

# Episode 227 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 02 - Velleius Begins His Attack On Traditional Views Of The Gods

Post by "Cassius" of May 18, 2024 at 7:00 PM

## [Quote from TauPhi](#)

If the gods are incorruptible that means they cannot be corrupted. That also means they do not have to act to maintain their blessedness as it cannot be taken from them. They are immortal. And since only atoms, void and the universe as a placeholder for them are eternal and cannot be corrupted, thanks to the [Epicurean gods](#) we can kiss Epicurean atomism bye, bye.

I don't agree that this is rigorous application of Epicurean principles. "Incorruptible" does not contain within it an explanation of how that incorruptibility is maintained. As DeWitt argues, only atoms and void are eternally unchangeable. Something must maintain the status of incorruptibility, and since there is no god over them to do so for them, the gods must maintain their incorruptibility themselves.

This is supported by Velleius' statement in the material we are covering:

"But, what is more remarkable, he gives us a world which has been not only created, but, if I may so say, in a manner formed with hands, and yet he says it is eternal. Do you conceive him to have the least skill in natural philosophy who is capable of thinking anything to be everlasting that had a beginning? For what can possibly ever have been put together which cannot be dissolved again? Or what is there that had a beginning which will not have an end? If your Providence, Lucilius, is the same as Plato's God, I ask you, as before, who were the assistants, what were the engines, what was the plan and preparation of the whole work? If it is not the same, then why did she make the world mortal, and not everlasting, like Plato's God?"

No one I have seen has asserted that Epicurus definitely held that an individual god has existed ETERNALLY, so unless you are contending that it is clear that Epicurus held that a particular god has existed eternally, just like an atom, then a god came together from atoms at some point just like we did. I am not saying it is the only difference, but for purpose of this discussion I would say that the major distinction is that the god has found a way to maintain his togetherness indefinitely (being in the intermundia is part of that) and that there is no necessity for a god to worry that he will cease to exist, unless the god were to for some reason stop doing the things that keeps it alive. I don't see anything beyond that as necessarily a part of "incorruptibility." Maybe there are ways to trace the etymology and definitions of the words used to a different conclusion, but again unless someone can point to clear references that the god (a god, the gods) had no beginning, then they are not exempt from the rule that only

atoms have eternally unchanging nature.

Again, it's perfectly understandable if someone says that all this discussion of these issues is pure speculation and they want nothing to do with it, but that's not the position that Epicurus or the Epicureans took, and eliminating it from discussion is not Epicurean philosophy. It is, in fact, arguably the subject that the Epicureans considered of number one prime importance above all others.