

Prolepsis of the gods

Post by "Cassius" of June 26, 2025 at 5:17 PM

Rolf: Try this analogy:

What is an example of a sight? What is an example of a hearing? What is an example of a smell? You can describe a tree or a song or a flower at a conceptual level, but that is not the question. Trees and songs and flowers are complex conceptual conclusions.

Prolepsis is a faculty, not an idea or a conclusion.

The sense of smell is given to us by nature and we use it all the time without understanding or caring about its nature, so this is an example of a faculty that gives us input to knowledge, but not knowledge itself.

Anytime you can state an idea as a proposition, such as "there is a god" you are already past the proleptic stage, in my opinion.

And so Velleius does not really reference, to my understanding, "a prolepsis of a god." Rather, he is saying that we have a proleptic faculty which disposes us to thoughts which leads to the idea of a god, just as we have a nose which functions in a way that gives us input into a final conception of a flower.

Now, if what you are really focusing on is the proof of the existence of a god, then it's my view that that proof goes far beyond just prolepsis. I think that's why Velleius then goes on to talk about isonomia, because the particular concept of a particular type of god is another issue for chain reasoning that incorporates other issues, such as the infinity and eternity of the universe and that nature never makes a single thing of a kind.

So the ground floor is back at the point of realizing that prolepsis is a faculty parallel with seeing or hearing or pleasure or pain. It reacts in particular predisposed ways, but it does not itself provide content.