

Episode One Hundred Twenty - Letter to Herodotus 09 - Epicurus' Rejection of Infinite Divisibility

Post by "Cassius" of May 1, 2022 at 12:29 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Some mathematicians and historians, such as Carl Boyer, hold that Zeno's paradoxes are simply mathematical problems, for which modern calculus provides a mathematical solution.[6] Some philosophers, however, say that Zeno's paradoxes and their variations (see Thomson's lamp) remain relevant metaphysical problems

We just finished recording the podcast and this statement from Wikipedia stands out for me. We did our best to make the issues understandable and relevant, and this quote gets to the issue of why I think Epicurus thought the subject was important: We aren't simply discussing "mathematical problems" - we're illustrating that some very compelling arguments can be drawn up on many issues that would make you doubt your ability to control your life and be confident in reasoning based on the senses. Two other quotes come to mind:

This one I included in the podcast at the end:

[500] And if reason is unable to unravel the cause, why those things which close at hand were square, are seen round from a distance, still it is better through lack of reasoning to be at fault in accounting for the causes of either shape, rather than to let things clear seen slip abroad from your grasp, and to assail the grounds of belief, and to pluck up the whole foundations on which life and existence rest. For not only would all reasoning fall away; life itself too would collapse straightway, unless you chose to trust the senses, and avoid headlong spots and all other things of this kind which must be shunned, and to make for what is opposite to these. Know, then, that all this is but an empty store of words, which has been drawn up and arrayed against the senses. (Bailey)

This one I didn't include but also seems relevant from Book One:

[102] But still I fear your caution will dispute the maxims I lay down, who all your life have trembled at the poets' frightful tales. Alas! I could even now invent such dreams as would pervert the steadiest rules of reason, and make your fortunes tremble to the bottom. No wonder! But if Men were once convinced that death was the sure end of all their pains, they might with reason, then, resist the force of all Religion, and contemn the threats of poets. Now, we have no sense, no power, to strive against prejudice, because we fear a scene of endless torments after death. (Brown)