

Relationship between AI/LLMs and prolepsis

Post by "Cassius" of June 14, 2026 at 10:18 PM

We've discussed many of these issues many times in many places, but just for the sake of having fun with the last post here is an example of how I would push back at the contention that Epicurean physics is obsolete. Ironically I would also expect that an AI engine would probably do a better job of laying out both sides of these arguments and how they might be reconciled than some of us are able to do.

These are several of the most fundamental issues on which I contend Epicurus can and should be defended:

1. **It cannot be true that matter and space are "infinitely" divisible.** If that were true then movement would truly be impossible, because you would always have to traverse infinite distances of space to move at all. Further, dividing bodies infinitely would amount to their ceasing to have any real existence. If all things were infinitely divisible then all things would have long since ceased to exist, because they could not have been replaced (as our experience tells us that things do not come from nothing). Epicurus makes no specific claim about any step along the way other than that there is an ending point to divisibility. "Atom" means nothing other than that end-point - uncuttable. Whether we today call that point some kind of subatomic particles makes no difference - the only issue is that division cannot be continued without end. At some point division must stop and you must arrive at a particle that has size, shape, and weight (motion).
2. **The empty space in the universe and the part of the universe that is material and not empty are both infinite in extent.** If bodies were infinite in number but space was limited, everything would be filled up with bodies. If space were infinite but bodies were not infinite in number, bodies would never come together to form combinations, just as the wreckage of a ship drifts further and further apart and does not reassemble itself into a ship.
3. **The universe as a whole had no beginning because nothing can come from nothing. The universe as a whole will never have an end because no thing can go to nothing.** These are logical positions that make perfect sense and require nothing specific about how the matter and space are arranged in any locality within the universe as a whole.
4. **Epicurus' essential claim about images is that we do not perceive the world around us through some kind of magical or divine communication, but because particles flow constantly in all directions.** Our senses react to contact with those particles. Call those particles photons or waves of electromagnetic emissions or whatever, the information we receive comes through particles interacting with each other between us and the object of our attention.

5. **Epicurus' only specific claims about gods are that we should think of them as blessed and imperishable.** This is an opinion, and like all opinions they originate from our minds processing our contacts with the outside world. Our five senses and two feelings receive stimulations from outside us (including non-visual images, and our anticipations pick out patterns from among them from which our minds generate opinions. Among the concepts we form from those patterns are "blessedness" and "imperishableness." These conceptions are formed from real patterns, but we are often mistaken when apply those conceptions to specific phenomena. Many of these errors arise because we presume that a blessed and imperishable being would be like us and reward friends and punish enemies, but we can correct these false opinions by rejecting opinions that are inconsistent with true blessedness and imperishableness. (I am using "imperishableness" rather than "imperishability" because I am convinced DeWitt is correct that Epicurus held that gods are not by necessity deathless, but that they must act (and do act) to maintain their continued existence.)

Also for kicks, [this is what Claude did with those five points.](#)