

As To The Three Legs Of The Canon (Sensations, Feelings, Anticipations) Is it Possible to Experience (Receive Data?) From One Without The Others?

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2023 at 2:24 PM

We definitely need to turn some attention to "conceptual reasoning in Epicurean philosophy.". In my view this is a cause of the confusion in Diogenes Laertius as to anticipations.

It seems to me that the description of seeing oxen and assigning a word to them, and then judging future animals against that word, is standard conceptual reasoning with which Epicurus would have had no issue. When he was criticizing excessive decision-making he was not criticizing obvious things like "look at those two animals that look like each other lets call them oxes."

He was criticizing abstractions built on a abstractions which grow further and further away from observation to the point where there is no further linkage.

I think Dewitts position, with which I agree, is that this process of labelling oxen is a matter of language formation that contains many elements of opinion that would not be related to the instinctive process of pattern recognition in the first place.(1)

But for purposes of this discussion the key is to establish that we agree that basic conceptual reasoning is not a reference to Platonic idealism, and is something that Epicurus himself used and embraced. (For example, an "atom").

(1) I edited this post for the record to make clear that I think that's why the best term is prolepsis or pre-conception or anticipation, and the absolutely worst possible term is what Bailey uses in his translation, where he in fact uses the term "conception" rather than something that indicates an input into the concept-formation process. In my view Bailey guts the entire discussion by presuming that pre-conceptions = conceptions, and that is something that needs to be totally revisited and refuted. We can deal with this when we talk elsewhere about anticipations. Right now we need to establish that the formation and use of concepts in ordinary life attached to real observations does not constitute Platonic idealism. Here is a reference to concept-formation being endorsed by Epicurus in the letter to Herodotus: "First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the ideas attached to words, in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning." Another: "[40] And if there were not that which we term void

and place and intangible existence, bodies would have nowhere to exist and nothing through which to move, as they are seen to move. And besides these two, nothing can even be thought of either by conception or on the analogy of things conceivable such as could be grasped as whole existences and not spoken of as the accidents or properties of such existences." Plus I know some disagree on this, but DeWitt cites this from Diogenes Laertius in the context we are talking about it now, and I think it applies: "The internal sensations they say are two, pleasure and pain, which occur to every living creature, and the one is akin to nature and the other alien: by means of these two choice and avoidance are determined. Of investigations some concern actual things, others mere words." This is from Chapter 8 of EAHP:

to overlap the recommendation concerning style, the application is different. It means that the quest of definitions is useless. This quest is capable of terminating in fantastic concepts, such as Other, Same, and Essence in Plato's *Timaeus*, possessing no meaning unless on the highest level of abstraction. Since Epicurus rejected the reality of the eternal ideas, such terms could possess no meaning at all. Hence the following dictum: "There are two kinds of inquiry, the one about realities, the other ending up in sound without sense." ** In the same vein is the advice to the young Herodotus to take words at their face values "so as not by our endless attempts to define have all our ideas in confusion or have mere vocables that mean nothing." 41