

"On Methods of Inference": Notes For Review And Discussion (Including David Sedley Article: "On Signs")

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 11:00 PM

This formulation here sounds reasonable to me, and I begin to get the strong feeling that Epicurus would have disapproved a lot of these arguments, as per the Elizabeth Asmis note just above. I am getting the feeling that a lot of these arguments are unwise and similar to Torquatus thinking that he needed an elaborate and abstract argument about the nature and role of pleasure. All of this "necessity" and "essentialism" argument does not seem to me

based on necessity between K and F which the *qua* truths demand.

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At this point, we must consider the objection of Long (1988: 142–143, see also Asmis 1996: 164), who maintains that the Epicureans assigned a different, empirical sense to the *qua* truths, which is not the same as that used by their critics. According to Long, the Epicureans do not use formulations as ‘insofar as such individuals are men’, but rather something like ‘insofar as the things familiar to us are of such a type’. This fact emerges quite clearly in the following passage from the treatise: ‘When we say that since things familiar to us are of such a kind, things outside our experience are of that kind, we are judging that insofar as things familiar to us are of such a kind, something outside our experience is conjoined to them, as in the case of “since men familiar to us, insofar as they are men, are mortal, if there are men anywhere else they are mortal”’ (XXX.24–32). In other words, the Epicureans relate the *qua* formula (‘insofar as’) not to the thing in general (e.g., ‘man’), but to the thing in our experience. The Epicureans statement of the *qua* truth thus takes on

the following form: ‘Insofar as Ks familiar to us are F’. In this way they avoid the trap of essentialism into which their critics want to push them. The Epicureans begin from the fact that mortality accompanies the men observed insofar as they are men, and conclude that all men insofar as they are men are mortal. In this way the conclusion is not presupposed by the premises, but is produced by the method of similarity.