

# To What Extent, If Any, Does Modern Physics Invalidate Epicurean Philosophy?

Post by "Don" of August 16, 2020 at 11:20 AM

Thanks and agreed.

Just as we shouldn't hold Epicurus to our modern understanding, we shouldn't hold ourselves to maintaining ancient ideas that have been better explained by modern science. If we don't, we fall into the trap of textual fundamentalism and requiring \*belief\* in things like the idea that the universe is 6,000 years old like some \*other\* fundamentalists believe. Again, forest not trees.

From my perspective, those three that you mention (infinite universe, the swerve, immutability and indestructibility of atoms, etc.) should not be impediments to acceptance of Epicurean philosophy. We had a thread elsewhere on the forum on infinite vs innumerable. Ultimately, it doesn't matter to me whether the universe is infinite \*in fact\*. From my puny human perspective, it is, for all intents and purposes, infinite. On the swerve, there is minimal surviving textual evidence or information on this topic from Epicurus and the early Epicureans. Personally, I don't think we should get hung up on it. On the "immutability and indestructibility of atoms", whether we \*interpret\* this to mean the fields of quantum physics or something else, this points to Epicurus's concept that things just don't change willy-nilly. There is \*something\* "natural" that holds up or undergirds our - and the universe's - physical existence. It does a gross disservice to Epicurus to say, "He said atoms are indestructible. What a dummy! We are so much smarter than him!" We need to ask what was he getting at with \*his\* interpretation of existence. Why was that \*idea\* important to him?

If we take that tack, I think we can have an interesting conversation on the similarities between Ancient "Physics" (quotes used deliberately) and modern Physics; but we should neither denigrate the ancients for their understanding nor require ourselves to maintain outdated scientific ideas.