

PD01 - Blessed and Imperishable?

Post by "Don" of March 2, 2020 at 11:40 PM

It has been some time since I read DeWitt. Does he give any textual evidence for believing that "They were never called immortal by Epicurus himself...". Both KD 1 and the *Letter to Menoikos* include the line concerning "blessed and imperishable beings." Are we to pick and choose which words we want to attribute to the Founder? If it's merely a matter of inconvenience (Oh, Epicurus would never say *that*!), I would be interested to see additional scholarship to support that. And DeWitt's contention that Epicurus thought that the gods could decide whether or not to be subject to dissolution starts to sound very supernatural to me. That troubles me.

To respond to your final thoughts:

Now here I would be reluctant to go so far. I think that especially in an issue like the nature of divinity, Epicurus might consider that an attribute of divinity such as deathlessness (for the gods) might have application to us as reassurance of the overall doctrine that the gods do not interfere with us, even if we as humans are never able to achieve deathlessness ourselves.

I'm interested to explore your reluctance. The reason I belabor this point is that this is literally KD **Number 1**, the very first of the [Principal Doctrines](#) laid out in antiquity for this philosophy I'm considering charting my life by. If I can't make reasonable sense out of this in some shape or form, what else is lurking that I can't reasonably explain?

One of my questions would be: Is this really a question of the "nature of divinity" (which sounds rather theological and religious) or is Epicurus talking about what our lives *could* be? Or explaining how our lives actually are? Perseus Project's text of Diogenes' Lives includes a scholion note to KD 1: *Elsewhere he [Epicurus] says that the gods are discernible by reason alone, some being numerically distinct, while others result uniformly from the continuous influx of similar images directed to the same spot and in human form.* Long and Sedley in *The Hellenistic Philosophers, Vol. 1*, expand on this and give a cogent and coherent explanation of KD 1. According to their research and in light of the scholion, the [Epicurean gods](#) are "thought constructs" - the result of countless images impressing upon our minds - and so as concepts are imperishable. Second, it is up to us to endow the gods with imperishability, to preserve them by continually conceiving of them that way. L&S also posit that the [Epicurean gods](#) are paragons of the Epicurean life. As such, the Epicurean sage can serve as an imperishable example to the community. They also quote Sextus Empiricus' *Against the Professors* text against Epicurus which grumbles against the Epicureans who see *eudaimonia* as literally meaning one must have the correct conception (eu-) of the god (-daimon) to be truly happy. L&S provide a number of texts, from Epicurus, Lucretius, and others, to back up their assertions in a way I can get past KD 1.