

Joseph Thompson - "Lucretius Or Paul?" 1875

Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2024 at 7:57 PM

Ok I cannot resist getting started. Thompson seems very admiring of Lucretius, and his extended discussion of how Lucretius is using the deductive method about atoms that have been and never will be seen by the unaided eye emphasizes the point that DeWitt makes, that Epicurus and Lucretius were not strict "*empiricists*" as that term is often used.

Quote

Now, the point I make, and would insist upon, is, that these were not lucky guesses or coincidences of Lucretius, but results of the deductive method to which scientific materialism is compelled to do homage by its own discoveries. But remarkable as are these correspondences of experimental physics and chemistry with the atomic theory, the atom itself is simply assumed. It never has been, and never can be, brought within the range of the senses.

The atomic theory is evidenced by experiments as to atomic weights, volume, heat, and combining capacity, and as to isomerism, and chemical molecules and homogeneity; but the theory is still stoutly contested by some, and the very existence of the atom is disputed by others.³) Yet we are called upon to accept the materialistic doctrine of the universe, and to receive nothing as knowledge which does not come to us through the senses, while forsooth the foundation of this sensible universe lies utterly beyond the senses, is not at all a physical fact that any one has seen or handled, but a theoretical deduction, an assumption of the mind to explain facts that are seen. Let the atomic theory have all due acceptance as an ingenious and subtile theory, but let it not be thrust upon us as a dogma by a hierarchy of physicists — which, in the name of human freedom, is as much to be resisted and detested as an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Most heartily and gratefully do I welcome all facts ascertained by physical science; nor do I see, upon theistic grounds, any solid objection to the nebular hypothesis, the atomic theory, the doctrine of the correlation of forces, or of natural selection. But should all these be established upon the physical basis of experimental observation, I pray men of science to be honest enough to own that it was not physics but Metaphysics that first suggested and sought to demonstrate them, each and all. Materialism can not repudiate its own parentage; can not steal the name of Lucretius and scorn his method. Materialism was begotten not of Nature, but of Mind through metaphysics.