

Making Epicurean Canonics Understandable

Post by “Elayne” of October 31, 2020 at 6:05 AM

Cassius, I think it's not quite that confusing, and that it's easy to make things sound deeper than they are.

When it comes to what I know, I stick to the Canon-- I don't put anything derived from reason in the "I know this" category. For prolepses, I do not include anything as known which contradicts my senses. Which rules out anything like supernatural gods, a realm of pure forms, string theory, Lawrence Krauss's ideas, elementary particles being hard bodies, or a universal consciousness which I could contact with my mind.

What I know with confidence is the data itself, confirmed by multiple encounters with reality and by the confluence of my senses, processed only to the unavoidable degree of those innate pattern recognitions which are inseparable from cognition. Any heuristics which are avoidable, like sunk cost, I can learn to avoid with practice.

Using the senses to obtain data does not require reason or the scientific method. It is a matter of direct encounter. If we don't start from that, all is confusion.

I also know my feelings directly, the only way feelings can be known. I have 100% confidence that my feelings are real.

The separate question is: how are these observations related to each other? What's causing the thing I'm observing? What's producing my prolepsis? What's triggering my feelings? What might be going on that I haven't yet directly or consciously observed? This is the question I think we are debating-- the mechanisms and explanations.

As I've mentioned before, I have a form of synesthesia. Certain words and feelings have colors and tastes for me. Those sensations are real-- I accept them. But what causes them? Does the word "bitter" actually throw off particles that bind with my taste buds? Do other people without synesthesia just not have sensitive taste buds, because they haven't trained them? That is a question not about my experience but about the cause.

My preference is to continue to always use evidence. That is the only way I know of to avoid getting fooled into thinking things like the multiverse must be real simply because it isn't ruled

out. This is where the scientific method has been shown to be so useful in helping us rank reliability of conclusions on a scale (the scale itself being a prolepsis). It allows me to feel confident in explanations about data. And this is the point where confident "enough" shows up.

On the degree of confidence, it is true that people can have different levels of preference and comfort, but if two people have agreed that the data was collected accurately and reproducibly, then there should not be confusion over what the p value is and which conclusions are more reliable than others when there's a comparison. It's not arbitrary, because it is grounded in the senses.

Comparing experimental reliability is entirely different from deriving conclusions from logic alone (string theory, a realm of pure forms, analogies about shapes of what we can't see, what completely blissful beings would look like, bitter foods bind my taste receptors so bitter words must do the same) or intuition about causes (dreams come from outer space, this sensation I have of contacting an unseen intelligence is caused by a being even though I have no sensory confirmation).

A prolepsis can help us identify a pattern, but it cannot tell us what the cause of the pattern is most likely to be.

Whenever you see me object to a conclusion, it is on the grounds that logic alone is different from experimental data with at least some idea of reliability to consider, no matter how minimal. Guessing at the shape of elementary particles based on analogy is reason based, not observation based. Nothing about reason based guesses is anything but hypothetical to me. All those things go in the tbd basket. I'm fine with people having different comfort levels once there's some sort of sense evidence-- but when there's zero sense evidence, I find it not a whit different from the world of pure forms.

So there's my bright line on causal explanations: at least some sense evidence vs zero evidence, and then when I have some evidence, I choose the explanation with the highest available reliability to base my action decisions on, because that is the most secure way to achieve pleasure. If I want to dig a well, and the well is part of my pleasure requirement, a secure source of water-- I'm not going to hire a magician to advise me on where to dig. I'm going to use methods which have been demonstrated more reliable.