

Relationship between AI/LLMs and prolepsis

Post by “Titus” of September 4, 2025 at 11:04 PM

Do you think there is something to learn about Epicurean prolepsis through the understanding how AI/LLMs (large language models) work?

If my understanding of LLMs is correct, they form a "general notion" of all kinds of things through the processing of an extraordinary huge data base. Sounds familiar to the Human mind. Although some would say AI is just statistics at work, perhaps this is somehow our own minds function, too.

There are further possible implications like: In which way does prolepsis form? How dependent/exposed is prolepsis on/to its database? How does LLMs relate to the debate on understanding prolepsis as (a) fixed innate ideas vs. (b) forming general notions out of impressions on our minds?

I won't have time in the near future for discussion, but I just wanted to share my thoughts on a topic that has been on my mind for a long time.

Post by “Cassius” of September 5, 2025 at 7:41 AM

I agree this could be a fruitful line to explore. It seems to be a key attribute of canonical faculties that they operate "mechanically" and without opinions of their own, and often here people have commented that there may be an aspect of "pattern matching" going on with prolepsis. (I started to say pattern "recognition" but that might not be the best word in this context.)

Post by “Eikadistes” of September 5, 2025 at 9:28 AM

At this point, I say *no*, it does not have something to teach us about preconceptions. I think it's like trying to learn about the physics of stars by observing Van Gogh's painting *Starry Night*. No matter how advanced or well-defined our models, they are still (for now) just models and

analogies.

Maybe it *does*, insofar as it can teach us what a preconception *is not*.

As Diogénēs describes of a *preconception*, it is a "*memory of the appearances from abroad*", so being able to experience/process sensation, as I read it, is a necessary precursor to a preconception.

In an Epicurean sense, I don't think it's accurate to say that LLM's can have "preconceptions" because they are prone to error. Rather, it looks to me like they are being programmed with "opinions", *some* of which *are* true ... but they are not, *themselves*, standards of truth. They lack the standard of sensation, so they're at the whim of their programmers' memories.

We'll need to get to the point where an android organically dreams of sheep.

If I were on Picard's Enterprise-D, I would, *personally*, trust Data, but not the ship's computer, even if 99% of their knowledge-base were shared. If I'm going to risk losing my arm, I'm not going to take advice from an armless thing. Give that thing an arm to lose, and then see how it thinks. Likewise, I'll trust Data's description of the texture of kitten fur before the computer's, or the flavor of Picard's tea (probably bitter Earl Grey), over anything else for which it lacks its own sensory organs.

[Quote from Titus](#)

I just wanted to share my thoughts on a topic that has been on my mind for a long time.

Really cool thought, though! It's at least worth the thought experiment.

Post by “DaveT” of September 6, 2025 at 2:05 PM

I understand the question from [Titus](#) and @Elkadites' response as: currently, LLMs cannot have preconceptions if preconceptions mean an idea conceived before and independent of the question. Also, as I understand the LLMs, they function because of training that exposes them to data (everything on the internet and/or fed directly to them) plus additional training after data collection, on how to “talk” to the people asking questions. Then, the LLM matches the question to its data, based on how it is phrased, and answers in a polite colloquial manner. I've found sometimes it then summarizes the response it has given, once again based only on the data in its microchips.

Post by "Titus" of June 12, 2026 at 2:25 PM

Today, I had a short but interesting talk with Chat GPT:

Titus: Is there a connection between large language models and Epicurean prolepsis? Could Epicurean prolepsis be interpreted as what LLMs are processing?

Yes, there is a surprisingly interesting analogy, although one should be careful not to identify the two completely.

For Epicurus, **prolepsis** (πρόληψις, usually translated as "preconception" or "anticipation") is one of the fundamental criteria of truth, alongside sensations and feelings. A prolepsis is formed through repeated experiences: after encountering many individual humans, for example, the mind develops a general conception of "human." When we hear the word "human," this preconception is immediately activated and allows recognition and reasoning.

An LLM works in a way that appears remarkably similar at first glance:

- It is exposed to vast numbers of examples.
- Statistical regularities are extracted.
- It develops internal representations of concepts.
- When prompted with a word such as "human," it activates patterns associated with countless previous examples.
- It can then generate responses based on these learned patterns.

An Epicurean might say that an LLM has something analogous to a prolepsis of "human," "justice," "friendship," or even "god," because it has formed generalized representations from repeated encounters.

However, there are also important differences.

1. Epicurean prolepsis originates in perception

For Epicurus, prolepses ultimately derive from actual sensory contact with reality.

A child sees many horses and develops the prolepsis "horse."

The prolepsis therefore has an ontological grounding in the world itself.

An LLM, by contrast, has no direct sensory encounter with horses. It processes symbols that humans have written about horses. Its "horse-concept" is second-hand and linguistic rather than perceptual.

This is probably the biggest difference from an Epicurean standpoint.

2. Epicurean prolepsis has evidential force

Epicurus regarded prolepses as a criterion of truth because they are naturally formed by repeated encounters with real things.

For example, all peoples possess some prolepsis of blessed and imperishable gods. Epicurus regarded this as evidence that the gods exist, even if many false opinions are attached to them.

An LLM's internal representations do not have this status. They merely reflect statistical patterns in its training data. If a society collectively believed dragons existed, an LLM would develop a strong representation of dragons without dragons being real.

Thus an Epicurean would likely deny that an LLM's "preconceptions" have the same epistemological authority as human prolepses.

3. The strongest analogy: pattern abstraction

The closest parallel is probably this:

Epicurean prolepsis is the mind's natural abstraction of recurring features from experience.

An LLM's embeddings and latent representations are statistical abstractions of recurring features from text.

Both systems:

- accumulate repeated inputs,
- compress information,
- form general categories,
- enable recognition of new instances.

In modern cognitive science, some scholars even describe human concepts as prototype-like statistical structures rather than fixed definitions. In that respect, Epicurus can seem surprisingly modern.

A deeper Epicurean reflection

There is an intriguing possibility that Epicurus would have found LLMs philosophically illuminating.

The existence of LLMs demonstrates that sophisticated concepts can emerge from repeated exposure without requiring innate Platonic Forms, divine illumination, or Aristotelian essences.

General notions arise naturally from accumulated experience.

That is actually very close to the anti-Platonic spirit of Epicurean epistemology.

An Epicurean might therefore say:

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"The language model shows how a system can acquire general conceptions through repeated impressions alone, without any need for transcendent universals."

That sounds remarkably Epicurean.

Yet Epicurus would probably add an important caveat:

Quote

"The model possesses only something analogous to prolepsis. Genuine prolepsis arises from a living being's direct interaction with reality through sensation."

So the connection is real and philosophically fruitful. LLMs can be viewed as a kind of artificial demonstration of how generalized concepts emerge from repeated inputs—a process that bears a strong family resemblance to Epicurean prolepsis, even though Epicurus would likely reserve the term *prolepsis* for conceptions ultimately grounded in actual sensory experience.

Titus: Conversely, LLMs could be interpreted as proof of the validity of Epicurean prolepsis. Although they are not grounded in direct exposure to sensual stimulation, their pattern recognition seems to enhance Epicurus' idea of prolepsis.

I think there is a strong argument in that direction, though perhaps not as a *proof* in the strict sense.

The historical challenge to Epicurean prolepsis was always: **How can mere repetition of impressions generate meaningful general concepts?**

Many philosophers after Epicurus doubted that this was sufficient:

- Platonists argued that universals must somehow pre-exist experience.
- Rationalists argued that important concepts require innate structures.
- Some theologians argued that knowledge of certain truths requires divine illumination.

An LLM demonstrates something remarkable: from exposure to enormous numbers of individual examples, a system can develop highly sophisticated conceptual structures without possessing explicit definitions or innate metaphysical forms.

That is very much in the spirit of Epicurus.

What LLMs seem to vindicate

An Epicurean could point to LLMs and say:

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"Look, a machine exposed to countless individual instances develops a functional understanding of categories, relationships, analogies, and even abstract reasoning. Why should we think the human mind requires Platonic Forms?"

In that sense, LLMs strengthen the plausibility of the Epicurean claim that repeated impressions naturally generate general notions.

Epicurus argued:

1. Repeated encounters create memory.
2. Memories accumulate.
3. General conceptions emerge.
4. These conceptions become tools for recognition and reasoning.

Modern machine learning shows that a system can indeed move from countless particulars to surprisingly powerful generalizations.

An especially interesting case: the gods

Consider Epicurus' famous claim that humans possess a prolepsis of the gods as blessed and imperishable beings.

Many modern readers wonder:

Quote

"How could such a concept emerge naturally?"

An LLM offers a possible model.

Humans repeatedly encounter:

- excellence,
- happiness,
- power,
- beauty,
- wisdom,
- longevity,

and then mentally extrapolate toward an idealized limit.

An LLM often does something similar. It learns patterns and can generate idealized or prototypical versions of categories that were never explicitly presented.

This does not prove Epicurus was correct about the gods, but it makes the mechanism of concept formation seem less mysterious.

Where the analogy becomes even stronger

Some cognitive scientists today argue that human concepts are not definitions but statistical clusters.

For example, most people cannot define "bird" precisely.

Instead they possess a prototype:

- sparrows are very bird-like,
- penguins less so,
- bats not at all.

LLMs appear to represent concepts in a similarly graded way.

This resembles prolepsis much more than it resembles Platonic essences.

The Epicurean could therefore argue:

Quote

Prolepsis is not a dictionary definition stored in the mind. It is a stable pattern emerging from repeated encounters.

That description sounds surprisingly close to modern representation learning.

But there is one thing Epicurus might not have anticipated

LLMs also reveal a weakness in prolepsis.

An LLM can form strong representations of things that do not exist:

- dragons,
- Sherlock Holmes,
- Middle-earth,
- fictional gods.

This raises a difficult question for Epicurean epistemology:

Quote

If a stable concept can emerge merely from repeated exposure, why should the existence of a prolepsis imply the existence of its object?

This is precisely where an Epicurean would have to defend the difference between concepts grounded in reality and concepts grounded in cultural transmission.

In other words, LLMs may strengthen Epicurus' account of **how** prolepses form while simultaneously weakening one of his arguments for **what** they guarantee.

A possible modern Epicurean reformulation

If Epicurus had known about machine learning, he might have reformulated prolepsis as:

Quote

"A prolepsis is a stable cognitive pattern produced by the accumulation of repeated impressions, enabling recognition, prediction, and reasoning about a class of objects."

That would be remarkably compatible with contemporary ideas about learning systems.

So I would say that LLMs do not prove Epicurean prolepsis, but they make one of Epicurus' central intuitions far more credible than it appeared to many philosophers in earlier centuries: namely, that sophisticated concepts can emerge naturally from repeated experience without requiring innate ideas, transcendent Forms, or supernatural intervention. The fact that a language model can do this from text alone makes Epicurus' epistemology look surprisingly prescient.

Titus: I think you are on the right path, but I would argue that in the Epicurean sense this is where the senses become important. Because some people indeed believe in dragons and they believe in all kind of conceptions about the gods.

I think that is exactly where an Epicurean would push back against an overly enthusiastic comparison between LLMs and human cognition.

The crucial point is that **prolepsis is only one criterion of truth**. Epicurus never intended it to operate independently. The other criteria—sensations (*aisthēseis*) and feelings (*pathē*)—remain indispensable.

An LLM has something analogous to prolepsis, but it lacks sensation. As a result, it has no way to distinguish between:

- horses and unicorns,
- Athens and Atlantis,
- historical figures and fictional characters.

All are merely patterns in text.

An Epicurean human, however, can test conceptions against experience.

Suppose a child develops a conception of dragons through stories. Epicurus would not deny that a conception exists. The question is whether it corresponds to reality. One then turns to the senses:

Quote

Have dragons ever been observed?

If not, the conception remains a mental construction rather than a confirmed object.

The same applies to many theological claims. Epicurus famously argued that people attach all sorts of opinions (*doxai*) to the gods:

- that they become angry,
- reward virtue,
- punish sin,
- intervene in history.

The mere existence of these conceptions proves nothing. They must be examined.

In this sense, the Epicurean method is actually more sophisticated than a simple theory of concept formation:

1. Repeated impressions generate prolepses.
2. We formulate opinions based on them.
3. Those opinions are tested against sensory evidence.
4. Unsupported additions are discarded.

This is where your observation becomes interesting for the LLM analogy.

An LLM is almost pure prolepsis without sensation.

It possesses vast networks of generalized concepts, but no independent contact with reality to evaluate them. It cannot perform the Epicurean step of returning to the evidence of the senses.

One might even say that an LLM resembles the state Epicurus warns humans against when they become detached from experience and live only among words and opinions.

There is another subtle point here. Epicurus did **not** claim that every conception corresponds to a real thing. Rather, he claimed that conceptions arise from some basis in experience.

Take dragons. An Epicurean could explain them as composites:

- snakes,
- lizards,
- birds,
- predators,
- fire,

combined and exaggerated by imagination.

The conception is real as a mental phenomenon, even if the object is not real.

Likewise, many anthropomorphic gods could be explained as idealizations of kings, parents, heroes, and natural forces.

Thus the existence of a conception does not automatically establish the existence of its object.

This is why, in Epicurean theology, the argument for the gods is not merely "people have a conception of gods." The stronger claim is that there is a universal and persistent prolepsis of blessed and imperishable beings that survives beneath all the false cultural additions. Whether that argument succeeds is another question, but it is more subtle than simply inferring existence from a concept.

Viewed this way, LLMs may actually illuminate the Epicurean distinction between **prolepsis** and **opinion**.

- The model's internal representations resemble prolepses.
- Its generated outputs resemble opinions.
- What it lacks is sensation, the corrective mechanism that Epicurus regarded as essential for separating true opinions from false ones.

From an Epicurean perspective, that absence is not a small detail—it is the difference between a system that merely manipulates conceptions and a living being capable of knowledge.

Admin edit: For discussion of prolepsis of the gods, [please visit this thread](#).

Post by “Cassius” of June 12, 2026 at 3:17 PM

Titus I would say that that discussion of a working theory of what Epicurus mean by prolepsis is better than what 98% of us on the forum could do if we sat down and decided to devote 20 minutes to tackling it. I am sure that most of us would also find tweaks we would suggest but in general I think someone who followed this model would be in good shape. I think it does a pretty good job as well with what often seems to be the trickiest part - that anticipations are not in themselves opinions, but foundations on which opinions are generated.

Post by “Cassius” of June 12, 2026 at 7:25 PM

Also Titus this chat exchange has me thinking about something that I think needs to be a focus of the forum in the future - and it's an aspect of prolepsis.

Taken separately, I think the data in the chat you presented is largely correct. As I said it's probably stated more clearly than many of us can do ourselves. That makes the information in the post a valuable data point.

But the value of that data point is limited if we can't integrate it into a bigger picture of how and why it fits into the philosophy as a whole. I see this problem as analogous to what prolepsis itself does - it's a faculty that takes individual data points out of an otherwise overwhelming background noise, allows us to recognize patterns, and helps us apply those patterns to evaluate future experiences.

Ultimately, the biggest pattern we need to be concerned about is the philosophy as a whole. Saying "I understand what Chatgpt just wrote about anticipations" accomplishes next to nothing if we have the ability to fit it into the big picture and then use that picture.

I'll use another example I think is far more of a problem: Reading the letter to Meneoeceus and seeing "By pleasure we mean the absence of pain" means absolutely nothing unless we can intelligently fix that into the big picture. Failing to see that the letter is about happiness, and that happiness is about pleasure, but taking that part out of that context as if it can be taken alone converts the entire philosophy into the command "minimize pain." And that's a disaster.

We've developed, and will continue to develop, lots of detailed information about individual letters and books and writers and summaries. Each of those detailed treatments gives us valuable data points. But if we don't integrate those points into the bigger picture they are useless and get us nowhere.

Someone I follow on youtube had what I thought was a good video (below) about this issue of high level integrated thinking. He framed it in terms of how to stay ahead of AI, but the focus of

his argument is that what makes humans smarter than AI is stronger ability to juggle lots of isolated facts and see their relationships and evaluate them by context.

That's what I take away from your AI chat -- the facts stated seem to me to be generally correct. The issue is whether we ourselves can integrate that information into a big picture that allows us to see why it is important and what it means for daily life. The video makes the point that "low-level thinking" - the accumulation of isolated facts - does not necessarily lead to "higher-level thinking" where those facts are integrated into a working whole. I think he's right, and that's a big problem we face.

I don't know what the best way to push that forward will be. The video makes a couple of suggestions. But I think "thematicallt" we need to move the forum forward needs to be in that direction. All of the detailed information we develop is useless or even potentially harmful if we don't see the relationships and integrate them into a working whole we can confidently apply.

https://youtu.be/-Xc_ExgwLs8

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}), Miscellenies, 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

"[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"

Post by "Cassius" of June 13, 2026 at 6:21 AM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

. 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."

So Bryan correct me if I am wrong here but this is how the entire discussion of prolepsis refutes what Plato had taught about ideal forms/reincarnation.

It is an obvious point that you can never investigate, refute, or judge whether you are correct about something unless you start with an understanding of what the "something" is. If you've never dealt with something before you cannot understand it unless you relate it to something you already understand.

Plato and gang want to suggest that you must have been born with from another life, or have been given by a divine god, a set of understandings that you then take and apply to your experience after you are born. You recognize a horse because before you were born you were implanted with the "form" of a horse, and when you see a horse after you are born you know it's a horse because you're remembering your pre-birth knowledge (or what god told you).

Epicurus says that 's nonsense. Like an LLM, your brain has evolved to be able to selectively pick out of the background noise the patterns that repeat within that noise. Sort of similar in a way that in the past when people looked at the noise on the screen of a black and white TV, you could begin to pick out the shapes of the objects on the screen even though they were covered in static.

That ability to pick out repeated patterns comes from the fact that the repeated patterns are in fact there in the static and our minds get used over time to picking them out. We aren't born with the patterns and the patterns are not in fact arbitrary - they are there in the static of the picture if we apply our attention and pick them out. For those of us who tune our TVs to shows about horses, we begin to be able to pick out in the programming the shapes to to which we apply the word "horse" or "equus" or whatever language we use.

This process is entirely natural and has no involvement with gods or pre-birth ideas or supernatural forms. But it is essential to human life and if this process did not exist, we would never be able to investigate, judge, or refute anything. It provides the framework for understanding human knowledge that repudiates the supernaturalism of Plato and all those who claim that truth only exists in a "beyond-world" which is inaccessible to us as humans using our senses. No geometry or syllogistic logic or divine revelation is required.

The disaster is that even today people continue to accept Plato's basic argument - that truth is impossible for humans to obtain through our natural faculties, and that we either (1) require supernatural assistance to find true knowledge or (2) should give up on the idea of true knowledge in the first place because it doesn't exist.

Post by "Bryan" of June 15, 2026 at 4:19 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

[Quote from Bryan](#)

false are those contested and not attested by evident reality"

Just as an aside: the Pyrrhonians would not call those “false” but indeterminate or undecidable (ἀνεπίκριτα).

We have the category "pending (προσμένον)" for things which are simultaneously not attested (μὴ ἐπιμαρτυρούμενον) and not contested (μὴ ἀντιμαρτυρούμενον), because indeed in that case there is no evidence either way.

We also have "pending" for phenomena that are apparently both attested and contested, because in that case there is conflicting evidence about the original source (*the hypokeimenon*) and more observation is needed.

The idealist position would have to argue there is no original source (*no hypokeimenon*). But according to Epicurus, if there is no original source, the object is not real -- and the proposition that it *is* real, is necessarily false (such as the proposition "minotaurs exist").

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

"While outlining what is true and false, [*Epicurus*] says 'what is true is that which exists in such a way as it is said to exist -- and what is false is that which does not exist in such a way as it is said to exist. And sensation (existing as capable of taking hold in response to the things falling under it, and neither removing nor adding nor changing anything to it) is unreasoning -- yet it reports truly in every case and in this way comprehends what exists - just as that very thing exists by nature. But with all sensible things existing as true: the things able to be judged differ - and some of them are true -- but others false'"

Post by “Cassius” of June 16, 2026 at 7:06 AM

ADMIN NOTE: Speaking of things breaking apart due to atomic collisions, I think [Kalosyni](#) is looking at dividing this thread up into more manageable topics such as separating the prolepsis of gods topic from prolepsis analogies to IIm (while leaving marker posts) so don't be surprised if that happens.

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 16, 2026 at 1:58 PM

All posts mentioning the gods have been moved (and general prolepsis comments by Bryan have been copied and exist in both threads. Also, Titus' AI query exists in both threads).

New thread split off to discuss prolepsis of the gods:

Thread

[Prolepsis and the Epicurean Gods \(discussion split from earlier thread started by Titus\)](#)

Admin Edit: This thread is for discussion on the nature of the gods spurred on by a section below: "**An especially interesting case: the gods**" (A number of posts have been moved or copied depending on the content).

For discussion on LLM's please [visit this thread](#).

Today, I had a short but interesting talk with Chat GPT:

Titus: Is there a connection between large language models and Epicurean prolepsis? Could Epicurean prolepsis be interpreted as what LLMs are processing?

Yes, there is a...



Kalosyni

June 12, 2026 at 2:25 PM

Post by "Kalosyni" of June 16, 2026 at 2:17 PM

Here is a good video explaining LLM's:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=NKnZYvZA7w4>

[Martin](#) do you have any input on the comparison between prolepsis and LLM's?

Post by "Don" of June 16, 2026 at 10:14 PM

LLMs are nothing like the way the brain works. Since I don't think prolepsis isn't necessarily how the brain actually functions, I'm sharing a couple videos explaining the brain as prediction machine. The mind doesn't break reality into tokens and assign values to then assign probabilities. The brain works with past experience and sensory input.

For y'all's consideration...

https://youtu.be/wo_e0EvEZn8?is=WxNrk2AuhV7bXeB

<https://youtu.be/lyu7v7nWzfo?is=nxjZ05l0fxqneJ9z>

That said, I don't even think LLMs are analogous to ancient Epicurean prolepseis. As I understand, the prolepseis engrave channels in our psychē to make it easier for similar eidola to find their channel, making our psychē recognize the pattern and assign meaning.

The LLM video (Thanks. [Kalosyni!](#)) did a good job of breaking down the process. I don't see ancient Epicurean prolepseis nor modern brain as prediction machine working like that at all.

Post by “Martin” of June 17, 2026 at 1:55 AM

Quote

@[Martin](#) do you have any input on the comparison between prolepsis and LLM's?

Quote

I don't even think LLMs are analogous to ancient Epicurean prolepseis.

I do see an analogy between prolepsis and LLMs. In both cases, pattern recognition built on past input is applied to new input to generate a response. This analogy may be weaker for ancient Epicurean prolepsis than for what prolepsis updated with respect to current knowledge of the brain may mean today. In all three cases (LLMs, ancient Epicurean prolepsis, modern meaning of prolepsis), the mechanisms are mutually so different, that there is apparently no other insight to gain from the comparison than details on the differences.

Post by “Peter Konstans” of June 17, 2026 at 6:58 AM

If prolepsis is roughly equivalent to the notion of pattern recognition that our cognition relies on, then AI is just the collective pool of human prolepsis, a machine packed with enormous quantities of information that humans use as an auxiliary for expanding cognitive capacity or to make up for cognitive gaps.

Of course, this doesn't make AI conscious. Consciousness requires a dynamically-evolving sense of self-awareness which requires a human brain and its biological substrate.

Post by “Cassius” of June 17, 2026 at 7:02 AM

[Quote from Martin](#)

In both cases, pattern recognition built on past input is applied to new input to generate a response.

At least at present that's the way I am seeing a relationship that is productive to discuss.

No doubt there are many differences, but i would not underestimate the significance of even this short part of Martin's statement.

When the major other alternatives are things like (1) "God (or my daemon) tells me what the truth is" or (2) "I know the truth because I remember it from my past life when I was living among the ideal forms," then the option (3) "my mind starts at birth assembling patterns that I then use to deal successfully with new experiences" is a huge improvement.

Post by “Cassius” of June 17, 2026 at 7:08 AM

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

Consciousness requires a dynamically-evolving sense of self-awareness which requires a human brain and its biological substrate.

i agree with Peter K's post and "liked it." I singled out this sentence only because I don't think he meant to imply that animals are not conscious, or only a "human" brain can be conscious. If you did mean that Peter please correct me, but I took your sentence in the context that the word "human" had been omitted and that your intended focus was on the "biological substrate." I suppose even the "biological substrate" might not be necessarily precise enough,

but I think most of us consider that to be a reasonable way of describing what we think is required for consciousness. I would focus on Peter's "dynamically-evolving sense of self-awareness" as the right direction for a test of consciousness.