

The True Scale of Atoms

Post by “Don” of December 24, 2023 at 1:56 PM

Honestly, I don't think we have to reinterpret or reconcile Epicurean philosophy with the theory of relativity or modern quantum physics, or vice versa.

Both Epicurus and Einstein were doing thought experiments with the knowledge and information they had available at the time, 3rd c. BCE and early 20th c. CE, respectively.

Epicurus's idea of a material universe composed of uncuttable "atoms" moving in a "void" was revolutionary. Einstein's discoveries of general and special relativity were groundbreaking. As scientific discoveries advance, we should not be tied to the literal texts but to their spirit. Epicurus himself was a proponent of waiting for evidence to come to a "final" decision. We can do the same and still think of ourselves as Epicureans.

The important takeaways from Epicurus's "atoms and void" are:

1. We live in an understandable, material universe.
2. The universe does not have a secret, supernatural undiscoverable "governor" controlling or creating it.
3. There are an innumerable but not infinite number of particles that make up the universe, constantly being reused and recycled into new bodies.