

Life Found Elsewhere?

Post by "Cassius" of April 17, 2025 at 8:21 AM

Some of the things about that you will read in DeWitt about skepticism:

Quote

In the succession of philosophers the place of Epicurus is immediately after Plato and Pyrrho the skeptic. Platonism and skepticism were among his chief abominations.

He was the first to promulgate a dogmatic philosophy, actuated by a passion for certainty and a detestation of skepticism, which he imputed even to Plato.

....

As for Plato, in an earlier age he might have become a dramatist. Thus it is not astonishing that the fruit of their joint invention was the dramatization of logic which is called dialectic, best exemplified by the Platonic dialogues.

Yet this was only the beginning. One false step invites another. The quest of a definition, of justice, for example, presumes the existence of the thing to be defined. If equilateral triangles did not exist, they certainly could not be defined. Assume that justice can be defined and at once it is assumed that justice exists just as equilateral triangles exist. Hence arose Plato's theory of ideas. The word idea means shape or form and he thought of abstract notions as having an independent existence just as geometrical figures exist, a false analogy. The theory of ideas was rejected as an absurdity by the young Epicurus, because he was a materialist and denied all existences except atoms and space. The theory once rejected, the instrument became useless; scientists have no use for dramatized logic; they depend chiefly upon their senses.

Plato became guilty of another error upon which the sharp-eyed Epicurus did not fail to place a finger. From Pythagoras was inherited the belief in the repeated rebirth or transmigration of souls. Along with

this went the belief that the body was a tomb or prison-house, which blurred the vision of reason and prevented perfection of knowledge. All that the human being perceived was the transient appearance of things as opposed to the eternal ideas. This to Epicurus was virtually skepticism. This error, moreover, was compounded and also aggravated. Closely allied to geometry was the study of astronomy. The latter, in turn, required the observation of heavenly bodies. Thus Plato was in the position of assuming the validity of sensation in the case of the remoter phenomena and denying it in the case of the nearer terrestrial phenomena. This was a glaring inconsistency. The aggravation consisted in the belief that circular motion, which was in those days

ascribed to heavenly bodies, was the only perfect and eternal motion and identifiable with Reason itself. Reason, in turn, was identified with the divine nature. Therefore the planets were declared to be gods. This seemed both shocking and absurd to Epicurus: shocking because it meant having more gods to fear, absurd because august gods were assumed to become hurtling balls of fire.