

Prolepsis Citations from Long & Sedley

Post by “Don” of July 3, 2024 at 11:06 PM

I decided to dive back into Long & Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers* to see which citations they use for the gods (or God) as they say in their table of contents. Some of the citations are expected, but a couple were noteworthy at least to me:

- Lucretius, [5.1161-1225](#)
- Lucretius [6.68-79](#)
- Lucretius [5.146-55](#)
- Epicurus, Letter to Menoikeus, 123-4 (the famous passages that starts "First, believe that the god is a blessed and imperishable thing as is the common, general understanding of the god.")
 - Menoikeus, 135 as well
- Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus, 76-7
 - we are bound to believe that in the sky revolutions, solstices, eclipses, risings and settings, and the like, take place without the ministration or command, either now or in the future, of any being who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss along with immortality. [77] *For troubles and anxieties and feelings of anger and partiality do not accord with bliss, but always imply weakness and fear and dependence upon one's neighbours.* Nor, again, must we hold that things which are no more than globular masses of fire, being at the same time endowed with bliss, assume these motions at will. Nay, in every term we use we must hold fast to all the majesty which attaches to such notions as bliss and immortality, lest the terms should generate opinions inconsistent with this majesty. Otherwise such inconsistency will of itself suffice to produce the worst disturbance in our minds. (Emphasis added to highlight an explanation of [PD01](#))
- Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.43-9 (probably redundant to place here since [Cassius](#) and [Joshua](#) are knockin' out of the proverbial park on the podcast!)
- Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.43-7

(1) The same reply can be made to Epicurus' belief that the idea of gods arose from dream impressions of human-shaped images. For why should these have given rise to the idea of gods, rather than of outsized men? And in general it will be possible to reply to all the doctrines we have listed that men's idea of god is not based on mere largeness in a human-shaped animal, but includes his being blessed and imperishable and wielding the greatest power in the world. But from what origin, or how, these thoughts occurred among the first men to draw a conception of god, is not explained by those who attribute the cause to dream impressions and to the orderly motion of the heavenly bodies. (2) To this they reply that the idea of god's existence originated from appearances in dreams, or from the world's phenomena, but that the idea of god's being everlasting and imperishable and perfect in happiness arose through a process of transition from men. For just as we acquired the idea of a Cyclops . . . by enlarging the common man in our impression of him, so too we have started with the idea of a happy man, blessed with his full complement of goods, then intensified these features into the idea of god, their supreme fulfilment. And again, having formed an impression of a long-lived man, the men of old increased the time-span to infinity by combining the past and future with the present; and then, having thus arrived at the conception of the everlasting, they said that god was everlasting too. (3) Those who say this are championing a plausible doctrine. But they easily slip into that most puzzling trap, circularity. For in order first to get the idea of a happy man, and then that of god by transition, we must have an idea of what happiness is, since the idea of the happy man is of one who shares in happiness. But according to them happiness (*eudaimonia*) was a divine (*daimonia*) and godly nature, and the word 'happy' (*eudaimōn*) was applied to someone who had his deity (*daimōn*) disposed well (*eu*). Hence in order to grasp human happiness we must first have the idea of god and deity, but in order to have the idea of god we must first have a conception of a happy man. Therefore each, by presupposing the idea of the other, is unthinkable for us.

- Scholion on Epicurus, Principle Doctrines, 1
- Philodemus (Phaedrus), *On Piety*, 112.5-12 (Usener 87)
 - Philodemus, *On Piety*, Vol. Herc. 2, II.82 [p. 112 Gomperz] {Obbink I.19.5}: ...as in the 12th book, he also reproaches Prodicus, Diagoras, and Critias among others, saying that they rave like lunatics, and he likens them to Bacchant revelers, admonishing them not to trouble or disturb us.
- Anonymous Epicurean treatise on theology: Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 215
 - <https://archive.org/details/oxyrhy...up?view=theater>

- Long & Sedley also cite Plutarch, *Against Epicurean Happiness* 1091B-C (Usener 419)... but we're going to take [Little Rocker](#) 's caveat to heart on Plutarch and not cite that reference 😊