

Comment at the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group On Pleasure As The Highest Good

Post by "Cassius" of September 18, 2020 at 9:15 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

The only inquiries about words would be to establish the clear meaning of words so works could be easily understood and not "run on ... ad infinitum."

I do think that is a significant part of the issue, especially as to poetry and other flowery and overly-complicated language. But I also am concerned about taking that too far as the full point. I think in that direction lies issues involved with the "present impressions of the mind," and concepts vs precepts, and whether there are four legs of the canon rather than just three.

Best way I can think to state my concern at the moment is that I think Epicurus was thinking that all communication through words is inherently limited and fall short of reality, just like math and geometry are inherently limited in what they can do. I believe that this position is one of the most important in the philosophy as providing the antidote to rationalism. No matter how clear we try to make our words or our theorems they will always fall short of reality.

Edit: For what it's worth I decided to see what [wikipedia says about "rationalism"](#):

In [philosophy](#), **rationalism** is the [epistemological](#) view that "regards [reason](#) as the chief source and test of knowledge"^[1] or "any view appealing to reason as a source of knowledge or justification".^[2] More formally, rationalism is defined as a [methodology](#) or a [theory](#) "in which the criterion of the truth is not sensory but intellectual and [deductive](#)".^[3]

In an old controversy, rationalism was opposed to [empiricism](#), where the rationalists believed that reality has an intrinsically logical structure. Because of this, the rationalists argued that certain truths exist and that the intellect can directly grasp these truths. That is to say, **rationalists asserted that certain rational principles exist in [logic](#), [mathematics](#), [ethics](#), and [metaphysics](#) that are so fundamentally true that denying them causes one to fall into contradiction. The rationalists had such a high confidence in reason that empirical proof and physical evidence were regarded as unnecessary to ascertain certain truths - in other words, "there are significant ways in which our concepts and knowledge are gained independently of sense experience".^[4]**

Different degrees of emphasis on this method or theory lead to a range of rationalist standpoints, from the moderate position "that reason has precedence over other ways of acquiring knowledge" to the more extreme position that reason is "the unique path to

knowledge".[\[5\]](#)