

PD24 - Alternate Translations

Post by “Cassius” of November 19, 2017 at 11:42 AM

Bailey: 24. If you reject any single sensation, and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation, and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment. And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.

Ι ΤΙΝ ΕΚΒΑΛΕΙΣ ****ΑΠΛΩΣ ΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΝ ****ΚΑΙ ΜΗ ΔΙΑΙΡΗΣΕΙΣ ****ΤΟ**

ΔΟΞΑΖΟΜΕΝΟΝ **ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΡΟΣΜΕΝΟΝ ****ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΑΡΟΝ ΗΔΗ**

ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΝ **ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΠΑΘΗ ****ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣΑΝ**

ΦΑΝΤΑΣΤΙΚΗΝ ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ **ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ ΣΥΝΤΑΡΑΞΕΙΣ**

ΚΑΙ ΤΑΣ ΛΟΙΠΑΣ ΑΙΣΘΗΣΕΙΣ ΤΗ ΜΑΤΑΙΩ ΔΟΞΗ **ΩΣΤΕ ΤΟ**

ΚΡΙΤΗΡΙΟΝ **ΑΠΑΝ ΕΚΒΑΛΕΙΣ **** ΕΙ ΔΕ ΒΕΒΑΙΩΣΕΙΣ ****ΚΑΙ ΤΟ**

ΠΡΟΣΜΕΝΟΝ **ΑΠΑΝ ΕΝ ΤΑΙΣ ΔΟΞΑΣΤΙΚΑΙΣ ΕΝΝΟΙΑΙΣ ****ΚΑΙ**

ΤΟ ΜΗ ΤΗΝ ΕΠΙΜΑΡΤΥΡΗΣΙΝ **ΟΥΚ ΕΚΛΕΙΨΕΙΣ ****ΤΟ**

ΔΙΕΨΕΥΣΜΕΝΟΝ **ΩΣΤ' ΑΝΗΡΗΚΩΣ ΕΣΗ ΠΑΣΑΝ**

ΑΜΦΙΣΒΗΤΗΣΙΝ **ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣΑΝ ΚΡΙΣΙΝ ****ΤΟΥ ΟΡΘΩΣ ****Η ΜΗ**

**ΟΡΘΩΣ. **

“If you simply discard a sense, and do not distinguish between the different elements of the judgment, so as to know on the one hand, the opinion which goes beyond the actual sensation, or, on the other, the actual and immediate notion, the affections, and all the conceptions of the mind which arise from the observable representation; you will be imputing trouble into the other senses, and destroying in that quarter every species of criterion. But if you allow equal authority to the ideas, which being only an opinion, require to be verified, and to those which bear about them an immediate certainty, you will not escape error; for you will be confounding doubtful opinions with those which are not doubtful, and true judgments with those of a

different character.” Yonge (1853)

“If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate between that which is matter of opinion and awaits further confirmation and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feeling or in any mental apprehension, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief, so as to reject the truth altogether. If you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation in ideas based on opinion, as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be taking sides in every question involving truth and error.” Hicks (1910)

“If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate with respect to that which awaits confirmation between matter of opinion and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feelings or in any presentative perception of the mind, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief and so you will be rejecting the standard of truth altogether. If in your ideas based upon opinion you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be maintaining complete ambiguity whenever it is a case of judging between right and wrong opinion.” Hicks (1925)

“If you reject any single sensation and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion as to the appearance awaiting confirmation and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations as well with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgments. And if among the mental images created by your opinions you affirm both that which awaits confirmation and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.” Bailey (1926)

“If you reject any sensations, and if you fail to distinguish between conjecture based upon that which awaits confirmation and evidence given by the senses, by the feelings, and by the mental examinations of confirmed concepts, you will confuse the other sensations with unfounded conjecture and thus destroy the whole basis for judgment. If among all opinions you accept as equally valid both those that await confirmation and those that have been confirmed, you will not free yourself from error, since you will have preserved all the uncertainty about every judgment of what is true and what is not true.” Geer (1964)

“(1) If you are going to reject any sensation absolutely, and not distinguish opinions reliant on evidence yet awaited from what is already present through sensation, through feelings, and through every focusing of thought into an impression, you will confound all your other sensations with empty opinion and consequently reject the criterion in its entirety. (2) And if you are going to treat as established both all the evidence yet awaited in your conjectural conceptions, and that which has failed to [earn] attestation, you will not exclude falsehood, so that you will have removed all debate and all discrimination between correct and incorrect.”

Long, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* 87 (1987)

“If you reject any sensation that you do not distinguish between the opinion based on what awaits confirmation and evidence already available based on the senses, the feelings, and every intuitive faculty of the mind, you will send the remaining sensations into a turmoil with your foolish opinions, thus driving out every standard for judging. And if, among the perceptions based on opinion, you affirm both that which awaits confirmation and that which does not, you will fail to escape from error, since you will have retained every ground for dispute in judgment concerning right and wrong.” O'Connor (1993)

“If you reject unqualifiedly any sense-perception and do not distinguish the opinion about what awaits confirmation, and what is already present in the sense-perception, and the feelings, and every application of the intellect to presentations, you will also disturb the rest of your sense-perceptions with your pointless opinion; as a result you will reject every criterion. If, on the other hand, in your conceptions formed by opinion, you affirm everything that awaits confirmation as well as what does not, you will not avoid falsehood, so that you will be in the position of maintaining every disputable point in every decision about what is and is not correct.” Inwood & Gerson (1994)

“If you arbitrarily reject any one sensory experience and fail to differentiate between an opinion awaiting confirmation and what is already perceived by the senses, feelings, and every intuitive faculty of mind, you will impute trouble to all other sensory experiences, thereby rejecting every criterion. And if you concurrently affirm what awaits confirmation as well as actual sensory experience, you will still blunder, because you will foster equal reasons to doubt the truth and falsehood of everything.” Anderson (2004)

“If you expel each and every sensation without qualification, and fail to draw [fitting] distinctions applying to what is opined [about sensations] as between what is present already and what is anticipated; or if you fail to draw distinctions applying to what is opined [about sensations] as to whether such opinions are according to sense perception, the passions, or some other imaginary twist of mind: you will, then, confound also the rest of your sensations [in addition to the ones you are trying to expel directly] because of this ineffective way of judging, so that you will also have expelled all criteria for judging what is true and what is false.” Makridis (2005)

“If you reject a perception outright and do not distinguish between your opinion about what will happen after, what came before, your feelings, and all the layers of imagination involved in your thoughts, then you will throw your other perceptions into confusion because of your trifling opinions; as a result, you will reject the very criterion of truth. And if when forming concepts from your opinions you treat as confirmed everything that will happen and what you do not witness thereafter, then you will not avoid what is false, so that you will remove all argument and all judgment about what is and is not correct.” Saint-Andre (2008)

“If you summarily rule out any single sensation and do not make a distinction between the element of belief that is superimposed on a percept that awaits verification and what is actually present in sensation or in the feelings or some percept of the mind itself, you will cast doubt on all other sensations by your unfounded interpretation and consequently abandon all the criteria of truth. On the other hand, in cases of interpreted data, if you accept as true those that need verification as well as those that do not, you will still be in error, since the whole question at issue in every judgment of what is true or not true will be left intact.” Strodach (2012)

“If you reject any sensation absolutely, and do not distinguish between an opinion that awaits confirmation and a present reality (whether of sensation, feeling, or perception), you will also throw your other sensations into confusion with your groundless belief, and in doing so will be rejecting altogether the criterion. But if, when assessing opinions, you affirm as true everything that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, [. . .] you will not escape error; for you will be preserving complete uncertainty in every judgment between right and wrong opinion.” Mensch (2018)

“If you're going to reject any particular sense-perception outright and not distinguish beliefs about anything deferred from what is already present in sense-perception or feelings or any presentational application of thought, then you're going to throw the rest of your sense-perceptions into turmoil too by this pointless belief, and you'll end up rejecting every standard. On the other hand, if you're going to affirm not only whatever is deferred in your concepts and beliefs but also what [has] no attestation, then you will not evade falsehood, and you will find yourself upholding every challenge on every decision about what is correct or incorrect.” White (2021)

Post by “Cassius” of September 7, 2021 at 5:37 PM

A couple more comments on those of Geer that strike me as unusual. 39 and 40 strike me as questionable too, but the one I object to the most is 24:

140 III. The removal of all that causes pain marks the boundary of pleasure. Wherever pleasure is present and as long as it continues, there is neither suffering nor grieving nor both together.

I kind of like "the boundary of pleasure...." but he's removing "the limit of quantity" which is probably more exact.

141 VI. Any device whatever by which one frees himself from the fear of others is a natural good.

Pretty good.

VII. Some, thinking thus to make themselves safe from men, wished to become famous and renowned. They won a natural good if they made their lives secure; but if their lives were not secure, they did not have that for which, following the rule of nature, they first sought.

Pretty good

X. If the things that produce the pleasures of the dissolute were able to drive away from their minds their fears about what is above them and about death and pain, and to teach them the limit of desires, we would have no reason to find fault with the dissolute; for they would fill themselves with pleasure from every source and would be free from pain and sorrow, which are evil.

Pretty good on a hard one, I think. BUT here is 24:

I have to object to this one because he is assuming the controversial conclusion that the anticipations part is well translated as "**the mental examinations of confirmed concepts.**" That is a dramatic raising of the flag in support of the position that "concepts" are part of the canon of truth. As I've said *ad nauseam*, as far as I am concerned that is the end of the game when you adopt that, because you have then adopted your own opinion as part of the standard of truth. Got to hand it to Greer, though - he makes his position on anticipations absolutely clear.

147 XXIV. If you reject any sensation, and if you fail to distinguish between conjecture based upon that which awaits confirmation and evidence given by the senses, by the feelings, and by the mental examinations of confirmed concepts,⁴ you will confuse the other sensations with unfounded conjecture and thus destroy the whole basis for judgment. If among all opinions you accept as equally valid both those that await confirmation and those that have been confirmed, you will not free yourself from error, since you will have preserved all the uncertainty about every judgment of what is true and what is not true.⁵

Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2021 at 5:47 PM

Note how Sedley and Long treat 24 (thanks Nate):

24. "(1) If you are going to reject any sensation absolutely, and not distinguish opinions reliant on evidence yet awaited from what is already present through sensation, through feelings, and

through **every focusing of thought into an impression**, you will confound all your other sensations with empty opinion and consequently reject the criterion in its entirety. (2) And if you are going to treat as established both all the evidence yet awaited in your conjectural conceptions, and that which has failed to <earn> attestation, you will not exclude falsehood, so that you will have removed all debate and all discrimination between correct and incorrect." (87)

I think they are properly too conservative to use "concepts" there, although it looks to me like they would be happy to do so.

Now if Epicurus were wanting to be a total subjectivist and say "things are to be judged as true in part according to the concepts I have formed of them" he might win an award for self-assertiveness or for starting a semi-modern school of subjectivity, but I don't think that was his intention at all.

I think he was setting up a standard of truth for the very exact purpose of always having a method to go back to, based on data provided through natural senses, by which to check the continued validity of concepts previously or currently formed.

If he had said " I include in my list of the standards of truth the opinions I have already formed," then he'd be doing exactly what he warned against (confounding your other opinions with empty opinion."

Of course I realize that a premise of my argument is that a concept is always an opinion, and that there is no way to objectively define any concept as "true for all times, places, people, etc." That's probably the direction this debate has to go to be decided. Is there any way to validate a concept as something that we should consider to be a criterion of truth for all people, all times, all places? Yes we take the position that some "facts" are established (such as no supernatural gods, no life after death, etc.) Do THOSE concepts we accept as "universally true" become part of the "criterion of truth"?

I can see someone arguing that position, but I am not at all sure that Epicurus was going in that direction. If he WAS going in that direction, then IMHO he was strictly limiting the number of positions that are "absolutely true" to those forcefully supported by his philosophy. And I don't think you can get from "one of three natural faculties" to "a list of the core positions of Epicurean Philosophy."

Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2021 at 5:48 PM

Argh now I am going to have to go through and move some of this to the sections for particular doctrines (such as 24) but I think it's probably best to let the thread develop first.

Post by “Cassius” of September 7, 2021 at 5:57 PM

To All Who Care To Comment:

Suppose I decide that I am absolutely completely convinced by all my faculties and life-long experiences that "ALL KILLING IS WRONG" which I identify in my mind as a concept I entitle the "Non-Aggression Principle."

I am persuaded of the truth of the non-aggression principle beyond any need for seconds further data or reflection.

Has "the non-aggression principle" now entered into what I should understand from Epicurus that my canon of truth should be?

Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2021 at 5:15 AM

No one has responded yet to my question in this post.: [RE: PD14 - Alternate Translations](#)

Anyone? I Want to check my thinking in this issue.

Post by “Don” of September 8, 2021 at 7:19 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

No one has responded yet to my question in this post.: [RE: PD14 - Alternate Translations](#)

Anyone? I Want to check my thinking in this issue.

I'll take the bait.

"All killing is wrong" is an opinion about justice. You say that you are "convinced" by " my faculties and life-long experiences." How are you convinced? What convinced you? You use words like convinced and persuaded.

If an animal is trying to eat you, is it wrong to kill it to survive yourself or do you resign yourself to your fate?

Is it okay to kill a virus? Bacteria? Cancer cells are alive. Do you kill them. What scale does your opinion hold? Is it okay to kill a virus but not a multicellular being? Can you kill plants to eat? Or did it just apply to humans? It's okay to kill non-human animals? How non-human?

You can hold this opinion if you want, but it's not Epicurean. Sounds Pythagorean or Jain even. Epicurus talked about the contextual nature of living our lives and that Not killing principle sounds like a Platonic universal you want to apply to all time, all places, all situations.

Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2021 at 7:27 AM

OK I don't think that answer really gets to where we need to go so maybe I should drop back even further to the issue of:

What is a "mental examination of a confirmed concept" if one were to accept that version of the doctrine?

In asking about a "non-aggression principle" maybe that is too complex an example. If the suggested translation were to be accepted as accurate, what would be an example of a "mental examination of a confirmed concept" that would then be considered a canonical standard of truth?

Again, I am not convinced this translation is a good one, but in order to examine it let's presume that it is and look for an example of how to apply it on its own terms. Can this construction be applied consistently with what we know about the rest of Epicurean philosophy?

Post by “Joshua” of September 8, 2021 at 7:29 AM

Suppose I decide that I am absolutely completely convinced by all my faculties and life-long experiences that *Jesus Christ is the Living God*, which I identify in my mind as a concept I entitle *Christianity*.

I am persuaded of the truth of *Christianity* beyond any need for seconds further data or reflection.

Has *Christianity* now entered into what I should understand from Epicurus that my canon of truth should be?

Indeed not, good sir! But I'll have to get into the 'why' after I get to work.

Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2021 at 7:55 AM

Yes Joshua that is what I am thinking too - but I definitely still want your "why" as that will help flesh out the question.

I suspect Don might say that "Christianity" is pretty much on order with the "non-aggression principle" as a "platonic universal." And yes, that analysis is probably correct, and leads to the conclusion I think that is likely, which is that this formulation doesn't work, because a "mental examination of a confirmed concept" or at least a "confirmed concept" IS a Platonic universal. Is that correct / do we agree on that?

To be fair to Geer and test his wording I am looking to see whether there is any way in which a confirmed Epicurean might consider a "mental examination of a confirmed concept" to be a standard of truth(?)

Post by “Don” of September 8, 2021 at 7:59 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

beyond any need for seconds further data or reflection.

This seems to be the sticking point. This goes against the "withhold judgement" ideas of Epicurus's philosophy.

Also

Prolepsis <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...entry=pro/lhyis>

vs hypolepsis <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...Du%28po%2Flhyis>

PS: I should add that the "false assumptions" of the hoi polloi about the gods in the Letter to Menoikeus are specifically called hypolepses. As opposed to the true prolepses that Epicurus endorsed.

Post by "Eikadistes" of September 8, 2021 at 8:08 AM

XXIV (24)

εἰ τιν' ἐκβαλεῖς ἀπλῶς αἴσθησιν καὶ μὴ διαιρήσεις τὸ δοξαζόμενον καὶ τὸ προσμένον καὶ τὸ παρὸν ἤδη κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν καὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ πᾶσαν φανταστικὴν ἐπιβολὴν τῆς διανοίας, συνταράξεις καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς αἰσθήσεις τῇ ματαίῳ δόξῃ, ὥστε τὸ κριτήριον ἅπαν ἐκβαλεῖς· εἰ δὲ βεβαιώσεις καὶ τὸ προσμένον ἅπαν ἐν ταῖς δοξαστικαῖς ἐννοίαις καὶ τὸ μὴ τὴν ἐπιμαρτύρησιν <ἔχον>, οὐκ ἐκλείψεις τὸ διεψευσμένον, ὡς τετηρηκῶς ἔση πᾶσαν ἀμφισβήτησιν κατὰ πᾶσαν κρίσιν τοῦ ὀρθῶς ἢ μὴ ὀρθῶς.

"If you simply discard a sense, and do not distinguish between the different elements of the judgment, so as to know on the one hand, the opinion which goes beyond the actual sensation, or, on the other, the actual and immediate notion, the affections, and all the conceptions of the mind which arise from the observable representation; you will be imputing trouble into the other senses, and destroying in that quarter every species of criterion. But if you allow equal authority to the ideas, which being only an opinion, require to be verified, and to those which bear about them an immediate certainty, you will not escape error; for you will be confounding doubtful opinions with those which are not doubtful, and true judgments with those of a different character." Yonge (1853)

"If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate between that which is matter of opinion and awaits further confirmation and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feeling or in any mental apprehension, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief, so as to reject the truth altogether. If you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation in ideas based on opinion, as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be taking sides in every question involving truth and error." Hicks (1910)

"If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate with respect to that which awaits confirmation between matter of opinion and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feelings or in any presentative

perception of the mind, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief and so you will be rejecting the standard of truth altogether. If in your ideas based upon opinion you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be maintaining complete ambiguity whenever it is a case of judging between right and wrong opinion.” Hicks (1925)

“If you reject any single sensation and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion as to the appearance awaiting confirmation and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations as well with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgments. And if among the mental images created by your opinions you affirm both that which awaits confirmation and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.” Bailey (1926)

“If you reject any sensations, and if you fail to distinguish between conjecture based upon that which awaits confirmation and evidence given by the senses, by the feelings, and by the mental examinations of confirmed concepts, you will confuse the other sensations with unfounded conjecture and thus destroy the whole basis for judgment. If among all opinions you accept as equally valid both those that await confirmation and those that have been confirmed, you will not free yourself from error, since you will have preserved all the uncertainty about every judgment of what is true and what is not true.” Geer (1964)

“(1) If you are going to reject any sensation absolutely, and not distinguish opinions reliant on evidence yet awaited from what is already present through sensation, through feelings, and through every focusing of thought into an impression, you will confound all your other sensations with empty opinion and consequently reject the criterion in its entirety. (2) And if you are going to treat as established both all the evidence yet awaited in your conjectural conceptions, and that which has failed to <earn> attestation, you will not exclude falsehood, so that you will have removed all debate and all discrimination between correct and incorrect.” (Long, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* 87; 1987)

“If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate with respect to that which awaits confirmation between matter of opinion and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feelings or in any immediate perception of the mind, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief and so you will be rejecting the standard of truth altogether. If in your ideas based upon opinion you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be maintaining complete ambiguity whenever it is a case of judging between

right and wrong opinion.” O'Connor (1993)

“If you reject unqualifiedly any sense-perception and do not distinguish the opinion about what awaits confirmation, and what is already present in the sense-perception, and the feelings, and every application of the intellect to presentations, you will also disturb the rest of your sense-perceptions with your pointless opinion; as a result you will reject every criterion. If, on the other hand, in your conceptions formed by opinion, you affirm everything that awaits confirmation as well as what does not, you will not avoid falsehood, so that you will be in the position of maintaining every disputable point in every decision about what is and is not correct .” Inwood & Gerson (1994)

“If you arbitrarily reject any one sensory experience and fail to differentiate between an opinion awaiting confirmation and what is already perceived by the senses, feelings, and every intuitive faculty of mind, you will impute trouble to all other sensory experiences, thereby rejecting every criterion. And if you concurrently affirm what awaits confirmation as well as actual sensory experience, you will still blunder, because you will foster equal reasons to doubt the truth and falsehood of everything.” Anderson (2004)

“If you expel each and every sensation without qualification, and fail to draw <fitting> distinctions applying to what is opined <about sensations> as between what is present already and what is anticipated; or if you fail to draw distinctions applying to what is opined <about sensations> as to whether such opinions are according to sense perception, the passions, or some other imaginary twist of mind: you will, then, confound also the rest of your sensations <in addition to the ones you are trying to expel directly> because of this ineffective way of judging, so that you will also have expelled all criteria for judging what is true and what is false.” Makridis (2005)

“If you reject a perception outright and do not distinguish between your opinion about what will happen after, what came before, your feelings, and all the layers of imagination involved in your thoughts, then you will throw your other perceptions into confusion because of your trifling opinions; as a result, you will reject the very criterion of truth. And if when forming concepts from your opinions you treat as confirmed everything that will happen and what you do not witness thereafter, then you will not avoid what is false, so that you will remove all argument and all judgment about what is and is not correct.” Saint-Andre (2008)

“If you summarily rule out any single sensation and do not make a distinction between the element of belief that is superimposed on a percept that awaits verification and what is actually present in sensation or in the feelings or some percept of the mind itself, you will cast doubt on all other sensations by your

unfounded interpretation and consequently abandon all the criteria of truth. On the other hand, in cases of interpreted data, if you accept as true those that need verification as well as those that do not, you will still be in error, since the whole question at issue in every judgment of what is true or not true will be left intact."
Strodach (2012)

"If you reject any sensation absolutely, and do not distinguish between an opinion that awaits confirmation and a present reality (whether of sensation, feeling, or perception), you will also throw your other sensations into confusion with your groundless belief, and in doing so will be rejecting altogether the criterion. But if, when assessing opinions, you affirm as true everything that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, < . . . > you will not escape error; for you will be preserving complete uncertainty in every judgment between right and wrong opinion ."
Mensch (2018)

Post by "Don" of September 8, 2021 at 8:46 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

beyond any need for seconds further data or reflection.

This seems to be the sticking point. This goes against the "withhold judgement" ideas of Epicurus's philosophy.

Also

Prolepsis <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...entry=pro/lhyis>

vs hypolepsis <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...Du%28po%2Flhyis>

PS: I should add that the "false assumptions" of the hoi polloi about the gods in the Letter to Menoikeus are specifically called hypolepses. As opposed to the true prolepses that Epicurus endorsed.

Display More

This is also the trap when we're looking at translations. Prolepsis, hypolepsis, etc. are one word, different words, in Greek, whereas we have to translate them into English with a modifier + noun many times. An X concept, a Y opinion, and if the same noun just gets modified with a

different adjective it starts to muddy the water.

I don't have a better solution. But it's a consideration.

Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2021 at 8:53 AM

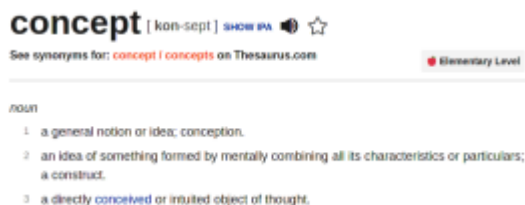
[Quote from Don](#)

This seems to be the sticking point. This goes against the "withhold judgement" ideas of Epicurus's philosophy.

That's referring to "beyond any need for seconds further data or reflection."

So I don't think that goes far enough. I don't think we can deal entirely within the Epicurean viewpoint here (unless you want to specify an Epicurean definition of "concept") because "concept" has a pretty clear and definite meaning among most of us today, and we're not going to be able to have public conversations about "concepts" unless we are clear on the terms.

And "concepts" are pretty darn close, if not identical, to "Platonic forms" and/or "universals." Certainly we can agree that concepts can be changed, but at any particular moment a "concept" i think is generally understood to be "a general notion or idea; conception" which at the time it is being discussed is considered to be something special.



Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2021 at 8:59 AM

Thanks to Nate's summary I can paste here the ones that seem to me to be of the same mind that we are NOT talking "full-blown concepts" --

Hicks 1910 : or in feeling or in any mental apprehension

Hicks 1925 : or in feelings or in any presentative perception of the mind

Bailey: or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind

Long: through feelings, and through every focusing of thought into an impression

O'Connor: or in feelings or in any immediate perception of the mind,

Inwood and Gerson: the feelings, and every application of the intellect to presentations,

Anderson: every intuitive faculty of mind,

Makridis: the passions, or some other imaginary twist of mind

St Andre: your feelings, and all the layers of imagination involved in your thoughts

Strodach: or in the feelings or some percept of the mind itself

Mensch: feeling, or perception

Post by “Godfrey” of September 8, 2021 at 3:16 PM

Quote from Yonge

...so as to know on the one hand, the opinion which goes beyond the actual sensation, or, on the other...

Quote from Geer

if you fail to distinguish between conjecture based upon that which awaits confirmation...

Quote from Geer

...and by the mental examinations of confirmed concepts...

Quote from Strodach

...or some percept of the mind itself...

My first thought while reading the various translations is that the Yonge quote (as well as most of the others) and the second Geer quote are referring to the same thing (opinions) and therefore the Geer quote is nonsensical.

But to look at the Geer quote, he's comparing "that which awaits confirmation" with "confirmed concepts." I can't comment on the Greek, but comparing Geer quote two with Strodach it looks like Geer is confusing "precept" with "percept."

There's a bit of a skeptical bent to Epicurus' thinking, as I understand it, in that all ideas and perceptions are open to verification: hence the multiple explanations of certain phenomena. But he's obviously not a Skeptic: the verification comes from direct experience. So, to me, Geer's translation is counter to the intent of this PD. Epicurus is saying that "confirmed concepts" are "opinions which go beyond the actual sensations."

Post by "Cassius" of September 8, 2021 at 6:24 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

But he's obviously not a Skeptic: the verification comes from direct experience.

Indeed, THAT is the function of the canon of truth!

Post by "Don" of September 8, 2021 at 9:47 PM

[Godfrey](#) may be able to add to this, but I can't shake thinking about Dr. Feldman Barrett's use of the word "concept" to denote mental images/memories against which your perceptions and interoceptions are compared. My understanding of her position is something like:

You're brain attempts to keep you safe and balance your body's energy budget. You see a long skinny thing in the ground once, and recognize it as a snake. Danger. You encounter this a few more times and finally any long slender thing you encounter: twig, rope, snake - automatically registered as "snake." The false positives keep you safe even though they startle you for no practical reason. Now, I know that doesn't line up with prolepses exactly but I think there's a connection there.

Post by “Godfrey” of September 9, 2021 at 1:42 AM

This was a book that I took notes on, which I rarely do. Here are some notes and quotes (italicized) regarding "concepts":

“Everything you perceive around you is represented by concepts in your brain.” This is how it reduces the tremendous volume of input to manageable information. The brain predicts sensory signals before they arrive and edits them to make them into useful representations of the world.

“Thus, concepts aren’t fixed definitions in your brain, and they’re not prototypes of the most typical or frequent instances. Instead, your brain has many instances—of cars, of dot patterns, of sadness, or anything else—and it imposes similarities between them, in the moment, according to your goal in a given situation. For example, your usual goal for a vehicle is to use it for transportation, so if an object meets that goal for you, then it’s a vehicle, whether it’s a car, a helicopter, or a sheet of plywood with four wheels nailed on.”

“Concepts are not static but remarkably malleable and context-dependent, because your goals can change to fit the situation.”

When you categorize, you are creating similarities in the world, not finding them.

“When your brain needs a concept, it constructs one on the fly, mixing and matching from a population of instances from your past experience, to best fit your goals in a particular situation.”

“Without a concept for “Fear,” you cannot experience fear.”

“Any healthy human can experience low-arousal, unpleasant affect. But you cannot experience sadness with all of its cultural meaning, appropriate actions, and other functions of emotion unless you have the concept ‘Sadness.’”

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2021 at 5:35 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Without a concept for “Fear,” you cannot experience fear.”

This quote seems particularly stark to me in making clear that it is important to define what is meant by this word "concept" because the view expressed here is almost certainly not the view that is implicit in the ancient debates, where by my reading a concept is something formed after thought based on experience.

Now fear is an emotion / feeling and a human would most certainly experience fear as a natural feeling before ever thinking and describing the experience in words, which seems to be a central part of concepts.

Use of Feldman Barrett or anyone else to describe the processes actually involved will be helpful, but I also think to keep the conversation on course we have to focus on the debate in traditional terms, and there it seems to me that the word concept is closely related to "ideas" and "forms" and the ultimate questions of whether there are external locations (realm of ideas, religion/gods, formal logic /virtue) to which we must conform our thoughts and actions.

On the other hand focusing on what is actually going on is obviously good, so there's a balance involved!

Post by “Don” of September 9, 2021 at 6:53 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Now fear is an emotion / feeling and a human would most certainly experience fear as a natural feeling before ever thinking and describing the experience in words, which seems to be a central part of concepts.

Barrett's point is that a person, say in a dark forest at night, experiences a heightened heart rate, their pupils dilate, their hands may get sweaty, but the identification of these feelings as "fear" is culturally conditioned. Another person may experience those same biological cues in another context and identify it as anticipation, anxiety, excitement, etc. "Emotions" are entirely contextual and constructed in the moment as needed on the fly. There is no universal called Fear (in this example) that applies to all people in all places at all times.

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2021 at 8:19 AM

Well if she is saying that "fear" is a word and that the definition of a word is contextual (with different words in different languages) then I have no problem with that.

If she is saying that the emotion that we call fear in English but which all animals and all humans appear to share - because we feel it pre-rationally - does not exist until a word is put to it after thinking about it, then that would be something else entirely.

Post by “Don” of September 9, 2021 at 8:38 AM

That's the point: We don't "think" about it. It's not "Well, I'm experiencing fear now." Your brain takes in all its sensory input, compares it to past experiences, and pairs this input with a "concept" of "fear." The process is entirely pre-rational. You can look at your fear post facto and realize that wasn't a snake, just a branch on the ground.

This is how people become over sensitive to certain stimuli and jump at everything. Their brains become conditioned to see threats around every corner. Everything is paired with their "fear concept."

Her and others' research showed that those photos of paradigmatic "emotions" we can "read on people's faces" are without merit. Those paradigms do not exist. So I would be careful with phrases like "all animals and all humans appear to share" especially when it comes to anthropomorphizing animals.

[Godfrey](#) is welcomed to fact check me in my interpretation here! It's been awhile since I read the book now.

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2021 at 9:26 AM

OK I am trying to keep not only the big picture but also just the thread title in focus as we go forward. The issue under discussion is broadly speaking (I think) whether "concepts" as that word is commonly used are a part of the Epicurean canon of truth.

Some translators seem to take that position (that "concepts" are part of the canon of truth), but I think it is fair to say the majority (and those I personally find most persuasive) do not take that position. They think Epicurus was referring to something pre-rational, potentially "intuitive," that functions in parallel (and analogously, I think it is fair to say, as pre-rational) with the five

senses and with the pleasure/pain mechanism.

So I think I am reading the Feldman-Barrett comments to say that she also agrees that there is a pre-rational mechanism going on that pre-exists in the sequence of things before the arisal of what we might call "the concept of fear."

If I am reading that correctly that that makes FB a useful data point in supporting Epicurus' contentions and explaining them as part of Epicurean philosophy.

(?)

Post by "Godfrey" of September 9, 2021 at 1:55 PM

I interpret LFB the same way as [Don](#) in post #22 and as [Cassius](#) in post #23.

Post by "Don" of September 9, 2021 at 2:26 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

what we might call "the concept of fear."

Exactly. LFB (I like [Godfrey](#) 's initialism) would probably call that ("what we might call") something like the ideation or idea or realization of fear and the pre-rational instance the "concept."

Post by "Cassius" of September 9, 2021 at 4:05 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Exactly. LFB (I like Godfrey 's initialism) would probably call that ("what we might call") something like the ideation or idea or realization of fear and the pre-rational instance the "concept."

Ok very good. If she is doing that then her terminology would appear to be not in accord with general use of the word concept, so we'll need to be careful to take that into account in discussing that aspect of her work.

Post by “Don” of September 9, 2021 at 4:22 PM

I haven't had a chance to read this full paper but it appears to lay out some interesting points of hers

https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/cas_sites/psych/pdf/articles/future_of_psych.pdf

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2021 at 9:50 PM

I note in her abstract that she starts off by saying that psychological states are "real."

I didn't read any further than the abstract but that is one of the key issues that we answer philosophically rather than through science. What does "real" mean really mean?

I think that is what Epicurus was focusing on in major aspects of the canon of truth. There are all sorts of ways to think about what it means to be real to us, but ultimately I think he was seeing the canonical faculties as that ultimate testing ground of reality. Whatever they report to us is ultimately something we feel to be real at that moment. That doesn't mean that our opinion about the perception and the ideas / concepts we process from it are going to be accurate in all respects to wider reality, but whatever these faculties are reporting to us at any particular moment is something that our nature tells us to process as real at that moment. And that is all we as human beings can ever have as the raw data with which to judge for ourselves what is "real" to us.

And so while she may be interested in reducing the question to a matter of neurons or other biological processes, that's a reduction that may lead to many medical or other practical benefits, but on the philosophical war level the focus remains on the philosophical question of the nature of truth and reality.

Post by “Don” of September 9, 2021 at 10:55 PM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2184-pd24-alternate-translations/>

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I didn't read any further than the abstract but that is one of the key issues that we answer philosophically rather than through science. What does "real" mean really mean?

She defines two definitions of what she means by "real":

Quote from Barrett

Natural sciences like physics deal with scientific categories that are assumed to be observer independent (they are real in the natural sense and can be discovered by humans)

Social sciences like sociology or economics deal with categories that are observer dependent (and are real because they are invented and shared by humans).

I think those are good basic definitions of how we use "real" in conversation. And Epicurus advised using definitions that could be agreed on by the average person. Photosynthesis - a natural process discoverable by science - is "real" in the first sense. Money - a culturally agreed-upon system of commerce - is "real" in the second sense.

I think your premise that philosophy is the arbiter of what's "real" is a tad restrictive unless you read her definitions as broadly "philosophical."

Post by "Cassius" of September 9, 2021 at 11:56 PM

Yes i do think her responses there are pretty philosophical. She's listing at least two kinds of meaning for "real" that have significantly different definitions, and even those I think probably bear a lot more scrutiny. In the first she uses the word "discoverable" -- Does that mean that they are discoverable to the five senses, or discoverable some other way?

In the second she says "real because they are invented and shared by humans. Does that also mean subject to verification through the senses? In fact I am not at all sure this whole second category is consistent with a common sense view of "real." Are economics and sociology "real"? I am pretty well prepared to say that they are great time-wasters 😊 but does that mean they are "real"?

I am afraid now I am getting too far down a rabbit hole that I was warning myself against, because the answers to these questions may or may not help us toward a better understanding

of Epicurean philosophy. I guess they do, in the sense that these are questions that Epicurus would probably have asked himself.

Post by “Don” of September 10, 2021 at 6:38 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In the first she uses the word "discoverable" -- Does that mean that they are discoverable to the five senses,

Yes, because they are "observer independent" in her words. They exist and *can* be observed, and they exist whether being observed or not. The sun is real in this sense. It's going to exist whether humans are observing it or not.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In the second she says "real because they are invented and shared by humans. Does that also mean subject to verification through the senses? In fact I am not at all sure this whole second category is consistent with a common sense view of "real." Are economics and sociology "real"? I am pretty well prepared to say that they are great time-wasters 😊 but does that mean they are "real"?

Justice is real in this sense, "real because they are invented and shared by humans)." Humans can agree to a contract and talk about "justice" in relation to that contract, but it's not "real" like the sun is real. Without humans (I'm sticking to Earth-based examples), the "observers", there is no such thing as justice. The agreed-upon general idea is "observer dependent." Epicurus obviously thought justice was important, he devoted several [Principal Doctrines](#) to it, so it is a "real" concept with which to grapple, it "exists" in the real world but it is contextual and cultural. It doesn't exist like the sun or atoms and void, but there is a thing we name "justice."

That's how I'd characterize her two categories of real.

Post by “Bryan” of December 19, 2023 at 12:10 AM

If you reject even one sensation and you will not separate (1) a theory about what is still pending, versus (2) what is actually present according to the senses, feelings, and the whole

visual focus of the mind: then you will disturb the remaining senses with empty thought - as you will be rejecting the whole basis of judgment.

Also, if you accept (1) all that which is still pending in theoretical concepts, along with (2) that which is not still pending full confirmation: you will not avoid error - since you will have retained all doubt regarding all judgment of what is true or not true.