

What "Live Unknown" means to me (Lathe Biosas)

Post by "Cassius" of March 8, 2020 at 7:17 AM

I largely agree with your conclusions here but in regard to this fragment I always caution against reading too much into it (beyond what you are doing here) because it comes to us with absolutely zero context. To my understanding we have zero knowledge about when or where or how or in what situation this was stated, or even for sure that it was Epicurus himself. And given as a premise that ALL rules of conduct are contextual, we would need to know much more than we do to conclude how much emphasis Epicurus and the key Epicureans placed on such views, since as you say they did not exactly "live unknown" themselves.

As I see it the phrase can be helpful for discussion, just like the "tetrapharmakon" but overemphasis on it creates many of the same problems that overemphasis of the tetrapharmakon does.

We simply don't have enough surrounding context to know the use cases that were referenced, or who said these things and why.

People who don't understand the full depth of Epicurus can easily misinterpret both, so it's important to provide the background first (as you've done here) so these phrases don't get misused, as they probably often are in the hands of those who want to keep Epicurus safely confined in the hermit-like box they have created for him.