What's the Difference Between Chance and Fate to an Epicurean?

Post by “C. Florius Lupus” of January 26, 2019 at 6:22 PM

Let me address the three mentioned issues:

1. **Black Holes:**

It is probably not the right place to go into astrophysical details and apparent flaws in current theories (According to General Relativity time stands still at the event horizon, therefore nothing can ever cross it and reach the point where not even light can escape.).

For an Epicurean there is a different problem: Which of the proposed effects of black holes have we actually perceived with our senses (or instruments)? The Hawking radiation for example cannot be measured. It can only be mathematically deducted. So what is its relevance for us, if we do not experience it? If we had measurable data, we could easily form explanations and theories. The fewer data we have, the more difficult the explanation becomes. But at the same time it is less important for us and our wellbeing.

For Epicurus observation comes first. The purpose of science is only the explanation of these observations and how good this explanation is for future observations.

Unfortunately modern theoretical physics works reversed. They come up with a theory, and then they search desperately for observations to confirm it.

If we have no observation, we do not need a theory.

2. **Social Injustice**

In your example not the social injustice of the worker in Thailand is the problem, but the pressure on our own labor market and the reduced salaries of us and our friends (reduced pleasure).

Insisting on fair working conditions and wages in Thailand is not the only possible solution, but a solution can also be reached by import tariffs to name just one example.

Justice for people we have no covenant (*contrat social*) with, should not worry us. Often outside intervention causes more harm than benefit ("The road to hell is paved with good intentions"). I would say that the Thai workers know best, what is good for them. If everyone cares for himself, everyone is taken care of.

This way we avoid unnecessary worries and unnecessary conflict.

3. **Randomness in Macroscopic Events**

Under normal pressure I would only expect small bubbles to have slightly higher temperatures than 100° C, bevor they evaporate. I doubt that this would be possible for large quantities like a cubic meter of water.

Historic events can depend on individual persons. This is true (similar to Schroedinger's Cat whose life depends on a quantum event). But the social circumstances usually trigger this event sooner or later.

Isaac Asimov described in his "Foundation" series a new branch of science dealing with the prediction of historical developments not by predicting singular incidents, but statistical analysis of social developments. He called it "psychohistory".

There are also recent scientific papers that seem to prove Asimov right. (e.g. https://firstmonday.org/article/view/3663/3040#p4)

The more data we look at, the more predictable major developments become.
So both phenomena have their place: Epicurus' swerve for particles and free will of individuals, determinism for huge objects or group behavior.

Nice to see that you are in Thailand! I plan to relocate there in March.