

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

Post by "Don" of August 16, 2020 at 1:05 PM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

I would say that Epicurean philosophy is ultimately not about any particular and precise physics position (and in that I think we are agreed). The issue is more that Epicurean physics were derived using a particular approach to knowledge (the canonical faculties vs "rationalism") and if we don't learn the details of that method then we'll never understand the appropriate consequences for the ethics.

Agreed. I think this reinforces what I was saying: forest not trees. It's more important to understand *how* and *why* Epicurus arrived at his conclusions than the "scientific" proposals themselves that can be refuted by modern science... with the understanding that modern science hasn't answered all the outstanding questions.

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

It is very important to observe the resistance that Epicurus displayed toward accepting contentions based on mathematics, geometry, or other aspects of logical modeling. Such conclusions can actually or apparently contradict what we observe through the senses, and that is why we are talking about these issues and need to continue to do so.

That being said, our understanding of mathematics has progressed well beyond what was available to the Ancient Greeks. I'm not sure if the Greeks even accepted the idea of zero (and I'm not trying to be hyperbolic here).

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

**Studying the reasoning behind "the swerve,"** for example, will always be more useful for understanding Epicurus' thought process than it will ever be for explaining the movement of atoms.

Yes, agreed, and ultimately more satisfying. This process is less shoe-horning Epicurus's ideas into an anachronistic, modern context (and vice versa) and more understanding Epicurus's thought process so we can apply *that* to our modern lives.