

Reverence and Awe In Epicurean Philosophy

Post by “Elayne” of October 27, 2020 at 10:36 AM

I propose that we need some procedural agreements when evaluating the texts on statements about the gods. My suggestions are:

1) Epicurus' own words take precedence over all other source material. Anywhere Epicurus leaves room for different interpretations is not narrowed down by commentary from other sources, such as Philodemus or DeWitt. Neither will individual quotes be taken out of context with his whole body of work.

2) The process of determining what is real takes precedence over details of prior or current conclusions. When new data is available that Epicurus didn't have, we agree to present both what he concluded based on information available to him _and_ revisions which are necessary to continue adhering to his process of observing nature and trusting the senses. We agree that such revisions are an embedded expectation in a philosophy based on observations of nature, and that to ignore new data is to distort Epicurus' intentions beyond recognition.

3) Prolepses are subject to the same verification process as any other sense data and are not to be given special status when the combined sense evidence contradicts them, no matter how compelling they are. We will not say prolepses are infallible when the content is in the form of a conclusion about reality. This is the same as we do not say a straw in a glass of water is bent because it looks to be so from one view. Instead, we examine it from different positions and touch it. We combine our senses to test any conclusion. A sensation about gods from an intuition or dream is not a mistake in the same way seeing an optical illusion is not a mistake, but assumptions about the _cause_ of those intuitions and dreams is a matter up for verification by the other senses. We must especially beware of making assertions of material fact on grounds that we received special knowledge due to a prepared mind, because this closes off the importance of examination by the senses.