

Feedback From A User

Post by "Lee" of February 13, 2020 at 2:49 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So in sum I think your sentence there is very important, but that what you are observing does not point to "universal concepts" but to a human **faculty** - the faculty of anticipations, which disposes us in the direction you are looking - and gives us the disposition, which not all of us use, to exercise the ability to organize things into relationships, even though there is no divine order, no "essence," and no possibility of truly universal concepts.

Hello Cassius, and anyone else who is willing to help to me gain a better understanding of an important issue. I am continuing to ponder universal concepts and how human behavior can be understood by anticipations in a world made of atoms and void.

I accept the quote above from Cassius and am attempting to reconcile the position with some of the other reading I have done which argues convincingly that we have an intellectual capability which allows us to understand and generalize the sameness (commonality) in things. Moreover, this intellectual ability allows us to understand these concepts as subjects of thought rather than simply recognizing them. For example, we can recognize "triangularity" in things **AND** we go beyond just recognition by understanding the concept of what it means to be a three-sided figure.

It seems clear that Epicurus thought justice, for example, was a real thing and I am trying to better understand the kind of reality this and other concepts have.

Attached to this post is "Chapter 2: The Intellect and the Senses" from a book called "Ten Philosophical Mistakes" by philosopher Mortimer Adler. I would be delighted if any members would care to read it and comment on the arguments made. However, I recognize the indulgence of this request and have pasted two passages below in this post. I hope to learn if others agree with me or may dissuade me of the opinion that these arguments are valid in the context of Epicurean physics and that the intellectual capabilities described could be a result of a completely material reality.

Quote 1

To affirm that what is common to two or more things, or that what is the same about them, can be apprehended, is to posit an

object of apprehension which is quite distinct from the object apprehended when we perceive this or that singular particular

as such. But this is precisely the position which opponents of nominalism regard as the correct solution of the problem;

namely, that there are objects of apprehension other than perceived particulars. Yet it is precisely this which is initially denied

by those who deny intellect and, with it, all abstract concepts or general ideas.

Rejecting nominalism as a self-defeating doctrine, one need not go to the opposite extreme, the extreme to which Plato went.

Attributing to man an intellect independent of the senses, Plato also conferred an independent reality on its intelligible objects—the universal archetypes. In his view, it was these universal and eternal archetypes—of triangle and cow and everything else—that truly have being, and more reality than the ever-changing particulars of the sensible world.

It is not necessary to go to that extreme to correct the mistaken view of the human mind that regards it as a wholly sensitive

faculty and that, denying intellect, is compelled to adopt an untenable nominalism. To say that the objects of conceptual

thought are always universals is not to assert that these universals exist as such in reality, independent of the human mind

that apprehends them.

Quote 2

Not all the concepts that the intellect is able to form are abstractions from sense-experience, as our concepts of cow, tree,

and chair are. Some are intellectual constructions out of the conceptual materials that consist of concepts abstracted from

sense.

In this respect, the intellect functions in a manner parallel to the imagination. Some of our images are memories of sense perceptions,

but some are constructs of the imagination—images constructed out of the materials of sense-experience;

for example, the constructed image of a mermaid or a centaur. We call these fictions of the imagination. So, too, conceptual

constructs might be called fictions of the intellect, with this one very important difference. We acknowledge at once that

the fictions of our imagination are objects that have no actual existence in reality. But many of the conceptual constructs that

we employ in scientific and in philosophical thought concern objects such as black holes and quarks in physics, and God,

spirits, and souls in metaphysics. These are objects about which it is of fundamental importance to ask about their existence

in reality.

Since these conceptual constructs can have no perceptual instances, the attempt to answer this question must be indirect

and inferential. The real existence of instances of such objects can be posited only on the grounds that, if they did not exist,

then observed phenomena could not be adequately explained.