

Episode 227 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 02 - Velleius Begins His Attack On Traditional Views Of The Gods

Post by "Cassius" of June 11, 2024 at 11:06 PM

Thanks Don. One thing I get from this passage is: "Overuse of the word 'they' in a difficult subject without specifying precisely what 'they' refers to is hazardous." Maybe it's just me being slow, but in that last sentence, when he uses "they," it looks to me like he's talking about "anticipations," and I think most of us would agree that "the activity of the subject in the acquisition of knowledge" is involved.

But the question we are asking is precisely **what** activity is involved. Because he has previously used "they" just above in an apparent reference to "general ideas," it's tempting to read him as saying that anticipations **are** general ideas, but then he goes on to refer to "ready-made categories for arranging the data of experience." But "categories" don't sound like "ideas" to me.

The term "ready-made categories" sounds ok and compatible with existing at birth and prior to experience, and I can see the potential for "gods" or "blessedness" being such categories. Those terms are general enough and evoke aspects of "pleasure" and "maximum pleasure" which relate to the in-born feeling of pleasure, especially when we define "pleasure" expansively as Epicurus appears to have been doing.

But I don't see that description as constituting "general ideas" such as the idea "the gods are blessed and imperishable." That kind of conclusory idea is what we are asking "Did it exist at birth?" with the almost certain answer "No."

As I write this it occurs to me to want to hold firmly to a test of "*Did it exist at birth in at least rudimentary form?*" as a necessary test of any suggestion that a faculty (including anticipations) is canonical. All sorts of opinions can be built on the data we get through faculties over time as we age, but I'm tempted to suggest that as to saying something is a "canonical faculty" then **"If a one day old baby doesn't have it, then it's not a canonical faculty!"** 😊 (And I would expect "one day after birth" is not the relevant factor either, as these faculties we are talking about have been developing since conception and even prior to that in the passing down of genetic coding over generations.)

And to pick up on an earlier comment I think you made, I would expect Epicurus would say that many if not all animals also have a corresponding form of this faculty.