

# **Episode One Hundred Six - The Epicurean Attitude Toward Fate / Fortune and the Role of Reason**

**Post by "Cassius" of January 20, 2022 at 6:45 AM**

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Six of Lucretius Today.

This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

I am your host Cassius, and together with our panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and we'll discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. 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.

If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics.

At this point in our podcast we have completed our first line-by-line review of the poem, and we have turned to the presentation of Epicurean ethics found in Cicero's On Ends. Last week we spent most of the episode discussing several listener questions. Today we return to the Torquatus text and look more closely at this list of core Epicurean doctrines.

Now let's join Joshua (or Charles) reading today's text:

[63] It was indeed excellently said by Epicurus that fortune only in a small degree crosses the wise man's path, and that his greatest and most important undertakings are executed in accordance with his own design and his own principles, and that no greater pleasure can be reaped from a life which is without end in time, than is reaped from this which we know to have its allotted end. He judged that the logic of your school possesses no efficacy either for the amelioration of life or for the facilitation of debate. He laid the greatest stress on natural science. That branch of knowledge enables us to realize clearly the force of words and the natural conditions of speech and the theory of consistent and contradictory expressions; and when we have learned the constitution of the universe we are relieved of superstition, are emancipated from the dread of death, are not agitated through ignorance of phenomena, from which ignorance, more than any thing else, terrible panics often arise; finally, our characters will also be improved when we have learned what it is that nature craves. Then again if we

grasp a firm knowledge of phenomena, and uphold that canon, which almost fell from heaven into human ken, that test to which we are to bring all our judgments concerning things, we shall never succumb to any man's eloquence and abandon our opinions.

[64] Moreover, unless the constitution of the world is thoroughly understood, we shall by no means be able to justify the verdicts of our senses. Further, our mental perceptions all arise from our sensations; and if these are all to be true, as the system of Epicurus proves to us, then only will cognition and perception become possible. Now those who invalidate sensations and say that perception is altogether impossible, cannot even clear the way for this very argument of theirs when they have thrust the senses aside. Moreover, when cognition and knowledge have been invalidated, every principle concerning the conduct of life and the performance of its business becomes invalidated. So from natural science we borrow courage to withstand the fear of death, and firmness to face superstitious dread, and tranquillity of mind, through the removal of ignorance concerning the mysteries of the world, and self-control, arising from the elucidation of the nature of the passions and their different classes, and as I shewed just now, our leader again has established the canon and criterion of knowledge and thus has imparted to us a method for marking off falsehood

from truth.

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Key References for the Epicurean Canonics (Epistemology - The Basis of Knowledge):

1. This document in updated and easier to read form at the [Epicurus College Course Materials](#)
2. The [EpicureanFriends forum on Canonics \(Epistemology\)](#)
3. [Epicurus' Letter to Herodotus](#) (Much of Herodotus is devoted to images, and thus the way the sensations work. Important to this also is the issue of Qualities (Events, Accidents) and Properties
  1. [37] Wherefore since the method I have described is valuable to all those who are accustomed to the investigation of nature, I who urge upon others the constant occupation in the investigation of nature, and find my own peace chiefly in a life so occupied, have composed for you another epitome on these lines, summing up the first principles of the whole doctrine. First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the ideas attached to words, in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning.

2. [38] For this purpose it is essential that the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference. And besides we must keep all our investigations in accord with our sensations, and in particular with the immediate apprehensions whether of the mind or of any one of the instruments of judgment, and likewise in accord with the feelings existing in us, in order that we may have indications whereby we may judge both the problem of sense perception and the unseen.
3. Images
  1. [46] Moreover, there are images like in shape to the solid bodies, far surpassing perceptible things in their subtlety of texture. For it is not impossible that such emanations should be formed in that which surrounds the objects, nor that there should be opportunities for the formation of such hollow and thin frames, nor that there should be effluences which preserve the respective position and order which they had before in the solid bodies: these images we call idols.
  2. [47] Next, nothing among perceptible things contradicts the belief that the images have unsurpassable fineness of texture. And for this reason they have also unsurpassable speed of motion, since the movement of all their atoms is uniform, and besides nothing or very few things hinder their emission by collisions, whereas a body composed of many or infinite atoms is at once hindered by collisions. [48] Besides this, nothing contradicts the belief that the creation of the idols takes place as quick as thought. For the flow of atoms from the surface of bodies is continuous, yet it cannot be detected by any lessening in the size of the object because of the constant filling up of what is lost. The flow of images preserves for a long time the position and order of the atoms in the solid body, though it is occasionally confused. Moreover, compound idols are quickly formed in the air around, because it is not necessary for their substance to be filled in deep inside: and besides there are certain other methods in which existences of this sort are produced. For not one of these beliefs is contradicted by our sensations, if one looks to see in what way sensation will bring us the clear visions from external objects, and in what way again the corresponding sequences of qualities and movements.
  3. [49] Now we must suppose too that it is when something enters us from external objects that we not only see but think of their shapes. For external objects could not make on us an impression of the nature of their own colour and shape by means of the air which lies between us and them, nor again by means of the rays or effluences of any sort which pass from us to them — nearly so well as if models, similar in color and shape, leave the objects and enter according to their respective size either into our sight or into our mind; moving along swiftly, and so by this means reproducing the image of a single

continuous thing and preserving the corresponding sequence of qualities and movements from the original object as the result of their uniform contact with us, kept up by the vibration of the atoms deep in the interior of the concrete body.

4. [50] And every image which we obtain by an act of apprehension on the part of the mind or of the sense-organs, whether of shape or of properties, this image is the shape or the properties of the concrete object, and is produced by the constant repetition of the image or the impression it has left. Now falsehood and error always lie in the addition of opinion with regard to what is waiting to be confirmed or not contradicted, and then is not confirmed or is contradicted.
5. [51] For the similarity between the things which exist, which we call real and the images received as a likeness of things and produced either in sleep or through some other acts of apprehension on the part of the mind or the other instruments of judgment, could never be, unless there were some effluences of this nature actually brought into contact with our senses. And error would not exist unless another kind of movement too were produced inside ourselves, closely linked to the apprehension of images, but differing from it; and it is owing to this, supposing it is not confirmed, or is contradicted, that falsehood arises; but if it is confirmed or not contradicted, it is true.
6. [52] Therefore we must do our best to keep this doctrine in mind, in order that on the one hand the standards of judgment dependent on the clear visions may not be undermined, and on the other error may not be as firmly established as truth and so throw all into confusion. Moreover, hearing, too, results when a current is carried off from the object speaking or sounding or making a noise, or causing in any other way a sensation of hearing. Now this current is split up into particles, each like the whole, which at the same time preserve a correspondence of qualities with one another and a unity of character which stretches right back to the object which emitted the sound: this unity it is which in most cases produces comprehension in the recipient, or, if not, merely makes manifest the presence of the external object.
7. [53] For without the transference from the object of some correspondence of qualities, comprehension of this nature could not result. We must not then suppose that the actual air is molded into shape by the voice which is emitted or by other similar sounds — for it will be very far from being so acted upon by it — but that the blow which takes place inside us, when we emit our voice, causes at once a squeezing out of certain particles, which produce a stream of breath, of such a character as to afford us the sensation of hearing. Furthermore, we must suppose that smell too, just like hearing, could never bring about any sensation, unless there were certain particles carried off from the object of suitable size to stir this sense-organ, some of them in a manner disorderly and alien to it, others in a regular manner and akin in nature.

8. [54] Moreover, we must suppose that the atoms do not possess any of the qualities belonging to perceptible things, except shape, weight, and size, and all that necessarily goes with shape. For every quality changes; but the atoms do not change at all, since there must needs be something which remains solid and indissoluble at the dissolution of compounds, which can cause changes; not changes into the nonexistent or from the non-existent, but changes effected by the shifting of position of some particles, and by the addition or departure of others. For this reason it is essential that the bodies which shift their position should be imperishable and should not possess the nature of what changes, but parts and configuration of their own. For thus much must needs remain constant.
  9. [55] For even in things perceptible to us which change their shape by the withdrawal of matter it is seen that shape remains to them, whereas the qualities do not remain in the changing object, in the way in which shape is left behind, but are lost from the entire body. Now these particles which are left behind are sufficient to cause the differences in compound bodies, since it is essential that some things should be left behind and not be destroyed into the non-existent. Moreover, we must not either suppose that every size exists among the atoms, in order that the evidence of phenomena may not contradict us, but we must suppose that there are some variations of size. For if this be the case, we can give a better account of what occurs in our feelings and sensations.
  10. [56] But the existence of atoms of every size is not required to explain the differences of qualities in things, and at the same time some atoms would be bound to come within our ken and be visible; but this is never seen to be the case, nor is it possible to imagine how an atom could become visible.
4. Lucretius' Discussion of Qualities (Events. Accidents) and Properties - [The reference to the Trojan War In Book One:](#)
1. [449] For all things that have a name, you will find either properties linked to these two things or you will see them to be their accidents. That is a property which in no case can be sundered or separated without the fatal disunion of the thing, as is weight to rocks, heat to fire, moisture to water, touch to all bodies, intangibility to the void. On the other hand, slavery, poverty, riches, liberty, war, concord, and other things by whose coming and going the nature of things abides untouched, these we are used, as is natural, to call accidents. Even so time exists not by itself, but from actual things comes a feeling, what was brought to a close in time past, then what is present now, and further what is going to be hereafter. And it must be avowed that no man feels time by itself apart from the motion or quiet rest of things. [464] Then again, when men say that 'the rape of Tyndarus's daughter', or 'the vanquishing of the Trojan tribes in war' are things, beware that they do not perchance constrain us to avow that these things exist in themselves, just because the past ages have carried off beyond recall those races of men, of whom, in truth,

these were the accidents. For firstly, we might well say that whatsoever has happened is an accident in one case of the countries, in another even of the regions of space. Or again, if there had been no substance of things nor place and space, in which all things are carried on, never would the flame of love have been fired by the beauty of Tyndaris, nor swelling deep in the Phrygian heart of Alexander have kindled the burning battles of savage war, nor unknown of the Trojans would the timber horse have set Pergama aflame at dead of night, when the sons of the Greeks issued from its womb. So that you may see clearly that all events from first to last do not exist, and are not by themselves like body, nor can they be spoken of in the same way as the being of the void, but rather so that you might justly call them the accidents of body and place, in which they are carried on, one and all.

5. Lucretius' Discussion of Images, Illusions, and Confidence in the Senses (Links to Bailey Edition)

1. [Opening of Book IV](#)
2. [Discussion of Images](#)
3. [The Illusions of Mirrors](#)
4. [Brightness and Shadows](#)
5. [The Illusion of Square Towers Appearing Round](#)
6. [The Illusions of Ships](#)
7. [Other Illusions](#)
8. [The Fallacy of Thinking that Nothing Is Knowable](#)
9. [Reason Is Dependent On The Senses](#)

1. [462] Wondrously many other things of this sort we see, all of which would fain spoil our trust in the senses; all in vain, since the greatest part of these things deceives us on account of the opinions of the mind, which we add ourselves, so that things not seen by the senses are counted as seen. For nothing is harder than to distinguish things manifest from things uncertain, which the mind straightway adds of itself.
2. [469] Again, if any one thinks that nothing is known, he knows not whether that can be known either, since he admits that he knows nothing. Against him then I will refrain from joining issue, who plants himself with his head in the place of his feet. And yet were I to grant that he knows this too, yet I would ask this one question; since he has never before seen any truth in things, whence does he know what is knowing, and not knowing each in turn, what thing has begotten the concept of the true and the false, what thing has proved that the doubtful differs from the certain?
3. [478] You will find that the concept of the true is begotten first from the senses, and that the senses cannot be gainsaid. For something must be found with a greater surety, which can of its own authority refute the false by the true. Next then, what must be held to be of greater surety than sense? Will reason, sprung from false sensation, avail to speak against the senses, when it is wholly sprung from the senses? For unless they are true, all reason too

becomes false. Or will the ears be able to pass judgement on the eyes, or touch on the ears? or again will the taste in the mouth refute this touch; will the nostrils disprove it, or the eyes show it false? It is not so, I trow. For each sense has its faculty set apart, each its own power, and so it must needs be that we perceive in one way what is soft or cold or hot, and in another the diverse colours of things, and see all that goes along with colour. Likewise, the taste of the mouth has its power apart; in one way smells arise, in another sounds. And so it must needs be that one sense cannot prove another false. Nor again will they be able to pass judgement on themselves, since equal trust must at all times be placed in them. Therefore, whatever they have perceived on each occasion, is true.

4. [500] And if reason is unable to unravel the cause, why those things which close at hand were square, are seen round from a distance, still it is better through lack of reasoning to be at fault in accounting for the causes of either shape, rather than to let things clear seen slip abroad from your grasp, and to assail the grounds of belief, and to pluck up the whole foundations on which life and existence rest. For not only would all reasoning fall away; life itself too would collapse straightway, unless you chose to trust the senses, and avoid headlong spots and all other things of this kind which must be shunned, and to make for what is opposite to these. Know, then, that all this is but an empty store of words, which has been drawn up and arrayed against the senses.
5. [513] Again, just as in a building, if the first ruler is awry, and if the square is wrong and out of the straight lines, if the level sags a whit in any place, it must needs be that the whole structure will be made faulty and crooked, all awry, bulging, leaning forwards or backwards, and out of harmony, so that some parts seem already to long to fall, or do fall, all betrayed by the first wrong measurements; even so then your reasoning of things must be awry and false, which all springs from false senses.
6. [Diogenes Laertius Section on Canonics](#) (Bailey - Warning - Note that he uses 'concept' instead of 'preconception')
  1. [29] I will also give you the [Principal Doctrines](#), and a selection from his sayings which seem most worthy of mention. You will thus be able to understand Epicurus from every point of view and could form a judgment on him. The first letter he writes to Herodotus (and it deals with Physics; the second is to Pythocles), and it deals with Celestial Phenomena; the third is to Menoeceus, and contains the moral teaching. We must begin with the first letter, but I will first speak briefly about the divisions of his philosophy.
  2. [30] It is divided into three parts, the Canonicon (or Procedure), the Physics and the Ethics. The Canonicon gives the method of approach to the system, and is contained in the work called *The Canon*. The Physics contains all the investigation into nature, and is contained in the thirty-seven books *On Nature* and in an

abridged form in the letters. The Ethics deals with choice and avoidance, and is contained in the books *On Lives* and the letters and the book on *The End*. The Epicureans usually group the Canonicon with the Physics and state that it deals with the criterion of truth and the fundamental principles and contains the elements of the system. The Physics deals with creation and dissolution and with nature; the Ethics with things to be chosen or avoided, with the conduct of life and its purpose.

3. [31] 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 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. [32] 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. And the visions of the insane and those in dreams are true, for they cause movement, and that which does not exist cannot cause movement.
4. [33] The concept [preconception] 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?'
5. [34] 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. The internal sensations they say are two, pleasure and pain, which

occur to every living creature, and the one is akin to nature and the other alien: by means of these two choice and avoidance are determined. Of investigations some concern actual things, others mere words. This is a brief summary of the division of their philosophy and their views on the criterion of truth.

#### 7. [Diogenes of Oinoanda On The Flux](#)

1. Fr. 5: [Others do not] explicitly [stigmatise] natural science as unnecessary, being ashamed to acknowledge [this], but use another means of discarding it. For, when they assert that things are inapprehensible, what else are they saying than that there is no need for us to pursue natural science? After all, who will choose to seek what he can never find?

2.

Now Aristotle and those who hold the same Peripatetic views as Aristotle say that nothing is scientifically knowable, because things are continually in flux and, on account of the rapidity of the flux, evade our apprehension. We on the other hand acknowledge their flux, but not its being so rapid that the nature of each thing [is] at no time apprehensible by sense-perception. And indeed [in no way would the upholders of] the view under discussion have been able to say (and this is just what they do [maintain] that [at one time] this is [white] and this black, while [at another time] neither this is [white nor] that black, [if] they had not had [previous] knowledge of the nature of both white and black.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 20, 2022 at 7:43 AM**

I have tried to pull together in that last post some of the key references to Epicurean canonic. I know that there are significant additional references in Sextus Empiricus and no doubt other places, so if someone has others to suggest please add them to the thread.

Depending on what size screen you are using, you may find that this link provides a more clear view of that outline of the major references: [Epicurus College Course Material On Canonic](#)

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### **Post by “Joshua” of January 20, 2022 at 12:02 PM**

That's a lot to get through in an hour!

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 23, 2022 at 1:54 PM

Well we made it through a grand total of two - arguably three - sentences today. Note that is "sentences" not sections!

Our purpose is to use Torquatus to provide an introduction to the big issues of Epicurean philosophy, so even a moderate but still superficial treatment takes a lot of time.

But the material is deep so I think you will like the finished product.

We started on the issue of Epicurus' rejection of Stoic logic, but we reserved til next week most of the detail of Epicurus' own positions, so we will treat that next week.

One omission I now recall from today is that when we referred to "your school" we talked mostly about Stoicism. We need to remember that Cicero was only partly Stoic, however, and he was probably more a Platonist or even Aristotelian on issues of "logic".

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## Post by “Martin” of January 24, 2022 at 9:46 AM

Sigh!

Again, in a nutshell:

With his syllogisms, Epicurus himself made ample use of logic.

"He judged that the logic of your school ..." is an abbreviation which does not refer to logic in itself but the wrong way it is used, e.g. by starting with ideas which have no justification in reality as premises and then claiming the conclusiveness of logic for conclusions on reality or by constructing apparent paradoxes which confuse people who are not skilled in the proper use of logic.

The excluded middle is probably the only theorem where Epicurus disagrees with Aristotelian / binary logic with respect to propositions on the future. Even Aristoteles himself was aware that the excluded middle might not be rock solid concerning propositions on the future (but Cicero apparently did not know that).

Let us stay clear of futile attacks on logic because those would just undermine our credibility. Instead we should point out which premises are wrong or what other aspect of the application of logic is wrong in specific cases.

It is mostly Plato himself with his dialectics and ideal forms who uses logic wrongly. The Stoics are relatively innocent and typically use logic properly for their reasoning as they have learned from Aristoteles except that some basic premises of the ancient Stoics are most likely false. There is no "Stoic logic" to refute.

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 24, 2022 at 1:27 PM

I agree with most of that Martin but this is not my understanding of the situation with Stoicism, so I will have to gather more material on this:

### [Quote from Martin](#)

The Stoics are relatively innocent and typically use logic properly for their reasoning as they have learned from Aristoteles except that some basic premises of the ancient Stoics are most likely false. There is no "Stoic logic" to refute.

For now, I would generally refer to a couple of the standard texts that simply refer to "logic." I agree, and I think we discussed in the episode, that it is necessary to establish just what is being criticized, so we can deal with these uses of the word "logic" that appear in the standard translations:

Diogenes Laertius:

"...the Logicians [he called] 'The destroyers,'"

[24] Metrodorus' writings were as follows:

Three books Against the Physicians. About Sensations. To Timocrates. Concerning Magnanimity. About Epicurus' Ill Health. ***Against the Logicians.*** Nine books Against the Sophists. Concerning the Path To Wisdom. Concerning Change. Concerning Wealth. Against Democritus. Concerning Nobility of Birth.\_

[31] 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 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.

DeWitt:

...He declared dialectic a superfluity but was able to criticize Plato with great acumen and he wrote against the Megarians, the contemporary experts in logic.

...

The rejection of Plato's teachings is almost total. If the Authorized Doctrines be read item by item it may be observed that almost all are contradictions of Plato, and thus it becomes plainly manifest that the writings of Plato occupied the chief place in the youthful studies of Epicurus. The Platonic dialogues were the textbooks of dialectic and in modern parlance would be "required reading."

This almost total rejection does not, on the contrary, preclude extensive borrowing and adaptation on the part of Epicurus. Dialectic by virtue of its dramatic form is committed to a very casual employment of a great variety of analytical tricks and logical devices. If incidentally it furnishes instruction in logic, this is by a method analogous to the case system in the teaching of law. This casual use of logic is precisely what we find in the writings of Epicurus, and it was this practice that gave superficial justification to Cicero in accusing him of "abolishing definitions and offering no instruction in classifications and in partitions of subject matter." B2 Epicurus was not so foolish as to think of abolishing logic; he was merely determined to keep it in a subordinate place. This deliberate choice is additional evidence of extreme familiarity with dialectical writings.

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 24, 2022 at 1:30 PM

### [Quote from Martin](#)

The Stoics are relatively innocent and typically use logic properly for their reasoning as they have learned from Aristoteles except that some basic premises of the ancient Stoics are most likely false. There is no "Stoic logic" to refute.

I will have to come back to this too, but as to whether there is a "Stoic Logic":

[Stoic logic - Wikipedia](#)

### Quote

**Stoic logic** is the system of [propositional logic](#) developed by the [Stoic](#) philosophers in [ancient Greece](#). It was one of the two great systems of logic in the classical world. It was largely built and shaped by [Chrysippus](#), the third head of the Stoic school in the 3rd-century BCE. Chrysippus's logic differed from Aristotle's [term logic](#) because it was based on the analysis of [propositions](#) rather than terms. The smallest unit in Stoic logic is an *assertible* (the Stoic equivalent of a proposition) which is the content of a statement such as "it is day". Assertibles have a truth-value such that they are only true or false depending on when it was expressed (e.g. the assertible "it is night" will only be true if it is true that it is night). [1] In contrast, Aristollean propositions strongly affirm or deny a predicate of a subject and seek to have its truth validated or falsified. Compound assertibles can be built up from simple ones through the use of [logical connectives](#). The resulting syllogistic was grounded on five basic indemonstrable arguments to which all other syllogisms were claimed to be reducible.

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2022 at 1:34 PM

I am not sure yet what this page is, but it looks interesting:

### [THE LOGIC OF THE EPICUREANS](#)

by Allan Marquand

When we think of the Epicureans we picture a friendly brotherhood in a garden, soothing each other's fears, and seeking to realize a life of undisturbed peace and happiness. It was easy, and to their opponents it became natural, to suppose that the Epicureans did not concern themselves with logic; and if we expect to find in their writings a highly developed formal logic, as that of the Stoics, our search will be in vain. But if we examine the letters of Epicurus, the poem of Lucretius, and the treatise of Philodemus\* with a view to discovering the Epicurean mode of thought, we find a logic which outweighs in value that of their Stoic rivals. This logic is interesting to us, not only because it is the key to that school of Greek Philosophy which outlasted every other, but because a similar logic controls a powerful school of English thought.

\* *Gomperz: Herkulanische Studien I, Leipzig, 1865. Bahnsch: Des Epicureers Philodemus Schrift Peri sêmeiôn kai sêmeiôseôn. Eine Darlegung ihres Gedankengehalts. Lyck, 1879.*

Since that page appears to be some kind of unpublished material that may disappear, here is the full page:

Quote

## THE LOGIC OF THE EPICUREANS

by Allan Marquand

When we think of the Epicureans we picture a friendly brotherhood in a garden, soothing each other's fears, and seeking to realize a life of undisturbed peace and happiness. It was easy, and to their opponents it became natural, to suppose that the Epicureans did not concern themselves with logic; and if we expect to find in their writings a highly developed formal logic, as that of the Stoics, our search will be in vain. But if we examine the letters of Epicurus, the poem of Lucretius, and the treatise of Philodemus\* with a view to discovering the Epicurean mode of thought, we find a logic which outweighs in value that of their Stoic rivals. This logic is interesting to us, not only because it is the key to that school of Greek Philosophy which outlasted every other, but because a similar logic controls a powerful school of English thought.

\* *Gomperz: Herkulanische Studien I, Leipzig, 1865. Bahnsch: Des Epicureers Philodemus Schrift Peri sêmeiôn kai sêmeiôseôn. Eine Darlegung ihres Gedankengehalts. Lyck, 1879.*

The logic of Epicurus, like that of J. S. Mill, in opposition to conceptualism, attempts to place philosophy upon an empirical basis. Words with Epicurus are signs of things, and not, as with the Stoics, of our ideas of /2/ things,\* There are, therefore, two methods of inquiry: One seeks for the meanings of words; the other, for a knowledge of things. The former is regarded as a preliminary process; the latter, the only true and necessary way of reaching a philosophy of the universe.

\**The hypothesis of lekta, or of immaterial notions, was a conceptualistic inconsistency on the part of the Stoics. The Epicureans and the more consistent empiricists among the Stoics rejected them. Sextus Empiricus, Math. viii, 258.*

All our knowledge is to be brought to the test of sensation, pre-notion, and feeling. (*Diogenes Laertius, x. 31*) By these we do not understand three ultimate sources of knowledge. Democritus held to only one source, viz., Feeling; and Epicurus, who inherited his system, implicitly does the same. (*Sextus, Math., vii, 140*) But each of these modes of feeling has its distinguishing characteristic, and may be used to test the validity of our knowledge. It is the peculiarity of sensation to reveal to us the external world. Sensation reasons not, remembers not; it adds nothing, it subtracts nothing. (*D.L., x, 31*) What it gives is a simple, self-evident, and true account of the external world. Its testimony is beyond criticism. Error arises after the data of sensation

become involved in the operations of intellect. If we should compare this first test of truth with Hume's "impressions," the second test, pre-notion, would correspond with Hume's "ideas." Pre-notions were copies of sensations in a generalized or typical form, arising from a repetition of similar sensations. (*D.L.*, x, 33) Thus the belief in the gods was referred to the clear pre-notions of them. (*D.L.*, x, 123, 124) Single effluxes from such refined beings could have no effect upon the senses, but repeated effluxes from deities sufficiently similar produce in our minds the general notion of a god. (*Cicero: De Nat. Deor.*, I, 49; *D.L.x*, 139) In the same /3/ manner, but through the senses, the continued observation of horses or oxen produce in us general notions, to which we may refer a doubt concerning the nature of the animal that moves before us.

The third criterion, Feeling (in the limited sense), was the ultimate test for ethical maxims. The elementary forms are the feeling of pleasure and the feeling of pain. A fourth criterion was added, viz., The Imaginative representations of the intellect. Its use is by no means clear.

Upon this foundation rises the structure of Epicurean logic. When we leave the clear evidence of sense we pass into the region of opinion, away from the stronghold of truth to the region where error is ever struggling for the mastery of our minds. A true opinion is characterized as one for which there is evidence in favor or none against; a false opinion, one for which there is no evidence in favor or some against. (*D.L.*, x, 34, 51) The processes by which we pass to the more general and complex forms of knowledge are four: Observation, Analogy, Resemblance, Synthesis.\* By Observation, we come into contact with the data of the senses; by Analogy, we may not only enlarge and diminish our perceptions, as we do in conceiving a Cyclops or a Pygmy, but also extend to the unperceived the attributes of our perceptions, as we do in assigning properties to atoms, the soul, and the gods; by Resemblance, we know the appearance of Socrates from having seen his statue; by Synthesis, we combine sensations, as when we conceive of a Centaur.

\* *D.L.*, x, 32. *The Stoics held a similar view; see D.L.*, vii, 52.

As a matter of fact, Epicurus regards only two processes,—Observation and Analogy. Our knowledge, then, /4/ consists of two parts: (*Philodemus: Rhet. lib. iv.*, i, col. xix) (1) The observed, or phenomena clear and distinct to consciousness; and (2) The unobserved, consisting of phenomena which are yet to be observed, and of hidden causes which lie forever beyond our observation.\* The function of logic consists in inference from the observed to the unobserved.\*\* This was called a sign-inference. According to Epicurus there are two methods of making such an inference; one resulting in a single explanation, the other in many explanations. (*Ibid*, x, 86, 87) The former may be illustrated by the argument *Motion is a sign of a void*. Here the void is regarded as the only explanation to be given of motion. In other cases many

explanations are found equally in harmony with our experience. All celestial phenomena belong to this class. That explanation which alone represents the true cause of such a phenomenon being unknown, we must be content to admit many explanations as equally probable. Thus thunder is explained by supposing either that winds are whirling in the cavities of the clouds, or that some great fire is crackling as it is fanned by the winds, or that the clouds are being torn asunder or are rubbing against each other as they become crystallized. (*Ibid.*, x, 100. Cf. *Lucretius*, lib. vi. 95-158) In thus connecting celestial and terrestrial phenomena, Epicurus aimed only to exclude supernaturalistic explanations. This done, he was satisfied.

\* *That is, to prosmenon kai to adêlon*, D.L., x. 38

\*\* D.L. x,32. hoden kai peri tôn adêlon apo tôn phainomenon chrê sêmeiousthai

In the garden at Athens this logic took root and grew; and by the time that Cicero visited Greece and sat at the feet of Zeno—See Zeller's *Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics* (London, 1880, p. 412, n. 3)—he may have listened to that great /5/ representative of the Epicurean School discussing such questions (*Philodemus*, *Peri sêmeiôn*, col. xix-xx) as:

1. How may we pass from the known to the unknown? Must we examine every instance before we make an induction? Must the phenomenon taken as a sign be identical with the thing signified? Or, if differences be admitted, upon what grounds may an inductive inference be made? And, Are we not always liable to be thwarted by the existence of exceptional cases?

But such questions had no interest for Cicero. He was too much an orator and rhetorician to recognize the force of the Epicurean opposition to dialectic. The Epicurean logic to him was barren and empty. (*Cicero: De Fin.*, I, 7, 22) It made little of definition; it said nothing of division; it erected no syllogistic forms; it did not direct us how to solve fallacies and detect ambiguities. And how many have been the historians of philosophy who have assigned almost a blank-page to Epicurean logic!

With a supreme confidence in the truth of sensation and the validity of induction the Epicureans stood in conflict with the other schools of Greek philosophy. The Stoics, treating all affirmation from the standpoint of the hypothetical proposition, acknowledged the validity of such inductions only as could be submitted to the *modus tollens*. The Sceptics denied the validity of induction altogether. Induction was treated as a sign-inference, and a controversy appears to have arisen concerning the nature of signs, as well as concerning the mode and validity of the inference. The Stoics divided signs into **suggestive** and **indicative**. (See *Prandtl's Gen. d. Log.*, i. 458) By means of a suggestive sign we recall some previously associated fact: as from smoke we infer fire. By indicative signs we infer something otherwise unknown: thus motions of /6/ the

body are signs of the soul. Objectively a sign was viewed as the antecedent of a valid conditional proposition, implying a consequent. Subjectively, it was a thought, mediating in some way between things on the one hand, and names and propositions on the other. The Epicureans looked upon a sign as a phenomenon, from whose characters we might infer the characters of other phenomena under conditions of existence sufficiently similar. The sign was to them an object of sense. In considering the variety of signs, the Epicureans appear to have admitted three kinds; but only two are defined in the treatise of Philodemus. (*Philod. loc. cit., col. xiv*) A general sign is described as a phenomenon which can exist whether the thing signified exists or not, or has a particular character or not. A particular sign is a phenomenon which can exist only on the condition that the thing signified actually exists. The relation between sign and thing signified in the former case is resemblance; in the latter, it is invariable sequence or causality. The Stoics, in developing the sign-inference, inquired, How may we pass from the antecedent to the consequent of a conditional proposition? They replied, A true sign exists only when both antecedent and consequent are true. (*Sextus: Math., viii, 258*) As a test, we should be able to contrapose the proposition, and see that from the negative of the consequent the negative of the antecedent followed. Only those propositions which admitted of contraposition were allowed to be treated as hypothetical. (*Cicero, De Fato, 6,12; 8.15*)

On this propositional ground, therefore, the Epicurean must meet his opponent. This he does by observing that general propositions are obtained neither by contraposition nor by syllogism, nor in any other way than /7/ by induction. (*Philod., loc. cit., col. xvii*) The contraposed forms, being general propositions, rest also on induction. Hence, if the inductive mode of reasoning be uncertain, the same degree of uncertainty attaches to propositions in the contraposed form. (*Ibid. col. ix*) The Stoics, therefore, in neglecting induction, were accused of surrendering the vouchers by which alone their generalizations could be established. (*Ibid. col. xxix*) In like manner they were accused of hasty generalization, of inaccurate reasoning, of adopting myths, of being rhetoricians rather than investigators of Nature. Into the truth of these accusations we need not inquire. It is enough that they cleared the way for the Epicureans to set up a theory of induction.

The first question which Zeno sought to answer was, "Is it necessary that we should examine every case of a phenomenon, or only a certain number of cases?" (*Ibid. col. xix, 13-15*) Stoics and Sceptics answered, The former is impossible, and the latter leaves induction insecure. But Zeno replied: "It is neither necessary to take into consideration every phenomenon in our experience, nor a few cases at random; but taking **many** and **various** phenomena of the **same general kind**, and having obtained, both from our observation and that of others, the properties that are common to each individual, from these cases may we pass to the rest". (*Ibid., col. xx, 30—col.*

xxi, 3) Instances taken from a class and exhibiting some invariable properties are made the basis of the inductive inference. A certain amount of variation in the properties is not excluded. Thus from the fact that the men in our region of country are short-lived, we may not infer that the inhabitants of Mt. Athos are shortlived also; for "men in our experience are seen to vary considerably in respect to length or brevity of life." (*Ibid.*, col. xvii, 18-22) /8/ Within limits, then, we may allow for variation due to the influence of climate, food, and other physical conditions; but our inference should not greatly exceed the limits of our experience. But, in spite of variations, there are properties which in our experience are universal. Men are found to be liable to disease and old age and death; they die when their heads are cut off, or their hearts extracted; they cannot pass through solid bodies. By induction we infer that these characteristics belong to men wherever they may be found, and it is absurd to speak of men under similar conditions as not susceptible to disease or death, or as having the ability to pass through iron as we pass through the air. (*Philod. loc. cit.*, col. xxi)

The Epicurean looks out upon Nature as already divided and subdivided into classes, each class being closely related to other classes. The inductive inference proceeds from class to class, not in a haphazard way, but from one class to that which resembles it most closely. (*Ibid.*, col. xviii, 20; col. xxviii, 25-29) In case the classes are identical, there is no distinction of known and unknown; and hence, properly speaking, no inductive inference. (*Ibid.*, col. vi, 8-10) In case the classes are widely different, the inference is insecure. But within a certain range of resemblance we may rely as confidently upon an inductive inference as we do upon the evidence of sense. (*Ibid.*, col. xxxiii, 33—col. xxxiv, 34)

In speaking of the common or essential characters, the basis of induction, it was usual to connect them with the subject of discourse by the words "hêi", "katha", or "para". These words may be taken in four senses: (*Ibid.*, col. xxxiii, 33—col. xxxiv, 34) (1) The properties may be regarded as necessary consequences; so we may say of a man that he is necessarily corporeal and liable to disease and death. (2) Or as essential to the conception or definition of the subject. This is what is /9/ conveyed in the expression, "Body **as** body has weight and resistance; man **as** man is a rational animal." (3) That certain properties are always concomitant. (4) The fourth sense, lost in the lacunae, appears from the following examples to involve degree or proportion: " The sword cuts **as** it has been sharpened; atoms are imperishable in so far as they are perfect; bodies gravitate in proportion to their weight."

Zeno's theory of induction may be formulated in the following Canons: —

Canon I.—If we examine many and various instances of a phenomenon, and find some character common to them all, and no instance appears to the contrary, this character may be transferred to other unexamined individuals of the same class, and even to

other closely related classes.

Canon II. — If in our experience a given character is found to vary, a corresponding amount of variation may be inferred to exist beyond our experience.

The most important objection made to this theory was, that phenomena exist in our experience exhibiting peculiar and exceptional characters, and that other exceptions might exist beyond our experience to vitiate any induction we may make. The following examples are given: (*Philod., loc. cit., col. i., ii*) The loadstone has the peculiar property of attracting iron; amber, of attracting bran; the square number 4 x 4, of having its perimeter equal to its area. Exceptional characters are found in the Alexandrian anvil-headed dwarf, the Epidaurian hermaphrodite, the Cretan giant, the pygmies in Achoris. The sun and moon also are unique; so are time and the soul. Admitting such exceptional phenomena, the Epicurean replies that the belief that a similar state of things exists beyond our experience can /10/ be justified only inductively. (*Philod. loc. cit., col. xxv*) And exceptional phenomena must be viewed not as closely resembling, but as being widely different from, other phenomena. Inductions concerning loadstones must be confined to loadstones, and not extended to other kinds of stones. Each class of exceptional phenomena offered a new field for induction, and hence could be said to strengthen and not to weaken the inductive argument. (*Ibid. col. xxiv 10—col. xxv, 2*)

The correctness of all inductions could be tested by the rule of Epicurus for the truth of opinion in general. An induction is true, when all known instances are in its favor, or none against; it is false, when no instances are in its favor, or some against. When the instances are partly one way and partly another, we cannot reach universal conclusions, but only such as are probable. (*Ibid. col. xxv, 31-34*)

This theory of induction was completed by a consideration of fallacies, summarized in a work called the "Demetriac." (*Ibid., col. xxviii, 13—col. xxix, 24*) These consisted in —

- (1) Failing to see in what cases contraposition is applicable.
- (2) Failing to see that we should make inductions not in a haphazard way, but from properties which resemble each other very closely.
- (3) Failing to see that exceptional phenomena are in no way at variance with the inductive inference, but on the other hand add to its force.
- (4) Failing to observe that we infer from the known to the unknown, only when all the evidence is in favor and no shadow of evidence appears to the contrary.
- (5) The failure to perceive that general propositions are derived not by contraposition, but by induction.

When we compare the work of Zeno with that of /11/ Epicurus, an important logical difference is brought to view. Both are occupied with the sign-inference, and look upon inference as proceeding from the known to the unknown. Epicurus, however, sought only by means of hypothesis to explain special phenomena of Nature. Zeno investigated generalizations from experience, with a view to discovering the **validity** of extending them beyond our experience. This resulted in a theory of induction, which, so far as we know, Epicurus did not possess. In the system of Aristotle, induction was viewed through the forms of syllogism, and its empirical foundation was not held in view. The Epicureans, therefore, were as much opposed to the Aristotelian induction, as they were to the Aristotelian syllogism. It was Zeno the Epicurean who made the first attempt to justify the validity of induction. The record of this attempt will give the treatise of Philodemus a permanent value in the history of inductive logic.

It is refreshing to see the formalistic and rhetorical atmosphere which had surrounded the subject of logic breaking away, and an honest attempt being made to justify the premises of syllogism. As yet, this had not been done by all the moods of the philosophers.

It is also interesting to find in the ancient world a theory of induction which rests upon observation, suggests experiment, assumes the uniformity of Nature, and allows for the variation of characters.

Display More

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## Post by “Godfrey” of January 24, 2022 at 2:16 PM

My post here doesn't deal with logic but with preconceptions. I find the wording in the following quote excerpt from post #7 disturbing:

Quote

[31] Logic they reject as misleading....Thus in \_The Canon\_ Epicurus says that the tests of truth are the sensations and concepts and the feelings; the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehensions of the mind....

Is this from Bailey? If anything, I would think that "concepts" and "intuitive apprehensions of the mind" should be reversed.

## Post by "Don" of January 24, 2022 at 2:39 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Diogenes Laertius:

"...the Logicians [he called] 'The destroyers,'"

[24] Metrodorus' writings were as follows:

Three books \_Against the Physicians. About Sensations. To Timocrates. Concerning Magnanimity. About Epicurus' Ill Health. Against the Logicians.\_ Nine books \_Against the Sophists. Concerning the Path To Wisdom. Concerning Change. Concerning Wealth. Against Democritus. Concerning Nobility of Birth.\_

[31] 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 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

All the "logic" references in Diogenes Laertius are "dialectic" (διαλεκτικός etc) in the original which I take refers to the conversational/dialogue method of getting at the truth, not Aristotelian formal logic.

Plus, induction is a kind of logic which appears to have been endorsed by the Epicureans.

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

If the Authorized Doctrines be read item by item it may be observed that almost all are contradictions of Plato

I'm still not convinced of this.

Still reading, more later.

## Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2022 at 2:44 PM

Right. I agree with Martin's basic point that Epicurus was not against all forms of logic.

However, there is definitely something that has come to be known as distinctively "Stoic Logic" that appears based more on the manipulation of abstractions than Epicurus approved of, and so this is a very important subject to explore..

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2022 at 2:54 PM

Also, as for whether the word "logic" is the correct word to use there, it sounds like Don you are questioning Bailey and other similar commentators. Which is all for the good, because I like Bailey, but the word seems to be deeply entrenched.

[Dialectical logic - Wikipedia](#)

Quote

**Dialectical logic** is the system of laws of thought, developed within the Hegelian and Marxist traditions, which seeks to supplement or replace the laws of [formal logic](#). The precise nature of the relation between [dialectical](#) and formal logic was hotly debated within the Soviet Union and China. Contrasting with the abstract formalism of traditional logic, dialectical logic in the Marxist sense was developed as the logic of motion and change and used to examine concrete forms. Its proponents claim it is a materialist approach to logic, drawing on the objective, material world.[\[1\]](#)

And I don't think that Bailey was confusing this with Marxism either -- there are lots of commentaries by Bailey we can explore on that if only we had time ... time ... time ....!

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2022 at 3:18 PM



### Quote from Cassius

If the Authorized Doctrines be read item by item it may be observed that almost all are contradictions of Plato

I'm still not convinced of this.

Still reading, more later.

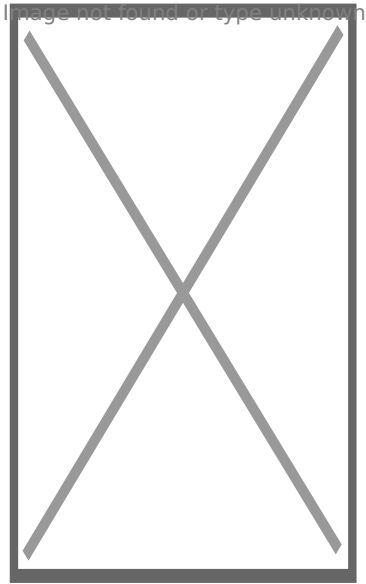
I didn't notice this earlier when I was reading your post Don. For purposes of other people reading along, that 's a quote from DeWitt, so you're saying you're not convinced by DeWitt on the point. Ultimately people evaluating this need to read DeWitt's argument on this in his book. In the meantime, I think a lot of it can be reduced to (especially on the 12 Fundamentals of Nature) that they make it impossible to maintain the importance of "idealism" / universal forms, so at that basic level as a starting point they can be used to generate the refutation of Plato (and yes, generate through a process of logical extension).

---

## Post by "Cassius" of January 24, 2022 at 3:34 PM

Also on this point of there being an Epicurean logic, and its controversies with the Stoic variety, I highly recommend the appendix to DeLacey's book, which treats this in detail:

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[Philodemus: On methods of inference: a study in ancient empiricism : Philodemus : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](http://uf.catalog.fcla.edu/uf.jsp?st=UF001032148&ix=nu&l=0&V=D)

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archive.org

The treatise of Philodemus *On Methods of Inference* presents in a clear fashion the basic issues involved in the conflict between the rationalists of the Stoa and the empiricists of the Garden. This material, added to fragments of Chrysippus and the material given by Sextus Empiricus in his account of the Sceptic polemic against both the dogmatic schools, enables us to reconstruct in some detail the basic principles of Stoic logic. As we have already noted, both Epicureans and Stoics built their logic on inference from signs; and their divergent treatment of signs reveals the fundamental difference between the two systems of philosophy.

### I. Stoic Logic

Chrysippus defines logic as the science about signs and things signified.<sup>1</sup> Logic in this broad sense includes grammar as well as logic, since words are signs. Logic in the narrow sense is limited to the analysis of the things signified, or concepts (*λεκτά*), which form the basis of propositions and syllogisms.

The Stoics isolate three factors of the symbolic relation in their analysis of truth:

“They (the Stoics) say that there are three factors joined to each other, the thing signified, the sign, and the object. Of these, the sign is the word, for example the word ‘Dion’; the thing signified is the thing indicated by the word, which we grasp in our concept of a co-existent entity, but which the barbarians do not understand although they hear the word; and the object, that which exists externally, as Dion himself. Two of

<sup>1</sup> Diog. Laer. vii.62; see E. De Lacy, “Meaning and Methodology in Hellenistic Philosophy,” *Philos. Rev.* XLVII (1938), 390–409.

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2022 at 4:50 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Logic they reject as misleading....Thus in *\_The Canon\_* Epicurus says that the tests of truth are the sensations and concepts and the feelings; the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehensions of the mind...Is this from Bailey? If anything, I would think that

"concepts" and "intuitive apprehensions of the mind" should be reversed.

Yes Godfrey that is direct from Bailey, and it is one of the reasons I instinctively find him untrustworthy. He could have used prolepsis or anticipations or preconceptions but instead he chose to muddy the water hopelessly by presuming to substitute a word that hides the issue. It's a major problem with using the Bailey material so I try to note this problem whenever possible:

VI. LIFE OF EPICURUS 410  
of his letters, in which he has stridged his whole philo-  
sophy. I will also give you the Principal Doctrines, and  
a selection from his writings which seem most worthy of  
attention. You will thus be able to understand Epicurus  
from every point of view and could form a judgment ac-  
cordingly. The first letter he writes to Diogenes and it deals  
with Physics, the second is to Pythocles, and it deals  
with Canonical Philosophy; the third is to Herodotus, and  
contains the moral teaching. We must begin with the first  
letter, but I will first speak briefly about the divisions of  
his philosophy.  
29. It is divided into three parts, the Canonics for Physi-  
cists, the Physics and the Ethics. The Canonics gives  
the method of approach to the system, and is contained in  
the work called the Canon. The Physics contains all the  
investigation into nature, and is contained in the three-  
score books the Nature and in an abridged form in the  
letters. The Ethics deals with choice and avoidance, and  
is contained in the books the Lives and the letters and the  
book on The End. The Epicureans usually group the  
Canonics with the Physics and state that it deals with  
the creation of truth and the fundamental principles and  
contains the elements of the system. The Physics deals  
with creation and destruction and with nature; the Ethics  
with things to be chosen or avoided, with the conduct of  
life and its purpose.  
30. Logic they regard as subordinate. For they say it is  
useless for individuals to be guided by what things say of  
themselves. Thus in The Canon Epicurus says that the  
task of truth is the acquisition and concepts and the  
feelings; the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehen-  
sions of the soul. And this he says himself in  
the summary addressed to Herodotus and in the  
Principal Doctrines. For, he says, all sensation is intu-  
itional and does not admit of memory; for it is not re-  
minded by itself, nor when it is set in motion by something  
other, nor is it said to be taken from it. For in those sayings  
which are called the sensations. For a similar sensation  
cannot relate a similar because it is equivalent in stability,  
29

Studying Epicurus is not for the faint-hearted who value tranquility above all else, because there are plenty of controversies about how to interpret Epicurus which we can resolve in our own mind, but never escape having to deal with when people read read various things on the internet.

That source is here: <https://archive.org/details/Epicur...up?view=theater>

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2022 at 5:38 PM

Following up on Godfrey's comment on concepts and Don's on Logic v Dialectic, this is where the older translations are superior to bailey:

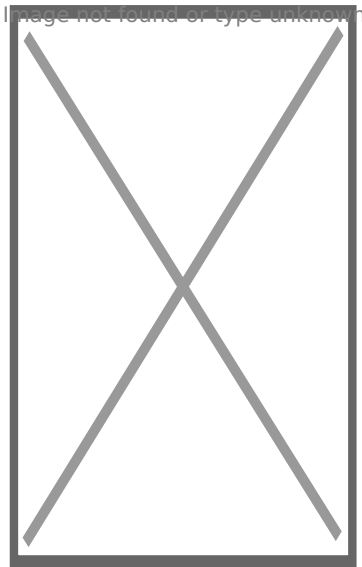
This is Yonge:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2353-episode-one-hundred-six-the-epicurean-attitude-toward-fate-fortune-and-the-role/>

nature; and that the ethical division has reference to the objects of choice and avoidance, and lives, and the chief good of mankind.

XX. Dialectics they wholly reject as superfluous. For they say that the correspondence of words with things is sufficient for the natural philosopher, so as to enable him to advance with certainty in the study of nature.

Now, in the Canon, Epicurus says that the criteria of truth are the senses, and the preconceptions, and the passions. But the Epicureans, in general, add also the perceptive impressions of the intellect. And he says the same thing in his Abridgment, which he addresses to Herodotus, and also in his Fundamental Principles. For, says he, the senses are devoid of reason, nor are they capable of receiving any impressions of memory. For they are not by themselves the cause of any motion, and when they have received any impression from any external cause, then they can add nothing to it, nor can they subtract anything from it. Moreover, they are out of the



[The Lives And Opinions Of Eminent Philosophers - NewEpicurean Annotated Version : Charles D. Yonge : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Lives and Opinions of Ancient Philosophers, with Chapter X devoted to Epicurus  
archive.org

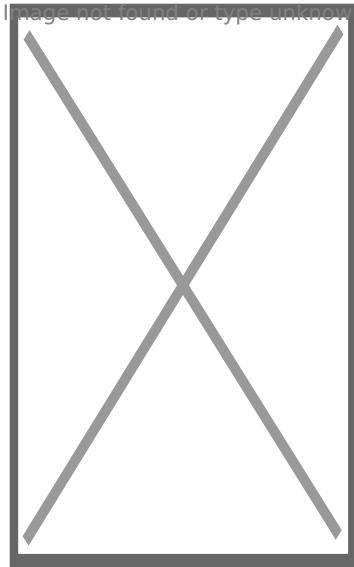
And here is Hicks, who follows Yonge:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2353-episode-one-hundred-six-the-epicurean-attitude-toward-fate-fortune-and-the-role/>

hand, deals with things to be sought and avoided, with human life and with the end-in-chief.

They reject dialectic as superfluous ; holding that in their inquiries the physicists should be content to employ the ordinary terms for things.<sup>a</sup> Now in *The Canon* Epicurus affirms that our sensations and preconceptions and our feelings are the standards of truth ; the Epicureans generally make perceptions of mental presentations <sup>b</sup> to be also standards. His own statements are also to be found in the *Summary* addressed to Herodotus and in the *Sovran Maxims*. Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory ; for neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom. Nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error : one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid ; nor can one sensation refute another which is

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I would say:

1 - This is an example of scholarship going backward over time (if I have the time sequence correct) because Bailey is the most voluminous commentator on Epicurus in recent years to have published a translation, and in my reading he is cited to far more often than is Hicks or Yonge. And he has the most extensive public domain version with commentary (The "[Extant Remains](#)" book).

2 - While it looks more appropriate to use "dialectic" rather than "logic," that really doesn't answer the question because as cited above the term is generally now being referred to as "dialectical logic" to reference a particular form or type of logic.

As Martin is saying we are not warring with ALL logic, but on the other hand it is a huge point that the Epicureans were indeed warring with certain types of logic, and not just something that can be adequately referred to as a misuse of what everyone agrees is "logic." Most of the discussion is taking place in terms of "types of logic" so we need to be able to understand what the commentators are talking about.

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## Post by “Don” of January 24, 2022 at 9:48 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

2 - While it looks more appropriate to use "dialectic" rather than "logic," that really doesn't answer the question because as cited above the term is generally now being referred to as "dialectical logic" to reference a particular form or type of logic

That's one of my arguments for always going back (a) to the original text (What word is used before translation?) and (b) What is the context and connotations of the word during the time period of the writing? While Diogenes Laertius is writing hundreds of years after Epicurus, it was Metrodorus and Epicurus who were writing "against the dialecticians." It seems to be that during their time, dialectic seems to refer to what we call the "Socratic method." I get the impression Epicurus did not agree with this round and round "What do you mean by \_\_\_\_?" He strikes me as "say what you mean." Even Torquatus prefers the lecture/presentation approach over continual back and forth dialogue/dialectic with Cicero.

See also

[Dialectic - Wikipedia](#)

## Quote

Dialectic or dialectics (Greek: διαλεκτική, dialektiké; related to dialogue; German: Dialektik), also known as the dialectical method, is a discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned argumentation. Dialectic resembles debate, but the concept excludes subjective elements such as emotional appeal and the modern pejorative sense of rhetoric. Dialectic may thus be contrasted with both the eristic, which refers to argument that aims to successfully dispute another's argument (rather than searching for truth), and the didactic method, wherein one side of the conversation teaches the other.

If using this as a jumping of point, it seems that Epicurus may be more of didactic than dialectic.

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2022 at 10:16 PM

Yes I definitely think that the Q/A approach is a part of the issue. Unfortunately I think we are stumbling because there also appear to be very detailed and complex questions about logical methods which are not something most of us have any experience in discussing, or any real enjoyment in discussing. It is like that Seneca quote on mouse and cheese and very off putting.

But the thread that we are only beginning to grasp is that apparently Epicurus was already staking out a position that he thought would stop the abuses to which logic was being put, and I think it would be highly desirable for us to at least be able to describe that in generalities that are still accurate enough to keep Martin from getting too exasperated with me! 😊

Wait til you finally read through the On Methods of Inference (if you have not yet) and you will see how hard it is to even understand what the general issues are.

It does however appear to be possible to summarize the issues, according to the commentators, but as for myself I am just not there yet.

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2022 at 6:43 AM

Episode 106 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week we continue with Torquatus' summary of some of the Key Doctrines of Epicurus.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/48481165>

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of January 28, 2022 at 4:03 PM**

Great episode! 👍 👍

I just want to mention that [Martin](#) 's temperature analogy sounds a lot like homeostasis in Dopamine Nation, as [Don](#) posted about previously.

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### **Post by “Marco” of January 29, 2022 at 2:03 AM**

The story of the farmer with his son and the broken leg is from Zhuang Zi (Taoism).

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### **Post by “Joshua” of January 29, 2022 at 8:55 PM**

Thank you Marco!