

Managing Expectations In The Study of Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of May 10, 2020 at 8:42 AM

I see we touched on some of these issues before (four years ago), but not thoroughly: [Passions / Emotions / Feelings - The Second Leg of the Canon of Truth](#)

For example:

Haris Dimitriadis The word passions needs special care because its meaning has been influenced by the definition of the soul that Plato gave. He imagined the soul as a chariot in which, logic-wisdom was the driver, and the two horses were the feelings and the desires. The feelings were obedient to the driver's instructions, and they contributed to the driver's guides to take under control the second horse, which was expressing the desires=passions of the body. To Plato the material body was the source of unhappiness and this was referred by him as the tomb of the mind. So to Plato passions reflected the desires of the body, which by nature are difficult to get hold on to. As regards then Democritus saying is risky to interpret it according to the platonian terminology because they had different views. They both lived in the same time period but Democritus was about 30 years older. Plato by his influence managed to distort the initial meaning of the word passion and hence makes difficult for us to know what Deemocritus meant exactly by the saying.

December 31, 2016 at 11:52amCassius Amicus Those are exactly the kinds of concerns I had in mind. In order to even begin to dig further we would presumably need the greek version of the fragment, and then compare the word choice to the word choice in Diogenes Laertius, who is himself giving his own summary and apparently not a direct quote. But rather than the end of the question I still think we are at the beginning. In discussing Epicurus we really need a firm statement of the "name" of the third leg of the canon as Epicurus used the term. Other than the two statements in DL I quoted I am not sure there is a direct statement in the core texts we have of the name of this third leg.

I personally refer to it as "the faculty of pleasure and pain" but I am not at all sure that that is the best wording. "pleasure" or "pain" alone do not seem appropriate, and "feelings" and "passions" have all the limitations we are noting. It seems clear that this third leg is also a something we commonly think of as a "sensation" but that too is not a satisfactory word. As I think of final remarks to close out 2016 I think this issue is one that would really help to make progress on in 2017. Greater clarity on this central point would be critically helpful - and ought to be doable if we are going to represent that we have a good understanding of Epicurean doctrine.