

Give Us an Example of God!

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2024 at 9:32 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

(3) Hermarkhos, Demetrios, Philodemos, and Lucretius making indications that the gods breathe and converse is not a preconception, but inductive reasoning that happens to be coherent with the preconception, and (4) the actual gods don't really exist except as concepts in our minds.

I think Point 3 is correct and applies to Epicurus as well. Preconceptions are never the same as inductive reasoning, and I would say "statements of fact" are always better termed "conceptions," as "statements of fact" are never the same as preconceptions. "Opinions" is another good word, as Epicurus apparently said (Diogenes Laertius?) that opinions can be true or false, but unfortunately today the word "opinion" is firmly understood to imply that the opinion is "not true," so in most cases clarity will require some other word.

As to point 4 I would say the problem is the meaning of the term "the actual gods." If someone insists that the term "actual gods" must include Yahweh, Allah, Zeus, Thor, or whoever, then yes I would say the statement "actual gods do not exist except as concepts in our mind" is true, because *those gods* do not exist as independently real beings with bodies and locations and so forth.

However the term "actual gods" by no means requires accepting that Yahweh and the rest are included within that term. Therefore I would submit the statement "the actual gods don't really exist except as concepts in our minds" as that statement would be made in common discussion and understood by 99% of people today would be seen in Epicurean terminology as false.

I would say (as I think you did later in the post) that if Epicurus were here today he would say something like the following, which is what I understand the texts to mean when read fairly. Epicurus would say "divinity" or "god" is a term that humans apply to living beings that meet a certain criteria of total blessedness and total deathlessness, and that this term is applicable to and appropriate to describe beings which our physics and understanding of nature tell us do actually exist in the universe.

The problem always comes when someone makes specific assertions about some personality like Yahweh or Zeus or any of the rest actually existing. It's also a problem to make general assertions about the class of gods that goes beyond deathlessness and blessedness, as none of those assertions have ever proven to be reliable and reproducible and worthy of belief.

Thus it appears that the Epicureans speculated about "quasi-bodies" and "quasi-blood" to acknowledge that we can reasonably believe that the class of "gods" have certain qualities that

allow them to exist in the universe, but that we do not have the ability to specify the details of those qualities given our lack of information from our vantage point here on Earth.