

Sorry, but I have an objection. This phrase "to the mind's eye" as it is said, it leads to that famous NOΥΣ/NOUS/MIND by Plato, and in extension it leads to the stoicism, as this was their opinion about gods.

No, the greek gods were not be manifest with any mind's eye, BUT they were be manifest WITH **SENSES** and **FEELINGS**, as they were totally materialistic! And this is the clear big picture that Epicurus means with his phrase in the letter to Meneceus.

Beauty and virtue and such are worthy of honor, if they bring pleasure; but if not then bid them farewell!

These were the gods as mentioned by Epicurus in his letter to Meneceus, and in our days, as excellent are described, by Dimitris Liantinis!

What defines the difference between Greeks and Christians? A difference that from a certain point and beyond is being opposed, opposition, rift, a fight fire with water.

This which is defines the difference is something else and clear, as the olive leaf. But for this reason, exactly is ultimate and extreme.

The difference between the two is that the Greeks built a world based on observation and understanding, while the Christians built a world based on the assumption and imagination.

The observation of the Greeks is of such of a quality that always is to be ensure in practice of what is happening in Nature, and always demonstrated in tangible from the experiment in the laboratory.

BECAUSE...

The Religion of the Greeks

If we count the strong position that the gods and the religions gave birth in primarily level from the fear of human towards life, and in advanced and to a second level of this matter from the fear of human towards death, then we will find that the religion of the Greeks is an exception as occurred that differently constitutes a unique mission.

The religion of the Greeks, i.e did not come from their fear, but it came from their sorrow to overcome the pain caused by their rational view for Nature and life.

In other words, the religion of the Greeks created by their honest and brave attitude to overcome their pessimism and melancholy.

But between the fear of life and death, and the need of the Greeks to capitulate with their pain from what gave birth to their knowledge that the world is heavy, there is a little difference

which gives the maximum effect.

The religion of the Greeks, i.e. is not the case and offspring of the imagination, like all other religions, but it is the aesthetic representation of the phenomena of Nature.

Thus, the gods of the Greeks are not neither secret and invisible presences. They are not ghosts of the mind, and wind's constructions, hypothetical words and inventions of the mind, and beings of a waking sleep.

Instead, the gods of the Greeks are the images made up from the natural phenomena with slender intelligence and dexterity. They made by fluttering of a rational imagination, the whole, the simple, the non trembling, and the prosperous.

And above all this: the gods of Greeks they were attested by sensory, touching them with the hands, facing them with the eyes, there are factual and materialistic.

Apollo suddenly, is the sun and the music regularity of the Nature.

Artemis is the Moon. Both of those two sisters symbolize the light of the day and night and were born on the island of Delos, word which means the clarity and the light.

Neptune is the sea.

Hephaestus is the fire and the metals.

Athena is the intelligence of the human, for this she is the protector of the ingenious Odysseus.

Aeolus is the sixteen airs to the seas.

Demeter is the joy of the fruits, the wheat, the rhubarb, the apple trees and vines, as the verse of Artsivald Maklis says.

And Jupiter is the thunder and the rain, which is falling like sperm to fertilize bravely the thirsty land. That's why the Greeks near other things, they create him as the lover of the more magnificent mortal women. Leda, Europe, Ious, Leto, Alcmene, Semele, Olympiad of Philip.

Thus, the story goes and with the thirty thousand gods of the Greeks. Everyone is also a real, functional, indestructible, the beneficial and harmful true and a beautiful natural phenomenon.

In other words, the religion of the Greeks is an aesthetic status of Nature's elements, and in this way it is a variant of the Greek's art.

The Geometric evidence of this proposal is given by the fact that the religion of the Greeks is all in their art.

Beauty and virtue and such are worthy of honor, if they bring pleasure; but if not then bid them farewell!

Post by “Don” of December 12, 2022 at 4:36 PM

For now, I'll just post a quick copy from my translation:

123f. ἐναργῆς γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ γνῶσις.

- Here's our δέ "on the other hand."
- ἐναργῆς [δέ] ἐστὶν αὐτῶν ἡ γνῶσις

"And the knowledge (ἡ γνῶσις (gnōsis)) of them (θεοί "gods", note the plural here) is ἐναργῆς." But what does ἐναργῆς mean?

It has two primary definitions:

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

Epicurus can't mean the first meaning since he's adamant that the gods don't interact with humans. But the second definition coincides with his contention (and the idea of the prolepsis of the gods) 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 ἐναργῆς in one sense of the word; Epicurus's in the other sense.

Post by “Cassius” of December 12, 2022 at 4:56 PM

Don you have probably answered this elsewhere but what is the source of this?

[Quote from Don](#)

It has two primary definitions:

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

I was recalling that Bailey simply said "manifest" (I need to check) so that by including the longer phrase you essentially take sides as translator with one side of the argument as to how

the gods are perceived. Likewise if you used only the word "distinct" there would be similar ambiguities.

No doubt this kind of "taking sides" happens all the time. I need to read back at your text - are you footnoting to highlight this ambiguity.

This is such a recurring issue - how to thread the needle between taking sides , footnotes, etc. That in itself needs to be a regular topic of conversation.

No doubt many of the finer points that we regularly debate are colored by these issues. One of many questions is how to keep in our minds which things are clear and which are not.

Post by “Don” of December 12, 2022 at 4:59 PM

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἐναργής](#)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, ἐναργής](#)

I literally used the dictionary definition.

Post by “Joshua” of December 12, 2022 at 5:05 PM

What Elli is saying here is very much in line with Lucretius' allowance for what we might call metaphorical gods--the grain as Ceres and the wine as Bacchus and so on. But there is a separate question as to whether there are *personal* gods with limited *physical* bodies and no involvement in human affairs--and it's clear to me at least that Epicurus accepted those as well. So the question is this--do those gods present themselves to our five senses, or do they not? The answer to that as I see it is no.

If they do exist, and yet do not present to our five senses, how do we know of them? If not sensation, and if not feeling, then the answer must be anticipation. To quote Lucretius;

And, Memmius, unless

From out thy mind thou spewest all of this

And casteth far from thee all thoughts which be

*Unworthy gods and alien to their peace,
Then often will the holy majesties
Of the high gods be harmful unto thee,
As by thy thought degraded,- not, indeed,
That essence supreme of gods could be by this
So outraged as in wrath to thirst to seek
Revenues keen; but even because thyself
Thou plaguest with the notion that the gods,
Even they, the Calm Ones in serene repose,
Do roll the mighty waves of wrath on wrath;
Nor wilt thou enter with a serene breast
Shrines of the gods; nor wilt thou able be
In tranquil peace of mind to take and know
Those images which from their holy bodies
Are carried into intellects of men,
As the announcers of their form divine.*

-Book VI, Leonard Translation

So it is the images or simulacra of the bodies of these gods that inform our knowledge of them, interfacing directly with our "intellects" and forming our preconceptions.

But soft! Did Lucretius in Book V not just make the point that our preconceptions that interpret and integrate these images can be very, very flawed? He says that a Centaur is what happens in our minds when the image of a horse and the image of a man get jumbled together. But we only think we *know* that Centaurs aren't real because we actually can use our senses to evaluate the horse, and the man, and because our reason can act on our sensory knowledge of them.

So under those constraints, how do we evaluate our preconceptions of the gods? We have no sensory information, and no means of getting any. We have nothing for reason to act on in assessing the images themselves.

I suspect that [Don](#) has translated it correctly, but it is certainly worth reminding ourselves that Epicurus' theology is possibly the most elusive and sinuous part of his philosophy--the preconceptions, the most difficult of his Canon of epistemology.

Post by “Cassius” of December 12, 2022 at 5:07 PM

Ok I see. Bailey says "clear vision" rather than just manifest.

You have done tremendous work on this so I am the furthest away from wanting to be critical. And I don't like things that are so footnoted that the text is hard to read.

I tend to think that the best way to keep these controversies in mind is with a "list of controversies" that applies everywhere and spells out the text issues so that we don't have to rely on every edition to make the same caveats.

I dunno. Any ideas on generally keeping these issues front and center? I am glad Elli made the comment - that's the power of teamwork as I probably never would have raised this

Post by “Don” of December 12, 2022 at 9:40 PM

It's also instructive to remember the scholia to PD1:

[Elsewhere (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.]

[ἐν ἄλλοις δέ φησι τοὺς θεοὺς λόγῳ θεωρητούς, οὓς μὲν κατ' ἀριθμὸν ὑφ' ἑστώτας, οὓς δὲ καθ' ὁμοείδειαν ἐκ τῆς συνεχοῦς ἐπιρρύσεως τῶν ὁμοίων εἰδώλων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀποτελεσμένῳ ἀνθρωποειδῶς.]

θεωρητούς

A. that may be seen

2. of the mind, to be reached by contemplation

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, θεωρητός](#)

λόγῳ "by reason" or "by thinking" or "through reasoning"

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, λόγος](#)

I don't really like Hicks translation of the scholia note: "the gods are discernible by reason alone". My preference would be, using the definitions, for something like "the gods are conceived by contemplation through reasoning."

We don't - can't! - see the [Epicurean gods](#) with our physical eyes. The "truth" of their existence takes place entirely in our minds by reasoning through their existence through contemplation. But through that contemplation, Epicurus asserts that their existence is εναργής "clearly discernable to us / manifest to us in our minds."

I continue to maintain that contemplation is the best translation for one of the characteristics of the sage, too. "The sage will also enjoy themselves more than others in contemplation, speculation, and theorizing" (my translation) For full explanation, see:

[Epicurean Sage - ...enjoy themselves more than others in contemplation](#)

Hicks: He will take more delight than other men in state festivals. Yonge: ...and he will find more pleasure than other men in speculations. Yonge appears to...
sites.google.com

Post by "Cassius" of December 12, 2022 at 10:08 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

We don't - can't! - see the [Epicurean gods](#) with our physical eyes. The "truth" of their existence takes place entirely in our minds by reasoning through their existence through contemplation. But through that contemplation, Epicurus asserts that their existence is εναργής "clearly discernable to us / manifest to us in our minds."

Right - I understand what you are saying, but just for purposes of this conversation the second sentence there is the conclusion you are drawing. It may make sense, but it doesn't seem to entirely jibe with the references about receiving "images" of the gods, whether with the mind as a "suprasensory" faculty as Dewitt describes it as otherwise. And it may not also account for "anticipations" depending on what we believe those to be.

And of course the next step in that positioning is to take a position whether the "gods" exist ONLY as constructs of the mind or whether they also have independent physical existence in the manner described by Velleius. At the moment I can't remember your position on that (?) I presume you are siding with what we've often described as the "idealist" position vs the "realist"

position (though I am not sure i really like those labels).

Post by “Don” of December 12, 2022 at 11:26 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

it doesn't seem to entirely jibe with the references about receiving "images" of the gods

We receive images of the gods *in our minds.*

Per LSJ, in Ancient Greek, ἐναργής meant:

A. visible, palpable, in bodily shape, esp. of the gods appearing in their own forms, [Don's note: i.e., as in Homer when they appears as majestic, giant humanoids in person or in dreams or visions] or

2. manifest to the mind's eye

I cannot interpret any of Epicurus's words as meaning we see the gods with our physical eyes.

Post by “Don” of December 12, 2022 at 11:35 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And of course the next step in that positioning is to take a position whether the "gods" exist ONLY as constructs of the mind or whether they also have independent physical existence in the manner described by Velleius. At the moment I can't remember your position on that (?) I presume you are siding with what we've often described as the "idealist" position vs the "realist" position (though I am not sure i really like those labels)

Yeah, I'm not fond of those labels either... but, yes, I'm siding with the Sedleyan "idealist" position.

But whether the [Epicurean gods](#) exist as mental constructs (i.e., goals toward which to strive) OR as physical entities in the μετὰκόσμια or intermundia, we humans will never see them with

our physical eyes like a tree or a goat or another human. If we receive their images, we intercept the subtle images with the sensory faculty of our minds.

Post by “Don” of December 12, 2022 at 11:45 PM

Quote from Lucretius via Joshua

Those images which from their holy bodies

Are carried into intellects of men,

As the announcers of their form divine.

-Book VI, Leonard Translation

nec de corpore quae sancto simulacra feruntur

in mentes hominum divinae nuntia formae,

mentes = the mind, disposition, feeling, character, heart, soul

[Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary, mens](#)

Post by “Cassius” of December 13, 2022 at 4:22 AM

As you know I personally favor the other position but for current purposes the main comment I would make is that whether we believe the theory or not, I presume you would agree that the long discussion of images in Lucretius book 4 and other places in the texts does confirm that the Epicureans did consider "images" to be a physical phenomena of atoms moving through space, and not a matter of simple "thought." Right(?).

And how do you view the Velleius material in "On the Nature of the Gods"?

Post by “Don” of December 13, 2022 at 7:12 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I presume you would agree that the long discussion of images in Lucretius book 4 and other places in the texts does confirm that the Epicureans did consider "images" to be a physical phenomena of atoms moving through space, and not a matter of simple "thought." Right(?).

Oh, of course! It's all atoms and void. Images from a tree, a goat, a god, are all films of atoms (per the Epicurean theory). Thought itself is a physical phenomenon within our psychē. But the images of the gods are so subtle they can only be perceived by the faculty of our minds in contemplation and dreams.

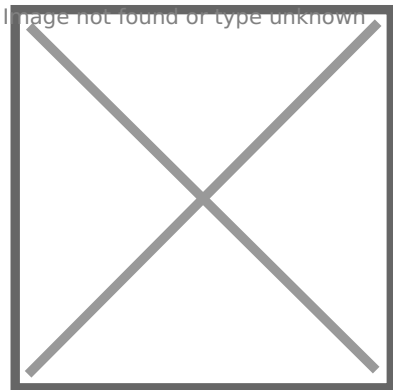
nec de corpore quae sancto simulacra feruntur

in mentes hominum divinae nuntia formae,

That line from Lucretius is pretty unambiguous to my reading.

Post by "Don" of December 13, 2022 at 7:47 AM

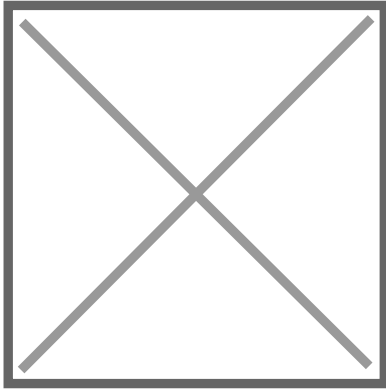
Here are some relevant papers:



[Theological Paradox in Epicurus](#)

Theological Paradox in Epicurus

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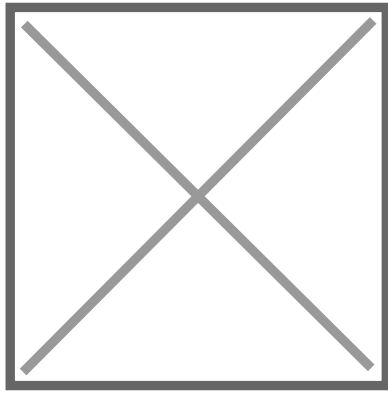
[The Polytheism of the Epicureans](#)

Epicureans have been branded atheists since antiquity, but although they might have held unorthodox beliefs about divinity, they did nevertheless believe in...

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Quote

They did not believe in the Olympians that Hesiod and Homer had depicted, but anthropomorphic yet bizarre gods: although these were compounds of atoms, they were immortal, unlike any other compound in the Epicurean universe, and there was quite possibly an infinite host of such deities, all alike and all nameless. These gods were not considered figments of the imagination by the Epicureans, but as real, living entities that actually existed, remotely, somewhere out there in the cosmos, doing very little aside from maintaining their supremely peaceful, painless, and tranquil dispositions. And these gods needed to be considered real in order to be genuine, ethical models for mankind to follow, which was their main function within the Epicurean world-view. The atoms of these gods, like everything in existence, were held to be perpetually in motion, constantly being emitted from their bodies as images that then travelled directly to the minds of mankind and thereby presented a true depiction of divinity, of peacefulness, and above all, of happiness, which would then be examples for individual Epicureans to follow on their individual journeys towards ἀταραξία, tranquillity.



[The Gods of Philodemus](#)

The Gods of Philodemus

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Quote from Cicero On the nature of the gods 1.16

gods exist, because nature herself has imprinted a conception of them on the minds of all mankind. For what nation or what tribe of men is there which possesses untaught some [preconception] of the gods?¹²

Post by “Cassius” of December 13, 2022 at 8:34 AM

Yes we can take this thread back into the direction of the general issue of [Epicurean gods](#) as far as anyone would like. We probably need to be revisiting this issue at least once a year anyway lest it get drowned out and forgotten. And what better time of the year than the Christmas season! 😊

It ties back into Anticipations, Images, and many other fascinating aspects of the texts that often get left behind.

Or should we just conclude that images of the gods impacted us and led us back to the topic? 😊

[\[15.16\] Cicero to Cassius\[Rome, January, 45 B.C.\]](#)

L I expect you must be just a little ashamed of yourself now that this is the third letter that has caught you before you have sent me a single leaf or even a line. But I am not pressing you, for I shall look forward to, or rather insist upon, a longer letter. As for myself, if I always had somebody to trust with them, I should send you as many as three an hour. For it somehow

happens, that whenever I write anything to you, you seem to be at my very elbow; and that, not by way of visions of images, as your new friends term them, who believe that even mental visions are conjured up by what [Caius](#) calls spectres (for let me remind you that Caius the [Insubrian](#), an [Epicurean](#), who died lately, gives the name of spectres to what the famous [Gargettian](#) [Epicurus], and long before that [Democritus](#), called images).

2 But, even supposing that the eye can be struck by these spectres because they run up against it quite of their own accord, how the mind can be so struck is more than I can see. It will be your duty to explain to me, when you arrive here safe and sound, whether the spectre of you is at my command to come up as soon as the whim has taken me to think about you - and not only about you, who always occupy my inmost heart, but suppose I begin thinking about the Isle of [Britain](#), will the image of that wing its way to my consciousness?

3 But of this later on. I am only sounding you now to see in what spirit you take it.

Post by “Don” of December 13, 2022 at 8:57 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Or should we just conclude that images of the gods impacted us and led us back to the topic? 😊



[Quote from Cicero via Cassius](#)

mental visions are conjured up by what Caius calls spectres

[Quote from Cicero via Cassius](#)

the mind can be so struck is more than I can see. It will be your duty to explain to me,

Both of these, while conveying Cicero's consternation at the idea, point to the Epicureans teaching that the mind was "struck" by images directly, especially in recollection of memories or thinking about something.

Post by “Cassius” of December 13, 2022 at 9:34 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Both of these, while conveying Cicero's consternation at the idea, point to the Epicureans teaching that the mind was "struck" by images directly, especially in recollection of memories or thinking about something.

I agree, almost like there is a radio/tv-like "tuning" mechanism where we receive the outside "images" that we are "tuning our minds" to receive. A combination of an on-board faculty with a "transmission" of some kind coming from outside. Or an analogy to our eyes perceiving "waves" in what we discuss as a light wave spectrum while the ears receive "waves" of another sort. (And the other senses are likewise "tuned" for their function.)

I started to look for another word than "transmission" as that implies a signal being intentionally sent to an object. But maybe there still is a parallel -- TV and radio stations send out signals "to the world" without any knowledge of who might receive them.

Post by “Don” of December 13, 2022 at 9:51 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I started to look for another word than "transmission" as that implies a signal being intentionally sent to an object.

Emanating?

Post by “Cassius” of December 13, 2022 at 9:53 AM

Emanating -- yes -- the theory seems to be a constant flow of atoms from every body that is always going on outward, in every direction, without any action or intent on the part of the body giving off the images.

Post by “Eikadistes” of December 13, 2022 at 11:31 AM

This all makes me wonder: do we have any documentation from ancient sources that shows how they treated (*conceptually*) the occasion of inducing a religious experience through digestion or inhalation of psychoactive substances? I can approach Epicurus' statement a lot better if "the gods" are contextualized as the objects of one's perception during psychedelic experiences. Our visual cortices, in tandem with other nerve clusters produce visions of extraordinary "other-presences" during a trip. We have reproduced these experiences under laboratory conditions using high doses of LSD, DMT, and other chemicals for decades. Indeed, these experiences are "manifest".

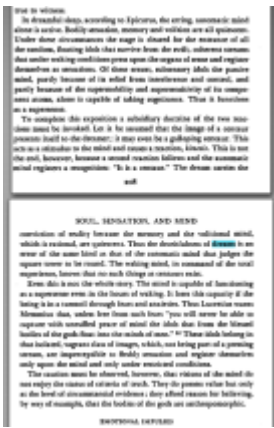
I am entertaining the idea that we might still be thinking too heavily of "the gods" within the context of modern theology (usually as abstract beings only accessible through imagination or faith) versus "the gods" as "the objects of psychedelic visions". It seems reasonable to me to suppose that the average ancient Greek had a working knowledge of mind-altering substances used for religious purposes based on ubiquity of mystery rites and their mind-altering sacraments. The Greeks were aware that the Scythians used cannabis (thus, the word *cannabis* comes from ancient Greek), so I have to assume that they understood the concept of "consumables that induce visions of divine beings".

Having shared in that experiences, I can attest to a personal certainty that the statement "the gods exist and knowledge of them is manifest" *feels* very appropriate, but I still understand that they are **not** immaterial subjects who exist between cosmic dimensions. They are objects of a material mind that are induced by a material substance. The common experience of a "dream" is extremely comparable to the psychedelic experience, as are the objects (sometimes mistaken for *subjects*) of the dream. Using the concept of a "dream" as a comparison for the state of the mind that oracles achieve when they inhale volcanic gases would be an appropriate and available concept.

I speculate that the ancient mind would have associated altered states with religious practice more readily than ours does; Epicurus' propositions might have been commenting on the visions induced during mystery rites.

Post by "Cassius" of December 13, 2022 at 11:37 AM

I can't remember anything specific from my own memory at this point, but perhaps similar to the direction you are going is the issue of dreams:



Post by "Don" of December 13, 2022 at 11:43 AM

That is a fascinating line of thought, @Nate .

My thoughts have most consistently turned to thinking of the prolepsis of the gods as connected with the capacity of all humans (I would think) to experience awe and wonder, but I can't readily point to an academic paper or ancient text to back me up on that.

Mind-altering substances and rituals we're definitely part of ancient cultures. Lookin' at you, Dionysus!!

Post by "Don" of December 13, 2022 at 12:17 PM

Long & Sedley On Gods (attached)