

# Episode 227 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 02 - Velleius Begins His Attack On Traditional Views Of The Gods

Post by "Cassius" of June 10, 2024 at 9:29 PM

## [Quote from Little Rocker](#)

It seems to me like the prolepsis for the gods in Letter to Menoeceus 123-4 is that 1) they exist and that 2) they are 'blessed and indestructible,' which offers at least some kind of skeletal conceptual structure.

My best thought at the moment is that the prolepsis "faculty" (and I think that's the major point, it's got to be a faculty like seeing through the eyes) has to be kept separate and apart from ideas, just like we keep the eyes and ears separate and apart from ideas. Otherwise it won't report "honestly," and won't have that canonical status, because it will be reaching its own conclusions.

So "the gods are blessed and imperishable" seems to me to necessarily be a conclusion of the mind, which rules it out from being considered a prolepsis itself. But it's a conclusion which would not exist but for the faculty of being able to recognize the relationships involved in being blessed vs not blessed, or deathless vs not deathless.

And I would also think that the prolepsis faculty does not function independently of the mind any more than the eyes function independently of the mind. If we take the position that we aren't born with these ideas about gods, then the mind has available to it not only the relationship organizing function, but also the past experiences of the five senses and the feelings of pleasure and pain on what we observe here on earth. And I would include there the issues of isonomia and deductions that life exists throughout the universe and that the universe is boundless and eternal. All of those would have to be brought together in the mind to conclude that divinity means total blessedness and deathlessness, and again the point may be that we would \*not\* bring all those things together for consideration at all if not for prolepsis disposing us to evaluate the possibilities.

So I'd see the two fundamentals of deathlessness and blessedness as hard to rank as "anticipations" in themselves. It seems to me they fit better from Epicurus' perspective as "correct conclusions," which are based on and consistent with all the data from all three of the canonical faculties. In contrast, the ideas that gods are arbitrary and capricious are false conclusions, contrary to our experiences, even though the people who reach that conclusion are also basing their opinions on the same canonical faculties. If that's the case then the prolepsis aspect would be a necessary part of the starting point for analysis, but not the end point of the conclusion that "gods are blessed and imperishable."

No doubt this is a very speculative subject for us to discuss, but maybe in conclusion I'd say that the main point I can't get past in fitting everything together is that if the prolepsis is indeed part of the canon, which it appears to be, then it *\*cannot\** have any "fully-formed-idea" content to it. If it did, it wouldn't be parallel to the five senses and the feelings of pleasure and pain, both of which exist at birth and are in full operation at birth before we open our eyes and see our first sight or hear our first sound.