

Episode 191 - Cicero's On Ends - Book One - Part 02

Post by "Cassius" of September 16, 2023 at 10:01 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

But my point is that I now think that a much larger portion of the time was spent on natural physics/science

I would say you are right and what you are largely referring to is what is covered in the letter to Herodotus - which includes a proper "logical" framework for deducing big picture conclusions from the science. My point there being that we have much more raw data today and yet most people are less advanced in processing the implications of it than we're the Epicureans. Without the analysis framework the data is worthless or even harmful, as both Epicurus and Lucretius state explicitly.

I will post a couple of quotes to support that statement:

Lucretius:

[Book 1 Bailey 146] This terror then, this darkness of the mind, must needs be scattered not by the rays of the sun and the gleaming shafts of day, but by the outer view and the inner law of nature; whose first rule shall take its start for us from this, that nothing is ever begotten of nothing by divine will.

[Book 2, Bailey, 40] For even as children tremble and fear everything in blinding darkness, so we sometimes dread in the light things that are no whit more to be feared than what children shudder at in the dark, and imagine will come to pass. This terror then, this darkness of the mind, must needs be scattered not by the rays of the sun and the gleaming shafts of day, but by the outer view and the inner law of nature.

[Book 3, Bailey, 74] For even as children tremble and fear everything in blinding darkness, so we sometimes dread in the light things that are no whit more to be feared than what children shudder at in the dark, and imagine will come to pass. This terror then, this darkness of the mind, must needs be scattered, not by the rays of the sun and the gleaming shafts of day, but by the outer view and the inner law of nature.

[Book 6, Bailey 30] And so with his discourse of truthful words he purged the heart and set a limit to its desire and fear, and set forth what is the highest good, towards which we all strive, and pointed out the path, whereby along a narrow track we may strain on towards it in a straight course; he showed what there is of ill in the affairs of mortals everywhere, coming to being and flying abroad in diverse forms, be it by the chance or the force of nature, because nature had so brought it to pass; he showed from what gates it is meet to sally out against each

ill, and he proved that 'tis in vain for the most part that the race of men set tossing in their hearts the gloomy billows of care. For even as children tremble and fear everything in blinding darkness, so we sometimes dread in the light things that are no whit more to be feared than what children shudder at in the dark and imagine will come to pass. This terror then, this darkness of the mind, must needs be scattered not by the rays and the gleaming shafts of day, but by the outer view and the inner law of nature. Wherefore I will hasten the more to weave the thread of my task in my discourse.

Epicurus [PD12](#). A man cannot dispel his fear about the most important matters if he does not know what is the nature of the universe, but suspects the truth of some mythical story. So that, without natural science, it is not possible to attain our pleasures unalloyed.

There are several others and we need to post this list somewhere. I know I am missing one in Epicurus (Pythocles I think) and one in Lucretius about those who learn a little about the stars having it worse for themselves if they don't also know the answers --- I will keep looking but if anyone posts them first I will thank you! 😊

Addendum: This one is close but not the one I am thinking about:

Pythocles 88 - Now all goes on without disturbance as far as regards each of those things which may be explained in several ways so as to harmonize with what we perceive, when one admits, as we are bound to do, probable theories about them. But when one accepts one theory and rejects another, which harmonizes as well with the phenomenon, it is obvious that he altogether leaves the path of scientific inquiry and has recourse to myth.

Also close but not it:

Pythocles 97 - And do not let the divine nature be introduced at any point into these considerations, but let it be preserved free from burdensome duties and in entire blessedness. For if this principle is not observed, the whole discussion of causes in celestial phenomena is in vain, as it has already been for certain persons who have not clung to the method of possible explanations, but have fallen back on the useless course of thinking that things could only happen in one way, and of rejecting all other ways in harmony with what is possible, being driven thus to what is inconceivable and being unable to compare earthly phenomena, which we must accept as indications.

I suspect I was thinking of these from Herodotus (primarily 79) - now I just need to find the same statement in Lucretius:

[78] Furthermore, we must believe that to discover accurately the cause of the most essential facts is the function of the science of nature, and that blessedness for us in the knowledge of celestial phenomena lies in this and in the understanding of the nature of the existences seen in these celestial phenomena, and of all else that is akin to the exact knowledge requisite for our happiness: in knowing too that what occurs in several ways or is capable of being otherwise has no place here but that nothing which suggests doubt or alarm can be included at all in that

which is naturally immortal and blessed. Now this we can ascertain by our mind is absolutely the case.

[79] But what falls within the investigation of risings and settings and turnings and eclipses, and all that is akin to this, is no longer of any value for the happiness which knowledge brings, but persons who have perceived all this, but yet do not know what are the natures of these things and what are the essential causes, are still in fear, just as if they did not know these things at all: indeed, their fear may be even greater, since the wonder which arises out of the observation of these things cannot discover any solution or realize the regulation of the essentials.

OK here's the extra Lucretius:

[Book 5:55 Bailey] For those who have learnt aright that the gods lead a life free from care, yet if from time to time they wonder by what means all things can be carried on, above all among those things which are descried above our heads in the coasts of heaven, are borne back again into the old beliefs of religion, and adopt stern overlords, whom in their misery they believe have all power, knowing not what can be and what cannot, yea and in what way each thing has its power limited, and its deep-set boundary-stone.