

Article - David Sedley - 1988 - "Epicurean Anti-Reductionism"

Post by "DaveT" of March 27, 2026 at 12:09 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I suspect that you are neither and that's why you think it's ok to go right to ethics

Cassius, your suspicion is quite incorrect as well as your conclusion. I do think my posts relating to Sedley's interpretations, indeed Lucretius' interpretations and arguments of Epicurus' beliefs need to be balanced and kept in context much better.

For instance, to say: "That's why this discussion is important. Epicurus is discussing the limits and boundaries of properties of atoms and the qualities that emerge from combinations of atoms. All of this directly refutes the idea that human life is either chaotic or determined supernaturally." (Underlining added)

I don't agree that it directly refutes either the chaotic nature or the supernaturally determined nature of human life. It is an argument against supernaturalism and chaos, but it is just that, a *reasonable argument*, rather than a refutation.

Please see my further comment below.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

These are the issues we are really talking about and that Epicurus is addressing. Epicurus could care less whether we call fundamental particles atoms or protons or neurons or quarks or anything else, and I think if he were here today those who focus on that perspective are in fact lost and will never see the bigger picture until they back up and decide philosophically what "reality" really means.

Cassius, in the spirit of Epicurean frankness, I hope you are not suggesting that perhaps I am lost on account of my opinion. Indeed, I think I see the bigger picture, even if it differs from someone else's field of study and opinion. Perhaps there is a failure to communicate here. And I am willing to consider that part of the problem is my failure to write more clearly.

But to your quote: It is quite clear to me, as you have responded more than once, that Epicurus' physics is a foundation for leading people away from mythology and divine Providence and using our human nature to achieve happiness. Anyone who thinks physics or ancient metaphysics are separate and apart from philosophy would be mistaken. I think we agree there.

I think it would be a better course to maximize Epicurus' reasons for his physics and minimize the study of the details for the average student, like me.

To repeat my earlier comment in this thread, I find the deep study of his physics more historically valuable than practically useful to a philosophically based lifestyle. And here is the crux of my comments; at the same time, our exposure to and study of modern science are essential to the individual practice of Epicurus' overall philosophy.