Paul Thyry (Baron D'Holbach / Mirabaud) - French / German Sympathizer With Some Epicurean Ideas

Post by “Cassius” of December 27, 2023 at 7:28 PM

> Quote from Godfrey
>
> Aren't emergent properties a form of randomness? Or do they fall under the idea of "if we knew enough about everything, we would see how they actually emerged"?

That would *not* be my understanding Godfrey. Emergent qualities would arise from the attributes of the atoms and void which make them up in a mechanistic way. There is no function assigned to the swerve of the atom other than free will and bringing atoms together to form worlds in the first place. Sedley thinks the swerve was only developed later in response to the need to respond to the hard determinists.

It's been a long time since I read it but I always recommend the Long article on this -- Chance and Natural Law in Epicureanism, the basic thrust of which is to argue that virtually everything in the Epicurean universe IS determined except for the free will of intelligent animals, which is the one place that the swerve "breaks through" into observability. If the swerve were constantly making many things random then the whole basis of atomism would implode because atomism would not be able to explain the regularity that we do see.

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Long: "Chance and Natural Law In Epicureanism"

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Cassius

June 28, 2019 at 8:52 AM

are possible within members of a given species. De Lacy recognizes that there are Epicurean equivalents to natural laws, but I believe Epicurus' restrictions on indeterminate occurrences were much tighter than De Lacy suggests. In particular, he seems to me to lay too much weight on the totally indeterminate and unpredictable 'swerve' of atoms, when he argues that this is responsible for variations within limits, such as the fact that a child sometimes resembles the mother, sometimes the father, sometimes even a grandparent (Lucret. iv.1209-1232).[8] The swerve of atoms, by definition, is the beginning of a new movement at no determinate time or place (Lucret. ii.218 ff., 251-60); it breaks or interrupts any antecedent set of causes. If Epicurus supposed that the manifold varieties within an animal species were due to the swerve of atoms, he permitted a measure of indeterminateness or purely spontaneous happenings in the world, which made his system appallingly vulnerable to attack by those who looked to the gods as guarantees of order in nature. The atomic swerve was much criticized by opponents of Epicureanism, but never on this obvious ground.[9] De Lacy, however, is not alone in assuming that Epicurus accepted into his explanation of natural phenomena an element of sheer contingency or indeterminateness. This

If the general line of argument in this paper is sound, Epicurus confined the verifiable evidence of the swerve in nature to 'free' animal behaviour. It is worth noting that his denial of necessity to propositions of the form 'Either Hermarchus will be alive tomorrow or he will not' is illustrated by an example referring to man.[48] Epicurus was most anxious to free human actions from necessity. But in other respects he developed the model of a world which conforms to natural law. The *foedera naturae* are probably identical to the *foedera fati* except in the case of *libera voluntas*.[66] If Epicurus was to let nature explain all phenomena and thus discharge gods and final causes from any place in the world, he could make only the most minimal concession to spontaneous or purely contingent events. The atomic swerve is *nec plus quam minimum*, and I conjecture that the scope of its operation in the world is equally minimal. At least it does not have power to counter the *validae aevi leges* and undermine the powers of nature, which are offered in place of the dominion of gods to those ignari *quid queat esse*,