

Carl Sagan, the 4th dimension, episode 20 of Lucretius Today, physics

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 14, 2021 at 11:14 PM

Thanks a lot for your answer Cassius.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I am in agreement with you that a search for a totally consistent and comprehensive set of physics propositions, and I think Epicurus says that himself as well, especially in the passage (Herodotus? Pythocles?) where he says that what is needed is not a comprehensive theory of everything but to live happily.



[Quote from Cassius](#)

However to bring that point back in a full circle, he could reach the conclusion that what is needed is to live happily ONLY because his physics and epistemology convinced him that there is no life after death to be concerned about reward/punishment, or supernatural gods to be concerned about obeying.

Well, this is something I did not touch upon (the gods), but I'm happy you brought it up; I know it's not part of the original doctrine, but I think (I'd like to learn what people would have to say about this) that there's a point of view about the gods, or god, that is not standard Epicurean, but I'd argue is not far away either.

There's people that believe in a completely benevolent god, so this belief doesn't bring them pain at all. They don't feel compelled to do stuff to gain their favor, and they do understand that these gods or god will not harm them because... that's beneath their divine status, if you will. This is a belief that gives hope to their lives. (From there, I know it could be a slippery slope into *trying to be good to gain this god's favors*, and opening the dangerous door of what this god could deem "good", but, please, bear with me, as I stated before, these are people who are not subject to this compulsion). I don't think the issue of the gods being supernatural would come to a person like this, because, unless you've been exposed to a point of view of physical/biological gods like the Epicurean ones, I don't think you've taken the time to think about whether they're material or not, you're just aware of the concept of god. But for this argument's sake, I'm not talking about supernatural gods.

What we know now about our species is not the same that we knew back in Epicurus' day. We're very destructive but we're also capable of tuning into our empathy a lot more than our fellow other animals can. I'd say this is a trait that's clearly linked to evolution and correlated to consciousness. So it's hard for me to believe that an Epicurean god would not help a less evolved being if they had the opportunity and this made them feel pleasure, while this could happen completely out of our capability of noticing it. As I see it, we can be pretty good to less evolved creatures, and I'm sure most of us are. I've thrown food to a stray dog, I've saved another one that was in pain/danger, and I've changed my walking path to avoid disturbing insects or other animals. If I find a bug in my home I try to take it out without killing it. I don't do this because I want to go to "heaven", or win the favor of a higher being, but because it makes me feel good, to be in the presence of another being that's alive, in my vicinity, and "allowing" it to improve its condition somewhat and also to allow me to feel my empathy, to become attuned to it. I don't feel like a god, at all, 😊, but it makes me feel good because I listen to my empathy, a clear and present feeling, towards them and this feels good. So, [Epicurean gods](#), being more evolved biological entities, wouldn't hesitate, in my opinion, to do it given the opportunity, because I'm pretty sure it will be pleasurable for them too, and they would do it without us realizing their intervention, as I'm sure the dog and the bugs don't realize at all what I just did for them. I'm sure they're not living to observe us and find ways to help us all the time, though, as classic conceptualizations of god or gods could be.

I understand we have to draw a line somewhere to be able to go forward with things, and as I understand it, Epicurean Philosophy's line is drawn at a place where no involvement from the gods (material, non supernatural) is conceivable, even if it's imperceptible; but as I stated before, perhaps this view is not that-at-odds with the philosophy, and could allow other people to benefit from Epicurean Philosophy, without having to give up their belief that there are blessings of god happening to them. Please don't banish me 😊

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That carries over from what I typed above, and I would say that he was confident in his epistemology NOT because it was logically sound, but because it went hand in hand and mutually supported his physics, and vice versa. The epistemology could not stand without confidence in a physics which helps us explain how the senses work, and of course our physics could not stand without our understanding and having confidence in the sense. The two are mutually supporting and both essential. The ethics follows from both together, in my view of Epicurus.

I can see that. Just to clarify something, and you're going to understand me from previous posts; it is speculative physics, and physics that doesn't impact our immediate reality, that I think are unnecessary now, as were unnecessary then; particularly when they had (back then) so much to clarify in more immediate physics; and now, when we have so much more to learn about us as species (psychology, pleasure, economics, etc.) that affects us directly. So I understand how it could be a prerequisite of the epistemology to have a good physics context,

but it would have to be the immediate and descriptive (rather than speculative) physics, and that type of concrete and down to earth physics I think I could see as a foundation to the epistemology and the ethics.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

our difference may only be that you seem to believe that it is self-evidently correct to take the position that "after observation we can be sure" that certain things are "impossible" with out a grounding in BOTH the physics and the epistemology. I would say yest that is the conclusion, but ONLY because we have confidence in our epistemology AND our physics.

No, perhaps I sent the wrong message unintendedly, I don't believe observation alone is enough. But I do think that many things, like free will, are so evident without the need to give more explanation, that actually trying to do so could probably fire back at you; for example, if you decide to 'enroll in the game' of "I need to have the undefeated explanation about this phenomenon" in order to be able to say it exists and it is happening (which is evident), you're very likely to find yourself frustrated, because most certainly you will not have an undefeated explanation about it; and if you base your philosophy on [blank] (something as obvious as free will), the reality is it will remain untouched, regardless of whether you were or not able to explain why and how something so obvious is indeed happening. And many more things are nowadays as evident and obvious as free will (to most people, after a certain age and education) than they probably were back then; so I guess my point is that the physics that are practical and useful are settled and pretty much allow, most basically educated people, to reach those same conclusions (of no supernatural stuff happening), allowing them to be able to jump into the parts of the philosophy that are actually more helpful to live happy lives. I'm not saying they're not important, I'm saying today's physics (in the domain that describes our immediate experience) are pretty much settled and serve their purpose to allow people to connect the dots easily when presented with this materialistic ontology. On the other hand... There's so much more to do about the Epistemology and Ethics!