

Anticipations - Justice & Divine Nature

Post by "Cassius" of August 16, 2021 at 11:02 PM

These are good points to move the discussion along. Let me comment on them:

[Quote from Don](#)

I'm interpreting some things posted here to say that everyone has their own standard. No. I can't see how that can be correct. Everyone has their own opinions, beliefs, interpretations, etc., but the Canon provides a standard against which those opinions and beliefs are measured. You can't say a belief or opinion is "empty" κενός if you have nothing against which to measure it. Otherwise, the Canon has no meaning. You can't say the standard is not a standard. That doesn't place a value judgement. It a belief does not START with a canonical sensation, preconception, or feeling, it's not a valid belief. Not all beliefs are equal. How else could you say that a belief that the gods influence my actions is vain/empty/κενός without referring to the yardstick/ruler/Canon?

Let's start with that one: Yes I do think that everyone has there on sense of pleasure, and I think that is the easiest one to deal with. Some people find pleasure in many different ways -- do we agree on that?

If we do, then that's the first indication that a canonical faculty gives different results for different people.

Don't we also agree that people see colors in different ways (for example some are color-blind) and hear in different ways (some are "tone-deaf")? I think we'll agree there too.

As for anticipations, that's really the question we're discussing, so let's defer whether people have different instances of anticipations, though I will assert eventually that those differ too.

Where I think you are going, though, is that yes I agree that we can "generalize" and find that MOST people's sense of pleasure and pain, and their senses of sight and sound etc, do fall within ranges or bell curves or whatever. I would think that those "ranges" or "statistical probabilities" are what we are all thinking form the basis for our generalizations as to what is desirable and what is not desirable for most human beings.

But the real point there is that these are just generalizations, and they vary (sometimes dramatically) by individual, so while it is correct to say "generally" that most people (or most "Amerians") or most "men," or most of many other types of categories that we could come up with, do perceive things in a general way, that's pretty much the same as any other kind of statistical generalization. While yes that generalization does arise from nature, it's not really

the kind of "absolute" standard at all that most people think about.

Now when we are talking about purely "mechanical" observations like length or width or weight or many many other things that can be "measured" yes we can come up with rulers and yardsticks and ways to measure them that are in fact 'objective' in way, but even there it is us (rather than nature) that is selecting an arbitrary standard to compare them against. Our confidence that those measurements always remains the same comes from the fact that we can reliably repeat them over and over and get the same result, not from any reference to an absolute standard "floating in the air"

[Quote from Don](#)

The Canon provides no ethical or conceptual content. All the canonic faculties (I think that's a good word) function pre-conceptually. "Images" impact the senses. Preconceptions/anticipations are exactly that: they are "before concepts" or "anticipate" concepts. The feelings of pleasure and pain are automatic. We cannot (really) control whether we feel pleasure or pain. We can decide to endure pain as a choice. But we feel pleasure or pain prior to any conceptual understanding of it or "meaning" behind it.

I think we are completely in agreement here, with the exception that pleasure and pain are the foundation of all ethical choices, and so I doubt that it is really proper to completely sever ethics from the canonical discussion.

[Quote from Don](#)

As far as determining whether something is just or not, whether there is justice in a given situation, that is entirely a matter for Ethics and the social contract. The most basic social contract - according to Epicurus - is "to neither harm nor to be harmed." That's not the prolepsis of justice. Granted, I'm still wrestling with what the "Prolepsis of Justice" is, but I'm leaning toward it having to do something with those animal experiments, especially since their working out something preverbally and maybe preconceptually but rather instinctually. The "prolepsis of justice" will not "tell" us whether something is just or not. That's determined by the social contract of a particular time and place.

I am pretty sure here is where we will disagree. First, I don't really think there is a sanction for saying that Epicurus really endorsed a 'social contract' in the first place, other than his observations that when people do agree not to harm each other, we can call that the foundation of any concept of "justice" that may exist. But he is also very clear that circumstances can and do change at a moment's notice, so that agreements which may have been "just" yesterday can become "unjust" today or tomorrow. And I think that just emphasizes

the ephemeral nature of justice and that nothing is ever just in and of itself. He's really saying that any relationship that leads to the happiness of the person concerned with it may be considered just, but he's also saying that if we choose not to enter into any such arrangement (or for some reason we're not capable of it) there is no justice involved.

While it's possible to correctly generalize that most people in most situations benefit if they agree with each other, all those caveats to me simply emphasize that there is no such thing as absolute natural justice, social contract or not, so that the entire discussion just becomes another illustration that there is no such thing as absolute virtue (with justice simply being a subset of virtue).

As to this sentence "The "prolepsis of justice" will not "tell" us whether something is just or not. That's determined by the social contract of a particular time and place." I doubt I agree with that. I am thinking that would be better stated as something like "When I was a child I had four friends and the ice cream man gave us four ice cream cones so one of us didn't have one so we shared them equally anyway." I think that child found PLEASURE in seeing herself and all her friends get the same amount of ice cream. She found pleasure in that, however, only because her faculty of anticipations told her to recognize that there was an issue in everyone getting a similar amount. Some of the other children could also have recognized the issue but thought "I am older so I should get more." And another one could think "I haven't eaten lunch so I should get more." And another one could think "I don't care what she thinks I am stronger and they depend on me so I deserve more." and many other possibilities could occur along the same lines.

In that scenario I would think that is an example that there is no natural sanction for a "social contract" for everyone to agree to divide equally, although that is ONE among several options that they could choose to follow. It was the sense of pleasure that ultimately provided the stop and go signal as each child evaluated (using their anticipations that there was an issue to consider) the situation that they might or might not choose to divide the ice cream equally. And to make Epicurus' point, they could choose to "agree" to divide it equally if they want, and they can call that "justice" if they want and "injustice" if someone breaks the agreement, but that ultimately if someone chooses to exit they agreement because it is no longer in their view mutually beneficial to them, they can simply choose to do so and no "injustice" is then involved. The word "just" becomes from that point of view as maleable as any other virtue - none of which are "absolute."

So ultimately I come down to the canonical faculty of pleasure as ultimately determining the "ethical choice" to be made. But it's also significant to note that no one would have ever even considered "ethics" to be involved at all if they didn't have an "anticipation" that "ethics" was a factor that they needed to consider as to how best to divide the ice cream. They could have, without that anticipatory disposition, just grabbed for all of the ice cream and each one tried to devour it all themselves just like we might say that a "savage" or some other primitive or hungry set of animals might do.