

My struggle with Norman DeWitt

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2023 at 11:27 AM

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Something tells me that if Epicurus was alive today, and he posited a belief that was contradicted by good science tomorrow, he would consider the results and modify his view the make way for the new information.

I think it's certain he would do that. However, there is a deeper issue at work too that is addressed by Philodemus and goes to the heart of Epicurean canonics regarding "when" it is appropriate to take a position and when it is not, and that question can't be settled by counting numbers of "scientists" or taking the position that a consensus of some number of people at any moment proves a point. The issue of when skepticism is appropriate and when it is not is very subtle, and Epicurus clearly thought that "radical skepticism" of the "nothing is knowable" type is clearly wrong.

If you agree with Epicurus that radical skepticism is clearly wrong, then the issue always comes back to that of "how much evidence is needed and how do you process it." You don't flatly throw up your hands - as many people do - and decide to simply stop thinking about super-important issues like whether there are supernatural gods or life after death.