

Reverence and Awe In Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Elayne" of October 25, 2020 at 5:32 PM

There is room for different interpretations of the prolepses. I personally always look at anything Epicurus says to see if I agree with it-- if he says something I think is scientifically either too far of a conjecture or already falsified by evidence we have today, it doesn't bother me to say I disagree.

IF Epicurus had proposed that prolepses could be used in isolation, minus sense evidence or at least inferences consistent with sense evidence, then I would say oops, Epicurus, on that proposal we will have to part ways.

Because he put so much weight on trusting our senses, it's hard for me to imagine he would propose belief in a prolepsis which violated sense data.

Now, we have access to centuries of neurologic and physics research he didn't have. So I know that we are pattern recognizers and that our innate pattern recognitions are over-active in some cases. Why can I say that? Because sometimes we see patterns our sense data contradicts. When there is a conflict between an intuition and what my senses tell me, the senses win. This doesn't render pattern recognition useless at all. It does put a gold standard in the decision process about what is real.

I don't know if anyone here has read *The Gift of Fear* -- it's a very interesting book about how our "fast brain" does pattern recognition of psychopaths. Subtle things like blinking rates get combined to produce uneasiness in us, and many of us are prone to override that fear because we "can't put our finger" on what's scaring us. So maybe we go off with Ted Bundy.

I think these fast pattern recognitions are important. I don't ignore them. I wouldn't be alone in a room with someone who gave me that feeling. But to convict such a person in court-- I need sense evidence.

So as far as awe goes-- I do not think there's any sense data to support the idea that feeling awe upon looking at tall mountains is because there's a vast complex intelligence involved, which I'm connecting with, no matter how much it feels like that's the case-- and to propose that the mountains somehow point to the existence of such an intelligence is contrary to both Epicurus' understanding of physics and modern physics. The evidence of my senses wins.

When we see a tree, it is not because the tree consciously sends images of itself or because some intelligence of the tree is connecting with us. When I read Epicurus on images of the gods, it sounds more like he's describing that kind of thing rather than a contact of minds.

I do also happen to think even the image proposal is the least plausible explanation, now that we know more than he did about neuroscience... and for less plausible hypotheses, sense evidence is needed-- and we have none. So I admit I diverge from him, but I also think the idea of our minds connecting with [Epicurean gods'](#) minds is farther than what he said... and that it would conflict with his ideas about the material nature of the mind being unable to survive outside the body.