

# Prolepsis Citations from Long & Sedley

Post by “Don” of July 2, 2024 at 11:04 PM

This thread is an offshoot of this thread:

Post

[RE: Episode 234 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 09 - Dealing With Marcus Aurelius And The Canonical Basis For the Epicurean View Of Divinity](#)

[...]

Say it ain't so, Don! I mean, at least Santa emits eidola, right?! 😊

[...]

Cicero, though largely hostile, and burdened with the conceit of a talented undergrad, does seem to me to have one redeeming quality—his Academic Skepticism required him to take seriously and weigh competing positions, never fully accepting any of them. And his bestie was an Epicurean. So I generally take his reports of Epicurean views seriously, *unless* it seems to set the Epicureans up for a too easy dismissal by...

Little Rocker

July 2, 2024 at 10:05 AM

In dealing with the prolepseis over there, I decided to turn to Long & Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers* ([which is available to borrow on Internet Archive](#) with a free account) to see what they have to say. It turns out they cite a number of instances of mention of the prolepseis/preconceptions. Their numbering system (ex. 21A 4) uses their individual section, cited text, then their subsection of that text. What I've done is cite their citation then cite the specific text with their translation. There are more mentions in Lucretius and Epicurus than I at first realized. I'll dig into a consideration later, but for now I thought this might prove useful or at least interesting:

Long & Sedley's examples of the use of prolepsis/preconceptions in the ancient texts:

**body 12E 2**

- Lucretius 2.730-833

- - (2) You are quite wrong if you think that the mind cannot be focused on such particles. For given that those who are blind from birth and have never seen the sun's light nevertheless from their first day know bodies by touch without any association of colour, you can be sure that our mind too can form a *preconception* of bodies without any coating of colour. In fact, we ourselves sense as colourless everything that we touch in the blind darkness...

#### **man 13F 4**

Lucretius 5.156-234

Also, from where did the gods get a model for the creation of the world, and from where was the *preconception* of men first ingrained in them, to enable them to know and see in their mind what they wished to create, or how did they come to know the power of the primary particles and what they were capable of when their arrangement was altered, if nature itself did not supply a blueprint of creation?

#### **utility 13E 4, 19B 4, 22B 2**

Lucretius 4.823-57 (13E 4)

Quite different from these are all the things what were first actually engendered and gave rise to the *preconception* of their usefulness subsequently. Primary in this class are, we can see, the senses and the limbs. Hence, I repeat, there is no way you can believe that they were created for their function of utility.

Lucretius 5.1028-90 (19B 4)

Besides, if others had not already used sounds to each other, how did he get the *preconception* of their usefulness implanted in him? How did he get the initial capacity to know and see with his mind what he wanted to do?

Epicurus Key Doctrines (22B 2)

(37) What is legally deemed to be just has its existence in the domain of justice whenever it is attested to be useful in the requirements of social relationships, whether or not it turns out to be the same for all. But if someone makes a law and it does not happen to accord with the utility of social relationships, it no longer has the nature of justice. And even if what is useful in the sphere of justice changes but fits the *preconception (prolepsis)* for some time, it was no less just throughout that time for those who do not confuse themselves with empty utterances but simply look at the facts.

#### **truth 16A 2-3**

Lucretius 4.469-521

And anyway, even allowing that he knows this, I'll still ask him: given that he has never before seen anything true in the world, from where does he get his knowledge of what knowing and not knowing are? What created his *preconception* of true and false? And what proved to him that doubtful differs from certain? (3) You will find that the *preconception* of true has its origin in the senses, and that the senses cannot be refuted.

### **all properties of bodies 7B 6**

Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus 68-73

Now another thing that is important to appreciate forcefully is this. We should not inquire into time in the same way as other things, which we inquire into in an object by referring them to familiar *preconceptions*.

May also include data of introspection:

### **our own responsibility or agency 20C 4,8**

Epicurus, On Nature 34.26-30

<He may simply choose to maintain his thesis while in practice continuing to> blame or praise. But if he were to act in this way he should be leaving intact the very same behavior which as far as our own selves are concerned created the *preconception* of our responsibility. And in that he would be at one point altering his theory, at another <...> ...<On the other hand> if in using the word 'necessity' of that which we call our own agency he is merely changing a name, and won't prove that we have a *preconception* of a kind which has faulty delineations when we call our own agency responsible, neither his own <behavior nor that of others will be affected...>

### **desirability of pleasure 21A 4**

Cicero, On Ends 1.29-32, 37-9

Some of our school, however, want to transmit these doctrines in a subtler way: they deny the sufficiency of judging what is good or bad by sensation, saying that the intrinsic desirability of pleasure and the intrinsic undesirability of pain can be understood by the mind too and by reason. So they say that our sense that the one is desirable and the other undesirable is virtually a natural and innate *preconception* in our minds...

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## **Post by “Eikadistes” of July 3, 2024 at 3:35 AM**

I am struck by the variety of ways in which *prolēpseis* is employed:

Sometimes, *prolēpseis* seems to be used within the domain of memory, as *mental impressions* or *representations* that have been formed from personal experience, sort of like mnemonic scars; sometimes, we express *prolēpseis* as a function of linguistics, as a necessary condition for communication, as a *common idea* to which a word refers, like how two people with different forms of colorblindness can both share the common idea of a "rainbow", or the fact that people who have lost their ability to detect sounds can still hear their favorite songs in their head. Othertimes, we refer to *prolēpseis* as a feature of developmental psychology, where it acts as an intellectual category required for children to develop pattern recognition. Elsewhere, *prolēpseis* exists within the domain of dreams, as *mental apprehensions*, uncensored from the editor that is the ego.

It seems clear why there are various "camps" in terms of "interpretations" of Epicurean theology: the criterion of *prolēpseis*, itself, has so many applications: Is the concept of "god" more like "divinity" or "blessedness" (or "justice"), as in, a prototype against which new examples can be judged? As in Star Trek V, where the crew meets a supreme being, but ultimately decides that this being cannot be God because it is willing to inflict pain? Or is the concept of "god" more like "human" or "living being" (or "animal") as in, a sort of "who" or "it" that a human infant could observe and (as pre-verbal infants do) point at with their chubby digits to indicate "**That! There! It!**" Is there a period in the development of young children prior to receiving their conception of "god"? Or is it conditioned by the very genetics that deal the cards of our neurology?

Here again, I really, **REALLY** want to consider that Epicurus would have mentioned, **at least once** (*humor me here*), that he, himself must have, as a conservative practitioner of Eleusian and Dionysian rituals (which, again, he, himself, seems to have attended with enthusiasm) ingested chemicals that were intended to induce an altered state of consciousness, a state that people throughout millennia have recognized as being exceptionally noteworthy and positively transformation. So, it is ultimately geared toward improving the circumstances of one's life. The experience of certain, psycho-active chemicals can reliably reproduce "the experience of God" when administered to Christians in laboratory conditions (among other faiths). Epicurus and his associates would have been aware that intoxicants were capable of inducing dreams that host godlike characters and fill participants with an overwhelmingly, undeniable sense of bliss.

I would be very surprised if Epicurus did not "see" Zeus at least once during his rituals.

I would be even **more** surprised if Epicurus (*purposefully*, it would have to seem) omitted any mention of the private, mental experiences people experience after ingesting entheogens in his writings. It would seem strange for a person in that context to **not** draw a connection between intoxication, good dreams, the feeling of bliss, the rituals of religion, and discussion about theology. Epicurus seems to have thought that pre-civilized humans developed conceptions about "the gods" (including, I have to assume, a being that would later be called "Zeus") in their dreams, independent of each other. They then developed spoken words they could share with one another to refer back to "that-memorably-strange-recurring-Zeus-experience". After time, they realized that "memory of the Zeus-experience" made them more observant of their own behavior. So, life improved.

As someone who writes every dream I have, and every dream I can recall (and have continued to do so for over 15 years), and as being that same someone who has experimented with psychedelics, may I just say that psychedelics are a **much** more reliable way to experience anything remotely "religious". Most of my (and probably your) dreams are anywhere from mundane to bizarre to incoherent, whereas your average trip is always memorable and meaningful.

Ultimately, I think what I'm getting at is that a *prolépsis* needs a stimulus. So what was the stimulus? The *prolépsis* of "the gods" must have been stimulated by a powerful agent capable of inducing an exceptional, purely-mental experience, significant enough to re-direct the trajectory of a person's life. So what are our candidates for the stimulation of spirituality? Religious institutions are one, and their forms of indoctrination are powerful, but they aren't always reliable at inducing profound mental experiences. (A lot of religious people just show up at church like they would show up at work or school, as purely a social obligation.) Dreams are another, and can be memorable and inspirational, but, as mentioned, usually just recycle mundane, daily experiences; dreams are only as reliable as showing the image of gods as they are showing the image of unreal monsters. But certain psychedelics are powerful, reliable, and psychologically transformational; "pre-civilized" humans who foraged for food were not choosers (they were opportunistic), so when it came to diet, mushrooms were/are nutritious, ubiquitous, visually-arresting...

I guess what I mean to say is this: we were *tripping* before we were assigning words to objects, so by the time we developed spoken/written language, the "weird-experience-after-eating-mushrooms" (or walking past a volcanic vent, or eating fermented fruit, or walking past a forest of burning cannabis plants, or eating alkaline barks, or consuming ergot that would have grown on stored grains, or..., etc.) demanded a word to go along with it, and I think that the words we use, like "god", "divine", and "blessed", are in the same spectrum as the words Epicurus meant when he referred to ancient peoples' dreams. I suppose, also ... perhaps, some of the discussion we have about Epicurean theology is taking place in a bubble of the English, Spanish, German, Italian, and Greek-speaking scholarship from societies that are propagandistic and prohibitory against chemicals that would have been exposed to the human ecosystem for hundreds of thousands of years. To be frank, I think we all overlook the influence the drugs had on early religion (the *real* kind).

Might have gone off topic there. Thanks for the share, [Don!](#)

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### **Post by “Don” of July 3, 2024 at 7:26 AM**

I'm going to leave [Eikadistes](#) 's intriguing suggestion of Epicurus's ingestion of "chemicals that were intended to induce an altered state of consciousness" for later; although I have absolutely zero problems whatsoever with the idea that Epicurus drank wine throughout his life and probably did as part of his participation in the city festivals and definitely, likely undiluted, when he was dying. What I wanted to address here briefly is [Eikadistes](#) 's mention of Epicurus's participation in the festivals and sacrifices for anyone who finds this a new idea. It is not a new idea, seems relatively well-attested, and we have an Epicurean source to rely on. Thanks to [Eikadistes](#) for reminding me of this!

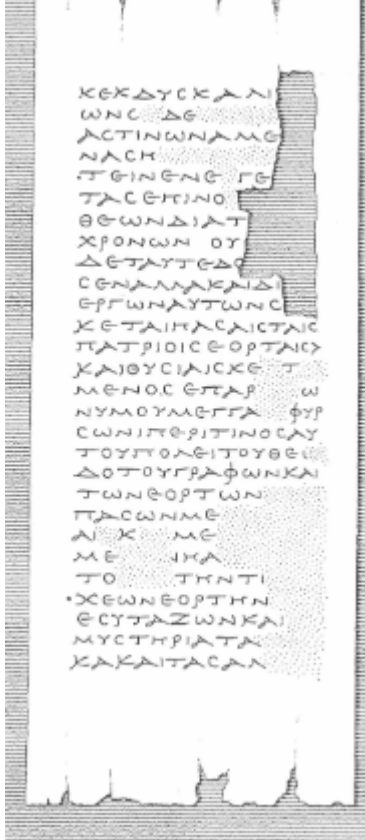
The primary evidence for this (to the best of my knowledge) is the work *On Piety* (scholarly consensus as attributed to Philodemus but also very possibly written by [Phaedrus, a scholar of the Garden](#)).

Col. 28/9: Epicurus wrote to Phyrson during the archonship of Aristonymus (289/8 BCE) about Phyrson's countryman from Colophon, Theodotus, Epicurus says that he (Epicurus) shared in all the festivals... Epicurus celebrated the festival of the Choes and the urban mysteries and the other festivals at a meagre dinner, and that it was necessary for him (prob. Theodotus) to celebrate this feast of the Twentieth for distinguished revelers, while those in the house decorated it most piously ('ολως) and after making invitations to host a feast for all of them.

#### My Notes

- For festivals, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthesteria>
- The Choes were part of this festival dedicated to Dionysus
- The "urban mysteries" refer to the Attic Dionysia, either the Lenaea (in the month of Gamelion, Epicurus's birth month) or Lesser Mysteries during 20-6 Anthesteria, both in honor of Dionysus.
- I find it interesting that the festivals mentioned were dedicated to Dionysus. It could just be coincidence that those are mentioned; or Athens had a lot of Dionysian festivals; or Epicurus had an affinity for Dionysian festivals or the god. No way to tell from what I've read so far.

and, btw, Column 28 is fairly well intact for a change:



Col. 29: Epicurus advised them to retain assertions made by means of these and similar expressions, and above all to preserve those made by Zeus himself (maintain the practice of swearing by Zeus by name νή Δία!)... Not merely "it must be so!"

My Notes

- LOL...So, Epicureans, feel free to pepper your writing and conversation with νή Δία! "By Zeus!" 😊

Col.31: Epicurus, in a letter to Polyaeus, writes: "(It is necessary for us) to conceive of their nature as accurately constituting the notion of benefit according to the epistemological standard (kriterion). Let us sacrifice to those gods devoutly and fittingly on that proper days, and let us fittingly perform all the acts of worship in accordance with the laws, in no way disturbing ourselves with opinions on matters concerning the most excellent and august of beings. Moreover, let us sacrifice justly, on the view that I was giving. For in this way it is possible for mortal nature, by Zeus, to live like Zeus, as it seems. And concerning obeisance (προσκυήσεις) in [Epicurus's] On Lifecourses [Περί βίων]"

My Notes

- devoutly and fittingly 'οσιως και καλως

- "in accordance with the laws (νόμους)" can also be translated as in accordance to custom" <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...entry=no%2Fmos2>
- obeisance (προσκυνήσεις) refers to "the custom of kneeling, prostration, or throwing kisses before statues of them gods or as marks of honor to important humans." Obbink recounts in the notes the story of Colotes embracing Epicurus's knees during a teaching session when Colotes was overcome with reverence toward his teacher.

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## Post by “Don” of July 3, 2024 at 11:06 PM

I decided to dive back into Long & Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers* to see which citations they use for the gods (or God) as they say in their table of contents. Some of the citations are expected, but a couple were noteworthy at least to me:

- Lucretius, [5.1161-1225](#)
- Lucretius [6.68-79](#)
- Lucretius [5.146-55](#)
- Epicurus, Letter to Menoikeus, 123-4 (the famous passages that starts "First, believe that the god is a blessed and imperishable thing as is the common, general understanding of the god.")
  - Menoikeus, 135 as well
- Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus, 76-7
  - we are bound to believe that in the sky revolutions, solstices, eclipses, risings and settings, and the like, take place without the ministration or command, either now or in the future, of any being who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss along with immortality. [77] *For troubles and anxieties and feelings of anger and partiality do not accord with bliss, but always imply weakness and fear and dependence upon one's neighbours.* Nor, again, must we hold that things which are no more than globular masses of fire, being at the same time endowed with bliss, assume these motions at will. Nay, in every term we use we must hold fast to all the majesty which attaches to such notions as bliss and immortality, lest the terms should generate opinions inconsistent with this majesty. Otherwise such inconsistency will of itself suffice to produce the worst disturbance in our minds. (Emphasis added to highlight an explanation of [PD01](#) )
- Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.43-9 (probably redundant to place here since [Cassius](#) and [Joshua](#) are knockin' out of the proverbial park on the podcast!)
- Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.43-7

(1) The same reply can be made to Epicurus' belief that the idea of gods arose from dream impressions of human-shaped images. For why should these have given rise to the idea of gods, rather than of outsized men? And in general it will be possible to reply to all the doctrines we have listed that men's idea of god is not based on mere largeness in a human-shaped animal, but includes his being blessed and imperishable and wielding the greatest power in the world. But from what origin, or how, these thoughts occurred among the first men to draw a conception of god, is not explained by those who attribute the cause to dream impressions and to the orderly motion of the heavenly bodies. (2) To this they reply that the idea of god's existence originated from appearances in dreams, or from the world's phenomena, but that the idea of god's being everlasting and imperishable and perfect in happiness arose through a process of transition from men. For just as we acquired the idea of a Cyclops . . . by enlarging the common man in our impression of him, so too we have started with the idea of a happy man, blessed with his full complement of goods, then intensified these features into the idea of god, their supreme fulfilment. And again, having formed an impression of a long-lived man, the men of old increased the time-span to infinity by combining the past and future with the present; and then, having thus arrived at the conception of the everlasting, they said that god was everlasting too. (3) Those who say this are championing a plausible doctrine. But they easily slip into that most puzzling trap, circularity. For in order first to get the idea of a happy man, and then that of god by transition, we must have an idea of what happiness is, since the idea of the happy man is of one who shares in happiness. But according to them happiness (*eudaimonia*) was a divine (*daimonia*) and godly nature, and the word 'happy' (*eudaimōn*) was applied to someone who had his deity (*daimōn*) disposed well (*eu*). Hence in order to grasp human happiness we must first have the idea of god and deity, but in order to have the idea of god we must first have a conception of a happy man. Therefore each, by presupposing the idea of the other, is unthinkable for us.

- Scholion on Epicurus, Principle Doctrines, 1
- Philodemus (Phaedrus), *On Piety*, 112.5-12 (Usener 87)
  - Philodemus, *On Piety*, Vol. Herc. 2, II.82 [p. 112 Gomperz] {Obbink I.19.5}: ...as in the 12th book, he also reproaches Prodicus, Diagoras, and Critias among others, saying that they rave like lunatics, and he likens them to Bacchant revelers, admonishing them not to trouble or disturb us.
- Anonymous Epicurean treatise on theology: Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 215

- <https://archive.org/details/oxyrhy...up?view=theater>
  - Long & Sedley also cite Plutarch, *Against Epicurean Happiness* 1091B-C (Usener 419)... but we're going to take [Little Rocker](#) 's caveat to heart on Plutarch and not cite that reference 😊
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### Post by “Cassius” of July 4, 2024 at 6:44 AM

Thank you Don! That Sextus Empiricus reference is particularly interesting and helpful!

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### Post by “Bryan” of July 4, 2024 at 12:08 PM

#### [Quote from Don](#)

feel free to pepper your writing and conversation with νή Δία! "By Zeus!"

Yes, by Zeus! Epicurus really does use this with great frequency. I started saying "nē Día!" almost as a joke in place of an interjection (in place of a "curse"). Over time "nē Día!" has become a genuine reflexive interjection.

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### Post by “Little Rocker” of July 4, 2024 at 7:27 PM

Don, you are amazing! There's a lot happening here:

#### [Quote from Don](#)

Col.31: Epicurus, in a letter to Polyaeus, writes: "(It is necessary for us) to conceive of their nature as accurately constituting the notion of benefit according to the epistemological standard (kriterion). Let us sacrifice to those gods devoutly and fittingly on that proper days, and let us fittingly perform all the acts of worship in accordance with the laws, in no way disturbing ourselves with opinions on matters concerning the most excellent and august of beings. Moreover, let us sacrifice justly, on

the view that I was giving. For in this way it is possible for mortal nature, by Zeus, to live like Zeus, as it seems. And concerning obeisance (προσκυνήσεις) in [Epicurus's] *On Lifecourses* [Περὶ βίωσιν]"

Here's an attempt at rendering its content: Divine nature (its blessedness and indestructibility) constitutes (either fully or partially) the *kriterion* of benefit. So expressing some form of reverence to that nature benefits us. For that reason, we can comply in good faith ('devoutly'/'justly') with the acts of worship required by law. However, we Epicureans will make such sacrifices free from the disturbing opinions of the many about what it means to 'benefit' from the gods.

So on my take, the question Polyaenus has asked is: 'is it impious to comply with the laws requiring sacrifices, given that we don't think the gods reward people in exchange for sacrifices?' Because surely, there was a question about whether they participated simply to avoid breaking the law or with some measure of sincerity.

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of July 5, 2024 at 3:13 AM

Another intriguing example of *prolépseis* comes from Philodemus' *On Piety*, where he writes, “For [the] **All [pân]** [...] is thought of, just as Time [khrónos] is defined, as being a naturally formed **generic conception [prólepsin]**” (Col. 66.3-6). I find this interesting because Philodemus makes a comparison between "the universe", "time" and "the god(s)". For one thing, each of these *prólepsin* feature instances of an infinity in one way or another: everything is spatially *boundless*, the universe is temporally *endless*, and the gods are *indestructible*. For another thing, each concept is somewhat abstract (due to their not being able to be fully experienced) yet is implied as necessarily real. Case in point, Philodemus records Epicurus as having explained in Book 32 of *On Nature* that these "naturally formed" impressions are "apprehended with clarity", and yet, Philodemus later admits that "no one furnishes in abundance demonstrations for the existence of gods".

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### Post by “Little Rocker” of July 5, 2024 at 3:12 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Another intriguing example of prolepsis comes from Philodemus' *On Piety*, where he writes, "For [the] All [pân] [...] is thought of, just as Time [khrónos] is defined, as being a naturally formed generic conception [prólepsin]" (Col. 66.3-6). I find this interesting because Philodemus makes a comparison between "the universe", "time" and "the god(s)".

Cool! I find this interesting, too, in part because Epicurus makes a point of saying we shouldn't investigate time like we investigate the *prolepseis* of objects that are 'observed within ourselves' (*Letter to Herodotus* 72). But he never says explicitly whether there's nevertheless a *prolepsis* of time that is different than the ones we have of objects.

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### Post by "Don" of July 6, 2024 at 8:45 AM



Construction of Col.66 of *On Piety*.  
is like this (Engraved 1844-1852 by

τῶν καὶ πο[.....]  
λη[- ca.12 -]  
ον· πᾶν γὰρ[ρ.....]  
οἴεται καθάπ[ερ ὀρί-]  
ζεται χρό[νος, εἶναι]  
πρόληψιν· [καὶ κα-]  
θάπερ κἀν [τῶι δευ-]  
τέρωι καὶ [τριακοσ-]  
τῶι, καὶ τῶν [θεῶν ἐ-]  
10ναργεῖαι φησ[ὶν κατα-]  
λαμβάνεσθα[ι τὸ ὄν],  
καίπερ ἔν τῶν [ἐν ὑπο-]  
κειμένοις ὄν, [τὴν δὲ]  
φύσιν διανο[ητὴν]  
15[ῆ]ττον ἔχον [τῶν]  
ἄλλων ὄντων [καὶ κα-]  
[θόλ]ου πρὸς τῆ[ν...]  
[7 lines missing]

That's A LOT of bracketed reconstructions. And its placement in the order of the text is a best guess, too, from my understanding.

Just because something fits in the number of letters doesn't necessarily convince me that that is the *correct* reconstruction. That said, the word πρόληψιν is tantalizingly right there. And I believe that the πᾶν doesn't have the usual definite article for it to refer to TO PAN "The All" "the universe." The author (again could be Philodemus or Phaedrus) could be referring to "all (somethings)" and not The All.

This exactly demonstrates my reluctance to rely too heavily on any of the Herculaneum papyri that are too heavily damaged to reliably read blocks of text and not interpolate and reconstruct what \*might\* have been there. There are good reliable sections of the *On Piety* papyri [like Col. 75 for example](#). Unfortunately, Col. 66 isn't necessarily one of them from my perspective... even if we would REAAALLLY like to have more context for that πρόληψιν.

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### Post by "Little Rocker" of July 6, 2024 at 11:34 AM

I agree that we should be cautious about all reconstructions, and I'll be curious to see what AI starts doing with these.

### [Quote from Don](#)

And I believe that the πᾶν doesn't have the usual definite article for it to refer to TO PAN "The All" "the universe." The author (again could be Philodemus or Phaedrus) could be referring to "all (somethings)" and not The All.

Yeah, the missing *to* is puzzling, though I guess I might expect a *panta* if it were modifying 'all Xs.' Unless that *gamma* is actually a *tau*, of course, then it is *panta* instead of *pan gar*.

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## Post by “Don” of July 6, 2024 at 11:55 AM

### [Quote from Little Rocker](#)

Unless that *gamma* is actually a *tau*, of course, then it is *panta* instead of *pan gar*.

Exactly! The difference between Γ and T could obviously be open to interpretation (or even a slip of the scribe's hand!) on a charred fragmentary scroll 😞 Our access to the papyri is paradoxically open and amazing but also at the same time limited and circumscribed by what was transcribed in the 19th century.

Fingers firmly crossed for more actual photos and AI technology and that the public and academics will have wide access 🗄️

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## Post by “Eikadistes” of July 6, 2024 at 4:32 PM

In summary, trying to digest the various intersection that *prolēpseis* seems to demand between developmental psychology, descriptivist linguistics, the development of religion, the anthropology of spiritual practice, social norms and ethics, and the neurological architecture of psychedelia...

- The experience of "the divine" is universal for hominids (even the ancient ones).
- Ancient hominids received clear insight into "the divine nature" through dreams.
- (They had the benefit of not being confused by institutionalized mythology.)
- (Also, dreams are the clearest and most reliable source of the concept of "divinity")
- The true concept of "divinity" is synonymous with the notion of blissful humanoids.
- The true concept of "divinity" is antinomic with the notion of blissful humanoids.

- We can use this true notion as a criterion to measure allegations of "divinity":
- (a) Identifying a *needy creator* as "divine" contradicts the meaning of the word "divinity".
- (b) Identifying a *happy meta-creature* as "divine" is coherent with our concept of "divinity".
- Cults and religions developed from the concept of *indestructible, happy humanoids*.
- Most cults and religions identify their "divine beings" as being troubled humanoids (see: Homer, Hesiod, *Bhagavad Gita* 11:32; *Gen.* 19:24–25; *Mark* 11:12-25; *Surah Ali 'Imran* 112)
- (*In fact, all of the mainstream spiritual traditions have deviated from this universal truth*)
- This *deviation* is harmful to our spiritual health, and a **huge** source of human misery.
- We should avoid this spiritual harm (the effects of impiety) by practicing genuine piety.
- Genuine piety corresponds with a correct understanding about the true notion of "divinity".
- A pious person should reject the belief in a *cosmic architect, an eternal soul, a universal mind*, or any other propositions that describe "the divine" as having *fluctuating disturbances*.
- These beliefs (mystical and supernatural) are sources of fear and uncertainty.
- The Good Life is antithetical to holding beliefs that stimulate fear and uncertainty.
- A clear understanding of piety/theology is fundamental to living a happy life.
- This clear understanding is apprehended through the preconception of "divinity".
- Having accurate knowledge about **what** the "preconception" of "divinity" **is** is key.
- Evidently, (as true as the sky is blue) the *prólēpsis* of **divinity** = *never-ending happiness*.
- Any being who is *ceaselessly satisfied* is a god or goddess.
- A ceaselessly satisfied being would not subject itself with earthquakes and storms (so it would live beyond the atmosphere of a world); it would not suffer the disadvantage of not having an opposable thumb or a lack of speech (so it looks *like* us); yet unlike humans, it would not suffer disease (so its physical nature must be only superficially resemble ours). It would not trouble itself with loneliness (so it would live among friends); and the divine society would not allow external forces to disturb their history (they are hidden in all ways but thought).
- By nature, we cannot be gods ... but by practicing a righteous ethic, one that is characteristic of their form, and by emulating their models of perfection, we become godlike.
- Through devotion to good habits (those like the gods), we inherit the benefit of their model.

**Post by “Eikadistes” of July 6, 2024 at 10:05 PM**

After all this, and ten years of devoted study, I must say, understanding *prolēpseis* is like holding wet soap. It functionally works when you just cup it and apply gently, but when you squeeze it to test its composition, it just slips out of your hand and re-orient itself toward another drain.

Diognes describes *prolēpseis as cog* in the wheel of formulating language. Hermarkhos and Philodemos entertain hypotheses that almost make me suspect that a *prolēpseis* is a song that we receive on our mental radios from the FM being transmitted from the gods in deep space. And I'm not into that. That frankly sounds oddly mythic, and unnecessarily reliant on metaphor.

I bring up my drug hypotheis with you guys (too) frequently because, honestly ... I'm really just an defacto atheist who thinks religion is really fucking dumb, and I have tried - **TRIED**, I mean, was raised Methodist, questions God as a pre-teen, dated a Catholic for years and entertained mass, accepted the rituals of Cathoicism, prayed with fraternity at Mosques, worshipped at Buddhist temples, engaged the artifices of New Age commercialism, dedicated myself to replicating the meditative practices described in *Gita* and Paramahansa Yogananda's famous book, and re-studied heterodox Christianity with nonjudgmental eyes, and NONE of the provided me with any practice advice, and all of them blinded me to the reality of the genuine religious experience .... **until I ate mushrooms**. Six grams of *psilocybin cubensis* will provide any atheist with a fascinating journey through convincing intellectual demonstrations that lead to reasonable religious belief. All natural, all conditioned by chemicals that happened to be released in a young philosopher's brain.

If *prolēpseis* are just "common sense" human concepts, like "justice" or "divinity" or "time" then ... fuck it, right? Who care what they really are, or where they came from, or how they work. They simply are, like color. Wavelength measures in nanometers or not, we know what color is because DAMN there is it. Likewise, people talk about the gods, when I drop LSD, I feel downright blissful and holy and oceanic and incorruptible and pure and utterly godlike, and I want to know.

Or is this just his response to Plato's belief in innate ideas that precede birth and have a more fundamental reality than death. These are the "idea"-level of human existence, and Epicurus is just trying to contextualize them in mental processes to the best of his linguistic creativity. It this is the case, *prolēpseis* isn't technical we just mean "notions" or "ideas" or "concepts" that are on-point when it comes to being reflective of the place, person, objects or process to which they refer.

As far as the gods go, they've been here, they're here, they'll be here ... it's on the cash in my pocket I use to buy weed, it was in my 9th-grade biology class when we talking about Darwin and Mendel, it gets a tax break on every street corner in Central Florida, like ... we can't escape it. They are self-described godly people, who believe ungodlike things. F\$%@ 'em.

But back to LSD ... I don't mean to bring it up as an abstract point of show-and-tell or as a fringe theory (like the simulation fantasy that has encapsulate undisplined minds) ...but really, **I'm asking my Epicurean friend who accept Epicurean theology: do your guys have experiences in your mind with a humanoid figure that you have seen in very unique dreams?** (maybe a new thread [Cassius](#) ). I never have, of hundreds of recorded dreams. I have a few figures that I identify as "God", but my personal definition in "what 'God' is" is a "Helper" or a "Guardian", which is, according to Epicurus, is a false conception that comes from culture, not natural impressions.

Fair enough. Even so, I have *\*never\** dreamed of a blissful humanoid. I've seen *\*some\** interviews with people on DMT who describe Machine Elf Faeries that are eerily similar in description to Epicurean detities, but still ... I am constantly fighting the feeling that Epicurus walked about from church feeling re-charged and inspired, and I've just felt guilty and ashamed, and I have, for a deacde now, really struggled to understand this principle for what it means to my life.

I wish we had his letters to Metrodoros about his struggled conception of divinity. Did Metrodoros share similar gripes as do it? Did any other Epicureans say, "look ... **BRILLIANT** argument to the bozo thesists about their circular reasoning to provide them with a genuine challenge ... but we don't believe in ... like ... okay, so, for real, we just think Apollo is dumb and we eat food and discuss physics and the nature of human desires ... we don't get on our knees, slit a lamb's throat, paint our face with blood, and then assume that this act will somehow reinforce our psycho-social health, that's, ugh, gross, right?" Or if Epicurus really did practice the Dionysian mysteries with regularity, was his god the intoxicating feeling of empathy and warmness in non-alcoholics that was personified as a jolly god?

I really want to flesh this out, because, for me personally, if Epicurean theology isn't consistent, a few other key parts of the philosophy begin to unravel, the more I see it.

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## Post by “Cassius” of July 6, 2024 at 11:00 PM

### [Quote from Twentier](#)

Or is this just his response to Plato's belief in innate ideas that precede birth and have a more fundamental reality than death.

Twentier while I don't think this is *\*all\** there is to it, I do think this is a major part. The whole question of how the mind works is too fundamental to leave to the possibility of supernatural influence. Living things are pretty clearly not just a "blank slate," and if you are going to tackle

explaining chaos and how the universe was not created but eternal, you have to come up with an explanation of how thought also arises from the atoms.

Plato and everyone else decided to default to the supernatural. Epicurus refused to do that and instead came up with a theory in which everything - including thought - stems from flows of atoms. I think the answer to unwinding this lies more in following a chain of reasoning which begins with moving atoms and then inch by inch assembles into arms and legs and eyes and brains and thought. Everything has to stem from flows of atoms; beavers have to have imprinted upon them at birth - naturally - the disposition to build dams. Flows of atoms from place to place are the only way to solve the action-at-a-distance problem without defaulting to the supernatural.

I think Epicurus was 100% serious about his ideas of divinity. There has to be a natural process by which pleasure arises from flows of atoms, and everything more complicated builds on that over time. And the reason I agree with you that this is so important is that you just can't leave these kind of things without a natural explanation or -- we see what the priests have managed to do even after Epicurus came along. The same nihilism which bothers so many people today is going to attack anyone who doesn't ultimately come to grips with whether there's something otherworldly and more than our existence, or whether our existence and happiness needs no outside justification.

And in the end I don't see what Epicurus proposed as absurd at all. Everything - including every living thing - is constantly bombarded from all sides with atoms flowing from all directions, and those atoms \*do\* both influence us, as they are also influenced by where they came from. They come to us and induce reactions on our part - reactions through the five senses, and for all we know reactions directly on our body like the sun causes us to make Vitamin D. And those influences impact all parts of us - including our minds - and our brains wire themselves over time in response to these patterns. As our brains wire themselves we find ourselves in tune with certain patterns that have struck us in the past, and our genetics find ways to transmit over generations dispositions to respond analogously in the future.

Also, as we've been discussing lately, our minds form patterns of behavior as to pleasure and pain that allow us to think about what a "higher" life would be like if we never faced pain or death. We can imagine and benefit from considering what that life would look like - everyone needs a goal and vision of how they would like to live. In parallel with that aspirational aspect, we can think about how in an infinite and eternal universe that is filled with planets like Earth there are bound to be beings that have reached that level. And our consideration of that level of performance constitutes a goal for ourselves mentally and conceptually, just like all pleasure constitutes a goal for us.

I'm far from saying that this kind of explanation solves all the issues, but I think that it's a very reasonable approach and one that continues to have a lot more validity than most any I can name. And It sure beats giving in to the priests or to suicidal nihilism.

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**Post by “Root304” of August 28, 2024 at 1:03 AM**

Hello all!

Had a thought while doing some philosophizing...I propose prolepsis is our internal existing working model of how the universe operates and how our bodies integrate. It is the "simulation" of the world and how our bodies work that our bodies are using regularly that shifts and changes with impactful experiences, which is made up of our underlying expectation or anticipations about the world and the, semi-conscious and unconscious workings of the body.

Prolepsis is partly a conceptual tool that can be honed by interacting with language in the study of Natural Science to acquire more accurate expectations or blunted by adopting unreasonable expectations. Also adopting the core tenants of Epicurean Philosophy would be a practice in embodying the teleology of pleasure, to experience a more beneficial ethics.

Prolepsis could also encompass body awarenesses that develop mostly in childhood or other body training exercises like senses of balance and elaborate movement for example. I also have a sense that this underlying model building relates to our whole integration of various parts of "the self" and constructs underlying novel personality and general human quirkiness that makes humans especially pretty distinct, perhaps explained materially through environment, Genetic and Epigenetic factors among other things perhaps.

To get poetic, humans are not a simulation. The universe is not a simulation. Our Souls are a simulation run by our bodies to get it all the parts functioning together and effectively navigating the environment. Just a thought...

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**Post by “Cassius” of August 28, 2024 at 6:29 AM**

I would say there is no doubt but that what you are talking about in terms of a "internal existing working model of how the universe operates" is an important aspect of our lives. And I would say there is no doubt but that prolepsis is involved in the formation and operation of that. It might be going too far to say that they are exactly the same thing, but I'd agree that they are closely related.