

Tactical Question for the Group Re Terminology In Discussing Reason and Logic

Post by “Joshua” of January 19, 2021 at 8:46 PM

Quote

"When making decisions, don't use logic and reason, use the Epicurean canon."

Hmmm...☐☐

I'm experiencing some heavy resistance to this phrasing. Let me see if I can articulate a response.

I first take issue with what might be differing interpretations with the word *decision*. If the word *decision* means "*a conclusion or resolution reached after consideration*", and these decisions can either be—according to the prevailing view of psychology—*rational* or *irrational* (in the neutral connotation of that last word), then we're faced with a startling apposition! Am I suggesting to my friends that they only make irrational decisions? I hope not. I think we too easily forget how quickly reason encroaches even on the simplest and most absent-minded of choices.

Here's a decision I often make based on personal pleasure; "I think I'll get a coke."

And here's only *some* of the underlying architecture of that decision;

-Observation 1: "This place sells soft drinks in a range of choices."

-Observation 2: "My previous experience with soft drinks—and it is *extensive*—suggests to me that a soft drink will give me pleasure."

-Observation 3 (self evident): "pleasure is the end or goal of my life."

-Premise 1 (inductive reasoning): "If I get a coke it will probably give me pleasure this time, too."

-Decision/Conclusion: "I think I'll get a coke."

So that even if I were to restrict the question only to 'decisions about pleasure', or 'decisions about the proper end of life', I would still have problems with it. But how much more troubling when we move beyond these humble beginnings!

I have family members who hold to a position they call "Zetetic Astronomy". One of the conclusions of their astronomy is that the Earth is flat. We have very little to learn from *what* these people think, but there is a lot to be learned from *how* they think. The basis of Zeteticism is that the traditional Scientific Method is fundamentally flawed. Scientists begin by making hypotheses about their observations, which they then attempt to falsify. From the point of view of the Zeteticist, these scientists are merely introducing a prejudice or bias into their work when they hypothesize. "What they *ought* to be doing instead (this is me paraphrasing) is performing the observation with an unbiased mind, and trusting the results."

For example; "I don't observe a gravitational pull when I put two apples side by side. No evidence for gravity."

"When I pour water on a baseball, it runs off onto the ground. No evidence for spinning ball with water on it."

"When I ride a merry-go-round, I can feel movement and rotation. I don't normally feel that. No evidence for motion or rotation of Earth."

You get the gist. I've had wearying hours of such "arguments", and have no stomach for them any longer. This particular individual used to drive me to distraction by failing to meet one simple demand; articulate your argument in the form of a syllogism. He never agreed to do it. C'est la vie!

TL;DR—The point I'm laboring to make is that reason and logic impend rather quickly in any decision-making process. Epicurus was right to exclude them from the canon, but they become inescapable *fast*. No, that's not advice I would give to my friends.