

The Beginning of an Outline of Epicurean Reasoning

Post by "Cassius" of March 18, 2022 at 5:41 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

But I believe I'm correct in my understanding that this snippet is only referring to the signs, not the method of inference

Here I am not sure but my comment would be that I think you are hinting correctly that there are definitely two processes involved in human life:. There is (1) the operation of the canonical faculties, which presents raw perceptual data to us automatically without injection of opinion, and (2) the conceptual reasoning process, where we weigh the evidence and form our opinions, and this is the stage that is not automatic and where our opinions formed can be "right" or "wrong" depending on our method of processing.

In other words, I have always thought that Diogenes Laertius's statement about seeing multiple oxen and then over time forming a picture or definition of an ox is something that definitely does happen - I think that's probably the conceptual reasoning process. But I think that is what I list there as function (2), not function (1), and function (1) is where anticipations and feelings and the 5 senses are in operation. So I think the process Diogenes Laertius is describing does exist and Epicurus talked about it, but what he is describing is not the operation of anticipations, but what we do with the data from anticipations (and from the other 2 legs too).

What we are discussing in the "inference" stage is function 2, where we have the ability to think through the alternative methods of reasoning and improve our understanding of the ways Epicurus is suggesting that we sift and weigh the evidence.

It seems to me that the canonical faculties are DeWitts "witnesses in court" who are testifying "truthfully" in not giving their own opinion, but sometimes (not always) suffering under having been too far away from the action to see what happened with clarity, so we have to piece together their testimony. Sometimes their testimony is clear and direct with no reason for doubt and we embrace the obvious conclusion with confidence, and sometimes we have to judge prudently and "wait" until more witness testimony is available. Sometimes we have the luxury of waiting for as long as necessary to get more evidence, and sometimes life demands that we go with our best judgement on the available evidence.

The inferential reasoning process is more equivalent to the "jury instructions" that the judge gives to the jury to tell them how to view the evidence and what principles of law to apply. This latter stage is full of opinion and discretion and is where all sorts of things can go right or wrong - but we hold that the best results are obtained when the jury understands the rules of evidence and weighs all the facts carefully without bias or prejudice or artificial rules. That's why our common law system has focused on decisions as to reasonable conduct being made by "a jury

of our peers" rather than by trying to get a single "expert" to enforce a "one size fits all" rule.