

Issues In The Meaning And Definition of Logic

Post by "Mathitis Kipouros" of August 17, 2021 at 9:10 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think my best response to that would be to drop back and say that I think we should keep in mind the likelihood (I think a certainty) that Epicurus was aware of the need to, and constantly did, swap back and forth between talking in terms which are primarily "logical" at times, while at other times focusing on the "practical." I think he would say that doing so does not make him inconsistent but acknowledges the limits of logic (the need to always tie it to observable evidence) and the ultimate primacy of the canonical faculties given by nature.

From this, and also from, I think, Episode 22 of the Lucretius podcast, that there is mention of "proper logic" or "proper reasoning", I remembered this podcast:

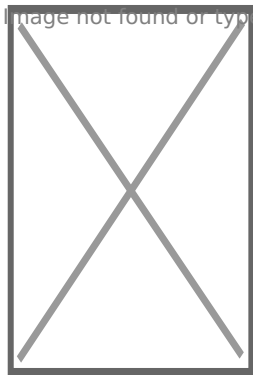
[Critical Reasoning: A Romp Through the Foothills of Logic | University of Oxford Podcasts - Audio and Video Lectures](#)

Which I have listened to, and can recommend. I like that she's very clear about logic being able to provide "valid" arguments, but not necessarily "true" arguments, particularly that an argument can be valid but not necessarily true. She does, however, make some distinctions about deductive logic and inductive logic that do have some prerequisites of truth or imply a high likelihood of truth for certain arguments, but I don't recall the specifics.

Has anyone heard or read about her or this topic? I had never studied formal logic in school so this was completely new for me, and I think it, at least, allows you to order your ideas better while presenting an argument, which doesn't necessarily imply a discussion.

She also has this book about critical reasoning that I intend to read after finishing DRN:

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Post by “Cassius” of August 17, 2021 at 9:56 AM

I haven't had time to pursue this myself but I hope others will and also comment here.

Also camotero as I mentioned a moment ago in another post you're going to want to add the appendix to the DeLacy Translation of Philodemus "On Methods of Inference" to your reading list. The appendix is excellent and compares and contrasts Epicurean views on these issues to those of Aristotle and Plato. After you read the appendix you're then equipped to begin to get something out of the text, which I think is hard to do unless you read the appendix first.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 17, 2021 at 7:43 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

I like that she's very clear about logic being able to provide "valid" arguments, but not necessarily "true" arguments, particularly that an argument can be valid but not necessarily true.

This is what has always struck me about logic (not that I'm close to being an expert!). You can have an internally consistent argument that has no basis in reality, so what's the point?

Thanks for the podcast link, it looks interesting.

Post by “Cassius” of August 17, 2021 at 7:59 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

so what's the point?

So what's the point?????

Tsk Tsk Godfrey you will never be one of Plato's Golden and mesmerize the world with your incoherent gibberish!

Unless you polish up on your geometry you will never figure out how to get the lower classes to defer to your every whim!

I hope you wise up before it is too late!!!



Post by “Godfrey” of August 18, 2021 at 2:41 AM

I hadn't thought of it in this context, but over the years I've derived much pleasure from geometry, trigonometry and basic math. They have been pleasurable in themselves to varying degrees, and also as useful tools to realize the joys of drawings, which often themselves were useful tools in the creation of a variety of objects and spaces.

In dealing with various theories of beauty and proportion, to me beauty and resonance in the resulting products invariably come down to the humanity and the feelings expressed. Without humanity and feelings, any coherent inner logic falls flat.

Furthermore, I can't say that geometry, trig or math ever provided me with any valuable insights; they assisted in refining and communicating other, more interesting and relevant ideas.

Post by “Cassius” of August 18, 2021 at 6:13 AM

I do think that math and geometry are useful and when not considered to be magical is valuable to know.

I consider the issues involved in the recurrence of the Fibonacci ratio in nature to be fascinating and no doubt informative of something.

So it's probably not just math and geometry that is useful for making oneself appear to be a wizard - just about any advanced knowledge can be employed that way with less-educated

people.

Meaning that there's certainly nothing intrinsically wrong with them but rather the use to which they can be put in the "wrong" hands

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2021 at 9:02 AM

I find this link, that explains the different types of reasoning:

[Deductive Reasoning vs. Inductive Reasoning](#)

I think is short enough to be worth reading when you see this.

This is sort of a very summarized version of what the podcast explains.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

This is what has always struck me about logic (not that I'm close to being an expert!). You can have an internally consistent argument that has no basis in reality, so what's the point?

I'm not sure what internally consistent means, but I gather that you may be talking about an argument being valid (that is, well formed) and it being true. This article addresses that: if the premises are false, the conclusion is going to be false. But this doesn't discard the whole framework of logic, as a useful means for communicating an argument, it just emphasizes that if you use it wrong you'll get wrong results.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I do think that math and geometry are useful and when not considered to be magical is valuable to know.

From what I read the only type of reasoning that would allow magic, is abductive reasoning, because it allows for the less certainty. As we understand them, deductive logic gives general premises to confirm that a particular case is an instance of them (less margin of error), the inductive takes particular observations to infer a general rule about things (more margin of error), and abductive takes whatever particular observations and jumps to "the most likely particular conclusion" (thus, the greatest margin of error).

Post by “Godfrey” of August 25, 2021 at 2:21 PM

Thanks for the link Camotero!

What I like about the descriptions in the linked article is that all three types of reasoning are discussed as part of the scientific method and subject to verification. What drives me crazy would appear to be deductive reasoning in which premisses are presented as true without proper examination. A particular conclusion is then accepted as true and used as a premiss for further argument. So as described in the article, proper examination and verification of each statement would lead to correct conclusions.

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 3:36 PM

I need to check the texts but do I remember correctly that Epicurus didn't necessarily write against logic so much as rhetoric?

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 3:42 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I need to check the texts but do I remember correctly that Epicurus didn't necessarily write against logic so much as rhetoric?

I think the answer to that is once again "Logic" has to be defined. Saying that he attacked "all logic" is almost certainly overbroad. Lucretius talks about "true reason." The real target is probably better stated as "logic based on nothing that can be verified through the senses." Use of the term "abstractions" is probably overbroad, and "abstract logic" isn't clear enough.

So I do think that Epicurus' target was definitely against more than "rhetoric" and there you have to consider his comments on poetry.

The work "Against the Megarians" seems to be part of what we 're talking about.

And you'll find what I am suggesting to be confirmed, with much more detail, in Delacy's comments to Philodemus including:

[Appendix 1 - Sources of Epicurean Empiricism](#)

[Appendix 2 - Development of Epicurean Logic and Methodology](#)

[Appendix 3 - Logical Controversies of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics](#)

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 3:46 PM

This first sentence from Diogenes Laertius taken out of context probably contributes people to being overbroad. And to add to the list above, a significant part of the target seems to be "Dialectical Logic"

Logic they reject as misleading. For they say it is sufficient for physicists to be guided by what things say of themselves. Thus in The Canon Epicurus says that the tests of truth are the sensations and concepts [preconceptions / anticipations] and the feelings; the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehensions of the mind. And this he says himself too in the summary addressed to Herodotus and in the [Principal Doctrines](#). For, he says, all sensation is irrational and does not admit of memory; for it is not set in motion by itself, nor when it is set in motion by something else, can it add to it or take from it. Nor is there anything which can refute the sensations. For a similar sensation cannot refute a similar because it is equivalent in validity, nor a dissimilar a dissimilar, for the objects of which they are the criteria are not the same; nor again can reason, for all reason is dependent upon sensations; nor can one sensation refute another, for we attend to them all alike. Again, the fact of apperception confirms the truth of the sensations. And seeing and hearing are as much facts as feeling pain. From this it follows that as regards the imperceptible we must draw inferences from phenomena. For all thoughts have their origin in sensations by means of coincidence and analogy and similarity and combination, reasoning too contributing something. And the visions of the insane and those in dreams are true, for they cause movement, and that which does not exist cannot cause movement.

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 3:56 PM

Thanks!!

The line in Perseus has:

31] "They reject dialectic as superfluous"

The word is διαλεκτική

[Greek Word Study Tool](#)

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 4:03 PM

Yep and then we have the question, "What is dialectic?" and it appears that's probably a reference to "dialectical logic" which also is probably a reference to the "Socratic method" or the methods used in Plato's Dialogs.

I think there's also a relevant reference in On Ends when Torquatus begins his monologue and says that rather than question-answer he wants to use a narrative format. I think it's right before the section we usually start quoting:

Quote

I quite agree with you, said Torquatus; for one cannot dispute at all without finding fault with your antagonist; but on the other hand you cannot dispute properly if you do so with ill-temper or with pertinacity. But, if you have no objection, I have an answer to make to these assertions of yours. Do you suppose, said I, that I should have said what I have said if I did not desire to hear what you had to say too? Would you like then, says he, that I should go through the whole theory of Epicurus, or that we should limit our present inquiry to pleasure by itself; which is what the whole of the present dispute relates to? We will do, said I, whichever you please. That then, said he, shall be my present course. I will explain one matter only, being the most important one. At another time I will discuss the question of natural philosophy; and I will prove to you the theory of the divergence of the atoms, and of the magnitude of the sun, and that Democritus committed many errors which were found fault with and corrected by Epicurus. At present, I will confine myself to pleasure; not that I am saying anything new, but still I will adduce arguments which I feel sure that even you yourself will approve of. Undoubtedly, said I, I will not be obstinate; and I will willingly agree with you if you will

only prove your assertions to my satisfaction. I will prove them, said he, provided only that you are as impartial as you profess yourself: **but I would rather employ a connected discourse than keep on asking or being asked questions.** As you please, said I.

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 4:28 PM

Take a look at the definitions. There's some intriguing stuff:

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, διαλεκτικός](#)

[Greek Word Study Tool](#)

Including a reminder that it's the title of a work by Metrodorus.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 4:33 PM

Yes it's pretty much a direct attack at what so many people today praise as the "Socratic Method" -- which also takes us back to the material we have on the "[Epicurean Criticism of Socrates](#)" as preserved in Plutarch.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 4:36 PM

And of course there is this from the Letter to Herodotus, and I think the key to the point is in the last sentence, and not in the direction that some apparently took to think that there was a picture-based "fourth leg" of the canon. Reasoning based on words that ultimately have no way to be checked back against the canonical faculties are the main danger, I think, but that takes a lot of explanation too:

Quote

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.

[38] 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.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 4:40 PM

I would really like to dig into what this means here, as I think this is where people go wrong and think that there's something mystical about the "first mental image" reference. As I read them they are thinking that "concepts" formed in our mind after reflection (such as are described by Diogenes Laertius in his statement of preconceptions) become primary evidence of truth. I do not think Epicurus would agree with that, and I think I would argue that all concepts are essentially "words" - they are the map and not the terrain and can never be confused with the reality itself. I think he would argue that words can never fully describe reality, and that "reality" is what is given to us by the pre-rational faculties (including not only the five senses but also by (2) pleasure and pain and (3) the non-idea-based anticipations):

Quote

For this purpose it is essential that the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded,

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 4:47 PM

Quote

[38] For this purpose it is essential that the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded,

As I see it the key issue would also include whether this "first mental image associated with each word" functions automatically or consciously/rationally, because if it is consciously/rationally assigned then that involved (in my view) the injection of opinion and the possibility of error, and that's the point in the process where error is made. If we accept a word/concept as something that is given to us by nature and that we processed involuntarily, without reason/opinion, then we've just injected into our canon of what is supposed to be "truth" our own opinion. And then once you consider your own opinions to be canonical, you're going to consider them as equal to "seeing is believing" and you're going to do exactly what Epicurus warned against in losing your true standard of judgment:

Quote

PD24. If you reject any single sensation, and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation, and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment. And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2021 at 6:48 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

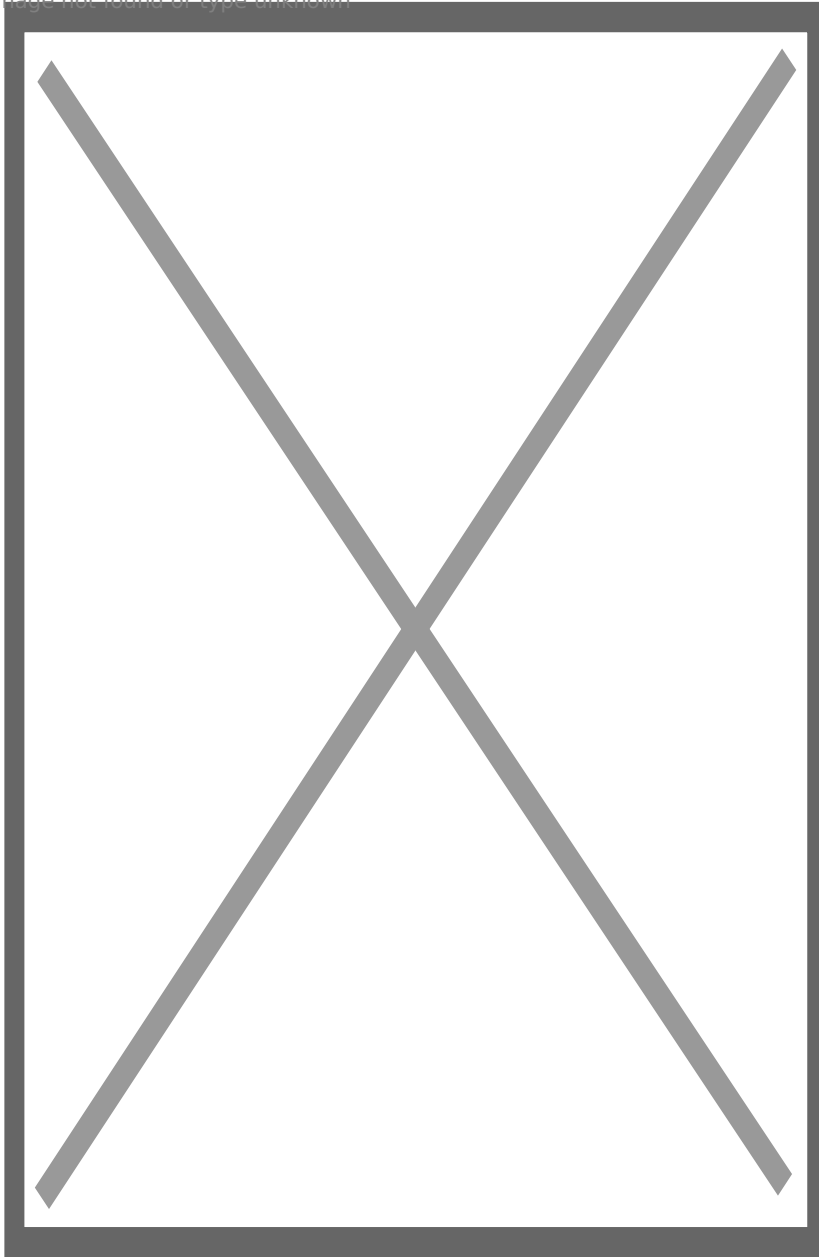
A particular conclusion is then accepted as true and used as a premiss for further argument.

The "chain argumentation" that DeWitt wrote about.

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 6:56 PM

Put an interlibrary loan request in today for this book with Sedley's chapter:

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[Epicurus on Dialectic \(Chapter 3\) - Dialectic after Plato and Aristotle](#)

Dialectic after Plato and Aristotle - November 2018

www.cambridge.org

Post by "Don" of August 25, 2021 at 7:00 PM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2153-issues-in-the-meaning-and-definition-of-logic/>

Wasn't one of Epicurus's big gripes against Socrates that Socrates just ignored the commonly accepted definitions of words or he made up new definitions? To my memory, Epicurus was like "How can you even hold a conversation let alone an investigation of 'truth' with this guy?? He's just a jerk!"

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2021 at 7:06 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I need to check the texts but do I remember correctly that Epicurus didn't necessarily write against logic so much as rhetoric?

Did they have these standards of reasoning back then? Perhaps the reason why the epicureans disregard it is because reasoning was misused back then.

Math (which would be deductive reasoning?) drove some to overstate its importance and then make the abductive argument that leads to the ideal definitions.

And the other type of logic was... dialectic? which, if wasn't analyzed by these standards, resolved arguments more because of the charisma of one part rather than actual reasoning...

Also... going back to the argument about how we are some species in an evolution spectrum, isn't this a particular faculty of our species? I'm going full devil's advocate here: If the faculties of the senses, the feelings, and the anticipations, are faculties of all animals, and reason is particular faculty of our own, how come reason is not part of the Canon of Truth? If you ask me, it seems more plausible to find truth in by way of reasoning as the article explains, and the canon is more a canon of morality, rather than of truth.

What am I missing?

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2021 at 7:10 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"logic based on nothing that can be verified through the senses."

But how can logic be verified through the senses, if it is completely a mental thing. Wouldn't it be, logic should be constraint to material issues? Or that if it has to fly a bit into the ether, it should have a grounding back into maerial reality, otherwise it would be plain speculation about things that don't exist?

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2021 at 7:21 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I would really like to dig into what this means here, as I think this is where people go wrong and think that there's something mystical about the "first mental image" reference.

Quote

[38] 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.

You touched on this subject in episode 28 of the Lucretius podcast (which by the way has been one of the best ones), when you where trying to define "what is truth?" and I think Elayne pointed out that for all of you to be able to talk about a thing and reach a conclusion, you all must have an agreement on the meaning of the words you're using.

I think that's right. In order to use logic to make an argument, you have to do it on the same context as the on you're arguing with.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 25, 2021 at 7:57 PM

Quote from Camotero

But how can logic be verified through the senses, if it is completely a mental thing. Wouldn't it be, logic should be constraint to material issues? Or that if it has to fly a bit into the ether, it should have a grounding back into maerial reality, otherwise it would

be plain speculation about things that don't exist?

For me, it seems critical to ground logic in material reality and that's the purpose of the Canon. Think of the common example of "Bob is a man. All men are mortal. Therefore Bob is mortal." At least to my understanding, we need the Canon to provide evidence that Bob is a man and that all men are mortal, or neither of the two statements are verifiable and therefore the conclusion is not verifiable, even if it is "formally" correct. This is why I think it's important that the article linked to above in post #7 describes reasoning in the context of the scientific method.

Post by "Godfrey" of August 25, 2021 at 8:17 PM

To expose my ignorance, one question that I have as I begin to work my way through DeLacey: how do "signs" fit into this discussion? It seems that words are signs; what about "first mental images," concepts... what else can be considered a sign? Do the Stoics have a different idea of what constitutes a sign than the Epicureans do? Just defining the language with which to discuss logic and methods of inference is confusing!

I stumbled upon this quote online, though I'm not sure if it's helpful:

Quote

"All instruction is either about things or about signs; but things are learnt by means of signs. I now use the word "thing" in a strict sense, to signify that which is never employed as a sign of anything else: for example, wood, stone, cattle, and other things of that kind. Not, however, the wood which we read Moses cast into the bitter waters to make them sweet, nor the stone which Jacob used as a pillow, nor the ram which Abraham offered up instead of his son; for these, though they are things, are also signs of other things. There are signs of another kind, those which are never employed except as signs: for example, words. No one uses words except as signs of something else; and hence may be understood what I call signs: those things, to wit, which are used to indicate something else. Accordingly, every sign is also a thing; for what is not a thing is nothing at all. Every thing, however, is not also a sign. And so, in regard to this distinction between things and signs, I shall, when I speak of things, speak in such a way that even if some of them may be used as signs also, that will not interfere with the division of the subject according to which I am to discuss things first and signs afterwards. But we must carefully remember that what we have now to consider about things is what they are in themselves, not what other things they are signs of.

AUGUSTINE, De Doctrina 1.2." From the Heidlblog

Despite the anachronism it seems that this is what Epicurus was struggling against 🙄

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 9:04 PM

I'm be very curious about that book I ordered. I think it will answer some questions we're posting here. Here is a section of a review specifically on Sedley's chapter:

David Sedley contributes a helpful chapter about “Epicurus on Dialectic,” in which he considers several ways in which Epicurus’ well-known rejection of the dialectical method reflects Epicurus’ own ontological commitments. One particularly noteworthy aspect of Sedley’s chapter is his discussion of the so-called ‘Bat Riddle’ that Glaucon mentions in Book V of the *Republic* (89-105), in which ‘a man who is not a man shoots and does not shoot a bird that is not a bird,’ etc. Sedley argues that this riddling description of the eunuch (who is both a man and not a man) who shoots (and misses) a bat (which both is and is not a bird, as it is a bird relative to its gift of flight but is not a bird insofar as it is viviparous) captures the Epicurean view that being is in all cases relative and aspectual, and hence not truthfully or meaningfully disclosed through the kind of dialectical investigation at play in, for example, Platonic division.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 9:24 PM

I The Rejection of Dialectic

... Epicurus, who scorns and mocks the whole of dialectic, can't be got to grant that the proposition 'Either Hermarchus will be alive tomorrow or he will not be alive' is true ...

(Cic., *Luc.* 97)¹

Already in the second part of philosophy, that known as *logikê* and concerned with questioning and arguing, your man [Epicurus] seems to me manifestly unarmed and naked. He abolishes definitions; he teaches nothing about division and partition; he does not convey how an argument should be constructed and a conclusion drawn; he does not explain a method for solving sophisms and distinguishing ambiguous terms.

(Cic., *Fin.* 1.22)²

... Epicurus scorns dialectic, which contains the entire science of discerning what each thing entails, of judging of what kind each thing is, and of arguing methodically ...

(Cic., *Fin.* 2.18)³

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2021 at 9:35 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Wasn't one of Epicurus's big gripes against Socrates that Socrates just ignored the commonly accepted definitions of words or he made up new definitions?

That actually sounds to me more like Cicero's gripe against Epicurus, that EPICURUS was not using words like pleasure in a standard way.... Don't hold me to that but I think so.

[Quote from camotero](#)

and reason is particular faculty of our own, how come reason is not part of the Canon of Truth? If you ask me, it seems more plausible to find truth in by way of reasoning as the article explains, and the canon is more a canon of morality, rather than of truth.

Camotero with all due respect and affection many of your comments in the recent posts above are (I am confident you are going to find) very off-base as to Epicurus' position. I think you're instinctively taking the majority Platonic / Aristotelian / Stoic position that logic is the center of good reasoning, and I think you're going to find that that (depending on the definition of "logic" and focusing in dialectical logic) is exactly what Epicurus rejected as the focus.

Of course working through these issues is exactly what we are here to do, so it will be fun.

However, this thread is already serving as an important reminder to me that it is going to remain a very good idea to jump up and down and shout and all the rest to READ DEWITT FIRST AND/OR EARLY because no one who reads DeWitt will be surprised or taken aback by any of these arguments that deprecate "logic." DeWitt drives home throughout the book how this rejection of Platonic logic is at the heart of his philosophy. So even now I would recommend reading DeWitt's chapters One (for the overview) and Seven and Eight for the focus on these canonical / logical issues. Although due to the way DeWitt presents things telescopically, the same issues appear at multiple places in the book and that's why I recommend the whole thing.

Now don't anyone misinterpret what I just wrote -- I am not chiding anyone. Going through these arguments is extremely helpful to everyone. But the real problem with approaching Epicurus through anyone but DeWitt - even trying to read Diogenes Laertius and Lucretius first - is that it's hard to pick up the significance of the full extent of Epicurus' revolution against virtually ALL who went before him. I am convinced that Epicurus' revolution wasn't based nearly as much on the role of "pleasure" as it was on these issues of the canon and the role of logic. The ethics of Epicurus are strictly secondary and derive from the physics, and the physics analysis is tightly tied to the canonic.

Of course the bitter truth is that most people are going to come here having read mainly the Cambridge and the Warren and the O'Keefe material. They are mostly as a result going to be so hamstrung on "absence of pain" that they have a long hill to climb to get to the real issues. But these issues of the canonical faculties and the role of logic/conceptual reasoning are where the real battle lies, in my humble opinion! And the opponents of Epicurus are almost more worked up about his rejection of "logic" than they are of his rejection of "virtue" and "religion" -- maybe more so, because the canonic/logic argument is the key to defeating their virtue/piety arguments.

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2021 at 9:44 PM

LOL I see that I have just accused Camotero of not reading DeWitt, and now I see THIS from the new poll of what people have read:

The screenshot shows a forum thread titled "Norman DeWitt's Epicurus and His Philosophy". It lists three users with their profile pictures, names, roles, and various statistics:

- Cassius** (Administrator): Posts: 6,521, Blog Articles: 33, Files: 38, Images: 231, Bookmarks: 14, Events: 33, Map Entry: yes, Quizzes: 7, Quiz rate: 100.0 %, Link Entries: 3, Reactions Received: 4,202, Points: 51,781, Trophies: 3
- Godfrey** (Level 03): Posts: 715, Bookmarks: 15, Map Entry: yes, Quizzes: 3, Quiz rate: 85.0 %, Reactions Received: 1,122, Points: 5,016, Trophies: 2
- camotero** (Level 01): Posts: 100, Bookmarks: 6, Map Entry: no, Reactions Received: 97, Points: 662, Trophies: 2

Ha someone has some adjusting to do -- either I am dramatically mis-remembering what is in DeWitt, or I need to get to work on that Quiz to help test how closely people have really read what they think they've read 😊

Maybe you skimmed chapters Seven and Eight Camotero? Or maybe DeWitt wasn't as convincing as I remember him being 😊

Either way we'll figure it out and it will be fun doing so.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 9:48 PM

Don I appear to have access to the Sedley chapter on Dialectic but I have absolutely no confidence that I will be able to read it anytime soon, so I hope you'll lead us through that one by commenting when you get it.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2021 at 9:52 PM

I did read it! Haha. First, as I said, I was playing devil's advocate. That being said, if I had it 100% clear, perhaps that game wouldn't make sense at all to me. I may be at fault of not remembering it well enough, but I have it by my bedside so I'll check it out and come back later.

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2021 at 10:10 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

how do "signs" fit into this discussion? It seems that words are signs; what about "first mental images," concepts... what else can be considered a sign? Do the Stoics have a different idea of what constitutes a sign than the Epicureans do? Just defining the language with which to discuss logic and methods of inference is confusing!

Godfrey if you are getting started in Philodemus I hope you will post all sorts of things like that in the Philodemus thread. Yes it appears that signs are a big issue, as well as the terms "contraposition" and also "reasoning by analogy"

Articulating this question of what signs means and how the Epicureans took a position on them is going to be key to unwinding all these issues. They clearly took the position that "contraposition" is not the key to truth.

One way of stating what i remember the ultimate point to have been is that Plato and the boys were taking the position that nothing can be said to be "true" unless the proposition could be stated in some form of symbolic logic (if $A=B$ and $B=C$ then $A=C$, might be an example, but I think their examples were much more complex).

The Epicureans took the position that truth has to be "defined" in terms of evidence from the canonical faculties, not from symbolic logic.

But that is a very primitive way of stating the issue and our goal ought to be to make things a lot more clear than that.

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2021 at 10:14 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

perhaps that game wouldn't make sense at all to me. I may be at fault of not remembering it well enough

1 - I first read DeWitt over ten years ago now and I frequently misremember it.

2 - Plus I suppose to be clear about deWitt, his goal and his merit is in providing the wide overview that gives us an orientation, and the book isn't nearly long or detailed enough to give us all the raw material and argument that we'd like to have, so that's where we have to fill in the gaps. I think DeWitt's usually right or close to right in most of his views, but in all of the details we have to work through them ourselves.

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 10:52 PM

Here's one section of DeWitt that addresses what I remembered about Socrates and about dialectic. Interestingly, logic doesn't appear in the index to Epicurus and His Philosophy:

Quote

As for the third branch of Platonic studies, dialectic, the evidence for Epicurus' familiarity with it is the express and almost total rejection of it. The grounds of this rejection were both ethical and intellectual. It is on record that he condemned the irony of Socrates.⁵⁰ It is not difficult to discern the reasons for this. The pretence of ignorance is a form of dishonesty and inconsistent with that absolute frankness (parresia) by which Epicurus set great store, as will be shown under the head of the New Virtues. Yet even assuming that Socrates felt himself to be genuinely ignorant of the nature of piety or justice, he was deliberately concealing his mastery of a devastating skill in debate, which could only result in the humiliation of the hapless interlocutor in the presence of witnesses. This was totally opposed to that disinterested concern (kedemonia) for the good of the instructed which was required of the Epicurean teacher. If Cicero disagreed with Epicurus about the condemnation of irony, this was but natural, because, whether as trial lawyer or political orator, the ability to make his victim writhe under mental punishment was a precious part of his equipment. In the judgment of Epicurus the Second Philippic of Cicero and the speech of Demosthenes On the Crown would have seemed to represent oratory at its ethical worst, whether because of cruelty of intention on the part of the speakers or the love of havoc on the part of the listeners. A second evil of dialectic was the tendency to

become eristic and argue for victory instead of truth. This was incompatible with the Epicurean considerateness (epieikeia) for the feelings of others, which fore-shadowed the Golden Rule of Christianity. It was thus no accident that Epicurus, in the manifest division of labor which prevailed in the mature organization of the Garden School, reserved for himself the task of refuting the Megarians,⁵¹ with whom eristic was a specialty. Only the head of the school seemed capable of dealing with methods so contrary in spirit to the new philosophy. The intellectual grounds for rejecting dialectic were equally fundamental. Epicurus denied categorically each of its four assumptions, first, that reason was the criterion, second, that sensations were undependable, third, that phenomena were shifting and deceptive, and fourth, that the only real and eternal existences were the ideas. The reality of the ideas he denied on the ground that nothing exists except atoms and empty space. In place of reason he declared Nature to furnish criteria of truth and he held the Sensations, supplemented by the Feelings and innate notions (Anticipations), to be direct and immediate contacts with external reality, whether physical or social. Thus dialectic became a superfluity. The rejection of Plato's teachings is almost total.

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 11:05 PM

That footnote 50 after Socrates refers to Cicero's Brutus (85.292):

Quote

"But I made some remarks," said Atticus, "which I had several times a mind to mention; only I was loath to interrupt you. As your discourse, however, seems to be drawing towards an end, I think I may venture to out with them."—"By all means," replied I.—"I readily grant, then," said he, "that there is something very humorous and elegant in that continued Irony, which Socrates employs to so much advantage in the dialogues of Plato, Xenophon, and Aeschines. For when a dispute commences on the nature of wisdom, he professes, with a great deal of humour and ingenuity, to have no pretensions to it himself; while, with a kind of concealed raillery, he ascribes the highest degree of it to those who had the arrogance to lay an open claim to it. Thus, in Plato, he extols Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus, Gorgias, and several others, to the skies: but represents himself as a mere ignorant. This in him was peculiarly becoming; nor can I agree with Epicurus, who thinks it censurable. But in a professed History, (for such, in fact, is the account you have been giving us of the Roman Orators) I shall leave you to judge, whether an application of the Irony is not equally reprehensible, as it would be in giving a judicial evidence."—"Pray, what are you driving at," said I,— "for I

cannot comprehend you."

Post by "Mathitis Kipouros" of August 25, 2021 at 11:56 PM

Some quotes that I have found so far that may be clarifying as to what was it that Epicurus rejected:

Page 24:

Quote from DeWitt

Equally fallacious was the allegation that the canon had been set up as a substitute of logic. [...] The function of ancient logic was to score points, and make opponents wince, but no adversaries were needed for the use of the Canon.

So, rhetoric? Which may have been considered logic, but it's not. Am I wrong?

Page 122 (talking about Plato):

Quote from DeWitt

Thus, in his system, reason became the only contact between man and reality [...]

Epicurus denied the existence of Platonic ideas [...] Thus, to his thinking, man stood face to face with physical reality and his sensations constituted the sole contact with his reality. [...]

Thus Nature [...] becomes a norm, while the Platonic Reason is eliminated, along with the Platonic Ideas.

So here his equating reason to Platonic reason/ideas.

So he is not talking at all about reason, as in what we understand as logic. Also, from page 123:

Quote from DeWitt

The position of Epicurus becomes seemingly paradoxical because there is no instrumentality by which reason can be dethroned except by reason itself. Consideration of this paradox may be postponed until it has been shown how the Platonic concept of reason may be rendered absurd. ****The conclusions will be**

absolutely logical if the premises are accepted. **

So it seems to me that there was a desire to render reason useless in general for the sake of particularly rendering absurd and useless, at least, the two associations to reason/logic that are quoted above. Throwing the baby with the bath water?

The last line quoted above is a testament to how reason is not to be disregarded, isn't it? Perhaps this is the type of true reason that we won't be able to get by without?

If this reason isn't logic, or formal logic, could we agree that it could be "critical thinking"?

Also, and by the way, the preeminence of sensation over reason is established only mechanically, on page 129:

Quote from DeWitt

Let it be assumed that a human being has been deprived of all his five senses. This is tantamount to death, and the subject has ceased to be a rational creature. [...] Laertius ascribes to Epicurus the idea "that the sensations lead the way". In the present context, this notion seems to have opposite application: The possession of sensation seems to be construed as antecedent to rational activity.

Also, it's been stated over and over again that while that sensations can and are always true (in that they bring a pure impression) they can be, as DeWitt puts it, valueless as a criterion (the round/square tower example). And how are we going to discern this if not by reason?

I must add also, that I found also this example, when he is explaining the difference between logic and the canon (page 24):

Quote from DeWitt

The researcher works on the basis of an hypothesis, which he puts to the test of experiment, that is, of the senses [...]

This reinforces one of the doubts I expressed some posts above. Isn't the hypothesis's logic/reason? Without the hypothesis, what is there to try and prove? Yes, the senses perceive the reality, but to understand it, we need reason/logic, don't we? Otherwise we are perceiving reality, alright, but if we don't process it with reason, we're no different than other animals.

I know no one here advocates for the nullification of the importance of reason, but I think there may be a strong disregard of logic/reason that perhaps is not too helpful either, and as an example I'd like to bring something that was commented in that same episode (of the Lucretius podcast I mentioned above), after I finished listening to it: "How do we know something is true? I can *feel* when something is true". I don't think this is true, but I'm open to be corrected. I'm

pretty sure the person who said this didn't mean it and said it rhetorically or lightly as no one objected it. But as I said, I don't think you can feel truth. You may have true feelings. But the truth about something has to be established (and agreed upon to be able to move forward) logically, albeit after the senses gave us content to reason about, and after we've tested out reasoning with those same senses.

These are honest questions, I really don't want to stir things up just for kicks.

And also, I recognize I have a long way to read in order to be able to say I've studied enough, so I appreciate and recognize the patience and tolerance shown by the most advanced around here. I post what I post humbly (even if sometimes this doesn't show), keeping this in mind, and perhaps out of my depth, because it's fun ☺ and I have felt encouraged to do so. I think that is one of the most valuable characteristics of this forum.

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2021 at 1:25 AM

All of what I see you raise are good questions so while I appreciate your last statement I firmly think the discussion we're having is very valuable. I do think, however, in general, that we are suffering from the difficulty of really having a bright line definition of many of these words (logic, reason, dialectic, dialectical logic, etc). And much of the reason for that is they these words are commonly used in very similar ways, so each discussion about each word almost requires a clarification each time it is used.

[Quote from camotero](#)

So, rhetoric? Which may have been considered logic, but it's not. Am I wrong?

Rhetoric is another word that in my view isn't so clear in common usage.

[Quote from camotero](#)

So he is not talking at all about reason, as in what we understand as logic

Just citing that to reinforce the issue that "reason" seems to have a number of connotations that may or may not make it similar in usage as logic depending on context.

[Quote from camotero](#)

Also, it's been stated over and over again that while that sensations can and are always true (in that they bring a pure impression) they can be, as DeWitt puts it, valueless as a criterion (the round/square tower example). And how are we going to discern this if not by reason?

Of all the comments this is probably the most important to articulate better. We confirm that the tower is in fact square by walking toward it, viewing it from different angles, touching it, etc. It is never reason *alone* which does the confirming, it is the reliability of subsequent multiple sensations. There's a really good cite from Epicurus directly on that point (that the reliability of our conclusions / opinions comes from the repeatability of the sensation) that if my mind were quicker I'd like to post, but can't. If someone else can I hope they will add this to the thread.

Now someone may want to argue, "Well, comparing multiple sensations to see which is reliably repeated IS a form of "reason" or even "logic!" If someone goes down that path then they've really got to disentangle what they mean by reason and logic, because such a wide definition essentially converts every example of looking for consistency into reason and logic and that clearly is not Epicurus' target.

[Quote from camotero](#)

Otherwise we are perceiving reality, alright, but if we don't process it with reason, we're no different than other animals.

Ok now on that point it is my position (and I think Epicurus') that there IS no essential difference between humans and other animals. And that precise argument is stated very clearly by Cicero who complains that Epicurus reduces us to the state of animals by not worshipping reason/logic as he (Cicero) does. Can't easily remember the cite there but I think it's in Academic Questions.

[Quote from camotero](#)

: "How do we know something is true? I can feel when something is true". I don't think this is true, but I'm open to be corrected. I'm pretty sure the person who said this didn't mean it and said it rhetorically or lightly as no one objected it.

This is very valuable for you to call this into question. Are you talking about something Elayne said? I don't suppose you have a time cite do you? I remember being uneasy with certain formulations of some of that discussion and it might be that it would be good to make some notes on that episode to clarify. I am remembering that it was Elayne who said something like that and (if I recall) I considered it a reasonable formulation of the "feeling of certainty" that we do in fact get when we are legitimately convinced that our conclusion is correct. And in a way

(depending on the words that were used) it is correct to argue that certainty / confidence in Epicurean terms comes from our ability to confirm our opinions through the data we observe through the senses and all the canonical faculties.

It is also possible that what you're referring to was in discussion of "abstractions" and I also think there may have been some statements made at times that may have been more critical of abstractions than would be warranted. But there is an important point there too about the limitations of abstractions, so it would be necessary to pull out the precise statements and consider them carefully.

Anytime you (or anyone) feels like certain statements in the podcast might warrant clarification or revision please make note of it (preferably in the discussion for that episode) and try to record the time it appears and we'll go back and address those. It would be very valuable for everyone to do that.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 26, 2021 at 1:26 AM

Quote from Camotero

The last line quoted above is a testament to how reason is not to be disregarded, isn't it? Perhaps this is the type of true reason that we won't be able to get by without?

If this reason isn't logic, or formal logic, could we agree that it could be "critical thinking"?

This seems to be a key distinction! Logic that is used to win arguments may lead to victory but not necessarily truth. Epicurus placed high value on wisdom and/or prudence, which I think can be equated to critical thinking. Reasoning of this sort has the goal of living well, not necessarily winning arguments.

Of course this begs the question: "how do you define prudence or critical thinking?" Film at 11



Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2021 at 1:33 AM

Here's the quote I was looking for above about the repeatability of the senses being the guarantee of their accuracy. Someone might say that's not exactly the same point as being discussed, but I think it pretty much is, because it seems implicit that if we're talking about the truth of our senses we're talking about the truth of the opinions that we can confidently reach based on what the senses repeatedly tell us:

****Diogenes Laertius, _Lives of Philosophers,_ X.31:**** They reject the dialectic as superfluous; holding that in their inquiries the physicists should be content to employ the ordinary terms for things. Now in _The Canon_ Epicurus states that the sensations, the prolepses, and the passions are the criteria of truth; the Epicureans generally make perceptions of mental presentations to be also standards. ... Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it self-caused nor regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom. Nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error: one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid; nor can one sensation refute another which is not kindred but heterogeneous, for the objects which the two senses judge are not the same; nor again can reason refute them, for reason is wholly dependent on sensation; nor can one sense refute another, since we pay equal heed to all. **And the reality of separate perceptions guarantees the truth of our senses.** But seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain. Hence it is from plain facts that we must start when we draw inferences about the unknown. For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition, with some slight aid from reasoning. And the objects presented to madmen and to people in dreams are true, for they produce effects - i.e., movements in the mind - which that which is unreal never does.

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 1:45 AM

The page in Delacy I return to time and again is this one: <https://archive.org/details/philod...ter&q=syllogism>

I believe we are going to find that the concept of syllogisms is critical to this discussion, and that Aristotle (and even more so Plato and the Stoics) were invested in "syllogistic logic" as the ultimate standard of truth, and that that is something Epicurus firmly rejected. And what's the definition of syllogistic logic? As Godfrey says, "film at eleven," but I think that if that term means anything it refers to a formal symbolic kind of process in which you convert particular observations into "concepts" or "universals" or some other term denoting a symbol taking the place of a sensation (or any data from the canonical faculties). And of course the problem is as stated in our recent conversations to the effect that "the map is not the terrain," etc.

Which is of course not to say that symbolic / syllogistic logic cannot be valuable at times, but is to say that symbolic / syllogistic logic should never be (but often is, by its advocates) confused with reality itself. Our only real connections with reality are the data we get from the canonical faculties, and that's what makes THEM (and not symbolic/syllogistic logic) the ultimate standard of truth. We don't consider maps necessary to our being able day-to-day to navigate in reality, and we shouldn't consider syllogistic logic to be a requirement of our being confident in our day-to-day thinking either

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Aristotle regards empiricism as inadequate because he believes that observation can never give necessary connections between objects. In the absence of causal knowledge the empirical scientist must base his knowledge on a study of signs, and inferences from signs are not reliable except in cases where the inferences may be converted into valid syllogisms. He says in one place that a science of physiognomy would be possible only if an invariable correlation could be established between physical qualities and mental traits, for instance between large extremities and courage. In that case one could infer syllogistically from the physical qualities as signs to the mental traits.²⁸ Especially significant in this connec-

Post by “Godfrey” of August 26, 2021 at 2:12 AM

syllogism (noun):

- an instance of a form of reasoning in which a conclusion is drawn (whether validly or not) from two given or assumed propositions (premises), each of which shares a term with the conclusion, and shares a common or middle term not present in the conclusion (e.g., all dogs are animals; all animals have four legs; therefore all dogs have four legs).

- deductive reasoning as distinct from induction. "this school of epistemology is highly advanced in syllogism and logical reasoning"

(from Oxford Languages online)

Post by “Martin” of August 26, 2021 at 4:07 AM

Quote

"We don't consider maps necessary to our being able day-to-day to navigate in reality, and we shouldn't consider syllogistic logic to be a requirement of our being confident in our day-to-day thinking either."

No.

We don't consider maps necessary to our being able day-to-day to navigate in reality because we have internalized them and use them intuitively without realizing it.

Similarly, we have internalized "syllogistic" logic such that we use it in our day-to-day thinking when fully awake without realizing it.

Interestingly, when I am very tired but still awake, logic does no more work but the results from the associative thinking which continues are often lousy because no logic has been applied as a sanity check.

Post by "Martin" of August 26, 2021 at 4:35 AM

Quote

"if the premises are false, the conclusion is going to be false."

No.

If the premises are false, the conclusion is not necessarily false.

Otherwise, you could "refute" a true statement by presenting it as the conclusion of false premises.

The truth table of a syllogism looks like this (you can verify by thinking it through line by line):

A * B -> C
T T T T T
T T T F F
T F F T T
T F F F F
F F T T T

F F T T F
F F F T T
F F F T F

You can see from this table that the conclusion may be true if any or both of the premises are false.

Post by “Don” of August 26, 2021 at 5:18 AM

[Quote from camotero](#)

"How do we know something is true? I can feel when something is true". I don't think this is true, but I'm open to be corrected. I'm pretty sure the person who said this didn't mean it and said it rhetorically or lightly as no one objected it. But as I said, I don't think you can feel truth. You may have true feelings. But the truth about something has to be established (and agreed upon to be able to move forward) logically, albeit after the senses gave us content to reason about, and after we've tested out reasoning with those same senses.

Your quote here [Mathitis Kipouros](#) reminded of this thread that I had started awhile ago: [Facts don't care about your feelings](#)

Post by “Martin” of August 26, 2021 at 5:21 AM

When (binary) logic is taught, it is usually exemplified by combining statements which are obviously true.

Logic works only with crisp (100% true) and timeless statements (or statements on events of the past or present). If any of the premises is not 100% true but only with some probability, the conclusion is not reliably true.

In fuzzy logic as applied technically in designing control loops, you can still get a conclusion with a high probability of truth if the examined system is linear.

In (practical or philosophical) cases which are not obvious, the premises are typically not crisp, their probabilities of truth are not known and it is not known whether the probabilities of truth of the premises are linearly connected with the probability of truth of the statement to be proven.

Epicurus knew that proponents of dialectics misrepresent the reasoning as crisp while it is actually not, was aware that logic may not fully apply to future events and saw that rhetors can confuse an untrained audience with paradoxons.

Therefore, it makes perfectly sense that he excluded logic from the canon of truth regarding daily life and philosophical discussion.

Nevertheless, he did use logic in his syllogisms and in what he called "true reasoning".

Post by "Don" of August 26, 2021 at 5:47 AM

Thank you, Martin! What [Martin](#) is saying was my impression as well. Epicurus was fully against using logic and rhetoric and argument to obfuscate the truth or to mislead people. People "gifted" with the ability to make fine speeches or craft elaborate but empty arguments can convince unsuspecting or uncritical people of anything.

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 7:50 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

What Martin is saying was my impression as well. Epicurus was fully against using logic and rhetoric and argument to obfuscate the truth or to mislead people.

I think "poetry" probably goes in that list as well.

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 8:03 AM

On Martin's posts, I agree that post 46 is a very good summary of the proper conclusions.

On post 44 I am not sure where that quote is coming from, but I do think that in common usage that position stated is correct, as something very similar occurs in the Torquatus narrative:

Quote

You are pleased to think him uneducated. The reason is that he refused to consider any education worth the name that did not help to school us in happiness. Was he to spend his time, as you encourage Triarius and me to do, in perusing poets, who give us nothing solid and useful, but merely childish amusement? Was he to occupy himself like Plato with music and geometry, arithmetic and astronomy, **which starting from false premises cannot be true**, and which moreover if they were true would contribute nothing to make our lives pleasanter and therefore better? Was he, I say, to study arts like these, and neglect the master art, so difficult and correspondingly so fruitful, the art of living?

On post 43 I think we are also probably disagreeing only in details. When I refer to "map" there I refer to the kind that those of us old enough used to know before google - the large fold-up paper variety that we used to carry in our car gloveboxes. I would say that we never need a paper map to navigate our local neighborhoods, and what we internalize after learning our way around it is our experience - we have not committed a paper map to memory. And a paper map and a physical compass with spinning pointer are what I think we are referring to in making the analogies we are making.

To repeat I think Martin's post 46 is very well stated and a good summary of the proper conclusions to draw. The main thing i would add to that is to go back to Delacy's point and reassert that Aristotle and Plato were insisting that nothing be considered fully true unless it could be stated as a syllogism, and in pointing out the differences between true and false logic and reasoning, we need to be sure that the full significance of their position - their error - sinks in. they were not just inaccurate in their expressions, they were consciously embracing a highly damaging point of view of life.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2021 at 8:25 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I do think, however, in general, that we are suffering from the difficulty of really having a bright line definition of many of these words (logic, reason, dialectic, dialectical logic, etc).

Yes. Even if it's not a Canonical faculty, don't you think is worth being clear about what it is? or what it's not?

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Of all the comments this is probably the most important to articulate better. We confirm that the tower is in fact square by walking toward it, viewing it from different angles, touching it, etc. It is never reason *alone* which does the confirming, it is the reliability of subsequent multiple sensations.

Ok, I see what you mean. But what if we're not able to go closer to the tower? (or the atoms) wouldn't it be nice to have some certainty that perhaps you have an alternative (which we do) to go to the tower? Like, with reason, formulate an indirect way of determining it's shape and testing it. Again, the testing **wil involve the sensations**, (so I'm not disregarding those as essential), but can you see here how reason comes as a very good thing for us. I guess no one has disputed reason that works this way, to our pleasure.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"Well, comparing multiple sensations to see which is reliably repeated IS a form of "reason" or even "logic!"

I agree this doesn't make sense. But you do need reason in order to be able to use your sensations better, more usefully, in different ways that help you more than in raw, brute fashion. Don't we?

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Ok now on that point it is my position (and I think Epicurus') that there IS no essential difference between humans and other animals. And that precise argument is stated very clearly by Cicero who complains that Epicurus reduces us to the state of animals by not worshipping reason/logic as he (Cicero) does.

I get it that is not convenient to give humans a special place in the world, but we can nonetheless use reason, and it has been, evidently, advantageous (also disadvantageous) to us. I firmly believe that it's been disadvantageous to us because we haven't been using the other two legs of the canon right, feelings and anticipations, and were these to take a more prominent role in the consciousness of most, many things in the world would change for good.

You don't have to go all the way to worship reason, but I'm arguing that recognizing the important place it evidently and materially has in our lives, is of the essence not to over simplify Epicurean Philosophy. Don't raise it to the level of the canon, I get it, in order to keep it in check and not fall in the trap of over valuing it, I like that, but do recognize it has an active role in the use of the canonical functions, and as such (at least for me) is of the essence to understand it better; I'm not sure that throwing the baby with the bath water of platonic ideals, absurd/paradoxical abstractions, is going to be useful towards understanding that part of Nature better.

About the podcast, I also believe it was Elayne who said it, but, as I'm not sure, and as I wasn't listening to the podcast in that precise moment, hence, not having the full context of that particular part of the conversation, I preferred not to name anyone.

It's a great idea that we should put the doubts or comments directly in the episodes, I'll try and do that.

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2021 at 8:35 AM

[Quote from camotero](#)

Ok, I see what you mean. But what if we're not able to go closer to the tower? (or the atoms) wouldn't it be nice to have some certainty that perhaps you have an alternative (which we do) to go to the tower? Like, with reason, formulate an indirect way of determining it's shape and testing it. Again, the testing will involve the sensations, (so I'm not disregarding those as essential), but can you see here how reason comes as a very good thing for us. I guess no one has disputed reason that works this way, to our pleasure.

on this point I think this is the point Laertius emphasized Epicurus held to be an example of the need to "wait" before forming a firm opinion. And this situation ("we are not able to go closer to the tower) occurs many times in life, with the primary example being that of the stars, which we cannot reach to confirm our thoughts, and that is where the "multiple explanations' viewpoint comes in.

[Quote from camotero](#)

You don't have to go all the way to worship reason, but I'm arguing that recognizing the important place it evidently and materially has in our lives, is of the essence not to over simplify Epicurean Philosophy.

I agree with you in conclusion and full context, but in the context in which Epicurus was talking (which I think still applies today) the specific and important error of the general Greek philosophers essentially did amount to a "worship" of reason, which specifically and thoroughly harms the proper viewpoint expressed in the canonical principles. So I think Epicurus thought it important to stress that this isn't some minor disagreement that we can gloss over and accept that there is a difference of opinion. This is a field where an all out 'war' is necessary, and where Epicurus thought it necessary to repeatedly warn his students in the strongest of terms.

And i would say that his concern was fully justified by events, because over succeeding generations the arguments of the stoics and others playing games with logic did shake lose a significant number of Epicureans (including those who came up with the "fourth leg" of the canon, and those like Torquatus who came to believe that an elaborate logical proof or explanation of the nature of pleasure was necessary).

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2021 at 9:09 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

the repeatability of the senses

Do you mean the ability to repeatedly use the senses as tests, right?

By the way, this brings up to mind another possible cause for confusion. Perhaps we're conflating the inaccuracies of language with the inaccuracies of reason. It's obvious to me that we have to agree on the same meanings of language as the medium to communicate our arguments, but the confusion that derives from it doesn't invalidate the reasoning it is trying to communicate. It's a similar instance of the case of value vs. truth, that DeWitt used. If the meaning of language is not properly agreed upon, the argument, or exposition of reasoning, may end up not being useful, but not because of that the argument is false, and when all the meanings are properly agreed upon, we are going to be able to see the truth of the argument.

Also, I know it could seem, to some, a hassle to have to be clarifying meanings of terms all the time, but it can be a pleasurable activity too, as I've seen in many threads around here. It's a joy that not other animal on earth gets the luxury of experiencing. There's so much depth of experience available in that activity. Not only the pleasure of the process, if you're nerdy like me, but the pleasure of reaching clarity with friends about a concept that is going to be useful to the group. But we need not satanize concepts and abstractions, we need to agree that concepts are good, are a material part of our human nature (they rest in the atoms of our minds), and helpful to move forward with a certain context of time and space. Thus, they are

going to have to be "brought to present value" whenever that context changes, but that, again, can be very pleasurable too.

I think that paragraph from Laertius, while giving importance to the proper, constant and repeated engagement of sensations, (which is great, and probably a huge problem when not done) doesn't disregard reason at all, but rather reinforces it's importance.

I feel a bit more confident that the term "critical thinking" could be the modern meaning of "true reason". The "critical" part is what makes it material and useful for us, as a test, perhaps, yes, of a second order to the sensations, preconceptions and feelings, but an indispensable test nonetheless.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2021 at 9:15 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Of course this begs the question: "how do you define prudence or critical thinking?"
Film at 11

I couldn't find this you're referring to [Godfrey](#) in the videos I posted; or do you mean another film?

Post by “Don” of August 26, 2021 at 9:19 AM

[Quote from camotero](#)

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Of course this begs the question: "how do you define prudence or critical thinking?" Film at 11

I couldn't find this you're referring to [Godfrey](#) in the videos I posted; or do you mean another film?

It's an American figure of speech;

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2021 at 10:08 AM

[Mathitis Kipouros](#) that reminds me that your native language is not English and your country of residence is not the USA, correct? If not, that's likely an advantage to you rather than a disadvantage, but it's still a relevant consideration to be sure we communicate clearly.

For example, in this thread, Martin's "No." I find to be distinctly German and it is good to know that he is German so that his directness is interpreted correctly. 😊

It's very possible that differences in background also help explain some of our differences in perspective:

[Quote from camotero](#)

But we need not satanize concepts and abstractions, we need to agree that concepts are good

That's an example there. At this point in my study of Epicurus I prefer to try to be really specific and avoid a sweeping statement like "concepts are good" any more than I would say "concepts are bad" or "abstractions" are bad. It's probably more accurate to say "concepts can be useful" without the value judgment implied in being "good," especially without a specific statement of what concepts are being discussed.

So to say "concepts are good" comes pretty close to what I perceive Plato and the stoics to have been doing in essentially "worshipping" formal logic. (I think I'll use "formal logic" as the term for a while.)

[Quote from camotero](#)

Perhaps we're conflating the inaccuracies of language with the inaccuracies of reason.

Perhaps so, but in this way of stating the issue, my own perspective is that "reason" and "logic" are purely inventions of the human mind and it is important to stress that they are in no way divine or superior to human affairs. I think people understand that about "language" but they tend to think that "reason" is something that exists independent of humanity, floating in the air,

as if the request to "be reasonable" actually means something useful and specific in common everyday life (it most of the time does not, in my view, because the "devil is in the details").

[Quote from camotero](#)

doesn't disregard reason at all, but rather reinforces it's importance.

Same point as above. Hammers are extremely important in carpentry, but in the "great scheme of things" they have a distinctly subordinate place, and if we are evaluating philosophy and comparing Epicurus to the others, then the important thing to know about "reason" may well be that the other philosophers are absolutely wrong about how important it is (depending again on definition).

[Quote from camotero](#)

I feel a bit more confident that the term "critical thinking" could be the modern meaning of "true reason".

I am personally reluctant to endorse the term "critical" even more than I would endorse the term "skeptical." Yes both have good aspects, but it seems to me in common usage both terms have developed a negative connotation that is probably well deserved when they are taken to their logical conclusions. The truth of the reason of Epicurus, I would say, is not based on it being a "critique" or "skeptical" of anything, but of it being a realistic assessment of the nature of the universe and our capabilities and limits of understanding it.

There are always going to be issues in life that you aren't going to have the evidence you would like to have to be certain of what is the "truth" of the matter. In those situations, you must have a readily-accessible method for analyzing the positive assertions you are comfortable making plus the limits of those assertions. Thus the importance of the "waiting" doctrine, and the multiple possibilities viewpoint, and the nature and role of the canonical faculties, etc. None of that is adequately expressed in terms of "being logical" or "being reasonable." I don't think there is any term even close to adequate other than "being Epicurean."

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 10:13 AM

Note: If I recall this thread started off entitled with the single word "Logic." I have tried to fine-tune that so that it's now "**Issues In The Meaning And Definition of Logic**" to make the subject easier to find in the future. If someone wants to suggest a more appropriate title that is more representative of the topic at any point, please say so.

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2021 at 10:22 AM

As we go through this I would appreciate any comments on DeLacy's formulation that Aristotle had held that

Quote

"inferences from signs are not reliable except in cases where the inferences can be converted into valid syllogisms."

I'm not so concerned that we be able to find a cite in Aristotle to that effect, as I think this is probably just DeLacy's general interpretation.

What I am concerned about is whether this sentence and formulation are useful in describing the issues between the Epicureans and proponents of the "pro-formal-logic" position. And of course in that regard it's necessary to really be able to articulate in a few words the opposite positions so that the discussion is clear.

It appears that Epicurus may have associated the position he is arguing against (and which Delacy may be right in asserting to Aristotle and probably Plato et al) with the "Megarians" ---- but "MEGARIAN" just doesn't cut it as a tag for the position we're arguing against.

We could call them "worshippers of logic" but that is too argumentative and I am sure they would deny that (the worship "god" even as they identify god with pure reason, and similar formulations).

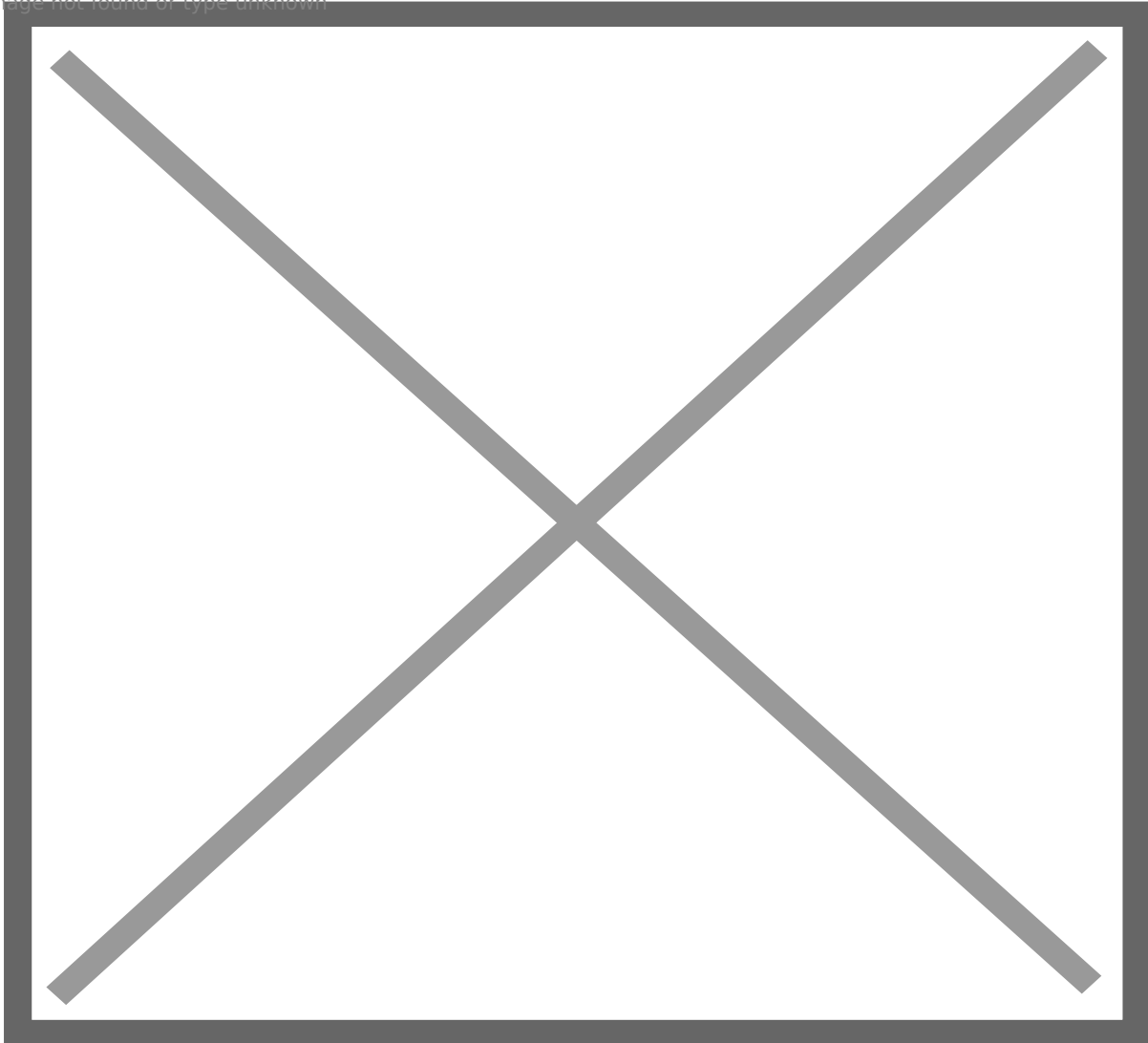
And another example: I continue to agree with Martin's post 46 as to the details of what we are talking about. However in order to use our words clearly, we're going to want to come to some form of agreement (or at least be able to state our own words and definitions) as to what words to use to describe the opposing camps.

In order to decide which side we're on, and understand why, we need to be able to articulate a definition of both camps. I doubt at this point that any of us (including me) are comfortable in setting out what we think the "best labels" for the opposing camps would be. Yes we could call them "Stoic" and "Epicurean" but since we're not clear on the meanings that doesn't help much more than describing one or the other as "Megarian."

Post by “Don” of August 26, 2021 at 10:31 AM

At the risk of posting another Wikipedia link, here is a summary of the Megarian school:

Image not found or type unknown



[Megarian school - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

along with some external links

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2021 at 10:40 AM

So it "might" be reasonable to identify "Against the Megarians" as primarily against dialectical logic... And of course what is "Dialectical logic" as opposed to "logic in general?" At the moment I'll continue to use "formal logic" which is a tip of hat to Plato's forms, but I am not so sure that "symbolic" logic or "syllogistic" logic isn't a better way to describe the opposing position (and even then Martin is probably right that you still have to parse further. "Syllogistic" suffers from being a word that most people don't have a firm grasp of the meaning of which might not advance the ball very much.

Quote

The **Megarian school** of philosophy, which flourished in the 4th century BC, was founded by [Euclides of Megara](#), one of the pupils of [Socrates](#). Its ethical teachings were derived from Socrates, recognizing a single [good](#), which was apparently combined with the [Eleatic](#) doctrine of [Unity](#). Some of Euclides' successors developed [logic](#) to such an extent that they became a separate school, known as the **Dialectical school**. Their work on [modal logic](#), [logical conditionals](#), and [propositional logic](#) played an important role in the development of logic in antiquity.

The major advantage of calling these people "Megarians" is that in "American" that sounds like they are some evil nation from some faraway planet! 😊

And that reminds me of this: "This is the voice of the Mysterons."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs13rCqfH9k>

So who speaks for the Megarians?

Post by "Don" of August 26, 2021 at 10:51 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The major advantage of calling these people "Megarians" is that in "American" that sounds like they are some evil nation from some faraway planet!

Well, probably to an Athenian, those people in Megara were from some evil nation when it came to their philosophical school.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 26, 2021 at 1:32 PM

Quote from Martin

We don't consider maps necessary to our being able day-to-day to navigate in reality because we have internalized them and use them intuitively without realizing it.

Similarly, we have internalized "syllogistic" logic such that we use it in our day-to-day thinking when fully awake without realizing it.

No 😊

Although one might argue that this is a chicken or egg conundrum, I think it's not and I have to disagree with this statement. A map is a two dimensional representation of a three dimensional environment. We navigate a 3D environment by noting markers and our subconscious forms connections between these. I recall conversations between an architect, a geologist and a botanist. The architect navigated by noticing buildings, the geologist by noticing rock formations, and the botanist by noticing plants. Each was oblivious to the markers of the others. None of these systems of markers have anything to do with internalizing a map as commonly defined; a map is constructed by visualizing the markers in space and transferring them to paper.

Similarly, I see syllogistic logic as an attempt to represent ways of thinking, not as the way in which we think. Some of the greatest technical and creative innovations have occurred after a person has put aside a problem and allowed it to "bubble" in the subconscious mind. To say that this person is subconsciously performing syllogistic logic is such a stretch as to be ridiculous, in my opinion.

Thinking that a map precedes navigation or that syllogistic logic precedes thinking is similar to thinking that mathematics preceded matter. All of these are tools to try to help us understand the world.

Having said all of that, I do agree that we can and do internalize maps and/or logic and/or mathematics. But these are just instances of using the tools provided, and people use them to greater or lesser degrees depending on the way their minds work.

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2021 at 1:35 PM

1. I am interested to see if Martin has more to say about "maps" in reaction to the comment.
2. As to the first "no" I have never met a Californian without a good sense of humor. :-). (but I hear they do exist!)

Post by “Martin” of August 27, 2021 at 3:12 AM

Except for the "No", I agree with Godfrey's comment #61.

In my comment #43, I used "map" in a loose meaning in the sense of a model just because I was referring to a quote using the word "map" and did not notice that my statement becomes wrong when applying a proper definition of the word "map". A model could be anything, e.g. a set of markers.

Regarding syllogisms, I meant the internalization such that we do not need to write down a truth table every time we consciously apply logic. My personal observation at the end of #43 is an indication that we cannot subconsciously perform logic in a reliable way while we are not fully conscious. Logic is apparently performed in a part of the brain which actually turns off when we are not fully awake.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 27, 2021 at 9:39 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

your native language is not English and your country of residence is not the USA, correct? If not, that's likely an advantage to you rather than a disadvantage, but it's still a relevant consideration to be sure we communicate clearly.

Yes, that's correct, dear Cassius. It's kind of you to take that into account.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It's very possible that differences in background also help explain some of our differences in perspective

Yes, definitively. I come from a religious education, so there's that, but perhaps most of us come from some sort of religious education; fortunately, mine was not a religious family at all; even though my family was not particularly religious, I hadn't a formation that shielded me from the nonsense of "virtue for the sake of virtue" either, and that's something that I struggle to shed, to this day. Also, being an engineer, reason, definitions and idealizations have been an important and very valuable part of my formation and my approach to the world. The only times that I thought reason could take a secondary role, was when it came in conflict with "what was good", "the good" being defined as something related to virtues and idealizations, so there was no shortage of confusion there. So, I've promoted, and lived by, virtue for the sake of virtue, for too long, though I don't anymore. I come with wounds and confusions from my time playing Jedi, if you will 😞

So, reason, has been a great tool for me at many times, thus I have a bit of trouble putting it in a secondary role. I find analogies in my experience using reason to soothe myself at times of fear when I was a child, and distress now as an adult, and how Epicurus used reason to get rid of the unfounded fears about the things that disturbed many if not most during his time, particularly superstition. Although, it's been idealizations, rather than superstition (although I guess they're some sort of superstition), what's been a source of distress for me the most. I don't know yet how to use the canon as a tool for soothing, although allowing myself to see life as the greatest good, and pleasure as its deterministic goal/end/north, and permitting myself to follow it with use of my free will and reason, has been of great help so far, so I'm hopeful.

As an aside, I'm sure, that the "deterministic" part of my last sentence is going to jump out. I think this is what I was referring to in another thread. As I see it now (feel free to try and change my mind), what we feel pleasure from is not a choice, is largely undetermined by us, and mostly, if not fully, is determined by our biology and formation.

And thus, I circle back to reason, to touch on the risks of following pleasure *without the check of reason*. I think of myself as a child of teenager, and wonder whether I would've been served well by the concept of pleasure being the end/goal/telos of life. I also wonder, whether or not the virtues for the sake of virtues can serve as guardrails to protect children and teenagers from doing stuff that could be harmful for them in the long term, as a way of forming in them anticipations that allow them to live happily before being exposed to these more complicated ways of seeing life. Most children, teenagers, and arguably some adults, don't have the ability to foresee (again, reason) the consequences of their choices and avoidances. Any thoughts on this?

Post by "Cassius" of August 27, 2021 at 11:11 AM

Thanks for the background in your post. We definitely both in the forum and in the podcast the effect of different upbringings. You will probably hear in the podcast Elayne say that she was brought up in a very scientific family with little religious influence. The amount of time someone has been faced with religious doctrines definitely influences how interested they are in discussing those subjects.

Two of your comments concern me though:

[Quote from camotero](#)

So, reason, has been a great tool for me at many times, thus I have a bit of trouble putting it in a secondary role

[Quote from camotero](#)

And thus, I circle back to reason, to touch on the risks of following pleasure without the check of reason.

I think you're probably not yet seeing what I think is the real issue, especially in the second comment. I think what people in your situation (as I understand it) would be better of saying is something like this:

Quote

"So "reason" has been a great tool for me at many times, and I have always been taught and thought that being reasonable was the best anyone can be. Thus I have a bit of trouble dealing with the idea that any part of what most people think of as "reason" can be a problem. I've always understood formal logic, or syllogistic logic, or dialectical logic (whatever you want to call it) to be a good thing, and thus it is surprising to me that Epicurus pointed out many dangers and damaging effects that go along with the misuse of those things.

Further, I have always considered "reason" to be the ultimate test of truth, and I find it very disconcerting to hear that Epicurus held that the "senses," as well as pleasure and pain and something called "anticipations" (which I don't understand) to be the test of truth, with reason in a secondary role only adding a little. It's hard even to begin to understand what he means, because doesn't everything have to be "reasonable" to make sense? If I understand now what Epicurus was saying, it appears he was saying that reason is a part of the opinion-making process, and since the opinion-making process is always subject to error, it's a bad idea to take an "opinion" as unchallengeable in any situation. It appears to me now that what Epicurus was saying

is that at any moment the only data we have that is unchallengeable to us, because we experience it in the moment, come from the five senses, pleasure and pain, and those pesky anticipations. He seems to have been saying that while reasoning is an important part of the opinion-making and conclusion-reaching process, reaching the right result in reasoning is totally dependent on observations of reality that can be verified, and the only things given to us by nature that have direct contact with reality are the three canonical faculties.

After all, Epicurus also said "[PD16](#). In but few things chance hinders a wise man, but the greatest and most important matters, reason has ordained, and throughout the whole period of life does and will ordain."

So the more I study it seems that what Epicurus was concerned about was focusing our attention on the data we get from our natural faculties that we take as "givens," and that those serve as the "ruler" against which we compare our opinions to judge their correctness. We can say that various parts of the opinion-making involve reason, but we never look at "reason alone," and especially the kind of "reason alone" that *can* be used by certain philosophers and other people, as the ultimate thing that we compare our opinions against."

So especially on your second quote, you do use "reason" as a part of evaluating your decisions and deciding what to choose and what to avoid. But the ruler ("the tool of precision" according to DeWitt) is not the standard of truth. (As an exception to illustrate the rule, if you want to invent a new system, a particular object *can* be made to be a standard, if for example you set up a certain bar somewhere as a unit of measurement, like Wikipedia says: "In 1799, the metre was redefined in terms of a prototype metre bar (the actual bar used was changed in 1889).") Even in the case of using a particular bar as a standard, you then develop "rulers" against that standard and you use those rulers as your tool in everyday life.

But in general, any measuring device was originally developed against some other standard, against which which the measuring device was created. What we are talking about here is that Epicurus said the ultimate standard of conduct is pleasure and pain, because that's all Nature gave us as stop and go signals. All our tests of what will eventually happen to us are judged against that. "Reason" is best considered as a tool, as a sort of measuring device, just like all of the "virtues." There is no absolute standard of "reason" or "reasonableness" anywhere in a Bureau of Standards in Brussels or anywhere else. And the common danger involved in thinking about "reason" in itself, just like all of the "virtues," is that people start worshiping the virtues in themselves, and consider "virtue to be its own reward."

The same thing is going on with "reason." Reason is by no means its own reward, and it should not be worshiped as a goal or an end in itself, but that is exactly what many people and philosophers seem to do, whether they are up front about it or not.

Post by “Don” of August 27, 2021 at 2:46 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Reason is by no means its own reward, and it should not be worshiped as a goal or an end in itself,

But pleasure IS its own reward and is a goal in itself... which is what makes it the greatest good. Couldn't resist poking that bear again 😊

Post by “Cassius” of August 27, 2021 at 3:30 PM

LOL. And that's why I made those remarks about "Don will come in and explain all of this to us!" --- we can count on Don to go right to the heart of the issue! 😊

So that I can add something more than this joke to this thread, let me poke another bear I've poked often in the past. When I was much younger I used to study the works of Ayn Rand, and from that experience I came away with it burned into me that "Here is someone (Rand) who really does in fact worship "reason."

I recall reading that she wanted the word "RATIONAL" on her headstone, even though I don't think she eventually did that.

And of course no one reading Rand can escape her worship of Aristotle as a virtual god of reason.

Then in subsequent years added to that I became familiar with the Stoics and observed that they were doing almost exactly the same thing as Rand in putting "reason" at the center of their analysis.

So this is where I see more of that "context" I've discussed recently with camotero. Some people are brought up steeped in religion, and so they are always interested in how Epicurus jibes with the religions viewpoint. I pretty much check that box personally. And then some get exposed to the Rand-like approach where they are taught to hold reason as essentially the standard of all things -- reason being the essence of what Rand would refer to as "man *qua* man." And I think if we set our minds to it we could come up with literal gobs of examples of philosophers all across the ages in that same boat, singing hymns of praise to "reason."

So in balancing how Epicurus could say both [PD16](#) praising reason, while still in the rest of his philosophy putting reason in a firm secondary role to his "canon of truth," I think we need to take into account that it's very possible that Epicurus was as fed up with the worship of "reason" as I can get myself today when I let myself think about it too long. 😊

Therefore we aren't talking about Epicurus opposing reason in the form of "common sense" or simple "consistency" or those ordinary senses. All of those I think he fully endorsed. We're talking about Epicurus pointing out the "limits of reason" specifically including those who try to use formal /syllogistic / symbolic logic to convince us to overturn the more day-to-day conclusions that we reach through the ordinary use of our ordinary faculties.

That's why I think Jefferson was exactly right in this quote below (once you take out the deistic tone that Jefferson was probably using to protect himself). I think Epicurus was essentially in tune with the last part I am highlighting from the letter Peter Carr, August 10, 1787.

It's hard for me to read this sentence: "This sense is submitted, indeed, in some degree, to the guidance of reason; but it is a small stock which is required for this: even a less one than what we call common sense"

..... without thinking of Diogenes Laertius' " For all thoughts have their origin in sensations by means of coincidence and analogy and similarity and combination, reasoning too contributing something."

I realize this applies probably only to ethics, and we're talking more than that, but I do think it's instructive, so here's the full paragraph:

Quote

He who made us would have been a pitiful bungler, if he had made the rules of our moral conduct a matter of science. For one man of science, there are thousands who are not. What would have become of them? Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this object. He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong, merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his Nature, as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality, and not the [beautiful], truth, &c., as fanciful writers have imagined. The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body. This sense is submitted, indeed, in some degree, to the guidance of reason; but it is a small stock which is required for this: even a less one than what we call common sense. State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, & often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules.