

Episode 234 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 09 - Dealing With Marcus Aurelius And The Canonical Basis For the Epicurean View Of Divinity

Post by “Cassius” of June 23, 2024 at 7:51 AM

As we get close to recording I definitely want to be sure we go over citations as to what the Epicureans meant by "true" or "real." Including what Bryan just quoted, several are:

Diogenes Laertius [31] Logic they reject as misleading. For they say it is sufficient for physicists to be guided by what things say of themselves. Thus in *The Canon* Epicurus says that the tests of truth are the sensations and concepts and the feelings; the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehensions of the mind. And this he says himself too in the summary addressed to Herodotus and in the [Principal Doctrines](#). For, he says, all sensation is irrational and does not admit of memory; for it is not set in motion by itself, nor when it is set in motion by something else, can it add to it or take from it. [32] Nor is there anything which can refute the sensations. For a similar sensation cannot refute a similar because it is equivalent in validity, nor a dissimilar a dissimilar, for the objects of which they are the criteria are not the same; nor again can reason, for all reason is dependent upon sensations; nor can one sensation refute another, for we attend to them all alike. Again, the fact of apperception confirms the truth of the sensations. And seeing and hearing are as much facts as feeling pain. From this it follows that as regards the imperceptible we must draw inferences from phenomena. For all thoughts have their origin in sensations by means of coincidence and analogy and similarity and combination, reasoning too contributing something. And the visions of the insane and those in dreams are true, for they cause movement, and that which does not exist cannot cause movement.

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Sextus Empiricus, Against the Logicians II (Against the Dogmatists, II).9: Epicurus said that all sensibles were true and real. For there is no difference between saying that something is true and that it is real. And that is why, in giving a formalization of the true and the false, he says, “that which is such as it is said to be, is true” and “that which is not such as it is said to be, is false.”

Letter to Herodotus [51]: For the similarity between the things which exist, which we call real, and the images received as a likeness of things and produced either in sleep or through some other acts of apprehension on the part of the mind or the other instruments of judgment, could never be, unless there were some effluences of this nature actually brought into contact with our senses. And error would not exist unless another kind of movement too were produced inside ourselves, closely linked to the apprehension of images, but differing from it; and it is owing to this, supposing it is not confirmed, or is contradicted, that falsehood arises; but if it is

confirmed or not contradicted, it is true.

Cicero, De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum, I.7.22: Turn next to the second division of philosophy, the department of Method and of Dialectic, which its termed Logikē. Of the whole armor of Logic your founder, as it seems to me, is absolutely destitute. He does away with Definition; he has no doctrine of Division or Partition; he gives no rules for Deduction or Syllogistic Inference, and imparts no method for resolving Dilemmas or for detecting Fallacies of Equivocation. The Criteria of reality he places in sensation; once let the senses accept as true something that is false, and every possible criterion of truth and falsehood seems to him to be immediately destroyed. {lacuna} He lays the very greatest stress upon that which, as he declares, Nature herself decrees and sanctions, that is: the feelings of pleasure and pain. These he maintains lie at the root of every act of choice and of avoidance.

U247 Sextus Empiricus, Against the Logicians, I (Against the Dogmatists, I) 203: Epicurus says that there are two things which are linked to each other, presentation and opinion, and that of these presentation (which he also calls 'clear fact') is always true. For just as the primary feelings, i.e., pleasure and pain, come to be from certain productive factors and in accordance with productive factors themselves (for example, pleasure comes to be from pleasant things and pain from painful things, and what causes pleasure can never fail to be pleasant, nor can what produces pain not be painful; but rather, it is necessary that what gives pleasure should be pleasant and that what gives pain should, in its nature, be painful), likewise, in the case of presentations, which are feelings within us, what causes each of them is presented in every respect and unqualifiedly, and since it is presented it cannot help but exist in truth just as it is presented [...lacuna...] that it is productive of presentation. And one must reason similarly for the individual senses. For what is visible not only is presented as visible but also is such as it is presented; and what is audible is not only presented as audible, but also is like that in truth; and similarly for the rest. Therefore, it turns out that all presentations are true. And reasonably so. For if, the Epicureans say, a presentation is true if it comes from an existing object and in accordance with the existing object, and if every presentation arises from the object presented and in accordance with the presented object itself, then necessarily every presentation is true.

Peter Konstans very helpfully collected some cites for us on this point here:

Post

Determinism and Emergence Discussion

I recommend reading the academic book

Pleasure, Mind, and Soul, Selected Papers in Ancient Philosophy by C. C. W. Taylor

The second chapter examines the Epicurean thesis that all perceptions are true, arguing that what it means is that every instance of sensory presentation (widely construed, to include dreams, hallucinations, and imagination as well as perception proper) consists in the stimulation of a sense-organ by a real object, which is represented in that perception exactly as it is in...

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Peter Konstans

March 25, 2024 at 4:13 AM