

What Would Epicurus Say About Searching For "Meaning?"

Post by "Pacatus" of January 12, 2024 at 4:04 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I wonder if there are any! 😊

I probably danced around skepticism for awhile – though closer to Pyrrhonian skepticism than Academic skepticism. Never hard determinism.

I left long ago what I would call a “hard dogmatism” (in the more modern, pejorative sense) that demands a strict attitude of certainty, as opposed to a pragmatic confidence.* (DeWitt seems to veer there.) [I came to the conclusion that Sextus Empiricus simply confused Epicurus’ use of dogma with that of the Stoics and the Academics.]

As you put it in *Ante Oculos*: “Epicurus also saw that man’s natural fear of the unknown is seized upon as a tool by false priests, professors, and politicians who demand obedience through the call for ‘certainty.’ **The call for ‘certainty’ in human action is a false standard which can never be met**, and the real evil of those who call for it is that they are aware of the trap which they lay for the unthinking. The only remedy for this abomination is for men to acknowledge that their knowledge and their lives are **limited to the scope to the bounds established by Nature.**”

– Cassius Amicus, *Ante Oculos: Epicurus and the Evidence-Based Life* 😊

We draw on senses (observations), feelings and intuition (my shorthand translation of prolepsis**) – and reasonable inference – to achieve a level of confidence that allows us to form opinions and act. Confidence is necessary, but absolute objective certainty is only available in deductive logic and pure mathematics. (Of course, sometimes we might say “I’m certain that ...” as a subjective expression of high confidence; not generally a problem.)

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* Don and I discussed the changing usage of “dogma” here: [RE: Philodemus of Gadara - Main Biography](#)

** As per these definitions from Merriam-Webster:

1a: the power or faculty of attaining to direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference

b: immediate apprehension or cognition

2: quick and ready insight