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

Post by “Elayne” of January 22, 2021 at 5:38 PM

The reason I care about the outcome of this conversation is that I want to see EP survive and not be made obsolete, because I get pleasure from the pleasure of other people. I also feel some pain when it appears to me that Epicurus, a cutting edge, revolutionary scientist in his day, would ever be considered to support a less than cutting edge position today, when he's not here to defend himself. That, I realize, is silly, bc he's dead and can't be hurt! □□

Here is my summary on which PDs can hold up:

Pd1 Matter is uncreatable: no, not in the way he described matter. If we change it to matter/energy is uncreatable, that holds up, but may not have been true in the Big Bang when matter/energy may not have functioned as it does now. Since that happened so long ago, I don't mind saying matter/energy is not created, because of the "is". An "is" doesn't rule out things having been otherwise in the past, so I'll take it.

PD2 Matter is indestructible : not true in the original description. Could reframe as matter/energy is indestructible. However, if there is a "big collapse" to conditions preceding another big bang, and everything we call matter/energy winds up taking no space and the physics we understand now changes-- then PD2 may not always be true. That doesn't change that it is true now and certainly during any survivable conditions for life. I'm fine again here with an "is" because it doesn't constrain the distant future. PD1 and 2 are accepted physics for the current universe, now that it exists.

PD3 no, the universe does not consist of solid bodies and void. The hard body model of physics is over. That one cannot even be metaphorically accepted. And since we are including all known types of energy fields as matter, there's not much void if any, especially if what looks like void has dark energy. It's just wrong. But it doesn't change that there's no god.

PD4 solid bodies are either compounds or simple. Just take out the word solid and it's ok

PD5 the multitude of atoms is infinite. We could translate better and say the multitude of elementary particles is infinite. But to be accurate, we actually don't know. It is unclear whether the universe is infinite or just very big, and the answer depends on that. Either way, it's so big in comparison to us that it might as well be infinite. If it is finite, that doesn't mean there's anything outside it. And there's still no god.

PD 6 the void is infinite in extent. Unclear. There are some observed areas of apparent void in space (not on earth) but they may not actually be empty-- they may have dark energy. We

don't know enough to say this, and it's not relevant to being sure there's no supernatural god.

PD7 the atoms (elementary particles) are always in motion. That one seems to have held up □□

PD8 the speed of atomic (elementary particles) is uniform -- that's not true. They can be accelerated, for instance. And since you are including particles like photons in matter, then those are (obviously) at the speed of light. You can look around without a physics lab and know that other stuff is not moving at the speed of light. PD8 can't be fixed-- it's just wrong.

PD9 motion is linear in space, vibratory in compounds. Well, no. Elementary particles have vibratory motion even when they have linear motion. There's also rotational motion, orbital, and suborbital motion.

PD 10 atoms (elementary particles) are capable of swerving slightly at any point in time. This physical description doesn't fit current ideas of probabilistic behavior of matter. Epicurus thought it was a literal swerve from linear movement and that's not what happens. It can be metaphorized to say future events are probabilistic, but imagining a little particle speeding along and suddenly, unpredictably changing course is not really what happens. I would leave out the "any point in time "-- I don't think we know that.

PD 11 atoms (elementary particles are characterized by 3 things-- weight, shape, and size. That one would need updating to mass, charge, and spin

PD12 the number of the different shapes (of elementary particles) is not infinite but innumerable. Shape is not a thing used to describe elementary particles, and so far there are a limited number of different types, nothing close to innumerable types. This one just needs to have a note for historical purposes -- it's not relevant any more. There's no way I can think of to re-state this in a way that is correct.

So you see, some of this information is not controversial in being outdated. Some is still unknown, but some things actually need to be revised now.

I agree it's important to question experts -- and also to question Epicurus. I don't put anyone on privileged footing when it comes to whether I would question them! So when you say why should we believe experts, I am with you, and it includes Epicurus.

I agree it's important to know where his ideas came from, and his thought processes. And it's also important for people today to know they can come to his same overarching conclusions about this being a material universe, about absence of gods, and about pleasure as the goal, while studying ongoing discoveries in physics. It's not that I want to say Epicurus didn't have PD8 and 12-- he did.

If we think of a conclusion like any of these PDs as a "diagnosis", and the observations as signs and symptoms-- parents sometimes get scared when they finally get a diagnosis for their kids' troubles. That's normal. And if the diagnosis changes, it's also scary. But what's true is that even though a diagnosis, a model of disease, provides useful information, the label doesn't

change the child. The child is still who they are with or without the label. In the same way, reality is what it is with or without the concepts being applied.

I mainly want people to know that PD 8 and 12 being inaccurate and almost all the others needing updating doesn't do a thing to mess up the overall conclusions. And to put more weight on observations than reasons-- to emphasize the Canon. That's my whole point.