

Episode 239 - Cicero's OTNOTG 14 - The Dishonesty Of Academic Skepticism vs. Epicurus' Commitment To Truth

Post by “Cassius” of July 28, 2024 at 7:19 PM

Early in this episode (recorded this morning, to be released later this week) Joshua leads off with an excellent quote from Thomas Jefferson expressing Jefferson's disdain for Skepticism. The quote comes in an 1820 letter Jefferson wrote to John Adams, one of a series of documents relevant to Epicurus collected [here](#).

The complete letter can be found [here](#), and the selection Joshua emphasized is below:

Quote

let me turn to [your puzzling letter of May 12](#). on matter, spirit, motion E^tc. it's croud of scepticisms kept me from sleep. I read it, & laid it down: read it, and laid it down, again, and again: and to give rest to my mind, I was obliged to recur ultimately to my habitual anodyne, '[I feel: therefore I exist](#).' I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them matter. I feel them changing place. this gives me motion. where there is an absence of matter, I call it void, or nothing, or immaterial space. on the basis of sensation, of matter and motion, we may erect the fabric of all the certainties we can have or need.

...

Quote

Rejecting all organs of information therefore but my senses, I rid myself of the Pyrrhonisms with which an indulgence in speculations hyperphysical and antiphysical so uselessly occupy and disquiet the mind. a single sense may indeed be sometimes decieved, but rarely: and never all our senses together, with their faculty of reasoning. they evidence realities; and there are enough of these for all the purposes of life, without plunging into the fathomless abyss of dreams & phantasms. I am satisfied, and sufficiently occupied with the things which are, without tormenting or troubling myself about those which may indeed be, but of which I have no evidence. I am sure that I really know many, many, things, and none more surely than that I love you with all my heart, and pray for the continuance of your life until you shall be tired of it yourself.

Those are certainly two excellent quotes directly on point to this and many episodes of the podcast to come, because we are dealing with the objections to the Epicurean position made by

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3980-episode-239-cicero-s-otnotg-14-the-dishonesty-of-academic-skepticism-vs-epicurus/?postID=31622#post31622>

Cotta, who is himself an Academic Skeptic. I also recommend reading [the full letter](#), because sandwiched between the two sections Joshua quoted is more excellent analysis that is useful to fully understand the self-refuting nature of the radical skeptic position.