

Epicurean Views of "Teleology"

Post by "Cassius" of March 14, 2025 at 7:58 AM

Joshua:

1 - That question mark in the margin is the author, questioning himself? The issue of how to interpret Caesar's actions and the civil war of the time has always been very difficult for me to understand. So the author is supporting Caesar or not? The question of when a pre-existing constitution should be overturned is always sticky, but as the doctrines on Justice say, that which has ceased to be of advantage for the people involved is no longer "just." The part of the doctrines in the 40's that talks about the justice of nature being in agreeing not to harm is one thing that is often emphasized in discussion, but those doctrines that say that agreements cease to be just when they are no longer of mutual benefit indicates that the label of "just" can change very easily. I suppose that's the ultimate way to evaluate Caesar's actions, not by an absolute standard but by the details of the time, which are very difficult for us to evaluate today.

2 - The non-purposiveness issue is something that ought to flow from the implications of the first and second and third of these statements, which are pretty much quotes, but they require some explanation to see that. I agree that the quote from page 168 is very good. Dewitt's summary is also good, especially "This amounts to saying that a nonpurposive Nature had produced a purposive creature, for whom alone an end or goal of living could have a meaning. This is teleology at a minimum." I agree that it would be good to emphasize this more. Are you aware of a pithy quote or near-quote that makes this point from Epicurus or Lucretius or Diogenes of Oinoanda? As it is, I'll probably modify the existing explanation of the statements in 1, 2, or 3 to include it.

Is the issue summarizable by referencing how the Stoics make Nature divine and essentially a god and imply that divine fire is intelligent, which is just step further than Aristotle's prime mover? I think we all agree that Epicurus rejects this as implications of what is stated in the principles of 1,2, and 3, but does he state this separately and explicitly anywhere?

in plain English, does it come down to the point that Nature is neither conscious nor intelligent and is not goal-driven?