

Eliminative Materialism

Post by "Cassius" of January 4, 2025 at 3:20 PM

I find this highly interesting and worth discussing, especially this:

The most influential is David Sedley's thesis that for Epicurus the self is an emergent phenomenon that acquires a power of volition that transcends the laws that bind atomic motion and can even 'reach down' and cause changes at the atomic level. (As Sedley puts it, the self is radically emergent.

..... seems to me to be a very understandable and acceptable way of untying the knot of reconciling the two levels (atomic level and "our" level.

It may well be academically true that talking about "eliminative" terminology can bring greater precision to the specialist, but I doubt very much whether the normal person has any need to go that deep. The level at which Sedley is speaking seems to me to be the "practical" level of understanding how "our world" relates to "atoms," and that's the level of practical guidance that most people need.

Focusing specifically on the context that the purpose of this forum is to bring practical Epicurean philosophy to normal people who are not and are never going to be academic specialists, I'm interested in any comments anyone wants to make on that issue.

I'm not trying to be overly critical of Tim O'Keefe, either, because he's an academic writing for academics. Our goal here ought to be always focused on looking for practical constructions that deal with the great majority of a problem.

Not to say that any individuals here should not look for greater precision, but as a "group" we ought to swing for the sweet spot of aiming at the "middle class" that Cicero was complaining about picking up Epicurean philosophy on the crossroads of Rome.

We don't want to let the "perfect" explanation that Tim O'Keefe might be looking for become the proverbial "enemy of the good" -- in this case the good being defined as a practical and beneficial worldview for normal people.

Sedley seems clearly right in his broad strokes that excessive reductionism is akin to excessive skepticism and excessive determinism, and those are almost as much the enemy of Epicurean philosophy as supernatural religion. (And arguably *more* so, given what Epicurus said in the letter to Menoecus.)

So if anyone disagrees specifically with where Sedley is coming from I'd definitely like to hear that commentary.