

Episode One Hundred Forty-Seven - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 03 - True Opinions And False Opinions About Epicurus

Post by "Kalosyni" of November 8, 2022 at 10:34 PM

Second half of podcast notes:

35:05 -- One of the most controversial aspects. And there is major division of skepticism. Dogmatism.

True opinion -- Promulgated a dogmatic philosophy actuated by passion for inquiry to find certainty -- a destestation of skepticism.

False opinion -- he promulgated a dogmatic philosophy because he renounced inquiry and Epicureans unthinkingly accepted the positions.

36:35 -- The wise man will dogmatize -- the issue of dogmatism and what that word really means.

You figure out a set of axioms and then derive more than what was just there -- physics which establish a materialist worldview, and then derive everything else as was shown by Lucretius.

37:54 -- While the other schools of philosophy would rise and fall, the Epicureans had an unbroken line of scholarcs which seemed to go on and on, and it was the most enduring and robust school in the the ancient world. Dogmatism was an issue which may have supported that.

38:30 -- Methodology for evaluating competing claims. Methodology for remaining aloof from certainty when you couldn't be certain about which competing claim was true. The thing that you must avoid is to be enamored of the single cause. You have to remain aloof from a conclusion until you have enough good information to actually know what you think is true about you are observing.

39:28 -- The Catholic church (the Vatican) pronouncing the assumption of Mary into heaven is a good example of dogmatism. -- Epicurus is not articulating a position in this manner and does not take position when there is clearly not enough information to take a position.

43:23 -- Book 4 of Lucretius -- those people who say that nothing can be known are essentially standing on their heads and you can't even reason with these people because their own logic

and argument makes no sense -- saying they are certain that nothing can be known -- they are talking in riddles and in circles. Radical skepticism.

44:04 -- Epicurus is rejecting two extreme positions -- rejecting the idea that nothing can be known and also rejecting the idea that there is a supernatural god delivering some kind of absolute truth on everything. And looking for a fair reasonable position that is supported by the evidence -- when to be confident of taking a position on something and when not to be confident of taking a position on something.

45:40 -- Multiple causes

47:50 -- Epicurus is not telling you to go read all these books on other philosophers and then follow xyz lines of argument -- he is telling you an opposite approach which is to trust your own senses, trust your own observations, and use that as your ultimate standard for what you are going to conclude with confidence to be right or wrong -- not using some dead philosopher's arguments. It is more important for you to understand that your senses are trustworthy, that they are what you have to deal with nature as the basis for making decisions.

48:50 -- Epicurus' view of truth -- DeWitt says that Epicurus exalted nature as the norm of truth revolting against Plato who had preached reason is the norm and considered reason to have a divine existence of its own. Epicurus studied and taught the use of sensations and their role in determining that which we consider to be true.

The false opinion was that Epicurus was a modern empiricist, and that he declared that sensation is the only source of knowledge, or even that "[all sensations are true](#)"

49:38 -- Truth -- Is there a norm, is there a standard against which you can ever arrive about truth about anything -- What is truth? Frances Wright presented a version of Epicurus that was more steeped in an empiricist view than maybe he really was in antiquity -- because Epicurus thought that sensation was one leg of the tripod of epistemology -- the anticipations and the feelings -- nature furnishes the norm and nature gives us a tool kit for accessing and evaluating competing claims about everything, from ethics to explanations of phenomena -- and because we are natural, we derive from nature and we are part of nature -- pleasure and pain as guides to how we should live our lives makes sense for us, because that's the norm that nature gives us to make those kinds of decisions.

53:00 -- Epicurus' method for determining truth -- types of logic and how to pursue logic -- is logic a norm to be used as a ruler or standard -- canonic, a standard to be compared against -- in Epicureanism the word canon refers to a rule, principle, or criterion by which something is judged (an entirely different meaning than the Catholic use of the word).

56:25 -- Epicurus says: nature is the proper place to look for that authority for right and wrong (Plato takes the position that logos or reason in itself is superior to nature as this norm of truth -- Divinity, or God as a source of truth)

57: 15 -- How you view basic metaphysical claims about what nature is -- does nature have any existence independent from the human mind, does it have any existence independent from abstract principles, like reason or divine fire, is nature merely an ephemeral mirage that actually conceals the truth rather than revealing it to us, is nature merely creation and therefore simply one aspect of revelation from god but does not answer the total purpose of revelation. So these are all the competing ideas about the role of nature in the spirit of inquiry, whether we can learn anything from nature or not. Idealist schools, nature lies to us constantly -- and if you are going to get at the truth you are going to have to penetrate the veil, see through nature into what lies on the otherside of nature (58:15) -- God, ideal forms, or divine fire, or any other of the competing ideas.

58:29 -- Latin: nil ultra -- nothing higher -- is there anything higher than nature itself as a standard of truth. Plato -- logos is higher than nature, logos created nature, and god is behind nature, superior to nature. The telos -- what is ultimately your final authority for determining something to be right or wrong -- is it some standard that logic has revealed to you, or that religion reveals to you, or is some standard that nature gives to you -- nature gives us no guidance on what to choose or avoid other than pleasure and pain -- nature is the ultimate standard of authority, then you take the faculties that nature has given you as a starting point for making all the decisions for what to choose and what to avoid.

1:00:36 -- Next week: the method for determining truth

1:01:10 -- Polemic: words of strong attack -- Books that begin with the word: "Against"

1:05:10 -- We are still on the synoptic view

1:06:29 -- Epicurus is anti-dogmatic -- but people who take the position that things can be known, that some truth is possible to obtain, are referred to as "dogmatic" -- axiomatic is a good synonym to dogmatic.