

# Toward a New Interlinear Gloss of De Rerum Natura

Post by "Don" of June 13, 2023 at 11:49 PM

OH!! The passage is from Menoikeus!! Egads! I feel dense!

Here's my translation, first:

For the sake of this, we do everything in order to neither be in bodily or mental pain nor to be in fear or dread; and so, when once this has come into being around us, it sets free all of the calamity, distress, and suffering of the mind, seeing that the living being has no need to go in search of something that is lacking for the good of our mental and physical existence.

Here's my commentary on that word in 128e.

τοῦ ζῶου "the living being" genitive singular of ζῶον, the word we met way back in 123b in Epicurus's discussion of the gods. "A god" was described as a ζῶον. So, are we to take the word in 123b as "living being" there as the word implies here in 128b? Or is the ambiguous nature of the word still at play in the description of a god? The debate continues.

The ambiguous nature of the word is:

τὸν θεὸν ζῶον "a god (is a) ζῶον. But what is a ζῶον?

ζῶον (zōon) is where English zoology comes from.

LSJ gives two primary definitions:

living being, animal

in art, figure, image, not necessarily of animals (or a sign of the Zodiac)

So, unfortunately, at this point in the Letter we can't necessarily resolve the question of what the nature of the gods (or of a god) is according to Epicurus. Some scholars think Epicurus believed the gods were material beings ("living being, animal") somehow living between the various world-systems (cosmos) in the universe. Some think Epicurus believed the gods were mental representations or personifications of the concepts ("figure, image, sign") of blessedness.