Thinking About Epicurean Viewpoints Such As The Eternal / Infinite Universe, And How To Discuss Them

Post by “Elayne” of January 11, 2021 at 4:09 PM

On atoms meaning elements-- of course, elements are made of atoms (in current usage), not molecules. Maybe I am misunderstanding the suggestion though. Modern atoms would not fit Epicurus' atoms better than elementary particles, because they aren't just "cuttable"-- they can change into each other through radioactive decay. For instance, the decay of uranium to lead is used for dating materials. I think that aspect makes atomic elements unsuitable as a parallel, and elementary particles are closer, being actually uncuttable so far as we can tell.

However, I also think it's legit not to stretch Epicurus' ideas to fit modern ones, even when there are similarities.

In Cassius' comments, there is the suggestion that other models of the universe might scare people into thinking things might suddenly spring into existence today. That is not part of any seriously considered cosmology model I have seen. It is a mistake IMO to imply that these other models should or might provoke anxiety, especially because one of them may turn out to be correct. People _will_ encounter these ideas, unless they just don't read much. Rather than put them in the position of thinking there's anything unnerving about these models, we can reassure them there's still nothing to worry about.

The more important thing to say is that none of them change the conclusions of the philosophy. The ethics conclusions of EP do not rest on infinity, eternity, or indivisibility, and they won't be unraveled if any of those things is found inaccurate.They rest on materiality, and none of the major theories challenge that. So no need to defend one materialist model out of fear a different one will damage EP. It won't happen.

Fundamentally what I mean when I say science is observations which inform models, followed by more observations, with revisions and replacements of models as required to include all the replicable observations. There are specific methods in science, making predictions to test hypotheses and so on, and ways we have learned to avoid confusing ourselves with confounding variables. But ultimately science is observations in the driver seat. Not letting abstract models drive the bus but always going back repeatedly to the study of nature.

Science is not fundamentally a process of reasoning. Reasoning is a tool, yes, but observations rule. That was one of the things that attracted me to EP. When I notice people clinging to a chain of reasoning, I notice they become resistant to new observations.

That is the way the scientists I grew up with approached reality. So when I hear people questioning whether science is "all that" or if we should consider some other process better

when it comes to understanding the nature of things-- I think, what process is more accurate than observations driving models? Certainly not reason!!

We even do this with feelings-- we observe what actions and conditions lead to pain or pleasure and thus become increasingly skilled at planning accurately for pleasure. We engage in an individual scientific study of our own pleasure.