

Prolepsis / Anticipations As Epicurus' Answer to the MENO Problem

Post by “Cassius” of December 1, 2024 at 6:38 AM

Only the wise can judge the wise... therefore we should all be skeptics?

Here is the Meno problem stated another way, In Cicero's Academic Questions (the person speaking is Cicero himself, speaking as an Academic Skeptic, if I read this correctly):

Quote

Nor is there any difference between ourselves and those who think that they have positive knowledge except that they have no doubt that their tenets are true, whereas we hold many doctrines as probable, which we can easily act upon but can scarcely advance as certain ; yet we are more free and untrammelled in that we possess our power of judgement uncurtailed, and are bound by no compulsion to support all the dogmas laid down for us almost as edicts by certain masters. For all other people in the first place are held in close bondage placed upon them before they were able to judge what doctrine was the best, and secondly they form judgments about matters as to which they know nothing at the most incompetent period of life, either under the guidance of some friend or under the influence of a single harangue from the first lecturer that they attended, and cling as to a rock to whatever theory they are carried to by stress of weather. For as to their assertion that the teacher whom they judge to have been a wise man commands their absolute trust, I would agree to this if to make that judgement could actually have lain within the power of unlearned novices (for to decide who is a wise man seems to be a task that specially requires a wise man to undertake it) ; but granting that it lay within their power, it was only possible for them after hearing all the facts and ascertaining the views of all the other schools as well, whereas they gave their verdict after a single hearing of the case, and enrolled themselves under the authority of a single master. But somehow or other most men prefer to go wrong, and to defend tooth and nail the system for which they have come to feel an affection, rather than to lay aside obstinacy and seek for the doctrine that is most consistent. Academica II iii Lucullus