

The Best Simple Term To Use For "Anticipations" (?)

Post by "Cassius" of December 31, 2018 at 10:18 AM

Here is an abstract of a discussion held on Facebook in December 2018. We were discussing a question by Nate as to the most "accessible" term to use for preconception / anticipation / prolepsis:

Elli:

1. Let's give the etymology of this greek word that he used. It consists from the preposition "pre" [=προ] and the verb "receive" [=λαμβάνω]. This means that from the day of our birth and as human beings, we have the ability to pre-receive things and complex concepts (with the usage of the words) and during the procedure of our adulthood, we confirm what is FALSE or TRUE in accordance, of course, to the reality around us.

2. Let's re-read this important passage of Epicurus letter to Herodotus for understanding what these "prolepsis" are that Epicurus placed in his Canon as a standard of truth. IMO the english word "pre-conceptions" is more near what Epicurus meant as "prolepsis" than the word "anticipations".

The passage : <<First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the ideas attached to words ((important note : CONCEPTS ATTACHED TO WORDS)), in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning ((important note : we have to be CAREFUL NOT USING WORDS DEVOID OF MEANING)).

For this purpose it is essential that ** the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference**((important note : IMO in this paragraph describes "prolepsis"-pre-conceptions))....

...and besides we must keep all our investigations in accord with our sensations, and in particular with the immediate apprehensions whether of the mind or of any one of the instruments of judgment, and likewise in accord with the feelings existing in us, in order that we may have indications whereby we may judge both the problem of sense perception and the unseen>>.

4. In the above passage Epicurus describes his methodology of the CANON which includes (in a full cooperation) the fourth criteria of truth that

IMO they have to be connected with an AND : 1) and the senses 2) and the feelings pleasure/pain 3) and the preconceptions 4) and the intuitions.

Cassius:

1) Elli I agree with you that "preconception" seems much more clear and more likely to be correct than "anticipations."

2) Elayne, I am tagging you here because this may be the first time you have seen this argument, which is a point raised regularly by our Greek friends. I will use the candor of your recent post to say that I am not sure that I agree with this argument, but it clearly is a part of the issue, if not the only part. I am talking about the issue of the "first mental image associated with each word." As I understand it, this is a topic DeWitt addresses in dealing with "phantasia" for example on page 137 of EAHP.

As you see, Elli is in her item 4 stating that there are four canons of truth, by dividing preconceptions from intuitions.

DeWitt does not do that, and he cites to Diogenes Laertius to the sentence which is translated 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 to be also standards. His own statements are also to be found in the Summary addressed to Herodotus and in the [Principal Doctrines](#)."

My mind is open on what the correct perspective is on all this, but I personally tend to follow DeWitt, that considering there to be Four criteria of truth was an innovation of later Epicureans, not of Epicurus himself, and I personally am very cautious about that, for the reasons that DeWitt addresses.

I wish I had a stronger position on this, and if pushed I take the DeWitt position, but I readily admit that there is evidence that a significant number of Epicureans thought this (4 criteria and not 3) was a good argument.

I think I can summarize the Dewitt / 3 criteria position by saying that those who hold there to be only 3 think that what is being described as the 4th is part of mental processing where assembly and use of opinion is involved, and that is unrelated to "preconceptions." Your mileage may vary,

Cassius:

DeWitt's commentary on why he did not think Epicurus considered this phenomena to be a fourth criteria is on page 140 of EAHP (and perhaps another place too, this is the one I recall best):

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Another point: Dividing them into four under the model Elli has cited means that either her (3) preconceptions or (4) intuitions (but not both) are the words that stand in the place of "perceptions of mental presentations" used by Diogenes Laertius. So if there are four criteria, and "perceptions of mental presentations" is the definition of one (presumably it's the definition of "preconceptions" under that model) then what is the definition of "intuitions"?

Elayne:

I don't know enough about the traditions and translations to have an opinion on what Epicurus said-- you all are a better judge of that. But in my understanding of how our brains work, the 4 would work for me in modern terms. Preconceptions sounding similar to what "innate intuitions" would be in developmental neurology-- the actual content of the preconception, already there at birth; and intuition meaning the faculty of pattern recognition that gives us quick answers but using learned information, not innate.

I think trying to make the preconceptions_ only_ a faculty, with no information already there, will not work, because we use that same faculty for learned processes. The thing that distinguishes preconceptions is that it is something we are born "knowing" without having had feeling or sensory contact.

If we don't do it that way, then you are left having to explain what causes this faculty to come up with "justice", etc, in a way that does not involve feelings or the sense organs. But really we are evolved with that tit-for-tat thing from the beginning. It isn't learned. That would be very inefficient.

- I don't know if I'm making myself clear-- some of that conversation above between you and Elli was confusing to me, so it may be that I am missing what you all are saying.

Elli:

Moreover, we must suppose that human nature too was taught and constrained to do many things of every kind merely by circumstances; and that later on reasoning elaborated what had been suggested by nature and made further inventions, in some matters quickly, in others slowly, at some epochs and times making great advances, and lesser again at others. And so names too were not at first deliberately given to things, but men's natures according to their different nationalities had their own peculiar feelings and received their peculiar impressions, and so each in their own way emitted air formed into shape by each of these feelings and impressions, according to the differences made in the different nations by the places of their abode as well.

And then later on by common consent in each nationality special names were deliberately given in order to make their meanings less ambiguous to one another and more briefly

demonstrated. And sometimes those who were acquainted with them brought in things hitherto unknown and introduced sounds for them, on some occasions being naturally constrained to utter them, and on others choosing them by reasoning in accordance with the prevailing mode of formation, and thus making their meaning clear.

(From Epicurus epistle to Herodotus)

Cassius:

Actually, Nate, in thinking about what Elli has written above, there are actually two issues to be addressed: (1) Taking a position on the best term to use for "preconceptions/intuitions/anticipations/etc" and (2) Taking a position on whether there are three criteria of truth, or four. In my writing I generally try to deal with this in a footnote just to make people aware of the controversy, but that's not to say you need to do that here.

Cassius:

I think this is one of those issues, like details of what Epicurus thought about gods, that we better be careful about taking too strong a position. However I think I can summarize a danger here that ought to be considered carefully before accepting:

First, I think we all probably agree on a couple of things:

(1) After we gather evidence, reason through, and evaluate any subject, our minds constructs a "word" or a "picture" or a "definition" - which is probably what we refer to when we say "conception." I think we would all probably agree that that process is what is labeled "reasoning" or "conceptual reasoning, with the point being is that in the end we construct a "concept" in our mind, such as "capitalism" or "cows."

(2) We probably also all agree that we store these concepts in our minds, and the next time we are confronted with "capitalism" or "cows" we say to ourselves "I know what that is, it is a cow or an example of capitalism.

(3) I think we (probably?) all agree that this process in (1) and (2) goes on all the time in humans, and this is called conceptual reasoning, and that in assigning words to our experiences we use our own opinions about what each word/concept should mean.

(4) Probably we also agree that in this process of painting our own pictures, and assigning our own definitions to words, and in matching these word/pictures, to new examples, we employ our own opinions and decisionmaking. In other words, there is no master definition of cows and capitalism floating in the air, so all of us may have (will have) different definitions of those words and different pictures in our minds about what makes a cow or an instance of capitalism.

It seems to me that the controversy is whether any part of the process described above is properly called "anticipations" or "preconceptions" or "prolepsis."

If the word/picture developed in this process, which is stored in the mind, is considered to be a "criteria of truth," then this criteria is something that is developed in our mind after a process of conscious reasoning and opinion-evaluating. This conclusion is unavoidable because just as there are many languages and words for "cow," there is no "essence of a cow" (Aristotle) or "ideal form of a cow" (Plato) against which all of us can check our own local definition.

The distinction here to be sure we want to embrace is that all other criterias of truth (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell, pleasure, pain) operate without conscious evaluation, without prior reasoning, without any opinion whatsoever. The word picture we create ourselves, however, cannot be said to have been created without conscious evaluation, without prior reasoning, and without any opinion whatsoever.

I don't think any of us want to consider the authority of unnamed "Epicureans Generally" as cited by DL, so that leads us back to Herodotus, quoted by Elli above:

"For this purpose it is essential that ** the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference**"

And so each of us have to decide whether, in this passage, Epicurus is saying:

(1) Form word pictures in your minds, and then in the future those word /pictures have equal status as criteria with what your eyes, ears, pain, pleasure, etc tell you....

(2) When you *do* reason about what your eyes and ears tell you, be sure that you are thinking as clearly as possible about the concepts you form, because chain reasoning depends on every link of the chain being as accurate as possible.

If he is saying (1) then he is endorsing four criteria of truth. If he is saying (2) then there are three criteria, plus an important rule of clear thinking.

What DeWitt is concerned about, and has me persuaded of, is that if you follow the road of option one, then you have re-introduced "logical reasoning" into the canon of truth, which it was the whole purpose of canon to avoid in the first place. That is because if we are entitled to consider our own opinions as equivalent in force to what our eyes, ears, pleasure and pain tell us, then we are elevating our opinions to equal (and eventually higher) status than what nature provides to us directly and without possibility of mistake through the other non-rational criteria.

And if our own opinions as created in our own minds have equal status, or priority over, the perceptions provided by the senses, then we are back on the road to radical skepticism. Everyone has their own opinions, no one can logically prove that one opinion is better than another, and we are back in the skepticism of Pyrrho and Plato that we originally set out to avoid.

Elli:

"And every image which we obtain by an act of apprehension on the part of the mind or of the sense-organs, whether of shape or of properties, this image is the shape or the properties of the concrete object, and is produced by the constant repetition of the image or the impression it has left. Now falsehood and error always lie in the addition of opinion with regard to what is waiting to be confirmed or not contradicted, and then is not confirmed or is contradicted. For the similarity between the things which exist, which we call real and the images received as a likeness of things and produced either in sleep or through some other acts of apprehension on the part of the mind or the other instruments of judgment, could never be, unless there were some effluences of this nature actually brought into contact with our senses.

And error would not exist unless another kind of movement too were produced inside ourselves, closely linked to the apprehension of images, but differing from it; and it is owing to this, supposing it is not confirmed, or is contradicted, that falsehood arises; but if it is confirmed or not contradicted, it is true. Therefore we must do our best to keep this doctrine in mind, in order that on the one hand the standards of judgment dependent on the clear visions may not be undermined, and on the other error may not be as firmly established as truth and so throw all into confusion". (Epicurus letter to Herodotus)

[Cassius](#), I have the impression that in the above Epicurus is clear as he describes the "PROCEDURE". Since he leaves the person FREE to be able to make speculations and be judged and by himself and others if his opinion/speculation is with regard to what is waiting to be confirmed or not contradicted, and then what is not confirmed or is contradicted by the senses and feelings in accordance with the reality.

And imo this is the procedure that the scientists built up their theories : They are based on past scientific knowledges (these are the "prolepsis") and then they're publishing their new theories and their phd's in scientific magazines, while they are waiting to be confirmed and not contradicted by the phenomena of Nature and the experiments of their science. I do not get all the trouble that caused of what means the word "prolepsis" !

However, imo and if I understand clearly the whole issue...

1. According to Epicurus everything that provokes motion in the brain is "real" because an image of the materialistic reality left its trace to that brain, until the time that that "real" will

become totally FALSE IF it is not confirmed and contradicted by the senses, and the feelings based on the examination of the experiences (in the science these are called experiments) and all the causes that caused the phenomena in the procedure in the study of Nature !

2. Epicurus accepts the issue on "subconscious" that is a function of the brain too for hiding fears, desires and feelings. Example : there are many times that I have the impression of a dream that it was so real that provokes to me feelings during the time that I was dreaming. But when I woke up, I confirmed with my senses and feelings that this dream was not real. But it was REAL, because it was based on images of the reality that those images are in accordance with my senses and feelings too. So, Epicurus in the above paragraph gives us an idea what are the prolepsis, and what are those "fantastic impressions of the mind", to make the future Epicureans placing this issue as the fourth criterion of truth in the Canon.

Cassius:

Elli most of what you wrote I agree with, but I can put my finger on one part I probably don't, here, referring to scientific articles:

"They are based on past scientific knowledges (these are the "prolepsis") and then they're publishing their new theories and their phd's in scientific magazines, while they are waiting to be confirmed and not contradicted by the phenomena of Nature and the experiments of their science."

See by the time you get to the point where your theory is a scientific article, I would say surely it is by then a "concept" involving opinion. I would never consider a concept to be a "standard of truth" or a "tool of precision in measuring truth" -- that would be a feedback loop in which you would never escape the error in a prior concept, if you accepted it as a standard of truth.

That's why I think the analogy that "standards of truth" are "tools of precision" and not "truth written in stone." The Judea-Christians for example consider the Ten Commandments to be "standards of truth" because they consider them to be "truth" because god supposedly wrote them.

In an infinite universe where there is no center, and where no one's perspective can be said to be "final," then I don't think it is possible to say that one concept is itself a "standard of truth."

All we have in the end are the "tools of precision" by which we measure and ascertain those "truths" which are relevant to us.

Cassius:

Actually I think that last point leads to a very important question. Is it possible / would Epicurus have taught / that any IDEA of any kind can ever be a standard of truth? And when I say "idea" I mean any "word / mental picture"?

Elli:

Since Epicurus excluded all the Myths from our investigations and researches then the issue is getting more easy and clear for finding where is the false and where is the right in accordance with the study of Nature ! But the procedure in the Canon starts from what the words denote in any language. Since the human beings are talking for finding the obvious. And imo it is the only standard that Epicurus accepts when we read the above excerpt in his letter to Herodotus of what the words denote. And then the procedure that is based on the Canon too, continues to separate the fantastic from the reality. In the above he describes the procedure.

Elayne:

[Cassius](#), it sounds to me as if you are equating intuitions with a type of reasoning, and that is not how the brain works. Intuitions-- the very fast cognitions-- are not logical or reasoning based, and they can be much more accurate than logic. So accepting intuitions as a specific way to interact with reality is not getting into logic or idealism, even though it involves thought. It's closer to a feeling than to logical thought. There are heuristics involved but these are not logical.

Post by “Cassius” of December 31, 2018 at 11:29 AM

Cassius:

Elli and Elayne, may I return to this point: Original question:

"Actually I think that last point leads to a very important question. Is it possible / would Epicurus have taught / that any IDEA of any kind can ever be a standard of truth? And when I say "idea" I mean any "word / mental picture"?"

Restated Question: Does it make sense ****within Epicurus' framework**** to equate an "idea" with a "sight" or a "sound" or a "taste" or a "touch" or a "smell" or a "sensation of pleasure" or a "sensation of pain" as a standard of truth?

Elli: Cassius hi ! I think so ! When I smell a specific perfume the idea/thought/remembrance of one of my relatives comes immediately to my mind. And not only her figure, but many facts and many stories and words that she narrated to me, when I was a little child.

This the perfume ! 😊

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Cassius: Ok in that example, the sensation of a smell is calling to your mind a stored idea of this relative of which a smell is a part. The smell itself however is new, in the present - it is reported to you by your nose exactly as it happens to you even if you had never smelled it before. The idea of your relative, however, was assembled in your mind and is dependent on your having met her (presuming it is a her! 😊) in the past. So in your example, the smell sensation served as a direct connection with reality outside your brain. Can we say the same about 'ideas'?

DL: "Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom."

Now of course no one is saying that a "sensation" is the same in all respects as an "idea." The question under discussion is "Does an "idea" deserve the same level of credibility as a sensation?"

Also DL again: "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 to be also standards. His own statements are also to be found in the Summary addressed to Herodotus and in the [Principal Doctrines](#). And the reality of separate perceptions guarantees the truth of our senses. But seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain. Hence it is from plain facts that we must start when we draw inferences about the unknown. For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition, with some slight aid from reasoning.

So where I am going is that your idea of your relative is a "notion" which is derived from past perceptions. The individual perceptions - the sensations - have all the indicia of being criterias of truth, because they are "devoid of reason and incapable of memory." The notion of your relative, however, has been formed in your mind over time and repeated experiences, and your mind has selectively assembled what it considered, in its own opinion, to be significant about your relative. Therefore the notion of your relative in your mind, while a critical part of your thinking process, does not appear to me to hold the same credibility of "truth" as is any individual sensation from your dealings with that relative.

Which is not to say that your notions are not of critical importance - they are the way that we think and live our lives and we decide what is of importance to us. But any particular notion is something that we assembled for ourselves, and is subject to all sorts of dramatic changes over time. I don't think it is a problem to consider a "notion" to be "true" in some senses of the word, but I do see an important distinction between "notions in our minds" and "external facts of reality."

Maybe the entire issue revolves around the definition we are giving to "true."

Post by "Cassius" of December 31, 2018 at 3:40 PM

Elli -

[Cassius](#) my friend, I have the impression that you did not understand my example with my relative that she gave me her name too. She had this perfume, I smelled on her in the past, and I smell it now, because I have this perfume in my closet. My experiences/contacts with her were REAL and all the images, as well as many issues with words I learned from her, have been stuck in my mind as images/remembrances. This is my experience of course, but it is not only a speculation that can't be proved. Here is a prove in this photo : She holds me as I smelled her perfume.

Elayne -

[Cassius Amicus](#), that is the ONLY way I can understand prolepsis as referring to a source of information about reality, because it is the only part of the cannon which does not rely on a post-natal input to be present. The sense organs are present at birth and then receive input from reality. The feelings of pain and pleasure are present and respond to reality. But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?

If it were ONLY the faculty and not the actual mental content, then it would require input of information that is neither sensory nor feeling based, after birth, to develop into a prolepsis of justice. And what would that input be, into something that is only a mechanism without any information in it? If it were sensory or feeling, you wouldn't need this 3rd part of the Canon at all.

That is why I think he made this special exception for a few ideas that are clearly innate but which are not abstract or rational. And as in so many cases, this exactly squares with modern research.

If something is just, it will match our mental sense of justice, our prolepsis, which we were born with, but in a different way from a sensory experience or from pain/pleasure. It has a different qualia that is hard to describe, but it is intuitive and mental. Not an abstract idea with rules.

Elli -

And as Epicurus said for the concept "justice" Doctrine 33. 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.

How the people are making dealings and compacts in any society ? Could we make dealings

and contacts without speaking to each other with words expressing our feelings too ?"The prolepsis or concepts (in English are the anticipations or preconceptions) as the teacher Epicurus says, e.g. with the word "residence" may involve with a degree of content in an apartment, a house, a farmhouse, a villa etc. Each man from his personal experience and the history of his representations has formed its own prolepsis-concepts that corresponds to the word "residence". The variations of the concept are so many as the people are. The Eskimo will include the igloo, the African the hut, the Queen of England the Buckingham Palace, the President of the United States the White House, the homeless the carton and Diogenes the Cynic the jar.

"Man is the measure of all things" as Protagoras said. The fuzziness of the concept, therefore does not allow the definition, but only the description of the common features of the concept. That's why the teacher Epicurus is against the definitions. This does not preclude the meaning attributed to a specific word. "Prolepsis" concepts are PERSONAL, but the words are PUBLIC. This codification of the concept with a specific word, and this is the only concession is made by the teacher in dialectics".

The above is an excerpt entitled: "THE MANIFOLD WAY OF THE EPICUREAN CANON", by our friend Dimitris Altas that is a cardiologist and member in the Epicurean Garden of Thessaloniki.

Cassius:

I hope we're not belaboring this point as we're unlikely to reach a conclusion that satisfies everyone (we never have in the past) but it is good to review these arguments every so often. That way we'll be alert to the issues as we read and study more.

So commenting on the recent posts:

"The feelings of pain and pleasure are present and respond to reality. But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?" The DeWitt theorem is apparently that it is a capacity to organize abstractions, and perhaps in a particular direction, but the capacity to organize them is not the same as the result of the organization. I grant you that DeWitt does use the term "idea" in a passage of two, and thereby he undercuts the case he makes in the majority of his comments. When he compares the prolepsis mechanism to the veins of a leaf, and cites Cicero as to how the leaf unfolds into its full shape over time, he is more closely on his main point, which is that the ideas in final form are not inborn with us at birth.

"if it were ONLY the faculty and not the actual mental content, then it would require input of information that is neither sensory nor feeling based, after birth, to develop into a prolepsis of justice." Correct, under the DeWitt theorem we would be like cats and dogs and all other animals - we would experience all sorts of experiences but never organize those experiences

into a concept we call justice, and certainly we would not organize it into high-level concepts like capitalism, socialism, democracy, etc.

"But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?" A prolepsis of justice would be just like an anticipation of a god, it would be a disposition to organize a pattern of life from lower to higher to "perfect," but it would not be the final idea of Yahweh or Zeus itself. In other words, the example in Menoeceus is that false ideas of gods are not "true anticipations" or text to that effect. That means there can be false ideas. Now whether we tease the text to argue "resulting from a true anticipation" or "a true anticipation itself" is a question that we would have to search the various texts of Diogenes Laertius to investigate, always being wary of textual corruption issues. When so much is at stake in the issue I would not want to put too much emphasis on any text or particular translation, I would want to see how the conclusion reconciles with the rest of the texts.

"If it were sensory or feeling, you wouldn't need this 3rd part of the Canon at all." I think Dewitt would respond to you that cats and dogs have similar feelings and senses, but they never organize those perceptions into "justice" or "divinity" at least in the same way that humans do. Dewitt would say that the inputs would never get organized into concepts if the dispositive faculty to do that were not in existence with us first. But then again, the (A) dispositive faculty to recognize that there are relationships between these perceptions (B) would not be the same as the results of having organized them. The ability to see a small object which is blue and has wings and a beak is the faculty of sight, but the ability to organize those observations into "bird" is the concept that is the result of reasoning over time. At a distance, we aren't sure if what we see is a robin or a crow, just like at a distance we aren't sure if the "perfect" being we intuit to exist is meddlesome or self-sufficient.

"That is why I think he made this special exception for a few ideas that are clearly innate but which are not abstract or rational." The key word here which I think DeWitt would dispute with you is "ideas" as distinguished from "the principles by which those ideas are derived." (That part, Elayne, is more clearly articulated in that selection from Barwis that you commented on earlier, and which goes much further into the issue by way of arguing against Locke's blank slate.)

"It has a different qualia that is hard to describe, but it is intuitive and mental. Not an abstract idea with rules." << Yes that's the issue. Many people have different ideas of what justice really means (their ideas of justice), even though they possess a similar intuitive faculty disposes them to organize those percepts into their separate ideas. Again, dogs and cats never reach that level of organization, not because they necessarily have fewer brain cells, but because (presumably) they are not "wired" to think in that way. It's the "wiring" we are talking about, the computer's operating system, not its application programs.

Elli in most of your statements it appears to me that you are using the term "pre-conception" as an exact analog for "conception." if that is the case, why were they called "preconceptions" rather than simply conceptions? The DeWitt argument is that there was a reason that Epicurus used the pre- and the pro- to designate something that is prior to *all* experience, just as eyes exist before we open them for the first time. DeWitt's argument as to Diogenes Laertius' example that we have preconceptions of an ox is that DL was wrong - he was using his much later Platonic/Stoic organizing categories (as you recall DL is much later than Cicero). This would be parallel to the way DL talks about katastematic vs active pleasures as being important to Epicurus, even though there is a strong case (the [Nikolsky](#) article in the files section) that DL was very wrong to do so. I think DeWitt makes a good argument that there is a conflict between the account of DL and the account of Cicero, and that they both cannot be correct. In this case, despite our recent raking of Cicero over the coals, Cicero appears to have the better understanding.

In regard to Cicero, remember that if you decide that preconceptions occur only after our having seen or otherwise experienced something, then you are likely going to have to accept that anticipations of gods arose only after we saw a number of gods and formed that concept. That would be something that most of us would not accept as a reasonable conclusion by Epicurus (unless some of us have been seeing gods without telling each other about it!).

The case against DL is that just like he made a mistake in implying that the katastematic - kinetic distinction was a big deal to Epicurus, he made a mistake in saying that anticipations arise only AFTER experience. In both cases the alleged error would arise from applying the standard cookie-cutter pattern of 3rd century AD analysis, which by that time had been largely mutated by Stoic/Platonic arguments. In both cases, much of the disposition to equate precepts with concepts comes from Diogenes Laertius. Epicurus himself clearly only had three items in his canon of truth (senses, feelings, and anticipations) rather than four.

Cassius:

"But what is a prolepsis of justice responding to, if it is only a mechanism?" Elayne your comment reminds me of Barwis' argument against Locke's blank slate. I apologize to anyone who thinks this is a useless tangent, but I see it as directly on point:

A standard Lockean argument in favor of the blank slate is "Well if you think we are born with ideas, then give me a list of those ideas!" - Which is supposed to shut up the opponent of the blank slate, because no one can agree on what that list of innate ideas would be. -- Just like we would not be able to agree on any list of what we are born with. I may be wrong, Elayne, but that is why I think you described these as "a few ideas that are clearly innate." ("That is why I think he made this special exception for a few ideas that are clearly innate but which are not abstract or rational.")

Here is Barwis's response to that argument, which I think addresses the problem:

Mr. Locke, you know, rather triumphantly demands a catalogue of these principles, which he says no one "has ventured yet to give."

I understand you, replied he: you desire to know what I have to say on that subject?

I do, returned I.

You know, then, continued he, that when Mr. Locke demands a catalogue of innate principles, he means a catalogue of propositions such as he had before proved to be not innate, and such as you and I have agreed cannot properly be called principles of our nature at all. These, therefore, can be but little to our present purpose. But nevertheless, we have innate moral principles which do not consist of propositions or maxims, but of internal sentiments or conscious feelings prior to all moral maxims, and without which (as you have seen) morals could have no foundation in nature, nor could be understood.

All right and wrong, just and unjust, which concern the nature and happiness of man is perceived by him through what is innate, and formed in him in the very constitution of his nature, or he could never perceive or understand them at all. If anyone require a catalogue, or rather an exact description of these innate internal sentiments, I can only tell him what I feel within myself, and describe to him how the actions of men and how the relations of their actions, when I hear or read them, affect my nature and move my conscious feelings. Nor can he have any other rule of judging the truth or falsehood of my sentiments but by reference to his own conscience, by which only it is possible for him to form any rational judgment.

Mr. Locke himself does not think a better explanation can be given of any simple perception, or idea, than that we do perceive it, which is as much as to say, thus I am impressed by the object; thus it affects me; how are you impressed? How does it affect you? This doctrine, you see, supposes that all men being of the same kind have the same natural principles in them (with the degrees only or more or less perfect) and that, therefore, their perceptions must be the same, or very nearly the same; and indeed, were they not so, they could never understand each others' meaning.

We do not, therefore, contend about innate moral principles, as if they were innate propositions or innate ideas, but as principles naturally inherent in mankind, which being excited to action, raise in our minds ideas and concerning which we can make propositions. We can describe them to each other, and we can compare our feelings and perceptions of them together, as we can those of sight or any other sense. But take away the innate principles, the sight, and the moral sense, and everyone perceives that neither reasoning, argumentation, explanation, or description, in short, that no human contrivance can possibly make the blind man understand

any thing concerning the objects of sight, or the unconscious man any thing concerning moral truths. If our conscience, or moral sense, were not born with us, we most certainly never could be made to feel or understand any thing concerning morals, nor could we ever reason at all about them; we should be entirely ignorant of any such thing.

You must now, no doubt, perceive, continued he, how absurd it would be to demand a catalogue of our innate moral principles when the true nature of them is rightly understood. It would be to demand a catalogue of all the conscious sentiments excited in us in all the various actions and circumstances which occur to us in human life; in which right or wrong, just or unjust, moral beauty or deformity, are concerned. It were as reasonable to demand a catalogue of all the various sensations excited in us by the operations of outward things on our other senses. The only rational attempt to describe or give a catalogue of our innate moral principles would be to copy the purer sentiments of the best moralists, who have, with the soundest heads, justly and naturally depicted the conscious sentiments of the worthiest hearts; which would be no more than if, being curious in vision and the nature of sight, we were to consult the ablest masters in optics and were to give a catalogue of their experiments and opinions in that science."

<https://jacksonbarwis.com/dialogues-on-innate.../dialogue-2/>

For now only one more point - much of the issue is "What are we born with?" The "concepts" which Elli and most modern writers (Bailey and the rest too) is describing do not seem to be something with which we are born. Certainly the description of a cow as an example by DL is not something we are born with -- "For example: The object standing yonder is a horse or a cow. Before making this judgment, we must at some time or other have known by preconception the shape of a horse or a cow. We should not have given anything a name, if we had not first learnt its form by way of preconception."

So are we born with preconceptions, or do they arise only after experience? DeWitt and I would say this is something we are born with, and not something that arises only after experience (like horses or cows).

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2019 at 2:28 PM

What do you guys think of the phrase 'Pre-Verbal Memory'?

I think the pre-verbal part is descriptive as one part of the process we're talking about, but I am not sure it conveys the full scope. And in regard to the memory part I am not sure that that

would be correct. I realize it is not a given that anticipations are going to be parallel in every respect to the feelings, and to the sensations, but I think Epicurus seems firm that both the feelings and the sensations are incapable of memory, and I suspect that as a faculty of the canon of truth that anticipations would not be capable of memory either.

- Actually that observation goes right to the heart of the DeWitt objection to the DL description of anticipations as a stored picture (presumably stored in memory).

There's absolutely no doubt that we do have a faculty of memory, and that we do store pictures, and that we do use stored pictures to process our thoughts. The issue continues to be whether THAT PARTICULAR process, which clearly exists, is what Epicurus was referring to. The DeWitt position, by which I am still persuaded, would be that we're talking about a faculty that is different from the storing and processing of pictures. The DeWitt position would likely be stated that the faculty enables us to assemble all sorts of separate sensations into a form that we then store, and it is the process of assembly, not the storage, that is the faculty of anticipations.

The analogy Nate would be that you, as an artist, hear all sorts, of sounds, but that you organize only certain sounds into a composition that you store in your mind, and play on your piano, as music. The storage and repetition certainly occur, but the "faculty" part that even gets you to the party is that you have a "knack" for assembling sounds into music.

Same with a painter. The painter's eyes see all sorts of colors and shapes, but there is some faculty within the painter's mind that selectively observes only some of them, and assembles them into the picture in his mind that he then paints again and again. The issue of remembering the picture is of course part of our mental processes, but our minds would never have assembled what our eyes report to it into a picture unless our minds had knack for assembling disparate pieces into a whole.

It seems to me that to parallel with sensations and feelings in terms of having no memory, and in terms of having no opinion, anticipations have to be a "faculty" constituting "the knack to assemble" rather than any single picture, or any single memory of a picture. Once we make judgments to assemble something into a word, opinion has necessarily been a part of that, since words are not universal symbols.