

Hidden Brain podcast: Suggested Episodes on the Gods & Religion

Post by “Don” of June 30, 2024 at 8:36 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I'm chewing on the idea that the prolepsis comes from the infant-caregiver relationship

I think you're onto something thinking along those links, [Godfrey](#) . Part of it comes down on answering the questions:

- "What is a prolepsis?"
- What are the prolepses (as a group of phenomena)?
- Can we translate (literally and/or metaphorically) Epicurus's ancient Greek concept of mental/sensory functioning into a modern framework and still have it make sense?

[There's the rub.](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

At the moment I would tend to think the way Godfrey is going is most likely. It seems likely that prolepsis is, like the eyes or other senses, a pre-conceptual / pre-opinion faculty that is neither right nor wrong. In contrast, even the assertions that "gods are blessed" or "gods are incorruptible" are chock full of conceptual right/wrong content.

So... it reads to me there, [Cassius](#) , that you don't think "gods are blessed and incorruptible" cannot be the content (so to speak) of a "a pre-conceptual / pre-opinion faculty"? IF (and *please* correct me right out of the box!) that's your point, I'm tending to agree.

Epicurus tells Menoikeus:

- "First and foremost, believe that the god is a blessed and imperishable thing/being as is *the common, general understanding of the god.*"
 - πρῶτον μὲν τὸν θεὸν ζῶον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον νομίζων, ὡς ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις ὑπεγράφη
 - The verb, νομίζων, comes last in that first phrase and means "believe, hold, consider." At this point, he's not bringing in the prolepses.
 - I still say there is significance in that ζῶον can mean "living being, animal" OR "in art: figure, image" To me, it seems Epicurus hedges his bets in that one word.
 - ἡ κοινὴ (koinē) τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις "the common or general understanding of the god" has been ὑπεγράφη (hypegraphe) "traced, outlined" on our minds. I think this refers

to Epicurus's proposed prolepsis of divinity. I consider ὑπεγράφη as laying in a rough, light outline of a drawing to later fill in the details with pen and ink and paint, covering up the original outline. It seems to me that Epicurus is encouraging us to stick to the outline and not cover it up with unnecessary decoration. That seems to be why he's insisting on the "blessed and incorruptible." BUT that seems to be more of an intellectual distillation process arrived at from sorting through all the religious ideas of the hoi polloi than what is *really* outlined in our minds (if I understand those Hidden Brain episodes and other research + [Godfrey's](#) caregiver hypothesis (See, I've raised your idea to a hypothesis now 😊)).

[Quote from Cassius](#)

More likely than saying that our brains are stamped at birth "gods exist and are incorruptible and blessed," he's saying that our brains are stamped at birth with an operating system that, when exposed to certain experiences, are disposed to "anthropomorphize and to engage in teleological thinking." The results of that process are deemed to be true and consistent with all evidence only when we conclude that gods are blessed and imperishable, which means that they don't have anything to do with us or earth (that would indicate weakness). To reason otherwise contradicts our physics and all other repeatable and verifiable sensory observations.

Hmmm.... I'm not sure I completely follow your train of thought there.... but I *think* I agree with where I think you're going? 😊

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurean style gods

And *there's another rub!* With the popular and scholarly debates about what an "Epicurean style god" *is*... this discussion continues to have interesting side quests and interesting digressions!