

[Historical Records] from The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group

Post by "Cassius" of September 19, 2015 at 8:49 PM

★★ THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 09/19/2015 ★★

★★ This is the one hundred and twenty-fourth in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. Our home base for discussion is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy> Copies of these posts, and links to active Epicurean websites, are stored at EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com, and other discussion cites are referenced at the end of this post.

★★ We welcome all participants and lurkers. If you apply to participate and don't receive a reply promptly, please send an email to an admin about your interest in the group. We are here to discuss Epicurean Philosophy, have fun, and in the words of Lucian, "strike a blow for Epicurus - that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him!"

★★ Today I'd like to highlight a new post by Alexander R. in the group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...89980677717560/>) and explain why I think it's significant. The topic is essentially how we should consider whether and how concepts of "condensed - rarified" and "kinetic - static" apply to pleasure. Alexander's comments highlight the issue from the perspective that Alexander regularly posts on - physics issues, including the movement of particles.

Here's the point that I want to emphasize: Alexander has a keen interest in Epicurean theory in part because he is oriented toward the physics, and he knows that the implications of physics go far beyond "dry" science. Many of our participants come to our group knowing a little about Epicurus' ethics, but virtually nothing about Epicurus' "physics" or his theories of knowledge. If this situation describes you, you owe it to yourself to spend some time understanding why Epicurus was concerned about these deeper issues. With just a little effort I think you'll begin to see why they are so important.

I think we all can recognize that the question "can we know anything?" is closely related to the ethics questions that most of us find interesting. After all, if we can't know anything with confidence, then how can we have any confidence in any decisions we make on how to live?

And how did Epicurus attack the question of how we know anything? He attacked it by looking for the *mechanism* by which we gather informations - the mechanism by which our senses operate. And the key to this mechanism is the topic of "images." As dry as that might sound,

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/27-historical-records-from-the-epicurean-philosophy-facebook-group/?postID=88#post88>

the essential point of "images" is nothing more than to address the point of how we learn things. The point is that GODS do not plant ideas in our minds, and neither are we born with ideas fully-formed in our minds. We don't learn things by looking for FORMS in heaven, as Plato taught, or for "essences" built into the objects around us, as Aristotle taught. Our job in learning isn't dependent on revelation from gods, nor is it dependent on "logic" after we somehow tune our minds with the essences around us. The job of learning is wrapped up in understanding how our senses operate - how "images" travel from objects to us, and how we interpret those images even when they are not clear.

The work of unravelling how these "images" work relies on our understanding the nature of the images and how they move, and that is a matter of "physics." In other words, we have to grasp a basic understanding of the concept of particles and how they move if we are to have any confidence that we can rely on this mechanism to gather knowledge. If those particles are at the mercy of gods, then WE are at the mercy of gods, and all hope of confidence in living without fear of the gods is essentially gone.

So Epicurus wants you to understand enough physics to see that our senses operate through the motion of particles. And he also wants you to know that not only your sight and hearing, but the entire universe as well, operates through the properties and the motion of those particles. That's why you need to know enough about particles to realize that they aren't "divine" and they are in fact "eternal" - that they therefore weren't created by any god.

And only if you know the basics of this issue will you have enough confidence to laugh at St. Paul, in Galatians 4:9, when he says: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

From this you ought to begin to see that the "physics" of Epicurus was hardly "dry" at all. Unlike our modern particle physicists, who often seem to live in a world of their own, Epicurus considered a series of basic observations about the nature of the elements to be essential for anyone's understanding of how to live happily.

In order to make this review of basic principles of nature easier to grasp, I have continued to work this week on my latest "outline" which summarizes these issues and their implications. The latest version will always be here: <http://newepicurean.com/major-observat...phy-an-outline/>

So if you're one of many who knows something about Epicurean ethics but little about the foundations of the Epicurean view of Nature or Knowledge, I hope you'll take a few minutes to review the first two bullet points on Nature and Knowledge, and these should help you to think about the connection of "physics" to the Epicurean conclusions on how to live.

★★ Moving on, here are the rest of the highlights of this week's posts:

★★ On Sep 15, Elli posted a cute video illustrating an Epicurean and Platonist at the Agora.



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...87462297969398/>

★★ On Sep 16, I posted a link to a news article on a court ruling allowing the religious ceremony of "Kaparos" to continue in New York over the objections of animal rights advocates.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...88556217860006/>

★★ On Sep 17, Alexander linked to an article on how quantum theory may relate to human decisionmaking. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...88955844486710/>

★★ On Sep 15 I linked to my blog post announcing the "outline" as discussed above.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...87735334608761/>

★★ Thanks to all who participated in the Facebook forum this week. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/> or hop around the internet world of Epicurean Philosophy by checking the links here: EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com

Live Well!

Cassius Amicus

★★ Options for those who wish to discuss Epicurus on the internet include:

1- If you are someone whose views are fully formed, and you've combined several disparate viewpoints into your own personal mix, and you mainly want to talk casually to other people of the same eclectic type, there are several excellent facebook groups including EPISTOBUZEN and "Epicureanism for Modern Times" that you can find by searching facebook.

2- If you are focused primarily on Epicurus, and you want to participate in a forum where people will defend Epicurus strongly from all challenges, then you have two Facebook options. Our open and main group, entitled simply "Epicurean Philosophy," is the home base of this post. Anyone can read the posts there, and all you have to do is ask in order to join. (Note that there is an "About" and a "Sticky" post with our forum rules.)

3 - If you prefer to post in a "private" group where your posts are not readable by outsiders, we have "Epicurean Private Garden." Because it is a private group, you cannot find it by searching, and you have to email one of our admins in the open group if you wish to join. Please note that our About and Sticky Post rules in the private forum are the same as the open forum, and the private forum will be moderated to the same standards as the open forum (or perhaps slightly tighter!)

4 - If you are not only focused primarily on Epicurus, but you wish to assist with a forum platform where pro-Epicurean activists can build for the future, check out <https://www.epicureanfriends.com/www.EpicureanFriends.com>. Work is starting on a FAQ and other resources. Anyone can read the posts, but only approved members can create new posts

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or comment.