

# Happy Twentieth of September 2019!

Post by “Hiram” of September 20, 2019 at 10:13 AM

Here is the relevant portion (I should have included). I think every sincere student would benefit from revisiting this in depth.

My own thoughts is that Epicureanism can only claim to be based on the study of nature if it preserves the (originally intended) empiricism in its canon, and so the acceptance of non-empirical "faculties" is incoherent with the original intention. This strengthens my view that the third / atheistic interpretation of the [Epicurean gods](#) (or at least the idealist) is the accurate one. One can only infer so far based on the available evidence.

---

[Epicurean Preconceptions](#), by Voula Tsouna, was published in academia.edu. Below is a quote from it. The word *enargeia* means immediacy, and denotes the quality of an unmediated insight which requires no arguments to establish itself as true.

## Quote

Broadly speaking, there are two alternatives on the table. According to one, preconceptions derive their *enargeia* from their unmediated link to *aisthēseis*, sensations: because of their origin in sensation, they take on, as it were, the self-evidence and trustworthiness of sensation itself. (I call this the ‘Lockean view’.)

According to the other, the self-evidence of preconception lies, not so much in a natural continuity between preconception and sensation, as in the spontaneity of the association between the preconception and the corresponding object as well as the word that denotes that object. For example, as soon as we hear the word ‘horse’, the preconception of a horse comes automatically to mind, and it is precisely in virtue of this association that the preconception captures ‘both the unmediated nature of an experience and its direct connection with reality’. (I call this the ‘Kantian view’.)

Recall that Epicurus and his followers argue for the veridicality of all (sensations) partly by pointing out that they are *alogoi*, non-rational: the mind plays no role in sensations, whose trustworthiness depends, precisely, on the fact that they are non-rational events involving no interpretation at all (Diogenes Laertius 10.31-2).

Diogenes Laertius ([10.33](#))--cited in the work--introduces preconceptions in this manner:

#### Quote

Before making this judgement, 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. It follows, then, that preconceptions are clear. The object of a judgement is derived from something previously clear, by reference to which we frame the proposition, e.g. "How do we know that this is a man?"

In section five of the essay, which is about the length of a short book, the author explains the controversy surrounding whether anticipations are ontologically a separate thing, a third entity separate from the word and the thing meant. This controversy is summarized as the three-tiered interpretation (which accepts anticipations as a third, distinct thing and is influenced by the Stoic doctrine of *lekta*) versus the two-tiered interpretation, which says that only names and name-bearers (objects referred to by names) may exist. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that this last interpretation is truer to Epicurean teaching. The anticipations appear to be related to our brain's pre-cognitive faculty of memorizing meanings and easily recalling them, as if unconsciously. If names are accurate, it's because the named objects correspond to them, not because meaning somehow asserts itself independently of the named objects. We have no reason whatsoever, in my view, to suppose that they exist as de-contextualized Platonic ideas on their own, or to imagine that they emerge as phenomena in any way independent from the names or the things named. The author says:

#### Quote

Both the implicit denunciation of investigations of 'mere utterance' and the Epicurean rejection of dialectic are warnings against concentrating on language but losing connection with reality. And although Epicurus makes clear elsewhere that attending to prolepsis ensures, precisely, that we remain grounded in reality, nevertheless, in the present instance as well as in others, he chooses to highlight only words and things.

Furthermore, the view that meanings exist as separate things from names and things named is a useful nursery for superstitions of all sorts. Ancient Egyptians believed that words (written or spoken) had magical powers, and that a person's name contained part of their essence. One could curse, influence or enchant a person by the use of their names, which is why the Pharaoh had numerous secret names, and why descendants had to continue repeating the names of their ancestors in the belief that, if the names were forgotten, their souls would no longer be efficient or would "die" on Earth.

This view of meanings as a separate thing from names and things named also lends itself to the superstition that meanings existed apart from, and even prior to, the things that are named--and so we have problems like "*in the beginning was the Word*", where a complex cognitive process is believed to have preceded nature itself. The study of nature demonstrates that nature obviously existed prior to language, and that language is an emergent property of social sentient beings. Nature must not only provide a mind that has the ability to think, but also contents for it to think about, prior to the formation of thoughts and words.

For more discussions on anticipations, you may [visit this forum page](#).