

"Epicurean Philosophy: An Introduction from the 'Garden of Athens'" edited by Christos Yapijakis

Post by "Cassius" of January 12, 2023 at 7:13 AM

Thanks for the reminder of that Democritus quote, which Joshua cites regularly on the podcast. I don't know whether Democritus intended this in the original, or whether it is just an artifact of the translation, but it looks like the distinction between one level being real and another level being unreal goes back to Democritus himself. Did he know or intend that this formulation be taken to imply ethically that our world lacks "reality" such that we should view it as a mirage or illusion, or was it purely a scientific observation? Epicurus makes much the same observation, but by stressing that the senses are able to comprehend things (such as Diogenes of Oinoanda says about the flux) the resulting tone seems different.

Maybe Democritus' tone would seem different to us if we had more of his work, or maybe this was an area (like determinism) where Epicurus was modifying what Democritus had taught. Was Democritus laughing because he was truly happy, or was his laughter cynical and to the effect that people are nothing but whirling windbags of atoms bouncing around with no more intelligence than billiard balls?