

Tactical Question for the Group Re Terminology In Discussing Reason and Logic

Post by “Don” of January 23, 2021 at 11:44 AM

At the risk of wading in late to this discussion, I just would like to offer the following reminder. And I apologize if this had already been covered. I admit I haven't closely read all 60+ posts.

As a start, arguing over Epicurus's saying "nothing comes from nothing" is specious. Epicurus *never* said, "Nothing comes from nothing." That's what English translators have made him say. As I've mentioned *ad nauseum*, Epicurus didn't speak English or Latin.

His Letter to Herodotus states:

Quote

πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι οὐδὲν γίνεται ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος.

"First,... nothing comes into being from that which doesn't exist."

[οὐδὲν](#)

[ὄντος](#)

To me, this is broad enough to cover everything y'all have been discussing on that point. He doesn't say "Nothing comes from *nothing*" although one can paraphrase it that way in English. However, that's not literally what it says. He says "οὐδὲν - no-thing" comes from "that which is not existing (τοῦ μὴ ("not") ὄντος (ontos 'being, existing'))." (Note: ὄντος is related to English ontology, ontological.) Atoms, energy, fields, space-time all **exist.** When one throws in "ex nihilo", Epicurus didn't say that either. That's an interpretation, a translation. There has to be something for something else to come into being from it. Dawkins even emphasizes this about new species in that video. You need a starter for new species. Things come from other existing things. Period.

It might be good to go back to each of those twelve statements to see what Epicurus *actually* said before planting a flag on either side of any debate.

Plus, taking Epicurus in context is important. What was he arguing against? What is the **import** of his statements (i.e., no supernatural realm)? Was he closer to our understanding than his peers? Was he "on the right track"? etc.

Plus plus, I don't think that list exists as a list anywhere but in DeWitt. Does it? Diogenes Laertius mentioned Epicurus's "Twelve Rudiments" but that work is lost. I don't think we know for certain what twelve points were in that work. Please correct me if I missed something from

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1845-tactical-question-for-the-group-re-terminology-in-discussing-reason-and-logic/?postID=10859#post10859>

another source!! My understanding is that the Herodotus letter is as close as we get, and DeWitt's Twelve don't seem to match up neatly one-to-one in order with that letter. I've tried.