

Preconceptions and PD24

Post by "Cassius" of December 15, 2021 at 7:04 AM

Thanks to both of you guys for this post so far. This is an essay by DeWitt that I have tended to just glance over because of its technical nature, but you guys are wrestling with the same issue that he found so important, and in reviewing it I am seeing again why he spent so much time with the issue.

I do want to make a request that I hope you will keep in mind: In order to give your work as wide and strong an impact as possible, I hope you will take special care to spell out the possible conclusions and implications of the various options. It's very easy for more casual readers to throw up their hands and think that the difficult translation issues are just left to the experts, and not necessary for them to understand. It's probably true that the "translation" aspect of it is beyond most of us, but if we bury the conclusions inside the technicalities then I think people fail to see why the issues are so important.

In this case, it takes a lot of reading into the DeWitt article to discover that there are at least a couple of major issues involved, such as "Would or did Epicurus himself wish to use the literary device of *casting the mind or soul out into space*? It seems to me that modern writers now universally seem to agree that he did so, which DeWitt points out would be contrary to one of the most fundamental physical premises of the philosophy -- that the mind/soul is absolutely connected and tied to the body and cannot be separated from it.

There's also perhaps the ultimate issue of whether this terminology, whatever is meant by it, constitutes a "fourth leg of the canon." On that point it seems even more clear that Epicurus himself did not consider it to be so, and it ought to be an immediate red flag whenever later and lesser minds attempt to "improve upon" fundamental aspects of the philosophy of the original "genius."

Related to that is the complex relationship between the "true" and the "real" which I think we see over and over to be important in Epicurean philosophy. If we can't handle with intelligence a basic issue like whether Epicurus held "[all sensations are true](#)" then I doubt such a person can ever make anything else understandable about of Epicurean epistemology.

So I hope you guys can develop the discussion in ways that make the real-world conclusions clear. And it's worth encouraging many more of us to read the DeWitt essay in full, especially to dig out its conclusions, rather than just give up when we're hit with a barrage of untranslated words and phrases.