

Reverence and Awe In Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Elayne" of October 26, 2020 at 9:35 PM

Cassius, one of the most frustrating things about constructed meaning for me was always that it was so flimsy... I could never make existentialism work if I knew I was "making my own meaning", because having to make it meant it wasn't real in some way.

Theologies about supernatural gods do the same thing to people. They get dumped unprepared into a world suddenly devoid of meaning. People who study neuroscience are among the highest percentage atheist groups, because they learn how we fool ourselves. Physicists are similar.

The sturdiest protection against disillusionment and fear of meaninglessness is always, IMO, reality. If meaning had to be found in something objective or had to be constructed, we would be hopeless-- nihilism would be the only choice.

But we have feeling. Which we don't construct-- it's aside from reason, irrational, impossible to invalidate. For me, feelings are what make nihilism fail-- nihilism has nothing to argue against the pleasurable feeling of life mattering, of people we love mattering to us, because we aren't appealing to reason anyway. Nihilism can do nothing but slink off to the corner and pout, lol.

If we try to base meaning in something without evidence, a sort of "god of the gaps"-- gaps which are steadily shrinking-- we put ourselves at risk.

The goal and guide of pleasure stands with or without gods, even material gods. Because of that, I am not bothered by whether or not they exist and am ok with leaving unknown things open... but I am a poet and have a high degree of what Keats called negative capability.

I think the material gods idea is interesting, and for some people it may be useful to think of them as examples. About the sensation of contact, I would say that if it doesn't cause an individual more harm than good, that's a personal decision whether to question it or not-- but I see a significant risk for many, upon exposure to neuroscience research.

Coming down on the side that they are definitely out there floating images to prepared minds, exactly as Epicurus thought, given how much more we know now, will send all the scientists

running away. This image floating thing is now implausible, as much as dreams giving factual information. But straight up denial of the possibility that there are blissful extraterrestrials somewhere in the universe and that eventually we might communicate is also unscientific.

I know Epicurus didn't like leaving things open... but he wasn't faced with the knowledge we are faced with. I think honoring him and the philosophy has to include accepting that we can't always reconcile his desire for dogma with the data.