

Episode 162 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 16 - Chapter 8 - Sensations, Anticipations, And Feelings 03

Post by "Cassius" of February 14, 2023 at 6:33 PM

Welcome to Episode 162 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. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. 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.

We're now in the process of a series of podcasts intended to provide a general overview of Epicurean philosophy based on the organizational structure employed by Norman DeWitt in his book "Epicurus and His Philosophy."

Sensations

Epicurus Not An Empiricist

Anticipations

The Account of Laertius

The Element of Anticipation

Evidences From Specific Context

Later Evidences

Feelings

This week we continue in Chapter 8 and move to the subsection "Anticipations."

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/52802088>

Post by "Cassius" of February 14, 2023 at 6:49 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2895-episode-162-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-16-chapter-8-sensations-anticipatio/>

This episode will be recorded on 2/19 and it is going to be one of our most challenging, so all readers please feel free to make comments or suggestions on your latest thoughts on "anticipations." We'll obviously steer our discussion but the DeWitt text, but we'll also try to include at the very least the article by Voula Tsouna focusing on her and David Sedley's views on the topic. Link:

File

[Epicurean Preconceptions - Tsouna](#)



Epicurean Preconceptions



Cassius

April 13, 2019 at 11:14 PM

Post by “Cassius” of February 14, 2023 at 7:11 PM

Another thing I want to mention in preparation for this episode is a question we touched on at the end of 161 - the relationship of Epicurus to "empiricism" and the focus in empiricism on "experience."

One of the important issues in controversy as to anticipations is to the extent to which anticipations exist or operate "prior to experience." Let me through out a description that may or may not be accurate: in the Dlogenes Laertius example of anticipations, multiple experiences of observing oxen are made by a person, an image-picture-definition-anticipation is assembled, and then that image-picture-definition anticipation is used as a standard by which to judge later experiences.

One interpretation of anticipations (can't recall at the moment if this is Dewitt) is that this description refers to concept formation and conceptual reasoning, but that "pre-conceptions" and "pro-lepsis" and even the word "anticipation" itself refer to something going on *before* even the first exposure to an oxen.

The argument for that position would find its strongest support in Velleius (On the Nature of the Gods) which can be read to refer to anticipations of the gods being inborn and/or existing before any experience with a god. In other words, since most of us take the position that we

have never seen or heard or touched or smelled or tasted a god, the existence or development of anticipations of the gods must not come from direct sensory experience of them.

I think that's a good argument but very definitely I am not taking a firm position on much of this debate - especially since I have not read either DeWitt or the Tsouna article in recent months.

However I do hope before we come to the end of this discussion we can begin to address the question: Does the faculty of Anticipations describe nothing more than concept-formation and the application of those concepts to new situations? Or - like i think most of us accept about the operation of pain-pleasure and even the 5 senses, the faculty of anticipations involves some kind of inborn predisposition of principles of operation which exist in us before any exposure to anything that causes the faculty of anticipations to generate any input to our minds. At the very least, it would seem that the "coding" for the faculty of pleasure and pain exists before we, after birth (or after conception) are exposed to anything we find painful or pleasurable. Same goes for the "Coding" in the operation of the eyes, which predates the things we see. Is the same true for Anticipations?

Another thing I think that most of us will agree on is that we are not born capitalists or communists or socialists (i.e., with fully formed concepts in our minds). Then what is this disposition toward "fairness" or "justice" and how far does the disposition go in containing comment at birth? I would say at the moment that the "disposition" goes as far as the ability to **recognize** that relationships and abstractions exist, but not much as to their content. LOTS of room for discussion on all this.

Post your comments and we will try to at least address the major points!

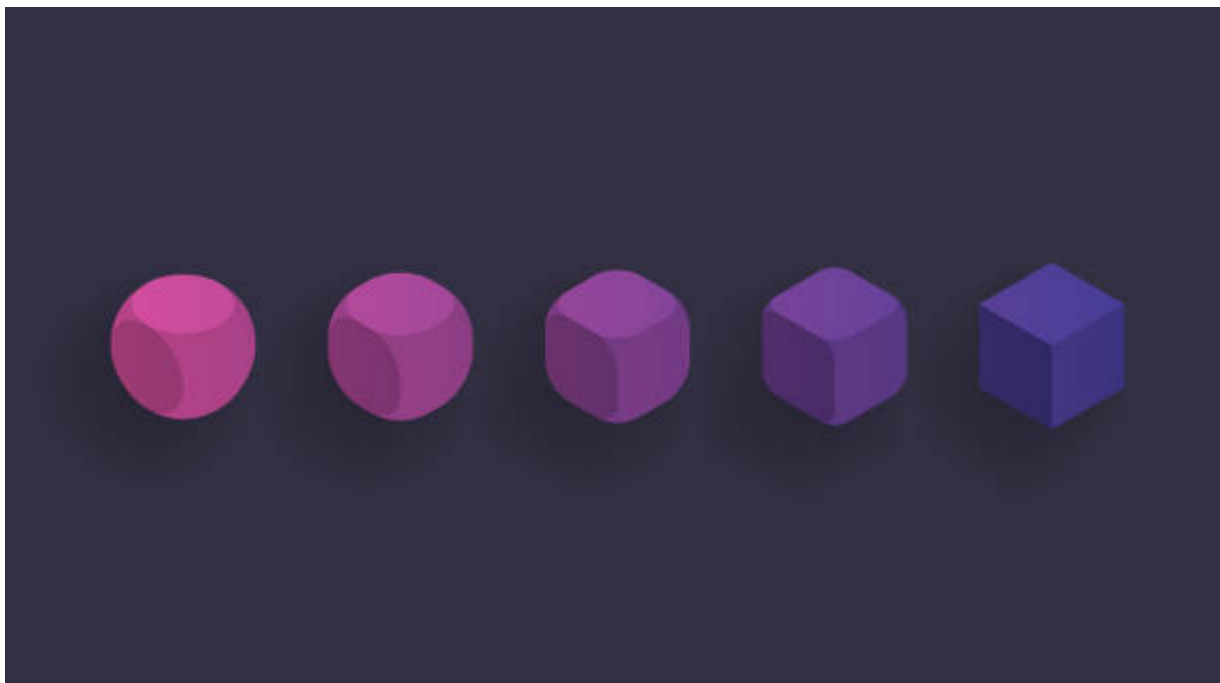
Post by “Joshua” of February 14, 2023 at 8:09 PM

Quote

Does the faculty of Anticipations describe nothing more than concept-formation and the application of those concepts to new situations? Or - like i think most of us accept about the operation of pain-pleasure and even the 5 senses, the faculty of anticipations involves some kind of inborn predisposition of principles of operation which exist in us before any exposure to anything that causes the faculty of anticipations to generate any input to our minds.

It occurs to me that one reason for considering the anticipations to be involved in pattern recognition is that it obviates any need for "forms" or "essences". The categorization of oxen as

that



I don't know that Epicurus would have taken this to Darwinian conclusions, though Lucretius hints at that, but it perfectly represents the folly of idealized unchanging forms. It is possible to prove genetically, for example, that whales (the purple cube) are descended from land dwelling ungulates of which oxen are one current class. The pink shape on the far left might represent a common ancestor of both. How does the Ideal Form of an Ox-like creature turn into the Ideal Form of a Whale-like creature? If the Forms are unchanging, as Plato suggests, then whence cometh the Form of the new-fangled whale?

Post by “Cassius” of February 14, 2023 at 10:34 PM

Great point Joshua. I am not sure which or if any of the commentators use the term "pattern recognition" but that is definitely one of the labels that we want to discuss. A faculty of "recognizing patterns or relationships between objects that does not derive from ideal forms or from internal essences, but from analogies which we are genetically disposed to recognize arising from evolution over the ages" -- but hopefully less wordy.

And this is the place also we need to discuss intuition/intuitive and instinct/instinctive with those dam-building beavers, migratory birds, etc.

And i don't think it would be out of place to compare this with pleasure and pain, which are arguably similar in representing some capability that is pre-programmed at birth to operate in certain ways that don't derive totally (or even primarily?) from experiences as we grow older. I am pretty sure that i liked ice cream the first time i tasted it, even though i also acknowledge that certain vegetables are "an acquired taste."

Post by "Cassius" of February 16, 2023 at 9:46 AM

Several of us talked last night that we really need to develop a list of alternative theories so we can be sure to cover them when we record this session. I have started such a list below - please feel free to make suggestions. I intend to at least include the major quotes under each source, but I have not had time to get started. Once this is fleshed out we will be able to post it somewhere it is regularly findable:

Notes Re Anticipations / Preconceptions / Prolepsis

Alternative Sources:

1. Diogenes Laertius
2. Velleius from On The Nature of the Gods
3. References in Epicurus Letters and/or [Principal Doctrines](#)
4. Lucretius

Alternative Theories:

1. The faculty of Anticipations is what happens when we see multiple oxes, create a word-picture of an ox, and then use that word-picture as a reference in labeling things as "oxen" when we see new ones. (Diogenes Laertius)
2. The faculty of Anticipations arises because of things which are engraved in our minds at birth (Velleius)
3. Anticipations involve justice, notions about the gods, and time (references in the letters of Epicurus but no real explanation)
4. Anticipations involve the repeated inflow of images into our minds and creating what amounts to an established path by which we are disposed to route new images.
5. Anticipations is a faculty that disposes us to recognize patterns - "Pattern recognition" (These patterns are simply in the objects themselves and are not ideal forms or essences or divinely created.)

Alternative Positions By Commentators:

1. DeWitt
2. Bailey
3. Voula Tsouna
4. David Sedley
5. Others?

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Post by “Cassius” of February 20, 2023 at 1:37 PM

Unfortunately Joshua was not able to join us for this episode, so it is shorter than usual and will serve mainly as a short introduction to the topic. We'll grapple with it in much more detail when Joshua is able to rejoin us, which will hopefully be our next episode. Editing should be complete and the episode released by mid-week.

Post by “Cassius” of February 21, 2023 at 10:12 AM

Episode 162 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week we continue in Chapter 8 of the DeWitt Book and begin our discussion of anticipations. Unfortunately Joshua is not with us this week so we go slow and set the stage for more detailed discussion next week - and we hope to have Don join us next week as well.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/52802088>