

Episode Fifty-Five - Reason Is Dependent On The Senses (Part 2)

Post by "Cassius" of January 25, 2021 at 5:47 PM

I hope some of the people who have been following the recent conversations on logic and reason will be able to listen and comment on this discussion. I think we have the foundation here for broad agreement on the role of the senses, but there is still much more to discuss in terms of fleshing out and --to use the term of the day - "describing" - the Epicurean method of thinking and decision-making.

We also need to deal in much greater detail with Charles's observation about Epicurus' views on "dogmatism." We have discussed that knowledge must be based on the senses (more accurately, the three legs of the Canon) but we have not really discussed what "knowledge" is.

This is probably a good time to review principal doctrine 24:

"24. If you reject any single sensation, and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation, and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment. And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong."

Also, from Diogenes Last time:

"Again, the fact of apperception confirms the truth of the sensations. And seeing and hearing are as much facts as feeling pain. From this it follows that as regards the imperceptible we must draw inferences from phenomena. For all thoughts have their origin in sensations by means of coincidence and analogy and similarity and combination, reasoning too contributing something.

....

Opinion they also call supposition, and say that it may be true or false: if it is confirmed or not contradicted, it is true ; if it is not confirmed or is contradicted, it is false. For this reason was introduced the notion of the problem awaiting confirmation: for example, waiting to come near the tower and see how it looks to the near view."

How does an Epicurean decide whether he "knows" something has been confirmed, or whether he should wait for more information? (Much the same question Martin raised in the podcast.)

Much more to come!