

# Issues In The Meaning And Definition of Logic

Post by "Cassius" of August 27, 2021 at 11:11 AM

Thanks for the background in your post. We definitely both in the forum and in the podcast the effect of different upbringings. You will probably hear in the podcast Elayne say that she was brought up in a very scientific family with little religious influence. The amount of time someone has been faced with religious doctrines definitely influences how interested they are in discussing those subjects.

Two of your comments concern me though:

[Quote from camotero](#)

So, reason, has been a great tool for me at many times, thus I have a bit of trouble putting it in a secondary role

[Quote from camotero](#)

And thus, I circle back to reason, to touch on the risks of following pleasure without the check of reason.

I think you're probably not yet seeing what I think is the real issue, especially in the second comment. I think what people in your situation (as I understand it) would be better of saying is something like this:

Quote

"So "reason" has been a great tool for me at many times, and I have always been taught and thought that being reasonable was the best anyone can be. Thus I have a bit of trouble dealing with the idea that any part of what most people think of as "reason" can be a problem. I've always understood formal logic, or syllogistic logic, or dialectical logic (whatever you want to call it) to be a good thing, and thus it is surprising to me that Epicurus pointed out many dangers and damaging effects that go along with the misuse of those things.

Further, I have always considered "reason" to be the ultimate test of truth, and I find it very disconcerting to hear that Epicurus held that the "senses," as well as pleasure and pain and something called "anticipations" (which I don't understand) to be the test of truth, with reason in a secondary role only adding a little. It's hard even to begin to understand what he means, because doesn't everything have to be "reasonable" to

make sense? If I understand now what Epicurus was saying, it appears he was saying that reason is a part of the opinion-making process, and since the opinion-making process is always subject to error, it's a bad idea to take an "opinion" as unchallengeable in any situation. It appears to me now that what Epicurus was saying is that at any moment the only data we have that is unchallengeable to us, because we experience it in the moment, come from the five senses, pleasure and pain, and those pesky anticipations. He seems to have been saying that while reasoning is an important part of the opinion-making and conclusion-reaching process, reaching the right result in reasoning is totally dependent on observations of reality that can be verified, and the only things given to us by nature that have direct contact with reality are the three canonical faculties.

After all, Epicurus also said "[PD16](#). In but few things chance hinders a wise man, but the greatest and most important matters, reason has ordained, and throughout the whole period of life does and will ordain."

So the more I study it seems that what Epicurus was concerned about was focusing our attention on the data we get from our natural faculties that we take as "givens," and that those serve as the "ruler" against which we compare our opinions to judge their correctness. We can say that various parts of the opinion-making involve reason, but we never look at "reason alone," and especially the kind of "reason alone" that \*can\* be used by certain philosophers and other people, as the ultimate thing that we compare our opinions against."

So especially on your second quote, you do use "reason" as a part of evaluating your decisions and deciding what to choose and what to avoid. But the ruler ("the tool of precision" according to DeWitt) is not the standard of truth. (As an exception to illustrate the rule, if you want to invent a new system, a particular object \*can\* be made to be a standard, if for example you set up a certain bar somewhere as a unit of measurement, like Wikipedia says: "In 1799, the metre was redefined in terms of a prototype metre bar (the actual bar used was changed in 1889).") Even in the case of using a particular bar as a standard, you then develop "rulers" against that standard and you use those rulers as your tool in everyday life.

But in general, any measuring device was originally developed against some other standard, against which which the measuring device was created. What we are talking about here is that Epicurus said the ultimate standard of conduct is pleasure and pain, because that's all Nature gave us as stop and go signals. All our tests of what will eventually happen to us are judged against that. "Reason" is best considered as a tool, as a sort of measuring device, just like all of the "virtues." There is no absolute standard of "reason" or "reasonableness" anywhere in a Bureau of Standards in Brussels or anywhere else. And the common danger involved in thinking about "reason" in itself, just like all of the "virtues," is that people start worshiping the virtues in themselves, and consider "virtue to be its own reward."

The same thing is going on with "reason." Reason is by no means its own reward, and it should not be worshiped as a goal or an end in itself, but that is exactly what many people and philosophers seem to do, whether they are up front about it or not.