

Thoughts and Criticism of Chapter 1

Post by "Cassius" of April 13, 2020 at 1:13 PM

Edit: I first added this as a comment in the thread on Chapter 2, but I see it needs to be here on Chapter One more so than on Chapter two:

I now realize that part of what we may be observing here is that DeWitt wrote the early chapters, as he says, following the model of Epicurus himself, starting with a synopsis of the whole, at a higher level of outline, while reserving the details of his analysis for later chapters. So DeWitt's reasoning on "sound mind - sound body" takes place much later in the book, under Chapter TWELVE - "The New Hedonism" - rather than in the highest-level outline, which is Chapter One. He makes the assertion in Chapter one, but reserves the backup detail for Chapter twelve.

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Rather than being a defect this is intentional and I think beneficial. The Epicurean model was to make sure that the final conclusions were not buried under mounds of notes and academic verbiage. You play fair with the reader by telling him very early where you are going. Then if the reader wants to stick around for the evidence that supports the detail, he can do so, but the primary outline of Epicurean philosophy is not buried under tons of words that only the hard-core academic is going to dig out. That's the way life is - we only get a short time to engage with any one person before they tend to move along to something else, so you need to tell them as quickly as possible what is important about the detail, so they can choose whether they want to pursue it.

So that's the most general answer to this comment:

Quote

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[Quote](#)

[from Eugenios](#) DeWitt's penchant for making assertions with no context or citations or context.

- Yes, I can see how what you observe in Chapter one could be confusing when contrasted with the academic approach, but this is the "multi-level outline" model as suggested by Epicurus himself in the letter to Herodotus:

Quote

But those also who have made considerable progress in the survey of the main principles ought to bear in mind the scheme of the whole system set forth in its

essentials. For we have frequent need of the general view, but not so often of the detailed exposition. Indeed it is necessary to go back on the main principles, and constantly to fix in one's memory enough to give one the most essential comprehension of the truth. And in fact the accurate knowledge of details will be fully discovered, if the general principles in the various departments are thoroughly grasped and borne in mind; for even in the case of one fully initiated the most essential feature in all accurate knowledge is the capacity to make a rapid use of observation and mental apprehension, and this can be done if everything is summed up in elementary principles and formulae. For it is not possible for anyone to abbreviate the complete course through the whole system, if he cannot embrace in his own mind by means of short formulae all that might be set out with accuracy in detail.