

# Using the Phrase "Nothing Exists Except Atoms and Void"

Post by "Cassius" of March 12, 2017 at 10:21 AM

WK Regarding SF cepticism and Epicurus one thing that should be pointed out is that in atomism the only thing that exist are atoms and void (atoma kai kenon). Therefore your notion of an individual yourself along with the notion of the isolated things (objects) around you that are " other" or "not me" is false . Everything is a soup of atoms. This concept is quite similar to the hinduism Maya and the "co arising" in Budism but is not the same thing. So it just happens that a temporary agregate of atoms carry some atomic processes that makes for uncertain "knowledge" within a delirious "subjectivity". Pleasure and pain are part of this process so, what we can do is to make sure we have the best possible handling of things, and achieve the real pleasure that arises from \*concrete\* and adequate atomic relationship within this environment which we can think we are imersed as aliens but in fact we belong to. Stay with the Hegemones and take the red one.

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***Cassius Amicus I want to talk about this point: "one thing that should be pointed out is that in atomism the only thing that exist are atoms and void (atoma kai kenon). Therefore your notion of an individual yourself along with the notion of the isolated things (objects) around you that are " other" or "not me" is false . Everything is a soup of atoms." <<<< I am beginning to question whether formulations like this are as productive as they could be if stated more precisely. I am not being critical because I use this expression myself, but what I think we really mean when we say "nothing exists but atom and void" is that nothing exists ETERNALLY and WITHOUT CHANGE except "atoms." The problem I have with simply "exists" is that the implication it raises is just what is being discussed here with Matrix allegories - that the world around us is somehow NOT REAL simply because it is composed of atoms in motion through the void. The truth is that the entire structure of Epicurean philosophy is geared toward our "temporary aggregate of atoms" which "carry some atomic processes that make for" knowledge - though it may be uncertain within the span of our lives. This is ALL that we have, and it seems to me to be poor messaging to imply (or state explicitly!) that our lives - all that we have - are somehow "unreal" because they are not eternal and unchanging like the nature of the atoms.***

***There is a passage from Diogenes of Oinoanda directed against Aristotle that makes the point that the flow of atoms is not so fast that we cannot grasp it which I think makes a similar point:***

***[[Others do not] explicitly [stigmatise] natural science as unnecessary, being ashamed to acknowledge [this], but use another means of discarding it. For, when they assert that things are inapprehensible, what else are they saying than that there is no need for us to pursue natural science? After all, who will choose to seek what he can never find?***

***Now Aristotle and those who hold the same Peripatetic views as Aristotle say that nothing is scientifically knowable, because things are continually in flux and, on account of the rapidity of the flux, evade our apprehension. We on the other hand acknowledge their flux, but not its being so rapid that the nature of each thing [is] at no time apprehensible by sense-perception. And indeed [in no way would the upholders of] the view under discussion have been able to say (and this is just what they do [maintain] that [at one time] this is [white] and this black, while [at another time] neither this is [white nor] that black, [if] they had not had [previous] knowledge of the nature of both white and black.)***

***(Again, not directing this against Washington Kuhlmann but thinking out loud about how best to state this proposition.)***

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***[Cassius Amicus](#) So to follow up, in a sense the observation that nothing exists "eternally and without change" except atoms and void is not an observation that should send us into fits of depression, as it is often used. In fact, the opposite is true. The observation that we are alive only for a short while before our atoms again disperse ought to be an clanging wakeup call - telling us to get out of bed, open our eyes, and smell the roses \*now\* because what we see around us is not going to be there forever.***

***VS14: "We are born once and cannot be born twice, but for all time must be no more. But you, who are not master of tomorrow, postpone your happiness. Life is wasted in procrastination and each one of us dies without allowing himself leisure."***

***VS30: Some men throughout their lives spend their time gathering together the means of life, for they do not see that the draught swallowed by all of us at birth is a draught of death.***

***VS42: The same span of time embraces both the beginning and the end of the greatest good. (Which interpreted as Norman DeWitt suggests is another affirmation that all that will ever happen to us happens to us in life, which is our most prized possession.)***