

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

Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2021 at 10:43 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

No amount of evidence can relieve someone's anxiety, according to evidence, but therapy can be extremely helpful

This is the sentence I would use to discuss what I see as the only practical difference between our positions. I don't think that Epicurus would have devoted so much of his life to exploring and writing about nature if he did not think that evidence can and does relieve anxiety in some people, when processed into a reasonable system of thought such as he presented in his philosophy. I think the point where we are missing each other is that you are correctly pointing out that for some people, no amount of evidence presented to them is going to change their mind. Such people are for any of many possible reasons not oriented toward making up their minds based on evidence, and for them some type of therapy is the appropriate option. But I would contend that many others DO make up their minds based on evidence, and its to those that Epicurus and Lucretius primarily directed their work. They wouldn't have ignored those who aren't interested in evidence, but the great bulk of their work seems to me clearly directed to those who were interested in a reasoned and logical analysis of the great questions of life. And yes, I'll repeat that I don't think a "reasoned and logical analysis of the great questions of life" means what Plato and the Stoics meant in their version of what I would call "formal logic."

As a result it is entirely appropriate for some people to devote their lives to the study of nature and to take that information and develop a system of reasonable and logical thought like Epicurus did, and like Lucretius followed. The fact that others exist for whom no amount of gathering of evidence and system-building and reasoned presentation is going to make a difference is no reason at all not to engage in gathering of evidence and system-building and reasoned presentation for those who find such activities persuasive.

[Quote from elli](#)

The laconic answer by Epicurus that excludes all the dilemmas of "either or" by Aristotle is : "I say, BOTH of the above"!

I agree with Elli's laconic answer here -- BOTH approaches are legitimate and the Epicurean tent is big enough to contain them both. But I would strongly resist the idea that the ethics should or could reasonably be presented without the physics and the epistemology (the discussion of reason and logic and evidence that we are discussing now).

[Quote from elli](#)

Because if you want to give a credence to my experience of the symposia in Athens, that friends of Thessaloniki and Athens met in person once a year... The results of all the conferences and the symposia in public became a whole mess.

I continue to be fascinated by the situation among the Epicureans in Greece, and I am not satisfied that we should let that question go unexamined. In fact I think the answer there is very likely close to the subject that we are discussing. I think Elli is correct that closer personal contact would help alleviate any "mess" that might exist between disputing participants in Greece (or anywhere else), but I also don't think that the disputes are "only" a result of lack of personal contact. I think if people don't identify differences in approaches and bring out those differences for examination, then issues can never be resolved and progress made.

Even though this current debate may seem disconcerting I think it's among the most important we've ever had. We've been through debates before about whether "pleasure as the goal" should be kept front and center in presenting Epicurean philosophy, and we've seen people go separate ways because of disagreement about that. Rather than just have these debates go unresolved, it seems to me it's a lot better to explore in the open the reasons **why** the issues are important. That way even if people have to agree to disagree, then those of each position can continue to explore the implications of their positions, rather than leaving the different perspectives frozen perpetually. I think this discussion has been very useful for us all and I'm very glad we have had it.