

Episode One Hundred Twenty-Five - Letter to Herodotus 14 - Purpose and Method of Studying Nature - Completion of the Letter

Post by "Cassius" of June 11, 2022 at 7:35 AM

Podcast should be up later today. A few notes in the meantime:

- Around the twenty minute mark (and several places) we talk about possible differences between the attitude of Frances Wright ("observation is everything, theory is nothing") and what Epicurus seems to be saying about determining alternative "explanations" for celestial phenomena (even though we don't have information to say which one of several is correct). I think we might want to expand in the future on this issue: An "observation" is not really the same as an "explanation." Epicurus is telling us that we may have several "explanations" that are consistent with observations, and that we should not choose between them if we don't have sufficient evidence to do so. But it seems to me that here is another example where Epicurus is clearly telling us to USE our observations to come up with rational explanations that assist our happiness and help us to see that supernatural gods are not a necessary explanation of natural phenomena. Whether or not Frances Wright means to be so extreme, she seems to me to differ from Epicurus on this, because several of her chapters can be read to imply (or even state explicitly) that we should never move past observation to reach any "theories" of any kind. Maybe the resolution is to unwind the meaning of the term "observation" as Frances Wright uses it, but on the face of it I can see the way she makes her point to be potentially confusing, or even wrong, from Epicurus' perspective.