

# The Letter to Menoecus - Translation By Cyril Bailey

Post by "Cassius" of April 30, 2015 at 9:20 AM

The Letter to Menoecus - Translation By Cyril Bailey

LET no one when young delay to study philosophy, nor when he is old grow weary of his study. For no one can come too early or too late to secure the health of his soul. And the man who says that the age for philosophy has either not yet come or has gone by is like the man who says that the age for happiness is not yet come to him, or has passed away. Wherefore both when young and old a man must study philosophy, that as he grows old he may be young in blessings through the grateful recollection of what has been, and that in youth he may be old as well, since he will know no fear of what is to come. We must then meditate on the things that make our happiness, seeing that when that is with us we have all, but when it is absent we do all to win it.

The things which I used unceasingly to commend to you, these do and practice, considering them to be the first principles of the good life. First of all believe that god is a being immortal and blessed, even as the common idea of a god is engraved on men's minds, and do not assign to him anything alien to his immortality or ill-suited to his blessedness: but believe about him everything that can uphold his blessedness and immortality. For gods there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision. But they are not such as the many believe them to be: for indeed they do not consistently represent them as they believe them to be. And the impious man is not he who popularly denies the gods of the many, but he who attaches to the gods the beliefs of the many. For the statements of the many about the gods are not conceptions derived from sensation, but false suppositions, according to which the greatest misfortunes befall the wicked and the greatest blessings (the good) by the gift of the gods. For men being accustomed always to their own virtues welcome those like themselves, but regard all that is not of their nature as alien.

Become accustomed to the belief that [death is nothing to us](#). For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation. And therefore a right understanding that [death is nothing to us](#) makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality. For there is nothing terrible in life for the man who has truly comprehended that there is nothing terrible in not living. So that the man speaks but idly who says that he fears death not because it will be painful when it comes, but because it is painful in anticipation. For that which gives no trouble when it comes is but an empty pain in anticipation. So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not then concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no

more.

But the many at one moment shun death as the greatest of evils, at another (yearn for it) as a respite from the (evils) in life. (But the wise man neither seeks to escape life) nor fears the cessation of life, for neither does life offend him nor does the absence of life seem to be any evil. And just as with food he does not seek simply the larger share and nothing else, but rather the most pleasant, so he seeks to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant.

And he who counsels the young man to live well, but the old man to make a good end, is foolish, not merely because of the desirability of life, but also because it is the same training which teaches to live well and to die well. Yet much worse still is the man who says it is good not to be born but 'once born make haste to pass the gates of Death'.

For if he says this from conviction why does he not pass away out of life? For it is open to him to do so, if he had firmly made up his mind to this. But if he speaks in jest, his words are idle among men who cannot receive them.

We must then bear in mind that the future is neither ours, nor yet wholly not ours, so that we may not altogether expect it as sure to come, nor abandon hope of it, as if it will certainly not come.

We must consider that of desires some are natural, others vain, and of the natural some are necessary and others merely natural; and of the necessary some are necessary for happiness, others for the repose of the body, and others for very life. The right understanding of these facts enables us to refer all choice and avoidance to the health of the body and (the soul's) freedom from disturbance, since this is the aim of the life of blessedness. For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear. And when this is once secured for us, all the tempest of the soul is dispersed, since the living creature has not to wander as though in search of something that is missing, and to look for some other thing by which he can fulfil the good of the soul and the good of the body. For it is then that we have need of pleasure, when we feel pain owing to the absence of pleasure; (but when we do not feel pain), we no longer need pleasure. And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good.

And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided. Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgment on all these matters. For the good on certain occasions we treat as bad, and

conversely the bad as good.

And again independence of desire we think a great good — not that we may at all times enjoy but a few things, but that, if we do not possess many, we may enjoy the few in the genuine persuasion that those have the sweetest enjoy luxury pleasure in luxury who least need it, and that all that is natural is easy to be obtained, but that which is superfluous is hard. And so plain savours bring us a pleasure equal to a luxurious diet, when all the pain due to want is removed; and bread and water produce the highest pleasure, when one who needs them puts them to his lips. To grow accustomed therefore to simple and not luxurious diet gives us health to the full, and makes a man alert for the needful employments of life, and when after long intervals we approach luxuries disposes us better towards them, and fits us to be fearless of fortune.

When, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality, as is supposed by some who are either ignorant or disagree with us or do not understand, but freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind. For it is not continuous drinkings and revelings, nor the satisfaction of lusts, nor the enjoyment of fish and other luxuries of the wealthy table, which produce a pleasant life, but sober reasoning, searching out the motives for all choice and avoidance, and banishing mere opinions, to which are due the greatest disturbance of the spirit.

Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is prudence. Wherefore prudence is a more precious thing even than philosophy: for from prudence are sprung all the other virtues, and it teaches us that it is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently and honourably and justly, (nor, again, to live a life of prudence, honour, and justice) without living pleasantly. For the virtues are by nature bound up with the pleasant life, and the pleasant life is inseparable from them. For indeed who, think you, is a better man than he who holds reverent opinions concerning the gods, and is at all times free from fear of death, and has reasoned out the end ordained by nature? He understands that the limit of good things is easy to fulfil and easy to attain, whereas the course of ills is either short in time or slight in pain; he laughs at (destiny), whom some have introduced as the mistress of all things. (He thinks that with us lies the chief power in determining events, some of which happen by necessity) and some by chance, and some are within our control; for while necessity cannot be called to account, he sees that chance is inconstant, but that which is in our control is subject to no master, and to it are naturally attached praise and blame. For, indeed, it were better to follow the myths about the gods than to become a slave to the destiny of the natural philosophers: for the former suggests a hope of placating the gods by worship, whereas the latter involves a necessity which knows no placation. As to chance, he does not regard it as a god as most men do (for in a god's acts there is no disorder), nor as an uncertain cause (of all things) for he does not believe that good and evil are given by chance to man for the framing of a blessed life, but that opportunities for great good and great evil are afforded by it. He therefore thinks it better to be unfortunate in reasonable action than to prosper in unreason. For it is better in a man's actions that what is well chosen (should fail, rather than that what is ill chosen) should be successful owing to chance.

Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men. For a man who lives among immortal blessings is not like unto a mortal being.

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 18, 2021 at 3:54 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

For gods there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision.

In the Epicurus Reader, it is translated as:

#### Quote

For gods do exist, since we have clear knowledge of them.

Does someone care to elaborate on what Epicurus could've meant here?

How do we have "clear knowledge of them"?

How is this knowledge "clear by vision"?

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### **Post by “Don” of December 18, 2021 at 4:11 PM**

The word Epicurus uses is *εναργής*.

It has two primary definitions:

1. visible, palpable, in bodily shape, properly of gods appearing in their own forms (in Homer); so of a dream or vision; ex., *εναργής ταῦρος* "in visible form a bull, a very bull"
2. manifest to the mind's eye, distinct

He can't mean the first since he's fairly adamant that the gods don't interact with humans. But the second definition coincides with his contention (and the idea of the *prolepseis*) that the gods are apprehended by the mind only. That also sets up a nice contrast with the first definition's use by Homer in describing the Olympian gods appearing "in visible form." Homer's

gods were εναργής in one sense of the word; Epicurus's in the other sense.

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### Post by “Cassius” of December 18, 2021 at 4:58 PM

Yes I agree with Don. I think that Epicurus considered conclusions that derive from firmly supported principles (such that there is no life after death, or nothing exists except matter and void) to be reliable building blocks for a some basic conclusions about the gods. He didn't say that we can make out everything we would like to know based on this source of data, but I think it's fair and reasonable to conclude that certwin aspects of the gods (that they are not supernatural, that they didn't create the universe, that they would have no concern about humans) would be something that can be confidently determined through this clear data. We aren't just guessing, we have firm reason for our confidence about these important aspects of godhood.

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### Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 18, 2021 at 8:12 PM

#### [Quote from Don](#)

that the gods are apprehended by the mind only.

This, coupled with this:

Quote

#### **Etymology** [Processing](#)

**inactive** < [ancient greek](#) [εναργής](#) < *έν-* + *-αργής* (< [ἀργός](#) = sparkling / white)

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**Pronunciation**

#### [Processing](#)

[DFA](#) : / [e.nar'jis](#) / *male or female*

Processing

**active, -is, -es**

- 1. which is seen with [clarity](#) and [clarity](#)Αυτά *All of this came to my mind alive, **active** , as if it were just yesterday.* ( [M. Karagatsis](#) , *The yellow file* )≈ [Synonyms](#) : [clear](#) , [distinct](#)≠ [antonyms](#) : [indistinguishable](#)
- 2. ( [metaphorically](#) ) that can be easily understood≈ [Synonyms](#) : [understandable](#) , [clear](#)≠ [antonyms](#) : [vague](#) , [difficult to understand](#)

Makes a lot of sense.

But this, from the Epicurus Reader, becomes confusing then:

Quote

First, believe that god is an indestructible and blessed animal.

As it seems quite a material thing. Perhaps a wrong translation? What word did he use in greek [Don](#) ? Since it's different from Bailey's:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

First of all believe that god is a being immortal and blessed

Which I guess is more aligned with god being and idea/concept (/prolepsis?).

**Post by “Don” of December 18, 2021 at 8:33 PM**

I'm getting these excerpts from my 80-page exploration of the letter to Menoikeus. It's almost ready to release as a \*first draft\* but I'll respond to the questions here since they're being asked:

123b begins the review of those elements of living nobly, beautifully, and virtuously.

**123b. πρῶτον μὲν τὸν θεὸν ζῶον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον νομίζων, ὡς ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις ὑπεγράφη,**

- μὲν can stand on its own, as here, in which case it can mean "so, whereas, and so" but it can also be left untranslated.
- The passage begins, appropriately enough, with πρῶτον (prōton) which literally means "first" but can also carry the idea of "primarily, foremost, most prominently, etc." So, Epicurus isn't just saying, "Okay, number one..." numerically but rather "This is important so I'm telling you this \*first\*!"
- The verb, νομίζων, comes last and means "believe, hold, consider." What are we to believe? We are to hold that: τὸν θεὸν ζῶον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον. So, what does that mean? Let's break it down.
- θεὸν is transliterated theon and is where English gets theology and atheist. τὸν θεὸν is singular, but, singular or plural, this can refer to a god, the gods, or the divine in general. However, David Sedley in his paper "Epicurus' Theological Innatism" <https://www.academia.edu/resource/work/11365772> places significance on the singular construction. Sedley proposed each person creates their own "god" which is why he stressed the importance of the singular form. Sedley's paper is [recommended reading](#). So, where the word is singular, I will try to translate it as such as to not obscure the semantics.

τὸν θεὸν ζῶον "a god (is a) ζῶον. But what is a ζῶον?

ζῶον (zōon) is where English zoology comes from.

LSJ gives two primary definitions:

- living being, animal
- in art, figure, image, not necessarily of animals (or a sign of the Zodiac)

So, unfortunately, at this point in the Letter we can't necessarily resolve the question of what the nature of the gods (or of a god) is according to Epicurus. Some scholars think Epicurus believed the gods were material beings ("living being, animal") somehow living between the various world-systems (cosmos) in the universe. Some think Epicurus believed the gods were mental representations or personifications of the concepts of blessedness ("figure, image, sign").

The Letter goes on to describe what kind of ζῶον a god is: ἄφθαρτον and μακάριον

## Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 18, 2021 at 8:39 PM

Quote from @cassius

that they are not supernatural, that they didn't create the universe, that they would have no concern about humans

because they are:

- ideas? \*\*
- aliens somewhere else in the universe?
- animals evolved to that level? (But just not yet seen by us)

\*\* I guess here that concept of isonomia (as in "same arrangement") becomes relevant again... as it would explain why we all create a concept/idea of god, derived from what we would think it would be, basing this from what we know, which is unmistakably biased towards the way we see the universe is organized and works (evolution, material beings...).

This wouldn't be at odds with the aspects you described [Cassius](#)

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## **Post by "Cassius" of December 18, 2021 at 8:52 PM**

Camotero I think I need clarification on what you are asking.

My view is that Epicurus was very clear about at the very least a couple of things in this area:

(1) Epicurus was very clear that gods are physical beings and that the type of beings he is discussing really exist;

(2) The gods are so far away from us, and beyond our ability to perceive them through the five senses, and our only information about them comes from (1) mental processing of data about the nature of the universe and what we would expect it to contain, which involves anticipations. That's what I was referring to above. In addition as a source of knowledge is (2) the receipt of "images" directly by the mind, which are not registered through the five senses. There are lots of uncertainties about what (2) means, but it's very clearly in the texts, so if we are asking what Epicurus taught, information through "images" has to be part of the mix. I personally do not believe that the mind's direct receipt of images constitutes (is the same as) anticipations, but there's a lot of uncertainty about the nature of anticipations.

I realize that there are a lot of people, including some here, who think that [Epicurean gods](#) are simply mental constructs and that they don't really exist. That is not my position, because I think Epicurus was serious about what he wrote. I also think Epicurus thought that physical concepts

such as isonomia and "nature never makes only one thing of a kind" plus and "eternal universe" and "infinite universe" all compel the conclusion that deathless beings exist somewhere in the universe, so I think he was very comfortable with this conclusion and did not consider it to be a stretch or lacking in reason to be firm about it.

I am not sure if what I have written addresses your comment but I would be glad to expand further if there's part you would like to clarify.

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 18, 2021 at 9:34 PM**

As always, I like to clarify that my comments come from a place of wanting to learn, and always respectfully of you (the most experienced guys around here) and your knowledge.

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus was very clear that gods are physical beings and that the type of beings he is discussing really exist;

From what [Don](#) said lines above this could very well not be the case. Particularly after learning about the other possible meanings the words "enargis" and "zoon" could represent. Are there sources that could back the argument that the right interpretation is that they are physical beings existing now? Because, Epicurus could've been talking about physical beings that don't exist now but are likely to exist as a product of evolution, from the way we see the universe is organized (Again, and I can't exactly say how or why, but this is helping me understand better the concept of isonomia). Which would make them only mental constructs at the time. Which would be a valid inference. And also would make much more sense as we now have pretty much mapped every type of element and their interactions and there's no evidence of any being that would resemble these gods. And if we can't see them because they are electromagnetic fields or some sort of other physical phenomenon we know exists but can't see, they would be resembling more "things" rather than "beings".

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### **Post by “Don” of December 18, 2021 at 9:35 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

(1) Epicurus was very clear that gods are physical beings and that the type of beings he is discussing really exist;

Well, Sedley would disagree with you there as I understand his position.

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I realize that there are a lot of people, including some here, who think that [Epicurean gods](#) are simply mental constructs and that they don't really exist. That is not my position, because I think Epicurus was serious about what he wrote.

That would be me for one 😊 and I also think Epicurus was serious about what he wrote.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 18, 2021 at 10:11 PM**

Right there is never going to be consensus on this point so it makes little sense to worry about differences in position so long as the core implications are protected. I personally look to what I see as the total thrust of all the texts, including not just Epicurus but many others, and from that point of view I find it inconceivable that he did not believe that they existed physically. But as I said everyone has to reach his or her own conclusion about that. The implications of the different positions are not nearly as significant as would be divergences on more core issues, because none of us think that these gods are supernatural or intervene in human affairs or reward or punish either during life or thereafter, and those are the "big" issues.

Camotero if you see a practical implication that you think would be affected by the choice, be sure to mention that and we can address it.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 18, 2021 at 10:17 PM**

#### [Quote from camotero](#)

? Because, Epicurus could've been talking about physical beings that don't exist now but are likely to exist as a product of evolution, from the way we see the universe is

I should address that point: given the infinite amount of time that has already passed, I do not think Epicurus would believe this to be a future hypothetical. While I don't think he would have said that everything that could happen has already happened at least once, I don't think he would expect that there is any reason to suspect that deathlessness has not already developed somewhere in the universe. And since he held the universe as a whole to be infinitely old, I don't think he would have held that there was a place and time when a "first" God (or first life) arose.

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### **Post by “Don” of December 19, 2021 at 5:08 AM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

The implications of the different positions are not nearly as significant as would be divergences on more core issues, because none of us think that these gods are supernatural or intervene in human affairs or reward or punish either during life or thereafter, and those are the "big" issues.



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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 19, 2021 at 8:55 AM**

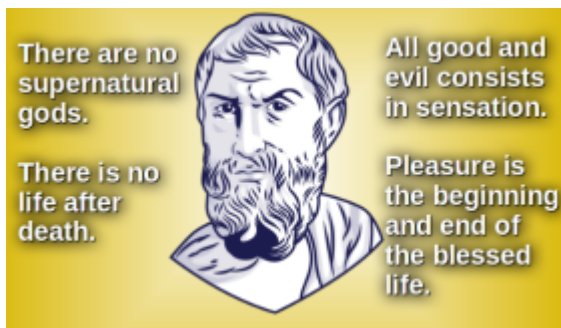
#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Right there is never going to be consensus on this point so it makes little sense to worry about differences in position so long as the core implications are protected. I personally look to what I see as the total thrust of all the texts, including not just Epicurus but many others, and from that point of view I find it inconceivable that he did not believe that they existed physically. But as I said everyone has to reach his or her own conclusion about that. The implications of the different positions are not nearly as significant as would be divergences on more core issues, because none of us think that these gods are supernatural or intervene in human affairs or reward or punish either during life or thereafter, and those are the "big" issues.

Camotero if you see a practical implication that you think would be affected by the choice, be sure to mention that and we can address it.

I woke up this morning thinking that I better clarify my statement about the "practical implication" of the issue. I often make general comments like that on this subject and I better clarify the context in which I am saying that.

Here are what I consider to be the big core issues that the EpicureanFriends forum needs to always focus on keeping very clear as a matter of community standards:



Any argument that carries on for very long too far afield from those key positions needs to be reined in and pursued elsewhere so as to avoid confusion to those who are less familiar with the issues.

The issue of the actual physical existence of the Epicurean gods does not seem to me to be essential to any of those positions. Someone might at some point convince me otherwise, but I am pretty sure that our core people here are unlikely to diverge, and most all would hold that the position someone takes on physical existence of the gods won't play a major role in their confidence on these core points.

But if someone wanted to take a much more rigorous definition of what the term "practical implication" means, I am sure that everyone on all sides of the issue sees down-the-line ramifications of the position someone takes on that issue. In my case, I think that a full treatment of the problem would require an exhaustive review of the Philodemus "On Piety" material, and especially of the "On Methods of Inference / On Signs" material. We haven't done that here on the forum, and most of us have done only a limited review of that material individually. I know myself that I would like to spend a lot more time with both.

If we were to do so, we'd have a lot more data that we would need to incorporate on the issue of the actual physical existence of the gods, so my preference for myself and for discussions here at the forum is that people (everyone on all sides) keep something of an open mind and a generous tone toward all sides of the issue.

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**Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 19, 2021 at 9:07 AM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

you see a practical implication

In reality just to assess whether or not the Epicurus Reader translation is a good one (in case I find something else later on the doesn't seem right).

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**Post by “Pacatus” of December 21, 2021 at 4:50 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The issue of the actual physical existence of the [Epicurean gods](#) does not seem to me to be essential to any of those positions.

In my humble view, that seems exactly right. And that in itself removes fear of the gods (or personified Fate, or hellfire, etc.). My understanding is that Epicurus was not interested in either physics or metaphysics *per se* --- but only in understandings that led to a pleasurable/ pleasant life of happy well-being.

And although it perhaps should not be taken too dogmatically, the old maxim about absence of evidence not being evidence of absence would also seem relevant here. Especially given the apparent difficulty in defining the exact lineaments of such putative gods.

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**Post by “Matt” of December 21, 2021 at 6:36 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Right there is never going to be consensus on this point so it makes little sense to worry about differences in position so long as the core implications are protected.

I feel this is true...there's a special kind of worry or concern that simply emanates from debates about this subject and frankly whatever "Epicurean" conclusions a person has should suffice without causing themselves mental anguish. It dovetails off the "do not fear god" principle in that worrying excessively about what Epicurus meant can also get quickly out of hand. Like all things, prudent thought is important in how deep we dive.

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## Post by "Eikadistes" of December 22, 2021 at 12:07 PM

### [Quote from camotero](#)

Does someone care to elaborate on what Epicurus could've meant here?

Totally! (*Sorry I'm late to the conversation*).

The English translations of the second paragraph of the *Epistle to Menoikeus* disappoint me, and I came up with a paraphrasing (*not a translation, but a re-wording*) that I think better contextualizes his nuances:

".... What I have to share with you should be seriously considered if you want to live well. First, having acknowledged that '**a god**' is properly defined as '**a ceaselessly satisfied being**', do not contradict this acknowledgment by proposing that something *other* than only '**a ceaselessly satisfied being**' could qualify as '**a god**', for the natural anticipation of '**a perfect existence**' is relatable and therefore implicitly accessible to all living beings; But herein, note that this acknowledgment is seen as being controversial to the masses who employ myth to obscure the contradiction: that a being worthy of reverence could become *embarrassingly impassioned* by the activities of one specific species of primate on Earth. These are true *perverters* of our *natural* religious sympathies—despite their popular appeal to the general public—for their propositions are ultimately at odds with the reality of their own lived experiences as animals; So, as far as this material theology goes, *tragedy* strikes those *beholden to superstition*, and *fortune* favors the *students of nature*, because '**a being who lives a perfectly pleasant life**' knows that '**a perfect existence**' means studying nature to develop ways to preserve their pleasure, such as cultivating friendships with other '**ceaselessly satisfied beings**' who *also* guard against the misery that results from any disruptions to the continuation of their '**divine existences**' ...."

"God" (or "the gods", "deity", "divinity") is a pre-conceptual category, like "Justice". Whether or not we have any individual examples of "gods" is irrelevant: we know "the Perfect Existence" when we see it. We know Justice when we see it, even though "Justice", itself, refers to a condition or state, rather than an object or item. A *mutual agreement* is an example of the

concept of Justice, though, it will end, and newer circumstances may no longer be evident of Justice. However, for that time, the mutual agreement had all of the marks of a "just" agreement.

Likewise, Epicurus posits that we implicitly recognize "the Perfect Existence" because, *like Justice*, the expectation of *Living Your Best Life* comes from Nature, and that's what "God" is: *Nature giving you direct knowledge through pleasure and pain as to what Living Your Best Life looks like.*

Many beings in an infinite universe fit that definition. If we were to gain knowledge of an extraterrestrial entity who enjoys a life of ceaseless satisfaction, and therein neither causes drama nor suffers anyone else's drama, we'll all recognize that as "God". Furthermore, this pre-conceptual impression also informs us as to what is not "God", for example: a being that adopts homo sapiens as surrogates and declares our primate species to be "its children".

Epicurus was **neither** saying (so to speak), "Displace reasonable judgment and practice blind faith in the Divine Entity That Guides You (because its Favor is real)", **nor** was he saying "We all dream about Space Zeus (et. al.), and having raw unconditional belief in the physical existence of those Space Olympians is a reliable way to live."

He was saying "If you think 'god' is anything **but** 'an animal living a perfectly-pleasurable life', then you're going to get confused and easily manipulated by supernatural religion, and you'll suffer."

Stevie Wonder really said it better than I just did:

*"When you believe in things that you don't understand, then you suffer. Superstition ain't the way."*

So this is sort of Epicurus' way of naturalizing the phenomena of *human belief in the supernatural.*

It's the natural impulse to know and pursue *living your best life* ("the perfect existence", "the gods", "God"). When we look to the perfect existence as something **other** than (1) really [physically] existing [being a real goal you can actually achieve in your natural lifespan], and (2) constantly being "perfect" [in other words, "full of uninterrupted pleasure"], then we are turning away from the reliable preconception of the perfect existence, and, instead, adopting some mythic narrative that was invented in accordance to the misunderstandings of the authors who peddled it.

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**Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 24, 2021 at 10:17 AM**

[Quote from Nate](#)

we'll all recognize that as "God"

As **a** god, right?

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### **Post by “Eikadistes” of December 24, 2021 at 11:59 AM**

[Quote from camotero](#)

As **a** god, right?

Definitely! 👍

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 24, 2021 at 1:53 PM**

[Quote from Nate](#)

ceaselessly satisfied being

This makes much more sense than *inmortal* being. Could this be a mis interpretation of the greek word too? What was it?

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 24, 2021 at 1:54 PM**

[Quote from Don](#)

my 80-page exploration of the letter to Menoikeus

is this available somewhere?

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## Post by “Don” of December 24, 2021 at 2:07 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

my 80-page exploration of the letter to Menoikeus

is this available somewhere?

In the final editing... Stay tuned

PS I should say "final" editing... I'll remain a work in progress.

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## Post by “Don” of December 24, 2021 at 2:17 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

[Quote from Nate](#)

ceaselessly satisfied being

This makes much more sense than *immortal* being. Could this be a mis interpretation of the greek word too? What was it?

Epicurus: **τὸν θεὸν ζῶον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον**

A god is a **ἄφθαρτον and μακάριον being (or image depending how you interpret ζῶον)**

ἄφθαρτον = incorruptible, undying, eternal, uncorrupted

μακάριον = blessed, completely happy, etc

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## Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 24, 2021 at 3:23 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Epicurus: τὸν θεὸν ζῶον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον

A god is a ἄφθαρτον and μακάριον being (or image depending how you interpret ζῶον)

Does "kai" only translate to "and"?

How do you get from that to "ceaselessly satisfied " @Nate ?

It would be awesome to know there's a meaning of kai that allows for "incorruptible blessedness" ☐☐

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**Post by “Don” of December 24, 2021 at 3:27 PM**

Honestly, I'm still in the Sedley idealist camp since, to my mind, the only way something could be ἄφθαρτον is if it is a mental construction, something in our imagination to who we stream images of a being who is experiencing an eternally pleasurable state of being. I admit I need to read more and meditate on these things, because Epicurus placed a great deal of importance on this.

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**Post by “Don” of December 24, 2021 at 3:28 PM**

[Quote from camotero](#)

Does "kai" only translate to "and"?

καὶ is just the conjunction "and"

Sorry 😊

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**Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of December 25, 2021 at 12:04 PM**

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

For it is better in a man's actions that what is well chosen (should fail, rather than that what is ill chosen) should be successful owing to chance.

### Quote from Epicurus Reader

For it is better for a good decision not to turn out right in action than for a bad decision to turn out right because of chance.

It seems clear that a right (successful) or bad (failing) result of our decisions would be related to whether or not it resulted in pleasure/pain... right?

But... What is a *good (well)* or *bad (ill)* choice/decision in the first place? One made using our senses and feelings?

Anyone thinks of a didactic example?

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## Post by "Cassius" of December 25, 2021 at 1:41 PM

Camotero I think what you are questioning is the issue of the canon -- what it is, how to use it, etc. So simply saying "using our senses and feelings" is a start, but not the whole. You would need to incorporate all three of the legs of the canon, and then consider the rules of comparison and analogy (rather than abstract logical reasoning) of which we only have fragments of the full description.

If you decide to read further into that, I recommend the long appendix, and then the text, of the DeLacy translation of Philodemus' "On Signs" or "On Methods of Inference" (same work; different title).

I think what Epicurus is saying is that for the most success in life we need to tune our functioning to understanding Epicurean philosophy and how to apply it. No doubt we can feel relieved if something turns out pleasurable as a result of a decision made in an improper way, but I think he is saying that if we indulge that method consciously and regularly we are bound to suffer for it not because there is fate, but because we succeed best when we work "with" the nature of things and not "against" it or in ignorance of it.