

Lucretius On The Development of Language

Post by "Godfrey" of October 23, 2019 at 4:29 PM

It would appear from Lucretius and from observation that there is a prolepsis of language, in terms of an innate desire to communicate and a "pencil sketch" of how to do so given our biology.

The Nietzsche excerpt, to me, does not relate to prolepseis but it useful to clarify the difference between a prolepsis and a concept. It illustrates how, for instance, "cow" becomes a concept, which I think we've determined is not a prolepsis (at least by our non academic reasoning). Similarly the Lucretius excerpts illustrate what a prolepsis could be, although I don't know that I've ever heard a prolepsis of language referred to so that could be open to discussion.

Quote

First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the ideas attached to words, in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning.

For this purpose it is essential that the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference.

This is where it gets confusing to me, particularly in light of the recent thread on the gods and the discussion there of the words "immortal" and "incorruptible". One issue is that so much philosophy originates in languages other than English, so there's the added complexity of translation (for those of us who are primarily monolingual). Another issue more directly related to the above quote is that people seem to have conflicting first mental images of many words. So how does one burrow down to the first mental image of a given word?