

Epicurus vs Aristotle: the Role of Reason vs Sensation Seeking?

Post by "Cassius" of December 8, 2025 at 3:39 PM

This is an issue that is addressed at length by DeWitt in several chapters, and it's part of the reason why his book is so important.

I think it's also mentioned by Emily Austin by I'd have to go back and search for where.

A large part of the essential point is that Epicurus is all in favor of the use of practical reasoning based on evidence that can be verified through the senses.

What Epicurus is opposed to is the contention that "logic" (the construction of logical propositions such as $A + B = C$) is useful only so long as the meaning of A and B and C can be verified ultimately by observations confirmable by the senses. You don't have to see everything directly, but you have to have a chain of evidence that ultimately ends up with something that's observable. That's how Epicurus could be so certain of the existence of "atoms" even though no one at his time (or now, without equipment) has ever seen or touched an individual atom.

And Aristotle's problems often derive from the fact that he was willing to reach conclusions about the existence of a "Prime Mover" that are not verifiable by, and conflict with, the evidence of the senses.