

# Democritus' "Nothing is truly real but atoms and void" statement

Post by "Cassius" of October 4, 2022 at 8:00 PM

As to that article Don cited last, sounds like our back and forth on Democritus is not entirely different than the different interpretations of Democritus advanced by Sextus Empiricus vs that of Galen.

## Quote

"Galen is, then, an objective relativist, who holds, contrary to Sextus's view that it is false to call an apple red, that the apple really is red, only not intrinsically, but in relation to perceivers."

Sounds like the way to interpret Democritus in a pro-Epicurus way is through Galen, while Sextus seems to be happier with the "slippery slope to nihilism" side. 😊 (If Sextus is in fact saying that it is "wrong" to call an apple red.)

If one says that it is false to call an apple red, then (leaving aside issues of language and definitions) that is a statement that many people of common sense would interpret as a direct challenge to the reliability of the senses on which Epicurean philosophy is built. Epicurus could not allow such an opinion to go unchallenged.

Also:

## Quote

Democritus may then be taken (following Sextus) as maintaining that things are not in fact flavored or colored, but are merely (falsely) called so (because that is how they seem to be), or (following Galen) as maintaining that things are flavored, colored, etc., not intrinsically, but insofar as that is how they seem to us and, consequently, how we (conventionally) describe them. It may be that Democritus did not in fact distinguish these two theses, which are not in any case sharply distinguished from one another, since it is frequently disputed how far something's being generally regarded as F, or called F, is constitutive of its actually being F.