

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by "Godfrey" of March 28, 2022 at 12:15 AM

Sedley's article which started this thread has a very unique translation from the Letter to Menoeceus.

Quote

"First of all, consider god an immortal and blessed living being, as the common notion of god is in outline, and attach to him nothing alien to imperishability or inappropriate to blessedness, but believe about him everything that is capable of protecting that combination of blessedness and imperishability. For although there are gods—the knowledge of them being self-evident—they are not as the many regard them, since by regarding them as of that kind the many fail to protect them." (Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus 123–4)

This heavily coded statement combines the firm assertion that there are gods with an instruction to us to conceive those gods in a way which will 'protect' them. Later Epicureans seem to have no doubt that their school's founder was referring, in realist mode, to biologically immortal beings. But the language chosen at least licenses an idealist alternative, that our gods are a projection of our own thought, whose invulnerability it falls to us to ensure.

Unless I'm missing something, every translation that I'm familiar with is diametrically opposed to the underlined portion above. Typically, the gods fail to protect those with wrong ideas of them. Sedley uses his version as support of the idealist interpretation, although I don't see this interpretation as *necessary* for that.

Does anybody have any insight into this particular translation? Including [Don](#), of course 😊🤔