

The Dangers of Misdirected Increase of Knowledge

Post by "Cassius" of October 12, 2020 at 1:12 PM

I can hear some people saying "It's not necessary to take a position on whether there is life on other worlds, or on whether there are supernatural gods, or on the best response to quantum woo."

I think that is a legitimate objection, but only for some people in some circumstances. If your circumstances are such that there is no reason for your mental or physical wellbeing to take a position on those issues, then I would agree. But I think over the course of history, and still today, there are many circumstances in which it is necessary for very practical reasons, even in some cases against your will, to "take positions" on issues like that. And in suggesting that, I am not even really referring to "peace of mind" or "cognitive dissonance" issues.

So if someone is in a situation where they can afford to shrug and say "I don't know and I don't care" then I am 100% in favor of taking that approach. I don't think I am in that situation personally, however, and I think there are a lot of people in the world who can profit from Epicurean philosophy who are not. Distinguishing between those situations is an interesting challenge in itself.

For example, remember how Lucian said that the Epicurean who almost got himself killed had acted foolishly in that situation. Yet on the other hand, Lucian is clearly cheering on the idea of Epicureans challenging the manipulations of Alexander -- that's what Lucian is doing **himself** in writing the article to expose Alexander's pretensions. So there is room for both approaches depending on context, but where opposition **is** possible, my sympathies are clearly with Lucian, and I think we should do what we can for ourselves and for our friends to expose the frauds and impositions