

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by "Godfrey" of April 11, 2022 at 12:59 AM

Cassius, some thoughts on your comment, with an attempt to use methods of inference:

- The idea of films of atoms coming from the gods and into our minds over great distances was consistent with the theory of atomism in the time of Epicurus, and his innovations regarding the theory. I understand it as a conjectural opinion, but Epicurus considered it as true. It's also reasoning by analogy, I think, being formulated similarly to how he reasoned the correctness of atomism in general. As I understand it, it is:

1. Attested: (I perceive this, therefore it is evidence) For Epicurus I would say that this applies.
2. Non-attested: (evidence conflicts with the original evidence) For Epicurus, I think this would not apply.
3. Contested: (if x exists, it implies this doesn't exist) For Epicurus, this would not apply.
4. Non-contested: (this exists, and implies that exists) For Epicurus, this would apply.

So for Epicurus, the idea of films of atoms reaching us from the gods would be attested and non-contested, which would make it a true opinion.

- Today, with far more information with which to work:

1. Attested: we have no evidence of this occurring, so this does not apply.
2. Non-attested: there is evidence that ideas of gods are obtained from the society, family, etc in which one is reared (based on neuroscience), so this applies.
3. Contested: the evidence in 2 exists, and implies that the films of gods from afar don't exist. This applies.
4. Non-contested: there is no current evidence to support the idea of these images from afar being biologically received, so this does not apply.

So for us, this idea is Non-attested and contested, which makes it a false opinion.

Additional evidence made Epicurus' opinion false by this method. Similarly, future evidence could make the current opinion (ideas of gods are propagated through socio-environmental conditions) false.

I'm in the midst of a lengthy process of trying to sort out the methods of inference/logic/reasoning; this is my first attempt at this so I welcome further discussion!