

Episode 163 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 17 - Chapter 8 - Sensations, Anticipations, And Feelings 04

Post by "Cassius" of February 21, 2023 at 3:51 PM

Thanks to Don for this very helpful article: Epicurean Prolepsis by David Glidden.

[Epicurean Prolepsis](#)

The paper I presented at the SAGP session was NOT the same as my much longer paper that was subsequently published in Oxford Studies, where I had by then...

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I am reading that article now and it shoots at a lot of what seems generally accepted about anticipations. I read Glidden to agree with DeWitt in being very critical of Diogenes Laertius, but he is also critical of Cicero, on the grounds that both of them have too much Stoic influence. I like what I am reading so far.

For example:

Quote

Consequently I see no foundation for the most common interpretation, that Epicurean prolepsis is some kind of conceptual device. The most popular version of this thesis has been that prolepseis are the meanings of individual words, as they might also have been for the Stoics, individual concepts which when strung together in the appropriate way would provide meaning to sentences, constituting lekta. Now I have argued against this interpretation in "Epicurean Semantics," where I pointed out that we should take the evidence of Plutarch and Sextus seriously, that there is nothing in Epicureanism comparable to what the Stoics claimed was the significance (τὸ σεμαινόμενον) of voiced sounds. The Epicureans made do with just voiced sounds, or utterances, and the events happening in the world which those utterances referred to. Attention to everything which the Epicureans say about the origin and character of language suggests that utterances label states of the world, or else they are vacuous sounds. The prolepseis, then, are not vehicles of meaning, but conveyances of evidence making claims on the world, not making sense of our vocabulary.

Some would maintain that nevertheless prolepseis are mental representations, though what they represent are complex ideas about the world. This too seems unlikely. The authority of perception and the authority of our feelings would be called into question, with disastrous consequences for Epicurean empiricism, were it the case that what it

is we see or how it is we feel were somehow dependent upon our own subjective perspective and viewpoint. The Epicureans were adamant on the mechanical, automatic character of perception and feeling, which somehow guaranteed the information we received from our senses was information about the state of the world, as opposed to our state of mind. The purely referential character of what it is we perceive and the pleasure and pain we feel is what guarantees the epistemic authority of aisthesis and pathē.