

Keen Reasoning Based on the Evidence of the Senses

Post by "Cassius" of November 28, 2022 at 3:35 PM

I don't think you have overshot the question and I appreciate your engaging on it because I do think it needs to be discussed at length as part of Epicurean discussions. I don't think we ultimately disagree but I am pushing the envelope for purposes of clarifying the "skepticism vs dogmatism" issue and so we can work toward clarifying Epicurus' position in way that normal people can understand. And that will mean as future discussions proceed to try to foreswear use of terms such as "ontological certainty" or other "big words" that these discussions often involved, but that ordinary people can't understand.

I see the issue as revolving more around the issue of thinking that there is in fact a standard of "infallibility" that is derived from a theological viewpoint. I don't think that it is a contradiction to take both the position "I am certain sugar is sweet" and "there might be some context hitherto unknown to me in which sugar is not sweet." The issue comes down to "must I experience everything in the universe to be "certain" of anything? And the answer to that in all practical terms is "no."

Now maybe the issue comes down as it often does to the meaning of words, and someone wants to say "Only god can truly be certain of anything because only HE is omnipotent and omniscient and omnipresent." If that is the definition of the word "certain" that is required to be used then the word is useless because such a being does not exist.

But in our real world we often use the word "certain" and "confident" to mean things that sound like "human certainty" without requiring omniscience and omnipotence and omnipresence. That too seems to me to be a legitimate use of vocabulary and something that Epicurus was in fact saying is a valid concept for humans to maintain about many things in life.

Are there in fact some people for whom it creates anxiety to think that they are not certain of everything in the godlike sense? Certainly there are, but those people are operating with an invalid standard of what it can possibly mean to be certain as a human being, and as such they need to be disabused of their false notion of certainty - not disabused of the idea that there are in fact many things in life that they can be confident to the point of "certainty" about.