

New (October 1 2019) Catherine Wilson Speech Video on Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of October 12, 2019 at 8:38 AM

I very much agree with your take Joshua. No doubt there are elements that can be pulled out (I am thinking at the moment of passages that seem to lament that the Earth is no longer able to give rise to as hardy races/animals as in the past) but those fit well into the larger context that you are describing.

After all, the Epicurean physics has long before this point in the analysis established that all things that come together from the elements eventually dissolve back to those elements, so why should mankind, animals of any kind, life on earth, or the earth itself deviate from that pattern?

In fact I think Lucretius makes clear that we can expect the Earth to dissolve to nothing at some future point, and with it the end of the human race at least as we know it now here on earth. There's no reason to think that up to that final point of destruction there would be a steady upward climb, certainly not in every particular area, and probably not in humanity as a whole either. That kind of analysis fits into the theistic model of a supernatural god having a plan of progression, but not at all into the Epicurean model.

I'll say it again here too: we can dismiss the "physics" as hopelessly obsolete in details if we like, but if we don't ground ourselves in the basic understanding of the premises and implications of a totally natural and atomistic universe then we - consciously or otherwise - hold open the door to "maybe there is a spiritual realm" or "maybe there is a realm of ideals / ideal forms" and we thereby miss the crux of what Epicurus was all about, because it was only after establishing those ground rules that we get to the point of identifying pleasure as the guide of life, and interpreting what that means.