

# **Epicurean Logic and Reason: Deriving True Opinion Through Evidence From The Canon of Truth**

**Post by "Cassius" of January 20, 2021 at 8:15 AM**

Woke up this morning thinking about this:

I believe that for a significant number of people, it is important to be able to explain logically and reasonably why logic and reason are insufficient to answer the ultimate questions of life and "the good" and how to spend our time.

If I were to reduce that as basically as I can, I would say that as Epicurus held, nature gives us only "feeling" - pain and pleasure - by which to decide what to choose and what to avoid.

The issue with formal reason and logic is that pain and pleasure can never be adequately reduced to words or other symbols. While it is possible to use words to describe scientific measurements and to somewhat approximate reality, it is not possible to use words to approximate feeling with a great degree of accuracy. Feelings can be estimated but cannot be accurately reduced to words. "Let  $A=B$  and  $B=C$  therefore  $A=C$ " may be accurate in significant ways, but such symbolic formulas can never encompass the many aspects of feeling.

The Dialectical method of teaching was emphasized by the ancient Epicureans to be a particular problem. In pointed question and answer form it is impossible to convey in symbols or words all the aspects of feeling which need to be considered in evaluating issues such as "the good." There is in fact in conversation a tendency to be agreeable and to wish to avoid taking the time that would be required to consider all of the many aspects of feeling. As a result conclusions reached by dialectic are always truncated and inaccurate because they cannot evaluate every aspect of the feelings involved. Further, the more a dialectical discussion is aimed at the discovery of "universals," the more the discussion necessarily departs from accurately reflecting the feelings of pain and pleasure of the individuals who would supposedly be applying those universal rules.

Those are a couple of points I would include in any discussion of the limitations of formal logic and reason. I am sure there are others?