is concise in taking the survival argument in its several forms and raising detailed objections to them in the form of his auxiliary assumption requirement amongst other approaches. He believes that the classical argument for post mortem survival is not enough on its own to justify a belief in post mortem survival. Although Sudduth's critique shows that post mortem survival can't be justified merely by the classical argument he does not rule out the possibility for

justification in the belief of post mortem survival.

It was not Sudduth's goal to prove that there is absolutely no possibility for postmortem survival. Sudduth states in his conclusion, "I have not taken myself to show that belief in survival, even personal survival (including the robust sort of survival hypothesis required by the classical arguments), is epistemically unjustified. I also do not think this is an implication of anything that I have argued" (Sudduth 2016). The classical argument for postmortem survival is just one way of justifying the belief in postmortem survival. Just because this particular method of justifying post mortem survival has failed does not mean that there is no justification for holding this belief. I will not list all the ways in which a belief in post mortem survival is epistemically justified, but to the extent that an individual is epistemically justified in believing in post mortem survival, ancient Egyptian thought becomes highly relevant. The ancient Egyptians provide a philosophy with a rich and thorough account of post mortem survival that may be ethically and psychologically beneficial. Ancient Egyptian philosophy provides a narrative that can be more useful to individuals who have had an NDE specifically because of the shared commonalities mentioned previously. For individuals seeking the meaning of phenomena such as the near death experiences the ancient Egyptian philosophy presents several layers in which these types of experience could be understood. The materialist account of the world is deficient in providing a possibility, not to mention a narrative, for post mortem survival.

## **Quantum Theory and Implications for Consciousness**

Major implications about consciousness have arisen with the advent of quantum theory. Consciousness may be so fundamental to our reality that our consciousness may actually create the physical world. Robert Lanza is a biologist who was a part of the science team that helped to develop stem cell research. Lanza has developed a theory of Biocentrism that claims “the animal observer creates reality and not the other way around” (Lanza 2009). Biocentrism goes against mainstream thought within the field of physics that claims the universe is mechanical and only by chance has produced life that has conscious experience. The problem with the mainstream model is that there are holes within the model that cannot be explained. For instance, the story begins with a “big bang” that set the universe on its current course over 13 billion years ago. If we ask, what happened before the big bang, the answer is either, there was nothing or something like there was no space and time before the big bang so that question doesn’t make sense. The problem is that we know that there can’t be something from nothing so a big bang that occurs out of thin air doesn’t really qualify as a scientific explanation. There also is no explanation for life or conscious experience. Science has no clue how particles of matter can give rise to life and consciousness, nor are these questions even considered a problem. Furthermore we are discovering that this scientific model for the universe is a description for less and less of the actual universe. We know now that only four percent of the universe consists of physical matter. Over twenty percent of the universe is made up of what is referred to as dark matter, while the remaining seventy percent is made up

of dark energy. Modern science can tell us little or nothing about dark matter or dark energy. Lanza contends that we are in need of a new theory, one that accounts for life and consciousness. By flipping the current model of the universe upside down and putting consciousness at the top of the model we can have a more accurate understanding of our reality. Experiments in the field of quantum physics give us scientific evidence of how consciousness mediates the relationship between us and the universe.

Lanza uses the double slit experiment to highlight how consciousness is intrinsic to how we understand the physical world. In this experiment an electron is shot through two slits. When it passes through the slit the electron leaves an interference pattern that was thought to only be produced by waves. When the electron is observed passing through the slits it behaves like a particle again and leaves a pattern that we would expect to be left by a particle. This means that electrons behave like waves until they are measured or observed and then behave like particles. Not only is this theory inconsistent with the theory of relativity, it puts consciousness at the base of our reality. Matter behaves like a wave of potential or probability until a conscious observer is aware or measures that matter. It takes an observer to actualize its probability so that it may materialize as a particle. If there was no consciousness or observers the physical world would only exist as a potential or probability wave, but would never actually materialize or collapse into particulars. According to quantum theory, without consciousness the physical world would not exist (Lanza 2009). The double slit experiment is just one of many examples that Lanza used to demonstrate how reality is created by consciousness. I

believe that an understanding of quantum theory may allow for the survival of consciousness beyond the death process.

We still are not at a place where we can claim to prove empirically that the human soul survives the process of death, but we can see the implication based on these experiments in quantum science. Although I can only speculate, my speculations will follow what we do know about consciousness and the physical world. The current understanding of death is informed by the matter-based model of physics in which some of its issues have been previously explained, specifically that a matter-based physics in a universe where only four percent is made of physical matter needs revising. This model informs us that we are our physical bodies and the consciousness that our bodies (the brain) creates will cease at the point of death. On some levels this is true, but on the most fundamental level this statement is false. This statement is true because we know that all things that are created will be destroyed. We see this in physics and biology with the creation and destruction of stars and cells respectively. When we identify with the material existence of our bodies we are faced with their inevitable destruction. Science offers us no way out of this dilemma.

A new view is needed to provide a greater understanding of the death process. “The biocentric view of the timeless, spaceless cosmos of consciousness allows for no true death in the real sense” (Lanza 2009). By shifting our identity from the material body to the consciousness of subjective experience we can transcend the body and even the physical world of time and space. It is consciousness that creates the physical universe

and subsequently our bodies, so if we began to see ourselves as consciousness we will never see death. This is not a new concept. Religions have long asserted that a spiritual identity as opposed to a physical one is the universal human condition. Individuals who experience altered states of consciousness also referred to as “religious experiences” tend to find it easier, even natural, to identify with a spirit or a soul which can ultimately be reduced to consciousness. Skeptics of the religious view can find solace in our understanding of energy. All matter in the universe can be reduced to energy, which is never created or destroyed but only changes forms. This means that even our physical bodies are never truly destroyed they only change forms. The only step that is left to take is to hypothesize that the consciousness that creates the physical body will persist regardless of the condition of the physical body. The ancient Egyptians took this step and embarked on a three thousand year investigation in order to assert the possibility of immortality of the soul. The ancient Egyptians may have known, as we are now discovering, that there is a legitimate claim for the possibility that consciousness can persist beyond death.

A parallel view in modern science contends that the unified field of quantum physics is the unified field of consciousness. Unified field theory is one of the most current views in theoretical physics that attempts to explain the physical world. Unified field theory suggests that nature is structured in layers of space/time. Humans are organisms that consist of multiple organs. Organs consist of multiple cells. Cells consist of multiple molecules or atoms. Atoms consist of subatomic particles. Below particles are

fields such as the gravitational field and the electromagnetic field. At the fundamental or primordial level of these fields is a unified field that connects and informs all fields.

Modern psychology and neurobiology suggests that consciousness is also structured in layers, layers that represent states of consciousness. Three states of consciousness that humans experience daily are waking state, dreaming state and deep sleep state. These states of consciousness have a corresponding physiology that correlates with each conscious state. The method of finding a unified field of consciousness follows the method that discovered the unified field in physics. The principle to follow is the deeper the level, the simpler the field. Just as organs are simpler than organisms and atoms are simpler than cells, the deeper the conscious state the simpler it should be. There is another principle to follow when discovering the unified field. The other principle to follow is the deeper the layer is located in nature, the more dynamic that layer seems to be as well. We can see this in how nuclear energy at the level of the atom is exponentially greater than chemical energy. Within consciousness we can see how there are more possibilities of existence in the dreaming state than in the waking state.

A fourth level that has been discovered within human consciousness is referred to as pure consciousness. Pure consciousness is a state of consciousness which is essentially empty of all objects. We can define consciousness as awareness because consciousness must always be aware of something. In the state of pure consciousness, consciousness is only aware of awareness. We can think of waking consciousness as having a three-fold structure: the observer, the observed, and the process that manages the relationship

between the observer and the observed. Pure consciousness is a state where the observer has no object within its awareness. Pure consciousness is a state of pure beings, where being is all that is. In physics terms, we can then think of this as a state with no time and no space. The state of pure consciousness can be understood as the unified field of consciousness. This state of consciousness, which is reported to be reached during meditation, has several physiological benefits such as lowering heart rate, decreasing stress and reducing the effects of aging. Also, neuroscience reveals that more neurons are connected while in the state of pure consciousness than any of the other three states.

Beyond the physiological benefits are the philosophical implications within physics. The unified field of consciousness is parallel to the unified field of theoretical physics (Hagelin 1987). We are to understand consciousness as being more fundamental to the universe than even gravity. This is because gravity is a product of the big bang that created the universe. In this model of physics, it is pure consciousness that precedes the big bang. The strength of this model is its explanatory power. Hagelin claims that this model is the most accurate theory in physics because it is consistent with all of the laws of physics and gives an answer to explain all of the phenomena of physics and of consciousness that we experience, some of which our current model has no answer for. I will not show how this physics model is supposed to operate but it is interesting that this model by a modern theoretical physicist is so similar to the model of the universe that is presented to us by the ancient Egyptians.

### **First Principle of Hermeticism**

Hermeticism is a body of knowledge that owes its tradition to the ancient Egyptians. The philosophy is named after the Greek god, Hermes Trismegistus which means 'Three Times Great', who can also be found in Egypt under the same name. This philosophy was passed down to the Greeks and is still practiced today by the Rosicrucians. The website of The Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, states that they are a community whose mission "is to provide seekers with the spiritual wisdom necessary to experience their connectedness with the miraculous world around us and to develop Mastery of Life." They attempt to complete this mission by educating seekers in hermetic philosophy at their ancient Egyptian museums where tours are given at hundreds of locations around the world. The first of seven hermetic principles states, 'All is Mind' (Chandler 1999). The first principle is in reference to everything that we can find in the universe. The All refers to everything in the universe or the totality of the universe as a whole. Everything that occurs in the universe is understood to occur in the mind of the All. This conception of the universe makes the mind more dominant than anything physical within the universe because everything is taking place within the mind of the universe. The consciousness of the universe is the blank board that everything in the universe is painted upon. In the ancient Egyptian model of the universe, consciousness is fundamental or primordial. As conscious beings, humanity can identify with this primordial consciousness because everything in the All is of the All. Within this ancient Egyptian framework of the universe, consciousness cannot end at the point of death

because death and life occur within Mind, while Mind persists.

In the spirit of the ancient Egyptians I believe that it is appropriate to highlight the views of a biologist and a physicist (Lanza & Hagelin). These two fields may be the key to unlocking a new paradigm in our current reality. The multi-layered meaning of the ancient Egyptian cosmology story can be understood as a class lecture of biology and physics. I see great interest in tying these two fields together in a cosmology story to explain the creation of the universe. They were linking the creation of the physical universe with the process of creating life. On one level, we can observe meiosis and mitosis which is the process of reproducing life in the physical world. But on another level we can study quantum theory to understand that it may be the deepest level of consciousness that gives rise to the physical world.

### **Benefits of Heroic Metaphysics**

So far in my analysis I have provided reasons why ancient Egyptians believed that there is a possibility for the soul to survive the process of death. I have attempted to show that it was possible that there was truth in the ancient Egyptian account of nature which led them to believe that the soul or consciousness can possibly survive death. At this point I would like to take a slightly different approach to the argument. Owen Flanagan has recently written on the topic of heroic metaphysics and how it may be more beneficial to accept these accounts as a possibility.

Heroic metaphysics are metaphysical accounts that describe the universe as being

alive and connected. The metaphysics of ancient times such as that of the Egyptians said of the universe that all is alive; all is conscious; all is one. Flanagan's research reveals how altered states of consciousness caused by hallucinogens or meditation allow the universe to not only be seen in this heroic way but actually experienced. Flanagan believes that these experiences tend to be 1) highly meaningful, possibly 2) morally motivating and also likely to be 3) false, or if not false, then not supported by any other evidence than the way things seemed to be while hallucinating, but also 4) self certifying, or beautiful, or good to continue to see things this way even after the hallucination. He believes that the benefits of these types of experience that give rise to a world view that is metaphysically heroic outweigh any potential damage of believing in a metaphysical account that may be false. Flanagan writes:

A common feature of the phenomenology is described in terms of "completeness," where this involves "feelings of unity, sacredness, ineffability, peace, and joy," as well as the impression of having transcended space and time and the "noetic sense" that the experience has disclosed some objective truth about reality. A complete mystical experience is one that exhibits all six characteristics (Flanagan 2016).

Individuals who undergo these hallucination experiences gain a noetic confidence that they now see things as though they really are. These individuals tend to experience an overall reduction of fear and anxiety within their lives. The increase of love and compassion experienced in the hallucinations tend to have positive moral effects that accompany the increased love and compassion that individuals experience even after the hallucination. While these benefits are extremely relevant to humanity as a species and more specifically to my argument, the most beneficial aspect of these experiences may be

the way that they can affect our views on death.

As mentioned earlier, the heroic hallucination experience can lead to a reduction of fear and anxiety in general but specifically around the issue of death. Heroic hallucinations can lead to acceptance, even contentment with an impending death. Individuals that are terminally ill who have taken psilocybin to induce a heroic hallucination say that the experience is ranked at the top of all other experiences in one's life. Late in his life, Bertrand Russell wrote about overcoming death;

The best way to overcome it . . . is to make your interests gradually wider and more impersonal, until bit by bit the walls of the ego recede, and your life becomes increasingly merged in the universal life. An individual human existence should be like a river: small at first, narrowly contained within its banks, and rushing passionately past rocks and over waterfalls. Gradually the river grows wider, the banks recede, the waters flow more quietly, and in the end, without any visible break, they become merged in the sea, and painlessly lose their individual being (Flanagan 2016).

This quote sounds ironically reminiscent of the soul merging with Amen Ra at the end of the journey through the duat. The idea that at death one's soul or consciousness will ultimately combine or return to a state of pure, complete, singular consciousness is firmly conveyed within Egyptian philosophy. Flanagan does a convincing job of revealing how it is more beneficial to believe in a heroic metaphysics that allows for the possibility of the survival of the soul than a more material base reality that contends no such possibility. More importantly these benefits accompany the heroic hallucination experience and the metaphysical account that results from the experience whether it is actually true or false. In light of this information, the ancient Egyptian had legitimate reasons to believe in their heroic metaphysical account that lead them to believe that the

soul could survive death even if there was no way for them to actually know whether it was a possibility or not.

### **Justice in the Afterlife**

The last issue that I will raise against the materialist view conveyed by Lucretius is in the area of justice. Lucretius says that we have nothing to fear about death because all experiences cease at the point of death. If this is true then there is no ultimate accountability for behavior throughout one's lifetime. If there is no accountability for one's behavior at the end of one's life then there is no punishment for wrong doings that were not recognized by law. For instance, imagine a King that spent his whole life oppressing his people through heavy taxes and corrupts courts. We can add to this King's crimes, genocide of his own people because he didn't agree with the God that they worshiped. Under the materialist view there will be no justice to pay for this evil king. On the other hand there is no justice for the citizens who lived their whole lives under a tyrant that got away with a lifetime of oppression. In this model justice is only given by the state and any injustices that the state does not recognize will go unaccounted for. Victims of injustices in this model receive no justice. Also all good deeds that are not acknowledged by the state will ultimately go unrewarded. Since states tend to reward a tiny quantity of the good deeds performed by its citizens, it is safe to say that most good deeds will go unrewarded.

In the ancient Egyptian thought, justice is a metaphysical feature of the universe.

In this view, at the point of one's death the heart is weighed against a feather by the goddess Maat. If that individual life was not guided by the principles of Maat then that individual soul would suffer the consequence. It is important to note that although there is some form of punishment in the afterlife, ultimately all souls rejoin the Sun-God, Amen-Re. In this view the King who spent his life oppressing his citizens would have a difficult journey through the duat. The suffering that the citizens endured from the evil king is taken into consideration at the weighing of the heart at death as well. Maat is a righteous judge because she embodies truth, justice, balance, harmony and order. If we do good all of our lives and we are never recognized by our friends family or society, under this view we can look forward to a reward in the afterlife. In the Egyptian view justice is not just a creation of human civilization. Justice is a feature of the universe that cannot be escaped not even by death. The ancient Egyptian narrative provides a universal justice that is not present in the materialist view. For this reason the ancient Egyptian view is more desirable.

## **V: Conclusion**

The philosophical view of Lucretius called atomism contends that all things are made of atoms, therefore the human soul must also be made of atoms. He believed that since the soul is a material thing, it must cease to exist like all other material things. For this reason Lucretius claimed that the soul has no possibility to survive the process of death. The ancient Egyptians had legitimate reasons to oppose the view of Lucretius; that

there is absolutely no possibility for the soul or consciousness to survive the process of death. Ancient Egyptian cosmology reveals that they had a view of the cosmos that is similar to quantum string theory. Experiments in quantum theory such as the double slit experiment demonstrate how fundamental consciousness may be to our physical reality. If the claim of biocentrism is true then the claim that consciousness has a possibility to survive the process of death becomes an understatement.

The ancient Egyptian account of the duat depicts the soul's journey through the afterlife that shares similarities with the phenomenon known as Near Death Experience. While modern accounts of NDE's do not add up to an argument built on deductive logic, it is still quite possible that these accounts are true. The possibility that they are true makes them relevant to this argument. NDE accounts serve as testimonies that link modern experiences of death with the ancient Egyptian duat. By highlighting these similarities I seek to show that there is at least a possibility that the soul could survive death. Furthermore, the duat can also be understood as a description of Carl Jung's collective unconscious. This is the part of human consciousness that is shared between all humanity because the archetypes within the collective unconscious are believed to be present in every human life. According to the ancient Egyptians, knowledge of these archetypes in the collective unconscious will act as a guide in this world and also in the underworld also known as the afterlife. If we are looking for a place where human consciousness might go upon death, the duat or collective unconscious is probably the best place to look.

This argument is not an attempt to prove that consciousness survives death. I set out only to convey the vast amount of ways that the ancient Egyptians wrote about the possibility of consciousness to survive death, as well as how some views of modern physicists and biologists run parallel with the views of the ancient Egyptians in their respective fields. My main goal is to show that the ancient Egyptians had legitimate reasons to oppose the view of Lucretius that there is absolutely no possibility for the soul or consciousness to survive the process of death.

Lucretius' poetic materialistic cosmology has given us images that have survived in various forms until the modern day, giving us insights into the way the world in which we live might be said to function. A continuing source of dissatisfaction of some with materialist cosmologies is their implications for the nature of and possibilities for the survival of the human soul. Contrasting the stories told by ancient (and even some modern) Egyptians about the nature and progress of the soul which presuppose its survival after death suggest an alternative approach which, like ancient materialism, has themes and images that can contribute to our understanding of the world we live in, but unlike Lucretius' cosmology, can contribute as well to a wider understanding of the nature of human consciousness. Persisting anecdotes suggesting reincarnation or out-of-body experiences fit better into the Egyptian model than the Greek.

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