

"Epicurean Philosophy: An Introduction from the 'Garden of Athens'" edited by Christos Yapijakis

Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2023 at 6:52 AM

Just to set the stage on the "three legs of the canon vs. four" issue, the following is from the chapter of the book entitled "Epicurean Gnoseology":

The four criteria of truth include senses, concepts (προλήψεις, "preconceptions"), emotions (πάθη, "passions") of pleasure and pain and the imaginary imposition of the mind (φανταστική έπιβολή τής διανοίας):

...

Preconceptions are concepts stored in the mind and are derived from the senses. These concepts are based on repetitive sensory experiences. They do not need verbal proof since they are evident by observation to all ("universal understanding"), constituting a criterion of correct belief. For example, it is common to all people who have seen a rose, the "clear preconception of a rose", that is, the explicit concept based on observation of this material object. Through preconceptions, the chaotic information of the sensory world begins to assemble into a coherent, structured, and stable entity leading to the emergence of language and consciousness.

...

Imaginary impositions of the mind are representations that the mind captures when it focuses its attention on something. In its singular form, the term has been interpreted as "insightful conception of the mind", "immediate perception of the mind", and "focus of the mind on an impression", but perhaps the best conceptual approach to the term is 'focusing on a cognitive image'. According to Diogenes Laertius, Epicurus, in his book "Kanon", describes the three criteria of truth, senses, preconceptions and passions. At the same time, the imaginary imposition of mind was added as a criterion of truth by the later Epicureans (D.L. X31). However, Epicurus, in his [Principal Doctrines](#) (XXIV), mentions: "If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate with respect to that which awaits confirmation between matter of opinion and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feelings or in any immediate perception of the mind,

[The discussion of this latter paragraph is taken further, basically in the direction of interpreting impacts of "images" on the mind as constituting a fourth leg. As far as I can tell so far the book does not attempt to take a position on why Epicurus himself did not consider this to be a full leg of the canon, or on why later Epicureans thought he was wrong in failing to do so.]