

# Episode 241 - Cicero's OTNOTG 16 - A Common Thread Between The Epicurean View Of "The Gods" and "The Good"

Post by "Cassius" of August 15, 2024 at 7:39 AM

Very well stated Don!

The only caveat I would have is that when one of us refers to the "idealist" position, the implication is that "the idealist position" means that "gods are a mental construction but they don't really exist."

I think the better view in slightly different words is that what Epicurus is doing is providing a "definition" of a god.

The important problem with what is being referred to as "the idealist view" is that "the idealist view" contains a non sequitur in that it appears to presume that the thing defined does not exist. I would submit that this presumption is false and has no place in describing Epicurus' position, and it is error to refuse to honor the definition that Epicurus is stating. The question of whether beings which fit the definition actually exist is entirely separate.

It is as "the idealist position" is taking the position that "I can define for you what it means to be a Ford Model T, but Ford Model T's do not exist." It does not follow from the definition of a Model T that they do not exist, even though we know separately today that they are very hard to find.

The correct position is "I can define for you what it means to be a Ford Model T, but the question of whether you can find a real Ford Model T is entirely separate, and depends on whether you have access to a car museum."

Or to refer to centaurs, the right formulation would be: "I can define for you what it means to be a centaur, but the question of whether centaurs exist is separate. In the case of centaurs, it is biologically impossible for humans and horses to interbreed, so therefore we are confident that centaurs do exist except in our imagination and artwork."

So I would submit the correct position as to gods is best not described as realist or idealist, but described taking that Epicurus is saying what he means and meaning what he says, which taken all together is something like:

*I can define for you what it means to be a god, which is that gods are living beings who are blessed and imperishable. We have formed this opinion as to the proper definition based on our faculty of prolepsis, through which we detect patterns and arrangements within the perceptions*

*that we have received throughout our lives through our five senses, our feelings of pain and pleasure, and our mental reception of images. But our opinion of the definition of a god is not itself a prolepsis, any more than our definition of a god is itself a real god, or our eyes relating to our minds that it sees the light given off by a candle is itself a real candle.*

*There are many opinions of the proper definition of a god, and many people who assert the existence of many particular gods. Some people hold the opinion that stars are gods, and that gods take an interest in humanity and that gods choose some people as friends and others as enemies. The question of whether any particular asserted god really exists is not answered by stating a definition of gods in general.*

*For you to maintain that a particular god exists, you will need to provide more than an opinion without evidence. And I can already tell you as a rule of evidence (and we need rules of evidence such as consistent definitions if we are to communicate clearly) that if the description you are asserting conflicts in any way with our definition, which you will recall is to be (1) living, (2) totally blessed, and (3) incorruptible, then what you are describing is not a god. What you are describing may exist, if you have proof of it, but whatever it may be, it is not a "god." Alexander the Oracle-Monger's fake snake does exist as puppet that can be touched and viewed, but it is certainly not a "god."*

*Going further, I can also tell you that if what you are describing is (4) in any way impossible under the laws of physics we have previously set forth, then what you are describing not only is (A) not a "god," but (B) does not exist as all, because it is physically impossible. That is how I know that your assertions of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence are false, because they are physically impossible.*