

Anticipations - Justice & Divine Nature

Post by "Joshua" of August 15, 2021 at 12:33 PM

I think Don is on the right track. Principal Doctrine 31 makes the point explicit:

Quote

Natural justice is a symbol or expression of usefulness, to prevent one person from harming or being harmed by another.

And 24:

Quote

Those animals which are incapable of making covenants with one another, to the end that they may neither inflict nor suffer harm, are without either justice or injustice. And those tribes which either could not or would not form mutual covenants to the same end are in like case.

In light of this, "natural justice" is not to be confused with "Natural Law"; it is merely the sense of justice inherent to human nature. And yet even here there is hairsplitting, for though all humans likely possess this innate sense as an heirloom of our evolutionary past, it is quite possible to be conditioned by culture or circumstance *out* of a sense of justice.

Even in lower order animals we can see certain seemingly altruistic behaviors, like food-sharing, that hint at the development of this trait in humans.

Divine Nature as an abstraction is also thought to be innate. Epicurus' evidence for this is the near-universality of belief among humans; even today, the rate of proper atheism among U.S. adults is something like 5 percent. There is a tendency among the non-religious to believe that religious belief at some distant epoch will at long last perish from the Earth, ushering in a golden age of...well, I don't know what exactly.

But if Epicurus is right, this is not to be hoped for. Like Sigmund Freud in his *Future of an Illusion*, Epicurus seems to have recognized that the religious sense is innate; like the sense of justice, it can be conditioned against by culture or circumstance, but on the whole our species is not likely to abandon it altogether.

But here is where things get interesting; in the case of justice, Epicurus' account is descriptive, not normative. It tells us how things are, in other words; not necessarily how they should be. Primitive tribes whose culture or circumstance prevent them from exercising a sense of justice are not thereby unjust. In living without justice, they also *ipso facto* live without injustice. The words cease to carry any meaning or applicability for those peoples.

And this should be true of the divine nature as well. There will be those for whom the hypothetical objection imagined by Pascal is a truth to their own nature; "I am so made that I cannot believe."

Lacking a sense of the godly ought not make one ungodly, if the same is true of justice. It ought to be possible to, I might say, *sublimate* beyond the reach of the question altogether; to change one's state so completely that it no longer applies. But that's my argument, and not Epicurus'.