

References on Motion in Lucretius and Diogenes Laertius

Post by "Cassius" of April 12, 2025 at 4:25 PM

I hope Bryan won't mind but I think we need to add here a comment he just made on his wall:

[Quote from From Bryan's Wall](#)

What are now considered to be areas of empty space are really full of tiny, undetectable particles. We cannot see or measure them because they pass through us -- and through our instruments -- with almost no interference. "Gravity," in the sense of a force acting at a distance without contact, does not exist. What we call "gravity" is really the result of how larger objects interact with the wakes and currents they create in the medium of these smaller particles.

Objects move in the direction they are already moving, without any loss of speed, and deviating only slightly and rarely -- unless they make contact with something else. To believe (as those who follow Einstein do) in forces beyond the force of touch -- is to give in to magical thinking.

To which I posted this reply:

This is a topic I've been thinking a lot about as a result of going through Matthew Stewart's book. Apparently there were several major failures of follow-through in the years after the Epicurean period.

Simply talking about "pleasure" and rejecting some (but not all) aspects of supernatural religion doesn't go nearly far enough if you're going to turn around and talk like the Deists did, and you:

(1) claim agnosticism about whether there is life after death, or even hopefulness that there is, and

(2) accept the possibility that particle motion is imposed on them by some force outside the particles themselves.

(3) talk about Nature or "everything" as a "God" (pantheism) without being clear that when you use the word god you are excluding supernatural action and design.

All if these three are really pretty simple to understand, but the "motion caused by unknown outside forces" that you're talking about in this wall post is probably the easiest of all to see

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how important it is.

And that surely helps explain why we have a section on magnetism in Lucretius (book six around line 1000) explaining that issue too in terms of flows of particles, not in terms of any mysterious outside force.