

Epicurean Rules of Evidence

Post by “Bryan” of January 26, 2021 at 10:23 PM

Thank you, Elli, for your response. I thank you also for your past comments on ΤΟ ΑΦΘΑΡΤΟΝ with its meaning of "that which is not in touch" which is good to keep in mind along with the connotations of "that which is self-sufficient" and "independent."

As we know, Epicurus reminded the people of his day not to add to their natural conceptions of gods, and to preserve them in the state "as the typical idea of a god is (mentally/naturally) engraved, ὡς ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ Νόησις ὑπεγράφη (X123b)." We have no ability to deny the existence of the conception, or the gods themselves, because "the knowledge of them is clear, ἐναργῆς δὲ ἐστὶν αὐτῶν ἡ Γνώσις." Which of course it is. Telling all the people around the world that the gods do not exist is like telling people that they themselves do not feel hunger or pain. They feel it, they know it. For an atheist to be made, a person must accept arguments that fight against their natural anticipations of the gods (or they assume the additional cultural ideas regarding the gods are the same as their anticipations, judge both to be ridiculous, and deny both together) – just as for a religious person to be made, they must accept additional ideas along with their natural anticipations.

Regarding the use of "intuitive apprehensions of the mind" ἡ φανταστικὴ ἐπιβολὴ τῆς διανοίας, we do have the use by Epicurus in KD24 and ΔΛ X51. "The entire graphic perception of the mind" "the full pictorial focus of the mind" "the complete visual attention of the mind." Because all thought is based upon images, the use of φανταστικὴ ('graphic') here is only further explaining the process of mental focus; the whole phrase is therefore equivalent to ἡ ἐπιβολὴ τῆς διανοίας ('the perception of the mind') alone, which Lucretius translates (2.740) as animī iniectus 'a casting of mental energy' or 'a throwing out of the attention.' Instead of using the modern analogy of 'focusing' the mind (as though the mind were something like a camera), Ἐπίκουρος and Lucretius use the analogy of 'throwing' or 'casting' the mind (as though the mind were something like a net). Put simply, animī iniectus and ἡ ἐπιβολὴ τῆς διανοίας are equivalent to our modern use of 'attention.'