

Prolepsis / Anticipations As Epicurus' Answer to the MENO Problem

Post by "Cassius" of November 1, 2024 at 8:56 AM

I don't think we have any major disagreement Don but as to this:

[Quote from Don](#)

saying that we do not sense things through the impact of eidola on our sense organs. Our bodies - all bodies - are not casting off "films of atoms" that travel through space. Yes, our eyes interact with photons. Our noses interact with molecules in the air. Our tongues interact with chemicals. And so on. Is it interesting to understand how Epicurus was reacting to his contemporaries' philosophical ideas? Sure. No argument there. However, Epicurus called his students to study nature and "how things work" in the materials world. On that track, I think it behooves Epicureans living in the 21st century to understand how sensations and the brain work to their best of our ability in the here and now as well.

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. Epicurus' general approach remains perfectly valid: the things we are talking about are happening as a result of the movement of physical "real" things of some kind, and are neither the result of supernatural forces nor are they essentially unsolvable (such as moving too fast for any apprehension, as referenced by Diogenes of Oinoanda). The task of philosophy is to get a reasonable understanding of the big picture, and the final details are best left either to others who want to spend the time exploring that, or simply to the theory of multiple explanations, in which so long as we have one or more reasonable non-supernatural theories, then we can dismiss the worst of the problems (gods, fate, zero regularity) and get on with living our lives as best we can.

To get too far into the details of whether a photon constitutes a particle or not isn't going to contribute much to that, although I am all in favor of reading about it in the appropriate place. I've always enjoyed reading science magazine and hearing the theories.

The real problem is that the majority of people who get exposed to philosophy are polluted with these false major theories, and they need to be provided responsive and persuasive theories that point the way to what is true. Whether the data that we receive through perceiving particles is encoded in "shape" (by means of film like the skin of a snake) or otherwise, the real issue is whether the data comes to us through the particles and our senses receive it and our

minds interpret it, or not.

Yes you're probably right to say that the Meno paradox is sophistry. 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. There are reams of videos out there today further causing confusion on these issues, and it will be necessary for people who want more "Epicurean Friends" in their real world lives to go out and explain that the Meno problem does have one or more reasonable solutions.