

# Ben's personal outline of Epicurean philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of May 15, 2019 at 2:21 PM

## [Quote from Mousikos](#)

That said, because of the nature of knowledge, we can make general statements about which choices would bring greater pleasure and happiness to the majority of people.

I just noticed this part. It's good and i would not suggest changing it. But when reading it , it occurs to me that it's possible that it might not be clear what the "nature of knowledge" means in this context. I am thinking that what we're really saying here is that because of the nature of reality (including humans) being a combination of things that are determined and "mechanical" and things that are not determined and mechanical, we are able to form opinions about future events based on experience with past events.

I say this largely because I am always on guard against the implication that "knowledge" is something that exists in the air as part of some network of ideal forms, or something that comes from gods, or even something that we are born with (in our anticipation discussion). I think it's more proper to think of "knowledge" as opinions formed in our minds that we are confident are true.

We form opinions about what is likely to happen in the future (not "certain" to happen, because there is no "fate") because we can accurately observe what has happened in the past, and over time we form understandings about how things generally work. And as we gain more experience we get more confident in predicting what that mix is likely to produce a result in the future. The consciously held opinions are probably what we refer to as "knowledge."

But I don't think we would ever get to the point of being able to say that anything is "knowledge" if our minds were not first programmed with some kind of organizing operating system to combine observations into concepts in certain ways. I continue to think it is a valid analogy to compare this process to our eyes being programmed to observe shapes and colors and shades in particular ways. The eyes then report that data to our minds, where the mind processes the data into something that ultimately we turn into concepts and words. I think the analogy is that there is a faculty of anticipations which leads us to observe "relationships" that we would not otherwise ever recognize as having any useful aspect to them. Try as they might, my cats and dogs are unable to arrange the things they see and hear and smell into the same kind of eventual conclusions that a human baby can do, and in observing the distinctions between humans and animals I think we are talking about a "faculty" that Epicurus thought deserved a category of its own.