

Prolepsis of the gods

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 3, 2025 at 12:31 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

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 would consider *prolēpseis* to just be raw, pre-interpretive mental data, like sensations are just physical data, and feelings are just emotional data, all of which are produced prior to evaluation or reflection. We digest all of this data when we exercise various applications of the mind, like *imagining, supposing, entertaining, fantasizing, considering, exploring, believing, or formulating* (which can all produce false results), and then there is acknowledging the raw data, just *witnessing, or observing, or recalling*, which is just recognizing the objects of experiences that are self-evident.

It's like lying to ourselves: we just can't. It catches up to us, because reality doesn't go away.

In that regard, I think of the mind like the moon, and *prolēpseis* are like impact craters that deepen over time. The mind is physically bombarded with hard impulses, and they leave marks in the form of memories. As humans, the shape of our craters are comparable – the "yellow" crater looks yellow on everyone's personal moon, and the "dog" crater looks like a dog. The craters for "mortals" looks the same, and "animals" (they're all breathing and making babies), and it would follow then that the basic crater of "divinity" largely looks the same to everyone (they're perfectly happy).

I think we all have an idea (just as people) of what a category of beings that are perfectly happy would be like (we all seem to share that notion), and that notion is perfectly natural, so it's just being received from environmental stimuli and physical experiences, because its shared.

Epíkouros explains that we're not physically observing the visible particles of the gods, like lights and colors, but rather, we receive knowledge of the gods by the means of subtle particles that only interface with the mental organ, comparable to the way we receive knowledge of justice. Justice has no color, nor a shape, nor a sound, nor a language; it is only expressed by particular examples. The gods are the same way. We have a basic definition of "a god" we can apply to various candidates for divinity. For example, Jews propose that the divine is YHWH. Fair enough. That's a proposition we can evaluate for truthfulness, and we can do so because we have a firm grasp of what the definition of a real *god* (who doesn't cause trouble), and that is

our ruler to test for truth (literally, those basic understandings are part of the canon, meaning "ruler"). YHWH causes trouble, therefore, YHWH is not a real god. At best, YHWH (if real) is a meddlesome extra-terrestrial, or, *more likely*, a misconception, caused by mixing the notion of *god* with the notion of a *moody human*. Christians maintain, like Aristotle, that God created the universe. Diogénēs the Epicurean wonders, *Why? Was he bored? Was he lonely? From where does he inherit his artistic creativity?* That "God" sounds more like a human sculptor or a chemist than it does a principle of Goodness. We'll find false gods in anything supposed to have created us, evaluates us, and anything that interferes with our history. People throw around their conceptions of "God" all the time, and we know, for a fact, they are nonsense, because all of those conceptions contradict the basic notion of a happy being. Jesus literally bleeds for us (so they say). I can do that, and I am most definitely not a god. And you can't be both mortal and immortal, or else the meanings of words just dissolve into confusion.

In general, the *prolēpseis* are grasped by the applications of the mind (like *contemplation* and *reflection*) in the same way that *contemplation* and *reflection* also grasp ideas like "Middle Earth" and "lightsabers" (which are only *real* as fantasy), but the difference is that all of these other mental objects are generated by the faculties of reason, whereas *prolēpseis* are like fish captured by a mental net: the mind captures what nature gives it; our myths are made, not captured.

We talk a lot about *what the gods are* in this forum, and, I believe, most of the candidates we have proposed tend to contradict the raw definition of divinity that Epíkouros provides. We like the idea that they might just be mental conceptions that only exist in the human mind, made of mental particles, and that, perhaps, they were first recognized by early hominids in dream-states (either nocturnal dreams or perhaps self-induced visions). We also like to consider that the gods are some kind of laughing, talking, respirating space ghosts (I'm *sort* of joking). Honestly, we're not sure, but, we **can** be sure that it is irrational for any hypothetical "god" to act "ungodly", because, without a doubt, we know, for a fact, what the definition of a "god" is, regardless of *which one*.