

Episode One Hundred Four - More Torquatus and a Question: Was The Ancient Epicurean Movement A Cult?

Post by "Cassius" of January 15, 2022 at 6:07 AM

Some key paragraphs:

Chapter 7:

Quote

It is an even worse mistake to have confused the tests of truth with the content of truth, that is, the tools of precision with the stones of the wall. This was the blunder of Pierre Gassendi, who revived the study of Epicurus in the seventeenth century. It was his finding "that there is nothing in the intellect which has not been in the senses." From this position John Locke, in turn, set out as the founder of modern empiricism. Thus a misunderstanding of Epicurus underlies a main trend of modern philosophy. This astonishing fact begets an even greater concern for a correct interpretation, which may cause Locke to appear slightly naive.

Example of the chain reasoning issue:

Quote

It still remains to glance at the paradox in which Epicurus involves himself by employing reason to dethrone reason as the chief criterion. He places himself in a position similar to that of the skeptic who denies the possibility of certainty in knowledge, thus depriving his own skepticism of certainty.

This paradox, moreover, does not stand alone. It is also paradoxical that Epicurus should have omitted reason from his Canon and at the same time accepted a great body of truth accumulated by the reasonings of predecessors and set these down among his Twelve Elementary Principles of Physics. From this inconsistency he thought to escape by treating each of these principles as if a theorem of geometry. For example, to demonstrate that the universe is infinite in respect of both matter and space, he resorts to a disjunctive syllogism.¹⁴ If matter were infinite and space finite, the latter could not contain the former. Again, if matter were finite and space infinite, then matter would be lost in space and no clashes or combinations of atoms would

occur. Since these alternative assumptions lead to absurdities, the conclusion is that the original proposition is true. With such reasoning even a Stoic logician could find no fault.

Chapter Eight:

Quote

THE criteria are three, but the prevailing custom is to reduce them to one by merging the Anticipations and the Feelings with the Sensations. This error arises from classifying Epicurus as an empiricist, ascribing to him belief in the infallibility of sensation, and then employing this false assumption as a major premise.