

Innovations/Updates in Epicurus Philosophy

Post by "Martin" of April 20, 2026 at 11:01 AM

Quote

infinite divisibility of matter is logically impossible

If Plato writes something like "finite divisibility of matter is logically impossible", we reject it because logic does not tell anything about reality, and logic is not in Epicurus' canon of truth. The statement "infinite divisibility of matter is logically impossible" is to be rejected for the same reason. That infinite divisibility of matter is possible is demonstrated by the success of continuum theories, e.g. the classical theories of thermodynamics, electrodynamics and continuum mechanics. Experimentally determined coefficients make these theories work. Where continuum theories fail is at microscopic explanations and in microscopic systems. Atomism has much more explanatory power and can be used to calculate from small sets of fundamental constants the coefficients which are used in continuum theories.

Epicurus typical reasoning on basic physics applies the logic of indirect proof: It is inconceivable that [statement] is true. Therefore, the negation is true.

Meanwhile, the conceivability of some of what he thought was inconceivable has been established, so his indirect proof fails in these cases.

Atomism has won because of its far greater explanatory power for the phenomena, not because of logical impossibility of infinite divisibility of matter.

My approach regarding the innovations/updates in Epicurus' philosophy is to keep them mentally separate. Whereas I am fundamentally Epicurean (materialism, atomism, ethics, individualism, friendship), I am complementarily eclectic in aspects where Epicurus' philosophy has gaps and where some non-Epicurean philosophers and others have made progress beyond Epicurus' philosophy. I abandon obsolete details of Epicurus' physics and replace them with better alternatives. In this way, Epicurus' philosophy remains authentic and consistent as discussed on this forum, and it is up to each individual to decide which eclectic additions to make to one's personal philosophy.