

# Is There A Relationship Between "Anticipations" and "Instinct"?

**Post by "Cassius" of April 21, 2021 at 5:26 AM**

In recent [discussions](#) the question has been raised as to whether there is a relationship between the Epicurean theory of Anticipations (especially as described by Velleius in his "etching" reference in "On The Nature of the Gods") and the view that is generally described as "instinct," especially as we (presumably) see examples in animals.

Over time I expect this question to recur so let's use this thread as a discussion starter.

1. What is "instinct"?
2. Does the common conception that certain animals are born "hard-wired" to certain behaviors at birth, prior to any experience of any observations of that behavior, really exist?
3. If it exists, does it have anything to say about the possibility that certain behaviors in humans may also be "hard-wired" from birth, prior to experience?
4. if such hard wiring actually exists in humans to any degree, is there any relationship between this phenomena and what Epicurus described as anticipations / preconceptions / prolepsis?

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**Post by "Godfrey" of April 21, 2021 at 3:37 PM**

Just to get the ball rolling:

The only things hard-wired in this regard are the faculties of pattern recognition, sensation and affect: all "instinct" can be reduced to this.

Pattern recognition is one of the ways that we have been thinking about Anticipations and I think pretty much aligns with DeWitt. It both precedes and reacts to sensations, forming concepts and affecting behaviors from such an early age that it is commonly and mistakenly thought that there are ideas and behaviors that are innate.

Affect is defined as a faculty of registering pleasure/displeasure and the degree of arousal. This corresponds to the Feelings and is a guide to behaviors and to forming concepts. These behaviors and concepts are formed from a very early stage of development in each individual,

often through social connections, and are not innate.



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## Post by “Cassius” of April 21, 2021 at 5:04 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Affect is defined as a faculty of registering pleasure/displeasure and the degree of arousal. This corresponds to the Feelings and is a guide to behaviors and to forming concepts. These behaviors and concepts are formed from a very early stage of development in each individual, often through social connections, and are not innate.

I think I am with you completely on the first paragraph, but on this one I think you're making a distinction that may be in Barrett but may not be in Epicurus as to "degree of arousal."

Also the word "affect" would appear to be Barrett (?) the term in Epicurus as to the feelings would appear to be "pathe" sometimes translated "passions" and includes both pleasure and pain (Don?) but does NOT include "degree of arousal" as part of the term pathe / passions. Obviously degree of intensity or focus is something that is relevant, but I don't gather that that factor is included under the term pathe (?)

The reason I think it is important to distinguish the two categories is that "degree of arousal" or "intensity" is a huge question that involves evaluation of the pleasure as relatively more or less desirable, and that's such a deep topic that I don't think they can be merged together. We know Epicurus said not to measure relative pleasure in terms of "time" (not the longest but the most pleasant) but as far as I know he didn't give any other measurement of intensity either, so if we're trying to be as clear as possible we ought to make clear to people that there is no absolute standard (time or anything else) telling us how to compare pleasures.

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Pattern recognition is one of the ways that we have been thinking about Anticipations and I think pretty much aligns with DeWitt. It both precedes and reacts to sensations,

I think you're intending that to mean "the faculty of pattern recognition" and the issue of "both preceding and reacting to sensations" is really the question. Is it just a "faculty for recognizing patterns" that exists at birth, or is there any faint etching or disposition to etch in a particular

way that is involved. Relevant quotes from Velleius include:

"For he alone perceived, first, that the gods exist, because nature herself has imprinted a conception of them on the minds of all mankind." ....

"For the belief in the gods has not been established by authority, custom, or law, but rests on the unanimous and abiding consensus of mankind; their existence is therefore a necessary inference, since we possess an instinctive or rather an innate concept of them; but a belief which all men by nature share must necessarily be true; therefore it must be admitted that the gods exist."

"For nature, which bestowed upon us an idea of the gods themselves, also engraved on our minds the belief that they are eternal and blessed."

Now it's maybe possible that this imprinting / engraving took place after birth by operation of images received after conception, but it appears a good or better chance that Velleius is talking about at birth, not exposure to images after birth.

And that's where the discussion would involve whether beavers are born with dam-building imprinted in their minds, or whether the behavior is fully learned from experience. I would think that these "instinct" questions deserve a lot of attention, because if and when it were to be reliably shown that animal brains contain etchings of any kind of behaviors, that would likely establish the principle that this could go on with humans too.

All of this is also part of what we (individually) need to take a position to as to "what Epicurus taught" as distinct from "what we think is in fact the fact the case."

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### **Post by "Don" of April 21, 2021 at 7:29 PM**

#### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

It both precedes and reacts to sensations, forming concepts and affecting behaviors from such an early age that it is commonly and mistakenly thought that there are ideas and behaviors that are innate.

I think that's an important statement right there! (Emphasis added)

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 21, 2021 at 8:45 PM**

### [Quote from Don](#)

I think that's an important statement right there! (Emphasis added)

I agree it is important as to "ideas" - which I think all of us agree (even me, despite Dewitt's comments that might seem to differ) would be fully formed concepts, and these are NOT present at birth. But I am not so sure about "behaviors." Behaviors may be and probably are different from "ideas" (fully formed concepts), and I can see the possibility that those dams and migrations patterns or whatever are "behaviors."

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of April 21, 2021 at 9:32 PM**

[Cassius](#) I've made an attempt to correlate the current science as presented in the Barrett book with my understanding with the Canon. You're quite right to point out some of the differences! Regarding affect, to me it's useful to think about if and/or how arousal relates to intensity (as I understand it, it's different); I'm also curious to what degree the Greek pathos might correspond to affect.

Regarding behaviors, [Joshua](#) had a good point last night about animals that are raised in captivity being unable to survive in the wild. Intuitively (meaning I'm totally guessing!) it seems to me that animal behaviors are driven by pleasure and pain (or affect) and by the faculty of pattern recognition, both interacting with the senses. I think that this is taking materialism to its logical conclusion, although observation would trump any purely logical conclusion and looking at animals seems like a good direction to pursue.

As to Vellius, that brings up the controversy of Cicero being such a tainted source and how much we can trust him. This is why I was interested in reading modern theories in the first place: to try to make up for the uncertainties in the ancient texts and see if that can shed any light on Epicurus' thinking. But as you say, they are two different things.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 21, 2021 at 10:00 PM**

Just let me be clear on this point: I'm still very much in the evaluation phase myself on some of these issues. Plus you can add to that the point that I fully expect to be still in the evaluation phase on many of them on the day they haul me off to the funeral home!

I especially think that "instincts" needs further research that is far beyond our (certainly my) ability to really come up with hard data on, so that's probably going to have to be one of those long-term issues that we talk about for quite a long time.

As to Cicero, I tend to think that we can trust him when the points he raises are not slanderous toward Epicurus, and I don't detect that Cicero really had a problem with the "etching" suggestion. It's when Epicurus' views seemed to hold Cicero back from his politics and military glory-seeking that we probably need to look at him most suspiciously.

All of these are issues on which I do not profess to know "the answer" so we'll likely continue to debate them as long as we live, which hopefully will be quite a while longer!

Gosh I wrote this entire post thinking I was talking to Don and now I see I'm talking to Godfrey 😊 Don's lined up to get my two cents every Sunday as we go through Lucretius, as to you Godfrey we've got to find a way to translate all of your detailed research into some forms of "presentation" to the outside world too!

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### **Post by “Don” of April 21, 2021 at 10:10 PM**

FYI

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=bGpw7NeXyBc>

Operant conditioning: Innate vs learned behaviors (video)

Khan Academy · khanacademymedicine

Oct 26, 2015

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of April 22, 2021 at 8:42 PM**

Interesting video! In the terms of the video, the question that I'm asking is whether complex behaviors are actually innate. To me, the behaviors listed as simple are innate, biological, and would not involve an Anticipation.

Assume that you go to a bird's nest, take an egg, and rear the bird that hatches from the egg away from other birds. Once it is fully grown, if you release it will it fly south for the winter? Will

it exhibit mating behavior appropriate to its species if it comes across a bird of the opposite sex? Will it wake up early to sing? These seem to me to be learned behaviors, but that's just theorizing on my part. Theoretically speaking, maybe the bird would seek warmth as a precursor to migrating, and have some awkward teenage sexual attraction to the other bird as a rudimentary mating behavior. Both of these not quite developed behaviors could be Anticipations in the sense of the "sketch" that DeWitt refers to. As to singing, there is probably a joy of making noise which may eventually lead to a song of sorts.

But do seeking warmth, having sex, and making noise really rate as Anticipations? They seem to be just simple biological functions of seeking pleasure; adding the specific behaviors of flying to San Juan Capistrano, doing a specific mating dance and singing a particular birdsong seem to me to be learned behaviors. If this is correct, then an Anticipation would be considered social and not innate.

Somebody has probably done experiments along these lines, which could provide useful observational evidence to work with. If I have a chance I'll try to track some down!

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**Post by “Don” of April 22, 2021 at 8:52 PM**

[https://youtu.be/r5\\_ZSnFDPRg](https://youtu.be/r5_ZSnFDPRg)

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**Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2021 at 9:01 PM**

I believe those Beaver dams are going to prove critical to this question! 😊

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**Post by “Godfrey” of April 22, 2021 at 9:05 PM**

Actually it may be quite a rabbit hole! 😞

Here are a couple of links that I found that look promising, but I haven't read them yet:

<https://home.uchicago.edu/~rjr6/articles...%20Behavior.pdf>

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/animal\\_instincts](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/animal_instincts)

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**Post by “Don” of April 22, 2021 at 10:36 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I believe those Beaver dams are going to prove critical to this question! 😊

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/67662/...vers-mood-build>

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**Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2021 at 10:53 PM**

Ha that article seems to imply they just want peace and quiet!

The pig may have to yield some of its place as an Epicurean symbol if this keeps up. Pig as symbol of pleasure and beaver as symbol of canonic anticipations 😊

Maybe if they has had more beavers in Athens we'd already have the dual symbolism!

(For some reason I am questioning whether they have beavers in Greece. I know we have plenty in the USA.)

(Note 2 if we have a patron animal for ethics and canonics that leaves us needing one for physics)

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**Post by “Godfrey” of April 22, 2021 at 10:55 PM**

So according to these videos there is some sort of predisposition to build and to sing. Would this be a "faculty?" A biological "sketch" and thus a DeWitty Anticipation? Would subsequent learned behavior still be an Anticipation? Is it appropriate to draw a line between the two or could both be considered Anticipations?

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1971-is-there-a-relationship-between-anticipations-and-instinct/>

## Post by “Godfrey” of April 22, 2021 at 10:58 PM

Quote

Ha that article seems to imply they just want peace and quiet!

They're seeking absence of pain 😄

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2021 at 10:59 PM

My first thought is that this would be similar to developing sharper use of eyes or hearing through use. The faculty exists at birth but can be sharpened / tuned with use. So I would not draw a sharp distinction - I would see all results from the faculty as separatr from the faculty , along the lines of separating the faculty of sight from things that we see.

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2021 at 11:03 PM

Also Godfrey in terms of subsequent learned behavior, almost surely there would be types of behavior too which do not arise from anticipations. I dont see why the existence of the dispositions would rule out the invention of new activities as we grow older, in part or whole unrelated to the original dispositions

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 23, 2021 at 5:23 AM

(Since I am suggesting we always ought to be planning our seminar presentations)

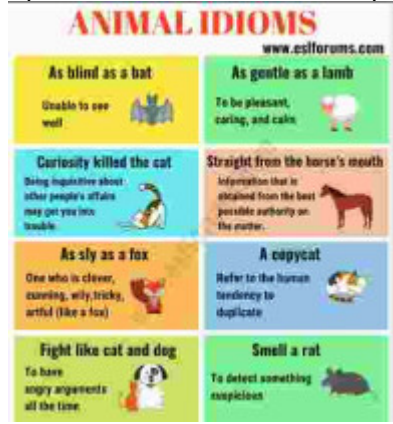
[Quote from Cassius](#)

(Note 2 if we have a patron animal for ethics and canonics that leaves us needing one for physics)

On the symbolism of pigs/hogs I think there is some material which help explain the reference. We surely know it it existed from the Boscoreale cup and the Horace reference. I think there is a church father comment also referencing it in which hogs are cited as pursuing pleasure singlemindedly.

Numerous animals would work for the others but any that are known for their instinctive behavior, beavers and their dams being a great example, would fit.

For physics the first thing that comes to mind is the characteristic of curiosity. Maybe animals that construct elaborate nests or communities (beavers again maybe) could be said to be implementing physics principles, but I tend to think that the way Epicurus emphasized the study of nature more for the relief it brings from fear and perhaps even enjoyment in itself, the more characteristic trait would be curiosity. Googling "animals that represent curiosity" brings up all kinds of weird examples that are to my view too obscure if I were doing a presentation;



Universally in my experience associated with curiosity would be the cat, S.

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**Post by "Cassius" of April 23, 2021 at 8:05 AM**

Just to restate a couple of points that are (or should be) obvious:

The suggestion before the house, based on the Velleius material as highlighted by DeWitt, is that there might be "inborn" / "present at birth" dispositions toward certain activities. Not fully formed ideas, not fully formed concepts, nothing with "information" or "opinion" in it, but "dispositions" that are "etched" as it were on the brain even at birth. Or in maybe more modern term, genetic encoding that disposes animals to act in certain ways depending on circumstances that arise in life.

If so, the potential analogy would be that an innate disposition at birth for beavers to grow up and build dams would be an example of a faculty that exists at birth, etched into the brain, which then flowers into a disposition to dam-building later in life when the circumstances present themselves. As per the article Don cited, maybe the sound of flowing water inspires them, or maybe they just recognize as part of their disposition that flowing water is a necessary prerequisite to successful dam-building, and they don't try it til the flow triggers them.

Carrying the analogy forward, Velleius would be saying that the disposition to form ideas of gods exists at birth, and develops as babies age, either without outside influence (in which case the constructed ideas are less perverted) or along with outside influences. But in either case the disposition to recognize an issue as to the existence of "gods" is present at birth.

As to the other recorded example of anticipations, justice, the same analogy can be drawn. Human babies (and others maybe) are born with the disposition to recognize that there is an issue involving social arrangements to be pursued. They find later, but this is not part of the anticipation, that agreements not to harm or be harmed lead to happier living than do other arrangements (random rule of the mob or the strong). But the initial disposition / faculty was the recognition that this social structure pursuit is an activity to be recognized and pursued, just as the beaver builds dams or the human brain contemplates the nature of potential gods.

To me, it is absolutely obvious, and would be obvious to a child, that this is the potential direction that Velleius was going. Why have not these issues been pursued and investigated in great detail? I am sure that there are many reasons that we aren't finding many articles on it, but I think one reason is that Academia / the intellectual establishment is wedded to the Aristotelian "blank slate" approach, and they are opposed to looking for or finding anything that would conflict with their model, in which "education" or "nurture" is everything. It's the old "nature" vs. "nurture" debate and does in fact have lots of implications.

And so I relate this back to the picture of Epicurus and the "This is the way things are" attitude. I don't want to know only those things that make me feel good and give a warm and fuzzy feeling. Just like with the inevitability of death I think that we ought to pursue the truth wherever it leads, confident in the conclusion that we'll find better ways to live happily when we know the truth than when we don't.

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### **Post by “Elli” of April 23, 2021 at 11:18 AM**

If you want my opinion on the issue of the "prolepses" and as said by Epicurus, he did not mean only the instincts. Prolepses are in accordance with the environment too. BOTH instincts/dna/talents AND the environment are the prolepses. We may be born with some

faculties, but there is the environment that has the power to change something that is innate in us. We are not born with ready made patterns and ideas. We have the faculty to speak, but we must learn the words of a language that is going along with the things that we pre-receive (προλαμβάνω [pre-receive] is the greek verb for the word "prolepses") with our senses and feelings around us. All are going in accordance with the experiences and the phenomena of the reality and our brain accumulates knowledges from our infancy. IF we were as pre-programmed to think or act on something, from our born till our death then <<the swerve>> that means our autonomy and responsibility to change things in accordance to the phenomena of the reality, could never be happen! Thus, IMO the prolepses that means only instincts, goes hand in hand with the idea of an absolute determinism. In the phenomena of Nature, there is neither an absolute determinism nor an absolute indeterminism.

In the following photos we see the Synaptic plasticity of the brain.

When engaged in new experiences and learning, the brain establishes a series of neural pathways. These neural pathways, or circuits, are routes made of inter-connecting neurons. These routes are created in the brain through daily use and practice; much like a mountain path is made by daily use of a shepherd (e.g. Epicurus as a teacher) and his herd (e.g. friends and students of his school).

The neurons in a neural pathway communicate with each other through connections called synapses, and these communication pathways can regenerate throughout your whole life. Each time that we gain new knowledge (through repeated practice), the synaptic communication between neurons is strengthened. A better connection between the neurons means that the electric signals travel more efficiently when creating or using a new pathway.

For example, when trying to recognize a new bird, new connections are made among specific neurons. Neurons in the visual cortex determine its color, the auditory cortex identifies its song, and other, the name of the bird. In order to know what bird it is, its attributes, its color, song, and name are repeated many times. Revisiting the neural circuit and re-establishing neuronal transmission between the implicated neurons at each new attempt enhances the efficiency of synaptic transmission. Communication between the relevant neurons is facilitated, cognition made faster and faster. Synaptic plasticity is perhaps the pillar on which the brain's amazing malleability rests.

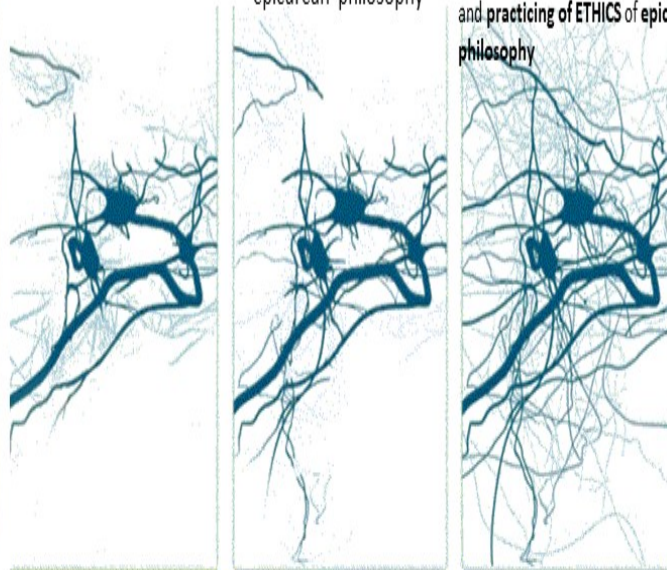
source: <https://www.cognifit.com/brain-plasticity-and-cognition>



This is the clear brain of Apelles

Apelles' brain after he had entered into epicurean philosophy

Apelles' brain in just two months after a repeated stimulation of his brain while was keeping his ATTENTION in pure knowledges e.g. on the usage of CANON, and of PHYSICS, and practicing of ETHICS of epicurean philosophy



Neural networks before training

Neural networks 2 weeks after stimulation

Neural networks 2 months after stimulation



<<Μακαρίζω σε, ὦ Ἄπελλι, ὅτι καθαρὸς πάσης παιδείας ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν ὤρμησας>>.

I congratulate or I consider you blissful, oh Apelles, because you have entered into (epicurean) philosophy clear (i.e. with clear brain) from all culture. - Epicurus

culture means: false religions, false philosophies and false political ideas.

APELLES PLEASSED BRAIN/BODY

APELLES MORE PLEASSED BRAIN/BODY

APELLES' PURE PLEASSED BRAIN/BODY... ALL THE PURE HORMONES HAVE ENRICHED FROM APELLES BRAIN TO THE WHOLE OF HIS BODY.

APELLES IS A BLISSFULL-EUDEAMONIC MAN THAT WANTS KEEPING IN HIS BRAIN/BODY, THIS SITUATION [KATASTASIS] OF PURE PLEASURE AS LONG AS HE CAN. APELLES WON'T PERMITT ANY OTHER FALSE BELIEF/ AMBIGUOUS "KWOWLEDGE" TO ENTER IN HIS BRAIN, BECAUSE HE KNOWS ALREADY THAT THIS WILL BE AGAINST HIS PURE PLEASANT SITUATION OF BRAIN/BODY. IN JUST TWO MONTHS APELLES IS LIVING LIKE GOD AMONG MEN.

Post by "Cassius" of April 23, 2021 at 1:00 PM

[Quote from elli](#)

he did not mean only the instincts

That is a key sentence. You do agree that instincts do exist within humans too? So that both instincts at birth do exist, but also experience comes into play after birth? No one seems to argue that instincts alone exist, but many seem to want to argue that experience after birth is the ONLY mechanism that exists.

Would your Greek beavers build dams even if separated from their parents and other beavers at birth?

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**Post by “Joshua” of April 23, 2021 at 1:46 PM**

Quote

The pig may have to yield some of its place as an Epicurean symbol if this keeps up.

Off topic, but I discovered recently that Samos was one of a handful of Ionian cities that used flying boars on its coinage. I've searched widely, but nobody seems to know exactly why. Predates Epicurus by centuries.

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**Post by “Elli” of April 23, 2021 at 5:18 PM**

According to evolution humans brain has been evolved into three parts (see photo).

Whilst all humans have these three parts of their brain present at birth, they don't develop for several years. One very important part of the brain – the *orbitofrontal* cortex does not develop until the child is three. This part of the brain is responsible for emotional intelligence, our ability to see the world from another's point of view and manage strong emotions such as rage or fear.

The development of this part of the brain and many others is not something that just happens naturally. It relies heavily on the interactions of others, namely the main caregivers of the child. Much of a baby's brain is 'plastic' so early experiences have a formative effect on how they will go on to interpret the world and form relationships later on in life. Parental interactions help form the synapses and bridges that give the child healthy solutions to difficult situations.

Luckily, there isn't a complicated set of tasks or exercises that parents should complete to aid the development of their child's brains. Nurturing and interacting is the key, teaching a child that their needs will get responded to in a caring, affectionate way, talking to them, showing them patience and even just eye contact are all important in helping your child's brain develop.

As parents, we won't always get it right, we all get frustrated and snap at our children at times, but even the process of apologizing and things becoming OK again is very useful for our children's developing brains.

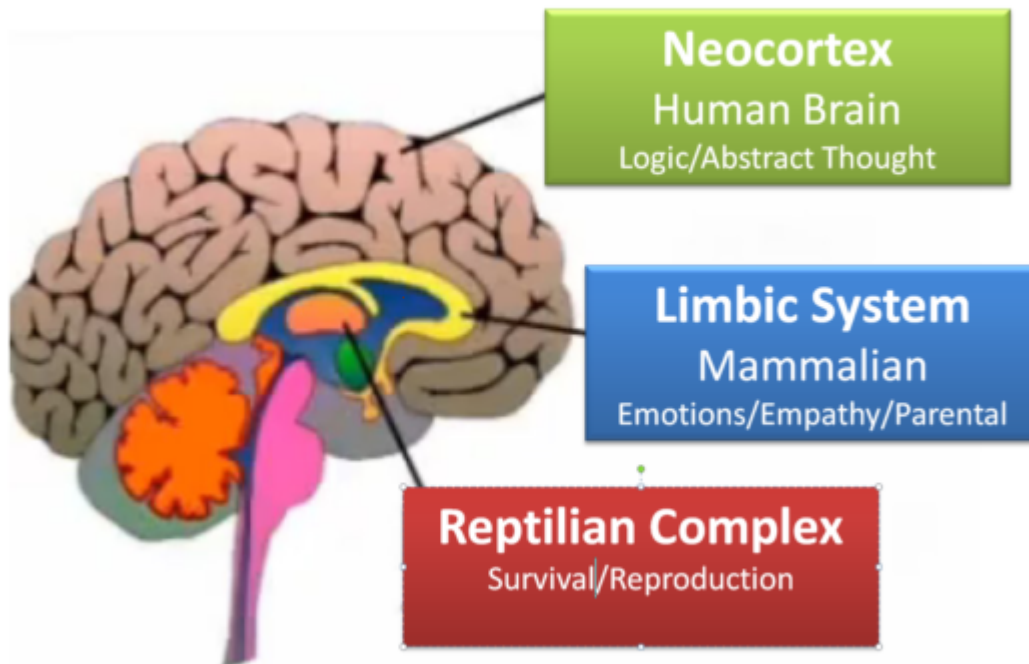
What if it goes wrong?

Of course, not all children will have positive experiences in the first few years of life. For instance, children who have a depressed or anxious main care giver may experience less positive interactions than other children.

We often hear from parents who are wracked with guilt that their post-natal depression has prevented them from bonding with their child. We have worked with children whose adopted parents are struggling with some of the issues that have arisen due to the child's early neglect. Many parents are anxious that it might be too late for things to change, but we know that things can and do get better, if the right help is sought.

We can read more here on this link and many other links: <https://www.clinical-partners.co.uk/insights-and-n...as-three-brains>

# The 3 Brains



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## Post by “Don” of April 23, 2021 at 5:29 PM

Just FYI: Modern brain research has debunked the 3-part human brain. All mammalian brains (and possibly others, sorry, can't recall off the top of my head .... pun not necessarily intended) contain all those parts to varying degrees. See the work of Dr. Barrett and others.

[https://how-emotions-are-made.com/notes/Triune\\_brain\\_myth](https://how-emotions-are-made.com/notes/Triune_brain_myth)

<https://drsarahmckay.com/rethinking-the-reptilian-brain/>

<https://thebrainscientist.com/2018/04/11/you...a-lizard-brain/>

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## Post by “Elli” of April 23, 2021 at 5:31 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1971-is-there-a-relationship-between-anticipations-and-instinct/>

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Would your Greek beavers build dams even if separated from their parents and other beavers at birth?

Aristotle that maybe he had observed the greek beavers and many animals may would give you the response to your question. 😊

IMO beavers are not able to build dams IF they will be separated from their parents and IF in their enviroment they will not have interactions and meetings with other beavers to learn from them how to build their dams and how to co-exist with them.

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### **Post by “Elli” of April 23, 2021 at 5:48 PM**

[Don](#) does Dr. Barette mean that all the neurologists (including the founding member in Athens Garden mr. Christos Yapijakis) are based till our days on a wrong theory? Oh gee! 😊

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### **Post by “Don” of April 23, 2021 at 5:55 PM**

#### [Quote from elli](#)

[Don](#) does Dr. Barette mean that all the neurologists (including the founding member in Athens Garden mr. Christos Yapijakis) are based till our days on a wrong theory? Oh gee! 😊

If they're using a triune brain model, yep, they're using outdated information.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 23, 2021 at 7:13 PM**

Ok Godfrey you started this. What would you say to Elli's Greek beavers who need training in building dams?

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**Post by “Cassius” of April 23, 2021 at 7:15 PM**

And now we add to the list of fact issues: "is the brain triune like the godhead?". 😊

Developing a method for dealing with fact disputes apparently is something we'll need to figure out!

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**Post by “Cassius” of April 23, 2021 at 7:17 PM**

i suspect it will be easier to produce a consensus on beaver-dam-building than it will on a triune brain division.

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**Post by “Cassius” of April 23, 2021 at 7:21 PM**

I am not exactly a farm boy but I have some experience now and my gut tells me that the beavers don't need to be taught. However that is not a persuasive argument. I think it would be the wrong approach to turn every question of Epicurean philosophy into a course in reviewing science journals, but we do need a method that appears satisfactory for some of the basic points. I actually think this one ("instinct") is more fundamental than the eternal or infinite universe issue because it affects us more directly.

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**Post by “Cassius” of April 23, 2021 at 7:25 PM**

Another way of asking the method question is "Suppose Martin does some reading and on the podcast Sunday he says "I am now convinced that beavers do (or do not) need to be taught dambuilding." What is our proper approach for communicating something like that? Do we need to say who it is we are trusting, or explain our reason why we are sure? I think in our philosophy discussions it would be desirable to find a way to state opinions on issues like that in a firm but still friendly way, suggesting to people how it is that they themselves should go about deciding

what they think is true.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of April 23, 2021 at 8:23 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Ok Godfrey you started this. What would you say to Elli's Greek beavers who need training in building dams?

I would think that beavers would need to learn to build dams. But one of Don's links explains that they don't, so *if* that's correct then as good Epicureans 😊 that should be our basis for going forward.

Meanwhile, I got around to reading the links that I attached earlier. It turns out that one is pretty useless, but the other describes some of the history of this debate (although not specifically beavers). I've attached the paper from the second link here. Better minds than mine have wrestled with this for a long time!

So I guess the bottom line is "damned if I know!" (Sorry, I couldn't resist. )

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### **Post by “Joshua” of April 23, 2021 at 8:36 PM**

If they can figure it all out on their own, well...

Leave it to beavers, ay?

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### **Post by “Don” of April 23, 2021 at 9:40 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

And now we add to the list of fact issues: "is the brain triune like the godhead?". 😊

Developing a method for dealing with fact disputes apparently is something we'll need to figure out!

Doing some additional reading, I found that the triune brain myth is more akin to Plato's analogy of the mind as the charioteer and the two horses. It's more of an analogy. However, it is also misleading in portraying how the brain is actually structured and how it evolved.

See also:

<https://medicine.yale.edu/news/yale-medi...ill-compelling/>

"The triune brain is a combination of Plato's tripartite psyche and Aristotle's and Darwin's phylogenetic scale, tattooed onto the human brain. Plato wrote that the human psyche consists of three parts: rational thoughts, passions (which today we call emotions), and appetites like the drive for hunger and sex. Rational thought was in charge, controlling the passions and appetites, an arrangement that Plato described as a charioteer wrangling two winged horses."

<https://web.northeastern.edu/affectiveandbr...euroletters.pdf>

The triune brain in antiquity: Plato, Aristotle, Erasistratus. "This paper investigates its origins and suggests that it is perhaps now time to move on."

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20391097/>

and, finally, probably the best scientific paper title I've ever seen: "Your Brain Is Not an Onion With a Tiny Reptile Inside"

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0963721420917687>

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## Post by "Cassius" of April 23, 2021 at 10:08 PM

I think keeping good humor as with deal with factual debates like this is essential. I don't need to even get close to an allusion to the political world for us to recall how even today some science debates get caught up with a fervor that it would take a Galileo to appreciate!

But at risk of getting a slight bit more serious, I think we're about to open Pandora's box with Elli's references to Christos Y.'s position on the brain issues, given his status as a medical professional, and I have this gut field (instinct? 😊 ) that issues like this are percolating only slightly below the surface in the Greek Epicurean world.

We could easily find ourselves in a situation where we conclude based on a combination of personal observation and some number of studies that we conclude that instinct is a much

more potent force in the animal kingdom than it's generally given credit for, and that might not at all be received well in certain circles which take a different position on the science as it relates to Epicurus.

"Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" is clearly in my mind the right path to take, but it's probably going to take a mixture of good humor and articulation of a method for how educated laymen should approach "science" issues in order not to get caught in some explosions. I'm seeing a pattern that this kind of issue is popping up frequently, so we probably need some kind of "Order of Merit" badge to award for he/she/or they who come up with a good way to deal with the "educated layman" vs "expert" issue. In the legal world I'm very comfortable that I want my juries to be composed of ordinary people of good sense, rather than "experts," but I'm not sure that position is as widely embraced as it used to be, and I think I recall that it may always have been the "American" view as opposed to the Continent.

I know there are references in the Epicurean texts to these issues as well, not the least of which was the issue of how and why Epicurus held his views on the size of the sun. On that I'll still take the position that while he proved to be factually wrong, his reasoning and approach (especially if we knew more details of what he himself thought rather than what's said about what he thought) were probably valid and remain a model today of how to deal with conflicting information - with the main thing that's changed being that we have more information than was available then.

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## Post by “Don” of April 23, 2021 at 11:49 PM

### [Quote from Don](#)

"Plato wrote that the human psyche consists of three parts: rational thoughts, passions (which today we call emotions), and appetites like the drive for hunger and sex. Rational thought was in charge, controlling the passions and appetites, an arrangement that Plato described as a charioteer wrangling two winged horses."

This quote from the paper I referenced got me to think that it may be tempting to see the three Platonic parts of the psyche as comparable somehow to the three legs of the Epicurean Canon somehow. However, that temptation or any permutation of it should be resisted at all costs. That - or the idea of the triune brain analogy - sets up a false hierarchy.

I think we've discussed elsewhere that the "parts" of the Canon work in concert, each influencing the other. That's, personally, what I find so elegant about seeing Epicurean parallels in Dr. Barrett's work and that of her colleagues. *Sensations influence affect which influences*

*concepts which influence how sensations are processed which...* And translated into Epicurean terms: *sensations influence the two pathē (pleasure and pain) which influence prolepses which influence how sensations are processed...* It's not a 1:1 correspondence but I think it has promise and it aligns with the most current brain research.

Where does this leave us in the instinct question? I don't know if you can separate "nature vs nurture." One influences the other. They're inextricably linked. It's even been found that the environment has an effect on the expression of some genes. Cues in the environment can activate certain genes and these can be inherited by offspring. That's, as I understand, a recent finding. See, for example, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41437-018-0113-y>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2021 at 6:51 AM**

#### [Quote from Don](#)

I don't know if you can separate "nature vs nurture."

Almost certainly they work together hand in hand as you say, and I suspect no one in their right mind who thinks "nature" is an influence would deny nurture also is at work. But the reverse is not true. Those who push "nurture" are heavily invested in a total "blank slate" and I think we are seeing that as we observe the surprising lack of research on instinct the results of that attitude.

There is no way in 2021 we should be lacking a conclusion on beaver-dam-building or many other aspects of animal behavior.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2021 at 6:57 AM**

Here's an example that might appeal to some. If (hopefully when) we are one day able to reconstruct Jurassic-Park style a new generation of ancient dinosaurs, would we not expect to see them exhibit behaviors that were typical of their ancestors eons ago, even though by the terms of their resurrection none of them ever met their parents?

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### **Post by “Don” of April 24, 2021 at 9:02 AM**

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Here's an example that might appeal to some. If (hopefully when) we are one day able to reconstruct Jurassic-Park style a new generation of ancient dinosaurs, would we not expect to see them exhibit behaviors that were typical of their ancestors eons ago, even though by the terms of their resurrection none of them ever met their parents?

I'm really torn on this one. First, I firmly agree any representative of a resurrected species is going to display instinctive behavior. And it would be cool to actually see a dinosaur or even a mammoth or mastodon.

On the other hand, you'd have to start with one. How sad would it be to doom an animal to be the only member of its species to be alive, to deny it the pleasure of "friendship" or of having a recipient to return its mating call or see its dance.

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### **Post by "Don" of April 24, 2021 at 9:57 AM**

To go back to your original question:

Is There A Relationship Between "Anticipations" and "Instinct"?

I don't think so. Instinct has to do with behavior. The Anticipations have to do with perception.

To use your favorite castorine example, beavers build dams over flowing water it appears as a result of stimuli compelling that behavior. There appears to be some sort of necessity involved. There is a visible measurable behavioral result.

From my perspective, Anticipations (I'm going to say similar to "mental concepts" in the strict scientific sense of Barrett's and her peers' research) are used by the mind to assess, identify, and categorize sensory stimuli. Previous sensations build, fine-tune, and strengthen "Anticipations" but they don't lead to a compulsive behavior.

Or maybe I'm conflating instinct and instinctual behavior. Still thinking...

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 24, 2021 at 10:28 AM**

### [Quote from Don](#)

From my perspective, Anticipations (I'm going to say similar to "mental concepts" in the strict scientific sense of Barrett's and her peers' research) are used by the mind to assess, identify, and categorize sensory stimuli.

Yes, we remain at the very starting point of debate because that is the Bailey/Laertius position. The process of "assessing, identifying, and categorizing" is certainly (I think everyone would agree) a process of individual reasoning involving the use of opinion. The trademark characteristic of the five senses, and of pain and pleasure, is that they operate automatically and WITHOUT the use of opinion. If anticipations are viewed as concepts formed through the use of opinion, then you've introduced into the "canon of truth" a tool which has been formed by individual human opinion and not by Nature itself.

So to restate where we are (I think) for clarity, we have at least two major issues:

(1) Per Bailey/Laertius, anticipations are concepts built up through experience which are then used as the structure for the next floor in the building, going ever-higher but always on the basis of the concepts built up after experience.

The opposing position (Velleius/DeWitt) would be that while the conceptual reasoning process Bailey describes of erecting one concept after another certainly does exist, the original decision to erect the conceptual structure, and the tools by which the conceptual structure is shaped as we build it upward, are innate / instinctual, all of a class that includes the eyes, ears, taste, nose, and touch, as well as pleasure and pain, and among which would per Velleius/DeWitt to be "etchings" which dispose the structure of conceptual thinking to be erected like a fully-formed adult grows from the DNA of a microscopic cell.

The argument would be that the beaver is predisposed to recognize an opportunity for successful living in dam-building, from the moment of conception, and that similar processes take place throughout the animal kingdom, certainly influenced by experience after birth, but which would never have occurred at all but for the original "wiring" being present to allow the connections to be recognized.

So that's a description of the issue, with a further major aspect of this debate being:

(2) That the DeWitt/Velleius description of the faculty (and as far as I can tell those who advocate it) does not in any way foreclose the Bailey/Laertius description of the faculty, but those holding the Bailey/Laertius position fiercely advocate (dare I say they are predisposed to advocate?) that the DeWitt/Velleius description is bogus and something that needs to be eliminated from consideration completely.

I find this second aspect of the question almost as fascinating as the first aspect, but maybe with this caveat: I don't think there is anything in the Laertius material that leads to the

ferocious denial of the Velleius position. And almost certainly Velleius would have been aware of and had no issue with the Laertius "conceptual reasoning" position (who could?)

I think the force of the anti-Velleius argument comes from Bailey and other "modern" commentators, not from the ancient sources.

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### Post by "Don" of April 24, 2021 at 10:40 AM

Excellent summary, [Cassius](#) !! Thanks! It's got me thinking, so I'll take a step back and respond asap.

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### Post by "Eikadistes" of April 24, 2021 at 10:54 AM

#### [Quote from Don](#)

Just FYI: Modern brain research has debunked the 3-part human brain. All mammalian brains (and possibly others, sorry, can't recall off the top of my head .... pun not necessarily intended) contain all those parts to varying degrees. See the work of Dr. Barrett and others.

[https://how-emotions-are-made.com/notes/Triune\\_brain\\_myth](https://how-emotions-are-made.com/notes/Triune_brain_myth)

<https://drsarahmckay.com/rethinking-the-reptilian-brain/>

<https://thebrainscientist.com/2018/04/11/you...a-lizard-brain/>

The *3-part human brain* schema always struck me as being **Platonic** (and **Freudian**, for that matter)

1. the rational **superego** of the "human" *logos* (λογιστικόν), or *logistikon*
2. the selfish **ego** of the "mammalian" *thymos* (θυμοειδής), or *thumoeides*
3. the defensive **id** of the "reptilian" *eros* (ἐπιθυμητικόν), or *epithumetikon*

There seems to be a correlation between the three *gunas* (psychological qualities) posited in the *Gita*:

1. Sattva (सत्त्व), being understanding, patient, orderly, and wise

2. Rajas (𑀢𑀺𑀓𑀾), being ambitious, passionate, and egotistical
3. Tamas (𑀢𑀺𑀓𑀾), being vindictive, defensive, violence, and destructive

I'm curious if there is a historical link between the aforementioned division of *Threes*. I note a division of *Fours* that can be found throughout history from Hippocrates' four humors to Galen's four personalities, to the four stations of life in Hinduism and the Indian caste system that reflects it, to contemporary American job-placement tests: there is a direct, historical evolution there. There may be for *Threes*, too.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2021 at 11:03 AM**

(I didn't see Nate's post before posting this, which is more response to Don's last post.)

I think a lot of this battle is being fought subconsciously on the issue of the meaning of "truth." I think DeWitt almost surely has to be correct in his assertion that Epicurus did not understand "truth" as an absolute term, but in terms of something being "truly reported" as if by a witness in court, who is reporting without opinion, but who may well not have access to all the facts.

The Academic world, however, including Plato and Aristotle and Stoic derivatives, are fully invested in there being an "absolute" truth which is accessible, if at all, through conceptual reasoning. Therefore they cannot imagine themselves, and cannot tolerate in opposing views, any standard of "truth" which does not include conceptual reasoning as core to the definition of what is true or false.

But that seems to be exactly what Epicurus did, setting "Nature" as the provider of each and every criterion of "truth." At the same time, of course, Epicurus studied and discussed how the mind works with conceptual reasoning, in which opinion is involved. So that's why I think we see Epicurus discussing both conceptual reasoning as well as the set of tools given by nature by which conceptual reasoning must be tested for its accuracy and relevance to us as individuals.

And I guess in saying that we might see another reason for the hostility -- to suggest that the power and relevance of conceptual reasoning should be "tested" or in any way restrained by faculties of nature would be intolerable to the Platonic team. To them, reason and logic are absolutely supreme, and its easy to read into them (especially into the Stoics) the disposition to dispense with the senses and "reality" totally, in favor of what they see as the higher life attainable through the mind only.

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### **Post by “Don” of April 24, 2021 at 11:14 AM**

[Eikadistes](#) , the three-part brain **\*\*may\*\*** be an analogy/metaphor to simplify an explanation of human nature but it shouldn't be taken to describe the anatomy of the brain. You bring up an interesting point about the ubiquity of 3s and 4s. Maybe something about completion or the satisfying arrangement you can get from 3 (triangle) or 4 (square) objects.

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2021 at 11:46 AM

One way in which I disagree with DeWitt's comments in this area, or at least think they are too harsh, is in his comments that Lucretius does not seem to have known about or understood anticipations. If you take DeWitt's on viewpoint as to Velleius talking about "etchings" and therefore potentially instinct, I think there are probably numerous sections of Lucretius which contain relevant material, including this below from Book 3 (Bailey).

I know he's talking about heat and air here, but ultimately he's referring to the atomic makeup of the body and mind, and surely a faculty of anticipations would function through the elemental particles just as any other faculty is based there. This passage seems to me to be something easily compatible with a viewpoint that the animals discussed are born with particular "natures."

At the same time, his final statement is I think consistent with my argument earlier that the Velleius position doesn't rule out that the Laertius conceptual reasoning also occurs. Lucretius is clearly pointing out that humans are born with natures of a certain type, but that conceptual reasoning has a great deal of influence on us as we grow and learn, even to the point of dispelling many of the undesirable traits that might be born in our nature.

... ill paste that here first:)  
It is the same with human beings. Although education may give certain people equal refinement, it cannot obliterate the original traces of each individual's natural disposition. We must not suppose that faults of character can be extirpated, and that it is possible to stop one person from being excessively prone to sudden fits of rage, another from succumbing a little too readily to fear, and a third from accepting certain situations more meekly than one should. And in many other respects people must

Presumably you can train a beaver not to build dams, but no amount of training was present at birth that led to their disposition to build them in the first place.

Quote

Bailey Book 3, approx line 300: Now, as I long to give account in what way these parts are mingled one with another, and in what manner bound together so that they can act, against my will the poverty of my country's tongue holds me back; yet, despite that, I will touch the theme, as best I can in brief. For the first-beginnings course to and fro among themselves with the motions of first-beginnings, so that no single one can be put apart, nor can its powers be set in play divided from others by empty space, but they are, as it were, the many forces of a single body. Even as in the flesh of any living creature anywhere there is smell and a certain heat and savour, and yet of all these is made up the bulk of a single body. Thus heat and air and the hidden power of wind mingled create one nature together with that nimble force, which sends among them from itself the beginning of motion, whence the motion that brings sensation first arises throughout the flesh. For right deep within this nature lies hid far below, nor is there anything further beneath than this in our bodies, and it is moreover the very soul of the whole soul. Even as in our limbs and our whole body the force of the mind and the power of the soul is secretly immingled, because it is formed of small and rare bodies. So, you see, this force without a name, made of tiny bodies, lies concealed, and is moreover, as it were, the very soul of the whole soul and holds sway in the whole body. In like manner it must needs be that wind and air and heat act mingled together throughout the limbs, and one is more above or below the rest, yet so that one single thing is seen to be composed of all; lest heat and wind apart, and apart from them the power of air, should put an end to sensation, and by their separation break it up. Moreover the mind possesses that heat, which it dons when it boils with rage, and the fire flashes more keenly from the eyes. Much cold breath too it has, which goes along with fear, and starts a shuddering in the limbs and stirs the whole frame. And it has too that condition of air lulled to rest, which comes to pass when the breast is calm and the face unruffled. But those creatures have more of heat, whose fiery heart and passionate mind easily boils up in anger. Foremost in this class is the fierce force of lions, who often as they groan break their hearts with roaring, and cannot contain in their breast the billows of their wrath. But the cold heart of deer is more full of wind, and more quickly it rouses the chilly breath in its flesh, which makes a shuddering motion start in the limbs. But the nature of oxen draws its life rather from calm air, nor ever is the smoking torch of anger set to it to rouse it overmuch, drenching it with the shadow of murky mist, nor is it pierced and frozen by the chill shafts of fear: it has its place midway between the two, the deer and the raging lions. So is it with the race of men. ***However much training gives some of them an equal culture, yet it leaves those first traces of the nature of the mind of each.*** Nor must we think that such maladies can be plucked out by the roots, but that one man will more swiftly fall into bitter anger, another be a little sooner assailed by fear, while a third will take some things more gently than is right. And in many other things it must needs be that the diverse natures of men differ, and the habits that follow thereon; but I cannot now set forth the secret causes of these, nor discover names for all the shapes of the first

atoms, whence arises this variety in things. **One thing herein I see that I can affirm, that so small are the traces of these natures left, which reason could not dispel for us, that nothing hinders us from living a life worthy of the gods.**

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### **Post by “Don” of April 24, 2021 at 2:42 PM**

A quick clarification that may have led to some confusion:

When I say Anticipations are similar to "mental concepts" in modern neuroscience, I'm not talking about rational reasoning. [Godfrey](#) may be able to help me with this.

A "concept" in this sense is a technical term that denotes a mental model against which your brain compares sensations coming in and uses to make predictions on the course of action to keep your body budget in equilibrium. Its all pre-rational, we don't "know" it's going on. The model or concept can get refined but it works below the surface.

I'm not explaining this very well, but I wanted to be clear I'm not referring to a "conceptualizing" or "reasoning."

[Godfrey](#) ? Help 😊 .

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2021 at 3:37 PM**

At this part of the conversation I would like to provide some cites from the Bailey position to show that regardless of what Barrett might be talking about, Bailey DOES (I would argue) equate anticipations with general concepts which are then used and recombined in the future to construct the rest of human thought. The first one I can put my hands on is Bailey's commentary on Diogenes Laertius in the Greek Atomists and Epicurus, in which he says he is adopting the position generally taken by the commentating community. I'll paste some of the critical part of the discussion here.

[Quote from Don](#)

Its all pre-rational, we don't "know" it's going on. The model or concept can get refined but it works below the surface.

In distinction to this statement about it being pre-rational, Bailey says "**a concept is not fully known until it is named, until it has a label by which it may at once be called into prominence in the mind.**" (last page pasted below)

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general concepts we can imagine or feel doubt or even hold an opinion, no, nor refuse assent." So the Epicurean position does not seem to be peculiar to the acquisition of opinion as a necessary element in perception, and the admission of the impossibility of doubt in such a case. It is necessary to ask how Epicurus conceived his general concepts, who was their origin and what their nature.

To return to a statement in psychology, the "mind-image" created by the movement of the soul-particles excited, their turn by the occasional motion of the sense-organs, does not immediately perish, but remains stored up in the mind, and may be, as it were, "called up" for subsequent contemplation. Thus an act of memory is the secondary motion of the mind to an "image" so preserved in itself, and a mental comparison is the apprehension by the mind of one or more such images side by side. But this is not all, for when as the result of many individual perceptions of objects of the same class, a series of similar images, as it were, lodged one upon another in the mind, the result is a kind of "composite photograph" of the genus or species, the characteristics of the individual images have disappeared, and that which is common to all is retained in what is called a general concept. The combined images of many horses, both in their perception, has created in the mind the general concept of "horse". To this general concept Epicurus gave the name of "anticipation" (*prolepsis*), it is that which we have previously in our mind to enable us to recognize the general appearance of something for which we are looking or wish to compare, and to identify and distinguish the individual images of sense-perception when they are presented to us. "Anticipations" thus take their place as the second criterion of truth. They owe their reality to the fact that, although they are not themselves directly sensations, they are immediately built up of sensations; our "anticipations" of horse is simply the aggregate—perhaps not without relief by the average—of a number of individual sensations of

- Epicurus and Cicero de Sen. 1. 4. 117-121 U. 702

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horses. The "anticipation" is not itself "true" for it does not correspond to or issue from any one external existence, but it is a clear vision and as such a true of truth; for which is the common element in a number of images of horse, these itself constitute a clear general image of horse, and to a may be referred to a certain true the subsequent images presented to us in sense-perception.

This account of the "anticipation" is not to be found explicitly stated in any Epicurean source, but it is generally adopted by modern writers and is strongly supported by such testimony as is available. Three points of evidence may be cited which all tend to the same conclusion from different points of view. Disagrees' discussion' of "anticipation" looks as if it were compiled from several different sources, but there is nothing in it inconsistent either with itself or with the explanation given above. It is worth quoting at length because of the strong support afforded by his discussion:

the "anticipation" they speak of as an apprehension or right opinion or thought of a general idea stored within the mind, that is to say a recollection of what has often been perceived from without, as the instance, both and such a thing is a man; for the same reason the word "true" is applied, for cause of the "anticipation" has been retained in the thought of justice, as the same give us the information (apprehension) "Therefore the first specification of every name is immediate and clear evidence (obvious). And we could not look for the object of our search, unless we have first learned in the instance we ask to that standing under a horse or a cow"; to do this we must know by means of an "anticipation" the shape of horse and of cow. Differences we could not have named them, unless we previously have their appearance by means of an "anticipation". In the "anticipation" are clear and immediate evidence.

\* Mithras (1) (1) notices the Epicurus never speaks of anticipation as *dehinc*, but as *prolepsis*.

\* e.g. *De Sen. 1. 4. 117* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 118* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 119* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 120* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 121* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 122* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 123* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 124* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 125* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 126* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 127* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 128* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 129* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 130* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 131* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 132* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 133* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 134* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 135* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 136* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 137* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 138* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 139* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 140* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 141* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 142* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 143* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 144* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 145* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 146* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 147* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 148* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 149* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 150* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 151* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 152* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 153* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 154* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 155* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 156* et. *De Sen. 1. 4. 157* et. *De Sen. 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**Post by “Don” of April 24, 2021 at 3:45 PM**

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I was going to make exactly that point. "Pre-rational concepts" are what I would consider to be the faculty as well as the "etchings."

Exactly! Thanks for that! That's what I was trying to get across.

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**Post by “Godfrey” of April 24, 2021 at 3:48 PM**

Bailey is explicit that concepts clarify sensations. According to modern science, sensations confirm "pre-rational concepts." In conscious thought we use concepts to clarify sensations, but Barrett argues that rationality is somewhat of an illusion since so much of the process occurs subconsciously through predictions, simulations, affect, etc.

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**Post by “Don” of April 24, 2021 at 3:51 PM**

Which would seem to poke a hole in the Platonic or Stoic balloon...

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

gues that rationality is somewhat of an illusion since so much of the process occurs subconsciously through predictions, simulations, affect, etc.

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**Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2021 at 4:20 PM**

Bailey's reference to the words and labels issue is probably useful as a dividing line or place to focus attention. If I remember some of Ellis comments correctly, some of the modern Greek

Epicureans take the position that the assignment of a word or label is itself somehow prerational and is what Epicurus meant by the "present impressions of the mind which Laertius says some later Epicureans considered to be a fourth leg of the canon.

I have never been persuaded that this direction (meaning considering "present impressions of the mind" to be a fourth leg of the canon) is useful but the sections referenced in Laertius and Herodotus probably do deserve to be correlated with any full review of these issues.

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### **Post by "Elli" of April 25, 2021 at 2:31 PM**

[Don](#) Thank you very much for the info on Baretts book. I read one of her articles on a scientific magazine and was really remarkable. Her article is on this link: <https://academic.oup.com/scan/article/12/1/1/2823712>

Yesterday, I found that her book already exists, here in Greece, in english language and I will buy it soon.

As for the beaver... It takes two to tango. 😊

Beaver is very capable swimmer, as he can breathe underwater, he uses his sharp teeth and manages to cut down an entire tree overnight. It builds its dams in lakes, even in rivers and in fact creates dams with tree trunks, branches, stones and mud.

The curious thing of course is that beavers for building their dams all the materials are carried by the male beavers while the females are the ones who undertake the construction by making a separation in the house, which is of two parts, because it has the main apartment and storage for food for difficult days while with a hole in the top out of the water, there is also ventilation. The little beavers, as soon as they manage to swim well, they take on their responsibilities and become independent, after going to their own nest.

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### **Post by "Godfrey" of April 25, 2021 at 3:33 PM**

It seems then that the behavior being debated as instinctual is quite complicated since it involves two beavers and a division of labor. This, to me, makes it sound more like learned behavior. But since it doesn't seem to be clear what constitutes instinct, there is the possibility that this degree of complexity may be instinctual.

In Don's example I wonder if the beaver that built a dam was male or female 🤔

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 26, 2021 at 8:27 AM

Perhaps also this is a reason that I think DeWitt chose the term "[intuition](#)" almost as much as he did "instinct" -- I think "intuit-" is probably a broader or at least more applicable word, and less likely to get us sidetracked onto other issues not really related to the current discussion. I see the wikipedia article talks about Plato in ancient philosophy, which ought to be a concern, yet also may provide another clue as to what Epicurus was "bouncing off of" in articulating his own views.

Since DeWitt had a lot more background than we do and thought about this issue long before we did, let me do a word search in EAHP to see how often he mentioned each word:

Number of occurrences of "instinct-" in EAHP - seven

Number of occurrences of "intuit-" - in EAHP - six

I think another thing to keep in mind is that if we're talking "canonical faculties" here - and that's what we should be looking at - then we are talking about ways in which WE perceive reality that are somehow personal to us, not a matter of how others judge us from the outside.

I think we're all agreed that there is no way that we are talking about particular "concepts" or "ideas" being inborn, and we are also (or should be) talking about some kind of perceptual faculty like seeing or hearing which is available to process data, but which doesn't have any data in it at birth.

The "dam" example is probably a good test case because at least to me it seems tempting to consider a "dam" to be a concept or idea, which would not seem compatible with the theory. Maybe that's where the "rushing water" cited above would be helpful, in that if the components like water and trees are present but other key components are not, it's the relational ability that is the real key. A beaver which built a dam in a lake which had no flowing water would probably be evidence of a truly preprogrammed mind (like a computer programmed to do some activity regardless of circumstances ) but the ability to see that a key component is missing may indicate that the faculty which the beaver is endowed is part of an "active" faculty that is able to react to unforeseeable circumstances.

At any rate, all we really have to work with in explaining the philosophy is the examples in the texts that are specifically cited -- "gods" and "justice" and maybe one or more less certain references (time?). In most all other cases, I would think we can talk about the core issues of a

faculty while leave the extended applications to other people down the line. Beavers may help us as a possible example, but all we really know that Epicurus mentioned was justice and gods.

And that's the real issue I have always asserting itself in my mind; our job (at least the job I have chosen for myself) ought to be to articulate and restate the basics in an understandable form so that people in the future do not have to start virtually from scratch (or worse, as we do in the "absence of pain" attitude) in studying Epicurean philosophy. We don't have to get too far in the weeds in order to do that, and if we DO get too close to those weeds they will probably in every case prove to be a major distraction to plowing ahead with the primary goal.

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## Post by "Cassius" of May 2, 2021 at 8:30 AM

On this topic Godfrey called to my mind an article (chapter of a book) by David Sedley that is probably relevant here - "Epicurus' Theological Innatism," of which an early paragraph is:

*Epicurus' theological innatism* 31

Consider first section 6: 'we possess implanted, or rather innate (*vel positus innatus*), cognitions of them'. The self-correction makes little sense unless we understand the description of the knowledge as 'innate' to be substituted because in Cicero's view it is the more correct of the two. It would be untrue so Cicero's clearly signalled intentions to suggest that the substituted word *innatus* is itself being used loosely here, even though in other contexts it may well be.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge of the gods then really is, on Cicero's understanding of his material, inborn rather than implanted in us subsequent to birth. Whether his understanding is correct is a separate question, and it is the main purpose of my paper to argue that it is.

If confirmation were needed that 'innate' is what the text both says and means, it is available from the slightly earlier *De finibus*, where, according to Cicero, the ancients

see that . . . we also possess a certain implanted, or rather innate, desire for knowledge (*instituta quaedam vel positus innatae cupiditates scientiae*), and have been born (*natusque esse*) for human society and for the fellowship and commonality of mankind.<sup>7</sup>

The innateness of our desire for knowledge, emphasized here by the speaker's self-correction, 'implanted, or rather innate', emphatically parallels our explicitly inborn (*natusque esse*) inclination towards social living.<sup>8</sup> There should therefore be little doubt that by introducing the expression 'implanted, or rather innate' Cicero means precisely to draw attention to cases where literal innateness is intended.<sup>9</sup>

A link for this is [here](#)