

Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2020 at 11:51 PM

Great post Mike.

"Besides, Epicurus is not big on definitions or essences of things."

I think there is a deep point here. Clearly he was not "big on definitions" in the sense of wordy and elaborate logical constructions, but it seems to me, especially in reading Lucretius, that Epicurus was focusing on definition by examples. It strikes me regularly that in Lucretius and I think Epicurus letters too that Epicurus uses the device of giving a lineup of examples each time he wants to identify something, such as when Lucretius first references atoms and immediately says he will call them by different names. Seems to me that this is a conscious form of "definition by example" which would be consistent with the premises of the philosophy being grounded in the senses.

Watch for that especially in Lucretius and I think it begins to jump out at you. They were teaching by pointing to real world examples rather than by setting up word-play definitions.