

# Epicurean Views of "Teleology"

Post by "Joshua" of March 13, 2025 at 8:56 PM

Admin Edit: This thread was split off from a discussion of a book by John Masson on atomism

## Quote

The habit of constantly explaining natural phenomena by final causes induces, as Lord Bacon says of Plato and Aristotle, ' a neglect in searching after physical causes.'

p. 168

Here's a sentiment I can fully endorse, and it might reveal a weakness of our presentation here at the forum. We need to find a way to clearly address Aristotle's teleology! If Lucretius' objection to what DeWitt calls "Purposiveness" in Nature is not of first-tier importance, as are those doctrines in the image below, then it certainly merits a place in any proposed second-tier list of doctrines.

## Quote

The limited teleology at which Epicurus finally arrived had nothing to do either with creationism or adaptation of organ to function. It had nothing to do with the universe at large, which was ruled by natural laws. It had nothing to do even with animals, although animal behavior afforded evidence that pleasure was the end or telos of living. It was recognized, to be sure, that animals possess volition and that certain kinds of animals are actuated by innate ideas to organize themselves into herds for mutual protection, but only the rational human being was believed capable of intelligent planning for living and for keeping steadily in view the fact that pleasure is the end or telos ordained by Nature. This amounts to saying that a nonpurposive Nature had produced a purposive creature, for whom alone an end or goal of living could have a meaning. This is teleology at a minimum. For such a belief no teacher had set a precedent.

Norman Dewitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, page 67

**Nothing can be created from nothing.**

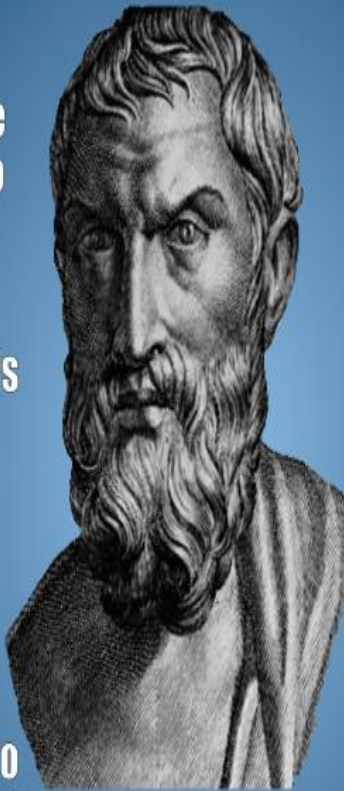
**The universe is infinite and eternal and has no gods over it.**

**The nature of gods contains nothing that is inconsistent with incorruption and blessedness.**

**Death is nothing to us.**

**There is no necessity to live under the control of necessity.**

**Life is desirable, but unlimited time contains no greater pleasure than limited time.**



**He who says "Nothing can be known" knows nothing.**

**All sensations are "true."**

**Virtue is not absolute or an end in itself - all good and evil consists in sensation.**

**Pleasure is the guide of life.**

**By "Pleasure" we mean all experience that is not painful.**