

More Sleuthing -This Time Against Cicero

Post by "Cassius" of October 3, 2022 at 8:38 PM

Our recent discussion focused on unwinding the Wikipedia "bitter gift" issue ([RE: New Article on the Inscription](#)) has me thinking about something else:

I recently recommended to Onenski the article by AA Long the article "chance and natural law in Epicureanism. One of the arguments in that article is to observe in connection with the swerve that neither Cicero nor other ancient authorities attacked Epicurus with the argument that the swerve undermined the rest of the philosophy by making EVERYTHING indeterminate - in other words, the ancients even including Cicero understood from their familiarity with his writings that Epicurus had limited the effect of the swerve in important ways, so they did not attack him on the apparent contradictions between the swerve and the other conclusions of atomism.

That points out the potential usefulness of the sort of Sherlock Holmes "dog that didn't bark" method of sleuthing.

I wonder if we can apply that to the "absence of pain" question in this way:. Cicero attacked the apparent ambiguities of calling absence of pain the greatest pleasure from Cicero's perspective wrting 250 years after Epicurus. One would expect that this argument - which raises so many issues - would not have taken 250 years to be raised.been raised.

Do we not have any record of other writers from the time of Epicurus to Cicero who raise this question? Obviously Laertius doesn't really count because he comes after Cicero in time. Do we have any other materials between the time of Epicurus and Cicero in which this complain was raised?

In order to answer that we would need to know if any texts exist from well before Cicero. We can observe that Lucretius does not see this as an issue to be concerned about, but I wonder if there are other texts we can look to(?). It seems to me that if there are in fact commentators on Epicurus from the pre-Cicero period, and they do not raise this issue as a concern, then that is an indication that there was additional teaching material that explained within the Epicurean school why the interpretations advanced by Cicero (and even the defense given by Torquatus) are not the full story.

One would expect that lots of anti-Epicurean material prior to Cicero (including preCicero Stoic material) would attack on the same grounds, and there would be at least hints of discussion of it.

Other than Lucretius himself I am not sure what surviving texts date from the death of Epicurus to the time of Cicero's writing.