

Someone Who Understands What Makes Epicurean Philosophy Unique.

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The excerpt below is not directed at Nietzsche or Al-Razi, but it contains an independent insight that is worth taking out of that context. This paragraph points to what really makes Epicurus unique and important - not his ethics, but his insight into the nature of the universe. "Positing only material atoms and the void, the Epicureans attempt to account for all being, knowledge, and value without relying upon any "supernatural" explanatory entities." Without this foundation, the ethics lead nowhere:

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Garden-Variety Epicureanism

Before examining al-Rāzī and Nietzsche as wayward Epicureans, I will first very quickly sketch out the general doctrines that I am associating with this school.¹² As I understand it, the most striking and unique characteristic of Epicureanism is its rejection of Socrates' paradigmatic "second sailing" (*deuteros plous*).¹³ That is to say, it resists the powerful impulse, whether intellectual or emotional, to move above and beyond the explanatory resources of the material world—the natural realm of generation and destruction—and posit some more fundamental, timeless, changeless, supersensible reality that serves as the ultimate basis of all being, value, and intelligibility. Interpreted in this broad sense, the "second sailing" can be understood as the drive toward some kind of transcendent metaphysics or theology. Historically, this has manifested itself in a number of different ways: in Socrates' autobiographical discussion in the *Phaedo* it takes shape as Plato's Forms, but it could also find expression as the abstract, intellectualized "God of the Philosophers" (a kind of causal anchor we might posit in order to explain the temporal origin, sustained existence, or apparent teleology of the natural world), or the more personalized transcendent creator God of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Epicurus and his followers preemptively resist this move in all its forms and attempt to offer us instead a purely naturalistic interpretation of the world.¹⁴ Positing only material atoms and the void, the Epicureans attempt to account for all being, knowledge, and value without relying upon any "supernatural" explanatory entities.¹⁵ In effect, Epicurus and his progeny endeavor to explain all phenomena through some combination of natural necessity and chance, without any reference to preexisting intelligence or design.¹⁶
