

Prolepsis Citations from Long & Sedley

Post by “Don” of July 2, 2024 at 11:04 PM

This thread is an offshoot of this thread:

Post

[RE: Episode 234 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 09 - Dealing With Marcus Aurelius And The Canonical Basis For the Epicurean View Of Divinity](#)

[...]

Say it ain't so, Don! I mean, at least Santa emits eidola, right?! 😊

[...]

Cicero, though largely hostile, and burdened with the conceit of a talented undergrad, does seem to me to have one redeeming quality—his Academic Skepticism required him to take seriously and weigh competing positions, never fully accepting any of them. And his bestie was an Epicurean. So I generally take his reports of Epicurean views seriously, *unless* it seems to set the Epicureans up for a too easy dismissal by...

Little Rocker

July 2, 2024 at 10:05 AM

In dealing with the prolepseis over there, I decided to turn to Long & Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers* ([which is available to borrow on Internet Archive](#) with a free account) to see what they have to say. It turns out they cite a number of instances of mention of the prolepseis/preconceptions. Their numbering system (ex. 21A 4) uses their individual section, cited text, then their subsection of that text. What I've done is cite their citation then cite the specific text with their translation. There are more mentions in Lucretius and Epicurus than I at first realized. I'll dig into a consideration later, but for now I thought this might prove useful or at least interesting:

Long & Sedley's examples of the use of prolepsis/preconceptions in the ancient texts:

body 12E 2

- Lucretius 2.730-833

- - (2) You are quite wrong if you think that the mind cannot be focused on such particles. For

given that those who are blind from birth and have never seen the sun's light nevertheless from their first day know bodies by touch without any association of colour, you can be sure that our mind too can form a *preconception* of bodies without any coating of colour. In fact, we ourselves sense as colourless everything that we touch in the blind darkness...

man 13F 4

Lucretius 5.156-234

Also, from where did the gods get a model for the creation of the world, and from where was the *preconception* of men first ingrained in them, to enable them to know and see in their mind what they wished to create, or how did they come to know the power of the primary particles and what they were capable of when their arrangement was altered, if nature itself did not supply a blueprint of creation?

utility 13E 4, 19B 4, 22B 2

Lucretius 4.823-57 (13E 4)

Quite different from these are all the things what were first actually engendered and gave rise to the *preconception* of their usefulness subsequently. Primary in this class are, we can see, the senses and the limbs. Hence, I repeat, there is no way you can believe that they were created for their function of utility.

Lucretius 5.1028-90 (19B 4)

Besides, if others had not already used sounds to each other, how did he get the *preconception* of their usefulness implanted in him? How did he get the initial capacity to know and see with his mind what he wanted to do?

Epicurus Key Doctrines (22B 2)

(37) What is legally deemed to be just has its existence in the domain of justice whenever it is attested to be useful in the requirements of social relationships, whether or not it turns out to be the same for all. But if someone makes a law and it does not happen to accord with the utility of social relationships, it no longer has the nature of justice. And even if what is useful in the sphere of justice changes but fits the *preconception (prolepsis)* for some time, it was no less just throughout that time for those who do not confuse themselves with empty utterances but simply look at the facts.

truth 16A 2-3

Lucretius 4.469-521

And anyway, even allowing that he knows this, I'll still ask him: given that he has never before seen anything true in the world, from where does he get his knowledge of what knowing and not knowing are? What created his *preconception* of true and false? And what proved to him that doubtful differs from certain? (3) You will find that the *preconception* of true has its origin in the senses, and that the senses cannot be refuted.

all properties of bodies 7B 6

Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus 68-73

Now another thing that is important to appreciate forcefully is this. We should not inquire into

time in the same way as other things, which we inquire into in an object by referring them to familiar *preconceptions*.

May also include data of introspection:

our own responsibility or agency 20C 4,8

Epicurus, On Nature 34.26-30

<He may simply choose to maintain his thesis while in practice continuing to> blame or praise. But if he were to act in this way he should be leaving intact the very same behavior which as far as our own selves are concerned created the *preconception* of our responsibility. And in that he would be at one point altering his theory, at another <...> ...<On the other hand> if in using the word 'necessity' of that which we call our own agency he is merely changing a name, and won't prove that we have a *preconception* of a kind which has faulty delineations when we call our own agency responsible, neither his own <behavior nor that of others will be affected...>

desirability of pleasure 21A 4

Cicero, On Ends 1.29-32, 37-9

Some of our school, however, want to transmit these doctrines in a subtler way: they deny the sufficiency of judging what is good or bad by sensation, saying that the intrinsic desirability of pleasure and the intrinsic undesirability of pain can be understood by the mind too and by reason. So they say that our sense that the one is desirable and the other undesirable is virtually a natural and innate *preconception* in our minds...