

PD01 - Blessed and Imperishable?

Post by “Don” of March 2, 2020 at 6:50 AM

τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει οὔτε ἄλλω παρέχει· ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται· ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.

"The blessed and imperishable being [τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον] has no troubles itself nor causes troubles for others; as a consequence, it is affected by neither anger nor gratitude; because all this would be an indication of weakness, sickness, or lack of strength." (Translation is my own)

Being affected by anger as a sickness or weakness makes sense, but why would being affected by gratitude be a sign of weakness? One conjecture would be that it would show a lack of self-reliance / αὐτάρκεια. If we needed reassurance / affirmation from others and didn't just do things because they were pleasurable, we're not truly living a blessed life. That sense of self-assurance would make one a **μακάριος καὶ ἄφθαρτος**. Blessed, yes. Imperishable? This echoes an idea that, once unnecessary desires are uprooted, they can't come back. But that's a Buddhist concept. Could Epicurus have really been implying that kind of Imperishability?

Some of the senses of **φθαρτος**, the opposite of **ἄφθαρτος**, are "pass away, able to be bribed, adrift." Considering the opposite of these qualities - "not pass away, not able to be bribed, not adrift" - gives a deeper sense to what a mortal life potentially filled with these senses of **ἄφθαρτος** would be like. We know we are mortal. Epicurus and Lucretius proclaim that. So interpreting how we mortals can be imperishable beings isn't readily apparent at first. But this doctrine - all the [Principal Doctrines](#) - have to be applicable to our lives, otherwise of what use are they to us? Epicurus was adamant that philosophy had to be practical and to improve one's life. Re-examining the connotations of **ἄφθαρτος** allows us to see that that idea doesn't have to be a mystical imperishability but one rooted in the here and now.

Post by “Cassius” of March 2, 2020 at 8:17 AM

Dewitt makes the comment in EAHP that while other Epicureans did, he did not believe that Epicurus *himself* called the gods immortal, only having the *capacity* to continue to live if they so choose.

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The new theology that resulted is astonishing. Some of the findings are as follows:

The gods are not by nature deathless. They were never called immortal by Epicurus himself, though they were by his followers.

The gods are animate creatures, resembling human beings, that is, atomic in composition and structure. As such they are theoretically not immune to the contingency of dissolution but in practice this event is avertible. Thus they may be styled incorruptible in the sense that they are subject to a contingency that need never occur.

I think this issue of deathlessness of an individual god would also be related to the question of whether an individual god has also existed for eternity, or became "godlike" through some process which had a beginning. While the universe itself would need to be eternal under the atomistic theory, no individual thing within the universe would be subject to that same eternality requirement, and the reverse is probably true - all things that are composed of atoms *at some point came together from the atoms*. I don't myself have an opinion on when or how, but I presume this is a function of the eternal universe that Epicurus said to consider.

As to this:

[Quote from Eugenios](#)

Epicurus was adamant that philosophy had to be practical and to improve one's life. Re-examining the connotations of ἄφθαρτος allows us to see that that idea doesn't have to be a mystical imperishability but one rooted in the here and now

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.

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:

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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.

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2020 at 8:15 AM

I am going to have to look further into this but it appears that he translates the phrase as incorruptible, and ultimately his reasoning is pretty much what I remembered, that it is an elementary principle of physics that only the elements are eternal, and any combination of elements will eventually come apart.

Appendix

or is already gone by. So both the young man and the old man should philosophize: the former that while growing old he may be young in blessings because of gratitude for what has been, the latter that he may be young and old at the same time because of the fearlessness with which he faces the future. Therefore the wise plan is to practice the things that make for happiness, since possessing happiness we have everything and not possessing it we do everything to have it.

THE GODS

"Both practice and study the precepts which I continuously urged upon you, discerning these to be the A B C's of the good life. First of all, believing the divine being to be blessed and incomprehensible, just as the universal idea of it is outlined in our minds, associate nothing with it that is incompatible with incorruption or alien to blessedness. And cultivate every thought concerning it that can preserve its blessedness along with incorruption. Because there are gods, for the knowledge of them is plain to see. They are not, however, such as many suppose them to be, for people do not keep their accounts of them consistent with their beliefs. And it is not the man who would abolish the gods of the multitude who is impious but the man who associates the beliefs of the multitude with the gods; for the pronouncements of the multitude concerning the gods are not innate ideas but false assumptions. According to their stories the greatest injuries and indignities are said to be inflicted upon evil men, and also benefits.

As far as making reasonable sense out of KD1, I don't see an issue there. If you are saying that you should set as your human goal never to suffer any pain whatsoever, that is obviously impossible for a human, and Epicurus would have realized that impossibility himself, which is why the focus is on pleasure obtained even at the cost of pain. As far as the model of what the best human life can be, there is a more clear and detailed statement of that in "On Ends"

Quote

XII. The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: ***what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable?*** One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.

As far as the gods being "thought constructs" I certainly realize that modern scholars favor that, but that is not what Epicurus appears to have held, or that Velleius describes in "On the Nature of the Gods." The Epicureans took their view of gods seriously, and whether we agree with it or not would not change what they thought or how we should understand their position before we decide what to adopt as our own. Focusing on thought constructs is one of the tangents of modern commentators that in my personal view (not in everyone's) undermines the possibility of understanding Epicurus thoroughly and on his own terms.

I think the main aspect of DeWitt's analysis of the immortality issue starts on page 267. I am not wedded to taking DeWitt's side in every position he takes, by any means, but I agree with his approach that in order to duplicate Epicurus' approach we much always start with the basics and then never let a basic rule (like nothing exists except atoms and void, in motion, etc) **ever** be violated in any subsequent speculation - so that if a passage or commentary appears to contradict an earlier foundation, then that interpretation of the passage is incorrect:

INCORRUPTIBILITY AND VIRTUE

If the adoption and adaptation of the Heraclitean theory of flux to explain the nature of the gods, that is, by an afflux and efflux of images, seems astonishing to the modern reader, not less astonishing is the doctrine that the maintenance of their own incorruptibility should be ascribed to the gods as a virtue. This is certainly advanced doctrine, and rather difficult to understand and more difficult to accept. Yet the evidence for it is sufficient and explicit.

At the outset it must be observed and kept diligently in mind that nowhere in his extant writings does Epicurus call the gods immortal. This might be thought an accident of the tradition were it not for the fact that other considerations rule out this possibility. If Lucretius does call them immortal repeatedly, this may be set down as an indication that he never really mastered the Epicurean lore of the gods and did not live to make an intensive study of it in preparation for writing about it.

The reasoning behind this doctrine of incorruptibility is readily discerned. From the doctrine that nothing exists except atoms and void it follows that the bodies of the gods must be corporeal. Gods are zoa, "animate beings." They are thus units in the ascending order of Nature, as is man. Being in this order and corporeal, they cannot be deathless. If deathlessness were inherent in their nature, they would be

EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

is another than by themselves. Since they do belong in the same class as men, it is a logical necessity to think of their incorruptibility as by some means generated. Since in the opinion of Epicurus, unlike that of Plato, this incorruptibility lacked a superior being as generator its maintenance the sole possibility was that the gods generated it for themselves by their own vigilance. Thus it must be discerned that just as the happiness of men is self-achieved, so the happiness of the gods is self-generated.

However astonishing this doctrine may seem, it is well substantiated. Platonists, for example, who, though hostile, were well versed in Epicurean beliefs, had this to say: "Platonists have pain along with incorruptibility should have have (interest) in the nature of the blessed being, amounting to no need of active concern."¹⁰ This manifestly implies that the Epicurean gods were unable to take their immunity from corruption for granted but must concern themselves for its preservation.

The incongruity between this which conceals for their own bodily security and their indifference to the good of mankind was certain to elicit condemnation from believers in divine providence, and this has not escaped record. Thus the Christian Eusebius quotes his Atticus as saying: "According to Epicurus it's good-ly to providence, in spite of the fact that according to him, the gods being in fear of distress care for the preservation of their own peculiar blessings."¹¹

When once it has been observed that the gods are under the necessity of generating their own blessings, the next step is to learn that this activity is ascribed to them as a virtue. The recognition of this fact will serve to explain a rather cryptic statement from the pen of Epicurus himself. Writing of the "false suppositions" of the Stoicists, who thought of the gods, now in punishing the wicked, now in having special relationships with them, he concluded as follows: "The gods being exclusively devoted to their own peculiar virtues, are partial to those like themselves, attending all this is not such as alien."¹² The first half of this statement has been suitably interpreted, but the recognition of one partialing doctrine will make the meaning intelligible. Just as it is the virtue of men to achieve their own happiness, so it is the virtue of the gods to preserve their own blessings. This task so completely engages their attention that no participation in human affairs is possible.

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This is an excellent detailed discussion Eugenios so thank you for it. People will not always agree on every detail but it helps everyone to dig into the primary material and then display their reasoning about how to interpret it. Otherwise every discussion is just arbitrary assertion.

Probably there are all sorts of other considerations in your mind in starting the thread so there are lots of directions this can go.

Post by "Don" of March 3, 2020 at 1:38 PM

I greatly appreciate your willingness to engage in this discussion. It's truly a pleasure and also a way for me to investigate my own understanding. I'll need to read your post thoroughly before responding but am sure, in the end, there will be more that unites us as Epicureans than divides us.

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2020 at 2:50 PM

Eugenios - you bet. I will also say this: I try to be very alert to never taking anything on "authority" and so I do not like to reference DeWitt as much as I do. HOWEVER while I am perfectly sure that he may have made mistakes in certain areas (although I cannot currently cite anything major) I firmly believe that his approach merits great attention, so if you don't have a copy of that please let me know so I can point you to places you can find it if you don't have it already. But sounds like you are well equipped already!

You'll see elsewhere on the site here that on the issue that I think is most profound - the "ataraxia" / tranquility argument, I think DeWitt is also correct, but to go further his conclusion is bolstered by the applicable chapter in Gosling & Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure" and by the [Nikolsky](#) article "Epicurus on Pleasure."

Given how central I see that argument to be, it's almost amusing to me that DeWitt treats it almost as a sideline rather than one of his pet issues. He was much more interested apparently in anticipations, and the "[all sensations are true](#)" issue, and numerous other points -- but his interpretation of Epicurus as not focusing exclusively on katastematic pleasure foreshadows the conclusions in the other books and articles I just mentioned.

There are numerous technical details (anticipations is a great example, along with nature of the gods) that I don't think are of "life and death" centrality to making Epicurus important to us today, but to me, I simply could not accept for a moment *that my life is so short, that there is no life after death, that [pleasure is the guide of life](#), that there is no absolute morality or virtue or divine revelation* --- and **THEN be told that the best thing for me to do with my time is live on bread and water in what amounts to a cave with a couple of friends????**

There is NO WAY I believe Epicurus taught that, and no way that I believe that the ancients, who had access to all his texts and loyal followers, interpreted him in that way. I am convinced that the message I draw from all these presumptions is the same that the ancient Epicureans drew: that we should indeed "seize the day" and make the most of whatever opportunities of pleasure are available to us for as long as we live, each in our own circumstances.

That lesson or realization, if you will, is tremendously difficult for many people to accept, indoctrinated as they are from all sides that there is either a god or ideal virtue to which we all must conform. Sometimes I find it interesting to consider how Epicurus himself confronted the issue of choosing between "truth" as we understand it, versus "pleasure" which he concluded was the guide and goal of life, because it is easy to argue that happy fool is a better life than an unhappy "wise man." But I am convinced that he concluded to embrace **both**, and I don't think he accepted any contradictions after his basic understanding of nature was established. Better that the life be short, while confidently embracing whatever pleasure is available, than long and ultimately miserable from embracing foolishness, which so rarely ends up being pleasant or happy.

Post by "Godfrey" of March 3, 2020 at 4:25 PM

This may be a bit of a detour, but the attached article on the invocation of Venus in Lucretius is a brief discussion of religion among the early Epicureans. This is the only thing that I've read on the subject other than what's in DeWitt; my main takeaway (as someone with minimal knowledge of early Greek and Roman religion) is the importance of understanding context in interpreting ancient doctrines. DeWitt's book is very good at addressing the philosophical context of Epicurus, but this points to a different subject of context.

It also touches on early practices and might have some relevance to other threads involving practice.

The article doesn't address blessedness or imperishability, but does perhaps offer some additional context to the discussion.

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2020 at 4:47 PM

Argh I hate of when people quote Latin or Greek and don't provide a translation 😊

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2020 at 4:55 PM

Godfrey I just read that article and as far as I am concerned it is OUTSTANDING and one of the best I have read. I could kick the writer, however, for saying on page 191 that there are "many contradictions" in Lucretius, but other than that comment my own views of the Epicureans' sincerity are very close to this. Thank you!

Also, that looks to be an "old" article, which probably helps explain why I like it. Do you have the source citation?

EDIT -- Well gee whiz I guess I had it already, cause I have the cite:

Significance of Worship and Prayer among the Epicureans

Author(s): George Depue Hadzsits

Source: *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 39 (1908), pp. 73-88

And yes it's over 100 years old -- which appears to suit the age when I was more in harmony with the commentators on Epicurus. 😊 It even significantly pre-dates DeWitt!

Post by "Elli" of March 3, 2020 at 6:13 PM

In this PD 1, Epicurus does not mention for gods any kind of characteristics with words such as imperishable or deathless or immortals. For Epicurus, Gods are such beings as "ἀφάρτα", and in english the right word is given with "**incorruptible**" which and in greek also means "**untouched**" or else "**without having any communication at all**" by us the humans. And that also means that gods are such beings that can't be touched by our corruptible "virtues" that are synonym with our hypocritical morality which indicates that from the morning till the late hours at night, the hypocritical moralists (usually the believers of Abrahamic religions) in their prayers are throwing curse to each other and to all the infidels of this world, being always ready to make wars in the name of their absolute true god.

So, the fact for Epicurus and epicureans is that humans can't overpass their chimpanzee and gorillas DNA. For **all humanity** living totally in bliss/makariori and pleasantly or else like gods among men, it is a mission impossible since from Epicurus era ==2400 years have passed == and our species still is doing wars without end. And for being a little pessimistic this will never happen forever and ever and till all the things on this planet will collapse and will be created again by **atoms/ particles and the void (quantum field)** and this is our **FIRST** and the most

important **PRINCIPLE**.

Post by "Elli" of March 3, 2020 at 6:30 PM

fg If god heeded the wishes/prayers of men, all men would quickly have died, because
388. they are always wishing evils upon each other. 😡

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2020 at 6:44 PM

OK Elli so does that mean that you agree with DeWitt's translation of the letter to Menoecus, also using the word INCORRUPTIBLE?

This below is the clip from DeWitt's personal translation of the Letter to Menoecus, in the appendix to his "St Paul and Epicurus. Same word as PD1, same "incorruptible"?

977-pasted-from-clipboard.png

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2020 at 6:48 PM

Here is Inwood & Gerson's "Epicurus Reader, who weigh in for "indestructible" which is actually pretty close to DeWitt:

I What is blessed and indestructible has no troubles itself, nor does it give trouble to anyone else, so that it is not affected by feelings of anger or gratitude. For all such things are a sign of weakness.¹⁹

123. Do and practise what I constantly told you to do, believing these to be the elements of living well. First, believe that god is an indestructible and blessed animal, in accordance with the general conception of god commonly held, and do not ascribe to god anything foreign to his indestructibility or repugnant to his blessedness. Believe of him everything which is able to preserve his blessedness and indestructibility. For gods

Post by “Elli” of March 3, 2020 at 6:50 PM


Yes, I agree totally with the word as used by DeWitt. The word in english and greek for "ἀφθαρτα" is "incorruptible" or "untouched" by the corruptible, and on the basis of Ethics I explained - as much as I could - the reasons why this word is the accurate one.

Post by “Cassius” of March 3, 2020 at 6:51 PM

So the Epicurus WIKI actually admits that the word is indestructible, but chooses to transmute it into imperishable!

Principal Doctrine 1

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Τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἀφθαρτον οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει οὔτε ἄλλω παρέχει, ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε
That which is blessed and indestructible neither → → has (any) [trouble itself] nor → does it cause (trouble) [for anyone else] so that [it has no part] either in anger or
χάρισι συνέχεται· ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον. 
in favors → → because all → such (things are only for) [the weak]

Translation

A blessed and imperishable being neither has trouble itself nor does it cause trouble for anyone else; therefore, it does not experience feelings of anger or indebtedness, for such feelings signify weakness.

Post by “Cassius” of March 3, 2020 at 6:53 PM

OMG - the Epicurus wiki does EXACTLY the same thing with the letter to Menoecus:



I suppose they get a "C" for "Consistency"! 😊

Post by “Don” of March 3, 2020 at 8:32 PM

[Quote from elli](#)

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I may be mistaken but I think what [Elli](#) is saying is that "ἀφθαρτα" means "incorruptible" or "un-corruptible" in the sense of "untouchable" by anything "corrupt". Which, to me, makes perfect sense when you look at the last half of KD 1. That says "affected by neither anger nor gratitude." So what is being described is not a being that is eternal or imperishable in the sense that it lasts forever, but rather a being that is "untouched", that "remains the same" whether battered by gratitude or anger. That is very intriguing to me (if I'm understanding her correctly).

We seem to be getting hung up on what English word is used in translation. That's secondary from my perspective. Epicurus didn't speak English. We need to understand the connotations of the ancient Greek text itself and then decide the best English paraphrase, whether that's a single word or a phrase that best encapsulates the meaning of the original.

Post by “Cassius” of March 3, 2020 at 8:39 PM

Eugenious I am not sure I understand your comment. As far as getting hung up, the original language was it not, was whether an Epicurean god is "immortal" or not by nature? And your

secondary point was that you were concerned that "immortal" might mean that this attribute was irrelevant to humans, since humans are not immortal? And perhaps an even more subtle point was whether DeWitt was correct in not using "immortal" in his translation?

I think ultimately Dewitt is indicating his value by pointing us in the direction that you are looking, which is not what "immortal" conveys. DeWitt's view is at least in part that like humans, gods too must act to sustain their lives and happiness; they are not mystically immortal.

[Quote from Eugenios](#)

We know we are mortal. Epicurus and Lucretius proclaim that. So interpreting how we mortals can be imperishable beings isn't readily apparent at first. But this doctrine - all the [Principal Doctrines](#) - have to be applicable to our lives, otherwise of what use are they to us? Epicurus was adamant that philosophy had to be practical and to improve one's life. Re-examining the connotations of ἀφθαρτος allows us to see that that idea doesn't have to be a mystical imperishability but one rooted in the here and now.

Post by "Don" of March 3, 2020 at 9:15 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Eugenios I am not sure I understand your comment. As far as getting hung up, the original point, was it not, was whether an Epicurean god is "immortal" or not by nature? And your secondary point was that you were concerned that "immortal" might mean that this attribute was irrelevant to humans, since humans are not immortal? And perhaps an even more subtle point was whether DeWitt was correct in not using "immortal" in his translation?

I think ultimately Dewitt is indicating his value by pointing us in the direction that you are looking, which is not what "immortal" conveys. DeWitt's view is at least in part that like humans, gods too must act to sustain their lives and happiness; they are not mystically immortal.

Sorry on two counts:

1) I haven't had a chance to read all the DeWitts you graciously posted. Mea culpa on that. That's next on my list.

2) My initial hang up was indeed not being able to get past the idea that the "gods" (blessed beings) were said to be ἄφθαρτον which I took to mean "immortal" as that was my initial understanding of the word. How could that work, I wanted to know.

BUT now, with [Elli](#)'s post I find myself very fascinated by the idea that ἄφθαρτον could mean "immortal" in the sense of "unchanging" when confronted by external circumstances. Blessed beings remain unchanged ("eternally" the same) whether they are confronted by anger or gratitude, making the second part of KD 1 directly enhancing the meaning of the first part. Neither anger nor gratitude matters to them. They are self-sufficient, they are not buffeted by the waves of Chance, they remain unperturbed and choose to not concern themselves with the worries of the world. THAT is an intriguing concept to me. It's not a PHYSICAL "imperishability" but a MENTAL one! And that would be of direct applicability to our own existence. One that could serve as an exemplar to us mortals.

Now, whether any of this is correct and/or orthodox and/or novel and/or academically accepted is another matter entirely. 🤔

Now, after all that, I'm off to read DeWitt's excerpts and your previous posts!!

Post by “Don” of March 3, 2020 at 9:46 PM

Okay, after reading DeWitt I remain intrigued by this possibility of the gods' mental "incorruptibility". It sounds like the gods' "imperishability" isn't a given according to DeWitt (if I'm reading him and his ancient sources correctly); the gods have to work at it. Physically, they are animals composed of atoms and void, just like us. But it could be that their disposition or mental faculties are "eternally" unchanged - if they maintain control.

And so we are urged to consider living a life worthy of the gods in Epicurean writings, something that would at least theoretically be achievable if we look at it in this sense.

Okay, I need to dig a little more in the sources. I fully realize I could be WAAAY off base here... But I am finding pleasure in doing the research and in entertaining the ideas!

Post by “Cassius” of March 4, 2020 at 6:29 AM

Eugenios I would "head off" a possible direction that some (not necessarily you) would take this:

[Quote from Eugenios](#)

They are self-sufficient, they are not buffeted by the waves of Chance, they remain unperturbed and choose to not concern themselves with the worries of the world.

A Stoic might of course say that this is pure stoicism - by force of mental willpower choose to detach oneself from "the worries of the world."

Of course I would say that is not the case whatsoever, any more than it is of essential importance to us as humans to , by force of mental willpower, choose to be concerned with the worries of ants.

As to Epicureans gods living in the intermundia, an environment suited to them, or by them, to allow them to maintain constant pleasure which is constantly renewable to them without facing the inevitability of death or pain, I would say the essential characteristics we would seek to emulate are not significantly related to our "choosing not to be concerned with the troubles that ants may be having" but would again be describable as the best existence possible in the words attributed to Torquatus:

"The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: **what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable?** One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement."

Post by "Elli" of March 4, 2020 at 12:18 PM

The main point for Epicureans is not if gods are mortal or immortal, or any word someone may find. Frankly, I do not give a dime about that. If there are some aliens in outer space that can live in total bliss and pleasure that it would be great for them. But my life is here on this planet, and I have one and unique life to live. So, the main point of Epicurean Philosophy is to liberate us from those fears that are produced with empty beliefs and the opinions by the many which say that there is god's providence that a god created the Universe, so here comes and the lust of immortality and the worse here comes the necessity.

The almighty God provides, the multitude says, and that's how someone becomes a good andrapodo (slave) to his leaders, his god's representatives that all for me are mystic gurus and charlatans, that want all the pleasures for themselves, for making man going to his death empty-handed without living his life pleasantly. For this the first thing that they fought in Epicurus and his philosophy is the goal of pleasure and then all the others as senses, feelings, researches on sciences and all these that still keep to our days !

Post by “Don” of March 4, 2020 at 1:59 PM

[Quote from elli](#)

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Well said, [Elli](#) !

This has been a pleasurable intellectual exercise (and one I'll plan on exploring on my own for awhile) but, for the time being, I can't think of a better way to tie up this particular thread. 😊
Thanks!

Post by “Godfrey” of November 16, 2020 at 6:46 PM

As an addendum, I was about to start a thread on PD1 and gratitude. In researching, I found this thread and it seems that not only is my question answered here but that it also ties up a loose end in the thread.

From Don in the initial post:

Quote

Being affected by anger as a sickness or weakness makes sense, but why would being affected by gratitude be a sign of weakness? One conjecture would be that it would show a lack of self-reliance / αυτάρκεια.

The word "gratitude" seems problematic as, to me, one who is blessed would experience a general sense of gratitude. Denying gratitude seems quite un-Epicurean! The wiki translation in post #15 gets to a more accurate sense of the doctrine in my opinion: "indebtedness," or "favors" as they translate it in their first pass.