

# Thoughts on Anticipations

Post by "Cassius" of May 19, 2015 at 6:59 AM

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[Cassius AmicusVictor Hugo](#) there is no clearly authoritative viewpoint on this, but here is my understanding: DeWitt calls the anticipations an "intuitive" faculty involving abstract relationships like justice. The point is that unless our minds were "oriented" or "disposed" or "wired" with certain principles of functioning, we could never even RECOGNIZE the relationships we consider to be "justice." This view is like the sense of sight. If our eyes did not operate according to certain physical principles, we would not see the light of the sun. If they were wired differently we might see UV instead of sunlight. In the case of sight, we were not born having seen trees, or knowing anything about trees. But we are born with a faculty (eyesight) that is "tuned" and "operates with certain principles" that allows our eyes to report the shapes and colors etc that our minds interpret as trees.

- With abstract relationships such as justice, the analogous theory would be that our minds were wired to operate in such a way that they recognize the spectrum of relationships that amount to what we label "justice." This wiring does not tell us that one form of justice is good or bad, or pleasing and non-pleasing (this latte is the job of pleasure and pain). What the wiring DOES do is allow us as men to recognize that the issue of "justice" exists, which is something that lower animals do not even recognize, much less evaluate.

The theory I have just stated is a blend of what DeWitt calls intuitive, and Jackson Barwis calls "innate principles." I am not saying for certain that this is what Epicurus held. But it does appear clear that Epicurus held anticipations to be PRE-conceptual, and as part of the canon, they must operate without injection of opinion. So what i am describing \*may\* be a way of thinking about the Epicurean position.[7 hrs](#) · &quot;}" href="https://www.facebook.com/home.php?#" role="button" title="Like this comment" data-reactid=".t.1:4:1:\$comment831616663553962\_831758306873131:0.0.\$right.0.\$left.0.3.\$likeToggle:0

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- [Cassius Amicus](#) Let me add something else here: what I gave above is my interpretation, based on DeWitt. Here again, there is a "majority" view that is/was held by people like Cyril Bailey. Essentially, that view is that Epicurus held "anticipations" to be "concepts" formed by conceptual reasoning. And in fact Diogenes laertius says "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 to be also standards." To me, this indicates a split in they years after Epicurus. DeWitt says that Epicurus was right, and that the "Epicureans generally" were wrong, for reasons I am about to discuss.

Here is another key section in Diogenes Laertius: "By preconception they mean a sort of apprehension or a right opinion or notion, or universal idea stored in the mind; that is, a recollection of an external object often presented, e.g. Such and such a thing is a man: for no sooner is the word "man" uttered than we think of his shape by an act of preconception, in which the senses take the lead. Thus, the object primarily denoted by every term is then plain and clear. And we should never have started an investigation, unless we had known what it was that we were in search of."

Now that OUGHT to be very clear, and end the discussion, but DeWitt thinks this was the position of "the Epicureans generally" and not the position of Epicurus himself, and that it is in fact a view that opens the door to the undermining of the core doctrine, and here's why.

What we are calling the "Canon of Truth" is really nothing more than "our faculties of direct contact with reality" (kind of like aponia means nothing more than "without pain"). Everyone agrees on the five senses as being direct contacts. The eyes report what they see, without adding opinion or recognition - the mind does that. But in considering anticipations as "concepts," that would mean they are "abstract concepts," such as "justice" or "divinity" for example). Most people agree that we are not born with "concepts" in our mind, and that concepts arise from the process of thinking about things. If preconceptions are abstract concepts that have arisen after we thought about them, and if they are also part of our faculties that test reality, then that would mean that we have created our own standard by which to test reality.

Now there is no doubt that this process does exist as PART of how our mind works. We see different types of trees, and we assign the concept "tree" to them. We see different types of human relationships, and we assign the concept "justice" to describe some of those relationships.

But DeWitt says, and I think rightly, that this process of thinking and forming concepts is NOT part of our "our faculties of contact with reality." He says this conceptual formation process takes place LATER, AFTER the faculties of perception have done their work of presenting us data to process. And so DeWitt thinks that any process which includes "opinion", which all concepts do (since they are not handed down to us by ideal forms or by essentials) CANNOT be considered a "faculty of direct contact with reality").

Instead, Dewitt says, these are called PRE-conceptions for a reason. They PRECEDE the end result of the concept-formation process. Dewitt calls them "intuition" that is used in

the process of forming concepts, which is why I was describing them above as "dispositions" or intuitions that allow us to recognize that an issue of "justice" or "divinity" is involved. Justice and divinity are kinds of "relationships", so seen in this way, anticipations are a faculty for recognizing abstract relationships that we otherwise would not even consider, such as a cat or dog or animal can look in a mirror and not seem to see anything worth considering. DeWitt is essentially saying that anticipations are dispositions guiding us to recognize areas that need consideration.

SO the majority view is that preconceptions are the result of a reasoning process. This brings "reason" directly into the heart of the canon, and says that reasoning to produce concepts is every bit as reliable and trustworthy as seeing or hearing. Do you see why that view would undermine the whole system? It invites us to treat the results of "reasoning" as just as valid as seeing or hearing or being pleased by something. And that invites us to think that we can overrule the guidance of nature, and decide for ourselves what the ultimate goal of life "should" be. It invites us to substitute "virtue" (or any other conceptual goal we come up with) as equally, or more, important, than choosing pleasure and avoiding pain, which is the directive NATURE gave us to follow.

That's why the nature of anticipations is so important. It appears to have been an issue within the Epicurean community fairly early, and I think DeWitt is right that those who adopted it, probably in order to accommodate the Stoic/Platonic/ Aristotelian worship of "reason/logic", made a very bad mistake in doing so.

If you allow that it is possible to "reason" your way to conclude that "virtue" is more important than "pleasure," which is what happens when you consider "reason" to be a part of the canon of truth, then you have opened the door to the collapse of the entire system, which is built on the faculties NATURE gave us, and not on standards we dream up ourselves.

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## Post by "A Singh" of September 2, 2016 at 6:41 AM

There has been a detailed discussion on FB group on the topic of Preconceptions/ Anticipations recently, shedding light on many aspects of this important third leg of the Epicurean Canon. In this post I will try to highlight one particular aspect of preconceptions which I find most intriguing and useful. That aspect is the faculty of Mental visualisation/Imagination/3D Map of reality in one's head and I strongly think that this mental visualisation faculty is equipped with

certain pre-existing biological phenomenon (Preconceptions) that is responsible for producing the Ideas of Conceivable and Inconceivable projections in the form of mental intuitions in us (Provided this faculty has not been subjugated and taken over by “Pure reason” through extensive conditioning thereby over riding its authority as supreme judge for truth determination). Operationally its likely be similar in biological basis as in the case of pre-wired ideas of justice, friendship etc developed during evolution of our species.

most normal humans are born with a capacity to visualise the physical world in their minds, a sort of like a blank projector on which anything can be played using either direct input (Visual sensory) or thought commands for memory activation/visualisation. Where we are faced with direct clear input of senses to produce projections (as in our every day experience with our surroundings) we have no ambiguities. Where sense data is not clear cut errors can arise in interpretation due to our preference of some alternative explanation over others for various reasons and this point is well known to Epicureans.

In addition to direct sensory mechanisms humans have evolved another supertool- Symbols- to represent reality. These symbols can be sounds or figurative representations as in languages, words, shapes, diagrams, geometrical and mathematical representations. Now the reality only consists of atoms and void and nothing else. Most of the symbols have been invented to represent physical reality and to make communication easier among humans for survival (Ruuun Tiger.....for example) In the world of symbols lies a new “thing” which really exist only in the human thought (neural connections) and no where else - Concepts. As a typical human grows up in today's world not much attention/training is provided to distinguish this powerful but madeup construction -Concepts- from his other actual physical sensory perceptions. Consequently he or she grows up somewhat muddled up and if enough Aristotelian/Platonic training/conditioning is provided to override trust in his own sensory mechanism he will grow up to be cocksure about his conceptual reality (think religious people or academics for example) without realising the error in the process.

Now coming back to original topic how do I make that claim in the first place. Firstly during my study of Epicurean texts (Mainly from Cassius's resources) I was immediately struck with the realisation that most of what I read made clear visual picture in my head and corresponded perfectly with my sense perceptions in terms of its conceivability without rousing any ambiguity. It was as if the jigsaw was fitting together with all the parts lining up together in perfect harmony from the big picture to the smallest and only details remained to be filled up with accuracy. I will try to explain this in detail by using an example of one of Epicurean assumptions to build a model of reality. For this I will reverse engineer the Epicurean assumption about our universe that the universe is infinite. How did Epicurus arrive at this conclusion and why I should believe it. Now the only way to settle this question is to visualise the universe in our heads and traverse it with a imaginary spear in our hand to mark the boundary if we happen to find it. Travelling far and wide beyond even the visible horizon of the universe we are unable to fathom any boundary as we will then have to explain what lies

beyond the boundary. This knowledge that there can be no boundary to the universe is produced by a certain kind of inborn faculty or intuition of the mental visualisation which is independent of reasoning or learning and it tells us what is conceivable in terms of its existence and what is inconceivable i.e. that cannot exist. A universe that is bounded is inconceivable by this visualisation faculty if we trust its judgement and we have no other means to refute it. It therefore follows from this example that our mental visualisation faculties are pre-equipped with intuitions of certain kinds that tell us (where the evidence is not direct ) that what can be i.e. conceivable and what cannot be i.e. inconceivable. This tool can help us greatly in the areas where there are multiple possibilities and the correct use of this faculty can tell us what is more plausible or conceivable.

I believe this ability to visualise with its intuitive sense of conceivable probability is among one of the keys to our understanding of the nature of things (For using alongside the true Epicurean reasoning of cause and effect derived from the 12 elemental observations including matter being uncreatable and indestructible). Language and reasoning are powerful tools but useful only to the extent that they can help us in making coherent conceivable mental projections of the things they are trying to convey otherwise they are just empty symbols devoid of any real meaning and wasting our most precious and limited resource of our lives -Our Time. No claim of any scholarship is made and this posting is more of an Epicurean peasants output.

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**Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2016 at 7:20 AM**

Thank you A!