

# PD01 - Gratitude and Weakness (Especially In Relation to the Gods)

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 9, 2023 at 11:03 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Nate](#)

It seems to me that he (and apparently Hermarchus, based on fragmentary attestation I'm still trying to organize) had concerns about the status of the gods' social lives and their speech patterns

If you compile those sources, I'd be very interested to see them.

My access to primary sources is limited, but these reputable sources feature secondary attestation:

Quote

"One specific thesis is however attributed to Hermarchus, cited at Philodemus *On Gods*, PHerc. 152/7, col. 13.20–41:25 the gods breathe and are not mute but converse with each other, since felicity is incompatible with lack of conversation. He is even said to have provided an argument: the gods are living beings, and the notion of a living being entails that of breathing, just as that of a fish that of water and of a bird that of wings; breathing, we may infer, is a 'permanent property' of the gods. Philodemus col. 4.8–13 adds that their language is Greek. He also tells us, col. 10.25–30, that the Epicureans not only accept the existence of the gods of the Panhellenes but say that there are even more. But we are unable to determine to what extent the ideas found in our later sources may be traced back to Hermarchus and Epicurus." (*The Cambridge Guide To Hellenistic Philosophy* 456-457)

And also:

Quote

"Philodemus asserts the connection in fr. 13, 'Those who attempt to deprive them of imperishability must [also] deprive them of blessedness'; and the same idea seems to underlie the discussion of the gods' use of language which he cites from Epicurus' successor Hermarchus in cols. xiii.36-xiv.6:

'And one must say that they use speech and converse with one another; for, he says, we would not consider them more fortunate and indestructible [...] if they did not, but rather similar to mute human beings. For since in fact all of us who are not maimed make use of language, to say that the gods either are maimed or do not resemble us in this respect (there being no other way either they or we could give shape to utterances) is extremely foolish, especially since conversation with those like themselves is a source of indescribable pleasure to the good.'

[...] Hermarchus wrote a treatise *Against Empedocles* in twenty-two books, and Bernays' suggestion that Plutarch *On the Cessation of Oracles* 420c-e [...] is derived from it has been generally accepted. Certainly it is the most economical hypothesis that this vast work was both Plutarch's source for the Epicurean attack on Empedocles and Philodemus' for this argument and for the further points about divine physiology for which he cites Hermarchus by name in cols. xiii-xiv." (*Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans* 218-219)