

Ancient Greco-Roman Skepticism

Post by “Cassius” of August 31, 2023 at 10:31 AM

I think the key issue generally revolves around this:

That everyone of intelligence agrees that knowledge can be difficult to get, and that we need to question authority and not take anything on blind faith.

The real issue is that those who truly buy into "skepticism" conclude that **nothing** can ever be known with confidence, while Epicurus rejects that and says that in many cases we CAN have confidence in our conclusions, and that even where we can't be sure which of several possibilities is correct, we can be confident that we have eliminated the supernatural as a possibility. Epicurus considered Plato and even Aristotle as tending toward skepticism, because Plato and Aristotle and many of similar theistic viewpoint insisted that knowledge cannot come through the type of reasonable processing of the information provided by the senses that Epicurus advocates.

From Diogenes of Oinoanda:

Fr. 5

[Others do not] explicitly [stigmatise] natural science as unnecessary, being ashamed to acknowledge [this], but use another means of discarding it. For, when they assert that things are inapprehensible, what else are they saying than that there is no need for us to pursue natural science? After all, who will choose to seek what he can never find?

Now Aristotle and those who hold the same Peripatetic views as Aristotle say that nothing is scientifically knowable, because things are continually in flux and, on account of the rapidity of the flux, evade our apprehension. We on the other hand acknowledge their flux, but not its being so rapid that the nature of each thing [is] at no time apprehensible by sense-perception. And indeed [in no way would the upholders of] the view under discussion have been able to say (and this is just what they do [maintain] that [at one time] this is [white] and this black, while [at another time] neither this is [white nor] that black, [if] they had not had [previous] knowledge of the nature of both white and black.