

Prolepsis and the Epicurean Gods (discussion split from earlier thread started by Titus)

Post by “Bryan” of June 12, 2026 at 11:20 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

prolepsis to be an experience

Yes, a prolepsis is an experience, but not a process of thought.

The prolepseis are the direct experiences we have when we think of something.

Anybody who uses the words “god” or “water” or “minotaur” has a sense of what they are talking about. That sense is always real, but we are left to determine what physical objects exist as the original source (**the hypokeímenon**).

[Hypokeimenon - Wikipedia](#)

If there is no correspondence (**sympátheia**) between an original source and the prolepsis, then it exists only as a mental impression and the word used for it is “empty.”

Clement of Alexandria (fl. 190^{CE}), Miscellanies, 2.4

"Epicurus... supposes an anticipation to be [our mental] perception's certainty: and he defines an anticipation **[1]** as attention directed toward something evident – and **[2]** [as attention] directed toward an evident concept of a *thing* {or "of a situation"}. And [Epicurus says] that it is not possible either to investigate, nor to be at a loss, nor indeed to judge -- but not even to refute -- without an anticipation."

Philodemus (fl.c. 70 BCE), On Piety, 1.66A.1882-1911

"Time is distinguished as existing as an anticipation; and just as, in the Thirty-Second [book of On Nature], Epicurus says that the evident realities of the gods are thoroughly comprehended as existing, even though existing as a single [object of thought] among those [other objects of thought] in the original sources [of the films from their bodies], nevertheless [these detectable realities of the gods] have a nature less mentally perceptible than that of other existing things."

Sextus Empiricus (fl.c. 200 CE), Against the Logicians, 1.203 - 216

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/5134-prolepsis-and-the-epicurean-gods-discussion-split-from-earlier-thread-started-by/?postID=40301#post40301>

"[For Epicurus] the particularity of sensation is to receive only what is present and moving it: but **not** to thoroughly separate that [1] what is here is one thing -- but [2] what is underlying there is another thing."

"so then, of the judgments, according to Epicurus, some are true, and others are false: true are those attested and not contested by evident reality -- false are those contested and not attested by evident reality"
