

# Preconceptions and PD24

Post by "Cassius" of January 23, 2022 at 7:11 AM

I think your statement is probably right SimonC, but it's no doubt a complex matter. There are all sorts of reasons to be careful in this controversy, or else you end up where Bailey did in his translation of this section of Diogenes Laertius - you just start using the word "concept" instead of pre-conceptions or prolepsis or anticipation:

## Quote

The concept they speak of as an apprehension or right opinion or thought or general idea stored within the mind, that is to say a recollection of what has often been presented from without, as for instance 'Such and such a thing is a man,' for the moment the word 'man' is spoken, immediately by means of the concept his form too is thought of, as the senses give us the information. Therefore the first signification of every name is immediate and clear evidence. And we could not look for the object of our search, unless we have first known it. For instance, we ask, 'Is that standing yonder a horse or a cow?' To do this we must know by means of a concept the shape of horse and of cow. Otherwise we could not have named them, unless we previously knew their appearance by means of a concept. So the concepts are clear and immediate evidence.

I will give Bailey credit for honesty, because I think what he is describing is "conceptual reasoning" and certainly it does occur. We see or think of things over time, we form a definition of what is common or essential to a variety of things that we see (or just think about) to which we assign a name, and then we use that concept over time to discuss new instances of the same thing we have reduced to a definition.

But what Epicurus seems to be describing is something that occurs before we reach the stage of assigning a definition or even before we see any examples of a thing (this is where I think DeWitt rightly points to the Velleius material).

Plus, the process of assigning words (and aren't words pretty close to concepts?) would seem to be discretionary, and that's where you get the issue of opinion which is where error becomes possible, and it does not seem consistent to include a process where we know errors enter in to be a part of the "canon of truth" which seems to be uniformly "pre-rational."

I am not suggesting that what I am writing here is "correct" any more than previous attempts. I suppose the point here is that I don't see William Wallace's formulation as any more helpful than any of the other discussions.

As Nate has done for the translations, we probably would profit from trying to assemble the various options (DeWitt's, Bailey's, this one, etc etc etc) because it is even hard to state a list of

the varying positions. I doubt that is at the top of my list to do, but assembling a list of the major positions on anticipations (sort of like we sometimes refer to idealist and realist views of the gods) would be very helpful. Simply saying "The DeWitt position" vs. "the Bailey position" vs. the "Voula Tsouna position" isn't really very helpful.