

Prolepsis of the gods

Post by "TauPhi" of July 3, 2025 at 11:03 AM

I really like your photo album analogy, [sanantoniogarden](#) . This part especially highlights my own struggles with prolepsis:

[Quote from sanantoniogarden](#)

Now an analogy which would apply to gods might be something like taking a picture of a ball, a bat, a base, manicured grass, chalk lines, and a foul pole, eventually suggesting a new file called "baseball". However abstract concepts like gods and the game of baseball would require a language to flesh out, I feel. Once again imperfect at best but maybe helpful to some.

There are several problems I struggle to resolve. "Baseball" file creation based on the series of photos requires reasoning ie. we can create complex concepts consciously (some of them correctly, some of them incorrectly) by processing input data using our minds (language included). Epicurus realised that human reasoning is far from perfect and reasoning introduces probability of error. That's why senses, prolepsis and feelings can only be considered canonical if they are cut off from reasoning. Otherwise, any kind of knowledge would be impossible due to constant errors (which is exactly what Epicurus tried to overcome and come up with a way to explain that knowledge - at least subjective one - is possible to humans).

Another problem that creeps in is the theory of eidolas (images) that every material object is supposed to emit. Epicurus claimed that our prolepsis of gods comes from eidolas that reach our mind directly and these images are put in our photo album under 'gods' file. (To be clear, I am still impressed with the eidola theory. To come up with something like that in ancient times is ridiculously impressive. Below I'm only highlighting the impossibility of prolepsis of gods derived from this theory. I'm not trying to be smart criticizing ancient atomists from the modern perspective).

These two problems lead to serious aporia in my mind:

1) Prolepsis is a canonical faculty, knowledge is possible but prolepsis of gods is logically impossible (we know now that eidolas is a failed theory and images of gods do not reach human minds travelling from intermundia). That means Epicurus blundered with his description of gods being incorruptible and blessed. He had no input data to form prolepsis of gods and make any claims about gods, whatsoever.

2) Prolepsis is a form of reasoning and cannot be considered canonical faculty or knowledge is impossible. That means Epicurus blundered with his description of canon or applied pure reasoning in his description of gods. Whether his reasoning is correct or incorrect remains forever undetermined as knowledge is impossible in this case and everything goes.

I hope someone can help me out with this because, for the love of god, when I put prolepsis, epistemology and gods in the epicurean equation, I can't solve it no matter how hard I try. Anyway, thanks [sanantoniogarden](#) for your post. It made me think, reason and use language (probably incorrectly on all fronts but, hey, I'm only human).