

Epicurean Perceptual Content by A. Gavran Milos

Post by "Cassius" of December 4, 2020 at 11:14 AM

Looks like a good find and important read. I had time to skim the first page or two but I was immediately struck that DeWitt's way of explaining the truth issue (honestly reported, like a witness in court who is honestly reporting but might be mistaken) doesn't seem to be Milos' approach. If you have read the full article, Godfrey, is my impression correct?

I see this is the conclusion. "Factive"????? That doesn't sound very helpful to me.

Then there is the sentence that I underlined. If I read this correctly then he is basically taken the Bailey approach: we see things, we form concepts (pictures) of what we have seen, and those concepts/pictures become standards of truth for future analysis. That's not the view I tend to agree with, but I want to read and think about this in more detail. My problem has always been, and remains, that I think Epicurus held a standard of truth to be something that is perceptual and not challengeable in and of itself, in that we need to take every perception (taste, touch, sight, etc) as a given for what is being honestly reported by the faculty at that moment. A "belief" or a "concept," on the other hand, is by definition full of opinion, and can't be considered unchallengeable, can it? Or can it? I think another way of stating my concern relates to his last sentence. To me, the process of seeing things and forming pictures is obviously very important, but I don't consider it to be an "epistemological" tool as much as an "analytic" tool (or thinking tool or some other word that preserves the distinction that this tool contains opinion, while the other tools -the five senses - do not).

passively given in perception without any intervention upon stimuli. I believe that taken this way the content of perception can be characterized as purely factual. Exactly the feature of passivity and givenness enables perception to serve as the foundation of cognition, to be self-evident and the criterion of truth. Namely in perceiving subject is not able to intervene in the process, but is passively stimulated from outside, which in the end guarantees validity of all perceptions. In Epicurean terms, the eidolic theory excludes a possibility of any intervention in perceptual content, for which I argued, is the starting point for reading that such content is nonconceptual.

Since perceptions are impossible to refute, they sharply differ from beliefs which can be false. Given that perceptions in Epicurean epistemology cannot be false it seems plausible to assume that truth and falsity cannot be ascribed to perceptions and beliefs in the same sense. Therefore, I accept a new proposal for the interpretation of *alethes* as factive. ?????

From this we can infer that the beliefs will be true if they correctly extract and structure information delivered through the sensory organs by applying correct concepts in order to classify, structure and express the content of perception. The concepts that are applied are Epicurean preconceptions. This reading I believe serves as a good ground for understanding why preconceptions are necessary as the second criterion of truth. Namely, preconceptions originate from a memory of what is often perceived (DL X.33) and

enable us to articulate what we see in the form of judgment and as such are necessary epistemological tool for testing truth and falsehood together with perceptions.¹¹