

Epicurus' Prolepsis vs Heraclitus' Flux

Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2025 at 10:05 AM

To add to what Bryan says about atoms being too small for machines to detect, that highlights that we need to remember that Epicurus was clear that the atoms are not discernable at all by the senses. Anything we know about them is going to come from deductive reasoning based on what is observable.

For that reason, when Martin says:

[Quote from Martin](#)

as hard bodies, which has been refuted by modern physics.

I am not sure that I would agree that Epicurus was really focusing on the bodies as being "hard." That word may very well be used in places, and it is easy to presume that they are hard by analogizing them to the bodies we can observe, but I think we need to look closer and assume nothing that Epicurus himself did not clearly specify.

What I recall is that Epicurus held that the atoms have the three qualities of "size," "shape," and "weight." When I think of "hard," that's something that I identify with touch, and as before we can't touch the atoms to be sure, so any deduction that they are "hard" isn't necessarily required.

Even in terms of size, shape, and weight, what I believe comes through from the texts as necessarily the case was that the "size" of the atoms cannot be infinitely small, nor infinitely large. If they were infinitely small they would not exist, and if infinitely large they would swallow the universe. Within that range what he was focusing on is that the atoms in some way have permanent characteristics that do not change over time. Those permanent characteristics ensure the regularity of the universe and create what we see around us, meaning that there is no requirement for supernatural forces to have created them. Atoms are called "atoms" because the word means indivisible, not because of any other specific assertion about their nature.

These are primarily deductive logical positions, not assertions of specific qualities such as hard or soft, yellow or red, etc. All that is needed is a reasonable explanation of how the universe has a natural, rather than supernatural basis, and for that we look inside of the things we can observe and do our best to deduce conclusions about the smaller parts of which they are composed. As such, it seems to me that virtually any new discovery of actual facts can be fit into this model so long as the new discovery does not constitute a n intelligent supernatural force or the mystical going back and forth to the *truly* nothing.