

Preconceptions and KD24

I propose that ?A?TA?T???? E?????? T?? ??A???A? is used as a placeholder in KD24 for ?PO?E??I?.

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:

?A?A? ?A?TA?T???? E?????? T?? ??A???A?

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 tēs 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 [E ??????? T?? ??A???A?]” (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 tēs dianoias*). [...] 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 E ??????? T?? ??A???A? to express “concepts (like ‘gods’ and ‘justice’) formed from other, foundational concepts, or even dreams” (4th Criterion), versus the correct understanding which is that E??????? T?? ??A???A? includes **BOTH** “preconcepts (like ‘dog’ versus ‘cat’)” as well as “concepts (like “gods” and “justice”).

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