

Episode Thirteen - Properties, Qualities, And the Trojan War

Post by "Don" of April 10, 2020 at 3:38 PM

Just finished listening to the episode and enjoyed the discussion. I did want to respond to the brief mention of Buddhism and Emptiness and Dependent Arising. From my perspective - or should I say from my subjective perception 😊 - I don't think Epicurean philosophy and Buddhist philosophy are that far apart in this regard. They quickly diverge but on these I find echoes in each other.

The idea that entities do not have independent existence (Buddh.), I believe, echoes the idea that the only things that truly exist are atoms and void (Epic.). Buddhists assert the doctrine of the [Two Truths](#): one truth is that the conventional reality of our everyday perceptions *does* exist and this is how we interact with our world on a day-to-day basis; however, the underlying truth is that everything is dependent on everything else and is ultimately empty of its own inherent existence. The examples I've heard are that there's nothing you can point to in a "table" that is the essence of its table-ness. It relies on its component parts to function as a table. Or consider the [Greek story of the ship of Theseus](#). Additionally, I've also heard dependent arising being described as "the universe in a cup of tea": the tea in my cup is dependent on the tea grown in the fields, on the people who pick the leaves, on the sun that shines to make the tea grow, on the parents and grand-parents who gave birth to the people working in the fields, on the clouds that rain on the fields, on the lay of the land that makes the clouds form, on the Earth itself that contains that land, on the solar system, etc., etc., etc. Everything is dependent on everything else.

I find echoes then of this in Epicurean philosophy. Conventional reality exists, that's how we perceive the world. However, ultimately, we are all aggregates of atoms and void and everything reverts to atoms and void and is re-configured into other entities eventually. This is one of the reasons that "[death is nothing to us](#)." If our atoms were re-assembled into something that looked like us, it wouldn't be us. We don't ultimately exist (we are atoms and void) although we do conventionally exist and can perceive the world through the Canon and make choices and rejections and have free will (although, I would say, our choices and rejections are predicated on previous choices we've made and our choices are not infinite)... but that might be for another future post.

Keep up the great work. I do hear a much more casual, conversational tone as the group continues the podcasts... and you've made me want to get back to studying De Rerum Natura. Thanks!