

Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19

Post by "Cassius" of January 7, 2020 at 5:03 AM

Quote

knowledge of how things began is probably beyond our grasp

That phrasing from such an article would be an example of the problem. The implication that everything in the universe "began" at a single point in time conflicts with the observed nothing comes from nothing or goes to nothing, and therefore should not even be entertained as a valid theory since it does not incorporate all reliable evidence. And the implication that there was some mysterious "we'll never know" inflection point in time (which again conflicts with nfn/ntn) plays right into the hands of the "gnostics" who claim to possess some special revelation of the "truth").

At most, an expanding area within a total universe would appear to imply that that locality, and not the whole, had an explosive event that might then be followed by a collapse of that section - but never of the whole universe.

I believe an Epicurean plan of early education would start with premises such as "eternal universe" based on nfn / ntn to the point where the "normal" person would consider phrases such as "universe began" with the same disdain as we hear someone speaking of human sacrifices to appease the gods.

As things are, the default position is "in the beginning, god created the heaven and the earth" and that has brought a cascade of disastrous thinking.

And I don't think there is any coincidence, accident, or mistake in the rise of such terminology in religion, or in its incorporation and embrace by large parts of humanist-friendly modern society. It plays right into the hands of monotheism / absolutist thinking. *See, the universe DOES have a central point from which one perspective is correct! We may be separate atoms today, but one day the universe will all come back together into one uniform homogeneous whole where we all get along with no conflicts at all.*

Obviously I am saying this just for myself and not as a red line of "you're not an Epicurean if you don't believe it," but that is why I think the chain reasoning of nfn/ntn >> eternal universe >> boundless universe >> life throughout the universe was so important to Epicurus and should be so important to us.

It's acceptable as Epicurus said to maintain multiple theories that are consistent with the evidence, but anything less (a flat "we dont know") reduces our response to religion and platonism to "maybe you're right, we can't prove it because we weren't there and we'll never know because the origin of things is 'beyond our grasp.'" And this leads directly to "Your Yahweh is entitled to as much respectful consideration as my eternal universe, because we ourselves personally weren't there and therefore we can never know for sure."

It seems to me that Epicurus stands for the proposition that we can and should do better than that.