

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

Post by "Cassius" of January 7, 2020 at 8:56 AM

Quote

And I am content to think that some contradictions will remain contradictory, some problems will never be resolved by the mammalian equipment of the human cerebral cortex, and some things are indefinitely unknowable. If the universe was found to be finite or infinite, either discovery would be equally stupefying and impenetrable to me

That is an interesting quote from Hitchens and I do think it illustrates a way in which though he admired Epicurus, he was not fully Epicurean.

I think that Epicurus would go further and differently than this, because Epicurus would process the information and attempt to come to a conclusion in which he could be confident that the discovery (especially that the universe is "finite") assisted him in concluding whether to entertain the possibility of supernatural control.

Because if we DO have to entertain supernatural creation and control, then all bets are off on everything. And I do mean "bets" because it is not a matter of considering all this to be "stupefying" or "impenetrable." We have finite lives and we have no choice but to take practical positions on what to do with our time - whether to go to church and worship Allah or Yahweh or whoever, or base our decisions on Epicurean or some other philosophy.

So OF COURSE this next point is true.....

Quote

And I am content to think that some contradictions will remain contradictory, some problems will never be resolved by the mammalian equipment of the human cerebral cortex, and some things are indefinitely unknowable.

The question is really what is meant by "knowable." If Hitchens is suggesting that anything less than "I am eternal myself and I have observed everything myself and therefore I KNOW the universe is infinite or finite" is required in order to say that you "know" something, then that is a false standard and never going to be satisfying to someone who thinks about ultimate issues like Epicurus did.

It's a FACT that in our lifetimes we have and will have limited evidence, just as Hitchens did in his lifetime. We have to make our decision on how to live based on what we think of the evidence before us. Everyone has to do that. Epicurus is saying that it is foolish to walk around being stupefied and thinking everything that is really important to you is impenetrable. he is saying look around, observe all the facts you can, and then live by a method that incorporates all of the observed facts and doesn't contradict any of them.