

Fixed or Unfixed

Post by "Cassius" of January 4, 2020 at 4:46 PM

You got me going Oscar I have another example:

I also think that something that keeps rearing its head is that we are going to have to follow DeWitt's lead and pursue our understanding of Epicurus as a supreme anti-Platonist.

What I am referring to here is that although it seems clear that Epicurus himself detested logic games and the dialectical method, it seems clear that he decided that he needed to confront the Platonic arguments by developing responses that beat Plato at his own game -- using logic to show the shortcomings of logic. So even though he detested it, Epicurus engaged in logical warfare himself, and for better or worse much of what we have in the surviving texts in Epicurus' own hand was that part of his writing - where he was laying down the logical premises which Epicureans could study and learn and apply to defeat the logicians at their own game.

I think that is primarily what is involved in probably the most contentious issue facing us all - coming to an understanding of the "absence of pain" discussion in the letter to Menoeceus.

As you know I have come to the conclusion that this discussion is primarily aimed at the logical arguments against pleasure that were advanced in places like Plato's [Philebus](#). Unfortunately the letter to Menoeceus is so short and gives so little background that this connection is not at all clear from the surviving text, and since we today are not immersed in logical arguments about "limits" and "purity" and "highest good" -- the normal person is going to interpret these passages without that context -- and without that context, taking the passages on their own in their current English translation forms -- then they can be read to be totally contradictory to much of the rest of the philosophy, for reasons we have discussed at length elsewhere.

So my point here is that what likely happened in the centuries after Epicurus is that the Epicureans were constantly confronted with logic game attacks by stoics and platonists, and it appears that some of them lost their nerve and attempted to compromise. Even today we face a powerful tendency to consider "logic" and "reason" to be unimpeachable references, from being taught to revere Mr. Spock and in 1000 other examples.

And the flip side is that we are taught to deprecate "feeling" / "emotion" as something to be suppressed and/or ignored and/or always to be distrusted.

So my point in this post is that even though I think we are clear that Epicurus' ultimate point is that "feeling" is the guide of life, we're still going to have to recognize that much that we have in the surviving texts constitutes "logic games" that were made necessary by the hostile environment in which the Epicureans (and we) live.

And that's huge part of the reconstruction battle that DeWitt trailblazed for us, but in which there still tremendous work to be done.