

Episode 161 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 15 - Chapter 8 - Sensations, Anticipations, And Feelings 02 (Sensations and Not An Empiricist)

Post by "Cassius" of February 10, 2023 at 5:27 PM

Welcome to Episode 161 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. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. 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.

We're now in the process of a series of podcasts intended to provide a general overview of Epicurean philosophy based on the organizational structure employed by Norman DeWitt in his book "Epicurus and His Philosophy."

Sensations

Epicurus Not An Empiricist

Anticipations

The Account of Laertius

The Element of Anticipation

Evidences From Specific Context

Later Evidences

Feelings

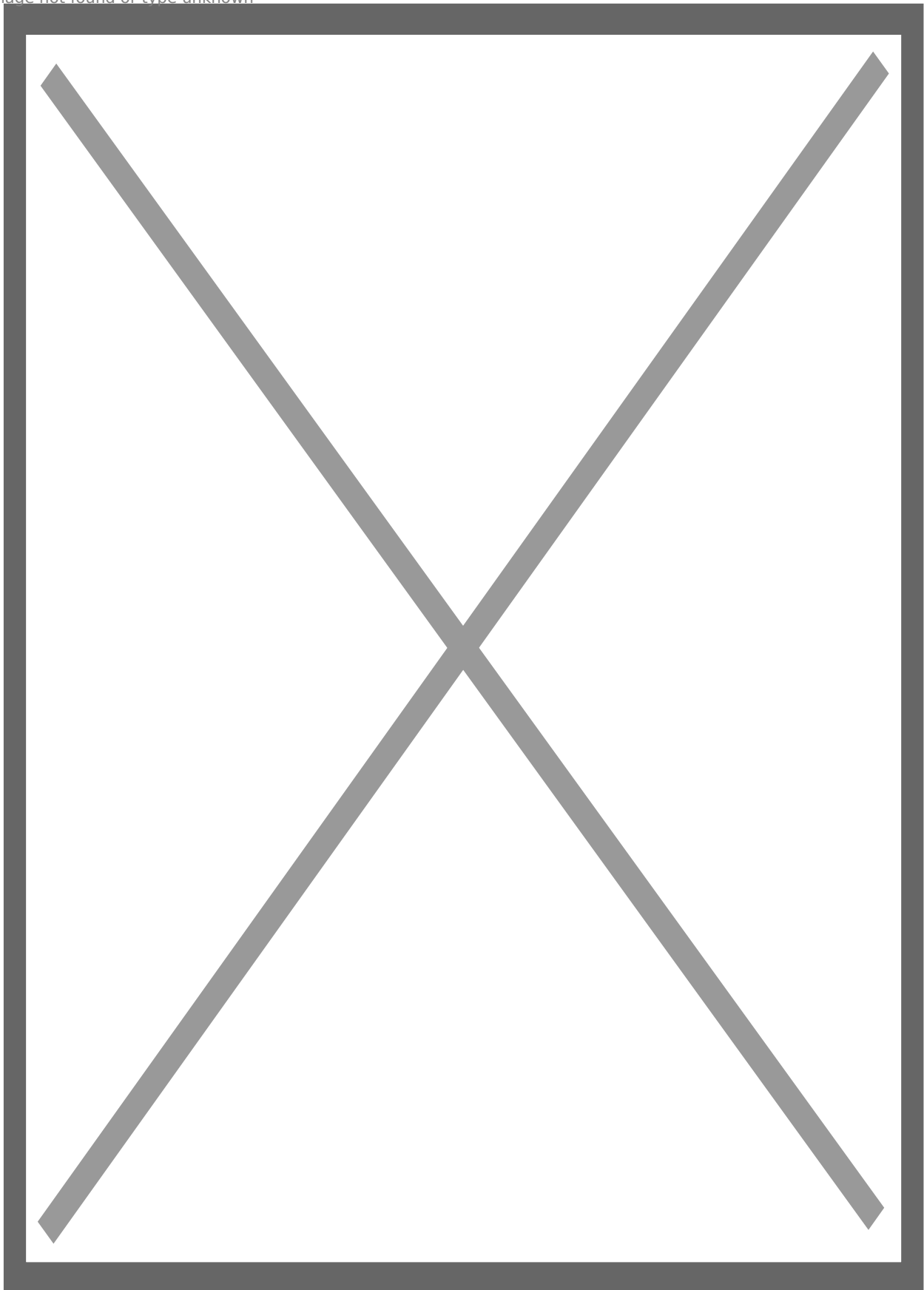
This week we continue in Chapter 8 and move to the subsections "Sensations" and "Epicurus Not An Empiricist"

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/52737050>

Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2023 at 6:48 PM

It will be a couple of days before this is ready for release, but one point worth noting on what is discussed in our look at Sensations and "Epicurus not an Empiricist" comes from the Wikipedia entry on Empiricism:

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[Empiricism - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

That page features discussion of Bacon, Locke, and Hume.....



Quote

Empiricism in the [philosophy of science](#) emphasizes evidence, especially as discovered in [experiments](#). It is a fundamental part of the [scientific method](#) that all hypotheses and theories must be tested against observations of the natural world rather than resting solely on [a priori](#) reasoning, [intuition](#), or [revelation](#).

Empiricism, often used by [natural scientists](#), says that "knowledge is based on experience" and that "knowledge is tentative and probabilistic, subject to continued revision and [falsification](#)".^[5] Empirical research, including experiments and validated measurement tools, guides the scientific method.

Etymology[[edit](#)]

The English term *empirical* derives from the [Ancient Greek](#) word ἐμπειρία, *empeiria*, which is cognate with and translates to the Latin *experientia*, from which the words *experience* and *experiment* are derived.^[6]

But this sentence especially catches my eye:

Quote

Philosophical empiricists hold no knowledge to be properly inferred or deduced unless it is derived from one's sense-based experience.^[7] This view is commonly contrasted with [rationalism](#), which states that knowledge may be derived from [reason](#) independently of the senses. For example, [John Locke](#) held that some knowledge (e.g. knowledge of God's existence) could be arrived at through [intuition](#) and reasoning alone. Similarly [Robert Boyle](#), a prominent advocate of the experimental method, held that we have innate ideas.^{[8][9]} The main continental [rationalists](#) ([Descartes](#), [Spinoza](#),

and [Leibniz](#)) were also advocates of the empirical "scientific method".[\[10\]\[11\]](#)

A large part of the importance of the issue we are discussing this week is that Epicurus is definitely willing to use deductive reasoning to make conclusions about issues that he has not experienced directly - notable examples being the condition of life after death, or the age of the universe, or the size of the universe --- none of which Epicurus himself personally was able to test through his own sensory experience.

I wonder if the development of this school through Lock and others did not find its way through Bentham and his friends to Frances Wright, which would explain what I think are her deviations from Epicurus in "A Few Days In Athens" to stress that "observation is everything" and theories are often damaging. I recall in reading her work outside of "A Few Days In Athens" that this position seems to have been especially important to her, and at least in part explains her lack of interest in many of the "physics" issues which interested the ancient Epicureans.

I would tentatively have to say that an "excess of empiricism" was damaging to Frances Wright's confidence in Epicurean philosophy, that in turn probably illustrates why this seemingly boring issue has many important ramifications that justify our taking the time to slog through it.

Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2023 at 6:54 PM

Two more notes on this;

1 - From the same Wikipedia article, we see that empiricism is closely related to Pyrrhonic skepticism, which was something Epicurus was firmly against (or at least modified considerably):

The earliest Western proto-empiricists were the [empiric school](#) of ancient Greek medical practitioners, founded in 330 BCE.[\[15\]](#) Its members rejected the doctrines of the [dogmatic school](#), preferring to rely on the observation of [phantasiai](#) (i.e., phenomena, the appearances). [\[16\]](#) The Empiric school was closely allied with the [Pyrrhonist](#) school of philosophy, which made the philosophical case for their proto-empiricism.

2 - It is interesting to note that the Wikipedia article discusses Aristotle at length, as well as the Stoics, but makes no mention of Epicurus.

Post by "Cassius" of February 14, 2023 at 7:50 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2884-episode-161-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-15-chapter-8-sensations-anticipatio/>

Episode 161 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week we continue in Chapter 8 of the DeWitt Book and focus on sensations and Epicurus' relationship with empiricism.

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