

Anticipations - Justice & Divine Nature

Post by "Cassius" of August 16, 2021 at 8:22 AM

My comment in response to the last two posts is that I would emphasize over and over that any single "anticipation" might be just as erroneous as any single glimpse by sight or hearing of the thing being considered. A faculty of being aware that "there's something here I need to pay attention to" does not tell you what you should "conclude" about it. I think that is the main issue that needs to be grappled with in discussing anticipations -- "faculties" are not omniscient or omnipotent and the immediate temptation to conclude "Nature tells everyone to be 'fair'" or "Nature tells us to punish the unjust" needs to be resisted because as Epicurus hammers home there IS no absolute just or unjust.

Then:

[Quote from EricR](#)

While definitions abound in trying to pin down what is pornographic and what is not, I can say with confidence that "I know it when I see it." While the context can vary historically and across cultures, I've often wondered if most people "know it when they see it" and then attempt to define it afterward. Is this an example of an Anticipation?

I would say that yes this is quite possibly the faculty of anticipations at work. You recognize that there is an issue here that needs to be evaluated and dealt with, but you are not given at birth a "rule-book" written by a Censorship Committee of what is and is not acceptable. If you did not have some natural faculty disposing you to take notice of this issue, you would stare blankly at it and see nothing of significance to you any more than a grasshopper looking at a TV screen.

[Quote from EricR](#)

What is blank are the actual ideas, thoughts, concepts, etc. that are later conceived via the interaction of the Anticipations with experiences. Am I understanding this correctly?

I agree with Don that the terms "blank slate" and even "blank" are not very useful at all, and as they ARE used by those philosophers who promote it, it is very damaging, because what they are indeed trying to do is erase all reference to natural faculties and dispositions, in favor of "logic" -- conceptual processing that they seem to believe is TOTALLY within our own minds and arrived at by our own thinking.

[Quote from EricR](#)

Now, how about "divine nature"? If we are not born with actual innate ideas, what is going on with this one? What is innate in us that refers to what we later define conceptually?

I would say that the [Velleius narrative in "On The Nature of the Gods"](#) is, as DeWitt suggests, an accurate version of Epicurus' views. We are born with a faculty that allows us to recognize higher and lower states of "performance" in living, and we are at birth wired / disposed to categorize ways of living as "more or less blessed" (or any similar superlative you want to use). As we grow older from day to day we are exposed to more examples of ways of living and our minds begin to classify them according to what we begin to conclude are better or worse. As we think about these ways of life we are exposed further to stories and natural scenery that inspire us to deeper and deeper thought. We are exposed to the idea that the universe is infinite and eternal and teeming with life. We are exposed to statues and artworks and depictions of divinity that others before us have conceived. And if you take Epicurus at his word, we are exposed to "images" that stimulate our minds directly (if you want to joke, like radiation from a cell phone, or radio reception through a tooth filling) to think further about these issues.

But despite all that, these things are not properly thought of as "innate ideas." We are not born Presbyterians or Islamists or atheists.

And to repeat my view is that it is very important to speak accurately and distinguish "the faculty of anticipations" which is like "the faculty of sight" as against "an anticipation" or "one or more anticipations" which is like saying "I observed elephants from a tour bus four times in my life." Those observations are extremely helpful, but they are raw data that must be processed into opinions, and once they become opinions, they are no longer strictly examples of anticipations. Your viewpoint of on whether you find elephants to be sympathetic and admirable creatures arises FROM your sensations of them in the past, and from the feelings of pleasure or pain you felt in regard to them, and from your anticipations by which you organized your views of their "justice" or "blessedness" or other abstract issues), but all of those you have processed into opinions, and those are YOUR opinions, not handed to you in final form by Nature, and YOU have to take responsibility for the correctness of your personal conclusion to be a Nature Guardian or a Big Game Hunter. Others can decide whether to judge you positively or negatively as to which of those choices you take, but everyone (you, those who judge you - everyone) are just acting to the best of your abilities. Nature hasn't programmed any of you on the final conclusion you "should" reach. There's no heavenly ranking or Platonic realm list which tells everyone how to evaluate those things.

Even though I am disagreeing with him as to the word "ideas," I believe I am essentially following, and simply expanding, on DeWitt's perspective on all this. DeWitt knows much better than I do that there can be false anticipations, as cited in the letter to Menoeceus. Once you incorporate into the big picture that no single anticipation can be considered to give you the

"correct big picture," I think this "anticipations as a faculty that provides data that can be either 'right' or 'wrong' to the full facts" position is where you end up.