

# **Astronomical Events During the Time of Epicurus (& Discussion on Letter to Pythocles Section 91)**

**Post by "Cassius" of May 28, 2021 at 6:36 AM**

It seems clear that he thought it was important to limit the distance on the grounds that (1) light sources don't shrink as much as other objects at a distance and (2) things that we see sharply don't tend to be as far away as objects that seem to us to be blurry.

But on the other hand we see the sun and moon on the horizon as further away or at least comparable in size to the mountain ranges, and we know the mountains to be huge.

I am thinking that part of the answer here lies, as in other areas, in comparing Epicurus to what he was arguing against. I don't have a reference but I seem to have picked up over the years that the people Epicurus was arguing against (Pythagoreans?) had calculated the sun to be huge as part of their program of seeing the sun (and maybe moon and stars) as gods, and so they were using their calculations of the size being hugely bigger than the earth itself as part of their program of deeming the sun to be a god. (Not sure what they thought about the size of the moon. Did they have that right?)

So maybe it would be clearly to us what Epicurus was saying if we knew that he thought it was possible and acceptable that the sun be bigger than the mountains, just so long as he didn't have to admit that the sun was many times larger than the earth itself.

That probably takes us back to the issue of what the model really was. Our world is clearly not the center of the universe, but was the earth the center of our world? If so, then we might have the perspective there that would allow us to see that Epicurus could admit that the sun was pretty large just so long as the calculating didn't have it swallowing up the whole "world." And we could probably come up with a picture or diagram that would make the position a lot more clear, and a lot less ridiculous-looking, than presuming he meant the sun was the size of a basketball.

In fact, a diagram of our "world" in Epicurean terms would be highly helpful for many uses.