

Prolepsis / Anticipations As Epicurus' Answer to the MENO Problem

Post by “Don” of November 1, 2024 at 7:14 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

As I see it, the important issue is whether the mind and the sense work through material / bodily means or through some other means. We aren't a biochemistry group, and it would be as unproductive for us to get into the details of biochemistry as it would be to get into the latest discussions of particle physics.

Oh, I wouldn't suggest we become a biochemistry or particle physics forum; however, we've had any number of threads on neuroscience and physics. I don't advocate getting into the weeds of any specific science, but I think we have to keep distinct the ancient theories and the current theories (*as in "a formal statement of the rules on which a subject of study is based or of ideas that are suggested to explain a fact or event or, more generally, an opinion or explanation; as in evolutionary theory" and NOT "it's just a theory"*).

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus' general approach remains perfectly valid...

Absolutely. I will be the first to contend that there is a through-line from Epicurus to modern scientific theories in that ALL are based on the truth of there being a material, physical universe *and* the laws governing said physical universe are knowable *and* there's no mystical, supernatural woo underlying the universe.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

But simply saying that it is sophistry doesn't persuade the legions of normal people outside this group who need to be provided both an explanation as to why it is sophistry and an alternative that makes sense from an Epicurean point of view.

So what's your solution to this problem other than to point out the natural, material basis for sensations? I fully realize there's [Chalmer's supposed "hard problem" of consciousness](#) where he seems to want to smuggle in supernatural or mystical bases for consciousness. I still think consciousness is just the sum total of our physical sensations, neurons, gut bacteria, and what not working in concert. Sure, it's complex!! But, in the end, we're still just physical beings sensing a physical world just trying to get through the day.

And I agree with Asimov's spectrum of "wrongness." BUT while eidola were less wrong than Plato's flashlight idea of sensation, it still was more wrong than our current understanding. There's nothing "wrong" with that, and I find it interesting to delve into how Epicurus came up with that approach. BUT we also need to understand why it was wrong, how it was wrong, and be humble enough to know how far we STILL have to go to understand how the universe works on all levels.