

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by "Cassius" of April 11, 2022 at 9:08 AM

Also -- one aspect of what I think Don and Joshua are talking about that we ought to discuss is the whole issue of "action at a distance." How can one thing influence another without any perceptible (to the senses) means of touching? We know that Lucretius / Epicurus specifically dealt with magnetism and/or perhaps static electricity even in their time, and of course this would seem to be an important element of refuting supernaturalism.

And just to be sure this is part of the discussion, it does seem to me to be intuitive to suspect that the objects around you can influence you regardless of whether you are looking at them or listening for them. Maybe the basic point is that one would suspect that whatever is moving between those objects and yourself doesn't stop moving just because you turn your eyes and look in another direction. Since Epicurus was focused on explaining the world in material "atomic" terms, it would seem natural (at least to me) to think about the effects of those atoms (which are postulated to keep their shape as the means of transmitting the qualities of the object) going forward through space regardless of whether we are looking for or listening for them. If it is true that certain birds are evolved to be able to work with magnetic fields, there may be other similar faculties which we have not yet discovered.

I see this discussion as very different from the discussion of "woo" which is centered on supernaturalist views. To keep open the possibility that phenomena exists which has not been discovered does not require that we consider that phenomena to be supernatural. We don't define what is natural and "supernatural," only nature determines what can exist, regardless of our speculations.

Does a tree falling in a forest with no person there to hear it make sound? Of course it does, and the movements of particles from place to place deserves a lot of consideration in natural science very much apart from whether and how a particular human interprets them.