

How Supporters of Epicurus Should Approach The Effect of Modern Scientific Discoveries In Their Promotion of Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of August 16, 2020 at 5:00 PM

Yes I am looking for a place to move this thread now, but before i forget I need to comment on this:

[Quote from Philos Armonikos](#)

By my division here, I satisfy both and would therefore classify myself as a neo-Epicurean, in the particular sense that I am for seeking a revival of the Epicurean tradition and also a revision of some of the conclusions of the physics.

Philos, you are the first in a while (perhaps ever) to come into our circle so intensely focused on physics. The origin of the labels and the materials on this website on the "Neo-Epicureans" is primarily that there are large numbers of people in academia who reject almost every significant conclusion of Epicurus, but adopt his name in their efforts, because they want to redefine "pleasure" as the equivalent of "absence of pain." That is a HUGE problem and is the core of most every dispute or division that we have ever had in our "circle."

The word "circle" is relevant to your sentence that I quoted. Given that there is no formal "Epicurean School" anymore (Don's point) it is not really logically possible to "revise some of the conclusions of the physics." The Epicurean physics are what they are, and no one is really qualified to say "we are revising position X and it is now position Y."

This is closely related to the issue that you will read about if you refer to the thread entitled [Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19](#)

Since we don't have a formal organization with a formal set of mandatory beliefs, it's not really up to us to say what is or is not Epicurean on a very detailed basis.

We've never had a real problem in the past, and I hope and expect in your case it will be the same, accommodating each other on issues like the size of the sun, infinity, indivisibility, etc., because we are not in the business of writing a physics textbook or the like.

None of us (including me) see any real problem with believing that the universe is infinite or atoms are indivisible or not, except as the reasoning process for those conclusions might indicate some form of skepticism or other process that would lead to problems later - and even then we haven't even begun to approach such a point of concern.

You will see some of these issues discussed when we release the latest podcast (32) that we recorded this morning.

But to repeat and re-emphasize the same point, our "Not Neoepicurean" position papers are almost entirely directed toward the "absence of pain" "be a minimalist" "run from all politics" "go live in a cave" approach which is either explicit or implicit in the academic version of Epicurean philosophy prevalent today.

I think I can already firmly predict from the intensity of your views and the things you have said so far that the "neo-epicurean" issues are not a problem for you personally.

And I am surrounding myself by so many scientists that I am beginning to feel outnumbered and questioning my own assessment of the world situation. 😊

But at least at the moment I am still confident that what i wrote earlier about not letting the physicists war with the philosophers is still the best way to go. I remain convinced that outside the "halls of science" the vast majority of the world is taken in by these issues that are primarily "philosophical" rather than physics-oriented.

As we go forward we need a way to articulate this approach that does not involve constantly repeating "On physics point A Epicurus was wrong, on physics point B Epicurus was wrong, on physics point C Epicurus was wrong ad infinitum. If we do that, we really undercut the way our presentation will effect the majority of people. Yes those points are valid and should be made at the proper time and place, but the global issues of supernatural gods, reward/punishment after death, the assertion that all human action is controlled by a hard deterministic fate, the true nature of "virtue" and its role in making decisions, the role of "abstract logic" and how to weigh it against the sensations, anticipations, and feelings -- all of those are HUGE issues and for better or worse the primary effort and attention of the forums needs to be primarily devoted to those.

Not exclusively, by any means, but just like with "politics" it would be a great pity if we allow ourselves to be too divided on details of physics unless they truly impact these bigger issues.