

How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain by Lisa Feldman Barrett

Post by "Cassius" of April 16, 2021 at 1:48 AM

For ease of reference here is the section on anticipations from DeWitt If someone needs the rest and doesn't have it, let me know. This doesn't necessarily help with understanding LFB's points at all, but it will help with the higher-level issue of whether the mechanisms she is talking about are the same category of phenomena as what Epicurus was talking about, or a separate category of phenomena.

As I see it, the crux of the issue is in this paragraph as circled - are we talking about something that is truly prior to any experience with instances of a thing (DeWitt's position focusing on Velleius) or are we talking about the manipulation of concepts after experience with one or more instances of a thing (the majority modern commentator view). Again, whichever position you take doesn't necessarily mean that LFB is right or wrong, because they could be talking about entirely separate things.

THE ELEMENT OF ANTICIPATION

The core of the problem is to be recognized in the element of anticipation. It is positively stated by Cicero that the use of the term *prolepsis* was an innovation on the part of Epicurus.³⁸ It is agreed that this term *prolepsis* also denotes some sort of concept or idea. No one denies that its proper signification is "anticipation." Therefore, if an idea precedes or anticipates something, this can hardly be anything but experience. The said idea must therefore be innate. Quite correctly, therefore, Cicero wrote with studied precision when reporting on the gods of Epicurus,³⁹ "implanted or rather inborn conceptions of them." Nevertheless it has been deemed unnecessary to believe that Epicurus held such an opinion and it is even declared that "the notion of 'innate ideas' would be wholly repugnant to Epicureanism."⁴⁰ Yet there is compelling evidence for believing the precise opposite, that he thought of all infant behavior as anticipatory of later experience.

ANTICIPATION

The second instance of such is the *Prolepsis* or Anticipation, such as the innate sense of justice. Before Sensation and Anticipation there is an obvious ledge of sensation. The latter capacity to distinguish colors is an anticipation of experience no less than the former capacity to distinguish between justice and injustice. The difference is that the latter sense is part of the individual's prearranging for life in his physical environment and emerges in early childhood, while the sense

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of justice is part of the prearranging for life in the social environment and emerges later, developing in pace with experience, instruction, and reflection. How the Anticipation functions as a criterion may be seen in the case of the gods: it is impossible to think of them as in need of anything, for example, because according to the idea antecedent among men their happiness is perfect.

Unfortunately the traditional accounts of the Anticipations have gone far astray. These confusions cannot be traced to their originator; for, in the gradual reshaping of Epicurus the topic was treated by advanced students and steadily omitted from both the *Letter* and the *Big Epicurus*; consequently Lucretius had no help or other source, thereby he confuses the concepts of such abstract things as justice but becomes confused with the general concepts of such concrete things as horses and oxen; thus, modern scholars have become victims of the confusion of the students and on their own account have committed the error of comparing the Anticipations with the Sensations.

It is highly probable that Epicurus allowed even to certain intellects, especially philosophers, the possession of these rudimentary anticipations of social virtues. The stability of the city and its laws requires in the study of irrational creatures in order to learn the teachings of Nature. It should be recalled too that not only was Epicurus very eager to have information of Pythagoras, who had been in India, but also that the writings of Alexander's historians, Aristobolus, Nearchus, and Onesicritus con-

...erasing India were available in his youth, and the same is true of the description of India by Hipparchus at the time of Seleucus. The elder Philo, who quotes three of the above writers, described as *epithymon* "a sort of division of justice,"¹³ as another equivalent of the Epicurean *Anticipation*. Philo also ascribes to epithyma the position of grief, hunger, pleasure, equity, and even religion.¹⁴ All of these fall squarely into the category of abstract notions, where the *Anticipation* belongs.

The term *prolepsis* was correctly understood by Cicero as *anticipation* or *preconception*¹⁵ and less precisely, though intelligibly, by the elder Philo as *division*. It is wrongly translated as "conception" by those who confuse the general concept of such a thing as an owl with the abstract idea of justice. One scholar prefers "preconception," but perhaps "preconception" would be preferable. It seems more self-explanatory, however, to adhere to "*Anticipation*" because this is the meaning of the Greek word *prolepsis*.

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Two explicit accounts of the text have fortunately survived from antiquity, the first from Cicero and the second from Diogenes Laertius. Unfortunately there is virtual consensus among modern scholars that the authority of Cicero is to be rejected and that of Laertius accepted. This would mean that the word of a single compiler weighs more with us than that of the gifted Cicero. It seems also that not one, but several ancient sources pages of the text of Epicurus, are in a better position to form a judgment than Cicero himself, who knew all the outstanding Epicureans of his time, whether Greek or Roman, and enjoyed access to all the original texts.

THE ACCOUNT OF LAERTIUS

The account of Laertius would not deserve more than brief mention were it not approved by eminent scholars. It is a hodgepodge of Epicurean and Stoic terminology and doctrine. The essential part of the text may be rendered as follows: "By a *prolepsis* they mean, so to say, an

apprehension or right opinion or notion or general idea which comes in the mind, that is, a confirmation of something that has already been perceived from without."¹⁶ In his exposition he mentions general concepts of a man, a horse, or an owl.

The objection to this text both numerous and rapid. In the first place, the statement is false to the facts. General concepts are formed naturally, as it will be shown.¹⁷ A little child who has only once seen an elephant will be able to recognize or explain another one immediately. In the second place, we know from Epicurus himself that the term *prolepsis* was applied to the concept of the divine nature.¹⁸ Thus it can follow, then, if the general concept of a horse is the result of having seen many horses, that the concept of the divine nature must be the result of having seen many gods! This is absurd.

Again, we learn from the text of Epicurus himself that the term *prolepsis* applies to the general concept of justice.¹⁹ If, then, the definition of Laertius be adopted, it follows that the general concepts of such basic things as horses and men are to be placed in the same logical category with that of justice.

The following objection may also occur to the mind of the reader: If the formation of the general concept occurs upon acts of sensation, then all elements of anticipation are sensory again, if it is based on the recollection of acts of sensation, this is a sort of inductive process and

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as a result of a natural process can itself be a primary criterion of truth, which Epicurus declared the *prolepsis* to be. Still again, if the general concept is the sum of a series of sensations, then the *prolepsis* is merged with sensation, and the second criterion of Epicurus disappears. This, in turn, would mean that Epicurus possessed no criterion of truth on the abstract level of thought. Such a conclusion is hardly to be tolerated.

THE RESULT OF ANTICIPATION

The aim of the problem is to be recognized in the domain of anticipation. It is pointed out by Cicero that the use of the term *prolepsis* was an innovation on the part of Epicurus.²⁰ It is agreed that this term *prolepsis* also denotes some sort of concept or idea. No one doubts that its proper significance is "*anticipation*." Therefore, if an idea precedes or anticipates something, this can hardly be anything but experience. The *prolepsis* must therefore be innate. Quite correctly, therefore, Cicero wrote with studied precision when reporting on the gods of Epicurus:²¹ "unexplained or rather (rather) unexplained of deity." Nevertheless it has been deemed unnecessary to believe that Epicurus held such an opinion and it is even declared that "the notion of 'innate ideas' would be wholly repugnant to Epicureanism."²² Yet there is compelling evidence for believing the precise opposite, that he thought of all initial behavior as anticipatory of later experience.

Let the reader! Laertius be called as the witness stand. Among his more striking and better remembered passages is one that emphasizes the *prolepsis* as anticipatory behavior of all living creatures, including animals.²³ Their five senses anticipate the activities of their whole body. Children pain with the lungs before they can talk. Crows hunt before they have been. The cubs of lions and panthers fight with tooth and claw even before they have teeth and claws. Young birds go through the motions of flying before their wings are fit for flight. Obviously all living things are preconditioned for life in their natural environments.

It is, then, inconsistent with this observed fact to maintain that human beings are preconditioned for life in their social environments!

Let Epicurus himself be allowed to testify. Basic to his definition is the observed fact that all living creatures, from the lowest, however young and helpless, reach out for pleasure and shrink from pain. Even before the five senses have begun to perform their parts, living before

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the dawn of conscious motivation, and long before the development of

understanding, pleasure seems to be a good and pain an evil thing.²⁴ This initial behavior, like the subsequent growth of play, is at one and the same time prompted by intense propensities and anticipatory of actual experience. In the growth of the living being and the unfolding of the faculties the sensation of Epicurus is momentarily focused upon this principle, the priority of Nature over reason.

Another aspect of this priority is the speed of learning, especially as displayed by gifted children. This topic had received attention before the time of Epicurus. Philo, who believed in the immortality of the soul and in its transmigration, expressed his judgment of it by the term *mnemoticon*, or "recollection." To him the process of learning was one of reviving personal memories, while the function of dialectic was to bring this dimly remembered knowledge once more to consciousness.²⁵ Epicurus, on the contrary, does not credit both the pre-existence and the survival of the soul, found his explanation in the preconditioning of man by Nature for life in the prospective environments. His word for this phenomenon, *Prolepsis* or *Anticipation*, is that the philosophical anatomy of Plato's *mnemoticon* or *recollection*, and so far it is hard to believe that the notion of "innate ideas" would be wholly repugnant to Epicureanism, that it is part of the marrow of his doctrine. His mention, on this point, is identical. *Platonism* is wrong.

REFERENCES TO THE TEXTS

In the extant texts of Epicurus, the term *prolepsis* occurs four times in a specific context. The first has reference to the divine nature and the second and third to justice; the fourth applies to the concept of time. There are sufficient witnesses that the use of *mnemoticon* refers to the domain of the abstract. To deny this would mean that the concepts of justice and the divine nature are on the same level with the general concept of a horse or an owl.

The discussion of the divine nature is found in the least of the available literature.²⁶ It is there declared that the preconception of the *mnemoticon* concerning the gods are not anticipations (*prolepsis*) but *innate conceptions*. "What the correct anticipation is may be gleaned beyond doubt from the unambiguous context: first, the divine nature is imperishable, which means that the bodies of the gods are "inextinguishable."

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idea of perfection. This idea of godhead is related to a more basic, a certain common or essential, a "universal" idea.

This universal idea of god is said by Epicurus "to be situated in outline," the verb being *ἀπαρραγία*. This compound word exhibits a prefix known or connotation as "superfluous," implying that the action goes about of its own kind. The notion also the verb as signifying "to cast letters for children to write over" or "to state in outline, sketch out," as printers do not appear to be filled in later with colors. From more illuminating, however, is a usage to be found in Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*,¹⁴ where the network of veins in the embryo is described as prefiguring the adult organism. Here is plainly detectable this element of anticipation or protypia which conditions the thinking of Epicurus. These same ideas, which Cicero categorically ascribed to him, stand in the same relation to law and father under standing as the various structures of the embryo in the developed organism. Incidentally, it should be again recalled that the study of biology gained sudden vigor in the interval between Plato and Epicurus.

The second and third examples of the same protypia are found in Authorized Decrees 21 and 22: the rule is justice. Just as in the case of the divine nature, the law requires it to show the essential attributes or attributes. It is Nature that forbids the form and implants in man the anticipatory nature or protypia of justice in advance of all experience. Hence it is called "the justice of Nature," as in Decree 21: "The justice of Nature is a measure of advantage to the end that men shall not injure one another nor be injured." Having said the idea of the movement, which is a separate topic, it will be noted that the essential requirements of justice is to prevent citizens against injury. Thus "law" becomes a condition of Epicureanism. Since the law are the instruments of justice, it is clear that must be used by this criterion. Like other attributes of his ideas, Epicurus was aware of the diversity of law from age

to have the substance of justice. This is the gist of Decrees 21, 22, and 23.

The fourth occurrence of protypia, although negative in its bearing, is particularly illuminating. It deals with the nature of time. The protypia, as has been indicated, retain the substance of a thing in their anticipatory definition. Therefore, Epicurus virtually says that a protypia of time is a contradiction in terms, since time has no substance. He

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finding in the case is "an accident of accident," and, if his reasoning be clearly scrutinized, one seems to be even less than this.¹⁵ The line of reasoning may be sketched as follows: a human being is susceptible of sickness but sickness is not a permanent condition, only a temporary condition, that is, an accident. Sickness in its case may be long or short, but this quality of length or brevity is not a permanent attribute but an accident. Therefore it is an accident of an accident. Now, by analogy, since we associate time with cases of health or sickness, the time of their duration is said to be long or short. Thus long and short become properties of time while in reality they apply only to cases of health or sickness. This amounts to saying that in the phrase "a long time" or "a short time" the adjectives are transferred epithets.

Incidentally, in the case of Epicurus this paragraph on the topic of time follows immediately upon the discussion of attributes and accidents. This juxtaposition confirms the assumption that the protypia is rightly interpreted as an anticipatory notion of the essential attributes

LATER EVIDENCES

The word protypia, once learned by Epicurus as a technical term, was taken over by the Stoics,¹⁶ who exhibited freely from the fact they utilized. It is well enjoyed vigor in Cicero's ideas but the sharp edges of the original idea had suffered erosion through careless handling. The Stoics had developed the study of formal logic and one ingredient of this was the general concepts. This denotes the essential attributes of the