

SOE9: Laws of nature apply everywhere

Post by "Hiram" of December 31, 2019 at 11:02 AM

Concerning [Cassius](#) ' feedback:

Quote

SOE9: All things operate within the laws of nature, which apply everywhere.

Objection to SOE9: The concept of "laws of nature" is very troublesome today. It is my opinion that this is regularly interpreted to be the equivalent of saying "laws of nature's god" or even "laws of god" in the sense that it implies that there is some being "Nature" which has adopted a set of rules about how everything must work. I think the proper statement is that the universe operates according to the properties of the essential particles, motion, and void, and that everything that we see arises from the interactions of those three things. There really is no such thing as a "law of nature" that applies everywhere; perhaps if you can somehow stipulate that under exactly the same conditions then the elements will respond the same way, but that seems very different from saying that "the laws of nature apply everywhere."

I finally have some time to address more feedback

Concerning "nature's God" or the "laws of god", that's not consistent with Epicurean theology even in the realist interpretation, so not sure that I need to address it.

I was mainly thinking of the "doctrine of innumerable worlds" and its tacit understanding and view (expressed in LHerodotus) that we can infer about what is beyond in the heavens based on what we can see here on Earth.

Also, the study of nature does teach us that there are laws of nature: gravity will always pull bodies, there are laws that govern what molecules are able to combine to form what elements, etc. Our sources say that there are innumerable particles but LIMITED possible combinations of particles--THIS is limited by the laws of nature, which will not allow every imaginable thing to happen, only certain things. Water becomes ice at a certain temperature, and methane becomes ice at a much colder temperature (which is why the moon Titan has methane lakes and we have water oceans and methane gas).

The doctrine of innumerable worlds is based on the opinion that these laws operate always and everywhere, which is why the Epicureans in antiquity were confident in saying that there are other planets similar and different from our own, with beings similar and different from the ones

on Earth.

This is the line of empirical logic employed there: the same laws of nature operate everywhere. (with the additional conclusion implying that the planets / moons / stars are not gods who rule our fates but bodies like our own planetary body.)

Post by “Cassius” of December 31, 2019 at 11:30 AM

We may not be too far apart here, but the word "law" is something that in the minds of most people in my experience means that there must also be a "lawgiver." Which can also be ok so long as we are clear that we are not talking about an intelligent actor giving those laws.

We are definitely talking finer points of strategy and terminology here. I am not comfortable that I have enough knowledge to say whether Epicurus spoke in terms of "laws" of nature, and if he did not employ that easy analogy then there might have been a good reason for him not to.

Did Lucretius employ words that we would clearly translate as "laws of nature?" Again I am not sure - it seems that I have read that maybe he did, but this would be something to explore. I don't gather that he or Epicurus included a word meaning "law" in the title of works (?) Not sure either whether "De Rerum Natura" is a true title for the poem or something added by others, but it would have been easy to write "On the Laws of Nature" if "law" were an easy analogy.

My main concern at this point is to advise caution in using a word that has strong connotations of there being an intelligent purposeful lawgiver.

Post by “Elayne” of December 31, 2019 at 12:50 PM

I'll say here that I would not have had the concern Cassius raised, because my background is in science and that language would be understood not as any sort of imposed rule but as consistent patterns of matter/energy behavior in defined conditions, which would be replicated whenever there weren't confounding factors.

I haven't thought of how a non-scientist would hear that phrase, but it's standard science language. However, it's certainly possible laypeople wouldn't understand it.

Hiram, one possibility would be to have the Tenets as headers with short summary explanations.

Post by “Cassius” of December 31, 2019 at 1:51 PM

Yes in science it is a different context, as the "law of gravity" doesn't necessary imply god to most people nowadays. But as always it depends on who is reading.

Post by “Hiram” of December 31, 2019 at 3:17 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Hiram, one possibility would be to have the Tenets as headers with short summary explanations.

Yes, that's the plan, but I have a menu of pleasures to attend to these days, plus a neighbor with panic attacks, plus a neighbor's cat to cat-sit, so I will do that as time allows.