

Preconceptions and PD24

Post by "Cassius" of December 15, 2021 at 2:32 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

If you're saying there are commentators that put forward some kind of soul travel outside the body... Yeah, that makes no sense.

I think what's on my mind is that I pick up things on reading posts and articles from a variety of sources, so I should not overgeneralize. However I know from several discussions that the point being discussed here has been of interest in some of the discussions over in Greece. If considered strictly as a literary device, agreed - no harm done. But what I pick up is that those who contend that there should be considered to be a "fourth" leg of the canon consider this reference to be key in supporting the "fourth leg" theory. And of course this goes way back - long enough for Diogenes Laertius to refer to it.

So I THINK the point is that the issue to be avoided is seeing this as a "bridge" to platonism, or a "bridge" to making any kind of fully-formed concepts to be part of the canon itself. I believe the first and major point that probably gets lost is that the "canon of truth" is not itself a list of ideas, but instead a set of measuring devices which produce data from which ideas are formed. Even at that basic level I think there's a lot of confusion and the Stoic-sympathizers see this discussion as a path to finding "innate ideas" in Epicurean philosophy.

It's very innocent and fine to think in terms of flying through the universe mentally and seeing things from outer space. That should not lead to problems because no real Epicurean would think it possible for the soul or mind to literally leave the body. But if the wording turns into a device by which the mind has some kind of preprogrammed power to attach particular words to particular events (and that's an argument I have seen in private) then I think we're a long way down a road that wouldn't be started down in the first place if we were rigorous about the canonical faculties being automatic and pre-rational.

No doubt it's tricky, because the texts seem clear that Epicurus thinks that the mind can receive "images" directly. But even there I think the emphasis should be that these images are received in much the same way that the eyes receive light -- they may receive these things, but they don't make judgments about them or perceive them automatically as fully formed ideas.

I hope I don't sound tedious on this point but I've seen it come up over and over and every conversation needs to probably go back to these basics to be sure the table is set.