

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

Post by "Todd" of January 10, 2023 at 8:28 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Your discussion of consciousness aware of itself brought to mind the capacity to be aware of watching your own thoughts. I can easily think "I need to stop thinking about lunch" and realize I need to stop thinking about lunch and redirect my thoughts to the task at hand. Noting one's thoughts as they come up in your mind is a common method of mindfulness meditation. So, knowing that we're thinking particular thoughts is a common occurrence.

This is something I've been thinking about, and not seeing how it would fit into Epicurean epistemology.

Not only can we observe our own thoughts, but doing so is essential to make sense of other people's actions. That is, to know that other people are not mechanically responding to stimuli; they have desires, and are aiming at ends, just like we do.

So that seems like a legitimate and important source of knowledge, but how does it fit into Epicurus' system?

- Is it knowledge of reality? I'd say it is, but then how would it fit into the canon?
- It's definitely not a feeling, and I don't think it is what Epicurus was describing as anticipations.
- Is it a sensation? I think that's the best fit. It is an observation, but it's an observation of internal reality rather than external. That seems acceptable to me - the human mind is part of nature too - but it might seem like a slippery slope. And it is very different from the traditional senses.
- Or would you say this is just something Epicurus overlooked?

To be clear, I'm referring strictly to the observing of one's own mental processes. The extrapolation to understanding other people's actions definitely involves additional reasoning.