

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

Post by “Cassius” of May 28, 2021 at 1:14 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

cared about it, which I think he did not.

As usual I may or may not be plagiarizing this from DeWitt, but I do think that he would have cared about it to the extent that some people might equate immense size with an attribute of being a god (in the supernatural/non-Epicurean sense). I think I remember reading DeWitt say that, or maybe it was someone else, or maybe I am just dreaming it. 😊 There should be no necessary relationship between size and being a supernatural god, but I can see the possibility of enough connection that it might have been on Epicurus' mind as a reason to denounce the conclusions of those who were arguing that their geometric calculations were somehow divine.

(Note - I may be reading it into that passage from Lucian criticizing the mathematicians, which wasn't directly on point, but I think would be related. Let's see if i can find it reasonably quickly. Ok it's here:

from Lucian's Dialog "[Icaromenippus, An Aerial Expedition:](#)"

“Menippus. Ah, but keep your laughter till you have heard something of their pretentious mystifications. To begin with, their feet are on the ground; they are no taller than the rest of us ‘men that walk the earth’; they are no sharper-sighted than their neighbors, some of them purblind, indeed, with age or indolence. And yet they say they can distinguish the limits of the sky, they measure the sun’s circumference, take their walks in the supra-lunar regions, and specify the sizes and shapes of the stars as though they had fallen from them. Often one of them could not tell you correctly the number of miles from Megara to Athens, but has no hesitation about the distance in feet from the sun to the moon. How high the atmosphere is, how deep the sea, how far it is round the earth— they have the figures for all that. Moreover, they have only to draw some circles, arrange a few triangles and squares, add certain complicated spheres, and lo, they have the cubic contents of Heaven.

Then, how reasonable and modest of them, dealing with subjects so debatable, to issue their views without a hint of uncertainty; thus it must be and it shall be; *contra gentes* they will have it so. They will tell you on oath the sun is a molten mass, the moon inhabited, and the stars water-drinkers, moisture being drawn up by the sun’s rope and bucket and equitably distributed among them.”