

# Metaphorically Picturing Epicurean Philosophy

Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 11:59 AM

Focused like a laser on this very point is one of the very best of Lucian's dialogs: [HERMOTIMUS - Or, The Rival Philosophies](#)

Lycinus. So you have not solved my puzzle; I know just as little as before which traveler to trust; I find that each of them, as well as his guide, has tried one only, which he now recommends and will have to be the only one leading to the city. Whether he tells the truth I have no means of knowing; that he has attained some end, and seen some city, I may perhaps allow; but whether he saw the right one, or whether, Corinth being the real goal, he got to Babylon and thought he had seen Corinth—that is still undecided; for surely every one who has seen a city has not seen Corinth, unless Corinth is the only city there is. But my greatest difficulty of all is the absolute certainty that the true road is one; for Corinth is one, and the other roads lead anywhere but to Corinth, though there may be people deluded enough to suppose that the North road and the South road lead equally to Corinth.

Hermotimus. But that is absurd, Lycinus; they go opposite ways, you see.

**Lycinus. Then, my dear good man, this choice of roads and guides is quite a serious matter; we can by no means just follow our noses; we shall be discovering that we are well on the way to Babylon or Bactria instead of to Corinth. Nor is it advisable to toss up, either, on the chance that we may hit upon the right way if we start upon any one at a venture. That is no impossibility; it may have come off once and again in a cycle; but I cannot think we ought to gamble recklessly with such high stakes, nor commit our hopes to a frail craft, like the wise men who went to sea in a bowl; we should have no fair complaint against Fortune, if her arrow or dart did not precisely hit the centre; the odds are ten thousand to one against her; just so the archer in Homer—Teucer, I suppose it was—when he meant to hit the dove, only cut the string, which held it; of course it is infinitely more likely that the point of the arrow will find its billet in one of the numberless other places, than just in that particular central one. And as to the perils of blundering into one of the wrong roads instead of the right one, misled by a belief in the discretion of Fortune, here is an illustration:—it is no easy matter to turn back and get safe into port when you have once cast loose your moorings and committed yourself to the breeze; you are at the mercy of the sea, frightened, sick and sorry with your tossing about, most likely. Your mistake was at the beginning: before leaving, you should have gone up to some high point, and observed whether the wind was in the right quarter, and of the right strength for a crossing to Corinth, not neglecting, by the way, to secure the very best pilot obtainable, and a seaworthy craft equal to so high a sea.**