

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

Post by “Cassius” of January 21, 2021 at 3:36 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Conclusions about absence of gods can't be accurately made from logic.

I agree with that, although I believe it should be stated as ".....cannot be accurately made from logic alone." I think that would be one reason why the Epicureans considered "anticipations" to be a kind of innate evidence which provides an evidentiary starting point for evaluation of the subject, so that the entire subject would not be grounded in abstract logic and speculation

[Quote from Elayne](#)

I put my confidence in my first-hand observations of nature, and in the complete absence of evidence for supernatural gods.

I think the part where we are not connecting is here. I agree that the root of the issue is first-hand observation, but I think Epicurus held that it is proper to infer conclusions from first-hand observation which we then treat as established principles and expect to be valid even in places where we have not seen any evidence (such as beyond reach of telescopes). Such a principle would be "the universe has no supernatural gods over it," or "nothing comes from or goes to nothing" treated not just as a sum of prior observations but as an established principle that can then be dealt with on an intellectual level as principles considered "proven" rather than in a category with those things which await further confirmation. That text reference to "awaiting further confirmation" I see as another indication that Epicurus held that observations must be converted to principles (to the category of "confirmed; no longer awaiting confirmation"), and those conclusions would then be a large part of the outlines he referenced in the opening of the letter to Herodotus to be used in daily processing of information.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

And whenever more detailed evidence is obtained, at the level too small or too far away to investigate without instruments, never has any researcher found any observations a god was needed to explain

Agreed, but as per the above, the conclusion that Epicurus reached from this observation was to place it in the category of knowledge which is not waiting further confirmation. We can call that category "first principles" or something else, but the category would be considered as

established to the point of a fundamental of nature, not just "the sum of past observations."

[Quote from Elayne](#)

You seem to want explanations which appeal to those with less education or intelligence, whether those explanations are correct or not.

Well in response to this I will simply say that we still are not joining the issue other than that you seem to be considering words like "logic" and "reason" as in tension with having an open mind to incorporate future observations. I see this as the point being made by Epicurus when stating then wise men should be "dogmatists" and "not mere skeptics" and also as the point made by Lucretius in considering the man who asserts that he knows nothing to be perverse or trifling or Lucian saying that an Epicurus would consider the deceit of Aristotle the Oracle Monger as a fraud, even though he did not know the precise way the fraud was being committed. We could also list here the statement by Lucretius that it would in fact be better to affirm an incorrect reason than to give up confidence in the senses; or really the entire "multivalent logic" approach where multiple possibilities are entertained where they are not contradicted by evidence. Each of these seem to me to affirm that Epicurus was suggesting that it is necessary to form our observations into principles which are then considered to be the building blocks by which we evaluate evidence and make our day to day decisions.

It seems to me that there is an issue here in how to consider whether anything is "established" in life to the point where it can be considered firm and unchallengeable within the philosophy. Thinking back to that statement of Epicurus, the point of the study of nature is not to become an encyclopedia of facts which ends with "and this is what has been discovered to this point and will be revised in our next edition" but to deduce a set of life operating principles by which we can confidently hope to live happily.