

On How Much To Exert Oneself In Science (Or Anything Else)

Post by "Cassius" of May 15, 2018 at 1:18 PM

There is a modern tendency to read Epicurus as advising the avoidance of exertion and therefore doing as little as possible in every field but the obtaining of necessary and natural pleasures (bread, water, shelter). I read Epicurus as advising the opposite- that we exert ourselves as intelligently as possible to maximize pleasure and minimize pain during the finite and limited term of life we have available to us. Therefore I believe Epicurus advised not only the study of "nature" but of ALL science that has any reasonable probability of increasing our happy living. And THAT is what happy living demands, not that we live in a cave and turn away from anything that would call us away from bread and water and cheese. But there are many people who DON'T like Epicurus who try to slam Epicurean philosophy as luddite and anti-knowledge, and I think nothing could be further from the truth. Even stupid "sciences" like astrology can be worth knowing enough about in order to help others defeat and dismiss them. Wide areas of geometry and math have excellent practical application and would have been embraced by the Epicureans - it is only when they are used to argue in support of religious and anti-natural philosophical positions that they are dangerous. The Epicureans would have known the obvious point - that the best way to prevent their misuse is to understand and use the valid aspects, while rejecting and dismissing the invalid aspects.