

"The Canon of Epicurus In Everyday Life" - An Article by George Kaplanis

Post by "Cassius" of June 17, 2019 at 8:04 AM

Elli has just added a translation of an article by George Kaplanis of the Epicurean Garden of Thessaloniki - ["The Canon of Epicurus in Everyday Life"](#)

Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:44 AM

Poster GFL:

Interesting article!

However we should keep in mind that the main opponent of Plato's idealism was Aristotle. And Aristotle strongly emphasized the importance of the principle of the excluded middle.

The truth value after perception with our senses is always 0 or 1 and not anything in between. Fuzzy logic applies to probabilities before perceiving something with the senses. But even uncertainty and probability are subject to exact mathematics, not just to vague gut feelings.

Even if one might quote quantum mechanics and quantum superposition as counter-argument, superposition ends at the moment of observation. The wave function collapses and the particle has a well defined state.

The three axiomata of classical logic (identity, excluded middle, non-contradiction) cannot be challenged by any empirical observation. A universe that does not obey these axiomata would not be stable and immediately collapse in itself.

A lot of Epicurus' physics is based on logic, not on empiricism, e.g. the conclusion that the universe is infinite and that the number of possible arrangements of particles is finite. To make Epicurus a denialist of classical logic would do him injustice.

Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:45 AM

I agree that a lot of Epicurus' physics is based on deductive logic -- we can't see atoms so we have to deduce whatever we can know about them.

But as to this sentence "The three axiomata of classical logic (identity, excluded middle, non-contradiction) cannot be challenged by any empirical observation" I am not at all sure that Epicurus would agree, in fact I doubt he would. I believe Epicurus would say that the principals of logic are validated by empirical observations, not the other way around.

Diogenes Laertius (Bailey): "Logic they reject as misleading. For they say it is sufficient for physicists to be guided by what things say of themselves. Thus in The Canon Epicurus says that the tests of truth are the sensations and concepts (Bailey says concepts, most other translators say preconceptions or anticipations) and the feelings; the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehensions of the mind. And this he says himself too in the summary addressed to Herodotus and in the [Principal Doctrines](#). For, he says, all sensation is irrational and does not admit of memory; for it is not set in motion by itself, nor when it is set in motion by something else, can it add to it or take from it. Nor is there anything which can refute the sensations. For a similar sensation cannot refute a similar because it is equivalent in validity, nor a dissimilar a dissimilar, for the objects of which they are the criteria are not the same; nor again can reason, for all reason is dependent upon sensations; nor can one sensation refute another, for we attend to them all alike. Again, the fact of apperception confirms the truth of the sensations. And seeing and hearing are as much facts as feeling pain. From this it follows that as regards the imperceptible we must draw inferences from phenomena. For all thoughts have their origin in sensations by means of coincidence and analogy and similarity and combination, reasoning too contributing something."

Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:45 AM

Poster E:

Logic is a tool, but it is more susceptible to error than correctly executed scientific observation with independent replication. In medicine this is abundantly obvious. Epicurus was not a denialist-- he understood the limits of logic as well as the uses.

Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:46 AM

There is a lot of good discussion about these issues in Philodemus' "On Methods of Inference" and the DeLacy commentary on his translation of it <https://archive.org/stream/philode...arch/Metrodorus>

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Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:46 AM

Norman DeWitt page 172 -

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Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:46 AM

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Cicero Academica II.30.97 (Lucullus): "They will not get Epicurus, who despises and laughs at the whole of dialectic, to admit the validity of a proposition of the form "Hermarchus will either be alive tomorrow or not alive," while dialecticians demand that every disjunctive proposition of the form "either x or not-x" is not only valid but even necessary, See how on his guard the man is whom your friends think slow; for "If," he says, "I admit either of the two to be necessary, it will follow that Hermarchus must either be alive tomorrow or not alive; but as a matter of fact in the nature of things no such necessity exists." Therefore let the dialecticians, that is, Antiochus and the Stoics, do battle with this philosopher, for he overthrows the whole of dialectic."

Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:47 AM

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Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:47 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1000-the-canon-of-epicurus-in-everyday-life-an-article-by-george-kaplanis/>

I see that Sedley would dispute Bailey's word "misleading" in the sentence I quoted above "Logic they reject as misleading...." Sedley thinks the better translation is "Logic they reject as redundant..."

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Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:47 AM

It is hard to overstate the importance of this observation on the Epicurean view of "truth," from the same source:

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Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:48 AM

Here is the section from Lucretius to which Sedley refers in that last quote --

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Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 10:57 AM

It gets old to keep saying that everything is "important" - but here is another important passage, confirming how BOTH the Platonists and the Aristotelians were against Epicurus' position.

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Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2019 at 11:12 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1000-the-canon-of-epicurus-in-everyday-life-an-article-by-george-kaplanis/>

Sedley is suggesting that in attitude toward logic/dialectic we may have another deviation (watering-down) by later Epicureans. The first two areas were (1) thinking that pleasure has to be defended logically (Torquatus in *On ends*) and (2) coming up with four criteria of truth instead of Epicurus' three (Diogenes Laertius description of the canon). Sedley is suggesting that Epicurus himself didn't just reject logic/dialectic, he SCORNEED it, and that later Epicureans (and therefore presumably us) should not make peace with logic/dialectic at all.....

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⌚ Character of words. *PH 2.25, cf. M 7.267*

While Epicurus, as we saw, finds no merit in the formal definition of man as 'rational mortal animal', he is reported to have advocated his own alternative formula: man is 'such and such a formation, plus animateness' (τὸ τοιοῦτονὶ μὀρφωμα μετὰ ἐμψυχίας, *PH* 2.25, cf. *M* 7.267). We might say that, whereas the traditional definition is achieved from the top down, by division within a genus, Epicurus' preferred alternative is accretive in nature: it starts with the most familiar identifying feature of a human being, the shape (difficult if not impossible to capture fully with a verbal formula), then adds animateness in order to differentiate man from other bearers of that shape,⁹⁹ such as statues and corpses.¹⁰⁰ Since 'such and such a formation' invokes ostensibly, without describing it, what is presumed to be an already familiar mental image of the human form, Epicurus' formulation is evidently not pretending to be a definition;¹⁰¹

enable human beings to be recognised as such.

In mentioning body, alongside man, as another item whose mere name should be enough to evoke its primary notion, I had in mind a particular testimonium. Comparably to his formula for man ('such and such a formation, plus animateness'), Epicurus is reported to have listed size, shape, resistance and weight as the conceptual components of body.¹⁰⁵ As a difficult but important passage at *Letter to Herodotus* 68–71 confirms, Epicurus is in fact a 'bundle' theorist,¹⁰⁶ analysing each *per se* existent in terms, not of its underlying atomic composition, but of its inventory of ineliminable properties.¹⁰⁷ There can be little doubt that the bundle of ineliminable properties constituting each thing corresponds to the set of predicates that make up its primary notion.

To put it another way, Epicurus does not for a moment deny that precise, clear and fixed natural conceptions, or *prolepsis*, of natural kinds are at our disposal, including those of animal species like man, horse and cow (DL 10.33). Such conceptions are indeed basic tools of his epistemology. His objection is rather to the assumption, fostered by practitioners of dialectic, that these natural kinds can be coherently explained by reference to each one's position in some taxonomic tree. There is not, as Plato and his followers maintained, an intelligible realm in which such a structure might be located and studied.

Post by "Elli" of August 1, 2019 at 2:17 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It is hard to overstate the importance of this observation on the Epicurean view of "truth," from the same source:

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This is the greek phrase as has been said by Epicurus in his letter Herodotus : <<Τὰ υποτεταγμένα τοις φθόγγοις>> [pron. ta ypotetagmena tis fthogis].

First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the concepts that are submitted to words. The word that Epicurus used is not "attached" actually, it is "submitted". And submission means you have already conquered something. And the most important is that when you have conquered in your life the pleasure and eudaemonia.

The concepts are the images that the brain from our childhood accumulates along with senses and feelings and these images are submitted to words. The brain works photographically, actually. The image of a word in our brain is as a whole and not separated into parts. When we say human our mind has already the General Picture of the human. And for giving definition to the words is unnecessary/redundant, because we will lead to funny situations.

Look how funny was the whole situation with the word "human" when Plato tried to give the definition of human as an animal, biped and featherless. Thus, Diogenes the Cynic plucked a rooster and brought it into the lecture-room of Plato's academy saying : "Behold Plato's man !".

I imagine, in front of this scene, all Platos' pupils to laugh out loud, and Plato to be angry and saying to them loudly:

- Why are you laughing you little roosters?

And a young epicurean responding to Plato :

- Because your methodology of dialectics is tragelafos [tragelafos is a situation for laughing and crying at the same time].

Thus, Plato angrily and loudly saying to that young epicurean :

- You are kicked out of my Academy !

And the young epicurean responding to Plato:

- At last, I'll breathe free the clean air, and I'm going to Epicurus' Garden to learn his methodology of the Canon, connected with Physics and Ethics. Indeed, my parents would be happy to not giving such a lot of money for your classes in your academy for the purpose to learn foolish things that do not bring me pleasure and eudaemonia.

You do imagine that that young epicurean provoked anarchy and revolution in the academy of Plato. HA 😄

Since all Platos' pupils were singing also :

We don't need no education

We don't need no thought control

No dark sarcasm in the classroom

Hey! Teacher! Leave them kids alone!

All in all, it's just another brick in the wall

All in all, you're just another brick in the wall.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR5ApYxkU-U>

Post by “Cassius” of August 1, 2019 at 5:38 AM

Wow that is quite a video! I have never seen that!