

Sunday June 22 - Topic: Prolepsis

Post by "Cassius" of June 21, 2025 at 8:18 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I think that Cassius doesn't necessarily like endorsing one scientific view too much or trying to shoehorn Epicurean philosophy into a modern theory, and I agree somewhat. For me, modern science - investigations into nature - is a way to update Epicurus' spirit if not the letter of his physics.

I am all for discussing modern validations of Epicurean theory too, but the reason for my different emphasis is to get people on board with the philosophical issues that Epicurus was dealing with so we can see why he thought this issue was important.

Much like atomism is an explanation of the way the world works that is graspable and gives confidence that the universe is natural rather than divine, I we need to understand that Epicurus was assembling a theory to provide confidence that a reasonable explanation of knowledge can be grasped without requiring us to believe in ideal forms, recollection of past lives, etc.

When you grasp at a conceptual level what Epicurus was doing, you're not as likely to fall to the problem of toying with the theory as a purely historical predecessor to modern science. Just like there's a lot more to Lucretius than atomism, you see that a big-picture analysis of the problem of knowledge is still very relevant today.

As DofO said in identifying the ultimate question:

Quote

Fr. 5

[Others do not] explicitly [stigmatise] natural science as unnecessary, being ashamed to acknowledge [this], but use another means of discarding it. For, when they assert that things are inapprehensible, what else are they saying than that there is no need for us to pursue natural science? After all, who will choose to seek what he can never find?

Now Aristotle and those who hold the same Peripatetic views as Aristotle say that nothing is scientifically knowable, because things are continually in flux and, on account of the rapidity of the flux, evade our apprehension. We on the other hand acknowledge their flux, but not its being so rapid that the nature of each thing [is] at no time apprehensible by sense-perception. And indeed [in no way would the upholders of]

the view under discussion have been able to say (and this is just what they do [maintain] that [at one time] this is [white] and this black, while [at another time] neither this is [white nor] that black, [if] they had not had [previous] knowledge of the nature of both white and black.