

# Preconceptions and PD24

Post by “Eikadistes” of December 14, 2021 at 5:50 PM

I propose that ΦΑΝΤΑΣΤΙΚΗΝ ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ is used as a placeholder in [PD24](#) for ΠΡΟΛΕΠΣΙΣ.

While continuing to expand my glossary, I came across an interesting phrase that has lead me down a rabbit hole, from which I am still attempting to emerge. *Join me*, and note that the following phrase is taken from the middle of the somewhat-lengthy KD24:

## ΠΑΣΑΝ ΦΑΝΤΑΣΤΙΚΗΝ ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ

As I understand it, Epicurus is employing the rhetorical device of repetition. In this case, the sentence separates three ideas by the conjunction “and”, indicating that the same value is being placed on each of the three ideas — they are equivalent. Given that the first two ideas are “Sensations “and “Feelings”, the structure of the sentence would indicate that the third idea should hold the same value, or would be placed in the same conceptual category as “Sensation” and “Feeling”. It is irregular to suppose that the "*phantastikai epibolai tês dianoias*" would be anything *but* “preconceptions”.

*Let’s turn to the translators, themselves.* Our 13-or-so English translators since 1850 have rendered the following:

*Of the 1st Criterion:*

- “Sensation”, “the Senses”, “Sense-Perception”

*Of the 2nd Criterion:*

- “Affectations”, “Feeling(s)”, “Passions”.

*Of the 3rd Criterion:*

- “conceptions of the mind which arise from the observable representation”,

- “mental apprehension”,

- “mental examinations of confirmed conceptions”,

- “focusing of thought into an impression”,

- “intuitive faculty of the mind”,

- “application of the intellect to presentations”

- “mental examinations of confirmed concepts”,
- “imaginary twist of mind”,
- “layers of imagination involved in your thoughts”,
- “some percept of the mind itself”,
- “perception”,
- “presentational application of thought.

While further researching the issue, I came across the following observation, provided by the *Oxford Handbook of Epicurus and Epicurean Philosophy*: “Preconceptions are direct apprehensions, true beliefs, concepts, and universal thoughts that are formed from the outside by the repeated impressions of simulacra emitted by objects, which ultimately are stored in our memory through an act of focalization of the mind [ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ]” (310). The author explicitly describes *prolepsis* according to KD24.

As I understand, this definition of *prolepsis* seems to drastically expand the number of concepts that qualify as “true preconceptions”.

However, an older group of Epicureans present a different interpretation:

“According to Diogenes Laertius (10.31-2 = LS 17A), Epicurus recognizes three criteria of truth [...] his followers added ‘impression-applications of the intellect’ (*phantastikai epibolai tês dianoiias*). [...] As for the ‘impression-applications of the intellect’, these were doubtless introduced to cater for cases like those of the gods, apprehended by images directly affecting the mind rather than through senses.” (Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics: An Introduction to Hellenistic Philosophy, 19).

So, the “Epicurean Sophists”, as Diogenes documents, seem to indicate that a 4th Criterion (Impression-Applications of the Intellect) is needed to elaborate on the 3rd Criterion (Preconceptions), since the 3rd Criterion (Preconception) required those “anticipations” to have been “impressed” by the 1st Criterion (Sensation), whereas concepts that are not directly, physically sensible except through the theatre of the mind (like “the Gods”), cannot be justified by *prolepsis*, and requires a separate *kriterion* to add to the other three.

*I note that the word *kriterion* is **ONLY** used once in the *Kuriai*, and happens to be found in KD24, which, as far as I can tell, is also the **ONLY** *doxa* to list the criteria of Sensation and Feeling, indicating that Preconceptions would also be there.*

Thus, the “Epicurean Sophists” (as ancient Athenian traditionalists argued), have misinterpreted the phrase ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ to express “concepts (like ‘gods’ and ‘justice’) formed from other, foundational concepts, or even dreams” (4th Criterion), versus the correct understanding which is that ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ includes **BOTH** “preconcepts (like

'dog' versus 'cat')" as well as "concepts (like "gods" and "justice").

I propose that ΦΑΝΤΑΣΤΙΚΗΝ ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ is used as a placeholder in KD24 for ΠΡΟΛΕΨΙΣ.

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### Post by “Cassius” of December 14, 2021 at 6:38 PM

Nate I am not sure that the term "placeholder" is clear to explain for the conclusion that you may be suggesting. Do you mean "equivalent"?

#### Quote

the following observation, provided by the *Oxford Handbook of Epicurus and Epicurean Philosophy*: “Preconceptions are direct apprehensions, true beliefs, concepts, and universal thoughts that are formed from the outside by the repeated impressions of simulacra emitted by objects, which ultimately are stored in our memory through an act of focalization of the mind [ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ]” (310). The author explicitly describes prolepsis according to KD24.

I am pretty sure that I disagree with the Oxford handbook line of reasoning and agree with what is cited in opposition as the older group which included Epicurus himself.

When the Handbook says that preconceptions include "concepts" I think we have a clear contradiction which rules out their interpretation. In order to be canonical it seems to me that the thing must be PRE rational, and I think most everyone agrees that word "concepts" means ideas and that concepts are the result of rational thinking, not things that float around in the universe on their own --- except under the Platonic "forms" viewpoint.

I would like to see this discussed as thoroughly and as long as anyone cares to pursue it because I think this issue is critical- and I agree with the implications of DeWitt that the adoption of this viewpoint by later Epicureans (and it seems certainly correct that they did so) was a disastrous development for the philosophy.

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### Post by “Cassius” of December 14, 2021 at 6:43 PM

### EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

example, when Aristotle says, "The sense of sight is not deceived as to color," this is true only of the close view, because colors fade in more distant views.

Sensations, however, usually present themselves in combinations of color, shape, size, smell, and so on. An immediate presentation of such a composite unit is a *phantasia*. All such presentations are true, but they do not rank as criteria in the meaning of the Canon, for the reason that the intelligence has come into play. An act of recognition (*epaisthesis*) has taken place in the mind of the observer, which is secondary to the primary reaction that registered color, shape, size, smell, and so forth.

That Epicurus did not regard these composite sensations as criteria is made clear by a statement of his own: "The fidelity of the recognitions guarantees the truth of the sensations."<sup>19</sup> For example, the animal standing yonder is recognized as a dun-colored ox. This is a secondary reaction. Only the primary perceptions of color, shape, size, and so on constitute a direct contact between man and the physical environment. The truth of these perceptions is confirmed by the fidelity of the recognition.

Again, let it be assumed that the quality of sweetness is registered by sensation. It is not, however, sensation that says, "This is honey"; a secondary reaction in the form of a recognition involving intelligence has taken place. This, in the terminology of Epicurus, is "a fantastic perception of the intelligence." These were not given the rank of criteria by Epicurus for the reason already cited. It is on record, however, that **later Epicureans** did so.<sup>20</sup>

So far is Epicurus from believing all sensations to be true in the meaning of the Canon that he guards against error in various ways. In the first place, attention must be paid to all sensations, as already mentioned. Next, the sensations of the individual must be checked by those of others: "Consequently attention must be paid to the immediate feelings and to the sensations, in common with others in matters of common concern and individually in matters of private concern and to all clear presentations of every one of the criteria."<sup>21</sup> This guardedness was imperative, because contemporary skepticism was flourishing.

Fortunately the subject is so

it I will find:

at the moment at least I am not finding the additional discussion that I think exists somewhere else in EAHP about the comment made by Diogenes Laertius at line 31 (in case that's not clear already, which Bailey translates as "the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehensions of the mind" ===

#### Quote

31] Logic they reject as misleading. For they say it is sufficient for physicists to be guided by what things say of themselves. Thus in *The Canon* Epicurus says that the tests of truth are the sensations and concepts and the feelings; the Epicureans add to these the intuitive apprehensions of the mind. And this he says himself too in the summary addressed to Herodotus and in the [Principal Doctrines](#). For, he says, all sensation is irrational and does not admit of memory; for it is not set in motion by itself, nor when it is set in motion by something else, can it add to it or take from it.

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#### **Post by “Cassius” of December 14, 2021 at 7:04 PM**

Well since I cited that same section before, maybe it IS the one I was thinking about: [Thoughts On The Alleged "Fourth Leg of the Canon"](#)

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#### **Post by “Don” of December 14, 2021 at 8:43 PM**

DeWitt wrote a whole paper on this specific topic. [Epicurus On Impressions of the Mind.pdf](#)

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#### **Post by “Don” of December 14, 2021 at 10:16 PM**

@Nate I think you're into something. Here's my take from a little while back on [PD24](#):

Post

[PD24 - Commentary and Translation of PD 24](#)

Principal Doctrine 24 (PD 24) is one of the more convoluted doctrines with multiple phrases and conjunctions. I would like to provide some commentary and break the doctrine down into manageable words and phrases for everyone to get a more coherent understanding of what Epicurus was communicating. You may also want to take a look at [this doctrine's page on the Epicurus Wiki](#):

First the original text:

[...]

Now, let's break it down before we put it all back together. I'll provide a (mostly) literal...



Don

September 2, 2020 at 11:56 PM

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## **Post by "Cassius" of December 15, 2021 at 7:04 AM**

Thanks to both of you guys for this post so far. This is an essay by Dewitt that I have tended to just glance over because of its technical nature, but you guys are wrestling with the same issue that he found so important, and in reviewing it I am seeing again why he spent so much time with the issue.

I do want to make a request that I hope you will keep in mind: In order to give your work as wide and strong an impact as possible, I hope you will take special care to spell out the possible conclusions and implications of the various options. It's very easy for more casual readers to throw up their hands and think that the difficult translation issues are just left to the experts, and not necessary for them to understand. It's probably true that the "translation" aspect of it is beyond most of us, but if we bury the conclusions inside the technicalities then I think people fail to see why the issues are so important.

In this case, it takes a lot of reading into the DeWitt article to discovery that there are at least a couple of major issues involved, such as "Would or did Epicurus himself wish to use the literary device of *casting the mind or soul out into space*? It seems to me that modern writers now universally seem to agree that he did so, which DeWitt points out would be contrary to one of the most fundamental physical premises of the philosophy -- that the mind/soul is absolutely connected and tied to the body and cannot be separated from it.

There's also perhaps the ultimate issue of whether this terminology, whatever is meant by it, constitutes a "fourth leg of the canon." On that point it seems even more clear that Epicurus himself did not consider it to be so, and it ought to be an immediate red flag whenever later and lesser minds attempt to "improve upon" fundamental aspects of the philosophy of the original "genius."

Related to that is the complex relationship between the "true" and the "real" which I think we see over and over to be important in Epicurean philosophy. If we can't handle with intelligence a basic issue like whether Epicurus held "[all sensations are true](#)" then I doubt such a person can ever make anything else understandable about of Epicurean epistemology.

So I hope you guys can develop the discussion in ways that make the real-world conclusions clear. And it's worth encouraging many more of us to read the DeWitt essay in full, especially to dig out its conclusions, rather than just give up when we're hit with a barrage of untranslated words and phrases.

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### Post by "Don" of December 15, 2021 at 7:28 AM

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

"Would or did Epicurus himself wish to use the literary device of casting the mind or soul out into space? It seems to me that modern writers now universally seem to agree that he did so, which DeWitt points out would be contrary to one of the most fundamental physical premises of the philosophy -- that the mind/soul is absolutely connected and tied to the body and cannot be separated from it.

Oh, I have no problem with the "literary device," and there's no need to postulate some kind of "out of body" experience. For me, this simply means imagination or thought-experiments or thinking deeply about the cosmos, atoms, void, etc. out there. That's just what astrophysicists and theoretical physicists do now. Even Einstein was famous for his thought experiments. If you're saying there are commentators that put forward some kind of soul travel outside the body... Yeah, that makes no sense.

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### Post by "Cassius" of December 15, 2021 at 2:32 PM

### [Quote from Don](#)

If you're saying there are commentators that put forward some kind of soul travel outside the body... Yeah, that makes no sense.

I think what's on my mind is that I pick up things on reading posts and articles from a variety of sources, so I should not overgeneralize. However I know from several discussions that the point being discussed here has been of interest in some of the discussions over in Greece. If considered strictly as a literary device, agreed - no harm done. But what I pick up is that those who contend that there should be considered to be a "fourth" leg of the canon consider this reference to be key in supporting the "fourth leg" theory. And of course this goes way back - long enough for Diogenes Laertius to refer to it.

So I THINK the point is that the issue to be avoided is seeing this as a "bridge" to platonism, or a "bridge" to making any kind of fully-formed concepts to be part of the canon itself. I believe the first and major point that probably gets lost is that the "canon of truth" is not itself a list of ideas, but instead a set of measuring devices which produce data from which ideas are formed. Even at that basic level I think there's a lot of confusion and the Stoic-sympathizers see this discussion as a path to finding "innate ideas" in Epicurean philosophy.

It's very innocent and fine to think in terms of flying through the universe mentally and seeing things from outer space. That should not lead to problems because no real Epicurean would think it possible for the soul or mind to literally leave the body. But if the wording turns into a device by which the mind has some kind of preprogrammed power to attach particular words to particular events (and that's an argument I have seen in private) then I think we're a long way down a road that wouldn't be started down in the first place if we were rigorous about the canonical faculties being automatic and pre-rational.

No doubt it's tricky, because the texts seem clear that Epicurus thinks that the mind can receive "images" directly. But even there I think the emphasis should be that these images are received in much the same way that the eyes receive light -- they may receive these things, but they don't make judgments about them or perceive them automatically as fully formed ideas.

I hope I don't sound tedious on this point but I've seen it come up over and over and every conversation needs to probably go back to these basics to be sure the table is set.

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**Post by “Don” of December 16, 2021 at 7:03 AM**

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I hope I don't sound tedious on this point

Hey, as they say, "the Devil's in the details." All good points.

I agree there's a big difference between innate faculties and innate concepts. We are not born with innate concepts of house, human, horse, justice or οίκος, άνθρωπος, ἵππος, δίκαιος and then map reality to those innate concepts. Research doesn't support that. Epicurus doesn't seem to me to support that.

I will say language acquisition in children is miraculous to behold! I can see how some may have come up with a theory that we "re-discover" language because it is so magical to behold. It may be interesting to note that research has discovered that babies naturally produce every phoneme that human language uses and those that are not phonemically significant for their parents first language will be weeded out. We gradually learn to see that animal as a horse and not a ἵππος or Pferd depending if our parents are English or American or Greek or German.

We also don't have some kind of innate Platonic Horse Form against which we compare our sensory input. It's simply the baby's constant reinforcement of "That's a horsie." Points. "Orsy!" "No, that's a cat." "Orsy!" "No, that is a dog." "Horsy!" "Right, that's a horsy! Oh, pretty horsy." I find it hard to think that Epicurus endorsed an innate horse-template to "measure" our sensory input against. But, you're right, I think I've read that sort of thing as some saying that's what prolepseis are.

I need to go back and read Laertius description of the Canon and Sedley's paper on On Nature Book 28 on language.

As for the "fourth leg," my jury is still out that there's any 4th leg at all. I'm still not entirely convinced that Laertius's "Epicureans" weren't qualifying the prolepseis or expanding the explanation of prolepseis. I also need to dig back into DeWitt's paper.

The translation is:

"Now in The Canon Epicurus affirms that our sensations and preconceptions and our feelings are the standards of truth ; the Epicureans generally make perceptions of mental presentations<sup>44</sup> to be also standards."

Note 44 in Perseus read: Such mental pictures are caused by atoms too fine to affect sense : *cf.* § 64*infra*; Lucr. ii. 740 *sqq.*, iv. 722 *sqq.* ; Cic. *N.D.* i. 54. On the whole subject consult Usener's *Epicurea*, Fr. 242-265, and, more especially, Sext. *Emp. Adv. math.* vii. 203-216.

Usener Fragments 242-265 are available on Attalus's site: <http://www.attalus.org/translate/epicurus2.html#us2>

Especially pertinent here seems to be 255-259.

This isn't a simple topic by any means, but it is an important one. I'm enjoying the digging in!

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**Post by “Eikadistes” of December 16, 2021 at 12:16 PM**

"During the 100ms, the human brain pieces together information from memories, past personal experiences, and intrinsic values to generate calculated judgements. [...] The researchers also found that the first impressions were heavily influenced by the evaluation of how much value the fictional person presented would add to the test subject's life. This again presents first impressions as a way to befriend solely for personal gain, but also aligns with theories of evolution that state that humans developed first impressions to avoid interactions with dangerous organisms." (<https://frontiersmag.wustl.edu/2018/12/21/neu...st-impressions/>)

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**Post by “Don” of December 16, 2021 at 5:47 PM**

Thanks, @Nate . That's a fascinating article.

How would you line up that with prolepseis or concepts? Epicurus certainly wouldn't have had instruments or observations at the 100ms scale, but I do think he got some things intuitively correct. Just curious about your take on the article.

I also think this intersects with Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett's research. The idea of the brain needing to predict our actions is intriguing, makes sense when explained, and provides interesting parallels to Epicurus's philosophy.

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**Post by “Eikadistes” of December 16, 2021 at 10:35 PM**

I'm not sure. The minute activity of the soul is a complicated mess.

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**Post by “Don” of December 16, 2021 at 10:48 PM**

Well said!

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### **Post by “Eikadistes” of December 16, 2021 at 11:52 PM**

There seems to be particular importance in my mind on the "pro-" part of "prolepsis". The particular prefix that is added to the root word indicates a temporal relation, in this case, "before". This third criterion of knowledge (*whatever* it is) is occurring "**before**" something else, indicating that Epicurus was critically evaluating the thing that comes "later" in relation to the more reliable thing "before". In this case, it seems to be some form of mental activity.

The typical kinds of mental activity we observe and to which we can readily relate are things like "thinking", "imagining", "reflecting", "contemplating", "calculating", "reasoning", "rationalizing", "problem solving", all of which take time.

He's talking about something that happens incredibly fast (or has already happened as far as we're concerned).

So, as far as this article goes, I think it is giving a good, mechanical description of some of those intellectual activities that happen so fast, they not only precede, but they help shape later activities like "conceptualizing".

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 17, 2021 at 5:12 AM**

#### [Quote from Nate](#)

There seems to be particular importance in my mind on the "pro-" part of "prolepsis". The particular prefix that is added to the root word indicates a temporal relation, in this case, "before".

I very much agree!

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### **Post by “Eikadistes” of December 17, 2021 at 9:11 AM**

Intuitively, I entertain the idea that *Preconception* fits into the moment when you realize "I've been lying to myself this whole time", or "I think some part of me always knew." I recognize this feeling as being equivalent to dreams that compel me to ask "I wonder what that meant?", regardless of any developed perspective I have regarding my intellectual judgment of the activity. It's also the part of me that drops LSD, eats mushrooms, or takes Nitrous (*I recently had a vasectomy and had way too much nitrous which lead to a fascinating experience*) and experiences an un-intellectually-filtered world **without** the context of having access to the parts of my brain that formulate analytical thought, construct sentences, recognizes relations, and links words. However, I remember that in that state, I feel overwhelmed with a sense of meaning; I'm just cut off from the easy ability to express that meaning with any sort of symbolic knowledge, such as spoken or written language, or even sign language. I've done it enough to learn to recognize non-linguistic impressions that do not dematerialize once the link between the language centers of the brain get "disconnected" from the processing of sensory experience, so, when I "come out of it", I tend to bring some kind of meaning with me, but it's also after interpretation, and never before. Like waking up from a dream. You are only mechanically capable of remembering the parts of the dream that you were able to link with a symbolic, conscious words, concepts, or thoughts at the *very* final moments of the dream, just prior to waking up (I've been keeping a dream journal for 12 years and have a wealth of evidence to support the regularity of the experience I'm describing).

All in all, I feel like dreams and psychedelic experiences give me a direct link to interface with *Preconception* prior to having those intuitive impressions dissected by the intellect like a medical student performing an autopsy. At most, in that medical metaphor, you can only learn about inanimate organs, without seeing how they work together. Likewise, there's a danger in language to mistake "the map for the territory" and getting lost in the "map" without actual going on a journey. The *Preconception* would never make the mistake of mis-recognizing the map. In fact, I don't think *Preconception* is aware that some other part of the Intellect is a map-maker that is trying to write an encyclopedia for later reference. The human brain (as I continue to speculate) shifted to a "map-making-centric" intellectual schema somewhere between 10,000-50,000 years ago versus the previous mental schema, which was able to pursue pleasure, learn about nature, and predict natural patterns without the benefit of complex, recursive language.

I think language is the thing that disrupts the clarity of *Preconception*. Or, at least, I propose that.

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**Post by “Eikadistes” of December 28, 2021 at 4:56 PM**

I'm just reading his book, and Haris Dimitriadis seems to make the same observation when he writes that "Thoughts, musings, and plans are not true, if they are not based on direct, real and obvious evidence, such as those that carry our physical characteristics, namely the senses, emotions, and anticipations. This clearly describes a Principal Doctrine '... and such evidence must come from **the five senses, the feelings of pain and joy, and the impressions of the mind that arise from anticipation...**' (Epicurus and the Pleasant Life: A Philosophy of Nature, 35)

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## **Post by "Cassius" of December 28, 2021 at 6:12 PM**

Nate what do you interpret that to mean? I have a lot of respect for Haris, and don't think he gets the credit he probably deserves for his books.

But I am not sure about the use of the word "true" in that sentence you quote. If what is meant is that a concept of a thing (concept taken to be the equivalent of thoughts, musings, plans) does not correspond with the reality of a thing unless the concept is closely connected with our senses, emotions, and anticipations of that thing, then I think I agree.

But I am concerned that some of our thoughts on the subject of abstractions may not be worded as well as could be hoped. If the point is that a concept needs to correspond to reality to be true, then again, yes. But must all concepts be "true" in order for them to have significance to us? If a concept generates great pain or pleasure, it still may have significance to us, just like (maybe) the images seen in a dream.

I have probably just lost the flow of the conversation but if our subject is the meaning of anticipations, what does the observation you quote tell us? Would you take it to mean that all anticipations must be "true" to be anticipations? That is ruled out, correct, by the observation that Epicurus makes that the views of the gods are anticipations but also are false (?) I think I am concerned that we are not being clear about the nature of anticipations and when and how to consider them to be "true" -- because we don't see the data received from the feelings or the 5 senses to be "true to all the facts all the time" and I don't think we should go in that direction as to anticipations either, correct?

*In other words, I think there is a strong temptation to see anticipations as "true by nature" in the sense of interpreting anticipations as ideas that we hold to be true because nature gives it to us. I think that would open up all sorts of problems if we were to interpret Epicurus as saying that, so I don't think that is what he means. Is Haris saying that in this quote?*

This is such a complex subject i am mainly trying to make sure we're all clear about what we are discussing.

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## Post by “Don” of December 28, 2021 at 9:22 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

the observation that Epicurus makes that the views of the gods are anticipations but also are false (?)

Wait. Where does that come from?

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## Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2021 at 9:29 PM

I will look for a more definite statement of what I just wrote, but it is my understanding that that is a fair rendition of this section of the letter to Menoeceus:

123-4) Ἄ δέ σοι συνεχῶς παρήγγελλον, ταῦτα καὶ πράττε καὶ μελέτα, στοιχεῖα τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν ταῦτ' εἶναι διαλαμβάνων. Πρῶτον μὲν τὸν θεὸν ζῶον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον νομίζων, ὡς ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις ὑπεγράφη, μὴθὲν μῆτε τῆς ἀφθαρσίας ἀλλότριον μῆτε τῆς μακαριότητος ἀνοίκειον αὐτῷ πρόσαπτε· πᾶν δὲ τὸ φυλάττειν αὐτοῦ δυνάμενον τὴν μετὰ ἀφθαρσίας μακαριότητα περὶ αὐτὸν δόξαζε. θεοὶ μὲν γὰρ εἰσὶν· ἐναργῆς γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ γνῶσις· οἴους δ' αὐτοῦς <οἱ> πολλοὶ νομίζουσι, οὐκ εἰσιν· οὐ γὰρ φυλάττουσι αὐτοὺς οἴους νομίζουσι. ἀσεβῆς δὲ οὐχ ὁ τοῦ τῶν πολλῶν θεοῦ ἀναιρῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ τὰς τῶν πολλῶν δόξας θεοῖς προσάπτων. οὐ γὰρ προλήψεις εἰσὶν ἀλλ' ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς αἱ τῶν πολλῶν ὑπὲρ θεῶν ἀποφάσεις. ἐνθεν αἱ μέγιστα βλάβαι ἐκ θεῶν ἐπάγονται καὶ ὠφέλεια <τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς>. ταῖς γὰρ ἰδίαις οἰκειούμενοι διὰ παντὸς ἀρεταῖς τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀποδέχονται, πᾶν τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον ὡς ἀλλότριον νομίζοντες.

everything necessary to regain it.

123-4) I encourage you, as always, to study and practice the things which are the ingredients of happiness. First of all, consider that a god is an immortal and happy being, as is commonly written. But do not believe anything about divine nature other than what is congenial for an eternally happy existence. The gods do exist because we have preconceived notions of them. But they are not like how most people describe them, because they do not retain the notion of the gods that they first receive. Rejecting the popular myths does not make one impious. Impious is one who upholds popular beliefs about the gods, because those pronouncements are false opinions rather than actual preconceptions. Hence the severest harm from the gods is anticipated by the many, while benefits are reaped by the virtuous. The reason being is that those who reflect upon their own virtues regard the gods as resembling themselves, and reject all else as outlandish.

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## Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2021 at 9:34 PM

We'll probably have a lot to discuss here, but let's first reestablish that anticipation is not true or false (so my wording is incorrect) - it is concepts that are true or false, and an anticipation precedes and is not the same as a concept:

into the category of abstract notions, where the Anticipations belong.  
The term *prolepsis* was correctly rendered by Cicero as *anticipatio* or *praenotio*<sup>33</sup> and less precisely, though intelligently, by the elder Pliny as *divinatio*. It is wrongly rendered as "concept" by those who confuse the general concept of such a thing as an ox with the abstract idea of justice. One scholar prefers "preconception," but perhaps "pre-concept" would be preferable. It seems most advantageous, however, to adhere to "Anticipation" because this is the meaning of the Greek word *prolepsis*.

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So that first needs to be clarified in what I wrote above. It is not the "views of the gods" that are anticipations that are false, it is the conclusions that we make based on the anticipations.

The point I need to be focusing and making is that anticipations are not fully formed concepts and thus are neither true nor false -- it's opinions that are true or false.

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### **Post by "Don" of December 28, 2021 at 9:35 PM**

No, that's not my interpretation of that section at all going back to the text itself.

The only valid - "true" - conception of the gods is through our prolepsis of a blessed and incorruptible being.

The beliefs of the masses, the *hoi polloi*, are what are false when they say the gods provide blessings to the good and punishment to the wicked.

(btw we cross posted. This was between your two.)

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### **Post by "Eikadistes" of December 28, 2021 at 9:37 PM**

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

Nate what do you interpret that to mean? I have a lot of respect for Haris, and don't think he gets the credit he probably deserves for his books.

I just think his assertion lends weight to the proposition that ΠΑΣΑΝ [ΦΑΝΤΑΣΤΙΚΗΝ ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ](#) (from KD24) is synonymous with the word ΠΡΟΛΕΨΙΣ.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2021 at 9:38 PM**

Don would you say that any anticipation of the gods or anything else can be "true" or "false"?

That is probably the starting point for us to be together on. The rest derives from clarifying that, i think.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2021 at 9:39 PM**

#### [Quote from Nate](#)

I just think his assertion lends weight to the proposition that ΠΑΣΑΝ [ΦΑΝΤΑΣΤΙΚΗΝ ΕΠΙΒΟΛΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ](#) (from KD24) is synonymous with the word ΠΡΟΛΕΨΙΣ.

Ok, but how do you relate the significance of that in English?

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### **Post by “Eikadistes” of December 28, 2021 at 9:40 PM**

He makes a number of interesting assertions. On pages 71-72, he writes:

#### Quote

*Our character, which incorporates the state of our mood, is a synthesis of our nature and nurture; it is biologically expressed through the neurons and synapses of our brain. In the Epicurean terminology it is known as "anticipations" or "prolepses," reflecting the view that our character anticipates, to a great extent, our future experiences.*

---

### **Post by “Don” of December 28, 2021 at 9:46 PM**

I would reply - off the cuff here - that the components of the Canon - Sensations, Pathē, and Prolepseis - have to give us an accurate picture of reality upon which we then build our concepts which can then be either true or false or maybe valid or empty might need better. The pre-rational components on the Canon have to register reality or they're meaningless as a starting point. The idea that the oar is bent is an invalid concept built on the image reflected on our retina. Where the prolepseis fit in is more difficult but I have to think they also register reality before we begin to build concepts on them.

Liked I said, off the cuff.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2021 at 9:48 PM**

I think Haris' instincts are good; it's unfortunate that he doesn't seem to pursue some of the details with footnotes or sources and so some of it does come across as "assertions" that are needing justifications. But someone reading and looking for new avenues to pursue would likely find his views useful.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2021 at 9:52 PM**

Don this clip is what I see as the real issue, and the part underlined in red is where I think DeWitt canNOT be correct. To me he is implying that an anticipation is an idea (by calling it innate), so to me the part I poorly expressed above is this; the question is whether an anticipation is an "idea" that can be right or wrong (not that some anticipations are right and some are wrong; I stated that exactly incorrectly, as if I were taking DeWitt's position here):

## THE ELEMENT OF ANTICIPATION

The core of the problem is to be recognized in the element of anticipation. It is positively stated by Cicero that the use of the term *prolepsis* was an innovation on the part of Epicurus.<sup>38</sup> It is agreed that this term *prolepsis* also denotes some sort of concept or idea. No one denies that its proper signification is "anticipation." Therefore, if an idea precedes or anticipates something, this can hardly be anything but experience. The said idea must therefore be innate. Quite correctly, therefore, Cicero wrote with studied precision when reporting on the gods of Epicurus,<sup>39</sup> "implanted or rather inborn conceptions of them." Nevertheless it has been deemed unnecessary to believe that Epicurus held such an opinion and it is even declared that "the notion of 'innate ideas' would be wholly repugnant to Epicureanism."<sup>40</sup> Yet there is compelling evidence for believing the precise opposite, that he thought of all infant behavior as anticipatory of later experience.

—\

I am pretty sure DeWitt's footnote 40 there is a reference to Bailey (I will look it up and confirm) and there I agree with Bailey, and would say that innate IDEAS are incompatible -- but not innate "principles".

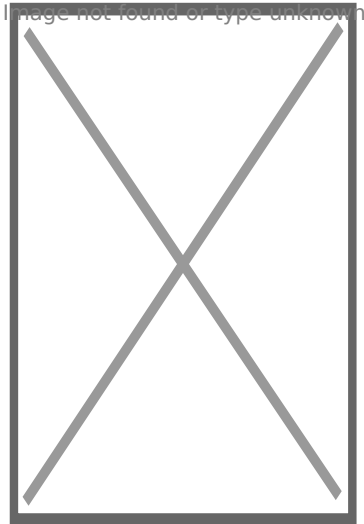
(Note: Yes the cite 40 is to Bailey's "Greek Atomists and Epicurus, section 557.1)

I think deWiitt is mainly just speaking loosely, as I have been guilty of myself above. His last sentence, for example "yet there is compelling...." can still be correct. just because infant behavior may be anticipatory of later experience, that doesn't mean babies have innate "ideas."

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**Post by "Don" of December 28, 2021 at 10:06 PM**

40 is from Bailey's The Greek Atomists and Epicurus 557.1.



[The Greek Atomists And Epicurus : Cyril Bailey : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Cyril Bailey - The Greek Atomists and Epicurus  
archive.org

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 29, 2021 at 8:40 AM**

Continuing to try to think through these issues, as I reflect on our past discussions about anticipations, I currently think:

(1) That the path most likely to be productive is going to be something similar to a "pattern assembly" and/or "pattern recognition faculty, without which we would not even recognize that there are commonalities between things that upon further thinking we find similar in ways we can name.

(2) The most important question in the analysis is not about the mechanism, but the related issue of "content." If you take the position that anticipations are "true" or "false" in the same sense as we consider concepts to be true or false, then you will inevitably end up with Plato's ideal forms. You will conclude that Nature has somehow created on its own, and likely from eternity, certain "ideas" that exist in some way external to us, that we can eventually "recognize" through the rational use of our minds. So the closer you get to thinking that anticipations are fully formed ideas (in other words, you translate anticipations as "concepts" as Bailey does) then the closer you are to Plato and thinking that certain ideas are somehow created or blessed by Nature for us to recognize and adopt.

(3) I think DeWitt is correct in taking to task Diogenes Laertius' description of the formation of anticipations through repeated observations. Repeated observations can be part of the process of refining our thoughts, but they can't be the starting point. Something had to be in place previously so that the first time you saw a cow, or an ox, you had a faculty of absorbing certain parts of the observation into connections, that you then over time developed, through thinking and repeated observations, into the word "cow" or "ox." But that part of the process is the conceptual reasoning process, in which you think about the various attributes and decide what is and is not essential to your definition of "ox" and "cow." The pre-conceptual part, the part which it seems to me Epicurus is pointing to as anticipations, must involve an automatic, pre-rational, faculty (like the eyes or ears) that are turned to assemble perceptual data in certain ways, but which are not themselves pre-loaded with "ideas" to be recognized.

And that gets back to the error in my statements above. Concepts are true or false as a result of reasoning about them; we say  $2 + 2 = 4$  by definition, and we can say an equation is true or false due to our definitions. But a faculty like sight or hearing (or presumably anticipations) is only true or false in the sense of "how much of the full picture of all the facts are these perceptions accurately conveying to our minds?" Because neither the eyes nor the ears nor the anticipations (presumably) deliver "conclusions" to us; they just deliver raw data that we then ourselves have to evaluate is pleasurable or painful or blue or yellow or a tree or a flower or whatever.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of December 29, 2021 at 2:05 PM**

OK I think I have it set up and linked correctly - if you see something you prefer changed, let me know. I'd like to keep some of the major stuff, like this and Don's Menoecus and Josh's Torquatus, easily findable from the first page since they are so valuable. I've added a link to the "Core Document" page for the PDs too.

Did we talk about whether you might extend this at some point to the Vatican Sayings? Unfortunately I am not aware of nearly so many options.

And last but not least, if you ever had the time to really flesh it out as a handbook of all the lists, there's also the list of the "Twelve Fundamentals." I am only really aware of two versions of that: DeWitt's version, and also a list by Diskin Clay in his article on Epicurus' Last Will and Testament.

But those can come later I am sure what you've done already as you stretched as it is!

## Post by “Eikadistes” of January 22, 2022 at 7:49 PM

"The point which Epicurus discusses after sensation is what he called by the technical term of προλήψις, anticipation or preconception. It is explained as a general idea stored up, a right opinion, a conception, or the memory of what has been more than once presented to us from without. When we apply a name to an object we can only do so by means of a previous conception corresponding to the name: and that conception is ultimately an image derived from the senses. Epicurus, in explaining these "anticipations," says: "In the case of every term of speech the primary ideas it conveys must be seen (by the mental eye) and not stand in need of demonstration: otherwise we shall have nothing to which to refer the point in question. These preconceptions are not in any true sense innate. They are products of observation. Their value lies in being common to the mass of mankind, and so affording a basis of argument. In the case of any dispute, in which general terms are employed, the first question is: What clear and distinct idea can we attach to it? And this does not mean, can I define it—can I substitute one set of general terms for another? But can I really put it before my intellectual vision distinctly? Epicurus, like Bishop Berkeley, reduces general ideas to the individual images which do duty for them in the imagination. He wants us to realize our ideas in a concrete case as the true test of our having them. And here, perhaps, is a fundamental fallacy of Epicureanism. It holds that truth is identical with what is clearly and distinctly conceived. It substitutes imagination for thought. Unlike Spinoza, who contrasts the imperfect conception of the imagination with the adequate knowledge of understanding, Epicurus abides by what is easily and satisfactorily presented to the mind under a pictorial or semi-sensuous aspect. Now, imagination most easily reproduces the phenomena familiar to us of bodies in motion. [...] A word only existed as the symbol of a mental image: and therefore it must present its credentials in the shape of a prolepsis, i.e. a clear and distinct image, conveyable, not in the general terms of a definition, but in the precise and particular language of a description. Can the conception be realized as an image? If it can, it is a safe and satisfactory basis of argument : if it cannot, it must be dismissed. A curious example of this dislike to generalities, to definitions and divisions, is seen in the contest which the Epicureans carried on against mathematics. If we believe Cicero, Epicurus declared the whole of geometry to be false : and he couples the remark with an expression of surprise as to whether Polyænus, who had a considerable mathematical reputation, had put the whole science aside after he became a disciple of Epicurus. We may be sure he did not; and the very conjunction of the two statements suggests that Epicureanism rather expressed a view of the nature and method of geometrical truth, than a doubt as to its scientific value. What the Epicureans principally objected to, we infer, were the principles—the axioms, postulates, and definitions: though others of them, like Zeno the Sidonian, went further, and urged that there were points involved in the demonstrations which had not been explicitly accepted in the preliminary principles. Now, the definitions of geometry have the defect that they cannot be represented in any distinct image. No man can conceive an image of a geometrical line, or point, or surface; the only image which can be raised to meet these terms is that of a physical line or surface, which is evidently quite unsatisfactory for the purposes of

mathematics. Even if we go a step further, we can say that the general conception of a circle or a triangle corresponding to the definitions of Euclid is such as can only be realized in special and individual instances of these figures. We need not particularly care for the abuse which, according to an ancient mathematician, they lavished on the proof of the proposition of the 1st Book of Euclid, as demonstrating what was palpable even to a donkey.) The main ground of their attack on the mathematical sciences was, that if they started from false premises (i.e. not in accordance with facts), they could not be true [...] The 'imaginative impressions on the intellect' are contrasted with the sensations in such a way as to render it more probable that we should understand by them the images which present themselves to the intellect (in the Epicurean description of it), and not to the senses. In other words, they represent the impressions derived from the spectra or idola, which are too delicate to affect the senses, but can act upon the mind." (Wallace, Epicureanism, 220-225)

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2022 at 8:36 PM

### [Quote from Nate](#)

And here, perhaps, is a fundamental fallacy of Epicureanism. It holds that truth is identical with what is clearly and distinctly conceived. It substitutes imagination for thought. Unlike Spinoza, who contrasts the imperfect conception of the imagination with the adequate knowledge of understanding, Epicurus abides by what is easily and satisfactorily presented to the mind under a pictorial or semi-sensuous aspect.

This is an example of the generally hostile tone toward Epicurus I pick up in Wallace's writing when I last tried to read this book. There's a lot going on here - another example is in referencing Berkeley, and I don't find Wallace persuasive in even being clear what his point is, much less making it in a compelling way.

### [Quote from Nate](#)

What the Epicureans principally objected to, we infer, were the principles—the axioms, postulates, and definitions: though others of them, like Zeno the Sidonian, went further, and urged that there were points involved in the demonstrations which had not been explicitly accepted in the preliminary principles.

This is a reference to geometry, but again I am not able to clearly say where Wallace is going. Is he saying that Epicurus was going too far in objecting to mathematics, or is he endorsing what I gather was Frances Wright's final viewpoint, that all efforts to conclude that any theory is

sound, beyond just observation, is bound to fail.

It's definitely useful to add Wallace's translations to the big collection of variations of the texts, but I have not found his commentaries to be very helpful.

[Not posting this to be argumentative, just as a marker that if someone who is newer reads a long paragraph like that, and doesn't really follow where Wallace is going, that person is not alone.]

At the very least, if he is going to suggest that he is smarter than Epicurus and say something like this: "And here, perhaps, is a fundamental fallacy of Epicureanism. It holds that truth is identical with what is clearly and distinctly conceived. It substitutes imagination for thought." then I would like him to clearly explain why he thinks Epicurus was wrong and what he thinks the correct answer is. Does this mean he is a Platonist or religionist and finds truth in ideal forms or divine revelation or some kind of logic ("thought")?

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of January 22, 2022 at 11:52 PM**

From the text cover page on [epicurus.info](http://epicurus.info), fwiw:

*Epicureanism*

*by William Wallace (1843-1897)*

*Originally published by the "Society for promoting Christian Knowledge" in 1880 (now in public domain).*

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### **Post by “SimonC” of January 23, 2022 at 6:27 AM**

#### [Quote from Nate](#)

"The point which Epicurus discusses after sensation is what he called by the technical term of προλήψις, anticipation or preconception. It is explained as a general idea stored up, a right opinion, a conception, or the memory of what has been more than once presented to us from without. When we apply a name to an object we can only do so by means of a previous conception corresponding to the name: and that conception is

ultimately an image derived from the senses.

This is the Laertius view of prolepsis which DeWitt argues against, so should perhaps be taken with a grain of salt.

Being able to be summarised as a clear mental image can't be an essential feature of prolepsis since we know that Epicurus considered "justice" to be an example.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 23, 2022 at 7:11 AM**

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

#### Quote

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

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

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

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

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

As Nate has done for the translations, we probably would profit from trying to assemble the various options (DeWitt's, Bailey's, this one, etc etc etc) because it is even hard to state a list of the varying positions. I doubt that is at the top of my list to do, but assembling a list of the major positions on anticipations (sort of like we sometimes refer to idealist and realist views of the gods) would be very helpful. Simply saying "The DeWitt position" vs. "the Bailey position" vs. the "Voula Tsouna position" isn't really very helpful.

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## Post by “Don” of February 9, 2022 at 9:27 PM

I was looking at Sedley's paper for something else and came across this:

### Quote

According to Diogenes Laertius (X 31), the Canon gave the three criteria as being sensations, *προληψεις*, and feelings. Cicero's translation of this phrase shows that there is no significance; except perhaps a grammatical one, in Diogenes' omission of the article before *προληψεις*. I mention this because Furley and Rist have deduced from it that *προληψεις* were lumped together with sensations as constituting a single category. Its inclusion of *προληψεις* as truth-criteria dates the Canon at any rate later than the Letter to Herodotus, according to the principle established above. It may well also be significant that the metaphor of *κανων*, meaning a truth-criterion, does not occur in the fragments of On Nature Books I-XV, or in the Letter to Herodotus, but is found frequently in the writings which we have already established to belong after 300 B.C.71

This should help dispel the mystification created by Diogenes Laertius' observation that the Epicureans add *φανταστικαι επιβολαι της διάνοιας* as truth-criteria, which has appeared to many to conflict with Epicurus' own acceptance of these 'image-making mental acts of concentration' as virtual truth-criteria in the Letter to Herodotus 79 and in KD XXIV. If we assign an early date not only to the Letter to Herodotus but also to KD XXIV, the most satisfactory solution will be that when he came to develop the notion of

προληψεις in the following years he subsumed under it certain truth-criteria to which he had previously granted an independent validity. We have already observed that the 'fundamental meaning of a word ' became an element in the broader concept of προληψεις ; and the same goes also for the φανταστικαι επιβολαι της διάνοιας , without which we could not visualise things at will, and consequently could have no generalised conceptions at all. Thus when he came to write the Canon he had downgraded φανταστικαι επιβολαι της διάνοιας in favour of προληψεις. And if later Epicureans chose to upgrade them once more to the status of criteria, they had good authority in their master's early works for so doing. (p.16)

Sedley's paper is available on Academia.edu:  
<https://www.academia.edu/resource/work/4310042>

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### Post by “Cassius” of February 9, 2022 at 9:41 PM

Yikes. The main thing I get from that is that is going to pay to be cautious in taking positions on this topic.

This calls to mind how DeWitt comments that Lucretius seems to contain very little information on this subject, but that may be because Diogenes Laertius is the muddy one.

Maybe DeWitt is correct in pointing to the Velleius material as the best way to unwind the issues.

Very complicated and unclear subject.

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of April 26, 2025 at 3:45 PM

I'm going to re-visit this, but I need a placeholder.

As I'm translating into 10.50 of the *Epistle to Hēródotos*, I am finding a shit-ton of employments of *phantastikai epibolai tês dianoiias* as τὴν φαντασίαν, φαντασίαν ἐπιβλητικῶς τῇ διανοίᾳ, τῇ φανταστικῇ ἐπιβολῇ, τῶν φαντασμῶν, τινὰς ἐπιβολὰς τῆς διανοίας , τῇ φανταστικῇ ἐπιβολῇ, and I am sure many others. He specifically starts throwing around this phrase when discussing the mechanics of sight.

He drops this phrase (as I recall) once in the KD, and once (I think) by Diogénēs Laértios in his own description. As it turns out *Ep. Hēr.* provides us with a real wealth of examples of this phrase.

... also, *neither here nor there*, but I detect a tone of admonishment from Epíkouros toward Hērodotos.

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## Post by “Joshua” of April 26, 2025 at 5:01 PM

I think David Glidden discusses some of this in his article "Epicurean Prolepsis";

### Quote

If we could determine how prolepseis arise, we might be in a position to determine their range. As I understand prolepsis, it cannot be the work of any particular sense organ, but it is a perceptual recognition of the mind as a result of the work of the separate sense organs. But if we assume it is the work of dianoia, it is still something we perceive in the world, not a rational reconstruction or hypothesis. Here the case of the gods is instructive. The mind, operating as a sixth sense sensitive to especially fine eidola, perceives the gods, just as it perceives phantoms in dreams. I suggest that this same apprehension of the mind, epibole tes dianoias, can perceive persistent characteristics characterizing the things it or the other sense faculties perceive, the sorts of things these things are. And so we have a prolepsis that the gods are blessed and immortal, over and above having a vision of them. Presumably these prolepseis are formed in the mind as a result of repeated experiences, allowing us to get acquainted with the persistent characters of things. As accumulated information, these prolepseis would be common to all familiar with the same sorts of experiences.

-Dr. David Glidden, "*Epicurean Prolepsis*", pp. 11-12

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## Post by “Eikadistes” of April 27, 2025 at 9:27 AM

All right, so, this is by no means authoritative, but I did my best to try to illustrate what I understand to be the semantic context of these phrases, primarily found in 10.49-52:

### "Theories of Vision

49 It is necessary then also to know [that the] impinging [of images occurs] on account of a certain thing from the *outside* [that enables] us to observe and to consider, since the nature [of objects] cannot be impressed [while we are] removed from the [objects] themselves, as [in the case] of an [object's] color and of an [object's] morphology [as though this these qualities could be extrapolated] from the air that [rests] between both of us and of the [objects as [Aristotélēs](#) says], nor [could it] on account of the "rays" [or "beams"] or whatever [is believed] of those presenting streams [of [Empedoklés](#) and [Pláton](#)], as a result of us [directing our gaze] toward those [objects]; therefore, just as in the case of some impressions [that are] impinging [upon] us [as] a result of both the colorful realities and of like morphologies concerning a harmonious magnitude [entering] into [either] the face or the mind, they are being swiftly assailed [by] the [atomic] forces, <sup>50</sup>[and] then because of the latter[forcible] cause of that one [magnitude], *both* of [a] constant [stream of particles] yielding **a [perceptual] phantasm<sup>15</sup>** and an[affective] sympathy as a result of the observing, [they] are [both] being established thereafter by symmetrical impact out of a [body] by breadth at the [immensely] fast [movement] of the pulsing of the uncuttable [particles]. And we could have immediately **apprehended this applicative phantasm [within] the mind<sup>16</sup>** or [else could have apprehended] the sensations either [in the case] of [a body's physical] morphology or of [a body's qualitative] attributes.

### Fact, Fiction, and Fantasia

That morphology exists [as] a solid [structure since] an [appearance] is being generated sequentially by a *concentration* or *residue* of the *éidólou*; moreover, a pseudodoxy, as [compared with] a [true belief], has gone astray from the [observable reality that] is being experienced [and] perpetually [*that reality*] exists. <In the case of what remains> to be *confirmed* or to be *contradicted*, either it will be *confirmed* <or it will be *contradicted*> (in respect of some motion within us [that] is [in] *ourselves* being merged with **the creative application [of the mind],<sup>17</sup>** then possessing [such a] judgment, the pseudodoxy is being generated by that [**creative application** that can be either *true* or *false*]). <sup>51</sup>For also that likeness **of the [perceptual] phantasms<sup>18</sup>** [that] are being grasped as by [an] image are being generated, either in respect of [*dreaming* like during] slumbers or in respect of **some other applications of the mind,<sup>19</sup>** or it could not actually be of the remaining criteria [of truth]— at some point it can have been arising [from] *The Real* just as true [statements] are being addressed, if [indeed] it was not *a certain something*, and *in such manner* besides that which we were apprehending; but having gone astray [from the facts], the proposition could not have been arising [from Nature's *kanón*], whether [or not] we were not grasping [the truth] and [instead preferred to follow] some other [persuasive] motion in us *ourselves* [that] is indeed being combined [to produce] **a creative application<sup>20</sup>** [that] is being engaged; moreover, [this faculty] is [capable of] possessing [reliable] judgment, but *again* if [the faculty] was [either] *not [capable of] confirming* or [if] it was *contradicting* the [evidence], a pseudodoxy is being generated; but, if it was *being confirmed*, or [at least] *was not being contradicted*, [then] the [proposition is] *true*."

And here are the corresponding footnotes, describing each declension:

15. τὴν φαντασίαν (*tēn phantasían*) meaning “**a phantasm**” or “*the fantasy*”.

— τὴν (*tēn*) – (fem. acc. sing.) – “**a**”, “*the*”.

— φαντασίαν (*phantasían*) – (n. sing. acc.) meaning a “*appearance*”, “*presentation*”, “*display*”.

16. λάβωμεν φαντασίαν ἐπιβλητικῶς τῇ διανοίᾳ (*lambōmen phantasían épiblētikōs tēi dianoíai*), the “**applicative fantasy**” in “*the mind*”.

— λάβωμεν (*lambōmen*) – (v. 1st. pl. aor.) meaning “*we received*”, “*we seized*”, “*we understood*”, “*we grasped*”, “**we apprehended**”.

— φαντασίαν (*phantasían*) – (n. sing. acc.) meaning “*appearance*”, “*presentation*”, “*display*”, “*phantasm*”, “**fantasy**”, “*creative [application]*”.

— ἐπιβλητικῶς (*épiblētikōs*) – (adj. pl. acc.) meaning “*apprehending immediately*”, “*apprehending directly*”, “*quickly*”, or “**applicative**”.

— τῇ (*tēi*) – (art. fem. dat. sing.) meaning “*a*”, “**the [mind]**”.

— διανοίᾳ (*dianoíai*) – (n. dat. sing.) meaning “*intention*”, “*purpose*”, “*thinking*”, “**mind**”, “*understanding*”.

17. τῇ φανταστικῇ ἐπιβολῇ (*tēi phantastikēi épibolēi*) or “*a creative*” or “**the creative application**” of the mind.

— τῇ (*tēi*) – (fem. dat. sing.) meaning “*a*”, “*the [application]*”.

— φανταστικῇ (*phantastikēi*) – (adj. dat. sing.) meaning “**creative**”, “*productive*”, “*fantastic*”.

— ἐπιβολῇ (*épibolēi*) – (n. sing. masc. dat.) meaning “*throwing*”, “*apprehending*”, “**application**”, “*projection*”.

18. τῶν φαντασμῶν (*tōn phantasmōn*) or “**of the phantasms**”, “*of the appearances*”, “*of the fantasies [of the mind]*”.

— τῶν (*tōn*) – (art. gen. pl) meaning “**of the** [*phantasms*]”.

— φαντασμῶν (*phantasmōn*) – (n. gen. pl) meaning “**of phantasms**”, “*mental images*”, “*vain imaginings*”, “*visions*”.

19. ἄλλας τινὰς ἐπιβολὰς τῆς διανοίας (*állas tinàs épibolàs tēs dianoías*) meaning “**some other application of the mind**”.

— ἄλλας (*állas*) – (adj. fem. acc. pl.) meaning “**other**”, “*another*”, “*different*”, “*else*”, “*yet*”, “*still*”.

— τινὰς (*tinàs*) – (pron. masc. fem. acc. pl.) meaning “**some**”.

— ἐπιβολὰς (*épibolàs*) – (n. sing. acc. pl.) meaning “*apprehending*”, “**application**”, “*throwing*”, “*reaching*”.

— τῆς (*tēs*) – (art. gen. sing. fem.) meaning “*of a [thought]*”, “*of the [mind]*”.

— διανοίας (*dianoías*) – (gen. sing.) meaning “*mind*”.

20. τῇ φανταστικῇ ἐπιβολῇ (*tēi phantastikēi épibolēi*) or “*a creative*” or “**the creative application**” of the mind.

- τῆ (têi) - (fem. dat. sing.) meaning "a", "the [application]".
- φανταστικῆ (phantastikéi) - (adj. dat. sing.) meaning "creative", "productive", "fantastic".
- ἐπιβολῆ (épiboléi) - (n. sing. masc. dat.) meaning "throwing", "apprehending", "application", "projection". ↵

The other two examples are found in [Key Doctrine 24](#) and [Lives of Eminent Philosophers 10.31](#).

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## Post by "Eikadistes" of May 4, 2025 at 6:25 PM

This placement in 10.62 is interesting: he presents a scenario where the **ἐπιβολὴν λαμβανόμενον τῆ διανοία** (épibolēn lampanómenon tēi dianoíai), the "**apprehending being grasped [by] the intellect**" **ἔστι ἀληθές** or "is true", verus it being false under dissimilar conditions.

More and more, it seems to me that there is no, true "Fourth Criterion" of the Kanon because Epíkouros, himself, writes that *one such* apprehension "is true" but *another such* "is false". However, that does not mean *this*, true apprehension is un-useful in having coherence with reality.

Also, based on the consistency with which this phrase is re-employed, combined with the naturalistic language he uses when making analogies, I think he supposes that *thinking*, itself, can reliably be said to be like a fisherman purposefully casting a net in meaningful directions to catch thoughts.

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## Post by "Cassius" of May 4, 2025 at 6:35 PM

I look forward to Don and Bryan and anyone else fluent in Greek commenting on this. But your conclusion Eikadistes I continue to share: There are three legs of the canon, and they can be counted on because they do not involve opinion - i.e., they are never true or false, they just are.

An operation of the mind which involves an opinion that is true or false (as would appear from your cite) cannot properly be thought of as a test of truth. That would be testing one opinion against another opinion.

I suspect that the "fourth leg" position comes about from people knowing that comparing opinion against opinion is an important part of reasoning, and that's absolutely true. But that isn't the way you get back to and test opinions against raw data - you have to have a starting

point which is not itself an opinion - you have to have a "yardstick." And opinions are not given to us by nature such that we can consider them to be a baseline yardstick.

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### Post by “Cassius” of May 4, 2025 at 6:45 PM

As a tangential comment Eikadistes, I also perceive a tendency in the "fourth leg" argument to conclude that the assignment of a word to a particular thing (the grasping part, i gather) involves a little more steering by nature than I think is consistent with Epicurus.

As I read the discussion of language and civil society in Lucretius, it seems to me that the real stress is on "these developed naturally rather than being given by supernatural gods," rather than "nature leads us to associate certain words with certain things" or "nature leads us to a proper word choice" or "nature leads us to a proper system of government." I see both those as a "trial and error" process in which there are lots of different languages, and lots of different systems of government, that can all be equally consistent with "nature."

I have a lot of respect for some who argue that there's a fourth leg, and clearly Diogenes Laertius says that "the Epicureans generally" (I think is the phrase) embraced the fourth leg. But to the extent that these other Epicureans deviated from Epicurus I think they were mistaken in doing so. The whole thing sounds to me like an improper attempt to reconcile with Stoicism.

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### Post by “Don” of May 4, 2025 at 6:59 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Don .... and anyone else fluent in Greek



I appreciate the vote of confidence!!

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### Post by “Bryan” of May 4, 2025 at 7:05 PM

I read that part of 62 as "**The addition of judgment concerning the unseen... ..is not true in such cases:** since everything envisioned or comprehended through our attention to

[mental] perception is true."

The addition of judgment, then, is the source of the error, not "attention to mental perception."