

The Closing Paragraph of the Letter to Menoecus

Post by "Adrastus" of August 19, 2025 at 9:10 AM

Excellent thread.

I just wanted to comment on another aspect of what I think is meant by the Nature of "contemplation" "meditation" and so forth.

Lucretius' Ode to Epicurus in Book 1, gives me a stark reminder of how the ancients thought about the Nature of mind and allowing ones mind to wander or imagine in ones 'mind's eye', at least in dramatic form.

Quote

"When human life to view lay foully prostrate upon earth crushed down under the weight of religion, who showed her head from the quarters of heaven with hideous aspect lowering upon mortals, a man of Greece ventured first to lift up his mortal eyes to her face and first to withstand her to her face.

Him neither story of gods nor thunderbolts nor heaven with threatening roar could quell: they only chafed the more the eager courage of his soul, filling him with desire to be the first to burst the fast bars of nature's portals.

Therefore the living force of his soul gained the day: on he passed far beyond the flaming walls of the world and traversed throughout in mind and spirit the immeasurable universe; whence he returns a conqueror to tell us what can, what cannot come into being; in short on what principle each thing has its powers defined, its deep-set boundary mark.

Therefore religion is put underfoot and trampled upon in turn; us his victory brings level with heaven." - Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, Book 1 62-78

So I think about Epicurus' physics and his view of infinite space and time, and infinite atoms and void, as something in which we can 'contemplate/meditate' on when fears about the Gods, primal terror at enormous thoughts or fears about humans overwhelm us. The physics may or may not be 'true' when we consider physics as we know them today, but the whole view of the universe to Epicurus is calming - at least I've found as an object of contemplation - and helps induce the loss of overwhelming fears associated with letting ones imagination run off billions of light years away or into fictive ideas about Gods or other unseeable things ready to strike at us.

I suppose in this way the physics are still immensely useful as, for the contemporary moment,

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we do not have a scientific view or a scientific cultural discourse that also does not incessantly hound us with thoughts of "other dimensions" or "simulations" that could leave us disconcerted and uneasy. Science isn't supposed to take into account the health of the soul when off discovering or theorizing in the same way Ancient Philosophical systems needed to more or less wrap **everything** up nice and tidy as to be a system of psychological health or attainment.