

On Nature Book 28 - Reconstruction By David Sedley - 1973 Article (Discussion)

Post by "Hiram" of April 17, 2019 at 11:26 AM

Continuing previous conversation in the file section (please provide feedback). Here are some additional notes:

"first meaning". "a pre-conception, based on sense evidence, with the help of which a perceived object can be recognized by name", ergo a word used in a secondary non-perceptual sense can have no prolepsis of its own ... and E insists that such words be traced back to the preconceptions associated with them in their primary, perceptual senses; that is: refer to nature

It seems like this first (proto) meaning was an extremely important aspect of the Epicurean theory of language. And it was tied to the faculty of anticipations / prolepsis.

To cite the example used in the other discussion: AUTARKEIA.

Let's dissect it referring to its original sense and use.

I am not a native Greek speaker, but even in Spanish and English AUT- deals with self (auto-didactic means self-taught, automatic means "doing things by itself"), auto-estima in Spanish means "self esteem". and -ARCHY means government, rule. Monarchy means government of one, oligarchy is the regime of a few, etc. And so we conclude using the Epicurean method that autarchy is self-rule, governing oneself, setting rules for oneself and obeying oneself (which is actually an idea we also find in Nietzsche, a pre-requisite for self-overcoming).

So here is an instance where a very useful word in philosophy is traced to its roots and we also find a similar concept being used by another philosopher of great esteem.

Self-sufficiency (the usual translation of autarchy) can also be subjected to this investigation of the roots of the word, having to do with oneself (single individual, alone) and suffice / sufficient (not needing anything else or any more than what is there already).

more notes:

a particular problem of language, from the Epicurean perspective, is that at some point men of culture began to use empty words. They began to assign false or unnatural (supernatural?) meanings to words for non-existent things, and even to use

p. 21 Epicurus "wants concepts to be clarified by reference to the data of perceptions and feelings, not through mere verbal predication", and "shows strong doubts about the usefulness of definitions"

If we understand this, we can begin to appreciate why Epicureans greatly valued plain speech and distrusted the rhetorical arts, demoting them to a very secondary role in philosophy.

...

p 22 says that Metrodorus had been "building up a private terminology" using ordinary language, but also innovation ("without adapting certain linguistic conventions"). Metrodorus had been, in effect, constructing a language

"a private terminology" sounds like a naming language (a lexicon that can be adapted to any grammar or conventional language), but the act of ignoring linguistic conventions sounds like an act of full-blown conlanging. Metrodorus was attempting, in effect, to construct a language, to fully reform language for the sake of clarity, and to reconcile language with nature.

This accentuates a profound concern and doubt about the accuracy and usefulness of conventional language in philosophy, and a conviction that language obscures thought and needs to be optimized and reformed for the study of nature. Furthermore, (as the work cited says) men frequently mismatch their perceptions with names in conventional language, which is at the root of many errors.

The least we can say is that the founders called for a healthy distrust and choice of words in all of our investigations and communications.