

Further Thoughts On Science And Epicurean Philosophy

Post by “Eggplant Wizard” of January 11, 2024 at 1:33 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

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So, the question: How does this devotion lead you to life perspectives for today that you could not derive from similar effort to examining the world today?

[...] it is a question about how the philosophical frameworks of two millennia ago are the same or different from today.

For me, the answer is theology.

Regarding *physics*, we are all (*in my not so humble opinion*) **already** Epicureans, whether we realize it or not. As long as we carry universal miniature computers in our pockets that triangulate our positions with respect to the curvature of spacetime, and as long as we are relying on technologies like MRIs to diagnose brain disease, then, without question, we have, as a culture, adopted *Indeterministic Atomism*.

Regarding *epistemology*, I make an argument in a paper published by the Society of Friends of Epicurus that suggests that (with or without Epicurus), we would still be navigating the waters of reality with raw sensations, with sensual impressions, and with a sense of feeling. Our scientific enterprise is fundamentally grounded in *Empiricism*: <https://epicureandatabase.wordpress.com/2020/01/17/on-...leasure-wisdom/>

Regarding *ethics*, we might (culturally) sway between uncompromising declarations of moral purity and fleeting devotion to popular virtues, but, at the end of the day, whether it's national defense or just a consumer trying to live on a budget, we are pursuing the pleasant life. We might be influenced by Puritans, but even the Puritans had to submit to the natural will of Winter that required an ethics of *Consequentialism*.

Theology, however, was a chasm for me, and the teachings of Epicurus provided me with the tools I needed to cross that chasm (if you'll excuse the clunky metaphor). For most of my life, I was, first and foremost, a critic of Christianity; by extension, Abrahamic religion; and, specifically (as I came to find) a critic of the very unique

proposition of an *immanent, benevolent, omnipotent, omniscient creator*. Overall, I identified as an *atheist*.

Through a study of Epicurean Philosophy, I came to acknowledge that the human impulse to practice piety is natural, and that the idealization of role models as deities is an equally natural practice that we observe in disconnected human societies. As a result, my position of *atheism* only really addresses the Judeo-Christian-Islamic god, but failed to engage the idea of non-Immanent, non-Creator (and other conceptions).

So, without Epicurus, I would still be a critical atheist that reduced anyone's expression of religiosity to a delusion of the mind, or an uneducated misunderstanding of psychology. Now, I accept that theism (when grounded in atomism) is a perfectly coherent and useful position.

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I'm happy to see that the religious aspect of Epicureanism is taken seriously on this forum, even if not everyone subscribes to it. It was clearly important to the classical Epicureans. I remember when I was on that Epicurean email list in the late 90's, Epicurean theology was dismissed by almost all the participants as a ruse to avoid persecution and attempts to talk seriously about it mostly ran into scorn.