

Episode 162 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 16

- Chapter 8 - Sensations, Anticipations, And Feelings

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Post by "Cassius" of February 14, 2023 at 7:11 PM

Another thing I want to mention in preparation for this episode is a question we touched on at the end of 161 - the relationship of Epicurus to "empiricism" and the focus in empiricism on "experience."

One of the important issues in controversy as to anticipations is to the extent to which anticipations exist or operate "prior to experience." Let me through out a description that may or may not be accurate: in the Dlogenes Laertius example of anticipations, multiple experiences of observing oxen are made by a person, an image-picture-definition-anticipation is assembled, and then that image-picture-definition anticipation is used as a standard by which to judge later experiences.

One interpretation of anticipations (can't recall at the moment if this is Dewitt) is that this description refers to concept formation and conceptual reasoning, but that "pre-conceptions" and "pro-lepsis" and even the word "anticipation" itself refer to something going on *before* even the first exposure to an oxen.

The argument for that position would find its strongest support in Velleius (On the Nature of the Gods) which can be read to refer to anticipations of the gods being inborn and/or existing before any experience with a god. In other words, since most of us take the position that we have never seen or heard or touched or smelled or tasted a god, the existence or development of anticipations of the gods must not come from direct sensory experience of them.

I think that's a good argument but very definitely I am not taking a firm position on much of this debate - especially since I have not read either DeWitt or the Tsouna article in recent months.

However I do hope before we come to the end of this discussion we can begin to address the question: Does the faculty of Anticipations describe nothing more than concept-formation and the application of those concepts to new situations? Or - like i think most of us accept about the operation of pain-pleasure and even the 5 senses, the faculty of anticipations involves some kind of inborn predisposition of principles of operation which exist in us before any exposure to anything that causes the faculty of anticipations to generate any input to our minds. At the very least, it would seem that the "coding" for the faculty of pleasure and pain exists before we, after birth (or after conception) are exposed to anything we find painful or pleasurable. Same goes for the "Coding" in the operation of the eyes, which predates the things we see. Is the same true for Anticipations?

Another thing I think that most of us will agree on is that we are not born capitalists or communists or socialists (i.e., with fully formed concepts in our minds). Then what is this disposition toward "fairness" or "justice" and how far does the disposition go in containing comment at birth? I would say at the moment that the "disposition" goes as far as the ability to ****recognize**** that relationships and abstractions exist, but not much as to their content. LOTS of room for discussion on all this.

Post your comments and we will try to at least address the major points!