

Episode Thirty-Three - More on The Implications of the Colorless Atoms

Post by "Cassius" of August 21, 2020 at 5:07 PM

Welcome to Episode Thirty-Three of Lucretius Today.

I am your host Cassius, and together with my panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. Be aware that none of us are professional philosophers, and everyone here is a self-taught Epicurean. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book, "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

Before we start, here are three ground rules.

First: Our aim is to bring you an accurate presentation of [classical Epicurean philosophy](#) as the ancient Epicureans understood it, which may or may not agree with what you here about Epicurus at other places today.

Second: We aren't talking about Lucretius with the goal of promoting any modern political perspective. Epicurus must be understood on his own, and not in terms of competitive schools which may seem similar to Epicurus, but are fundamentally different and incompatible, such as Stoicism, Humanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Atheism, and Marxism.

Third: The essential base of Epicurean philosophy is a fundamental view of the nature of the universe. When you read the words of Lucretius you will find that Epicurus did not teach the pursuit of virtue or of luxury or of simple living. or science, as ends in themselves, but rather the pursuit of pleasure. From this perspective it is **feeling** which is the guide to life, and not supernatural gods, idealism, or virtue ethics. And as important as anything else, Epicurus taught that there is no life after death, and that any happiness we will ever have must come in THIS life, which is why it is so important not to waste time in confusion.

Now let's join the discussion with today's text:

Latin text location: Approximately [lines 788-864](#)

Munro Summary: [Notes on the text](#)

788-794: We are tempted to give to atoms colour, not knowing how colour otherwise can come: but we have seen that white can come from what is not white; and surely white can arise more easily from no colour, than for instance from black : this reason then falls to the ground.

795-816: Again colours cannot exist without light, atoms never come into the light, therefore atoms have no colour: what colour can there be in darkness, when we see that the same thing continually changes its colour in different lights ? as therefore it is such and such stroke of light which produces such and such colour, without that stroke they cannot exist: as too one stroke produces white, another black, and as a stroke is a touch, and as it is shape, not colour, which affects touch, atoms need, not colour, but different shapes to give different touches.

817-825: Again if atoms have colour, it will not be said that this or that colour belongs only to this or that shape of atom : why then should not things formed out of coloured atoms vary their colours also? Why should not crows be sometimes white, swans black or green?

826-833: Again the smaller the shreds into which a thing is divided, the more its colour vanishes: be sure that all colour is gone before a thing comes to its first elements.

834-841 : you do not assign sound or smell to things which give forth no sound nor smell : why then attribute colour to all things? The mind can perceive things without colour as well as things without smell.

842-864: But atoms are likewise without heat or cold, without sound flavour or smell. As in preparing a perfume you seek out a quite scentless oil, that it may not infect the perfume with its own scent; thus first-beginnings must possess neither heat nor cold, smell sound nor flavour; these qualities are all frail and mortal, and must therefore be wanting to immortal elements unless things are to pass away to nothing.

Daniel Brown:

And since the eye receives within itself one sort of stroke with when it is said to perceive a white Color, and another contrary one, when it views an object of a black or any other color, and since it is of no moment by what color any thing you touch is distinguished, but rather of what peculiar shape and figure it is, you may conclude there is no manner of occasion that seeds should be stained with any colors, but that they should cause that variety of touch by the various figures with which they are imbued.

Besides, since there are no certain colors peculiar to certain figures, and since seeds of any figure may be of any color, whence is it that bodies that consist of such seeds are not in their several kinds imbued with all sorts of colors? It would be common to see crows, as they fly about, cast a white color from their white feathers, and black swans might be produced from black seeds, or be of any other one or more colors, as there seeds chance to be distinguished.

Further, the more any body is broken into small parts, the more you may perceive its color languishes by degrees, and dies away. This is the case of gold, when it is divided into thin shavings, its luster is extinguished, and the purple guy, by much the richest, when it is drawn out thread by thread, is quite lost. Hence you may infer that the particles of bodies discharge

themselves of all color before they come to be as small as seeds.

Again, since you allow that all bodies do not emit sound and smell, and not attribute sound and smell to every body; so, since we cannot discover every thing by our eyes, you may conclude there are some bodies as much void of color, as there are others without smell or sound; and a judicious mind can properly form a notion of such bodies void of color, as it can of others that are without smell or sound, or any other qualities whatsoever.

But lest you should conceive the first seeds are void only of color, you must know that they are without warmth, are altogether free from cold or heat, they emit no sound, are without moisture, nor do they send out any smell from their several bodies; so when you propose to compound a pleasant ointment of sweet marjoram, myrrh, and flowers of spikenard, that send out the richest odor up to the nose, the first thing you are to do is to choose, as far as it lies in your power, an oil that has no smell, that it may, as little as possible, infect and corrupt those few sweet ingredients, being mixed and digested with them, with its native rankness.

Lastly, the seeds do not bestow any smell upon the bodies they produce, nor any sound, for they can exhale nothing from themselves; and, for the same reason, they can communicate no taste, nor cold, nor any vapor hot or warm. You must separate all qualities from the seeds that render them liable to dissolution, such as viscous, brittle, hollow, which proceeded from qualities that are soft, putrid, and rare, the seeds must have nothing of these properties if you would fix them upon an eternal foundation, upon which alone depends the security of beings, lest all things should fall to nothing, and perish beyond recovery.

Munro

And since the pupil receives into it a kind of blow, when it is said to perceive a white color, and then another, when it perceives black or any, and since it is of no moment with what color the things which you touch are provided, but rather with what sort of shape they are furnished, you are to know that first-beginnings have no need of colors, but give forth sensations of touch varying according to their various shapes.

Moreover since no particular kind of color is assigned to particular shapes and every configuration of first-beginnings can exist in any color, why on a 'like principle are not the things which are formed out of them in every kind overlaid with colors of every kind? For then it were natural that crows too in flying should often display a white color from white wings and that swans should come to be black from a black seed, or of any other different color you please.

Again the more minute the parts are into which anything is rent, the more you may perceive the color fade away by little and little and become extinct; as for instance if a piece of purple is torn into small shreds: when it has been plucked into separate threads, the purple, and the

scarlet far the most brilliant of colors, are quite effaced; from which you may infer that the shreds part with all their color before they come back to the seeds of things.

Lastly, since you admit that all bodies do not utter a voice nor emit a smell, for this reason you do not assign sounds and smells to all.

So also since we cannot perceive all things with the eyes, you are to know that some things are as much denuded of color as others are without smell and devoid of sound, and that the keen discerning mind can just as well apprehend these things as it can take note of things which are destitute of other qualities. But lest haply you suppose that first bodies remain stripped of color alone, they are also wholly devoid of warmth and cold and violent heat, and are judged to be barren of sound and drained of moisture, and emit from their body no scent of their own.

Just as when you set about preparing the balmy liquid of sweet marjoram and myrrh and the flower of spikenard which gives forth to the nostrils a scent like nectar, before all you should seek, so far as you may and can find it, the substance of scentless oil, such as gives out no perfume to the nostrils, that it may as little as possible meddle with and destroy by its own pungency the odors mixed in its body and boiled up with it; for the same reason the first-beginnings of things must not bring to the begetting of things a smell or sound of their own, since they cannot discharge anything from themselves, and for the same reason no taste either nor cold nor any heat moderate or violent, and the like. For as these things, be they what they may, are still such as to be liable to death, whether pliant with a soft, brittle with a crumbling, or hollow with a porous body, they must all be withdrawn from the first beginnings, if we wish to assign to things imperishable foundations for the whole sum of existence to rest upon: that you may not have things returning altogether to nothing.

Bailey

And since the pupil of the eye receives in itself a certain kind of blow, when it is said to perceive white colour, and another again, when it perceives black and the rest, nor does it matter with what colour things you touch may choose to be endowed, but rather with what sort of shape they are fitted, you may know that the first-beginnings have no need of colours, but by their diverse forms produce diverse kinds of touch.

Moreover, since no fixed nature of colour belongs to fixed shapes, and all conformations of first-beginnings may exist in any hue you will, why on like grounds are not those things which are made out of them steeped with every kind of colour in every kind? For it were natural that often flying crows too should throw off white colour from white wings, and that black swans should be made of black seeds or of any other colour you will, simple or diverse.

Nay again, the more each thing is pulled asunder into tiny parts, the more can you perceive colour little by little fading away and being quenched: as comes to pass when purple is plucked apart into small pieces: when it has been unravelled thread by thread, the dark purple or the scarlet, by far the brightest of colours, is utterly destroyed; so that you can know from this that

the tiny shreds dissipate all their colour before they are sundered into the seeds of things.

Lastly, since you do not allow that all bodies send out sound or smell, it comes to pass, therefore, that you do not assign sound and smell to them.

Even so, since we cannot with the eyes descry all things, you may know that some things are made bereft of colour, just as some are without any smell and far parted from sound, yet that the keen mind can come to know them no less than it can mark those devoid of other things. But lest by chance you think that the first-bodies abide bereft only of colour, they are also sundered altogether from warmth and cold, and fiery heat, and are carried along barren of sound and devoid of taste, nor do they give off any scent of their own from their body.

Even as when you set about to make the delicious liquid of marjoram or myrrh, or scent of nard, which breathes nectar to the nostrils, first of all it is right to seek, in so far as you may and can find it, the nature of scentless oil, which may send off no breath of perfume to the nostrils, so that it may as little as possible taint and ruin with its own strong smell the scents mingled in its body and boiled along with it. Therefore after all the first-beginnings of things are bound not to bring to the begetting of things their own scent or sound, since they cannot give anything off from themselves, nor in the same way acquire any taste at all, nor cold, nor once more warm and fiery heat . . . and the rest: yet since they are such as to be created mortal, the pliant of soft body, the brittle of crumbling body, the hollow of rare, they must needs all be kept apart from the first-beginnings, if we wish to place immortal foundations beneath things, on which the sum of life may rest; lest you see all things pass away utterly into nothing.

Post by “Martin” of August 22, 2020 at 4:12 AM

This seems to be the same as 32 in red.

Post by “Cassius” of August 22, 2020 at 6:12 AM

YES Martin thanks. Been a long week... I am editing last week and fixing this today.

Post by “Cassius” of August 22, 2020 at 10:05 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1669-episode-thirty-three-more-on-the-implications-of-the-colorless-atoms/>

This episode is going to continue on the topic of colorless atoms, with many of the same underlying issues, so here is a link to a post by Don on the same subject [in the Episode 32 thread](#). We can continue the discussion there or here in this thread for Episode 33.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2020 at 9:06 PM

Episode 33 of the Lucretius Today Podcast Is Now Available: More on the Implications of the Colorless Atoms. Be sure to let us know if you have any comments or questions, and subscribe using Itunes or any podcast aggregator.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/40493833>

Post by “Cassius” of August 27, 2020 at 8:59 AM

Anyone had a chance to listen to this one yet? Given our current discussion [where we are talking about the details of PD 24](#) I think the material we discuss from Delacy about what is considered to be true based on analogy only (rather than direct observation) is pretty relevant.

Post by “Don” of August 27, 2020 at 1:47 PM

I listened but found myself just nodding my head in agreement mostly.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 27, 2020 at 2:40 PM

Yes. Another good one!

A few thoughts....

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1669-episode-thirty-three-more-on-the-implications-of-the-colorless-atoms/>

I'm not sure about Lucretius' era, but in ancient Greece **everyone** was speculating beyond the evidence. Which just reinforces the point that the methods of inference are perhaps more important than the actual conclusions reached.

When using the feelings as a measurement of truth it's extremely important that the "input" (sensations, data, facts, etc) is as extensive and accurate as possible. With pure reason this doesn't seem to be the case, which can be rather dangerous.

So it's only natural that as input improves over time, so will the conclusions. But during the podcast I kept thinking of the implications of this in terms of our fractured society and the plethora of "alternative facts" circulating. Without getting into politics (!!!) I think that this may illustrate how EP can and should apply on a societal level in addition to being *just* a personal philosophy.

Post by "Cassius" of August 27, 2020 at 4:22 PM

Thanks for the comments! Good to know you guys think we're pretty much in the zone where we should be. As to Godfrey's comments:

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

...in ancient Greece **everyone** was speculating beyond the evidenceWhich just reinforces the point that the methods of inference are perhaps more important than the actual conclusions reached.

Yes I think this is very important. This is the root of the difference between Epicurus and the others. When we go beyond what is directly in front of us, WHAT METHOD do we use in order to take positions, if they can be taken at all?

I think there are some pluses and minuses about the way we are approaching Lucretius "cold," and this is an area I want to improve. It's easy to get stuck in the weeds and not realize or emphasize the full implications of where we are in the process. The rejection of reliance on "reason" and the insistence on giving credit to the "faculties" is just huge and should not be lost sight of.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

But during the podcast I kept thinking of the implications of this in terms of our fractured society and the plethora of "alternative facts" circulating.

You're stating it in terms of "alternative facts" and that may or may not be the best perspective. What comes to mind are these cliches about "your feelings don't change my facts" and the many variations about that. I think the direction this takes us is that for better or worse, and no matter how we wish it might be otherwise, different people have different feelings about things, and those subjective feelings are as important a part of our human reality as those things which we consider to be more "objective." I agree this has profound implications for society.

But for now rather than carry it straight to the social implications, I think there are many more practical day to day implications that we need to bring out.

Post by “Cassius” of August 27, 2020 at 4:33 PM

Next week's podcast changes the subject only a little - in addition to the atoms not having any of these qualities like color, the point is made that most certainly the atoms can't think on their own.

That means we are still on the subject of how there are no Platonic/Aristotelian absolutes or essences arising in the atoms, so if you guys have suggestions on things to include or ways to elaborate on that point, don't hesitate to make suggestions! 😊

I need to confirm the start and end points but I am expecting this to be the core of it:

Quote

Now farther, those beings we see indued with sense, you must needs own are produced from insensible seeds; nor is there anything we perceive by common experience, which refutes or opposes this opinion. Everything rather leads us on, and compels us to believe that animals, I say, proceed from principles that are void of sense; for we observe living worms come into being from stinking dung, when the earth, moistened by unseasonable showers, grows putrid and rotten.

Besides, beings of all kinds undergo continual changes; the waters, the leaves, and the sweet grass turn themselves into beasts; the beasts convert their nature into human bodies; and the bodies of wild beasts and birds increase and grow strong by these

bodies of ours. Nature therefore changes all sorts of food into living bodies; and hence she forms the senses of all creatures, much after the same manner as she quickens dry wood into fire, and sets everything in a blaze. You see now it is of the utmost importance in what order these first seeds are ranged, and, when mingled together, what motions they give, and receive among themselves.

But tell me, what is it that lays a force upon your mind? What moves you? What drives you into another opinion, that you should not believe a thing sensible can be formed from insensible seeds? Perhaps you observe that stones, and wood, and earth, when mingled together, can produce no creature indued with sense; but you will do well to remember, upon this occasion, that I did not say things sensible, or sense, could instantly proceed from all seeds in general, which go to the production of beings, but that it was of great consequence of what size the seeds are that created a being of sense, with what figures, motions, order, and position they are distinguished. Nothing of which we observe in wood, or clods of Earth. Yet these, when they are made rotten by moisture, produce worms, because the particles of matter, being changed from their former course by some new cause, are so united and disposed, that living creatures are formed, and creep into being.

Besides, those who contend that a sensible being may be raised from sensible seeds, (and this you are taught by some philosophers), must needs allow those seeds to be soft; for all sense is joined to bowels, nerves, and veins, all which, we know, are soft, and consequently liable to change and dissolution.

Post by “Don” of August 27, 2020 at 8:48 PM

[Cassius](#) and [Godfrey](#) brought to my mind an issue I want to ...resolve? Raise?

When Epicurus says "feelings" are a criteria of truth, I do not believe he meant that the truth of a fact can be determined by how we feel about it. Did he? I don't think we can be like "I feel it is true in my gut so it's true." Or an I saying that doesn't feel right? It pains me to think that?

We had a thread a while ago that went into the point that "feelings" were a translation of *pathē* which refers to how one reacts to something. It's important to my understanding that "the feelings/pathē are two: pleasure and pain." The feelings are how we react to something: with pleasure, or with pain. So am I just reacting with pain to the proposition I'm putting forward?

Objective facts (the sun rose in the east this morning, zebras are animals with black and white stripes, the sun is a star, etc.) are not dependent on "feeling" in the common usage as in "that

doesn't feel right to me." They are or they're not based on objective, observable evidence. But does that mean that they elicit pleasure?

I admit I'm a little adrift here. What does having pathē be a criterion of truth mean? I can't (right now) accept it's a gut feeling. Or is it?

Help 😬

Post by "Cassius" of August 27, 2020 at 9:36 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I do not believe he meant that the truth of a fact can be determined by how we feel about it

Not trying to be smart here, but I think the answer is that that part of a fact which constitutes whether a fact brings us pain or pleasure IS determined by how we feel about it.

You're asking this is a different way but it's central to a lot of what we talk about and I see it this way - here's my proposed take:

just like how we see or smell or hear or taste or touch a thing is an irreducible primary that we can't go behind, so is the "feeling" we get when we react to something.

Yes indeed this is probably why primarily Godfrey's point probably raised this in your mind, because he referenced fracturing of society with the implication and my reaction being that it causes all sorts of problems that people experience pain and pleasure (they "feel") in an individual way that may or may not be fully "true" to all of the facts.

But that's EXACTLY the point and why the feelings are part of the criteria of truth! 😊

Just like what we see of something does not give us the full story of a thing (it may also have attributes of smell, taste, touch, sound) whether we feel pain or pleasure at the experience of the thing may not also give us the "full picture of it" -- and that's what I think you are worried about when you say "the truth of a fact can't be determined by how we feel about it."

But in fact looking at it from the perspective of how we see or hear or taste something, those too are individual experiences which are reported honestly to us by the senses, and there is no

way to go behind that sensation - We have to credit them for exactly what they say to us, which is the point we're discussing nearby in [PD24](#), even though they don't give us the "full picture" of the object under consideration.

Whether the apple when we taste it gives us pain or pleasure is in fact only a part of our experience of the apple, but the pain or pleasure we feel is an irreducible primary just like its red color or its taste or its texture.

Nobody promised you a rose garden - nobody promised that you would be able to take a limited number of experiences of any type and add them together and get the "full picture" of the thing being observed.

So make the point more clear the point I would suggest:

Rather than: "the truth of a fact can be determined by how we feel about it"

We might reword : "the way we feel about something, which is to us a "truth," is in fact determined by how we feel about it."

Now someone might say that there are different aspects of what it means to "feel something" that need to be clarified, but if we analogize "feeling" to the five senses, it seems to me that the "we must take it at face value because it is reported honestly" rule is still in force.

And we're also being led astray because when we say "the truth of a fact can be determined by how we feel about it" we collapsing the word "truth" as it means some kind of almost godlike objective perspective which is absolutely correct -- when in fact we should never think of "truth" in that way given the contextual nature of our universe. That's an improperly idealistic view of the meaning of "truth" which should always be understood to mean "true as revealed to us by our human faculties."

Agree or disagree?

I see this as important because this is the immovable object which stands in the way of utopian ideas of universal harmony and the like. Since people "feel" differently about things, just like they see and hear and touch and taste things differently, there is no way there will ever be universal agreement on exactly what activities are desirable and undesirable in life. And I personally translate that into why Utilitarianism - "greatest good for the greatest number" - is not a workable description of a social goal.

Post by "Don" of August 27, 2020 at 10:18 PM

Actually, that does help. I don't know if it resolves all my uneasiness (assuages all my pain?), but I think it certainly begins to address it.

So, that's why they Canon is three-legged. We need **all three** aspects: pain/pleasure, sensations, prolepses - working together, not one alone. I think this is why it came as such a shock (pleasant shock) that [PD24](#) specifically cited the three aspects of the Canon in the original Greek. You need all three.

Thanks, [Cassius](#) ! That was valuable! Glad I asked 😊

Post by “Godfrey” of August 28, 2020 at 1:20 AM

Maybe this is too simplistic, but [Don](#) in #11 you asked a question because you were feeling unease (pain) regarding an idea. By asking the question you were able to gather more data, and based on that data and the background activity of your prolepses you were able to "assuage your pain." That, in a nutshell, is one example of how I understand the process of the Canon to work.

Post by “Cassius” of August 28, 2020 at 5:42 AM

This is one of the many areas where I think the explanation I gave is basically channeling what Dewitt had to say. No doubt one of the most controversial aspects of it is that it equates "feelings" with the five senses as faculties that work by reporting "honestly" (pre-rational; without "opinion") but I think that has to be the common thread of anything that is a "canon of truth" - something that we can look to for what is our ultimate reality. "Our" human ultimate reality is all that is relevant to us - "absolute" "universal" reality "from the perspective of God" is a false idea that has no basis in "fact." Probably in legal terms that's why we look to the "reasonable man" standard in court rather than to something like "what God would have done."

I suppose you would have to be careful about the meaning of the term "cognition" but it strikes me that at least in terms of common understanding, this would put Epicurus squarely at odds with the Ayn Rand slogan "Emotions are not tools of cognition" for example [here](#). (I think this is often restated among the Randians as "feelings are not tools of cognition.")

A Conversation with Ayn Rand

"Emotions are not tools of cognition," Ayn Rand said on more than one occasion (1961, 55; 1964, 6; 1974, 6).

An emotion as such tells you nothing about reality, beyond the fact that something makes you feel something. Without a ruthlessly honest commitment to introspection—to the conceptual identification of your inner states—you will not discover what you feel, what arouses the feeling, and whether your feeling is an appropriate response to the facts of reality, or a mistaken response, or a vicious illusion produced by years of self-deception . . . (Rand 1984, 17)

The apparent meaning of these statements has reverberated among Objectivists for years. For some, they have cast a suspicion on emotion as such. Many take them to mean that feelings should always be ignored when reasoning. Why? On the premise that they do not give any evidence about reality, and distort our reasoning, giving a kind of positive bias (Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky 1982) to whatever is felt most strongly.

I can't leave the topic of "reporting honestly / pre-rational / without opinion" as the key aspect of a canonical faculty without going back to the issue of how that would apply to anticipations. It seems pretty clear that Epicurus was considering the process thinking to include the storing "mental pictures" which constitute our understanding of the meaning of words, and he was urging us to make those as clear as possible as an aid to proper thought. That would be the part that Diogenes Laertius described as:

(BAILEY uses "concept" here but the Greek is apparently prolepsis / preconcept / anticipation)

Quote

The concept they speak of as an apprehension or right opinion or thought or general idea stored within the mind, that is to say a recollection of what has often been presented from without, as for instance 'Such and such a thing is a man,' for the moment the word 'man' is spoken, immediately by means of the concept his form too is thought of, as the senses give us the information. Therefore the first signification of every name is immediate and clear evidence. And we could not look for the object of our search, unless we have first known it. For instance, we ask, 'Is that standing yonder a horse or a cow?' To do this we must know by means of a concept the shape of horse and of cow. Otherwise we could not have named them, unless we previously knew their appearance by means of a concept. So the concepts are clear and immediate evidence. Further, the decision of opinion depends on some previous clear and immediate evidence, to which we refer when we express it: for instance, 'How do we know whether this is a man?' Opinion they also call supposition, and say that it may be true or false: if it is confirmed or not contradicted, it is true ; if it is not confirmed or is contradicted, it is false. For this reason was introduced the notion of the problem awaiting confirmation: for example, waiting to come near the tower and see how it looks to the near view.

To me the best way to reconcile this is that the "first signification of every name" is a mental summary that INCLUDES the information we obtained from the 5 senses, and the feelings, and

the preconceptions, but it's not identical with the preconception itself. This is where DeWitt i think is definitely on the right track, as considering preconceptions to be an automatic intuitive **pre**-concept input rather than a fully-formed "concept" or "word" or "mental picture" itself. Anticipations in that theory would be a faculty that provides organizing procedural functions, like the eyes assemble light waves and process what we call "sight" that then GOES IN to the final mental picture, but isn't the final mental picture itself. All the various sights and sounds and smells and tastes of birds that we have experienced in our lives GO INTO THE CREATION OF our stored mental image of "bird," but those experiences are not identical with our stored mental image of bird.

In the same way, all our various experiences (Feelings, Emotions) of loving our families, spouses, friends, artwork, etc GO INTO THE CREATION OF our stored mental image of "love" but are not equivalent to that stored mental image.

That's where anticipations can be "not true to all the facts" as referenced in the letter to Menoeceus where it appears to say that people have "wrong" conclusions about the gods, even though those conclusions are based in part on anticipations. The five senses/feelings/anticipations are not magical keys by which we are in touch with "absolute truth" -- but they are the only faculties we have for experiencing what is "true to us" and testing that truth over time to have confidence that our conclusions are repeatable over time and can be expected to recur over and over again reliably. Since there is no god, no universal point of reference, no "absolute" truth, then the only kind of "truth" that really exists consists of repeatable test results over time.

Opinion they also call supposition, and say that it may be true or false: if it is confirmed or not contradicted, it is true ; if it is not confirmed or is contradicted, it is false.

Post by “Don” of August 28, 2020 at 7:22 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Maybe this is too simplistic, but [Don](#) in #11 you asked a question because you were feeling unease (pain) regarding an idea. By asking the question you were able to gather more data, and based on that data and the background activity of your prolepses you were able to "assuage your pain." That, in a nutshell, is one example of how I understand the process of the Canon to work.

[Godfrey](#) , that actually helps a lot. I don't think that's simplistic at all. It's a simple explanation, and those are sometimes the best. You're talking about using pain as a goad to resolve the

uneasiness makes sense.

I think my initial reaction to the idea of feelings as a criteria of truth was when people don't take that second step. They use pain to stop looking and use the pain itself to say this is true. "I don't like this thing/fact/event, therefore I will reject it" I'm thinking flat-earthers for example. I could use others but I'm trying not to get political. The Earth not being flat is demonstrably false if you look at additional evidence from science and the extension of our senses. But the idea of a round Earth is "painful" for them so they reject it. This is the kind of thing where I don't think feelings alone can be a criteria, BUT you work all three legs of the Canon and then you can reliably construct a mental picture of reality.

Am I making any sense or talking in circles? This thread has been very helpful, so thank you both for taking the time to respond!

Post by “Don” of August 28, 2020 at 7:46 AM

I think this is why the idea of people living in [filter bubbles](#) online causes me pain. #Cassius if this is too political it won't cause me pain if you delete this post 😊

People experience a reaction of pleasure by having their preconceived or predetermined ideas reinforced whether or not they reflect a rounded view of reality or circumstances. But they might also be experiencing pain by having their worst fears compounded. They may become depressed, fearful, but may experience this as pleasure in having their personal views fed back to them in their bubble. "I must be right because that is all I'm seeing." I see this as a pleasure of the profligate/lost since it is not conducive to long term well-being/eudaimonia. They don't seek alternative perspectives or additional information to confirm or deny. They only seek confirmation of possibly erroneous preconceptions. That's one area where I was/am having real problems in accepting "feeling" as a criteria of truth. But as you've both pointed out, that's my painful reaction to the situation so I'm using that feeling to react to this. On the other hand... But... However... Aaah! 😄😄😄

Post by “Cassius” of August 28, 2020 at 9:45 AM

Don I don't see that post as too political at all. I think the issues we are wrestling here are simple reality, and no less important (because they are the same) as the reasons Epicurus dealt

with "justice" in the last ten PDs. The only way we can improve things is to understand how things work, and this appears to be how things work whether we like it or not. Once we diagnose the situation we can act to improve it, but if we refuse to look at what is really going on as part of human nature, we'll never be as successful dealing with it as if we started with a "realistic" view of what's going on.

[Quote from Don](#)

I think my initial reaction to the idea of feelings as a criteria of truth was when people don't take that second step. They use pain to stop looking and use the pain itself to say this is true. "I don't like this thing/fact/event, therefore I will reject it" I'm thinking flat-earthers for example

Yes that's why people react against the viewpoint, but reacting against the viewpoint does not change the validity of observing that this is the way people work. We can't "fix" anything if we don't come to terms first with what is actually happening as a part of human makeup.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 28, 2020 at 3:16 PM

This thread is pointing out to me the idea of **balance** between the three faculties.

For instance if our feelings are particularly strong regarding something, that may suggest a need for gathering more information (sensations, input). Thinking in these terms, self-interested agents gain power through disrupting the balance of the faculties. For instance religion minimizes (undermines) the sensations and perhaps the prolepses by insisting on "faith." All that leaves is feelings with which to measure truth. And reason, which is ineffective without proper input. The same goes with filter bubbles. Or Platonists: look at the society Plato proposed in the Republic.

No wonder we have to struggle so much to understand our natural faculties....

Post by “Don” of August 28, 2020 at 6:55 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

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Very insightful post, [Godfrey](#) ! I think balance is a very good way to put it. The idea of the three-legged stool does in fact seem to be a good metaphor for the Canon. I know that's not original to Epicurus, but that idea of balance and working together seems appropriate.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 28, 2020 at 7:03 PM

Yes the three-legged stool is a great illustration of it!

Post by “Cassius” of August 28, 2020 at 9:13 PM

Yes unless all three are in contact with reality the resulting stool cannot be stable.