

Is There A Relationship Between "Anticipations" and "Instinct"?

Post by "Cassius" of April 24, 2021 at 10:28 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

From my perspective, Anticipations (I'm going to say similar to "mental concepts" in the strict scientific sense of Barrett's and her peers' research) are used by the mind to assess, identify, and categorize sensory stimuli.

Yes, we remain at the very starting point of debate because that is the Bailey/Laertius position. The process of "assessing, identifying, and categorizing" is certainly (I think everyone would agree) a process of individual reasoning involving the use of opinion. The trademark characteristic of the five senses, and of pain and pleasure, is that they operate automatically and WITHOUT the use of opinion. If anticipations are viewed as concepts formed through the use of opinion, then you've introduced into the "canon of truth" a tool which has been formed by individual human opinion and not by Nature itself.

So to restate where we are (I think) for clarity, we have at least two major issues:

(1) Per Bailey/Laertius, anticipations are concepts built up through experience which are then used as the structure for the next floor in the building, going ever-higher but always on the basis of the concepts built up after experience.

The opposing position (Velleius/DeWitt) would be that while the conceptual reasoning process Bailey describes of erecting one concept after another certainly does exist, the original decision to erect the conceptual structure, and the tools by which the conceptual structure is shaped as we build it upward, are innate / instinctual, all of a class that includes the eyes, ears, taste, nose, and touch, as well as pleasure and pain, and among which would per Velleius/DeWitt to be "etchings" which dispose the structure of conceptual thinking to be erected like a fully-formed adult grows from the DNA of a microscopic cell.

The argument would be that the beaver is predisposed to recognize an opportunity for successful living in dam-building, from the moment of conception, and that similar processes take place throughout the animal kingdom, certainly influenced by experience after birth, but which would never have occurred at all but for the original "wiring" being present to allow the connections to be recognized.

So that's a description of the issue, with a further major aspect of this debate being:

(2) That the DeWitt/Velleius description of the faculty (and as far as I can tell those who advocate it) does not in any way foreclose the Bailey/Laertius description of the faculty, but those holding the Bailey/Laertius position fiercely advocate (dare I say they are predisposed to advocate?) that the DeWitt/Velleius description is bogus and something that needs to be eliminated from consideration completely.

I find this second aspect of the question almost as fascinating as the first aspect, but maybe with this caveat: I don't think there is anything in the Laertius material that leads to the ferocious denial of the Velleius position. And almost certainly Velleius would have been aware of and had no issue with the Laertius "conceptual reasoning" position (who could?)

I think the force of the anti-Velleius argument comes from Bailey and other "modern" commentators, not from the ancient sources.