

What fears does modern science remove, as Epicurean physics did in antiquity?

Post by "Robert" of June 6, 2025 at 12:20 AM

[Quote from sanantoniogarden](#)

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"scientific determinism differs from the theistic determinism of Stoicism or Calvinism"

Right, it's the implications of this scientific determinism that has my attention. I expect most of us generally accept that the [epicurean gods](#) are material and do not interfere, intervene, inhibit or punish. And most will accept that modern science has continued the Epicurean mission to stamp out superstition. Now that we've done away with with the "supernatural" (a phrase I've always had issues with) we can focus on dispelling the new fears.

It's in these new found fears and anxieties. Genetic predispositions to painful or deadly diseases can make some feel trapped by some biological destiny. Psychology or neuroscience can also make some feel trapped by brain chemistry or childhood experiences (even compound the anxiety of biological destiny). Climate change can be the source of much existential dread. The interesting question is how does the Epicurean respond to these new problems?

Are these fears actually newfound, though? Or are they just modern variations on age-old themes: illness, disadvantage, mortality, the long-term fate of the universe?

Epicurus acknowledges the causal nexus, aka "necessity." Lucretius startles his readers in DRN 5 with the news that the world will end, though hopefully not just yet. Things like genetic predispositions and brain chemistry--seem to fall into the bucket of "necessity;" that is, they are causally determined, though we may make various choices in response to them.

That might suggest that the Epicurean prescription for dealing with them would be more or less the same as in his time, at least in terms of general principle.