

# Epicurus' Rejection of "Reductionist Atomism" (And The Related Issues of Skepticism and Determinism)

Post by "Cassius" of April 13, 2023 at 4:32 PM

While mentioning Diogenes of Oinoanda, here is the fragment that includes the "Who will choose to seek what he can never find?" argument that to me seems very powerful in the context of this discussion.

*Who will seek knowledge of any kind if he is convinced that knowledge is impossible?*

*Who will seek to be free of the supernatural gods or of fear of death or pain of any kind if he is convinced that everything happens by necessity?*

Here's the fragment:

Fr. 5

[Others do not] explicitly [stigmatise] natural science as unnecessary, being ashamed to acknowledge [this], but use another means of discarding it. For, when they assert that things are inapprehensible, what else are they saying than that there is no need for us to pursue natural science? After all, who will choose to seek what he can never find?

Now Aristotle and those who hold the same Peripatetic views as Aristotle say that nothing is scientifically knowable, because things are continually in flux and, on account of the rapidity of the flux, evade our apprehension. We on the other hand acknowledge their flux, but not its being so rapid that the nature of each thing [is] at no time apprehensible by sense-perception. And indeed [in no way would the upholders of] the view under discussion have been able to say (and this is just what they do [maintain] that [at one time] this is [white] and this black, while [at another time] neither this is [white nor] that black, [if] they had not had [previous] knowledge of the nature of both white and black.