

Episode One Hundred Fifteen - Letter to Herodotus 04 - Atoms, Void, and Basic Epistemology Issues

Post by "Cassius" of March 26, 2022 at 8:13 AM

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Fifteen of Lucretius Today.

This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world, and to Epicurus, the founder of the Epicurean School.

I am your host Cassius, and together with our panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we'll discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics.

Today we continue our review of [Epicurus' letter to Herodotus](#), and we move further into fundamental physics.

Now let's join Martin reading today's text:

Bailey:

Moreover, the universe is bodies and space: for that bodies exist, sense itself witnesses in the experience of all men, and in accordance with the evidence of sense we must of necessity judge of the imperceptible by reasoning, as I have already said.

[40] And if there were not that which we term void and place and intangible existence, bodies would have nowhere to exist and nothing through which to move, as they are seen to move. And besides these two, nothing can even be thought of either by conception or on the analogy of things conceivable such as could be grasped as whole existences and not spoken of as the accidents or properties of such existences. Furthermore, among bodies some are compounds, and others those of which compounds are formed.

[41] And these latter are indivisible and unalterable (if, that is, all things are not to be destroyed into the non-existent, but something permanent is to remain behind at the dissolution of compounds): they are completely solid in nature, and can by no means be dissolved in any part. So it must needs be that the first beginnings are indivisible corporeal

existences.

Moreover, the universe is boundless. For that which is bounded has an extreme point: and the extreme point is seen against something else. So that as it has no extreme point, it has no limit; and as it has no limit, it must be boundless and not bounded.

[42] Furthermore, the infinite is boundless both in the number of the bodies and in the extent of the void. For if on the one hand the void were boundless, and the bodies limited in number, the bodies could not stay anywhere, but would be carried about and scattered through the infinite void, not having other bodies to support them and keep them in place by means of collisions. But if, on the other hand, the void were limited, the infinite bodies would not have room wherein to take their place.

Besides this the indivisible and solid bodies, out of which too the compounds are created and into which they are dissolved, have an incomprehensible number of varieties in shape: for it is not possible that such great varieties of things should arise from the same atomic shapes, if they are limited in number. And so in each shape the atoms are quite infinite in number, but their differences of shape are not quite infinite, but only incomprehensible in number.

[43] And the atoms move continuously for all time, some of them falling straight down, others swerving, and others recoiling from their collisions. And of the latter, some are borne on, separating to a long distance from one another, while others again recoil and recoil, whenever they chance to be checked by the interlacing with others, or else shut in by atoms interlaced around them.

[44] For on the one hand the nature of the void which separates each atom by itself brings this about, as it is not able to afford resistance, and on the other hand the hardness which belongs to the atoms makes them recoil after collision to as great a distance as the interlacing permits separation after the collision. And these motions have no beginning, since the atoms and the void are the cause.

[45] These brief sayings, if all these points are borne in mind, afford a sufficient outline for our understanding of the nature of existing things.

HICKS

Further this he says also in the Larger Epitome near the beginning and in his First Book "On Nature", the whole of being consists of bodies and space. For the existence of bodies is everywhere attested by sense itself, and it is upon sensation that reason must rely when it attempts to infer the unknown from the known.

[40] And if there were no space (which we call also void and place and intangible nature), bodies would have nothing in which to be and through which to move, as they are plainly seen

to move. Beyond bodies and space there is nothing which by mental apprehension or on its analogy we can conceive to exist. When we speak of bodies and space, both are regarded as wholes or separate things, not as the properties or accidents of separate things.

Again he repeats this in the First Book and in Books XIV. and XV. of the work "On Nature" and in the Larger Epitome, of bodies some are composite, others the elements of which these composite bodies are made.

[41] These elements are indivisible and unchangeable, and necessarily so, if things are not all to be destroyed and pass into non-existence, but are to be strong enough to endure when the composite bodies are broken up, because they possess a solid nature and are incapable of being anywhere or anyhow dissolved. It follows that the first beginnings must be indivisible, corporeal entities.

Again, the sum of things is infinite. For what is finite has an extremity, and the extremity of anything is discerned only by comparison with something else. (Now the sum of things is not discerned by comparison with anything else: hence, since it has no extremity, it has no limit; and, since it has no limit, it must be unlimited or infinite.

[42] Moreover, the sum of things is unlimited both by reason of the multitude of the atoms and the extent of the void. For if the void were infinite and bodies finite, the bodies would not have stayed anywhere but would have been dispersed in their course through the infinite void, not having any supports or counter-checks to send them back on their upward rebound. Again, if the void were finite, the infinity of bodies would not have anywhere to be.

Furthermore, the atoms, which have no void in them – out of which composite bodies arise and into which they are dissolved – vary indefinitely in their shapes; for so many varieties of things as we see could never have arisen out of a recurrence of a definite number of the same shapes. The like atoms of each shape are absolutely infinite; but the variety of shapes, though indefinitely large, is not absolutely infinite. For neither does the divisibility go on "ad infinitum," he says below; but he adds, since the qualities change, unless one is prepared to keep enlarging their magnitudes also simply "ad infinitum."

[43] The atoms are in continual motion through all eternity. Further, he says below, that the atoms move with equal speed, since the void makes way for the lightest and heaviest alike. Some of them rebound to a considerable distance from each other, while others merely oscillate in one place when they chance to have got entangled or to be enclosed by a mass of other atoms shaped for entangling.

[44] This is because each atom is separated from the rest by void, which is incapable of offering any resistance to the rebound; while it is the solidity of the atom which makes it rebound after a collision, however short the distance to which it rebounds, when it finds itself imprisoned in a mass of entangling atoms. Of all this there is no beginning, since both atoms and void exist from everlasting. He says below that atoms have no quality at all except shape, size, and

weight. But that colour varies with the arrangement of the atoms he states in his "Twelve Rudiments"; further, that they are not of any and every size; at any rate no atom has ever been seen by our sense.

[45] The repetition at such length of all that we are now recalling to mind furnishes an adequate outline for our conception of the nature of things.

YONGE

"Further [this he says also in the Larger Epitome near the beginning and in his First Book "On Nature"], the whole of being consists of bodies and space. For the existence of bodies is everywhere attested by sense itself, and it is upon sensation that reason must rely when it attempts to infer the unknown from the known.

[40] And if there were no space (which we call also void and place and intangible nature), bodies would have nothing in which to be and through which to move, as they are plainly seen to move. Beyond bodies and space there is nothing which by mental apprehension or on its analogy we can conceive to exist. When we speak of bodies and space, both are regarded as wholes or separate things, not as the properties or accidents of separate things. "Again [he repeats this in the First Book and in Books XIV. and XV. of the work "On Nature" and in the Larger Epitome], of bodies some are composite, others the elements of which these composite bodies are made.

[41] These elements are indivisible and unchangeable, and necessarily so, if things are not all to be destroyed and pass into non-existence, but are to be strong enough to endure when the composite bodies are broken up, because they possess a solid nature and are incapable of being anywhere or anyhow dissolved. It follows that the first beginnings must be indivisible, corporeal entities. "Again, the sum of things is infinite. For what is finite has an extremity, and the extremity of anything is discerned only by comparison with something else. (Now the sum of things is not discerned by comparison with anything else: hence, since it has no extremity, it has no limit; and, since it has no limit, it must be unlimited or infinite.

[42] Moreover, the sum of things is unlimited both by reason of the multitude of the atoms and the extent of the void.

For if the void were infinite and bodies finite, the bodies would not have stayed anywhere but would have been dispersed in their course through the infinite void, not having any supports or counter-checks to send them back on their upward rebound. Again, if the void were finite, the infinity of bodies would not have anywhere to be. "Furthermore, the atoms, which have no void in them - out of which composite bodies arise and into which they are dissolved - vary indefinitely in their shapes; for so many varieties of things as we see could never have arisen out of a recurrence of a definite number of the same shapes. The like atoms of each shape are

absolutely infinite; but the variety of shapes, though indefinitely large, is not absolutely infinite.

[For neither does the divisibility go on "ad infinitum," he says below; but he adds, since the qualities change, unless one is prepared to keep enlarging their magnitudes also simply "ad infinitum."]

[43] "The atoms are in continual motion through all eternity. [Further, he says below, that the atoms move with equal speed, since the void makes way for the lightest and heaviest alike.] Some of them rebound to a considerable distance from each other, while others merely oscillate in one place when they chance to have got entangled or to be enclosed by a mass of other atoms shaped for entangling.

[44] This is because each atom is separated from the rest by void, which is incapable of offering any resistance to the rebound; while it is the solidity of the atom which makes it rebound after a collision, however short the distance to which it rebounds, when it finds itself imprisoned in a mass of entangling atoms. Of all this there is no beginning, since both atoms and void exist from everlasting. [He says below that atoms have no quality at all except shape, size, and weight. But that colour varies with the arrangement of the atoms he states in his "Twelve Rudiments"; further, that they are not of any and every size; at any rate no atom has ever been seen by our sense.]

[45] The repetition at such length of all that we are now recalling to mind furnishes an adequate outline for our conception of the nature of things.

Post by "Joshua" of March 27, 2022 at 12:20 PM

I mentioned that atomism was thought to be one factor in the condemnation of Bruno and other 'heretics' (like Galileo) by the Catholic Church, and that the whole issue turned on the point of the Transubstantiation of the Eucharist from bread and wine into Body and Blood. The historical evidence surrounding Bruno's death is fragmentary, complicated, and highly controversial even today. It's true that one of the witnesses who denounced him to the inquisition did so because of his 'denial of the Eucharist': this was by no means the only charge, and not the most important one either. Anyway, here is the Canon of the Catholic Church as promulgated at the Council of Trent, followed by a little bit of Aristotle, and finally Democritus where it all started.

From the 13th session of the Council of Trent:

Quote

it is indeed a crime the most unworthy that they should be wrested, by certain contentions and wicked men, to fictitious and imaginary tropes, whereby the verity of the flesh and blood of Christ is denied, contrary to the universal sense of the Church, which, as the pillar and ground of truth, has detested, as satanical, these inventions devised by impious men; she recognising, with a mind ever grateful and unforgetting, this most excellent benefit of Christ.

Quote

And because that Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which He offered under the species of bread to be truly His own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that, by the consecration of the bread and of the wine, a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood; which conversion is, by the holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation.

Quote

CANON I.-If any one denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that He is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue; let him be anathema.

CANON II.-If any one saith, that, in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denieth that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood-the species Only of the bread and wine remaining-which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation; let him be anathema.

CANON III.-If any one denieth, that, in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, the whole Christ is contained under each [Page 83] species, and under every part of each species, when separated; let him be anathema.

CANON IV.-If any one saith, that, after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but (are there) only during the use, whilst it is being taken, and not either before or after; and that, in the hosts, or consecrated particles, which are reserved or which remain after communion, the true Body of the Lord remaineth not; let him be anathema.

Aristotle, on Substance and Species

Quote

A substance—that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all—is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse. The species in which the things primarily called substances are, are called secondary substances, as also are the genera of these species. For example, the individual man belongs in a species, man, and animal is a genus of the species; so these—both man and animal—are called secondary substances.

Democritus

Quote

By convention sweet is sweet, bitter is bitter, hot is hot, cold is cold, color is color; but in truth there are only atoms and the void.

Principal Doctrine 22. We must take into account as the end all that really exists and all clear evidence of sense to which we refer our opinions; for otherwise everything will be full of uncertainty and confusion.

No kidding!

Post by “Don” of March 27, 2022 at 12:33 PM

So .. the charges of cannibalism against the early Christians was "substantially" correct? Or is that specious? 😊

Post by “Cassius” of March 27, 2022 at 5:32 PM

Thank you for posting that Joshua. We ran into a number of complicated issues in this podcast that I think we could greatly improve on, so I will try to get this one edited in time for posting and review by others a little more quickly than usual.

We particularly ran into difficulty in describing in summary terms the differences between Plato and Epicurus in terms of their attitude toward the senses. I think all of us are pretty familiar with the emphasis that Epicurus placed on it, but I wasn't prepared to cite chapter and verse on Plato or Aristotle, and without a firm point of reference it is not easy to illustrate the point.

I will trot out [my usual cite to the appendix by DeLacy on Philodemus' On Methods of Inference](#), but we need specific quotes to make the issue more clear.

Much more needs to be done on this issue so when we produce the final edited product I will find a way to make clear that we are not the last word especially on these other philosophers, so we need to marshal our cites in better form.

Post by “Cassius” of March 27, 2022 at 7:41 PM

To elaborate more on what we need, we have layers and layers of commentary like this one from the [Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy](#):

Quote

The latter point holds especially for the objects of philosophical knowledge that Plato later on in the dialogue (103e) refers to as “Forms.” Here Forms are mentioned for what is perhaps the first time in Plato’s dialogues: the Just itself, the Beautiful, and the Good; Bigness, Health, and Strength; and “in a word, the reality of all other things, that which each of them essentially is” (65d). They are best approached not by sense perception but by pure thought alone. These entities are granted again without argument by Simmias and Cebes, and are discussed in more detail later. .

All told, then, the body is a constant impediment to philosophers in their search for truth: “It fills us with wants, desires, fears, all sorts of illusions and much nonsense, so that, as it is said, in truth and in fact no thought of any kind ever comes to us from the body” (66c). To have pure knowledge, therefore, philosophers must escape from the influence of the body as much as is possible in this life. Philosophy itself is, in fact, a kind of “training for dying” (67e), a purification of the philosopher’s soul from its bodily attachment.

But unless we can marshal and command reliable and convincing quotes in our discussions, our arguments will seem less than convincing.

We need a series of quotes that are so clear as to the differences between Epicurus and Plato (and to pin down the others too is desirable) that the issue is beyond dispute and absolutely

clear even to the newer student.

Post by “Cassius” of March 30, 2022 at 2:50 PM

Rather than add too many more posts to this thread prior to posting the episode, I want to make several points that I will update in this single post:

1 - I think that most all of what we say in this episode is accurate, yet I have a sense that the big picture is still lacking in clarify, especially if someone listens to the first half alone and doesn't go all the way to the end. We're working over some very difficult territory here and this comes across as more of a preliminary discussion rather than a fully-formulated presentation of conclusions.

2 - We make the point that Plato's perspective is much more elitist than Epicurus's. That's a fair and good point, and yet if we were answering the question "List in order of priority the ways that Plato's approach to knowledge differs from that of Epicurus?" I doubt this would be at or even near the top. It gives us some comparative information but doesn't really strike at the heart of the actual process differences.

3 - What I find most at fault at this episode is that I tended to follow a more "Socratic" approach and asked questions in tones that may have been difficult to follow, and that weren't appropriate for this difficult material. I probably created more confusion by using irony when I should have been totally direct. I will work to avoid that problem in the future, but the best way to solve the problem will be to start with some direct and important quotations from each source (Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus). We can then have those quotes fresh in our minds and use them to be sure we are on the same page as to each philosopher, rather than look for differences before we have identified at least the broad outlines of each.

4 - One of several quotes that should definitely have been used early in this podcast, but was not, was this from Diogenes of Oinoanda:

Quote

Fr. 5

[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.

5 - I am beginning to assemble some of the key epistemology quotes here, and these need to be part of the discussion as we get into the details: <http://epicuruscollege.com/coursematerial/Canonics/>

6 - Although we probably don't have the time it deserves to include it as part of the Letter to Herodotus, it would be very valuable to find and review some kind of text material on basic Epicurean Epistemology. We need to look for a single article to see if we can find a starting point. Lacking a better one at this moment, my best suggestion remains the Appendix to DeLacy's translation of Philodemus "On Methods of Inference" (I go back and forth on whether to refer to this with DeLacy's title, or with Sedley's "On Signs." Sedley's title is probably more direct, but sounds in English like an Astrological Matchmaking Book. "On Methods of Inference" is probably a more accurate description of what is actually being discussed:

Appendix Chapters:

- [The Sources of Epicurean Empiricism](#)
- [Development of Epicurean Logic and Methodology](#)
- [The Logical Controversies of The Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics](#)

Those titles of chapters are right on point with what we need to explore further and get a command over. Unless we can come up with a better set of material to use for review, I think I am going to have to propose that we find a way to focus on this material as soon as possible, possibly with a special series of panel discussions.

The first step is to identify where there is any better "course material" than these three Appendix Chapters from DeLacy. These chapters have the great advantage as well that they are public domain and easily accessible to everyone, but if someone knows of something better (focusing on Epicurus) then please comment below.

I know these topics are covered in Chapters 7 and 8 of DeWitt, such as in the excerpt below from page 122. This is good general material and needs to be referenced as well, but DeLacy's material is probably more directly on point with what we need at this point in our discussions.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2442-episode-one-hundred-fifteen-letter-to-herodotus-04-atoms-void-and-basic-epistemo/>

EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

John Locke, in turn, set out as the founder of modern empiricism. Thus a misunderstanding of Epicurus underlies a main trend of modern philosophy. This astonishing fact begets an even greater concern for a correct interpretation, which may cause Locke to appear slightly naïve.

d we need

The institution of the Canon reflects a contemporary striving for an increase of precision in all the arts, sculpture, architecture, music, and mathematics, but the immediate provocation is to be found in the teachings of Pyrrho the skeptic and of Plato. Pyrrho's rejection of both reason and the sensations as criteria rendered acute the need of establishing a canon of truth. In the judgment of Epicurus Plato also ranked as a skeptic, because he belittled the sensations as undependable and phenomena as deceptive, the only real and eternal existences being the ideas. Thus in his system reason became the only contact between man and reality, and human reason was crippled by the imprisonment of the soul in the body.

Epicurus denied the existence of Platonic ideas on the ground that the only existences were atoms and empty space. Thus to his thinking man stood face to face with physical reality and his sensations constituted the sole contact with this reality. Had he stopped at this point he would have been an empiricist, but he did not. He made room also for a kind of intuition, which is incompatible with empiricism. He postulated that man was equipped in advance by Nature for living in his prospective environment, and not in his physical environment alone but also in his social environment. In addition to the five senses this equipment included innate ideas, such as that of justice, and these ideas, because they existed in advance of experience, were called Anticipations. Moreover, as Epicurus postulated, each experience of the individual, the sensations included, is accompanied by a secondary reaction of pleasure or pain. These pleasures and pains are the Feelings, which also rank as criteria, being Nature's Go and Stop signals.

Post by "Joshua" of March 30, 2022 at 4:03 PM

Point #2 says Plato twice instead of Epicurus, but otherwise good points!

Post by “Cassius” of March 30, 2022 at 4:46 PM

Thank you! I have been confused all week! Plato was so elitist that he was even more elitist than himself! (Fixed now - thanks!)

Post by “Cassius” of March 31, 2022 at 9:17 PM

Episode 115 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week, we continue discussing the Letter to Herodotus, and we begin our examination of atoms, void, and basic epistemology issues.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/49276121>

Post by “Don” of March 31, 2022 at 10:46 PM

Did I hear my name? 😊

The Greek for the section you discussed around 8:11 is:

τὸ πᾶν ἔστι σώματα καὶ κενόν: σώματα μὲν γὰρ ὡς ἔστιν, αὐτὴ ἢ αἴσθησις ἐπὶ πάντων μαρτυρεῖ.

The "bodies" are σώματα (sōmata). So...

"the whole of being (τὸ πᾶν) consists of bodies and space (our old friend κενόν (kenon)). For the existence of bodies is everywhere attested by sense itself."

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, σῶμα](#)

"generally, a body, i.e. any corporeal substance"

Post by “Don” of March 31, 2022 at 11:04 PM

"It is upon sensation that reason must rely when it attempts to infer the unknown from the known." (End of verse 39)

καθ' ἣν ἀναγκαῖον τὸ ἄδηλον τῷ λογισμῷ τεκμαίρεσθαι:

τῷ λογισμῷ (Dative case) = through logismōi

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, λογ-ισμός](#)

τὸ ἄδηλον = "the unseen; what is not evident to the senses"

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἄδηλ-ος](#)

τεκμαίρεσθαι = "to judge by signs and tokens"

It does not appear that the phrase "the unknown from the known" is actually in the Greek. The only word is τὸ ἄδηλον "the unseen" so the actual paraphrase would be something like "it is necessary to judge the unseen through reasoning" while also calling back to the previous phrase that talks about the senses.

Post by “Don” of March 31, 2022 at 11:29 PM

"of bodies some are composite, others the elements of which these composite bodies are made."

σωμάτων τὰ μὲν ἔστι συγκρίσεις, τὰ δ' ἐξ ὧν αἱ συγκρίσεις πεποίηνται:

συγκρίσεις

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, σύγκρι^σις](#)

πεποίηνται

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ποιέω](#)

Post by “Pacatus” of April 1, 2022 at 2:11 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2442-episode-one-hundred-fifteen-letter-to-herodotus-04-atoms-void-and-basic-epistemo/>

My reading of the Pyrrhonists (eg. Sextus Empiricus; but maybe through the lens of modern neo-Pyrrhonians) is that they did not accept any other schools' claimed criteria for "truth" (nor the denial that there could be such a thing: Academic "skepticism"). But they did accept appearances/sensations as criteria for decision/action. Sometimes, it seems to me, that the Pyrrhonian criticism of Epicurus is confused -- but hinges on what is meant by "truth"* in each of the schools of thought involved. [But the distinction between deductive and inductive logic does not seem to have been well developed.]

* Don, I seem to recall that aletheia (?) in Greek meant that which was unconcealed/unhidden -- or revealed?

Post by “Don” of April 1, 2022 at 6:36 AM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

* Don, I seem to recall that aletheia (?) in Greek meant that which was unconcealed/unhidden -- or revealed?

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἀληθ-ής](#)

Also from Wiktionary:

Etymology

In form it would be from ἀ- (a-, “un-”) + *ληθής, from λήθος (lêthos, “*concealment, forgetfulness”) + -ής (-és), thus “unconcealed”, “unforgotten”.

Ultimately from Proto-Indo-European *lehz- (“to be concealed”) (whence λήθω (lêthō), λανθάνω (lanthánō) and more)

Adjective

ἀληθής • m or f (neuter ἀληθές); third declension

(of things) true, real, genuine

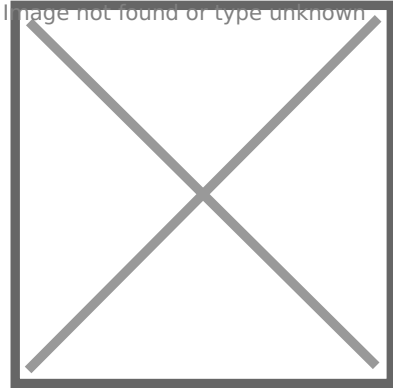
(of people) truthful, honest

385 BCE – 380 BCE, Plato, Symposium 217e:

οἶνος [...] ἦν ἀληθής

oînos [...] ên alēthés

Wine is truthful. (in vino veritas)



[Lucretius and the Epicurean View That "All Perceptions are True" \(forthcoming, but still a DRAFT version\)](#)

The well-known and controversial thesis that «all perceptions are true» is endorsed by all Epicureans. At least three general interpretations of it have been...

www.academia.edu

PS: So, the etymology is something like "not concealed" or "not forgetful" but etymology doesn't always equal definition 1:1. As LSJ says for ἀληθής: "*unconcealed, so true, real, opp. false*" So, the opposite of ἀληθής is "false" ψευδής not "hidden."

Trivia: The River of Forgetfulness in the Underworld is named Λήθη Lethe.

Post by “Cassius” of April 1, 2022 at 7:00 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Did I hear my name? 😊

Just about every episode!

Post by “Don” of April 1, 2022 at 7:40 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2442-episode-one-hundred-fifteen-letter-to-herodotus-04-atoms-void-and-basic-epistemo/>

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

Did I hear my name? 😊

Just about every episode!



See, but this way, I get to swoop in at the end without the need to say, "That's a good question!" and get recorded looking up definitions and citations. Consider me your on-call librarian.