

Episode 235 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 10 - Velleius Explains the Epicurean Proleptic View Of Divinity

Post by "Cassius" of June 25, 2024 at 9:19 AM

Issues I want to be sure to include in this episode:

1. Is "pattern" correct usage in the context of prolepsis? Is the Latin "exemplum" (see Lucretius below)? Is "example" or "notion" a better term? Does "pattern" imply intelligent designer?
2. Is "recognition" correct usage?
3. Are any "patterns" innate at birth? (beavers and dams?)
4. Relationship of "patterns" and "images"
5. Does the mind itself create patterns?
6. Lucretius 5:181, see [post 40 above](#): [181-Bailey] Further, how was there first implanted in the gods a pattern for the begetting of things, yea, and the concept of man, so that they might know and see in their mind what they wished to do, or in what way was the power of the first-beginnings ever learnt, or what they could do when they shifted their order one with the other, if nature did not herself give a model of creation? For so many first-beginnings of things in many ways, driven on by blows from time everlasting until now, and moved by their own weight, have been wont to be borne on, and to unite in every way, and essay everything that they might create, meeting one with another, that it is no wonder if they have fallen also into such arrangements, and have passed into such movements, as those whereby this present sum of things is carried on, ever and again replenished.
 1. Martin Ferguson Smith - Furthermore, how was a model for the creation of things implanted in the gods? How did they obtain the conception of human beings, so that they might know and perceive in their minds what they wished to produce? And how did they ever recognize the capacity of the primary particles and the potential effect of their different arrangements, if nature herself did not furnish them with a pattern for creation? The fact is that from time everlasting countless elements, impelled by blows and by their own weight, have never ceased to move in manifold ways, making all kinds of unions and experimenting with everything they could combine to create. 17 It is not surprising therefore that they have at last fallen into such arrangements, and acquired such movements, as those whereby this aggregate of things is maintained and constantly renewed.
 2. MFS Note 16 - 16. 181-186: The same argument is used in 1046 1049, where Lucr. is maintaining that language cannot have been an artificial invention. The point is that neither the gods nor the inventors of language can have had a conception of what they wanted to create, if nature had not already created a world or language that they could use as a model. The argument depends on an important principle of

Epicurean epistemology, which is that repeated reception of sense impressions creates in the mind a general conception of each class of things, and that without these conceptions, to which further sense impressions are referred, scientific knowledge would be impossible. On (pre)conceptions as a criterion of truth, see p. xxv.

3. MFS Note page xxv - "Sensation by itself is irrational and incapable of memory, but the repeated reception of sense impressions creates in the mind general conceptions of all classes of things. Both in Greek and in Latin these general conceptions are often (though not by Lucretius) called "preconceptions," because, once created in the mind, they remain there, and further sense impressions are referred to them for testing and identification. However, it is important to understand that the (pre)conceptions are not innate, but derived from sensation. Indeed it is because they are derived from sensation that they are valid. Without them, memory, thought, and knowledge would be impossible, and they are the second criterion of truth.

cui veteres obsunt ; sed cui nil accidit aegri
 tempore in anteacto, cum pulchre degeret aevom,
 quid potuit novitatis amorem accendere tali ?
 175 at, credo, in tenebris vita ac maerore iacebat,
 donec diluxit rerum genitalis origo. 175
 174 quidve mali fuerat nobis non esse creatis ?¹
 177 natus enim debet quicumque est velle manere
 in vita, donec retinebit blanda voluptas :
 qui numquam vero vitae gustavit amorem
 nec fuit in numero, quid obest non esse creatum ? 180
 exemplum porro gignundis rebus et ipsa
 notities divis hominum unde est insita primum,
 quid vellent facere ut scirent animoque viderent,
 quove modost umquam vis cognita principiorum
 quidque inter sese permutato ordine possent, 185
 si non ipsa dedit specimen natura creandi ?
 namque ita multa modis multis primordia rerum
 ex infinito iam tempore percita plagis
 ponderibusque suis consuerunt concita ferri
 omnimodisque coire atque omnia pertemptare, 190
 quaecumque inter se possent congressa creare,²
 ut non sit mirum si in talis disposituras
 deciderunt quoque et in talis venere meatus,
 qualibus haec rerum geritur nunc summa novando.

Quod si iam rerum ignorem primordia quae sint, 195
 hoc tamen ex ipsis caeli rationibus ausim
 confirmare aliisque ex rebus reddere multis,
 nequaquam nobis divinitus esse paratam
 naturam rerum ; tanta stat praedita culpa.

¹ ll. 174-5 placed before 176 by Lamb., Munro³. In ed. 2
 M. placed them after 169. ² ll. 188-191 = 423-426.