

Feedback From A User

Post by "Lee" of February 18, 2020 at 12:24 PM

The feedback to my question as been enlightening! Thanks to all who took the time to help clarify this difficult and fundamental question.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The reason I quote Godfrey is that that is how I tend to look at the question, although at present I would vary that and say:

"In a universe in which atoms are the only eternally unchanging entities, there is no possibility of there existing eternally unchanging human concepts (which is what is IMPLIED, to a normal person, by the word "universal").

On the other hand I agree that Martin is stating something obvious too:

"If the same thought pattern shows up with only minor variation among the vast majority of members of a population, that should qualify as a **universal**."

I personally just find it very confusing and potentially very misleading for philosophers to try equate "same thought pattern"... among "members of a population" and call that a "universal" (which again to me implies that it is presumed to be found in ALL members of that population anywhere in the "universe" (meaning "cosmos").

[Quote from Elayne](#)

There's clearly no innate specific word for cow-- but there is an innate recognition of the cow as distinct from the other matter in the field. The visual system, including the brain, has to perform work when presented with light reflections-- what is an object? Where are the boundaries of the object? Etc.

I don't know that anyone has specifically studied cows-- but humans do appear to have innate recognition of snakes and spiders as dangerous. The fear of snake-shaped objects appears whether a baby has been bitten by one or not.
<https://www.google.com/amp/s/api.nati...nakes-video-spd>

This inborn pattern recognition doesn't include language and is not a symbolic concept-- it is an example of what I believe Epicurus meant by the prolepses. It's definitely what I would include in my own Canon-- it's like a species encoded memory of certain patterns.

It seems possible to interpret everyone's comments as being in agreement and simply emphasizing different aspects of the answer.

Cassius has a good point that the terms "universal" and "accident" have a lot of historical meaning that is tied to immaterialism, essence and forms. Using the term "Events" does seem to shed some of the baggage that hangs with the other terms. He and Godfrey have emphasized the doctrine that all of reality resolves to the principles of matter and void. Cassius provided ample evidence for this with the helpful textual reference from the letter to Herodotus, Lucretius, Jefferson, Wright, etc. Thanks for sharing such a trove of useful material!



On the other hand, Martin seems correct in his point that it is possible to understand "universal" as a description for a cognitive activity we all utilize as a natural part of life. This can be true while still resolving to principles of matter and void.

Elayne's references to child behavior and description of prolepses as, "a species encoded memory of certain patterns" seems to round out the explanation based on the experience of scientific research.

In my opinion, Adler is generally correct in his opinion that nominalism is wrong and that these "universals" or "events" exist in the intellect. However, we must understand "intellect" as a mechanism ultimately made up of atoms that has the function of recognizing patterns found in other material configurations.

It seems similar to how DNA mechanically encodes the same configurations in separate individuals of the same species. Intellect is how the brain decodes and records the information in each of us.

Adler may agree with this but his finally paragraph of the chapter hints that he believes there is more to the issue where he says the brain is a necessary but NOT sufficient cause of the intellect. He still believes there is an immaterial component.

I, however, think the arguments raised here point out that the material brain could be sufficient to explain our experience. As the Occam's razor principle states, "Entities should not be multiplied without necessity." We do not need immaterial causes to explain similar (universal) events.

I am very glad to have found this group of Epicurean Friends and am immensely appreciative that all of you take such pains to share your opinions.

Best Regards,

Lee