

References to Epicurus' Attitude Toward The "Place of the Sciences And Liberal Arts"

Post by "Cassius" of July 19, 2020 at 10:53 AM

I "liked" Elayne's comments and I agree with her conclusions about proper procedure, but I think that I am also aware of my own limitations in studying the details of what Lucretius is presenting, so I don't think I would characterize Lucretius in the way stated there I think someone who was trying to advocate for Lucretius' particular presentation could probably argue that Lucretius *does* ultimately point to observable facts such that he is in the end reasoning in the way that Elayne is advocating.

Trying to resolve any particular point in dispute (as to whether Lucretius goes "too far" on a particular conclusion) would require us to get really specific about exactly what he said on that point, and compare it to what else he said in the remainder of the book, plus whatever other record we have from the Epicurean texts, and that would probably take a Martin Ferguson Smith or some other true "expert" to marshal all the evidence for and against that particular point.

In general, from my personal point of view, the "higher level" conclusions about the nature of the universe, infinity and innumerably, etc, remain very convincing, and I personally take what I understand to be modern theories to be just that - theories - which are in some instances an improvement but probably no more the "final word" than many other theories that have come about in the past.

That's why I am much more comfortable saying in many cases that Lucretius' views "appear to conflict with current theories" before I would say "Lucretius was *wrong*" Of course there are some specific examples where I agree and would say "Lucretius was "wrong" about some specific phenomena, but the closer the issue comes to bigger-picture issues of infinite/boundless universe, life elsewhere in the universe, etc, the more comfortable I am that his views probably remain the most persuasive.

Having said all that I want to come back to the big picture that I think Elayne's stress on proper procedure is correct and that is the take-home point. Whether or not Lucretius's particular statement in a particular passage fits the definition of "wrong" is a much less important question to me.