

# "Dualism" and "Philology"

Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 22, 2020 at 11:18 PM

**ADMIN EDIT BY CASSIUS 1/23/20: Because Mike's comments here are pretty technical I have moved this part of the discussion to a new thread. It originally came from the thread: [Feedback From A User](#)**

**Also: Epicureanfriends is primarily a forum for generalists, and I hesitate to let the public discussion go too deeply into highly technical issues that would leave the general reader behind. If someone wants to explore these issues more deeply, I would appreciate that person providing summary definitions of the terms rather than using them and expecting readers to know them already.**

**Here is a list of terms that probably should be defined before going further. Rather than simply giving a link it would be preferable to be able to summarize what they mean in a couple of sentences. I don't have the time to do that right now myself but brief definitions of these would need to be provided for the conversation to be meaningful; otherwise it would be better if the people involved discussed them privately using the "conversation" feature: Cartesian dualism; Kantian idealism; Solipsism; Philology**

NOW HERE IS MIKE'S POST:

I have noticed that the discussion circled around "innate ideas" and "indeterminacy." All these sound like Cartesian dualism and Kantian idealism. I have not yet read DeWitt deeply so I don't know whether or not he had Cartesian and Kantian root. But even so, DeWitt might be right if he finds proper to resort to abstraction and similitude for the sake of categorization since our sensation must be expressed in words in order for our subjective sensation and experience to be communicated with others. Otherwise, Epicureanism is nothing but one form of Solipsism which I don't think to be the case. Besides, we can see across the works of Epicurus that the importance of reason and philosophy has been repeated and emphasized.

And philosophy involves abstraction. It's not something like this philosopher said this, or this is said elsewhere in a particular passage of the text of this and that scholar or thinker with a particular quote of a context of this and that... That is not philosophy. That is Philology which is a study of what has been said of something. When Epicurus mentioned philosophy, I think he was referring to some sort of abstraction and not to an activity of sharing the ideas of philosophers.

## Post by “Godfrey” of January 23, 2020 at 1:23 AM

### Quote

It's not something like this philosopher said this, or this is said elsewhere in a particular passage of the text of this and that scholar or thinker with a particular quote of a context of this and that... That is not philosophy. That is Philology which is a study of what has been said of something.

For better or for worse, there is a necessary philological component to this particular philosophy. In modern philosophy the complete original works of various philosophers can be read. Only a small fraction of Epicurus' original works survive. Much of what we have to work with are secondary sources and fragments, so it's important to understand the context of this and that in order to properly address the abstractions.

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## Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 23, 2020 at 2:36 AM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

For better or for worse, there is a necessary philological component to this particular philosophy. In modern philosophy the complete original works of various philosophers can be read. Only a small fraction of Epicurus' original works survive. Much of what we have to work with are secondary sources and fragments, so it's important to understand the context of this and that in order to properly address the abstractions.

Yes. But did Epicurus think of Philology whenever he mentioned philosophy? And if not, what do you think Epicurus would think of philosophy? Logos? Logic? Metaphysics? Or what?

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 23, 2020 at 6:17 AM

I don't have an elaborate comment on Mike's suggestions at this moment but i suspect that a large part of the answer relates to DeWitt's discussion of "anticipations" in Chapter 13 of his book, along with the opening of the letter to Herodotus:

For those who are unable, Herodotus, to work in detail through all that I have written about nature, or to peruse the larger books which I have composed, I have already prepared at sufficient length an epitome of the whole system, that they may keep adequately in mind at least the most general principles in each department, in order that as occasion arises they may be able to assist themselves on the most important points, in so far as they undertake the study of nature.

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.

Wherefore since the method I have described is valuable to all those who are accustomed to the investigation of nature, I who urge upon others the constant occupation in the investigation of nature, and find my own peace chiefly in a life so occupied, have composed for you another epitome on these lines, summing up the first principles of the whole doctrine.

***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.***

***For this purpose it is essential that the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference.***

***And besides we must keep all our investigations in accord with our sensations, and in particular with the immediate apprehensions whether of the mind or of any one of the instruments of judgment, and likewise in accord with the feelings existing in us,***

*in order that we may have indications whereby we may judge both the problem of sense perception and the unseen.*

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**Post by “Hiram” of January 23, 2020 at 12:36 PM**

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

Yes. But did Epicurus think of Philology whenever he mentioned philosophy? And if not, what do you think Epicurus would think of philosophy? Logos? Logic? Metaphysics? Or what?

Philologists were one of the categories of members of the Epicurean community mentioned in Philodemus’ scroll on frank criticism, as attested by DeWitt in “Organization and procedures in Epicurean communities”.

<http://societyofepicurus.com/wp-content/upl...rean-Groups.pdf>

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 23, 2020 at 1:11 PM**

Hiram I did a quick word search for philology in that PDF but I don't see a form of it there. Am I missing it or are you inferring that from something DeWitt said.

For purposes of this I'll take this to be the definition of philology:

[Philology - Wikipedia](#)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philology>

[Anonymous View](#)

Philology is the study of language in oral and written historical sources; it is the intersection of textual criticism, literary criticism, history, and linguistics. Philology ...

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**Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 23, 2020 at 10:55 PM**

### [Quote from Hiram](#)

Philologists were one of the categories of members of the Epicurean community mentioned in Philodemus' scroll on frank criticism, as attested by DeWitt in "Organization and procedures in Epicurean communities".

Just like my reply to Godfrey, I acknowledge that Philology is important not only in the study of Epicureanism but also in the study of everything. But my question is "Did Epicurus think of Philology whenever he mentioned philosophy? We know how Epicurus reiterates the importance of philosophy.

The reason why I asked is because of my comment in the other thread that categorization, logic, and abstraction are indispensable especially when communicating with others our subjective experience and the knowledge we get out of it. Besides, Epicurean philosophy is also a knowledge that must be understood by us with similar precision. Therefore, the element of similitude and categorization can not be eliminated for the sake of relativism and indeterminacy which are the by-product of the atomic swerve.

For instance, you perceive a "horse" or "horses" to be different from what I sense, but we understand each other when we communicate and talk that a "horse" is there at the ranch. For sure you wouldn't think of a dragon-like creature, and I wouldn't surely think of a cat. We abstract, categorize, and generalize it so we can convey to others our similar sense experience. And we can not deny the importance of communication since it is useful not only in friendship but also in being part of a larger society. This abstraction is impossible without philosophy.

My point is that despite the precedence of sensation over rationality, reason and philosophy are still important for the purpose of grasping what is generally true., and I'd like to understand that abstraction is still necessary since Epicurus expressed that philosophy is also important.

Therefore, my question is "Did Epicurus think of logic whenever he mentioned 'philosophy'?" I am curious, but I doubt he was thinking of Philology to mean philosophy. 😊

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### **Post by "Cassius" of January 24, 2020 at 6:02 AM**

This is an important question about which there are several sections of Cicero criticizing Epicurus for not paying enough attention to it. I gather that the Epicureans did not admit that he omitted this, but that he denied the analysis being given to it by the logicians and asserted another approach to it that he held to be superior.

So this part quoted below may not be something that the ancient Epicureans admitted to "dispensing" with - but asserted that they dealt with in a different way:

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

categorization, logic, and abstraction are indispensable especially when communicating with others our subjective experience and the knowledge we get out of it.

So the challenge is to articulate the Epicurean counterpoint, and probably not to admit the approach to or the priority of these subjects suggested by the Platonists.

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### Post by "Hiram" of January 24, 2020 at 8:32 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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For purposes of this I'll take this to be the definition of philology:

[Philology - Wikipedia](#)

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[Anonymous View](#)

Philology is the study of language in oral and written historical sources; it is the intersection of textual criticism, literary criticism, history, and linguistics. Philology ...

You have to use Greek alphabet fonts then. Same for all the other categories of Sophos (of which Metrodoros and Epicurus were considered both "sages"), philosophos and Kath-hegetai.

Also it seems the philologist were concerned with language and definitions, or with learning and teaching all the literary sources, or both.

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### Post by "Hiram" of January 24, 2020 at 8:45 AM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

Just like my reply to Godfrey, I acknowledge that Philology is important not only in the study of Epicureanism but also in the study of everything. But my question is "Did Epicurus think of Philology whenever he mentioned philosophy? We know how Epicurus reiterates the importance of philosophy.

First: I don't know whether the word "philology" was directly used by the early founders but a. By the time of Philodemus there were "professional" philologists as a category of hierarchy (teachers or assistant teachers) who helped to teach Epicurean philosophy, and b. we know that one of the other founders, Polyaenus, wrote a treatise "On Definitions". This means they had discussed the subject enough to have formed clear ideas about the problem of definitions.

Second: We also know that one of Epicurus' books "On nature" was a sermon he gave "against the use of empty words", and I refer you to it here:

<http://societyofepicurus.com/reasonings-abo...of-empty-words/>

This is the most important source to consider in these matters. It delves into how to reason empirically about both things and actions (based on their consequences). It also talks about their practice of re-assigning meanings to words according to the concrete impressions (or "attestations") we get from nature in our senses and faculties, and on specific terms that had been redefined.

It restricts "redefinitions" to only words of which we have evidence. Words that are not available to our faculties can not be redefined following their methods. It also mentions that Metrodorus and Epicurus had had conversations about this in the past and their ideas had evolved.

Also, [Mike Anyayahan](#) its possible you will later take an interest in Philodemus' scroll "On methods of inference"

<http://societyofepicurus.com/reasonings-abo...s-of-inference/>

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 24, 2020 at 8:59 AM

As to the reference Mike to "On Methods of Inference" I agree that you will probably find that interesting. I have read in full and highly recommend both [the translation but particularly the commentary by Philip De Lacey](#)

I have found De Lacey's discussion in the appendix of the epistemology issues between Epicurus, the Stoics, Plato, and Aristotle to be among the most helpful I have every read.

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**Post by “Elayne” of January 24, 2020 at 2:57 PM**

I am working/traveling for a few days, but just want to say that for \_me\_, not speaking for Epicurus, neither quantum indeterminacy nor innate pattern recognitions/anticipations are truly abstract. We can certainly have abstract ideas about them, but there are observable phenomena available for testing through research. Vs abstract ideas which are not testable, not "falsifiable" as is generally said by scientists --abstract ideas can only be talked about ever. Some hypotheses require extreme measures like supercolliders to test-- but any potentially testable hypothesis is not abstract.

I know more about the biology end of physics, of course. And for that I can say I am not talking about anything abstract-- these are observed ways that humans and animals function, such that untaught pattern recognition occurs.

Without this innate brain "programming", it's unclear to me how a complex animal would ever develop the ability to interpret sensory input later.

But the main point is that we are talking about real phenomena. I think but can't prove that Epicurus observed the prolepses rather than just throwing out an abstract idea about them.

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**Post by “Elayne” of January 24, 2020 at 2:59 PM**

Plato's realm of perfect forms is abstract-- it is not ever potentially available in material reality for testing.

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**Post by “Charles” of January 24, 2020 at 8:55 PM**

Just a quick question. Is EP monistic for holding the sole substance of matter and its absence: void? Or dualistic for recognizing matter and void? I feel like I knew the answer at one point but Im failing to recall it.

## **Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 24, 2020 at 9:50 PM**

### [Quote from Charles](#)

Just a quick question. Is EP monistic for holding the sole substance of matter and its absence: void? Or dualistic for recognizing matter and void? I feel like I knew the answer at one point but Im failing to recall it.

Nice question. I'd like to add a question on top of it. If it's not monistic or dualist, is it pluralist?

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## **Post by “Elayne” of January 24, 2020 at 10:04 PM**

Material monist. Dualism requires "something" that is not material. Void is not a "something".

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## **Post by “Charles” of January 25, 2020 at 1:30 AM**

### [Quote from Elayne](#)

Material monist. Dualism requires "something" that is not material. Void is not a "something".

That's what I thought. Any sort of "properties" within Dualism usually invoke some abstract or mental property that is immaterial. I was caught up on the specifics and semantics of substance dualism.