

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

Post by "Mathitis Kipouros" of August 17, 2021 at 8:53 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In fact this might be analogous to the multiple options that he allowed in astronomical matters (as long as the options all are consistent with observable facts).

I seem to recall having read something close to this, and it had to have been in this forum or in DeWitt. Something like, all the possibilities that are in line with the physics are possible until one is proved to be the right one and the others proven to be wrong? Is there a PD about this?

[Quote from Cassius](#)

as he seems to have done on the issue of the "greatest good / good" even while criticizing the Peripatetics for walking around harping on it uselessly.

What do you mean by this? I though the greatest good was life, and the objective/end (or "telos" as DeWitt puts it) is pleasure.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

the best way for the "average" human to view the gods so as to live the theoretical happiest life with the least possible anxiety is the way he advocated -- that as a logical ideal, "gods" should be thought of in absolute terms as supremely self-sufficient and therefore not concerned about things that they have no need to be concerned about.

The only thing that bothers me about this ideal, is that it may be looked by many as an objective in itself, instead of pleasure, justifying even the individualistic tendencies that may arise when first exposed to a philosophy like this, or, at least, an aloof position towards other's experience; like most times, for argument's sake, I'm going to an extreme, so let me explain my point of view: when you come from other philosophies/religions, where the common good is dogmatically (while being hipocritically repeated but not practiced) accepted as the greatest good, and you're exposed to a philosophy that tells you that the greatest good is life (thus, your life) and that the objective of life is pleasure (thus, your pleasure, as it is subjective and you can't experience the other's pleasure), you get a feeling that this philosophy is a highly individualistic one.

I do understand, though, that this ideal, used properly, can allow for greater peace of mind, and evidently comes from an observation of nature, specifically us as the most advanced species we've observed, and how we relate to the other less-advanced species on Earth. I'd argue that an important (arguably the most important) part of the observations that we can make out of this comparison of species is that of our ability for empathy and compassion, and the pleasure we can get out of it, which, as I understand, from what I've read, was completely missing from Epicurus's description. Any thoughts on this?

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That observation in my view is based on the logical abstraction of quantity which results from categorizing ALL experience as either pleasure or pain. In that statement I believe he is abstracting those two words "pleasure" and "pain" and expecting us to understand that those two words cover a myriad - actually unlimited - number of experiences that are each subtly different from each other and tied to their individual facts.

I'm not sure I get what you're trying to say here. Could you please explain? I do think all experiences could be categorized as either pleasurable or painful, and I like the simplicity of that. Are you saying this is not so? I'd like to learn your point of view about this.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We probably ought to have an independent discussion of whether it is ever a good idea, and if it is, in what circumstances, to engage in these logic games

I have accepted the doctrine that there's no point in engaging in those kind of discussions. Unfortunately, I've done it many times; since they start from a place of idealistic competition, they focus on winning or losing the argument, not in accepting and giving good arguments for the sake of growing and having a good experience; and thus, when you win, the other part usually feels offended, when nobody wins, it is seldom a fun experience since most people take it personally, and if the other one wins, you end up confused but probably for the wrong reasons.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

(1) confident that the effect was not supernatural, and (2) confident that upon studying the facts long enough they would eventually be able to understand how such things were brought about naturally.

Agreed. Also agreed that physics are needed for this, and thus, foundational to the philosophy. Going back to my first argument about physics, what I meant is not that physics are not important, but rather that the specific physical explanations of Epicurus and Lucretius don't have to be right for the rest of the philosophy to be valid, especially nowadays that we have better explanations that allow us to reach these same two conclusions you mentioned.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2149-carl-sagan-the-4th-dimension-episode-20-of-lucretius-today-physics/?postID=13329#post13329>