

Democritus believed in the Atomist interpretation of the world, where the only two fundamentals of reality are atoms and the void (T2). Obviously, our direct experience of the world does not seem to align with this belief, at first glance. We can see the color red and feel the feeling of happiness. These are qualitative experiences, seemingly not made of atoms or void. They are examples of qualities and states that don't fit into Democritus' world view.

For Democritus, these qualities and states are somewhat of an illusion. In my interpretation of Democritus' view, all sense perceptions and emotions are *caused by the interactions of the real world* (which consists of atoms and void) but have no necessity to resemble it in any way. More specifically, my thesis is that sense perceptions are the effects of physical atoms interacting, while emotions are the effects of soul atoms interacting. In other words, our direct experience is not necessarily true. For Democritus, thinking is the only way to learn the fundamentals of reality, because sensory observation does not necessarily reveal true things (F3).

The structure of Democritus' argument for his view is twofold: first, he must prove that (A) sensory experience is caused by atoms. Then, he must prove that (B) states of emotion are caused by soul atoms. If these two are proven, my thesis as the conjunction of A and B is proven too.

To prove A, Democritus makes two points. First, he argues that changes in our sensory experience arise directly from changes in the qualities of atoms, such as their positions or arrangements (T12). For example, heavy objects have larger atoms, and hard objects have more compact atoms. Second, he argues that the sense organs have particular atomical structures that lend them to perceiving other atoms (T13). For example, the eyeball is made of moist atoms that the air between the eye the seen object imprints upon. Ears hear sound similarly, in that air that goes inside expands and its atoms touch the inner atoms of the ear. Thinking, too, he says is only possible with the right configuration of atoms: the mind must be calm and room temperature (T13).

To prove B, Democritus makes it known that the body and soul are packaged together, each composed of atoms (T25). This implies that there are some sort of "soul atoms" which constitute the soul. Additionally, the soul is responsible for unhappiness (T37), for it is the one that pursues pleasures. Finally, happiness resides in the mind, which is the dwelling place for the soul (T35). If this is the case, then soul atoms are merely mind atoms, and the mental and emotional states we go through can be attributed to the interactions and qualities of atoms, in the same way that sensory experiences were attributed to the same thing.

A strong objection to Democritus' argument is that if everything were merely caused by the interactions between atoms, then we wouldn't have consciousness. Democritus' worldview is machinelike, and there is no need for consciousness to arise. It is conceivable that emotions and senses are caused by inanimate objects known as atoms, but how can it be that we are *aware* of these experiences?

Democritus' response to this, as an atomist, would be that even consciousness is made of atoms. He would argue that even awareness is caused by atoms. Perhaps, there is some special quality of atoms in the brain that grant them the power of awareness of oneself and the world. For example, it could be that brain atoms create some sort of field, like magnets, and if there are enough of these brain atoms composed in the right structure (composed like a brain), then awareness and conscious experience are the aftereffects. For Democritus, there is no reason to think this impossible.