

The Beginning of an Outline of Epicurean Reasoning

Post by “Godfrey” of March 17, 2022 at 9:20 PM

The Hellenistic Philosophers has a translation of Sextus Empiricus, *Against the professors* 7.211–16 (Usener 247, part) (p. 142-3, kindle version) which seems to me to be a great start for an outline of methods of inference (or Epicurean logic, Epicurean reasoning, Epicurean processing). I edited and rearranged the text to get the beginnings of an outline.

1. The Basics

A. **Self-evidence is the foundation and basis of everything.**

B. **True opinions:** attested and non-contested by self-evidence

C. **False opinions:** contested and non-attested by self-evidence

D. **Conjectural opinions:** awaiting verification through attestation and/or contestation

2. Definitions

A. **Attestation:** perception through a self-evident impression of the fact that the object of opinion is such as it was believed to be.

Example: if Plato is approaching from far off, I form the conjectural opinion, owing to the distance, that it is Plato. But when he has come close, there is further testimony that he is Plato, now that the gap is reduced, and it is attested by the self-evidence itself.

B. **Non-contestation:** the following from that which is evident of the non-evident thing posited and believed.

Example, Epicurus, in saying that there is void, which is non-evident, confirms this through the self-evident fact of motion. For if void does not exist, there ought not to be motion either, since the moving body would lack a place to pass into as a result of everything's being full and solid. Therefore the non-evident thing believed is uncontested by that which is evident, since there is motion.

C. **Contestation:** is something which conflicts with non-contestation. It is the elimination of that which is evident by the positing of the non-evident thing.

Example: the Stoic says that void does not exist, judging something non-evident; but once this is posited about it, that which is evident, namely motion, ought to be co-eliminated with it. For if void does not exist, necessarily motion does not occur either, according to the method already demonstrated.

D. **Non-attestation**: opposed to attestation, being confrontation through self-evidence of the fact that the object of opinion is not such as it was believed to be.

Example, if someone is approaching from far off, we conjecture, owing to the distance, that he is Plato. But when the gap is reduced, we recognize through self-evidence that it is not Plato. The thing believed was not attested by the evident.

E. **Self-evident**: evident without proof or reasoning (from Merriam-Webster online)

It would probably be helpful to agree on plain English versions of these definitions!

Not covered here is the idea of multiple satisfactory theories from Pythocles and Lucretius. I don't have a cite at hand but that seems much more straightforward than this.