

How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain by Lisa Feldman Barrett

Post by "Cassius" of April 16, 2021 at 2:20 AM

"This barrage of sensory input was not random: it had some structure. Regularities. Your little brain began computing probabilities of which sights, sounds, smells, touches, tastes, and interoceptive sensations go together and which don't."

I would see in that sentence the issue of two phenoma:

(1) the sensory input was not random because the sense faculties received and presented their findings in ways influenced by their functional makeup (ears hearing only at certain frequencies, eyes seeing only at certain wavelengths, etc) DeWitt would say that there is in fact an anticipatory faculty as well which is active in helping organize according to the nature of the anticipatory function.

(2) the part as to "your little brain began processing" would be the separate second step of conceptual reasoning - taking the observations and forming them into concepts and then applying those concepts to new observations. DeWitt probably would say that the "which go together and which don't" isn't entirely observational, but that "go together" is at least partly what the anticipatory function recognizes by pre-birth etching. Cats and dogs can observe lots of things that we do, but they never make connections that we as humans do because our minds are wired to see things "go together" that theirs never will, regardless of how much they see and observe.

No amount of additional observation will ever move a cat or a dog to a human level of processing of abstract ideas because the initial wiring to make those connections is simply not "etched" there from the beginning. As I read between the lines it is this etching which Dewitt asserts Epicurus held to be the faculty of anticipation, with "an anticipation" being a connection drawn that would not and could not have been drawn without that pre-existent etching. Which is not to say that the connection drawn will be any more accurate to the full facts than a single perception of an eye or an ear, but is to say that the connection would not come to our attention to consider as a criteria of the "truth" of our eventual opinions if we did not have and exercise the faculty.

And further, it is to say that *the existence of this faculty amounts to something that Nature has provided in order to make available to us these very connections, just like Nature provides eyes that see and ears that hear. And would not the implication of that observation be that to ignore the results of the anticipatory faculty would be as unwise (or as contrary to Nature) as would be ignoring the perceptions of the eyes or the ears?*