

Episode Thirteen - Properties, Qualities, And the Trojan War

Post by "Cassius" of April 10, 2020 at 3:51 PM

1. No, you can't go back to reading De Rerum Natura until you're finished reading the Norman DeWitt book! 😊

2. Based on my limited knowledge of Buddhism I do see why you draw the similarities, which I recall doing in this podcast with Elayne. As more time goes by my perception is that the big point is not so much that there are technical similarities on these points as in the place where you end up after factoring in the details. My perception (unfair or fair as it might be) is that the Buddhists end up in a place of "Stoic-like" acceptance and resignation that becomes hard to distinguish from passivity and resignation. Whether this results from their conclusion being that they are somehow one with the universe and just want to accept their fate, or not, I leave to someone who knows better, but that is my perception of the demeanor and attitude that I associate with Buddhism.

And I see that same attitude in the "Tranquility" emphasis that some want to read in Epicurus. My own perception of Epicurus is that the tranquility angle is not correct, or at least it is by no means the majority, and that Epicurus meant what he said about (1) pleasure, and (2) the shortness of life, so that rather than passivity and resignation and acceptance of fate, an Epicurean will "seize the day" and make the best of the life that is available to him or her, seeking to fill the life that is available with the most pleasant experiences as they subjectively judge those to be valuable to them.

But I also think now that there is no way to dig in and then unravel these details without solid grounding in the physics, which if accepted totally disabuse one of any post-death existence, or any reason to live whatsoever but for pleasure, and someone who doesn't start with that orientation will happily sit round the campfire, arm in arm with a Stoic on one side and a Buddhist on the other chanting "cum-bay-ya my lord" til dawn. To each his own, but that is not how I want to spend *my* life, and I don't think that's what most ancient Epicureans understood the message to be either.

Thank you for listening and for the very helpful comments!