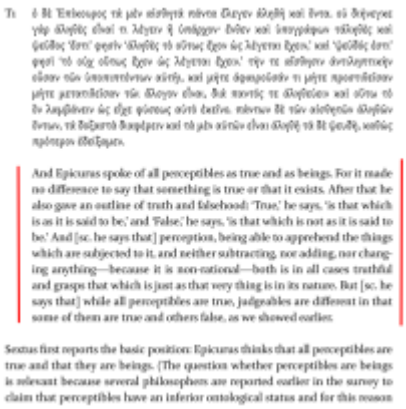
References to Epicurus' Attitude Toward The "Place of the Sciences And Liberal Arts"

Post by “Cassius” of July 20, 2020 at 1:16 PM

As for the issue of "truth" I have posted an article that contains quotes where Sextus Empiricus states what he understands Epicurus' view on "truth" to be. I have clipped several pages that contain quotes, which are the most useful, as I don't think we can safely defer either to the author of the article or to Sextus Empiricus for this very complex subject:

Epicurus On Truth And Falsehood: Statements by Sextus Empiricus / Article By Brown



Τι ὁ δὲ Ἐπίκουρος τὰ μὲν αἰσθητὰ πάντα ἔλεγεν ἀληθῆ καὶ ὄντα. οὐ διήνεγκε γὰρ ἀληθὲς εἶναί τι λέγειν ἢ ὑπάρχειν· ἔνθεν καὶ ὑπογράφων τἀληθὲς καὶ ψεῦδος 'ἔστι' φησὶν 'ἀληθὲς τὸ οὕτως ἔχον ὡς λέγεται ἔχειν.' καὶ 'ψεῦδός ἐστι' φησὶ 'τὸ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχον ὡς λέγεται ἔχειν.' τὴν τε αἴσθησιν ἀντιλαμπτικὴν οὖσαν τῶν ὑποπιπτόντων αὐτῇ, καὶ μήτε ἀφαιροῦσάν τι μήτε προστιθεῖσαν μήτε μετατιθεῖσαν τῶι ἄλογον εἶναι, διὰ παντός τε ἀληθεύειν καὶ οὕτω τὸ ἓν λαμβάνειν ὡς εἶχε φύσεως αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο. πάντων δὲ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀληθῶν ὄντων, τὰ δοξαστὰ διαφέρειν καὶ τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν εἶναι ἀληθῆ τὰ δὲ ψευδῆ, καθὼς πρότερον ἐδείξαμεν.

And Epicurus spoke of all perceptibles as true and as beings. For it made no difference to say that something is true or that it exists. After that he also gave an outline of truth and falsehood: 'True,' he says, 'is that which is as it is said to be,' and 'False,' he says, 'is that which is not as it is said to be.' And [sc. he says that] perception, being able to apprehend the things which are subjected to it, and neither subtracting, nor adding, nor changing anything—because it is non-rational—both is in all cases truthful and grasps that which is just as that very thing is in its nature. But [sc. he says that] while all perceptibles are true, judgeables are different in that some of them are true and others false, as we showed earlier.

Sextus first reports the basic position: Epicurus thinks that all perceptibles are true and that they are beings. (The question whether perceptibles are beings is relevant because several philosophers are reported earlier in the survey to claim that perceptibles have an inferior ontological status and for this reason

I interpret this as largely stating what should be obvious - "perceptions" are true because they are non-rational, but "judgeables" (meaning opinion?) are either true or false because they are formed through reasoning and therefore are subject to error.

So I would think one way to summarize a key point here is that perceptions through the canonical faculties constitute the foundation of truth for us, while those things which cannot be revealed through the canonical faculties must be considered opinions and can be true or false.