

Episode Ninety-Nine - The Epicurean View of Justice (Part Two)

Post by "Cassius" of December 2, 2021 at 4:05 PM

Welcome to Episode Ninety-Nine of Lucretius Today.

This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

I am your host Cassius, and together with our panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and we'll discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics.

At this point in our podcast we have completed our first line-by-line review of the poem, and we have turned to the presentation of Epicurean ethics found in Cicero's On Ends. Today we continue with that material and focus on "Justice" starting with line fifty.

Now let's join Charles reading today's text:

[51] But if there are any who seem to themselves to be sufficiently barricaded and fortified against all privity on the part of their fellow men, still they tremble before the privity of the gods, and imagine that the very cares by which their minds are devoured night and day are imposed upon them, with a view to their punishment, by the eternal gods. Again, from wicked acts what new influence can accrue tending to the diminution of annoyances, equal to that which tends to their increase, not only from consciousness of the actions themselves, but also from legal penalties and the hatred of the community? And yet some men exhibit no moderation in money-making, or office, or military command, or wantonness, or gluttony, or the remaining passions, which are not lessened but rather intensified by the trophies of wickedness, so that such persons seem fit to be repressed rather than to be taught their error.

[52] True reason beckons men of properly sound mind to pursue justice, fairness and honor; nor are acts of injustice advantageous to a man without eloquence or influence, who cannot easily succeed in what he attempts, nor maintain his success if he wins it, and large resources either of wealth or of talent suit better with a generous spirit, for those who exhibit this spirit attract

to themselves goodwill and affection, which is very well calculated to ensure a peaceful life; and this is the truer in that men have no reason for sinning.

[53] For the passions which proceed from nature are easily satisfied without committing any wrong; while we must not succumb to those which are groundless, since they yearn for nothing worthy of our craving, and more loss is involved in the mere fact of wrong doing, than profit in the results which are produced by the wrong doing. So one would not be right in describing even justice as a thing to be wished for on its own account, but rather because it brings with it a very large amount of agreeableness. For to be the object of esteem and affection is agreeable just because it renders life safer and more replete with pleasures. Therefore we think that wickedness should be shunned, not alone on account of the disadvantages which fall to the lot of the wicked, but much rather because when it pervades a man's soul it never permits him to breathe freely or to rest.

[54] But if the accolades passed even on the virtues themselves, over which the eloquence of all other philosophers especially runs riot, can find no vent unless it be referred to pleasure, and pleasure is the only thing which invites us to the pursuit of itself, and attracts us by reason of its own nature, then there can be no doubt that of all things good it is the supreme and ultimate good, and that a life of happiness means nothing else but a life attended by pleasure.

SUPPLEMENT:

[Principal Doctrines](#) and Vatican Sayings which are relevant to Justice.

[PD06](#). Whatever you can provide yourself with to secure protection from men is a natural good.

[PD07](#). Some men wished to become famous and conspicuous, thinking that they would thus win for themselves safety from other men. Wherefore if the life of such men is safe, they have obtained the good which nature craves; but if it is not safe, they do not possess that for which they strove at first by the instinct of nature.

[PD08](#). No pleasure is a bad thing in itself; but the means which produce some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures.

[PD10](#). If the things that produce the pleasures of profligates could dispel the fears of the mind about the phenomena of the sky, and death, and its pains, and also teach the limits of desires (and of pains), we should never have cause to blame them: for they would be filling themselves full, with pleasures from every source, and never have pain of body or mind, which is the evil of life.

[PD31](#). The justice which arises from nature is a pledge of mutual advantage, to restrain men from harming one another, and save them from being harmed.

[PD32](#). For all living things which have not been able to make compacts not to harm one another, or be harmed, nothing ever is either just or unjust; and likewise, too, for all tribes of men which have been unable, or unwilling, to make compacts not to harm or be harmed.

[PD33](#). 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. [see note below]

[PD34](#). Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which attaches to the apprehension of being unable to escape those appointed to punish such actions.

[PD35](#). It is not possible for one who acts in secret contravention of the terms of the compact not to harm or be harmed to be confident that he will escape detection, even if, at present, he escapes a thousand times. For up to the time of death it cannot be certain that he will indeed escape.

[PD36](#). In its general aspect, justice is the same for all, for it is a kind of mutual advantage in the dealings of men with one another; but with reference to the individual peculiarities of a country, or any other circumstances, the same thing does not turn out to be just for all.

[PD37](#). Among actions which are sanctioned as just by law, that which is proved, on examination, to be of advantage, in the requirements of men's dealings with one another, has the guarantee of justice, whether it is the same for all or not. But if a man makes a law, and it does not turn out to lead to advantage in men's dealings with each other, then it no longer has the essential nature of justice. And even if the advantage in the matter of justice shifts from one side to the other, but for a while accords with the general concept, it is nonetheless just for that period, in the eyes of those who do not confound themselves with empty sounds, but look to the actual facts.

[PD38](#). Where, provided the circumstances have not been altered, actions which were considered just have been shown not to accord with the general concept, in actual practice, then they are not just. But where, when circumstances have changed, the same actions which were sanctioned as just no longer lead to advantage, they were just at the time, when they were of advantage for the dealings of fellow-citizens with one another, but subsequently they are no longer just, when no longer of advantage.

[PD39](#). The man who has best ordered the element of disquiet arising from external circumstances has made those things that he could akin to himself, and the rest at least not alien; but with all to which he could not do even this, he has refrained from mixing, and has expelled from his life all which it was of advantage to treat thus.

[PD40](#). As many as possess the power to procure complete immunity from their neighbors, these also live most pleasantly with one another, since they have the most certain pledge of security, and, after they have enjoyed the fullest intimacy, they do not lament the previous departure of

a dead friend, as though he were to be pitied.

VS07. It is hard for an evil-doer to escape detection, but to be confident that he will continue to escape detection indefinitely is impossible.

VS12. The just man is most free from disturbance, while the unjust is full of the utmost disturbance.

VS13. Among the things held to be just by law, whatever is proved to be of advantage in men's dealings has the stamp of justice, whether or not it be the same for all; but if a man makes a law and it does not prove to be mutually advantageous, then this is no longer just. And if what is mutually advantageous varies, and only for a time corresponds to our concept of justice, nevertheless for that time it is just, for those who do not trouble themselves about empty words, but look simply at the facts.

VS43. The love of money, if unjustly gained, is impious, and, if justly gained, is shameful; for it is unseemly to be parsimonious, even with justice on one's side.

VS62. Now if parents are justly angry with their children, it is certainly useless to fight against it, and not to ask for pardon; but if their anger is unjust and irrational, it is quite ridiculous to add fuel to their irrational passion by nursing one's own indignation, and not to attempt to turn aside their wrath in other ways by gentleness.

Post by "Joshua" of December 5, 2021 at 9:19 AM

Explanation of this drivel to follow!

https://www.abdabrs.com/uploads/5/1/0/4/51042467/natural-law-1_orig.jpg

Natural Law	Man's law
Based Upon Principles & Truth (Inherent To Creation)	Based Upon Dogmatic Beliefs (Constructs Of Mind)
Harmonized with, due to Knowledge & Understanding	Complied with, due to Fear of Punishment
Universal; exists and applies anywhere in the Universe regardless of location	Differs with location based upon the whim of legislators (Moral Relativism)
Eternal and Immutable; exists and applies for as long as the Universe exists, and cannot be changed	Changes with time based upon the whim of legislators (Moral Relativism)

Post by "Joshua" of December 5, 2021 at 11:25 AM

Notes:

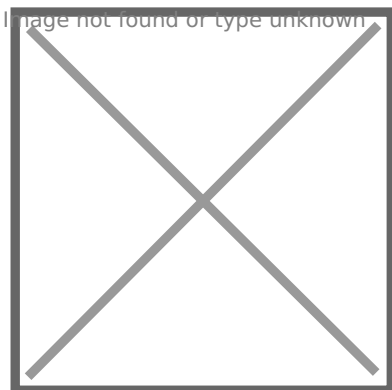
The passage from Lucretius I mentioned (Still need a direct citation):

Quote

Another fallacy comes creeping in whose errors you should be meticulous in trying to avoid. Don't think our eyes, our bright and shining eyes, were made for us to look ahead with. Don't suppose our thigh bones fitted our shin bones and our shins our ankles so that we might take steps. Don't think that arms dangled from shoulders and branched out in hands with fingers at their ends, both right and left, for us to do whatever need required for our survival. All such argument, all such interpretation is perverse, fallacious, puts the cart before the horse. No bodily thing was born for us to use. Nature had no such aim, but what was born creates the use. There could be no such thing as sight before the eyes were formed. No speech before the tongue was made, but tongues began long before speech were uttered. and the ears were fashioned long before a sound was heard. And all the organs I feel sure, were there before their use developed. They could not evolve for the sake of use be so designed. But battling hand to hand and slashing limbs, fouling the foe in blood, these antedate the flight of shining javelins. Nature taught men out to dodge a wound before they learned the fit of shield to arm. Rest certainly is older in the history of man than coverlets or mattresses, and thirst was quenched before the days of cups or goblets. Need has created use as man contrives device for his comfort. but all these cunning inventions are far different from all those things much older, which supply their function from their form. The limbs, the sense, came first, their usage afterwards. Never think they could have been created for the sake of being used."

— Titus Lucretius Carus, The Way Things Are

Chimpanzees sharing food:

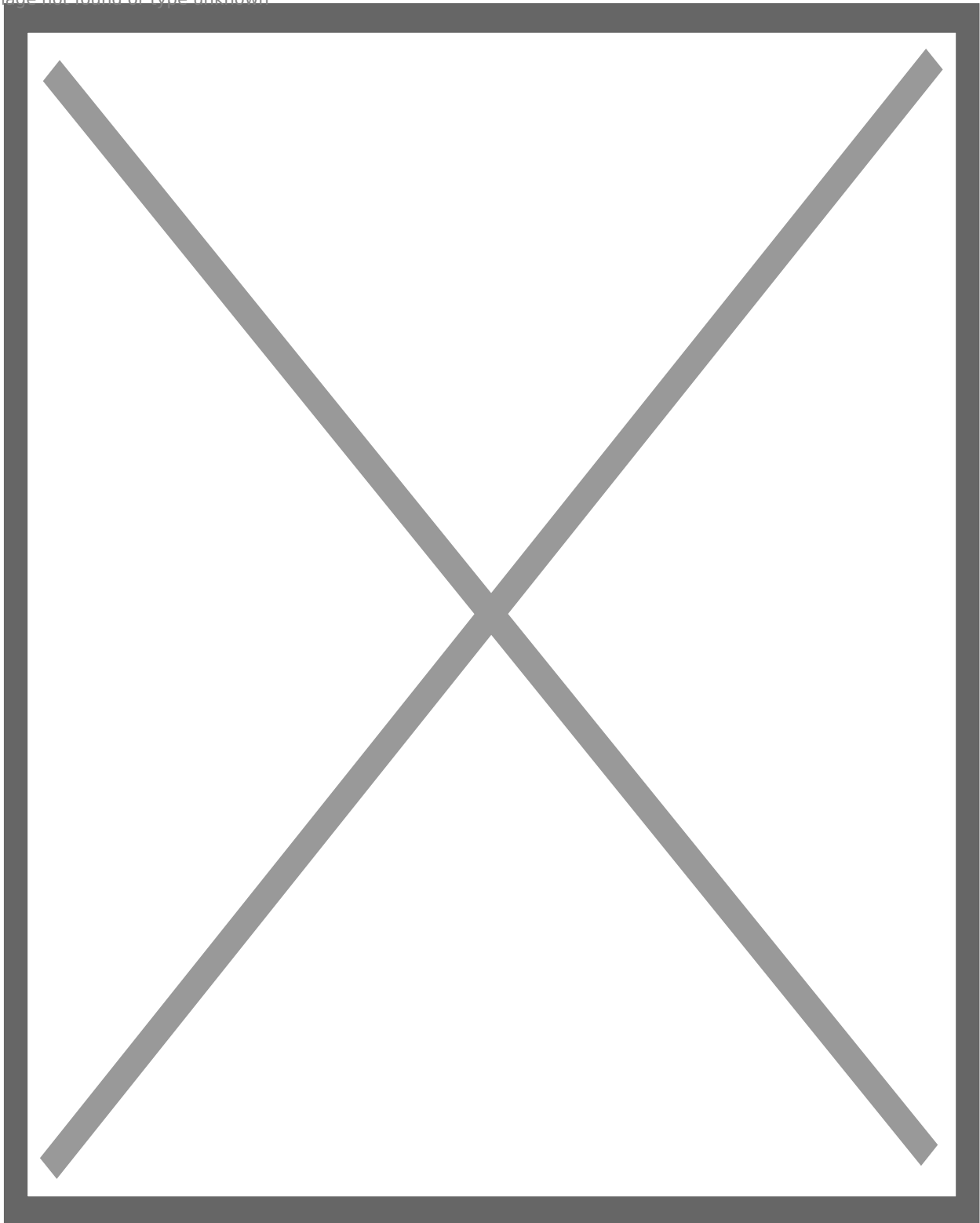


[Wild chimpanzees share food with their friends](#)

Why share food with non-family members when there is no immediate gain? An international team of researchers conducted observations of natural food sharing...
www.sciencedaily.com

Kids for Cash scandal:

Image not found or type unknown



[Kids for cash scandal - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

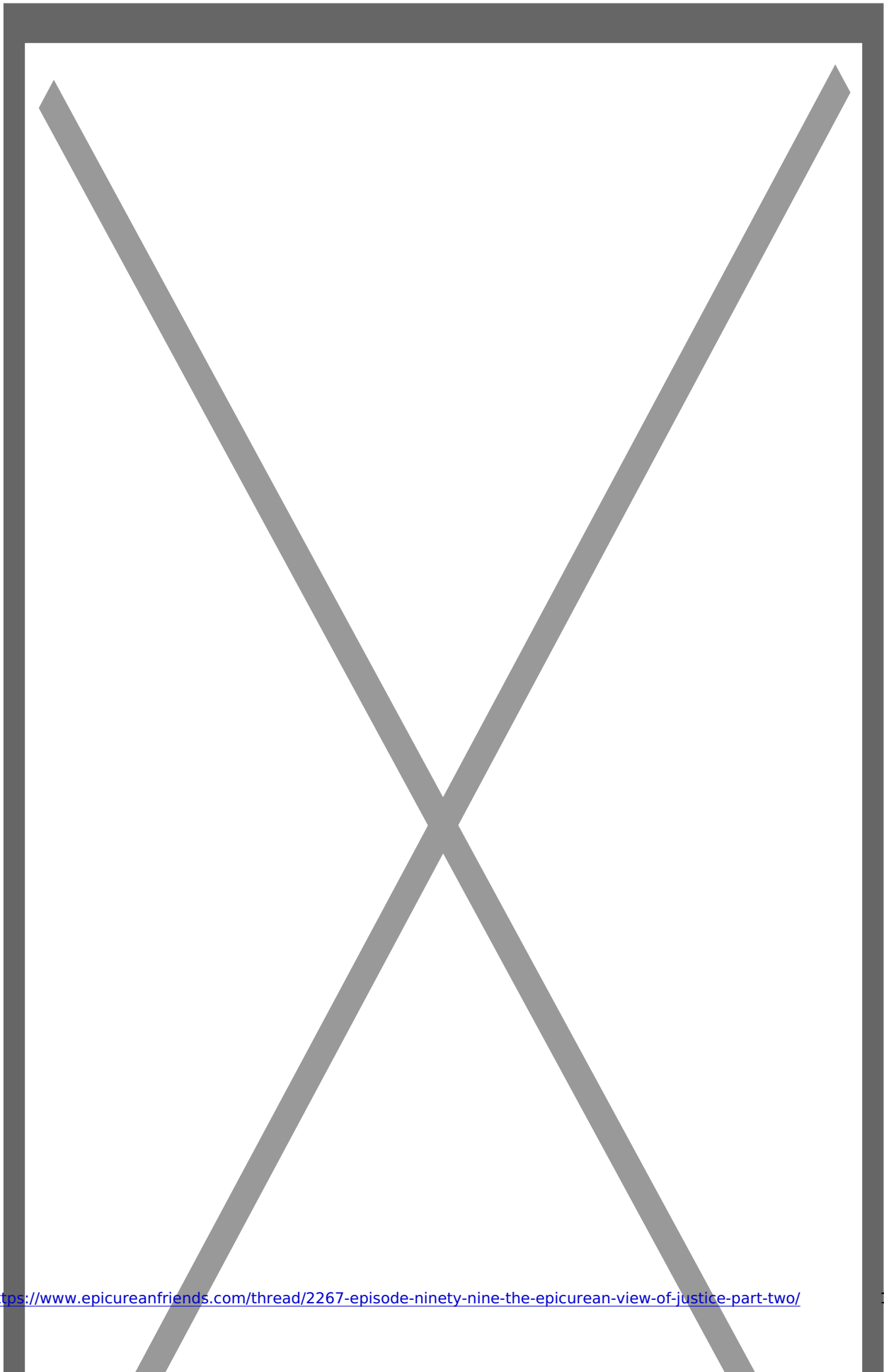
Problems with the Roman Constitution:

[The Roman Republic Fails, Ancient Rome for Kids - Ancient Rome for Kids](#)

[Political history of the Roman military - Wikipedia](#)

History of the Vatican Sayings:

Image not found or type unknown



[The Vatican Sayings of Epicurus](#)

A sparse selection of Epicurus' wise words survives to this day in writing. The collection of his "Vatican Sayings" gives us insight into the key teachings of...
owlcation.com

Post by "Cassius" of December 5, 2021 at 4:09 PM

I am guess it is is book five and it ought to jump out at me which book, and which section, because that is a very frequently referenced statement. We'll find it!

Post by "Don" of December 5, 2021 at 5:15 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I am guess it is is book five and it ought to jump out at me which book, and which section, because that is a very frequently referenced statement. We'll find it!

LOL! You don't have the entire DRN memorized by book and line? Oh, for shame ! 😊

Post by "Cassius" of December 5, 2021 at 5:54 PM

Darn my guess was wrong -- book FOUR around line 800 or so!

Times almost infinite, which reason knows
As presences, and in each presence dwells
Its own peculiar image, all of them
So tenuous no mind is sharp enough
To see them all, must focus, concentrate
On only one, so all the rest are lost
Except the one mind has determined on.
Mind does prepare itself, and hopes to see,
Anticipates the next successive image,
And therefore finds it, as it must. Don't eyes,
Looking for things almost invisible,
Prepare themselves, strain, squint, and concentrate,
And only so discover what they seek?
And even in things quite obvious, your mind
Must be attentive, otherwise they'll seem
Far off in time, in space. Is it so strange
That mind keeps overlooking many things
Save those to which it pays immediate heed?
Another thing we do is fool ourselves,
Become the dupes of logic which derives
Giant conclusions out of pygmy clues.

Images may be inconsistent things.
A woman, so it seems, becomes a man
While we are watching, or an ugly one
Grows beautiful, a young one old, and so on,
While slumber and forgetfulness preserve
Our lack of challenge or of wonderment.

Another fallacy comes creeping in
Whose errors you should be meticulous
In trying to avoid—don't think our eyes,
Our bright and shining eyes, were made for us
To look ahead with; don't suppose our thigh-bones
Fitted our shin-bones, and our shins our ankles,
So that we might take steps; don't think that arms
Dangled from shoulders and branched out in hands

Post by “Cassius” of December 5, 2021 at 5:56 PM

Now for the alternatives:

BAILEY:

[823] Herein you must eagerly desire to shun this fault, and with foresighted fear to avoid this error; do not think that the bright light of the eyes was created in order that we may be able to look before us, or that, in order that we may have power to plant long paces, therefore the tops of shanks and thighs, based upon the feet, are able to bend; or again, that the forearms are jointed to the strong upper arms and hands given us to serve us on either side, in order that we might be able to do what was needful for life. All other ideas of this sort, which men proclaim, by distorted reasoning set effect for cause, since nothing at all was born in the body that we might be able to use it, but what is born creates its own use. Nor did sight exist before the light of the eyes was born, nor pleading in words before the tongue was created, but rather the birth of the tongue came long before discourse, and the ears were created much before sound was heard, and in short all the limbs, I trow, existed before their use came about: they cannot then have grown for the purpose of using them.

[843] But, on the other side, to join hands in the strife of battle, to mangle limbs and befoul the body with gore; these things were known long before gleaming darts flew abroad, and nature constrained men to avoid a wounding blow, before the left arm, trained by art, held up the defence of a shield. And of a surety to trust the tired body to rest was a habit far older than the soft-spread bed, and the slaking of the thirst was born before cups. These things, then, which are invented to suit the needs of life, might well be thought to have been discovered for the purpose of using them. But all those other things lie apart, which were first born themselves, and thereafter revealed the concept of their usefulness. In this class first of all we see the senses and the limbs; wherefore, again and again, it cannot be that you should believe that they could have been created for the purpose of useful service.

BROWN:

But in subjects of this nature, guard yourself to the utmost of your power against that error, that gross mistake, and never believe that those bright orbs, the eyes, were made that we might see; of that our legs were made upright, and things fixed upon them, and were supported by feet, that we might walk and take large strides; that our arms were braced with strong sinews, and that our hands hung on both sides, to assist us in those offices that are necessary to the support of life. And whatever constructions they put upon other parts of the body, they are all absurd and against reason; for no member of the body was made for any particular use, but after it was made each member found out a use proper to itself; for there was no such thing as to see before the eyes were made, nor to speak before the tongue was formed, but the tongue was rather in being before there was speech, and the ears were made long before any sound was heard. In short, all the members, in my opinion, were in being before their particular uses were set out.

This is so true that, to engage in battle, to mangle the limbs, and to stain the body over with blood, these were in being before any shining darts flew through the air, and nature taught us to avoid a wound before the left hand learnt to oppose a shield in our defense; and so, to commit the body to rest was long before the invention of soft beds, and to quench the thirst was practiced before the use of cups. All these things, we may believe, were invented for common benefit, as they were found proper and convenient for the occasions of life. All things therefore that were in being before the use of them was determined applied themselves afterwards to the office that was most suitable and serviceable to them. Of this kind principally are the senses and members of our bodies, and therefore you are to avoid, upon all accounts, so much as to think that they were at first formed for any particular design or use.

MUNRO:

And herein you should desire with all your might to shun the weakness, with a lively apprehension to avoid the mistake of supposing that the bright lights of the eyes were made in order that we might see; and that the tapering ends of the shanks and hams are attached to the feet as a base in order to enable us to step out with long strides; or again that the forearms were slung to the stout upper arms and ministering hands given us on each side, that we might be able to discharge the needful duties of life. Other explanations of like sort which men give, one and all put effect for cause through wrongheaded reasoning; since nothing was born in the body that we might use it, but that which is born begets itself a use: thus seeing did not exist before the eyes were born, nor the employment of speech ere the tongue was made; but rather the birth of the tongue was long anterior to language and the ears were made long before sound was heard, and all the limbs, I trow, existed before there was any employment for them: they could not therefore have grown for the purpose of being used.

But on the other hand, engaging in the strife of battle and mangling the body and staining the limbs with gore were in vogue long before glittering darts ever flew; and nature prompted to shun a wound or ever the left arm by the help of art held up before the person the defense of a shield. Yes, and consigning the tired body to rest is much older than a soft-cushioned bed, and the slaking of thirst had birth before cups. These things therefore which have been invented in accordance with the uses and wants of life, may well be believed to have been discovered for the purpose of being used. Far otherwise is it with all those things which first were born, then afterwards made known the purposes to which they might be put; at the head of which class we see the senses and the limbs. Wherefore again and again I repeat, it is quite impossible to believe that they could have been made for the duties which they discharge.

Post by “Cassius” of December 5, 2021 at 6:09 PM

I will get the podcast up as soon as possible, but in the meantime I should clarify that the reason we were talking about this was in the context of justice. The point was made that we can in fact derive much useful guidance from observing the nature of things -- how things work for us and to us -- how we do in fact have to eat and drink and do all sorts of things due to the way we are "created by nature."

But the warning stressed so strongly by Lucretius is the real point, and we discussed that he's not making this point simply as a biological observation. He's asserting that just because we use the eyes to see that does not mean that SOMEONE OR SOMETHING DESIGNED THEM THAT WAY.

And so by analogy, just because we observe that certain patterns of conduct do produce more pleasure, and others produce more pain, that too is a PRACTICAL conclusion about "the way things are." It doesn't mean that just because things are that way now, that "Venus / Nature" or some supernatural god designed them that way for our benefit and for us to follow as an ironclad absolute rule. Simply because we can observe that in many contexts things generally work out in the end or pleasure, or for pain, that does not mean that we should treat those observations as "absolute natural law" that have to be honored in the same way that we would honor them if some supernatural god handed them to us as an eternal law (as for example Moses was allegedly handed the ten commandments), nor are that written somehow mystically "in the stars" - or somewhere else - and are discernable to us through geometry or mathematics or "logic" (as or example Plato and Aristotle proposed).

This is such a deep subject and this post is not intended to be the last word on anything - just an explanation as to why this cite appears in the notes to this podcast. Martin and Charles and Joshua can correct me if my summary is wrong, and once the podcast is posted everyone is of course invited to comment.

Post by "Cassius" of December 9, 2021 at 10:29 AM

Episode Ninety-Nine of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. In this episode we continue our examination of justice:

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/47853414>

Post by "Don" of December 10, 2021 at 6:58 AM

Thought these might be helpful for the discussion:

Fr. 548. Happiness and bliss are produced not by great riches nor vast possessions nor exalted occupations nor positions of power, but rather by peace of mind, freedom from pain, and a disposition of the soul that sets its limits in accordance with nature.

τὸ εὐδαιμον καὶ μακάριον [eudaimonia and blessedness] οὐ χρημάτων πλῆθος οὐδὲ πραγμάτων ὄγκος οὐδ' ἀρχαί τινες ἔχουσιν οὐδὲ δυνάμεις, ἀλλ' ἀλυπία καὶ πραότης παθῶν καὶ διάθεσις ψυχῆς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ὀρίζουσα.

χρημάτων πλῆθος = a huge amount of money or wealth

χρημάτων = things one needs or uses; property, esp. money

πραγμάτων ὄγκος = lit. heap of things

ἀρχαί τινες ἔχουσιν = having authority

ἀλυπία = "freedom from pain"

πραότης παθῶν = "peace of mind" lit. mild, gentle feelings/reactions
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...57:entry=pra=os>

43. It is not right to love money unjustly, and shameful to love it justly; for it is unbecoming to be overly stingy, beyond what is right. φιλαργυρεῖν ἄδικα μὲν ἀσεβές, δίκαια δὲ αἰσχρόν· ἀπρεπὲς γὰρ ῥυπαρῶς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ δικαίου.

This is interesting with the μὲν...δὲ... which can be typically translated as "on the one hand... On the other hand..." plus γὰρ then "since, because" giving the reason for what came before.

φιλαργυρεῖν is literally does mean "to love money" philargyreïn philo- love argyros "silver, money"

There are various permutations of just/unjust:

ἄδικα

δίκαια

δικαίου

ἀσεβές is the opposite word used in the title of Philodemus's "On Piety" and means *ungodly, unholy, profane, sacrilegious*, opp. [εὐσεβής](#) (used in the title).

αἰσχρόν is an antonym of καλός kalos "noble, upright, beautiful, etc..."
[http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...entry=ai\)sxro/s](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...entry=ai)sxro/s)

ἀπρεπὲς is "unseemly, unbecoming, indecent, indecorous; of persons, disreputable." With the α- "un-" prefix, think of those definitions without it to get antonyms. πρέπει is something like "fitting"

ῥυπαρῶς is an adverb. Filthily, dirty-ly, sordidly, but it sets up clever word play by Epicurus because it can also refer to coins made of base metals or alloys instead of pure silver so with a nod to meaning counterfeit maybe or not pure precious metals
[http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...entry=r\(uparo/s](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...entry=r(uparo/s)

φείδεσθαι to be thrifty, to use sparingly. I get the idea of being frugal or spending money wisely.

καὶ μετὰ τοῦ δικαίου.

"beyond what is right" could just as easily be "beyond what is just (δικαίου)"

Post by “Don” of December 10, 2021 at 7:40 AM

It might be good to refresh a look at the word for "justice" δίκαιοσ

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, δίκαιοσ](#)

Post by “Cassius” of December 10, 2021 at 10:40 AM

Don Thanks for those notes. I think I left in the podcast my reference to what you would have said about something, but I forget now. 😊

I think I also remember that "justice" is one of the situations in which the word for anticipations / preconceptions occurs -- is that what you remember?

If so, it's interesting that justice would be singled out, among the "virtues" as being something relevant to anticipations.

Post by “Joshua” of December 10, 2021 at 11:45 AM

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

Since we spoke a little bit about Thomas More a few weeks ago, I thought I would drop this in here. I can't say that I've read the play, but the film is good!

Post by “Godfrey” of December 10, 2021 at 5:57 PM

The point that [Martin](#) made about chimpanzees and justice points to a prolepsis of justice, which is one of the few specific prolepseis mentioned in the texts. That adds another layer to the discussion of justice! The discussion is quite enjoyable, by the way.

Post by “Don” of December 11, 2021 at 12:05 PM

Is the prolepsis (notion, anticipation, preconception, etc) of justice simply the concept that one neither harms nor inflicts harm? That that is where the definition of what is starts?

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, δίκαιος](#)

From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...057:entry=di/kh>

Post by “Godfrey” of December 11, 2021 at 12:48 PM

At first blush, I would say not, that it varies from group to group and person to person. If chimpanzees could speak English, maybe they would say that what they're doing is "sharing". A case could be made that this is "not harming" but that might be a stretch. However it does appear to us to be just.

Another thought is that "justice" often involves harm to a particular party. Every war is considered by at least one side to be a "just" war. Chimpanzees (I think; it may be another primate) use violence to establish and maintain the social order of the alpha male. Corporal punishment is another example (not to be confused with Joshua's example of corporate punishment in the kids for cash scheme?)

Post by “Cassius” of December 11, 2021 at 1:22 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Is the prolepsis (notion, anticipation, preconception, etc) of justice simply the concept that one neither harms nor inflicts harm?

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

At first blush, I would say not, that it varies from group to group and person to person.

My current opinions on this topic:

I agree with Godfrey's take with this modification: I don't think anticipations contain "black letter law." I think "black letter law" ("contracts to neither harm nor be harmed are good") is a conclusion that is reached only after rationally processing raw input data.

I think that in large part because preconceptions / anticipations are arranged in the canon as if they are parallel to or at the same level as to (1) the 5 senses, and also to (2) the feeling of pain and pleasure. Both of those function automatically, pre-rationally, and are not operating through rational processing and opinion.

So the parallel I would assert is that there is a "faculty of preconceptions" just like the faculty of sight and the faculty of hearing and the faculty of feeling pain and pleasure, all simply reporting and not processing data.

If that is correct, then the proper analogy would be that due to your faculty of preconceptions you have the ability to perceive that certain relationships and dealings with people are significant enough to perceive them as falling into a general category of relationships that we choose to call "justice." The particular preconception is a recognition that in the dealings of the people involved there is a relationship that we can expect to be repeated over and over and thus needs evaluation. It would be the faculty of pain and pleasure which then processes the data about the relationship and decides whether we feel pleasure or pain at the observation of the relationship. And of course we wouldn't notice it at all if we didn't have sight or hearing to make the observation in the first place.

So this is where I think DeWitt is on the right track by saying that the canonical faculties all work together, all simultaneously, all serving as "reactions" which happening automatically and without (at that first stage) evaluation by reason or opinion.

It's only after all of those canonical faculties weigh in that we have the raw facts which our minds would then process and develop opinions and rational (or irrational, as the case may be) conclusions about what we "think" is going on in the situation we're considering.

And in support of this analysis I would cite the other clear text about anticipations, involving anticipations of the gods, where Epicurus seems to be saying that the false opinions about the gods also involve the processing of anticipations. So it's never anticipations themselves that are right or wrong or good or bad, but only our processing of them in the mind that leads to opinions about right or wrong or good or bad.

Anticipations wouldn't be "right" or "wrong" anymore than data from the eyes or ears is "right or wrong." What they could be is "more or less accurate" in the same way that someone's vision or hearing could be operating poorly, but even in those situations where there is some defect in the mechanism of seeing or hearing or anticipating, that doesn't mean that the reports from those faculties are "wrong" - it just means that they are less true to the facts being observed at that particular moment.

That's the way at present I interpret the direction DeWitt was going, which I think is correct. But the main and absolutely imperative point would be to reject that anticipations contain "opinion" or rational processing of any kind. If you go down the road of thinking that anticipations contain "conclusions" or "opinions" then that removes their canonical authority of being automatic and pre-rational, and puts you into a Platonic position of saying that there is some mechanism of transmitting "ideas" that are inherited at birth. Lots of things are inherited at birth, including apparently things we view as "instincts," but I think Epicurus ruled out the view that "ideas" are inherited from birth.

Post by “Don” of December 11, 2021 at 1:28 PM

But there is an underlying "no harm to me, no harm to you" reciprocity at work, especially in the chimp and monkey examples. If you look at the definitions of δίκαιοϛ, there's a maintaining a certain balance in society aspect. One chimp sees a group member being "harmed" by being denied food etc. Another member shares, maintaining balance in society. The sharing member also sets up the precedent for reciprocity from the other member in the troop.

The idea of the "just" war is defensible(?) possibly in that one community didn't have any agreements with the other. Or if they did, one side sees the other as doing something against the contract and they are inflicting punishment on the offending party.

That's a take off the top of my head.

Post by “Don” of December 11, 2021 at 3:05 PM

We crossposted, [Cassius](#) . I do think you're on the right track on the pre-rational, sensory, pre-conceptual nature of the prolepseis. Not sure how I square that with divinity and justice being our two examples, but I agree that's the track to follow.

Post by “Godfrey” of December 11, 2021 at 3:07 PM

Quote from Cassius

If that is correct, then the proper analogy would be that due to your faculty of preconceptions you have the ability to perceive that certain relationships and dealings with people are significant enough to perceive them as falling into a general category of relationships that we choose to call "justice." The particular preconception is a recognition that in the dealings of the people involved there is a relationship that we can expect to be repeated over and over and thus needs evaluation.

Cassius I agree with what you've written but I do question this quote. First, are you saying that we actually categorize something as part of a preconception? That seems to me to be done using reason: I understand a preconception as being more "primitive" than that, more akin to a sensation or feeling.

In your second sentence you seem to be saying that there's a projection into the future, which again seems more like reason to me. But you're also emphasizing relationship, which on the societal level is a component of justice.

[Quote from Don](#)

But there is an underlying "no harm to me, no harm to you" reciprocity at work, especially in the chimp and monkey examples. If you look at the definitions of δίκαιος, there's a maintaining a certain balance in society aspect. One chimp sees a group member being "harmed" by being denied food etc. Another member shares, maintaining balance in society. The sharing member also sets up the precedent for reciprocity from the other member in the troop.

"No harm to me, no harm to you" seems like a preconception to me, it just doesn't appear to necessarily extend to "no harm to others" unless perhaps one has been raised with that view and therefore it has become a default point of view. Chimps maintaining balance in society

seems like it might be such a learned default. Or could it be explained as an innate sense of empathy?

To compare the two quotes, I see Don's as "one-offs" occurring in the present instant, similar to a sensation. There is also memory involved if you consider how one is raised as contributing to a preconception. But my understanding is that any recognition that this is "justice" or may be beneficial in the future occurs after the preconception, through reasoning. Am I mistaken in this?

Post by “Don” of December 11, 2021 at 4:15 PM

I go back to babies, monkeys, chimps, etc al exhibiting displays of "fairness" (or however one describes it) as being manifestations of an innate sense or prolepseis of "justice." I don't think they can be acculturation in relation to babies. The utility of "fairness" might be learned, but the sense of fairness is innate.

Post by “Don” of December 11, 2021 at 4:46 PM

Ex.

Post

[RE: Anticipations - Justice & Divine Nature](#)

[...]

I completely understand where you're coming from. However, the "blank slate" idea, while a popular and long-standing theory, has been well debunked. There is a lot of fascinating research on babies and toddlers.

[...]

Excellent observation! This sense - anticipation - of "justice" or "fairness" has been observed in monkeys as well. I think I've posted elsewhere on there forum on this, but the one that comes to mind is the experiment where two monkeys are given a task and rewarded with a...



Don

August 16, 2021 at 7:40 AM

Post by “Cassius” of December 11, 2021 at 6:08 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Cassius I agree with what you've written but I do question this quote. First, are you saying that we actually categorize something as part of a preconception? That seems to me to be done using reason: I understand a preconception as being more "primitive" than that, more akin to a sensation or feeling.

Yes I agree with your point Godfrey. Whatever we are talking about has to be pre-rational. As I think about it further I think in the past I may have suggested an analogy with the way that the eyes and ears work -- they see and hear within a range of naturally determined "wavelengths" and within those ranges they perceive in certain ways - colors for example.

We can't be talking about rational categorization as for example Aristotle does with his logic. We have to be talking about something inherent in the mechanism of the human mind that is tuned to perceive relationships that we otherwise would not even perceive as significant.

Do I recall that there are examples such as whether animals looking at a TV screen even perceive the images on them? I am thinking that this mechanism must be some kind of tendency to recognize something specific (like the eyes see light and the ears hear sound) but that it functions in the field of abstract relationships. I seem to recall that was DeWitt's suggestion, though I think when he talks about it he strays too far and seems to talk about ideas themselves.

This is where I go back to that article from [Jackson Barwis written in criticism of John Locke's \(and others'\) Blank Slate](#) theory. Barwis' point is that just because we aren't born with "ideas," that doesn't mean we aren't born with "principles of function" that precede and allow us to develop ideas from those principles:

Quote

You know, continued I, Mr. Locke advances that principles cannot be innate unless their ideas be also innate. “For, says he, if the ideas be not innate, there was a time when the mind was without those principles; and then they will not be innate, but be derived

from some other original. For where the ideas themselves are not, there can be no knowledge, no assent, no mental or verbal propositions about them.”

Now is there nothing in what he advances in this place that will affect your doctrine of innate principles?

I think not, answered he.

For granting that we have no innate ideas, it is by no means from thence follow, as he says, then we have no innate principles. Ideas, simply considered, are very different things from innate moral principles, or from any other principles, which constitute the nature of things. If I have not already shown, I will, by and by, endeavor more clearly to show that the propositions we compose according to our idea of things are nothing but propositions; they are not really the principles of the things treated of: the principles of the things treated of are naturally inherent and exist perpetually in them whether our ideas or propositions concerning them be true or false.

But in the part quoted there is a fallacy. He says, “if the ideas be not unique, there was a time when the mind was without those principles.” The conclusion, you see, is vague and delusive. The only just conclusion he could have drawn was, that if the ideas be not innate, there was a time when the mind was without those ideas, out of which the propositions are formed, which I call principles. I doubt not that you perceive they are very improperly so called in the present question. For Mr. Locke thus confounds the principles of our nature, and the ideas contained in the propositions he names, together, as if they were the same things: but they cannot be so, because the one receives existence from the prior existence of the other. That is, our moral ideas receive their existence from the prior existence of our innate moral sentiments or principles: as our ideas of light and figure are derived from the prior existence of sight.

In this question the matter, as too frequently happens, has been puzzled and obscured by the misuse of words. Axioms, and allowed propositions, are called principles. But they are only principles formed by the human mind, in aid of its own weakness; which, in reasoning, can proceed but a little way without proved or granted propositions to rest on. They might, perhaps, with much more propriety, be called helps, assistances, or supports to the imbecility of the human mind, than principles of things. The principles which naturally inhere in every species of created beings are of a nature entirely different.

It seems, then, said I, that you agree with Mr. Locke that neither ideas or propositions can be innate: but you differ from him by denying any propositions what so ever to be properly the principles of any species of beings; and by affirming that both speculative and practical propositions are mere creatures of human invention; which whether they be true or false, that is, founded in the nature of things or not, the true natures and principles of things remain unalterably the same.

That is my meaning, replied he, and that, therefore, most of the arguments advanced by Mr. Locke against innate principles are nothing, or but very little, to the purpose; because they only tend to combat things as innate principles which are nothing like innate principles; and, if it be not too bold a thing to say of so penetrating a genius, he seems only to have been fighting with a phantom of his own creating.

Indeed, highly as I think of his genius and integrity, I should have much doubted of his sincerity in this doctrine if we had not frequently seen men of the first rate abilities suffer themselves to be carried into great absurdities by their fondness for a favorite system, or, by too hasty a desire of forming a perfect one.

It is certain, however, that nothing can be more excellent than his work as far as it regards our manner of acquiring ideas by sensation and reflection. But what should move him to advance that we have no other way of acquiring ideas; why he should exclude our moral sense and deny even its existence with the pains of so much acute false reasoning, I shall not, at present, endeavor to explain. But having so determined, he found it necessary to remove all notions of innate moral principles (and with them, all other innate principles) out of the way, in the beginning of his book: for had they been granted, another source of ideas must have been admitted besides those of sensation and reflection as explained by Mr. Locke. And I shall not hesitate to affirm that a clear and indisputable explication of this mode of acquiring ideas would have cost him much more pains in trouble than all the rest of his most ingenious work. For human actions and opinions, in the ordinary course of things, pass away in so rapid a succession as to leave no lasting traces behind them; nothing fixed to which we may refer for a renewal or a correction of our moral ideas concerning them, if our memory prove deficient. And, unless they be recorded with extraordinary accuracy, they can seldom be contemplated a second time in precisely the same light in which they were viewed at the first.

But all those ideas which arise in our minds by the impressions which external things make upon our senses being derived from objects of fixed and lasting natures, when our memory fails us, when we doubt the clearness or precision of our ideas, we can, generally, refer with ease to the objects themselves, and can renew, or rectify, our ideas at pleasure. This renders geometry so certain and indisputable as science: for the least variation or incorrectness in our ideas may be discovered and corrected by recurring to the figures themselves, which, through the medium of sight, convey invariably the same ideas to the mind. Nor is there any impediment, anything naturally interesting to our affections, in the nature of the things themselves, that should make us see them falsely or apply them irrationally.

Display More

As those who have been here long enough know, I highly recommend the entire essay by Barwis - "[Dialogue on Innate Principles.](#)" My view has been for a while, and continues to be, that working with Barwis' core point it's possible to reconstruct a very possible description of the path that Epicurus was taking on anticipations as a PRE-conceptual ("pre-ideas") faculty.

DIALOGUES CONCERNING INNATE PRINCIPLES.

CONTAINING
AN EXAMINATION OF MR. LOCKE'S
DOCTRINE ON THAT SUBJECT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
THREE DIALOGUES CONCERNING LIBERTY.

*Mensurae arbitrarie conscientiam mensis sunt, quae ab illis immortalibus acceptae, quae a nobis deus non potest
quae a optimorum conditionum atque factorum totis in conspectu nobis erit, sine ulla mens et cuncta cum honestate vitentis.*

*...And must think that consciousness implanted in our minds, which we have received from the immortal gods, and which cannot be taken
from us, to be the most powerful motive of all. And if that is a witness of virtuous maxims and virtuous actions throughout our whole lives,
we shall live without any fear, and in the greatest honor.*

CICERO, *Oratio pro et CLAUDIO.*