

Tactical Question for the Group Re Terminology In Discussing Reason and Logic

Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2021 at 12:48 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

fact remains that you are telling people modern physics models somehow threaten our philosophy, and it's not true.

I am not seeing myself as disputing the part I quoted or any of the rest of what I quite there.

My view is that modern physics has a position on whether the universe is eternal and similar issues, and Epicurus had a position on those issues. Everyone can think about and decide for themselves what they want to believe and how much personal research they want to do, but they'll never even be able to consider Epicurus' position unless they know what it was and his reasons for holding them.

I certainly am not an expert in modern physics, and it's not appropriate for me to suggest to people that they should take a particular modern physics position either. I'm not qualified to say that a particular expert today is right, so I should not be in the business of endorsing one view over another, or saying that a particular expert has conclusively proved Epicurus wrong on the ultimate conclusions, even where there are many intermediate issues that clearly would appear to need revision.

Regardless of which side we take, there's no escaping the fact than in representing something to be Epicurean philosophy there 's a clearly documented position that Epicurus took on many of these issues. I don't think it was appropriate for Frances Wright to ascribe positions to Epicurus that conflicted with those he actually took, and I would not think it appropriate for someone to endorse a particular model unless they are themselves experts in the science. You're certainly a lot closer to that than I am, but even then, it's not a part of Epicurean philosophy to endorse the work of any particular scientists or to say that even a "consensus of scientists" deserves deference. For the very reasons you're saying, "science" changes over time and thus its conclusions change. We aren't in the business of being experts in science, we're in the business of finding a workable philosophy of life that allows us to live happily. Epicurus himself said that it would be better to follow the religionists than to give in to particular "scientists" of his day -- those that denied the possibility of "free will."

I note that while I was composing this Elli wrote another very good post about remembering important issues like friendships and feelings. I totally agree with that. I note that she closed with "**Please do not leave it in laboratory conditions or in the hands of academics.**" I

totally agree with that too, and that is why I do not think we should ever be in the business of placing our opinion on ultimate issues in the hands of "experts" who claim that they in their laboratories have access to ultimate truths that other people don't. I am very willing to believe that they have access to all sorts of detailed observations that others don't have, but I think every person has to reserve for himself or herself the ultimate responsibility for their ultimate conclusions about their place in the universe. And whether I think they "have to" or not -- that's the nature of things. Nature hasn't set up a system where we are all compelled to believe the same thing, or to find pleasure in the same things.

By no means do I live in fear of modern science, nor do I think that modern science threatens the significant conclusions of Epicurean philosophy. But I reserve to myself the ultimate right to decide whose opinions I am going to follow when issues are disputed, and I think Epicurus taught that as well. Epicurus resisted the idea that the scientific experts of his day should be the ultimate authority on issues where no direct evidence was possible, and I think the same approach is valid today. Many people are troubled by issues where we can never observe directly (life after death; was there an origin of everything; will there ever be an end to everything). Where we can only infer the unknown from the known there are always going to be competing theories, and everyone has to decide how to apply those theories to their own lives.