Prolepsis of the gods

Post by “Cassius” of June 25, 2025 at 8:50 AM

Maybe an even better example would be lower organisms - all the way down to single cell amoeba. We would not expect - and do not associate in our minds - the actions of amoeba in competing for food to be just or unjust. We do not expect that amoeba have any appreciation at all for such issues, and for amoeba no justice or injustice exists.

Somewhere up the line of advancement living things become capable of "thinking," and at some point they begin to appreciate that there is an issue or question involved in their relationships to other living beings. Somewhere in that range they begin to have "prolepsis of justice" which allows them to even begin considering that their relationships with other living beings might be divided into categories of relationships, and they begin to consider whether one type of relationship is more productive for them than another type of relationship. At that point they begin to consider some things "just" and other things "unjust" - but those are just words that we assign to the concept. I would say that you are long past the "prolepsis" stage at that point.

But if the "prolepsis" of justice or gods did not exist, we would never begin considering or discussing those concepts in the first place.

It's much better in my view to start analyzing prolepsis from the point of view of philosophy and the Meno problem than it is to start with some particular clinical phenomena (like monkeys or beavers) and try to analyze the issue in terms of specific animals or their conclusions. Otherwise you just transfer to the monkeys the same question we ask about ourselves: "Where does the whole idea of "justice" come from in the first place?"