

Episode 234 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 09 - Dealing With Marcus Aurelius And The Canonical Basis For the Epicurean View Of Divinity

Post by "Cassius" of June 20, 2024 at 4:15 AM

One additional thing I'd like to memorialize from the Wednesday Zoom: Bryan pointed out something that I think boils down to close to this (Bryan can correct me if better way to say it):

All of us are constantly being bombarded from all directions at all times with all sorts of sensations, with all sorts of feelings, and also with all sorts of "*images*."

For the moment we may (or may not) want to consider the essence of all of these bombardments as movements of atoms that touch us / impact us in different ways. The three canonical faculties are our inborn ability to perceive movement or presence of atoms which constitute light (sight), sound (hearing), odors (smell), touch, or in the case of images - arrangements of atoms in films which are essentially filmy "shapes" which retain to greater or lesser degree the shapes of their source.

We can take or leave that last paragraph, because the essential point being made right now is that we're constantly being bombarded from the outside with all sorts of atomic impacts.

I take Bryan's point to be that "something" within us must constitute a faculty of selectively focusing our attention and pointing us towards identifying what is significant to us and what is not. Whatever that mechanism is, whether that's a description of a "faculty of prolepsis" or a description of something else, such a process *is* going on within us, and such a faculty is born with us at birth, and such ability does in fact get sharper over time as we process multiple experiences over time.

Perhaps an analogy is that pleasure and pain are essentially our *reactions* to events as they occur. Our genetics are etched to operate in a way that predisposes us to particularize what happens to us and to find some events more pleasurable (and painful) than others.

Similarly each of our five senses are etched to operate in a way that disposes us to distinguish between the things that impact our senses and to relay that reaction to the brain for further processing. It should not be a stretch to think that there would be a faculty that disposes our mind to distinguish between the images that impact our senses and to find some more significant than others, and to relay that to the brain for further processing. Only after the brain receives these inputs and starts processing them into "opinions" is "truth" or "error" a relevant consideration. An exercise of the operation of the eyes and ears and nose is never "right" or "wrong;" the a feeling of pleasure and pain is never "right" or "wrong," and likewise on that

analogy an exercise of of the faculty of prolepsis is never "right" or "wrong." (I take it that Tau Phi is emphatically in agreement with the importance of emphasizing that truth or error does not exist in the faculties, but in the conclusions/opinions of the mind.)

Perhaps describing the action of the faculty we are talking about as one of *selective focusing of attention* is a little more neutral than the "pattern-recognition" term that we also discussed. "Recognizing a pattern" maybe rings a little to close to "recognizing an idea." I think most of us are disposed to reject "innate ideas" for maybe the same reason that Lucretius thought it was a good argument to say that the gods could not have created the universe because even the gods would have had no pattern by which to go.

On the other hand, it seems most of accept without hesitation that we are programmed at birth to find some things *pleasurable* and some things *painful* in varying degrees, so certain forms of "programming" as related to the operation of a faculty of prolepsis in selectively focusing images doesn't seem to be out of line with Epicurus' approach.

One of the Nietzsche quotes from Beyond Good and Evil that we included in the last episode ([Gutenberg edition, translated by Helen Zimmern \) Chapter 1, section 9 -](#)

Quote

... Is not living *valuing, preferring, being unjust, being limited, endeavouring to be different?* while you pretend to read with rapture the canon of your law in Nature, you want something quite the contrary, you extraordinary stage-players and self-deluders! In your pride you wish to dictate your morals and ideals to Nature, to Nature herself, and to incorporate them therein; you insist that it shall be Nature "according to the Stoa," and would like everything to be made after your own image, as a vast, eternal glorification and generalism of Stoicism!

Surely the faculty of pleasure and pain is an example of programming that disposes us to *value* or *prefer* some things over others. It might not be too much of a stretch to analogize prolepsis very broadly as involving a disposition of the mind to *value* or *prefer* or *focus* on some images other than others, without which faculty we would never be able to focus on or distinguish any images in particular as different from any of the other myriads of images that constantly bombard us.