

Question Re Thermodynamics And Deductive Reasoning v. Empiricism

Post by "Todd" of October 3, 2019 at 3:16 PM

I think it is important to acknowledge that there are things we just don't know.

Epicurus taught that the only good reason to acquire knowledge was if it increased our pleasure.

On the other hand, he also engaged in reasoning about the nature of the universe, for which, in retrospect, he really didn't have adequate data. I don't think this was an inconsistency. It was a practical matter that needed to be addressed: ignorance was a source of distress, so he needed to say something on the subject, and he reasoned it out as best he could. He did remarkably well with the data available to him.

It's a mistake to think we have to defend Epicurean physics when modern science seems to disagree about the details. It's important for us to understand Epicurean physics, not because we believe it to be a completely accurate description of reality, but in order to understand the basis for Epicurean ethics. I'm not aware of any scientific discoveries that would overthrow Epicurean ethics - much the contrary.

Edit:

Regarding ignorance being a source of distress, that is not to mention the nonsense on stilts coming from the Academy, which was probably an even more important motivation.