

# The Best Simple Term To Use For "Anticipations" (?)

Post by "Cassius" of December 31, 2018 at 3:40 PM

Elli -

[Cassius](#) my friend, I have the impression that you did not understand my example with my relative that she gave me her name too. She had this perfume, I smelled on her in the past, and I smell it now, because I have this perfume in my closet. My experiences/contacts with her were REAL and all the images, as well as many issues with words I learned from her, have been stuck in my mind as images/remembrances. This is my experience of course, but it is not only a speculation that can't be proved. Here is a prove in this photo : She holds me as I smelled her perfume.

Elayne -

[Cassius Amicus](#), that is the ONLY way I can understand prolepsis as referring to a source of information about reality, because it is the only part of the cannon which does not rely on a post-natal input to be present. The sense organs are present at birth and then receive input from reality. The feelings of pain and pleasure are present and respond to reality. But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?

If it were ONLY the faculty and not the actual mental content, then it would require input of information that is neither sensory nor feeling based, after birth, to develop into a prolepsis of justice. And what would that input be, into something that is only a mechanism without any information in it? If it were sensory or feeling, you wouldn't need this 3rd part of the Canon at all.

That is why I think he made this special exception for a few ideas that are clearly innate but which are not abstract or rational. And as in so many cases, this exactly squares with modern research.

If something is just, it will match our mental sense of justice, our prolepsis, which we were born with, but in a different way from a sensory experience or from pain/pleasure. It has a different qualia that is hard to describe, but it is intuitive and mental. Not an abstract idea with rules.

Elli -

And as Epicurus said for the concept "justice" Doctrine 33. Justice never is anything in itself, but in the dealings of men with one another in any place whatever and at any time it is a kind of compact not to harm or be harmed.

How the people are making dealings and compacts in any society ? Could we make dealings and contacts without speaking to each other with words expressing our feelings too ?"The prolepsis or concepts (in english are the anticipations or preconceptions) as the teacher Epicurus says, e.g. with the word "residence" may involve with a degree of content in an apartment, a house, a farmhouse, a villa etc. Each man from his personal experience and the history of his representations has formed its own prolepsis-concepts that corresponds to the word "residence". The variations of the concept are so many as the people are. The Eskimo will include the igloo, the African the hut, the Queen of England the Buckingham Palace, the President of the United States the White House, the homeless the carton and Diogenes the Cynic the jar.

"Man is the measure of all things" as Protagoras said. The fuzziness of the concept, therefore does not allow the definition, but only the description of the common features of the concept. That's why the teacher Epicurus is against the definitions. This does not preclude the meaning attributed to a specific word. "Prolepsis" concepts are PERSONAL, but the words are PUBLIC. This codification of the concept with a specific word, and this is the only concession is made by the teacher in dialectics".

The above is an excerpt entitled: "THE MANIFOLD WAY OF THE EPICUREAN CANON", by our friend Dimitris Altas that is a cardiologist and member in the Epicurean Garden of Thessaloniki.

Cassius:

I hope we're not belaboring this point as we're unlikely to reach a conclusion that satisfies everyone (we never have in the past) but it is good to review these arguments every so often. That way we'll be alert to the issues as we read and study more.

So commenting on the recent posts:

"The feelings of pain and pleasure are present and respond to reality. But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?" The DeWitt theorem is apparently that it is a capacity to organize abstractions, and perhaps in a particular direction, but the capacity to organize them is not the same as the result of the organization. I grant you that DeWitt does use the term "idea" in a passage of two, and thereby he undercuts the case he makes in the majority of his comments. When he compares the prolepsis mechanism to the veins of a leaf, and cites Cicero as to how the leaf unfolds into its full shape over time, he is more closely on his main point, which is that the ideas in final form are not inborn with us at birth.

"if it were ONLY the faculty and not the actual mental content, then it would require input of information that is neither sensory nor feeling based, after birth, to develop into a prolepsis of justice." Correct, under the DeWitt theorem we would be like cats and dogs and all other animals - we would experience all sorts of experiences but never organize those experiences

into a concept we call justice, and certainly we would not organize it into high-level concepts like capitalism, socialism, democracy, etc.

"But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?" A prolepsis of justice would be just like an anticipation of a god, it would be a disposition to organize a pattern of life from lower to higher to "perfect," but it would not be the final idea of Yahweh or Zeus itself. In other words, the example in Menoeceus is that false ideas of gods are not "true anticipations" or text to that effect. That means there can be false ideas. Now whether we tease the text to argue "resulting from a true anticipation" or "a true anticipation itself" is a question that we would have to search the various texts of Diogenes Laertius to investigate, always being wary of textual corruption issues. When so much is at stake in the issue I would not want to put too much emphasis on any text or particular translation, I would want to see how the conclusion reconciles with the rest of the texts.

"If it were sensory or feeling, you wouldn't need this 3rd part of the Canon at all." I think Dewitt would respond to you that cats and dogs have similar feelings and senses, but they never organize those perceptions into "justice" or "divinity" at least in the same way that humans do. Dewitt would say that the inputs would never get organized into concepts if the dispositive faculty to do that were not in existence with us first. But then again, the (A) dispositive faculty to recognize that there are relationships between these perceptions (B) would not be the same as the results of having organized them. The ability to see a small object which is blue and has wings and a beak is the faculty of sight, but the ability to organize those observations into "bird" is the concept that is the result of reasoning over time. At a distance, we aren't sure if what we see is a robin or a crow, just like at a distance we aren't sure if the "perfect" being we intuit to exist is meddlesome or self-sufficient.

"That is why I think he made this special exception for a few ideas that are clearly innate but which are not abstract or rational." The key word here which I think DeWitt would dispute with you is "ideas" as distinguished from "the principles by which those ideas are derived." (That part, Elayne, is more clearly articulated in that selection from Barwis that you commented on earlier, and which goes much further into the issue by way of arguing against Locke's blank slate.)

"It has a different qualia that is hard to describe, but it is intuitive and mental. Not an abstract idea with rules." << Yes that's the issue. Many people have different ideas of what justice really means (their ideas of justice), even though they possess a similar intuitive faculty disposes them to organize those percepts into their separate ideas. Again, dogs and cats never reach that level of organization, not because they necessarily have fewer brain cells, but because (presumably) they are not "wired" to think in that way. It's the "wiring" we are talking about, the computer's operating system, not its application programs.

Elli in most of your statements it appears to me that you are using the term "pre-conception" as an exact analog for "conception." if that is the case, why were they called "preconceptions"

rather than simply conceptions? The DeWitt argument is that there was a reason that Epicurus used the pre- and the pro- to designate something that is prior to \*all\* experience, just as eyes exist before we open them for the first time. DeWitt's argument as to Diogenes Laertius' example that we have preconceptions of an ox is that DL was wrong - he was using his much later Platonic/Stoic organizing categories (as you recall DL is much later than Cicero). This would be parallel to the way DL talks about katastematic vs active pleasures as being important to Epicurus, even though there is a strong case (the [Nikolsky](#) article in the files section) that DL was very wrong to do so. I think DeWitt makes a good argument that there is a conflict between the account of DL and the account of Cicero, and that they both cannot be correct. In this case, despite our recent raking of Cicero over the coals, Cicero appears to have the better understanding.

In regard to Cicero, remember that if you decide that preconceptions occur only after our having seen or otherwise experienced something, then you are likely going to have to accept that anticipations of gods arose only after we saw a number of gods and formed that concept. That would be something that most of us would not accept as a reasonable conclusion by Epicurus (unless some of us have been seeing gods without telling each other about it!).

The case against DL is that just like he made a mistake in implying that the katastematic - kinetic distinction was a big deal to Epicurus, he made a mistake in saying that anticipations arise only AFTER experience. In both cases the alleged error would arise from applying the standard cookie-cutter pattern of 3rd century AD analysis, which by that time had been largely mutated by Stoic/Platonic arguments. In both cases, much of the disposition to equate precepts with concepts comes from Diogenes Laertius. Epicurus himself clearly only had three items in his canon of truth (senses, feelings, and anticipations) rather than four.

Cassius:

"But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?" Elayne your comment reminds me of Barwis' argument against Locke's blank slate. I apologize to anyone who thinks this is a useless tangent, but I see it as directly on point:

A standard Lockean argument in favor of the blank slate is "Well if you think we are born with ideas, then give me a list of those ideas!" - Which is supposed to shut up the opponent of the blank slate, because no one can agree on what that list of innate ideas would be. -- Just like we would not be able to agree on any list of what we are born with. I may be wrong, Elayne, but that is why I think you described these as "a few ideas that are clearly innate." ("That is why I think he made this special exception for a few ideas that are clearly innate but which are not abstract or rational.")

Here is Barwis's response to that argument, which I think addresses the problem:

Mr. Locke, you know, rather triumphantly demands a catalogue of these principles, which he

says no one “has ventured yet to give.”

I understand you, replied he: you desire to know what I have to say on that subject?

I do, returned I.

You know, then, continued he, that when Mr. Locke demands a catalogue of innate principles, he means a catalogue of propositions such as he had before proved to be not innate, and such as you and I have agreed cannot properly be called principles of our nature at all. These, therefore, can be but little to our present purpose. But nevertheless, we have innate moral principles which do not consist of propositions or maxims, but of internal sentiments or conscious feelings prior to all moral maxims, and without which (as you have seen) morals could have no foundation in nature, nor could be understood.

All right and wrong, just and unjust, which concern the nature and happiness of man is perceived by him through what is innate, and formed in him in the very constitution of his nature, or he could never perceive or understand them at all. If anyone require a catalogue, or rather an exact description of these innate internal sentiments, I can only tell him what I feel within myself, and describe to him how the actions of men and how the relations of their actions, when I hear or read them, affect my nature and move my conscious feelings. Nor can he have any other rule of judging the truth or falsehood of my sentiments but by reference to his own conscience, by which only it is possible for him to form any rational judgment.

Mr. Locke himself does not think a better explanation can be given of any simple perception, or idea, than that we do perceive it, which is as much as to say, thus I am impressed by the object; thus it affects me; how are you impressed? How does it affect you? This doctrine, you see, supposes that all men being of the same kind have the same natural principles in them (with the degrees only or more or less perfect) and that, therefore, their perceptions must be the same, or very nearly the same; and indeed, were they not so, they could never understand each others' meaning.

We do not, therefore, contend about innate moral principles, as if they were innate propositions or innate ideas, but as principles naturally inherent in mankind, which being excited to action, raise in our minds ideas and concerning which we can make propositions. We can describe them to each other, and we can compare our feelings and perceptions of them together, as we can those of sight or any other sense. But take away the innate principles, the sight, and the moral sense, and everyone perceives that neither reasoning, argumentation, explanation, or description, in short, that no human contrivance can possibly make the blind man understand any thing concerning the objects of sight, or the unconscious man any thing concerning moral truths. If our conscience, or moral sense, were not born with us, we most certainly never could be made to feel or understand any thing concerning morals, nor could we ever reason at all about them; we should be entirely ignorant of any such thing.

You must now, no doubt, perceive, continued he, how absurd it would be to demand a catalogue of our innate moral principles when the true nature of them is rightly understood. It would be to demand a catalogue of all the conscious sentiments excited in us in all the various actions and circumstances which occur to us in human life; in which right or wrong, just or unjust, moral beauty or deformity, are concerned. It were as reasonable to demand a catalogue of all the various sensations excited in us by the operations of outward things on our other senses. The only rational attempt to describe or give a catalogue of our innate moral principles would be to copy the purer sentiments of the best moralists, who have, with the soundest heads, justly and naturally depicted the conscious sentiments of the worthiest hearts; which would be no more than if, being curious in vision and the nature of sight, we were to consult the ablest masters in optics and were to give a catalogue of their experiments and opinions in that science."

<https://jacksonbarwis.com/dialogues-on-innate.../dialogue-2/>

For now only one more point - much of the issue is "What are we born with?" The "concepts" which Elli and most modern writers (Bailey and the rest too) is describing do not seem to be something with which we are born. Certainly the description of a cow as an example by DL is not something we are born with -- "For example: The object standing yonder is a horse or a cow. Before making this judgment, we must at some time or other have known by preconception the shape of a horse or a cow. We should not have given anything a name, if we had not first learnt its form by way of preconception."

So are we born with preconceptions, or do they arise only after experience? DeWitt and I would say this is something we are born with, and not something that arises only after experience (like horses or cows).