

Managing Expectations In The Study of Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of May 9, 2020 at 5:46 PM

If Bailey's "internal sensations" is referring to the same subject, then maybe what we're missing is a word or terminology that ties pleasure and pain more tightly to some kind of "internal natural guidance system" that does in fact stand shoulder to shoulder as an equivalent with "divine inspiration" or "logic" as a concept in the fight to determine what is the proper goal of life. As it is, when we talk of "pleasure" the connotation is so tightly tied to "chocolate cake" and the like that it is hard to see the forest for the trees. When we explain to people that "pleasure and pain" are the guides to life, it would be nice to have an articulate way to explain to them that Epicurus was not meaning to list PARTICULAR pleasures or pains, but was referring to the overall mechanism given to us by nature to fulfill that guidance role.

It seems hugely important to me to be able to start with the observation that Diogenes Laertius made that "the feelings are two - pleasure and pain" in order to explain the whole issue of absence of neutral states, limits of pleasure, and especially how the presence of one equals in quantity the absence of the other.

I bet that the ambiguity that we experience in the term "feeling" would almost without a doubt have been addressed and explained by Epicurus if we had more of the texts. On that same point, my bet is also that certain aspects of this, like with the issue of "preconceptions" are buried unrecognized in plain view in front of us in Lucretius - we just fail to recognize it.