

# What holds me back from embracing EP

Post by "Cassius" of March 1, 2022 at 6:37 PM

## [Quote from EricR](#)

It reminds me how much discomfort many of us experience with uncertainty.

And I think that's an important part of why Epicurus thought that it is important to track these issues down to a conclusion, and not leave them hanging, as did Frances Wright. At risk of offense when I make that observation I would not be surprised if some would say that if you were to "take a poll" on whether these issues are super-important (Epicurus) or can be put to the side (Wright), the answers to this question might be found to correlate to some degree by male / female. At any rate, regardless of sex, some people are more concerned about them than others, and it's interesting to think about why that divide exists. It might also be influenced by childhood indoctrination into religion. Why did Epicurus find it necessary to pursue his whole life the answer to the "Chaos" problem, while Frances Wright put it entirely aside.

This really deserves a long and detailed treatment, at least as much time as we would devote to a "personal outline." But I haven't done one and can only offer some random thoughts:

1 - I think we can trace the Epicurean viewpoint on this best by looking at Lucretius' argument for atoms and void and the other basic questions in Book One of his poem. He's using deductive reasoning to turn observations of things which can be observed into opinions about things which cannot be observed. And in regard to these "close-at-hand" issues, he does not resort to multiple explanations - he reaches conclusions which are to all intents and purposes "certain," especially when you look at them from a high-level view. Some of the terminology and observations might need revision today, but I think essentially the same reasoning applies today to exclude to a reasonable certainty the existence of supernatural universe-creating forces.

2 - Then there's the logical component of deciding what "reasonable certainty" really means. Do we have to conclude that because we are not omniscient we therefore can never be certain of anything? To me that's one way of stating the ultimate question, and I can't answer that in any way but to say that we DO have the means to determine with reasonable certainty those things that are most important to us, like the existence of the supernatural and absence of life after death. The evidence in support of those positions I find to be compelling, and the arguments against it I find to be totally speculative. And how do we stack up and weigh "speculation without evidence and against tons of evidence" in the balance? We don't give much if any significance in our day-to-day decisions, and it seems to me we should give it less significance the more important the question.

3 - If someone wants to argue that we need "faith" or "trust" I would say Yes, I agree to an extent, but trust in what? There is lots of evidence that Nature has given us our senses, and basic reasoning to use them, but no real evidence of supernatural revelations exist other than hearsay from people who in my humble opinion have shown them selves to be supremely untrustworthy and even deceptive. So if I have to "trust" someone or something I find it much easier to "Trust Nature" and play the cards we are dealt as she gave them to us.

I could go on and on and on but will stop there for now. I do think that we all have to tackle these issues and be able to articulate our positions on them, or we've entirely missed an whole 1/3 of Epicurean philosophy. I think these can be done in a LOT simpler way than to play the elaborate word games of the Stoics and others, and I think it's important that we work to reconstruct and explain Epicurus' arguments on these issues by (1) starting where he started and reasoning based on his patterns, and (2) exploring the surviving texts. Based on that two-pronged approach I think we can reconstruct his viewpoint pretty accurately.

Even as it is today, I personally find it pretty compelling.