

# Epicureans and the Ancient Greek Gods (Imagery of "Gods" / "Gods Among Men")

Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2019 at 9:04 AM

[Quote from elli](#)

I prefer a god acting as human being than a god acting like an ascetic unnatural being.

Yes, I do too. I think this is a very important subject to discuss.

Aside from Epicurus' statement that "gods" exist, what is more primary about how we discuss anything than "that which has no sensation is nothing to us" as part of PD2?

If a subject cannot be considered in terms of sensations, then it seems to me that the subject can have no relevance at all. Which means to me that if the subject of the best and highest life cannot be considered in terms of sensations that are intelligible to us, then the subject is essentially nothing to us.

So you can take that and go in two directions:

(1) You can say that since "gods" do not appear immediately in front of us and interact with us the subject has no relevance at all, just like being dead.

(2) Or you can say that "gods" conveys a manner of living which is intelligible to all of us in the form of our picture of human-like beings experiencing the best possible sensations - "living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain."

If Epicurus stood for anything, he stood on the position that the soul cannot survive absent the body, and therefore all that is good must be experienced from birth to death. (Cited by DeWitt as encapsulated in VS 42. "The same time produces both the beginning of the greatest good and the dissolution of the evil." Or, as DeWitt translates it: "The same span of time includes both the beginning and termination of the greatest good." (p 219)

All this appears to mean that the greatest good has to be experienceable by humans in a way that humans can understand, and humans can't understand anything which is not understandable in terms of sensation. And what better way is there to convey anything than to describe by analogy how a thing "feels" to us?

Torquatus again in On Ends: "Further, every mental presentation has its origin in sensation: so that no certain knowledge will be possible, unless [all sensations are true](#), as the theory of

Epicurus teaches that they are. Those who deny the validity of sensation and say that nothing can be perceived, having excluded the evidence of the senses, are unable even to expound their own argument. Besides, by abolishing knowledge and science they abolish all possibility of rational life and action."

Also, and even more to the point from Diogenes Laertius: " For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or **by analogy, or resemblance, or composition**, with some slight aid from reasoning.

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So in my view, do we have to convey the meaning of godhood with a picture of Zeus? No. But we have to convey the image of godhood with something, and in the absence of better alternatives in the form of images that mean more to us, then I would think continuing to use Zeus and the rest makes as much sense for at least some of us today as it did for ancient Epicureans.