

Episode 203 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 11 - Do The Senses Have Jurisdiction To Pronounce On The Supreme Good?

Post by "Cassius" of November 28, 2023 at 11:47 AM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

The problem is unsolvable in Hume's terms, not just for Epicurus but for everyone

Also on the same point here's something else I'd like to come back to in the future. I don't know to what extent Bentham agreed with Hume on this issue, and of course my next question would be how (if at all) Frances Wright dealt with it in "A Few Days In Athens." I suspect I don't have enough time in this lifetime to launch off into study of Bentham and Hume and Mill on this issue, but it would make a good project to look into how far the Utilitarians got into this question and how they related it to their interest in Epicurus. I can think of aspects of "A Few Days In Athens" that seem to be touching on it, but I don't recall anything that jumps out at me as how she dealt with it (or communicated that it didn't need to be dealt with.

I've included this from Chapter 15 as an example, but it's not determinative. Chapter 15 is really deep and deserves a lot of consideration on its own:

Quote

Until we occupy ourselves in examining, observing, and ascertaining, and not in explaining, we are idly and childishly employed. — With every truth we may discover we shall mix a thousand errors; and, for one matter of fact, we shall charge our brain with a thousand fancies. To this leading misconception of the real, and only possible object of philosophical inquiry, I incline to attribute all the modes and forms of human superstition. The vague idea that some mysterious cause not merely precedes but produces the effect we behold, occasions us to wander from the real object in search of an imaginary one. We see the sun rise in the east: instead of confining our curiosity to the discovery of the time and manner of its rising, and of its course in the heavens, we ask also — why does it rise? What makes it move? The more ignorant immediately conceive some Being spurring it through the heavens, with fiery steeds, on wheels of gold, while the more learned tell us of laws of motion, decreed by an almighty fiat, and sustained by an almighty will. Imagine the truth of both suppositions: in the one case, we should see the application of what we call physical power in the driver and the steeds followed by the motion of the sun, and in the other, an almighty volition followed by the motion of the sun. But, in either case, should we understand why the

sun moved? — why or how its motion followed what we call the impulse of the propelling power, or the propelling volition? All that we could then know, more than we now know, would be, that the occurrence of the motion of the sun was preceded by another occurrence; and if we afterwards frequently observed the same sequence of occurrences, they would become associated in our mind as necessary precedent and consequent — as cause and effect: and we might give to them the appellation of law of nature, or any other appellation; but they would still constitute merely a truth — that is a fact, and envelope no other mystery, than that involved in every occurrence and every existence.”