

Phaedo and prolepses

Post by "Cassius" of October 17, 2020 at 4:20 PM

Great point - Godfrey -- we discussed some of this in the podcast that we released today, and I definitely think you are on to something.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I see in here a potential source for Diogenes Laertius' "cow explanation" of prolepses as things learned from repeated exposure, which would seem to reduce its credibility. Also the eidola would relate to this, and DeWitt's idea of a prolepsis as an embryonic notion or sketch of an idea. Then of course there's the fact that we have modern neuroscience to consider once we reach some sort of understanding of Epicurus' conception. I haven't had a chance to digest the full implications yet!

And I agree with this too. It seems very obvious that what DL wrote about forming a concept of an ox from having seen previous oxen would be very parallel (or contradictory) to the view that concepts are born with us at birth, carried from a previous life.

So from that point of view, it is possible that at least this aspect of prolepsis could have a very direct connection and usefulness to the ancient Epicureans in responding to the Platonic "recollection" theory.

The first thought that comes to my mind is "Is it possible that serving as response to the Recollection theory is primarily or exclusively what the prolepsis theory was all about?"

Related to that would be - does this shed any light on whyt Lucretius does not seem to deal with either the recollection theory or prolepsis, at least to any great extent?

I agree with you that we need to give some hard thought to this. it seems to me almost no doubt that we need to incorporate this into some of our basic discussions of what prolepsis is about - or at least what DL thought it was about.

Edit: Additional point --> I've read a lot about Epicurean preconceptions from the commentators without having seen too much discussion comparing them to this aspect of Plato. It's as if only DeWitt was really interested in comparing Epicurus to Plato. Geesh.