

"The Polytheism of the Epicureans" by Paul T. M. Jackson

Post by "Pacatus" of December 14, 2024 at 3:28 PM

I just revisited the essay linked by [Godfrey](#) in the opening post.

One of the considerations that seems to get shunted aside in discussions of the [Epicurean gods](#) (especially from a realist perspective, but also from an idealist one) is that the Athenian gods that Epicurus venerated (like the gods of other polytheisms) "embodied" (or at least represented) various, specific associations in their personae. Dionysus was the god associated with wine, viticulture and theater (especially *comedia*); Hestia was guardian of the hearth, hospitality and home fires (and public fires maintained for religious purposes); Gaia personified this earth; and on and on ...

If they become no more than muddled signifiers for some vague notion of blissful divinity (whatever that is!), living in the intermundia - they become little more than blurry abstractions, far removed from either the Greek pantheon (even with superstitious flaws removed by Epicurus) or psychological archetypes.

Personally, I am in the idealist camp - but I am hesitant to project that back onto Epicurus. In any event, ghostly "divinities" - with little even metaphorical "flesh" - abiding in some intermundia seem thoroughly uninteresting. I wouldn't even know how to consider them from a psychological/archetypal/meditative point of view, absent those very specific associations.

Archetypal personae, with specifically defined associations - whether physically real or not - are another story ...