

Welcome Susan Hill!

Post by "Godfrey" of September 26, 2020 at 7:40 PM

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[Quote from Susan Hill](#)

One thing I am keen to get a better handle on is how Epicureanism approaches questions regarding consciousness and identity/self. I am coming out of a deep-dive into Vedanta, Yoga and Samkhya, where the nature of consciousness, and its various states, is the foundation of the entire metaphysics and soteriology. To jump from that to "atoms and void" has me thinking - "oh ok - so atoms are Prakriti and the void is Brahman or Purusha..." Lol. Not exactly a good approach, I know, but consciousness has to fit in there somewhere, no? I guess I am going to be hard pressed to find a Vedantin who can clarify the differences for me. Epicurianism does not seem to be as simple as the basic materialist theories I am familiar with.

This is an excellent question and would make a good topic for a new thread. As you suggest it's probably not very fruitful to try to relate Epicureanism to Indian philosophy. As I understand it, there is a supernatural component to the Indian theories and Epicurus is quite clear that there is no supernatural. Once the supernatural is introduced, which is scientifically unverifiable, the door is opened to all sorts of confusion and mischief. I've read that atomism developed in both Greece and India, however in India they maintained the supernatural while in Greece they did not.

In Epicureanism atoms combine into compounds, and as compounds get more complex, properties such as life and consciousness emerge which were not a part of the lesser components. There isn't any implied hierarchy such as shown in your attachment: everything arises from combinations of atoms. I think this is in line with modern science even though our study of atomic physics is 2000 years more sophisticated than that of the ancient Greeks. If you haven't listened to the Lucretius podcast it might be worthwhile as there are a few episodes where they discuss atoms in ancient times vs today.

What other materialist theories are you familiar with? It would be interesting to know what they are and how they compare to EP.