

Episode 155 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 11 - The Canon, Reason, and Nature 02

Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2023 at 7:48 PM

In both cases I am attempting to carry out the texts to their conclusions.

As to consciousness conscious only of itself, I don't think that Epicurus would say that that is something that would not apply to us humans, because we are aware of who we are because our our past experiences through the senses, as per the Thomas Jefferson passage. I am not aware of the details or theory of mindfulness mediation, but we aren't the kind of consciousnesses who have arisen from hypotheticals that are conscious only of themselves.

As to dreaming, that is to my understanding attributed by the Epicureans to the influx of images while we are asleep, which would be related to their impact on us while we are awake as well, for example as given in the exchange between Cassius and Cicero about "spectres." I presume that in modern terms we would think that the mind is operating on stored memories, but I personally would not entirely rule out of court the possibility that we are in fact affected by things going on around us. We are affected by what we eat or drink or how cold or hot things are while we are sleeping, and I would not rule out undiscovered aspects of how our brains are impacted by our environments. But especially as to dreams and hallucinations the point is only that they are "real to us" not that they are really happening to us, or even the mechanism by which they occur.

That last part is what I see as the important point. It looks to me like Epicurus is saying that our reality derives from the actions of our senses, anticipations, and feelings, and our mind reasoning on the inputs from those things, and that we need to consider what is going on with those things to be real to us, and work with them, and not look to imaginary worlds of ideal forms or supernatural beings or any of that stuff which Platonists or religionists assert to exist without evidence. Dreams and hallucinations are what they are - things which have an impact on our thoughts - but that doesn't mean that they have any external reality beyond what is going on in our minds.

To me all this comes down to an attempt to explain that **this** world is all that we have, and we need to explain the things that present themselves to us in natural terms, and not look to supernatural or other-worldly (meaning Platonic idealism) sources for those things.